



# West Lancs Scouts MOUNTAINEERING GROUP

Registered Charity Number 521712

Affiliated to The British Mountaineering Council

Member of the YOUNG EXPLORERS' TRUST



## SUMMER 2015 EXPEDITION TO NORTHEAST GREENLAND

### Preliminary Report

#### Aims

In the autumn of 2011, a small number of leaders in West Lancs Scouts got together to plot the return to Greenland for a month-long mountaineering expedition. The expedition took place in Liverpool Land during July and August of 2015 with the following aims:

- To offer developmental opportunities to young people from the Explorer Scout and Scout Network sections of West Lancs Scouts, and to develop the leadership and organisational skills of the Leaders.
- To experience and explore Arctic wilderness.
- To climb remote mountains – some previously unclimbed.
- To undertake a degree of scientific research and exploration.
- To promote Scouting.



The team of fifteen was made up of the following: five Explorer Scouts; four Scout Network members; five Explorer Scout Leaders; and one Scout Active Support member.

The following districts of West Lancs were represented: Blackpool, Ormskirk, Lonsdale, South Ribble, Preston; plus members from Aberdeen and Glossop!

#### Training



A structured training plan was devised for the team, as a number of the team had only little mountaineering experience. The idea of a training event every season with a particular focus enabled the team to take part in an autumn weekend of first aid training, two weekends winter mountaineering in Scotland, and a summer 2014 training expedition to the Jostedalbreen area of Norway.

The training expedition to Norway introduced the team to heavy expedition rucksacks, long walk ins, camping on ice, and the remoteness of an arctic expedition.



#### Logistics

Due to the small team size of the expedition the logistics had to be downsized, and so the use of a helicopter from Constable Point for base camp equipment was out of the question! Luckily our logistics partner Tangent Expeditions have a winter business called the 'Snow Dragons'. This is a team of snowmobiles based in Constable Point who support winter expeditions to the east coast of Greenland. If we could get our food and base camp equipment organised by March, it could be flown to Constable Point in April, and Snow Dragons could drop it by snowmobile on to the Emmanuel Glacier in the spring. It should then all still be there in July at the start of our expedition.

So that's exactly what we did! In January and February we bagged 360 man days' worth of food, packed 28 airtight blue barrels, and loaded 750kg of food and equipment into the trailer for a flight to Greenland via Iceland.



## Base Camp



Our logistics plan worked like a dream, as when we arrived in base camp all expected barrels were there in good condition. A couple of days were spent building base camp, paying particularly attention to the layout of the sleeping area, the cooking area, the stores, and the 'facilities'.

A bear fence was erected around the sleeping area, and during our sleeping time (which was typically 2pm – 10pm) we ran a bear watch, with pairs completing an hour on watch.

After base camp was hit by a pretty fierce 24hour storm mid-way through the expedition, minor repairs were made to our mountain tents but our homemade base camp tent never recovered.



## Mountaineering

The team were successful in completing 95% of all objectives attempted. The area was found to contain a great number of achievable peaks for a team of our skill level. Easy angle snow slopes and gullies provided access onto ridges, where the rock was found to be loose but manageable. Descents were found to be more precarious than ascents, with a number of rope teams choosing to abseil from carefully selected rock spikes.



The team often chose to 'go as a team' on mountain days, with all fifteen splitting into three or four rope teams each managed by an experienced mountain leader. This whole team approach is reflected in the number of peaks summited, just ten. However, nearly all summits within view of base camp were climbed, the highlight being the highest peak in the area, which was named Aiguille de Scouse. At 1,340 metres it was also a first ascent for the WLS team!

Other first ascents included Abstract (803m), Reiff (1,000m) and Sgurr nan Chumbawumba (1,200m).

## Duke of Edinburgh

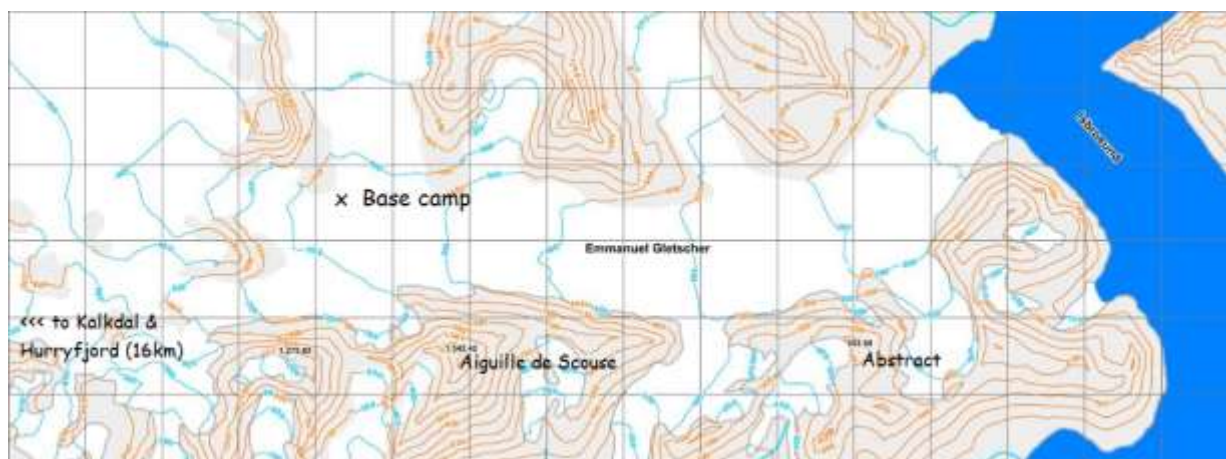
Four of the younger members of the expedition expressed interest in completing their Duke of Edinburgh expedition during their time in Greenland, and we built this in to our planning from the start.

The DofE team conducted their expedition under remote supervision from the leadership team, having a Motorola radio to make contact if required. The route was planned and route cards prepared whilst in base camp and was combined with their walk out from base camp. Needless to say they had quite a lot of equipment to carry! Their journey back towards Hurrufjord also allowed them to undertake their expedition aim, and our whole expedition scientific research, by observing glacial features and measuring lichen found on glacial moraine.



## Financial Report

| <u>Income</u>                                | £      | £               |
|--|--------|-----------------|
| Member contributions                         | 51,776 |                 |
| Central donations                            | 10,864 |                 |
| Gift aid                                     | 8,713  |                 |
| Equipment                                    | 1,897  |                 |
| <b>Total</b>                                 |        | <u>73,250</u>   |
| <br>   |        |                 |
| <u>Expenditure</u>                           |        |                 |
| Tangent Expeditions                          | 49,600 |                 |
| Flights, transport, accommodation in Iceland | 5,480  |                 |
| Training                                     | 11,883 |                 |
| Food   | 2,782  |                 |
| Equipment                                    | 2,054  |                 |
| Prospectus                                   | 370    |                 |
| Final Report                                 | 500    |                 |
| Polo shirts/kneekers                         | 268    |                 |
| Communications                               | 313    |                 |
| <b>Total</b>                                 |        | <u>73,250</u>   |
| <br>   |        |                 |
| <b>Balance</b>                               |        | <u><u>0</u></u> |



## Review

After initially planning the expedition for a team of 30, and going through some tricky phases of re-planning for the leadership team, the expedition came out to be an enormous success.

With such a young team we put a lot of training in and it paid dividends. Yes, we climbed some mountains never summited before. Yes, we experienced the Arctic wilderness (and survived its storms). Yes, we did some scientific research. But the best achievement by far? We took a group a young people and challenged them. We made them into competent and confident mountaineers, who will be our future leaders both in the mountains and in our Scout Groups. I do hope you get the chance to meet them!

Andy Mathers  
Expedition Leader