



Photo: Rigmor Mydtskov

## Arne Noe-Nygaard

30/7/1908 – 3/6/1991

Arne Noe-Nygaard died on June 3rd 1991, almost 83 years old; he had then been active as a geologist for 64 years. From 1942 until his retirement in 1978 Noe-Nygaard was attached to the University of Copenhagen, as Director of the Mineralogical Museum (now Geological Museum), 1969–77, as Professor of Mineralogy, 1942–69, and as Professor of Dynamic Geology, 1969–78. Noe-Nygaard's great insight into the multifarious world of geology, combined with his friendly, sincere and extrovert nature, made him many influential contacts. Within his profession, and also in places

where the voice of geology ought to be heard, he was the Danish geologist whose views were most respected. Honours, scientific, national and international came to Noe-Nygaard. He was a member and honorary member of many scientific societies and academies. It was during the early part of his period as professor that he became strongly linked to Greenland, due to his important contribution to the establishment of the Geological Survey of Greenland.

As a young geologist Noe-Nygaard participated in expeditions to several parts of Greenland, and became



Drawing by Me Mouritzen, 1946.

acquainted with many aspects of the very varied geology of this sub-continent. During a winter in East Greenland (1931–32) he collected metamorphic eruptive rocks, his studies of which were published as a doctoral dissertation in 1937. His experiences in Greenland understandably led to his conviction of the necessity to establish a geological survey concerned solely with Greenland.

One of Noe-Nygaard's predecessors as professor of geology, Professor F. Johnstrup, had attempted to set up a Greenland Survey in 1876. A commission (Commissionen for Ledelsen af de geologiske Undersøgelser i Grønland) was established and some young geologists were sent for field work in Greenland, but unfortunately it was not possible to maintain continuity. Instead of a permanent activity, successive unrelated expeditions were sent out with funding from different sources. When Noe-Nygaard was appointed Professor of Mineralogy in 1942, he considered that the moment had come to try once more and his efforts resulted in the appointment of a committee (Udvalget for Grønlands Geologiske Undersøgelse) of which he was a member. A commitment was made to form the new Survey, and to find ways to fund and organise it. The Prime Minister was soon persuaded to submit an application to Parliament for financial support. The letter was dated 11th March 1946, and was rewarded by a grant of 312 700 Danish kroner. The first step had been taken, and Noe-Nygaard's important contribution is on record in the state archives.

The overall planning of the geological work in Greenland during the early days of the young 'Survey' (not yet an established institute) passed through the hands of Noe-Nygaard who, with his colleagues at the University, undertook this work as an extra commitment to normal duties. Their plan for the future of the young Survey was for a permanent institution established by act of Parliament – this would release the organising committee of its responsibilities. Drafts were written, but action was deferred due to a governmental decision that the act on the Survey should be combined with an elaboration of the legislation concerning the exploitation of mineral resources in Greenland. Noe-Nygaard's important and influential role as a member of the organising committee of the Survey continued until the necessary legislation was passed by Parliament in 1965.

With the formal establishment of the Survey it was now possible to engage geologists and other personnel on a permanent basis. A new era for Danish (and Greenland) geology had begun, although for many years the Geological Survey of Greenland (GGU) continued its close cooperation with the Museum under Noe-Nygaard's leadership, which was of great support to the young survey.

The Greenland community has gained much from Noe-Nygaard's foresight and initiative with respect to the increasing knowledge of the geological and mineral potential of Greenland in the days before the establishment of Home Rule. The establishment of GGU has been a dominant factor in this development.

Noe-Nygaard was a very versatile geologist. His primary interests were igneous rocks, and his main field of activity the North Atlantic: the Tertiary basalts of the Faeroe Islands, Iceland and Greenland. He was privileged to leave his mark on the development of Danish (and Greenland) geology over a very long period of time, and in an extremely favourable and creative manner.

Arne Noe-Nygaard will always be remembered by GGU with respect, gratitude and affection.

K. Ellitsgaard-Rasmussen