

Mitteilungen

Final Destination of „Schneespatz“ and „Eisbär“ — the Propeller Sledges of Wegener's Last Greenland Expedition

By Anker Weidick *

The Danish Technical Museum in Helsingør (Elsinore) has received as an important addition to its collections the remnants of two propeller sledges, used during the 1930—1931 campaign of the German Alfred Wegener Greenland Expedition.

The type of propeller sledges used by Wegener was originally constructed in Finland for use on the sea ice of the Bothnian Gulf by the Finnish State Aircraft Manufactory, and this manufactory modified the construction for oversnow transport on the Inland Ice of the two sledges, ordered by the Wegener Expedition.

The sledges, christened "Schneespatz" and "Eisbär", were used on the Inland Ice between the west station at the Inland Ice margin near Scheideck in Qaumarujuk fjord, Umanak district, and the Eismitte station on the ice 400 km to the east. They were approximately 2 m wide and 6 m long and built with a pilot cabin for two persons constructed of plywood on a steel frame. The propeller was placed astern on a motor (Siemens-Sh-12) developing 112 horsepower. The sledges without motor had a weight of 250 kg and it

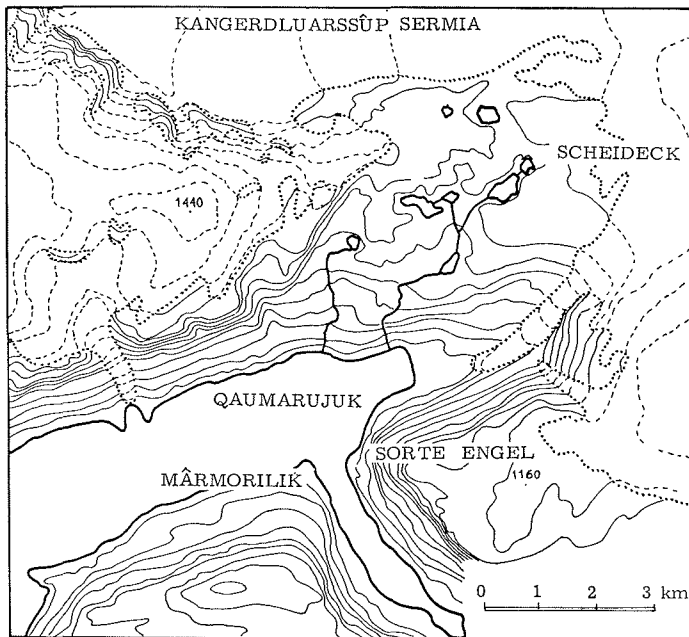


Fig. 1: Sketch map of the Qaumarujuk area, northern West Greenland. Map based on sheet 1610 of the Royal Danish Hydrographic Office.

Abb. 1: Übersichtskarte des Qaumarujuk-Gebiets, nördliches West-Grönland. Nach Blatt 1610 der Royal Danish Hydrographic Office.

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was therefore heavy work to transport the sledges, the motors and the fuel from the sea along the crevassed Qaumarujuk glacier lobe to the Inland Ice margin at Scheideck at an elevation of 972 m. The technical data and their history during the expedition is given by Schif (1932a, b, 1933). At the end of the expedition work in the autumn 1931, the engines were brought down to the coast again and transported to Germany, whereas the sledges were left at the ice margin.

In 1932, Scheideck was visited again by Loewe (1968), and from a visit at this locality in 1934 photographs of the station, the surroundings and the propeller sledges have been taken by J. Galster, the collection today being in the files of the Arctic Institute of Copenhagen.

In 1965, M. Kogelbauer visited the area around Scheideck and found "Schneespatz" and "Eisbär" at the margin of the Inland Ice (Kogelbauer, 1965). The observations also had glaciological interest since one of the propeller sledges in 1965 stood on the rock 6 m above the ice surface while it was left in the autumn 1931 on a slab of rock level with the ice surface (Loewe, 1968). The evidence of thinning out of the Qaumarujuk glacier lobe was followed up by the investigations of Loewe in the summer of 1967.



Fig. 2: The propeller sledges at Scheideck. J. Galster phot. 1934. By courtesy Arctic Institute, Denmark.
Abb. 2: Die Propellerschlitten bei Scheideck. Aufn. J. Galster, 1934. Mit freundl. Genehmigung des dän. Arktisk Instituts.

The area of Qaumarujuk fjord is relatively well known since a marble quarry, Mårmorilik, has been operating, albeit with some interruptions, from 1936 to 1972 (Galster, 1937; Jacobi, 1967). This mine is situated only 8 km southwest of Scheideck. Just opposite the small tributary fjord to Mårmorilik, lead-zinc ores were discovered in 1938 at Sorte Engel ("Black Angel"). The ore is situated near the top of a 1.000 m steep rock wall and first in 1972, when the technical problems of operating a mine under such difficult conditions were overcome by the Greenex Mining Company, extraction operations started (Nielsen, 1973).

In 1972 the director of the Technical Museum, civ. ing. K. O. B. Jørgensen, applied to the mining company for help in salvaging and transporting of the sledges down from Scheideck. So it was that volunteers from Greenex and Danish Arctic Contractors (the firm running the installations at Sorte Engel) in the autumn 1973 collected and brought

down the remnants of the sledges to Marmorilik harbour from where they were sent by boat to Copenhagen arriving early November 1973. Dr. F. Loewe contributed by making contact between the engineer of the Wegener Expedition, C. Schif, and the Technical Museum so that Schif furnished the Museum with technical information on the sledges. Unfortunately only one of the sledges is in a condition where complete reconstruction is possible.

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