

CHE-MUN

(Ojibway for canoe)

THE NEWSLETTER OF CANADIAN WILDERNESS CANOEING

OUTFIT 58

CHE-MUN

AUTUMN 1989

Flyin' Nor'westers!



The Northwest country was the end of the line for the voyager's search for furs and it's still a popular destination for today's paddlers. Geoffrey and Sean Peake take a wild ride

down on northern Saskatchewan's historic Churchill River. The Hide-Away Canoe Club paddled the Churchill this summer and we have a full report starting on page 4.

**The Birders
vs.
The Dammers**

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**Sig Olson's
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**Coppermine:
The north of
George Douglas**

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Fall Packet



Che-Mun has never done a demographics poll. We assume we know our readers are. But every once in a while we get a little surprise. The following arrived from Jean Humphries of Meadowvale, Ontario. Jean is twelve.

"I was interested by the Summer Packet in the Summer '89 issue of Che-Mun. Obviously someone else is a Durrell fan too! If you are looking for a relaxing, hilarious, interesting book and are interested in conservation, read one of Gerald Durrell's (husband of Lee Durrell) thirty-odd books. If you are like me you'll become addicted pretty fast! Gerald Durrell runs a zoo in Jersey (in the Channel Islands) and is a leading animal conservationist. The zoo is terrific, if you ever pass that way. As for books, *The Stationary Ark* 1/3 is a good one for starters. (That is if you're not a fan already) Anyhow, Che-Mun is a splendid newsletter and I hope you keep it up.

"My family does quite a bit of canoeing and camping and we also subscribe to Che-Mun. I enjoy reading and love canoeing and the land, and I read both of Bill Mason's books and thought they were superb. I feel as if I knew him personally. I thought you might like this poem which I wrote. I'd like to dedicate it to him.

Canoe.

Upon a distant mirror,
Rests a being, solitaire,
A spirit, and a feeling,
A wild desire laid bare.

An expression of addiction,
An unrelenting cry,
A deep and restless longing,
A low, heart-rending sigh.

A desp'rate bid for freedom,
The lure of paths untrod,
A surge of wild elation,
A nearness to our God.

O birchbark craft beneath me,
O sky of flawless blue,
O northern wood and pine tree,
I pledge my life to you.

We know that Bill Mason would be very touched and, most of all, encouraged by a tribute such as that. He realized the future is in the hands of our children and worked hard to convey the message of caring for our environment. With people like Jean Humphries coming along, the future bodes well.

The recent L.L. Bean North American Canoe Symposium was covered in the last outfit of Che-Mun. One of the speakers there was Cliff Jacobson, noted canoe author and speaker. He endured the wrath of the Peake brothers and lived to tell the tale.

"You are wild and crazy guys! To say that meeting you at the Bean show was perhaps the major highlight of the event would be putting it mildly. I really think you brothers three should go into show business.

"I note that you managed to include a slide shot of Molson's in the recent Che-Mun. All of us this side of the border heave heartfelt thanks for that wondrous Canadian brew. Please pass on our good vibes. (Ed. Note - Molson's gave us a few 'samples' to take with us to bribe people to attend our talks!) Hoping to make it back to Bean's next year. It was a very good time.

"By the way, Cannondale Aroostook tents will be available from me until the supply runs out. There are about 50 left right now (end of July) and I think I've talked Cannondale into continuing production next year. The new models have shorter (18-inch) poles, guy-out fly tabs on the pole sleeves, Velcro security tabs over the vestibule ridge, single floor seam construction, larger stake loops, wider pole sleeves. When this run is gone, they may bring back the original colours (red, yellow/blue, these tents are all rust/red) plus add some refinements I've suggested.

"Anyone who wants and Aroostook can get one from me for \$465 U.S., drop-shipped anywhere in Canada or the States. Delivery time is six weeks. Thanks for spreading the word. A lot of these tents are heading north of the border.

"Wishing you all the best until we again all sing O Canada together."

You can contact Cliff at 928 West 7th St, Hastings, MN, 55033.

Dr. Thomas Hyde, 29 Thornliebank Circle, Williamstown, MA, 01267 writes, "I was very happy to receive my first issue of Che-Mun and found it quite informative. I noted that you were off to the North American Canoe Symposium in Maine as were the (Maine Guides) Garrett and Alexandra Conover with whom I had just taken a most enjoyable (and comfortable!) trip on the St. John River the prior week.

"I also noted with some trepidation the information about the Hydro-Quebec plans for the Nottaway River. Two summers ago I canoed on Matagami Lake to the outlet

where the Nottaway heads north to Lake Soscumica and Rupert Bay. I have hoped to canoe the Nottaway in the future but it looks like I'll need to do it sooner rather than later. Is anyone in Quebec canoeing or environmental circles either planning or able to put pressure on Hydro-Quebec or the provincial government into abandoning the NBR plan? Perhaps a well publicized canoe trip with significant Quebec politicians and/or environmentalists might help to push public opinion away from such a massive encroachment upon nature. If, indeed, they plan to make the decision by next summer it appears that there may not be much time. Does the federal government have anything to say about the project?"

(Ed. Note - the feds can only control project affecting trans-border activities. They are concerned but given the drive of Quebec politicians, especially Premier Bourassa, the fight is an uphill one.)

A few months ago, veteran northern canoeist Dick Davidson, P.O. Box 90244, Sioux Falls, South Dakota, 57105, wrote with regard to Che-Mun's *The Classics* feature which examined the northern book *Sport and Travel in Canada's northland* by David Hanbury (Outfit 56).

"I read your article on Hanbury with interest. David Hanbury ranks with the top explorers of the far north. When Hanbury said he reached the mouth of the Buchanan River (now called the Consul) it was a conclusion that was logical with the map data at hand. He had only George Back's sketchy and incomplete mapping of the Back River. Back mapped the river during his descent which was a period of high flood stage. I saw this high flood stage in 1985. The river was like a large lake before reaching mouth of the Consul.

This stage is not like the river shown on the map or like low water stage of winter when Hanbury passed through the area in April of 1902. The mouth of the Morse River (not seen by Back) on Upper Garry Lake looks like the mouth of the Buchanan as mapped by Back. In preparing for a Back/Armark trip in 1985, I read and re-read Hanbury while following his trip on topo maps.

The text led me to the mouth of the Morse including the fact that he noted only one watershed crossing. The text fits the crossing of Upper Garry and overland to the western bay area midway up Armark Lake. Looking at the time that it took Hanbury to reach a midway point (or any

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CANOE TOONS

PAUL MASON



Editor's Notebook

Well, as promised, this issue of Che-Mun is out on time. As you are reading this I will be scouting locations for future canoe trips in London and Paris. (My new bride thinks we're on a honeymoon).

This issue is dedicated to the nor'westers in all of us. Our canoe group had a leisurely (for us) trip on the Churchill River this past July. We took along a copy of the venerable *The Lonely Land* by Sig Olson.

So it just kind of seemed natural that we feature the two together in this outfit. Sean Peake was working on a look at Tyrrell's *Across the Sub-Arctics of Canada* so we'll save that for *Outfit 60* when *The Classics* feature appears again.

Our trip on the Churchill was a revelation in some ways. The western areas of Canada are spared the subliminal damage of acid rain which emanates from the Ohio Valley and central Canada. I had forgotten what real lakes were like.

The lakes along the Churchill were filled with living things. Leeches, water spiders, snails, clams - not to mention fish. Yes, the water's murky but that's how real water is. One of the problems with acid rain is that when it kills all the necessary marine life the water goes crystal clear. Lovely to look at, delightful to behold and dying a little more every day.

It was also a bit shocking to be canoeing near people again. We get a bit spoiled by our remote northern trips. But with everything there's a plus side. The pioneer church at Stanley Mission was certainly a highlight.

We had planned to make this issue 12 pages again but between the canoe trip and nuptial plans eight pages seemed more realistic. The winter outfit will be a bulging dozen and I promise no European vacation photos.

Michael Peake, Editor.

Powerplays

Encouraged by the response in Quebec to its impact study on the construction of dams in the James Bay region, the U.S. National Audubon Society will step up its campaign to prevent the signing of new contracts for energy purchases from Hydro-Quebec.

For now, the environmental group is concentrating on a proposed \$7.6-billion contract with a group of 24 utilities in Vermont to purchase 450 megawatts of energy from Hydro-Quebec.

Starting Feb. 12, 1990, the board will hear outside intervening parties such as the Audubon and the Cree Indians of northern Quebec.

Opponents of Hydro-Quebec's James Bay II hydroelectric dam project say they plan to take advantage of public concern over environmental issues to oppose the energy mega-project of Quebec Premier Robert Bourassa, who is seeking reelection when Quebecers vote Sept. 25.

The Audubon Society says that in the next few weeks it will step up its media campaign, which began in Montreal July 25 with the publication of a report warning that the project threatens the long-term ecological stability of the James Bay region.

Another campaign is being prepared in Maine and New York to alert American media to the dangers of building dams in northern Quebec, spokesmen say.

But according to a spokesman for the provincially owned utility, Hydro-Quebec isn't looking back. Hydro-Quebec plans call for roughly doubling its power capacity in the region.

But opponents to the proposed 450-megawatt deal say it will lead to further environmental destruction in the James Bay region.

The Cree Indians say development so far has caused flooding of thousands of square kilometres of wildlife habitat, mercury contaminations of fish, destruction of 10,000 caribou and the loss of their way of life, which was based on fishing and trapping.

They are also worried about flooding for power dams, which creates massive decomposition of organic matter, releasing methane into the atmosphere and contributing to global warming.

A decision is expected in the spring of 1990 from Vermont's Public Service Board on the purchase of energy from Quebec.

Fall Packet continued

point) on Armark from the mouth of a river and looking at the distance between the mouth of the Buchanan and Armark Lake, it would seem that the Buchanan mouth to Armark Lake route could not be the case. Dog teams don't go that fast even in races.

Therefore it seems that David Hanbury followed the valley of the river that your party (the Morse River Expedition - Che-Mun Outfits 42 & 43) traveled through and built a cairn for Eric Morse.

It appears the mouth of the Buchanan assumption accounted for the misplacement of features like Armark Lake, Armark River and Pitok River, on early (before the use of air photos) maps of Canada."

(Ed. Note - We knew we were quite close to where Hanbury went through but were not so diligent in our research. Many thanks, Dick, for your thoughtful analysis. Che-Mun welcomes comment or suggestions on the topic).



Sean and Geoff Peake ride the rails of historic Frog Portage which connects the Churchill and Sturgeon-Weir Rivers. The railway is used by local natives and can give a pretty speedy ride since there are no brakes.

By Michael Peake
Che-Mun Editor

The remains of a mighty highway that once traversed the breadth of Canada still awaits the modern explorer.

The Voyageur Highway, stretching from Montreal to the Pacific, will not be found on any road map and has largely been reclaimed by concrete and settlements. But many miles of pleasurable paddling await the modern day voyageur along this route, and the Churchill River offers some of the best of it.

Pristine in spots, studded with fishing camps and outboard motors in others, the Churchill has never surrendered the beauty that till rings true for wilderness canoeists with a taste for the past.

This year's Hide-Away Canoe Club trip was down the Churchill from the small village of Patuanak to Pelican Narrows, roughly the width of Saskatchewan (through which it flows). The Churchill River rises in western Saskatchewan and flows east 700 miles to the town of Churchill on Hudson Bay. However, the area of interest to recreational canoeists lies on the upper, undammed 300 miles of river in Saskatchewan where voyageurs 200 years ago plied the fur trade route, bringing their riches east.

Last year, the HACC traversed the Ungava Peninsula on a month-long ordeal of ice, snow and wind (Che-Mun Outfit 54). We were ready for something more seasonal and that, combined with logistical considerations, led us to the Churchill.

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Our party this year consisted of three Peakes, Michael, Sean and Geoffrey, and Peter Scott. It was a trip that would round out a decade of wilderness tripping for most of this foursome. We started our river adventures in 1981 with a chilly trip down another famous link in the voyageur chain, the French River in northern Ontario. A five day outing in early May, we experienced ice-cold water, freezing temperatures and most deadly of all—lack of experience.

Our group photo from that trip is a classic 'how-not-to' illustration. Geoffrey Peake, now a professional and seasoned wilderness guide typified our gear, he is wearing heavy, leather hiking boots, thin cotton pants, deerskin gloves and a chintzy felt hat. We suffered more hardship on that five day journey that we did on our 55 day Journey Across the Barrenlands (JATB) four years later.

Liking the solitude of the Arctic regions, we started looking at the remote and alluring Ungava Peninsula in Northern Quebec, and completed two traverses of that rugged peninsula using the Leaf and Povungnituk Rivers. We thought it appropriate to end the decade as we started, on a traditional voyageur route, hence the Churchill.

Two members of our group, Geoff and Peter, had canoed the Churchill 10 years ago. This was with a school trip led by Peter's father, Angus, who was then headmaster of Trinity College School as well as a friend and member of several of Eric Morse's canoe trips over the years.

We were well aware that the Churchill is not a wilderness river. Two bridges span its Saskatchewan flow and upon entering Manitoba several hydro dams appear before the river empties into Hudson Bay at the town of Churchill.

What the Churchill has got is history and plenty of it. Two hundred years ago Alexander Mackenzie, Peter Pond, George Simpson and contemporaries paddled up and down this river after coming up the Sturgeon-Weir River which in turn connects to Lake Winnipeg and points south.

We set off from the cluttered beach of Patuanak, where a trio of young Chipewyan boys were plunging into the leech-filled water of this shallow bay. Pelican Narrows was 320 miles away and having lost a day in Saskatoon we now had 13 days in which to do it - about 25 miles each day.

It was hot. Very hot. That wasn't too unusual, we'd known some fierce heat in the Territories but the water had always been ice cold. Here, the water was 75 degrees, which was great for swimming but less that satisfactory for drinking. The heat continued for the first five days and was merciless. We stopped every couple of hours, on the real scorchers, lashed the boats together and dove in for a cooling dip. This was a bizarre experience for us. We had not been 'pleasure' swimming, i.e. on purpose or enjoying it, since the Missinai River in 1981.

Of course, warm water brought another benefit - it significantly reduced the risk at the rapids. Dumping on the Povungnituk would be a life-threatening affair. Dumping on the Churchill was a chance to cool off. The rapids on the Churchill were friendly. Most were pool and drop and offered a fun challenge without being dangerous.

Hours after putting-in we approached the first good set, Drum Rapids, followed by Leaf and Deer. All were runnable and a lot of fun. Only Dipper Rapids was formidable enough to require a portage and that was made most pleasurable by a newly renovated marine railway which made the carry a breeze.

The only disturbing factors were the ones caused by people. There were a few motorboats and accompanying garbage in the area but the most shocking thing was the graffiti painted on the few smooth shield outcrops near Patuanak. They appeared to have been done by the locals and the messages ran from the amusing 'Dangerous Rapids Ahead' to a swastika sign. These were the type of Indian rock paintings that we don't like to see.

The Churchill skirts the Canadian Shield for most of its first 60 miles. Occasional outcrops could be found where making camp was more enjoyable. Every few miles there is an Indian reservation, most were quite small and seemingly devoid of activity.

The Haultain Marshes are a long stretch of incredible grasses and wetlands without a campsite anywhere but soon after the rocky shield outcrops are in evidence and the camping is quite easy for the most part.

We found that the water was a bit low which always accounts for differences in falls and grade of rapid. Though it is hard to account for the difference in the view of certain features like Trout Falls. They were captured in a long ago etching and the rendering seems to far over-emphasize the true drama of these little falls.

Silent Rapids was described by Mackenzie as a whirlpool to be avoided. Today at presumably lower water it is a pleasantly big whoosher where we stopped for lunch, swam in the current and did eddy turns with our bodies.

The upper half of the voyageur's Churchill is still relatively remote. There is the occasional lodge but none directly on the route. There is one bridge for a remote mining road and little other sign of man. Just below Silent Rapids while beginning our navigation through the maze of islands that make up Black Bear Island Lake we came across the faint remains of a pictograph we believe was referred to by Mackenzie, a spot where Indians made offerings. It is discoveries like this that bring the Churchill alive again.

The river flows through a series of lakes and narrows. The scenery is well wooded with spruce and rolling countryside. Some of the rapids are very interesting and at one, Black Trout, we carried our packs through in order to run a big chute empty. Sean and Geoff ran the rapid right down the middle, taking on the big curling wave. They made it and the result is on the front of this issue.

Peter Scott and I tried it and made it through the first time but rolled over the second and took a warm bath in the fast flowing water. Other rapids not far below offered a narrow side-to-side run through rocky shores.

This area is known for its thunderstorms and though we were ready few materialized. One afternoon the western sky was black. The heat of the past week was going to pop and we figured we had about an hour to make camp. We shot the northern part of Birch Rapids, usually a portage on the south channel, and proceeded to find a good camp on the east end of an oval island. Within 10 minutes the storm arrived. And how it did.

A recently purchased wind meter was quickly put to use as the blast of wind came in from the west. Fifty one miles and hour read the digital dial. The lake was black lined with neat white rows of shallow whitecaps, the look only a storm could produce.

Our camp was set perfectly, nestled in the thick spruce on the lee side of the island. A mild breeze ruffled the fly. This was in great contrast to our big Ungava windstorm last year (Outfit 53). There were no trees in which to hide and no wind gauge to measure the blast. Judging from what we now know is 50 m.p.h. we think our little affair last year was 70-plus.

Once you get close to the second bridge, at Otter Rapids, you begin to enter the busy part of the river which runs through Lac La Ronge Provincial Park. It is here civilization takes hold again for a while. Paddling though what appeared to be a native housing subdivision at Missinipi was unsettling for the wilderness paddler.

The question of water quality begins to come into play here. We have never had a problem with water. On all our trips we have been able to drink whatever we want right out of the lake. We didn't have any problem this time either but we were a lot

more picky about where we took our water from.

The heat had subsided by this point and we could smell its side effect. The sweet perfume of spruce-stoked forest fires could be noticed all around us. The lichens and mosses in the forest were brittle. The fire danger was very high and as it turned out much of northern Manitoba and Saskatchewan were on fire.

One night we nursed our small campfire in the rocky point of a tree covered island in the middle of lake whose shore were scoured by a 10 year old burn we were paid a surprise visit. On the horizon were bright flashing lights coming towards us. We all big a double take and a big yellow water bomber cruised about 200 feet over top of us. We laughed to each other and our smiles dropped when the big plane banked sharply into a turn and made its way around to us again, all the while dropping in altitude.

No, surely they couldn't mind our little fire, which was, after all, set out on the rocks away from the trees. The flashing lights cruised lower, like some aviation cop coming to check us out. As the plane swooped over our tiny camp and hand shot out the pilot's window in a friendly wave. We stopped looking for cover and waved back, relieved.

We saw our first canoes in this area but it seemed everyone was doing some variation of a loop out of Lac La Ronge. No one was paddling the Churchill proper.

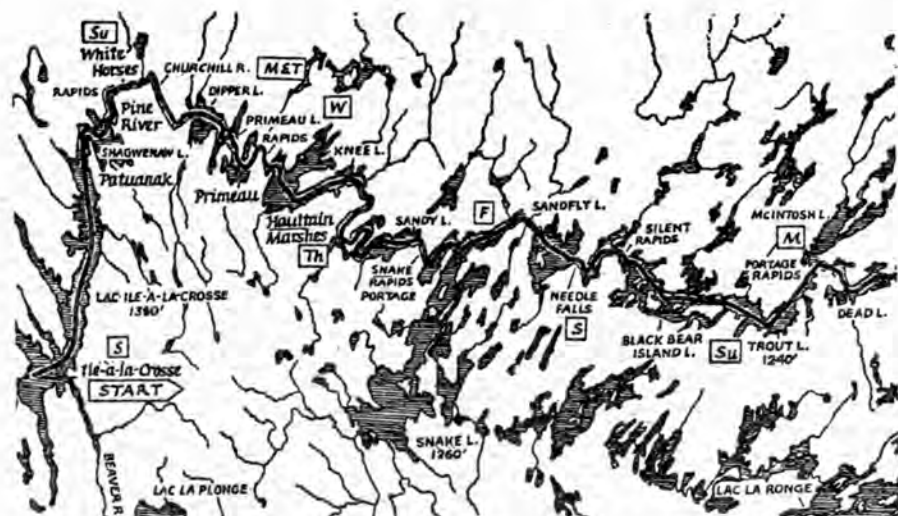
The province had some very special visitors in July. Andrew and Sarah, the Duke and Duchess of York, were visiting the province as part of their Canadian tour. They were scheduled to visit a tiny church on the Churchill River, the oldest building in Saskatchewan - Stanley Mission. The official itinerary showed the royal couple had two days off before their visit there and we presumed they might take time for a bit of padding in the area.

Churchill River

Paddling through the Lonely Land



The Lonely Land



Sigurd Olson was a giant in the American conservation movement. A noted author, likened to Thoreau, an outspoken conservationist, he played key roles in many pressure groups including of the Wilderness Society, the Isaak Walton League and Quetico-Superior Wilderness Committee.

We could use him now, when the message he spread has seeped in to the general consciousness.

He certainly would have been pleased to see the current interest in the environment. Olson wrote many books, some tales of trips, others lyrical essays on the north woods, the land he lived in and loved.

In 1956 Olson joined a group of canoeists he would paddle with for the next several years. Four years later, a splendid book on that first trip, on the Churchill River, appeared.

Titled *The Lonely Land*, the book tells the tale of a 500-mile canoe trip undertaken by six men in their 50's. These were no ordinary men but an elite group who were paddling in the north when very few others were. In fact, this trip even attracted the attention of the press who mobbed them as they headed home.

Olson's partners included; Eric Morse, National Director of the Canadian Clubs; Tony Lovink, the Netherland Ambassador to Canada; Denis Coolican, President of the Canadian Bank Note Company; Major General Elliot Roger of the Canadian Army and Omand Solandt, Vice-President of CN Railways. It was a diverse and interesting group that started together a couple of years earlier following a challenge by canoeist Eric Morse to "get out and know something of Canada. To sleep under the pines and feel the splash of rapids."

Sig Olson was elected Bourgeois of the group. This was the title the fur trade voyageurs gave to their leader. He also handled all the cooking duties.

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The Lonely Land is an immensely appealing book for any canoeist. Reading it in the dead of winter could be dangerous, for its lure is so strong you may find yourself in knee-deep snow dragging your boat looking for a campsite. There's no doubt Olson is a master stylist when it comes to the description of travel in canoe country. His evocative phrases capture just the right feel of the comfort and uncomfortable aspects of life on the paddle.

The physical nature of the book is a testament to Olson's writing abilities. There are no photographs, only line drawings and a map. It's a rare writer who can carry an outdoors book on style alone. And something publishers love - anything to spare the expense of photographic reproductions. *The Lonely Land* is the tale of a journey along the old voyageur route from Ile-a-la-Crosse, at the head of the Churchill River, to Cumberland House on the Saskatchewan River. Each chapter begins with a line drawing of a canoeing scene and a quotation from an early explorer's diary pertaining to the area where they were canoeing.

While writing what is essentially a narrative of a canoe trip log, Olson twists and weaves in personal and historical matters and dialogue from the modern-day voyageurs. It is certainly no day-by-day recounting of a river trip.

The journey was made with camping sensibilities of the 1950's and some of their practices, while progressive for the time, are a bit of surprise for the modern day canoeist. Every night they cut poles for their tents, a practice long-since abandoned for obvious reasons. At another point Olson carefully collects some excess garbage from their campsite . . . which he puts into a tin for burial at sea!

But those were different times and these men had already seen tremendous changes in the attitude of people towards wilderness. The group was discussing the possibility of a uranium mine opening in the area and Olson observes, "This was the Lonely Land, a big country that could absorb a hundred uranium mines, many more Hudson's Bay Posts and airplane fishing camps, and there would still be places no one would ever see. The Canadian North is big enough, I reasoned, to take it with room to spare, for there will always be vast areas of no economic importance along the smaller watersheds and off the beaten track. But even as I reassured myself, I wondered if it was actually true, if in this day of man's ability to reshape the face of the earth, even this great rocky land would be big enough to withstand his onslaughts."

The Churchill country has changed a great deal since this time. The towns they flew in and out of are now accessible by roads, two bridges span the river and fishing lodges and other outgrowths of population move nearer each year. Olson's crew still encountered Indians in birchbark canoes, a Catholic priest who traveled by canoe and ministered to the natives where they lived, and Indians who were still able to practice traditional crafts with little outside influence.

Like many paddlers of the time most of them had had little experience running rapids. The Churchill was in flood in July of 1956 so the rapids while more runnable in sports were certainly a bigger challenge for open cedar/canvas canoes. The group had a few rough bumps, as some canoes followed the practice of the day of going faster than the current.

When lunching early in the trip, they watched a group of Indians paddle a rapid and copied their technique of a controlled descent. It worked.

The book flows along as smoothly as those very boats. Even Olson's descriptions of making dinner are mouth-watering and his recounting of their quaint traditions most entertaining. Perhaps their most enduring tradition was the evening boisson, one that many a modern canoe party has continued. There was no shortage of provisioned rum on these trips and every evening it was the duty of Dr. Omand Solandt to concoct a bracing beverage using various mixtures of fruit juices, powders and alcohol.

The Lonely Land is not a rare book except in style. It was published by Alfred Knopf in the States and McClelland and Stewart in Canada in 1960-61. Both companies have several editions in print. It should be no more than \$10-15 in old book stores.

It is well worth looking for. While the style has aged a bit and perhaps it's a bit corny in spots the true gem of this book shines through.

News & Notes

FANCY CONSERVANCY . . . The most stylish and attractive 25th anniversary annual report of the Nature Conservancy of Canada appeared in Che-Mun's mailbox recently. It's a beautifully designed report and printed on recycled paper. The group is a non-profit organization "dedicated to the preservation of ecologically significant areas, unique natural features and places of special beauty." In the last quarter century the Nature Conservancy has succeeded in protecting from development over 80,000 acres costing \$14 million. There are 400 projects in all and every province is represented. A description of the major protected reserves are featured in the annual. The Conservancy seeks to secure invaluable marshes and wetlands and other important landforms from the seemingly relentless spread of development. One of this group's special projects is Un fleuve, un parc (One river, one park) that is seeking to project 45 miles of shoreline and 110 islands between Montreal and Sorel on the beleaguered St. Lawrence River, one of the most polluted waterways in North America. In an age when money talks louder than ever, the Nature Conservancy uses the language that so often destroys nature to buy it back - the language of money. Those interested in putting their marshes where their mouth is should contact the Nature Conservancy of Canada, 794A Broadview Ave, Toronto, Ontario, Canada M4K 9Z9.

SUMMERWRAP . . . It was a busy season on the Barrenlands this past summer. Air charter companies report higher than usual numbers of canoe parties heading out into the Northwest Territories. One of the more interesting journey's was made by George Luste of Toronto who along with —, paddled the Camsell River into Great Bear Lake, traveled around that huge, cold body of water to Dease Arm and then followed the historic Dismal Lakes trek across to the Coppermine. That route was a popular one in the early days when the likes of Richardson, Simpson and Hanbury used it to cut through to the interior from the Arctic Ocean via the Coppermine and vice-versa. It has been rarely used since. George and — did the route, with no real problems and about a week faster than they expected. We'll hear more about this later. Tragedy also struck the north this summer when an airplane belonging to Plummer's Lodge crashed in eastern Great Slave Lake killing six people, all Canadians. In northern Manitoba, two men drowned when trying to shoot the notorious Nelson River in an inflatable boat. A third member survived and was rescued sometime later. The Nelson is a big river and never popular for canoe descents. The survivor said the three stated just before the run that if something happened to them they would die doing something they liked doing. We like it too, and would like to continue doing it.

CanoeLit

Coppermine--The Far North Of George M. Douglas

by Enid Mallory
Broadview Press,
Ontario, \$20.00

who never released his bond with the north, was always in contact with the men he met during his trips. Perhaps the most enigmatic of these men was John Hornby. 'Jack' would eventually starve in the heart of the barrens in 1926, taking his 18 year old cousin Edgar Christian, and a young man they met in Alberta, Harold Adlard, with him.

The death of the Hornby party would gnaw at Douglas for the rest of his life. Many firmly believed, including his wife Francis, that George was the only man who could have stopped Jack from going north on that fateful trip. Douglas, unfortunately, was out of the country at the time. What would bother him more was the image that built up around Hornby after his death. Douglas grew tired of deflating the myth that surrounded Jack.

By the summer of 1938, when he met P.G. Downes, Douglas refused to speak about him. He finally emerged from his silence when he heard a CBC radio play about Hornby in the mid 1950's. In a cool but pointed letter to the man behind the broadcast, Queens University Professor George Whalley, Douglas vented his displeasure at seeing a man like Hornby being made into a great northern traveller. The letter would result in Whalley visiting Douglas to gain more information. Douglas played hard to get, and would constantly move into one of the many cabins and one houseboat on his property, making Whalley work for the interview. Eventually he relented and opened up his files to Whalley. What emerged after seven years of interviews was the true portrait of Hornby, found in Whalley's *The Legend of John Hornby*.

Another character Mallory highlights is P.G. Downes. The two men met in 1938, Douglas's last trip north. Downes, a student of the north recognised Douglas right away—a very tall gentleman, with snow-white hair and moustache, tanned a leath-

ery brown, with extraordinarily bright blue eyes under shaggy white eyebrows.

Enid Mallory brings out some fascinating and startling insights into the relationship between Downes and Douglas. Although over 30 years separated the two, they became good friends. P.G. respected Douglas, and perhaps Douglas saw a bit of Hornby in Downes. Both had something the other needed. Downes travelled light and had great understanding of native ways. Douglas, on the other hand, wanted to know more about the Indians and had the stability and organisation Downes lacked but desired.

Downes, was a romantic man, but the north, especially the barrens, is no place for romance—it becomes a self-destructive quality. That flaw would rear its head from time to time and would keep Downes in poor health. It's quite likely it contributed to his premature death in 1959 at the age of 49.

In all, *Coppermine* is a great book. The northern history buff will find this book vital because it covers the last great period of the old north. My only criticism is that the photos should have been reproduced on better quality stock. Having seen original Douglas photos, the book's reproduction fails to convey the depth and emotion of the originals. The blame, however, lies with our large publishing companies. I had approached Key Porter on the same topic three years ago—they didn't feel the project worthy. Broadview Press, a small publisher in Peterborough took the chance. A small publisher cannot afford to print a lavish photo-essay on top quality paper and hope to stay in business. So, I understand why the compromise was made.

I hope both Enid and Broadview Press see a substantial return from the book, because it's people and companies like these who bring such important pieces of our rich history to light.

Sean Peake
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One of my favorite northern books is *Lands Forlorn*, written by George Douglas. Between 1911 and 1912, Douglas, his brother Lionel, and a fellow geologist, August Sandberg, explored the area between Great Bear Lake and the Coppermine River.

Their mission was to see if the famous copper deposits of the Coppermine river were large enough for commercial development. Backed by Douglas's wealthy American cousin—who had made his fortune in the copper mining business—the three met a wide array of northern legends, and were witness to the north's loss of innocence.

In the *Lands Forlorn* review (see *Che-Mun Outfit* 52), I said the most overlooked aspect of Douglas's contribution to northern writing was his natural talent as a photographer. His photos show our north struggling to overcome the dead weight of the fur trade and move on to other resources, namely oil and mining.

Finally, Peterborough author Enid Mallory has compiled a project I've wanted to do for some time. *Coppermine, The Far North Of George M. Douglas*, is album of Douglas photos, many never published before, and is sure to raise Douglas to his proper place in Canadian history. Ms Mallory has scoured the Public Archives, the Whalley papers at Queens University, among other sources, to add insight and names to the faces in the photos. She also includes his adventures in Great Slave and Great Bear Lakes in the 1920's and 1930's. par ¼tab She has taken information from letters written and received by Douglas,

It turned out Andrew and Sarah spent the time at Pat Campling's cottage near Lac La Ronge. Campling is the head of La Ronge Aviation, and large charter operator with bases in Lynn Lake, Manitoba and Yellowknife. We heard though the grapevine in Stanley Mission that the Royal Twin Otter was carpeted and their cabin was completely refurbished and a jacuzzi installed. So it seems the only white water the royal couple attempted this year was in the bathroom.

We arrived at the beautiful white Holy Trinity church ourselves in our uncarpeted Old Towns four days after the royal couple had spent an hour there at a church service. The local Bay Manager had made a small killing on Stanley Mission/Royal Tour T-shirts which sold like hotcakes to the travelling media herd, from Canada and the U.K.

When we arrived, everyone was gone. The white steepled church, built in 1851, had been recently renovated and sat alone, glowing white, on the north shore of the river. The church had been there first and a small town grew up around it. When the Hudson Bay Company built a post across the river some years later the town gradually drifted across to join it, leaving the church and its rolling graveyard to dominate the north side of the river.

The building, which is both a church and a historical building is enchanting. Perfectly preserved it is an architectural and historical treasure and a must-see for any passing canoeist. The graveyard is particularly interesting. Generations of native families and churchmen are buried there. Many with the traditional Cree carved picket fences around the plot. All were overflowing with colourful flowers following the royal visit.

Once a few miles past Stanley, we had the river to ourselves again. Off the beaten track with only the occasional fishing lodge to be seen. One such place, Anglers Lodge is a particularly scenic spot over looking a rapid. After lining the far side we ferried over to have a look at the place. At least that's what Sean said. I anticipated his motives were different and he emerged with a dozen cold cans of beer that were used to slake a hot thirst at the end of a sunny day.



Geoff and Sean Peake carry historic Rocky Mountain Portage on a trail worn through to bedrock by centuries of use.

We ran the remaining riffles with a cold Molson in our hands - usually just a dream. It was most appropriate however, as we were entering Drinking Lake. The lake was named from Voyageur days when they would consume kegs of rum. In fact the next set of rapids is named Keg!

We approached the end of our stretch of the Churchill and our last major obstacle was Grand Rapids. It was here, on the last ledge of the last rapid, that Peter Scott and

his father Angus, dumped - or swamped as it was recorded in the trip log of the time. We found ourselves at the same point, in lower water, again. Geoff, Sean and Peter went to scout and pronounced it tricky.

It was a run close to shore and a drop of three or four feet. The trick was turning left and not hitting the big white wave while avoiding the rock on the left. Geoff and Sean just about swamped, filling up with water but making it the few feet to shore. As Peter and I approached the drop Peter announced to me that we had a 90 per cent chance of dumping. I was mildly concerned and depressed to learn these odds were accurate as I went face first into the white wave and never came out as our Old Town U-boat continued on. No damage was done however and the only person to lose something was Peter '90%' Scott who didn't secure his hat!

From there it was a half-day to historic Frog Portage where the jump to the south, along the Sturgeon-Weir River was made.

This portage got its name from the frog skins stretched by local natives in a show of derision for the fur traders who stretched beaver skins in a similar way.

There is another marine railway there and a plaque in three official languages, French, English and Cree, telling of the importance of this vital transportation link.

The remaining miles to Pelican Narrows were quite pleasant. The Sturgeon-Weir begins narrowly and surprisingly has a huge lake (Wood) near the headwaters. The land is rocky and rolling and the scenery superb.

When we pulled into the thriving community of Pelican and man and a woman came up to us in an outboard and asked if we were the Peake party! It was Sid Robinson and friend who had just delivered our vehicle. Great timing!

It turns out the town was hopping. The numerous forest fires in the area had created a high number of well paying jobs. It seems that Pelican has the reputation as a real 'hot' spot. For a town of 1,000 people there is an RCMP force of 14 fulltime officers.

We quickly left Churchill country for the long drive back. But we'll treasure the memories and wonderful photos of our few miles on the Voyageurs Highway.

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