

# 2010

Nunatta Katersugaasivia  
Allagaateqarfialu  
The Greenland National  
Museum & Archives

*Mikkel Myrup, curator*



## [ARCHAEOLOGICAL SURVEY NARSAQ 2010]

Report on archaeological survey conducted within specified area by request of Greenland Minerals and Energy PLC July 2010.

### **Executive summary**

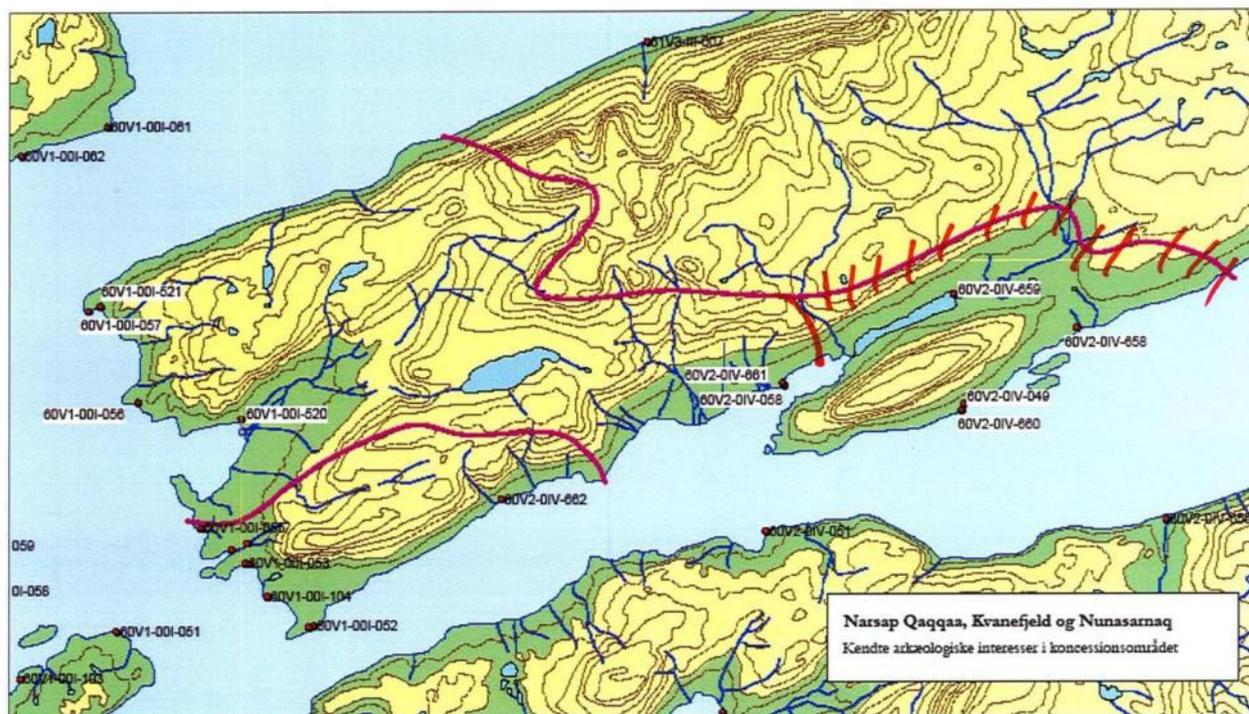
Nunatta Katersugaasivia Allagaateqarfialu/The Greenland National Museum & Archives (NKA) conducted an archaeological survey within a specified area on the Narsaq peninsula in July and August 2010. The NKA identified a number of protected monuments via the survey, predominantly situated in the immediate vicinity of the coast. A considerable number of these monuments were not previously recorded. The 2010 survey has thus given the NKA an important updated overview of the protected monuments within the concession area. At this stage though, it is not possible to establish which of these, if any, will conflict with the project design as detailed plans describing contingent infrastructure were not available at the time of the survey. Consequently, further assessments of potential monuments-infrastructure conflicts will have to be undertaken by the NKA as soon as this information is available.

## Introduction

In the summer of 2010 Nunatta Katersugaasivia Allagaateqarfialu/The Greenland National Museum & Archives (NKA) conducted an archaeological survey at the request of Greenland Minerals and Energy PLC (GME). GME holds an exploration license covering a stretch of land on the western part of the Narsaq Peninsula, reaching from the south shore of the Sermilik Fiord to the north shore of the Tunulliarfik Fiord (see map 1).

The survey is a continuation of the archival studies which were compiled in 2009, and is a part of a process which is mandatory according to the *Antiquities Act* as it is expressed in Greenlandic legislation (*Eqqissimatitsisarneq aamma allatigut kulturikkut eriagisassanik kulturikkut kingornussatut illersuineq pillugu Inatsisartut Inatsisaat nr. 11, 19. maj 2010-meersoq*).

The survey was conducted by Pauline K. Knudsen (NKA), Christian K. Madsen (National Museum of Denmark) and Mikkel Myrup (NKA) (ed).



Map 1. The concession area is marked with violet lines. The area originally included the Ilua peninsula (Strygejernet), but this was excluded before the survey commenced as illustrated by the red lines. (Boundaries on map made by GME)

## Methodology

It was decided to set up base in Narsaq as the extension of the exploration license area is relatively modest and NKA's personnel were able to reach the most remote localities by zodiac within an hour. Existing data regarding the cultural historical sites in the Narsaq area gave a good indication on where to expect the most densely populated areas to be.

The settlements and single feature sites were localised from the zodiac and their positions established by hand-held GPS. A sketch were made at each site giving a relatively detailed impression of its contents without being exactly to scale. Larger scale overview sketches depicting features situated at some distance from the dwellings, such as graves, fox traps etc, were made when relevant. Each site were extensively photographed. Artefacts found were left *in situ*.

A couple of inland stretches were surveyed by hiking and car. The team was airlifted to a point east of the Taseq lake and then made their way down to the coast on foot. Cultural remains encountered were registered with hand-held GPS and photographed.

## Archaeology in the Narsaq area

The first investigation which can be classified as an archaeological such, was conducted by the Dano-Norwegian missionary Hans Egede in the 1720'ies. Egede settled in the Nuuk area, where he arrived in 1721, but his search for surviving members of the Norse communities also took him to South Greenland. Apparently he also made a couple of excavations in Norse house ruins.

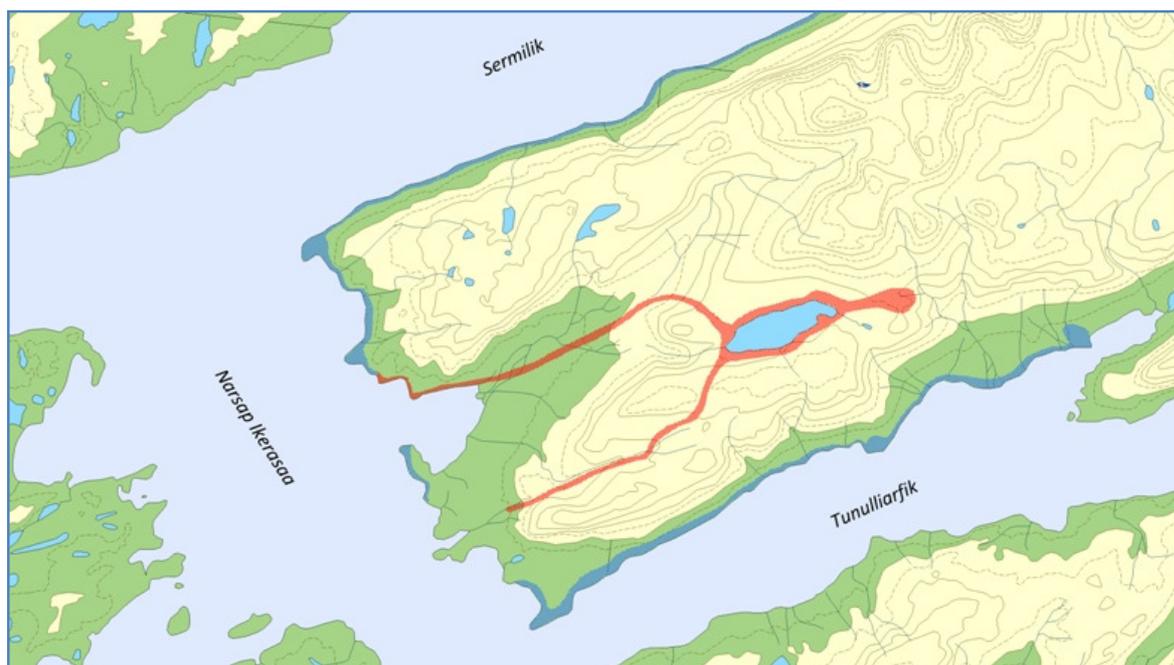
In the period after the colonization in 1721, the regions and different settlements of South West Greenland were often visited by employees of the Danish State and clergy. While no systematic recording of prehistoric dwelling sites and ruins were conducted, they were frequently mentioned in different types of reports made in the course of duty. These mentionings were compiled by *The Royal Society of Nordic Antiquities* (Det Kongelige Nordiske Oldskriftselskab) and published in the years 1838-45 in the *Historical Monuments of Greenland* (Grønlands Historiske Mindesmærker).

It was not until 1878 that it was decided through the *Commission on the management of the geological and geographical studies in Greenland* (Kommissionen for ledelsen af de

geologiske og geografiske undersøgelser i Grønland) to conduct a systematic archaeological registration of the physical remains left by past inhabitants of Greenland. This leads Gustav Holm to visit South Greenland in 1880 with the sole purpose of registering the Norse *Eastern Settlement* (cf. Holm 1894), as it was called. In the late 19th century focus was mainly on the Norse settlements of Greenland, and in 1894-1903 Daniel Bruun produced the first systematically compiled inventory of all known Norse settlements, including both the southerly *Eastern Settlement*, situated around the present towns of Narsaq, Qaqortoq and Nanortalik, and the northerly *Western Settlement*, which was situated in the Nuuk area (cf. Bruun 1895, 1917).

In 1929 interest was finally taken in conducting more thorough investigations of the Inuit settlements of Greenland when the Danish archaeologist Therkel Mathiassen began registering historical monuments in the rest of the country. Mathiassen did some large excavations on the western shores of Narsap Ikerasaa (Narsaq Sound) at the settlements of Illutalik and Tuttutuup Isua (cf. Mathiassen 1936).

The area subject to this summer's survey holds two sites on which archaeological excavations have been conducted. These are farms from the Norse period and they will be briefly described below. It is generally accepted that the Norse period comprise the time span 985 A.D.-1450 A.D. (e.g. Arneborg 2005). The Inuit cultures of prehistorical and historical times in West Greenland are comprised by Saqqaq (2500-900 cal B.C.), Dorset (800 cal B.C.-1 cal A.D.) and Thule (1300 cal A.D.-Historical times) (Jensen 2006). The archaeological record have confirmed that all of the above mentioned cultures have been present in the Narsap Ikerasaa area.



Map 2. The Narsaq peninsula. Coastal stretches surveyed by zodiac are in blue. Red indicate areas surveyed on foot.

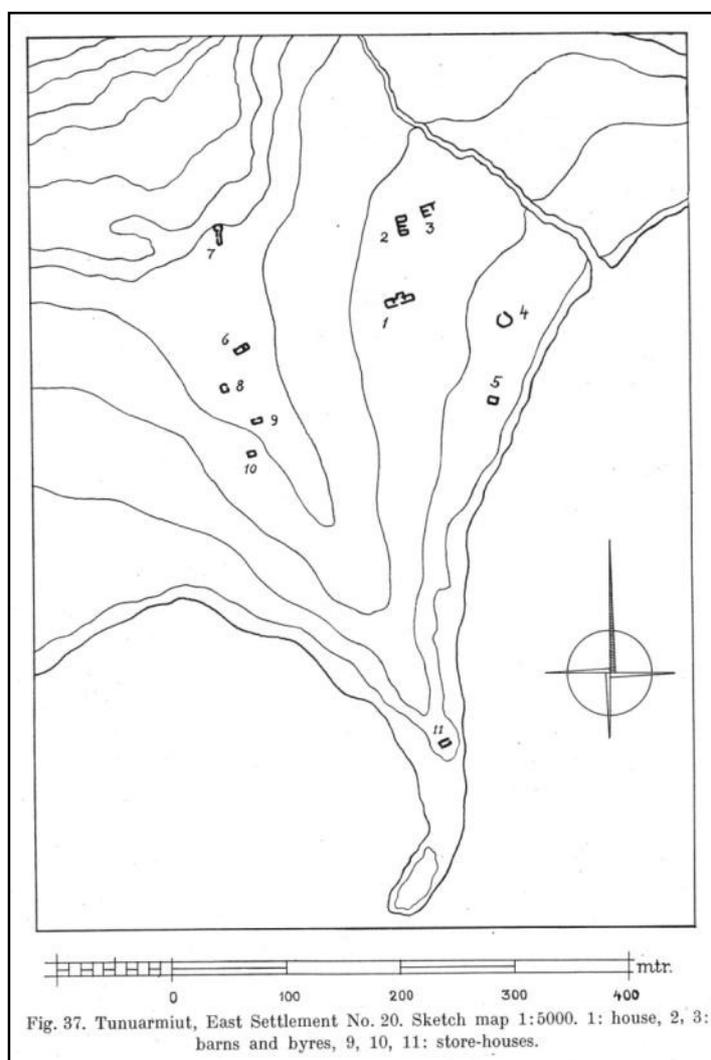


Map 3. The survey revealed several previously unregistered sites. All but one were found on the coast. The triangles mark the previously unknown/unregistered localities with cultural remains on them.

### Site descriptions

As mentioned above the monuments within the survey area are mainly comprised by Inuit remains stemming from the Thule culture and historical Inuit settlements. Evidence of Saqqaq and/or Dorset culture land use was observed around the Nuummiut promontory adjacent to the site 60V1-00I-057 (see map 1). Two Norse farms are situated in the area, one at Tunuarmit in the Tunulliarfik fiord and one at Narsap Ilua. Structures on these farms have been subjects of archaeological excavation in the past. None of the Inuit settlements in the survey area have been subject to past archaeological investigations of the same relatively meticulous extent.

The following site descriptions will be limited to the two Norse farms and two localities where Inuit settlements, prehistorical and historical, were registered. These four localities constitutes a representative segment of the overall cultural history of the Narsaq area. The rest of the visited sites will be described briefly and illustrated by photographs.



#### *Tunuarmit (60V2-0IV-661)*

A Norse farm situated in the inner most part of the Tunulliarfik fiord survey area. The farm is described in previous reports and both Daniel Bruun and Aage Roussel have made sketch maps and descriptions of it (Bruun 1896 & Roussel 1941).

Several Inuit graves are also found on this location. The 2010 survey team noticed that a modern (1950-60'ies) concrete foundation had been erected approximately halfway between structures 10 and 11.

*“The farm buildings lie together in two groups at each end of the site; one seems to be a cow-byre (3), while most of the others are barns or sheds and pens for sheep (2), (4), (5), (6), (7), (8) – Two are dry-wall storehouses (9), (10), and a similar one (11) lies at the end of the point at the landing place.”*

(Roussel 1941:59)

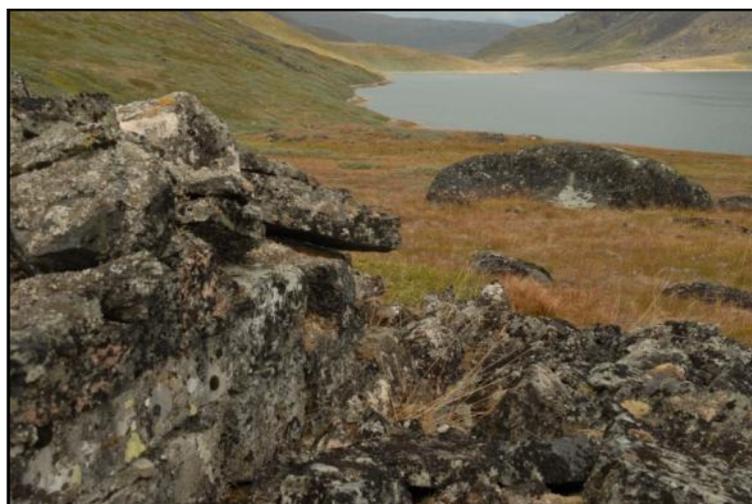
Today the coastal area adjacent to this site is used mostly for occupational as well as recreational char fishing.



*Photo 1. Tunuarmiut 60V2-0IV-661*  
Overview of entire farm.



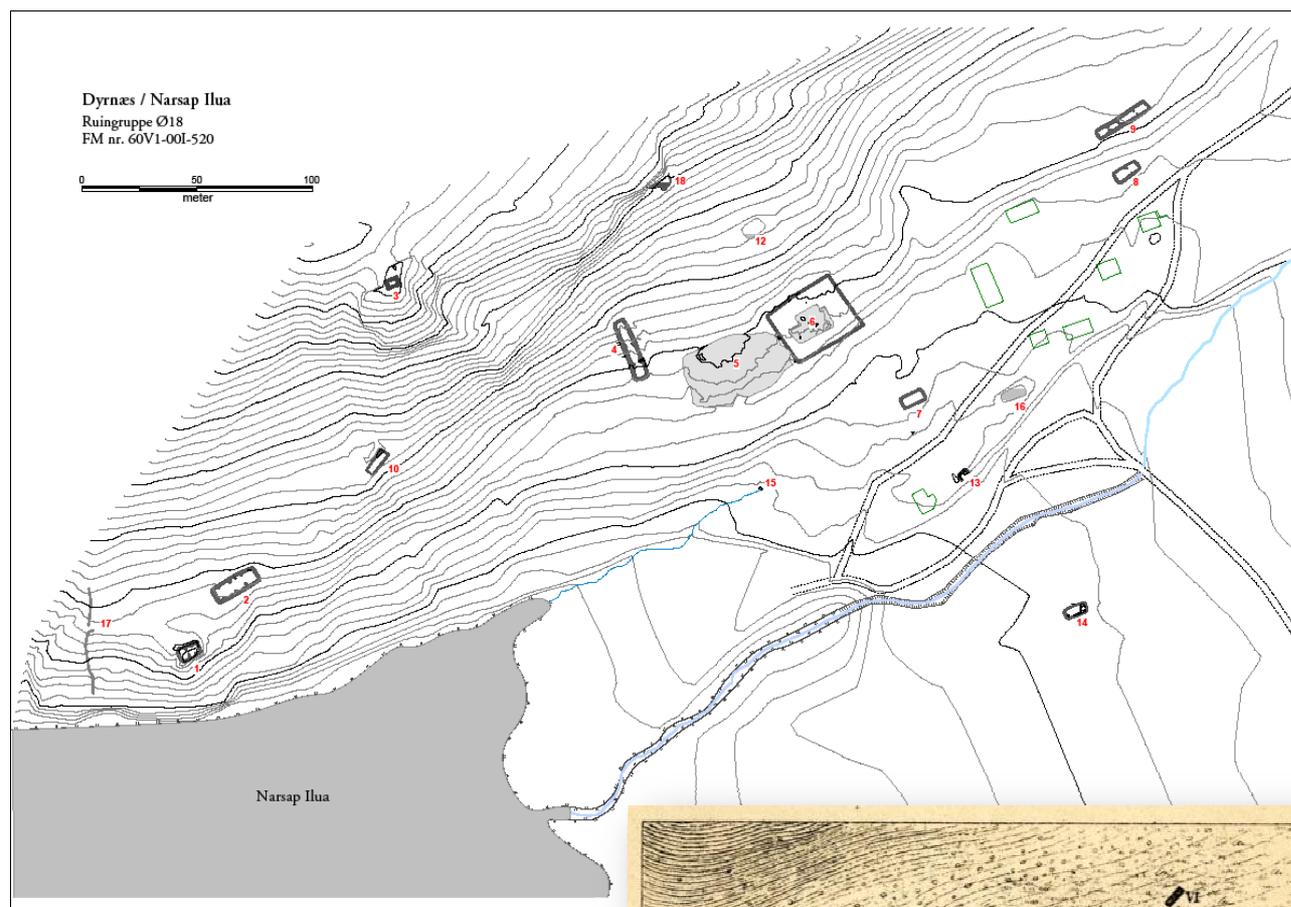
*Photo 2. Tunuarmiut 60V2-0IV-661*  
Structure 10 with structures 6 and 9 in the background. The structures 9 and 10 are interpreted as storages and structure 6 as a cowshed/barn.



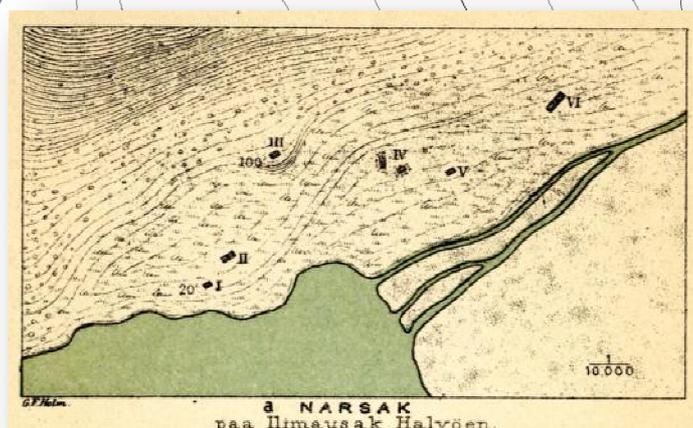
*Photo 3. Tunuarmiut 60V2-0IV-661*  
View from structure 6 towards structure 1 which is considered the dwelling-house on this farm. The house can be seen above the left corner of the boulder.

**Narsap Ilua/Dyrnæs (60V1-001-520)**

The Norse farm is situated where the melt water river from the valley below Kuannersuit reaches the fiord. In 2008 a digital survey of the farm with precision GPS equipment was undertaken by request of the Narsaq Museum (Kapel & Clemmensen 2008). The map below is a result of this survey. For an overview position of the farm in the concession area confer map 1. The farm has been visited by archaeologists on several occasions since the first registration took place in 1880. The 2008 survey revealed two previously unrecorded structures – a storage or outhouse and a pen.



**Figure 1. Narsap Ilua/Dyrnæs 60V1-001-520**  
The inserted sketch map of the same farm was drawn on the 1880-survey led by Gustav Holm.



**Structure 1:** Stone building divided into two rooms. **Structure 2:** Cowshed. Stone building with surrounding turf wall. **Structure 3:** *Skemma* (food storage): Dry-wall stone building constructed directly on the bed rock above the farm. **Structure 4:** Cowshed. Relatively long building, probably built with mostly turf since walls are very diffuse. **Structure 5:** Main

dwelling-house. Large complex of adjoining rooms. *Structure 6*: Church with surrounding graveyard. *Structure 7*: Stone building. Outhouse or storage. *Structure 8*: Function undetermined. Building divided into two rooms.

*Structure 9*: Probably a cowshed. Stone building with thick turf walls divided into 3 or 4 rooms. *Structure 10*: Function undetermined. Turf and stone building. *Structure 11*: Pen. This structure was not rediscovered in 2008. *Structure 12*: Function undetermined. Stone foundation. *Structure 13*: Function undetermined. Stone and turf building. *Structure 14*: Storage or *skemma*. Built on low bank in the melt water river delta. *Structure 15*: Stone framed spring. *Structure 16*: Function undetermined. Hardly discernible contours of large (11 X 4 metres) stone foundation. *Structure 17*: Fence consisting of a number of risen boulders and smaller stones. The fence goes from the coast appr. 50 metres up the hill. *Structure 18*: Pen. Built with stones between larger boulders (Kapel & Clemmensen 2008, my translation).



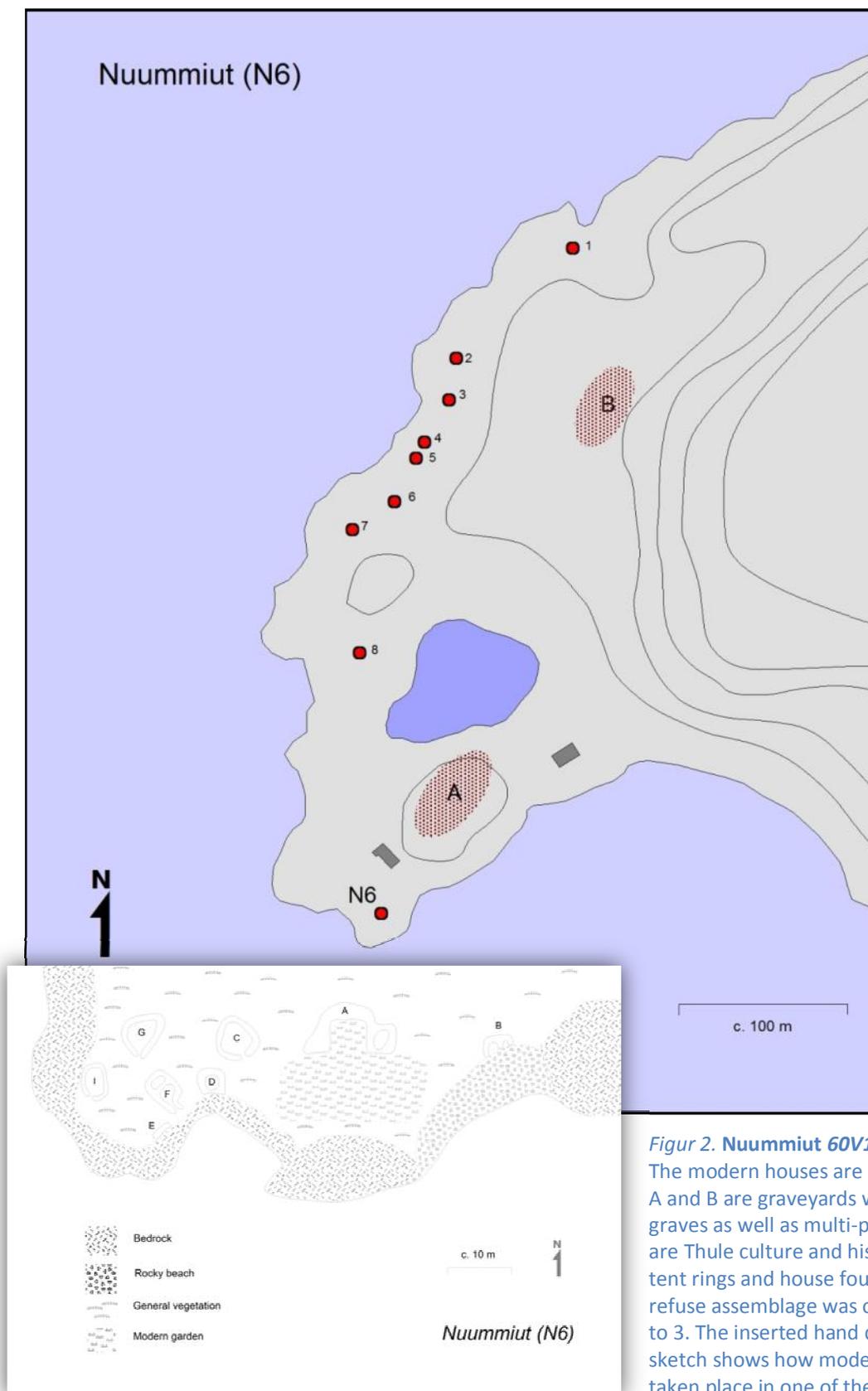
Photo 4. Overview of the Narsap Ilua/Dyrnes farm seen from N. The farm is situated on the N bank of the melt water river delta where the vegetation colour is yellowish.

#### *Nummiut (60V1-001-057)*

This site is situated on a small cape on the corner of the Sermilik fiord and Narsap Ikerasaa. The Greenlandic name translates to 'the people of the cape'. There is good access to the seal hunting areas of Sermilik and Narsap Ikerasaa and it is therefore no coincidence that one can observe a relatively large amount of dwellings with appurtenant graves. The features of this site represents a wide temporal span. Evidence of a Saqqaq and/or Dorset presence on the Nummiut cape is provided by a small assemblage of lithic refuse stemming from stone tool fabrication or maintenance located on the north shore of the cape. The raw material is called *killiaq* in Greenlandic and is a grey to blackish slate-like mineral, and is characterized as silicified metamorphosed slate (Jensen 2006). There are only two known locations in Greenland where one can quarry *killiaq*, near Qaarsut on the Nuussuaq peninsula north of the Disko Island and on the small island of Agissat situated in the southern part of the Disko Bay.

The dwelling remains which are immediately discernible on the Nummiut cape can be ascribed to the different phases of Thule culture and historical Inuit house typologies. Further archaeological investigation is needed though, if one wishes to obtain datings of a

more precise character. Information about a Norse structure on this site exists in the archives of the NKA, but this was not found. Furthermore, two modern houses and a fence have been constructed and evidence of gardening can be observed on several plots on the cape.



**Figur 2. Nuummiut 60V1-001-057**  
 The modern houses are shown in dark grey. A and B are graveyards with individual graves as well as multi-person graves. 1-8 are Thule culture and historical Inuit graves, tent rings and house foundations. The lithic refuse assemblage was observed adjacent to 3. The inserted hand drawn overview sketch shows how modern gardening has taken place in one of the dwellings.

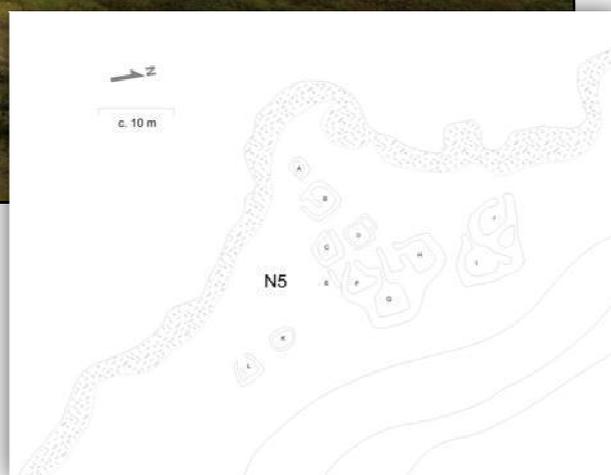
*Kussanga (60V1-001-056)*

This site holds numerous dwellings in two concentrations on the cape and there is a graveyard above them. Seemingly this site has not been in use as long as Nuummiut, but again, this can only be confirmed by further archaeological investigations.



**Kussanga 60V1-001-056**

The photo shows the western dwelling concentration of the site seen from E. On the sketch to the left their mutual position is illustrated as well as the position of the graveyard. The structures of the western dwellings are outlined on the sketch map below.

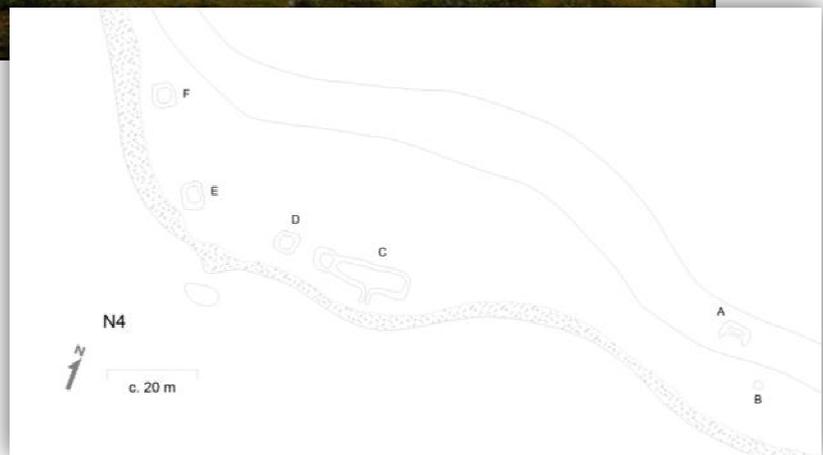


The Kussanga site is situated on the shore of Narsap Ikerasaa and like Nuummiut, the inhabitants have had easy access to the rich resources of the sound. The two dwelling concentrations have utilized the same graveyard situated just above Kussanga.



**Kussanga 60V1-001-056**

The eastern dwellings of Kussanga seen from N. The structure shown on the photo is the remains of a large communal house.



### Additional sites

The following sites will be briefly described with position and type. The length of the rule appearing on the photos is 1 metre.



**Qimatulivissuaq 60V1-00I-171**  
(60,93823°N/046,05739°W)

Near a large rock just above the beach, a couple of hundreds metres west of the Narsap Ilua/Dyrnes farm, a summer settlement was registered. The visible structures consists of tent rings and tent foundations.



**Tunu 60V1-00I-170**  
(60,92108°N/046,07013°W)

Large grave on the Tunu peninsula north of Narsaq town.



**Nuugaarmiut 60V1-001-169**  
(60,92355°N/046,08259°W)  
Tent foundation and shooting blind situated on the tip of the Tunu peninsula just north of Narsaq town. The stone built shooting blind was used when catching eiders passing around the cape.



**Illunnguaq 60V1-001-168**  
(60,9333°N/046,05739°W)  
This site is situated in the Tunulliarfik fiord on a rocky point below an alluvial fan and consists of a large communal house with an appurtenant grave. Several fox traps were also observed.



**Sermilik I 60V1-001-167**  
(60,9733°N/046,08629°W)  
Summer settlement site situated between Ikkarluk and Nuummiut. Structures consist of three tent rings.



**Sermilik II 60V1-001-166**  
(60,96667°N/046, 10648°W)  
This site is also situated between Ikkarluk and Nuummiut. It consist of tent rings and a relatively large house divided into two rooms. The western part of this structure is close to the rapidly eroding slope.



**Taseq 60V2-01V-071  
(60,96166°N/045,92955°W)**  
This site is situated by the eastern end of the lake, approximately 200 metres from the shore. The large rocks have been used as shelter against the elements. The natural cavities' sheltering properties have been optimized by supplementary stones. It was not possible to determine when the shelters had been built. The proximity to the hiking route between Narsaq and Qassiarsuk suggests that the shelters have been used by travellers on this route.



## References

- Jensen, J. F. 2006. The Stone Age of Qeqertarsuup Tunua (Disko Bugt). A regional analysis of the Saqqaq and Dorset cultures of Central West Greenland. - *Meddelelser om Grønland, Man & Society* 32. Copenhagen, The Commission for Scientific Research in Greenland, 2006.
- Arneborg, J. 2004. Det europæiske landnám – nordboerne i Grønland.  
In: H. C. Gulløv (ed), Grønlands forhistorie. – Gyldendal, Copenhagen: pp. 221-278.
- Mathiassen, T. 1936. The Eskimo Archaeology of Julianehaab District. – *Meddelelser om Grønland, bd. 118, Nr. 1. København, 1936.*
- Holm, G. F. 1894. Beskrivelse af Ruiner i Julianehaabs Distrikt, undersøgte i Aaret 1880 af G. F. Holm. – *Meddelelser om Grønland, Sjette Hefte. Kjøbenhavn, 1894: pp. 57-147.*
- Bruun, D. 1896. Arkæologiske undersøgelser i Julianhaabs Distrikt. – *Meddelelser om Grønland, vol. 16, Nr. 3. København, 1896.*
- Bruun, D. 1917. Oversigt over Nordboruiner i Godthaab- og Frederikshaab-Distrikter. *Meddelelser om Grønland, vol. 56, Nr.3. København, 1917.*
- Kapel, H. & Clemmensen, N. C. 2008. Narsaq Museum Feltrapport. Ruingrupperne ved Sissarluttoq og Narsap Ilua – Digital opmåling og fotodokumentation.
- Roussel, A. 1941. Farms and Churches in the Mediaeval Norse Settlements of Greenland. - *Meddelelser om Grønland, Bd. 89, Nr. 1. København, 1941.*