decide whether Deer was an immaculate boatman or just unconcerned, or both. For some of our glacier travel we used a man-hauled sledge for moving gear. This was, in retrospect, a ridiculously heavy contraption but was used to get to camps high on the huge glaciers that we needed to traverse. The prospect of the heavy-weight sledge with its three attendants disappearing down one of the numerous very large crevasses was a constant source of enlivenment.

One memorable day saw Deer and myself leave camp to cross a large snowfield in order to reach rocks that he had seen on a 1935 winter dog-sledge journey. It was late in the day when we finally got to our objective, only to find that it was guarded by a very large bergschrund. Fortunately, a short descent enabled a bridge to be reached, but, having got there, our only collecting hammer was dropped and could be dimly seen stuck on an icy knob about fifty feet down. Later, there was some discussion about who had dropped the hammer, but I know who it was! With the hammer recovered, we collected our hard-won samples and the long return was made back to a very welcome camp. Deer’s experience and determination were essential to achieving our objectives on these, at times, arduous days on Kap Edward Holm.

Despite his mountaineering background and his experience on Everest – without oxygen he reached 28,200 feet (8595 m) in 1933 – Wager strongly discouraged any activity not directly relevant to the geological program. He regarded any suggestion of taking in the odd summit, just because it was there, as highly frivolous. Not an unreasonable point of view, considering the time, effort and expense involved in getting to East Greenland in 1953. That was a time, not long after the war, when the area was hardly visited. Now the Blosseville coast is much frequented, and adverts for adventure trips can be found in glossy magazines. There is gold in some of the rocks on Gabbro Mountain, and the region has been overrun by helicoptering geologists of all nationalities. In 1953, wild-life around Kangerdlugssuaq was completely undisturbed. Nothing, apart from sealing activity in offshore waters, had significantly disturbed the area for many years. Bird life in the fjord was prolific, seals were abundant and other rare animals, such as the narwhal, were present. Now, however, bears, which travel south in the winter months, have become targets for hunters as they make their way back north and have to cross fjords such as Kangerdlugssuaq. Visits in later years have shown a scene greatly changed by human activities and the prospect of the heavy-weight sledge with its three attendants disappearing down one of the numerous very large crevasses was a constant source of enlivenment.


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