

Expedition Report

**British Tasermiut Fjord**

**Expedition 1993**

to

**Southern Greenland**

Report prepared by Dave Wills



## Expedition Summary

Dave Wills and Richard Spillet made unsuccessful attempts of two unclimbed routes - The North East Ridge on Ketil and our main objective of the superb North Pillar of pt 2051 on Uiluit Qaqa - both routes were abandoned because Spillet was unhappy with serious nature of the climbing. After retreating from pt 2051, it is doubtful whether the weather would have allowed us to reach the summit.

This small area of Southern Greenland does however offer some very fine, though serious, Rock-climbing objectives in a wild, beautiful and unspoilt environment. While prior visitors have concentrated their efforts on those peaks immediately visible from the fjord, tremendous opportunities exist within a half days walk.

# Index

Introduction

Approach

Climbing

Acknowledgements

Appendices

Balance Sheet

Weather, Rock & Conditions

Contacts & useful information

Maps

## Introduction

The idea of going to Greenland came about due to a combination of its relative obscurity and the fact that a trip there can be managed within one's annual holiday entitlement.

Information from Dave Oswin, many hours in the Alpine Club library and correspondence with Dominique Vulliy-Lanctot of Vertical Magazine highlighted the great potential, while an hour looking at photo's taken by Doug Scott while on a walking trip provided us with two specific objectives. Our objectives, unlike those usually associated with Greenland, were relatively unknown granite walls and towers south of the main icecap and soaring almost straight out of the fjord, reaching heights around 6000 feet. We expected to use Yosemite style "big wall" techniques.

The costs involved are similar to those of a Himalayan trip and we could not have afforded to go without the assistance provided (see acknowledgements). This is however offset by climbing time being maximised due to the ease of approach and proximity of the objectives to Basecamps which are reached directly by boat.

### **The Team:**

Two of our original team pulled out due to other commitments leaving the team as:

Richard Spillet  
David Wills

## Approach

This was the most problematic element of the whole trip. Greenland is not the most common holiday destination and so knowledge was not readily available at the local travel agent, while direct contact with the travel companies requires great perseverance and constant hassling. We booked our flights through Arctic Experience who run adventure style holidays in Greenland, Norway, Iceland etc.

August 1st (pm) - Iceland Air to Keflavik in Iceland

August 2nd (pm) - Iceland Air to Nasarssuaq in Greenland (see map).

Due to heavy booking we were unable to get a connection to Nanortalik for several days. There is a ferry boat which travels there but was not due for 5 days. We spent two wet bug infested days in Nassarsuaq - a place to avoid at all costs.

August 5th (am) - Greenland Air to Nanortalik. (90 min flight in a 25 seater helicopter)

We arrived in Nanortalik mid morning and before visiting the supermarket to do our shopping, Rene Nielson of the Tourist Office advised us that the boat that we had arranged was not available because it had gone out whaling for the day. It transpired that the extra time was required because our freight (arranged through "Expedition Freight"), which should have been there two weeks ago, was still on the ship sitting in the harbour and it took us all day and some good friends of Rene for the freight to materialise.

August 6th (am) - We left at 9:30, in uninspiring weather, in a 12 ft open boat with an outboard motor for a two trip to our proposed basecamp in the Tasermiut Fjord (or Ketil's Fjord). Before leaving we made arrangements to be picked up on the evening of the 24th - this gave us a day to spare if a storm prevented travel in the Fjord.

We arrived at the camp beside the Fjord, overlooked by the 4500 ft west face of Ketil just as a two man Austrian team were leaving, having had no success.

... see climbing section

August 24 (6pm) - Boat to Nanortalik

August 25 - Arrange for return freighting of excess equipment

August 26 (am) - Helicopter to Nasarssuaq

August 26 (pm) - Iceland Air to Keflavik

August 27 (am) - Iceland Air to London

NOTE:

While in Greenland, we investigated other travel options (see appendix 4)

## Climbing

Having arrived at our camp (6th August), we spent the remainder of the morning settling in, unpacking and fending off swarms of mosquitoes and flies. In the afternoon Richard and I went for a reconnaissance up the valley using the recommended approach of travelling the border between scrub and swamp. 140 minutes of scrub bashing and weaving through marshes took us halfway up the valley (Uiluit Kua) with brief glimpses of our objectives. We returned by following the river edge and found what evolved into good fast route provided the river didn't flood.

After a day of rain, we walked to the head of the valley with loads to equip a small camp below our main objective. The trip took 4 hours and an excellent campsite was found amidst some old terminal moraine, with good views of both our objectives and their possible approaches.

9th. We left after lunch and walked half way back up the valley before heading uphill through thick scrub towards our objective, the unclimbed **North East Ridge of Ketil**. After clearing the scrub and steep grassland we worked our way through smooth slabs to reach a bivouac spot beside a small icefall at the foot of the ridge proper. After a pleasant night, we departed with the sunrise. The climbing involved very long runouts on smooth granite adorned with a thick layer of unconsolidated crystals. After 6 pitches, Spillet decided that the route was too serious and a tricky descent ensued.

12th. Left midmorning with another load for our camp up the valley and after lunch carried a load up the hill to the foot of the route - the **Nth Pillar of Pt 2051 (Uiluit Qaqa)** - Pt 2051 has been referred to in one publication as Nalumassortok.

13th. Carried the remainder of the hardware up the hill. We then climbed 5 pitches up a corner system beside 1000ft slabs leaving fixed ropes in place. After descending the ropes, we filled all our waterbottles and loaded the haulbag, ready to commence properly the following morning. We descended to the tent for the night.

14th. A very early start, but having completed breakfast, Spillet announced that he did not feel up to continuing with the climb. After a failed attempt to inspire Richard to continue and a few more hours rest, we eventually headed back up the hill. We jumared up to the highpoint and absailed down stripping the fixed ropes, before returning to the tent with very heavy sacks. We returned to our basecamp later the same day.

15th. Rain threatened all day, so pleasantly cool for resting.

16th. Morning greeted us with a light dusting of snow on Ketil's summit and there was occasional rain throughout the day as we made a return trip for the remainder of the equipment at the top camp.

17th. More snow on Ketil in the morning.

18th - 21st. With no more chance of a climb I opted to do a circuit walk and look for other objectives in the area. From the Uiluit Kua I climbed over a pass into the Tupaussat valley and the impressive face of pt 1831 which is visible from basecamp. From the fjord, a small valley leads west to another pass and into the Qinguadalen valley guarded by the impressive spire of pt 1880. From the bottom of the valley I traversed the north shore of Taserssuaq Lake before travelling back up the Tasermit Fjord to our basecamp.

At the same time Spillet travelled down the Fjord for a better look at some fine peaks on the South side of the Uiluit Qaqa and North and East of Ulamertorssuaq.

24th. After several days of rain, our boat arrived in the evening for the trip back to Nanortalik. This was made the more enjoyable by the sight of a few whales.

## Acknowledgements

We would like to thank the following people and organisations for their positive influence on our trip:

For provision of grants that made the expedition possible:

Mount Everest Foundation  
British Mountaineering Council  
Foundation for Sport and the Arts

For invaluable and selfless help in Greenland before and during the expedition:

Rene Nielson ,Nanortalik Tourist Service,

For useful information about climbing in Greenland:

Dave Oswin  
Dominique Vulliy-Lanctot (Vertical Magazine)  
Doug Scott

For all her efforts arranging and juggling our travel bookings:

Steiner of Arctic Experience



## Appendix 1

### Balance Sheet

#### Expenditure

Travel	- Airfares	1580		
(1)	- Boat	500		
			2080	
Insurance			278	
Equipment & gas			140	
Freight	- to Greenland	315		
(4)	- return to UK	207		
			522	
Food & Stores	- UK	55		
(2)	- Greenland	145		
			200	
Travel costs (food & accommodation etc.)	(3)			230
<b>Total::</b>			<b>3450</b>	

#### Income

Grants				
	- Mount Everest Foundation	500		
	- British Mountaineering Council	500		
	- Foundation for Sport & the Arts	500		
			1500	
Personal contributions			1950	
<b>Total::</b>			<b>3450</b>	

#### *Notes:*

- 1 The cost of chartering the boats is set by the tourist board and is nonnegotiable, however, we were originally quoted a higher price for a bigger boat.
- 2 All food is shipped in from Denmark and is very expensive. It is probably still cheaper than freighting it yourself.
- 3 We either rough camped or stayed in youth hostels (which cost 9:00 per person per night) and we had freighted out our gas and stoves so when camping relied on cafes for food. Breakfast in Nasarssuaq was outstanding value but otherwise even buying our own cold lunch foods proved expensive.
- 4 This is an estimate based on volume of the freight out.

## Appendix 2

### **Weather, Rock & Conditions**

In general the weather we experienced was reasonable. Day time temperatures were warmer than expected and uncomfortable if confined to the tent for lunch or rest when the insect life was too active. The week prior to arrival had been almost continuously wet though before that, the area had experienced a month of nearly continuously fine weather. After some wet weather in the first few days at Basecamp, the following week was excellent. This was followed a period of on-off days and eventually the last 5 days were wet and windy with snow on the summits.

By the end of the trip, daylight hours were 5am to 9:15 pm.

The much talked about man-eating mosquitoes and flies made their presence felt on occasions and our headnets proved invaluable. There were times of peace however, e.g. when the wind came up at basecamp. Usually when walking, the occasional swat was sufficient and when on the rock they left us to enjoy ourselves. Nanortalik was completely free of airborne pests.

Travel by foot proved easier with practise. A good eye usually found a way through swamps that at first looked impassable (perhaps earlier good weather helped). It was otherwise usually better to stay as close as possible to the river bank or Fjord.

The Area boasts large faces and buttresses of excellent granite. It also has similarly large quantities of exceptionally bad rock. Some large areas have bands of iron filled rock which has completely oxidised and is totally unstable. In other places, particularly the less steep slabs and ridges, the underlying slabs of very smooth & solid granite are decorated with a layer (generally about a yard deep) of unconsolidated rock crystals like a giant lichen. When not blessed with natural crack and corner systems the rock tends to be completely smooth and without protection.

## **Appendix 3**

### **Contacts & useful information**

**Rene Nielson** is the Tourist officer in Nanortalik and was exceptionally helpful from the beginning. He can help with accommodation, food, freight clearance, transport, knowledge, etc. and goes far beyond the call of duty to make your trip enjoyable and hopefully successful. Writing letters to Greenland is not recommended - Fax is a very efficient method of communication and recommended.

Rene Nielson ,Nanortalik Tourist Service,  
P.O.Box 160, 3922 Nanortalik, Greenland  
Fax: Greenland 33442  
Tel: Greenland 33441

#### **Freight:**

We used Expedition Freight of Llanberis and opted for sea freight so that gas could be included without any problems. It took two weeks longer than expected. You should allow 8 weeks minimum. All sea freight goes via Denmark and involves a change of ship.

#### **Travel:**

Airfares to Greenland are cheaper when staying no more than 30 days (special tourist rate). There are only two forms of transport in Greenland - helicopter and boat (scheduled ferry boat or charter boat). It is possible to get to all the larger towns by ferries which travel up and down the coast, however, the journey between Nasarssuaq and Nanortalik takes most of two days. We had many problems with the timing of our travel. This was possibly due to delaying our booking while we tried to replace our two bailing team members. Once in Greenland we found that more travel information was available than we had managed to find from the UK. Flying via Copenhagen, it is possible to arrive in Nasarssuaq on the same day as your departure and meet a connecting helicopter to Nanortalik. Depending on how quickly you can do your shopping (this could be done for you in advance) and collect any freight, it is theoretically possible to get to basecamp in ONE day - certainly from Copenhagen.

I have also been since informed that an earlier party (4 years ago) took the weekly ferry boat to Tasiussaq and then hired a boat up the Fjord for 50 pounds.

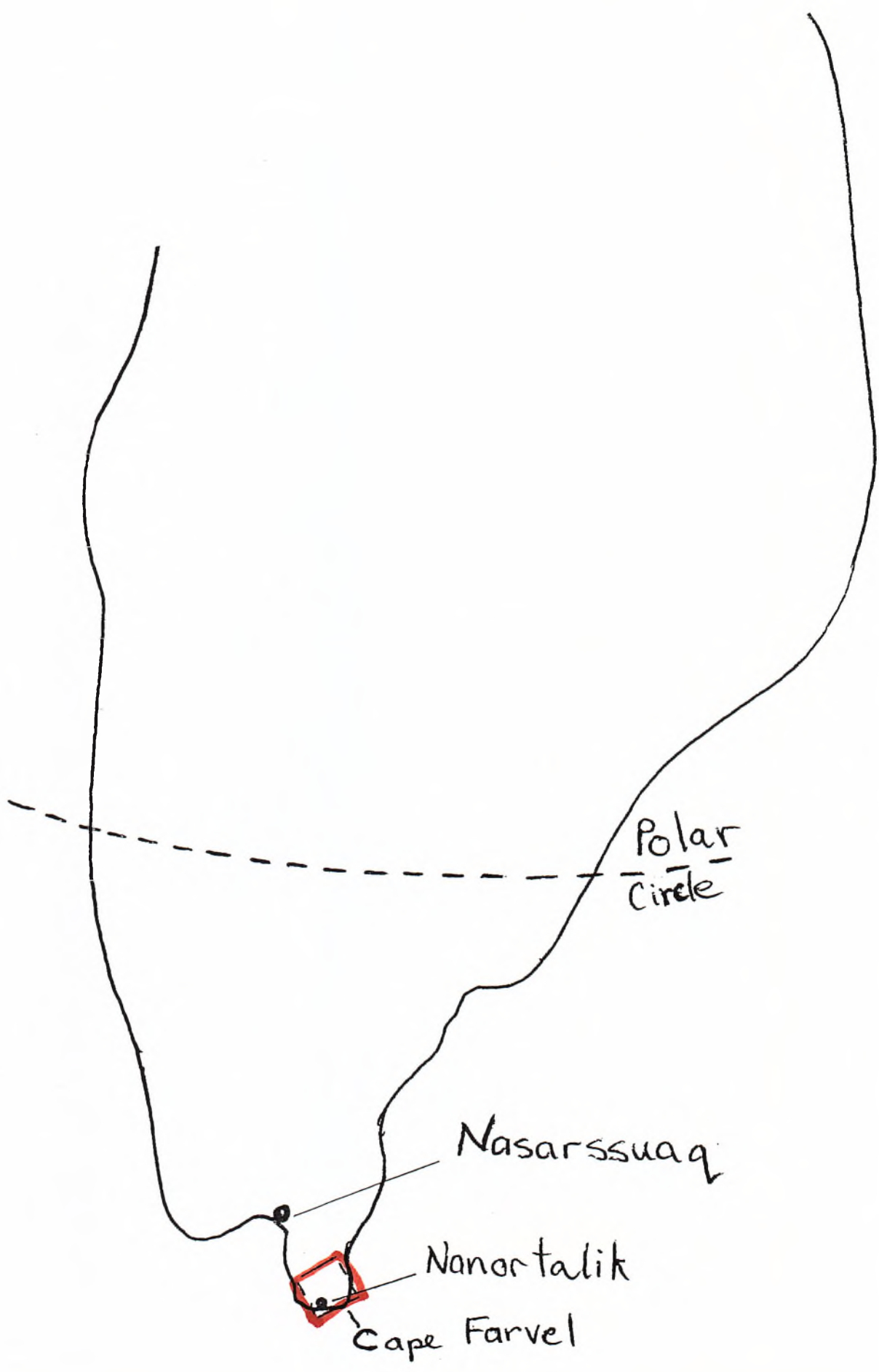
Steiner of Arctic Experience was most helpful with arranging all our air transport.

#### **Permissions:**

Although a formality, it is necessary to get permission from the Danish Polar Centre.

#### **People:**

Dave Oswin tel, 0228 75518  
Dominique Vulliy-Lanctot (Vertical Magazine)  
Doug Scott



Polar  
Circle

Nasarssuaq

Nanortalik

Cape Farvel



--- SPILLET EXPLORATION

--- WILLS EXPLORATION

1: KETIL N.E. SPUR

2: NTH PILLAR

SCALE: 1:250 000



SØNDRE SERMIK  
(ALPTA FJORD)

SERMIK  
(KONGS FJORD)

TASEMIK  
(TASES FJORD)

**NANORTALIK**  
LIVIAQ

Iliaq Kitsigsut  
(vongardit)

Kitsigsut tunuaq

Nanortalik  
Højarsuaq  
Takissuaq  
Naujat ikersuaq