



# SCOTTISH ARCTIC CLUB

*To Encourage Adventurous Endeavour and Interest  
in the Science, Culture and Protection of the Arctic*

## Newsletter - September 2019

[www.scottisharcticclub.org.uk](http://www.scottisharcticclub.org.uk)

### Autumn Newsletter

**49<sup>th</sup> Annual Gathering and Supper**

**Saturday 16<sup>th</sup> November 2019**

**The Ben Nevis Hotel, Fort William**

**Phone number 01397 702331**

[salesbennevis@strathmorehotels.com](mailto:salesbennevis@strathmorehotels.com)

**Douglas Anderson, the President, writes:**

### Ice Gone

Since we aimed to arrive in Tasiilaq just as the first ship from Denmark discharged our equipment we would invariably fly in from Iceland around the 4th of July. On the flight in I would always contrive to obtain a window seat on the right hand side of the aircraft in order to have a good view of the sea ice up the coast in the direction of Scoresbysund. My observations of the ice would provide important navigational information for any voyage north. The pictures below were taken on one such flight about 10miles out from Kulusuk Airfield. It shows a density of pack ice I have grown to expect based upon thirty five years of similar landings

I first visited East Greenland in 1975 to climb in the Southern Staunings. I have returned to the coast almost every year since. For the last 15 years I and my family have spent up to three months there both spring and summer. In total probably 60 trips.

Since 1982 many of the summer trips have started out from Tasiilaq (Angmassalik as it was then) and headed northwards as far as the sea ice would permit or my nerves would withstand!

Over the years people have asked me whether I could see evidence of climate change first hand. Given that local weather and sea ice cover are variable one year to the next I have generally been reluctant to be totally conclusive. I pointed instead to the map derived evidence of shrinking glacier fronts that I had visited and to broader irrefutable satellite data.

My line of sight observations during the summers of 2018 and 2019 however demonstrate a reduction in sea ice so great and so complete as to be truly shocking.



**10 miles to run**



**Final Approach**

Since 1982 my wife Andrea and I and our two offspring (Leif and Orea) have usually headed up the coast from Tasiilaq towards Kangerlussuaq and Tugtilik, the base of Watkins' last expedition. We typically attempted this journey in the latter half of July when we would anticipate sufficient sea ice on the outer coast to calm the effects of the oceanic swell but for the pack to be loose enough (3-5/10ths) to allow the passage of our Bombard C5 inflatable. Larger vessels would generally not attempt to go this far north for another few weeks.

Over the 35 year period we probably succeeded in reaching Kangerlussuaq less than 30% of the time. However it was this travelling in hope that led to many rewarding adventures. The growing local knowledge, the thrill isolation and satisfaction of navigating each impasse was reward enough.

Often we would find dense pack just a few miles north of Sermiligaq (65 54' N 36 14'W). I would climb onto a promontory of ice smoothed granite and watch the ice move in the strong current. If we forced the next few miles, often we got a good bit further until finding our passage blocked near Depot Island (66 70'N 35 38') where exposure to the open sea crowded ice into a narrow channel.

In those early years on only three occasions did we succeed in rounding Kap Japetus Steenstrup (66 15'N 35 3'W) named "Hell Corner" by Spencer Chapman in his book describing Watkins' Last Expedition (1934 Penguin). The huge cliffs of Hell Corner stick out into the Denmark Strait and it seems as though every ice flow voyaging from the north must crash onto these cliffs as a last act of violence, before continuing on their way south into oblivion.



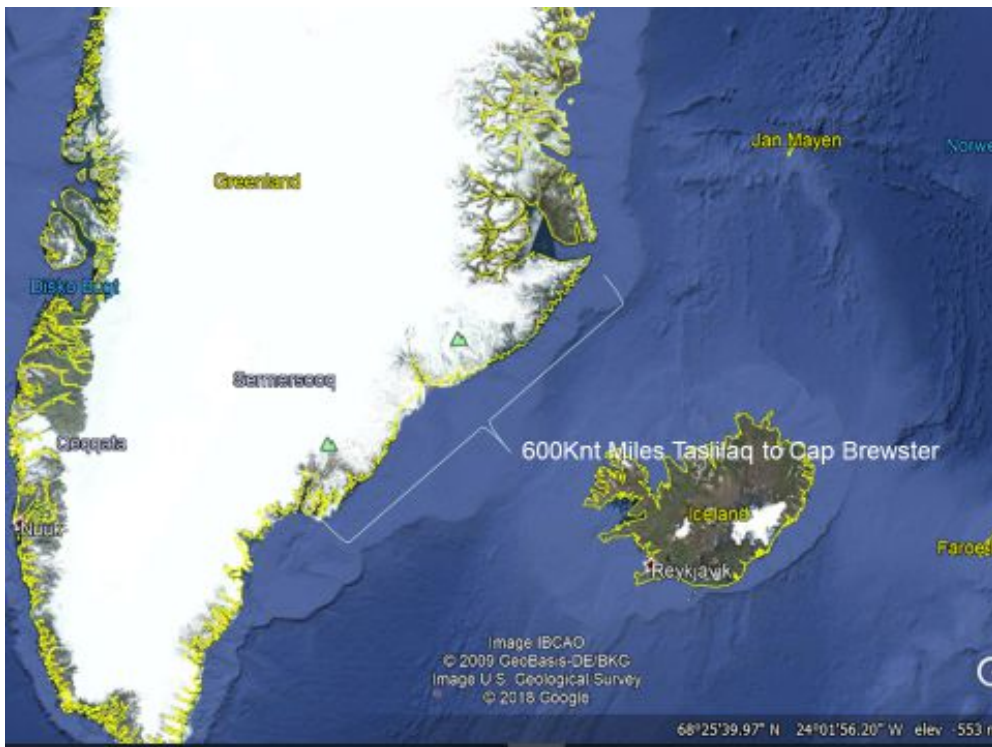
**1997 Just short of Hell Corner in about 6/10ths ice but I see much denser stuff ahead.**



Leif and Andrea think we should press on; however, we have my responsibilities (and my nerves) to think about! Hence we make a strategic retreat.

From Hell Corner it is a further 400NM north-east to Cap Brewster (71°9'N 22°1'W) at the southern entrance of Scoresbysund. At the halfway point lies the remote island of Nordre Aputiteq. We visited it in 2006 aboard an ice strengthened supply ship Johanna Christina to service an automatic weather station

that had taken a beating from a polar bear. It was a very slow and very noisy voyage as we bumped and crashed our way north through heavy pack often making no progress at all.



Nordre Aputiteq still 12hrs of bashing away!



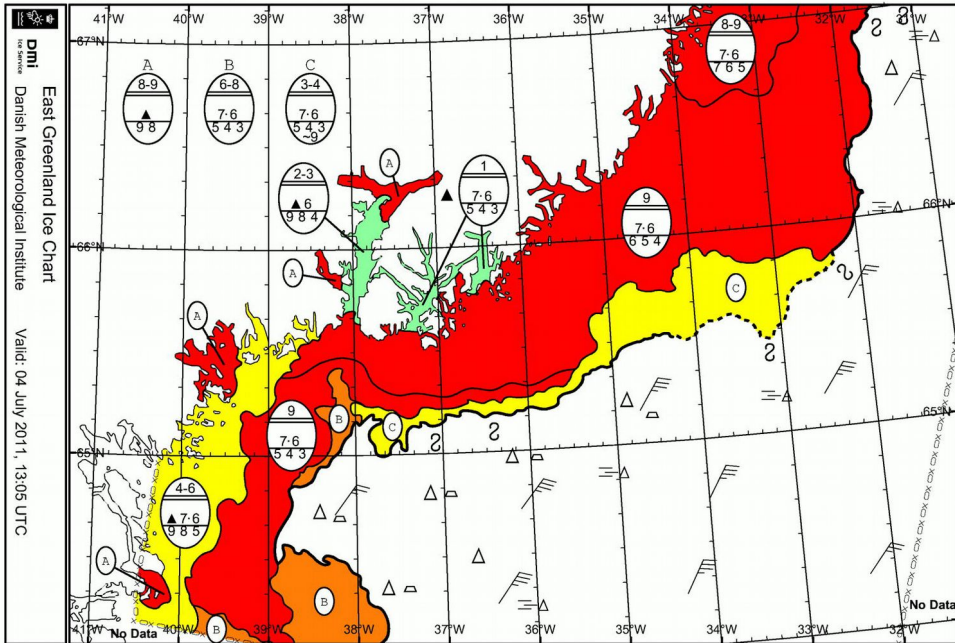
Looking aft

During the months of July and August this stretch of open coast was almost constantly obstructed by pack ice moving slowly southwest on the East Greenland current. We observed that the density of ice could vary even

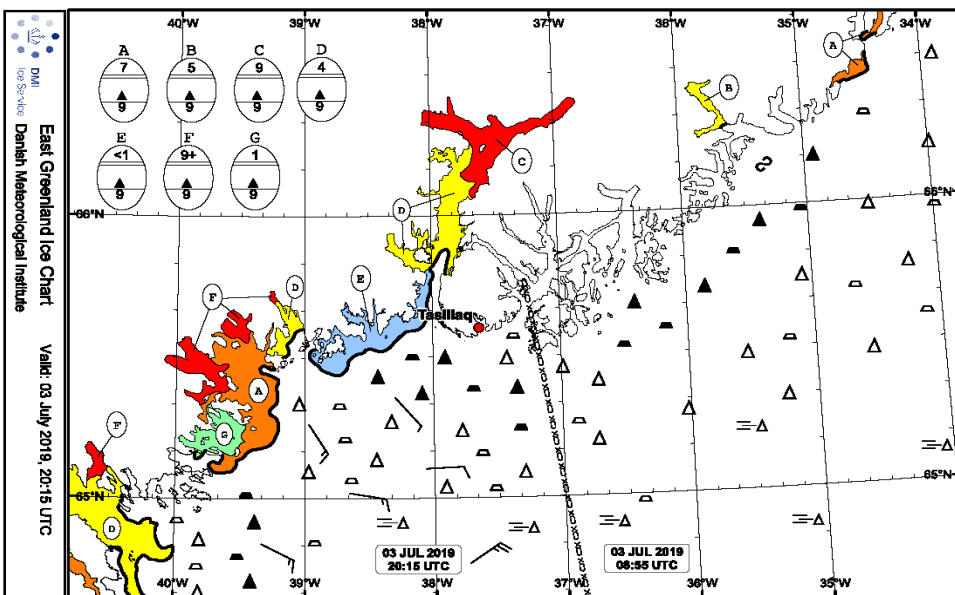


day to day. Sometimes it would be quite open (3/10ths) as the ice dispersed. Often it was very heavy 7-9/10ths as more ice fed in from the Arctic Ocean north of Scoresbysund. Occasionally a gap might open up but there would always be the threat of another slug of dense pack to fill it before many days passed. This could then make travel along the coast tricky or completely impossible for days or weeks at a time.

In early July 2018 during the final approach to Kulusuk airport looking to the north, for the first time ever, there was no pack ice to be seen. It was a disappointment and a shock.



Ice Chart 04 July 2011



Ice Chart 03 July 2019

I regret to report that that scene was repeated again this summer. No pack ice at all. As far as the eye could see the coast was bare. Ice Gone! Gone all the way north from Tasiilaq, clear past Hell Corner, clear past

Aputiteq, no ice all the way to Cap Brewster. It was as I expected but it was still a shock and the more I think about it the more shocking it seems.

## Subscriptions

The annual subscription of the Club became due on 1st September and remains at £5. If you are not attending the Gathering and Supper please complete the short section on the attached booking form and send a cheque, payable to Scottish Arctic Club, to the Secretary or transfer the £5 using internet banking to Bank of Scotland, sort code: 80-06-18 account number 00835858 using your surname and initial as reference. We encourage you to set up a **STANDING ORDER** with your bank to pay your subscription. When you do so, please let our treasurer, Chris Calver, know: ccalver@phonecoop.coop

If you wish to add a donation to the Expedition Fund please complete the other attached form and transfer the amount by internet banking to the Clydesdale Bank, sort code: 82-67-04 account number 20109358 and again use your initial and surname as reference. If you wish to pay by cheque, payable to Scottish Arctic Expedition Fund, please send a separate cheque to:

Sue Fenton, Polldoran, Clachan Seil, Oban PA34 4TJ

Donations made in this way are eligible for Gift Aid, cash donations at the Gathering are not.

## The Gathering and Supper 2019

Our annual meeting is fast approaching. Please complete the attached booking form and that for donations to the Expedition Fund, if you wish. If you plan to attend the Gathering and have not booked with the hotel, please do so as soon as possible: The Ben Nevis Hotel, Fort William, phone number 01397 702331.

At the last AGM the majority of members requested that we return to the Ben Nevis Hotel for 2019. It was not possible to book a different weekend, as we had hoped, so the Gathering & Supper will be on Saturday 16<sup>th</sup> November. The Gathering will start at 2.00 pm with the AGM following about 5.30. Supper at 7.30.

The programme is not yet finalised but two talks will be by: Dave King, who has run dog teams in Alaska and has completed the Iditarod, and Richard Smith who has just repeated John Rae's 700 km trek in search of Franklin (<https://arcticreturn>)

The rate for dinner, bed and breakfast will be £44, with a £14 single supplement (£16 for Friday night), and for those who are not staying in the hotel but wish to attend the Supper the cost is £20. If you are in full time education the Club will subsidise your hotel room by 50% so you will pay just £22; let us know on the form.

## The 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Gathering and Supper 2020

The Hilton DoubleTree Hotel in Dundee has been booked for the Gathering in 2020, a return to the city where the Club was founded. The date is Saturday 7<sup>th</sup> November 2020. Booking will open on the 7<sup>th</sup> November this year and a link to the booking system will be shown at the Gathering in Fort William and will be distributed by email and in the next newsletter.

## Attadale 2019



Mountain avens on the limestone outcrops of Sgurr a' Gharaidh. Photograph by Kathleen Cartwright



Loch Long and Dornie from the Glenelg hills. Photograph by David Stone

Kathleen Cartwright reports on the spring week at Attadale:

We arrived at Attadale this year to find that the area had been experiencing a prolonged drought and water was in short supply. The good weather continued for our stay and there was an added bonus that there was little wind which meant that the kayakers had an excellent week – the best yet, according to Frank and Edda - and managed on the water every day. It was also midge-free enough to let the 22 members who had booked enjoy sitting outside in the early evenings. The gardens were looking lovely as usual but were obviously in need of rain. Most of the walks enjoyed were fairly low level but with some long distance ones. The timing was just right for many of the wild flowers including the mountain avens, orchids and primroses on the limestone outcrops of Sgurr a' Gharaidh and the hawthorn blossom which this year was spectacular. Over the years that we have been going to Attadale it has been interesting to note what the main activities are each year. Initially it was mainly hill and long distance walking then kayaking became very popular, as it still is,



and several people brought their bikes. The big change this year was the number of electric bikes amongst the group – a sign of the times and dodgy hips and knees!

As usual we had three delicious communal meals in Strathan House and between times several of the excellent local cafes and restaurants were sampled.

Early May seems to be an ideal time to visit the area since we seem to miss the large numbers who participate in the North Coast 500 and make driving difficult. We are already planning our 2020 Attadale week. It will start on Saturday 2<sup>nd</sup> May. Hope to see you then.

## **Summer Solstice Meet, 22-23 June**

Stella Spratley reports that the Club held another successful solstice meet, kindly hosted by Myrtle Simpson at her home near Kincaig. As 21<sup>st</sup> June was the Friday, those of us who made it by then, enjoyed watching the sun set from Myrtle's wonderful home. The Ranford family canoed down the River Spey from Kingussie to Farleitter on Saturday and a fine selection of people gathered for a fire and BBQ in the evening, followed by a very impressive slide show from Myrtle.

On Sunday, a canoe expedition was mounted, and we made it all the way to the cafe on Loch Insh, where refreshments were consumed. Suitably fortified we headed up the Spey to swim from the beach. I convinced Mandy that it would be a good idea for us to swim upstream to the beach. Wearing only a swimming costume I made slow progress, but kept going despite approaching hypothermia. Mandy was lovely and warm in her nice thick wetsuit, but was sadly unable to move sufficiently to make forward progress. John mounted a rescue bid, and Mandy arrived at the beach wrapped around the end of his canoe like a reverse figurehead. Magnificent!

The weekend ended with more tea and cake courtesy of Myrtle. Another fine weekend. Thanks Myrtle!

## **50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Expedition: Greenland Summer 2020**

**Stella Spratley provides an update on developments towards next summer's expedition:**

Thirty four of us have now booked flights from Reykjavik to Kulusuk on the 25th July 2020. And four more are arriving by boat. In addition, Craig Mathieson and Hazel and Luke Robertson of Polar Academy hope to be in Tasiilaq at the same time. We have an age range of 76 years and it promises to be a memorable and exciting way to celebrate our 50th year. Activities during the fortnight are not finalised yet, and some people have their own plans, but we are planning to arrange a boat trip to a remote camp during the first week. Some people will walk back, and we are hoping for some kayaking during the second week. There will also be various day trips out from Tasiilaq. There is plenty for us to discuss at the gathering in November. Anyone who wishes to book their own flights and join us, for some or all of the fortnight, will be very welcome.

## **Sir Wally Herbert Painting**

Some time ago, Myrtle and Hugh Simpson gifted a watercolour painting by Sir Wally Herbert to the Club for the benefit of the Expedition Fund. Following an auction open to members of the Scottish Arctic Club and also the Arctic Club, we are pleased to report that the winning bid was from Hugh Mackay who has recently joined the Club and who has been a member of the Arctic Club for longer. As a result, £1001 has been gifted to the Expedition Fund.

## **Welcome to the following new members**

Robert Allison, London  
Tamara Beck-Slinn, Ballater  
Mike Bauermeister, Nairn

Hugh Mackay, Portskerra  
Will Rowland, Nairn  
Rob Thomson, Nairn

**Jim Gregson: The Rapidly Changing Arctic followed by a discussion on Climate Change**



Un-named, unclimbed peaks in the Schweizerland area, East Greenland.  
Photo: Jim Gregson



Looking north towards Petermann Berg, the dark pyramid to the right, taken at 1.00am.

Photo: Jim Gregson

**Tuesday 24 September 2019 in Keswick**

This is a double bill with Jim Gregson presenting his slideshow of numerous expeditions to Greenland 1991-2018, including his latest to North Liverpool Land in 2018, which highlights changes to the Arctic as a result



of climate change; followed by a discussion on the effect of climate change in mountain regions, and initiatives being considered by the AC's new Green Group, the Environment and Sustainability Panel.

**Venue:** The Greta Suite of the Skiddaw Hotel, Main Street, Keswick, CA12 5BL.

Doors Open:7pm. Lectures start:7.30pm The Hotel has a bar serving bar food from 6pm

This is one of the Alpine Club's Lakes lectures. Lectures free to members. Non-members are welcome to attend and are invited to make a donation of £3 to the Montane Alpine Club Climbing Fund.

## **Polar Academy Event**

**Friday 22 November 2019**

### **The Explorers Club and the Polar Academy: Into the Freezer**

Assembly Rooms, 54 George Street, Edinburgh EH2 2LR

at 6.30 pm (doors open at 6.00)

Tickets at [www.usherhall.co.uk](http://www.usherhall.co.uk)

Details:

On Friday 22 November, three of the world's toughest and most seasoned explorers will visit Edinburgh to share inspirational tales and help raise funds for Scottish children's charity, The Polar Academy.

Taking place at The Assembly Rooms, 'Into The Freezer' will be the first time the New York-based Explorers Club has staged an event in Scotland.

**Captain Louis Rudd MBE, Mark Wood and Paul Vicary** will share stories and footage from their expeditions in the Arctic and Antarctica and help motivate their audience by revealing what can be achieved when you push mind and body to the limit.

This exclusive event will be hosted by Scotland's greatest living Polar explorer, Craig Mathieson – the founder of The Polar Academy and a member of the world-renowned Explorers Club.

The speakers will be joined by teenagers from Bathgate Academy who participated in The Polar Academy's latest expedition to Arctic Greenland in April this year and will be part of a documentary being shown on BBC Scotland this October.

The speakers:

#### **Captain Louis Rudd MBE**

In December 2018, the British Army Captain became the first Briton in history and only the second person in the world to successfully trek unaided across Antarctica to the South Pole. Capt Rudd finished the solo 921-mile journey in 56 days.

#### **Mark Wood**

A former soldier and firefighter, Mark Wood has completed more than 30 major expeditions. This has included summited Mount Everest on numerous occasions, an unsupported trek to the Geographic South Pole, followed directly by a 200-mile solo and unsupported crossing of the Arctic Ocean to the Geographic North Pole.

#### **Paul Vicary**

With over 30 years military experience, Paul has undertaken many challenging expeditions to help raise funds for charity. In 2016, he embarked on arguably one of the last and most difficult arenas in the world today, venturing with two other colleagues unsupported to the Geographic North Pole.

The Polar Academy

Founded in 2013, the charity uses exploration of the wilds of Scotland and Greenland to positively transform young lives affected by mental health issues.

## **Christmas shopping!**

Sue Fenton, treasurer of the Expedition Fund, wishes to remind members that the Fund benefits from any online purchases from Amazon if the Amazon Smile site is used. Look for the dropdown menu to benefit Scottish Arctic Expedition Fund. Recently, we made more in this way than in bank interest – every little helps.

<https://smile.amazon.co.uk>

**New members are welcome:** the Club is for people of all ages and nationalities who have an interest in the Arctic, particularly if they have already been, or are planning to travel there. See the web site for an application form.

**The committee comprises:** President: Douglas Anderson, Vice Presidents: Stella Spratley and Noel Williams, Secretary: Iain Allison, Treasurer: Chris Calver, and Committee members: Hans-Peter Grossmann, Elspeth Hamilton, Susie Ranford and Aythya Young

**Secretary: Iain Allison**

**Club email address - [sacsecretaryia@gmail.com](mailto:sacsecretaryia@gmail.com)**

**Web site: [www.scottisharcticclub.org.uk](http://www.scottisharcticclub.org.uk)**

**Club's official postal address: c/o Royal Scottish Geographical Society,  
Lord John Murray House, 15-19 North Port, Perth PH1 5LU**

**Secretary's address: 1/R 13 Crosbie Street, Glasgow G20 0BQ**

**Mobile phone: 0781 244 7808**