



AAC Publications

Oxford Glacier, Island Peak, East Face and South Ridge; Snow Dome, North Ridge; Panorama Peak, South Ridge

Greenland, East Greenland, Stauning Alps

The Stauning Alps of northeast Greenland are bounded to north by the King Oscar Fjord, to the east by the Skel Valley, to the west by the Alpefjord, and to the south by the Nordvest Fjord, the northwest branch of Scoresby Sund. While the northern and central Staunings, accessed from Mestersvig, were popular in the past, with a book describing them in the early 1970s, large areas of the southern Staunings remain to be fully explored. In April and May of 2013, Neil Mathews and I made first ascents of three peaks from the Oxford Glacier in the southern Staunings, reaching the area by snowmobile.

We flew to Nerlerit Inaat (Constable Pynt) on April 18, and over the next two days used snowmobiles to travel 212km to near the bottom of the Oxford Glacier (71°26'31.78N, 25°20'17.88W). Our route crossed the frozen upper section of Hurry Fjord and Klitdal, then headed west over the Jameson Land mountains. We then followed the Sydkap headland and went up the frozen Nordvest Fjord, until reaching the start of the Oxford Glacier just before Stormpynt.

The glacier was highly crevassed and steep in places, so the snowmobiles were not used again until our return to Stormpoint. We skied and pulled sleds to Camp 1 at 304m (71°29'11.8N, 25°19'46.1W), and then Camp 2 at 430m (71°30'17.0N, 25°18'49.4W). On April 23 we reached a point 11km up the glacier, where there were many crevasses. It was too difficult and dangerous to pull our 100kg pulks any further, so we established our base camp there at 558m (71°32' 07.3N, 25°17' 32.0W), a location that provided reasonable access to many peaks.

On April 26 we made the first ascent of what we called Island Peak (1,960m, 71°35' 09.44N, 25°13'02.22W), a distinctive triangular peak located just north of the point where the Oxford Glacier makes a major division into east and west branches. Our approach on skis from the east branch was circuitous because of crevasses. At 1,500m on the east face of the mountain, the slope steepened considerably to about 45°, so we removed skis and continued with crampons and ice axes. The snow was deep, unconsolidated, and required wading until we reached the long, rocky summit ridge. The snow here was generally more consolidated. The summit was 7km north from base camp. We took seven hours up (PD+) and a further four for the descent.

On the 28th we explored an eastern glacial valley opposite Island Peak, and 1km up we made attempts to ascend peaks on either side. We were unable to summit the peak on the north side due to large amounts of unconsolidated snow on very steep rock, and on the south side were stopped by a large crevasse blocking the route.

The next day we skied farther up to the hidden end of the valley, where a slope of 35° led to a pass between two peaks (PD). From this pass we headed south, avoiding a rocky buttress on its east side, then followed 30° snow slopes to the summit of Snow Dome (2,030m, 71°34'15.72N, 25°08'12.28W). This peak lay 8km northeast of base camp. We then returned to the pass and climbed 20° slopes to the top of Isikkivinginner (Panorama Peak, 2,040m, 71°34' 53.09N, 25°07' 32.69W, 1.6km north of Snow Dome).

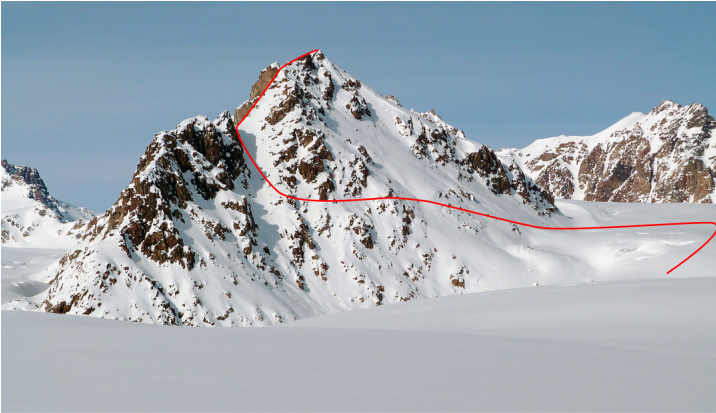
These summits are unnamed on the relevant Viking Polar Cruise Series 1:500,000 map; the names used in this report are not official. They had appeared rocky and difficult from the Oxford Glacier, but the eastern glacial valley gave us straightforward snow access and an easy route to both tops (F from the pass). The round trip from base camp was 11 hours. We also repeated a number of previously climbed peaks.

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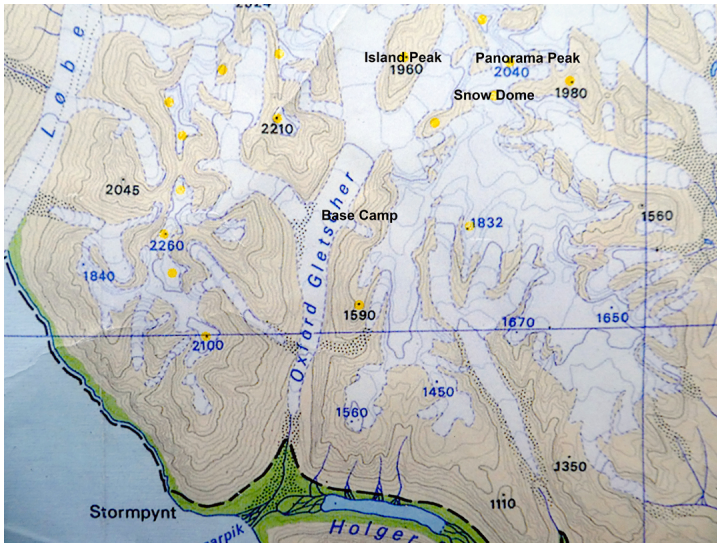
Images



The view northeast from near the entrance to the eastern branch of the Oxford Glacier, with Snow Dome in center back. The 2013 team skied to the right of the prominent rocky "peak" in the foreground, which is in fact the end of a spur coming down from Isikkivinginner, the main summit of which is hidden behind.



Island Peak from the southeast and the 2013 route of ascent.



Part of the Viking Polar Series 1:500,000 map showing the Oxford Glacier and surrounding peaks.



Looking over the Oxford Glacier to peaks on its west side. The viewpoint is near the head of the eastern glacier valley leading to the col between Isikkivinginner and Snow Dome. The broad, flat-topped summit slightly left of center is 2,210m, and the high distant summit toward the left edge of the picture is 2,260m. These, and many other peaks in this photo, are thought to be unclimbed.



Looking south at the route of the 2013 first ascent of Snow Dome. The ascent was made on skis.

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