

# CHE-MUN

AUTUMN 2002

THE JOURNAL OF CANADIAN WILDERNESS CANOEING

OUTFIT 110



WHAT'S NOT TO LIKE? -- A member of the Quoich River party surveys the alluring Barrenlands of Nunavut and his party's tents in the distance. The Quoich River is almost in the backyard of Baker Lake, making it easy to get to and it offers a classic northern river experience. Veteran paddler Doug McKown relates his group's adventures on the Quoich, accompanied by some great photos, beginning on Page Six.

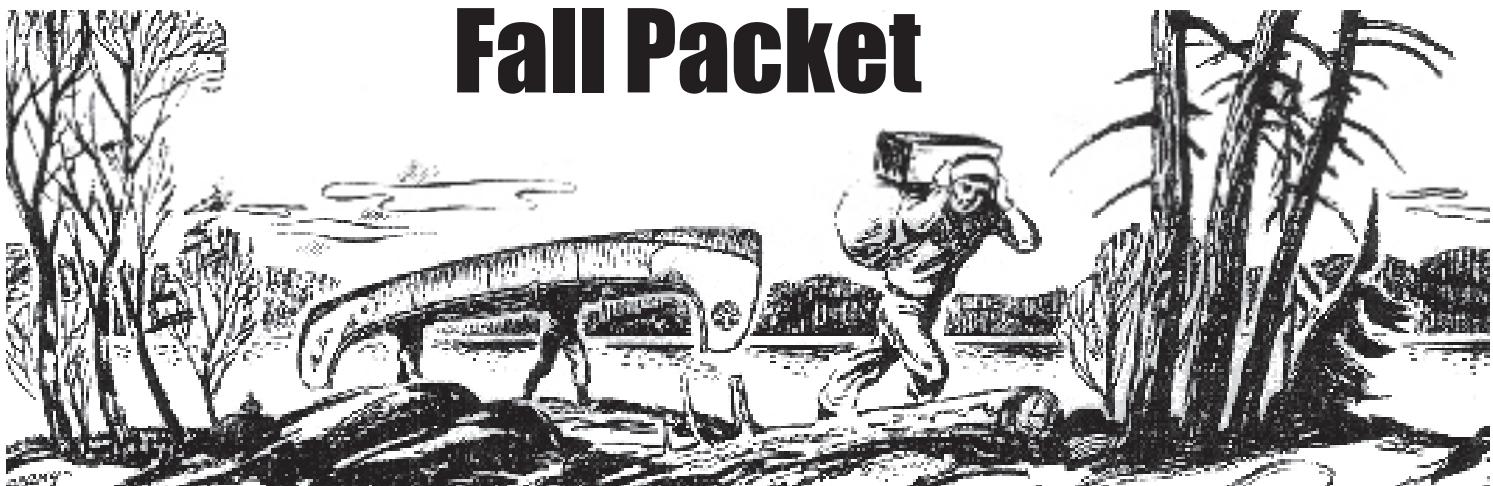
**Cruising Nunavut's Quoich**

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**Buy an HACC Print**

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# Fall Packet



We came across an interesting Web site ([www.wildernesscanoe.org](http://www.wildernesscanoe.org)) about north paddling and wrote to Troy Gipps, its Webmaster to find out a bit more of what he was doing.

"Wildernesscanoe.org started as a graduate school Web design project at the beginning of this summer. I had perused the Internet several times over the last year in search of a Web site tailored specifically for wilderness canoeing enthusiasts. There were a few sites, such as (*Che-Mun's*) that appeared to be run out of Canada, but I was unable to find a U.S.-based site that was solely dedicated to wilderness canoeing. So I decided to try my hand at building one. I was pleased to find that the URL [wildernesscanoe.org](http://wildernesscanoe.org) was available for registration.

"The primary mission of my site is to promote the art and science of wilderness canoeing. The site is in its early stages, but it is my intent to create an online resource that will cater to both novice and seasoned wilderness canoeing enthusiasts. Novices can turn to the site for detailed equipment advice and to broaden their understanding of the sport, as well as to get a feel for the Ungava and James Bay Regions of Quebec through photographs, basic route information and by listening to audio clips of the wildlife that can be found in the region.

"Seasoned wilderness canoeists and novices alike will also have the opportunity to exchange information and ideas about the sport through the use of a 'Message Board' and my 'Wilderness Canoeists' list that will contain the email addresses and basic route information of wilderness canoeists that voluntarily submit their information to me for posting.

"Additionally, I intend to build a comprehensive listing of North American Canoeing

Groups and Associations to further assist visitors in networking with wilderness canoeists in their area. I recently added a link to your CHE-MUN site to this section of my page.

"As for me, my trips to the Ungava and James Bay Regions include:

1999 Ungava Crossing, Quebec, (400 miles)  
1996 Nastapoka River, Quebec, (230 miles)  
1995 Clearwater River, Quebec (150 miles)  
1994 Broadback/Rupert Rivers, (140 miles)  
1992 Little Whale River, Que., (200 miles)

"My paddling team primarily resides in New England and we try to head up north every few years. We hope to return to Quebec and Labrador in the summer of 2003. Any coverage you can give to the site would be greatly appreciated. I look forward to creating a site that will be a great resource for the U.S. and Canadian wilderness canoeing community.

"If either you or the other readers of *Che-Mun* would like to be added to my list of Wilderness Canoeists just click the 'Join the List' link on the main menu and I'll be happy to add your e-mail addresses and some route information."

*In Outfit 104 we told you about an interesting project that would combine a great canoe trip with some historical research.*

*The Payne Lake Project would take the 1948 Jacques Rousseau route across upper Ungava. The next group to take that route was the HACC in 1990. The route goes up the Kogaluk River from Hudson Bay and over the height-of-land to the Payne River which drains into Ungava Bay.*

*The plan was to have two canoe parties go out this past summer; one doing the full tra-*

*verse and the other situated near the sites of interest on Payne Lake where some believe there are Viking artifacts. We had been waiting to hear something from George Sollish, the project manager, a dedicated amateur historian. We finally heard what happened to the project in an e-mail.*

"Sorry for the delay responding, but the short answer is that Avataq blocked the expedition and I've been unwilling to admit it to myself by taking down the website. I'll have to do it shortly, of course.

"If you want to know how one of the best staffed archaeological expeditions never to take the field didn't happen, I would be willing to provide some information if you can keep it to yourself -- nothing for publication, I'm afraid.

"In the meanwhile, I've been back in the Belchers (3rd time) and am hard at work on a history chronicling (I hope) the entry of Europeans into the central arctic from Greenland, where it began, to the Belchers, where it ended."

*Avataq is a group formed in 1980 to promote the Nunavik culture and language in Northern Quebec. I can only presume Sollish's group ran afoul of the red tape required to do something bordering on official.*

*George said he will link to a PDF of his report on the Web site at [www.autogear.net/paynelake.htm](http://www.autogear.net/paynelake.htm).*

*But the irony is exquisite. When you go to the English part of the [avataq.qc.ca](http://avataq.qc.ca) Web site you are met with this quote from Lazarusie Epoo, Nunavik Governor from Inukjuaq.*

*"All the people of the world, Inuit and non-Inuit will explore and learn together, because we who are breathing on earth are all relatives."*



The incredible Maine North Woods of Camp Winona are the backdrop for the annual Maine Canoe Symposium. The HACC has been speaking there almost every June since 1986. Check out their Web site at [www.maine-canoesymposium.org](http://www.maine-canoesymposium.org) and join in. Here, Geoffrey Peake gives a canoe cooking class featuring his world famous Cinnamon Bunz®.

In Auyittuq National park on Baffin Island, a backpacking guide course offered by Nunavut Tourism and the Kakivak Association is seen as a first step to help tourism benefit the local economy.

In the summer of 2001, four men recommended by outfitters in Pangnirtung and Qikiqtarjuaq embarked on an eight-day backpack guide course with Iqaluit guide Paul Landry.

Logan said it's relatively easy to find guides who will take people out on snow machines and dog sledding trips, but for the many backpackers who visit Auyittuq near Pangnirtung each year, the options for guides are slim.

"To just go for a walk isn't something a lot of local people do," Logan explained. Landry, who along with his partner runs Northwinds Arctic Adventures, said there is a lot of potential in the tourism adventure travel industry and its great to see young local people show interest in it.

The main objective of the course was safety, Landry said, and to show that guides are responsible for ensuring their clients have a safe experience.

The key focus here in the Arctic is polar bears, river crossings and the

## Canoesworthy

Arctic weather," he said. "Another main area is leadership, making sure people offer professional leadership and look after not just the safety skills of their group, but also the

well-being of the clients." The course was taught in the park, so the weather dictated when and what he could teach.

Landry and the four guides, Jamesie Alivaktuk, Juta Qaqqaqsiq, Mosesee Duval and Jimmy Akulukjuk, went back into the park this past summer for three days to develop a marketable trip package.

Part of the objective was for them to create a brochure they could use to market what Landry calls The Arctic Circle Loop - a three-day trip that takes people to the Arctic Circle and back. Landry also wrote a guide manual that includes route descriptions, where to cross rivers, where to camp, distances and time, suggested menus, equipment and clothing. The trip brochure will go to Kakivak this week, Landry said, so it can be marketed this winter.

Auyittuq Park was chosen for the course, Logan explained, because it's the most developed park in the region and attracts the most visitors. He would like to see a similar course for more northern parks, such as those on Ellesmere Island.

► *Continued on Page 10*

## From the Editor

Welcome to the start of the planning season - as non-canoeing time of the year is called. This past summer was without a big trip for us - something we try not to have happen too often.

However, the seed has been planted for a possible HACC expedition next summer and there is also the chance of doing some more TV work which we will tell you about as it develops.

You might have noticed a small change on the bottom of the front page of *Che-Mun*. It concerns our Web presence which has been transferred to the Ottertooth Web site run by Brian Back a Cana-

dian living in Wisconsin. Brian is perhaps best known as historian for the history of Camp Keewaydin, the oldest extant boys camp in North America. His *Ottertooth.com* site has extensive Keewaydin info along with a focus on the environmental aspects of Temagami and the Rupert River.

You will find *Che-Mun* posted there - always a couple of issues behind the current one you are now reading. We need the support of you subscribers - *now more than ever* - as they say in the movie trailers! The Ottertooth site will also allow us to expand more of what you get in *Che-Mun* - using more (colour) photos and some additional and expanded features.

For many years the one of the highlights of the Christmas season was the annual HACC Dinner. It was held each December 28, the birthday of our

late Patron Eric Wilton Morse, who was born in 1904.

After a few years off due to geography, kids etc, we are reinstating *The Dinner* this year and thanks to the advancing of inkjet technologies, we can provide great illustrations from the 20 years of HACC trips to decorate the walls. And it's really fun to dig up shots you couldn't or wouldn't use over the past two decades.

The Chief Guide, Guide, Piscine Director Quartermaster, Research Director and Governor and their spouses will all be there. Unfortunately, our Chaplain (Director of Pastoral Operations) will be with family in Ottawa. It's a special time to celebrate and truly appreciate the wonderful thing we have going here. After 20 years, we realize it can't last forever - and neither will we.

Michael Peake

## Barrow to Boothia

**The Arctic Journal of Chief Factor  
Peter Warren Dease 1836-1839  
Edited by William Barr  
McGill-Queens Press 322pp. \$49.95  
ISBN: 0-7735-2253-0**

Reviewed by Michael Peake

Peter Warren Dease is not a brick in the wall that is the Northern Historical Hall of Fame. Such distinction befalls Franklin, Back, Richardson and Hearne, men whose names are likely familiar to the general public.

But Chief Factor Dease is part of the mortar between those bricks and the very reason they have held together so solidly. And Edmonton-based historian William Barr, continues his superb work editing manuscripts from Canada's historical north and throwing a spotlight on those, like Dease, who deserve it.

In fact, it was Dease, assisted by the young and arrogant Thomas Simpson, nephew of HBC inland governor George Simpson - another man not known for his small sense of self, who from 1836-1839 filled a crucial gap in the geographical knowledge of the north, namely from Point Barrow to the Boothia Peninsula.

Those familiar with George Douglas' *Lands Forlorn* will well know their exploits. Douglas followed part of their route 70-odd years later. Fort Confidence, situated at the northeast corner of Great Bear Lake was the winter quarters built for Dease's



CONFIDENCE IS CRUMBLING -- Dease and Simpson's Fort Confidence as seen by Hanbury in 1902 was still standing. By 1911, George Douglas found the buildings burned down and only chimneys remaining. In 1991, the forest had grown up considerably and only two chimneys were standing.

## HACC prints available to own - see them online

A quarter century of wilderness paddling has produced a lot of wonderful photos of northern canoeing and we have been pleased to share many of these HACC images with you in Che-Mun and in the 100-plus canoe slide shows we've given across the continent.

Thanks to advances in inkjet printing technology we can now provide you with a archival prints that will last a lifetime. While we can't show you these in colour in Che-Mun, we hope you will check them out on the Web at <http://homepage.mac.com/mpeake/PhotoAlbum1.html>



Thunderhouse Falls, Missinaibi River

If you are interested in what's there - and there will be more to come, just send us a check, or a cheque, to the Che-Mun address, for the one(s) you want and we will get them right out to you.

All photos are taken by Michael Peake, professional photographer for 28 years. Most are from Kodachrome originals.

### Prices:

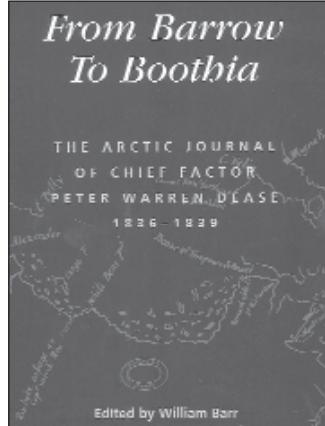
8" x 11"	\$50
11" x 17"	\$100
13 x 19"	\$130

All prices are in Canadian dollars and include preparation and delivery.



Quetico Rainbow

party. As the accompanying photos illustrate, it lasted for 65 years or so before being taken apart for the wood or burned down. Hornby and Melville overwintered nearby just before Douglas' arrival in



1911.

This book marks the first time Dease's journal has been published. His field notes were held by a private collector in Montreal and Dr. Ian MacLaren first transcribed and analyzed them. They were then combined with Dease's journal from the McCord Museum in Montreal and William Barr then took up the large task of assembling everything into this fascinating book.

Of course, such detailed historical books are primarily the domain of the academic. But many northern canoeists, whether they possess the credentials of academe or not, are in their own way historical researchers. Such seeming details make a northern trip some alive since, in many cases, the mode of travel and the hardships faced are so similar.

And Dease was in need of the PR help that Dr. Barr seems so willing to dispense. Born 20 years before the younger Simpson, that may account for the problems the pair had. Dease was 48 when the trip started. American born, he had worked for the XY Company and Northwest Company and accompanied Franklin on his second northern expedition as the HBC representative.

Simpson had joined the service after graduating from university in Scotland. He travelled with his uncle and work at several posts demonstrating great physical abilities. When it came to the natives, the pair could not have been more different. Dease, like his famed predecessor David Thompson, understood and appreciated their talents, while Simpson showed no such compassion or knowledge.

Their trip was unique in that it marked the first

time the Hudson's Bay Company has undertaken such a venture in the exploration of the northern coast. They did so to ward off criticism of their charter privilege, their lack of improvements to the region and the consuming public interest in continued northern exploration.

It was the height of the great age of northern explorers. London buzzed with the names of Back, Franklin, Ross, Richardson, and the amazingly irritating Dr. Richard King. It was King, surgeon to Back's expedition, who tried in 1836 to head another expedition to the area to rescue the overdue Ross but so infuriated everyone with his pushy manner, he got nowhere. (*Ed. Note: The HACC did his proposed inland "rescue" route in 1995.*)

So with all that going on, Simpson and Dease set out in the summer of 1836 for a what became a three year exploration of the missing piece of the northern map.

Wintering over the first year at Fort Chipewyan the headed west to Point Barrow while Fort Confidence was being constructed. They returned to the Great Bear and headed eastward the next two years - through the *Lands Forlorn* route - and back again to Confidence.

One can only imagine how strong and tough the men of this era were. Reading Dease's notes on coming up the Coppermine River in September 1839, heading back to civilization, is an eyecatcher.

They hauled the boat up the swift Coppermine to the Kendall River, some 80 miles, in four days. Dease got too far ahead one day and spent the night out in the freezing cold alone or "alfresco" as he puts it. They then cached the boat and walked back to Great Bear Lake. As one who has ventured along that ground - I can tell you it's tough going and here it is a mere footnote to the rest of the amazing story.

The book is arranged with an entertaining backbone of introductions to each chapter as it follows the expedition through its different phases. The people who did the work do the talking in a mixture of letters, journal entries, post journals and assorted info and footnotes; all-in-all a concise and superb job done in the service of history.

## Cold Summer Wind II

### 20 Years of Canoe Camping North of 60

**By Clayton Klein  
Wilderness Adventure Books  
Manchester, MI, 168pp. US\$17.50  
ISBN: 0-923568-49-2**

## Cold Summer Wind II

20 Years of Canoe Camping North of 60



Clayton Klein

Manitoba and southern Nunavut.

That area, which is still largely wilderness, has a great canoeing history and it good to see author Klein tapping into that. He features some tales of Ragnar Jonsson, a legendary trapper in the region for 60 years. He must be quite a hero to Klein, who like Jonsson was also paddling into his 80s. Klein reprints, from another author, a colourful (and fanciful) account of Ragnar's pursuit of a demon wolverine who had been stealing from his traps and creating a huge nuisance. Great reading and the stuff of Jack London novels!

Many of the tales are of shorter trips throughout the region and include the Lockhart, Ross and Anderson rivers and even the mighty Pike's Portage out of the eastern end of Great Slave Lake. He also spends some considerable time looking for a rumoured WWII Japanese communication facility! And there is also a trip to Alaska thrown in.

The trips usually consists of Clayton's son Darrell and daughter-in-law Deborah. In later years they took to paddling solo boats, the famed Monarch, made by another amazing elderly paddler from the US midwest Verlen Kruger.

The writing is straight forward and informative. And his writing of dialogue has improved with age, though it's not the reason to buy the book.

I was surprised to still see Klein's camping outfit still consisting of pack frames and five gallon pails but I guess if you're happy with some-

Despite its subtitle, *Cold Summer Wind II* is really about canoeing the "little sticks" country north and south of 60° in northern Saskatchewan and

# Cruising the Quoich

*East of Baker Lake and flowing into Chesterfield Inlet, the Quoich River offers a convenient spot for a Barrenlands excursion. Veteran paddler Doug McKown and party paddled the Quoich just a few months after it's newly named location of Nunavut was proclaimed in 1999. They found a river rich in native tradition, full of challenging rapids and lightly travelled by others.*



Heidi lines her boat in at the start of the portage.

Before long we heard the roar of the Twin Otter as he swooped in over the hill. Soon we were loading gear and preparing to leave this magic valley. As we secured our seatbelts, we could look outside for one last view of the beautiful Quoich River. As we prepared to take off, a majestic bull caribou with an enormous set of antlers, casually sauntered across the tundra in front of the plane. He watched in unconcerned majesty as we lifted off and disappeared into the blue sky, out of his world forever.

### QUOICH RIVER TRIP PLANNER

#### ACCESS:

Scheduled commercial airlines to Baker Lake via Winnipeg-Churchill.

Access to the river is by charter aircraft from Baker Lake. 120 miles Baker Lake to headwaters. 160 miles: St Clair Falls to Baker Lake.

It is quite possible to paddle the 85 miles to Baker Lake from St Clair Falls. Pick up by boat at St Clair Falls can be arranged in Baker Lake.

#### DURATION:

Plan on 18 days to St Clair Falls.

#### MAPS:

1:250,000 Scale: 56-C,D,E,F,K,L. All 1:50,000 scale are available.

#### INFORMATION AND SUPPORT:

Equipment rentals: canoes, paddles, PFD's, spraycovers, radios

## Expeditions

Story and photos by DOUG McKOWN

The first evening, we sat huddled under our leaky tarp, trying to stay warm in the driving sleet, as the wind howled across the tundra. This was the start of the Arctic canoe trip across Nunavut Territory that we had been looking forward to for so long. The good news is, there were no bugs!

When I first suggested this canoe trip to my friends, no one had ever heard of the Quoich (*Koich*) River. This was not surprising since the Quoich is a very rarely traveled river, in an even more remote piece of wilderness. The Quoich River rises at the height of land in the centre of the northeast landmass of Nunavut Territory, about 150 miles northeast of Baker Lake. The river flows generally south, across the vast barrens of the Nunavut tundra, to empty

unloaded from the plane, I entered the waiting room where I was finally able to meet Boris Kotelowitz, our man in Baker Lake. In the past, one of the many difficulties with trying to organize a canoe trip in eastern Nunavut has been the lack of local logistical support. There have been no dependable sources of canoes and equipment, and there are no planes permanently based in Baker Lake. I was becoming quite frustrated in my attempts to plan this trip until I was put in touch with Boris Kotelowitz who has lived in Baker Lake for thirty years. He is the owner/operator of Baker Lake Lodge and co-operates Silas Lodge on Wager Bay. Recognizing a market for the logistical support of wilderness paddling trips, Boris has moved into the canoe outfitting business in a big way. With top-of-the-line canoes, paddles, PFD's and spraycovers, Boris can supply all your paddling needs right in Baker Lake. He also coordinated our air transportation and all his arrangements worked out exceptionally well



Heidi and Ilya run a Quoich set.

into Chesterfield Inlet.

One of the problems with choosing little known rivers for canoe trips, is that there is little information available about them. I was only able to locate one other group that had paddled this river. However, lack of information has never stopped us in the past, and on July 16 1999, the six of us loaded up all our gear in Calgary, and headed off to Baker Lake, in the new Nunavut Territory.

From the airplane, the settlement of Baker Lake appears as a tiny oasis of civilization almost lost in the endless expanse of tundra. We touched down on the small airstrip on a cool and blustery day. As our mountain of gear was

for us.

The town of Baker Lake, recognized as the geographical centre of Canada, is a community of about 1400 people. It is perched on the north shore of the west end of the enormous expanse of Baker Lake. The Inuit name for Baker Lake is "Qamanituag", which means, "very wide place in the river". The town itself is a relatively recent development. There was no permanent settlement in this area until the Hudson's Bay Company built a trading post on Big Hips Island at the east end of the Lake in 1916. In true capitalist spirit a second trading post was built by Revillon Freres at the west end of the Lake in 1924. To meet this competition, the Hudson's Bay Company relocated to the west end

## Expeditions

light to read by until about 11 p.m., followed by a few hours of twilight. We arose early on the first morning to cold, cloudy weather, but also with that wonderful paddling phenomenon, a tail wind. It is always a chancy prospect trying to paddle the headwaters of Arctic rivers. If your timing isn't quite right, you can find yourself walking, wading, and dragging for days. We were lucky to have relatively high water on the Quoich River this season. We had no trouble paddling right from the start. Here, the Quoich is a small stream, flowing between the endless, boulder covered ridges. We now began to learn the nature and characteristics of the Quoich. The initial two rapids we encountered that morning were small ledges. The first required a short carry around. The second one was a lift over followed by a tricky maneuver through a little chute. This is where we had our first adventure. My wife Donna and I, fol-

water level, almost all of the rapids were runnable.

At our first camp that evening, we were all eager to head out and experience the tundra. This became our daily ritual, before or after dinner, an exploratory hike across the tundra. After pitching our tents, Donna, myself and Ilya and Heidi, left Mike and Shelley to start supper and hiked up onto a small ridge behind our campsite. I looked along the shore and saw a large, brown form ambling into view. Grabbing my binoculars, I called out, "Look, a grizzly!". Except that it wasn't a bear at all, it turned out to be a mother muskox and her calf. The shaggy brown animals made their way along the river bank, grazing contentedly until they saw Mike and Shelley in our camp. We had a wonderful view of them, until they finally decided to gallop off, clattering away across the tundra. We were surprised to see muskoxen here as we were



Hiking the eskers along the Quoich

lowed Ilya and Heidi, negotiated successfully through. However, Mike and Shelley zigged when they should have zagged, and the excitement began. The canoe broached on a rock and swung around. Shelley made a quick exit out of the bow, getting only half wet. The current then pushed the hull down and as the canoe began to capsize, Mike made his exit out of the rear. The last I saw of him was two boots disappearing into the river. With a good deal of its load disgorged, the canoe righted itself and came through unscathed. It always amazes me how well canoes manage once you take the people out. A quick change of clothes for the paddlers, and we were on our way once again. Most of the rapids on the Quoich consisted of rock gardens and waves, with few ledges and steep drops. This was wonderful for canoeing, as with the high

just on the very eastern border of their range in this area of Nunavut.

We continued down the river with this wonderful tailwind and cool wet weather that we categorized as "driving drizzle". However, it never rained all day, and we soon learned to appreciate that the cold wind was protecting us from the most serious wildlife menace of the tundra, mosquitoes and black-flies! The moment the sun came out, or the wind dropped, the bugs would rise in an incredible mass, driving us to shelter behind our head nets.

One morning we were rounding a bend, looking for a lunch spot which would be a little bit sheltered from the wet wind. Just downstream we were delighted to see a beautiful white wolf making his way along the shore. As we approached, he headed off across the tundra and we watched him disappear

## Expeditions

in 1926, close to the mouth of the mighty Thelon River. It wasn't until the 1950's that the Inuit people began to live more or less permanently in the settlement. Today, while all the Inuit people live in the town, they still spend as much time as possible out on the land, hunting and fishing.

We spent our first night in the little public campsite, halfway between the airport and the settlement. Here, after being taxied all about town by Boris to purchase last minute items such as stove fuel and fishing licenses, we then carried out the final sorting and organization of our gear. Because Boris is new at the canoe outfitting business, we were still informationally challenged about the Quoich River. We had yet to decide which branch of the river we would paddle, and didn't even know if there would be a suitable landing site for the Twin Otter. After lunch, our Otter arrived, and Boris taxied us and our

last ice age. The eskers provide ridges of hard packed sand, and provide excellent landing sites for a Twin Otter. That is, if the esker is wide enough, flat enough, and straight enough. This one wasn't. We continued to fly upstream, with all of us following the maps, searching the esker for somewhere to put down. The weather, of course, had now deteriorated to driving, cold, rain. At least we called it rain, because we didn't want to believe that it might actually be sleet. I was trying to formulate a new plan, since I hadn't seen anywhere the looked remotely suitable for landing. I turned around to grab my other maps, leaned over to look out the window again, and all at once we were down. The pilot had managed to land on a piece of esker that I never would have believed possible. That's the joy of flying in a Twin Otter, especially with a very experienced pilot. After a quick unloading, we signaled to the pilot that he was



The boats are lined up at the portage.

pile of gear out to meet with the pilots. A Twin Otter aircraft is the most cost effective way to transport 6 paddlers 3 canoes, and all the gear. The problem is that, these days it is very difficult to find a Twin Otter on floats. They all have the fat, low pressure rubber tires and require suitable ground for landing. After examining the maps and discussing with the pilots the general area where hoped to start, we loaded up the plane and took off. It was about a one hour flight to the headwaters of the Quoich River. This flight over the tundra made us begin to appreciate the unbelievable expanse of these spectacular barren lands. We arrived over the upper reaches of the river and started flying upstream, following an esker alongside the river. These eskers are the ancient sandy beds of streams that once ran under the great continental glaciers of the

clear to take off. In an even more incredible demonstration, the plane rolled, bounced a couple of times, and leaped into the air in what seemed to be no distance at all.

It was a rather humbling feeling as we stood on the wind swept tundra, cold rain dripping off our hats, and watched the plane disappear into the low grey clouds. Hundreds of miles from the nearest human, in the centre of one of the most savage environments on the planet, our mountain of gear looked pitifully small, and the three red canoes insignificant and inadequate. However, camp was soon established and we eagerly looked forward to finally getting on the river in the morning.

This far north of course, there is very little darkness. There was plenty of

► *Continued on Page 11*

# Canoesworthy

## CANOESEWORTHY Continued from Page 3

**A**nd once again the very same Paul Landry received an award for bravery at the highest level from Nunavut Commissioner Peter Irniq. Landry of Iqaluit was nominated for an incident that occurred at the end of July 2001, when he was leading a trip in Auyittuq Park, outside of Pangnirtung.

The water was high, he said, and crossing the rivers was a challenge. The group set up camp near a glacier to wait for the water to recede. Landry was cooking breakfast at about 5 a.m. when he spotted members of another group attempting to cross the nearby river.

"I watched as one by one they were swept away," he said quietly. Three out of five members of the group were clustered together in the water several metres from shore in Glacier Lake, named for the glacier that keeps its waters frigid.

One person had not attempted to cross and one man, Michael Graves, was on his own in the lake about twice as far out as the others. Landry went to his own group and asked Peter Gladden, the strongest of the bunch, if he would help him attempt a rescue. Gladden, a U.S. citizen, agreed and he and Landry swam out to the cluster of three people and dragged them back to shore. Graves was not responding to shouts from the shore, so the two agreed to go back in on the condition that if either one felt they weren't going to make it, they would turn back.

"[Graves] was alive, but I didn't know it at the time," Landry said, describing how he and Gladden dragged his body to shore. "Both Peter

and I couldn't stand up. We had to crawl out of the water."

As the two moved their limbs to try to get warm, they saw bubbles forming at Graves' mouth. They knew then he was alive. With the help of members of both groups, park officials and his young Inuit assistant-in-training, Juta, Landry lead everyone to safety. Landry didn't speak of the incident publicly until this week because he said he didn't feel comfortable being praised for his actions.

In December, Landry will receive the Governor General's award for bravery in Ottawa.

**T**he Department of Fisheries and Oceans is offering \$50,000 toward a scientific hunt for beluga whales in James Bay. The money is in addition to the \$50,000 announced in June to help Nunavik hunters organize a hunt after their quotas were slashed.

DFO reduced harvest quotas to 15 whales per community to protect the dwindling beluga population. Biologists had warned that without cutting quotas, the animals would become extinct within 15 years.

Under the management plan, each of the 14 communities can harvest a maximum of 15 beluga from Hudson Strait and James Bay. Hunting is prohibited in Ungava Bay and the eastern part of Hudson Bay. Because the announcement came late in the season, DFO offered \$50,000 to Makivik Corporation to help the communities that needed to redirect their hunt. It was to be used for things such as gasoline and boat rentals.

## OUR BACK PAGES

**The following back issues of Che-Mun are available at \$5 each (which includes postage).**

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# Canoesworthy

## CRUISING THE QUOICH continued from Page 9

into the distance.

We were lucky to travel the Quoich this year at the perfect time for wildflowers. While the tundra may appear as a bleak and desolate landscape when viewed from an airplane, the ground itself was absolutely ablaze with a thick carpet of a great variety of brilliant wildflowers. Flowers were everywhere. Blossoming on every centimeter of the shallow soil, among fields of boulders, and clinging to the smallest cracks in the rock, the flowers showed tremendous adaptability in surviving in this incredibly harsh environment. The bright white clusters of Labrador Tea, with the sunny yellow arctic poppies, and the gaudy fuschia of the river beauty, were just a few of the multitude of flowers carpeting the tundra. While enjoying the waving cotton grass, and the beautiful pinks of the lousewort and bog rosemary, we were very surprised to come across large mushroom fungi nestled in the grasses. I just never expected to find these types of toadstools in this cold and dry climate.

However, we were able to find one or two of these fungi at just about every campsite. While the river became bigger and bigger as we traveled further downstream, the rapids remained runnable. Like most remote rivers, we found there were many more rapids on the river than were indicated on our maps. There is one large and beautiful waterfall not far downstream from the confluence with the middle branch of the Quoich. I don't think we were able to fully appreciate the grandeur of this spot as we arrived at this waterfall just after huddling through a wet lunch on a day of cold, driving drizzle. The canyon below the waterfall was wild and deep. While it could have been run, due to the water level and weather conditions, we chose the half-mile portage. There is nothing like a good portage across the tundra to warm everyone up.

Most of the wildlife we encountered in the upper reaches of the Quoich was in the form of birds. Geese were everywhere. The Canada and Snow geese were molting and unable to fly. Whenever they saw us, the large flocks would scamper up on shore and run away as fast as they could. This was the most common wildlife sighting we had, long necks, and wagging tails, waddling and disappearing among the rocks. We saw numerous Sandhill Cranes. Alerted by their strange warbling gobble, we would usually find them in pairs, poking about the marshes or gracefully flying overhead.

There was no sign of human use in these upper reaches of the river. While we were in the process of discovering the "untouched" wilderness, we knew that native people had been using this land for thousands of years. There are no permanent Inuit settlements anywhere in the interior of Nunavut. These are not called the Barrenlands for no reason. The native people were forced to be nomadic, following the food sources as they changed with the seasons. As we proceeded down the Quoich, however, the river valley became more pronounced, with larger areas of bright green tundra. We began to find signs of increasing human use. On the ridges we could see numerous ancient tent rings of stone, and piles of rocks that were probably food caches. As interesting as these archaeological sites were, we had to pay close attention to the river as well. The rapids were becoming more continuous, with large breaking, frothy waves, and powerful currents. Concentration was imperative, as a single mistake could have resulted in a long and dangerous swim. However, with careful scouting we were usually able to paddle along the edges of the river, right past most of these big rapids. With only a couple of short portages, and a

little dexterous lining, we were able to stay in our canoes for the entire trip.

The confluence of the west branch of the Quoich River and the east branch (Lunan River), is a very high energy place. At the end of a long, major set of rapids, two big ledges empty into a huge cauldron lake. There are rapids from the east branch also, with the two currents meeting in a great swirling mass of boils and eddies.

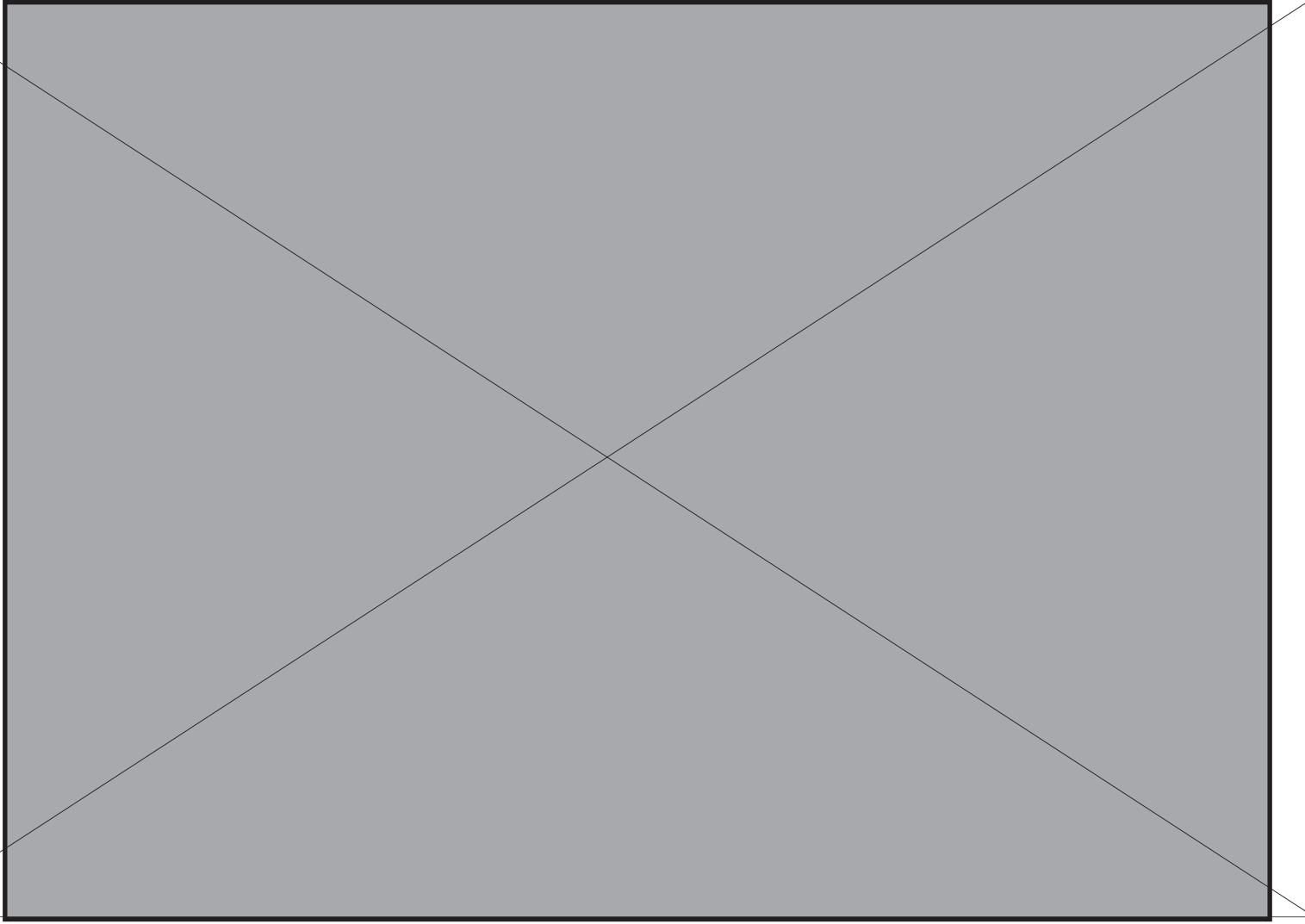
We now began to see several *inuksuit* (plural of inukshuk) on just about every ridge and prominent point along the river. We stopped to explore a number of these interesting sites. These *inuksuit* are standing stones or rock cairns, some single, some in piles or structures resembling a human figure. The *inuksuit* are thought to have many purposes. Some mark inland traveling routes that lead to the sea, while some indicate fishing areas. Others point out the location of food caches, and may also have been used to assist in driving caribou.

In the lower reaches of the river, wildlife became more abundant. We saw a number of arctic hares. These little animals are perfectly camouflaged with grey upper fur, and are virtually impossible to see as they sit motionless among the rocks. With their white boots and underparts however, they are a delight to watch as the hop away across the tundra. In the upper sections of the river we had seen plenty of sign of caribou, hair and antlers, and narrow trails crisscrossing the tundra. However, we had only seen about a half dozen individuals scattered along the course of the river. About four days before the end of the trip, we woke up to find ourselves pretty much surrounded by caribou. They were all along the ridges behind our camp, and on the far side of the river as far as the eye could see. We would share the tundra with these beautiful animals until the last moments of the trip.

Too soon we heard the muted roar of the approach of St Clair Falls, the end of our trip on the Quoich River. Below the canyon and cascades of the falls, the river widens, and becomes part of the tidal flow of Chesterfield Inlet.

The site of St Clair Falls, has long been an important area for the Inuit people. The 600 yard portage around the falls passes endless standing stones, and many stone rings, large and small. There are numerous food caches, as well as many burial cairns, with the small domes of rocks covering the lonely remains. This area is known as "kiguit" in Inuktitut, which means "the place of starvation". None of the locals could tell us how this name came to be, but it must refer to some very significant event in the past. It was suggested that this name might refer to the deadly years of the late 1940's when there was widespread starvation due to decreases in the caribou herds.

We had planned to fly out of St Clair Falls, passing up on the paddle back to Baker Lake, to maximize our time on the river. It is about 85 miles to Baker Lake from the falls. While this can be paddled, given good weather conditions, you can also arrange to be picked up by boat. However, having arranged for the Twin Otter to come in and get us, it was now up to us to find a place for him to land. While there are a number of good landing sites at St Clair Falls, they are all on the top of the hills and ridges alongside the valley. We chose a large flat hilltop about 3 km downstream of the falls, at the upstream end of the first large bay. We had to carry everything about a half a kilometer in, and 70 metres up, to the top of the hill. While a little intimidating to look at, the carry wasn't too bad, and two hours saw all our gear safely perched on the top of the ridge.



*photo: Michael Peake*

The 17th annual Maine Canoe Symposium last June was made doubly special by the appearance of John Ruge and Jim Davidson of Great Heart fame. The writerly pair, who also wrote the classic Complete Wilderness Paddler, are a great source of inspiration to many paddlers, including the members of the Hide-Away Canoe Club. They were photographed before giving their evening slide talk on the Hubbard and Wallace saga from almost a century ago in Labrador. It was also interesting to hear something of the story that has evolved about the attempts to make a movie of Great Heart - a most worthy subject. But it seems the travails of Hollywood have stopped it from getting done - so far.

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