



West Lancs Scouts East Greenland Expedition 2012



Preliminary Report

Expedition dates: 27th July – 17th August 2012

Location: Ammassalik area - East Greenland

Team Members

- Stuart Dean
- Phil Haworth
- Ash Green
- Kevin Day
- Michael Moul
- Andy Inglis



Expedition overview

Over the course of 2 weeks of sea kayaking the expedition covered approximately 300 km exploring the Ammassalik area and its surrounding islands. In the main the ice was 'kind' to us and the weather and sea state good.

On arrival at Tasiilaq it became clear after receiving local advice that we would not be able to follow plan A, which was to circumnavigate the island of Ammassalik, as the ice in Sermilik fjord was too thick and very changeable. This was no major surprise to us as the ice maps for the previous few weeks had suggested that this may be the case.

Resorting to plan B we set off up Ammassalik fjord heading for the small fjord of Tasiilaq. On the way we saw lots of water spouts from whales and some whales diving, but no close up experiences! A couple of days paddling and getting into expedition routine saw us arrive at our destination, where we had our first encounter with an arctic fox.

After spending a day exploring the upper reaches of the fjord we headed to Kuummiut in an increasingly strong headwind. Having to wait for the tide to come in gave us opportunity to explore the town and enjoy fresh coffee in the community building.

A small tidal race through a shallow narrow gap saw us reach the hunters hit at Fangsthus for the night.

The next day was spent primarily exploring the abandoned WW2 airbase Blueie East 2 where as well as climbing amongst tens of thousands of empty fuel barrels and rusting vehicles and boilers we came across a family of arctic foxes with young cubs.

Next it was up to the large Karale and Knud Rasmussen glaciers. We were fortunate enough to observe a glacier calving a huge block of ice, the debris from which we had to paddle through on our return a few hours later.

The next couple of days saw flat calm conditions, so we took the opportunity to paddle the length of Ammassalik fjord down to Tivparpik. The highlight of these days was finding a huge whale skeleton! After 10 days paddling we decided to have a rest day in a good location. Unfortunately from that day the weather took a change for the worse. It rained all day and visibility was very poor, so we got a good tent based rest day!

The plan was then to circumnavigate the island north of Kulusuk prior to returning to Tasiilaq. However on receiving a forecast via the sat phone that a storm was on its way on Friday we decided to start heading back. The next 2 days saw poor visibility with thick fog and navigation by compass bearings. However our early return proved to be a good decision as the weather was so poor on Friday that all the flights from Kulusuk were cancelled. Returning 24 hours early gave us an additional day trekking. Four and a half days trekking saw us cross Ammassalik to view Sermilik fjord and walk up a 750m hill to view Tasiilaq and its fjord from a height.



A very busy 3 weeks went with no major injuries or problems.

Summary of objectives

To explore the natural features of the Ammassalik area in sea kayaks with a view to returning to the location in the near future with a larger group of Scouts aged 16+. This would probably involve sea kayaking and trekking, including camping and travel on glaciers.

The area was very interesting to explore. A mountainous landscape with steep sided fjords and a multitude of glaciers of all shapes and sizes. The area has many pros and cons when compared to the other previously scouted area of Scoresbysund. These will be covered in detail in the final full report.

To further develop a pool of leaders experienced in Arctic sea kayak expeditioning.

‘In the footsteps of Watkins’ - to assess whether this longer and larger expedition could involve visiting a selection of the locations and bases explored by the 1930-1 British Arctic Air Route expedition and Watkins last expedition of expedition 1932

This would not be feasible with a youth group as the distances would be too great and the potential issues of difficult and sparse landing areas and finding suitable camp sites may be a problem.

To experience the culture of east Greenland

Visiting the settlements of Tasiilaq and Kuummiut we had a small insight into the lives and issues facing the people in this poor area of Greenland. Some of our observations will be outlined in the full report

To spend 4 days trekking on the island of Ammassalik to assess whether there is the potential for project based work in the future based on mapping and marking trekking routes.

There is potential for this as many of the paths we followed although marked were not easy to follow and many marks could do with renewing. Maps could do with updating.

To assess the feasibility of undertaking simple scientific research, such as bird observations, in the area.

Although only a limited number of species were observed there were enough birds to undertake this task. We also undertook some basic measurements about plant species, number and percentage cover at the air base, the results of which can be seen in the full report, to see if this could be the basis for extra study.

To promote Scouting

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