

# BAFFIN ISLAND 2025

4<sup>th</sup> April – 5<sup>th</sup> May 2025

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Our thanks go to all of them.



## 1.0 INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Summary

On the 4<sup>th</sup> April the four-person team travelled to Pangnirtung in Southern Baffin Island, Canada. After an initial false start when strong winds prevented the team accessing their planned snowmobile drop-off in the Kingnait Fjord, they changed plans and were dropped near Summit Lake in the Weasel River Valley. Three very difficult days were spent portaging their pulks, food and equipment up onto the Nerutusoq glacier. They then skied to a camp South West of Mount Bilbo from where they made two first ascents, Uppijjuaq (1823m, 66°31'50.34"N 65°11'55.05"W) and Minas Tirith (1950m, 66°31'29.76"N 65°4'52.95"W). They then skied onto the Fork Beard Glacier making a further two first ascents, Aqviq (1860m, 66°28'40.11"N 65°7'50.76"W) & Inutuaq (1637m, 66°27'56.73"N 65°13'3.67"W), as well as a failed attempt on a third peak. The team then hoped to find a pass connecting them to the Gateway Glaciers but after two days of searching no feasible route could be found. After the initial disappointment the team went onto make three further first ascents, Ukaliq (1532m, 66°26'14.84"N 65°12'13.77"W), Uvingajuq (1615m, 66°26'8.93"N 65°9'34.88"W) & Atangijjuq (1600m, 66°26'54.04"N 65°13'22.67"W). They then skied out for four days via the Fork Beard Glacier, the frozen Weasel River Valley and the sea ice in the Pangnirtung Fjord. They returned to the UK on the 5<sup>th</sup> April 2025. The weather was surprisingly stable with many beautiful blue-sky days and only two days tent bound due to wind and snow. Temperatures at the start of the trip reached -30°C but quickly warmed to around -10°C.

### 1.2 Team members



▲ The team at the Arctic Circle marker in the Weasel River Valley. Left to right – James Hoyes, Tom Harding, Leanne Dyke & Ben James

### **Tom Harding ‘Expedition Leader’, 39, British**

He has climbed all over the UK and Europe including; Lofoten (up to N5), Dolomites (up to VII), Senja (up to WI4+), Rjukan (up to WI4), Cogne (up to WI4+) and spent 15 weeks in Scotland over a number of years. In 2017 he made three first ascents Kyrgyzstan including the expedition's 5044m main objective peak (AAJ 2018, ‘Eastern Borkoldoy, First ascents from Kainer lake’). In 2018 he was part of a 4-person team (with Leanne and Ben), who carried out a self-organised and unsupported 250km Nordic ski traverse of Svalbard climbing its highest peak Newtontoppen (1717m). In 2019 he led the ‘Renland, Greenland 2019’ expedition, making ascents of five previously unclimbed peaks and a number of long rock routes (AAJ 2020, ‘Renland, five first ascents.’). In 2023 he was part of an expedition attempting an unclimbed peak, Gunsadhar (5740m), in N.E. Nepal. (*BMC, Arctic Club, Austrian Alpine Club*)

### **Leanne Dyke, 40, Irish/British**

She has been on trips all around the UK and Europe including trips to the Swiss and French Alps (AD+), Senja (up to WI4+), Rjukan (WI4+) and Cogne (WI4). In 2017 she became the first female to traverse Nepal from North to South unsupported via kayak and in the same year her and her partner became the first British team to complete an unsupported crossing of Iceland via packraft with a source to sea descent of its longest river. In 2018 she helped organise a self-supported 250km Nordic ski crossing of Svalbard via its highest peak alongside Tom and Ben. In 2023 she was part of the same expedition as Tom in N.E. Nepal attempting the unclimbed peak of Gunsadhar (5740m). (*Austrian Alpine Club, BMC*)

### **Ben James, 38, British**

Ben’s passion for endurance sports has seen him take on many expeditions and challenges. He regular competes in Ultra Marathons and Sky Races across the UK. In 2017 Ben led an unsupported walking team across Iceland. In the same year he summited Hvannadalshnukur, Iceland’s highest peak. In 2018 Ben attempted a continuous round of the Atlas Mountains 4000 metres peaks. The same year he took part in an unsupported Expedition to Svalbard (with Tom & Leanne), skiing 250km and climbing its highest peak, Newtontoppen. Over the 2019/2020 winter and as part of a two-man team, he completed an unsupported mid-winter Crossing of Iceland. Pulling pulks through appalling weather conditions this is believed to be the first winter crossing of its kind. (*BMC*)

### **James Hoyes, 44, British**

James has climbed and skied widely in the UK and Alps since 1999. He has climbed 43 of the 4000m peaks in the Alps and completed over 60 Alpine routes at grade PD or above, including several big mixed Difficiles such as the Grandes Jorasses Traverse, Frendo Spur and Arête du Diable, as well as Alpine rock routes up to TD standard. He has also ski toured extensively in the Alps, completing around 10 multi-day hut-to-hut ski tours. In Scotland James leads up to grade V and has climbed over 60 routes at grade III and above. James has also climbed around 60 Munros and on rock he leads up to E1. James has only recently got into expeditions and he accompanied Tom and Leanne on the Gunsadhar (5740m) expedition to N.E. Nepal in 2023. (*Alpine Club, Austrian Alpine Club, Climber’s Club, BMC, Mynydd Climbing Club*)



2.0 EXPEDITION MAP

- ▲ Peaks climbed
- Base camps
- Overnight camps
- Ski route
- Climbing routes

Background mapping © Contop





## 3.0 EXPEDITION REPORT

### 3.1 Write-up

After two years of planning and lots of training it was great to finally board our flight on the 4<sup>th</sup> April 2025. We flew from London to Paris, then Paris to Ottawa. The following day we took some of the most spectacular flights any of us have been on, initially from Ottawa to Iqaluit, the capital of the Nunavut region, then from Iqaluit to Pangnirtung. This flight makes a brief stop at Qikiqtarjuaq, another small settlement on Baffin Island, before heading to Pangnirtung. On this day, with the perfectly clear conditions the pilot decided to give us a real treat by flying the length of the Weasel River Valley below the height of the peaks giving us a close-up view of all the famous peaks to be found there. An incredible introduction to what lay ahead.

On the 7<sup>th</sup> April we had a frantic morning attending our mandatory Parks Canada orientation session, picking up some baggage that hadn't made our flight the previous day and packing all the kit onto the three snowmobiles. Our plan was to head from Pangnirtung over to the Kingnait Fjord then follow this for around 70km before getting dropped off in a remote valley. This 'valley of the lakes' as a previous team had named it, had only seen a handful of previous climbing expeditions in the 70's and 90's but still has huge climbing potential, including some of the most impressive big walls in the area. Peter Kilabuk, our local agent, had warned us that the Kingnait was known for extreme winds but as we rode in the sleds on a beautiful windless and sunny day, we were feeling quite smug. This changed though as we rounded a corner and were immediately hit by incredibly strong winds. A sudden gust caught us, pushing the snowmobiles sideways, ripping a windscreen off one and sending a load of our outfitter's equipment hurtling across the ice - a hasty retreat was made back to Pangnirtung!

Once back the weather deteriorated and we had a difficult decision, make another expensive and risky attempt at the Kingnait Fjord drop-off or change plans and make a cheaper and more certain trip up the Weasel River valley and into the Auyuittuq National Park. With the lost days and with each attempt costing almost £2,000 we made the decision to change drop-off. Two days later in perfect blue-sky conditions we started the spectacular journey into the park, travelling past iconic mountains and some of the largest cliffs in the world. After some difficulties getting the snowmobiles through the rocky frozen rapids we were dropped just below Summit Lake - we now wouldn't see another person for 20 days.



- ◀ *The little town of Pangnirtung (Pang to the locals) is the gateway to the Auyuittuq National Park*
- ▶ *Travelling along the frozen Weasel River Valley, Mount Thor with its impressive West Face, the tallest vertical drop in the world behind*

The next day we had hoped to be able to ski directly up onto the Nerutusoq glacier but a lack of snow and rocky terrain meant we spent the following days torturously portaging our pulks and gear. With around 70kg of equipment and food each this meant three trips were needed up and down and we covered just 4km in two exhausting days. However, we had an interesting surprise once on the glacier – fresh polar bear prints only a day or two old. We had either missed it by a day or it had walked straight past us up the other side of the valley. When we showed our photos to the locals afterwards, we were told 'that was a big one'. Although a little concerning it was a rare treat and a highlight of the trip.



- ◀ The drop-off point and first camp. Looking down the Weasel River Valley towards Mount Thor
- ▶ Portaging pulks and equipment up on to the lower Nerutusoq Glacier, the team covered just 4km in two days

The advantage of coming to Baffin in spring is by using skis and pulks we could visit a number of different areas all in one expedition. We planned to ski for a day, make a basecamp for a few days, then climb peaks in the area before moving on again. Our first base camp was to the South-West of Mount Bilbo on the Nerutusoq Glacier. On the 14<sup>th</sup> April we made the first ascent of a Uppijjuaq (1823m, 66°31'50.34"N 65°11'55.05"W) via an easy snow slope and ridge. As a note, most of the peaks we made first ascents of have been given Inuit names. This came after speaking to Peter Kilabuk who talked about the Inuit tradition of naming peaks after what they look like or something found close to them. For example, Uppijjuaq translates to Snowy owl as we had been lucky to see one near our camp the day before. On the 15<sup>th</sup> April over a very long day, we made the first ascent of Minas Tirith (1950m, 66°31'29.76"N 65°4'52.95"W), a beautiful granite spire at the end of a 3km long ridge.



- ◀ Very recent Polar Bear tracks on the Nerutusoq Glacier. The bear was crossing from the Weasel River Valley over to the Kingnait Fjord area. We had spent the previous two days travelling the same route
- ▶ Base camp 1 on the Nerutusoq Glacier with some of the stunning unclimbed peaks to the South



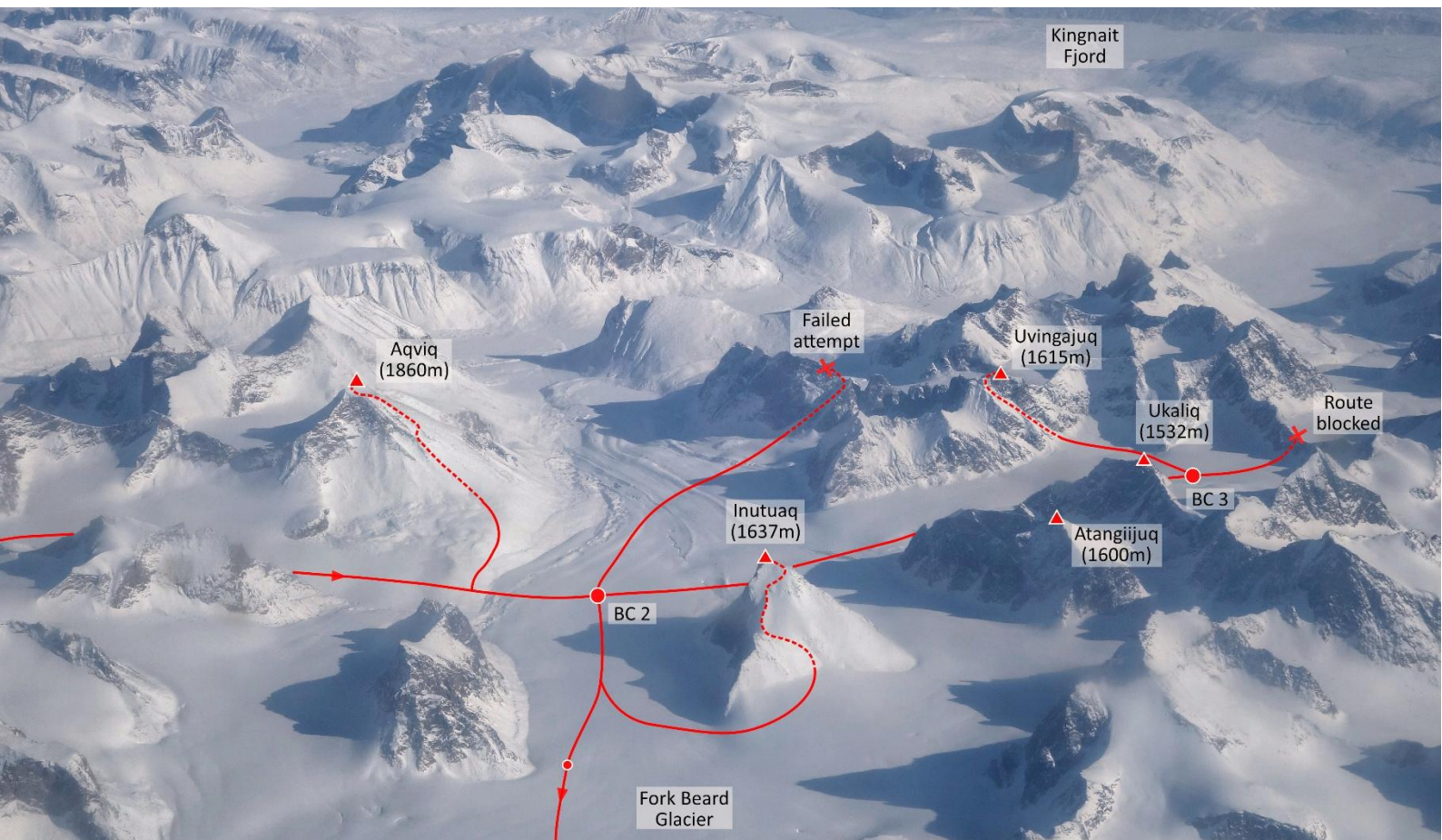
With many unclimbed peaks still left in this area we could have stayed a week but with so much distance still to cover we left basecamp 1 on the 16<sup>th</sup> April and skied over to the Fork Beard Glacier. Our second camp was on its eastern edge, near the previously climbed Willen Peak- we would spend the next five nights here. The next day we had another very long day on the first ascent of Aqviq (1860m, 66°28'40.11"N 65°7'50.76"W) where deep snow made progress very slow. Up to this point the weather had been almost perfect with clear skies & light wind and, although the temperatures at night were getting down to -30°C, the days were much milder. On the 18<sup>th</sup> April though we had the first of only two tent bound days, but with seven days of skiing and climbing behind us no one was complaining about a little bit of R&R. On the 19<sup>th</sup> April we made the first ascent of Inutuaq (1637m, 66°27'56.73"N 65°13'3.67"W) a beautiful isolated peak surrounded entirely by the Fork Bear Glacier. On the 20<sup>th</sup> April Ben, James & Tom made a failed attempt on another great looking peak; after ascending a steep snow ramp it was hoped a few climbing pitches would take them on a long moderate ridge. Ben waited at the top of the ramp but after five tricky pitches it was getting late and Tom & James retreated leaving most of our ab-tat in the process.



▲ *James & Tom on their failed attempt at a beautiful peak on the Fork Beard Glacier. Much of the rock in the valley is this same immaculate orange granite*

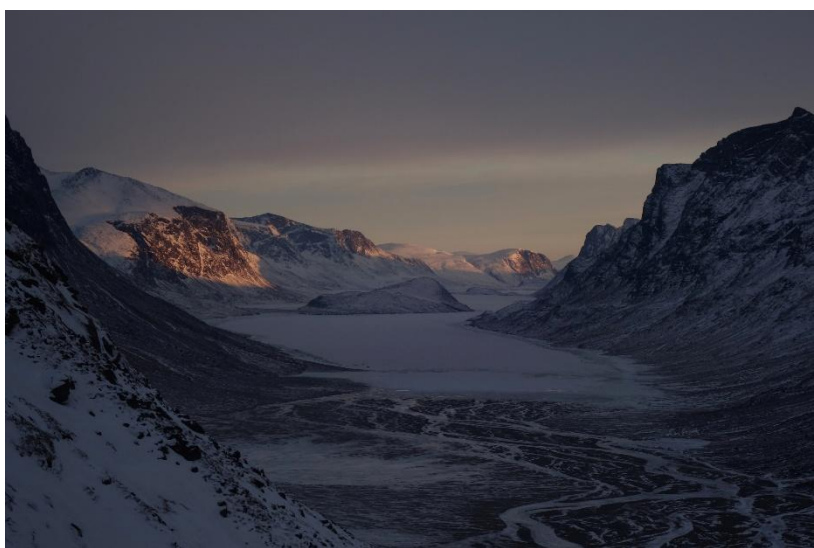
On the 21<sup>st</sup> April the team left base camp 2 skiing towards the Gateway Glaciers. Satellite imagery had suggested a number of passes likely existed between the Fork Beard and Gateway glaciers which we hoped to use to cross between them. We made our way up a previously unexplored valley and started searching for a safe route; Ben and James skiing and climbing snow slopes throughout the valley looking for a suitable col, and Tom and Leanne climbing a promising steep ice gully. After two days we realised it wasn't going to be possible, easy snow slopes on our side led to cliffs on the other side and although we could have made some long abseils ourselves, with the pulks this was not feasible. This was very disappointing, we were now blocked from a significant part of our route, including the two main objectives we had been planning to climb for several years, as well as knowing now that we would now have to ski back onto the Fork Beard Glacier. However, this initial disappointment passed as we reminded ourselves how fortunate we were to be there and decided to make the most of the untouched valley we were in.





▲ Aerial image taken on the flight into Pangnirtung. The team's route around the Fork Beard Glacier with five of the seven first ascent marked

On the 23<sup>rd</sup> April we had a potentially very close call on the first ascent of Ukaliq (1532m, 66°26'14.84"N 65°12'13.77"W). While ascending we had found a good large wedged block for a belay and planned to use this for an abseil on the descent. Tom setup the abseil but being not 100% happy with the block added a back-up cam. He gave it a bounce test and headed down without issues. Leanne was next but while getting ready to abseil the block unexpectedly moved leaving only the back-up in place! Had this happened for the last person down, with the last person removing the back-up, this could have had potentially serious consequences. Abseils for the rest of the trip were far more nerve wracking after this. The next day we made the first ascent of Uvingajuq (1615m, 66°26'8.93"N 65°9'34.88"W) via a huge ramp and exposed ridge. Having made good time, we basked in the sun at the bottom of the mountain for a few hours, fatigue now catching up with all of us.



- ▶ The team beginning the four-day ski back to Pangnirtung.
- ▶ The lower Weasel River Valley looking towards the sea ice in the Pangnirtung Fjord



On the 25<sup>th</sup> April we started our journey back to Pangnirtung, stopping briefly to make the first ascent of Atangijjuq (1600m, 66°26'54.04"N 65°13'22.67"W) via easy snow slopes. The same day we skied back to the main Fork Beard Glacier and made camp on the edge of the park boundary. Although we had a few peaks in mind for our last climbing day, we woke to snow and wind but having climbed or skied every day for the previous week we felt we had earned a rest day anyway and we were in good spirits. On the 27<sup>th</sup> we started down into the Weasel River, portaging our now much lighter load down a steep moraine slope. By now the valley had been stripped clean of snow so we ice-skied along the frozen river for a day and made camp on a windy and cold gravel bank. From there it took us two long days to ski back along the Pangnirtung Fjord sea ice. On the ice, we saw the first other people since being dropped off at the start of our trip, bumping into Peter Kilabuk who was taking a large group on a day trip into the park.

On the 30<sup>th</sup> April we finally skied back into Pangnirtung. In total we made seven first ascents, skied around 150km and had a generally very successful trip in a beautiful part of the world. We all left feeling incredibly lucky to have this opportunity and with so much climbing potential left look forward to reading about future expeditions to the area.

### 3.2 Expedition timeline

|                        |  |
|------------------------|--|
| 3 <sup>rd</sup> April  | Team meets at hotel near Heathrow Airport. Packing and weighing.   |
| 4 <sup>th</sup> April  | Flight London (LHR) to Paris (CDG). Flight From Paris (CDG) to Ottawa (YOW).   |
| 5 <sup>th</sup> April  | Day in Ottawa  |
| 6 <sup>th</sup> April  | Flight from Ottawa (YOW) to Iqaluit (YFB). Flight from Iqaluit (YFB) to Pangnirtung (YXP) with a stop in Qikiqtarjuaq (YVM).   |
| 7 <sup>th</sup> April  | Parks Canada orientation meeting. Unsuccessful snowmobile journey to our planned drop off point near the Kingnait Fjord – High winds meant we returned to Pangnirtung. |
| 8 <sup>th</sup> April  | Waiting for weather in Pangnirtung.  |
| 9 <sup>th</sup> April  | Waiting for weather in Pangnirtung   |
| 10 <sup>th</sup> April | Snowmobile drop of by Summit Lake in The Weasel River Valley.  |
| 11 <sup>th</sup> April | Sufferfest day 1 – Portaging equipment up the Nerutusoq Glacier. 5.6km in 8 hours.   |
| 12 <sup>th</sup> April | Sufferfest day 2 - Portaging equipment up the Nerutusoq Glacier. 7.1km in 10 hours   |
| 13 <sup>th</sup> April | Ski along the Nerutusoq Glacier past Mount Bilbo. First base camp.   |
| 14 <sup>th</sup> April | First ascent of <b>Uppijjuaq</b> (1823m).  |
| 15 <sup>th</sup> April | First ascent of <b>Minas Tirith</b> (1950m).   |
| 16 <sup>th</sup> April | Ski from Nerutusoq Glacier to the Fork Beard Glacier. Second base camp.  |
| 17 <sup>th</sup> April | First ascent of <b>Aqviq</b> (1860m).  |
| 18 <sup>th</sup> April | Rest day. Collected snow sample for GAP microplastics research.  |
| 19 <sup>th</sup> April | First ascent of <b>Inutuaq</b> (1637m).  |
| 20 <sup>th</sup> April | Failed attempt on an unnamed peak.   |
| 21 <sup>st</sup> April | Ski from Fork Beard Glacier to a small unnamed glacier. Trying to find a route into the next valley. Third base camp.  |
| 22 <sup>nd</sup> April | Trying to find a route into the next valley.   |
| 23 <sup>rd</sup> April | First ascent of <b>Ukaliq</b> (1532m).   |
| 24 <sup>th</sup> April | First ascent of <b>Uvingajjuq</b> (1615m). Collected snow sample for GAP microplastics research.   |
| 25 <sup>th</sup> April | First ascent of <b>Atangijjuq</b> (1600m). Ski from unnamed glacier to the Fork Beard Glacier.   |
| 26 <sup>th</sup> April | Bad weather rest day.  |
| 27 <sup>th</sup> April | Ski towards the Weasel River Valley. 12.4km.   |
| 28 <sup>th</sup> April | Portaging equipment down moraine to the Weasel River Valley. Beach camp. 10.2km  |
| 29 <sup>th</sup> April | Ski out along the frozen Weasel River and Pangnirtung Fjord. Sea ice camp. 18km  |
| 30 <sup>th</sup> April | Ski back into Pangnirtung. 17.6km  |
| 1 <sup>st</sup> May    | Parks Canada deregistration.   |
| 2 <sup>nd</sup> May    | Flight Pangnirtung (YXP) to Iqaluit (YFB). Flight from Iqaluit (YFB) to Ottawa (YOW).  |
| 3 <sup>rd</sup> May    | Day in Ottawa  |
| 4 <sup>th</sup> May    | Flight Ottawa (YOW) to Paris (CDG). Flight from Paris (CDG) to London (LHR).   |
| 5 <sup>th</sup> May    | Arrive in London (LHR).  |



### 3.3 Peaks and routes climbed

| Peak                 | English Translation  | Route                                  | First ascent Date           |
|----------------------|----------------------|--|-----------------------------|
| Uppijuaq (1823m)     | Snowy Owl            | E. slopes & S. Ridge, F 370m           | 14 <sup>th</sup> April 2025 |
| Minas Tirith (1950m) |                      | W. Ridge, PD- 840m                     | 15 <sup>th</sup> April 2025 |
| Aqviq (1860)         | Humpback Whale       | SW. Rib, PD+ (Scottish II/III) 970m    | 17 <sup>th</sup> April 2025 |
| Inutuaq (1637m)      | Alone                | W. Ridge, PD- 530m                     | 19 <sup>th</sup> April 2025 |
| Ukaliq (1532m)       | Arctic Hare          | S. Gully, PD 600m                      | 23 <sup>rd</sup> April 2025 |
| Uvingajuk (1615m)    | Diagonal             | Ramp & N. Ridge, PD (Scottish II) 820m | 24 <sup>th</sup> April 2025 |
| Atangijuk (1600m)    | Including everything | S. Slopes, F 460m                      | 25 <sup>th</sup> April 2025 |

#### Uppijuaq (1823m)

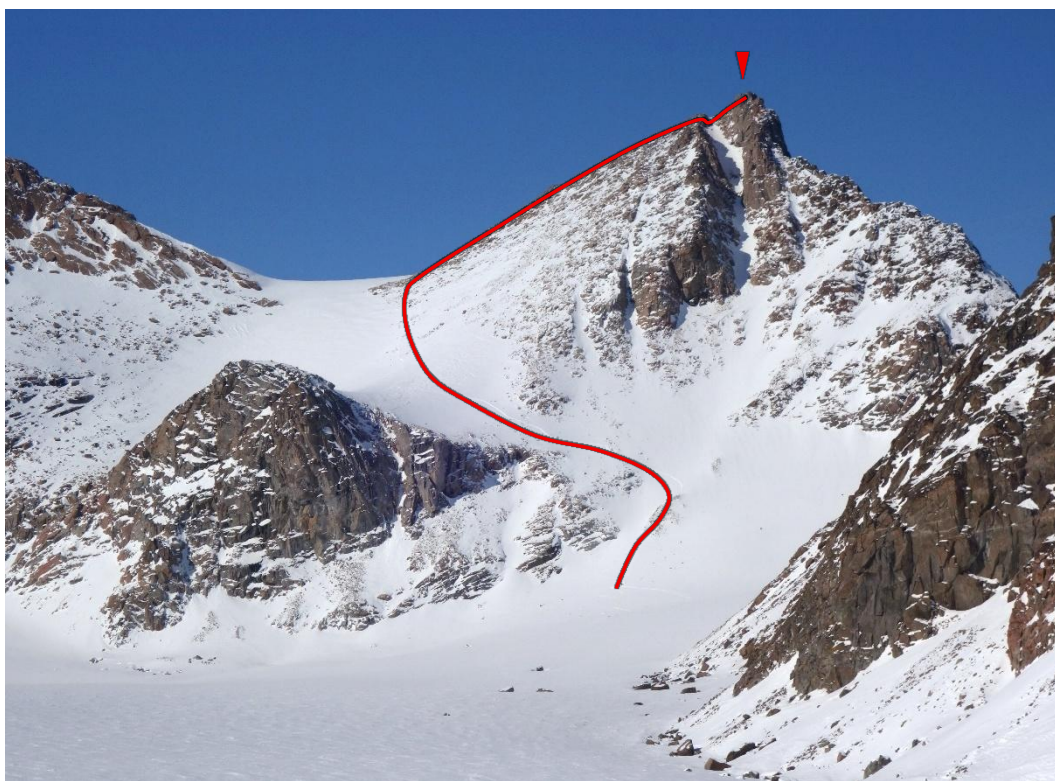
66°31'50.34"N, 65°11'55.05"W

English translation: Snowy Owl

First ascent on 14<sup>th</sup> April 2025 by the whole team.

Route: E. slopes & S. Ridge, F 370m

The team climbed the easy angled snow slopes on the East side of the peak. This led to the long rocky South ridge with a final exposed notch before the summit. Decent via the same route. The peak is named following the Snowy Owl seen whilst skiing up the valley towards the peak.



- ◀ Ben crossing the notch between the summit and the South ridge.
- ▶ The West face of Uppijuaq (1823m) with the team's route.



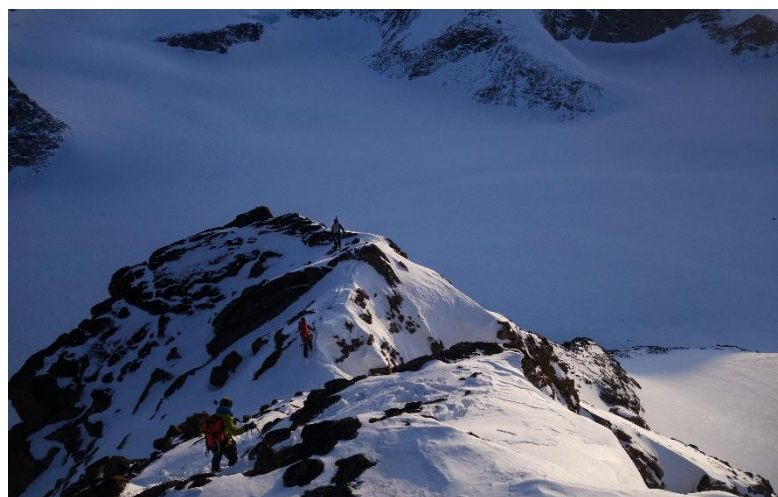
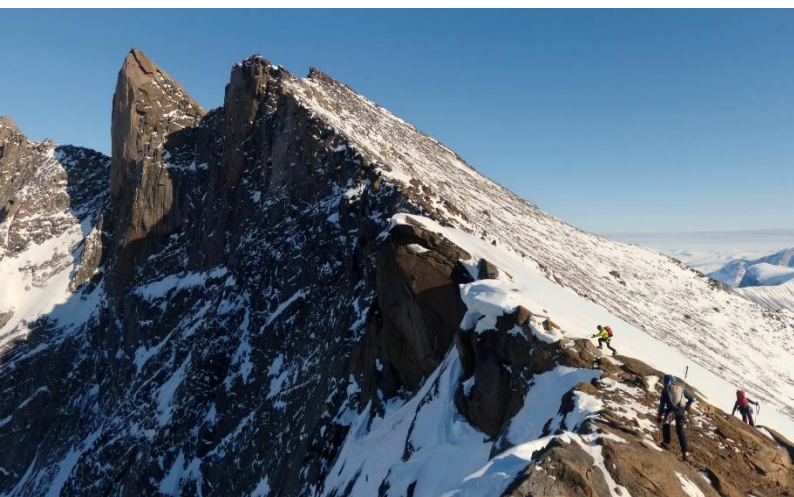
## Minas Tirith (1950m)

66°31'29.76"N, 65° 4'52.95"W

First ascent on 15<sup>th</sup> April 2025 by the whole team.

Route: W. Ridge, PD- 840m, 3km ridge traverse

The team initially planned to climb to a peak on the preceding ridge but it turned out to be a false summit. With plenty of daylight left they changed objective to the impressive granite spire that became Minas Tirith. The route follows the generally easy rocky ridge via a couple of tricky steps. The final ascent to the summit is via slabby cracks up excellent orange granite. The team reversed the route on decent. All the peaks in this small range have Lord of the Rings related names (Mount Bilbo, Isengard etc.) and the Minas Tirith of the book is a 'white' city with a huge fin of rock above it.



- ▲ Minas Tirith with the team's route
- ▲ The team scrambling along the 3km ridge
- ▶ Descending the last section of ridge at the end of a very long day



## Aqviq (1860m)

66°28'40.11"N, 65° 7'50.76"W

English translation: Humpback Whale

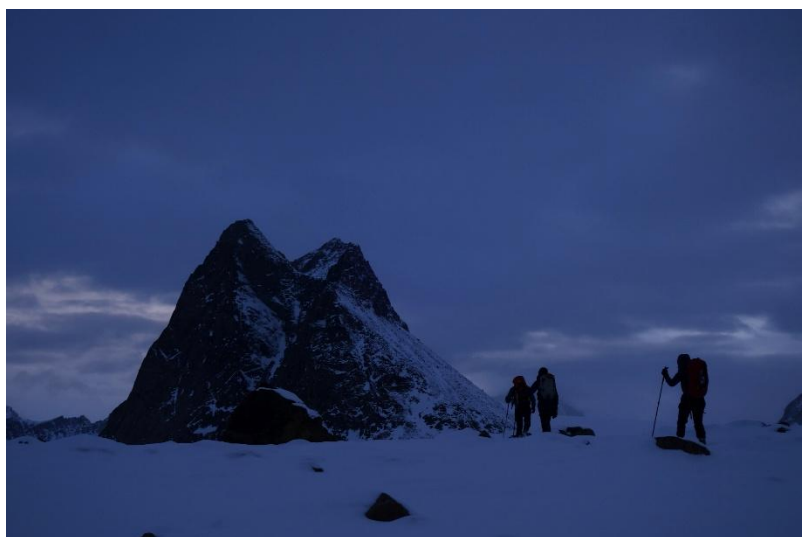
First ascent on 17<sup>th</sup> April 2025 by the whole team.

Route: SW. Rib, PD+ (Scottish II/III) 970m

The team first climbed easy snow slopes to a rib in the centre of the West face. They then climbed three pitches up superb quality orange granite, but slow progress post-holing at the start of day and tricky climbing meant the team had to escape to easier ground to the right before the rib ended. The final summit is a distinctive snow hump resembling the back of a whale. All the ridges on this peak would make fun objectives for future teams.



- ▶ The West face of Aqviq (1860m) with the team's route
- ▶ Looking towards the Fork Beard Glacier from Aqviq



- ▶ The perfect orange granite found on the peak
- ▶ Heading back to camp after a very long day



## Inutuaq (1637m)

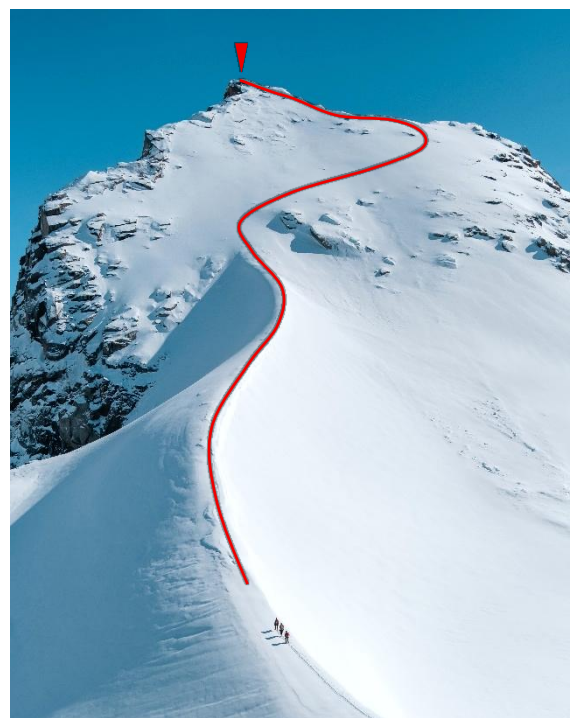
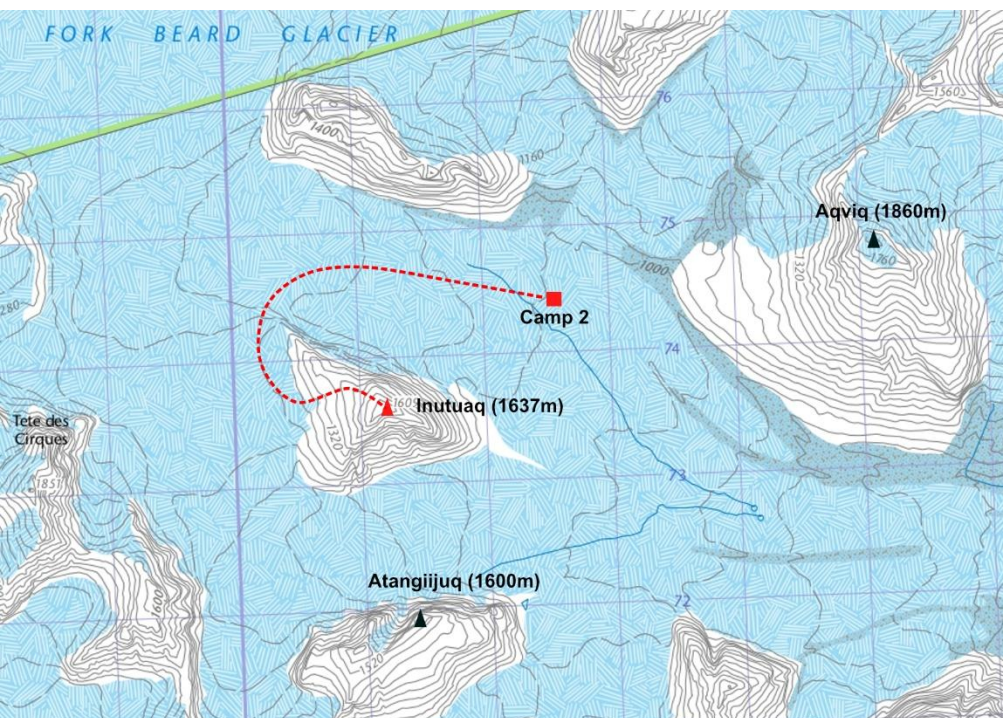
66°27'56.73"N, 65°13'3.67"W

English translation: Alone

First ascent on 19<sup>th</sup> April 2025 by the whole team.

Route: West face & Ridge PD- 600m

The team climbed an easy snow slope on the West face to a shallow col between the main peak and a vague sub summit. The route then followed a stunning S shaped snow ride (*report front cover*). The final 100m traverses a ridge past some tricky slabs to an exposed rocky summit. Decent was via the same route. The peak was named for its isolated position surrounded by the Fork Beard Glacier.



- ▶ The route from the team's camp
- ▶ The stunning S-shaped ridge and the team's route from the vague col between the main and sub-summit



- ▶ Ben hand roping down slabs near the summit
- ▶ The impressive North face of the peak from Camp 2



## Ukaliq (1532m)

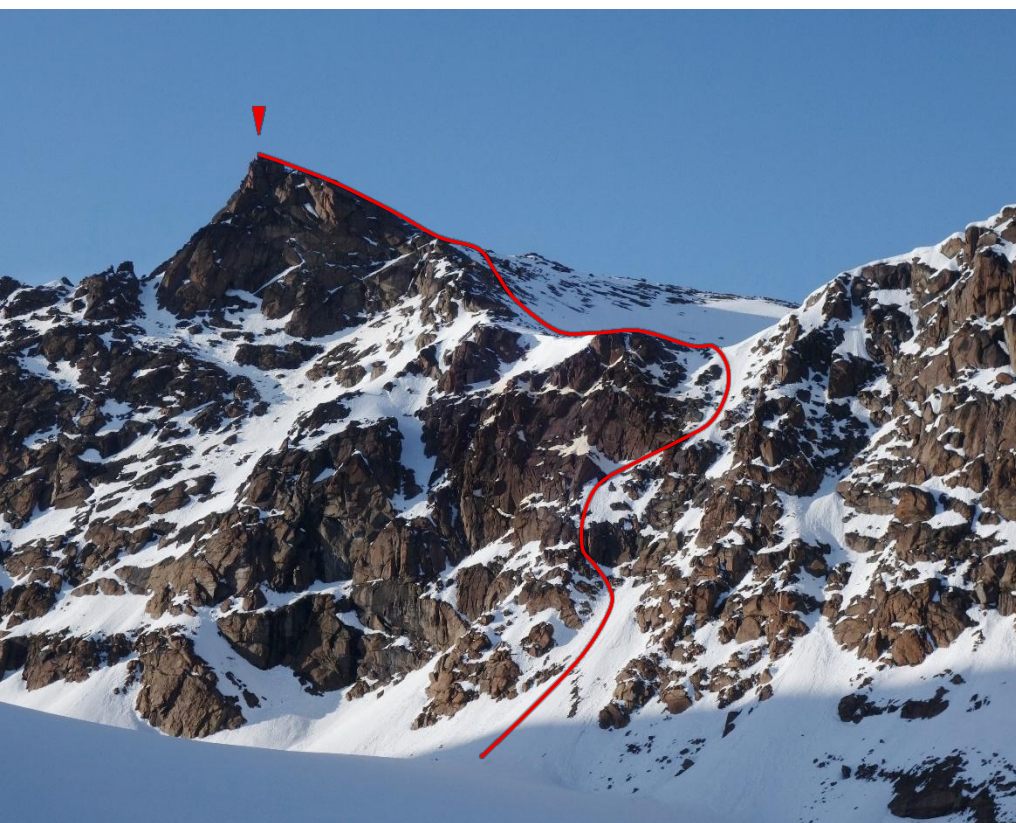
66°26'14.84"N, 65°12'13.77"W

English translation: Arctic Hare

First ascent on 23<sup>rd</sup> April 2025 by the whole team.

Route: S. Gully, PD 600m

The team initially climbed easy snow slopes before moving left up a steeper rock chimney. From there a traverse across ledges and another snow slope led to a wide col. An easy walk led to the summit itself. Decent was via the same route with a long abseil from the bottom of the ledges to the initial snow slopes. The peak was named for the huge number of Arctic Hares that seem to inhabit this valley.



- ▶ The South face of Ukaliq (1532m) with the team's route marked
- ▶ An amazing overhanging sub-summit to the East of the actual summit



## Uvingajuq (1615m)

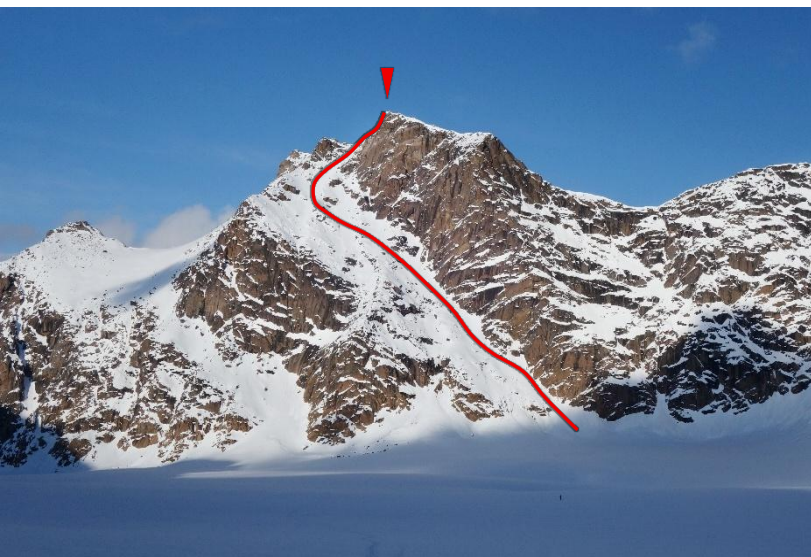
66°26'8.93"N, 65°09'34.88"W

English translation: Diagonal

First ascent on 24<sup>th</sup> April 2025 by the whole team.

Route: Ramp & N. Ridge, PD (Scottish II) 820m

The team climbed a long diagonal ramp on the peaks West face for around 500m before exiting right. A long tricky snow pitch led to an interesting ridge that was climbed in 4 pitches past a couple of steep rock steps. In descent the team reversed the route for one pitch then made a long abseil back down to the ramp.



- ▶ The west face of Uvingajuq (1615m) with its distinctive ramp. The team's route is marked.
- ▶ Heading along the summit ridge



- ▶ The final walk to the summit



## Atangijjuq (1600m)

66°26'54.04"N, 65°13'22.67"W

English translation: Including everything

First ascent on 25<sup>th</sup> April 2025 by the whole team.

Route: S. Slopes, F 460m

The team ascended easy snow slopes on the South of the peak. Descent via the same route. The name was given because all the peaks climbed by the team over the previous weeks could be seen from the summit.



- ▶ The team enjoying another sunny day near the summit
- ▶ The summit



- ▶ Looking North East across the Fork Beard Glacier from the summit



## 4.0 PLANNING & LOGISTICS

### 4.1 Travel & Logistics

Getting to Baffin Island involved four different flights; London – Paris, Paris – Ottawa, Ottawa – Iqaluit, Iqaluit – Pangnirtung. This gave plenty of opportunities for missing baggage and general airport stress. On the flights out we had 12 x 23kg hold bags; 4 for personal kit, 4 for food, 2 for group equipment (tents etc.), 1 for skis and 1 for the pulks. A loss of any of these would have been catastrophic. The only issue we had was two bags not making it onto the Iqaluit – Pangnirtung flight as they can only guarantee 2 hold bags per person – fortunately these arrived on the next flight the following morning.

We used the services of Peter Kilabuk in Pangnirtung for our snowmobile transport, fuel and rifle hire. He can be difficult to get hold of but was brilliant. He has helped countless expeditions in the past and what he doesn't know about the area isn't worth knowing. His kindness was also endless, he let us sleep in his shed/garage (saving hundreds compared to the high 'hotel' prices), let us use his shower on our return, welcomed us into his house to meet his family and kindly translated our peak names into the local Inuit language. A real star.

### 4.2 Permits & Paperwork

All teams are required to obtain an entry permit from Parks Canada before entering the Auyuittuq National Park. In advance of the trip they require details of the team, the planned route etc. On arrival in Pangnirtung all team members are required to attend an orientation meeting at their office. This takes an hour or two and involves discussing your plans, watching a polar bear information film and filling in a lot of paperwork. You are then granted a permit. On returning to Pangnirtung all teams must deregister.

For travel outside of the Auyuittuq National Park, for example the Kingnait Fjord area, you are required to apply for a land access permit from the Qikiqtani Inuit Association (QIA). This is a permit to access Inuit owned lands. This was a fairly time-consuming process involving emails, online forms and quite a bit of back and forwards to pay. The process should be started a good few months before departure. The final cost was £151 including bank fees.

### 4.3 Environmental impact and waste management

Before setting off excess food packaging was removed to reduce waste in Baffin - this also saved a considerable amount of weight which helped with our limited baggage. While in Baffin all rubbish was fastidiously collected, compressed and given to the agent on departure. Approximately 25m of abseil cord was left in the mountains. Human waste was buried in a deep hole and all toilet paper burned. The expedition generated 23.4 tonnes (CO<sub>2</sub>e) of climate changing greenhouse gases. This was offset using Climate Care ([www.climatecare.org](http://www.climatecare.org)) who support a wide range of offsetting methods.

|   |                                      |
|---|--------------------------------------|
| UK travel (car travel)                          | 0.24                                 |
| International flights                           | 13.67                                |
| Canadian domestic flights                       | 7.92                                 |
| Canadian travel (snowmobile & public transport) | 0.13                                 |
| Canadian accommodation                          | 1.32                                 |
| Expedition fuel                                 | 0.09                                 |
| <b>Total</b>                                    | <b>23.4 tonnes (CO<sub>2</sub>e)</b> |



## 4.4 Finances

| <b>Expenditure</b>                     |                |
|--|----------------|
| Permits                                | £325           |
| Insurance                              | £2,846         |
| Flights – International (UK to Canada) | £4,970         |
| Flights – Domestic (In Canada)         | £5,795         |
| Travel – Snowmobile Transport*         | £3,279         |
| Accommodation – (Heathrow & Ottawa)    | £885           |
| Food                                   | £2,193         |
| Equipment purchases                    | £162           |
| Communication**                        | £437           |
| Incidental expenses***                 | £402           |
| <b>Total</b>                           | <b>£21,294</b> |
| <b>Grants</b>                          |                |
| Arctic Club/Gino Watkins Memorial Fund | £4,000         |
| Mount Everest Foundation               | £3,000         |
| Austrian Alpine Club                   | £1,500         |
| British Mountaineering Council         | £826           |
| The Alpine Club                        | £500           |
| <b>Total</b>                           | <b>£9,826</b>  |
| <b>Team contributions</b>              | <b>£11,468</b> |
| <b>Individual cost per person</b>      | <b>£2,867</b>  |

\* Includes the unsuccessful drop-off (£1,936) and the successful drop-off (£1,342)

\*\* Satellite phone hire and InReach subscriptions

\*\*\* Includes carbon offset amount

## 4.5 Polar Bear Safety

We had been led to believe that polar bears are reasonably rare in this part of Baffin Island, being both relatively south in latitude and a fair distance from the sea ice off the North East coast of the island. This was confirmed again in our park orientation meeting but would turn out to be very inaccurate! Firearms are banned in the Auyuittuq National Park for all but the local Inuit population, but as our original plan would have kept us outside the park and we would be spending a fair amount of time close to the sea ice we hired a bolt action rifle from our outfitter. We did not carry the flare gun and trip-wire fence we would normally carry in higher risk areas. This all meant that when we found fresh bear prints along our route leading up from Summit Lake onto the Nerutusoq glacier it was a bit of a shock. Fortunately, that was the only time we saw any evidence of bears but, on arrival back in Pangnirtung, we found out that a serious incident had happened at Summit Lake two weeks after we were there. A person had been dragged out of their tent in the middle of the night. Fortunately, another person nearby had illegally carried a firearm into the park, shooting the bear but unfortunately not killing it. The injured person was evacuated from the park but was lucky to receive only minor injuries and was released from hospital the same day. The following day local Inuits tracked and shot the bear finding it had a broken jaw that made it unable to feed on its normal seal-based diet.

## 4.6 Secondary objectives

Before the expedition Ben was approached by Global Atmospheric Plastic Survey (GAPS 24-25). They have been asking remote expeditions across the world to collect snow samples from remote glaciers which are then analysed to see if microplastics are present. It's a really interesting and important piece of research so it was great to be asked to help. We had two sample kits delivered to us at our hotel in Heathrow airport which consisted of pure water control samples and empty sample bottles. Whilst on the glacier we had to carefully collect snow samples that were returned back to the UK. The results from these samples will be published when the full paper is released next year.



## 4.7 Notes and thoughts on equipment

*Tents & Sleeping* – We all took sleeping bags rated to around -28°C /-30°C which were a little chilly in the initial first week of -30°C overnight temperatures but perfect for the rest of the expedition. We took two Hilleberg Tents (Namatj 2 GT & Tarra) which we have used on all of our big Artic and Himalayan expeditions.

*Climbing equipment* – We took one full rack between us allowing either one team to climb with everything or, as was the most common, two teams to have a smaller alpine rack each. We bought 12 ice screws but we didn't end up using any of them except for Leanne and Tom's exploratory venture up an ice gully to try and find a way onto the Gateway Glaciers. We brought three ropes; two 60m half-ropes and a 60m triple-rated. This gave us a spare if one got damaged and the thicker 60m was useful for hauling pulks.

*Ski equipment & pulks* – We all had Nordic back country skis with NBC bindings and wore the excellent ALFA Outback BC or Polar A/P/S boots. We have used these boots on many long trips now and have always kept our feet warm and comfortable. Each of us had a SkiPulk Paris Pulk with a full body harness. These are great, affordable and lightweight pulks that will last a good few trips before the plastic wears through on the base. All four stack within each other and can be taken on flights easily.

*Communication* – You are not required to carry any specific equipment in the area. Based on previous experience though we hired-satphone which can prove invaluable in a rescue situation. We also carried three Garmin InReachs and had an experienced 'home contact' available to coordinate any issues or incidents from the UK. Finally, we took a couple of cheap walkies-talkies which proved very useful when we split up to scout routes etc.

## 4.8 Future objectives

The mountains to the East of the Weasel River valley have seen a fair amount of climbing activity over the years but a huge number of unclimbed peaks remain. As the valley is the main access point for most teams the further you travel from this the more objectives remain. Our team skied past many great looking peaks with some beautiful lines of all grades. The most impressive peaks the team saw though were closer to the Kingnait Fjord. A few of these were climbed in the 70's but their huge walls remain unclimbed. Boat access to these in summer would be relatively straightforward with some being just 25km from the coast. Below are a few photographs but the team has many more.



▲ A stunning unclimbed peak at the head of the Nerutusoq Glacier





- ◀ Climbed in 1977 but with huge unclimbed walls, these peaks are 25km from the Kingnait Fjord
- ▶ More unclimbed peaks and walls close to Kingnait Fjord, a great objective for a future expedition

#### 4.9 Contact information and thanks

Thanks go to all those that helped or supported the expedition- the assistance we received was invaluable. Particular thanks go to; The Arctic Club, Gino Watkins Memorial Fund, Mount Everest Foundation (MEF), British Mountaineering Council (BMC), Alpine Club and Austrian Alpine Club (AAC) for their generous grant support. Thanks also go to RAB UK, Voom Nutrition, SunGod and Expedition Foods for the equipment and food they supplied.

For further information please contact Tom Harding, email [tom-harding@live.co.uk](mailto:tom-harding@live.co.uk)

