

CHE-MUN

(Ojibway for canoe)

THE JOURNAL OF CANADIAN WILDERNESS CANOEING

OUTFIT 99

CHE-MUN

WINTER 2000



photo: Michael Peake

BENT INTO SHAPE -- Of all the thousands of miles of paddling, this shot of a great paddler, Geoffrey Peake, making his Lolk cherry paddle in 1982, remains one of our favourites. It's one great memory of many you'll find inside Outfit 99.

*The Che-Mun LastList:
A Canoeing Century
Summed Up* *Pages 5-8*

*1955: Two key northern
canoe trips that helped
define a century* *Page 4*

Winter Packet



George Reif, a subscriber from Bowler, Wisconsin sent along this letter in response to Outfit 97's.

"Yes, Mr. Peake, you are right about the people in the U.S. of A. They are, in general, ignorant of Canada and its people. I myself hold Canada with the same mysterious 'up north' veneration. I am elated that I have found *Che-Mun*. God keep you.

"You are also right about Grey Owl. I have a list of people I hold dear. First is Jesus Christ, the comes Gandhi and Henry David Thoreau, then Grey Owl and so on.

"I love three quotes of Grey Owl.

One. 'You are tired with years of civilization. I come to offer you— What? A single green leaf.'

Two. 'An Indian, an animal and a mountain move as to some rhythm of music. All the works of the creator are cast from the one mold, but on some the imprint of his finger is more manifest.

'My writing even had sprung from these things.

They ran all through it and I sorrowed no more. The tree falls and nourishes another. From death springs life; it is the law. And these writings that were no longer mine, but which I now saw only as recorded echoes and creations of my own, and captured in their poor way the essentials of what had eluded me so long.'

Three. 'Representatives of various sects addressed to me a voluminous correspondence, each suggesting that I adopt his particular faith. These communications left me in something of a quandary, as the only way in which I could have accommodated them all was to have divided myself up amongst them; and as each was so sure he was the only one that was on the right trail, it was all a little bewildering.

'It perhaps did not occur to these good people that I might have a creed on my own that made for honesty of purpose, perseverance and the love of my fellow man, as much as any one of theirs

did. Some of these condemned me for my love of animals, telling me to look to my own soul. I do not venture to drive a bargain with God and feel that if I do the right thing by my fellows, human and animal, my soul will be adequately cared for. I think that God must sometimes feel sorrowful and perhaps a little hurt to find himself so misunderstood that countless numbers of good people, whilst scrambling fervently to provide themselves with safe conduct to the Hereafter, look with a kind of self-complacent disdain on the rest of his works, that they, not God have pronounced to be soulless and even look with distaste, if not with utter hostility, on any form of worship which differs from their own which they, not God, have devised.'

"I am in my 60s now and it is only in your words and my minds-eye-view that I canoe our Canada. I have read George Douglas' *Lands Forlorn*. I would like to read *The Land of Feast and*

Nunavut Newslines *continued from page 3*

It may be getting too warm for our polar bears. An article in the Sept. 99 edition of the scientific journal *Arctic* said that since the early 80s, there has been a significant decline in the condition of adult polar bears.

They found that earlier ice breakup, where they hunt on the bay, meant bears returned to the land lighter and in worse shape. The success of the spring hunt seems to determine the success of female polar bears in surviving, reproducing and nursing.

One factor in this change may be the increased fresh water run-off due to hydroelectric development on the Quebec coast. Rising spring air temperatures over the past 40 years are also thought to cause ice breakup at progressively earlier dates. An increase in temperature of only one full degree can result in ice breaking up one week earlier along the western Hudson Bay, and two weeks earlier in eastern Hudson Bay.

Devon Island, in the Arctic Archipelago, is bleak; just rocks, frozen rubble, canyons, dry stream beds and steep ledges, but for space researchers, the scenery is nearly perfect because it reminds them of Mars.

NASA scientists learned there's an ancient meteorite crater on Devon Island, the Haughton Crater, that's remarkably similar to those found on Mars. Since 1997, the NASA-led Mars project has done three trips to the crater. They said their study may tell more about how a planet can withstand such a major collision with an asteroid or meteorite. It resembles Mars at its warmest and provides an idea of what kind of climate and conditions existed on Mars. Increasingly, they're looking at this crater as a test site for the future exploration of Mars by robots and humans.

The RCMP plans to re-create an historic voyage through the Northwest Passage. Next year, a small three-man RCMP patrol vessel called the *Nadon* will re-create the famous two year journey of the *St. Roch* through the Northwest Passage in 1940-42.

The *St. Roch* was the first ship to successfully navigate the Northwest passage in both directions and the first ship to circumnavigate North America. It served in the Arctic from 1928-1944, enforcing Canadian game laws, preventing incursions by American, Russian and Scandinavian hunters and whalers



Editor's Notebook

Well, it's almost here. It was quite strange to type in 2000 on top of our Page One layout. We still have no idea what people will call this successor to the 70s, 80s and 90s – the 0-ees? I am sure it will all be sorted out for us. The flip side of all this forward thinking is just how quickly the 20th century will become the gilded past.

In a few years, I fully expect to be telling my son Tom, now almost four, about the good old days of paddling back when the years started with the number 1; when there was no highway into Nunavut; when you could always drink the water right out of the river. A century's end is a time for taking stock. This time it's the ultimate year end and one can't help reminisce. That's kind of what we've done in these pages. Our *LastList* pronounces many a good and a few not-so-good canoeing things beginning on Page 5. The more I think about all the millennium stuff the more arbitrary it seems. Like the borders on a map, what do they really mean? Just imposed rules and lines. Still, a party's a party.

We are also about to celebrate a *Che-Mun* milestone as well. Our 100th Outfit is one issue away which is one of the reasons we have ol' 99 out to you before year's end. It's nice to start a century with a nice round number. As always, we welcome, and value, your input and submissions.

We also have a new web address thanks to our friends at CANOE. They have recently overhauled their canoeing and outdoor section and you can find *Che-Mun* and the Hide-Away Canoe Club at www.canoe.ca/che-mun - now that's easy. How will you spend the last evening of the century? Well, barring the fact that our favourite campsites and waterways are too chilly we will join the majority of people who now appear to want to stay at home with family and friends. It would be a great occasion to have a old fashioned canoeing slide show extravaganza, since digital technology will certainly eclipse the slide projector in the upcoming years. Though I hope any new device should include a recording of a buzzing fan and special effects which include a slide sticking in the tray. I don't think I could watch canoeing pictures without them.

Happy New Year and Merry Millennium to all you wonderful subscribers—and great paddling in the 21st century!

Michael Peake, Editor.

Nunavut & Nunavik Newsline

and performing census duties and personnel transfers. It's first journey through the Northwest Passage took 27 months. The new one is thought to take 87 days.

The mission was to help secure bauxite and cryolite mines in western Greenland. Cryolite and bauxite were crucial to war-time aluminum production. The *St. Roch* was to surreptitiously slip through the Northwest Passage, meet the military on the north coast of Labrador and proceed to Greenland secure the mines. It never completed the mission. Instead, the RCMP officers on board the *St. Roch* performed other duties. They became part of the north, carrying dog teams on board and making thousand-mile sled patrols. They learned the language, they learned the people, they learned their ways, and they had a tremendous amount of respect for the Inuit living there.

The Hamlet of Kugluktuk (*nee* Coppermine) has been forced to drill a water hole at the mouth of the Coppermine River because a water line that linked the municipality's water plant with a location further up the river has frozen up.

Local Nunavut public works officials would not comment on why the pipeline, which has been serving the community for the past 31 years, has frozen. The line appeared to be frozen along its entire 1500 yard length and may not get fixed until February. The hamlet is looking at using a temporary shelter to cover the newly-drilled hole. The water is perfectly safe to drink, but does have some sand in it.

Closer ties between the World Wildlife Fund (WWF) and the Qikiqtaaluk Wildlife Board (QWB) will help both groups tear down stereotypes, say leaders from both groups. The WWF can help Inuit hunters re-build their image in Canada and give them access to research on the wildlife they depend on, says the executive director of the QWB, Joanassie Akumalik.

The anti-sealing campaign in the south hurt the economy and social life of Inuit in the North, Akumilik said. He said the QWB was at first very hesitant about having a relationship with the WWF, but a visit from WWF President Monte Hummel changed the minds of QWB board members. "We've had a perennial problem in the North," says Hummel. "They hear you're in Toronto or they hear you're connected to an international network and right away they think seal hunt, trapping, these guys are bad

➔ *Continued on Page 2*

1955

1955: A Tale of Two Trips

By MICHAEL PEAKE
Che-Mun Editor

It was the best of trips, it was the worst of trips. With apologies to Charles Dickens, it can be said that 1955 produced two northern canoe expeditions that defined a century.

A northern trip in that era was a relatively rare thing. But two groups of six men ventured north that summer on a pair of completely different trips which had repercussions still felt today. Both had books and stories written about them and here, almost a half century later at the dawn of a new millennium, it is worth another look at both.

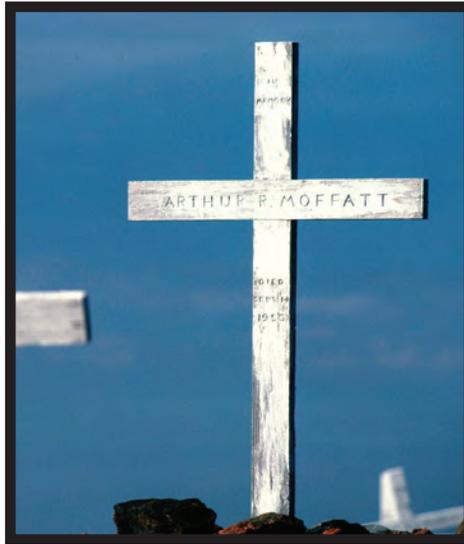
In one group was Arthur Moffatt and his crew of young men who set out to paddle the Dubawnt River in its entirety over the course of the summer. The second was the group known as *The Voyageurs* who paddled a section of the fur trade route on the Churchill and Sturgeon-Weir rivers.

The two groups could scarcely have been more disparate. American Moffatt, 36, a relatively experienced outdoorsman took along a group of young men, most barely out of their teens. They were his minions. He was the Leader of the trip down the fact he even had a much larger eating bowl than everyone else. He called the shots, decided the route, menu and travel schedule.

The Voyageurs also had a leader. Sigurd Olson, 55, was a well-known U.S. writer and advocate for wilderness but he was also a highly experienced woodsman. His fellow paddlers, all in or nearing their fifties, were likewise highly successful men in their own fields. Many were experienced canoeists. They respected Olson as their "Bourgeois" but the honour of that position also meant decisions were achieved by consensus, not fiat.

Olson wrote about the group's progress down the Churchill in his classic book, *The Lonely Land*. It was some time before a book by one of the Moffatt team appeared. George Grinnell penned *A Death on the Barrens* in 1996. Like the trips, the two books are poles apart. Olson's

carefully crafted prose is crisp, clean and evocative of the northern canoeing experience of the time. It speaks of friendship, purity and a love of the land.



Grinnell's polemic, begins on the beauty of the Barrens but descends into a tortured and cynical view of the world.

Of course, the Moffatt trip is now best remembered for the death of its leader. Arthur Moffatt drowned on September 14 on a rapid they had no business running that late in the year. He is buried in Baker Lake.



Art Moffatt's grave in Baker Lake (above) and *The Voyageurs* at the end of the Churchill trip; l-r Rodger, Lovink, Olson, Morse, Solandt, Coolican.

trip schedule seemed non-existent. The weeks had flown by during the brief Arctic summer as they dawdled across the landscape.

The Voyageurs, although 30 years older on average, completed a 500 mile trip from Ile-a-la-Crosse on the Churchill to Cumberland House on the Saskatchewan River in 21 days. Despite near flood conditions, they had no mishaps, no accidents, no unplanned adventures.

For many of us, *The Voyageurs* were, and remain, a shining example of how a wilderness trip should be conducted—properly planned, perfectly executed with an awareness of the history and natural beauty of the area. Moffatt's crew, were no doubt spellbound by the Barrens, but perhaps their leader found it too intoxicating.

Sig Olson and his *Voyageurs*; Eric Morse, Tony Lovink, Omond Solandt, Blair Fraser, Elliott Rodger, Denis Coolican and Tyler Thompson were a vital lynch pin of history. They linked the sensibilities of the 19th century with the century they paddled in. They were born into an time that considered wilderness an enemy, something to be tamed and mastered. They helped foster our latter 20th century appreciation for the wilderness and to advocate its protection. From their sensibilities came Bill Mason and many others. But it was, and had to be, *The Voyageurs* who helped forge that vital link.

Sig's son Robert Olson, responding to a dedication of a plaque to his late father from *The Voyageurs*, said it best, "But, above all I think, you were *Voyageurs* of comradeship and camaraderie.

You knew again what it meant to be men, to work and play, to strive together, to share the burdens and the laughter of the trail. And you forged in those days bonds that go beyond friendship and memories which can never fade. . . . When in future days we might wander down to this spot and see this plaque now firmly and forever set in the living rock, we shall think of those things. . . . of the *Voyageurs* and their exploits now passing into legend, but especially of their spirit which lives on and which has already enriched immeasurably the lives of us all."

The Listing: Canoe

We cannot resist the Millennium Lists that abound in these final few days of the century. We now present Che-Mun's version—the Hide-Away Canoe Club's LastList on 27 canoeing related topics—one for each year of Che-Mun. The usual caveat is due. This is by no means a scientific or exhaustive study. The categories are solely the opinion of the humble editor of Che-Mun and some others. Many of the selections are highly personal and refer to only HACC trips. We welcome your suggestions for list and topic additions. Send some in and we will publish them in *Outfit 100* which starts the Millennium off in style next spring.

12. Luste's Book List pre-1960

1. P. G. Downes—*Sleeping Island* ✓
2. Elliott Merrick—*True North* ✓
3. Eric Severaid—*Canoeing with the Cree*. ✓

13. Luste's Book List - Historical

1. David Thompson—*Narrative of his Explorations in Western America 1784 - 1812* *
2. Knud Rasmussen—*Across Arctic America* ✓
3. David Hanbury—*Sport and Travel in the Northland of Canada* *

*now out of print ✓- reprint edition is available at Northern Books - www.members.tripod.com/northernbooks or call 416.531.8873

14. Most Overrated Canoeing Accessory

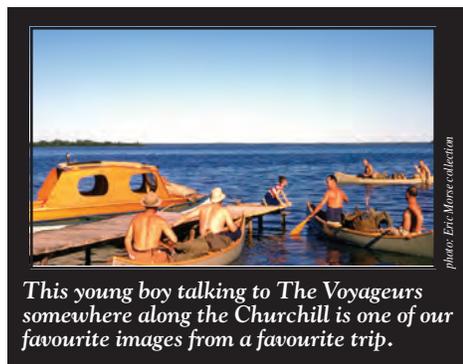
GPS - If you need one of these on a river you need more help than a satellite can give.

15. Most Underrated Canoe Accessory

Coleman oven. Fresh bread and cinnamon rolls a must-have! (When we remember to take it!)

16. Canoeing's great characters.

Mina Hubbard and Dillon Wallace. Imagine writ-



This young boy talking to *The Voyageurs* somewhere along the Churchill is one of our favourite images from a favourite trip.

ing a book about your canoe race to Ungava Bay and not mentioning your rival was camping nearby.

Don Starkell and Victoria Jason. The most discordant paddling pair since the above tandem.

17. Canoeing Heroes

The Voyageurs. Enough said.

Bill Mason. Ten years on, Mason's legend is still strong, a stamp in his honour, a great legacy of books and films and two kids still out there doing it, will ensure that for some time to come.

Eric Morse. Though part of *The Voyageurs*, Eric also broke his own ground with landmark northern trips while in his sixties. His legacy, inter-

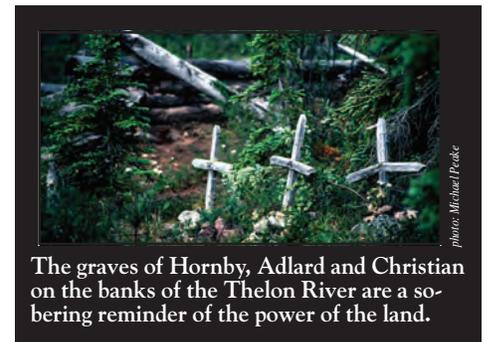
twined with his comrades, lives to begin a new century.

18. Most Meaningful Canoeing Spots

Hornby's cabin—Thelon River. To read Edgar Christian's journal of their demise while sitting beside the cabin is one of the most moving moments of northern paddling.

Bloody Falls—Coppermine River. Whether or not the July 1771 massacre that Samuel Hearne described happened as he said, this is still a special spot. Was actually named by Franklin who passed by 50 years later - to the day.

Morse Cairn—Hanbury River. Though just a pile of rocks at Helen Falls, this cairn made famous by Eric Morse, has been a historic sign-in for



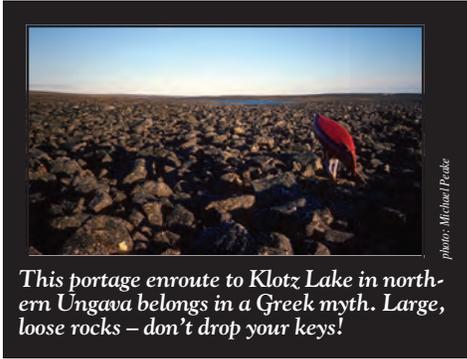
The graves of Hornby, Adlard and Christian on the banks of the Thelon River are a sobering reminder of the power of the land.

Last List

Barrenland travellers.

19. Most scenic spots (besides Virginia and Wilberforce Falls)

Dickson Canyon on the Hanbury.



This portage enroute to Klotz Lake in northern Ungava belongs in a Greek myth. Large, loose rocks – don't drop your keys!

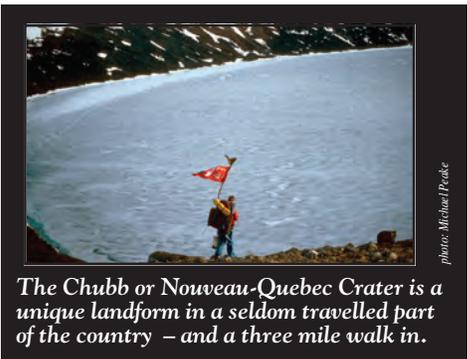
Conjuring House Falls on the Missinaibi River. Junction of the Kendall and Coppermine rivers.

21. Scariest rapids that you might run - or foolishly did.

Rocky Defile on the Coppermine. Several paddlers have died on this run. Keep hard right - it's tougher than it sounds. The scout from the high left side is quite a dramatic sight.

Thelon Canyon. Keeping hard left is easy until you come to the end of the cliff face. Then start dancing.

22. Scariest falls that you imagined running – or almost did



The Chubb or Nouveau-Quebec Crater is a unique landform in a seldom travelled part of the country – and a three mile walk in.

1. *Conjuring House Falls, Missinaibi River. We saw it in the first week of June and it was cookin'.* It's easy to tell how high the water level is, Conjuring House serves as a handy yardstick.
2. Grade V unnamed crusher on the lower

Povungnituk where our eddy-in 6 feet from the brink almost dumped us into it. We later found several dead caribou near the bottom of our portage.

23. Most Memorable Maelstrom

Aug 8, 1988. This one's easy. Shortly after confirming we were indeed on Flaherty's Povungnituk River as we had intended to prove, our headwind disappeared and the start of the biggest storm we'd ever seen began. Heavy winds all night and switching around until hitting 70+ mph in the early morning. Hiding our shredded tents under the canoes which were held down by rocks was a highlight. And that mystical date– 8-8-8-8.

24. Most sworn-at rivers

The Hepburn, a shallow, slippery-rock-strewn mother flowing into the upper Coppermine. It looks inviting to passing Coppermine paddlers. A few miles up, it isn't so pleasant.

Sandy Creek. Flowing into the Dease above Great Bear Lake, this historic connecting route, named by Hanbury after a trip companion, was shallow and sandy which meant many miles of heavy dragging.

25. Worst wipeouts

1981. House Rapids on Rupert. Last rapid, three miles from Waskaganish (Rupert House): a shallow, rocky and seat-breaking experience. After cleaning up I accidentally left my waterproof camera there which I had to retrieve in the cold rain the next day from the comfort of my tent in Rupert House. (Much to the amusement of certain other individuals).

1989. Also a Last Rapid, this time on the Churchill River a few miles before the historic Frog Portage into the Sturgeon-Weir River. This was where my partner Peter Scott had dumped with his father, Angus, a decade previously. As we lined up for the ledge, which was capped by a large foaming white wave, Peter said, "We have a 90% chance of dumping" He was right.

26. Dumbest Moments

Too many to mention but how about way back in 1982. While doing a portage to save a lot of lake paddling at the very start of the Rupert River in central Quebec. We had just put in from Baie-de-Poste on Lake Mistassini and had some last min-

ute grocery items still loose - as we were not expecting to portage that day. Michael Peake was holding the paper sack of groceries when a Cree local who was walking the other way took aside one of our paddlers and asked where we were

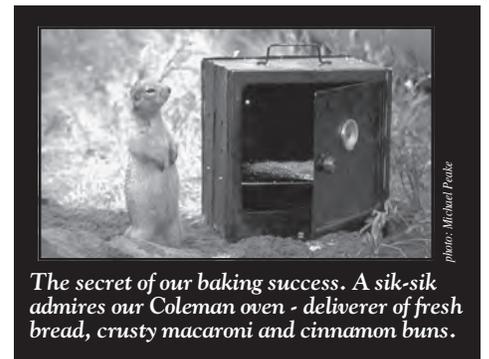


Carrying the groceries along a portage trail on the Rupert River system doesn't inspire natives as to your river experience.

going. When he heard it was the town of Rupert House some 400 miles away, he looked towards Michael and said quietly, "You guys ever done this before?"

27. Worst Planning for a Trip.

1. 1995. A key article of research was lacking for a crucial part of the Hide-Away Canoe Club's 50 day *Arctic Land Expedition* which began at Camsell Portage on Lake Athabasca and headed north to Tazin Lake. The Tazin River drains Tazin Lake except for the fact there is - and has been for several years - a large concrete dam blocking all drainage from that lake. The river was four inches deep which included three inches of algae.



The secret of our baking success. A sik-sik admires our Coleman oven - deliverer of fresh bread, crusty macaroni and cinnamon buns.

2. Measuring the mileage for our 1986 *Across Ungava* trip via the Leaf River with our mileage string and finding out during the trip it was the wrong string which added 50 miles to our already time-pressed sked! We ended up having to do the

Last List

1. The Great Trips - post 1950

1955 - *The Voyageurs* on the Churchill River. The greatest trip of a great group. Immortalized in Sig Olson's 1961 classic *The Lonely Land*.

1962 - John Lentz and party become the first modern group down the Back River. Beating out a misfit group of British military types in kayaks (see *Beacon Six*).

1985 - *Journey Across the Barrenlands* by the Hide-Away Canoe Club. The official naming of a river for Eric Morse as part of a 55-day, 1000 mile trip from the 60th parallel to the mouth of the Back River also via the Thelon, Dubawnt — and the Morse rivers.

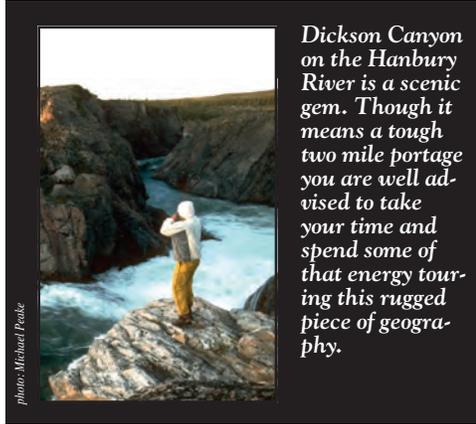
2. The Great Trips - pre 1950

1893 - The Tyrrell brothers, from Edmonton down Athabasca to Black Lake up to the Dubawnt and down to Chesterfield Inlet and down Hudson Bay to Churchill. A classic northern Canadian tale of adventure.

1902 - David Hanbury in his second year of travel. By sled and canoe: he left Baker Lake up the Thelon, overland to Consul River down to Back to Pelly Lake over land to Armark River to Ocean along to Coppermine which he ascended to Kendall River and up to Dismal Lakes and down to

pine to Dawson City. (See *Son of the North*.)

1911-2 - George Douglas' *Lands Forlorn* journey from Edmonton, down the Athabasca and Mackenzie (via steamer), up Great Bear River and



Dickson Canyon on the Hanbury River is a scenic gem. Though it means a tough two mile portage you are well advised to take your time and spend some of that energy touring this rugged piece of geography.

across Great Bear Lake, up Dease River to the Dismal Lakes and down Kendall and Coppermine rivers to Arctic Ocean—and back—plus overwintering on the Dease River.

3. The Tragic Trips

1926-7 - Hornby, Adlard and Christian on the Thelon. All three died after overwintering and missing the caribou migration. Christian's diary was the basis for this legendary and tragic trip and the book *Unflinching: Death on the Barrenlands*.

1955 - The Moffat Dubawnt River trip. Arthur Moffat, a seasoned traveller, took a group of young men on a slow and undisciplined trip down the Dubawnt. Their lack of schedule meant they took risks to catchup on time and Moffat died of exposure after they dumped in a large rapid they did not scout. He is buried in Baker Lake.

1990-92 - Don Starkell's Arctic venture - dumped in Hudson Bay north of Churchill while soloing. He was lucky to survive and tried again the next two years, this time with partners who eventually left. He almost died of exposure at the end of the final year but was rescued at the last moment.

4. The best rivers

1. *Coppermine*. History, rapids, scenery, remoteness - it has it all,
2. *George*. Big, clear water, lots of rapids, the great Hubbard connection.
3. *Rupert*. Brawling, high-volume and a travel

route for generations. But remember to bring your sunglasses, it runs due west.

5. The Toughest Portages

1. *Grand Portage* - The great jump to the pays d'en haut, a must for any historically-minded paddler. A protected trail and very scenic. Fairly flat a couple of wet and hill sports with a bit of mud but loooong!(nine miles) We first did it a day after a six inch snowfall which certainly added to the degree of difficulty.

2. *Boulder Portage* in between Lake Nantais and Klotz Lake in the upper Ungava peninsula in northern Quebec. Not really meant to be a portage but we were heading our way to meet Robert Flaherty's route and had to get by this killer.

3. *Methye Portage*. Though we haven't done it, this crucial and historic 12-mile link between the Churchill and Clearwater systems is on our to-do list.

6. The best campsites

1. *Conjuring House*. Tenting with a view—on top of a 100-foot sheer cliff above the boiling Conjuring House Falls on the Missinaibi. And it's only two steps to water!

2. *Chubb Crater*. Camping in the eastern notch of



8•8•88. The scariest storm we've ever seen. 18 hours of nylon-shredding wind. Geoff Peake grabs some canoe holders.

this 2-mile-wide natural phenomenon in northern Quebec affords a view unlike anywhere else in the world.

3. *Helen Falls*. Camped on the rock shelf of this fall on the Hanbury River thanks to the low water, and reading the notes in our tents from the Eric Morse cairn, located just above us, was a treat.

7. Top Wilderness Trippers

George Luste. An understated man but tougher than he would have you believe, Luste has gone



Last rapid on the Churchill. Michael Peake is still holding onto his paddle as the canoe disappears into a large, white hole.

Great Bear to Ft. Norman and then Edmonton.

1905 - the pair of George River trips by Mina Hubbard and Dillon Wallace. Wallace's trip was especially brutal; dumping in the ice-cold George in late September and arriving at freeze-up to meet his nemesis, who had beaten him with the help of guide extraordinaire George Elson.

1905 - Charles Camsell for the Geological Survey of Canada. Down the Yukon's Stewart and Beaver rivers, overland to down Wind and Peel rivers to Mackenzie, up the Rat down the Bell and Porcu-

Last List

from paddling with big groups to small groups to solo. His blend of experience, reverence and knowledge is second to none.

Bob Davis. Though little heard from now, in the 1970s, Davis cut a swath as a strong, rugged and capable paddler, especially in harsh Ungava. *Stew Coffin, John Lentz, Cliff Jacobson, Jim Abel, Dick Irwin, Aki Nishimura,* just to name a few.

8. Best Canoeing Books New (1960+)

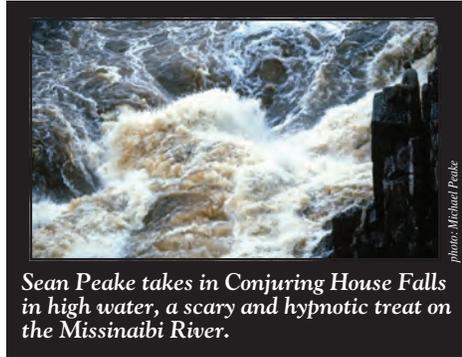
The Lonely Land by Sig Olson, 1961.

Fur Trade Canoe Routes of Canada/Then and Now by Eric Morse 1969.

Path of the Paddle by Bill Mason, 1980.

Canoeing Wild Rivers by Cliff Jacobson, 1984.

Great Heart by John Ruge and James Davidson, 1988.



Sean Peake takes in Conjuring House Falls in high water, a scary and hypnotic treat on the Missinaibi River.

Canoeing North into the Unknown. Edited by Gwyneth Hoyle & Bruce Hodgins, 1996.

9. Best Canoeing Books pre-1960

Lands Forlorn by George Douglas, 1914.

Across the Sub-Arctics of Canada, J. W. Tyrrell, 1897.

Son of the North by Charles Camsell, 1954.

10. Best Historic Journals

1. Samuel Hearne's *A Journey from Fort Prince of Wales in Hudson's Bay to the Northern Ocean in the years 1769, 1770, 1771 and 1772.*

2. Alex Mackenzie's, *Voyages from Montreal on the river St. Lawrence, through the continent of North America to the Frozen and Pacific Oceans, in the years 1789 and 1793.*

3. George Back's *Narrative of the Arctic Land Expedition to the Mouth of the Great Fish River.*

11. George Luste's Book List - 1960+

1. George Grinnell—*A Death on the Barrens* *

2. Peter Browning—*The Last Wilderness* *

3. Eric Morse—*Freshwater Saga* ✓

HACC - Highlights of the Lowlights



The Bathing Uglies

Water Nymphs on the Missinaibi, Sean Peake shows his good side to the camera.

Noble fads that failed



Sean Peake demonstrates his famed frontpacking technique during a 1976 trip through Quetico Provincial Park. Though very popular on the trip (at least to Sean) it failed to ignite the paddling world's imagination or even warm it.



It's worth two in the bush

Geoff Peake plays birdfeeder for our favourite northern flyer the Whiskeyjack – in the Boundary Waters.



A what on the Food List?

Ruggles, former cat of HACC's Governor, still appears on every trip food list as: Ruggles - 1 (and only).



Come Fly with Me

The Peake brothers demonstrate why we have trouble finding people to camp with us.



The Glorious Twelfth

Sean Peake with the HACC style with the hors d'oeuvres tray in the Macdougall Pass.

Greybeards on the Harricana

By JOHN LENTZ

Call this trip “return of the greybeards.” Our six-man party had over 150 years of cumulative wilderness canoe tripping experience. But with half of us past 60 and the rest not far behind, our plan to tackle the turbulent Harricana River would make for a challenging summer.

The Harricana flows almost due north through east-central Quebec, crossing the Ontario border just before spilling into the very bottom of James Bay. Early western exploration was by a Geological Survey of Canada expedition in 1914, although the river had been a traditional Indian route to and from the Bay for centuries.

We put our two 18-foot Old Town Voyageurs and a relatively high tech 16-foot Mad River Explorer all decked, in off a highway at a former gold mining site called Joutel. We intended to paddle 150 miles to tidewater near James Bay, dropping a healthy 950 feet in the process. At first, the Harricana gave us some good news/bad news. It had lots of water, dispelling my local drought-induced fears but the dense brown stuff was undrinkable. Farm and mine pollution had damaged the Harricana to the extent where I could not see the end of my paddle and potable water had to be taken from tributaries unless one wanted to risk the beaver’s revenge.

For most of the first two days it was a bit of a drag as we pressed ahead on the dead flat river against a north wind. An unvarying spruce-aspens forest scrolled by, punctuated with small moose hunting shacks. Then the Harricana dropped off the table - flat water would be a relief from now on. As we approached our first rapid, it gave out a deep throaty roar—a sign of a hazardous, unrunnable cataract, I was unceremoniously reintroduced to portaging, a phase of wilderness tripping that I hadn’t experienced since 1983 on the Hood River. The two trips I did with packs went well enough, despite general decrepitude and shortness of breath resulting from heart repair surgery in 1992. My paddling partner Bob Schaefer, a survivor of many trips to Canada and the old Soviet Union, and I offered everlasting thanks to John Williams, an experienced Canadian tripper, who cheerfully carried our boat as well as his own.

Age, however, seemed to hone some of our

skills at finding sneak routes past the rapids that now came in quick succession.

On some trips a week of whitewater can blend in one’s memory. Not so on the Harricana as it split first around One Mile Island then the climactic Seven Mile Island. It started well enough with a short carry around the climax of what I call a nose rapid for the proboscis-shaped rock formation in river centre. A hundred yards downstream the river narrowed, accelerating between some garage-sized boulders. The portage “trail” was one of the most arduous any of us could recall—and that took a lot of recalling. After threading our way along the bank



amongst the rock jumble, we were lured by a bit of orange surveyor’s tape on a bushwhack up a steep hill and down again in calmer water. After pack carriers mangled the loose, mossy groundcover (with unprintable exclamations renting the air) the route was pronounced unrunnable with canoes which were manhandled up and over the shoreside boulders.

It was almost 7 p.m. when we stopped opposite the portage end on a sandy beach campsite. Time to get payback for toting those heavy packs. First came the memorably welcome beer which the two Canadian sternmen, Fred Gaskin and Jack Purchase, downed while floating an eddy. Pork loin roast and mashed potatoes were then complimented by a fine Ontario red wine. I was awake for all of 10 minutes after hitting the tent.

Around Seven Mile Island, the river plunges over 200 feet—no place to mess up in loaded boats. With the roar of whitewater almost a constant backdrop, we did our utmost to pick conservative routes and held numerous riverside discussions to

plot the path ahead. Sometimes the course was obvious as once when the river was constricted into a wild, narrow canyon. The winding 500 yard portage around it led through a fresh burn. Everything was a depressing black, the air still acrid and only the smallest green sprouts gave hint of the forests ability to regenerate itself.

Next day was a constant contest with the whitewater, portaging, lining, wading or running—we reached deep into our bag of tricks. By 6 p.m. with everyone ready to stop, Jack Purchase spotted an apparently inviting rock and hit on a campsite none of us will ever forget. The Harricana divided at the base of this broad swath of bedrock with river right surging over an 8-foot falls which formed a perfect shower stall at its edge (though “nozzle” pressure was a bit much). Tents were pitched on a flat rock and our kitchen was set up beside an ancient spruce tree a yard in diameter which had been laid down by springtime runoff. Thunderheads threatened in a deeply etched northern sky, but then blew off. That night our ancient predecessors would have recognized the scene as we fired up a monstrous log blaze under the watchfulness of the spiky spruce forest and glow from a near-full moon.

On our last day passing Seven Mile Island, cascades and falls had “moderated” into the largest boulder garden I have ever experienced. Bob Schaefer and I were so intent on our wading and lining, while trying to maintain balance on the ultra-slimy rocks, that we lost sight of the Fred Gaskin-George Dobbie canoe. After almost a mile of effort, we were most of the way through when it seemed we surely ought to wait as their yellow boat was nowhere to be seen. The minutes passed and the dire thoughts began to present themselves. Relief was our reward when their boat joined us to report only a large rent in George’s pants from rock hopping—the Harricana strikes again!

Even as it approached tidewater at James Bay, the Harricana didn’t give up. The full-blooded river was almost a mile-wide in places, splitting into a labyrinth of intricate channels calculated to hang up even the most experienced canoeist. But finally, there it was, that unfamiliar upstream pressure against our paddles—tidewater. A turbo Otter came in on schedule to whisk us back to our cars and life on the “outside”. Maybe my next trip we’ll

News & Notes

JAMMIN' . . . A 10 mile ice jam has closed the ferry on the Mackenzie River, cutting off Yellowknife's only highway to the south in November. Officials said the city could only wait for the ice to loosen, while grocers brace for air freight charges that will triple the North's already-high shipping costs. There is no bridge across the Mackenzie.

Airplanes from Hay River began hauling supplies such as food and heating oil to the city of 17,000 -- the capital of the Northwest Territories. "It more than triples the cost of a head of lettuce," said Dusko Trivic of Edgson's Market, which wholesales supplies.

ROAD? WE'LL HAVE NUN-OF-IT . . . Manitoba is on the verge of a deal with Nunavut that could link the two jurisdictions by highway, Officials on both sides of the border want to build a 600 mile road connecting Nunavut to Manitoba's highway system.

"My dream is to come here one day from my territory by car," said Nunavut

Premier Paul Okalik. "We want to catch up with the rest of Canada." Nunavut does about \$300 million a year in trade with Manitoba.

Okalik says he believes with the right infrastructure, including road access and hydro transmission, the new territory could boost its natural resource exports, including mining. The cost of an all-weather road has been pegged at more than \$1 billion.

Inco Ltd. has proposed building a new processing plant in Newfoundland, showing that it is willing to gamble on a new, unproven technology in order to get its giant Voisey's Bay nickel project back on track.

The Toronto-based nickel mining giant is planning a "new, leading-edge hydrometallurgical processing plant." The willingness of Inco to move away from the conventional refining and smelting technology symbolized by the famous smokestacks of Sudbury, Ont., demonstrates Inco's eagerness to develop the Voisey's Bay ore body in Labrador as a new low-cost source of nickel.

It also indicates that the hardball tactics used by Newfoundland's Premier Brian Tobin have worked. His government was adamant that all of the concentrate from the Voisey's Bay mine in Labrador should be processed in the province. Until then Inco would not get the mining licence needed to go ahead with the project.

The project still faces many hurdles from native and environmental groups and has been on the back burner for some time. No word yet on the link between this development and the proposed new dams on the lower Churchill River, which are also stalled in talks with local Innu natives. The

Our Back Pages

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

Outfit 44 Bill Mason & the Dog R., Athabasca letter
 Outfit 45 Pipe River by Eric Morse, River flow chart
 Outfit 46 Hudson Bay to Ungava, Stew Coffin report
 Outfit 47 Heritage Rivers, Trans Canada Expedition
 Outfit 48 Freshwater Saga - Morse River memoirs, slide fest
 Outfit 49 Queen Charlottes kayaking, HBC sell-off
 Outfit 50 Royal couple canoe the Hanbury/Thelon*
 Outfit 51 Traditional canoeing through Quetico Park
 Outfit 52 Lands Forlorn review, Atomic Arctic proposal
 Outfit 53 Chubb Crater in Ungava, Hubbard & Wallace
 Outfit 54 Povungnituk 88 - Ungava, Sleeping Island rev.
 Outfit 55 Memories of Bill Mason, Twin Otter gone
 Outfit 56 Canoeing stamps, Hanbury review, WCA slidefest
 Outfit 57 North American Canoe Symposium, book reviews
 Outfit 58 Churchill River trip, The Lonely Land rev.
 Outfit 59 Tyrrell brothers, Water & Sky, Alberta Pulp wars
 Outfit 60 Via Rail, Missinaibi River, James Bay, HBC exit
 Outfit 61 Inside Hydro-Quebec's LG2, Aki on the Barrens, Grey Owl
 Outfit 63 Canoeing in the 1930s, Hydro-Quebec chairman
 Outfit 64 Rupert R. 1914, Keewaydin Guide, Fur Trade Canoe Routes
 Outfit 65 - Churchill River hydro, Robert Perkins, James Bay
 Outfit 66 Lands Forlorn, HACC in Japan, Needle to the North
 Outfit 67 NWT division, Cdn. Canoe Museum, James Bay
 Outfit 68 Charles Camsell, Barrens Wedding, Book reviews
 Outfit 70 Great Bear to Coppermine, Ungava photos
 Outfit 72 Eric Morse River List, Ungava Journey, J.B. Tyrrell
 Outfit 73 Petawawa River, David Thompson map, NWT regs

Outfit 74 Pukaskwa River, Helen Falls cairn, Quetico trip
 Outfit 75 Tyrrell pictures, Hearne's route, Heritage Rivers
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 Outfit 80 Warburton Pike, Wabakimi Park, Merrick's True North
 Outfit 81 Arctic Land Exped, David Hanbury, Diamond development
 Outfit 83 Jacobson's Caribou River, *Canoescapes* rev, Franklin's journal
 Outfit 84 1955 Moffatt Exped., Winisk R., John Rae's effigy & Cloak-boat
 Outfit 85 Rocky Defiled, Grey Owl movie, Bill Mason bio, Canoe Museum
 Outfit 86 PBS's Backcountry, E. Merrick's Labrador photos, Summerwrap
 Outfit 87 Across the Barrens to Arctic Sound. Dr. John Rae, Cree wisdom
 Outfit 88 Great Whale River, Elliott Merrick's last words, Paddling the Web
 Outfit 89 George River preview, Merrick Memorial, Stew Coffin- George 1967
 Outfit 90 Rat River 1926, George River Online, Chestnut Canoe book rev.
 Outfit 91 Across Canada paddle, Schwatka's Last Search rev., Arctic Unrav-
 elled
 Outfit 92 Danes on the Barrens, Ladies & the Rat review., Grey Owl movie
 Outfit 93 Mason stamp news, Letdown on the Thelon, Real Bedard profile
 Outfit 94 Mason stamp unveiled, Great Whale River, Cdn Canoe Symposium
 Outfit 95 Lost art of Arthur Heming, Mackenzie & the Rockies, Barrows Boys
 Outfit 96 MacFarlane R. trip report, Tom Manning profile, Nunavut book rev
 Outfit 97 Ellice River report, Winisk online preview, Bill Mason in hall of fame
 Outfit 98 Winisk to The Bay report, Book review: McGuffins, Callans & Kraik-
 ers

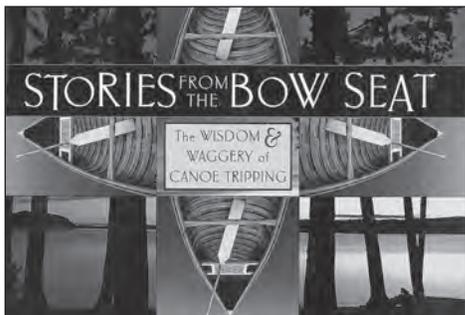
Stories from the Bow Seat

The Wisdom & Waggyery of Canoe Tripping.
By Don Standfield & Liz Lundell
Boston Mills Press, Erin, ON
1999 156pp. \$49.95
ISBN 1-55046-188-5

All books reviewed by Michael Peake.

Every so often a canoeing book comes along where you say (or at least I do), "Now that's something I wish I had done." This is one.

But saying and doing are a big step apart. I first



heard about *Stories from the Bow Seat* eight years ago. It was worth the wait, as this lovingly original canoeing tome has arrived in great shape featuring superb pictures and incredible colour reproduction, justifying its hefty price.

It's full of quotes and on canoeing and related activities ranging through Pierre Trudeau, Sig Olson, Bill Riviere, David Pelly, Mina Hubbard and Marcel Proust! Standfield's great pictures are mixed with a great archival collection of photos and artwork. It's a joy to skip through or settle down with. Some topics include; bannock, dumping (a canoe), portaging and the tea pot: eclectic and elegant, unique and unifying.

There's even one page with a coffee cup ring on it - as if we would ever do that!

One quibble. In a book so obviously rife with research and dedication to what people said and did, the photos are virtually absent of proper credits on either who took them (presumably Standfield?) or where they were taken. I would like to have more info on each photo - if only because they are so darned interesting.

But it's a small piece of fluff on an otherwise glistening achievement.

Three Seasons in the Wind

950 km by Canoe Down the Thelon River.
By Michael and Kathleen Pitt
1999 Trafford Publishing
145pp \$22.95 ISBN 1-55212-229-8

The Thelon River has become the Nahanni of the east. It's the river of choice for novice Barrenland travellers - and authors too.

This self-published work is essentially the journal of a couple who paddled the river in 1993 over 37 days - not exactly three seasons. Each day is entered

with both paddler's comments, hers in italics to differentiate. It's a readable account for we paddlers of a typical northern trip but it doesn't really contribute much to the genre.

For example, they arrive at Hornby Point the famed site of the starvation cabin from 1927 but they

can't find the cabin (which is 200 yards upstream). I don't think I'd admit that if I was writing a book about it.

It's not a guide book either with little river running info and contains a few small black & white pictures. It has the self-published "look" to it, which these days means acceptable quality but not much more. Perhaps it's a good choice for the author's relatives and friends and a nice way for the pair to remember their wonderful summer on the Thelon.

North with Franklin

The Lost Journals of James Fitzjames.

By John Wilson.
Fitzhenry & Whiteside, 1999.
250 pp. ISBN 1-55041-4062

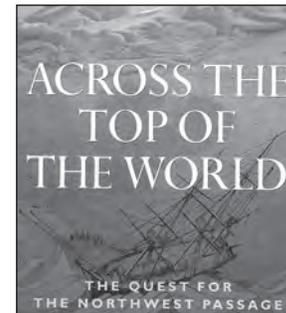
Across the Top of the World

The Quest for the Northwest Passage.
By James P. Delgado.
Douglas & McIntyre. 224 Pages
\$45 ISBN 1-55054-734-8

This pair of Arctic books arrived just before press time and I will freely admit that I haven't had the time to give them my fullest consideration.

Even before examining them, their very content is

something to remark on. The fact that the lure of Arctic adventure, much of it from the 19th century, still has strong market appeal as we head into the 21st century is amazing.

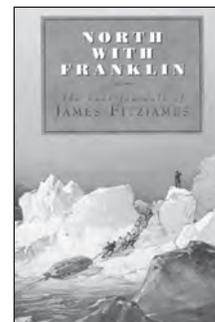


Across the Top of the World is a lavishly

illustrated volume with a great deal of artwork featuring the look and feel of the exploration era. James Delgado is an Arctic shipwreck authority and executive director of the Vancouver Maritime Museum. He has pieced together a superb history of man's attempt to cross the Northwest Passage from Frobisher in 1576 to the RCMP's boat the *St. Roch* in 1942.

The book contains many of the incomparably dramatic paintings of British ships featuring those wonder-

fully romantic, cloud-swept vistas. Pertinent maps and pictures of original equipment such as Franklin's medicine chest made the book itself a treasure trove for the Arctic history lover. (There's even a photo of James Fitzjames - see below)



The first thing you should know about *North With Franklin*

is that it is a novel about the letters written to his wife by the captain of the *H.M.S. Erebus*, James Fitzjames. This work of historical reinterpretation is based on the few letters Fitzjames actually did send home.

Such a literary device allows us an intimate look into the harsh and beautiful world of the 129 men on that ill-fated 1945 voyage. The Franklin saga is a giant puzzle for which the pieces have been gathered for 150 years. John Wilson reassembles them to put a personal touch to all those facts and figuring.

With Wilson's help, Fitzjames is, naturally, a gifted letter writer and, as he lived until the very end, he allows us in on the many crucial moments of that three year journey. The death of Franklin in June 1847 is fascinating. It's a neat trick and a trip worth taking but pack an extra sweater.



Photo: Michael Peake

GO WITH THE FLOE -- One constant we've noted in 20 years of northern tripping is that when things go wrong, they can often go right in many ways. This great image of Geoff Peake and Kate Schnaidt adrift on an ice floe in Hudson Bay was the result of getting stranded while travelling up the coast from Kuujjuarapik (Great Whale) to Richmond Gulf. Out Inuit

guide's boat blew a motor though the ice would have stopped us anyway. But we spent several days with our Inuit friends on a large rock island surrounded by salt water. They told us where to find the fresh water - on the melted tops of the ice floes and Geoff and Kate rode this one out to the Bay on the gentle tides that swept in between our islands.

Ahead in Outfit 100!

Cover to Cover to Cover. As Che-Mun hits the triple digits in a new century we have a look at our history and the faces of all those in the modern era (1984 - on).

Looking Back. John Lentz recalls one of the great northern trips with a look back to the Back River in 1962 when he led the first modern group down that remote northern stream.

CHE-MUN

Founded in 1973 by Nick Nickels

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