

## **Gino-Watkins Memorial Fund report – Oxford West Greenland Expedition**

The expedition totalled 5000m of rock and 5000 miles of sea and had an extremely productive time, putting up five major new routes and a number of minor routes, including first ascents of two previously unknown faces. Tom Codrington, Peter Hill, Clive Woodman and Angela Lilienthal sailed to Greenland from Montreal through a number of gales and met Ian Faulkner and Jacob Cook in Aasiaat. The team then scoured the Uummannaq region for big faces, achieving a double success on their main objective, the Horn of Upernivik Island.

This face had been attempted by a British team in 2010 but had only seen one successful ascent in 1981. Tom and Peter claimed the second ascent with 'Choss, the Universe and Everything' E2/XS 5c 1200m on a 42h single push in which they discovered secret (and occasionally loose!) ways around the main difficulties of the upper headwall before bagging part of the summit ridge and descending the route. Ian and Jacob made the third ascent a few days later with 'Cosmic Rave' E6 6b 1000m, an uncompromisingly direct line following George Ullrich and Matt Burdekin's 2010 attempt. They fixed to 300m, placing one bolt, before pushing to the top and descending via Choss, the Universe and Everything. The team then endured a storm in basecamp as the Cosmic Dancer struggled with engine problems. The storm caused massive rockfall which chopped every single one of their fixed ropes and sent rocks bounding past the tents into the sea.

Next up was the second ascent of Uummannaq NW peak. Tom and Ian climbed the lower tier before being forced to retreat down a scree gully by rain. Two days later Jacob, Peter and Tom returned up the scree gully to extend the line to the summit, establishing 'Islands in the Sky' E4 6a 810m, so named for a stunning cloud inversion.

The boat's engine problems made a trip to Upernavik unfeasible so the team investigated an area south-east of Uummannaq instead, on a tip from Nolwenn Chauche, skipper of the Gambo. Tom and Ian spotted a line on Ivnarssuaq Great Wall, a previously unknown plumb-vertical face rising straight out of the sea near Ikerasak. 'The Incredible Orange' E3 5c 800m provided extremely steep and sustained climbing for the full 800m. The pair bivied twice on the route during their 72h Alpine-style push. The Wall turned out to be a huge pillar connected to the mainland by a rickety bridge.

Meanwhile Jacob and Peter had a terrible time on Umanatsiaq Mountain due to loose rock. Their first attempt saw Jacob accompanying a foothold as it parted ways with the cliff on pitch two, injuring his ankle. A few days later they established 'Flake or Death' XS 5b 200m, descending via an oft-climbed ridge, with the rock quality varying from loose to extremely loose.

Just before returning to Aasiaat and laying the boat up for the winter, Peter, Jacob and Ian put up 'That Sinking Feeling' E5 5c 300m on Nugssuaq, another previously unknown face. The striking knifeblade feature offered good climbing but little gear and was connected to the mainland via another exciting bridge.

The expedition was a huge success, thanks in large part to the support of the Gino-Watkins Memorial Fund and the Arctic Club. Other generous supporters included the Irvine Fund, the BMC, the MEF, the Andrew Croft Memorial Fund, Rab, Mammut, Wild Country, Spinlock, First Ascent and AST Systems.