

Field report from the journey to Northeast Greenland 2006



Villaen / Danmarksminde in Danmarkshavn July 2006.

It has been exactly 100 years since the "Danmark-ekspeditionen 1906-08" founded its base at the place that 17. August 1906 was named Danmarkshavn. The old expedition house, "Villaen", later renamed "Danmarks Minde", still stands, but is seriously threatened by invading moist. A preservative effort is needed.

According to the instructions of Grønlands Nationalmuseum & Arkiv in Nuuk, Nanok accomplished an acute draining in the summer 2006 and prepared a complete report of condition including proposals of the future protection of Villaen, the oldest living quarters of European origin in Northeast Greenland. In the report you can read more of this and Nanok's other projects in the summer 2006.

16. Field season

Introduction

Nordøstgrønlandsk Kompagni Nanok has accomplished its 16th field season. We are very pleased with the results in spite of the trying ice conditions in the Northern area, which prevented us from achieving all our goals there. We have had two field teams in Northeast Greenland in the summer of 2006: A North Team with four participants in Danmarkshavn and a South Team with three participants on Ella Ø. You can read the teams' accounts later in this report.

It was back in 2003 when Grønlands Hjemmestyre asked Nanok to make a new index of records over the old huts from the trappers era 1908-60; a project including about 320 different geographical sites spread over a 600 km far reaching stretch of coast in Northeast Greenland. Today, four years later, we have visited more than 290 sites – in other words over 90 % - and made extensive documentation, including GPS-data, photos and scale drawings. The material is forwarded to the Grønlands Nationalmuseum & Arkiv in Nuuk each year. Now Nanok is going to evaluate its goals and strategy for the remaining sites.

"But is the renovation of the huts a closed chapter for Nanok?" - we have been asked.

No – certainly not. Ever since the foundation in 1991, the basic principle of Nanok has been the preservation of the huts in Northeast Greenland. The preservative effort was suspended to meet Hjemmestyret's request for a new index of records over the huts. Now when the index is almost finished, Nanok is ready to resume the renovation – with the approval of the Hjemmestyret.

Besides, it has never been the wish of Nanok to renovate all the huts. On the contrary. As soon as in 2001 we compiled a list of priority for Direktoratet for Miljø og Natur (DMN) in Nuuk. The list recommended reconditioning and continuously maintenance of only 60-75 selected huts and stations. Today the new index is a perfect tool for the evaluation of the recommendation. Indeed, there are huts enough for every stakeholder group, also the enthusiasts of preservation, as there remain 200-250 buildings that can be left in the hands of Nature. The list of priority also pointed out about 30 sites with particular historical value, e.g. Alabamahuset on Shannon and Villaen in Danmarkshavn, which need special protection. Nanok's vision continues to be that the restored huts are to function as animate culture memories; as close to their original, unique appearance as possible, and completely applicable and publicly accessible for the benefit of all; scientists, tourists, members of the Sirius patrol and of course locals from Ittoqqortoormiit. It is just through the regular use that the huts are best maintained, and it has never been good manners to put a lock on the huts in Northeast Greenland.

Finally, Nanok wishes to express warm thanks to our sponsor the Aage V. Jensens Foundation 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. Finally, warm appreciation to our collaborators and expeditions and institutions, who have participated in making our work possible.

On behalf of Nanok

Peter Schmidt Mikkelsen

This field report is also available in English and Danish on: www.xsirius.dk/nanoke.html

Field report for the North team 2006

Task

The tasks of the North team were:

- 1) to continue the survey and draw up a structural status of the cabins in the area of Germania Land, Dove Bugt, Bessel Fjord and Hochstetter Forland and
- 2) to examine the condition of and restore "Villaen" [628-1] / "Danmarks Minde" according to an agreement with Grønlands Nationalmuseum & Arkiv (NKA).

Participants

Jens Erik Schultz and Jannik Berntsen, both experienced Nanok members, and Erik Jochumsen and Hans-Henrik Carlsen, both former Sirius men and "hut finders".

To manage both tasks, we sometimes split in two teams: A Villa team (Jens og Jannik) and a Hut team (Erik og Hans-Henrik).



The North team 2006.

Erik, Jens, Jannik og Hans-Henrik in front of Villaen [628-1] in Danmarkshavn.

The conditions

After the registration in 2005 in the Northern terrain, the huts most difficult to access and with the longest distance between them were missing.

As base the North team used Danmarkshavn Vejrstation, which gladly provided shelter, materials, helpfulness and a friendly atmosphere, often supplemented by a square meal.

To make the sail along the coast, where there often is difficult ice conditions, possible, we had brought Nanok's little aluminium boat with a 4 h.p. outboard motor with us. These ice conditions turned out to be of the utmost importance to this year's hut survey.

Departure

We left Kastrup 18 July 2006 in a tropical heat. The journey proceeded via Reykjavik and to Akureyri in a more temperate climate. Hans, who had been in Akureyri for a couple of days to buy the provision, received Jens, Jannik and Erik at the airport. The next morning the journey went via Mestersvig to Daneborg, where we spent the night in Sandodden. It suited us perfectly, as we had plenty of time to load the airplane with gear, provision and the aluminium boat for departure the next morning.

Arrival at Danmarkshavn

The following morning we took off to Danmarkshavn in the most beautiful weather. We were the only passengers and had unlimited view over the terrain so we immediately got an impression of what could be expected: During the flight of one



Us and the aluminium boat as a blind passenger!



Jens in front of his grandfather's hut in Danmarkshavn. Jens Schultz is the grandchild of J.P.J. Lindhard, who participated as doctor in Danmark-ekspeditionen 1906-08.

hour, there was open water to be seen nowhere! The kayak journey of summer 2005 under no circumstances could have been carried out this year. Only a little south of Danmarkshavn we saw an open area in the ice of perhaps 2x3 kilometer and a crack along the outer coast.

After having landed safely and received well at Danmarkshavn, we were quartered. During our whole stay we were well treated and attended.

At the station the snow still lay in enormous drifts, and only in front of Vesterelv there was a small hole in the ice in the harbour. Immediately it was clear to us that there was not much to be done the first week. The entire Dove Bugt was packed with ice, everything on land was covered in a heavy snow and melt water.

As Villaen was no exception, the first week went by preparing the gear, draining Villaen and helping at the weather station.

The Hut team's report

The Hut team carried through four survey trips of 3, 8, 1 and 1 days duration respectively. It was quite a job if you consider the number of huts and not least because we often were had to "go on Shanks's mare". This year we walked approx. 170 km and sailed approx. 200 km.

1. trip:

Having made a few trips studying the ice conditions both in the mountains and on the ice itself, we started out going inland due North to find "Syltekrukken" [634]. By detours, often in slushice to the knees, we made it to the hut late in the evening – that is, we camped 3 km from there, as there were no pitch nearby due to snow and melting. The hut was in a poor condition and more wet than moist. The journey home was easier, and we had a good overview of the outer coast.



Bamserne er glade for Heeringhus [626]

2. trip:

We were lucky that a helicopter with a friendly pilot happened to pass by. What a great opportunity! As a background to the observed (a broad crack approx. 35 km southwards from Fyrretyvekilometernæsset along Germanialand), we decided to get the aluminium boat going. It has the advantage that it can be used both as a boat and a sledge. It went quite smoothly and after two



Our crack seen from the air ...



... and from the water.

days we reached Fyrretyvekilometernæsset. Here we left the boat, grabbed our rucksacks and walked further north.

The next day we reached both Micardbu [704] and Thomas Thomsens Næs hytte [707]. In spite of a thick fog, we walked on the ice most of the way, as mud and snow drifts made it almost impossible to walk on the land. Both huts were very damaged and Micardbu, which only 3-4 years ago was in a tolerable state, was now facing a ruinous condition.

Back by the boat or "the aluminium beacon" - and after Erik had tested if his rucksack could keep him above water (it couldn't!) – we resupplied and went due West, heading for Germania Land hytte [702]. It was not easy to find, and finally we had to camp for the night and continue our search the next day. After five hours of searching, we finally discovered it – 2 km from our tent! It is the old "Syltekrukke", which has been cut in two, transported approx. 25 km North and put together. It is a nice, usable hut, which rarely has visitors. We walked 62 km total on that trip.

We went South in the aluminium boat and we soon reached Syttenkilometernæsset via Margarinecentralen [638] on Kap Steensby due to a fair wind and sufficient air holes. Margarinecentralen was damaged, but the new hut at Syttenkilometernæsset [630] is a lovely box. We repaired the chinmey after a visit from the bears, so there was no end to the domestic comfort! Around the hut there were lots of Eskimo ruins: Tent rings, winter houses and meat caches.

Onshore wind had drifted the ice towards land and closed the southern part of our passage, so the journey home as "drought animals" across the ice was somewhat longer than journey out.

3. and 4. trip:

The last two trips from Danmarkshavn were both of one day's duration and in the company of the station's crew and in its boats. The first trip went to Kap Bismarck [623], Heeringhus [626] and Kap Quist [624]. The first two had been badly damaged by wind, weather and teddys. The last mentioned was but a ruin.

A few days after, on a hut- and ice reconnaissance, we used the station's cutter, which is almost similar to Nanok's own "Agsut" on Ella Ø. Unfortunately, the outcome of the trip was not what we had hoped for. We could not reach the huts in Lillebælt because of the pack ice, and the ice still lay firmly in Dove Bugt all

the way from Stormnæs. Although we could see Dagmar Havn [620] 3-4 km away, we had to return to Danmarkshavn, as the ice closed in on us.



Syttenkilometernæsset [630-2]



*Left.: Germania Land [702]
(Gl. Syltekrukke)*

Below: Ny Syltekrukke [634]



The Villa team's report

Villaen

Our task was to go check out "Villaen", which is the oldest living quarters of European origin in Northeast Greenland. It was built 100 years ago by "Danmarksekspeditionen" at the bay that on 17th August 1906 was named Danmarkshavn. The little house of 16 m² was for two years the home of four expedition participants: J.P. Koch, A. Wegener, A. Lundager og A. Bertelsen. In 1910 it saved the lives of Ejnar Mikkelsen and Iver P. Iversen, who reached the house and its provisions with the very last of their strength, when they were on their "Dangerous two-person expedition" (the Alabama expedition).

In August 1919 trappers from the newly founded "Østgrønlandsk Kompagni" arrived. The leader of the team was Hans Ludvig Jensen, the former steward on the Danmarksekspedition, and who also was one of the originators of the foundation of the new company. They discovered the house to be in a terrible condition: The roof had blown



Mindevarden over de to døde fangstmænd.

filled with ice. Immediately it was rebuilt with a new, lower roof, and with porch on three of the sides. The astronomical observatory was removed and became a part of the porch. The brand new station was renamed "Danmarksminde".

After two hard years, where two trappers had died from scurvy, because the supplies did not turn up, the house had to be abandoned. For the rest of the trappers era it was only used sporadically. During the years the weather station's personnel has thoroughly maintained it with roofing felt.



The floor has been opened. There is blank water all the way up to the boards.



A canal for draining is being dug out through the south wall.

away, partly burned, and the house was



Villaen today

The house is today quite like it was after the rebuilding according to photos and drawings from 1919. However, it was built on sloping, rocky ground, which means that large quantities of gravel have gathered against the northern wall. This results in large quantities of water inside the house in the Spring and Summer. However, we have made a draining out the south wall.



We have written a complete status report for the use of Grønlands National-museum & Arkiv (NKA) in Nuuk with proposals for a

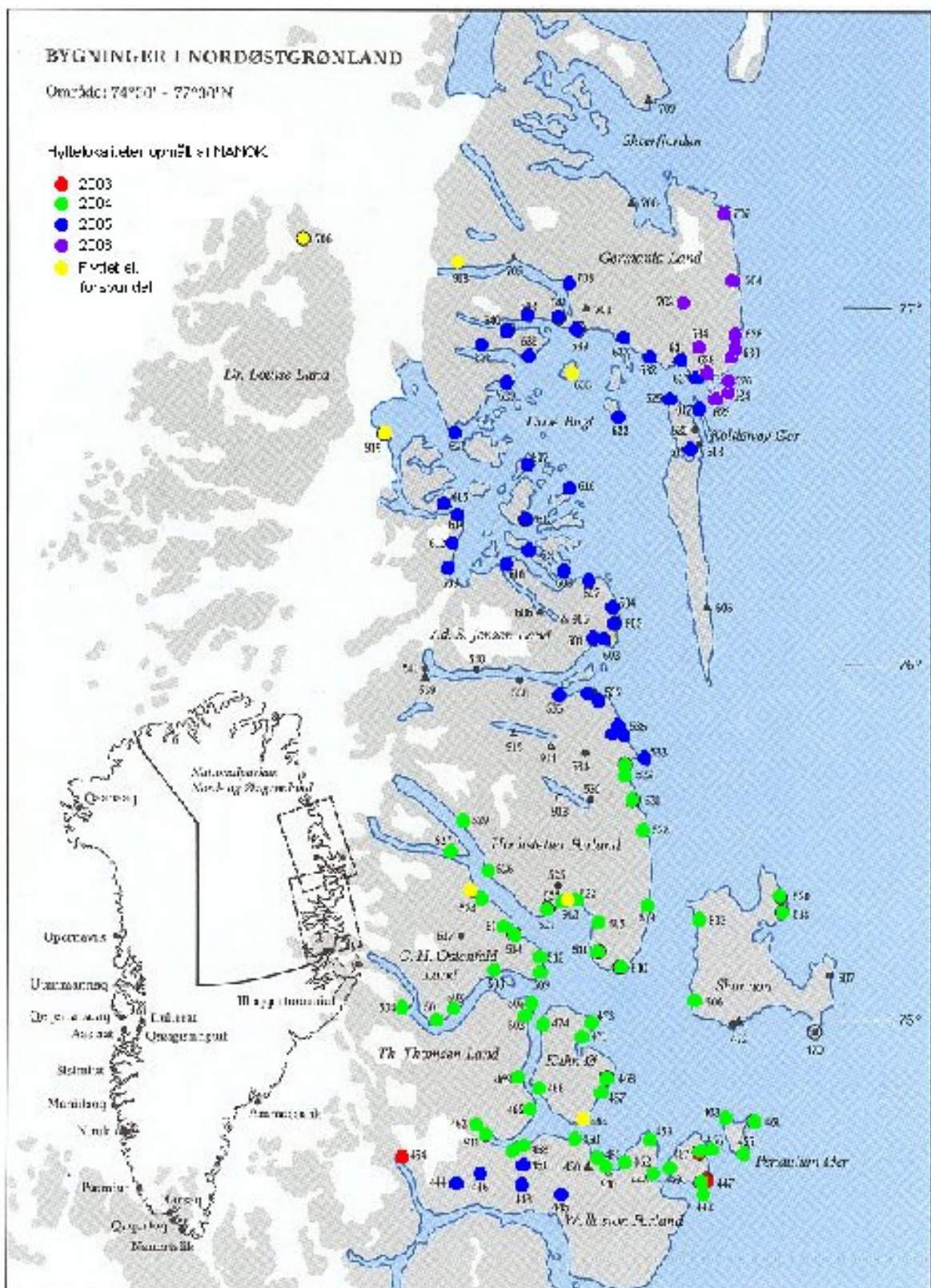
plan for the future protection of the house. In large the proposal consists of a removal of all gravel north and west of the house in order to drain the melting water southwest of the house. Furthermore, the floor in the house, which can no longer be saved, should be removed and a drain should be provided beneath the floor, leading the water south, and a new floor put down. Nanok will be at the disposal to the carrying out of this project.

The journey home

The journey home with the Twin Otter started in the afternoon 9th August. Directly to Mestersvig, Constable Pynt and Akureyri. On the flight our presentiments were confirmed: The ice was still firmly in whole Dove Bugt and only in Øresund, Lillebælt and Stormbugt that is the waters just south and west to Danmarkshavn, there was open water. The opening in the pack ice, in which we sailed along Germanialand, had closed again. It was not until we reached south of Shannon that you could sail in the fiords, but the sea was still closed.

We had to stay 24 hours Akureyri and then flew directly to Copenhagen, where we landed at 2.a.m. 11 August. We want to express a warm thanks to the crew at Danmarkshavn for shelter, help and very good food.

Erik, Jannik, Jens and Hans-Henrik



These two maps illustrate the extent of the work of Nanok's work in the summers of 2003, 2004, 2005 og 2006. All the sites highlighted with red, green, blue and purple are huts and stations, which have been visited and measured by Nanok's expedition teams. Sites highlighted with yellow are places, where we without any luck have searched for buildings and the remains of such, or where it is known with certainty that the building or its remainings have been removed or are missing.

Field report for the South team 2006

The South team

Full time: Ole Schirmer Nielsen, Jesper Stentoft and Torben Jeppesen, all former members of the Sirius patrol. Part time: Christina Zinck-Jørgensen and Mette Stentoft.

Task

The South team had the task to finish the registration of huts in the area around Mestersvig, the north coast of Kong Oscar Fjord and huts in land at Fleming Fjord. Furthermore the cutter "Agsut" wanted a fresh coat of paint. The South team left Denmark Monday 31 July 2006 and returned Saturday 26 August.

Home to Ella Ø

We arrived at Ella Ø Tuesday late in the afternoon in a lovely weather. We were put up in Ørnereden and then began to dismantle the tarpaulin that covered "Agsut".



The travelling route for the South team:

Number of visited sites: 29

Sailed by Agsut (cutter): 720 km (blue).

Walked: 120 km (red).



South team 2006.

Full time (from the left): Ole Schirmer Nielsen, Jesper Stentoft and Torben Jeppesen.

Part time (from the left): Christina Zinck-Jørgensen and Mette Stentoft.

Renovation of "Agsut"

We had the cutter painted on Friday. The painting was badly damaged on almost the entire boat due to the drastic drying up that had been in progress since the boat had been moved to Ella Ø.

At first we tried to sandpaper the painting off, but it was very time consuming because of the remaining paint's hard surface. But with the right gear we really saw some action – a felt burner and a scraper – and the painting flew off in big chunks. However, because of our deadline we had to limit the renovation to the cabin and wheel house. After priming, the joints got some joint filler and then we painted like insane.

On Saturday the cutter was ready for mounting. We changed the oil and made ready for launching. The cutter was put in the water at low tide and by high tide we could sail it off the cradle. It rained almost all day, but that pleased us because the deck then would be watertight before we were going sailing.

Sofia Sund

Sunday 6 August we took off from Ella Ø. The weather was nice and we were ready. The trip went through Sofia Sund to visit the huts there. Our first stop was Namdalshytten [305] in Karl Jakobsens Bugt. We sailed further on across the sound and passed Arentz Hytten [304], Stordalen [306] and Orvin Hytten [307] on the north coast of the sound on our way. Our plan was to spend the night at Kap Humboldt [308], but it was not until 1 a.m. that we reached the hut, so every room had already been occupied. The Konebådsekspektion, who sailed with "Arnaq", the sister ship to "Agsut", had arrived before us, so we slept in the cutter.

The next day we shaped our course for Laplace [301]. The station is of the same construction as Sverresborg in Vega Sund, another site that reeks with history and, unfortunately, lack of maintenance.

We sailed back through Sofia Sund. The plan was to spend the night in a small bay in the mouth of Vega Sund, but owing to storm and big waves just outside the mouth of the



"Agsut's wheel house before renovation.



Torben and Jesper swinging the brush.

sound, we made for Ella Ø to anchor. We went alongside Lemming Bugt on the east coast of Ella Ø. When we anchored, we had a visit from a bear. Unfortunately, it did not stay for long, and so we went to bed.

Kong Oscar Fjord

Tuesday 8 August. When we checked the oil before departure, we discovered that water had entered the gear. We changed the oil and then made for the first hut on the west coast of Traill Ø. We anchored at Nordborg hytterne [231-1 and 231-2], Kongeborghytterne [224-1 og 224-2] and Holm Bugt hytten [222]. The last hut that day was Spurvognen [221]. Here we spent the night – in real beds.

The next day we shaped our course for Mestersvig via Bådhytten [217] and Vælddalhytten [214]. Bådhytten is placed well inland standing on a primitive carriage. The hut is still intact, but marked by being exposed to a lot of moist, when the spring thaw begins. Apparently, it has been pulled there by means of a dozer.



The oldest of the Kongeborg hytterne [224-1].

We arrived at Mestersvig late in the evening. The last part of the trip was in a thick fog, and we made it by means of GPS. Fortunately, the fog lifted as we reached land.

The next day we registered Mestersvig Flyveplads [209-1] and Nyhavn [209-2].

Fleming Fjord

Friday 11 August we made for Stresshytten [106] in Fleming Fjord. We went with Sirius, who were going in the same direction. It was quite a tough trip; 10 hours sail in dull weather and half of the time in rain.

The following day Torben and Jesper went the 10 km into Pingel Dal to Fleming Dal Hytten [101]. Ole stayed and looked after "Agsut".

In the evening we sailed to the west side/coast of the fiord to spend the night. The next morning Ole and Jesper went across land to Ørsted Dal Hytten [111]. The



Jesper and Torben by Fleming Dal Hytten [101].



Ole fetches water by Bådhytten [217].

trip went via Qorog and Allday Dal in fine weather. Fortunately, the hut had been placed incorrectly on the map, which spared us the crossing of the great river bed in Ørsted Dal. On the way back we were followed by an angry muskox bull a couple of miles. After two signal flares and some walking match we lost him.

Having walked 30 km we sailed to the bay outside Henrik Møller Dal.

Monday 14 August Torben packed a light rucksack and went to Øyedalshtten [115] by himself. The approx. 16 km. were accomplished in almost 4 hours.

When Torben was back, we said goodbye to Fleming Fjord and left for Mestersvig.

On our way we passed Jostein hytten [205]. The hut had had a visit from a bear or two, from which one of the house ends and a mattress had suffered.

We stayed at Mestersvig for a couple of days. Christina and Mette arrived by plane 15 August. We used the time to register Minebyen [207] and Washburns Hus [210] and socialise with POLOG and Tårnuglerne. We had a life-saving drill with the girls, so they could try both the suit and jacket in the cold water. They also had a small test sail from Nyhavn to Skida [211].

Thursday 17 August we sailed from Nyhavn to set people down at Hamna [208-2] and at Ekspeditions huset [206-2] in Mesters Vig. However, a storm and big waves stopped us from doing so, when we reached Hamna, so the landing was in Noret instead. Torben sailed back to Nyhavn to wait for a calmer weather.



You can use Øyedalshytten [115] with "a little" ingenuity.

Ole and Christina were registered Hamna hytten, where they spent the night and walked the 9 km back to Mestersvig. Mette and Jesper went in to Sorte Hjørne [203] via Ekspeditionshuset. After having spent the night in Sorte Hjørne the trip went to Jakobsbo [202] and from there back to Ekspeditionshuset, where, after having walked 38 km, they were picked up by "Agsut".

Bound for Ella Ø

The course was shaped for Kap Peterséns [218], where we arrived at 4 a.m. Two were put up in the hut and the rest slept in the cutter. At 7 a.m. we woke, when the cutter started rolling because of big waves and storm. The storm increased, so we decided to go ashore to get some sleep, while waiting for the weather to improve. Six hours later wind and waves had calmed, so we hoisted the anchor and continued for Ella Ø. It even went as bad as for the sun to appear among the clouds. The trip past Bastionen was made in sunshine and calm water.

When we arrived at Ella Ø, we emptied the cutter and then took lodgings in Ørnereden.

Sunday 20 August we rose to a fine, sunny day. We spent some of the day with Sirius on a cutter trip to Ørkendal west of Ella Ø. An hours sail, 10 minutes walk and then you are in the middle of the impressive river bed. In the evening we pulled "Agsut" on shore.

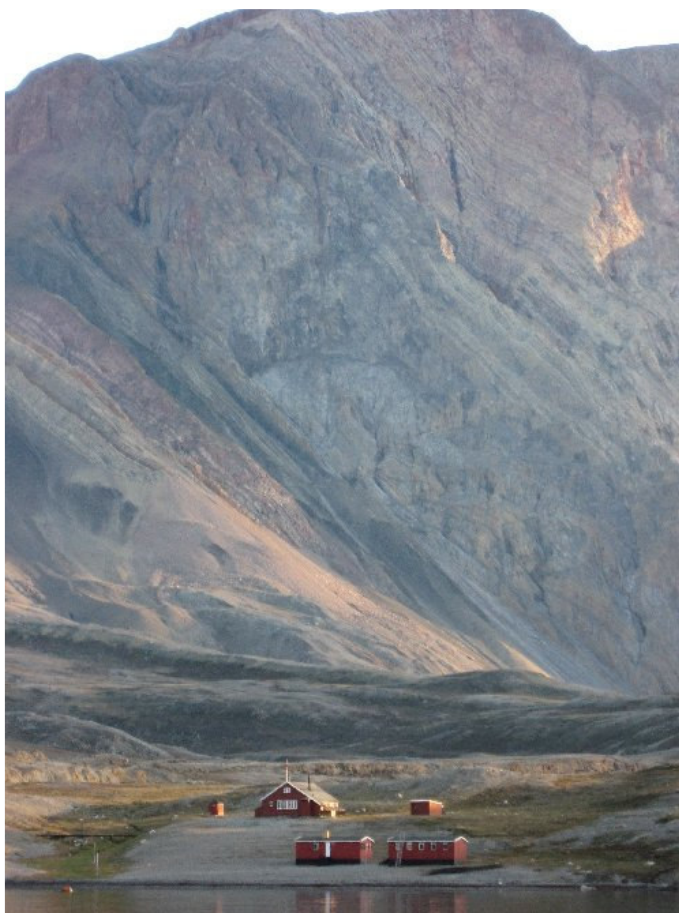
We used Monday to take stock and make "Agsut" ready for the winter. In the evening we were ready to leave Ella Ø.

But that was easier said than done. We were to leave the 22nd in the afternoon, but the following days a thick carpet of clouds covered Ella Ø og Mestersvig. It was not until the morning on the 24th that the weather allowed us to fly.

After 24 days in Northeast Greenland the South team left Ella Ø to head homewards to families and everyday life.

The teams' tasks were accomplished thanks to the "heroic" effort from the team's participants. Nanok is indebted to the Sirius crew at Ella Ø and Mestersvig and to POLOG for the great helpfulness they showed the South team.

Torben, Ole and Jesper



Arrival at Ella Ø. Ørnereden in front of Bastionen.

On Nanok

Nordøstgrønlandsk Kompagni Nanok (Nanok) is a private, non-profit organisation founded in 1992 upon the former Østgrønlandsk Fangstkompagni Nanok A/S, founded in 1929.

The aim of Nanok is a.o. to contribute to spreading knowledge of Nordøstgrønland and its culture history and to contribute in securing the cultural monuments and buildings in the area.

Nanok consists of a management of seven persons. These are Peter Schmidt Mikkelsen (dir.), Jens Erik Schultz, Tommy Pedersen, Søren Andersen, Martin Reenberg, Palle V. Norit, and Søren Rysgaard. Besides the management a number of individual persons - Nanok'ers - participate actively in Nanok's projects. All work in Nanok is voluntary and unpaid.

Each summer Nanok sends an expedition of typically 5-10 persons divided on 2-3 teams to work in Northeast Greenland for 3 to 5 weeks. Result of this work is documented and published in a field report. The expedition participants are chosen by the management. In the years 1991-2006 a total of 92 Nanok'ers have been sent out to Northeast Greenland.

In order to perform its tasks, Nanok controls a considerable amount of expedition equipment; however, Nanok possesses no property in Greenland.

Nanok's projects are financed by Aage V. Jensens Fonde.

The organisation is furthermore supported by a number of private contributors. Among Nanok's many, good partners are a.o. Slædepatruljen Sirius, Forsvarets Vagt Mestersvig, Royal Arctic Line, Polar Logistics Group (POLOG), Flugfélag Islands, Logistikcenter Grønland, Grønlands Hjemmestyre, Grønlands Nationalmuseum, Dansk Polarcenter, and Danmarks Miljøundersøgelser.

Since 1991 Nanok has repaired approx. 20 culture historic buildings and has for this effort gained considerable recognition from a.o. Grønlands Hjemmestyre and Grønlands Nationalmuseum.

Encouraged by Grønlands Hjemmestyre Nanok in 2003 has initiated a new structural survey of all cultural-historical cabins and stations in Northeast Greenland. The records are available free of charge for Grønlands Nationalmuseum.



List over Northeast Greenland stations and huts repaired by Nanok 1991 - 2006:

Hut number	Name	Repaired in
514	Ny Jonsbu	1995
510	Hochstetter	1996, 1998
447	Germaniahavn	1999
438	Zackenbergt	1991, 1992
429	Moskusheimen	1994
425	Sandodden / Karina	1994 - 2000
417	Kap Herschell	2002
405	Eskimonæs	1998
356	Hoelsbu	1999, 2000
350	Loch Fyne	1993
340	Kap Ovibos hytten	2000
335	Myggbukta	1999
324	Varghytten	2002
308	Kap Humboldt	1997
224-2	Kongeborgen	2001
222	Holm Bugt hytten	2001
218	Kap Peterséns	1998
201	Antarctichavn	2001 (crushed by avalanche in 2002)

Source: Concerning hut- and station numbers and –names see:

Peter Schmidt Mikkelsen *Nordøstgrønland 1908-60*, Aschehoug 2001

