
DEREK BUCKLE, ROBERT DURRAN,
ROY RUDDLE AND DAVE WILKINSON

Citrus Delights

Greenland's North and South Lemon Mountains

(Plates 44, 45)

Roy Ruddle writes: 'I had wanted to visit Greenland for almost 25 years. When I was still in my mid-teens an adult friend had shown me some pictures of an impressive mountain they had attempted that summer somewhere in the east of the country. Even though I had yet to take up climbing, I knew for sure that this was a place I desperately wanted to go to. I nearly went to Greenland in 1985 for my first major expedition, but instead I visited Peru's Cordillera Huayhuash, inspired by Al Rouse's article in *Mountain*. Time passed and opportunity remained elusive. Then in the summer of 2001, with personal circumstances changing, urgent action had to be taken. I recruited a climbing partner and set out to organise a suitable team to help me achieve a long-held dream.'

The 2002 Alpine Climbing Group/Alpine Club Greater Ranges Meet was organised, on an ad-hoc basis like its predecessors, to places such as the Caucasus, the Karakoram, and the Cordillera Blanca. Roy Ruddle put forward the idea and, if there were sufficient takers, offered to organise it. The trip started with an e-mail circular and entry in the Club's Newsletter, inviting anyone interested to contact Roy and, if possible, meet at his house. The agenda was to find an area, alpine in nature, which allowed exploratory ski touring and had easy unclimbed peaks, with potential for more technical new routes up to TD+. Oh, and preferably had an unclimbed Walker Spur.

Eight people turned up, including Paul Walker of Tangent Expeditions International, who had been asked to provide the logistics. Aided by curry and copious bottles of wine, we gradually narrowed down the possibilities, helped enormously by Paul's unparalleled knowledge of Greenland's various mountain ranges, a carousel of his slides, some aerial photos, and various back issues of the *Alpine Journal*. By midnight the Lemon Mountains had been chosen and the core of a team had formed.

The Lemon Mountains can be divided into two roughly equal areas. The South Lemons had been visited by nine previous expeditions that picked plums from the various side glaciers of the Frederiksborg. However, it was

a picture of one of the routes that they left untouched which gave us our 'Walker Spur', the North Spur of Mitivagkat East (*AJ* 1993, plate 44).

The North Lemons cover some 300km² and were completely unexplored. Phil Bartlett reinforced this, stating that they were 'unvisited and contained some fine objectives' (*AJ* 1999). By landing in a ski plane near the famous Cathedral (2600m), first ascended by Bartlett and Luke Hughes, we could focus our collective attention on both Mitivagkat and the vast potential that lay further north. This included peaks as high as, but of much larger scale than, anything in the South Lemons and access via any one of four glaciers.

Four pairs of climbers signed up for the trip: Roy Ruddle and Robert Durran, Dave Wilkinson and Geoff Cohen, Andy and Rachel Gallagher, and Derek Buckle and Martin Scott. For official purposes, we were known as the *British Lemon Mountains Expedition 2002*, but in practice we operated as four independent pairs. Our objectives were: the first ascent of the 800m North Spur of Mitivagkat East in the South Lemons; exploration and first ascents in the unexplored Courtauld glacier region of the North Lemons; and major unclimbed lines on the north and west side of Cathedral and Minster in the South Lemons.

We flew to Iceland on 13 July, and on to Greenland in a Twin Otter ski plane two days later to join our equipment that had already been deposited on the edge of the ice cap. We knew that our landing site was two days' ski from where we had intended, the change forced by the accelerated glacial melt of an unusually warm summer. That meant Roy and Robert had to spend a frantic Sunday trying to locate additional pulks to allow us to transport all of our gear in one go.

To get to Greenland we first took a scheduled flight to Isfajordur in North-west Iceland, where we were due to meet a chartered Twin Otter that would take us into the mountains to land on skis. However, after landing in rain and low cloud, we were met by a phone message. It transpired that the weather over the Lemon Mountains was marginal and forecast to get worse. As we were liable for any extra flying time, and an aborted trip to the ice cap would cost £6000, we weren't going to argue. However, we hadn't reckoned on a chance encounter with Cambridge academic and adventure pilot Andy Hopper in an otherwise deserted Isfajordur airport. En route to Anchorage in his little Cessna, with a mate who was into climbing volcanoes, Andy offered to pass over the Lemon Mountains and phone our pilot with a weather report. Providing Andy with the GPS coordinates of our destination prevented any ambiguity and two hours later the answer was 'clear blue skies, sunny and stable'.

By 2pm we were on our way and after two flights all eight of us had landed on the edge of Greenland's Inland Sea. Originally, we had planned to make forays from a base camp by Cathedral but that now lay two days away and caused a reassessment of how we would operate. We split into three teams. Roy Ruddle and Robert Durran headed initially for new routes

on Mitivagkat and Cathedral, while Dave Wilkinson and Geoff Cohen set out to try and find, reach and climb the highest peak in the unexplored North Lemons, Pt 2600m, according to the clearly error-prone map. In doing so, these pairs were also going to establish an Advanced Base Camp where their paths diverged, and stock that camp with half their food and the team's satellite phone. Meanwhile, the remaining pairs, Derek Buckle and Martin Scott, and Andy and Rachel Gallagher, mapped out a circular ski tour that would take in a number of unclimbed peaks stretching as far as the Lindbergh Mountains and Mitivagkat.

Although not originally planned, the expedition would not meet again as a whole until two days before its intended departure from Greenland. The next sections, therefore, tell the separate story of each of the three teams.

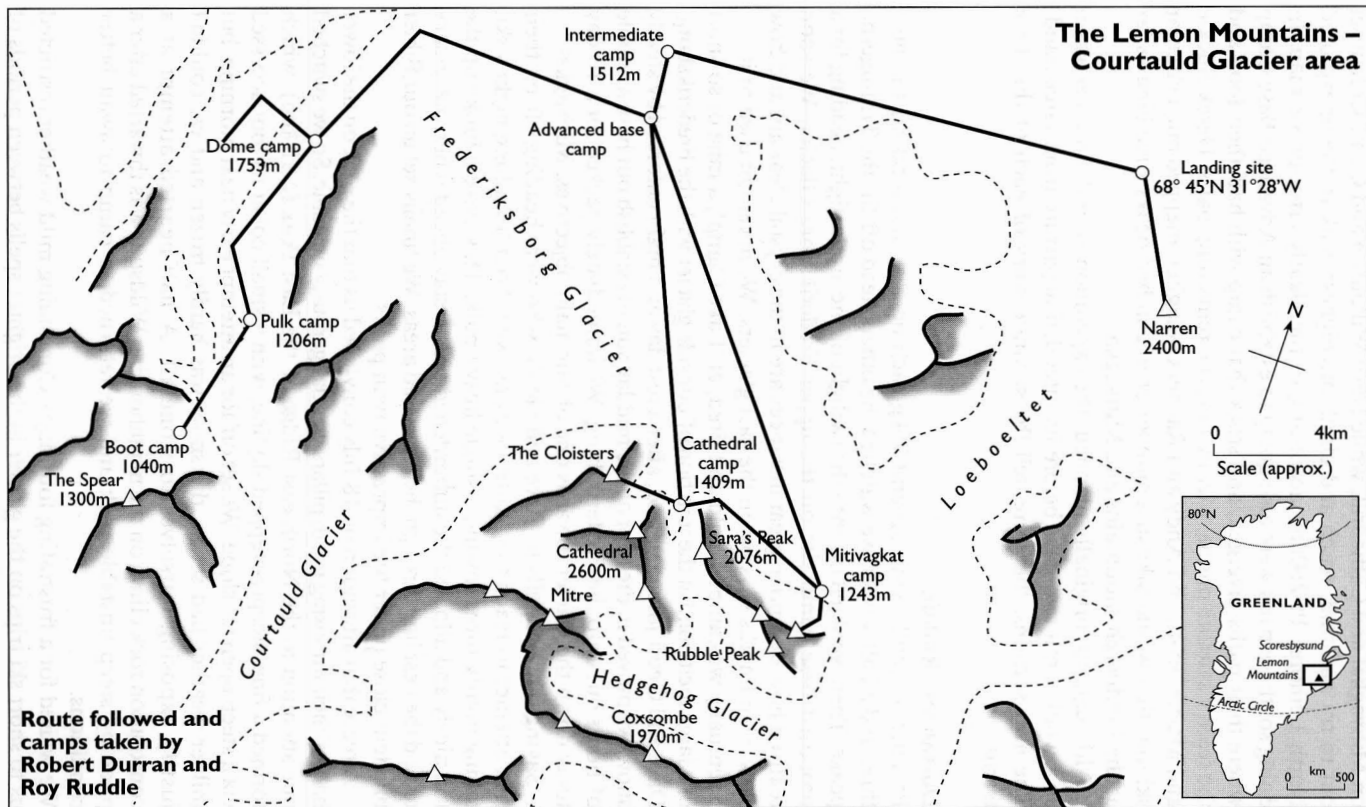
Durran and Ruddle

Packing our pulks with around 90kg each of gear and food for the next three and a half weeks, we watched the others head off for the Trillingerne peaks. Then we skied off into the twilight of the arctic night, heading for a proposed base camp site on the upper Frederiksborg Glacier. We soon realised how deceptive great distances are in the crystal clear air, and how slowly landmarks pass by on the vast glaciers. We never got used to it. Eventually we camped, cold and tired, at 'Lake Camp', a mile or so short of a large melt pond at the junction of our side glacier with the Frederiksborg. Dave and Geoff joined us and, after a rest day and night enforced by steady snow, we moved in the heat of the midday sun to establish our base a couple of hours out onto the Frederiksborg. We immediately packed for a 10-day foray down the glacier towards one of our main objectives, Mitivagkat.

Saying our farewells to Dave and Geoff, who were heading off on their first attempt to reach the North Lemons, we set out for a long night's ski, taking hourly turns towing a single heavy pulk. This system broke up the toil nicely and allowed the unburdened one to stay ahead where necessary to find the best line through the crevassed areas. We finally set up our Bibler bivi tent close under the impressive twin peaks.

A recce that afternoon on 18 July convinced us that the rock on the lower half of their imposing north pillars was dangerously unstable. So we switched our attention to the North-east Ridge of the East Peak (c.2100m), which formed a fine, steeply-stepped skyline, with a small col at its foot accessed via a steep open ice slope. We set off for an attempt early next morning, but milder weather had set in, the snow was hardly frozen and we couldn't justify exposing ourselves to stonefall. A half-hearted attempt at a consolation rock climb on the neighbouring Wildspur was thwarted after a pitch by steep unstable rock and we returned to camp to await better conditions.

We waited for a frustrating four days. Continuing mild weather restricted us to short ski trips on the glacier in the brighter spells between periods of



rain or wet snow. Finally colder air arrived, the snow froze hard, and a 3am start on 24 July saw us quickly up the ice slope and onto the rock. The ridge gave a series of strenuous pitches in awkward chimneys and cracks, several of which would have achieved classic HVS status on Stanage, interspersed with easier slabby sections. The final step was steeper and more sustained. We investigated three lines in deteriorating weather but each turned into intimidating off-widths and we finally retreated probably within 50m of the summit. The abseil descent went smoothly as far as the ice slope, which, with the return of mild conditions, was being swept by rapidly worsening stonefall. Things became serious and scary so we were very relieved to find a good peg placement in the generally loose rock alongside the ice and make a final abseil over the bergschrund. It had been a 16-hour day, but the worst was still to come for Robert, when he suffered an excruciating cramp attack trying to get into his sleeping bag.

After a day's rest we decided to move overnight back up the glacier to the Cathedral group of peaks, where the unclimbed Cathedral East would be a major prize. Unfortunately Roy was feeling unwell the next day and after an afternoon recce of the glacial bay to the south of the peaks, Robert decided on a solo attempt on the minor but unclimbed peak of Cloisters West (2240m) to the north. He writes: 'Skiing to within 20 minutes of the col between the Cathedral and The Cloisters, I started up a 400m rock buttress at midnight. This gave interesting climbing on rock of variable quality, not sustained and never harder than about Severe, but I was very aware of the seriousness of the situation, alone in the vast wilderness spreading majestically below me. I lingered with satisfaction on the summit. The view was impressive of the north face of the Cathedral opposite and across the Courtauld glacier to the unvisited North Lemon peaks. Climbing and skiing carefully back down, I arrived back at the tent after an 8-hour round trip.'

Although Roy was now feeling much better, our supplies were running low, so we had to leave Cathedral East untried and the following night skied back up the glacier to base. An hour from the camp we crossed fairly fresh pulk tracks, the only sign we saw of Martin, Derek, Andy and Rachel in three weeks. They never spotted the speck of our camp on the vast undulating glacier.

A note in our tent from Dave and Geoff told us they had left only a couple of days earlier on a second attempt to reach the North Lemons. Since the weather was now excellent and they had not returned, we assumed they were making good progress and decided to follow their tracks. The following night (27/28 July) a long ski over the wonderfully easy glacial pass they had found, followed by a 7km descent that would have graced a top alpine ski resort, took us to 'Pulk Camp'. There, at 1206m, the snow gave way to dry glacier, with their route now open to some stunning peaks.

The next evening we shouldered heavy packs, descended onto an open glacier and headed for the most promising looking glacier-bay. Two hours later we ascended a short icefall and discovered Dave and Geoff's instincts

had been the same. We stumbled upon their tent just as they were preparing for an ascent of The Spear. It was great to share a brew and catch up on their news before wishing them luck and heading off ourselves for an attempt on the nearby 'Nesthorn' (c.2200m). An interesting icefall and a steep ice slope led to a ridge of appalling rubble. We grovelled on up for as long as it was safe to do so, but the steeper summit rocks looked lethal and we retreated without regret some 200m below the summit.

The next day was spent checking up on Dave and Geoff's progress through our binoculars, and that night we walked up the glacier under their peak until we were below its stupendous North-west Face, an impregnable looking 1300m rock wall. They returned like jubilant zombies to our congratulations in the morning, but with our food again running low, we decided to leave them to their well-earned rest and head back towards base.

Having picked up the pulk and back on skis, we made our way laboriously in light snow back up to the pass where we camped in the hope of an improvement. By the next evening (1 August), glorious weather allowed us to make a wonderful ski tour over the three 'Dinosaur Domes' (2178m) to the west of the pass. In many ways this was the highlight of the whole trip: perfect snow conditions, magical light and amazing views stretching from the ice-bound fjord and the surrounding peaks to the distant Watkins Mountains and the vastness of the ice cap. On returning to the tent, we decided to keep the momentum going and pushed on back to base in deteriorating weather, arriving back at 6am just as the snowfall began.

This time it snowed for nearly eighty hours and we congratulated ourselves on having pushed on to the comfort of our large tent rather than the cramped Bibler. The time passed in a more or less random sequence of snacks, dozes and chapters from Jilly Cooper's latest novel. The most memorable incident was when a flight of about 40 ducks, apparently lost in the clag, passed over our tent in three different directions within 10 minutes. Apart from one snow bunting, a spider and two moths, this was the only wildlife we saw on the whole trip, but our hopes of finding the exhausted birds laid out in formation on the glacier ready for our pot came to nothing.

It cleared suddenly on the third day and, with only three days to go until the flight out was due, we decided to take the opportunity to return to the landing site. Setting off that night (5/6 August) in the deep fresh snow, we thought we were in for a long arduous uphill haul, but a bitterly cold and windy night soon scoured and hardened the surface and with little incentive to linger, we made rapid progress. Locating the small cache on the featureless plateau of the landing site, we used our GPS in anger for the first time. We pitched the tent and slept with satisfaction.

We were wakened around midday by the return of Martin, Derek, Andy and Rachel. Dave and Geoff made it back the following night. It was good to have the whole team safely together again after such an unintentionally diverse trip. The following day, Roy and I skied eight miles in a straight line to the foot of the prominent, but isolated and unclimbed, snow peak of

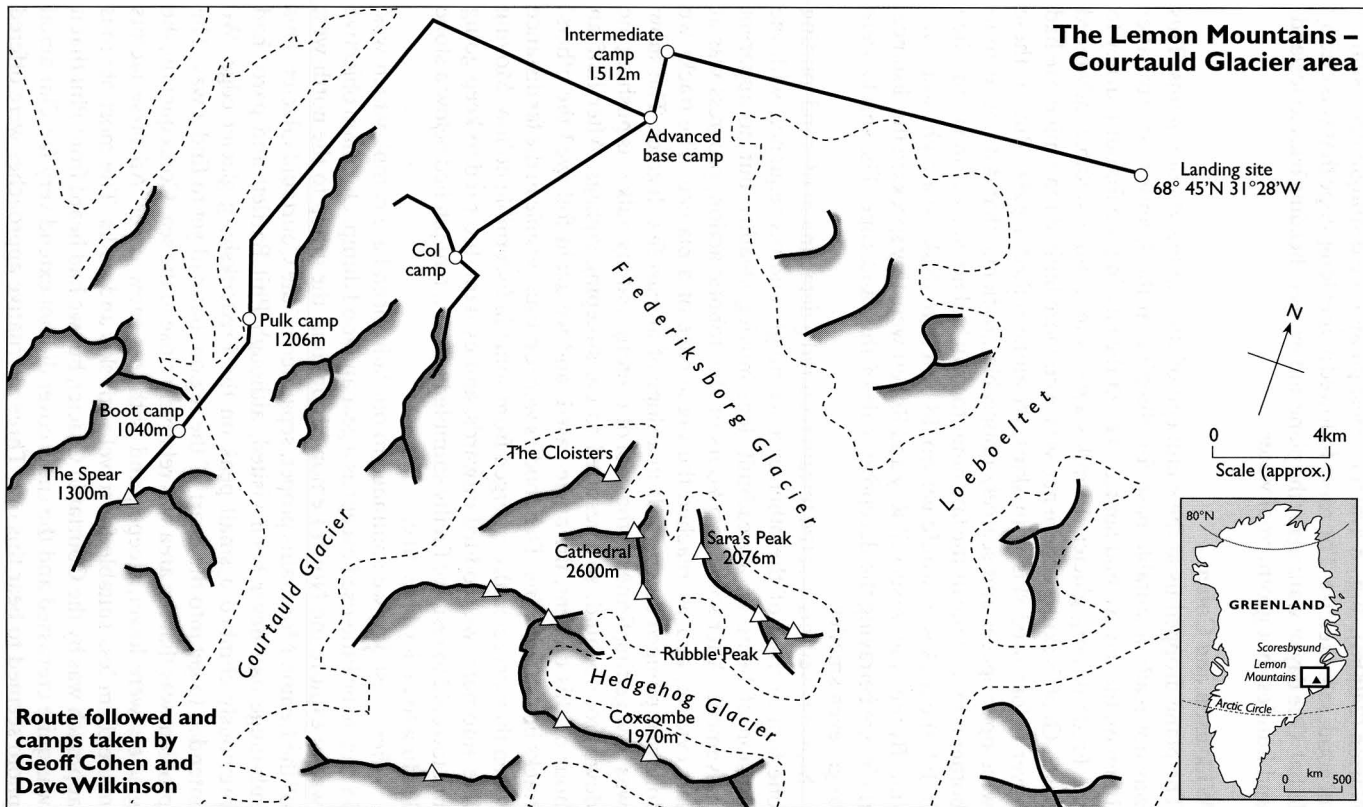
Narren (2400m), dug an avalanche test pit and skied straight back again – all good, safe exercise! The route followed a mile-long slope that was clearly lethal. One day of waiting for the plane and we were heading back to Iceland, and limitless hot geothermal water.

Wilkinson and Cohen

The plane dropped us at the south end of the Lindbergh mountains. This was not really a suitable base for climbing in the Lemons. Shortly after 10pm on the day we had landed, we left the landing site for our journey to the Frederiksborg glacier, 19 miles away and a more suitable 'advanced base'. Geoff's skiing experience was even more limited than mine. He had never before used skis with skins, let alone pulled a pulk. But on these wide-open spaces and scarcely noticeable gradients, that did not seem to bother him. In spite of the late hour, the sun had not yet set, and even when it did, the darkest it would get would be a light dusk, so a night walk was fine. By the time we set off, Roy and Robert were tiny specks in the distance, their size betraying the deceptive scale of this landscape. The specks were to get even smaller.

Moving over this vast flat terrain required a detachment of mind, putting one foot in front of the other in a seemingly endless sequence, with the illusion of being on a treadmill, legs moving steadily, but no apparent movement. After some two hours of this robotic action, progress was at last evident, and we reached the vague edge of a plateau. The tracks we followed plunged downwards in a slope of at least five degrees. The snow was now getting firmer in the cool of evening and my pulk was pushing me down from behind, so I resorted to big sweeping zigzags. After half an hour of this descent, the angle eased, and we again followed the others' tracks in a straight line. Their bodies were only just visible in the far distance when they occasionally emerged from some indiscernible hollow. Moving like automata, we plodded onwards, and by 4am, too tired to keep going but too cold to rest, we finally stumbled across a tent pitched below a slope leading to an icy blue lake.

After a rest day, we continued to our 'advanced base camp', which was, in fact, to be little-used except as a gear and food dump. Our main objective was to explore the North Lemon Mountains, the group to the north-west of the Lemon Mountains proper, separated by the Courtauld Glacier. This sub-range had never been visited, although Phil Bartlett and party had previously climbed a small peak on the Frederiksborg glacier edge. We intended to get into the heart of the region, but had yet to find a way. The problem was that the area was relatively close to the sea. Consequently, the glaciers were lower, steeper, and with less snow cover. All these factors made them less suitable for travel with skis and pulks. The most obvious approach was by the Courtauld Glacier, but we had heard from Phil that it was quite crevassed and the snow cover did not extend very far. Our aerial photo seemed to bear this out. Three alternative approaches were offered



up the next three glaciers to the north. In a spirit of laziness, we selected the first of these, which could be reached by heading immediately south-west from ABC. After a hurried repacking, we set off with 11 days' food supply, in the evening of the same day, while Roy and Robert headed south for their Mitivagkat objective.

The map was not accurate for access to our glacier, showing a direct descent from the Frederiksborg. In fact, there was a gentle rise for two or three kilometres to a shallow col before the descent started. Four hours after leaving ABC, we camped on this col. Next day we left all baggage at the col and did a short reconnaissance of the glacier beyond. A gentle descent for a kilometre led to crevasses, which got progressively worse, and an impressive icefall beyond. Better skiers could doubtless have got further, and the icefall might have been passable on foot, but not with pulks, so we gave up on that for access to the heart of the range.

For our first climbing, we decided on the mountain to the south of our 'Col Camp'. This mountain was in the form of a long ridge linking a number of peaks, running north-east to south-west, and marked 2010m on the Danish map. We had seen some of these from the previous day's reconnaissance, but it wasn't clear which was highest – and we're still not sure. Geoff thought we'd take about six hours, but he's a noted optimist in such matters.

Starting at around 4am on 19 July, we climbed easy snow directly above camp to a bergschrund, above which a steeper pitch led to a col on the ridge, just south-west of the very first peak, which is still unclimbed. We then turned west and traversed narrow snow ridges to a snowy summit. Inevitably, a higher one lay beyond. A steep descent led down to a col, the first of a series. In fact, this col was a complex of rocky pinnacles, which had to be climbed or turned. The route was never hard, but was long enough that pitching it would have taken several days. So we climbed unroped, crossing the tops of some towers – harder but better rock – and turning others on the flanks, which was easier but looser. The barrenness of the arctic environment was pleasantly relieved by colonies of flowers, apparently thriving in this harsh landscape. Several species were present, including something like a wonderfully translucent yellow celandine.

Eventually we reached the summit, or rather a summit, but like the buses, there was always another just behind. Another pinnacle-infested col intervened before the next summit. This gave a repeat performance of gendarme weaving, with an ice wall and a fine ice arête thrown in at the end. A scrambly section led to the top of a rock tower, the left of two, from which the snowy summit was easily gained. A long way beyond, past yet another pinnacle-bestrewn col, was yet another summit, but this one did not rise far, if at all, above our top. We looked long and hard, but could not tell which of the two was higher, nor did the map help. We named our mountain 'Switchback', due to the many undulations on its ridge, and gave it TD inf, with pitches of III and IV. We then had to reverse the whole

route, in mild but deteriorating weather, a fine drizzle making the lichenous rocks slippery and even more time-consuming. Returning to camp in thick mist, it took us 20 minutes to find the tent at the end of a 20-hour day. The mountain's south-west summit appears to be about the same height, but is still unclimbed. This appears more easily approachable from the Courtauld Glacier. The far north-east summit, closest to the Frederiksborg glacier, is also unclimbed.

A few days of bad weather then gave a welcome rest. A clearer day on 24 July let us climb the huge whale-like mountain to the north of our col. From the camp, a short walk in a north-westerly direction led to a 45-degree névé slope which bypassed some ice cliffs on their right. Easier crevassed slopes then led to easy terrain, reminiscent of the Cairngorm plateau in a very snowy winter. A long gentle ascent, west then south-west, led us over twin domes of apparently similar height and the further summit gave us good views of our next objective. We then returned to camp untypically early, the round-trip taking a mere six hours.

Returning to ABC, 26 July proved a calmer day and we had no excuse for further procrastination. We set off with heavily loaded pulks bearing most of our remaining supplies, and skied north-west, then west, then south-west to the next glacier, the one on the far side of Humpback. This also had a long gentle rise to a col, contradicting the map. However, unlike the previous glacier, so similar-looking on map and aerial photo, this one gave a long easy descent for four or five kilometres on slopes which even we could ski down, pulks and all. All good things end, and this finally halted at midnight on a patch of dry glacier at 1100m, above a short icefall just before a major junction of glaciers. We camped here at our 'Pulk Camp', the furthest we could get with skis and sledges, which we left here for the next week and more. We were now at the heart of this little range and surrounded by unclimbed mountains. Further movement had to be on foot.

On our very first day's skiing down to the Frederiksborg Glacier, and again from Humpback, we had glimpsed two outstanding peaks in our area. The further one ('The Shield') had a big snowy north face, and was presumably the one shown as 2600m on the map. This was still rather inaccessible without a long slog on foot. Much closer was an apparently slightly lower but more impressive pointed mountain ('The Spear'), which dominated the view from Pulk Camp. This looked a fine challenge, but worryingly big and steep.

The Spear had a very impressive north face – an ice-smeared rock wall, and an inaccessible East Ridge on the left. Between the two was a mixed north-east facet, which looked long but climbable. Two possible lines seemed to give access to this facet from the glacier, a couloir on the right and a hanging glacier on the left, so the peak did look climbable. On the north side of this basin, several other mountains were queuing up to be climbed, should we decide against the main one, or have time for another. We left a small dump of food and gear at what we called 'Boot Camp', walked back

to Pulk Camp, and returned the next day, with most of our gear and a week's food.

The weather was set fair, but the objective looked a serious one, so we made the following day a rest day, and started our route on the following evening of 29 July. It was at this point that Robert and Roy appeared, after reading our note.

Easy walking for an hour led to the route's foot, where we left ski poles. An avalanche chute on the left tempted us to take the left of our starting options. In the event, this choice came off, but only just. Frozen debris in the chute covered all crevasses, enabling rapid progress for 200m. A huge crevasse, not clearly visible from below, barred the way, and forced a long traverse right, using a sharp snow arête on the crevasse's edge, and losing some of our hard-earned height. An upward ice pitch then led to an equally long leftward traverse below another monster crevasse. This was crossed by a bridge of ice blocks, and above, past an icicle grotto, we made an even longer rightward traverse. This led to a break in the bergschrund at the foot of the mixed ground, and the start of the route's main section.

We pitched the rest of the route. The terrain was typical mixed ground at about 50 degrees. Most of the climbing was on ice overlain by a variable thickness of snow of variable texture, with occasional steps on rock. The climbing was never hard, but sustained, and with few resting-places, so the overall fatigue factor was out of proportion to the difficulty. But most of the belays were good rock ones. After 17 pitches of this, we reached a good ledge on the left-hand ridge, and took a ten-minute break.

The mountain became steeper and rockier. Towers barred the ridge ahead, so we traversed back onto the face. The next section had looked harder from below, but the going was made easier by a series of hidden terraces and snow gullies, which could be linked in a devious line so avoiding any difficulties. The angle eased, and we seemed to be nearing the top. A left traverse turned towers on the summit ridge, and a loose gully returned to the crest just short of a snowy peak. But this was just a fore-peak, a col lay beyond, then a rise to a higher summit.

Now tiring after 12 hours on the go, we traversed the fore-peak's snowy right face to the col. The narrow corniced crest was turned on the left via a rocky ledge with steep ice steps to a platform below the twin summit pinnacles. We took off our crampons for this one pitch, and reached the top – separately, because of the shortage of standing room – at about midday.

We had assumed that our mountain was not the mysterious 2600m one marked on the map, and looked forward to resolving this matter. But, although we had superb views of Cathedral and most of the other surrounding mountains, the view to the south was hidden by ghostly wreaths of sea-mist, drifting up on the breeze from the Courtauld Fjord.

We could wait no longer; we needed to descend. The cloudy wreaths had grown and multiplied, preventing a rest in the sun, and threatening a change in the weather. By now, we needed a break. We had decided to bring no

bivouac gear, only a little spare clothing and food and a small stove and pan, so we stopped for an hour and a half of melting snow to rehydrate, shivering as we rested.

The cold forced us to get going. We considered abseiling, but although we had used good rock belays on the way up, it was really the wrong sort of rock and the wrong sort of angle for abseils. Steep enough to make climbing awkward, but not steep enough for clean rope retrieval. Ropes catching round blocks and jamming, or pulling loose blocks off, was not an appealing prospect. There were few spikes and flakes, so our abseil cord was no use. Most of the belays had been Friends and nuts in cracks. We didn't have enough of these to abseil anything like far enough. So we down-climbed the whole way, except for a single abseil over the bergschrund.

Fatigue, lack of rest and sleep-deprivation for two nights were taking their toll, as we struggled to maintain our concentration for pitch after pitch of descent. I battled to keep going in ten-minute shifts, separated by five-minute rests sitting on my rucksack.

Eventually we staggered onto the main glacier, where Roy and Robert had left us a welcome bottle of drink and a bag of sweets. It had started to snow, but we were only just aware of it. Stupefied with exhaustion, we tottered our devious way, as much sideways as forwards, back to camp, and 34 hours after setting off, collapsed into pits and oblivion. (The Spear c.2500m, 1300m NE Face, TD/mixed.)

Buckle and Scott, Andy and Rachel Gallagher

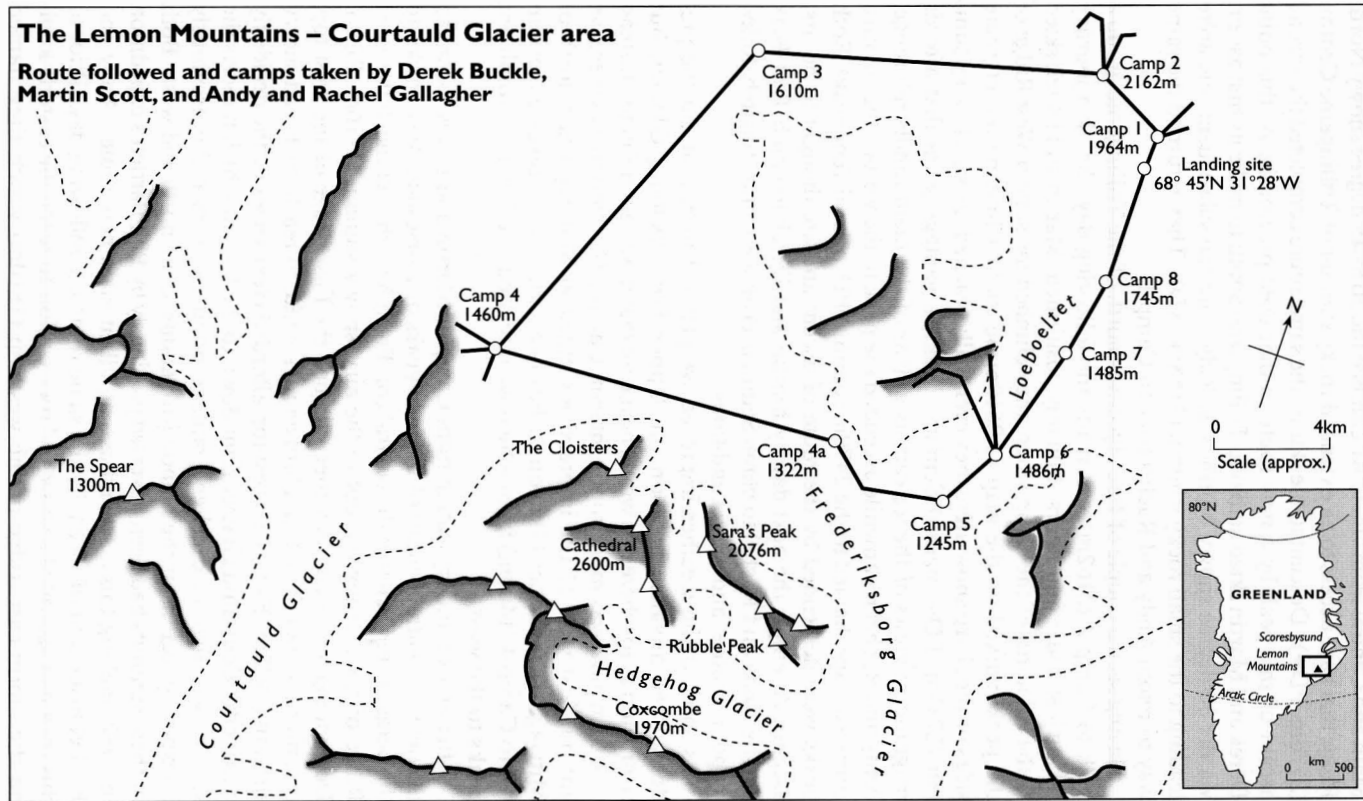
Faced with the closeness of the Trillingerne group we decided that these should be the first objective, even if they were technically in the Lindberghs. A short short spell with the pulks led to Camp 1 (1964m), where techniques learned by Andy Gallagher in Alaska led to impressive excavation and wall building activities. In a surprisingly short time the two tents were settled in their icy enclaves ready to face whatever the arctic climate had to offer.

We did not have long to find out since a marked deterioration overnight led to snow, wind and dismal visibility, seriously curtailing activities the next day. Still it did provide Martin and Derek with the opportunity to investigate the state of their day rations and to learn the hard way that pre-mixed aliquots of cheese and sausage impart a nice white coat to the former and an intriguing green hue to the latter. Andy and Rachel, on the other hand, were beginning to realise the disadvantages of transporting their food in large cardboard boxes, especially when they start to get wet.

With an improvement in the weather a recce was made of the surrounding mountains, identifying several potential routes on each of the three Trillingerne summits. This also provided an opportunity to look down on the vast Sorgenfri Glacier and for Andy and Rachel to climb the small peak between Trillingerne Central and South, an outcrop that they christened Bantam Point in recognition of its relative size. Armed with this knowledge, on 18 July all four of us skied to the prominent col between Trillingerne

The Lemon Mountains – Courtauld Glacier area

Route followed and camps taken by Derek Buckle,
Martin Scott, and Andy and Rachel Gallagher



Main and Central from where we climbed the 30 to 45-degree snowy North Ridge that gave access to an extended rocky summit of Trillingerne Central (2176m, PD+). Descent to the skis by the same route completed the second ascent of this peak by a new route to that used previously. At this point Derek and Martin skied across to Trillingerne South to make its first ascent via the 30-degree snowy North-west Ridge and the subsequent fine arête leading to the small rocky summit (2158m, AD). They returned the same way to rejoin Andy and Rachel back to Camp 1.

Having seen a couple of fine objectives north of the Trillingerne group a pulk to Camp 2 (2162m) was made the following day, the 8km journey taking just under four hours. Suitably positioned, Martin and Derek skied to the col north of the camp where they climbed the superb West Ridge of the peak marked on the map as 2610m on foot. Climbing on alternate sides of the sharp snow arête they eventually reached the small rocky summit (2735m, PD+, named Scimitar Peak), a vantage point that affords magnificent views of the ice cap, as well as of the main Lindbergh range. Andy and Rachel meanwhile ascended the peak to the west of the col *via* a corniced ridge that led to the 2479m summit (PD, named Tent Peak). Both peaks were descended by the route of ascent and are thought to be first ascents. Attempts the next day by Martin and Derek to climb Tent Peak and by Andy and Rachel to climb Scimitar Peak were unfortunately foiled by poor weather and snow conditions.

As soon as the weather improved we planned to relocate to the pre-designated advance base on the Upper Frederiksborg Glacier, but confusion as to where this would be meant that it was never found. Instead a 14.5km pulk was made to the interim Camp 3 (1610m) from where we got our first view of the impressive Cathedral Mountain just north of Mitivagkat. A further 11km on 24 July over extensively crevassed terrain led to Camp 4 (1460m) from which we intended to climb the prominent peaks to the west.

After an exploratory outing from Camp 4, Martin and Derek ascended the obvious central couloir of the twin peaks of Horseshoe Peak on skis to the bergschrund beneath the central col. From here they climbed the West Ridge of the east top on foot to the airy, snowy summit (1916m, PD+). Descending to the col they then climbed the East Ridge of the west top, first on snow, but then over a broken rock band, to reach the broad snowy summit (1928m, F+). The west top afforded clear views of the decidedly unfriendly Courtauld Glacier right down to the level at which it meets the sea. It was also an excellent vantage point to oversee the previously unexplored regions of the Lemon Mountains to the north and west. Both of these summits had been traversed previously by Phil Bartlett's expedition in 1992, making this a second ascent, albeit via a new route. Andy and Rachel made a third ascent by the same route the following day. Prior to this they had ascended a snow and rock couloir to reach the easterly knoll on the North-east Ridge of the west top (1810m) which they named

'Snowbunting Point' in memory of the bird of the same name that they saw there.

While Andy and Rachel were making their ascent of Horseshoe Peak, Martin and Derek skied up the shallow glacier to the south of the east top to the col leading back down to the Courtauld Glacier. From here they climbed on foot the steep (40° levelling to 25°), icy west ridge of the peak on the junction of the Courtauld and Frederiksborg glaciers to reach the broad snowy summit (1740m, PD+, named Sentinel Peak). This is believed to be a first ascent and the location gave commanding views of Cathedral Peak, Mitivagkat and the surrounding glaciers. Descent to the col was made the same way.

At this point we decided to complete a circular tour back to the drop-off site *via* the Løebøltet Glacier, even though the junction between this glacier and the Frederiksborg Glacier was heavily crevassed. However, after about 9km of pulking wide crevasses and weakened snow bridges forced an interim stop at Camp 4A (1322m) to allow the temperature to cool. Shortly after midnight we proceeded as a rope of four through the glaciated minefield, awestruck by the size of the fissures *en route*, and were compelled to make a significant detour to reach the Løebøltet Glacier. Camp 5 (1245m) was reached in the early hours of the morning. At mid-day (29 July) we moved again in order to establish Camp 6 (1486m) near the cirque of mountains bordering Point 2200m.

The following day Martin and Derek skied past the jagged central peaks (named Sawtooth Mountain) to ascend the most easterly of the northern couloirs, easily identified by the presence of a pronounced vertical intrusion in its central buttress. At the obvious col they continued on skis up the broad NW ridge leading to the snowy summit of what was subsequently named Whaleback Peak (1964m, F). Returning to the col they then continued NW to a second col that afforded access to the north ridge of the peak due east of Whaleback. This peak was ascended on skis until the final sharp arête, which was traversed on foot to the narrow summit (2100m, PD-, named Fin Peak). Return to Camp 6 was made by the same route. Later that evening Andy and Rachel also skied up to this second col and from there ascended the south ridge of the northerly peak to gain the corniced summit (2175m, PD, named Goblin Peak). All three routes are believed to be first ascents.

The next day Martin and Derek skied up to the col behind Sawtooth Mountain leading from the Løebøltet Glacier to the Frederiksborg Glacier (1802m, named Sawtooth Col), but inclement weather prevented an ascent of the peak to its north, despite a clear route forward. Indeed, a period of bad weather then continued for several days, with low visibility and up to half a metre of snow. This prevented further exploration of this interesting cirque. Effectively confined to camp we sampled the delights of compositions (especially treacle pudding) and continued the search for the coffee that Martin and Derek were sure had been packed prior to leaving the UK.

The decision to move camp nearer the drop-off site was delayed for as long as possible, but with time pressing on we were eventually forced to move camp in whiteout conditions and with the crevasses dangerously concealed. Moving in a rope of four we pulked to Camp 7 (1485m) on 4 August, arriving in a very sodden state. Fortunately the next day was considerably improved and a further pulk of 5.5km led to Camp 8 (1746m), which was a little over 5km from the drop-off site (Camp 9). This final distance was quickly accomplished and allowed us finally to rejoin Roy and Robert, and later Dave and Geoff.

With a few days to spare before being picked up and the snow reasonably consolidated, Martin and Derek decided to attempt the impressive south face of Trillingerne main peak. Leaving early they skied to the bergschrund just below the face and then climbed on foot through the frozen boulders lining the right-hand edge of the face. While steep (up to 45°) this route offered the least objective danger and afforded fast access to the summit ridge. Short, airy snow traverses then led to the true summit (2295m, AD-) and, a little further on, to a slightly lower subsidiary summit. This was the second ascent of this peak, but via a new route.

Summary:

The British Lemon Mountains Expedition 2002 attempted first ascents in the South Lemon Mountains, and the previously unvisited North Lemons from 13 July-12 August. Eighteen peaks were climbed, fourteen of which were first ascents and the remainder were by new routes. Three other major peaks were attempted. The most important ascent was the 1300m NE Face of The Spear, TD/mixed, in the North Lemons, by Dave Wilkinson and Geoff Cohen. We gratefully acknowledge the financial support of the BMC/UK Sports Council, the Gino Watkins Memorial Fund, and the Mount Everest Foundation.

REFERENCES

- Phil Bartlett, 'Kangerdlugssuaq'. *AJ104*, 91-96, 1999.
 Phil Bartlett, 'British Mountaineering Expedition to East Greenland 1992'. (MEF Report 92/28).
 Chris Bonington, 'A Greenland Adventure'. *AJ97*, 27-36, 1992/3.
 Tom Chamberlain, 'Bishops, Actresses and Witches'. *AJ105*, 71-79, 2000.
 Jim Gregson, 'Paradise Lost then Found; skiing and mountaineering in East Greenland'. *High 200*, 28-31, 1999.
 Luke Hughes, 'Lindbergs and Lemons'. *AJ98*, 147-151, 1993.
 Graham Little, 'Gneiss and ice: Greenland on the rocks'. *AJ99*, 64-70, 1994.
 Richard Pash, 'The Lemon Mountains of East Greenland'. *AJ106*, 31-36, 2001.
 <www.wayupnorth.clara.co.uk>



44. Geoff Cohen climbing the steep snow and ice pitch on the first ascent of Switchback (2010m) in the Lemon mountains, Greenland. (*Dave Wilkinson*) (p57)



45. Dave Wilkinson on the summit ridge of The Spear in the North Lemons; the Courtauld glacier appears below. (*Geoff Cohen*) (p57)



46. Johnnie Lees with Vic Bray during a reunion at RAF Valley in 1993. (*Derek Walker*) (p209)