



EXPEDITION REPORT

Burnside River Expedition 2001

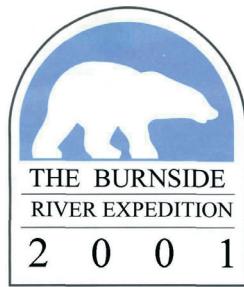
**A two-person fund raising journey in aid of the Heart of Kent Hospice,
along two hundreds miles of the Burnside River in Canada from
its headwaters in Contwoyto Lake to the Arctic Ocean, by open canoe.**

Compiled by Suresh Paul and Edward Bassett

Edited by Suresh Paul



Equal Adventure
DEVELOPMENTS



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CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION AND SUMMARY	2
BACKGROUND AND HISTORY	2
WHY A HOSPICE	3
THE TEAM	3
WHY THE BURNSIDE RIVER	3
PRE EXPEDITION	4
Community fundraising	3
Fundraising Target, Financial Accountability	5
Media Coverage	5
Marketing	6
Public Relations	6
Community Involvement	6
Supporting the Needs of Project Sponsors	7
Preparations and logistics	7
The journey	
BIBLIOGRAPHY AND RECOMMENDED READING	13
TOP TIPS AND HANDY HINTS	13
THE JOURNEY — AN EXTRACT BY EDWARD BASSETT	14



In July 2001, two people set off on a fund-raising journey for the Heart of Kent Hospice to canoe two hundred miles along the Burnside River from its headwaters in Contwoyto Lake to the Arctic Ocean. This dangerous and uncertain expedition has been documented here from its history and preparations to the final journey itself which is captured in a journal detailing the highs and lows of their experiences.

INTRODUCTION AND SUMMARY

The 2001 Burnside River Expedition was a fund-raising expedition for the Heart of Kent Hospice, Kent UK. The project involved three phases:

- Pre expedition fundraising and raising community awareness for the Heart of Kent Hospice.
- A challenging expedition phase involving a 200 mile two person journey by open canoe traveling the length of the Burnside River in Arctic Canada from Lupin Mine on Contwoyto lake to the settlement of Bathurst Inlet on the Arctic Ocean in the Territory of Nunavut.
- Post expedition fundraising and raising awareness for the Heart of Kent Hospice.

BACKGROUND AND HISTORY

In September 1999 Ed Bassett approached the Heart of Kent Hospice to discuss the concept of a fundraising expedition as a focal point for a broad based community fundraising project. Following Ed's previous expedition on the Coppermine River in 1997, Ed wanted to return to the wilderness of Canada's North West Territories.

He wanted to undertake an expedition with a smaller team to explore ways of letting the river set the pace of the journey and to develop a closer relationship to the environment in which the project was being undertaken.

Ed approached Suresh the week following his return from a five month long journey down the length of the River Ganges and asked if he would like to participate in the expedition, Suresh immediately agreed. The roles set, Suresh would take a back seat and supportive role to ensure that the focus of the fundraising remained Kent based with Ed taking the lead and fronting the PR and marketing of the project all of which was to be based in the Kent area.



WHY A HOSPICE

Despite providing essential palliative care for people with life threatening diseases and support for their families hospices throughout the UK are not funded centrally, through government or NHS. They rely on charity, fund raising events and legacies to provide their services, free of charge, to patients. One of the aims of the Burnside Expedition was to highlight this, and provide valuable funds for the Hospice closest to the community in which Ed resides, The Heart of Kent Hospice.

THE TEAM



EDWARD BASSETT

Edward is an ex soldier, traveler and Fellow of the Royal Geographical Society! His career in expeditions began in 1975 with a trip to the Welsh Mountains and continues today. Recently he was leader of the hugely successful Coppermine River Expedition, which was a groundbreaking adventure with a team of disabled and able-bodied canoeists. This was the first expedition of its kind to be approved by the Royal Geographical Society.



SURESH PAUL

Also a Fellow of the Royal Geographical Society and experienced adventurer Suresh is an award winning designer of outdoor pursuits equipment for disabled people. His leadership of the 1989 Ganges Expedition raised much needed funds for the Water Aid appeal.

WHY THE BURNSIDE RIVER

The Northwest Territories and the new territory of Nunavut provide a backdrop for some of the worlds remotest and most challenging rivers. The Burnside is considered a true wilderness river and could therefore be justified as a real challenge. It is also possible to navigate the full length of the Burnside, from its source deep in the heart of the Barren Lands to Bathurst Inlet on the Arctic Ocean. This provided a complete backdrop and depth to the project, presenting sponsors of both the expedition phase and the community fundraising project with a real focus and a meaningful challenge.

- The river journey was undertaken in one boat and represented a real challenge due to the remoteness, difficulty and location of the river.
- The Burnside was mostly class 2-3 according to the international river grading system, with some sections of class 4 water and a grueling four-mile portage around the falls at Bathurst Inlet.



PRE EXPEDITION

COMMUNITY FUNDRAISING

APPROACH

The need for this project was to create a platform for the development of long-term commitments to the Hospice, to ensure that following the conclusion of the Burnside project that there would be long-term benefits to the hospice. Additionally there was a need to broaden the base of support available to the hospice in the community, as a result the fundraising for the Burnside Appeal concentrated solely on the development of new beneficiaries to the hospice. The Heart of Kent Hospice has a clear catchment area, seeking to support the needs of the communities of Kent; fundraising therefore was centered on community-based activities in partnership with local media and businesses.

The Heart of Kent Hospice has a clear catchment area, seeking to support the needs of the communities of Kent

A range of pre expedition fund raising activities generated £10,000 before the field - expedition phase of the project. The community events included:

- After dinner speeches and presentations
- Round Table Gillingham
- Round Table Maidstone
- Round Table Malling
- Joint Fundraising Dinner for Medway Sea Cadets and the Heart of Kent Hospice
- Women's Institute Coffee Mornings
- Fundraising Dinner Leeds Castle
- Kent Based Forty Mile Cycle Ride in Kent - 12 Participants
- Staff Donation Scheme from Ward and Partners

POST EXPEDITION EVENTS

September 2001

Charity Bike Ride

November 2001

Sponsored Canoe - from Tonbridge to Maidstone involving Kent based canoe clubs. The event will generate income for both the Heart of Kent Hospice and the Canoe Clubs themselves, it is hoped that this will make it possible for the initiative and partnership to continue following the conclusion of the Burnside Appeal.



FUNDRAISING TARGET, FINANCIAL ACCOUNTABILITY

The fundraising for the project was split into two clear sections:

- Funding for the Expedition Phase - Project Costs
- Fundraising for the Heart of Kent Hospice

EXPEDITION PROJECT COSTS

With only one major sponsor, Ward and Partners, Kents' largest and most successful Estate Agency, covering the total cost of the journey it was possible to administer this section of the project in partnership with the major sponsor. Project costs were invoiced direct to the sponsor where payment was required upfront, for example, the de-hydrated food was invoiced on pro-forma and paid direct from ward and partners.

CHARITY FUNDRAISING

All donations were made direct to the Hospice to ensure that the hospice was able to immediately benefit from the finance raised. Utilizing existing banking and accounting structures meant that it was possible to keep the administration costs to a minimum. Acknowledgements and thank you letters for individual donations were sent straight from the hospice. The hospice accounts department kept the expedition team updated on donations received on a regular basis.

MEDIA COVERAGE

All media coverage for the project was focused around the Kent area providing local community exposure for the project, the hospice and vital pay back to the sponsors for their support and donations.

**Table 1:
Burnside media
coverage for Kent
Area.**

DATE	TITLE	MEDIA	DESCRIPTION
July 2001		BBC Radio Kent	Radio Interview - advertisement - 3 times a day for 4 Days during the end of the Community fundraising phase
July 2001	Launch	Kent Messenger	Newspaper article
May 2001	Leeds Castle	Kent Messenger	Newspaper article
Nov 2000	Ed's challenge	Kent Business	Magazine article
Sept 2000	Off to Canada	Kent Messenger	Newspaper article
July 2000	Paddling Adventure	Kent Messenger Extra	Newspaper article
July 2000	Canoe Pair	Kent Messenger	Newspaper article
July 2000	Danger Seekers	Maidstone News	Newspaper article
April 2000	Hospice Challenge	Downs Mail	Newspaper article

MARKETING

A modern business like approach was adopted for the project, which involved the generation of:

- Fundraising brochure
- Letter head
- Project Identity
- Web site www.burnside2001.org.uk
- An Expedition display was generated and used at all the main events during the pre-expedition fundraising events

All the material provided space for the appropriate display of sponsors logos and statements of support where required.

The brochures were also used as point of sale material in all Ward and Partner Offices, which was also supported by the generation of posters displays in support of the project.

PUBLIC RELATIONS

Sponsors were acknowledged at all pre- expedition fundraising events. All donors to the project received a written "thank you" direct from the Heart of Kent Hospice.

COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

- Round Table
- Women's Institute
- The Jarvis Great Danes Hotel provided the venue and catering for the launch of the expedition phase of the project as well as free membership of the health club for the expedition preparation.
- Round Table (Gillingham) were involved in the Pre - expedition fundraising cycle ride.
- Medway Sea Cadets.
- The proposed canoeing event involving Canoe Clubs from throughout the Kent Region will provide a focus for the next stage of community involvement and provide scope for the further development of community involvement and awareness for the hospice.



SUPPORTING THE NEEDS OF PROJECT SPONSORS

There have been relatively few sponsors for this project, which has made the management of the needs of individual sponsors simple and straightforward to deal with. Having been involved in a number of sponsored international projects both team members have used their past experiences to ensure that the needs of sponsors have been met.

WARD & PARTNERS

- Better public awareness of Ward & Partners community activity
- Press coverage

YAK (CREWSAVER)

- Photographic material
- Equipment feedback on performance and function

BERGHAUS

- Photographic material

BERMUDA CLEANING SERVICES LTD

- Photographic material
- Slide presentation

PREPARATIONS AND LOGISTICS

HEALTH AND SAFETY

Any journey in a remote area presents risks, however studies have shown that managed well and with appropriate preparation, expeditions present no greater risk to the health and safety of participants than those faced during daily urban life.

Why Health and Safety

In addition to the obvious responsibility and need for care for the team members there was an additional responsibility of the team members to the Heart of Kent Hospice and its trustees. Regardless of the finance raised one of the key benefits to the Hospice, already mentioned was an increase in publicity for the hospice, the success and or failure of this publicity hung in the balance at every turn. An incident or accident during the expedition phase would reflect poorly on the charity and may well have a negative effect on the image of the Hospice and its objectives within the community. As a result the health and safety preparations for the journey although low key and understated during the preparations were considered collectively, in depth by the team, building on past experiences of river journeys and expeditions, bringing in current good practice models where necessary.



KEY PRINCIPLES

The key principles employed to reduce risk during the preparation and execution of the field phase of the project were:

- Risk Assessment
- Recognition and assessment of hazards (factors which may cause harm)
- A considered approach
- Self reliance

RISK ASSESSMENT

A risk assessment is a process, which quantifies the hazards in a given situation and seeks to identify ways to reduce the likelihood of the hazard causing harm.

**Table 2:
 Risk assessment
 to help indentify
 ways to reduce
 the likely hood of
 the hazard
 causing harm**

HAZARD	STEPS TAKE TO REDUCE RISK
River	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Gather Information ● Study river guide ● Gather anecdotal information about the river ● Gather information about annual changes and the effects of the current climate on river conditions
Wildlife (Bears, Wolves, etc.)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Cook away from campsite ● Run a clean and tidy camp ● Employ principles from Bear Awareness course
Environment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Food - pre-packed using a supplier known to the team members. ● Shelter - A good quality tent was backed up by lightweight bivi bags, and a tarp or bivi sheet, which could be used if the tent was damaged or lost. ● Hydration - a constant theme throughout the day for both members of the team was checking food and drink levels to ensure team members were in top form at all times. ● Pace - goal setting for each day of the journey was flexible to ensure that environmental conditions and team needs were taken into account. ● Spare food - although it was calculated that the journey would take up to 16 days sufficient food was taken to allow for bad weather days or additional rest days if required.
Crisis Management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Next of Kin details submitted to the Heart of Kent Hospice ● Rescue - would be from RCMP and was organized through the hire of a Personal Location Beacon, this involved logging the journey with the RCMP on arrival in country at Yellowknife. ● The journey was also logged with the Float Plane Company and Outfitters with expected due dates
Transport	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Reputable floatplane operators and international carriers for the flights were chosen.

MEDICAL REPORT

Because of the remote nature of the fieldwork phase the approach to the medical needs of the team in the field was simply to stabilize a casualty in the event of a significant injury. The understanding between the team members was that any complex medical needs for either team member would result in the immediate air or ground evacuation of the whole team via the activation of the Personal Location Beacon.

There were no major injuries during the journey, minor incidents included a small burn to a finger and a vast number of mosquito bites to the buttocks and hind quarters! A full medical kit was taken and thankfully hardly used.

LOGISTICS

Flights

Table 3:
Flight timetable

DATE	DESTINATION	CARRIER
27th July	London Heathrow - Toronto	Air Canada
27th July	Toronto - Edmonton	Air Canada
27th July	Edmonton - Yellowknife	First Air
30th July	Yellowknife - Contwoyto Lake	Air Tindi
15th August	Bathurst Inlet - Yellowknife	Air Tindi
18th August	Yellowknife - Edmonton	First Air
18th August	Edmonton - Toronto	Air Canada
19th August	Toronto - London Heathrow	Air Canada

Accommodation

- Yellowknife Inn
- Address

Outfitter

- Overland sports
- Yellowknife

Food

- Harvest food works



Packing

- All equipment was listed before leaving the UK to ensure maximum ease of replacement in country should any personal baggage or expedition equipment be lost in transit.

Insurance

- AON Risk Services
- Full Expedition Cover - See appendices for documentation.

Choice of Boat

- Old town tripper - chosen based on past experiences the team wanted a boat what would 'track well during the lake sections.

Safety Equipment

- Bear Scarers
- River Safety Kit
- Boat Rescue
- Clothing
- Emergency Shelter
- Signaling
- Spare Stove
- Whistle
- River Knife
- Navigation
- Standard Map and Compass
- Silva 4NL
- Hand held GPS
- Med Kit

Navigation

- Standard Map and Compass
- Silva 4NL
- Hand held GPS

Table 4:
Tactical pilot
charts of Canada

MAPS	TITLE	SCALE
76E	Contwoyto Lake	1:250,000
76L	Kathawachaga Lake	1:250,000
76K	Mara River	1:250,000



THE JOURNEY

Table 4:
Route conditions
and campsites

DAY	MILES TRAVELED	WEATHER	DESCRIPTION	LOCATION OF CAMP
1	Nil	Warm & sunny	Island on Contwoyto Lake	High esker, overlooking small bay
2	4	Overcast and heavy wind	Open water crossing in force 4 headwind	Rocky bay
3	15	Overcast and windy	Open water in variable winds	Rocky beach next to outlet
4	15	Light cloud, warm	Fast water and rapids	Beach overlooking 2nd lake
5	25	Very cold, cloudy, variable winds, rain	Open water in variable winds	Sandy beach in small bay on island
6	1	Warm and sunny	Rest Day	Disused fishing camp next to island
7	20	Variable, light winds	Fast water and rapids	High esker overlooking sandy beach
8	15	Variable, light winds. Warm evening	Shallow, rocky, difficult water	Sandy, sloping site
9	33	Heavy tailwinds, cloudy and cold, heavy rain	Fast water and rapids	Windy plateau overlooking steep, rocky bank
10	8	Heavy winds, cold	Fast water	Small plateau close to deep re-entrant
11	26	Very cold, variable winds	Fast water and rapids	Sheltered sandy patch on rocky beach
12	6 on water. 12 on land	Warm, cloudy light winds	Deep water. Rough terrain for portage	Sloping, rocky site below rocky esker
13	8 on land	Warm, sunny light winds	Rough terrain for portage	Sandy beach overlooking Burnside Falls
14	12	Cold, clear light winds	Shallow open water	Bathurst Inlet



BIBLIOGRAPHY AND RECOMMENDED READING

CANOEING CANADA'S NORTHWEST TERRITORIES

ISBN 1-895465-09-05.

THE INCREDIBLE ESKIMO

ISBN 0-88839-189-7.

TOP TIPS AND HANDY HINTS

- Do a bear awareness course
- Read the guide, but read the river
- Talk to local paddlers
- Register with the RCMP
- Allow for bad weather days
- Balance and trim for the boat
- Develop an efficient paddling style for river and placid water before you go
- Only take what you will use and use everything that you take
- Prepare for bugs. Buy a bug shirt
- Take a fire making kit (despite being above the tree line)
- Get to know some animal tracks and signs
- Keep cameras and photographic equipment out of tents (maintain the temperature and humidity always by storing in Pelican boxes)

CULTURE

Nunavut is only just being recognized, the process of reconciliation and the move toward self-determination for the peoples of the Arctic is well under way. The First Nations people have a diverse culture, their stories and customs echoing through the vast landscape.



THE JOURNEY — AN EXTRACT BY ED BASSETT

The two-hour flight from Yellowknife to Contwoyto Lake took us over some of the most remote and desolate land in the world. Canada's Northwest Territories and the new territory of Nunavut cover an area of 1.3 million square miles, all of which is technically desert, although it contains about a tenth of the world's fresh water. From a little over 2000 ft up we had a very clear view of the tough, rocky terrain through which the Burnside River traveled. Above the line beyond which trees will no longer grow the land is mostly lichen and moss covered granite with little topsoil and, because of the permafrost, where soil does exist nothing grows over one metre high. The harsh arctic weather and the annual freeze/thaw have carved a landscape the like of which is seen nowhere else on earth. The permafrost also prevents drainage and as a result lakes and rivers abound, forming a lattice of waterways across the immense landscape of the Pre Cambrian Shield.

Eighteen months of planning, preparation, fund raising and PR lay behind us and, once more, Suresh Paul and I were headed for an arctic river adventure. Our plan was to travel by open canoe two hundred miles, from source to sea along the Burnside River from its headwaters in Contwoyto Lake in the sub arctic barren lands to the Arctic Ocean at the small Inuit settlement of Bathurst Inlet. We would be isolated and unsupported for the whole journey, relying on our canoeing and wilderness travel skills to keep us safe. The only contact with the modern world would be our satellite distress beacon, carried just in case!

The sky was a clear blue and the water of Contwoyto Lake was mirror calm as the Beaver float-plane carrying us, all of our equipment and our 16ft canoe circled a small island, looking for a suitable landing area. Finally the pilot, Darren, brought us down close to a small sandy bay below an esker and backed the plane onto the

shore, allowing us to unload without having to wade out into the icy water. Almost as soon as we set foot on the island the mosquitoes attacked! Thousands of the little bloodsucking insects swarmed around us looking for a piece of exposed flesh. Fortunately

The only contact with the modern world would be our satellite distress beacon, carried just in case!

we had donned our bug shirts, probably the most valuable piece of clothing available to any one traveling in the Canadian north. We quickly piled our kit on the shore, untied the boat from its' resting place on top of one of the planes' floats and watched as Darren got the plane airborne, dipped his wings in salute and then buzzed us at an alarmingly low altitude. Then the quiet took over! No wind no sound at all, nothing but water, rock and insects. Suresh and I stood still, letting it all sink in for a few moments and then, in a flurry of activity we picked up our kit, carried it up the esker to an area of flat ground at the top and set up camp.

The wind picked up a little, which sent most of the mosquitoes into hiding, so I went fishing in the little bay below the campsite. Almost immediately I caught a large trout which ended up wrapped in foil and cooking on a fire that Suresh had built from the little pieces of driftwood that we were able to find. We enjoyed our first wilderness meal in relative comfort, sat on a high esker overlooking the huge lake that surrounded us and talked of our loved ones, future plans and past experiences.



To the north we saw some ominous, dark clouds. Low cumulus, with black bases and tall towers coming our way, carried by the ever strengthening northerly wind which chilled the air and made the surface of the lake boil. After securing the boat and equipment we rushed to the tent just in time to miss the deluge that lashed down on us for the whole night and then stopped suddenly at about 5am. The wind didn't seem too bad at all so we decided to make a start and after a quick breakfast we broke camp, loaded the boat and set off.

Almost as soon as we left the island behind us the wind picked up, and it blew straight into our faces, we had to cross several miles of open water into a force four headwind. Waves began to crash over the bow and from my position in the back of the boat I found it difficult to keep us on course. Suresh does a lot of sea kayaking and open water doesn't worry him a bit! I, however, am an out and out river paddler with a real aversion for not being able to see the banks on either side of me and I found this a very uncomfortable place to be. Our 16ft open canoe, fully laden with tent, food, medical equipment and camera equipment was being tossed around like a matchstick! A capsized, two miles from shore in these conditions would have been fatal, so it was a great relief to see the far shore getting steadily closer. After six hours of hard slog we had managed about four miles and we were both exhausted! As we passed a small rock island near the shore we saw a sheltered beach and decided to set up camp, hoping that tomorrow would be a better day.

All around us on the shore there were pockets of ice, left over from last winter, stubbornly refusing to melt and acting as a reminder of where we were, as if we needed one!

It Wasn't! The harsh arctic winds were being unkind to us in the way that only they can. Whichever direction we had to travel the wind seemed to hit us straight on. We did however make some headway and after a few hours we reached yesterdays target, Contwoyto Point. After a brief rest and some food we set off again, this time full of confidence that

we would see the end of the lake today and camp at the mouth of the river tonight. All around us on the shore there were pockets of ice, left over from last winter, stubbornly refusing to melt and acting as a reminder of where we were, as if we needed one! Suresh pointed to a large icy patch on a distant shore in our direction of travel and suggested that we aim for it, I agreed and we paddled on, into the wind and a light rain that had started to fall as we rested.

At the front of the boat Suresh set a cracking pace, and I did my best to keep up. Eventually, after a long, arduous paddle we reached the icy patch, checked our position, ate some trail mix and set our next target, the outlet to the river. Navigating on a lake should be easy but a combination of exhaustion, foul weather and the sheer scale of our surroundings almost caused us to overshoot the large bay (one mile across) that hid the outlet. After several looks at the map and a brief chat we decided to turn into the bay and, wrong or right, camp for the night in any sheltered spot that we could find. As it turned out we were right on target and as an additional bonus we discovered a large flat area in the lee of the wind with a supply of firewood left by a water survey team.



The following morning was warm, windless and almost bugs free! Having both slept well we breakfasted, packed and launched into the calm water in search of the river. After a short paddle we reached a shallow boulder fan over which the water cascaded with a roar. We negotiated this, and what followed was one of the best days canoeing ever. Fourteen miles of continuous class2-3 rapids with one class 4 right in the middle! Belanger Rapid is a long boulder fan with a 5ft vertical drop at the end named after a man whose life it claimed during one of Franklin's expeditions in the 19th Century.

The water was fast, the rapids were fun and the sun was warm. There was, however, one brief moment of panic when we had to paddle backwards with a vengeance to prevent ourselves from falling over a five to six feet vertical drop into shallow water. "Almost Belangered" we managed to find a safe, dry route down and happily sat in a large eddy looking back at the water cascading over the drop before moving on to the next rapid, just downstream.

There was, however, one brief moment of panic when we had to paddle backwards with a vengeance to prevent ourselves from falling over a five to six feet vertical drop into shallow water.

As the day drew to an end we reached the beginning of Kathawachaga Lake where we enjoyed a comfortable campsite, a fresh fish and a warm evening during which we reflected on the days events. One aspect of the trip so far that was a real disappointment to me was the total lack of wildlife. Every time we stopped for a break or to set up a campsite we found the remains of dead animals with gnawed bones, but so far we hadn't seen one

living creature! In an area teeming with Caribou, wolves, bears and muskoxen as well as huge array of birdlife this was hard to understand. I put it down to the sheer scale of this huge wilderness.

Four days had past since we first touched down on Contwoyto Lake and although the weather had been unkind we were in good shape and high spirits. Our food was appetizing and we were very happy with the quality of our equipment. We had no doubts about our ability to complete the task that we had set ourselves, however the final outcome was also dependent on how well our clothing, tent, cooking equipment, boat and paddles performed. The Arctic Barren Lands are no place to be testing equipment or clothing. YAK (Crewsaver) provided all of our paddling kit and we will be forever grateful to them. Their cags, sallopettes, buoyancy aids and fleece wear were comfortable, warm, well made and hardwearing. On dry land we had outer clothing and thermals supplied by Berghaus, which were manufactured to the high standards one would expect from market leaders in mountain clothing, and they were subjected to very harsh conditions throughout the expedition. All in all we were well clothed and equipped, with a North Face tent providing our shelter against the elements, a Coleman stove for cooking and an Old Town Tripper canoe making up the rest of our essentials.



Fatigue was affecting our ability to judge distance and time so although we were heading in the right direction we hadn't covered as much distance as we thought.

Our target the following day was the island of Nadlak, some 25 miles away, fifteen miles of which is lake paddling! Weather conditions were good early in the day but deteriorated rapidly in the afternoon with rain, wind and bitter cold. Mile after mile drifted by and soon we left the lake behind us. Full of hope we ventured on through the narrow passage of fast water that led

to the river and headed toward the island. Navigation on a river should be easy; after all it's a river, and rivers flow to the sea. This part of the Burnside however is more like a lake, wide, flat and featureless! Add to this a flat, shadowless grey light and suddenly navigation becomes very difficult. We knew that the island was not far away but we couldn't see it. Fatigue was affecting our ability to judge distance and time so although we were heading in the right direction we hadn't covered as much distance as we thought. This confusion was quite worrying for a while and we almost convinced ourselves that we were in the wrong place altogether.

Eventually we rounded a headland and saw the island in the distance. It looked almost vertical, like a tower, surging up from the riverbed. A tall, sedimentary stack held together by the sparse vegetation of the arctic north. This was to be our home for the night and as we paddled ever closer we saw a small beach that looked just about big enough for the tent and our boat. Once we had landed, set up the tent, sorted the equipment and found some firewood we rested in the tent until late into the evening. As we lay in our sleeping bags we felt the evening sun warm the air and the wind stopped, which brought the bugs out.

