

	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>SCOTTISH ARCTIC CLUB</b>  <i>To Encourage Adventurous Endeavour and Interest in the Science, Culture and Protection of the Arctic</i></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>Newsletter - May 2021</b></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>President: Stella Spratley</i>  <i>Vice Presidents: Susie Ranford, Noel Williams</i>  <i>Secretary: Iain Allison, Treasurer: Chris Calver,</i>  <i>Committee members: David Broadhead, Chris Gilmore, Hans-Peter Grossmann, Elspeth Hamilton, David Stone, Aythya Young</i></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><a href="http://www.scottisharcticclub.org.uk">www.scottisharcticclub.org.uk</a></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>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.</i></p>
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### From the President

Hello all. Hope everyone is fit and well and finding plenty to do in these unprecedented times. Fingers crossed that we'll be back to some sort of normal before too long.

Our 50th anniversary celebrations did not proceed according to plan, but we did produce a mighty fine journal. Many thanks to Chris Gilmore for all his hard work, and to everyone who contributed articles and artwork.

Most of us have postponed our Greenland expedition until next summer, but we are hopeful that the Gathering will be able to take place in November. The Ben Nevis Hotel is booked for Saturday 20th November and we hope to celebrate our 50 years a little late, by asking club members to give talks, hopefully covering the entire 50 years.

Personally I am hoping that I'll be released from Cheshire before too long and that I'll make it back up to Scotland by the summer. And that I'll get to see many of you again this year.

### From the Editor

This newsletter is later than I had hoped, but Eve and I moved recently and this has used up a lot of time and energy. Life has settled down a bit now, so here it is.

I am always looking for contributions, so please send them to me at any time. It's an electronic publication so that the number of photographs or the length of the text is not a problem – up to a point! Send them to [chris.gilmore@glasgow.ac.uk](mailto:chris.gilmore@glasgow.ac.uk).

### Attadale

Kathleen Cartwright reports that the new dates i.e. Sat 4th - Sat 11th September. She has been in contact with several of the regular participants who are enthusiastic about the chance of meeting again. If there is anyone else who would like a place in one of the cottages or would like more details, please could they let her know at [arcturus@btinternet.com](mailto:arcturus@btinternet.com) or by phone at 01389 830 485.

## **Scottish Arctic Expedition Fund (SAEF)**

From Sue Fenton:

The fund has been most generously supported this year; as well as members' donations and the auction of a watercolour, the fund benefitted from money received in appreciation of the 50th Anniversary Journal. The Wallace Trust gave the fund £5,000 out of the blue; Myrtle Simpson very kindly asked that donations to the SAEF be made in memory of Hugh, one of the founders of the Scottish Arctic Club. The SAEF received £450 in Gift Aid from HMRC.

The trustees have met remotely this year. Aythya Young and Ashley Buchan 'retired' as trustees and were thanked for all their work on behalf of the fund.

In 2020, Mairi Fenton and Louise Hollinrake joined Kathleen Cartwright (chair), Sue Fenton (treasurer/secretary), Stella Spratley (SAC president), Iain Allison (SAC secretary), Douglas Anderson (past SAC president), Bryan Alexander, Andrea Anderson, Luke Robertson and Pat Duchart.

Thanks to your generosity, the SAEF has been delighted to award grants to three more young people joining the SAC 50th Anniversary expedition to East Greenland - Bethany, Lucy and Fraser. The fund also awarded a grant to Mark, one of the crew rowing the Northwest Passage; this ambitious expedition has been postponed until 2022 but is undertaking a training row from Newcastle to Stromness in Orkney in June, following the route of the original whalers and paying homage to Dr John Rae.

The trustees have kept some funds in reserve, anticipating a post-covid surge in applications for 2022! Trips funded in 2020 and still to go into the field, hopefully this year, include Zeki's reindeer adventure in Southern Greenland, Glasgow University's ornithological field trip to Iceland, Ellis' artist-in-residence in a NW Greenland museum, and Susie's children to join the SAC expedition.

Should you still wish to donate to the fund, the SAEF has its own bank account, separate from the SAC, as it is a charity, SC046857

Bank details; Scottish Arctic Expedition Fund. Sort code: 82-67-04 Account number: 20109358 Bank: Clydesdale, Oban

\* If you wish to claim Gift Aid, please ask for a form, or email with details of address. Email:

[scottisharcticexpeditionfund@gmail.com](mailto:scottisharcticexpeditionfund@gmail.com).

### **Evelyn McNicol**

Members may not have heard of the death of Evelyn McNicol. Allan and Evelyn were long-standing members of the Club. Allan died in December 2019. We send our condolences to their family.

On a personal note, I always enjoyed meeting up with Evelyn and Allan – they were great company, always interested in the activities of other and had an abiding passion for the Arctic.

## A Message From Upernavik by Andy Mackinnon

The message, in a plastic Coca-Cola bottle, was found on Baile Sear beach in North Uist, in the Outer Hebrides, in 2006, amongst the multitude of plastic flotsam swept onto our shores. I was on a regular flotsam foraging beach walk, collecting flotsam for a marine litter awareness project, when I spotted something different about this plastic bottle. Inside, written in English, but mostly barely decipherable due to UV exposure, was the story of an unsuccessful hunting trip in Baffin Bay high in the Arctic back in 2004, by Niels Berthelsen, from Upernavik, north west Greenland. (Niels shot this video at the time of writing the message <https://vimeo.com/392203314>). The message, which had probably travelled at least 7000km to reach the shores of North Uist, began:- “13.06.2004 01.00pm The north of Upernavik - 75.38.16 north, 61.25.36 west - We are some hunters from Upernavik who live’s about 3000 people. We are trying to hunt beluga whale. We have not catching a whales right now....”

The hunting wasn’t good for Niels and his fellow hunters that year. The glacier ice is melting at a rapidly accelerating rate, and traditional ways of life are disappearing with it. Habitat change, warming seas and ice melt has shifted the migratory ranges of many animals on land and sea. Niels wonders what hunting there will be when his youngest daughter Eva grows up. The old ways are useless now. Everything is disconnected.

But everything is connected. Our carbon emissions heat the planet. The polar icecaps melt. Sea level rises. Everywhere.



*Lines - tidally activated LED light installation at Taigh Chearsabhagh, North Uist*

Every year the western shores of Uist are eroded with increasing storm surges. and projected sea level rise is already threatening sustainability of life in low-lying islands such as Uist. The latest analysis predicts sea level rise of over 30cm by 2050 if global heating continues unchecked. Will that make life in low-lying islands like Uist impossible in the future?

Taigh Chearsabhagh Museum and Arts Centre in Lochmaddy on North Uist, where I work as arts curator and UistFilm director, is already unable to develop on its shoreside site due to predicted increased storm surge levels. An LED light installation around the building activated by the incoming tide, specially commissioned from Finnish artists Timo Aho and Pekka Niittyvirta, raises awareness of the issue. The artwork is a very simple and effective visualisation of the issue of rising sea levels and has been seen online by millions around the world.

After years of frustrating attempts to make direct contact, I finally spoke to Niels by phone in 2018 and in September 2019 I travelled to Upernavik to retrace the voyage of the message, to meet Niels and his family, and to start the process of making a documentary film about resilience in the face of the climate crisis in two very different island communities.



*Niels Berthelsen in Upernavik*

My three-week visit to Upernavik, and many surrounding island communities, was a fantastic experience as I got to know Niels and his family and find out about the issues affecting life in north west Greenland. I learnt that the reality of the climate crisis is different for everybody - many in Upernavik area are ambivalent about warming seas, as it currently has made a huge positive economic impact through a booming halibut fishery.

It is hoped to complete the film in time to premiere at COP26 in Glasgow in November. Watch the trailer for the film here <https://vimeo.com/373345751>

### **Ammassalik in April, 1997 by Louise Hollingrake**

No words needed except to note that when the Club's 50th Anniversary Expedition visits next summer, it will have been 25 years since my visit.









### **Climate-change stories by Susie Ranford**

1. During Joe Biden's first day in office as the USA's new President, he signed executive orders to bring the US back into the Paris agreement, halt oil drilling in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge and revoked a permit for the controversial Keystone XL oil pipeline.

<https://www.positive.news/society/positive-news-stories-from-week-3-of-2021/>

2. Switching to cleaner shipping fuels could halve climate-warming black carbon in the Arctic, says Sian Prior of the Clean Arctic Alliance. Ships typically burn the cheapest and dirtiest fuels. These produce high levels of black carbon which reduce the albedo of snow and ice, absorbing heat and accelerating melting. Switching to cleaner fuels or installing particulate filters could reduce black carbon emissions by around 44%.

<https://www.climatechangenews.com/2021/03/18/shipping-industry-can-halve-climate-warming-black-carbon-arctic/>

3. Britain recorded its greenest day ever In April 2021 with the National Grid recording just 39g of CO<sub>2</sub> for every kilowatt hour of electricity. In 2020 the country went 68 days without coal and Carbon Brief reported that our 2020 greenhouse gas emissions were 51% below 1990 levels meaning we are half-way to meeting our net-zero target. This November the 26th Conference of the Parties (COP26) takes place in Glasgow to accelerate climate action.

<https://www.positive.news/society/positive-news-stories-from-week-14-of-2021/>

<https://www.positive.news/society/what-went-right-in-2020-the-top-20-good-news-stories-of-the-year/>

<https://www.carbonbrief.org/analysis-uk-is-now-halfway-to-meeting-its-net-zero-emissions-target>

<https://ukcop26.org>

4. Marine litter is one of the most pervasive problems across the Arctic. The Icelandic Chairmanship of the Arctic Council put a focus on marine plastic and the Council will publish a Regional Action Plan in May.

<https://arctic-council.org/en/news/a-sneak-peek-on-the-regional-action-plan-on-marine-litter-an-interview-with-co-lead-author-elizabeth-mclanahan/>

<https://pame.is/projects/arctic-marine-pollution>

5. This year's Arctic sea ice maximum topped out at 14.77 million square kilometers on March 21st 2021. This ties with 2007 for the seventh-lowest annual maximum. 'We've been below normal for a long time now, and this is the new normal,' said Mark Serreze, director of the US National Snow and Ice Data Center. 'As far as sea ice goes, the old Arctic is gone.' In February, the ice-breaker *Christophe de Margerie* set a record for the earliest voyage through the Northern Sea Route north of Siberia. Arctic ice levels during 2020 were at their second-lowest ever and an August 2020 report in the journal *Nature Climate Change* argues that the central Arctic could be ice-free during the summer by 2035.

<https://www.arctictoday.com/relatively-low-maximum-arctic-ice-extent-part-of-the-new-normal/>

<https://overthecircle.com/2021/03/04/feedback-loop-the-voyage-of-the-christophe-de-margerie-and-its-aftermath/>

6. The April 6th election in Greenland may have a global impact. Greenland has the world's biggest undeveloped deposits of rare earth metals used for magnets and batteries in wind turbines and electric vehicles. Voters in Greenland are split between wanting to boost their economy and fear that mining will contaminate fishing grounds and drinking water. The party elected, Inuit Ataqatigiit, say that the controversial Kvanefjeld mine in South Greenland will not go ahead.

<https://www.arctictoday.com/greenlands-elections-next-week-will-be-watched-closely-by-the-global-mining-industry/>

<https://overthecircle.com/2021/02/09/opinion-the-kuannersuit-mining-project-impacting-greenlandic-and-international-politics-for-a-decade/>

### **UK Parliament establishes cross-party group dedicated to Greenland**

A news item appeared in the High North News and The Polar Connection about the creation, in November 2020, of this group. The press release stated:

The UK Parliament has become the first in the world, outside the Kingdom of Denmark, to create a special group specifically focussing on Greenland.

Last Friday (13 November), Parliamentarians from across the UK political spectrum including the three largest political groups at Westminster – the Conservative Party, the Labour Party and the Scottish National Party – joined forces to form the first All-Party Parliamentary Group for Greenland (APPG Greenland). The aim of APPG for Greenland is to strengthen the UK-Greenland relationship on matters political, economic, social, cultural and scientific. It aims to raise greater awareness about Greenland within the UK and promote closer cooperation with the Greenlandic parliament (*Inatsisartut*), which was established in 1979 after Greenland obtained Home Rule from Denmark. Greenland's current status is as an autonomous constituent realm within the Kingdom of Denmark.

The chair of the group is SNP MP Brendan O'Hara.

Interestingly, the Group has 8 members, 5 of whom are SNP MPs. It has one chair, one secretary, one treasurer and 6 vice chairs! It had its first meeting on 13 November and press releases appeared a few days

later, links below. The other members are:

Andrew Rosindell, Conservative MP for Romford;

Cat Smith, Labour MP for Lancaster and Fleetwood;

Drew Hendry, SNP MP for Inverness, Nairn, Badenoch and Strathspey;

Carol Monaghan SNP MP for Glasgow North West and

David Linden SNP MP for Glasgow East.

Alex Sobel, Labour MP for Leeds North West, was voted in as Secretary, while

Gavin Newlands, SNP MP for Paisley and Renfrewshire North was elected Treasurer.

The group unanimously supported the appointment of the London-based Arctic-focused think-tank *Polar Research and Policy Initiative (PRPI)* to provide the group's secretariat. Theirs is the polarconnections website listed below.

<https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm/cmallparty/201216/greenland.htm>

<https://polarconnection.org/uk-parliament-establishes-greenland-appg/>

### **Gardening at 78°N – A summer spent researching the effects of climate change on vegetation in Svalbard by Lia Lechler**

What can tiny plants, with flowers not bigger than half a fingernail, tell us about the impacts of climate change on the high Arctic? Not much, I thought at first, but after spending my summer researching the effects of extreme weather events on ecosystem functioning on the Svalbard tundra, I couldn't believe how well species such as *Salix Polar*, *Bistorta vivipara* and many others can indicate the change that is happening in the surrounding environment. From June to August this year, I joined Post-Doc Mathilde Le Moullec from the University of Science and Technology in Trondheim, Norway as well as several students from the biology department in the valley of Adventdalen, conducting daily measurements of soil temperature and moisture, vegetation reflectivity and phenology stages. This all was conducted under the hypothesis that increasing global warming causes more rain on snow events during winter, encasing Arctic flora in a thick ice layer rather than an insulating snow cover. It is suspected that this will not only have an effect on the vegetation locally but influence the whole interconnected food web. Originally, as many other expedition plans this summer, I was very uncertain whether I could even fly into Norway under the current circumstances, but as I then finally took my first breath of fresh Arctic air at Longyearbyen airport following two weeks of quarantine on the mainland, I couldn't believe my luck. After completing the Arctic safety training from the University Centre in Svalbard, including the compulsory rifle shooting course, I was good to go.

A typical day in our research team usually occurred as follows: get up early in the morning, still quite confused as we never really succeeded in getting accustomed to the midnight sun, check the weather forecast to see how many layers we needed today, run frantically between the cabin and the car to make sure we have definitely packed everything we need for data collection and polar bear protection in the field, then drive the little Toyota Corolla with the cracked windscreen and the missing wing mirror down the gravel road into Adventdalen to walk several kilometres to our field site, conduct all daily measurements whilst occasionally lifting our noses out of the vegetation plots to have a look around with binoculars for unwelcome, furry white visitors, drive back later afternoon after all data has been collected, either put data into the computers or process samples in the UNIS lab, run to the local shop, Butikken, to grab some groceries before it closes, make a nice, warm dinner and fall into bed very tiredly from wind, occasional sun,



snow, hail and generally just being at the fresh air the whole day. On free days, there was no time for rest, but to explore all that Longyearbyen and its vicinity had to offer during the summer. This included restoring the cabin on top of the mountain Nordenskiöldtoppen, fishing for cod and haddock from the kayak just off Bjørndalen coast, watching a polar bear mum and her cub from a safe distance in Hiorthhamn and occasionally just going into town for a cold beer of an evening.

The scientific results of this year's field work will be published next year, with data indicating an delayed onset in the growing season with compensated primary production later in the summer as well as reduced leaf sizes and weights. And climate change? Yes, we definitely felt it at the hottest day ever recorded at Svalbard (21.7°C), conducting our measurements in T-shirts and walking barefoot on the tundra. It will be very interesting to see the results of this research and highly beneficial for drawing inferences about other Arctic ecosystem functioning. All in all, it was a fantastic experience, and I cannot thank Mathilde Le Moullec and Brage Bremset Hansen from NTNU enough to let me join their team as well as the Scottish Arctic Club for generously supporting this incredible opportunity.



*The field team and Inuk, who definitely thought it was way too warm for the Arctic, in front of the experimental vegetation plots in Adventdalen, Svalbard. Photo: Mathilde Le Moullec*





*Bistorta vivipara*, one of our main study species, in full bloom. Tiny, but beautiful at a closer look. Photo: Lia Lechler



Furry visitors at our study site, deeming our research not relevant enough for themselves. Photo: Lia Lechler





*One of the absolute highlights of my time in Svalbard. Seeing a polar bear mother with her cub from the sea kayak off the coast of Hiorthhamn. Towards the end of summer, polar bears tend to come closer towards the settlements in search for food. Photo: Lia Lechler*

Lia was awarded a grant from the SAEF for 2020.

### **Nuggssuaq Peninsula, West Greenland, 1978 by Gavin Stewart**

The following account is of the stravaigings of eight people, back in the early days of SAC, and brought together by John and Kathleen Watson. The group consisted of Hugh Montgomery, Ruth Cruickshank, Averil and Gavin Stewart who tentatively asked if they might include Pat and Brian Duchart. John and Kathleen and Hugh had previously been to East Greenland. The Watsons did almost all the organisation which in those days was by post and telephone while we concentrated on finding lightweight equipment. However, moleskins and Jamet duvet still had their place!

13 July and six of us gathered in Copenhagen for the flight to Sondre Stromfjord. It was an interesting flight with good views of Norway, Faroe Islands, bits of Iceland and the Greenland icecap. At Sondre Stromfjord it was raining! The next day we decamped and made our way down to the coastal ship the *Disko* for our three day voyage to Umanaq. The voyage was characterised by the mixed weather of the Davis Strait, the first iceberg and the towns of Holsteinsborg, Egedesminde, Godhavn and Jakobshavn; all had much litter and dogs by the hundred. Each night we slept in the passageways of the ship which proved comfortable enough. Not until our third morning did we see the spectacular island of Umanaq, and to the starboard side the mountains of the Nuggssuaq peninsula that we hoped to explore. It was a shining day. The harbour was choked with gleaming ice and it required a launch to get us to dry land where we had to sort ourselves out, buy quantities of food, explore the possibilities of getting a boat to take us south to the mainland, and of course await the arrival of Brian and Pat. Just beyond the edge of town we found

ourselves a camp site near the town reservoir.



*Approaching Umanaq Island*

We had three nights on the island during which we shopped for food, storing a big sack in the local hospital. John spent time exploring how we might get a boat, finally making contact with a local Danish architect who was fluent in no less than eight languages and who was prepared to do the job. For most of us we had quite a lot of time to spare and botanised, entertained local children, and several times a day listened for the 5000 dogs which would howl in unison when the fish factory hooter went off.

Thursday 20th July and we finally packed up and got all our gear down to the pier, then to await the arrival of Brian and Pat who were due to arrive by helicopter late afternoon rather than the morning as scheduled. However, this delay allowed us to drop in on a ceremony by the local church whereby the town celebrated its 250th anniversary with the presentation of a large anchor. Come 5:30, under grey skies and a rising wind we finally sailed, chugging slowly through the ice out into the fjord. We were landed on the mainland beside a river which provided non-glacial water and where there was a *fangsthus*, or hunters' bothy, and which became our communal kitchen/dining room. We quickly pitched our tents, The wind was still rising and storm clouds threatening.



*John, Ruth, Kathleen, Hugh, Pat, Brian, Averil Umanaq Island From fangsthus camp*

The next couple of days were spent exploring our immediate surroundings. For part of the time five of us went up the valley of the Kuk river to explore possibilities. Come the third day we all decided to climb the local peak above us called Qilertinguit. The weather was good and having set off about midday it took us some eight hours to reach the summit at 2060m (6760 ft). The views and evening light were glorious. We were back in camp by 1:45 am.





*On Qilertinguit looking to Umanaq Island      Point 2090 directly above Averil*

Not surprisingly the next day was a rest day when we each did our own thing, and we were entertained by a group of husky pups who delighted in pestering Hugh who was sleeping out and still in his bag. They stayed for 24 hours. Next day, refreshed, Ruth, Hugh and Averil went west along the coastline to the small village of Qaersuit to seek out some more food, and hopefully book a boat for our later return. Mission successful, they returned in a local boat with an outboard motor in the company of two Inuit whom we entertained with coffee and pancakes. Meanwhile, John and Kathleen had been up to the glacier, found a camp site and also taken some food with them, as we planned to move up the valley the next day.

We often did things in smaller groups, and it would be impossible to log all of our activities, so I have chosen to record in detail one day out with Brian that gave especial pleasure.

“Peak 2090, or 2237 according to which map is used, had attracted my attention during our first reconnaissance. Quite apart from being the highest summit in the range, it was also perhaps the most elegant. Its flanks lay some 5 miles up our local glacier, and our first view showed a high, rounded summit of snow and ice, with one broad ridge sweeping widely to the north-east, while another gracefully sinuous snow ridge ran north towards us, ending abruptly in a broad sweep of cliffs which dropped 1800 feet to the main glacier. Both sides of this ridge were flanked by deep corries and icefalls. The cliff was split by a great gully. It was this last feature which straightaway struck me as being the key to a very fine expedition - namely to reach the north ridge directly by this gully, traverse the summit and return over, or round, Peak 1705. I had a little chat with Brian.

Some days later we moved camp up the valley and as we pitched the tents, I casually asked Brian what he fancied. Three hours later, at nine in the evening, I bade farewell to a warm sleeping bag and we set off for the glacier snout. The air was crisp and cool, the sky a faultless blue.

The journey up the glacier was tedious. The terminal moraine was a horrid jumble of unstable boulders, sand and clay. After three miles of this we moved onto the medial moraine and had to endure an orgy of mud. Only the last mile out of the five was reasonable. All this time the lowering sun had slowly been turning the shadow of Qilertinguit from the ice and cliffs in front until the entire mountain was bathed in the midnight glow. At 1 am we walked into the sunlight.

Having calculated that the best time to tackle the gully was early morning, when it would be in shadow, we bivouacked at its base.

At six with crampons on, we set off, working the chilly cramp out of our muscles. The gully was an ice shoot

of Alpine proportions, not steep but rising smoothly for 2500 feet. It was several hundred feet wide. Conditions were good, and mostly we were able to follow lines of snow between great streaks of bare ice but occasionally our points were biting thinly. We soloed. The gleaming glacier below steadily receded and after an hour and a half we emerged into the sunlight. We rested.



*Brian above the top of the gully of Point 2090*

The two miles of the north ridge were a delight of sun and hard snow. One steeper rise sharpened to a narrow crest with spectacular drops on either side, and we roped for 400 feet. Views were fabulous - we were surrounded by an array of summits resplendent with cascading ice, while across the deep blue of Umanaq Fjord, studded with icebergs, lay countless more peaks and the ever present vastness of the inland ice, all crystal sharp in the Arctic air.

The north-east ridge, our way down, was really a glacier, and after Brian had nearly fallen down a couple of hidden crevasses we roped until we reached the col. In contrast to the perfect snow on the ascent, this here had become soft and mushy in the sun and we kept on dropping in to our knees. Our tiredness had long dispelled any ideas of traversing peak 1705 as well, so instead we moved round the west side of it, across a plateau of basalt gravel sprinkled with the bright hues of bluebells, saxifrages and poppies. Then down a long gentle snowfield, down through the tundra flowers in the evening sunlight, and down to the glacier snout once more. When we got into camp we were delighted to find Hugh with a hot supper. Twenty-four hours, seven thousand feet, sixteen miles - an unforgettable day."

29th July: we had all enjoyed resting the previous day, the warm sun, the views and pottering around botanising. Now John, Kathleen, Ruth and Hugh set off to explore the right fork of the glacier, taking biggish packs for they expected to be away for 36 hours or so. Averil and I decided to go that way also. Once properly into the right branch the views were spectacular. Soaring cliffs and pinnacles rose on both sides, together with ice falls. We went for about 5 miles to an altitude of about 850 m. By late afternoon it was time for us to turn back.

Next day the weather was turning, with clouds gathering and a strong wind coming from the fjord. A lazy day then the other four returned having reached Point 1960 at the head of the glacier's right-most branch. The bad weather had arrived during their descent.

First of August and it was time to return to the *fangsthus*. That evening, we were joined by our Danish friends Alfred and Anna who came to say that the fifth was the day of the annual kayak race from Umanaq

to Qaersuit: We entertained again with pancakes, coffee and this time 12-year-old Glenlivet also. We noticed that the snow buntings were flocking.

5th August, a brilliant day with cloudless sky and the air sparkling; the epitome of what one dreams an Arctic day should be. Up at six, ready by nine and waiting for Alfred's boat. After some delay a speedboat came overbearing Alfred and friend: apparently his boat had propeller trouble and so he had arranged for the police boat to take six of us, while two went back on the speedboat. Averil and Pat shot off (to do the shopping) while the rest of us crossed more leisurely enjoying complementary coffee and beer. Back in Umanaq there was a general air of excitement and in the harbour there were eight boats lined up for the race. Most were canvas but one certainly was sealskin, complete with its buoyancy bladder and seal hunting rest on the front. All used wooden paddles. The race took about three hours - and a roll was mandatory at the finishing line! That evening there was a bit of a party with Alfred and Anna.

Next morning was cloudy with a rising wind. Nevertheless four of us went to see if we could climb the mountain, traversing across the west face of it to a stony gully near the north end. We got some way but the climbing was not attractive and neither the weather.

7th August and our day of departure. We spent most of it wandering around town, amongst seal carcasses (hooded seal) and meat. Later we watched two men skinning a seal and had the honour of being offered raw seal's liver still warm - we all took a bit - and enjoyed it, the texture was smooth and the taste fairly strong.

The time of departure arrived and we boarded the *Disko*, along with a group of children heading for Copenhagen for schooling, so there was a large send-off. The siren blasted, we moved off while a flotilla of speedboats streamed along beside us and a fusillade of shots echoed around the bay. A fitting finale.

### **Finally**

As covid-19 restrictions continue to ease, we plan to hold the postponed 50th Anniversary Gathering and Supper at the Ben Nevis Hotel in Fort William on Saturday 20th November. Accommodation bookings may be made by phoning 01397 702331.