

# Field report from the journey to Northeast Greenland in the summer 2000

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*In the summer Nanok has erected a historical collection over the "Trappers Era" in the "Hotel Karina" hut near Sandodden.*

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[Danish version](#)

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## Introduction

Nanok can look back on yet another good summer where we succeeded in reaching most of our aims. Three Nanok teams were sent off, with a total of 11 participants, to carry out the following tasks:

1. To furnish/establish a cultural historical collection in Hotel Karin at Sandodden;
2. To complete the restoration started in 1999 of "Hoelsbu" and to restore hunting cabins in the South area;
3. To do maintenance work for Peary Land Fonden of runway and buildings on Kap Harald Moltke and Brønlundhus in Pearyland as well as a status report for the maintenance.

Tasks 1 and 2 were carried out as planned and are mentioned later in this report.

Unfortunately, it proved impossible to carry out task 3 due to conditions beyond NANOKs control.

Our plan was to go to Station Nord onboard a RDAF C130. The team arrived as planned in Keflavik, but after some days the flight was cancelled due to problematic weather conditions at Station Nord.

The team therefore investigated the possibility of chartering a private plane to Peary Land, but this was not feasible within Nanok's limited budget, wherefore the team had to return to Denmark without success.

All in all, however, the weather and ice conditions were favourable for Nanok's work.

Northeast Greenland was this summer marked by many different activities, not least in connection with Sirius' 50th Anniversary. The undersigned himself had the pleasure of being among the invited guests, and we take this opportunity to congratulate Sirius once more and thank for good co-operation the previous years, as well as wishing the Sledge Patrol and its staff a stimulating and safe journey onwards.

We also wish to thank all our sponsors and contributors, Greenland and Danish authorities, and every individual who has shown us kindness in any way or made it possible for us for ten consecutive seasons to send Nanoks to Northeast Greenland to restore on a voluntary and unsalaried basis the old historical buildings on the coast.

These ten seasons have confirmed a new notion of Nanok. We visualised this identity in the past winter by presenting our new logo (see the cover of this report) which symbolises "The polar bear keeping watch over the hut".

On behalf of Nanok

Peter Schmidt Mikkelsen

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## **Field Report from Karina Team**

### **Task:**

To establish a historic collection inside and in the surroundings of the hunting station "Sandodden" with its adjoining buildings.

### **Participants:**

Claus Vahlkvist and Bent Zwergius. Both former Sirius men.

### **Report:**

The team left for North East Greenland by way of Iceland on 12 July and arrived at Daneborg late in the afternoon, after an overnight stay in Reykjavik and touchdowns at Constable Pynt and Mestersvig. We were well received by the Sirius personnel and CH/Sirius invited us for dinner. Nice to see that hospitality and helpfulness are still given priority in spite of the changes that have taken place on the Coast.

For Claus it has been forty years since he was here last, so there was much to look at.

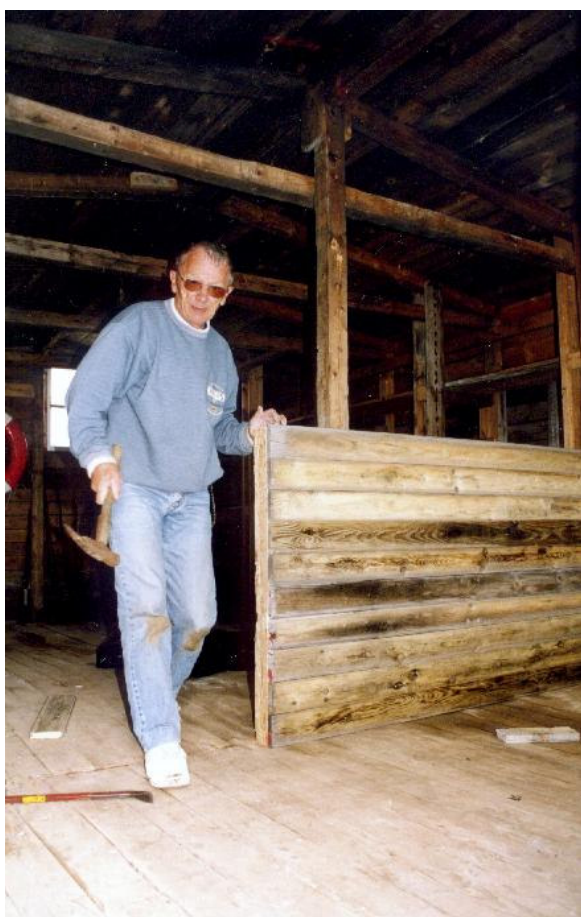
We moved into "Sandodden" which had not changed since Bent was here last in 1995, but the place needs a thorough overhaul to remove the traces of "modernisation" that have taken place through the years.

The next day, we proceeded with the task we had come for - to organise a historic collection. Not in "Sandodden", which is used as quarters by Nanok crew, but in "Hotel Karina".

"Hotel Karina" was built in 1938 as winter base for Elmar Drastrup and Finn Kristoffersen, who had planned to drive north around Greenland to Thule, beginning in the spring of 1939. For this purpose, the house was arranged with a small bunk room with two bunks and a coal stove. The room and the stove were latest used for habitation in the summer of 1960, where we had to evacuate Sandodden to give room for some of the weather station crew that had become homeless when their station burned.

But that was long ago. The bunk room and the stove have long since been gutted, and Sirius has for many years used the house for storage of boating gear. After the construction of the boathouse, this need no longer applies, so we could begin.

And so we did.



*Left: Claus. The first phase was a partial renovation create the illusion of a hunting station.*

*Above: The old paint is being removed.*

The first phase was to reconstruct the bunk room up to a point, to create the illusion of the indoors of a hunting station. Fortunately, Sirius was very helpful in finding old boards that could be fitted without disfiguring - lending us tools, transportation etc., so the work progressed rapidly.

The night between 17 and 18 July, the wind rose to a full gale - 45 knots in the gusts - and the snow whipped down, so in the morning the ground was covered by 8 -10 cm of melting snow, and we gave a hand gathering the bitches and puppies indoors. The rest of the week, we had muggy weather with

rain and sleet, so it was nice to concentrate on the indoor chores.

By the weekend it cleared up and we were offered a lift to Zackenberg, so we could see if there was anything there of use to the "museum". Off we went in the patrol's rubber dinghy, and late in the evening Claus and I were left alone there with some cleaning materials and some cans of paint. Plus provisions from Sirius.

We had six wonderful days where Greenland presented itself from its most beautiful side - and that means real beauty. Sunshine 24 hours a day, the fjord like a mirror (with wolf tracks on the beach), lots of hungry char and nice talks with the committed scientists at the ZERO-station on the other side of the river. And a pretty female cook, who brought cake to the two old grandfathers messing around on the old hunting station. Yes - the lack of civilisation was bearable.

We found the things we needed for the collection, and at the same time we gave the station a much needed overhaul.

Back at Sandodden we just needed to give the finishing touch to our small historic collection, which naturally will be referred to as "the museum", and which we honestly are a bit proud of. It is an old dream that at last after quite some difficulties comes true. And no doubt in the last moment, a lot of the artefacts have already disappeared. Some is thrown away as trash when a cleaning squad arrives, and some is taken home as souvenirs by the many guests visiting the National Park.

When you visit the old hunting stations today and look around in the living-rooms and the sheds, you get to wonder. Where are the pretty green kitchen lamps that adorned the cabins. They can't all have been worn out, because they had already been hanging there for 20-30 years when we last saw them. Where are the Aladdin-lamps, that shone like a 60 watt bulb and gave off a good heat too. Where are the reindeer furs and the wooden boots, where are the old rifles and all the ammunition which was stored with the tools, lamp chimneys, nails, screws, oil cans, coffee mills etc. Gone with the wind?







*Photos: Interior from the historic collection in "Hotel Karina". Now the Coast has a small unimpressive collection that can tell future generations of overwintering guests about the hard and free life some few tough men lived here years ago, in their constant struggle with nature to wring from it a livelihood.*

Now the Coast has a small unimpressive collection which can tell future generations of overwintering guests about the hard and free life some few tough men lived here years ago, in a constant struggle with nature to wring from it a livelihood. A struggle they lost, but their effort contributed to keeping this part of Greenland in the kingdom, and that should be cause enough for a small museum.

We held a small inauguration the evening before the ship arrived - one beer per man - and a few days later we flew home. But before that we managed to visit the former Norwegian main station Myggbukta - and we could ascertain ourselves, that it is in very fine condition on the outside from the renovation in 1999, but indoors it could need a loving touch and a few cans of paint.

We would like to thank everybody who helped us. Many thanks to those who through the years have collected artefacts from the Coast and deposited them at "Sandodden", and to those who returned their own "souvenirs" to the collection, and finally and especially thanks to the Sirius personnel without whose never failing interest and enormous helpfulness this project would never have succeeded.

Heartfelt thanks!

Claus Vahlkvist and Bent Zwergius.

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**Field report from "The South Team"**

**Task:**

The primary task of The South Team was to finish the restoration of the hunting station "Hoelsbu" in Moskusoksefjord. If time allowed, the team was supposed to repair the hunting cabin "Halle" or other hunting cabins on the way back to Mestersvig. The restoration of "Hoelsbu" was commenced in the summer of 1999 but could not be concluded. The needed repairs were extensive and the time sparse, as ice conditions delayed departure from Mestersvig.

**The South Team**

The crew this year consisted of four persons: Jannik Berntsen, who was on "Hoelsbu" in 1999 and who took part in restoring "Kap Peterséns" in 1998. Carsten Thordal, who took part in restoring "Hochstetter" in 1998. Lars Nielsen, who was to see The Coast for the first time. Søren Andersen, who participated in restoring "Hochstetter" in 1996 and 1998.

**The trip up and back**

We arrived from Akureyri to Mestersvig after a stopover on Constable Pynt 26 July. It was the first time we accomplished this trip in a Fokker 50, with a lovely stewardess, attendance and all. A sign of new times on The Coast !

The departure from Mestersvig took place on 16 August with Metro directly to Reykjavik and return to Kastrup 17 August.

**Preparation and departure**

Niels Lindegaard from Nanok had been a month on Mestersvig and had prepared a lot of stuff on our vessel "Agsut". So all that was necessary was to make equipment and stores ready and to launch the ship from Nyhavn. With the usual big help from the crew on Mestersvig, we were ready to sail after two days. After a somewhat cumbersome loading due to lumpy water, we could leave Mestersvig 29 July in the afternoon heading towards Ella Ø. The ice in Kong Oscar's Fjord had broken a fortnight before our arrival and the forecasts were for good conditions in all fjords.

**The trip to Hoelsbu:**

During the trip to Ella Ø there was a short stop at "Kap Peterséns", which Jannik had helped restore in 1998. On the way we passed the Sirius vessel "Ulla" on her way to Mestersvig. We had a bit of restless sea so all we got to do was wave. We learned later that they had a damaged engine, but they seemed in fine spirits.

At 3 a.m. we touched at Ella Ø, having sailed through Narhvalsund. We put up in the carpenter's workshop and next day we could say hello to Martin from Sirius who was alone at the place. After a pleasant stay with Martin and having gathered some more material, we continued the trip through Antarctic Sound with a short stay at the cabin "Bjørnheimen", where a team of geologists from Oslo University were staying in tents. The cabin is in reasonable condition but deserves some repair at a later opportunity.

The weather changed suddenly as we entered Kejser Franz Joseph Fjord, which meant that we had to anchor in Blomsterbugten. Dinner was served in the shelter of "Varghytten", which is in bad shape but still repairable. Wood has to be brought along for one of the cabin walls which is completely gone.

The following day the weather was calm and the fog had cleared. We had one of the prettiest passages of our trip, with a mirror-like sea across Nordfjord and until Moskusoksefjord, where the

wind returned. On the trip we visited "Ragnhilds-hytten" on the east side of Grejsdalen. The cabin is in reasonable condition but could still be restored if planking for the floor and door could be brought up. The cabin is nicely situated, surrounded by 4-5 incredibly well-preserved Eskimo winter huts.

## Hoelsbu

At 7 p.m. 1 August we anchored off the hunting station "Hoelsbu".

The following days persistent work was done putting new roof felt on the remaining part of the station. New shutters were made and most of the woodwork was painted. The station's famous signboard was redrawn, so the text is visible once again.

The weather was very changeable with rain, strong winds and fog. Another problem was the lack of drinking water. The area was bone dry without streams, so we had to fish for ice floes which were melted on the stove. Not bad, when the evening's ration of "malaria medicine" had to be taken. A delicious sound of small bubbles exploding.

After five energetic days we could fulfil the task with a fully restored Hoelsbu. We also had time, though, to search the area in hope of finding Knut O. Brandal's grave, but unfortunately without result. We would have liked, on behalf of his family, to leave a token of greeting for Knut, who at 35 years of age died of a pierced appendix in 1933, and was buried west of the station by his 23 year old comrade.

Due to the bad weather we decided to give up "Halle-hytten" and in stead try to restore a hunting cabin on the way back. Therefore we departed, heading towards Strindberg, on 5 August.



*Above: The southern side of Hoelsbu was in hard need of mending.*

*Below: Jannik and Carsten put new roof felt on the roof.*



*Above: The original signboard from 1930 has been painted up and hung in place.*

*Below: Hoelsbu is now fully restored and a fine example of one of the old Norwegian hunting stations in Northeast Greenland.*





## Strindberg

On the way to Strindberg we sailed close to the 17 km wide Waltershausen Glacier, which was a great experience. At Strindberg we settled down in the incredibly well preserved expedition house from 1931, which is built as an A. The hunting station "Strindberg" itself looks quite derelict from a distance, but indoors it is in very good condition and deserves to be maintained, if not for any thing else then for its important historic value.

The two days stay on Strindberg were used washing and nursing minor ailments. The dinner was of course freshly caught char - five kilos was the record. The weather had by now changed to roaring sunshine, and the musk ox wandered about cooling themselves in the river bed.

## Kap Ovibos

The trip continued the morning of 7 August in fresh wind. On the southernmost point of Strindberg Land, we anchored off "Kap Ovibos hut". It was in miserable condition. Large parts of the roof's felt and the door were gone, and the entrance had collapsed and was full of sand. The weather was fine and the spirits high, so we decided that the Ovibos hut should be restored to its former glory.

Diligent work was done attaching new felt, a new door was made and set in place and the window was repaired and a shutter fitted. It was a great pleasure to leave a fully renovated hut on this beautiful spot for the polar bear hunters from Scoresbysund and the lads from Sirius.



*The Kap Ovibos hut before and during restoration.*



*Persistent work was done attaching new felt, a new door was made and set in place and the window was repaired and a shutter fitted.*



*Above: The restored Kap Ovibos hut. It was a great pleasure to leave a fully renovated hut on this beautiful spot for the polar bear hunters from Scoresbysund and the lads from Sirius.*

### **Heading towards Ella Ø**

After a long and cold voyage, the next stop was the cabin "Polarheimen" on the north side of Sues Land. The cabin is in excellent shape, so there was not so much to be done here. Two men slept in the cabin and two on the ship. It was a short sleep though, as the wind suddenly rose strongly. After six hours we managed to fetch the two on shore so the trip could continue. But the further voyage through Antarctic Sound was a sheer pleasure, incredible how the weather can change.

On 9 August in the evening, we could moor at the quay on Ella Ø. Many thanks to Torben and Andreas who served real meat for us and wine made from real grapes.

### **Vælddalhytten:**

On 10 August we sailed on along the west coast of Traill Ø, and after a beautiful 11 hour voyage, we reached Vælddalhytten on the south coast of Traill Ø.

According to our information, the cabin needed maintenance, but earlier work turned out to have been so good, that one day of putting in shutters and various small repairs did the job.

The hour was now so late that we had to begin the trip back to Mestersvig. "Agsut" had to be signed off and readied for the winter, and this would take a couple of days work.

### **Nyhavn:**

There was a long wait before we could begin the trip home. Fog and wind postponed the departure



for many hours, and the ice conditions where we were situated were not too good. So on 11 August in the evening we navigated with the GPS across lumpy water to Nyhavn where we arrived late at night. We were in harbour.

The next day we could moor alongside the quay. The emptying of the ship turned out to be a piece of cake, as a car full of former Sirius lads showed up and lent a hand. Everyone had been on Daneborg for Sirius' 50th Anniversary. They were temporarily stranded on Mestersvig due to fog, preventing aeroplanes from landing.

Until the departure from Mestersvig 16 August, "Agsut Nanok" and various equipment were made ready for the winter and prepared for next year's travellers. "Kista Arctica" called at Mestersvig the following day and a couple of busy days lay ahead discharging stores for the next two years' consumption on Mestersvig.

### **Conclusion:**

The South Team managed what we had planned. The station "Hoelsbu" is completely renovated, "Vælddalhytten" is repaired and "Kap Ovibos" is the first hut to be restored. The smaller trappers' huts in particular have now become possible to restore, as the vessel "Agsut" can take us to the locations. In spite of their littleness, all these huts are part of the history of the hunters' era, and if renovated they can be used by other travellers for overnight stays or by small teams of scientists.



*The South Team 2000: Jannik, Søren, Lars og Carsten.*

The Nanok South Team would like to thank everybody who supported us this summer. Especially, we would like to thank DPC (Danish Polar Centre), and Sirius on Mestersvig, and the lads on Ella Ø for exquisite hospitality.

Søren Andersen - Jannik Berntsen - Carsten Thordal - Lars Nielsen



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List over North East Greenland stations repaired by Nanok 1991 - 2000:

No.	Name	Repaired year
514	Ny Jonsbu	1995
510	Hochstetter	1996, 1998
447	Germaniahavn	1999
438	Zackenbergt	1991, 1992
429	Moskusheimen	1994
425	Sandodden / Karina	1994 - 2000
405	Eskimonaes	1998
356	Hoelsbu	1999, 2000
350	Loch Fyne	1993
340	Kap Ovibos hytten	2000
335	Myggbukta	1999
308	Kap Humboldt	1997
218	Kap Petersens	1998

Source: Station numbers and -names including historical information referred to:

Peter Schmidt Mikkelsen: *Nordøstgrønland 1908-60, fangstmandsperioden*. Danish Polar Center 1994.

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## North East Greenland Company NANOK

Further information about Nanok and North East Greenland can be found at [NANOKs homepage](#)

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