

BMC



03/20

Exp Pg

2003 Greenland Expedition
Knud Rasmussen Land

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Summary.

We landed on a glacier as planned at 69 .08 N 28 .15 W at an altitude of 6400 ft. During the next 25 days we climbed a total of 20 previously unclimbed summits up to a maximum height of 8560 ft. 15 major summits and five subsidiary ones, the latter being mainly accounted for by two ridge traverses.

Generally the snow conditions were good for climbing but the rock was very broken and unstable. We concentrated all our activity towards the eastern end of the glacier on which we had landed. Establishing three camps so as to be near to our objectives and to minimise 'walk in' time.

Through out our time in Greenland the weather remained settled with only an occasional light dusting of snow, relatively little wind and moderate temperatures. Which varied from a high of 16 C during the day to minus 10 C. through out the night with wind chill on one occasion down to minus 20 C.

Because only one of our team could ski we took Snow Shoes which proved essential in view of the 'corrugated' surface of the glacier and occasional soft snow. Crevasse were not a problem being minimal and clearly identifiable when they did occur. Skis would have been an advantage and would have allowed us to explore further out towards the Greenland Ice cap.

Catering using MSR stoves and White Gas was satisfactory and our menus, a mix of Army Rations and our own made up menus proved adequate both in quantity and quality.

We unfortunately took to much climbing 'hard ware' both in terms of ropes and rock climbing gear, 3 no. ropes would have been enough and while climbing used only Snow stakes, dead men, ice screws and slings. A snow saw proved to be an essential tool for cutting snow blocks with which to form protective walls for the tents and kitchen.

We were very satisfied with our Agent Tangent Expeditions International, and all their arrangements worked satisfactorily.

We called the glacier on which we landed the Robertson Glacier and three of the major mountains that we climbed we called, Mt. Dawson, Mt. Grace and Mt. Carmichael's Standard.

*Bob Dawson
Broadmead Barn
Brentor
PL19 OLS
Nov.2003*

The compilers of this report and the members of the expedition agree that any of this report maybe copied for the purposes of private research.

Bob Dawson



The Team.

Technically we had no Expedition Leader in the field and had agreed that all decisions in Greenland would be democratic. However for organisational reasons Bob was the leader.

Bob Dawson, Expedition organiser.

Previously organised expeditions to the Karakoram mountains of Pakistan and Cordillera Apolobamba region of Bolivia,
Climbed in the Gangotri region of Northern India and in Nepal.

John Diplock.

Extensive climbing experience both at home and abroad including an attempt on the West Face of Makalu and the first successful British ascent of Kusum Kanggura in Nepal.

Ian Lancaster,

Nickname 'Duracell' for his ability to keep going.

Extensive climbing experience both at home and abroad, including the Karakoram and Cordillera Apolobamba of Bolivia

Mark Diplock,

Johns son.

Experienced rock climber. Considerable trekking experience in Nepal. Scottish winter mountain climbing experience.

Steve Lang.

Rock climbing experience in England, this was Steve's first expedition.

Acknowledgements

The Mount Everest Foundation

For financial support.

GinoWatkins Memorial Fund

For financial support.

The Co-op

Manchester for their generous supply of Food.

United Biscuits

For supplying Peanuts and Biscuits.

Dartcom.

Dartmoor.

For assistance with Satellite imagery of the glacier including temperatures and contouring.

Spirit of Adventure .

Dartmoor

For loan of vehicle to deliver our equipment to our Agent for freighting.

Expedition Dates

21 st. July Depart Stansted Airport for Iceland
Overnight in Reykjavik Iceland

22 nd. Internal flight from Reykjavik to Isafjordur in North west Iceland

22 nd. Depart Isafjordur in Chartered Twin Otter Ski Plane for Greenland

22 nd. Arrive Greenland - landing on a Glacier at 69.08 N-- 28.15 W

Establish 1st. camp

Climb 23 rd. July to 14 th. August

Scheduled departure on the 15 th. August delayed because of poor weather conditions.

16 th. August Depart Greenland in Twin Otter Ski Plane for Iceland

16/17 th. Overnight in Iceland in Reykjavik

17 th. Depart Iceland for Great Britain. Arriving at Stansted.

Planning.

Our main objective was to visit an area that had not previously been visited by climbers, and while the east coast of Greenland has a vast area of unexplored mountains it is becoming ever more popular with climbers. From research in climbing journals, previous expedition reports and on the www, as far as I could establish an area west of the Rignys Bjerg mountains known as Knud Rasmussen Land had not previously been visited by anyone including climbers and as such met our criterion..

Initially I intended organising the whole expedition including all the logistics and chartering a plane to fly us to Greenland. The cost however proved out of the question and having been in contact with Paul Walker of Tangent Expeditions International for a number of years tentively exploring the cost of an expedition to Greenland I decided to use Paul's 'Independent Expedition' package. While this has distinct advantages providing that you are flexible over expedition dates allowing Tangent to make maximum usage of their chartered planes. Using Tangents full logistics package does unfortunately take away a significant part of organising and planning an expedition..

Again Tangents extensive collection of aerial photos proved useful and in discussion with Paul I selected a previously unvisited area at 69.08 N -- 28.15 W. for which there was no map and our only reference was an aerial photo. In practice this was a satisfactory choice, close to the edge of the Ice Cap, on a wet glacier mainly free from crevasses and surrounded by mountains within our climbing ability.

Logistics.

All flights, transport of freight, permits, and accommodation in Iceland were organised by Tangent. Including an expedition permit from the Danish Polar Centre, Firearms and Radio Permit, Rifle, ammunition and flares which is a mandatory requirement for expeditions within the National Park as a deterrent against Polar Bears. Also pulks, VHF airband Radio and Satellite phone for emergency and to contact Iceland to advise on weather conditions on the glacier on pick up day.

We provided our own tents, climbing equipment, stoves and food and had a total weight allowance of 60 kilo per person which included Tangents equipment. This restriction although understandable with respect to Twin Otter payloads where a flight is shared with another expedition, was a cause for concern and as events proved we could have reduced the amount of climbing equipment we took and in its place taken a mess tent.

An advantage of climbing in Greenland is that there is no cost for a expedition permit, no environmental levy, and a Liaison Officer and Porters are not required nor do they exist. Against this is the high cost of flying from Iceland to Greenland which accounts for a significant amount of the cost.

Insurance.

Insurance costs are also relatively high because of the Danish Polar Centres requirement that each person is insured to a maximum amount of DKK 500.000 for Search and Rescue and upto a maximum of DKK 250.000 evacuation. In this respect we took advantage of Tangent and placed our insurance through them

First Day

After a two hour flight in a Twin Otter from Isafjordur on the North West coast of Iceland for most of the time the sea was covered in cloud we crossed the coast and emerged out of the cloud to get our first glimpse of the mountains of Greenland. We flew on for another 20 mins with our gaze fixed on the vast panorama of peaks. Some covered entirely in snow and others bare rock black against the glare of the white snow. Vast glaciers running in all directions, some brilliantly white, some a jumble of crevasses and others dirty grey with lateral moraines, and on others serpentine melt water streams. Engrossed in this panorama we were surprised when the pilot announced 'Fasten your seat belts we're landing in 2 minutes'. As the plane banked we got our first view of the glacier, on which we were about to land stretching towards the south west and at its eastern end surrounded by mountains, some isolated and others joined by corniced ridges. For a while the pilot flew round selecting a suitable landing site and nodoubt checking for the possibility of crevasses then with engines roaring, snow blasting up past the windows with a gentle bump we were down, onto the glacier, which we called the Robertson Glacier, and that was to be our home for the next 26 days.

Our equipment had been loaded both in the passenger cabin and luggage compartment, which we quickly unloaded and watched as the pilots took photographs of the glacier and plane, they then shook hands with us and were quickly airborne. As the plane vanished from our view and the drone of its engines faded the realisation that we were alone and had to be self sufficient for the next 26 days was at last a reality. While planning menus in a warm room back home in England I had worked on 1.25 kilo of dry food per person per day, hope fully this would be enough and now was not the time to discover that I had made a miscalculation in the quantities.

As we had landed towards the centre of the glacier it was necessary to ensure that we were not going to be exposed to any violent winds that may sweep the glacier and assuming if they did they would come from the North we had to move our 300 kilo of stores and equipment N/W towards the foot of the nearest mountain and establish our first camp.

We loaded the three pulks and set off with John, Ian and Steve pulling, Mark and myself carrying ruck sacs. One thing that soon became apparent was the difficulty in estimating distance and what we at first had estimated to be only a kilometre away to our proposed camp site in reality proved to be 3 kilometres, with undulations in the surface unidentifiable from a distance meant that the team at times lost sight of each other. In the current benign conditions this was not a problem but under different weather conditions it would be something to be aware of.

Second pulk loads were necessary to collect all our equipment, and while a return journey was made two of us started to established a camp. In this respect we were fortunate to find water trickling from the rocks only a 10 minute walk from camp.

We had 3 no Tera Nova Quasars tents and took 300 mm long snow pegs, which melted out on warm days even when buried.

It was a surprise as we finished our first meal when Steve asked if we had any idea what time it was, to be told that it was just gone midnight. In our need to establish camp we had neither noticed how quickly the time had passed and although the sun had sunk behind the mountain nor how late it was in view of the fact that it was still daylight.

Suprisingly we soon adjusted to the presence of 24 hour daylight and evolved our day around the fact. Moving our meal times to enable us to climb what was in reality the night but when snow conditions were at their best.

Climbing Overview

First impressions of this area is that the formation of the mountains is very similar to that of the Torridon Hills of Scotland. The glacier that we were based in was possibly 30 k long and 7 k wide, surrounded by many fine looking peaks with several secluded cwms and a major glacier joining it from the ice cap. The main glacier was relatively level, with no significant gain in height at an altitude of 6400 ft., although when pulling a pulk you found all the small rises. It was safe to travel on with no signs of crevasses, but the blown surface proved difficult to move over at speed.

We concentrated our climbing time from around midnight to mid-morning. The start time getting later as the trip went on, being governed by the changing snow conditions relative to sunrise.

Climbing conditions were generally good with firm snow making for quick travel.

Occasionally we used snow shoes for approaches on the glacier but for later starts this was not necessary. Ice was good and solid and gave you confidence. Overall the mountains have a very stable feel to them with little movement. Cornices were solid and crevasses well bridged. This stability is probably due to the fact that our visit was towards the end of the season. The same could not be said for the rock. This was very broken, so much so that we avoided it if at all possible. Due to the dry climate all the rock was shattered, loose and very dangerous to travel on. Many fine ridges remain untouched due to the lack of stability on the rock.

The mountains were all of a similar altitude, approx. 8000 ft./8500 ft. However there is a lot of variety in the climbing in this area. Some ascents were on snow of a gentle angle, some much steeper. Some good gullies were climbed approximately Scottish grade 2. Many of our routes included fine ridges, ranging from easy to knife edge, some with considerable exposure. Some mixed climbing was done but only if the rock was frozen together with ice. It was possible to do some long traverses, including one which incorporated 5 mountain tops. A long trip was made towards the ice cap, here the scenery changes and vast open spaces are seen with fewer mountains. All major mountains, 15 in total, around the edge of the glacier were climbed. Many other tops and cols. were also visited, along with exploration into all the cwms which provided excellent views into the glacier.

With regard to equipment - most of the time we were roped together Alpine style. We all used two ice tools and quick release crampons, the quick release being useful as on some of the mixed ground it was necessary to remove crampons several times. Deadmen, ice screws and slings were the main items used. We had rock gear but the rock proved to be too unstable to use any of it.

by Ian Lancaster.

Climbing Diary

July

Unless otherwise stated we all climbed together.

23 rd Summit No 1. Climbed summit No 1 which we called Mt Dawson. via the N/E ridge finishing with an easy angle ridge to the summit. descended via the steep East face.

24 th, Summit No 2, Climbed from the S/W via easy an easy angle arrette to a shattered stone summit, we had intended continuing along the ridge towards No 3 but decided against this in view of the very broken nature of the rock along the ridge. Descended via the ascent route.

25 th, explored the glacier to our west crossing a gentled angled coll between No 1 and No 4 to descend onto the glacier, returning via the southern end of No 1. To our camp.

26 th, Rest Day.

27/8 th Moved camp to base of Summit No 2.

29th, climbed a steep South facing gully onto a stony coll between No 9 and No 3, Ian continued onto No 3 while the rest returned to camp.

30 th, John and myself climbed No 5 from the South via a broad snow slope returning via the same route. Ian, Mark and Steve climbed No 4 which they called Mt. Grace via the N/E ridge encountering a section of hard ice just below the summit, and returned the same way.

31 st, Summit No 6 A mixed climb starting up the Western face and terminating in an exposed arrette onto the summit. Descended via the same route.

August

1st, John, Ian Mark and Steve explored the glacier towards the base of No 16 looking for possible climbing opportunities and a further camp site, I explored the lower rocks in the cwn between No 6 and No 9 for signs of any plant life.

2nd, Crossed the coll between No 1 and No 4 and outwards No 7 taking in a subsidiary peak on the way, in all covering a return distance of 25 kilometres with variable snow conditions from soft granular to wind slab, wind chill down to minus 20 C. Returned via the coll between No 4 and No 5 crossing a Bergschrund on the Western side.

3rd. Rest Day.

4 th, No 9 climbed by John and Ian via a west facing Grade 1/11 gully from glacier level to the summit descending via the same route, while Mark, Steve and myself climbed No 5 from the south west and continued onto No 8. Descending via the same route.

5th, Moved camp to the base of No 16.

6 th, Rest Day.

7th, Ian, Mark and myself climbed mixed ground onto the N/W section of the ridge to the east of our camp before traversing S/W taking in an unnumbered peak and onto No 12, descending via a delightful arrette south of No 12. past a number of seracs. John and Steve explored the glacier to the south west.

8th, Traversed the southern end of the ridge from S/W to N/E taking in Nos 10 and 11, starting with a short steep section leading first onto broken ground and then a corniced ridge descending via a low section in the ridge to the same point as on the 7th.

9th, John, Ian, Mark and Steve attempted to complete a traverse of three tops East along the ridge of No 13 but after the first summit poor snow conditions prevented progress and they descended via the same route. I explored the ridge to the south of No 14.

10th, Poor weather conditions prevented any climbing.

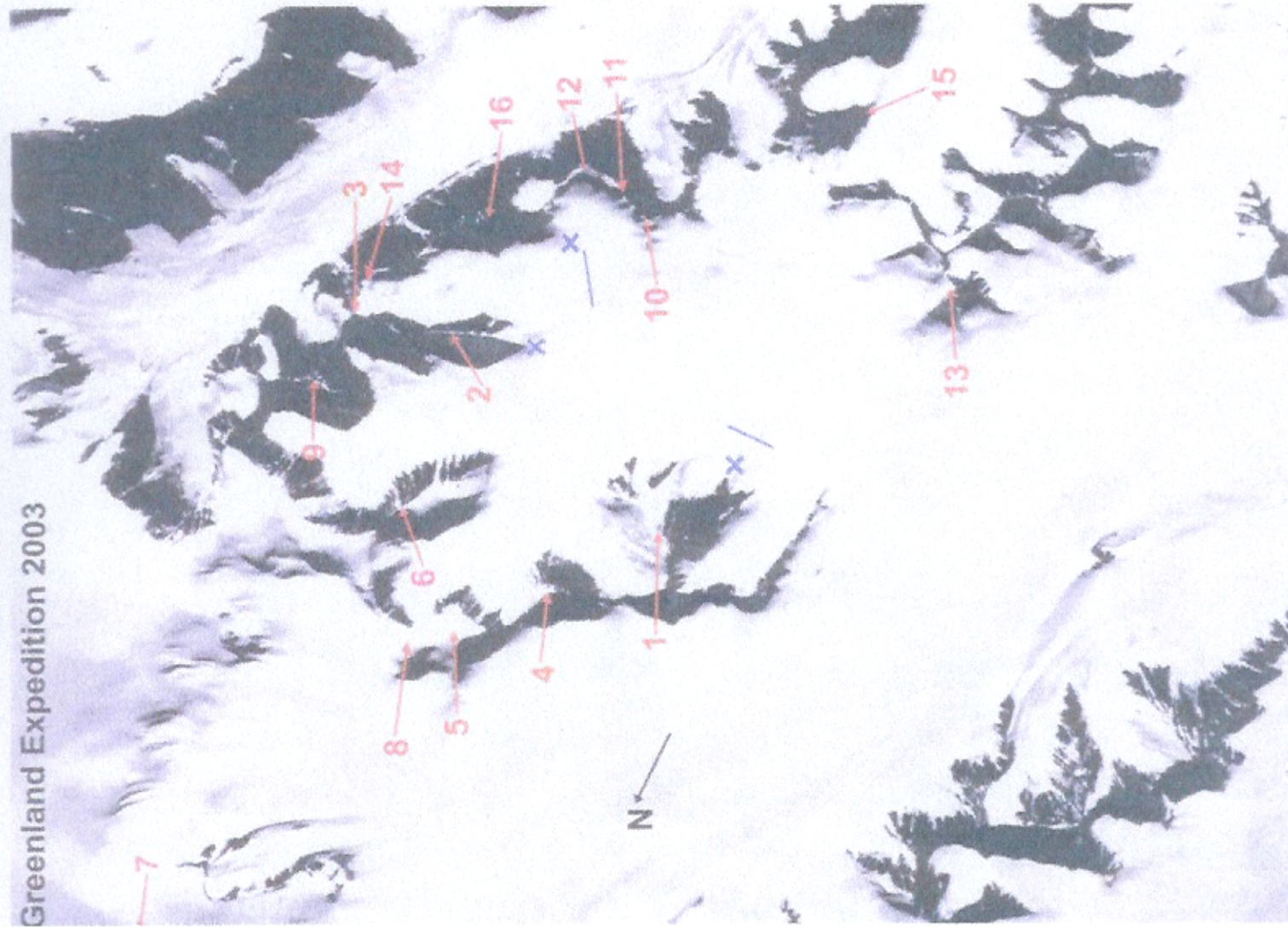
11th, Traversed North along the Western face of the ridge between 16 and 14 gaining height to take in a rocky sub summit with views toward the glacier to our east before continuing

11th, Traversed North along the Western face of the ridge between 16 and 14 gaining height to take in a rocky sub summit with views toward the glacier to our east before continuing N/W along a hogs back and a final steep steep broad gully and onto the appallingly shattered summit of No 3, which we called Mt Carmichael's Standard. Descending via a broad snow field to the West of our ascent route.

12th, John ,Mark and Steve explored a short section of the ridge to the north of No 16 gaining the ridge between nos 14 and 16 and then working south to investigate the possibility of climbing a prominent gendarme, although they reached the gendarme again the shattered nature of the rock meant that climb in was not feasible. Ian and myself explored the glacier between no 13 and 15, Ian traversed a short ridge east wards overlooking the adjacent glacier.

13th,John, Ian ,Mark and Steve completed a Southerly traverse of a ridge to the summit at No15, returning via the same route.

14th, Ian ,John and myself climbed the west face of No 16 encompassing several pitches of mixed ground, with occasional short pitches of Scottish 111. and a final short pitch of very broken rock out onto the snow covered summit of No 16, in my view undoubtedly the best climb of the whole trip. We descended partly via the same route skirting for several hundred feet a bergschrund before reaching the glacier.



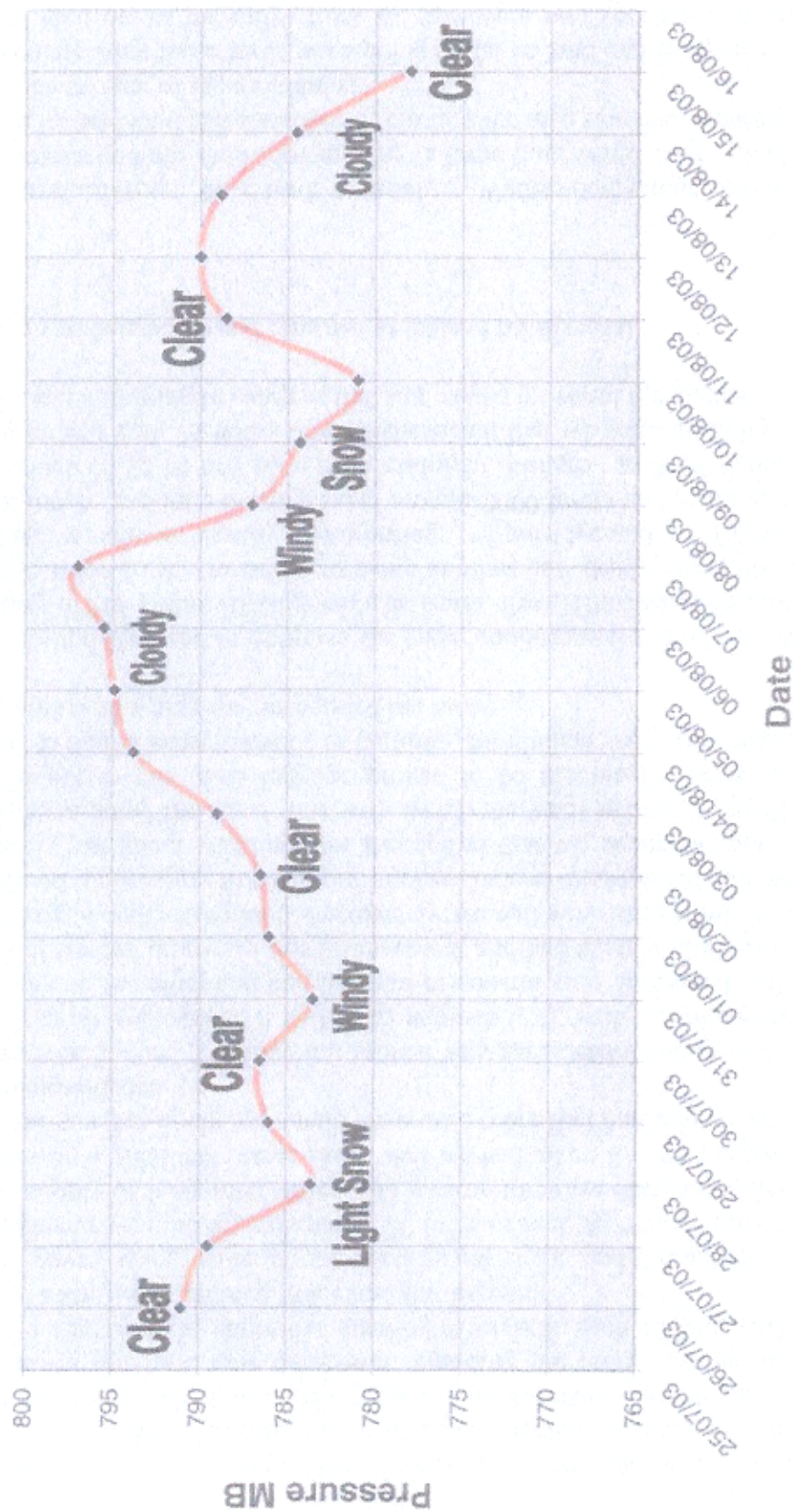
Key to Summits

1 -- N69°10.627 W028°17.761 - 8595ft
2 -- N69°10.392 W028°10.862 - 7794ft
3 -- N69°10.894 W028°08.626 - 8413ft
4 -- N69°11.637 W028°16.341 - 7967ft
5 -- N69°12.403 W028°15.503 - 8172ft
6 -- N69°11.869 W028°12.477 - 8172ft
7 -- N69°14.804 W028°17.345 - 7374ft
8 -- N69°12.641 W028°14.929 - 8152ft
9 -- N69°11.526 W028°08.915 - 8516ft
10 -- N69°08.650 W028°12.077 - 7116ft
11 -- N69°08.662 W028°11.834 - 7127ft
12 -- N69°08.629 W028°10.471 - 7373ft
13 -- N69°07.357 W028°18.875 - 7593ft
14 -- N69°10.510 W028°08.183 - 7969ft
15 -- N69°07.091 W028°14.007 - 6648ft
16 -- N69°09.570 W028°09.388 - 8009ft

x -- Camp sites

-- Landing sites

Greenland 2003



Catering

We were fortunate in obtaining a selection of Army Rations, both 'dry' and 'wet'. The Co-op and United Biscuits also generously supplied us with a considerable quantity of Breakfast and Mid-day food respectively, and it was only necessary to purchase a small quantity of 'choice' food to enhance our diet. One complaint regarding the army rations was the appalling 'Instant White Tea' and the enormous quantity of sugar in each 24 hour pack and significant quantities of each were returned to Iceland for disposal.

Cooking was on MSR stoves using white gas supplied by our agent and through out the 26 days we spent on the glacier we used approximately 20 litres of fuel. At both camps one and two there was a ready supply of fresh melt water and at camp three we obtained water most days by spreading snow on a black polythene sheet, that we had taken for this purpose and allowed it to melt in the sun. No doubt we would have used more fuel had it been necessary to melt all our water requirements.

Kitchen arrangements were rather primitive but proved very satisfactory and at each camp we dug a three foot deep pit, surrounded it with a snow block wall, with a cooking shelf on one side and seating area on the other and our standard of construction improved with each camp. Prior to going out we had discussed this arrangement and had taken a polythene sheet for the purpose of making a roof if required. Fortunately we had very little snow in the 26 days and never considered it necessary to cover our kitchen. Indeed the snow kitchen worked very well with the walls just about standing for the period that we occupied each camp. Indeed the biggest problem being the rapid rate with which the walls melted. A small hand saw bought and taken out in our hand luggage proved to be the most useful item of equipment, even more so than a snow shovel, in building the kitchen and for cutting the blocks for the snow walls with which we surrounded our tents.

Our routine revolved around the need to optimise the snow conditions for climbing. With a hot drink before setting off to climb. Taking with us snack food, Chocolate, Peanuts, Dry fruit, Biscuits, Patte and a hot drink. On return to camp another hot drink, sleep for a few hours and then breakfast, which was usually late morning, of porridge and tea. followed by a further rest, a snack lunch and then evening meal around 2000 hours and again rest until setting off to climb which could be any time from midnight through to 0500 hours. This worked very well and indeed with 24 hours of daylight meant that we were climbing in the coldest part of the day and returning to camp as the sun began to warm the glacier.

All our domestic refuse was bagged up and returned to Iceland for disposal.

Flora and Fauna

On one day we were surprised to see three birds resembling Waders do a circuit of our camp before flying off Eastwards and on the following day a large pure white bird which may have been an immature Iceland Gull did a number of circuits. We also saw two Bunting type birds flitting among rocks on one of the mountains.

It is interesting to speculate what these birds were doing so far in land and if resident in the area what they would feed on, as the only flora we saw were two very small plants of Saxifrage spp. growing between the rocks close to our first camp and at numerous locations small patches of three different coloured Lichen growing on the rocks. A surprise was one small isolated clump of Moss growing at 8000 ft.

Medical

We were fortunate through out our stay on the glacier that with the exception of an occasional mild upset stomach, we had no medical incidences or accidents. As none of us had a high degree of medical training at the planning stage we decided that we would keep our medical equipment too a minimum and in the event of an accident rely upon our knowledge to deal with the situation, improvising as necessary. Clearly sprains and strains or broken bones could either be dealt with or in the latter case might need evacuation. With internal injuries we felt that there was very little genuine assistance we could administer and evacuation would be necessary.

This approach minimised the amount of medical equipment that we took and ensured that we were all capable of using equipment we carried and of administering first aid .

In addition to our personal First Aid kits, we took the following items.

Drugs-- Prescriptive

Flamazine Cream ----	Burns
Co-codamol -----	Strong pain killer
Diclofenac -----	Very strong pain killer
Flucloxacillin -----	Skin infections / burns
Erythromycin -----	Ear / throat / chest infections
Metronidazole -----	Groin infections / Gut pains
Amoxycillin -----	Ear / throat / chest / urinary infections

Drugs --None Prescriptive

Co-codamol -----	Pain
Ibuprofen -----	Swelling / Joint pains
Loperamide -----	Diarrhoea
Senokot -----	Laxative
Soluble Aspirin -----	Pain

Tooth Care

Dental Repair kit

Oil of Clove

Cotton Buds

Miscellaneous

Antiseptic Sprays

Antiseptic Wipes

Large Menoline Pads

Small Menoline Pads

Triangular Bandages

Assorted Plasters

Latex Gloves

Thermometers

Face Mask

Air Ways

Parcel Tape

Foil Blanket

Tweezers

Scissors

Causality Report Form

Permanent Marker Pen

Sutchers

Neck Brace.

Equipment

3 no Quasar Tents with Snow pegs
8 no x 5 lt fuel containers and funnels
3 no MSR stoves, fuel bottles, spares and pans
6 no x 9 mm x 60 m ropes
2 no rock climbing racks, this was never used because of the poor quality of the rock
A selection of ice climbing gear, Dead Men, Ice screws and snow stakes were used.
Snow shovel
Hand Saw
GPS and Short Wave Radios
Spare bolts for Crampons and a File.
2 no medium Bothy Bags
Black Polythene sheet for the kitchen roof and for melting snow.
Group First Aid Kit
Para cord
Therma rest repair kit
Gaffa Tape

Personal Items

These varied slightly from person to person
40 and 70 litre rucksacks
Down Sleeping bag
Kari mat and Therma rest
Helmet, Harness and Belay plate
Fig 8. Screw gate karabiners
2 no Ice Axes
Snow Shoes
Telescopic Ski Poles.
Crampons
Asolo Boots, 6 pr socks
Gaiters
Fleece Salopetes
Silk Vest
Fleece Shirt
Fleece Waist coat
Aquafleece Jacket
4 pair gloves
Balaclava and Low Alpine Hat and neck gaiter.
Thermal Long johns and Vest, never used
Sympatex Salopettes and Over Jacket
Bivi Bag.
Knife ,fork,spoon,mug,bowl. Water bottle
Thermos flask.
Camera, leatherman, Walkman, diary, bottle of whiskey
Toilet bag and First aid kit.
Snow goggles
Compass

Finance

	Income
	£
Personal Contributions	14516.78
Insurance.....	1125.00
Grants	
Scott Polar Research Institute.....	400.00
Mount Everest Foundation.....	225.00

Expenditure.

	£	
Flights and Agents Fee, which included)	14600.00	
Accommodation in Iceland 3 nights *)		
Pulks 3 no)		
Rifle and Shells)		
Emergency Radio)		
Satellite phone)		
Flares and EPRIBs)		
Freight handling.)		
Obtaining Permits.)		
Insurance	1125.00	
Miscellaneous Food	103.33	
Packaging	20.33	
Medical	85.00	
T shirts	109.90	
Expenditure in Iceland, meal and taxi	51.72	
Delivering freight to agent	125.00	
Miscellaneous	13.50	
End of Expedition Report/Stationary	33.00	
Total.....	<u>£16266.78</u>	<u>£16266.78</u>

* In practice we had two nights in Iceland, one outward and one on return.

Bob Dawson

Useful Addresses.

Danish Polar Centre
Strandgade 100 H
DK-1401 Kobenhavn K
Denmark
E-mail dpc@dpc.dk

For Aerial Photographs
Kort & Matrikelstyrelsen
National Survey and Cadastre -Denmark
Rentemestervej 8
2400 Kobenhavn NV
E-mail kms@kms.dk

Greenlandair Charter
Box 1012 DK- 3900 Nuuk
Greenland
E-mail glcharter@greenlandair.gl

Greenland Tourism a/s
Postboks 1552
Hans Egedesvej 29
DK -3900 Nuuk
E-mail tourism@greennet.gl

Information about Iceland
Accommodation etc.
www.tourist.reykjavik.is

The Secretary
Gino Watkins Memorial Fund Committee
Scott Polar Research Institute
Lensfield Road
Cambridge
CB2 1 ER
E-mail enquiries@spri.cam.ac.uk

The Royal Geographical Society
Expedition Advisory Centre
1 Kensington Gore
London
SW7 2AR
www.rgs.org/eac
for past expedition reports

The Alpine Club
55 Charlotte Rd
London
EC2A 3QF

Tangent Expeditions International
3 Mill Beck
New Hutton
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The Secretary
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