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**RECENT NORWEGIAN  
EXPEDITIONS TO SOUTH-EAST  
GREENLAND**

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## RECENT NORWEGIAN EXPEDITIONS TO SOUTH-EAST GREENLAND

BY

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Until recently the southern coast of East Greenland was one of the least visited parts of that immense country. The reason is partly to find in the difficult ice conditions, at any rate in the spring and early summer, and also in the desolate and grim country behind the drift-ice which once had a small Eskimo population<sup>1</sup>. In the drift-ice Norwegian sealers have for many years hunted the seal<sup>2</sup> and during their voyages many of them have been close to the shores of South-east Greenland. Following the success of Norwegian trappers in North-east Greenland, it was only natural that fox-trapping should be attempted also in South-east Greenland, which in that respect was utterly unknown. Other possibilities might also be found here.

To achieve these aims two Norwegian hunting expeditions sailed for South-east Greenland in the summer of 1931: one led by Finn Devold in the sealer *M/S Heimen* of Tromsø, commanded by Captain L. Jakobsen; and another headed by Ole Mortensen, in the sealer *S/S Signalhorn* of Ålesund, Skipper Peter Brandal. Devold's expedition was planned and fitted out by himself, and in the programme was also the erection of a wireless and meteorological station at a suitable point. The expedition consisted of six members, all trained hunters, including a wireless operator. A scientific party led by the geologist Professor Th. Vogt of Trondheim and otherwise consisting of a botanist and a surveyor also sailed with this expedition. The *Heimen* left Tromsø on July 23 and approached the coast in lat.

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<sup>1</sup> Kolsrud, Oluf. Til Østgrønlands historie. Ostermann, H. De første efterretninger om østgrønlandingerne 1752. — Norsk Geogr. Tidsskr. B. 5. 1935. Pp. 381—428. Meddelelse. Norges Svalbard- og Ishavs-undersøkelser. No. 29.

<sup>2</sup> Iversen, Thor. Drivis og selfangst. Bergen 1928. 84 pp. Årsberetning vedk. Norges fiskerier for 1927. No. II. Isachsen, Fridtjov. Verdien av den norske klappmyssfangst langs Sydøstgrønland. Oslo 1933. 24 pp. Medd. N. S. I. U. No. 22.



Fig. 1. At Mortensen's Station in the third Fjord north of Lindenowfjorden.  
Looking south-west.

G. Horn phot. 2/9 1932.

$62^{\circ} 45' N$ , i. e. in the so-called Tingmiarmiut area. Later the Skjoldungen district to the north of the former was visited, and here the wireless station — Finnsbu — was erected close to a good harbour. Two other main stations were also built by the Devold expedition, as well as a number of small huts (so-called secondary stations), all in the region between lat.  $62^{\circ} 50'$  and  $63^{\circ} 40' N$ . The scientific party under Vogt also worked farther north, in the Umivik area<sup>1</sup>. The expedition of the trapper Ole Mortensen was sent out by Peter S. Brandal of Sunnmøre and others, and numbered three men<sup>2</sup>. The *Signalhorn* commanded by Captain P. Brandal and with J. Kr. Tornøe as expedition leader left Norway on Aug. 12 and reached Storfjorden (Kangerd-

<sup>1</sup> Vogt, Th. Norges Svalbard- og Ishavs-undersøkelsers ekspedisjon til Sydøstgrønland med "Heimen" sommeren 1931. — Norsk Geogr. Tidsskr. B. 4. 1933. Pp. 289—325. Medd. N. S. I. U. No. 20.

<sup>2</sup> Short accounts of the expeditions in 1931 and the following years will also be found in *The Polar Record*. Cambridge, No. 3. 1932 and following numbers. See also *Norsk geogr. tidsskr.* and *Skrifter om Svalbard og Ishavet* No. 73. An account of the *Signalhorn* expedition by Tornøe is given in *Aftenposten*, Oslo, No. 418, 1932.

lugsuak) in lat.  $68^{\circ}$  on the 22nd, where a hut was erected, but as Mortensen found the fox-trapping possibilities unfavourable, the voyage was continued southwards, and on Sept. 5 they entered the third fjord north of Lindenowfjorden, where the main station was built. Here it was decided to winter. The *Signalhorn* returned to Norway. In the middle of December the fjord was filled with drift-ice coming from the north. On Febr. 2 a sad accident occurred, for Mortensen fell through the ice in the fjord outside the station and was drowned. The results of the trapping were extremely poor, being only 16 foxes, half of which were blue, and three polar bears. A great number of sea fowls were shot, chiefly black guillemots (*Uria grylle*), but also ptarmigan. A few seals were also obtained. In the beginning of July the fjord was packed with drift-ice, but on the 19th there was a heavy swell indicating an open sea, and on the 26th the much longed-for boat, the *Polaris*, arrived.

The wintering of the Finn Devold expedition of six members at three main stations passed without mishap, but the trapping was poor; only some 30—40 foxes were caught, about one-fifth being blue. Six polar bears were also shot. According to the report of the leader, Devold, the weather conditions in the winter of 1931—32 were extremely unsatisfactory, and the fjords were open nearly all the autumn, making travelling difficult or impossible. Throughout the winter meteorological observations were carried out and transmitted to the Norwegian Meteorological Institute in Oslo via Jan Mayen and Tromsø. Not until Dec. 5 did the drift-ice arrive outside Finnsbu. This drift-ice passed Angmagssalik, 200 nautical miles to the north, on Nov. 9 and reached the sea outside the station of Mortensen farther south (lat.  $60^{\circ} 35'$ ) abt. Jan. 1. The ice had thus drifted from off Angmagssalik to near the southern promontory of Greenland, a distance of about 400 nautical miles, with a speed averaging 8 miles a day. Outside Finnsbu the drift-ice disappeared on July 18—19, and on the 24th the *Polaris* arrived on her way southwards.

In the summer of 1932 South-east Greenland was visited by an expedition again sent out, with State support, by Peter S. Brandal. The aim of the expedition was trapping, but the programme also included the erection of two wireless stations with meteorological service, being part of the Norwegian participation in the International Polar Year 1932—33. One station was erected in Storfjorden (Kangerdlugsuak) in lat.  $68^{\circ}$ . The second station was established in the area

north of the Lindenowfjord where the expedition arrived on July 27, and here the men, station, and outfit were landed in a bay on the north side of the fjord. An account of the expedition is given by Thor Iversen, who accompanied it to carry out fishery investigations<sup>1</sup>. By Order in Council of July 12, 1932, the country between lat.  $60^{\circ} 30'$  and  $63^{\circ} 40'$  N in South-east Greenland was placed under Norwegian sovereignty, and Devold was required by the Government to hoist the Norwegian flag at Finnsbu, which took place on the 12th July. The controversy which arose with Denmark was brought before the Permanent Court of International Justice in the Hague<sup>2</sup>. The same summer an expedition was sent out with the object of visiting as much as possible of the newly annexed coast and carrying out various scientific and practical investigations. The writer was in charge and the staff consisted of a hydrographic surveyor and a botanist as well<sup>3</sup>. The ship of the expedition, M/S *Veslemari* captained by M. Pilskog, left Norway on Aug. 7 and reached Finnsbu on the 17th without having encountered any ice, apart from the usual ice-bergs along the Greenland coast. Later the southern part of the annexed area was visited, and the expedition assisted in moving the mentioned wireless station from Lindenowfjorden to a more suitable site in the fjord, immediately to the north, called Øy fjorden. The station is situate in Lat.  $60^{\circ} 32' N$  and long.  $43^{\circ} 11' W$  and near the shore. It was called Torgilsbu after Torgils Orrabeinsfostre, a Norwegian who had emigrated to Iceland and is supposed to have visited the coast of South-east Greenland about the year 1000. Then various points along the coast towards Finnsbu were visited, and on the 16th of September the *Veslemari* left Skjoldungen; the sea was then still free from drift-ice, and Ålesund was reached after a crossing of 10 days. An American expedition, but in a vessel flying the Norwegian flag, also visited these coasts in the summer of 1932, viz. the M/S

<sup>1</sup> Iversen, Thor. Sydøstgrønland. Jan Mayen. Fiskeriundersøkelser. — Fiskeridirektoratets skr. Ser. Havunders. (Rep on Norw. Fishery and Marine Investig. Vol. V. No. 1). Bergen 1936. 171 pp. The paper also gives a general description and much useful information about this part of Greenland.

<sup>2</sup> After the Court had given its judgement in the case relating to Eirik Raudes Land in North-east Greenland on Apr. 5, 1933, and in favour of Denmark, the case *re* the Norwegian claims in South-east Greenland was withdrawn.

<sup>3</sup> Horn, G. Norges Svalbard- og Ishavs-undersøkelers ekspedisjon til Sydøstgrønland med "Veslemari" sommeren 1932. — Norsk Geogr. Tidsskr. B. 4. 1933. Pp. 409—27. Medd. N. S. I. U. No. 24.

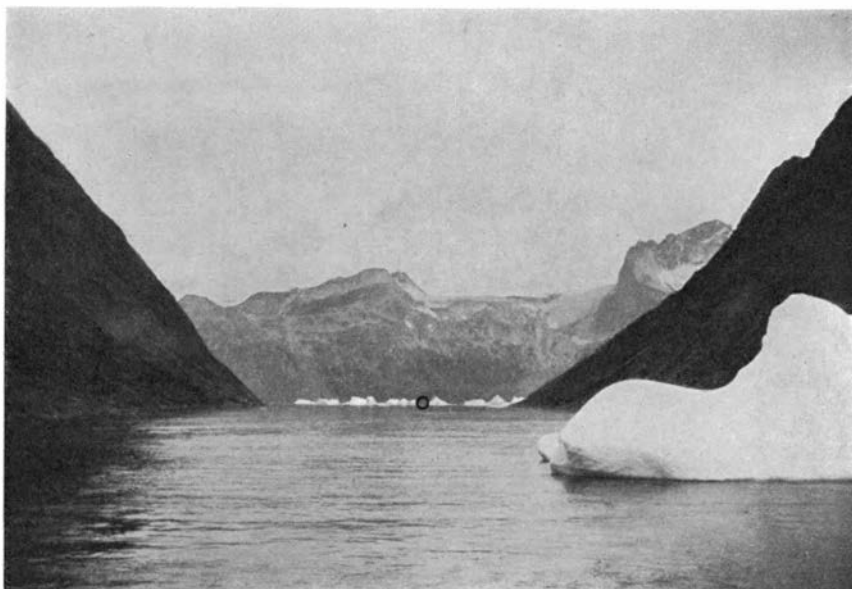


Fig. 2. The Entrance to Torgilsbu. Station marked thus: ○.  
Looking north-west.

G. Horn phot. 2/9 1932.

*Norkapp II* of Tromsø, Skipper Isak Isaksen. The leader was Dudley Talcott who had with him a number of tourists. The aim of the expedition was hunting and sight-seeing. From Greenland the *Norkapp II* sailed to the U. S. A.

During the winter of 1932—33 two expeditions wintered in South-east Greenland, viz. the expedition of Brandal in Torgilsbu, and the Devold men in the Skjoldungen and Umanak districts. At Torgilsbu were four men including a wireless operator, S. Åseth. On Oct. 8 the station (short-wave) got connection with Bergen in Norway. The sea was free from ice until the end of the year. The trapping was a complete failure and consisted only in a few foxes and two bears. A welcome addition to the provision stores was a large number of sea-fowl and some seals shot in the fjord leading to the station, as well as the ptarmigan obtained in the hills at the back of it. In June a good deal of "salmon" (char, *Salmo stagnalis*) was caught.

The Devold expedition this winter still occupied their three main stations, Finnsbu and Trollbotn in the Skjoldungen district, and Vogtsbu in the Umanak district to the south of the former, with two men at each

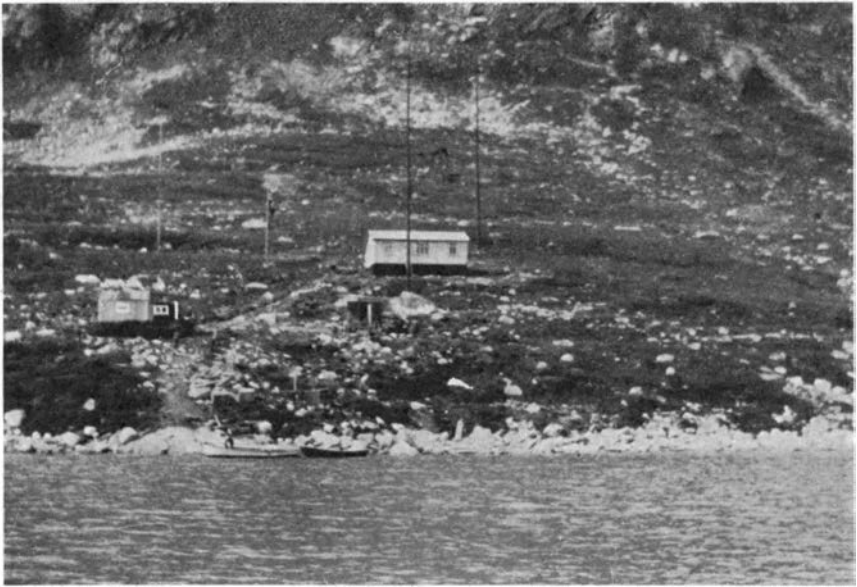


Fig. 3. Torgilsbu Wireless and Meteorological Station.

O. Robøle phot. Aug. 1938.

station. In Finnsbu, meteorological observations were sent out as during the previous year, the station being one of the Norwegian stations of the International Polar Year<sup>1</sup>. According to Devold the Heimenhamna at Finnsbu was free from ice even at the beginning of December, so that vessels might have reached the place at that late season. The results of the trappings were poor in the winter of 1932—33, too. In the beginning of July 1933 an Italian squadron of seaplanes led by General Balbo carried out a flight Rome—Chicago via Iceland and Labrador and during the flying the Finnsbu station sent out for the benefit of the Italians meteorological observations every third hour.

The relief ship *Signalhorn* arrived at Torgilsbu on July 31, after having called at the Storfjord station, where the personnel embarked and the station was closed down. On the return voyage the Devold expedition was taken on board, and the activity in this area was thus temporarily suspended. That summer an expedition led by Thor Iversen of the Fishery Board in Bergen visited South-east Greenland in the S/S *Heim-*

<sup>1</sup> The observations from the Norwegian East-Greenland stations will be published shortly by the Norwegian Meteorological Institute in: *Norwegische Publikationen aus dem internationalen Polarjahre 1932—33. No. 3.*





Fig. 4. A Summer Day at Torgilsbu. Looking south-east.

O. Robøle phot. Aug. 1933.

*land I.* Fishery investigations and hydrographic observations were carried out during the whole expedition, and meteorological reports were sent out by wireless four times a day. The vessel had a Marconi Echometer, and a number of soundings were carried out off the coast from Cape Farewell to the Blossville coast<sup>1</sup>. Manager of the Torgilsbu station in the winter of 1933—34 was A. Feyling. In December the fjord was still open, but at the end of the month the drift-ice had appeared. At the end of July the sea was again ice-free. The relief expedition in 1934 came in the *M/S Brandal* arriving at Torgilsbu on July 26. Later on the same day the station received a call from the vessel *M/S Signalhorn* belonging to the same owners, on her way home from West-Greenland waters. In the winter of 1934—35 J. Thorstensen was in charge of the station now administered by the Norges Svalbard- og Ishavs-undersøkelser. In addition to the manager there were two men; one assistant and a cook. In the beginning of

<sup>1</sup> Iversen, T. Sydøstgrønland etc. Ser. Havundersøkelser. 1936. The echo soundings are found on the chart: Sydøstgrønland. Kartskisse over farvannet Scoresbysund—Kapp Farvel—Island. Utgitt av Fiskeridirektøren, Bergen. Utarb. av Thor Iversen, 1934.

January the fjord-ice is strong enough to bear a man, but the sea outside is still free from drift-ice, which did not appear until the following month. It might be of interest to note that the hunting bag that winter consisted of the following: 1 blue fox, 1 polar bear, 4 seals, 13 ptarmigan, 60 sea-fowl (auks, etc.) 102 "salmon". In the summer of 1935 the relief ship was the *Signalhorn*, arriving at Torgilsbu on July 23 after having had to force its way through considerable masses of ice north of the station. On returning, the fjord where the Mortensen station is situated was visited and its inner part was found packed with drift-ice.

In the winter of 1935—36 S. Åseth was again in charge of the station. Not until after the middle of January did the fjord at the station become ice-covered. The following abstract of the ice observations that winter should show a fairly typical average: Throughout the autumn the sea was free from drift-ice, with now and then some small isolated areas of it. Towards the end of December the drift-ice had arrived, and throughout the winter and spring the sea outside Torgilsbu is covered by a belt of drift-ice of varying width, now narrow, now broad, and may even be far out at sea, so that the inside edge is just visible. In the beginning of July the ice has become more scattered, and later in the month it has disappeared. In the fjord at Torgilsbu as well as in the open sea there will always occur ice-bergs, but they are as a rule no serious obstacle to shipping. At the inner end of the fjords and at certain points of the outer coast the ice-bergs may occur packed close together. The hunting this winter consisted of 4 foxes, 14 seals, 48 ptarmigan, 10 auks, 60 black guillemots, 88 "salmon". In the summer of 1936 the relief ship S/S *Selis* arrived at Torgilsbu on July 15. The sea had no drift-ice; there were just local patches of ice, mostly bergs, rather close to the coast.

In the winter of 1936—37 R. Eggesvik was chief of the station and had with him two men. On Aug. 17 the relief ship M/S *Brandal* arrived with fresh provisions and the new staff. Outside the fjord she had encountered some drift-ice, and a few days later, when on a visit to the Lindenowfjord, a little ice was also met with.

During the winter of 1937—38 S. Åseth was head of Torgilsbu, and according to the notes made by Åseth the ice conditions were as follows: In August there were some scattered drift-ice and ice-bergs in the part of the sea which could be observed from the station.

In September, October, and November until the 22nd the sea (as could be observed) was free from drift-ice and had only a few ice-bergs. That day ice was seen which might indicate a larger mass. On the last days of the month there is some drift-ice outside, but in the beginning of December the sea is open again, with only a few scattered bergs. On the 8th two small ice-belts are seen, and on the 26th the sea is covered by ice as far as one can see. The fjord at the station was open in December, but in the following month it became frozen. There is still drift-ice in the sea, but towards the end of January the inner edge had been pushed so far out that it had in part disappeared from sight. In February the ice-edge is far out, but also close to the shore. In March the drift-ice frequently becomes somewhat scattered, is still there in April, which month had the ice-edge far out on the 20th, and in the last week the sea was open, only with the usual ice-bergs. During the month of May the ice was again present throughout the month. On June 4 the fjord-ice starts to break up, and throughout the month there is drift-ice in the sea, partly scattered but also close, and the west wind may throw the ice-edge far out. In July there is also drift-ice, partly scattered. From these notes on the ice conditions it will be clear that no ship should be sent to these waters unless especially fitted for going through ice. Although there may be long periods without any ice at all, especially late in the summer and in the autumn, the risk of meeting ice is always there.

The relief ship S/S *Veiding* arrived at Torgilsbu on July 31, and had to go through a good deal of ice. The ship left the station on Aug. 20 and there were then many ice-bergs, and at Cape Walløe also some drift-ice. In the summer of 1938 there was thus more ice than usual at South-east Greenland. *Veiding* brought the staff for 1938—39 with R. Eggesvik in charge. He had his wife with him, the first woman to winter at Torgilsbu. A new station building was erected this summer, a one-story building having an area of  $8 \times 10.5$  metres. The station now also acquired a long-wave transmitter.

A fishing expedition in the S/S *Rundehorn* of Ålesund and organised and led by Hallvard Devold, visited the Skjoldungen district in the summer of 1938, but the return of the expedition was greatly hampered by the drift-ice which blocked the fjords. The expedition lasted much longer than planned, and as the ship had no wireless, there was considerable anxiety for the fate of the ship. In the be-

ginning of October a search expedition was sent out by the Norwegian Government in the M/S *Polaris*, but then a report was received about the safe arrival of the *Rundehorn* at Iceland and the relief expedition was recalled.

From October 1932 meteorological observations have been carried out at Torgilsbu and are published in the *Jahrbuch des norwegischen meteorologischen Instituts*. In the *Jahrbuch* for 1936 (Oslo 1937) we find summary tables for Torgilsbu Oct. 1932—Dec. 1935, and in the *Jahrbuch* for 1937 (Oslo 1938) are given the daily observations for that station for 1936. The average temperatures for the year were as follows: 1933:  $1.7^{\circ}$ , 1934:  $1.6^{\circ}$ , 1935:  $1.9^{\circ}$ , 1936:  $2.7^{\circ}$ . In the year 1936 the monthly averages were: Jan.  $-0.7^{\circ}$ , Febr.  $-0.3^{\circ}$ , March  $-2.2^{\circ}$ , April  $1.4^{\circ}$ , May  $3.7^{\circ}$ , June  $6.9^{\circ}$ , July  $9.6^{\circ}$ , Aug.  $8.6^{\circ}$ , Sept.  $6.3^{\circ}$ , Oct.  $3.1^{\circ}$ , Nov.  $0.3^{\circ}$ , Dec.  $-4.0^{\circ}$ . A minimum temperature of  $-26.2^{\circ}$  was recorded in Febr. 1933 and a maximum of  $21.6^{\circ}$  in Aug. 1935.

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Observatoriegaten 1, Oslo

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