

# Field report from the journey to Northeast Greenland in the summer 2003

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*Midnight sun on the west wall*

*In spite of apparent resemblance each of the Northeast Greenland cabins has it's own special characteristics.*

*The above photo shows the Bakkehaug cabin bathed in the beautiful light from the midnight sun. Bakkehaug – or Bakkehuset – was built in 1927 and is located on the northwestern side of Clavering Ø. In this field report you will also see examples of the large variety of the buildings' construction and condition*

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[Danish version](#)

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## Introduction

Nordøstgrønlandsk Kompagni Nanok's 13<sup>th</sup> field season turned out to be a different, yet successful summer.

In May 2003 we were informed by the Direktoratet for Miljø og Natur, that the Landsstyret would

grant Nanok permission to perform the expedition as usual. However, no permit to restore more cabins and trapper stations would be given, until the Hjemmestyre had made a priority list over the cabins and decided upon the antiquarian questions concerning this type of cultural monuments.

In stead Nanok was encouraged this year to draw up a structural status of the cabins, we wished to restore.

Whether or not this piece of information capsized the plans for the summer, we appreciate and welcome the interest of the Landsstyre and consider it the outcome of many years of efforts made by Nanok to make clear the value of these cabins – practical as well as historical. We therefore immediately decided to launch the proposed survey. This was only possible because of the large amount of goodwill and flexibility among the participants of our expeditions.

We are quite satisfied with this summer's work. The Nanok teams have carried out a detailed and systematic survey of the majority of the premises between Mestersvig and Daneborg. More than 100 locations have been visited. A summary of this unique material is now included as basis when – as previously mentioned - decisions concerning each cabin's future is to be made. A task in which Nanok, naturally, participates. It is only natural to continue the survey in years to come in order to make a complete, up-to-date record, but no decision has yet been made on this subject.

In the spring of 2003 the polar research was given a new tool, as Aage V. Jensens Fonde decided that a newly built, specially equipped aluminium ship of 7 meters should be made available to Danmarks Miljøundersøgelser, Grønlands Naturinstitut, Dansk Polarcenter and Nanok. Through efficient co-operation between the trust and representatives from the future users, the ship became a reality within just a couple of months. An outstanding example of initiative, teamwork, and energy. The M/S "Aage V. Jensen" is now stationed at Daneborg, and Nanok's initial experiences with the vessel have been extremely positive.

Due to the almost total lack of drift ice along the east coast of Greenland, a drastic coastal erosion during recent years has become a growing threat to the historic buildings from the trappers period. Unfortunately, a result of this erosion was that in the fall of 2002, one of the most known and used stations, Mønstedhus, fell into the sea. You can read more about this further down in the report.

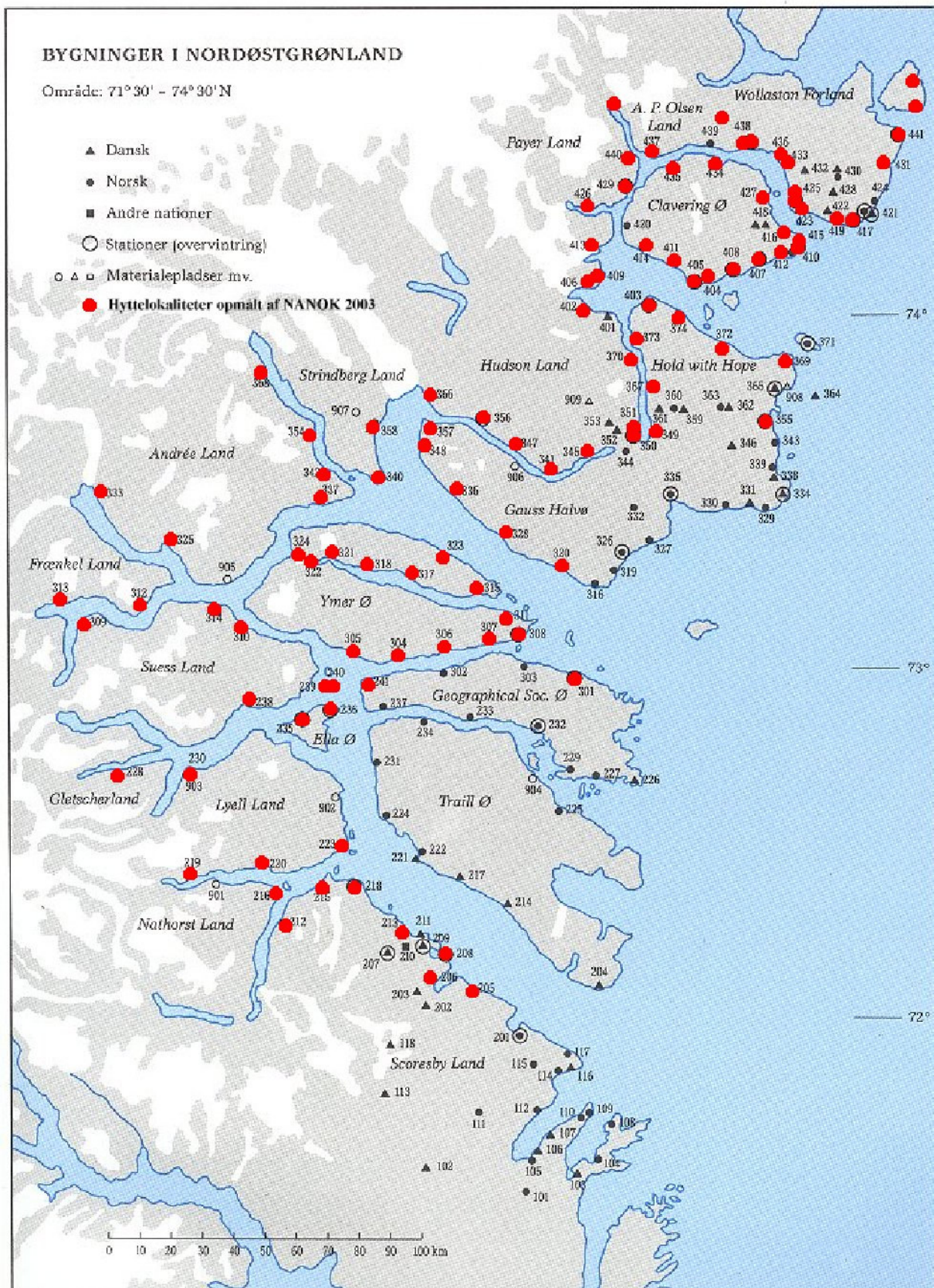
Finally, Nanok wishes to express our thanks to our sponsor, Aage V. Jensens Fonde for support and also to thank the large number of persons, who have given their support and shown interest in our work. Likewise, we would like to thank all our partners and the expeditions and institutions, who have contributed to making our work possible.

On behalf of Nanok

Peter Schmidt Mikkelsen

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*The map illustrates the extent of Nanok's work in the summer of 2003. All sites marked red are cabins and stations visited and surveyed by the expedition teams from Nanok*

## **Field report for the North team 2003**

### **Task**

The primary task for the North team was to survey and draw up a structural status of the cabins and stations in the navigable area between Daneborg and Hold with Hope.

With Daneborg as point of departure the team was to navigate the area in the extent possible. The recording was to be carried out by systematic digital photographing of the buildings, as well as ground plans and list of inventory. All visited locations were also to be measured by GPS.

### **The North team**

The task was to be carried out by three persons: Erik Jochumsen, photographer. Klaus Myntzberg Jensen, architectural designer and carpenter. (Both previous members of the Sirius Patrol 2000 - 2002). Søren Andersen from Nanok.

### **There and back again**

On the 21<sup>st</sup> of July '03 we left Kastrup together with the South team. After spending the night in Akureyri we flew by Fokker 50 to Mestersvig. After a short stay and a "so long" to the South team, Erik and I continued by Twin Otter to Daneborg. Klaus had already arrived at Daneborg on July 11.

The weather was so-so, but with his usual skills the pilot manoeuvred the plane through the fog and made a superb landing at Daneborg. Klaus turned out to be at Zackenberg, standing by with the rubber boat in case we had to land there.

### **Clearing and departure**

The team settled in at Sandodden Station, where we got ready for the trips. Supplies and equipment were cleared. The trips were to be made by Nanok's Humber RIB rubber boat with a 40 hp outboard motor. After two days we were ready to leave, heading for Revet and Tyrolerfjord. The weather was fine, but due to a fresh breeze, the surface of the water occasionally got quite "bumpy".





*The North team with their Humber rubber boat*

## **Revet and Tyrolerfjord**

Moskusheimen is one of the best situated old stations. The building is in good condition and the cabin diary confirms that many visitors come by. We stayed here for the night and the following day we headed for the bottom of the Tyrolerfjord.

The weather was fine and we had a great sail to the bottom of Tyrolerfjord where Fjordbotten [454], one of the smallest cabins on the Coast is situated with a view to a large glacier. On the inner walls of the cabin previous legendary trappers, such as Henry Rudi and Gerhard Antonsen, have carved the dates of their visits.

The next cabin was Skrænthytten [440] followed by Bjørnnesstua [437]. Bjørnnesstua is situated at the mouth of the river from Store Sødal, and more unique Eskimo winter houses are located here. We visited Bakkehaug north east of Clavering Ø and then shaped course for Zackenberg. Fog and choppy sea combined with some engine problems only made the trip more colourful!

After a stay at Zackenberg station we measured the Fiskerhytten and Zackenberg Base. We also found the time to visit the ZERO station at Zackenberg, where we were shown great hospitality.



*Fjordbotten [454] in Tyrolerfjord is a very small cabin with an unusual appearance and an interesting story*

## **Kap Herschell**

Back at Daneborg we cleared up the Sandodden, replacing old supplies with new. We checked the motor and made for Kap Herschell [417]. The work performed by the Nanok team last summer is outstanding. The old ruin is completely reconstructed and brought back to its original looks. The coast here is difficult to navigate. Heavy swells and ice floes gave us some problems. It is essential that the boat is pulled far ashore or is at anchor. The small "Grønlænderhus" [419] was surveyed and we also saw a couple of fine Eskimo ruins and a site for tents on the upper terraces.



*Grønlænderhuset [419] at the south coast of Wollaston Forland*

### **The Sandøen and Kista Arctica**

The following days were spent on unloading Kista Arctica that had announced an early arrival. Nanok joined the hectic work crew. We also found time to assist the walrus researcher Erik W. Born in transporting equipment to Sandøen. It's always a magnificent experience to be close to the huge and heavy walruses sunbathing and scratching in the sand. Erik used a crossbow to sedate the animals in order to get samples of fat for a further examination.

Our newly built vessel "Aage V. Jensen" also arrived by Kista Arctica. The landing went fine and when marine biologist Søren Rysgaard and his team arrived, the ship was quickly made ready to sail.

### **M/S "Aage V. Jensen"**

A fine ship, that is completely adjusted to its task. The first day at sea, we helped Søren Rysgaard

lift a sediment trap, which originally should have been lifted from Kista Arctica. By means of the small crane on the ship, we managed to lift the trap out of the 75 meters of water it had been put in last year. However, lifting a 400 kgs heavy object onto a ship weighing 1800 kg is not the easiest job in the world!

The ship is very manoeuvrable. Built in aluminium and equipped with 2 outboard motors of 60 hp each. Furthermore, the ship is equipped with echo sounder, radar and GPS. What a pleasure it is to get onward with a speed of 25-30 knots.





*"Aage V. Jensen" at the launch on 12 June 2003 in Svendborg*

### **The South side of Clavering Ø and Loch Fyne**

Our long journey started on August 6. The following days we recorded all cabins along the south side of Clavering Ø up to Eskimonæs [405]. Visiting the Dødemandsbugten [408] is a fantastic experience. Here are traces from the war and all the Eskimo ruins from the last East coast Eskimos, whom the Clavering expedition encountered in 1823.

The journey continued to the bottom of Granta Fjord, then along the east of Hudson Land to the bottom of Loch Fyne and back to Eskimonæs. A magnificent journey with many interesting cabin visits. Though many of the cabins are ruins, they are still a testimony of an intriguing story. Especially cabins like "Norske Villa" [373] and "Kap Stosch hytten" [403] that are built of driftwood.





*Norske Villa [373] - a marvellous example of a cabin built of driftwood*

### **Hold with Hope and Knudshoved**

There were certain limits to how much fuel we could bring on the rubber boat, but with the assistance of M/S "Aage V. Jensen" new supplies were transported to Eskimonæs so that the journey could continue to the north side of Hold with Hope. After recording here we had to proceed along the outer coast to Knudshoved [355]. The waters here were somewhat different, but compared to riding a "rodeo bull" this was easy!

Entering Knudshoved we got quite a surprise, as a huge male polar bear was leaving – allowing us to take some great photos. We got, however, a bit concerned when we observed the bear heading for the drifting pack ice - its usual residence - a pack ice that had drifted southwards long ago. It's going to be difficult being a polar bear if this development continues!

Though the navigation conditions are bad, Knudshoved is situated at a beautiful location, and in the future this could be an obvious object for restoring.

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*Knudshoved [355] at Hold with Hope*

### **Jackson Ø and Kap Breusing**

A long journey back to Daneborg - via Jackson Ø and further on to Kap Breusing – was now ahead of us. From the waterfront, however, there was no trace of the cabin [371] on Jackson Ø. It had burnt down in 1981. Bad navigation conditions left us no chance to get ashore. After approx. 80 kms with "full speed ahead" we arrived at Daneborg and jumped into a warm sleeping bag late in the evening. A voyage of approx. 500 kms had come to an end.

### **Clavering Ø and Store Sødal**

We spent the following days on shorter trips and visited the "Henningelvhytten" [416] and the "Djævløkløfthytten" [427] on Clavering. Cabins south of Wollaston Forland were visited by ship and by foot. Erik and Klaus went to Store Sødal and enjoyed a magnificent view when climbing the Zackenberg mountain.



*Pashuset [433] – Nicely restored and frequently used by Sirius*

### **Kap Wynn and Hansa Bugt**

By means of M/S "Aage V. Jensen" a trip to Hansa Bugt was possible. Apart from recording of cabins along the way, we also used the echo sounder to make a systematic survey of Hansa Bugt. It is now safe to say that there is no sunken German warship to be found here!

During this trip we had another great polar bear encounter, as a female bear and her two little cubs were observed south of Kap Wynn. Amazing to see how easily a polar bear with two cubs can traverse an almost vertical snow drift.

### **Sandodden**

In calm weather and weatherproof periods we spent the time maintaining the Sandodden. A window needed changing, and we soon discovered that the entire wall and floor in the east porch had to be replaced as well. It was all rotten. Everything was replaced and new felt welded on. The room is now fitted up as kitchen, large and bright with kitchen table and shelf. (NB: Sandodden formally belongs to Sirius Daneborg, wherefore Nanok could only carry out this restoration in agreement with Sirius).





*Repair of the porch at Sandodden*

## Closure

A fine summer had ended. The weather changed and the colours on the mountain showed autumn. The Nanok North team could look back on many a good experience. A satisfying job that had been done, regarding the conditions we were given this year. We have visited about 45 cabins and stations and sailed approx. 1000 kms both by rubber boat and by M/S "Aage V. Jensen".

The Sandodden was repaired and a new kitchen fitted. Nanok's equipment at Sandodden was counted and a record of tools was made.

Finally, the North team wishes to forward warm thanks and appreciation to Sirius for great teamwork and good fellowship and also to Søren Rysgaard and his team for assistance.

All collaboration has been carried out in the unique "polar spirit", where everybody lends a hand when needed. If only this spirit could be transferred to more southern skies, many problems would never arise!

Erik, Klaus, Søren



*The North team 2003, from left: Klaus Myntzberg Jensen, Søren Andersen, Erik Jochumsen*

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## Field report for the South team 2003

### The South team

The South team consisted of Niels Fæster Sørensen, blacksmith and pilot. Ole Schirmer Nielsen, plumber stud.ing. Jesper Mølbæk Stentoft, mechanic and engineer. Morten Lindhard, marine biologist. (All three previous members of the Sirius Patrol 1997-1999), and Jens Schultz from Nanok.

### Tasks

The team had two main tasks:

1. To remove Nanok's depot, equipment and M/S Agsut from Mestersvig to Ella Ø and organise Nanok depot on Ella Ø as arranged with Sirius.
2. To inspect and draw up structural status report of cabins and stations in the navigable area between Kong Oscars Fjord in the south and Hold with Hope in the north.

Drawing up a structural status report is to make a systematic photographic documentation, a GPS position and an accurate measuring of buildings and effects of historic interest.

### Removal of the Nanok depot

Immediately upon arrival on July 22<sup>nd</sup> at Mestersvig via Akureyri we began clearing the Nanok cutter "Agsut". She was towed from the helicopter hanger to the garage in Mestersvig for a.o. a big motor overhaul, welding of broken stern furnishing, new mountings for the lifeboat and mounting of 6 new tires for the boat cart.

On July 26 the cutter was towed to Nyhavn and launched. All relevant material from the depot at Nyhavn and some supplies were stowed on board. Due to unscheduled arrival of the supply ship Kista Arctica departure was delayed, and all men participated in the unloading. In return Kista Arctica carried our heavy boat cart to Ella Ø, which was an invaluable help. We also got assistance from the Cambridge Arctic Shelf Project (CASP), who lent us a rubber boat, as our own was being repaired – an agreement we made before leaving Denmark.

Agsut arrived at Ella Ø on the 28<sup>th</sup> of July and the following days a material depot was fitted in the

old generator house next to Ørnereden – Lauge Koch's old basecamp – as well as a supply depot in the so called 12-mans hut. We ourselves stayed in Ørnereden. We managed as such to move our base with only one sail from Mestersvig.

On Ella Ø we organised a slipway; a winch was repaired and anchored and on the 22<sup>nd</sup> of August Apsut was pulled ashore. After several repairs in the engine room and the exhaust she was cleared for the winter.

Having done the inventories, winter cleared tools and so on, we cleared and cleaned the Ørnereden and on August 26 it was time to strike our colours.



*Ørnereden on Ella Ø, where Nanok has established our southern summer basecamp*

## The survey

During the work in Nyhavn, Morten and Jens took the rubber boat to the southern Kong Oscar Fjord district and made three surveys here. When we left Ella Ø, Ole, Jesper and Niels sailed Apsut to the Kempe Fjord district, while Morten and Jens sailed the rubber boat via Antarctic Sund to the Kjerulf Fjord at the bottom of Kejser Franz Joseph Fjord.

On the 3<sup>rd</sup> of August we met again in Blomsterbugten by Varghytten, where the rubber boat had been weather-bound for a day or so. Later on we reunited at Strindberg in Nordfjord. Here Moskusoksefjord was surveyed. The 8<sup>th</sup> of August a present Sirius-team decided to remove the Kap Ovibos cabin further up ashore, as it was gliding into the sea. Nanok participated and this job lasted a day.

The following day, after a close encounter with the Waltershausen Gletcher, the whole Nanok team left Strindberg in hard wind into the Geologfjord, where we spent the night at Winterheimen. The



next day we split up at Bjørne Ø, so that Niels and Jesper in the rubber boat inspected the eastern side of Nordfjord and the south side of Gauss Halvø. The following morning at 03.00 a.m. we reunited at the ruin of Nørvehytten at the estuary of Dusén Fjord.

It was raining when we split up at 08.00. Agsut sailed into Dusén Fjord for surveying and Morten and Jens left for Kap Humboldt. Here we made a short trip to La Place on Geographical Society Ø.

Having surveyed Sofia Sund, both teams arrived at Ella Ø on August 13. On August 16 and 17 Morten and Jens went to the bottom of Isfjord for inspection.

We went back to Mestersvig by rubber boat (together with Sirius). Along the way we surveyed cabins in Segelsällskapet Fjord, Forsblad Fjord and Alpefjord.

The South team has surveyed a total of 60 locations. Agsut and the rubber boat have - almost shared evenly between them - travelled approx. 1600 kms.



*m/b Agsut and her crew en route*



*Raudberget [215] in Segelsällskapet Fjord is still fairly intact even though it has not been used for many years*



*Measuring the Mineralbukta [238] in Kempe Fjord*

### **Closing remarks**

Agsut functioned satisfactorily, but could do with some improvements, which we've noted. Also the rubber boat worked well with a motor of 15 hp, but on their own initiative and with regard to safety, Sirius lent us a spare motor of 20 hp.

Though heavily loaded – sometimes with 80 ltrs of fuel and other gear – it could manage up to 30

kms/h, which in return could turn out to be quite a rough experience, when the water was "bumpy".

We have seen a large number of seals and muskoxes, but no foxes or bears. In Kjerulf Fjord a single ermine. At almost each site we found ruins of Inuit settlements. Most of the time the weather was fine, sunny and only occasionally windy.

We would like to send our warmest appreciation to the staff at Mestersvig and Ella Ø for their great helpfulness and hospitality.

On 26<sup>th</sup> of August we gathered with the North team in Mestersvig and after one night in Reykjavik we arrived in Denmark on August 27.

Thank you for a great summer!

Jesper, Ole, Niels, Morten, and Jens



*The South team 2003*

*From left: Jesper Mølbæk Stentoft, Ole Schirmer Nielsen, Morten Lindhard,  
Jens Erik Schultz, Niels Fæster Sørensen*





*Rendalshytten – Paradisdalen [309] in Kjerulf Fjord – Still used by Sirius*



*Kikut [311] – at the entrance of Dusén Fjord*



*Huttetu – Sydvestpynten [348] on Gauss Halvø is becoming sanded up*



*Snaddheimen [312] located among two thousand meters high mountains in the beautiful Kejser Franz Joseph Fjord*

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## Mønstedhus in memoriam



The old trapper station Mønstedhus on Hochstetter Forland was built in 1938 and functioned as Danish trapper station until 1952.

Several well-known trappers had station here, e.g. "Gamle Niels" Hansen – who spent 9 years altogether in Northeast Greenland. Peter Nielsen – who since joined the "Nordøstgrønlands Slædepatrulje" during WW2. Mogens Graae – who became director of the old trapping company and who in 1991 was the central power behind the foundations of present Nordøstgrønlandsk Kompagni Nanok.



*In 1953 the sea took a large piece of the coast. The following year Mønstedhus therefore had to be moved further ashore*

Erosion on this coast is not a new phenomenon. In 1953 it was so powerful, that Mønstedhus had to be moved 20 meters further ashore. Mogens Graae participated in this work.

Since then the cabin stood solid for many years and was much used. It was a good building – certainly worth a resting day – and frequently used by Sirius and other travellers. There is only one North-Southbound trail on this stretch of coast. You simply could not "miss" Mønstedhus!

Since 2001 the ice conditions along the East Coast of Greenland have been quite unusual. Practically no drift ice along the coast allow huge Atlantic swells to make tremendous cuts in the coast sides.

In November 2001 a Sirius sledge team gave the first alarm that during the resent summer the distance between the cabin and the cliff had been dangerously minimised to only 3 meters. It ought to be obvious to everyone that something urgently had to be done if Mønstedhus was to be saved.

Unfortunately Nordøstgrønlandsk Kompagni Nanok was unable to interfere, as the question concerning ownership of the old Danish cabins was not yet solved. All that Nanok could do was to implore Sirius and other relevant parties to act as soon as possible.

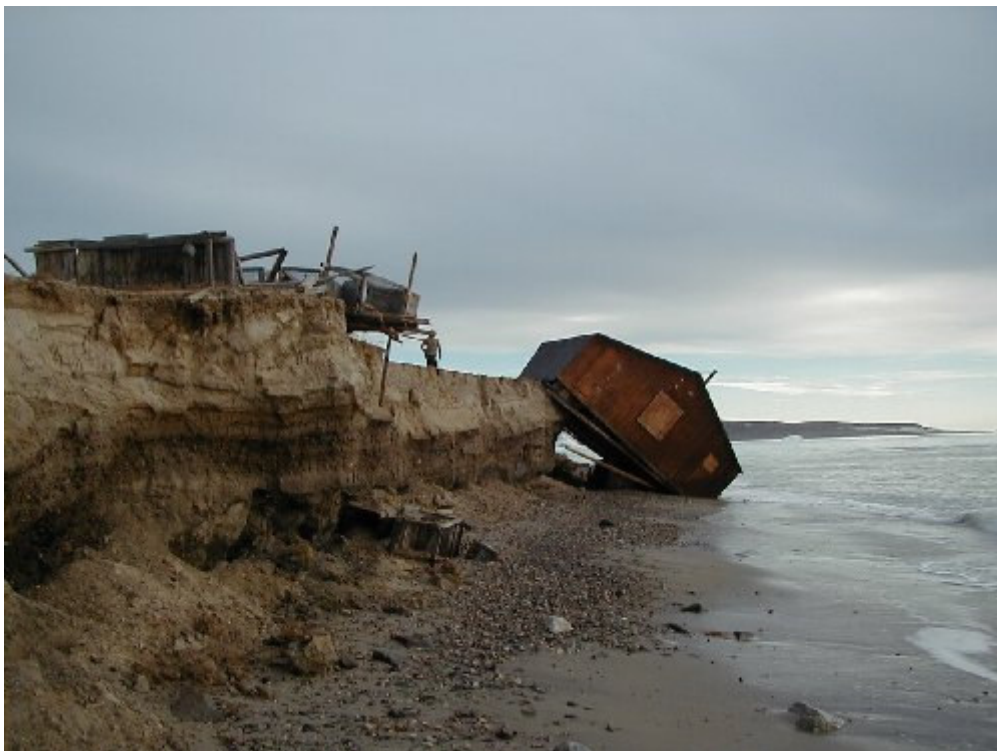


The Slædepatruljen undertook the task, but unfortunately the accomplishment was delayed, so on the 14<sup>th</sup> of September 2002, when the "removal party" from Sirius finally arrived at Mønstedhus, all they could do was to state, that the cabin had fallen over the cliff. Only four days earlier a plane had reported that the station was still intact on the edge!

Sirius saved all that was saveable and built a smaller cabin out of material from the old station. There was nothing else to do.



*September 2002. Mønstedhus has fallen over the cliff and cannot be saved*





*September 2002. The cabin built of materials from Mønstedhus*

But it ought never to have got this far with Mønstedhus!

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List over Northeast Greenland stations repaired by Nanok 1991 - 2003:

No.	Name	Repaired year
514	Ny Jonsbu	1995
510	Hochstetter	1996, 1998
447	Germaniahavn	1999
438	Zackenberg	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 (demolished by avalanche in 2002)

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

Peter Schmidt Mikkelsen: [Nordøstgrønland 1908-60, fangstmandsperionen](#). Aschehoug 2001.




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### North East Greenland Company NANOK

Further information about Nanok and North East Greenland can be found at  
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This page was updated: 13 September 2003