

# Renland, Greenland 2019

26<sup>th</sup> June 2019 to 31<sup>st</sup> July 2019

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## CONTENTS

### 1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Summary	3
1.2 Team members	3

### 2.0 PLANNING AND LOGISTICS

2.1 Research & previous expeditions	4
2.2 Travel and logistics	5
2.3 Permits	6
2.4 Finances	6
2.5 Insurance	7
2.6 Food	7
2.7 Environmental impact and waste management	8
2.8 Communication	8
2.9 Medical	9
2.10 Polar bear safety	9

### 3.0 EXPEDITION REPORT

3.1 Write up	9
3.2 Expedition timetable	13
3.3 Peaks and routes climbed	14
3.4 Secondary objectives	18
3.5 Weather, snow and ice conditions	18
3.6 Notes and thoughts on equipment	19
3.7 Future objectives	20
3.8 Contact information and thanks	21

### 4.0 APPENDIX

Expedition Map	22
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We also received generous support from: Expedition Foods

Our thanks go to all of them.

▲ *Previous page -The final snow slopes of 'Footloose' on The Bastion*

## 1.0 INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Summary

From the 26<sup>th</sup> June to the 31<sup>st</sup> July 2019 a team made up of Tom Harding, Niall Newport, Cameron Ree and Neil Cox (all U.K.) visited the Scoresby Sund region of East Greenland, exploring new terrain and making several first ascents. The expedition used a Greenland based agent for some logistics but otherwise was independently organised. The team and their 250kg of food and equipment flew from Manchester via Iceland to the dirt runway at Constable Point Airport (CNP) in Jameson Land. After initial delays to boat travel due to excessive sea ice, their local agent took them 180km to a little visited and still unnamed coastal valley in Renland. They spent the following eight days hauling food and equipment through difficult glaciated terrain to establish a high camp at 1290m followed by thirteen days making first ascents of five peaks and putting up three long rock routes including the first ascent of the impressive 'Northern Sun Spire' that dominates the valley. Stable weather, good quality rock and a stunning area led to a successful expedition.



▲ The team. Left to right – Niall Newport, Cameron Ree, Neil Cox & Tom Harding

### 1.2 Team members

#### **Tom Harding (Expedition Leader), 33, British, Cartographer & Aerial Photographer**

Tom has climbed all around the UK and Europe. In 2017 he was a member of a successful expedition to the Borkoldoy range in Kyrgyzstan making a number of first ascents including a previously unclimbed 5044m peak. In 2018, as part of an unsupported group of 4 friends, he pulled a pulk 250km across Svalbard to climb its highest peak, Newtontoppen. (Avon Mountaineering Club, BMC)

### **Neil Cox, 31, British, Actuary**

From canoeing along the Amazon, multiday caving expeditions in Austria and climbing 6000m peaks in South America, Neil is at home in remote environments. He has made multiple trips to the Alps climbing more than 20 4000m peaks. He was the Expedition Leader for a successful 2017 Borkoldoy (Kyrgyzstan) expedition and one of 4 friends who pulled pulks across Svalbard in 2018. (*Alpine Club, Austrian Alpine Club, BMC*)

### **Niall Newport, 28, British, Cameraman**

This was Niall's first major expedition and an exciting opportunity to experience remote area climbing and hopefully make some first ascents. He has spent the last few years climbing and mountaineering in the UK leading trad VS/sport 6b and has three seasons of Scottish winter mountaineering experience leading Grade IV (6). Niall hopes that Greenland will be the first of many big international trips. (*Avon Mountaineering Club, BMC*)

### **Cameron Ree, 24, British, Outdoor Instructor**

Cameron works as a freelance RCI and ML, as well as being an Army Reservist annually instructing and guiding military groups in the Dolomites on adventurous mountain routes. Recently he has conducted winter trips to Scotland and Norway, and has experience in alpine mountaineering in Patagonia and Chamonix. (*Avon Mountaineering Club, BMC*)

## **2.0 PLANNING AND LOGISTICS**

### **2.1 Research & previous expeditions**

The expedition started in the back of a six wheeled Soviet truck while Tom Harding and Neil Cox travelled home from an expedition to Kyrgyzstan. Tom had wanted to visit Greenland for many years so volunteered himself as expedition leader. Keen to climb in an area with good quality granite, he tracked down an old Geological Survey of Greenland map which led him to the Scoresby Sund region on the East Coast. While researching past reports from this area he came across one written by a team that had visited Renland in 2016; they had inserted an enticing photograph titled 'New route potential'. It showed the upper part of a valley that became the inspiration for this expedition.

Thanks go to both the 2016 team and another from 2012 who shared photos and hugely valuable information. The valley may have been visited by Kenton Cool while guiding a father and son team in 2013 but we were unable to get further information. Below is a summary of the valleys mountaineering history:

**2012** – Michael Raab, Betsy Winston (Renland, Various Ascents 2012 AAJ)

Believed to be the first people to enter the valley. Spent around 2 weeks in the area and climbed a number of moderate peaks including what we believe to be the highest in the area.

**2013** – Kenton Cool - Unknown, no information forthcoming.

**2016** – Geoff Hornby, David Barlow, Robert Powell and Paul Seabrook (British Renland 2016 MEF-16-25)

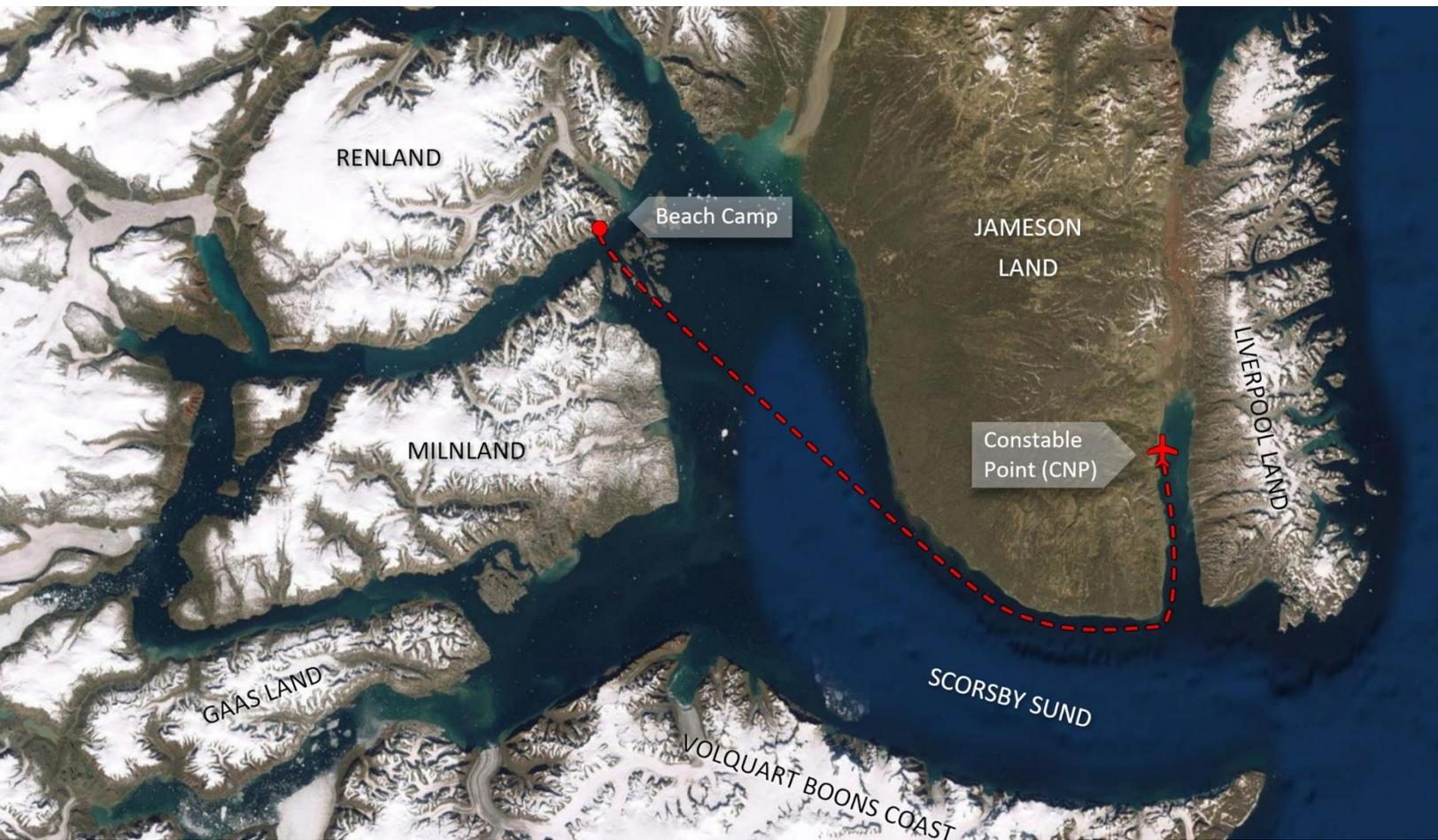
Spent 25 days in the valley climbing a number of long rock routes including the first ascent of Mt Hannes.

During our research it became clear there were no large-scale maps for the area, the best being 1:250k. As a cartographer by trade Tom Harding created new a new 1:50k. This used freely available satellite radar data for contours and hill shading and topographic details were digitised from high resolution satellite imagery. Peak names came from previous trip reports and the version attached to the end of this report also has details of this expedition's ascents. Maps of this specification can be produced for most areas of Greenland and hopefully this will prove useful for future teams visiting this area.

## 2.2 Travel and logistics

Previous expeditions to this area of Greenland, particularly those flying into Constable Point, have used an out of country agent for their logistics. After lots of research it was decided it was feasible to do all this ourselves, only relying on a local outfitter for boat travel, fuel and equipment hire. This was a huge amount of work and a steep learning curve but a rewarding process and saved a considerable amount of money.

The decision was made to fly in all of our equipment rather than the more common method of sending it in advance on one of the infrequent ships to the area. This meant weight was tight but it simplified logistics as no handling and storage had to be arranged in Greenland. The flights into Greenland were with 'Greenland Air' who run regular flights between Akureyri and Constable Point (CNP). The tickets can be bought around 6 months in advance. A lot of excess baggage was added to the tickets, each member taking three 20kg hold bags and a 6kg cabin bag – 66kg each and 264kg in total on the way out. On the return journey we only needed 46kg each. This amount of baggage didn't seem to cause any issues, but we were advised by Air Iceland Connect to 'remind' Greenland Air a month before departure.



▲ The Scoresby Sund region of East Greenland.

From Constable Point, Renland is a 180km boat journey across the Scoresby Sund. We used a company called *Nanu Travel* ([www.nanutravel.dk](http://www.nanutravel.dk)) who are based in the local village of Ittoqqortoormiit. The boats were charged per boat per day and they always travel in pairs for safety (i.e. two boats for drop off and two boats for pick-up equals four boat days). Nanu also supplied fuel and rental of a rifle, flare gun and the required ammunition.

Nanu Travel don't seem to get many independent groups so we had quite a few issues getting replies to emails and nailing down the final details before we left. Once in Greenland these communication problems continued. We wanted regular updates from them regarding the boat delays but we were only able to get these by phoning their office which is open for a few hours around lunchtime. We did manage to get a personal mobile number in the end which helped but we always had to do the 'asking'. Future teams should make note of this. Overall though, Nanu Travel were friendly, the equipment arrived when needed and the boats arrived when they said they would. We would happily use them again and it was great to support the local community.

**2.3 Permits**

The permit procedure for Greenland expeditions is time consuming but generally logical. It's more than feasible for teams to do this themselves. The key guidance document is 'Cover Letter Sports Expeditions \_Version jan. 12' which can be found on the Government of Greenland's website (<https://naalakkersuisut.gl>). It goes through all the steps in detail but the basic procedure is to first apply for an expedition number from the Expedition Office. This number allows you to apply for all the other necessary permits, obtain insurance and pay the permit fee. Once everything has been issued and paid for, you send all the paperwork back to the expedition office who issue the final permit documents.

A few comments: **Firearms License** – The license is a surprisingly easy process. A form needs to be sent to the Chief Constable of Greenland with details about the rifle you are hiring and the expedition. Tom had a rifle safety certificate issued after a 1-day course at a firing range in the UK, it's not clear if this was needed but it was included anyway. **Radio Permit** – Teams are required to carry a VHF radio, E-PIRB and satellite phone but you need a separate license issued by the 'Greenland Radio Administration' to do this. Tom Harding already held a UK VHF license that was included in the application – it's not clear if this is required. There is some useful information online, but a phone call to the office for assistance proved more helpful.

**2.4 Finances**

<b>Expenditure</b>	
Permits	£616
Insurance	£5,427
Travel - Flights UK to Greenland	£4,338
Travel - Buses & taxis	£249
Travel - Boat travel in Greenland	£5,066
Iceland Accommodation & subsistence	£592
Food	£1,164
Equipment hire & purchases	£2,059
Incidental expenses	£59
<b>Total</b>	<b>£19,570</b>
<b>Grants</b>	
The Arctic Club	£3,000
Gino Watkins Memorial Fund	£3,000
Mount Everest Foundation	£1,650
British Mountaineering Council	£650
Austrian Alpine Club	£200
<b>Total</b>	<b>£8,500</b>
<b>Team contributions</b>	<b>£11,070</b>
<b>Personal expedition cost</b>	<b>£2767</b>

**Notes** - The agent and insurance company in Greenland were paid in Danish Krone (DKK). There was a £20 fee on each transaction, so it is worth trying to pay for everything in one go if possible. Neil Cox chartered a helicopter to pick him up from high camp on the 16<sup>th</sup> July. The cost of this was covered personally by him and as such is not included in the overall expedition finances.

**2.5 Insurance**

Securing insurance seems to be becoming increasingly difficult for expeditions to Greenland and it took us weeks of sending emails to a number of companies before we had things in place. To secure a permit from the Government of Greenland teams are required to have 1,000,000 DDK (Approximately £120,000 GBP) cover for search and rescue and a further 280,000 DDK (Approximately £34,000 GBP) per person for evacuation. You are required to get a form physically stamped and signed by the insurer. The form must be returned no less than 8 weeks before the date of the expeditions so it’s strongly recommended that teams start the process as soon as possible. We found every major insurance company we had used for previous expeditions were unable to offer us cover, primarily because of the very high S&R costs. We ended up using the basic cover from a Greenland based company called *Kalaallit Forsikring*. They require you to complete a lengthy application outlining; rescue plans, qualifications, safety equipment and communication equipment. They have a captive market and as such the cover is expensive but they were helpful and efficient and to be recommended. We also purchased cheap holiday insurance to cover us while in Iceland.

**2.6 Food**

Overall the team took 4300kcal per person per day for the expedition. This was counted and weighed upon delivery to ensure there were no errors. The initial weight (approximately 125kg total) was around 10% higher than had been calculated from the weights provided for food items online. The difference was most likely due to packaging, so it could be worth factoring in an additional 10% when planning for expeditions (or remove packaging to reduce this).

4300kcal per day provided a filling diet for the expedition. Daily calories could perhaps have been reduced without serious impact, but the situation may have been different if the weather was colder. Lightweight foods were chosen due to the distances we would be carrying packs, but a few luxuries were also thrown in. With packaging, the weight was just over 1kg per person, per day. The cost was approximately £10 per person, per day. The expedition operated a 3-day rotating menu as below:

	<b>Day 1</b>	<b>Day 2</b>	<b>Day 3</b>
<b>Breakfast</b>	Porridge sachets (golden syrup)	Oats with sugar /honey/golden syrup	Granola
<b>Lunch</b>	Flatbreads with garlic/peanut butter/honey/butter/olive oil	Super Noodles	Extra snacks (i.e. more nuts, cereal bars and chocolate bars)
<b>Dinner</b>	1000kcal Expedition Foods freeze dried meal	1000kcal Expedition Foods freeze dried meal	Pasta, chorizo, dried veg, pine nuts and parmesan in various sauces
<b>Snacks</b>	Haribo, chocolate, trail mix (mixed nuts, desiccated coconut, banana chips, apple slices, dried craisins), cereal bar, chocolate bar		
<b>Treat</b>	Cheddar cheese	Oreos and custard	Pork crackling
<b>Drinks</b>	Tea, coffee, milk, protein shake and squash'd		
<b>Other</b>	Pepper, chilli powder, mustard powder, mixed herbs, butter sugar and olive oil		

In particular there were a few high energy but tasty luxuries valued by the team - parmesan and cheddar cheese (over 400kcal/100g and keeps surprisingly well), pork crackling (over 600kcal/100g), pine nuts (soft and easy to add to meals without changing the texture/flavour too much, over 600kcal/100g) and Nestle Nido milk powder (over 600kcal per 100g). The flat breads also proved to be a popular and time-consuming task for rest days! We bought *Expedition Foods* 1000kcal extreme energy meals for the evenings. Having tried most of the major brands over the last few years these are by far the best. Expedition Foods ([www.expeditionfoods.com](http://www.expeditionfoods.com)) also kindly gave us a large discount on our bulk-buy our thanks go to them.



- ◀ 125kg of food waiting to be packed
- ▶ Making flat breads, an enjoyable rest day distraction

## 2.7 Environmental impact & waste management

Before setting off excess food packaging was removed to reduce waste in Greenland - this also saved a considerable amount of weight which helped with our limited baggage. While in Greenland all rubbish was fastidiously collected, compressed and given to the agent on departure in the hope it was disposed of responsibly, unfortunately this can't be guaranteed. Approximately 1.5m of abseil tat was left in the mountains. Human waste was buried in a deep hole and all toilet paper burned. Finally, the estimated 3.3 tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub> generated by our flights were offset using a company called *Climate Care* ([www.climatecare.org](http://www.climatecare.org)) who support a wide range of offsetting methods.

## 2.8 Communication

Both the permit and insurance documents specified the team carry a VHF radio, satellite phone and E-PIRB/PLB. We took two VHF radios which proved useful in the first week whilst transporting gear up the glacier. We hired an Iridium 9555 Satellite phone from a company in the UK and it proved essential in contacting our agent in Greenland. There is limited mobile phone coverage at CNP but this should not be relied upon. Although not required for the permit we also took two Garmin InReach devices, they have the ability to send tracking data and cheap messages to a home contact while using very little battery.

A home contact was put in place throughout the expedition and they were well briefed on all expedition plans and logistics prior to setting off. They had access to the InReach tracking data during the trip. Communication protocols were setup for the team to 'check-in' each day and others were agreed for loss of communication with one team or with the entire team. The same system has been used on a number of previous expeditions and it strikes a good

balance between safety, effort, and the desire to be self-sufficient. The home contact would also provide weather forecasts for the next few days on receipt of the team's 'check-ins'.

## **2.9 Medical**

Since there was no expedition doctor on the team, all members made sure to attend training prior to the expedition. Since all members of the team already had some first aid training experience, a one-day refresher course in wilderness medicine was arranged for 3 members of the team with *First Aid Bristol* ([www.firstaidbristol.co.uk](http://www.firstaidbristol.co.uk)). The remote nature of the expedition and the flight weight limit meant both short-term and long-term medical care had to be catered for efficiently. Supplies were based upon recommendations from the excellent '*Oxford Handbook of Expedition and Wilderness Medicine*' (a copy was taken to Greenland for reference). Lightweight first aid kits were carried whilst mountaineering with a comprehensive kit at base camp. These lightweight kits cantered around trauma injuries; some notable inclusions were various pain reliefs, a SAM splint, military trauma dressings, and haemostatic agents. The base camp kit contained a selection of drugs, ointments and dressings.

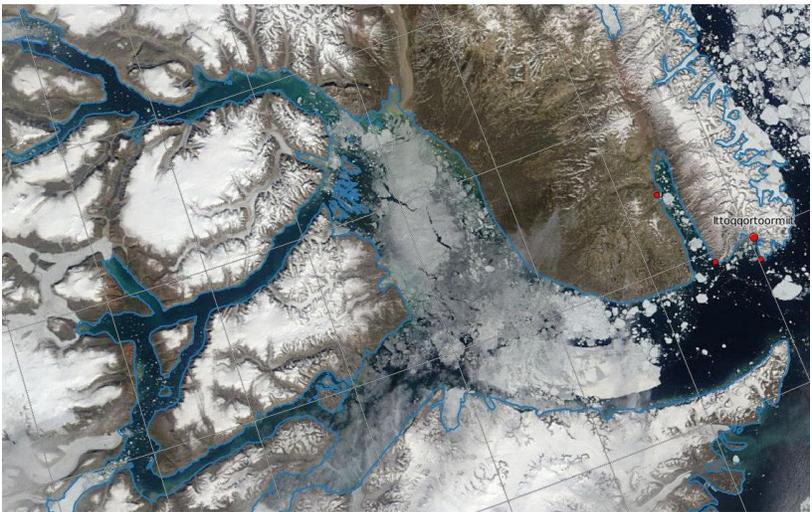
## **2.10 Polar Bear Safety**

In the Scoresby Sund area human-bear interactions are rare and the locals seem reasonably relaxed about the equipment they carry, but it still felt prudent to have both a rifle and flare gun while close to the coastline. A .30-06 bolt action rifle and a cal-4 flare gun were hired from Nanu Travel and unused ammunition was returned at the end. An American made bear trip-wire fence was also taken that fires either cal-4 flares or shotgun blanks (taken from the UK). The fence was only used while at the beach camp where an overnight watch was also carried out on the first night due to seeing what were believed to be paw prints along the beach. No bears were seen.

## **3.0 EXPEDITION REPORT**

### **3.1 Write-up**

After more than a year of planning it was a great feeling to finally be boarding our flight out of the UK. We flew from Manchester airport to Keflavík International in Iceland on the 26<sup>th</sup> June. The following day we left from the domestic Reykjavík City airport, first making a flight to Akureyri on the North coast before transferring on to a much smaller aircraft bound for the gateway to our part of Greenland, Constable Point (Nerlerit Inaat Airport, CNP). In a year, where the rapid melting of Greenland's ice was making international news, it was surprising to find ourselves initially stuck at the airport waiting for the sea ice to break up so we could take our boat to Renland. Both previous teams had recommended we arrive earlier in the year as rockfall had increased noticeably during their trips but as we found out – the sea ice can be very fickle and in our case block travel entirely (*see 3.5 Weather, snow and sea ice conditions for more details*).



- ◀ 25th June 2019 - The sea ice conditions in the Scoresby Sund the day before we left the UK
- ▶ 3rd July 2019 - The sea ice conditions just eight days later. The day after the boat journey to Renland

We ended up camping for four days next to the airport's jetty. Fortunately, we had been able to get Nanu Travel to deliver our fuel and rifle in advance but had to pay for their additional boat journey. We went for some pleasant walks around the local hills but the mosquitos were intolerable at camp and we were very happy when our boats finally turned up. The spectacular journey across the iceberg filled Scoresby Sund is approximately 180km but took less than 4 hours! They dropped us on the small sandy beach at the foot of our unnamed valley and wouldn't return for another 27 days.

We spent the following 8 days hauling food and equipment through difficult glaciated terrain. A mid camp was established at 700m on a snowy area in the moraine at the side of the glacier. We would scout a route with lighter bags then ferry huge loads once the easiest route had been found. Up to this point the terrain was reasonably mild but above our mid camp, a huge icefall barred access to the as yet unexplored upper valley.



- ◀ Our two small boats making the 180km crossing of the Scoresby Sund
- ▶ Carrying big loads through the lower valley. Mt. Hannes first climbed in 2016 in the background.

The icefall forms where two glaciers merge, one turning through 90° while also descending around 300m making a churned mess of huge blocks and crevasses. The left hand (South) side, although vulnerable to serac and rock fall, seemed to offer the easiest route so we set off early with small bags. Steep snow slopes brought us to the top from

where we thought the terrain would ease, but it became far more crevassed. We spent the next eight hours covering around 1.5km. The huge crevasses often stretched from one side of the valley to the other with intimidating snow bridges formed across many of them. We back-tracked repeatedly while finding a possible route through and at one point thought we had come to a complete dead end. It was by far the most difficult glacial terrain any of us had experienced and it quickly became clear we wouldn't be able to traverse it again safely with our other gear. After 12 hours of navigating, we were exhausted both physically and mentally by the time we reached a suitable high camp. Forced to bivvy for the night before returning to mid camp, we settled in as the cloud rolled over and it began to rain for one of the only times during the trip – with only sleeping bags and mats, it was a wet and cold night.

The next day we woke early. Back in the UK, while Tom had been creating the expedition maps, he had spotted a narrow snow gully that seemed to connect to the adjacent valley. We were very keen to avoid having to go through the icefall again so went to investigate. It turned out to be an easy angled 100m snow climb up to a small col and on the other side dropped around 300m on snow and ice at an angle of 55° to 45°. 'The Secret Scottish Gulley' (Scottish II) and a route to high camp had been found! A few abseils from v-threads and a short walk later and we were back at mid camp. The following day we hauled most of our equipment to the base of the gully and returned to mid camp. On the 9<sup>th</sup> July we spent the whole day hauling around 180kg up the 300m gully. We began trying to haul bags up on a counter balance system in two stages but with a slow pace and bags constantly getting stuck, we decided to divide and conquer; two members of the team hauling while the other two members lugged the heavy packs to the belay and then descended via the counter balance. It was hard graft but after a monumental effort and another 12 hour day high camp was finally established at 1290m.



▲ *The upper icefall. The 'Northern Sun Spire' is centre and high camp up the valley to the left*

High camp would be our home for the next 13 days and gave us great access to all the peaks in the upper glacial basin. It sat on a flat, crevasse free area, with stunning views up three diverging valleys. Following a well-earned rest day and over two weeks since we had left the UK, we could finally do some climbing. We went on to make the first ascents of five peaks, either by moderate mountaineering routes or by three more technical rock routes. We found the rock to be generally good, often superb with plenty of good cracks for protection and with strong natural lines. We were able to walk-off the 'back' of all but one peak and with the 24 hours of daylight climbed everything in a single day push, leaving and returning to high camp each day. There were few negatives in the trip but while at high camp the temperature generally remained above 0°C, although this made for pleasant climbing conditions it meant the snow never consolidated and walking conditions were torturous. We generally climbed one day and rested the following, sometimes breaking trail in advance to try and make the walk-ins to routes easier.

On the 16<sup>th</sup> July a Greenland Air helicopter, normally based at Constable Point over the summer, arrived at high camp to pick up Neil Cox. Home commitments meant he had to leave the expedition early. On the 21<sup>st</sup> July we received a message from our home contact reading "STORM WARNING". We had planned to stay another two days but quickly decided we should make a run for it before the expected snow possibly made the 'The Secret Scottish Gully' impassable. We broke camp the following day but that night woke to a huge dump of snow accompanied by the sound of avalanches and rockfall reverberating around the valleys. Concerned, we left early but thankfully when we reached the top of the gully the snow had eased and we were able to lower the bags without issue. Our snowy mid camp had melted into rocky moraine by the time we returned and keen to reach the beach before further storms, we used a three day weather window to remove all of our stashed equipment from the mountains. We finally settled back into beach camp on the 25<sup>th</sup> July.



- ◀ *Niall on one of the superb upper pitches of 'Footloose' on The Bastion*
- ▲ *Cam climbing the beautiful orange granite of the 'The Bristol Flyer' on Skyline Peak*
- ▶ *Making a run for it up the 'Secret Scottish Gully' as the stormy weather come in*

It had been windy with some rain the previous few days but the weather deteriorated at beach camp. We spoke to our agent and they said the conditions were too rough for the boats to collect us. As we hid away in the tents there was a real concern we would miss our flight on the 29<sup>th</sup> July. After a nervous wait, things eased just enough for the boats to arrive at midnight on the day of our flight and we travelled across a very murky Scoresby Sund. We arrived at Constable at around 5am with our flight due just a few hours later. We grabbed some sleep in an empty shipping container but when we went to check in we found all flights were cancelled – the rain over the last few days had reduced the dirt runway to mud. That night we were put up in the airport’s famous minus one star ‘Hilton’. By this time of year, the sun is just starting to get low and we enjoyed our final hours in Greenland with a stunning sky and a comfy bed. Having missed our original flight date back to Iceland, our contingency travel day became manic. We flew from Constable Point to Akureyri, Akureyri to Reykjavik City Airport, hauled all our bags to the bus station, caught a couple of hours sleep, then got the bus back to Keflavik International Airport finally getting back to the U.K. on the morning of the 31<sup>st</sup> July. Not the celebratory ending we had hoped for, but that’s expeditions for you!



▲ *The team descending from Peak. 1881 & Peak. 1763. The Bastion is on the left.*

### **3.2 Expedition timetable**

- 26<sup>th</sup> Jun – Flight from UK (MAN) to Iceland (KEF). Bus to Reykjavík. Airbnb.
- 27<sup>th</sup> Jun – Flight from Reykjavík (RYK) to Akureyri (AEY). Flight to Greenland (CNP). Jetty camp.
- 28<sup>th</sup> Jun – 1<sup>st</sup> Jul – Waiting at Constable Point (CNP) for sea ice to clear. Jetty camp.
- 2<sup>nd</sup> Jul – Boat from Constable Point to Renland. Gear haul. Beach camp.
- 3<sup>rd</sup> Jul – Mid camp reconnaissance. Gear haul. Beach camp.

4<sup>th</sup> Jul – Gear haul. Move to mid camp.  
 5<sup>th</sup> Jul – Gear haul. Mid camp.  
 6<sup>th</sup> Jul - High camp reconnaissance. High camp bivi.  
 7<sup>th</sup> Jul - Return to Mid camp.  
 8<sup>th</sup> Jul - Gear haul. Mid camp.  
 9<sup>th</sup> Jul - Gear haul, 'Secret Scottish Gully'. Move to high camp.  
 10<sup>th</sup> Jul - Rest day.  
 11<sup>th</sup> Jul – Ascent of 'Peak 1881' and 'Peak 1763'.  
 12<sup>th</sup> Jul – Rest day.  
 13<sup>th</sup> Jul – Ascent of 'The Bastion' via 'South Gully'.  
 14<sup>th</sup> Jul – Rest day.  
 15<sup>th</sup> Jul – Ascent of 'Skyline Peak' via 'The Bristol Flyer'.  
 16<sup>th</sup> Jul – Helicopter arrives to pick-up Neil Cox.  
 17<sup>th</sup> Jul – Reconnaissance and Gear Haul to 'Northern Sun Spire'.  
 18<sup>th</sup> Jul - Ascent of the 'Northern Sun Spire' by 'A grand day out'.  
 19<sup>th</sup> Jul – Rest day.  
 20<sup>th</sup> Jul – Recovered gear from 'Northern Sun Spire'.  
 21<sup>st</sup> Jul - Ascent of 'The Bastion' via 'Foot loose'.  
 22<sup>nd</sup> Jul – Packing day.  
 23<sup>rd</sup> Jul – Return to mid camp.  
 24<sup>th</sup> Jul – Gear haul. Mid camp.  
 25<sup>th</sup> Jul – Return to Beach camp.  
 26<sup>th</sup> Jul – Gear haul. Beach camp.  
 27<sup>th</sup> Jul – 28<sup>th</sup> Jul – Waiting for boat  
 29<sup>th</sup> Jul – Boat to Constable Point (CNP). Flight delay.  
 30<sup>th</sup> Jul – Flight to Akureyri (AEY). Flight to Reykjavík (RYK).  
 31<sup>st</sup> Jul – Flight from Iceland (KEF) to UK (MAN)

### 3.3 Peaks and routes climbed

**Notes** - Please refer to the expedition map at the end of this report or more details. All summit altitudes and positions were recorded using a Garmin handheld GPS. Our camps in Renland were:

*Beach camp (Sea level) 71° 8'37.8"N, 25°39'53.3"W*

*Mid camp (700m) 71°10'25.2"N, 25°46'40.7"W*

*High camp (1290m) 71°11'14.6"N, 25°51'00.4"W*

#### Summary

Peak	Route	Date	Note
Peak. 1881 (1881m)	'West Ridge' PD- 450m	11 <sup>th</sup> July 2019	1 <sup>st</sup> ascent of peak
Peak. 1763 (1763m)	'West Ridge' PD 350m	11 <sup>th</sup> July 2019	1 <sup>st</sup> ascent of peak
The Bastion (2014m)	'South Gully' PD 45° 450m	13 <sup>th</sup> Jul 2019	1 <sup>st</sup> ascent of peak
The Bastion (2014m)	'Footloose' AD 4c 50° 520m	21 <sup>st</sup> July 2019	2 <sup>nd</sup> ascent of peak
Skyline Peak (2080m)	'The Bristol Flyer' AD+ 5a 55° 480m	15 <sup>th</sup> July 2019	1 <sup>st</sup> ascent of peak
Northern Sun Spire (1527m)	'A Grand Day Out' PD+ III 450m	18 <sup>th</sup> July 2019	1 <sup>st</sup> ascent of peak

**Peak. 1881 (1881m)**  $71^{\circ}10'12.24''N, 25^{\circ}50'52.37''W$

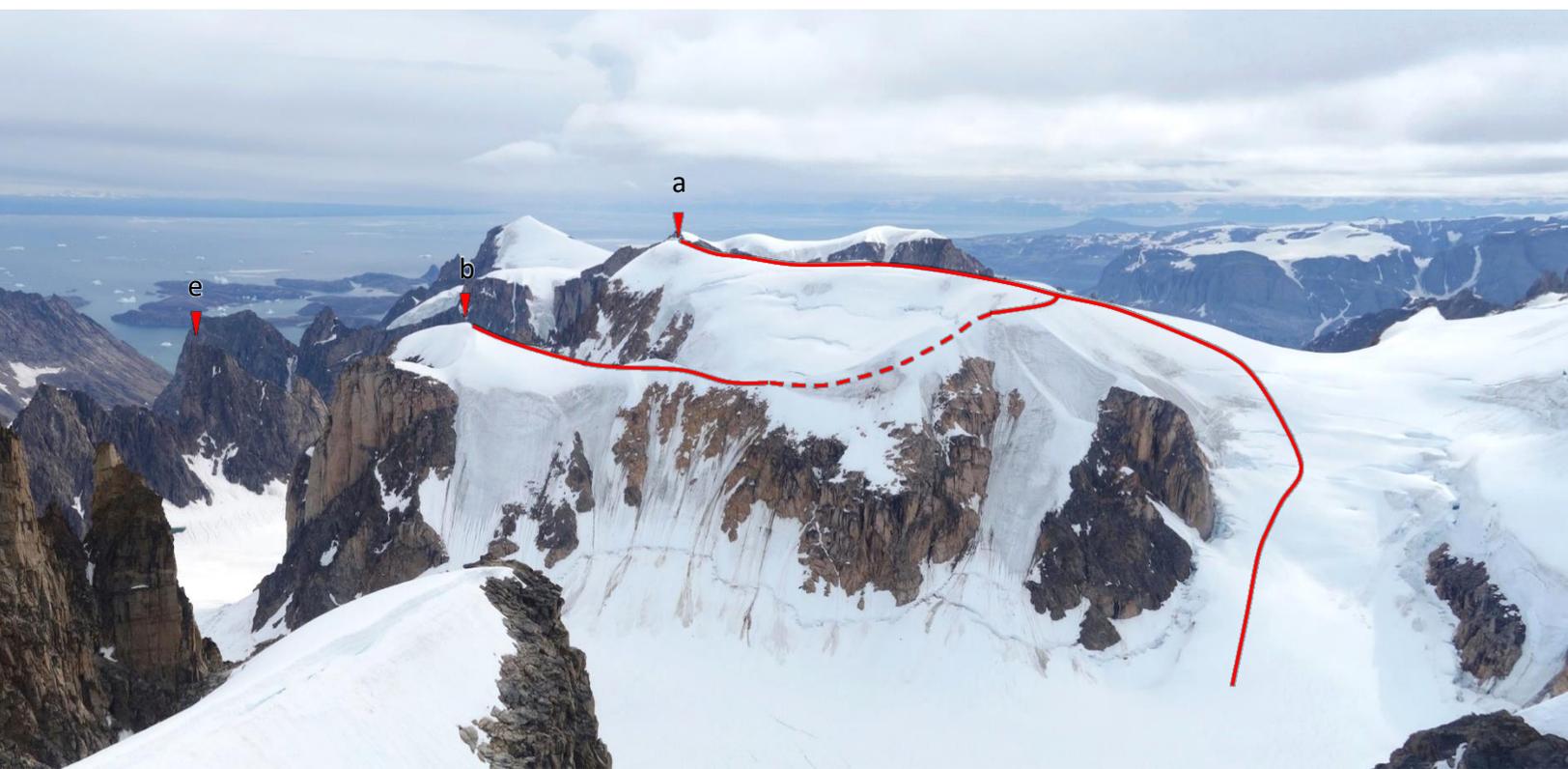
Tom Harding, Niall Newport, Cameron Ree & Neil Cox made the first ascent of the peak on the 11<sup>th</sup> July 2019. This was done alpine style via:

**'West Ridge' PD- 450m** From the valley floor the route zig-zags up moderate snow slopes avoiding a number of hidden crevasses until a wide saddle is reached. Continue easily to the centre of the horseshoe ridge. The right-hand (Southern) 'arm' is followed easily to the summit. Descent: Reverse the route.

**Peak. 1763 (1763m)**  $71^{\circ}10'40.56''N, 25^{\circ}51'25.56''W$

Tom Harding, Cameron Ree & Neil Cox made the first ascent of the peak on the 11<sup>th</sup> July 2019. The peak is a subsidiary peak to Peak. 1881. The ascent was done alpine style via:

**'West Ridge' PD 350m** Start as for Peak. 1881. Take the left hand (northern) 'arm'. Keep circling northwards before dropping down to a series of rocky ledges on the right. These lead to a short but aesthetic knife-edge snow ridge (prominent feature during approach) that can be followed towards the summit. Descent: Reverse the route.

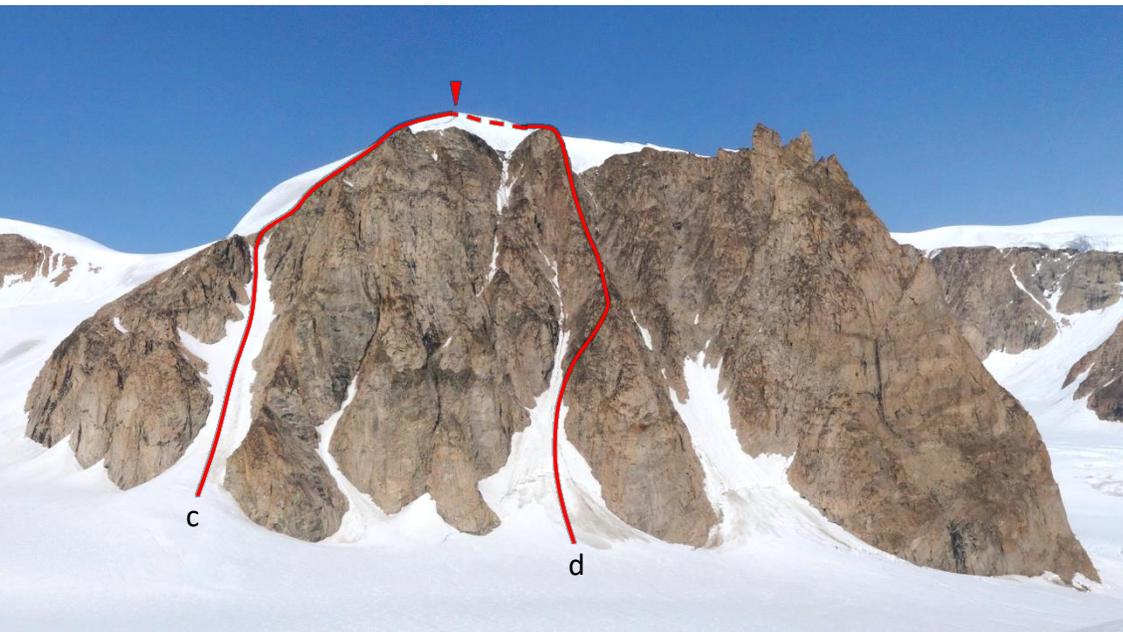


▲ a. Peak. 1881 - 'West Ridge', b. Peak. 1763 - 'West Ridge', e. Northern Sun Spire.

**The Bastion (2014m)**  $71^{\circ}11'17.40''N, 25^{\circ}53'47.10''W$

Tom Harding, Niall Newport, Cameron Ree & Neil Cox made the first ascent of the peak on the 13<sup>th</sup> July 2019. This was done alpine style via:

**'South Gully' PD 45<sup>o</sup> 450m** After passing the numerous projecting rock buttresses of 'The Bastion', head up an easy angled south facing gully. At the top continue rightwards on a steeper ice face to the summit. Descent: The team made an easy walking descent to the north-west before then descending to the main valley.

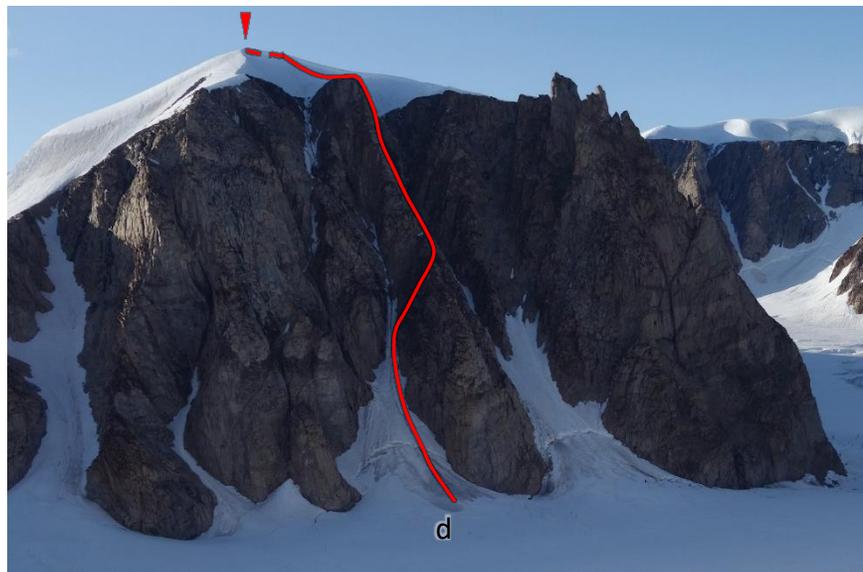


- ◀ *The Bastion (2014m) - c. 'South Gully', d. 'Footlose'*
- ▶ *Nearing the summit of 'The Bastion' (2014m). Many unclimbed peaks in the background.*

**The Bastion (2014m)** 71°11'17.40"N, 25°53'47.10"W

Tom Harding, Niall Newport & Cameron Ree made the second ascent of the peak on the **21<sup>st</sup> July 2019**. This was climbed alpine style via:

**'Footlose' AD 4c 50° 520m** Ascend a large snow filled gully (150m) between rock buttresses until an escape rightwards is possible to a ridge. Follow this (III-4a) with increasing interest until it narrows and forces 4 quality pitches up steeper cracks (4b-4c) to a vertiginous blocky tower (325m). Follow a snow slope to the summit plateau, tunnelling through an obligatory unstable cornice. Descent: The team made an easy walking descent to the north-west before then descending to the main valley.

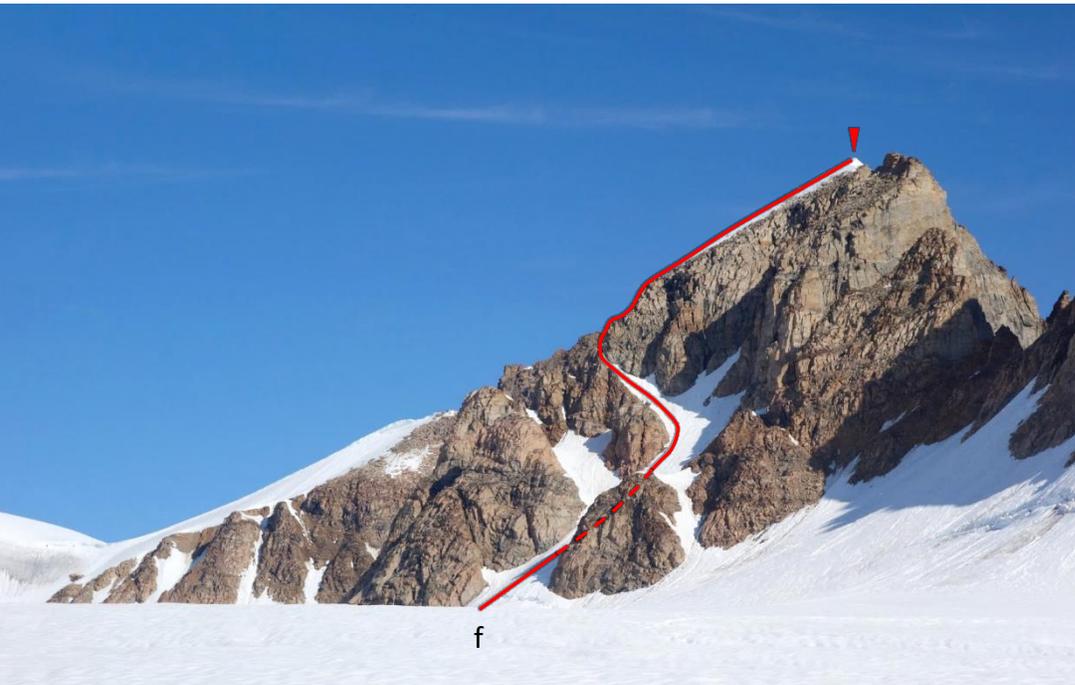


- ◀ *The wild final pitch of 'Footlose' on The Bastion.*
- ▶ *The Bastion (2014m) - d. 'Footlose'*

**Skyline Peak (2080m)**  $71^{\circ}12'44.04''N$ ,  $25^{\circ}53'46.26''W$

Tom Harding, Niall Newport & Cameron Ree made the first ascent of the peak on the **15<sup>th</sup> July 2019**. This aesthetic peak sits at the head of the valley and was the highest we climbed. It is probably the 2<sup>nd</sup> highest in this area after 'pt. 2084m' which was climbed by a previous team in 2012. We climbed alpine style via:

**'The Bristol Flyer' AD+ 5a 55° 480m** Cross the bergschrund up a snow (and later ice) slope, taking the highest left branch (230m) to a picturesque rocky col. Continue directly up the ridge, climbing short steep crack pitches (4b-5a) on fantastic rock until the summit slopes can be gained (100m). Climb easily to the summit. Descent: The team continued along the ridge, down-climbing ice slopes and rock ledges westwards until a 30m abseil was possible over steep rock wall to a wide col.

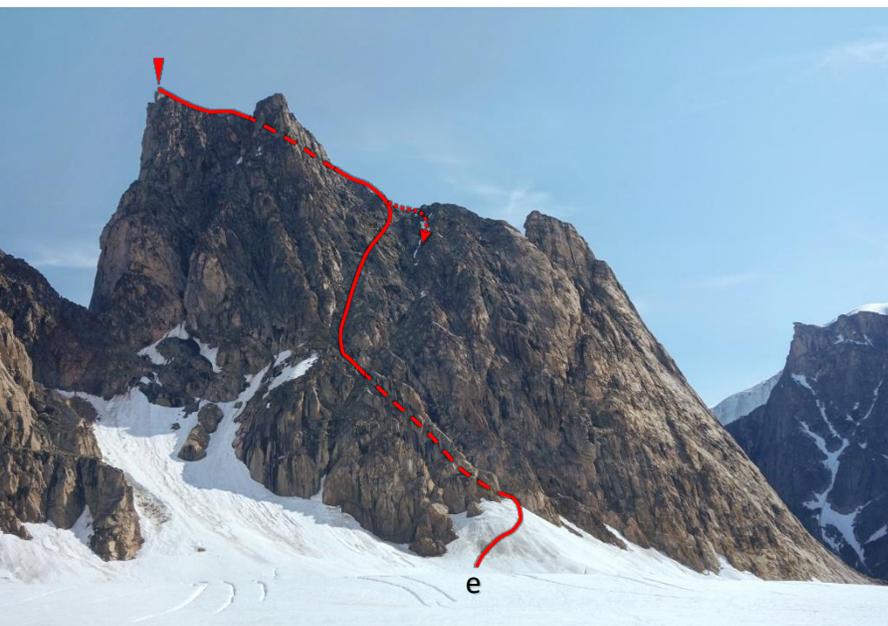


- ◀ Skyline Peak (2018m) - f. 'The Bristol Flyer'
- ▶ Steep wide cracks in immaculate orange granite.

**Northern Sun Spire (1527m)**  $71^{\circ}10'32.10''N$ ,  $25^{\circ}48'37.44''W$

Tom Harding, Niall Newport & Cameron Ree made the first ascent of the peak on the **18<sup>th</sup> July 2018**. Our team found more broken terrain on the West face and climbed the peak alpine style via:

**'A Grand Day Out' PD+ III 450m** A short snow slope affords access to a loose rocky gully which quickly emerges onto the complex west face. Continue up and rightwards via ledges and slabby corners with varying rock quality (II-III) onto the spine of the mountain (350m). A small ledge system on the right improbably weaves to a staggeringly exposed summit that overhangs the east face. Descent: From the summit ridge we spotted a rock and snow gully that, although unpleasant for ascent, brought us easily and more directly back to the loose entry gully. We downclimbed this making 2 x 50m abseils to our start point.



◀ The west face of the Northern Sun Spire (1527m) - e. 'A Grand Day Out'

▶ Looking up the lower valley towards the East face of the Northern Sun Spire and the icefall. - e. 'A grand day out', a. Peak. 1881

### 3.4 Secondary objectives

Tom Harding worked with the Long Ashton Scout group on the outskirts of Bristol to introduce them to expedition climbing. He visited them before the expedition, showing a few slides and got them to 'plan' their own expedition. During the expedition, the team hoped to do a short sat-phone Q&A session, but with good weather back in the UK an outdoor activity had already been arranged. A month after returning to the UK Tom presented a short film and a few slides of what happened on the expedition. The presentations went really well and hopefully it has inspired them to think about something similar in the future.

Niall Newport attended Spaniorum Explorer Scout Unit based in Westbury on Trym, Bristol to put on a presentation of the Greenland expedition prior to leaving. He delivered a talk and slides of how the trip had been organised and what they hoped to achieve as well as taking kit for the expedition to pass around and try on. It was a fun night for the group and helped open their eyes to the world of mountaineering expeditions.

Niall Newport is a professional cameraman and filmmaker and took a variety of cameras, drone and audio equipment with him to produce a short film of the expedition. He captured the entire trip taking plenty of memory cards and charging batteries using solar. He hopes to make a film that can be entered into the film festival circuit before being released to the public domain.

### 3.5 Weather, snow and sea ice conditions

The weather was surprisingly good for the entire trip. Temperatures were generally above zero only occasionally dipping below freezing for a few hours overnight. The wind was on the whole no more than a chilly breeze but more often than not, days were completely still. There were two short periods of bad weather, the first lasting 3 days bringing thick overcast skies, light rain over one night and low daytime temperatures. The second fell at the end of the trip, again bringing overcast cold conditions for 4 days but this time with long lasting moderate rain showers. There was also a moderate breeze which increased the sea state in the fjord delaying our return boat trip.

There was less snow than expected and the glaciers were only snow covered above 1000m. Warm conditions meant the snow was generally appalling and many hours were spent post holing through bottomless slush - particularly while above 1300m. Early starts did not make much difference as the 24-hour daylight and warm temperatures did not allow the snow to consolidate to any real extent. Skis could have proved useful but would probably be impractical with the high snow line but snow shoes would be an excellent addition. The rock was generally snow free, cracks were dry and there was very little seepage.

The break up of the ice in the Scoresby Sund is very fickle. It's influenced both by sea and air temperatures but also importantly, wind direction. On arrival the Sund was completely blocked but just 4 days later it was clear enough for the boats to sail. Two weeks later the area around Constable point had yet again become blocked with ice. Future teams should factor in plenty of time for delays. Current and historic satellite sea ice images for Greenland are published daily and can be found at this excellent website. <http://ocean.dmi.dk/arctic/kangertittivaq.php>

### **3.6 Notes and thoughts on equipment**

**Stoves & cooking equipment** – The team took two MSR XGK stoves and bought 25 litres of 'Benzin' fuel from Nanu Travel. It was a form of white gas and seemed pretty potent. We had provisioned to use 175ml per-person per-day but running water at our lower camps and warm temperatures higher up meant only half this amount was used. The remaining fuel was sold back to the agent. There were problems with the valves leaking under pressure on both stoves, which meant depressurising the fuel bottles and storing them upright after use – no amount of seal replacement and fiddling would stop this suggesting it was a fuel issue.

**Sleeping equipment** – We took two expedition tents, a Hilleberg Tarra and a Nammatj 2 GT. One has a large porch and if you roll away the inner it makes a cozy 'group' tent in poor weather. Original pegs were replaced with snow pegs, and often rocks or ice screws were used to secure them at the lower camps. All the teams sleeping bags were rated to around -20°C, it didn't get anywhere near that cold but they were a pleasure to climb into each night.

**Clothing & Footwear** – General summer alpine clothing was perfect and often the team would be in t-shirts while moving. A big down jacket was appreciated around camp. With the warm conditions and slushy snow, saturated feet were a common problem as well as struggling to dry boots and socks. It was probably the biggest annoyance of the trip. The team had a selection of boots from Alpine style B2's through to B3's with an Integrated gaiter and even vapour barriers but all suffered from the same issue. Plastic bags proved to be the best option!

**Climbing equipment** – Climbing ropes consisted of two 60m triple rated ropes, one 50m half and a 30m 'glacier' rope. Having this much rope proved very useful while hauling gear up the 'Secret Scottish Gully' and provided spares if any got irreparably damaged (they took a battering). Crampons with sharp vertical front points are appreciated as the ice can be bullet hard.

**Skis/snowshoes** - Neither skis nor snow shoes were taken on this expedition but the latter would be highly recommended for future teams. Hours were spent post holing through awful snow conditions and snow shoes would have made walk-ins faster and easier and would probably have increased the number of peaks climbed.

**Electronics & Miscellaneous** – With all the filming and communication gear there were sizable charging requirements. Three solar panels (24W, 20W and 14W) were taken alongside a selection of battery packs, one of which was able to output 240v needed to charge some of the filming gear. Lightweight camp chairs were our luxury item and made rest days at camp a pleasure.

### 3.7 Future objectives

The remaining unclimbed summits that can be accessed from the high camp are generally easy snow peaks. A team on skis could make quick ascents of most of them in a week or so. There is still plenty of potential for both moderate and high-end rock climbs in the area and we saw some great looking lines. The most impressive objective in the valley is the incredible 700m+ East face of the 'Northern Sun Spire'. It was investigated by a team in 2016 but remains unclimbed and will be a serious big-wall. Included below are a few photographs but the team have many more.



- ▶ *The incredible 700m+ east face of the 'Northern Sun Spire'. The objective of the valley*
- ▶ *Immaculate orange granite - the 250m north east buttress of Peak. 1763m*



- ▶ *The complex 400m east face of Peak. 1881*
- ▶ *Many moderate snow peaks to the south-west. The valley containing the Edward Bailey glacier on right*

### 3.8 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) & Austrian Alpine Club (AAC) for their generous support.

For further information please contact Tom Harding.

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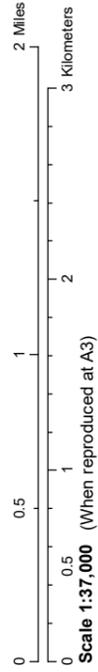


- ▶ *Greenland poppy near constable point at the start of the expedition.*
- ▶ *Cotton Grass near constable point at the end of the expedition.*

# RENLAND, GREENLAND 2019

June 26th - 31st July 2019

Thomas Harding, Cameron Ree, Niall Newport, Neil Cox



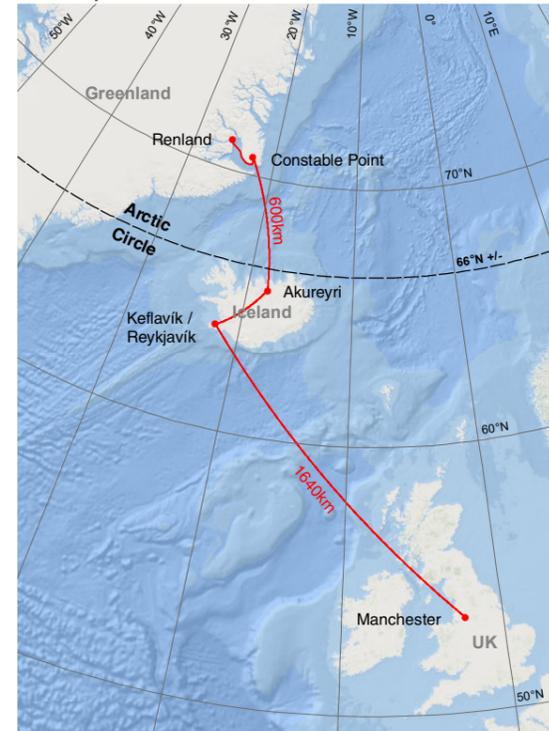
## Final expedition map

A five-week mountaineering and climbing expedition to the remote Arctic peninsula of Renland on the East coast of Greenland. The team of 4 made 5 first ascents and climbed a number of long rock routes. Supported by: Arctic Club, Gino Watkins Memorial Fund, Mount Everest Foundation, British Mountaineering Council & Austrian Alpine Club

### Legend

- - - Access route
- ⋯ Climbing route
- ▲ Peaks (Climbed by team / climbed previously)
- Camps
- ▼ Peaks believed to be unclimbed

### Travel Map



Map produced by Tom Falcon Harding ©  
tom-harding@live.co.uk / www.tomfalconharding.com

WGS 1984 EPSG Greenland Polar Stereographic  
Contours and hill shading derived from the Shuttle Radar Topography Mission captured in 2009. Thanks go to previous expeditions for coordinates and photographs that were used in this maps production.

