

A highly successful expedition owing to the expertise of my international team. We met up in Aasiaat on the west coast of Greenland where I had left my boat for the winter, and my team proceeded immediately to take over the Greenland Independence Day celebrations at the boatyard with their musical instruments and song to the delight of the local Greenlanders! We then sailed from Aasiaat to Upernavik, a rather rigorous introduction to the sailing for all but especially for the two who had never sailed before, as after motoring across Disko Bay the engine thereafter would not start. We had to sail whether the wind blew strongly or not at all. And there was the occasional iceberg around, sometimes looming out of the mist. It took five days to complete the normal two day passage – ‘well, you did want to learn to sail, lads, didn’t you?’

At Upernavik my ‘world class climbers’ put up four landmark new routes on the big walls, the big sea cliffs, of the area. Clear, clean cut lines on three different walls. The tour de force of these was the first ascent of Impossible Wall – Devil’s Brew (there are stories behind the name), quite simply the steepest and hardest route on the wall and probably in the whole area at E7, 6c, or 5.12c, 850 metres and 19 pitches, each pitch sustained at this standard with two of them at 7a. It took them ten days to complete this climb with three portaledge ‘camps’ on the way up, though they were stopped for three days at one of these due to bad weather, so whiled away the time playing their instruments and composing new songs, having included the instruments in their haul bags! They had stepped off the boat onto the wall to start the climb as it fell sheer into the sea, but I picked them up round the corner at the end.

It is hoped that these ground breaking routes will open up this area with its huge potential for big walls and ordinary routes of virtually any standard for the future

From here we made our way south, surveying but finally dismissing a big wall near Kangarsuatsiaq (Proven) as not being quite worth the necessary effort, and so to Aasiaat to tidy up and prepare for the long haul south and for the Atlantic. The six hundred miles south to the Kap Farvell area proved somewhat arduous as there was either no wind or it was ‘in our faces’, and it included a rather unpleasant evening wending our way in heavy swell through big bands of ice - growlers, bergy bits and bergs - streaming out of the Sermilik fjord from that glacier south of Paamiut. After calling at Nanortalik for stores and fuel – we had had to motor all the way - and after reading past expedition reports from the Tourist office, we made our way to the Kap Farvell area

The team were immediately struck with the difference here. At Upernavik it had been big sea cliffs, here it was Alpine in character. They made four first ascents. The first two were on a remote wall and unnamed peak after a 5k walk in (carrying all that gear) from the boat anchored rather precariously on a lee shore in the Torssukatak. ‘Two classic, clean direct lines on excellent rock’, 500 metres at only E4, 5.11 with a D – TD traverse of the ridge line afterwards to the summit which they kindly named Shepton Spire (not that the name will stick of course). The other two routes were at the northern end of Quvnerit Island on the wall by Spot Height 1180. One of these may have been done before (a bolt was found) in which case this was the first completely free ascent. They completed the TD ridge to the summit but are not claiming the first ascent of that. It should be added that all their climbing was done completely free, the climbing here done in long 30 hour pushes, and some of the climbing at Upernavik was by redpointing, so those were first team free ascents.

Foolishly the skipper allowed himself to be persuaded to do a new route with two of them. At E2 and 500 metres it was far too long and far too hard for an old man and I named it Never Again – I decided 75 is a good age for retirement!

We made our way down Prins Christian Sund for the Danish pastries at the Weather Station at the far end before putting out into the Atlantic. The spirit of adventure was maintained as it was a tough crossing with almost ten days of ocean tacking down 61°N against strong easterlies before we could work our way south to pick up westerlies at last to make good progress before a following wind towards Scotland. We had hove-to three times to wait out heavy weather including the tail end of Post Tropical Storm Danielle which turned north to sweep by us, and after inspecting but not climbing on the cliffs at Mingulay and Pabbay in the Western Isles we arrived in Oban to a full gale. Welcome home!

Team: Nico Favresse; Olivier Favresse; Sean Villaneuva; Ben Ditto. Skipper: Bob Shepton

A full report will be sent in due course but for further information and excellent pictures see www.xpedition.be Perhaps a link to this could be included.

