

Field report from the journey to Northeast Greenland in the summer 2005



Evening mood at Ålborghus.

The trapping station Ålborghus in the beautiful Dove Bugt. Although the last trappers left the area more than 50 years ago, the house is still in good condition, giving a peaceful setting for a days rest.

Ålborghus is one of the approx. 70 sites surveyed by NANOK during the summer of 2005. Read more about the survey in the following report.

[Danish version](#)

Introduction

The 15th field season of Nordøstgrønlands Kompagni Nanok has been carried through as planned.

NANOK has completed the third year of the surveying project started in 2003, in order to establish a contemporary status of all historic cabins and stations in Northeast Greenland. During the two previous years we have documented more than 200 buildings. This summer approx. 70 locations have been added to this list, which now shows updated information about 80% of all sites of this type in Northeast Greenland. As usual, the gathered material is forwarded to Grønlands Nationalmuseum. This autumn we will work out the plans for 2006 as well as the goals and strategies concerning the remaining sites.

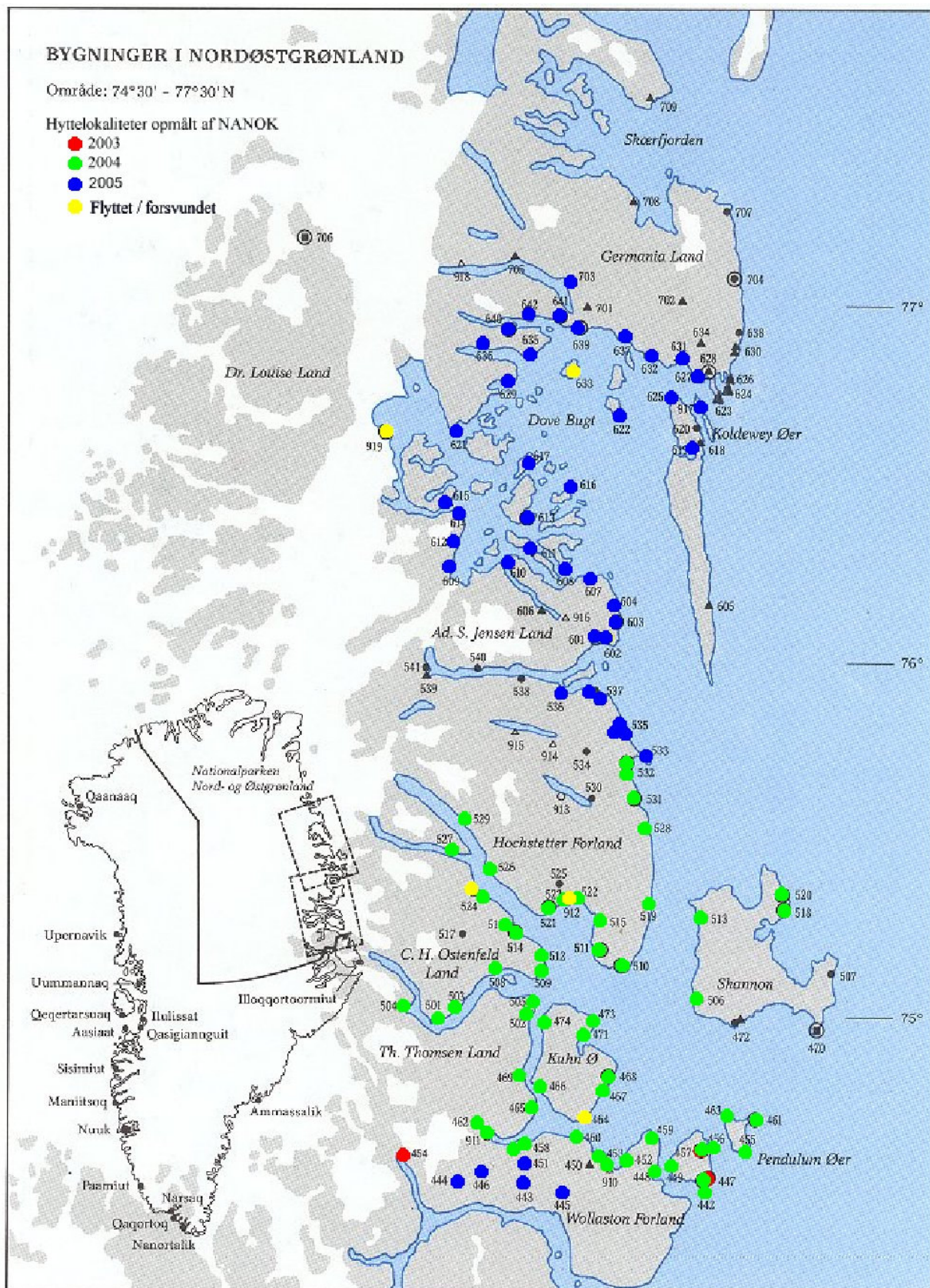
When planning this summer's work, it became obvious to us that the logistic challenges would be somewhat different than the previous years, as we almost exclusively visited sites accessible by boat. This year, however, we wished to survey sites in less accessible areas, such as the large valleys around Daneborg and the entire Dove Bugt area. In both cases alternative means of transportation was required. In the Daneborg area we chose lightweight equipment - suitable for hiking-expeditions and crossing rapid streams - for the 3 men on the team. The Dove Bugt team, on the other hand, had to prepare themselves for difficult ice conditions and we therefore chose to provide each man with a kayak, which – if necessary – could be drawn across the ice like a sledge. Both choices proved to be optimum and thanks to great efforts from the teams, we succeeded in carrying out all plans scheduled. The result is that we, finally, have clarified the existence of a couple of doubtful or unknown sites.

After four successive years with very reduced quantities of drift ice along the Northeast coast of Greenland, the ice conditions this year were back to "normal". The north of Daneborg was closed by bay ice until August and during the whole summer Pack ice remained along the entire coast to Kong Oscar Fjord. Only few of the strongest ships went ashore north of Mestersvig.

Finally, Nanok wishes to express warm thanks to our sponsor Aage V. Jensens Fonde for never failing trust and support and also to thank the large number of individuals who in their own way has supported or shown interest in our work. Also warm appreciation to our collaborators and expeditions and institutions, who have participated in making our work possible.

On behalf of Nanok

Peter Schmidt Mikkelsen



The two maps illustrate the extent of Nanok's work during the summers of 2003, 2004 and 2005.

All sites marked with red, green or blue are cabins and stations surveyed by Nanok's expedition teams. Sites marked with yellow indicate places where buildings or remains of buildings could not be found or are known to have been moved or disappeared.

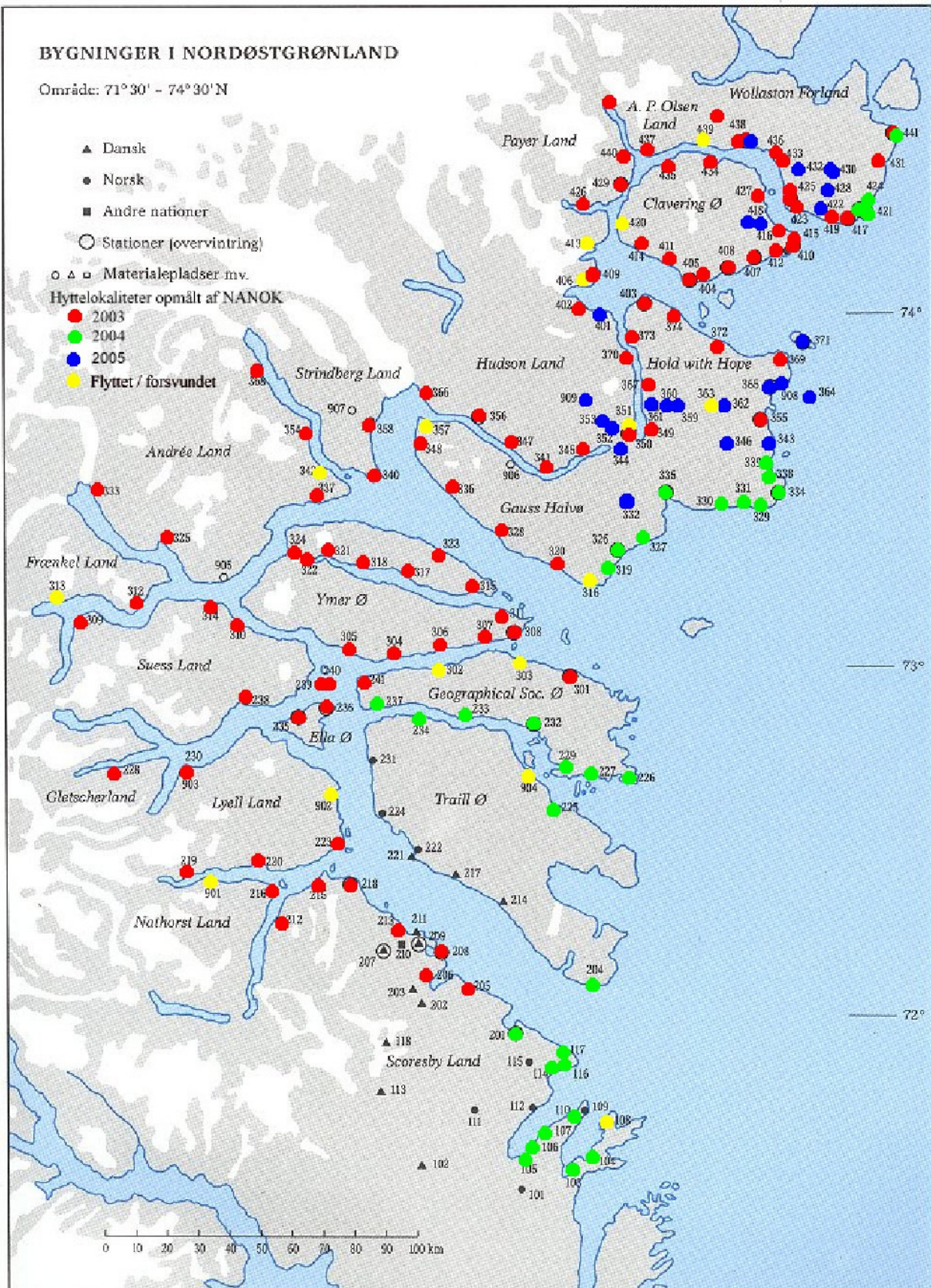
BYGNINGER I NORDØSTGRØNLAND

Område: 71° 30' - 74° 30' N

- ▲ Dansk
- Norsk
- Andre nationer
- Stationer (overvintring)
- ▲ □ Materialepladser mv.

Hyttelokaliteter opmålt af NANOK

- 2003
- 2004
- 2005
- Flyttet / forsvundet



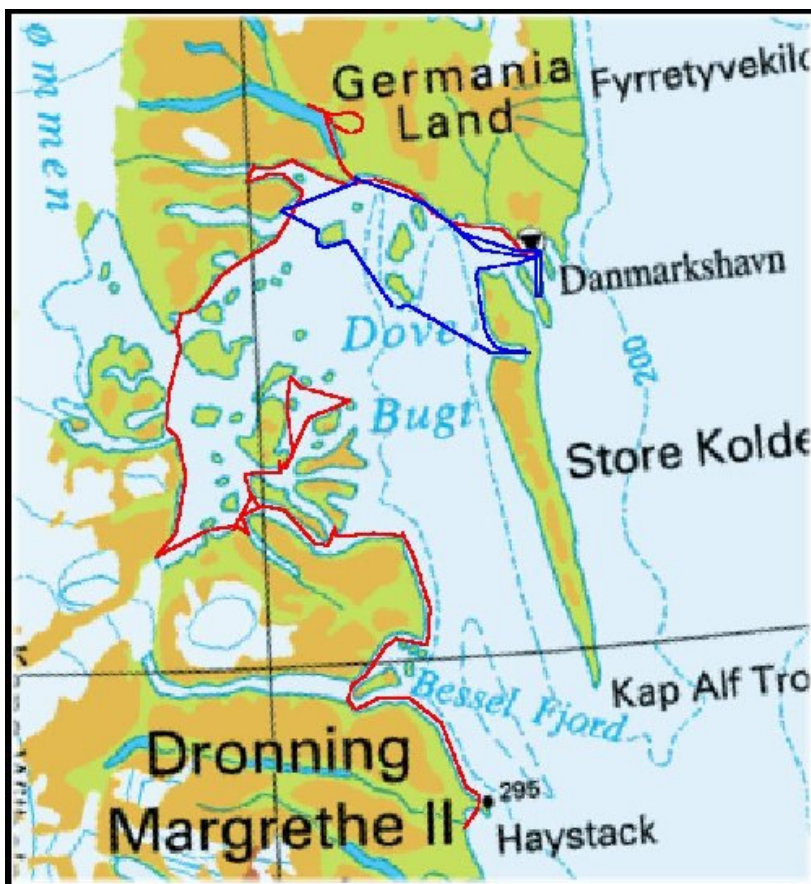
Field report for the North team 2005

Task

The primary task for the North team was to survey and draw up a structural status of the cabins in the area from Mønstedhus [532] in the south through Dove Bugt to Danmarkshavn in the north, in order to localize and measure the cabins and to provide sufficient documentary visual material.

Participants

Anders Uffe Ibsen (leader), Erik Jochumsen (photographer), Hans-Henrik Carlsen (coolie). All three are former members of the Sirius patrol: Anders and Erik from 2000, Hans from 2001.



The travelling route for the North team 2005. During the summer we paddled 462 km by kayak, sailed 235 km by boat and walked 147 km. Red = kayak. Blue = boat.

The conditions

In 2004 NANOK traversed the area between Daneborg and Mønstedhus with the same purpose, but by means of rubber boat. This resulted in a number of bigger tasks concerning depositing of fuel, range and navigating in the ice. These tasks would increase further north. As means of transport the kayak was chosen because of the obvious advantages when moving across close ice and the low fuel consumption. The kayaks were kindly put at our disposal by NordØstgrønlands Kajakekspeditioner (NØK).



High tide by Pollenhytten [536].

From March to June 2005 we trained for the trip with 4 joint sessions of 1–2 days. With focus on life-saving technique and –practice we also participated in a course in kayak technique with Svend Ulstrup.

Journey there and back

The departure on July 18 2005 went as planned for the two NANOK teams, who co-traveled via Iceland. After a nights stay in Akureyri we continued via Mestersvig to Daneborg, arriving late in the afternoon. What a joy to see the Coast again!

On the journey back – the 19th of August - the North team was split up, as Anders took the kayaks to Mestersvig from Danmarkshavn to sort out the gear and find storing space for the kayaks. Erik and Hans stayed in the area around Danmarkshavn until the 28th of August. The journey back went via Store Sten - Constable Point – Akureyri and ended the next day, the 29th of August, via Akureyri - Reykjavik – Keflavik - København.

Clearing

Having arrived at Daneborg we faced a tight schedule: the kayaks as well as ourselves had to be ready for flying out 16 hours later, at 9.00 a.m. on July 20. The main part of the gear - old and new including the kayaks - waited for us here and had to be tested thoroughly during the night. But duty comes before pleasure, so first of all, we had to say hello to our old and long lost friends: the dogs! An almost tear-stained reunion!

We eventually got ready and even had some spare time to shortly present this years NANOK-projects to the patrolmen in Sirihus and to enjoy a cozy chat in the Sandodden [425].



The kayaks are loaded onto the Twin Otter TF-JMD at Daneborg.

Departure

At 9 a.m. on July 20 the Twin Otter left Daneborg heading for Roseneathbugt and Ny Mønstedhus carrying the NANOK North team with all their gear and three small vessels. The mood was close to euphoric and due to excellent visibility we got a good view over the first lap of our route. After a little more than one hour we found ourselves alone in the amazing nature and in equally amazing weather – ready to go and prepared to enjoy every second of it!

Ny Mønstedhus – Påskenæsset.

The first lap turned out to be concentrated on rowing in closely packed ice in often tremendous weather; tides and daily rhythm, getting used to the kayaks and gear as well as adjusting them and short, but hectic day's marches. It is extremely exciting to row in the ice and a challenge to find the right way, the right tidal stream and "read" the wind. We quickly learned that unpredictability is

more common than not and that the trick is to move when circumstances allow it – not to linger, not to rush.



The kayak proved to be an excellent choice. A rubber boat would have been no use here.

According to various geographical, ice- and weather conditions we tried many things: rowing in the ice, pulling ourselves across smaller pieces of ice by means of iceaxes; rowing and pulling along the coastline at high tide; waiting and jumping between the ice floes. Now and then it was optimum to row countercurrent, as the ice was drawn away from the coast, and then it was not, because the current was too strong and you got nowhere. We constantly had to balance the factors. If – e.g. – the countercurrent was strong and the wind favorable, if the tide was falling and the ice close and drifting, we could either choose to pull along the coastline or to jump into the sleeping bag.

All the way to Bessel Fjord and further along Adolf S. Jensen Land the ice was in control and kept us ashore, but in the bay, the current and the wind were crucial.

All the cabins on this first lap were easy to find and caused no trouble – except for one! Between Besselfjord Station [601] and Kap Beurmann lies – or used to lie – a small cabin, Sætherhytten [602]. This stretch is notorious for the heavy winds from Tromsdalen, which both we and – before

us - Sætherhytten tried first hand. Short, dashing waves hindered our search for more cabins and we went ashore to camp. Later we found the cabin 4-5 km back, not far from the coast. Only a few boards and the oven remained – a phenomenon we would frequently encounter further north.

Påskenäset – Ålborghus

Once again the ice played a decisive part, moderating the swells and waves but mostly because it packed the narrow straits. We tried, unsuccessfully, to "wait the ice away"; but ice seems to have more patience than humans. We therefore changed the route from Jægersund to Trangsund in the southern part of Dove Bugt, but it made no difference – the ice caved us in and on top of this three bears turned up, showing great interest in our yellow vessels.



"Golden kayaks and three bears" –or the Greenland version of "Goldilocks and the three bears".

Only one cabin gave us trouble and as the quality of the cabins and their mutual location seemed more random than further south, we slowly got the impression that we had reached the northernmost part of the trapping area. Through many a summer the ice has often been tricky and quite a nuisance and besides, you see much fewer animals here than around Daneborg. These two facts are connected to the sad fate of many trappers in the Dove Bugt area.

Ålborghus – Soranerbræen

As expected, revisiting Ålborghus was exceptional with calm, blue sky and 15 degrees centigrade!

A well earned day of rest, spiced with a couple of strolls and some totally shameless meals! Later on we went northwards between the islands to find a couple of cabins but were distracted by the wind. The power of the outgoing winds you meet under a tall, steep mountain side, is amazing. So we rested in our mobile home, far from Ålborghus [613], when our friend from NANOK, Fritz from

the supply ship "Arina Arctica", paid us a visit. He arrived by helicopter and "forgot" a bag of goodies when he left. Back at Alborghus the wind had taken control of the ice, which now caused no more trouble.

But the wind! Navigationwise it caused a few delays, and all Rechnitzer Land north of Soranerbræen was practically blown free of cabins. On several occasions luck more than anything, guided us to the right location.





Above: Hvalrosodden [639-1], built in 1919 for Østgrønlandsk Kompagni. Due to regular use and maintenance by Danmarkshavn and SIRIUS, this cabin is still in very good condition.

Below: Mørkefjord station [641], built in 1938 for Mørkefjord-ekspeditionen. The station has not been used for more than half a century and is in decay.

Soranerbræen – Hvalrosodden

We enjoyed some extremely beautiful days as well as some difficult cabins, but at Kap Stop we – in our own opinion – made the most spectacular discovery of the expedition, namely 5 horse skeletons and many remains from J.P. Kochs Dronning Louise Land Ekspedition 1910-12. We found the skeletons on the slaughtering place north of the original camp site and were surprised by the condition they were in – they looked almost fresh.

The wind was teasing and we had to make several unscheduled stops, especially when crossing larger waters. Clouds and fog were approaching – rather annoying, when you're used to "tropical weather". Longer distances between the drinking water meant that we had to borrow some from the icebergs.

Having arrived at Hvalrosodden [639], a magnificent cabin, we started angling and enjoyed meals and life altogether.

After a days rest we rowed up Lakseelv into Sælsøen. It took more than two hours to row up stream, but only 40 minutes down, pop! In the lake we found remains of Tvillingnæshytten [703] and made quite an effort – unfortunately in vain – to find Trekrønerhytten [701]. After 6 hours we gave up –

but we are quite sure that the cabin can be found elsewhere. Two of us are absolutely certain to have seen it by chance during a sledge journey 4 years ago. But where....exactly?!

Hvalrosodden – Danmarkshavn

Only two more days of rowing to go, but still a lot of excitement where heavy wind, drift ice, close fog and surprise visits on Snenæs is concerned. After a good day in the drift ice, (including a surprise in the shape of a bearded seal, who suddenly - between two of the kayaks - rose from the water as if it had been fired from a submarine and caused some rapid heartpounding) We were greeted by the welcoming committee in Danmarkshavn next to the rather damaged Snenæshytte [632]. Pizza with beer is a delightful variant, highly underestimated by the producers of tinned food!

The following afternoon we reached Danmarkshavn and a warm welcome. We enjoyed a luxurious meal together with the fact that we had found all cabins scheduled and not at any time had we left our kayaks voluntarily!

Sailing from Danmarkshavn

The following day, the 19th of August, Anders traveled south with the kayaks. Erik and Hans stayed until the 28th of August. During this period, the crew in Danmarkshavn put boat, equipment and fuel at our disposal, so that we could survey and measure the cabins not accessible by kayak.

It was a somewhat different experience to start the two-cylinder Listermotor and to enjoy Dove Bugt from the cutter. A bit cooler as well, since you are steering in stead of rowing.

We made three longer trips of respectively ½, 3 and 2 days. We started out with a trial run to Tyskerdepotet [917] on Lille Koldewey, then a longer lasting cabin survey, where we a.o. unraveled that Vindseløhytten [633], that is said to have disappeared in 1938, does not exist.



Above: Aboard the cutter of Danmarkshavn.

Below: The new Snenæshytte, built in 1992 by the crew in Danmarkshavn.

The final trip was a genuine NANOK-gig, as we and two of the guests in Danmarkshavn were given the task to save the new Snenæshytte – a refuge for the crew in Danmarkshavn – from collapse. Last winter a storm, measured at Danmarkshavn to 147 km/hour (approx. 70 m/s), lifted the cabin 6 to 8 meters and placed it in surroundings, rougher than the construction is fit for. We heaved, pulled, nailed and stacked for two days, having a wonderful time. The hospitality we enjoyed at Danmarkshavn was unique and very much contributing to the good survey result as well as a great closure to our kayak trip. One way of measuring the hospitality is by the fact that our weight had increased quite a bit.

The gathered result of the North team's work was to draw up a status for a total of 42 cabin sites.



Anders Uffe Ibsen



Erik Jochumsen



Hans-Henrik Carlsen

Field report for the South team 2005

The South team

The team consisted of Kunuk Olsen Lennert, (educationist student), Christian Holm Andersen, (cabinetmaker) and Rasmus Gregersen, (student of philosophy). All three are former members of the Sirius patrol (2001-2003).



Travelling route for the South team 2005. During the summer we walked 345 km, navigated 755 km and flew 275 km. Red = by foot /by boat. Blue = by helicopter.

Tasks

Our main task: to survey and measure a number of cabins and sites in the area around Daneborg, Zackenberg, outer coast Home Forland and Loch Fyne. As most of these sites are further inland and therefore located far from the coast, NANOK's previous expeditions were not equipped to visit them. The South team had planned on using Nanok's RIB (the Humber) in order to reach the various main areas. SIRIUS had beforehand promised to assist in depositing the fuel but this turned out not to be necessary.

The journey up

The 18th of July 2005, a beautiful and sunny day, we met with the three members of the Nanok North team in Kastrup Airport. We had a pleasant trip via Iceland, had touch down in Mestersvig before continuing to Daneborg. Here we were invited to Sirihus for a cup of coffee and to tell about our project. A hospitality that continued throughout the summer and was supplemented by SIRIUS' kindness and vast helpfulness.



The Nanok South team 2005 at Sandodden, Daneborg. From left.: Kunuk, Rasmus and Christian.

Outer coast Home Forland

We spent the evening packing and clearing for the North team's flight the next day. Late in the morning on July 20, the North team flew to Mønstedhus and the pilots told that Dove bugt was packed with ice. The same evening we – the South team – boarded the Humber and sailed in calm weather to Lygna Elv Depot on the outer coast of Home Forland. Here we spent the next couple of days surveying Ulvedræberhytten [346], Gamvik [343], Carlshavn [365], Kap Kraus [908], Arundelhytten [364] and Jackson-stua [371]. We were particularly anxious to visit Ulvedræberhytten, as the only documentation we had been able to find was, that since 1950 it had only been seen once – in 1979 by Peter Schmidt Mikkelsen! We found the cabin approx. 5 km from the place we had marked on our map in accordance with the descriptions from "Fangstmandsperioden". The cabin can be budged, is very unstable and has moved approx. 10 cm on its base. We found musk ox wool on the felt nails, so our theory is that muskoxes have rubbed against the cabin – but perhaps the wool was brought here by the wind.

The Daneborg area

Back at Sandodden we spent the following days on clearing and planning the next walking route.

In the foggy morning of July 25, we left Sandodden with direction through Blæsedalen, down to Young Sund once again via Albrechtssletten and Isdal. As company we had borrowed Stress, one of the dogs from Sirius sledge team 3, so she could get some exercise. Kunuk had brought a dog-rucksack, so Stress carried her own food. Marc from the weather station gave us a lift to the mouth of Blæsedalen, and the walking tour ended equally fine when Per Bang and Karsten from SIRIUS

picked us up by the coast of Young Sund. On this tour we surveyed Blæsedal Retrætedepot [422], Blæsedalhytten (Nanok) [428], Blæsedalhytten (Norwegian/Sirius) [430] and Kuppelpashytten [432].



Even in fresh breeze the Humber rubber boat easily manages a load of 700 kilos.

From left: Christian and Kunuk.

We looked most forward to visit Blæsedal Retrætedepot [422], as we had heard of no one, who had seen the remains of it. We knew that when built "approx. three kilometers into the windy valley", the cabin would have been placed out of sight for the uninitiated, as it was supposed to act as shelter for SIRIUS in case of war. So now, registered as moved, the remains would be even more difficult to spot. We split up with a few hundred meters between us and searched the area through Blæsedalen with our binoculars. Our hard work paid off as we found a small bank of stones together with the old oven – which by the way lay on the side – beneath a hillside on the edge of the valley.

We spent the night in Blæsedalhytten (Norwegian/Sirius) [430], recently handsomely restored by SIRIUS. This cabin is placed in an altitude of about 400 meters and we turned quite nostalgic by the sight and sound of a small blizzard with a wind velocity of approx. 30 knot. There's a reason for the name "Blæsedalen". (Blæsedalen meaning windy valley)

We returned to Sandodden on Wednesday the 27th of July 2005 and sailed onwards the next day to Grønnedal, in order to solve the biggest mystery yet. We were to survey Grønnedalshytten [418-1] and Grønnedal [418-2]. In the clear light of belated wisdom, we now read in the book "Fangstmandsperioden" that Grønnedalshytten [418-1] – supposedly located "6-8 km up in Grønnedal" – during the spring of 1950 had "blown down from the mountain and crushed." The cabin seen earlier in Grønnedal by the three of us was placed exactly 6 km up, measured from the coast. We therefore assumed, that this was Grønnedalshytten [418-1]. In order to search for Grønnedal [418-2] we went from the cabin to the small lake, which begins 10 km up the river bed, measured from the coast. It was supposed to be found "next to small lake, west of river bed, approx. 10 km up in Grønnedal, Clavering Ø." Having spent twelve hours trawling the terrain around the lake as we did in Blæsedalen, we started to move downwards along the river bed. Approx. 300 meters from what we believed to be Grønnedalshytten [418-1], we now found the real Grønnedalshytten [418-1] down by the water, shattered and scattered. Conclusion: the cabin first surveyed had to be Grønnedal [418-2], built after the other one had been crushed.

The Zackenberg area – part one

After the trip to Grønnedal we went to Zackenberg to survey Antonsens Hytte [444] and Meyer-Hus [439]. Antonsens hytte [444] was easy. We were given the exact position from the Biobasis element on ZERO, represented by Line Anker Kyhn. We anchored at Tyroler Fjord and crossed the land – by a saddle with two lakes - to Store Sødal, where we went almost directly to the cabin.

Meyer-Hus [439], on the other hand, was impossible to find. We sailed along the entire outer coast of A.P. Olsens land, from the west end of Zackenberg Bugt on to the river bed at Bjørnesstua [437]. From there to the north coast of Clavering Ø where we searched the area from Louise Elv up to and including the west mouth of Lerbugt and the area around Leirvågen [434]. We went ashore to search all plausible sites, but no trace of the cabin. Our conclusion is that Meyer-Hus [439] either has been moved or simply has disappeared without a trace. Reports made by ZERO - concerning walking tours from Zackenberg station to the place we crossed when entering Store Sødal - stating that nothing has been observed along the route support our conclusion. Only a few sites here are suitable for a cabin, as the hillsides on both the south side of A.P. Olsens Land as well as the north side of Clavering are very steep.

The next day, July 30, we sailed to Daneborg and Ulrik – a logistician from ZERO – went along. He was going to assist in unloading and we had offered to help. But due to the new container system, no help was required. The following day we rowed out to the supply ship "Arina Arctica" from Royal Arctic Line and the captain Fritz Ploug Nielsen invited us to lunch. We presented our wishes concerning using the ship's helicopter to some flights to various cabins. As we anticipated these requests to be unrealistic, we presented them in two bits, prepared for rejection. But later that day we were informed that at 0900 on the following morning one of us should come back to the ship with a view to carry out both flights. This called for a late night celebration at Sandodden.

Loch Fyne area

At 09.30 the next day, after a thorough security briefing, Rasmus, Nicki and Franck left aboard the helicopter. Located only 30 meters apart Flata [332-1] and Stormbu [332-2] were easily found. Schjelderup-Hytten [344] was more difficult to spot from the air, as it is placed deep in a river bed and half the cabin has sunk into the ground.

The search for Tobiasdal (east) [363] and Jordly [362] was confused by the fact that Jordly [362] was placed where we expected to find Tobiasdal (east) [363]. According to the Lauge Koch map a cabin is placed here, so we flew exhaustively over the area where we figured Jordly [362] would be. But we found nothing. Hoping to find Tobiasdal (east) [363] in the area east of Jordly [362] and all the way to Tværelv, we then flew over this area, but no luck in this direction either. However, next to Jordly [362] we saw some remains from another cabin. This indicates, that another cabin had existed in the area but at some point had been "butchered". As suggested in "Fangstmandsperioden", this could be Tobiasdal (east) [363].

After an enjoyable farewell-party aboard the "Arina Arctica" we headed for Loch Fyne depot the next morning. En route we found Dyndvulkanen [401] - yet another interesting site – as we were unsure whether it existed or whether the photo we had was this cabin or not. But the cabin exists and was found a few km inland; strangely enough close to a large mud vulcano. (Dyndvulkan meaning mud vulcano). The cabin does not seem to have been used recently as the oven lay outside and the roof was missing. On the floor we found a Danish coin from 1967, so the last confirmable visit must have taken place in or after 1967.

