

GREENLAND 2000 – TILMAN IN A NEW MILLENNIUM

Aim

To sail a 10 metre sloop from Scotland to the west coast of Greenland and climb mountains from the boat in the Tilman tradition, with special reference to the first ascent of the North Wall of Sandersons Hope above the Arctic Circle

Approach

The boat was sailed across the Atlantic from Scotland by the first crew. The abiding impression of the Atlantic crossing this time was of too little wind, as opposed to too much in 1998. There were one or two close encounters (not *quite* literally) with big icebergs looming out of the mist dead ahead after Cape Farewell, and we had to pick up brash ice in the dinghy in the Davis Strait to replenish our fresh water supply. After putting in to Nuuk we continued tacking up the Davis Strait, before putting into the twelve mile long scenic fjord of Kangerdluarssuargssuaq (66° 13'N, 53° 39'W), anchoring at the far end to climb some peaks from the boat.

Preliminary Peaks: Paornaquussuit Qavat

The first peak involved a round trip of some 20 kilometres and 1500 metres of climbing. This was difficult bouldery country, and if we needed any proof of the inadequacy of a 1:250,000 map for mountain work we had it here. It simply does not give sufficient detail of the terrain, but there is nothing else. We followed the main river valley initially before going up into the glacial valley to the south west. The Australians being rockclimbers really we then found ourselves scrambling directly up the side of the valley. This rock scrambling turned more into rockclimbing, without gear, the further we went up, but eventually led up to the ridge where we found snowfields and several false summits as we traversed round above some glaciers falling steeply down the other side, to arrive eventually on the true summit at the far end. We looked carefully for a cairn or sardine tin, but thankfully after all that effort, we found neither. So we built our own cairn for posterity. Mountain sense prevailed on the way down and we took the longer but gentler boulder strewn slope, which led us back to our ascent route and some gear we had left, and so to the boat. A long day and the Old Man was almost suffering from what Bill Tilman used to call 'Mountaineers' Foot' by the end.

The second peak of 1230 metres was nearer the anchorage and gave a pleasant day. The usual initial ascent into the glacial valley was followed by a scrambling ascent of a dry gully up the side of the mountain. This led again to the ridge, and an easy angled snow slope where we kicked steps led to the summit rocks. Again no cairn or tin, and a fast descent down the gravel and rock slope beside the watercourse led us back to the valley and boat.

We believe both these were first ascents, and most easily reached from a boat anchored below in the fjord in the Tilman tradition. We gave the peaks provisional names of 'Scotland the Brave' and 'Aussie Peak' but do not know how to translate those into Inuit!

Climbers

Bob Shepton
Steve Holland
Laurie Haynes

Anchor Watch

Dudley Smith

James Jackson of the sailing crew had returned home from Nuuk

Sandersons Hope

We continued to sail north to the Uummannaq area. Gradually the sailing crew left and the climbers gradually arrived, and were picked up from the airstrip at Qaarsut. We then sailed further north, in stormy conditions some of the time, to Upernavik where my team of climbers made the first ascent of the North Wall of Sandersons Hope at 72° 43'N above the Arctic Circle.

ExPg 00/09

Sandersons Hope is a famous navigational landmark named by John Davis in 1587 when he was looking for the North West Passage. The North Wall is a sweeping, compact granite cliff which rises majestically 1045 metres straight out of a deep fjord. This was big wall climbing, involving both hard free climbing and aid. The team chose finally to do the whole wall by siege tactics, coming down to the boat each evening rather than using portaledge. Though this involved some two hours jumaring to reach the previous high point towards the end, it was as well that they did because owing to the strangely unsettled weather on the west coast of Greenland this summer, several times they had to wait a day or more for the weather to clear and the rock to dry. It became somewhat nail-biting as to whether they were going to be able to complete the climb in the conditions in the time, and in fact on the last day they had to force their way out with aid with snow and icy rock, finishing the climb in the dark at 2300 hrs on 8 September. The actual climbing had only taken six days; overall it had taken from 26 August to 8 September.

The wall fell direct into the sea, and the climb was started by nudging the boat directly up to the cliff so that our tallest member Alberto could jump onto the wall from the rail at the bow to gain a ledge system above. We then rigged pallets from bolts, which proved effective for landing the necessary large amounts of gear and then the climbers from the boat, motoring gingerly past. But the spring tides and large swell soon destroyed that system, so in the end we backed the dinghy against the wall for the climbers to grasp the trailing lines and jump onto the wall at the top of a swell.

We named the climb 'Arctic First Born' Topo and details to follow.

Climbers	Graham Austick (Climbing Co-ordinator)	Support Team	Bob Shepton
	Paolo Pagino		Angelika Heisel
	Alberto Zuchetti		

Conclusion

In my mind the significance of this climb is not so much that it was the first ascent of the big wall of the North Face of Sandersons Hope above the Arctic Circle, but more that this, although probably the biggest wall there, resides in an area of big walls, sweeping rock and ice climbs, and scenic fjords. So hopefully this ascent will have the effect of opening up this completely undeveloped area for climbers in the future. We also took the opportunity of recording with relevant detail a number of anchorages along the west coast of Greenland, and especially in this area, to add to the existing Pilot of the Royal Cruising Club's Pilotage Foundation. Hopefully again this may encourage more sailing boats to cruise the west coast of Greenland and particularly to enjoy this dramatic cruising area.

Overall I hope it will be seen as a fitting tribute to that exceptional explorer Bill Tilman that we were able to take his innovative ideas, and practice, to this extreme in this first year of a new Millennium.

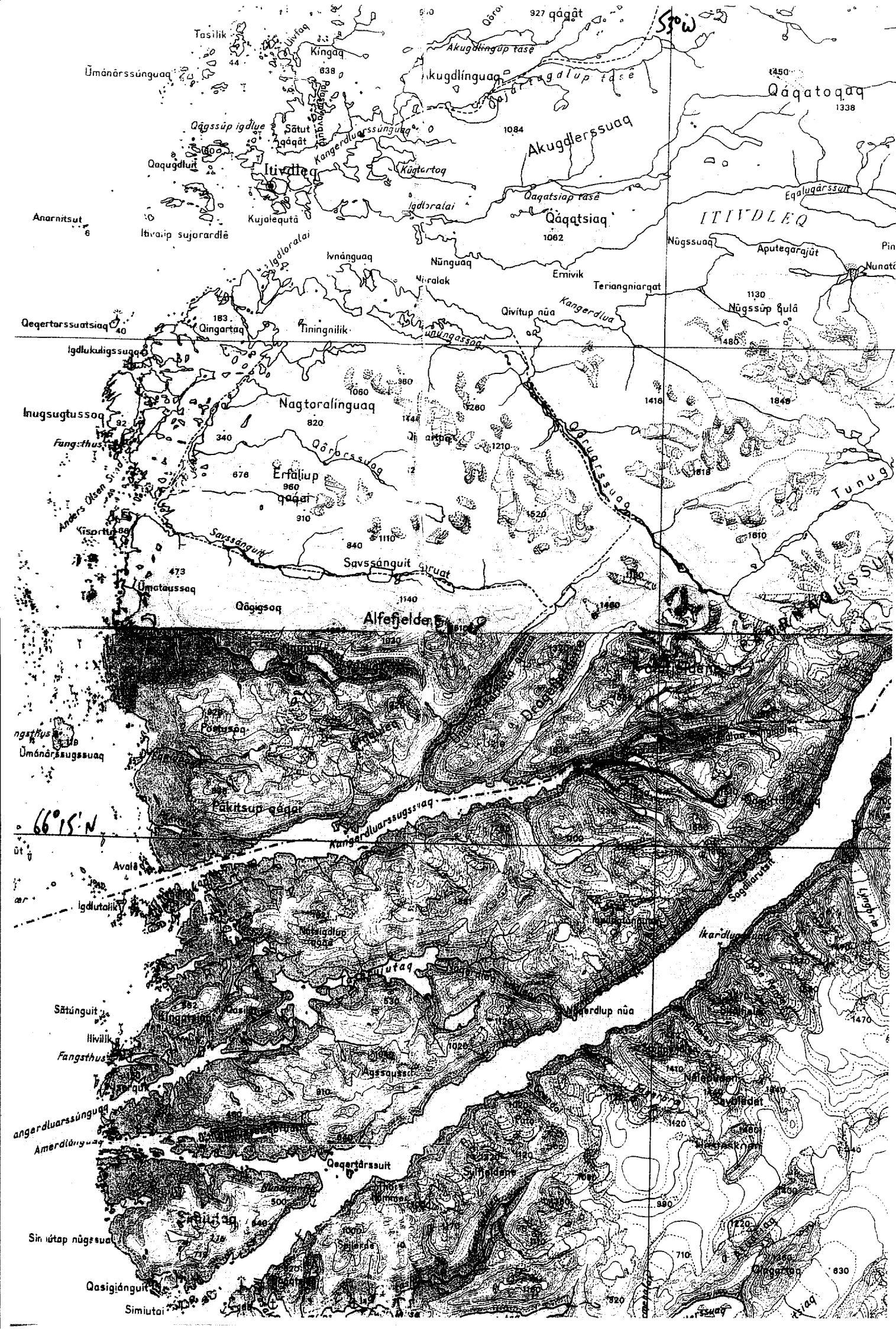
Expedition Leader	Rev Bob Shepton	Boat	Dodo's Delight
Sailing Crew	Dudley Smith Steve Holland Laurie Haynes James Jackson	Climbing Crew/Team	Graham Austick Angelika Heisel Paolo Paglino Alberto Zuchetti

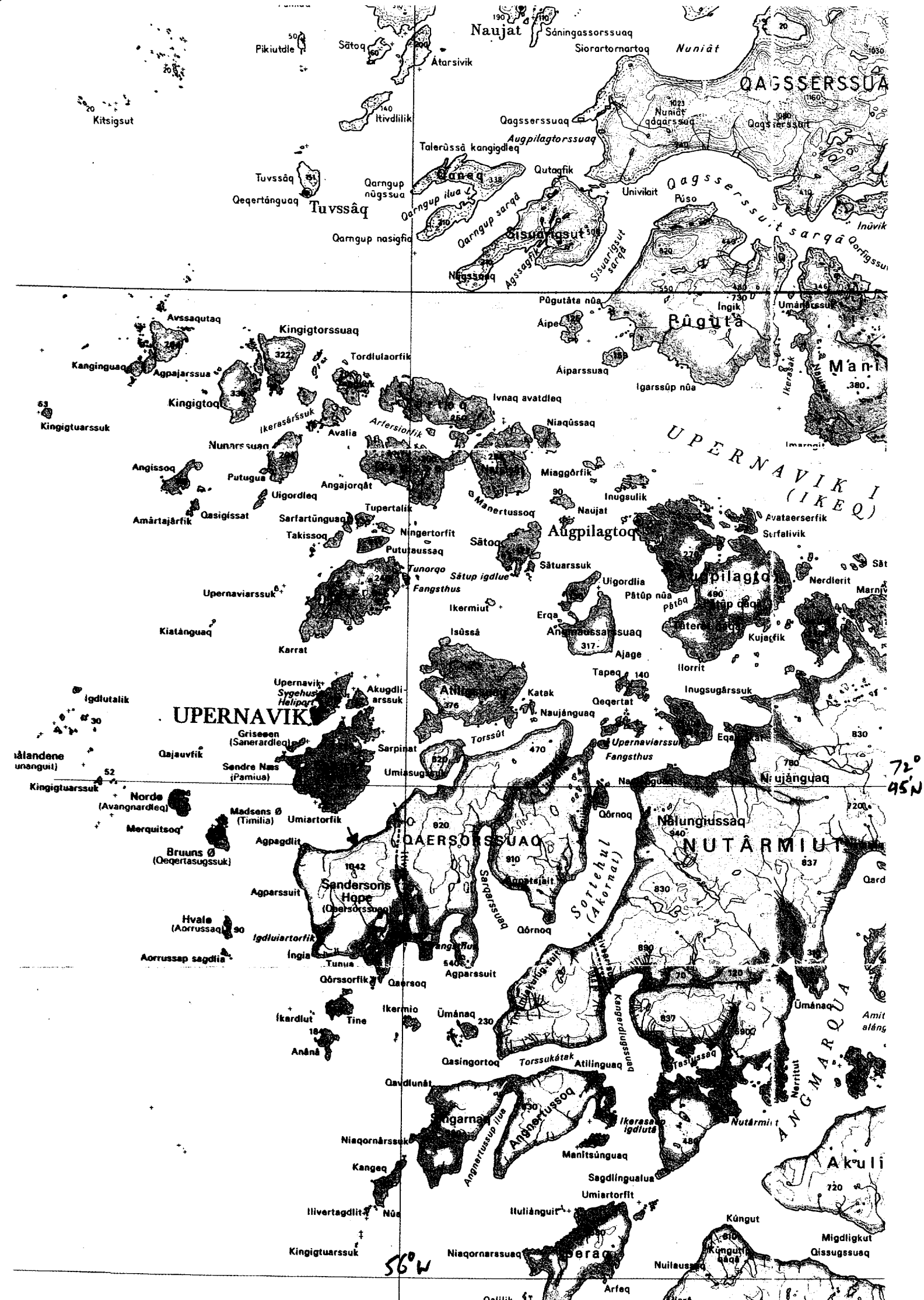
We would like to take this opportunity of expressing our heartfelt gratitude to the following who by their kind support made the expedition possible:

Mount Everest Foundation
Gino Watkins Memorial Trust

British Mountaineering Council
Lyon Equipment Ltd

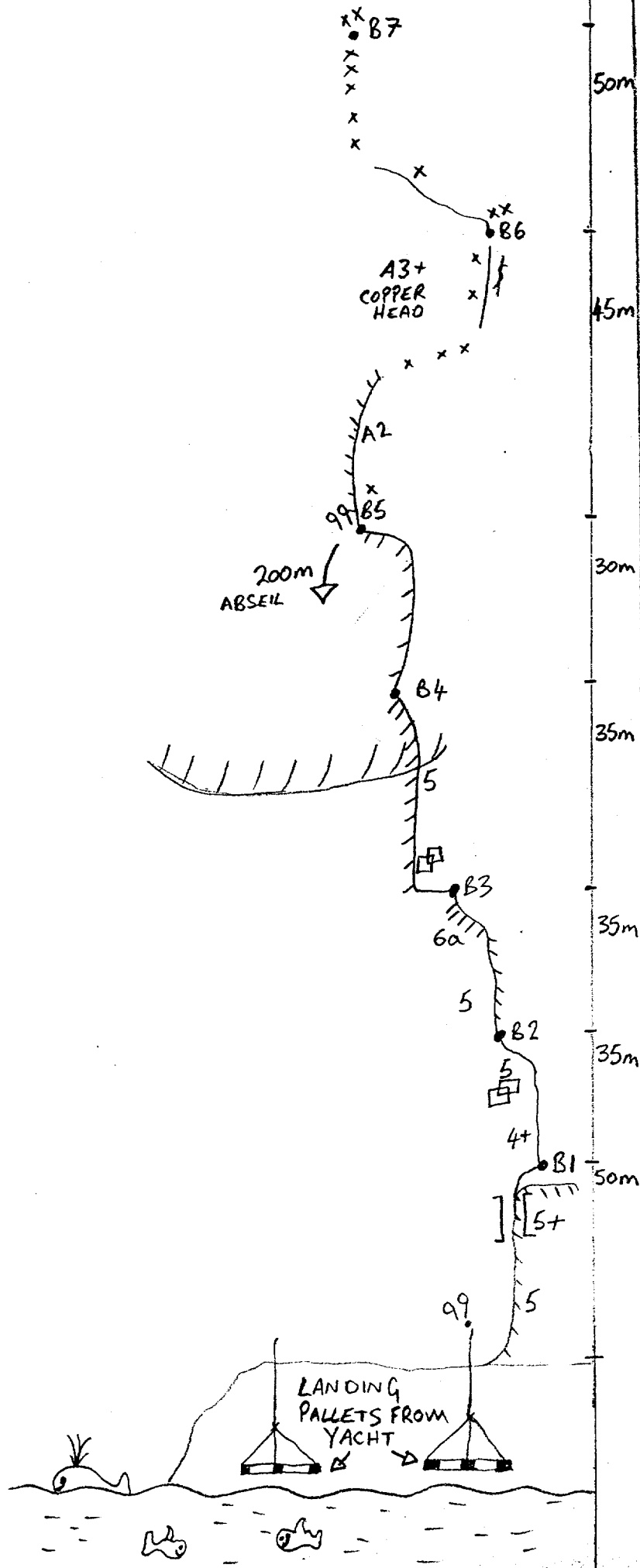
The Expedition Leader was also awarded a Winston Churchill Travelling Fellowship 2000 which was a tremendous help personally, enabling him to concentrate on organising and running the expedition



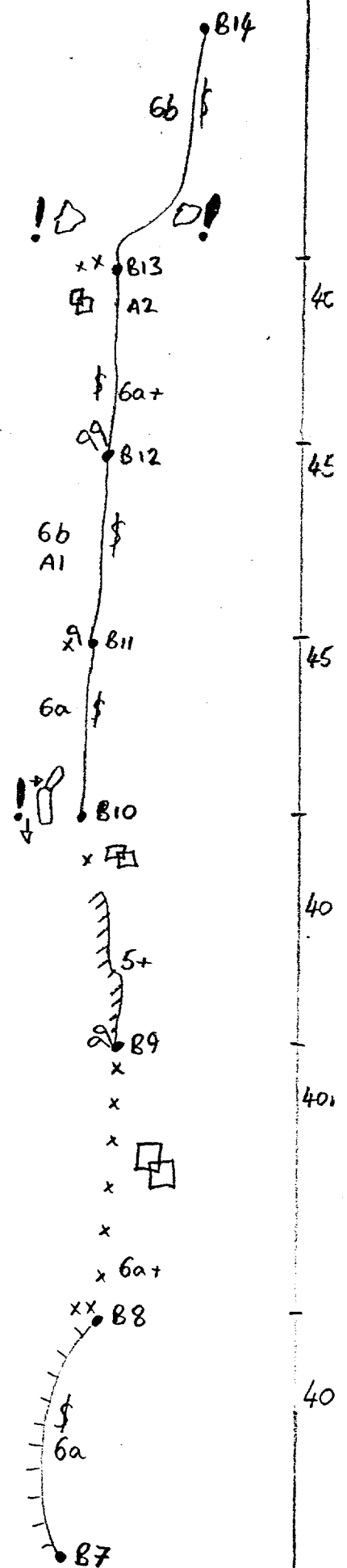


SANDERSONS HOPE
NW GREENLAND
"ARCTIC FIRST BORN"

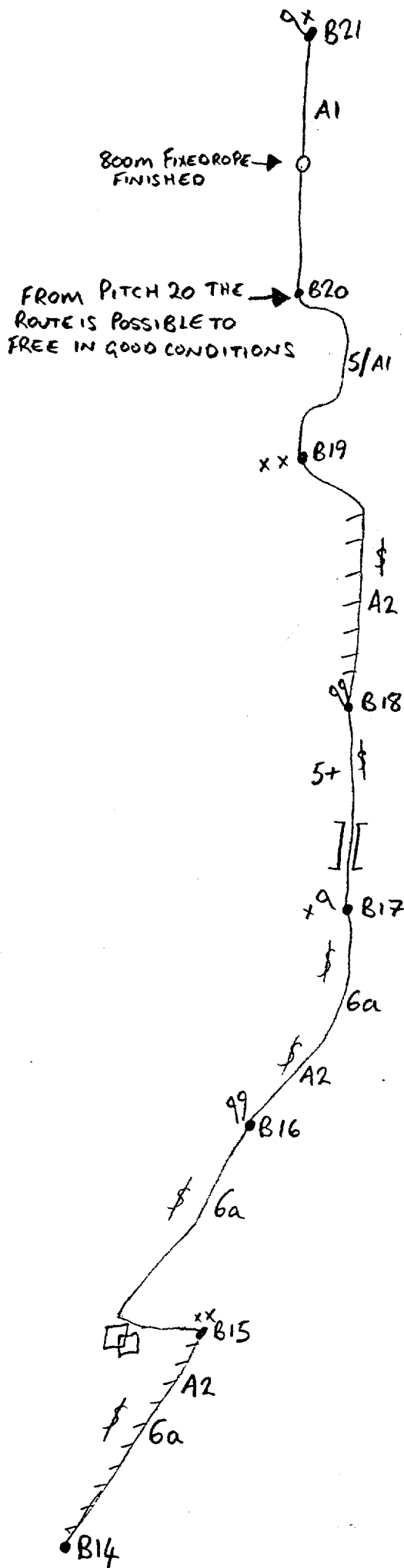
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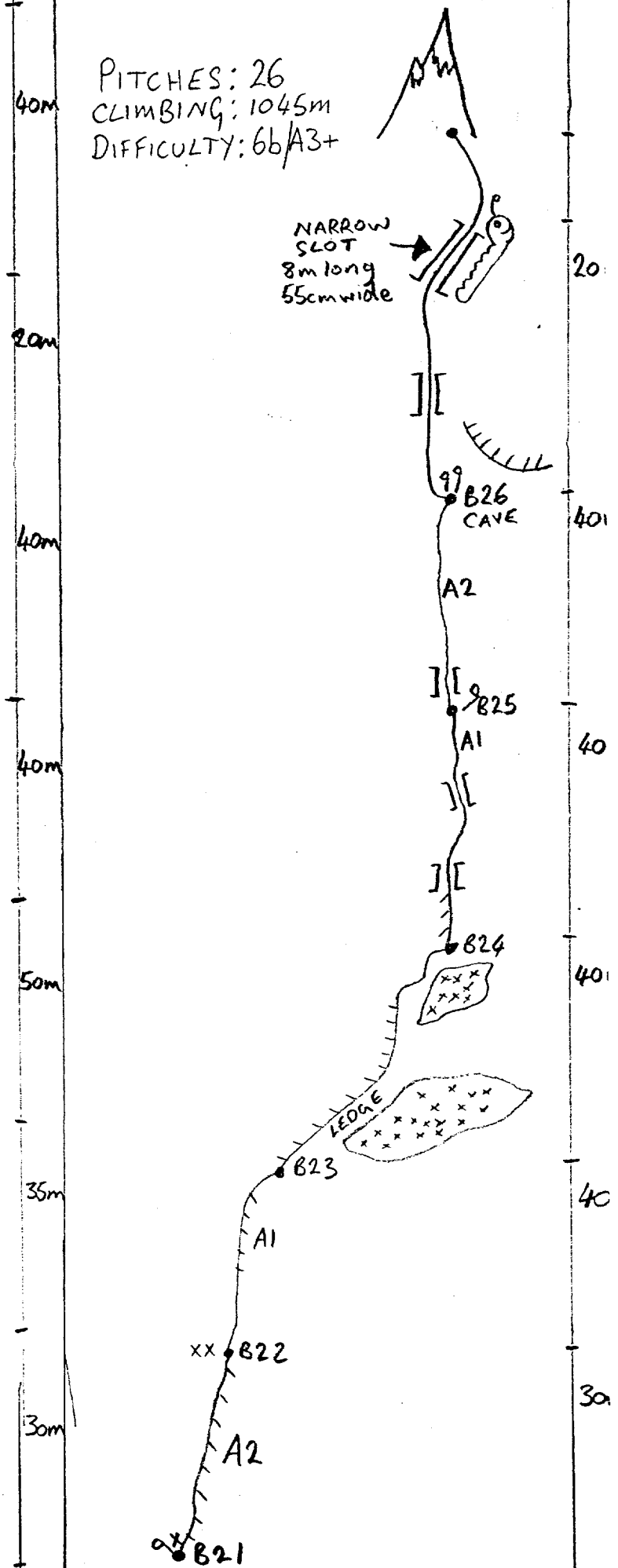


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PITCHES: 26
CLIMBING: 1045m
DIFFICULTY: 6b/A3+



Greenland Big Wall / Sail Expedition 2000

North Wall of Sandersons Hope

Rock type: Compact Granite.
Characteristics: Crack, Corner, Slab.
Climbing length: 1085 metres
Grade (UK): E3 5C A3+

Equipment:

2 x 50 metre half ropes (recommended 60 metre)
Double Series Friends all sizes #0,5 – 4
Double series rocks
One series micro wires
Series of copper heads #8
Pitons: Angles small and medium
Universal complete series
Knife blade complete series
Lost arrow complete series (short / thick)
Sky hooks

Equipment left on the wall

31 Stainless steel bolts x 10mm
15 x 8mm hand drilled bolts
30 pitons for belay and progression
1 wire in belay

Note: pitch 7 and 9 were partly climbed in artificial with the protection of some bolts. Progression was also made by drilling a small hole and setting sky hook placements to advance in the upper half of the pitch. If dry rock is experienced this section may go free (slab) but there is not sufficient protection in place for a free attempt at present.

Pitch 18 onwards to the top was climbed in artificial due to the snow and ice conditions. This section would in good weather and dry rock present clean crack and corner climbing of superb quality, the grade estimated at no more than UK 5b.

Descent abseiling: over the route is possible although not recommended above pitch 18 as crossing the rightward trending ramp system would present difficulties for the rope jamming. And some belays would need re-equipping on the descent.

Descent on foot: Upon reaching the summit we recommend the descent is made on foot. Turn to the east and descend easy broken terrain avoiding the snow fields on the left side which eventually lead to a lake between a valley. Turn left at the lake (north) and descend the wide valley, staying left to avoid water falls as the valley narrows and steepens to where it joins the fjord.

Members of the expedition:

Expedition Leader and yacht captain: Rev Bob Shepton

Logistics: Angelika Hiesel

Climbers: Paolo Paglino
Alberto Zucchetti
Graham Austick

Boat: Dodo's Delight - Westerly 10 metre sloop

Expedition location: Greenland, north west coast
North Wall of Sandersons Hope
Timmiakilussuit – Greenlandic name

Climb Named: 'Arctic First Born'

Co-ordinates: N 72° 43'
W 56° 04'

Access: October 2000, new airport – 45 minutes from Upernavik by motor boat to the North Wall of Sandersons Hope.

BIGGEST ARCTIC SEA CLIFF CLIMBED FROM A SAILING BOAT

The North Wall of Sandersons Hope is a sweeping granite cliff which rises majestically 1045 metres straight out of a deep fjord above the Arctic Circle, and an enterprising expedition has just climbed it from a sailing boat. The 10 metre yacht sailed across the Atlantic from Scotland, and two previously unclimbed peaks were climbed on the way up the west coast of Greenland, before arriving at 72° 43'N on 25 August. They then climbed this biggest sea cliff above the Arctic Circle in Greenland, which had never been climbed before, direct from the sailing boat.

The climb was started by stepping off the rail at the bow of the boat onto the big wall to gain a rock ledge above. Then there were all sorts of adventures landing the climbers onto the wall from the boat each day to continue the climb. And it was technically a very hard rockclimb which had to be completed in ice conditions owing to the prevailing bad weather.

Though this is the biggest wall there, there are a lot of other big rock walls in that area and it is hoped that this ground breaking first ascent will encourage others to go and climb there too. The expedition also investigated a number of anchorages so that yachtsmen might now want to visit this magnificent cruising area.

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