

Southern Kangerdlugssuaq Expedition 2003



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Southern Kangerdlugssuaq Expedition 2003

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SUMMARY

From 23 July to 15 August eight British climbers visited the mountains on the south side of the Kangerdlugssuaq fjord. Base camp was at approximately 1700m in the snow basin at the head of the Nordre Parallelgletscher and Søndre Parallelgletscher. This was reached using a ski equipped Twin Otter chartered from Iceland. From this base camp a number of sledge trips were undertaken into the mountains in the area. Members of the expedition made a total of 35 probable first ascents of unclimbed peaks during the three weeks in Greenland. Weather was generally very good for the first two weeks with more unsettled weather occurring during the third week.

Paul Walker of Tangent Expeditions organised freighting of equipment and food and accommodation in Iceland. As part of this deal we were offered a rifle which we did not take and pulk sledges, but more importantly a satellite phone, VHF radio, emergency beacon and flares were also included. Paul was extremely helpful and also supplied us with aerial photographs of the area, a useful addition to the maps.

History of the Kangerdlugssuaq Area

There have been two previous expeditions to the south side of the Kangerdlugssuaq fjord at 68° 30' North on the east coast of Greenland. The first in 1990, led by Stan Wooley, was flown in using a ski equipped Twin Otter which landed at a higher elevation further inland closer to the ice cap. The group then divided into two teams which both undertook impressive and independent ski and sledding trips bagging many of the highest spot marked peaks in the area. Realising the potential of the area and the prospect of good granite, Phil Bartlett a member of the 1990 led an expedition in 1998 which landed on the glacier to the north of Redekammen. Members of the expedition climbed that mountain and several to the north west toward the Kangerdlugssuaq fjord.

THE ASCENTS

Most of the peaks do not have spot heights on the map and indeed inaccuracies in the map mean several are not marked at all or their position or heights are incorrect. In general the route of ascent was also used in descent, where there is a significant difference this is indicated. The peaks climbed are mentioned below and marked on the map. Camping spots are also indicate on the map.

- P1 - Camp Peak via the snowy north face, on skis nearly to the top, BD 23/7/03
- P2 - Redoubt Peak, via west gully and north face. BD, BC 24/7/03
- P3 - Barbarian Peak, via SE rock and snow ridge. BD 24/7/03
- P4 - Via SW gully then rock shelf on S ridge. BD, BC, DW 25/7/03
- P5 - Subsidiary summit of Pt 2500 via S ridge from a snow basin. BD, BC, DW 27/7/03
- P6 - North Triple Peak, via SW face and ridge. This was the lowest but best of the three tops to the mountain, the map only indicates one. BD 27/7/03
- P7 - Central Triple Peak, via NW snow ridge from P6, the highest top. BD 27/7/03
- P8 - South Triple Peak, via NW snow ridge from P7, the highest top. BD 27/7/03
- P9 - Circa 1600m in coire opposite Pt 2200m, map is incorrect in this area. Via SE snow and rock ridge. BD, BC, DW 30/7/03
- P10 - Scythe Peak, via NE ridge on snow then via rock to avoid hanging glacier and poor snow conditions. BD, BC, DW 31/7/03

P11 - Via E face in soft snow which stopped BC. BD 1/8/03
 P12 - Blade Peak, Pt 2500m via W ridge. BD, BC, DW 2/8/03
 P13 - Via broad snow S facing snow slope. BD 2/8/03
 P14 - Via rocky south face traversing across from left to right between gullies and following to the top. BD 2/8/03
 P15 - Via E snow gully then north across ledges on the summit rock face. BD 2/8/03
 P16 - NW Crescent Peak, via the S snow face to E col then the E ridge to summit. BD descended by same route BC and DW descended via snowy W face 5/8/03
 P17 - SE Crescent Peak, via the snowy SE ridge. BD, BC 7/8/03
 P18 - The Castle - Via hidden S gully to the snowy E face. BD descent by same line. BC, DW descent via snowy E face 8/8/03
 P19 - Dome Peak, via ski to col between P19 and P20 Pt 2100m the only one marked on the map. Via rock slabs up SE ridge to snow. Poor weather. BD 13/8/03
 P20 - From the col between P19 and P20 via NE snow ridge between seracs. BC, DW, BD 13/8/03
 P21 - Breakfast Peak. Via rocky SE ridge with descent via snowy N side of ridge. BD 13/8/03
 P22 - the Roost, via rock S face. This is marked as one peak with P1 on the map. BD 13/8/03

BB1 - Snow Dome, circa 2260m. Snow peak incorrectly marked on map. PN, PB, CD, GR, MP 30/7/03
 BB2 - Triple Peak, 2260m via SE ridge. MP, PB. 31/7/03
 BB3 - 2240m. Via snow slopes on skis. PB 2/8/03
 BB4 - Via snow slopes on skis. PB 2/8/03
 BB5 - Scorpion Peak, 2350m via snow slopes on skis. PB, PN, GR, MP 2/8/03

Q1 - Snow peak at end of ridge via NE slopes. NP, GR 8/8/03
 Q2 - Pyramid Peak. Snow Peak at end of ridge via S face and SE ridge. PN, GR 11/8/03
 Q3 - Next peak north on ridge from Q1 via NE snow slopes. PN, GR 12/8/03
 Q4 - Snow Peak. The obvious small snowy bump on the ridge seen from BC via SE ridge. PN 13/8/03

M1 - Crystal Peak, 2480m via E ridge. MP, CD, with PB on skis 8/8/03
 M2 - Middle Peak, 2310m via W ridge on skis. PB, MP 11/8/03
 M3 - Curving Peak, 2490m via NW ridge on skis. PB, MP 13/8/03
 M4 - 2310m, via S face on skis. PB, MP 13/8/03

ITINERARY

Flights: International flight Stanstead, UK to Keflavik, Iceland return. Domestic flight Reykjavik to Isafjordur return. Isafjordur to Greenland on chartered Twin Otter.

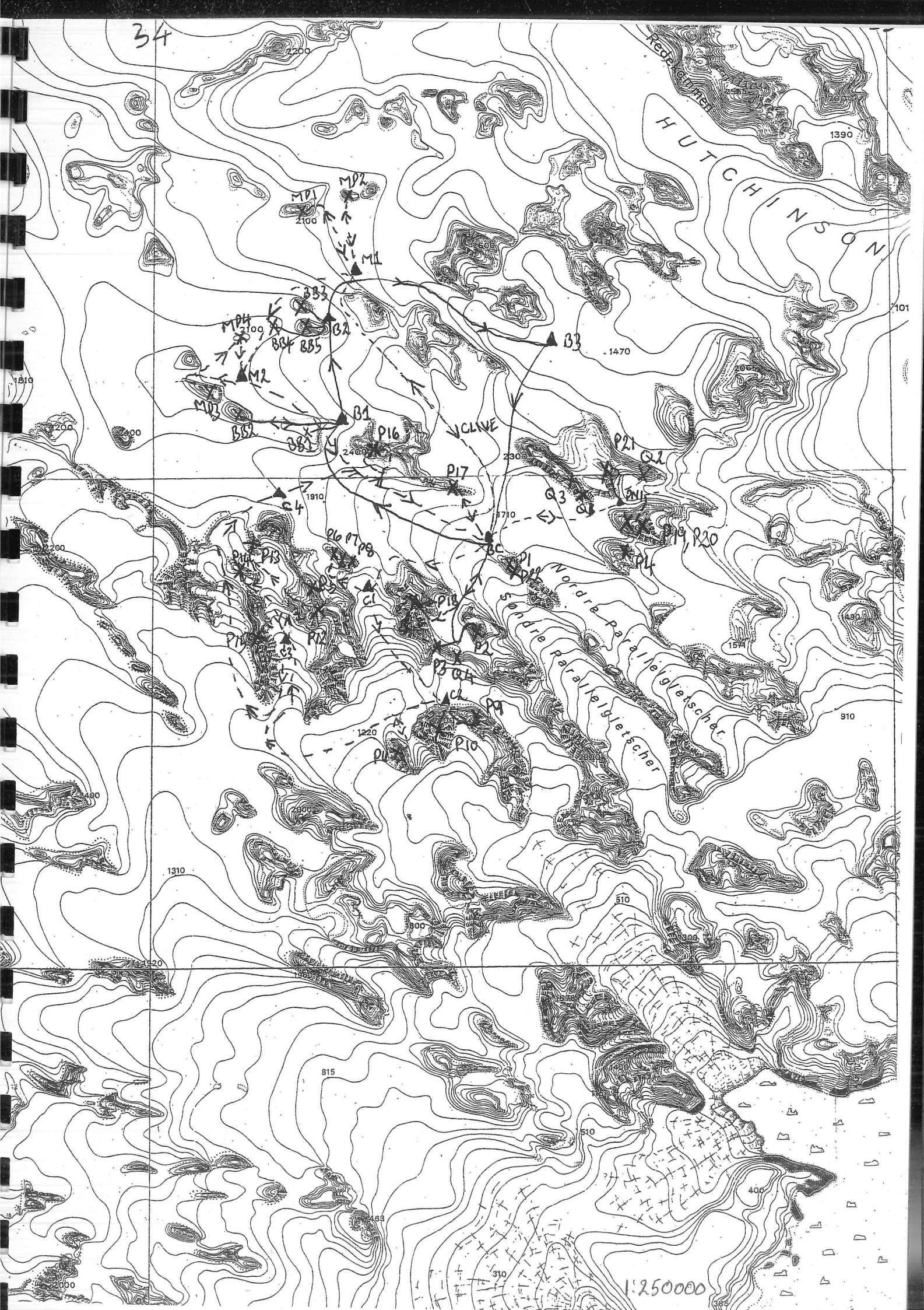
Dates:

7 June Packing weekend for all food and equipment that has to be freighted to Iceland.

22 July Evening flight on new (2003) budget airline Iceland Express. Arrive at Keflavik International Airport and take a bus to Reykjavik and check into Snorri's guest house for the night.

23 July Early start for 7:45 Reykjavik to Isafjordur internal flight. Arrive at 8:25, met Martin Bohl's group who were departing on the flight to Reykjavik, they had had two weeks of good weather. Checked equipment and food that was freighted in June. Arranged gear into two loads and fill fuel containers. We had decided to cook on paraffin stoves, which run well on aviation kerosene. By noon (Iceland time which is GMT) the weather had improved and DW, BD, BC and MP were flown in the first flight to our selected landing site at the head of the parallelgletschers at approximately 1700m (67° 58' N, 34° 06' W). The flight took about 2:15 hours. By 19:30 the second flight comprising PN, PB, GR and CD had arrived and we were left alone. Base camp was established and BD skied up and climbed the final section of a small hill (P1) to the SE of BC. While marked on the map as one peak this is in fact two this one being the highest.

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24 July Exploration of the area. PN, PB, MP and CD headed west up the glacier to the ice cap and checked a glacier to the south that would offer access to the lower elevation coastal ranges.

DW, BD and BC skied into a small glacier basin to the west overlooking the Søndre Parallelgletscher and unnamed glacier to its west. BD and BC climbed a gully then ridge to ascent peak P2 and BD also climbed P3, a good snow and rock vantage point at the end of a ridge.

25 July DB, DW, BC ski to peak SW of Pt 2100 to NE of Nordre Parallelgletscher. Ascend a gully then traverse the ridge on rock ledges below the soggy snow ridge to its summit, P4. PN, PB, MP and CD explore southern tip of Pt 2400 due north of BC.

26 July BC, DW and BD take 10 days food and set off west to access glacier leading to the lower coastal range. Camp at A1 just after descent from col and opposite Pt 2500. In the evening PN, PB, MP and CD attempted peak P17 but retreated from the final ridge because of poor snow conditions.

27 July Depart at midnight to attempt Pt 2500m. Ascend through icefall to snow basin to discover it can be accessed from the glacier to the north and that Pt 2500 has a steep rock ridge on E side. Climb subsidiary summit on ridge to north (P5). BD continues onto climbs three summits of peak to the NE (P6-8). Return to tents for 6am. After a rest move camp down glacier in the afternoon to north of Pt 2200 at A2. Weather deteriorates in the evening with low cloud, rain and snow.

28 July Rain all night and day with glacier in cloud, at A2. BC 500m higher had snow and low cloud. Everyone tent bound.

29 July Rain in the morning gave way to a better afternoon. BD attempted NW rock ridge on peak due east of Pt 2200m, backed off due to poor rock. Camp moved approximately 200m due to worry about seracs. PN, PB, MP GR and CD leave in the evening and pulk overnight to camp at B1.

30 July BD, DW and BC ascend yesterdays peak (P9) via snowy SE ridge. PN, PB, MP GR and CD ascend peak BB1 which is incorrectly positioned on the map.

31 July A 1am start for DW, BC and BD to climb snow gully then a rock ridge to the final summit glacier on Pt 2200 (P10). Poor snow lower down forced use of rock ridge. MP and PB climb BB2 and PN backs off peak next to Pt 2400.

1 Aug PN, PB, MP GR and CD move camp to B2. BD, DW and BC travel to camp A3 with BD stopping off to climb P11 en route.

2 Aug A 4am start for BD, BC and DW to ascend the west ridge of Pt 2500 (P12). BD travelled west across the glacier to check the possible cols marked on the map. Aerial photographs suggested there were rock walls in the way, there were. Peaks P13 and the awkward rocky P14 were climbed. An 8pm start allowed the east facing gully directly opposite the camp then rock terraces to be ascended to the highest point on the ridge to the west of the glacier (P15).

PB skis BB3 and BB4. BB5 climbed by PB, PN, GR and MP with PN, PB and MP going onto ascend BB3.

3 Aug PB, PN, GR, CD and MP move camp to B3. An 8pm start sees BD, DW and BC move camp to A4.

4 Aug MP and PB try (twice) a small rock peak to the NNE of B3. PN checks rock ridge to the NW and glacier to the NE. Pt 1470 on the map appears more like 1600m. DW, BC and BD rest ready for a midnight start.

5 Aug DW, BC and BD ski to Pt 2400 and pass the outward tracks from the other party. Pt 2400 is climbed from the col to the east (P16), BD descends the same route with DW and BC

descending the snowy west face. These three return to BC in the morning and rest. Others return to BC in the evening.

6 Aug A rest day, gear repair and bread baking. A 2am weather check reveals windy and overcast weather so climbing plans are abandoned.

7 Aug Wind decreased but cloudy with some snow. BC and BD leave 11am for the peak (P17) at the end of the ridge due north of BC. Very wet snow, low cloud and some snow during the climb. Weather improved during the day. PN and GR leave for camp D1 in evening. CD, PB and MP head for the plateau and camp F1 at 11pm. BD, BC and DW leave for high rocky peak due west of BC.

8 Aug Peak west of BC (P18) climbed via hidden gully on the south face and snowy east face to a rock ridge. BD descended the same route with DW and BC descending whole of snowy east face and returned to BC to rest. Snow peak Q1 climbed by PN and GR in evening. MP, PB and CD climb M1, PB reaches summit on skis.

9 Aug Woke to low cloud and poor weather.

10 Aug Snow and low cloud for much of the day. In the late afternoon PN and GR ski the glacier to the east. This became heavily crevassed after 3km and did not provide a through route.

11 Aug Weather slowly improved through the day. MP and PB ski peak M2 in the evening. PN and GR climb peak Q2 in the evening.

12 Aug PN skis through col south of Pt 2100 and checks glacier below. MP and PB leave F1 for camp F2 in afternoon leaving CD at F1.

PN and GR climb snow peak, Q3 on SE ridge to Pt 2300. BD, DW and BC descend to Pt 2100 and meet PN and GR in evening. CD heads down glacier and weather starts to deteriorate so continues to BC.

13 Aug BD, BC and DW ski to north side of col of Pt 2100. This is marked as one mountain on the map but is clearly two. BD ascends awkward rock slabs and snow to north summit (P19) in deteriorating weather. BC, DW and BD ascend main summit of Pt 2100 (P20) from the col winding through seracs. Descend to D1 for tea from PN and GR. DW returns to BC, BC climbs Q1 and BD climbs P21 via south facing rock ridge descending via the snowy east flanks. BD returns to the D1 tea stop before returning to BD by 9am. PN and GR return to BC in the evening.

PB and MP attempt M3 during poor weather and retreat. M3 retried on skis in afternoon with success. Continue onto snow nunatak M4 (2100m). MP and PB return to BC in late evening.

BD leaves BC and climbs P22 from the Søndre Parallelgletscher on rock to the final snowy ridge. A colony of white birds, possibly Ivory Gulls seems to live on the hill. PN leaves BC and climbs the snow peak (Q4) on the ridge. Returns to BC at 2am in deteriorating weather.

14 Aug Wake to snow and low cloud which lasts all day. Called Paul Walker on satellite phone in the evening with the weather conditions.

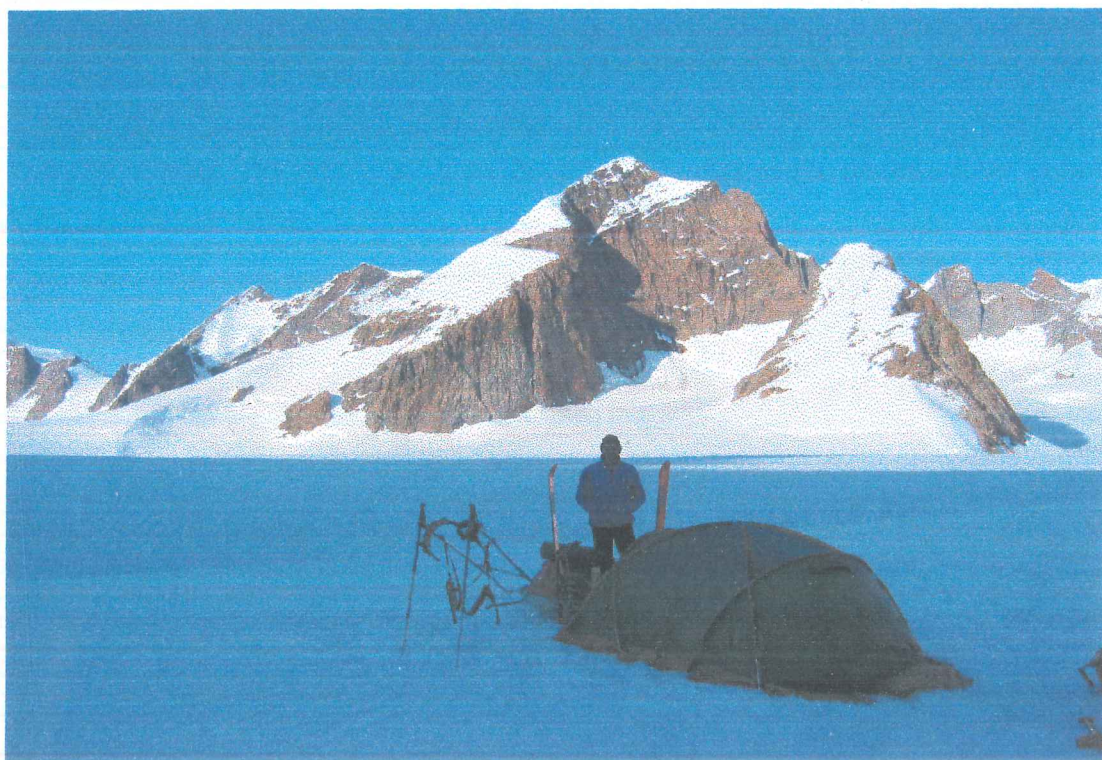
15 Aug Good weather. Contacted Iceland throughout the day on the satellite phone with weather updates. Flew out of BC for Isafjordur at 8:30pm arriving at 10:30pm. Sorted out freight at airport and dried tents. Got a taxi to the school accommodation for the night. Called in at Isafjordur's only bar for a beer before bed.

16 Aug A 6:30am depart for the airport to finish freight packing and catch the 8:40am flight to Reykjavik. This flight and the next were rescheduled into a noon flight due to a football match. Arrive in Reykjavik in the afternoon and check into Flokagata Guest House. Look around Reykjavik and party as it was foundation day in the city.

17 Aug Taxi to Loftleider Hotel to catch the Keflavik airport bus. Return flight to Stanstead.



The Castle as seen from base camp. The top of the hidden gully is above and left of the serac band of the hanging glacier.



The west ridge, the line of the 1st ascent of Blade Peak, point 2500m.

TRANSPORT

For the flight from the UK to Iceland we used Iceland Express, a newly formed (2003) budget airline operating daily Stanstead to Keflavik flights. The internal flights within Iceland from Reykjavik airport to Isafjordur were with Iceland Air. A Twin Otter was chartered for the flight from Iceland to our chosen base camp location in Greenland.

MAPS

Maps of the area produced by the Danish Geological Survey were bought from Stanfords. Aerial photographs of the area were supplied by Paul Walker of Tangent Expeditions.

EQUIPMENT

All equipment and supplies were freighted out from the UK. Pulk sledges with a solid metal trace for pulling were essential for moving around and establishing new camps as were skis. A combination of Alpine and Nordic ski equipment was used, primarily based on what people already owned. Comfortable boots for pulling sledges are the primary requirement. The weather was never particularly cold and no specialist equipment was required. Moon boots or something comfortable and easy to slip on when getting out of the tent are good for moving around the camp. Large snow stakes were useful for anchoring the tents but plastic carrier bags filled with snow and buried also work well.

FUEL

Aviation kerosene burns well in primus and MRS stoves. We worked on 0.5 L per day per person for snow melting and cooking. We took 12 x 5 L containers and from these filled metal sig bottles for general use. This was a generous fuel allowance and still had a significant amount of fuel left at the end of the trip.

ENVIRONMENTAL CONCERNS

A pit was dug as a latrine to contain human waste in one place and prevent contamination of snow used for drinking water. Tins and other rubbish were collected and bagged for return to Iceland. Some paper and cardboard packaging was completely burnt as there was limited space and weight allowance on the return flight.

WEATHER AND CONDITIONS

The weather in Greenland is generally dominated by the high pressure centred over the icecap. This helps force low pressures away from Greenland and so good settled weather is fairly common. The weather was settled and generally very good during the first half of the trip. During the final week or so a pattern of more unsettled weather was experienced. This coincided with the heat wave across Europe. It is possible that the high pressure that must have been present over mainland Europe and across the UK may have been forced low pressure systems further north along the east coast of Greenland so providing more unsettled conditions.

At the beginning of the trip sunset at 00:30GMT and sunrise was at 4:15 GMT. Three weeks later at the end of the trip sunset was an hour earlier and sunrise an hour later.

COMMUNICATIONS

Of the various communications provided as part of the Tangent Expedition package only the satellite phone was ever used. We also had two emergency beacons and a VHF radio which would allow communications with planes flying overhead.

MEDICAL

Bill Church as an MD was our resident doctor and several of the team had some medical first aid training or personnel experience in medical emergencies. The main first aid supply was left at base camp with members carrying a small supply of pain killers, bandages, padding and elastoplasts for use on the hill. The rubbing of boots due to pulling a pulk sledge meant Elastoplasts were the main things used, BD used gaffer tape as it tended to stay on the foot longer and covered a greater surface area. A sterile cleaning kit was used to clean a head wound sustained by BD from a falling rock while climbing a gully up one of the peaks.

Aspirin and paracetamol were brought as moderate pain killers with a small supply of Temgesic as a major painkiller. Ibuprofen was available as an anti-inflammatory. A couple of courses of anti-biotics; ciprofloxacin, amoxycillin and erythromycin, an alternative to

penicillin, were present in the main medical kit left at base camp. Eye patches and amethocaine and chloramphenicol were provided for snow blindness.

FOOD

As the bulk of equipment and food had to be freighted out nearly a month before the trip all the food sent had to be non perishable. For quantities we used the established total of 1kg/person/day. Within this we loosely set amounts for each item in accordance with a list produced by that master of expedition organisation, Dave Wilkinson, marking individual products up or down. A few extra luxuries were transported out from the UK with us including rye bread, sausages, bacon, a few onions, garlic, apples and home made cake. At base camp bread was baked from a ready made bread mix. A few extra days had to be catered for in case of delays in pick up from Greenland. In the event the plane arrived on the designated day. Many of these items were eaten on the return flight to Iceland and as snacks while in Iceland.

ACCOUNTS

Income

MEF grant	700.00
BMC grant	1600.00
Gino Watkins Fund	1200.00
Personal	22750.00
Total	26250.00

Outgoings

Flights, insurance, hire of Tangent Exp. Equip.	22400.00
Expedition food	1000.00
Equipment	1950.00
Travel, accommodation, sustenance in Iceland	450.00
1 st aid supplies	50.00
Travel to Stanstead	250.00
Postage, phone, report copies etc	150.00
Total	26250.00

COPYING

The expedition members agree that any or all of this report may be copied for the purpose of private research. Really interested parties can obtain more information by contacting members of the expedition:

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

For their financial support without which the expedition would not have been possible, the climbers would like to thank the following:

The Mount Everest Foundation
The British Mountaineering Council and UK Sports Council
Gino Watkins Memorial Fund

For generous support with equipment:

Dawn Harrison, Antarctica for tents.
Andy Denton and Catherine Gibson of Mountain Equipment for clothing.
Hugh Banner and Peter Robertson of HB Climbing Equipment for axes and hardware.
Steve Roberts of the Mountain Boot Company for footwear.

For help in gleaning information on the area: Phil Bartlett and Paul Walker.