



AAC Publications

Ikasagtivaq Fjord, Various Ascents

Greenland, East Greenland, Ammassalik Island and Schweizerland

The 25km-long ridge partially traversed by the 2022 team, seen from the northeast side of Ikasagtivaq Fjord. The traverse attempt began at the far left end. Photo by Noel Williams

Our expedition comprised four members, Mike Bauermeister, Simon Tietjen, Noel Williams, and me, and took place during July and August. We teamed with a large expedition from the Scottish Arctic Club, organized by their president, Stella Spratley, and originally planned for 2020 to celebrate the 50th anniversary of the club. Altogether we were 26 people, most involved in non-climbing activities.

Our smaller group's main objective was a 25km-long ridge on the southwest side of Ikasagtivaq Fjord. Starting at the southeast end, after a boat drop-off below the east flank of the first peak, Qeqqikajik (710m, 65°45'6.22"N, 37°21'28.53"W), Mike, Simon, and I reached the top via broken ground and soon embarked on a traverse toward the steep second peak. On closer inspection we realized this was a no-go. The cliffs were populated by a huge colony of herring gulls, which had nest-bound young. We dropped down the east flank and traversed to the third peak. This descent was loose, and the last step to reach the snow was rappelled. After regaining the ridge, we continued over various summits until bivouacking below peak seven, 12 hours after leaving the boat.

A large cliff lay between the seventh peak and the continuation ridge. We outflanked this via a gully to the east. The terrain now varied between reasonable granite and loose gneiss, with a few steps at UIAA III. After a 10-hour day we found an excellent bivouac spot between the 13th and 14th peak. The weather had now broken, and we decided to stop for the night and reassess the following morning.

After a wet night the sky showed no signs of clearing. Much of the rock on the ridge was extremely lichenous and slippery when wet. We descended a gully east to the fjord and walked to the northwest end of the ridge to reach our agreed collection point at the head of the Kuugarmiit inlet. To traverse the ridge of over 30 tops (the highest, at the northwest end, around 1,110m) would have taken us at least four days, and not the three anticipated. We had also been slowed by loose rock, which often required extreme care.

While this was taking place, Noel, Simon Fraser, and Fraser Melville summited Peak 750m at 65°48'13.08"N, 37°31'37.74"W. The climbers reached the top via the east ridge and are reasonably certain it was previously unvisited. On either side of the summit lie deep gaps in the ridge. After removing much loose rock, they were able to cross the eastern gap to reach the summit. However, the west gap, which would give access to the higher Peak 890m to the northwest, defeated them: It was deeper, harder, and the high quantity of unstable rock made it dangerous to tackle without a rope. They returned along the east ridge, ending with a wonderful standing glissade that brought them to their tents in double-quick time.

The expedition's second principle objective was to explore a superb cirque of peaks that lies north from the ridge across Ikasagtivaq Fjord. While this cirque had been visited previously by several parties, there is still scope for exploration.

From Kuugarmiit, we were transported to a base camp just above the shore at approximately 65°54'38.71"N, 37°34'57.32"W. On July 30, Simon and I attempted the west face of Peak ca 1,190m, variously called the Dru, Little Dru, or Asta Nunaat (see AAJ 2007). However, it was soon apparent we had neither enough gear nor the right tactics. Next day, we repeated neighboring Peak 1,250m via the

west ridge [this peak was climbed in 1975 via the west ridge up and south ridge down, but the first ascent was sometime earlier] and descended the north ridge to the col between it and the Dru, with the aim of continuing over the latter. The south ridge of the Dru looked unattractive, so we made a quick descent of the west couloir. Five hours later, back at base camp, a huge rockfall released into this couloir and descended to the glacier. Our descent of the north ridge of Peak 1,250m may have been the first, but it was dangerously loose and is not to be recommended.

The steep rock tower of Niniartivaraq (1,160m), close to our base camp, has been climbed several times, and on such an impressive formation, it is easy to ignore the slabby west face. From a distance this face appears largely broken, but the rock is generally sound. On August 2, starting in the center, Simon and I climbed 13 pitches, weaving through slabs and overlaps, until we reached a terrace and easier ground. From there, a further 300m led to a higher terrace, where we broke left onto the northwest ridge and so reached the summit. We named the route Dr. Boom Fuzz's Circus (700m, British HVS).

Prior to this, seven members of the Scottish Arctic Club had reached the summit via the northwest ridge/flank, a remarkably straightforward grade 3 scramble. They also climbed two southwestern subsidiary summits of Peak 1,295m, but were deterred from attempting Peak 1,295m because of loose rock.

The three youngest members of the group, Bethany Carol, Hannah Mortlock, and Tom Lichfield, ventured further north, and after a high bivouac climbed the easy, snow-covered Peak 1,200m at 65°58'57.22"N, 37°31'20.59"W. This is located around 2km east-northeast of a summit reached by Noel Williams in 2018, and to date no record of a previous ascent has been located. Later, some of the party climbed the pleasant peak Nialigag (1,171m) via the easy east-southeast ridge, approaching from the north—a repeat of the 1975 route.

— Will Rowland, with additional material from Noel Williams, U.K.

Historical Notes on 1975 Expedition: In July and early August 1975, New Zealanders Stu Allen, Steve Dawson, Rob Rowlands, and Jo Straker, with South Africans Phillipa and Rick Hoare, and Simonne Stratford, spent ten days climbing in the cirque north of Ikasagtivaq Fjord, summiting six peaks, four of which were first ascents. Prior to their visit, it seems that some of the easier peaks in this cirque had been climbed, probably in the 1960s.

On July 26–27, Allen, Straker, and Rowlands made the first ascent of the “Dru.” They climbed the west-facing couloir to reach the start of the south ridge, climbed this ridge to the summit (UIAA V), and descended the north ridge. The south ridge appears relatively broad, so while the ascent reported in AAJ 2019 and graded UIAA VI+ A1 was not the first of this ridge, it is likely to have taken different ground in parts.

On the 29th, Allen, Dawson, and Hoare made the first ascent of Niniartivaraq by climbing the south ridge and southwest face at V+. They descended the northwest ridge. Allan returned on August 3 and with Straker and Rowlands made the first ascent of the east face. Meanwhile, on July 28, Dawson, the Hoares, Stratford, and Rowlands climbed the southwest ridge of Peak 1,295m at II and descended the southeast ridge, while Allen and Straker climbed the west ridge of Peak 1,250m, south of the Dru, at III, and descended the south ridge (both summits had been previously climbed).

On July 31, Rowlands and Straker made the first ascent of Peak 1,438m via the northwest ridge (III), after which they descended snow slopes on the southwest face. On August 1, the Hoares and Stratford made the first ascent of Nialigag via the east-southeast ridge (II), approaching from the north.

This map shows the cirque of peaks on the northeast side of Ikasagtivaq Fjord. The peaks numbered

in red are those known to have been climbed; a brief description of each ascent is recorded in the side box. (Peak number 12 has additional routes; see the AAJ references in this report.) Apart from the peak labeled with a 2018 ascent, all the peaks circled in pink were climbed during the 2022 expedition. Annotated by Noel Williams

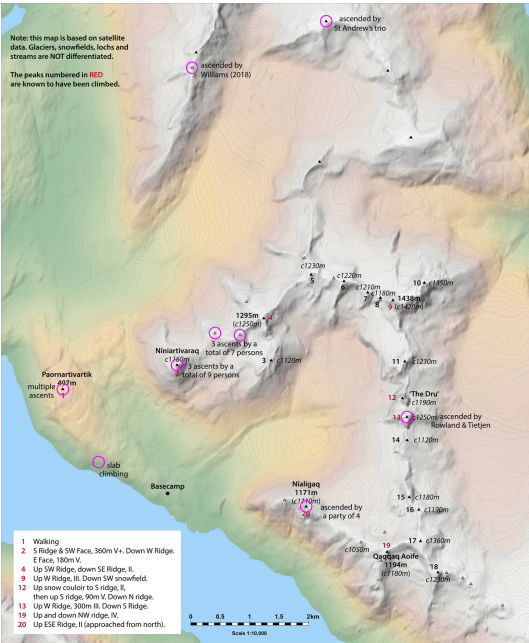
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Dr. Boom Fuzz’s Circus (700m, HVS) on the west face of Niniartivaraq. The northwest ridge (left skyline) provided a pleasant scrambling route to the summit.



Simon Tietjen and Mike Bauermeister on the 25km-long ridge near Ikasagtivaq Fjord, looking southeast at the initial section.



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Seen from the west, one of several possibly unclimbed tops in the central section of the 25km-long ridge partially traversed by the 2022 team.



Rockfall cascades down the couloir between the Dru/Asta Nunaat and Peak 1,250m to the right. On the left is the snow-topped Peak 1,230m.



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