

Imperial College East Greenland 2009: Preliminary Expedition Report

On August 3rd the team departed from Gatwick airport for Iceland, where we had allowed 2 nights in Reykjavik before flying on to Greenland. The second leg of the journey then involved another connection at Kulusuk (Greenland) before finally arriving at the destination airport of Constable Point. Much of the equipment and all of the expedition food had been freighted out in advance but unfortunately it had not arrived in Constable Point as intended. After a great deal of investigation it transpired that the cargo had not left Copenhagen; the carrier was at fault so they agreed to fly it out but that still meant waiting one week for it due to the frequency of Constable Point flights.

The first few nights therefore had to be spent in one of the hangars at the airport before we relocated to the town of Scoresbysund (Ittoqqortoormiit) by boat. We were very lucky to be given approximately one week of food by two girls from the University of Oslo who happened to be leaving from Constable Point. This enabled us to spend a few days hiking in Liverpool Land after renting two tents from Nanu Travel. We headed across the peninsula to the Lillefjord and made an ascent of Trefoden (1110m), which allowed us to adjust to the local terrain and also gave us our first sightings of musk ox and arctic hare. On return to Scoresbysund our freight had finally arrived and the following day we headed out on the 250km boat journey up the fjord to North West Renland. The journey took approximately 6 hours and once we had reached the correct valley we picked a suitable part of the coast to unload all of our equipment. A brief exploration of the area revealed a good site for our base and over the next day we ferried loads across one of the glaciers before setting up camp. A further day was spent exploring the two main glaciers and possible objectives in the area.

For their first outing, Rob and Chris chose a mixed route up the nearest ridge to base camp and ascended over scree and then mixed rock, snow and ice to a height of approximately 1700m. They reached the top of a local summit but were prevented from reaching an overall summit which would have been much farther back on the ice-cap. Jonny and Dom headed out to attempt the obvious zig-zag line up the peak opposite on the Western side of the main glacier. However, on the first try it was not possible to find a route off the far side of the glacier due to crevasses and a 30-40m vertical drop. After a second attempt, an abseil and a river crossing, the base of the mountain was reached and over the next two days the route was ascended on scree and friction slabs.

Rob and Chris's second outing was an exploratory trip up the length of the main glacier and onto the ice-cap over two days, and reached the highest point of the trip at approximately 2100m. Jonny and Dom then headed back across the main glacier and up a Western side valley to attempt a snow peak via a series of subsidiary glaciers. After a camp at 850m the ascent was made in one day and reached a summit at 1950m. Rob and Chris's third outing was made up the same valley and ascended a similar style route but topped-out the ridge on the opposite side, reaching a summit at 1816m.

The final outing of the trip was made by Rob, Jonny and Dom who attempted a route on the ridge East of the smaller glacier. Camp was made at 600m and then 1000m of ascent was achieved in a day. Unfortunately the group had to stop short of the ridge due to a recent fall of snow and poor conditions on steep slabs. On return from this last trip the team was promptly picked up by the chartered boats. A final night was spent in another part of Renland with a Dutch group of climbers and then we all headed back to Constable Point on the same boat. A final highlight of the trip was then seeing a polar bear whilst camping at the airport, albeit at a safe distance through binoculars. In addition to the three new summits and two new routes (all first ascents as far as we are aware), many photographs were taken as reconnaissance for future expeditions and some good objectives were noted. The geology of the region was analysed by one member of the group and a study of the region's flora was conducted and specimens collected for an expert back in the UK.

A fantastic experience was had by all members of the team and the group is extremely grateful to all the individuals and organisations who helped fund the expedition, gave us advice during the planning stages and assisted us whilst on the expedition.



