

## Fort Reliance – Ptarmigan Lake (06 July- 13 July 1970) Henning F. Harmuth

My partner Robert Schaefer of Washington DC and I flew on 6 July 1970 from Yellowknife to Ft. Reliance at the eastern end of Great Slave Lake. The starting date appears rather late since the ice at Ft. Reliance breaks up about two weeks earlier. However at the other end of the route we had to cross Beverly, Aberdeen and Schultz Lakes which are often ice blocked till the end of July. The trading post as well as the RCMP post at Ft. Reliance had been abandoned. Only a weather station, a fly-in fish camp and a few Indian families living in the area were left. The ruins of historic Ft. Reliance built in 1833 during Captain George back's expedition are 15km northeast at the mouth of the Lockhart River.

The following morning we paddled the 8km across the lake to the mouth of Glacier Creek (02-53). The name of this creek is due to the accumulation of ice produced by its overflows during winter which provides a conspicuous landmark for the canoist. The mouth of Glacier Creek is the start of Pikes Portage Route to Artillery Lake. Pikes Portage starts with a 6km long portage, ascending somewhat more than 100m. It is well beaten at its beginning but becomes occasionally quite unrecognisable in swampy areas. For some distance we had to walk on a snow field that, of course, showed no marks whatsoever. The heat generated by the heavy portaging made it impossible to wear a mosquito net and the insect repellent was quickly rinsed off by sweat. We did not enjoy the portage but the mosquitos did. Twenty-two hours after leaving Ft. Reliance we had all our gear at the south end of Harry Lake, where one finds a good campsite.

The following day we paddled to the north end of Harry Lake, made the short portage to French Lake and from there to Acres Lake. The creek between Acres and Kipling Lakes could be paddled. On 8 July we reached the portage at the north end of Kipling Lake to Burr Lake. It is about 2km long. Another, equally long portage leads from the north end of Burr Lake to Toura Lake. At the north end of Toura lake a portage of about 1km leads to an unnamed lake (25-71), which provides an excellent jump-off point for a day hike to Parry Falls, only 8km away as the crow flies, but somewhat farther as man walks due to the many lakes and ponds. Parry Falls is one of the sights of northern Canada, tumbling 40m over a ledge. The last stretch of the route follows the Lochart River above the falls where powerful rapids are a sight in their own right. A portage between this unnamed lake and the southern end of Artillery Lake is hard to find. A well-beaten trail at the north end of the lake turns east and seems to peter out in a narrow gorge. One must squeeze through between the boulders in this gorge to find the trail again, which leads to a small pond and then on to Artillery Lake. The distance is about 2km. If one does not force ones way through this gorge, one must take a much longer and steeper route over the mountain to the north of the gorge. Artillery Lake is 203m above Great Slave Lake according to the topographic map.

We paddled about 15km north on Artillery Lake and pitched camp on the east shore across from Timber Bay. The time taken from Ft. Reliance to here was four days, plus one day for the visit to Parry Falls. On the following day we paddled about 50km north on Artillery Lake in perfect weather. The trees come to an end around Crystal Island. Two log cabins could be seen on the island. Many sandy beaches along the shores of Artillery Lake provide excellent camping. On July 12 we reached the mouth of the upper Lochart River. It turned out we could paddle upstream without much trouble. Only in the evening when approaching the first rapid (75-43) did we have to resort to wading. This rapid drops about 3m. The map (1:506,880) of 1951 shows a drop of 5 metres for this rapid and 3 metres for the following one, but this is too much since the altitude difference between Artillery Lake and Ptarmigan Lake above the rapids is only 6.4m according to the topographic map (1:250,000) of 1965. The following day we portaged this rapid as well as a second one with a drop of some 2m (75-46) and camped at the south end of the peninsula sticking into Ptarmigan Lake from the south. Three hours paddle brings one to a narrow spot in the lake (87-65) and two more hours to the eastern end of the lake (94-64). The topographic map shows a rapid here but actually this is a boulder strewn bed of a stream without water in it. A short portage leads to an unnamed lake and about 1km paddling along its north shore brings one to the height of land at Hanbury Portage (95-63). A small cairn marks the spot.

## Back River Travel Notes Allan Jacobs

D: George Drought; used only for Drought distances. BG: Bob Bignell & Gene Chorostecki. DB: George Drought, Barbara Burton and companions. DD: Daniela Kosch & Doug Bell. HH: Hans Schneller & Hans Baumgartner (kayakers met on the river). LA: Linda Gordon & Allan Jacobs. MH: Marilyn Sprissler & Hendrik Herfst. SA: Stephen Catlin & Allan (again).

C: centre L: river left R: river right CWT: centre wave train Ded: dragged. Led: lined Ped: portaged.

### Upper Back River

Start on map 76C9 (NAD27).

Campsite DB1. ~426/808. D 51 km. 2 July 2000.

Enter map 76B12 (NAD27). Note that the UTM is discontinuous at the boundary (D 51 km) with map 76C9.

We landed on Jim Magrum Lake (elevation 316 m) on 5 July 2005 and camped.

[Back], 2 July 1834: *A line of rapids ... led us to an opening or small lake four miles broad, bounded on the north by a ridge of blue mountains ... which cut the lake at a right angle. The centre, and, indeed, the greater part was covered with ice.* The identification of the rapids with Muskox, and of the lake with Jim Magrum, is certain. At the western end of the lake was a large Indian encampment where Back met again his old acquaintance and Indian belle Green Stockings: *she was still the beauty of her tribe; and, with that consciousness which belongs to all belles, savage or polite, seemed by no means displeased when I sketched her portrait.* Back recorded the weather that day as thick and foggy, just what we experienced.

Campsite N1. 572/802. Class C site. Tent sites OK; good in and out. 5 July. D 51 km.

**R7 596/824:** Below the exit from Jim Magrum Lake. Scout! I messed up here (my excuse, lame I admit, is the high water). Whatever the reason, we missed the extreme L channel run by DB & Rob Perkins and ended up instead on an island just L of a CIII+ ledge, with a third channel R of the ledge. We looked at the L channel, but it didn't look so great, even with high water. After lunch and much scouting and discussion, we Ped (nasty, over large rocks) and Led around the ledge; we then put in, joined the L channel and ran a CI+. After scouting this rapid (**596/824**) rather thoroughly, DB ran down the channel on the extreme L; about the far R channel, DB says careful, scout.

[Back], 4 July: *An increasing current brought us to a strong rapid and fall, with an island in the centre. His boat got hung up on a rock and was scraped in one place but not seriously damaged.* Here Back met Akaitcho again. The strong rapid and fall is clearly **596/824**.

[Anderson], 14 July: *The ladings were carried at the rapid where Back nearly lost his boat, but the canoes were merely lifted over a ledge of rock ....*The rapid is clearly **596/824**.

**622/829:** Ran easy swift on the L side of the island. DB, who says easy swift, did the same.

[Back], 5 July: *we entered a small lake, whose western shore led to a narrow channel formed by an island with a rapid on either side. The one which we ran was rather shoal, but the boat did not ground.*

The rapid must be **622/829**; the western shore comment is confusing though since the river here flows almost due east.

Enter map 76B13 (NAD27); D 60 km.

**695/887:** Ran the R side of the L channel, easy swift with rocks in the C. DB did the same.

[Back], 8 July: *A wide and deep channel that was passed terminated in a rapid, which ... was run with a full cargo, and brought us to a small lake.* Identification of the rapid with **695/887** and the small lake with Gold Lake, more than likely in any case, is supported by his later remark that the small lake forms the northern boundary of the Heywood chain; look at the topo if you have any doubt.

Campsite N2. **704/905**. Class C site (tent sites OK, nasty landing and loading). 6 July. D 69 km.

Campsite DB2. ~**704/912**. D 70 km.

**720/952:** Ran a swift at the contour-line crossing.

[Back], 8 July: *The river now became contracted, and formed an easy rapid* which is almost certainly **720/952**.

Enter map 76B14 (NAD27); D 91 km.

Campsites N3 & N4. **757/011**. Class D site (damp, ugly landing & loading, only two places to land and load). Necessity site (forced in by wind, windbound the next day); reasonable walking though. 7 & 8 July. D 83 km.

**R8 827/086:** Ran R side of CWT. DB says swift. (CWT = Centre Wave Train)

**R8 824/088:** Ran L side of CWT. DB says swift.

Return to map 76B13; D 95 km.

**R8 820/090:** Ran swift, as did DB.

Enter map 76G4 (NAD27); D 96 km.

Campsite DB3. ~**810/108**. D 96 km.

**R9 812/108:** Ran big waves; CII-.

**R9 812/114:** Ran big waves; CII-.

**R9 809/127:** Ran big waves; CII-.

[Back], 9 July: *An easy rapid ... a very long rapid immediately succeeding ... a river joining from the westward ... a rapid then followed ... another tributary was observed coming from the same quarter.*

I identify these five features with:

1. narrows at **827/086** 2. the stretch below it 3. river joining at **810/108** 4. long rapid below it 5. the river from Fidler Lake

Then all three rapids mentioned by Back between **596/894** and **827/086** are accounted for, specifically as **622/829**, **695/887** and **720/952**. BTW, the Fidler brothers John and Henry/Harry were part of [Anderson]'s party; he calls the first Half-breed steer'n and the second Half-breed mid'n. Use of this ugly term was common among Pure Breeds like Anderson and Thomas Simpson; a notable exception is John Rae, who, though he used it, apologized for doing so.

Enter map 76G3 (NAD27); D 100 km.

**R10 884/177:** Scout! Big bad rapid. Scouted from L shore; started hard L, then dodged rocks. CII+ (easy run as we did it but with opportunity to go wrong). DB says big rapid; ran tight L.

Comment: I considered but eventually rejected identifying 884/177 with [Back]'s rapid at An island, near the centre ... I'm a bit uneasy with my decision though, for if I am correct then either Back didn't consider 884/177 worth mentioning or he forgot it; and [Anderson] doesn't mention it explicitly.

890/208: Ran swift. DB did the same. [Back] doesn't mention this one either.

895/232: Fast water only at the bend (explicitly, we saw no rapid as marked on the DB map).

Campsite N5. 898/233. Class A site. Just above Malley Rapids, so called. 9 July. Same as DB4. D 116 km.

R11 900/234: Malley Rapids, so called. Scout! We scouted from the R side, below our campsite. In the morning, we ran the R channel on the far R, dodging rocks. CII+. DB did the same.

Comment: George Drought pointed out, and I agree, that the cartographer got it wrong; as discussed below, 900/234 is not Back's Malley Rapids.

[Back], 9 July: *An island near the centre of the river, with thin columns of mist rising ... on each side.*

Although the phrasing seems bloated, this must be 900/234 (which the topo incorrectly calls Malley Rapids).

R12 891/265: Ran CI+. DB says swift. This might be the first of Back's no less than five rapids (notes for 9 July), though I counted only four.

R13 893/278: About 4 km of continuous CII+ with many boulders, ledges and holes, requiring frequent and major course changes. The length made it difficult to scout much of it from shore, so many of us did boat scouts (aka blind probes) only. For us, the rapids started at the narrows, rather than several km downstream as marked on the topo. Several boats went L (as suggested by DB), others R (following Robert Perkins). All got through after much bumping and grinding; several tubes in Marilyn's boat got bent. DB says Care!, Scout!, spray covers on; ran L side.

[Back], 9 July: *a long and appalling rapid, full of rocks and large boulders.* He called this one Malley's Rapids in honour of the crew member who got lost on the portage. Back camped below it that night.

[Anderson], 15 July: His party left from a point below 596/824. *Ran 10 Rapids with full loadings, except at 2 rapids ... Encamped at 9 1/4 p.m. at the foot of Malley's Rapids ... I do not find the Rapids nearly as bad as I was led to expect by ... Capt. Back's narrative - the water was certainly lower than it was when he passed, which renders them in this part of the river worse.*

Comment: George Drought was the first (known to me) to suggest that the topo is marked incorrectly; explicitly, Back's Malley Rapids is 893/278, rather than 900/234 as marked on the topo. Here are five points in favour of this interpretation:

1. 900/234 is neither long nor appalling. On the other hand, 893/278 is long and more difficult than 900/234; the appalling bit looks like hype though.
2. 893/234 is the only rapid on this part of the river that comes close to fitting the long and appalling description.
3. How could anyone get lost on the very short portage past 900/234?
4. I provide above a plausible identification for Back's rapid with an island, namely 900/234; no other rapid fits this bill either.
5. The stretch between the bottom of 900/234 and 893/278 is about three miles long, just like Back's nearly three miles between the island rapid and Malley's Rapids. The only contrary point I can think of is that I've been unable to make one-to-one correspondences between all the rapids mentioned by [Back] and those that we saw. Summary: Identifying the island rapid with 900/234 and Malley Rapids with 893/278 both make sense, whereas the topo's MALLEY RAPIDS at 900/234 does not.

R14 916/322: Ran about 1 km of CI+ rapids. DB says great rapid; ran L side.

[Back], 10 July: *an intricate piece of water before us ... wedged in between two hills that forbade landing ... rocks under water ... a passage in a strong current, broken by shoals and sharp stones.* The identification with 916/322 looks sound; the banks of 916/322 were steep enough that we didn't consider getting out to scout it, but the difficulty was less than suggested by Back's other comments.

R15 914/343: Couldn't scout; ran mostly C through huge waves. CII+. DB says Scout!; ran C, through huge waves.

[Back], 10 July: *Another rapid and a portage took us to what would have been still water ....* The identification of the rapid with 914/343 looks sound.

Campsite DB5. ~902/372. D 132 km.

Enter map 76G6 (NAD27); D 134 km.

Swifts at 874/450, 893/468, 902/484 and several other places before the island with tip at 927/540.

Campsite N6. 926/538. Class E site (wet, grassy, worst on the trip, quaking). Necessity site (getting late and we hadn't seen anything for a long while). 10 July. D 152 km.

Comment: I lost contact with Back's journal at some point below 914/343; from there to Beechey Lake, I couldn't make identifications with any confidence. His low islands might be the islands below our campsite N6, the narrow in his *From a narrow we emerged into a wide space* might be the narrow at 972/593, and the river in his *another large river* might be the river joining at 982/618. But the large river might well be the one joining at 883/470, and so on. In fact, some of Back's descriptions made no

sense to me. For example, the *lake, ruffled by a head wind ...* might be the lake starting near 004/631, but we saw no rapid after 998/637 which is upstream from the lake.

**R16 993/633:** Scout! Having watched BG dump small-time on trying the ledge on the R, the others ran the huge waves in the C. CII+. DB says bad ledges on both sides; ran C.

**R17 998/637:** Ran L channel, as did DB.

Comment: For the latitude just above the last rapid before Beechey, Back gives the value 65° 38', surprisingly different from the modern value of about 65° 29'. Whatever the source (transcription, typographical ...) of the error, the 38' should have been 28' or 29'. My argument is first that measurement errors in latitudes (not longitudes) were much smaller than 10' in those times, and second that the latitude below the Beechey portage is given correctly.

[Back], 13 July: *A small tributary came in from the left, and thence the river spread itself into several branches ....*

[Anderson], 16 July: *All the rapids mentioned by Back were run without difficulty. The water must have been higher and the Rapids stronger when he passed. Back's description of the country is in general very correct but I did not perceive several branches of the river before arriving at L. Beechy*

Comment: The small tributary might be the one arriving at 001/642. Like [Anderson], we didn't see the branches, only the islands marked on the topo, but maybe Back just used the wrong phrase. *[Back]'s strong ripple with white waves ... heavy rapid* (13 July) must be the river arriving at 041/656. Again though, details of his description don't agree with the topo or what we saw.

[Back], 13 July: Referring to Bathurst Inlet and Back's River (now called the Western River), he comments *Our proximity to the coast, however, explained the cold and dreary weather which had lately incommoded us.*

Campsite DB6. ~050/655. D 171 km.

Enter map 76G7 (NAD27); D 174 km. We saw no good campsites on the R side of Beechey until well down the lake. Rob Perkins says that the L side is better for campsites; we saw few over there either, but then we stuck close to the R shore. [Back]'s party was blocked by ice here on 14 July.

Campsite N7. 173/514. Class C site. Tent rings. 11 July. D 191 km.

Campsite DB7. ~227/458. very good. D 198 km.

Campsite. 255/398. Had lunch there.

Skirt corners of maps 76G2 and 76G8.

Enter map 76G1 (NAD27); D 211 km.

Campsites. There are several good sites on the L, past the constriction.

Campsite N8. ~381/361. Class A site. Start of portage; nice walk to view cascades. Same as DB8 & DB9. 12 July. D 218 km.

Back arrived here on 15 July, Anderson on 17 July.

**R18 378/365:** We portaged the entire Beechey Cascades on the R, about 2 km and 35 minutes each way. There's no real trail (we didn't see the one marked on the topo); we went a little L of the rocks visible on the horizon from the campsite and then followed our noses (and ears) to the end of the rapids. The top part looks maybe lineable but forget it; you'll end up portaging the same distance but over tougher ground. Hans Baumgartner (kayaker) ran the whole thing but ordinary paddlers won't touch the bottom part. The put-in is very rocky; we had to protect our Pakcanoes from the wash.

Campsite. Rob Perkins camped in the grass above the put-in point at the end of the portage; the site didn't appeal to us.

[Back], 15 July: *... loud roar that was heard long before we got to it ... an awful series of cascades, nearly two miles in length, and making, in the whole, a descent of about sixty feet.* He gives the latitude at the end of the portage as 65° 15'.

[Anderson], 17 July: *A complete portage was made at the Cascades; all the Rapids below it were safely run with full cargoes, with the exception of one where the canoes were lightened ....* A candidate for the one is 76G1 495/300. BTW, his party was on the water from 2:45 am to 9:15 pm.

Enter map 76G8 (NAD27) at D 224 km. The broad part of the river (Back, 16 July) is not so broad, but the river does take a sudden turn to the northward, after which it bends suddenly to the southward.

Return to map 76G1 at D 231 km and from the upper end of the southward reach there is indeed no passage perceptible at its farther extremity (Back, 16 July).

**R19 495/300:** Scout! We did a lengthy scout on the R, of this one and of **R20 503/295**, the latter from afar. We ran 495/300 on the hard R, dodging rocks. CII+. DB ran R.

**R20 503/295:** Ran big waves in C to avoid bigger waves on the sides. CII-. DB ran C.

[Back], 16 July: *... an extremely sharp angle led us between cliffs in a contracted channel into a rapid, at the foot of which it was necessary to land to avoid another, the waves of which were too high to allow of its being run with the cargo.*

There are actually two sharp angles, at 480/300 and 492/295; I recall that the second has a water survey station (no cabin). The rapid and another are certainly 495/300 and 503/295. JR Note: this is gauging station 10RA001.

Campsite N9. 509/291. Class D site. The tent sites are class B but are far from the water, over rocks; and landing and loading are bad. The island is home to angry terns (wear your hat). Same as DB10. 13 July. D 242 km.

R21 522/288: Ran CI+ at R turn; not marked on topo.

[Back], 16 July: *A loud roar of rushing water, heard for a distance of about a mile, had prepared us for a long line of rapids, which now appeared breaking their furious way through mounds and ranges of sand-hills of the most fantastic outline.* These are likely the rapids from 522/288 to 604/282.

Enter map 76H4 (NAD27); D 245 km.

R22 534/283: Ran CI+ at L turn; not marked on topo.

R23 542/287: R turn. BG half-swamped going over the C ledge; seeing this, the others ran R through big waves. CII-.

R24 550/278 (approx): Ran CI+ at L turn.

560/283: Saw nothing worthy of note; rocks are marked on topo.

577/282: Saw nothing worthy of note; rocks are marked on topo.

R25 584/283: Started in C, then went R. BenRalph rapids. CII-.

Campsite DB11. ~611/272. Necessity site due to BenRalph dump? D 254 km.

R26 602/283 (approx): Ran CI- on R.

R27 604/282 (approx): Ran CI- on L.

[Back], 16 July: *The course of the river became afterwards more tortuous.* This looks like a reference to the bends starting near 600/284. *We glided quickly along with the strong current, passing by peaked sand-hills ...*

Route note: We took the L channel around the island at 627/267; the R side is likely also OK. Starting about here, the river is sandy for many km downstream. Sand bars lurk just below the surface; keep your eyes open, stand up to scout and be prepared to get out and wade. The 1:50k topos are useful in some cases for they suggest clean routes through the sand bars. Navigation is especially difficult in high water and it is especially difficult for kayakers; HH lost many hours due to sitting so close to the water.

Enter map 76H3 (NAD27); D 271 km.

Campsites N10 & N11. 790/215. Class C site (good tent sites but far from water). Necessity site (looming storm which however missed us); the wind was up a bit the next day and we stayed put, with some dissent. 14 & 15 July. D 274 km.

Campsite DB12. ~919/159. lovely. D 289 km.

Campsite. 963/153. Class B site. We had lunch there. D 294 km.

Enter map 76H2 (NAD27); D 299 km.

088/173: Fast water only. DB says swifts.

R28 103/184: Scout! CIV in centre. We scouted on the R and decided that the rapid was nowhere runnable. We spent much effort lining and dragging down the R, the last bit over a gravel bar. DB ran R.

R29 112/186: Scout! Started R, then followed CWT. CI+. DB says swift.

R30 125/196: Scout! (not in Allan Jacob's notes but clearly visible on satellite image)

R31 135/194: Scout! CIV in centre. We scouted on the R for a long time; after much discussion, we all decided to run it. All four boats backferried hard R, turned sharp R at the corner, then pulled into quieter water on the R. CIII-. DB says run middle of the L tongue (not an option for us) or run hard R. JR Note: R31 may actually be what I've called R30, however R31 may still be rapids (appears to be white water on satellite image).

[Back], 16 July: *After crossing a small lake ... the stream again contracted to about three hundred yards, and precipitated itself over a bed of rocks, forming rapids and cascades, which compelled us to carry the principal baggage ... Three detached and lofty hills of gneiss, with obtuse conical tops quite bare, here formed conspicuous objects.* The rapids and cascades are likely 088/173 to 135/194.

R32 139/200: Scout! CIV in centre. We scouted on the R for a long time; there was a chancey route on the R but we decided to line R. It was really nasty; DD unloaded packs from their Pakboat and others should have (some Pakboat tubes got bent). DB sneaked R.

[Back], 16 July: *The river ... now gradually contracted to about fifty yards, and this narrow space had projecting rocks which compressed the passage still more. In the language of the voyageurs, this form is denominated a spout ... We ran this one, and were lifted considerably higher than the side water, as we shot down with fearful velocity.* This one looks like 139/200; in confirmation,



Back mentions no more rapids until the mouth of the Baillie: *The stream after these agitations settled into a calm though not very gentle current ....*

[Anderson], 18 July: *The canoes were lightened at the 2nd cascade and portages made at the 1st Cascade and the 'dalles' previous to arriving at Baillie's R.* I guess that the 1st is 103/184, that the 2nd is 135/194 and that the dalles is 139/200.

[Back], 16 July: *... a magnificent river, as broad as the Thames at Westminster, joining ... from the eastward ... received the name of Baillie's River. ... Not a great way from this we encamped.*

[Anderson], 18 July, of the Baillie: *... that stream is now only few yards in width, tho when the water is high it is evidently an imposing stream.*

Route note: We saw no good campsites on either side for several km below the Baillie. I vaguely recall a promising site a few km above the Baillie.

Campsites DB13 & DB14. ~191/226. We saw nothing suitable anywhere on this stretch (and disagree with DB's comment that this area has good campsites; recall though that we had much higher water). D 320 km.

Campsite N12. 204/250. Class D site, verging on E (damp, grass, bad access to water). We camped there, beside HH, because it was getting late, we had had a tough day, and we hadn't seen a decent site for a long time. 16 July. D 323 km.

Enter map 76H1 (NAD27); D 327 km.

[Back], 17 July: *Sand-banks and islands were constantly met with; and from our ignorance of the channels between them, we were repeatedly aground. In these cases, the people had to wade until the boat again floated freely, with the chance of being thrown into the same situation ten minutes afterward.* To this I can say only right on George!

Route note: Go R around the island at 389/290; the L channel is likely dry in low water.

Route note: Go L around the island at 457/318; we Ded down the R channel even in high water (JR Note: on satellite image R (south) side looks as good if not better).

Enter map 66E4 (NAD27); D 354 km.

Campsite N13. 515/341. Class C site. Same as DB15 or close to it. The sides of the river are little but sand flats for many km upstream and downstream. 17 July. D 360 km.

Enter map 66E5 (NAD27); D 365 km.

Campsite DB16. ~694/485. D 386 km.

Enter map 66E6 (NAD27); D 387 km.

Route note: Go R around the island at 745/515; we Ded down the L channel even in high water.

Route note: The hill at 746/532 is worth a stop; DD say the view is good and there's a cairn with notes.

[Back], 17 July, on passing the mouth of the Warren River: *The banks here were higher, sometimes rising into cliffs, but of the same dry and sandy character, barren and cheerless.*

[Anderson], 19 July: *Passed the Warren and the Jervoise* (sp?).

Campsite N14. 780/548. Class C site (grassy). 18 July. D 399 km.

Campsite N15. 802/568. Class C site (sandy, little shelter). Necessity site (wind). 19 July. D 404 km.

812/633: Ran swift. Better start L; BG went too far R and had to work through a gravel bar. DB says swift but Scout!

813/637: Ran swift.

820/643: Ran swift.

Enter map 66E11 (NAD27); D 415 km.

[Back], 17 July: *... we passed Jervoise River ... and then came to low sandy opening, which seemed to be completely shut in, until at the northern limit a rapid channel led us among some rocks.*

R33 832/712: Part 1 of Hawk Rapids. We ran R; maybe we should have scouted it. I suggest that you approach it slowly; it was a CI- for us, but maybe it's harder in lower water. DB ran R.

R34 836/712: Part 2 of Hawk Rapids. Scout! We scouted from the R shore. The main obstacle was a big pillow on the R of C; some of us ran R of it, others L. We all then cut to the R to miss some big waves. CII+. DB ran R.

R35 832/712: (JR – probably should be 845/710 to 852/710) Part 3 of Hawk Rapids. Scout! High water had opened up a channel on the R. We ran down the C of the R channel (steep but easy, CI-), avoiding really big stuff in the L channel; then we went R to avoid big eddies and whirlpools. DB ran R, I think down the R side of what for us was the L channel.

[Back], 18 July, on running Hawk Rapids:... *the threatening appearance of the curling waves, and the roar and gloom of a defile ...*

*frowning rocks ...the boat was whirled about in whirlpools ... and but for the amazing strength of McKay ... it must inevitably have been crushed against the faces of the protruding rocks....craggy, broken and overhanging, towered in stratified and many-coloured masses far above the chafing torrent....a deep and unsettled gloom in the abyss ...I felt relieved as if from a load when we once more burst forth into the bright sunshine of day...whirlpools and eddies, which strangely buffeted her about.*

[Anderson], 20 July: *The rapids were run safely; at this stage of the water though strong they are not dangerous.* On both 19 and 20 July his party was very much incommoded by sand and banks.

Campsite DB17. ~868/717. D 426 km.

R36 881/719: Ran CII-.

895/737: Go R of the island; the L channel ended in a gravel bar even in high water. But the R channel had bad eddies and BG dumped major-league (long swim).

Campsite N16. 904/754. Class C site (good view and good tent sites, but up hill and far from water). Necessity site (dump). 20 July. D 433 km.

Enter map 66E10 (NAD27); D 435 km.

R37 958/756: Ran CI+ with bad whirlpool. DB says swift.

R38 985/756: Ran CI+ with big waves. DB says swift.

R39 055/768: Ran CI+; started L, then swung to the R. DB says swift.

Campsite DB18. ~073/770. D 450 km.

078/764: Nothing at the constriction.

Enter map 66E9 (NAD27); D 460 km.

Route note: We went L of the island at 165/779; this passage may be draggy or even dry in low water.

[Back], 18 July: *Still widening, the river rolled on without obstruction, being here large enough to remind me of the McKenzie.... a large river, nearly as broad as that which we were descending, came through a low country to the right ... It was named after Rear-Admiral McKinley.* Later the same day he passed another wide tributary, called, after his Majesty's Consul at New York, Buchanan's River. Here Back saw many Inuit fences and blinds. *The breadth of the river now varied from a quarter to a mile and a half; and ... made a bend to the north. The country became decidedly hilly, with an odd mixture of ravines, conical sand-hills with black mossy tops, and isolated rocks. which rose like sombre fortresses ....a broad river ... has been named after ... Sir Charles Bullen ....*

Campsite N17. 225/789. Class C (?) site. 21 July. D 468 km.

Campsite DB19. ~323/865. so so site. D 484 km.

Campsite N18. 342/895. Class D site (grassy). 22 July. D 490 km.

Enter map 66E16 (NAD27); D 495 km.

Enter map 66F13 (NAD27); D 515 km.

Back entered Pelly Lake (*a large lake, full of deep bays*) 19 July; one bay was choked with ice. Anderson entered Pelly on 22 July.

Campsite DB20. ~647/121. D 519 km.

Campsite N19. 728/158. Class C site. 23 July. D 529 km.

Route note: The high water and a stiff north wind made navigation difficult through the sand flats. BG found a passage at 775/190 through the peninsula.

Route note: We went L around the island at 858/178 to get out of the wind, have lunch and look for Inuit sites.

Campsites DB21 & DB22. ~857/183. D 542 km.

Enter map 66F14 (NAD27); D 542 km.

Campsite. 890/151. Class C site, near Pelly Cairn [Pelly]. Inuit site to west, as mentioned by [Perkins]. D 546 km.

Campsite N20. 916/135. Class D site. On island. The tent sites were OK, but the approach was through shoals, making for bad landing and loading. Necessity site (north wind down channel). 24 July. D 549 km.

Campsite DB23. ~055/093. We had lunch there and looked at the cabins. D 565 km.

[Back], 19 July: *Having ... passed two openings of about fifteen and twenty miles in extent, we landed on an island ... . From this point I got cross bearings, and a view of another opening ... ; a piece of an old kieyak, blanchd with age, and other remnants of Esquimaux workmanship, showed that the place was frequented by them some part of the year. ... Leaving the island, a slight*

*current piloted us to a rapid ....* Likely the island is the one at **056/082**, 1 km south of the present-day cabins; if so, there is an obvious connection between those who hunted there in Back's time and those who built the cabins and there is likely also a connection, chilling to me, with the Garry Lake famine of 1958, as described in [Tammarniit (Mistakes)]. The rapid has to be **089/089**.

Enter map 66F15 (NAD27); D 569 km.

**R40 089/089:** Between Pelly and Upper Garry Lakes. Like other parties, we took the L channel around the island. We ran just R of the ledge sticking out from the L shore, then cut L to miss huge waves. CII-. DB says easy run on L. HH started on the R, then worked to C.

[Anderson], 22 July: *Saw 2 Lodges of Esquimaux at the Rapids between L. Pelly and Garry ... ; they evidently have intercourse with the Churchill Esquimaux ....* It is unclear whether he means at the Rapids literally or whether he is referring to the site seen by Back (the site of the present-day cabins?); I favour the former interpretation.

[Back], 19 July: *The strong current from the rapid gave us some expectation that ... the lake was at an end; but to our chagrin and annoyance, we soon again found ourselves in a wide, indefinable space, studded with islands of sand-hills, with, occasionally, a clear horizon to the S. and N. W.* The rapid is **089/089**; the islands are Mission Island and the other sandy islands in Upper Garry.

**Campsites N21 & N22. 198/099. Mission Island. Class A site.** Good walking, major historical interest, beach, good landing and loading. Our float-plane pilot found the water near the campsite too shallow and used instead the beach upstream. 25 & 26 July. DB24 looks to be about 1 km east. D 581 km.

### Lower Back River

Route note: After leaving mission island, we stayed close to the L shore until well into Garry Lake. The topo shows a 2 m difference in elevations between Upper Garry and Garry Lake proper but we saw no fast water.

Enter map 66F16 (NAD27); D 594 km.

Route note: We had no wind and so went pretty well straight across to the east shore of Garry.

Campsite DB25. **~424/048**. D 605 km.

Campsite N23. **437/069**. Class B site. Inuit site. 27 July. D 607 km.

[Back], 19 July: *... our hopes were again blighted by the startling sight of extensive and unbroken fields of ice, stretching to the extremest point of vision. They camped on an island with tent rings. It was with indescribable sorrow that I beheld ... a firm field of old ice, which had not yet been disturbed from its winter station.*

[Back], 20 July: *... we ascended the highest hill near; but only to see one wide and dazzling field of ice extending far away in every direction... we continued to creep slowly to the south, sometimes wedged in the ice, at others cutting through it with axes ... lifting her with fenders ... wade and carry pieces to lighten the boat ... portage ... she was absolutely lifted ... benumbed as they were from being so long in the water ... in sixteen hours we had only come fourteen miles.*

Route note: We went L around the island at **490/120**.

Route note: We went L around the island at **520/125**, into Lower Garry. The topo shows a 3 m difference in elevations between Garry and Lower Garry but we saw no fast water.

Campsite DB26. **~535/126**. Class A site (we had lunch there). D 621 km.

Enter map 66G13 (NAD27); D 622 km.

Route note: We went pretty well due east, close to the north shore.

Campsite N24. **679/123**. Class D site. 28 July. D 636 km.

Route note. We threaded our way between islands, going L of the one at **715/100**.

Campsite DB27. **~723/105**. D 640 km.

Campsite. **728/095**. Good, esker. D 641 km.

Campsite. **761/108**. Excellent site in small bay, 1 or 2 tents. D 646 km.

Campsite DB28. Not marked on DB maps.

Enter map 66G14 (NAD27); D 647 km.

[Anderson], 23 July, on Garry Lake: *We were ... retarded by cutting through ice 2 feet thick ... Either we are very stupid or the map in Back's work is very incorrect.* At times, Anderson gets quite annoyed with Back's maps; more of such is to come.

[Back], 21 July: *... the main body of ice commenced again, and stretched to an undefinable distance ... in four hours we were lucky enough to have advanced eight miles ... a portage was immediately made, and the boat lifted over into the water ... we were again stopped by ice, so thick that all our endeavours to cut a passage with the axes ... were utterly in vain ... landed and made a second portage across the rocks, which brought us to a sheet of water terminating in a rapid; and this, though seldom a pleasing object to those who have to go down it, was now joyfully hailed by us as the end of a lake which had*



*occasioned us so much trouble and delay.* And so finally they came to the rapids between what are now Lower Garry Lake and Buliard Lake.

[Anderson], 24 July: *It was near midnight before the men were laid down last night. I therefore allowed them to sleep until 5 1/2 a.m. ... we were ... much retarded by cutting our way through the ice ... from 2 to 3 feet thick ... We at last reached the rapid at the end of L. Garry to which we joyfully ... bid adieu. ... This rapid was easily run.*

Route note: The DB route, as planned, follows the L shore for wind shelter. Having no wind, we headed straight for the point at 855/145 (D 659 km).

**R41 858/162:** Exit from Lower Garry Lake to Buliard Lake. CI+. We took the leftmost of the three channels, as did DB. LA started R, got swept to C, worked way back R; MH started R, went over to L. DB says easy, ran R.

Comments: From the bottom, the middle channel looked bad and the rightmost (barely discernible) looked to have little water. [Anderson] notes that there are three rapids, so he must have looked carefully. Back descended this rapid on 21 July, Anderson on 24 July.

Enter map 66J3 (NAD27); D 665 km.

Campsite N25. **892/205.** Class A site (great views, good walking). 29 July. Same as DB29 & DB30 (windbound). D 678 km.

[Back], 21 July, on Buliard Lake: *Long ranges of conical and cliff-broken sand-hills extended irregularly nearly round the compass ... gigantic boulders were strewn in every direction, and in two instances were seen on the summits of ... sand-hills ... One of these was very conspicuous ... thus forming an excellent mark for the rapid in any direction.* That hill is easily visible from Lower Garry.

[Back], 22 July, on the rapids below Buliard Lake:

*... a swift current ... brought us to a strong rapid, the descent of which looked exceedingly like going down-hill ... plunged into the midst of curling waves and large rocks ... one towering wave threw us on a rock, and something crashed ... we escaped from this without other damage than a broken keel plate ... but rapid still followed rapid in disagreeably quick succession, and I was not a little rejoiced when we were again fairly in smooth water.*

[Anderson], 24 July, on the same rapids:

*The rapids ... 5 in number are all strong and dangerous with the exception of the last one, a little below which we encamped at 8 1/4 p.m.; 2 decharges were made--at most of these rapids there are several channels. Capt. Back's map ... is on so small a scale as to be utterly useless in these large bodies of water.*

Route note: We took the R channel around the island at 925/235. If you are thinking of going down the L side of the island, better scout it. Water flowing down the L side of the island splits; part flows to the R and so to the rapid at 933/236, and part flows dead ahead to the L channel around the island at 937/240; DB says that the latter channel is CV. If you go L around 925/235, you will certainly have a tough time at the junction of the channels, near 952/258, and perhaps also above that junction.

**R42 933/236:** Scout! High water had cut through the point at 933/235, generating a new channel and exposing a big rock. We stayed R (close to shore and to the R of the exposed rock), dodged boulders, joined the main flow and dodged more boulders.

CII- on our route but with opportunity to go wrong.

DB, who had lower water, ran L; DB says CIII, technical, big boulders, nasty.

**R43 946/237:** CIII. Big, bad, long rapids with large boulders at the bottom. It is difficult to scout from shore because you are out in the flow from 933/236; and it is difficult to portage. Both LA & MH started on the R; LA stayed R, MH went L. DB says large rapid with boulders at bottom.

**949/250:** Ran swift. Not on the 1:50k topo, not noted by DB.

**R44 949/253:** Ran CI+. DB says easy.

**R45 952/258:** Stop! CIV. We couldn't run it or line it so we Ped R about 50 m. Both channels coming in from the L were unrunnable. DB says CIV; Led R.

**R46 956/283:** Ran CI+ between islands; not noted on the 1:50k topo. DB says easy swift.

**977/306** (JR: think it should be 967/306): Ran swift. Not on the 1:50k too, not noted by DB.

Route note: We went L around the island at 995/325 and entered a shallow lakey area with however a good current. The current tends to sweep you to the L; if you want to go R around the island, you have to stay hard R before the point at 990/324. I don't know which side is better in either high or low water.

Enter map 66J2 (NAD27); D 686 km.

Campsite DB31. ~022/290. D 691 km.

**026/283:** Ran swift on R channel around island at 028/285; DB says easy swift. The L channel was almost dry, as noted by DB.

[Back], 22 July: *The islands were also numerous; and having passed between two where there was a rapid*  
Tentative identification of rapid is 031/285, though I don't understand the 'between two'.

**R47 031/285:** Ran CI+. DB says easy swift.

[Anderson], 25 July: ... *we reached an easy rapid, ...this led into an extensive sheet of water where the current became imperceptible; it ran on either hand N. and S. in deep bays. Land was seen in every quarter ... Tho distant.*  
The easy rapid must be 026/283; the extensive sheet of water must be Upper MacDougall.

Campsite N26. 049/273. Class C site. 30 July. D 694 km.

Route note: We had good current from 043/280 to the entrance to Upper MacDougall Lake.

074/203: Ran swift. DB did the same.

Route note: The channel between Upper and Lower MacDougall Lakes had good current.

Enter map 66G15 (NAD27); D 719 km.

Campsite N27. 155/147. Class D site. OK tent sites, but bad landing and loading; it was buggy when we landed but they vanished when it cooled off; there might be a better site at the point 100 m or so downstream. 31 July. D 723 km.

Campsite DB32. Very roughly 161/114. D 726 km.

[Back], 22 July, on Lower MacDougall Lake: *Still keeping south, we threaded a zigzag path through a barrier of ice, and were then led by the increasing noise [sic] to the end of the lake.*

[Anderson], 25 July: ... *we struck due south to the end of L. McDougall ... The map is perfectly useless. Again.*

[Back], 22 July, on the start of Rock Rapids, which was choked with ice when he arrived: ... *in a comparatively contracted channel, the whole force of the water glided smoothly but irresistibly towards two stupendous gneiss rocks, from five to eight hundred feet high, rising like islands on either side... succession of falls and cascades and whatever else is horrible...impetuous and deadly fury ... the remaining keel plate was entirely stripped away.* The latitude of Back's campsite that night (22 July) is given as 65° 54', which is just below the second part of Rock on present maps. The next day he ran three rapids, apparently going down (as we did) the L channel around the island at 185/065; he might have gone R of the island at 192/074 (we went L). He Ped the cargo at Part 3 of Rock. He seems to have camped (on 23 July) just below Part 3 or Rock. BTW, I was surprised to read Back's reference to atoms, the existence of which had been firmly established only 24 years before I believe.

Comment: Rock Rapids is plain dangerous. If you dump, you will likely have a long cold swim and you may well lose your boat. Allow two days to do the 10 km or so from the start of Rock to below Sinclair Falls; it makes sense to start Rock in the morning.

R48 165/126: Part 1 of Rock. Use your judgement on the upper bit, but be sure to pull over to the R well above the point (at 173/106) and Scout! We ran R, through over 1 km of CII-, passing the two canoes and the packs abandoned on the L shore by the Widgi group (who cost the Canadian taxpayer \$70,000 or so by activating their EPIRB). We pulled out on the R several 100 m above the point at 173/106.

R48 After a long scout, we ran past the point to calmer water where the bay opens up on the R and then ferried over to the top of the island at 175/095. This was CIII with huge waves and many big, bad boulders, about the worst stuff we ran on the whole river, though not as bad as what LA did at the bottom of Part 2.

R48 174/098: Part 2 of Rock. Scout! From the island, we checked out the L channel first; after deciding that neither drop was runnable, we climbed to the top of the hill (great views; if you go this way, don't do as we did and forget the cameras). We debated portaging across the island to below the second drop on the L channel, as other parties had done (from the cairns); later we much regretted not having done so.

We decided that the upper part of the R channel would have to be Led but that the lower part could be run; BAD decision. We ferried over to the R side of the R channel, Led for a while, Ped about 50 m (very bad), and Led some more. MH Led all the way to the bottom. LA got tired of lining and ran the rest down the C channel through monster waves (biggest either of us has ever run, wet or dry), getting enough water in the boat that we didn't dare do an eddy turn; we made a U-turn, front ferried in behind a rock and bailed for a while. DB Led the R side of the R channel, then sneaked R through the rest.

[Back], 23 July: *He ascended the highest of the rocks, which had a smooth table of quartz ... The Esquimaux had here erected a small obelisk of slabs.*

R48 182/080: Ran ledgey CI+. DB ran small chute on R. (??, L??).

Route note: We went L of the island at 192/074 and camped.

Campsite N28. 196/076. Class C site. On caribou migration path; ruts, silty water. 1 August. Same as DB33. D 732 km.

R48 192/083: Part 3 of Rock. Scout! We broke camp, paddled a bit, then got out and scouted on the L. There was no way we could run or line it so we Ped about 800 m to the second bay on the L; it was much easier over the tundra than near the river. We debated ferrying out from the bay and running the rest; I wimped out so we Led down the L side to the point, hopped in and carried on. A portage route is marked with cairns all the way from calm water just below our campsite to calm water below where we put in. DB says scout all; ran most on the L, ferried over to the R, ran R and Led the rest.

[Back], 23 July, on the third part of Rock: *Scarcely had we pushed from the shore, when we were in the midst of rapids. Two were run; but the third was too dangerous to allow the attempt ... The opposite shore was then discovered to be an island, round the western extremity of which another branch of the river cut a broad channel, and joined the one we had selected by a fall of ten feet.* The other branch is evidently the one going R around the island at 185/065.

R48 210/058: Ran CI+, notes bad. DB says easy, ran R.

R48 214/065: Ran CI+, notes bad; there might be another CI+ before the island at 215/070. DB says easy, ran R.

R48 214/072: Ran CI+, notes bad. DB says easy, ran R.

Joss Haiblen: (diary for Day 24), Lower Macdougall Lake to below Rock Rapids:

A cold overcast day with strong north winds, enough to windbind us had we been going against them. As it was we had a fast ride down Lower Macdougall on the 4 foot rollers, some of which were breaking. The marked rapid above Rock Rapids splits around an unmarked island. We took the left channel which had less water and smaller waves. We then ran down the left shore to the beginning of Rock Rapids - a truly powerful series with huge volume stoppers, etc. A portage was in order so we skirted the edge of the rocky peak adjacent to our landing, crossed a boulder-filled valley, and put in below the last big set - a portage of about 1 km. Below Rock Rapids we paddled to the left of the medium-sized island and then to the right of the larger one. We were able to run all rapids (on the left) up to the Deep Rose River junction. The Deep Rose water was clear green which contrasted with the darker waters of the Back. The last two marked sets around the island (really one) were too big to run although one could run down the left to the last ledge and then portage 100 yards. We chose not to do this as the mixing of currents at the bottom of the island produced large standing waves that did not look appealing on a cold grey day. Instead we decided to portage on the right bank down to where we are camped now at the foot of the abovementioned large standing waves - a portage of 750m.

R49 219/078: Sinclair Falls. After some discussion, we went to the extreme L and got out at the lip. We Ped about 100 m over the tundra, not the rocks; loose boulders make for very bad footing at the bottom.

DB took a small channel on the R before the falls and didn't have to portage; maybe they missed the great view we had of the falls.

[Back], 24 July: ... *having followed the turn to the north, and got down the rapids, we made a portage at Sinclair's Falls.*

[Anderson], 25 July: *We ran part of the Rock Rapids (3) but a decharge was made at the last one, after which we ran 3 Rapids and carried over the cascades and falls. We encamped at the foot of the latter (Sinclair's Falls). All these rapids are strong and hazardous.*

R50 224/080: Ran CI+ through big waves.

Enter map 66G16 (NAD27); D 738 km.

Campsite DB34. ~229/082. We saw nothing there but rocks. D 738 km.

R51 245/080: Saw only fast water at the rapid marked on the topo.

[Back], 24 July, on the stretch below Sinclair: *The river was now near a mile broad, full of small rocky islands, with falls between each.*

Campsites N29 & N30. 250/079. Class D site. The ground, which would have been damp even in good weather, was wet in the rain. We were windbound the second day. 2 & 3 August. D 740 km.

Route note: On the stretch north from our campsite, we stayed R around the two islands to get shelter from the north wind.

Campsite N31. 371/159. Class C site. 4 August. Same as DB35. D 762 km.

Enter map 66J1 (NAD27); D 768 km.

R52 422/223: Escape Rapids: Scout everything! Nasty, brutish and long. Allow most of a day for this one. There's a portage route, marked with cairns, down the R side; we didn't see the start of it, but it goes right to the bottom of the rapids.

Part 1 of Escape: We Led about 1 km on the R side (tiring), then paddled a bit to the bay on the R, through nasty whirlpools and eddy lines. We got out and scouted down the R side. We decided that the R side was unrunnable and that the L side, though with unrunnable pieces, was easier. But to get over there required a tough ferry.

R 53 Part 2 of Escape: MH ferried across to the L side, Led, Ped and paddled their way down, and camped near 445/019 (location uncertain). LA Led up the R side to get more space for the ferry, decided that the ferry was too risky, ran back to the bay, Ped about 1.5 km on the R side and camped near 433/205 (location uncertain). In the morning, LA spent 2+1/2 hours carrying stuff down the slope and loading the boat (one had to hold it off the rocks while the other loaded); there's an easier route down about 100 m farther downstream. LA ran some, got out and scouted, ran a CII- on the R to the bottom and rejoined MH.

DB ran the top part of Escape on the R, ferried to the L, ran R to the smooth rock island, suitcased 50 m, ran from L to R and ran the bottom on the R.

Comment: we didn't see the smooth rock island mentioned by George; likely the high water flooded it out.

[Back], 25 July, describing Escape: ... *a mile of heavy and dangerous rapids ...in the most imminent danger or perishing by being plunged into one of the gulfs formed in the rocks and hollows of the rapid ...singular and dangerous spots, which partake of the triple character of a fall, rapid, and eddy in the short space of a few yards ...The power of the water so far exceeded whatever had been witnessed in any of the other rivers ... that the same precautions successfully used elsewhere were weak and unavailing here. Back's boat was almost lost here:.. it seemed uncertain whether the boat and all in her were to be hurled into the hollow of the fall, or dashed stern foremost on the sunken rocks ...* The crew, one of whom began to cry aloud to Heaven for aid, just missed being buried in the frightful abyss, good enough reason for the name Escape. Back quotes McKay as exclaiming, in response to the cry for help from above: *Is this a time for praying? Pull your starboard oar.*

[Anderson], 26 July: *Made a decharge at the Escape Rapid and at two of the Sandhill Rapids, but ran the others with whole ladings; all these rapids are strong and long.* I don't understand the reference to two of the Sandhill Rapids. His party encamped above Wolfe Rapids.

Campsites N32. We got separated and camped at two different sites (rough UTM's 445/019 and 433/205). Class C sites. 5 August. ~D 774 km.

Campsite DB36. ~453/198. D 775 km.

Enter map 66I4 (NAD83); D 775 km.

[Back], 25 July: *They were urged by a strong current considerably to the eastward, the river now taking that direction through a range of cliffy sand-hills ....* The sand-hills are the eskers between 500/255 and 530/230.

Campsites DB37 & DB38. ~504/261. Windbound 1.5 days. D 783 km.

523/237: Both we and DB saw nothing at the marked rapids.

533/231: Ran easy swift, as did DB.

R54 560/224: Scout! Marked on 1:250k topos, not on 1:50k set. Ran hard R through 1.5 km of nearly continuous CII-; scouted several times and waded around one point. DB ran hard R except at ledge.

[Back], 25 July: *a line of heavy rapids, which more than once made me tremble for our poor boat. ... we ... flew past rocks and other dangers with a velocity that seemed to forbode some desperate termination... we escaped; though only to begin another series.* The line looks like the rapids starting at 560/224. I tentatively identify the second series as Sandhill; I must say though that Sandhill lies about 10 km below the end of 560/224, whereas [Back] can be read as saying that the series follows close by the line.

Enter map 66H13 (NAD27); D 793 km.

Campsite N33. 614/153. Class C site (silty water). 6 August. D 799 km.

R55 624/140: Sandhill Rapids. Scout! After scouting on the L, we ran hard L all the way, through big waves, dodging boulders. DB did the same.

R56 651/154: Precursor to Wolf. Scout! About 1 km of continuous CII-. We ran hard R to near the island above and to the R of Wolf, scouting several times.

R57 661/158: Wolf Rapids. Scout! After scouting on the R to the hill above the island, we ran hard R, entered the R channel around the island, moved to the C and ran down the tongue. CII- as run. The L side of the island has a huge ledge where some say, incorrectly, that Bromley and Calder died.

Lower R57 665/160: Ran big waves at the confluence of the channels. CII-.

[Back], evening of 25 July, above Wolf: *a detached mountainous rock dipping to the eastern shore of the river, in which quarter the descent, now manifest, as well as the hollow roar, plainly indicated something which at that late hour it was prudent to avoid.*

[Anderson], 27 July: *The Wolfe and 9 other rapids were run with whole cargoes; they are all strong, some with whirlpools which must be dangerous in high water. ... We encamped late about 3 miles below the Rapid with whirlpools and Esq. marks.* His party went the wrong way, over to the mouth of the Meadowbank; the Rapid with whirlpools can be only 841/233.

Enter map 66H14 (NAD27); D 809 km.

Campsite DB39. ~698/172. D 810 km.

700/167: First of about 12 swifts with the last at 806/184. Both 782/162 and 787/167 are marked as rapids on the 1:50k topos but we saw only swifts.

[Back], 26 July: *Several other rapids (for there was no end of them) ...* These must be the swifts between 700/167 and 787/167. He then refers to high rocks on the east side of the river; these must be the hills near the mouth of the Meadowbank.

Route note: We went L of the island at 725/160 and Ded through a shallow, rocky section; I suggest that you go R.

Campsite N34. 817/193. Necessity site (wind). Class C site (OK tent sites but exposed). 7 August. D 824 km.

Enter map 66I3 (NAD83); D 826 km.

Route note: Take the channel at 826/217; the channel at 842/232 had a ledge when we passed it and may be dry in low water.

Route note: We went R of the island at 829/224; this route may be dry in lower water.

R58 841/233: Long continuous rapids to about 843/240. CII+ at the top, CI+ below. Both boats went down the C, BAD idea; we ran into big whirlpools and a giant eddy on the R, from the confluence with the channel at 842/232. LA went around the eddy 3 times before breaking through at the top, into the whirlpools again; the eddy line was bad and we were very cautious in crossing it. I suggest scouting from the L shore, then powering through L of C. DB says Scout, ran L; wish we had followed George's advice.



847/247: Ran swift in L channel around island at 850/247, as did DB.

856/252: Ran big swift.

R59 864/320: Ran L channel around the island. CII- with whirlpools and big eddy on the R; LA 360ed (vertical axis). DB says swift. DB says there's a ledge (at 872/323) in the channel on the R side of the island; the ledge sure looked bad to us, from below.

Postscript: The above was written before I learned that the ledge on the R is where Bromley and Calder died. (From A note kindly sent by Bob Bromley gives the coordinates as 66° 05' 44.69" N, 97° 04' 06.29" W. The location is on topo 66I3, between the mouth of the Meadowbank and Mount Meadowbank; it is the ledge at 872/322 (NAD83, plus/minus 50 m) on the river right side of the island. Bob adds that a cairn in memory of Graham (Peter) Bromley was built on Bromley Lake in 1987. Bromley Lake and Ian Calder Lake to the WNW were named after the victims. Thanks to Hugh Westheuser, John Stephenson and most especially Bob Bromley. Out of respect for Bromley and Calder, I quote the obituary published in *The Polar Record*:

Graham (Peter) Bromley and Ian David Calder died on 27 August 1967 in a canoe accident near the mouth of the Back River, Northwest Territories, Canada. Bromley was born in Grande Prairie Alberta on 11 January, 1926 but moved to Yellowknife, NWT, where he owned a hardware business founded by his father. He keenly felt the pioneering spirit, and generously devoted much effort to community affairs and to improving social and economic conditions in northern Canada. Calder was born in Croydon, England, in 1935. He was educated at Mill Hill, qualified in dentistry at Edinburgh University, and in 1964 emigrated to Canada. His dental practice, based in Yellowknife, covered more than a million square miles. Under government contract, he gave dental care to Eskimo settlements throughout the Western and Central Canadian Arctic, as well as to Indian villages in the vicinity of Great Slave Lake. Both Calder and Bromley were expert canoe men, with considerable experience of northern rivers. They had studied the works of earlier explorers and delighted in retracing their canoe routes. In 1966, they accomplished a difficult journey from Fort Rae on Great Slave Lake northward to Great Bear Lake. In 1967, following closely the journals of George Back (1834) and James Anderson (1855), their only predecessors along the entire Back River, they set out from its source in Muskox Lake. After twenty-seven days of travel, some 130 km above the river's estuary in Chantrey Inlet on the Arctic Ocean, their canoe capsized in rapids and both drowned. Ten days later, the third member of the party, Bromley's 16-year-old son Robert, was rescued by an air search party. He had survived with food and equipment washed ashore after the accident. The Government of Canada, in recognition of the public services and adventurous spirit of these two men, has undertaken to name two lakes in the vicinity in their memory.

[Back], 26 July: *Some more rapids led farther to the north...a picturesque and commanding mountain ... the most conspicuous eminence we had seen ... and I called the hill Mount Meadowbank.*

His latitude of 66° 6.5' is 2' less than the map's 66° 8.5'.

879/343: The constriction was pretty dry even in high water; we went R.

Enter map 66I2 (NAD83); D 846 km.

Campsites DB40 & DB41. ~907/396. The DB 2003 trip started here, across the river from Mount Meadowbank. D 847 km.

Campsite N35. 976/366. Class E site (slant city). We camped here after a discussion; I maintain that we should have continued to the end of the lakey section and camped near 045/300. 8 August. D 855 km.

Campsite of DB 2003. ~043/297. D 864 km.

R60 050/304: Scout! Marked on the 1:250k topos, not on the 1:50k ones.

This is about 3 km of rapids, CII+ on the easiest route, with the most difficult part at the start. We started R; MH got swept into an eddy and fought hard to get out; LA, following, cut L through a small passage. We bashed down, cut to the R across bad whirlpools to avoid the rough stuff, got swept into a strong eddy and landed to scout. The upstream eddy line was too tough (too much chance of dumping on crossing it) so we Ded the boats about 50 m to near the point on the R, jumped in and rode out the rest. MH stayed R; LA went to the C and bounced through big waves. DB says scout, keep R all the way; they got into an eddy (must be the one we got into) and got out only by dragging.

[Back], 26 July: *After a course of six miles to the south-east, the river again veered northerly, rushing with fearful impetuosity among rocks and large stones, which raised such whirlpools in the rapids as would have put the strength of a canoe in jeopardy.* After 050/304, he passed more rapids (205/386 and maybe also 322/540), and encamped under the lee of a high rock. It was opposite to a solitary bank of sand, that formed the western entrance to a small river.

[Anderson], 28 July: 4 rapids were run, 3 of them very strong. *The eddies or whirlpools strain the canoes very much.* The three are likely 864/320, 050/304 and 205/386, and the fourth 322/540. Anderson encamped late a little above Montresor River.

Enter map 66I1 (NAD83); D 873 km.

Campsite of DB 2003. ~137/303. D873 km.

Campsite N36. 199/391. Class C site. In bay. 9 August. Same as or near DB 2003. D 883 km.

205/386: Marked on 1:250k topos, not on 1:50k ones. We stayed R of C through about 1.5 km of CI+ with eddies on the R and big stuff on the L. DB says Scout, run R of C. This is the last rapid run by DB in 2003.

Campsite of DB 2003. ~286/483. D 896 km.

Campsite of DB 2003. ~291/489. DB party went no farther in 2003. D 897 km.

R61 304/506: Marked on the 1:250k topos, not on the 1:50k ones. We saw fast water only; rapids were washed out by high water?

Enter map 66I8 (NAD83); D 900 km.



**R62 322/540:** Marked on the 1:250k topos, not on the 1:50k ones. CI-. Ran CWT through boils and whirlpools.

Enter map 56L5 (NAD83); D 910 km.

Campsite N37. **712/683.** Class C site. 10 August. D 921 km.

**R63 738/715:** Scout! Nasty start past the R turn followed by rapids continuing about 1 km to **745/723**. The top is likely not runnable except in high water; some parties portage (I assume by the shore rather than on top) or line. For us, it was a CII+ with the opportunity to go horribly wrong by getting swept into the ledge/keeper. After scouting above from the R (passing several tent circles and picking up some muskox fur), we started R of C, then went R to cross the eddy line below the rocky point and pass above the ledge/keeper on the L. MH went slowly and came close to the keeper. LA went down fast, crossed at speed and braced hard at the eddy line; MH waited for us, in case we dumped. The rest was just big waves with the occasional boulder to dodge. A small herd of muskoxen stood on top of the hill, right above and staring dumbly at us, as we bashed through.

[Back], 27 July: *... on the right bank of a second one, more intricate than the first, we observed the marks and traces of three circular encampments, the inner portions of which were divided into sections...* Identification of the second one with **738/715** is certain.

[Anderson], 29 July: *Ran a bad rapid above Montresor River, in which Mr. Stewart's canoe was completely ungummed.* Identification of the bad rapid with **738/715** is certain.

Enter map 56L12 (NAD83); D 933 km.

Campsite N38. **787/926.** Class C site (bad landing and loading). 11 August. D 949 km.

[Back], 27 July: *There was a rocky hill, so remarkably formed as to have attracted the attention of all of us for some time.... The base ... was one enormous mass of round grey rock, surmounted by a large cone of the same substance... we christened it McKay's Peak.*

**R64 787/984:** Whirlpool Rapids. We scouted from the L; we saw nothing but fast water with big but weak whirlpools in the C, and some rocks on the L. We did an easy run down the C; it was not even a swift.

[Back], 27 July: *... I shall never forget the moment of the first descent down what cannot be more fitly described than as a steep hill. There was not, it is true, as single break in the smoothness of the surface; but with such wild swiftness were we borne along, that it required our extremest efforts, the very tug of life, to keep the boat clear of the gigantic waves below; and we succeeded at last only to be tossed about in the Charybdis of its almost irresistible whirlpools.*

[Anderson], 29 July: *The rapid at McKay's Peak was little more than a strong current. In the rapid below it, my canoe was nearly broken.* It is unclear whether the rapid below was immediately below Whirlpool or the one at **756/090**.

Enter map 56L13 (NAD83); D 962 km.

Route note: We found good current in the 1-km wide part of Franklin Lake, with big waves in a head wind.

Campsite N39. **766/074.** Necessity site (wind). Class D site. 12 August. D 964 km.

**756/090:** We saw at most a swift at the constriction.

[Back], 27 July: *Six miles below Whirlpool, a sandy bluff from the left seemed to bar the river; but ... it proved, as expected, the beginning of another rapid; which however was more civil than the last.* I identify the rapid with **756/090**.

[Back], 28 July: Guided by Inuksuit, he followed the east shore of Franklin Lake.

Enter map 66I16 (NAD83); D 978 km.

Campsite. **280/260.** Inuit site. D 986 km.

**R65 309/298:** Exit from Franklin Lake. We ran the R side of the R channel, dodging a few rocks. CI-.

[Back], 28 July. He turned right and followed the stream, which, as usual, soon broke into a rapid; this was safely passed; but the next, close to it, demanded more caution. I identify the rapid with **309/298**, the next as Franklin Falls.

Enter map 56L13 (NAD83); D 991 km.

**R66 715/307:** Franklin Falls. Some parties line/drag/run it, I gather on the L. But it was impressive even from our campsite 1 km below the bottom, a toboggan slide through boulder fields. Marilyn and Hendrik spotted a sneak portage route on the R that we decided to take because we thought it likely to save time and effort. We entered the bay starting at **703/300** on the R, paddled through with no trouble to about **710/294**, Ped about 800 m to **713/290** at the pond, paddled through (the passage is likely OK even in low water) to **721/293**, and Ped about 100 m to the river; the put-in was bad though. It's unclear to me that this is the better route.

[Back], 28 July: *... white spray which was rising at the vanishing line... a rapidly inclined descent of twenty feet... The entire space of the rapid was shoal, and encumbered with stones, which threw up a continuous sheet of foam.*

[Anderson], 30 July: *The rapids at the outlet of L. Franklin were partly passed by a portage and partly run. At their foot we saw 3 Esq. Lodges ... We ran the last falls--they were only an easy rapid at this stage of the water.* I expect that the easy rapid is **782/286** (rather than the one I've only heard of, at the narrows below the Hayes).

Campsite N40. **724/288**. Necessity site (getting dark). Class C site (mud at shore). 13 August. Before setting up, we checked out the site 100 m or so downstream but found it inferior to what we had. D 997 km.

**R67 737/285**: We ran the upper part (CI+) on the R, then landed near **736/284** to scout the lower part, which was clearly a serious piece of water. We found a CII- route on the far R but decided to go down the spring channel starting at **736/284**. We Ded over rocks at the start (this part may be dry in lower water), then did an easy clean run to rejoin the river.

Comment: After describing the running of the falls, Back mentions a fine open reach terminating at the end of three miles in almost meeting rocks of considerable altitude. The constriction is clearly the lower part of **782/286**. Strangely, he doesn't mention **737/285**, whose top end is about one mile below the bottom of Franklin Falls.

**R68 782/286**: Rapid in two parts. First part: MH ran R of C, LA ran hard R and punched through the eddy line; both routes CII+. Both boats pulled into the bay on the R and scouted. Second part: Both boats ran hard R through big waves, dodging rocks; CI+. And that for us was the last rapid on the Back; here or not far downstream you can see the tide at work.

On 28 July at the rapids starting at **782/286**, [Back]'s party first met the Inuit, who helped his party in carrying the boat below the fall; so that, in reality, I was indebted to them for getting to the sea at all. Then too the Inuit used this spot to fish; then too the hills were crowned with inuksuit.

Route note: We went L around the big island at **840/290**.

Enter map 56L14 (map is supposedly NAD83 but GPS gave strange reading; checked that GPS was set to NAD83); D 1016 km.

Campsite N41. **992?/324?** (question marks because of conflict between GPS and topo). Class C site. Necessity site (north wind). 14 August. D 1028 km.

Enter map 56M3 (NAD27); D 1029 km.

Campsite N42. **013/391**. Class C site (sand, exposed to north wind, water silty). Necessity site (wind, but OK since we figured the float plane could get in). We knew about it from the DB maps. There's good float-plane access at the point between the sandy and muddy areas; the pilot said that access is likely better about 1 km downstream. Noticeable tide. Night of 15 August. D 1035 km.

Back mentions several rapids near latitude  $67^{\circ} 7.5'$ ; on today's maps, this is the narrows at the cabins, 2 km above the Hayes. On 29 July 1834, he reached the mouth, for which he gives latitude  $67^{\circ} 11'$ ; on today's maps, this lies at D 1050 km, 5 km below the Hayes and 10 km above the last narrows before Cockburn Bay. Anderson reached Victoria Headland in the morning of 31 July 1855.

**Father Joseph Buliard: 'He Came And Dwelt Among Us'** Jennifer Kingsley July/August 2012 Issue UP HERE Magazine



In August of 1949, a floatplane buzzed low over the north shore of Garry Lake in the heart of the Keewatin District – part of mainland Nunavut today. It banked, descended to the water and skipped to a stop by a small island. A skinny man with thick glasses climbed out and stepped on to the tundra. Dwarf birch and willow tangled at his feet, eskers snaked off in the distance and the lake stretched to the horizon. This island would be his new home. He was Father Joseph Buliard of the Oblate Missionaries of Mary Immaculate, and he was here to establish Canada's most remote mission. That much he knew. What he didn't know was that within 10 years, due to forces set in motion by his arrival, this land would be emptied of its people, and he would be gone too.

Buliard was born and raised in France, but by the time he reached Garry Lake, at age 35, he'd already been in the Canadian Arctic for a decade. He'd served as a priest in the remote settlements of Repulse Bay and Baker Lake, ministering to Inuit who'd gathered around the Hudson Bay Company posts there. Now he had a more ambitious assignment. The plane had brought him into the wilderness – about halfway down the 1,000-kilometre length of the Back River, where the water collects into a series of enormous lakes. The north shores of those lakes, he knew, were home to about 15 families of nomadic caribou-hunting Inuit, the Uvaliaqtiit. This island was their summer gathering place. Here, he would bring them

the word of the Lord. But Buliard needed help to establish his mission. Despite his decade of Arctic experience, he was relatively unskilled on the land, so he relied heavily on an Inuk named Anthony Manerluk – an orphan who’d been Buliard’s guide and companion since he was 15 years old. Buliard had terrible eyesight and clumsy hands – at Repulse Bay, he’d fallen through the ice, frozen his fingers and never fully recovered. Though he learned to run dogs, set fish nets and travel on the tundra, he never became an expert. Manerluk kept Buliard’s mitts and boots clean of snow, hunted and fished for him, and built igloos when they travelled together throughout the region. And over the coming months and years, they travelled a lot. They sought out the Uvaliaqtiit, who were often on the move. They met families like that of Ninayok and her husband Sabgut, and hunters like the man Arnadjuak. And of course, people also came to see Buliard at the cabin.

At least some of the Inuit held Buliard in high regard. And in his own way, Buliard certainly cared about them. But he never learned to appreciate the Inuit’s sophisticated concept of nuna – a worldview encompassing the land and all its relationships. Expressing a view common among missionaries of the time, he once wrote that the nomadic Inuit were “living like animals.” No matter what Buliard may have thought of them, as time went on, they came to him more and more frequently. He had supplies. Just as Manerluk and others taught the priest some of their skills, changing his relationship with the land, Buliard’s missionary work did the same for them. His presence – especially his reliable supply of tea, ammunition and relief rations – persuaded the Uvaliaqtiit to spend more time near the island. In just a few years, families who’d survived entirely on wild foods – mainly caribou – began integrating Buliard’s provisions into their subsistence economy. Soon, some of the local Inuit, like John Adjuk and his wife, stuck close to the mission, and had come, in a way, to depend on it.

Then, on October 24, 1956, seven years after Buliard’s arrival, everything at the Garry Lake mission suddenly changed. Buliard, by then 42 years old, hitched up his dog team, planning to head a few miles onto the frozen lake to check his fish nets. As his clumsy hands set up the harnesses, Adjuk came over and expressed concern. Buliard’s helper, Manerluk, had been sent south to be treated for tuberculosis, so the priest was going out alone. Adjuk warned him a storm was coming. Buliard left anyway. The bad weather set in, and later, five of his dogs returned to the mission. There was no sled with them, and no priest. Adjuk went searching, but the blizzard had obliterated any tracks. Buliard’s nets were untouched. He was never seen again. That night remains a mystery – did Buliard’s bad eyesight lead him astray? Was he killed by the cold? Did he plunge through thin ice? The RCMP launched a brief murder investigation, but no one was ever charged. The Uvaliaqtiit, for the most part, accepted his disappearance. Manerluk, though, was deeply sad. He said, “When I heard of Father Buliard being lost, I felt I lost a parent.”

Officials in Baker Lake, nearly 300 kilometres southeast, didn’t get word of Buliard’s disappearance until January of 1957. In June, Father Ernest Trinel was flown in to replace him. Caribou were sparse at the time, and some Uvaliaqtiit families were struggling, so Trinel picked up where Buliard had left off. He gave out relief supplies. But this act would become highly controversial. Distributing food and gear was a common practice at Arctic missions; it was part of looking after the flock. But it also, of course, drew Inuit to the men who were trying to convert them. And it didn’t sit well with some government officials. By the time Trinel arrived at Garry Lake, Ottawa was enacting a policy promoting Inuit “independence.” The priests and the bureaucrats disagreed: were the supplies a tool to bring souls to God, or essential food-aid for people in need? In August of 1957, after two months at the mission, Trinel sent a message to Baker Lake. It read: “A community of 60 Eskimos menaced to starve at Garry Lake.” The caribou had not come, and Trinel saw the situation as life-or-death. The nearby storehouse was stockpiled with food, and Manerluk and others were put in charge of distributing it. Government agents came with a relief shipment in August, but not everyone agreed the rations were needed. Douglas Wilkinson, the Northern Affairs officer based in Baker Lake, called the food drop “the worst thing that could happen.” He claimed the Inuit at Garry Lake had “hoodwinked the father into giving out most of his supplies.” Meanwhile, Trinel was worried he himself wouldn’t survive the winter. He left, going to Baker Lake in early December. On December 15, a final shipment of food arrived at the storehouse.

That winter was cold and grim. The lack of caribou meant the Uvaliaqtiit weren’t just hungry, but poorly clothed. The government had given them fish nets, but in their threadbare garments they couldn’t venture far to fish. Ninayok and Sabgut had put up lots of fish in the fall, but had given them away to people who were even worse off. A man named Angeelik shot nine caribou, but they were soon consumed. By early in the new year, Ninayok told an official, “Eskimos were forced to eat their dogs.” The situation became desperate in January and fatal by February. With barely any food left, starving and freezing, Arnadjuak and a companion travelled from their camp to the storehouse to see if they could gather supplies. Inside, they started a small stove. It exploded, and both men ran out into the cold. As the building burned, Arnadjuak ran to a nearby structure, crawled between two mattresses and died. His companion made it back to camp, but he had none of the food his family was expecting. It wasn’t long before they all died of starvation.

Between late February and early March a total of 17 Uvaliaqtiit died. One man was found frozen next to a fishing hole. The RCMP, who were responsible for making a winter patrol through the area, didn’t do so. Father Trinel and government officials didn’t make contact with Garry Lake until April 24. On May 10, Ninayok, who played an important role in piecing the story together, was evacuated for emergency medical treatment. A flurry of government and media attention followed, placing blame all around. Some accounts held the Inuit responsible; others blamed Mother Nature, as though the starvation was inevitable. No white man wanted to assume guilt: not the missions, for their role in altering the area’s subsistence economy. Not the government, for its ever-shifting relief policies. And not the police, for having failed to make their winter rounds. Some pointed to the storehouse fire as a single, clear cause, but a pathologist’s report on the deaths cited prolonged hunger and exposure – “definite evidence of severe malnutrition as evidenced by weight loss and extreme loss of all fat.”

After these events, the Department of Northern Affairs flew into action. Within five months they’d launched a dramatic project. They deployed staff to the Hudson Bay coast and, some 500 kilometres from the Uvaliaqtiit homeland, began constructing a new settlement for some of the survivors. Today, the village is called Whale Cove. Many of the Uvaliaqtiit who were brought there had never seen the sea. By 1959, just a decade after Father Buliard had set up the first-ever mission at Garry Lake, nobody was left. The Uvaliaqtiit people had either died or been moved away. Father Buliard’s cabin stubbornly remains. It stands to this day, its shell of thin boards blackened by sun and cold. Shreds of tarpaper cling to its walls; wind whips through it. It had been occupied for so short a time, but long enough to change everything.

## Magnetic Deviation

85J08 (Yellowkn)	75K11 (Pikes Por.)	76C07 Alymer)	76H02 (Back)	66J03 (Garry Lk )	56M03 (Chantrey)
23° E	30° E	31° E	14°	12° E	6° W