

Samuel Hearne's Track: Some Obscurities Clarified

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ABSTRACT. In 1770–72, Samuel Hearne walked from the present-day Churchill, Manitoba, to the lower Coppermine River and back in the company of a band of northern Indians (Chipewyans) and their leader, Matonabee. Hearne's map is sketchy, to say the least; nevertheless, J.B. Tyrrell (1911) identified the main features along his route from Churchill to Wholdaia Lake. The key to the rest of the journey is identification of Lake Thelewey-aza-yeth, which is the next lake that Hearne mentioned by name and the point at which his homeward track crossed his outbound track. My conclusion that Thelewey-aza-yeth is named Spearfish Lake on modern maps leads to identification of Clowey Lake (McArthur), Peshew or Catt Lake (Lynx), Thoy-noy-kyed Lake (Ptarmigan), Thoy-kye(coy)-lyned Lake (Aylmer), Cogead Lake (Contwoyto), Buffalo or Muskox Lake (Takijuaq), and Thaye chuk gyed (Lac de Gras). There are two candidates for Hearne's Point Lake. One is MacKay Lake, in which case Camsell Lake would be Hearne's No Name Lake. The alternative is Courageous Lake, in which case Warburton Bay on MacKay Lake is No Name Lake. It is certain that Hearne's Point Lake is not either Franklin's Point Lake or the modern Point Lake. Evidence shows that the route followed was well known to the Chipewyan Indians (and probably to other Dene). Segments of the journey scarcely depart from the most direct route (a straight line on a map), even though at least two segments are well over 100 miles (160 km) in length.

Key words: Clowey Lake, Lac de Gras, Lynx Lake, Matonabee, No Name Lake, Point Lake, Thelewey-aza-yeth, Thoy-kye-lyned Lake, Thoy-noy-kyed Lake

RÉSUMÉ. Entre 1770 et 1772, Samuel Hearne a effectué à pied le voyage aller-retour entre ce qui est aujourd'hui Churchill au Manitoba et le cours inférieur de la rivière Coppermine, en compagnie d'une bande d'Indiens du Nord (Chippewyans) et de leur chef, Matonabee. Le moins qu'on puisse dire, c'est que la carte de Hearne est peu détaillée; J. B. Tyrrell (1911) a cependant identifié les caractéristiques principales le long de son parcours de Churchill à Wholdaia Lake. La clé du reste du voyage se trouve dans l'identification du lac Thelewey-aza-yeth, qui est le prochain lac dont Hearne mentionne le nom et le point où sa piste de retour recoupe celle de l'aller. Ma conclusion que Thelewey-aza-yeth est le lac Spearfish sur les cartes modernes mène à l'identification des lacs Clowey (McArthur), Peshew ou Catt (Lynx), Thoy-noy-kyed (Ptarmigan), Thoy-kye(coy)-lyned (Aylmer), Cogead (Contwoyto), Buffalo ou Muskox (Takijuaq), et Thaye chuk gyed (Lac de Gras). Il y a deux possibilités pour le lac Point mentionné par Hearne. L'une est le lac MacKay, auquel cas le lac Camsell d'aujourd'hui serait le lac No Name de Hearne. L'autre possibilité est le lac Courageous, auquel cas la baie Warburton actuelle du lac MacKay est le lac No Name. Il est certain que le lac Point de Hearne n'est pas le lac Point (qui est aussi le nom moderne) de Franklin. Les preuves montrent que le trajet parcouru était bien connu des Indiens Chippewyans (et probablement d'autres Dénés). Des tronçons du trajet s'écartent à peine de la route la plus directe (une ligne droite sur la carte), malgré qu'au moins deux tronçons fassent bien au-delà de 100 milles (160 km) de long.

Mots clés: lac Clowey, Lac de Gras, lac Lynx, Matonabee, lac No Name, lac Point, Thelewey-aza-yeth, lac Thoy-kye-lyned, lac Thoy-noy-kyed

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INTRODUCTION

Samuel Hearne was born in 1745 to a working-class family in London, England. After the death of his father in 1750, his mother moved to Beaminster in Dorset, which happened to be the home of Mrs. Samuel Hood. Mrs. Hood's sons, Samuel and Alexander, were both captains in the Navy, and both were to end their careers as admirals. The young Hearne was not an apt scholar, and a year after the

Seven Years War broke out, his mother allowed him to quit school and go to sea as servant to Captain Samuel Hood. He served from 1757 to 1763, first in the English Channel and later in the Mediterranean Sea. During his naval service he learned to endure hardship: ordinary seamen lived under conditions of extreme crowding, filth, stench, and a daily diet of salt meat and hardtack. Perhaps that experience prepared him in some way for the hardships that were to come.

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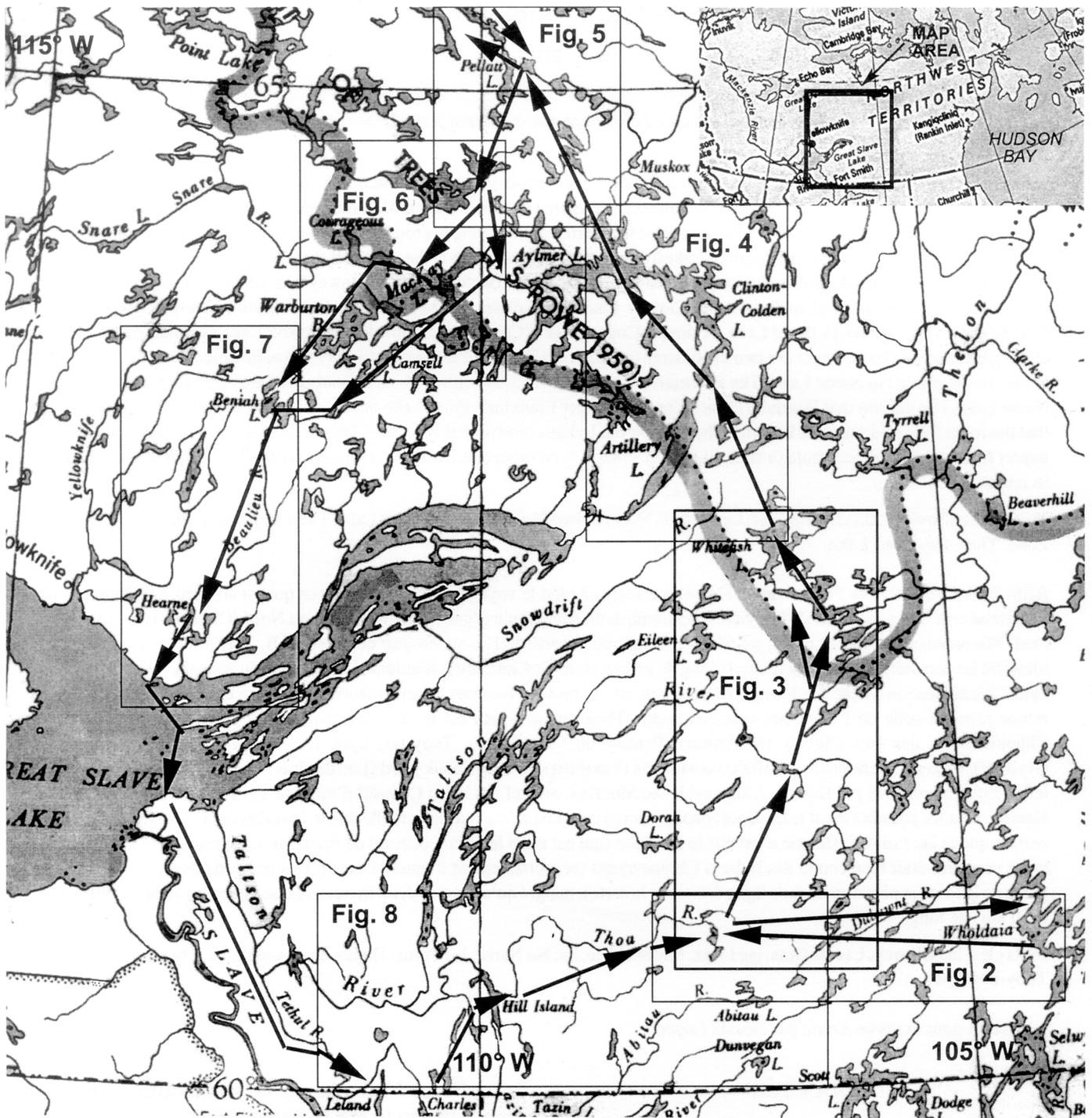


FIG. 1. Overview map showing an outline of Hearne's track and locations of detailed maps.

In 1766, Hearne joined the Hudson's Bay Company as a seaman. His duties were to go whaling and trading along the western coast of Hudson Bay. At the end of the summer of 1768, however, the Governor of Fort Prince of Wales chose Hearne to undertake an exploration by land. For several decades, Indians coming to the Fort to trade had brought samples of pure, free copper, which they had found close to the Arctic Ocean. Hearne was to accompany a band of Indians to the site and report on the prospects of

exploiting and shipping the copper. His first two attempts were aborted because the Indians chosen to guide him did not know the route. On the third attempt, his guide was a young Chipewyan leader named Matonabee. They set out from the fort on 7 December 1770 and returned on 30 June 1772. Hearne sent a report and a map to London later that year. The Governor of the Hudson's Bay Company freely lent the report to scientists and explorers, and copies of the map were also widely circulated.

Hearne remained in North America and in 1776 took command of Fort Prince of Wales. In 1782, he returned to England, where he received a warm welcome. In the fall of 1783, he was back in North America, where he remained for four years. On his final return to London, he met some of the leading scientists of his day and discussed his observations with them. He died in England in 1792. The account of his journey was published posthumously in London in 1795 and reprinted in Dublin in 1796. German, Dutch, and French editions followed. The Champlain Society also published a limited edition (Tyrrell, 1911). Richard Glover (1958) brought out an annotated edition, and Hurtig Publishers produced a facsimile (Hearne, 1971) of the first edition (Hearne, 1795).

My interest in Hearne was aroused when I discovered that he was the first European to mention the two animal species that I studied as a graduate student, namely, the fish in Great Slave Lake that his companions called *shees* and the northern (or wood) bison in the Slave River valley. Furthermore, during nine years of residence at Fort Smith, I flew over almost every square kilometre of the area between the 60th parallel and the south shore of Great Slave Lake, from Slave River in the west as far east as Wholdaia and Lynx Lakes.

The main purpose of this paper is to assign correct modern names to as many as possible of the lakes on Hearne's route from Wholdaia Lake to the Coppermine River and back. An overview of the area under study is presented in Figure 1, which also shows the location and orientation of the detailed maps. The late Eric Morse (1981:25) identified what he called seven "obscurities that Hearne left between his known points" and gave his interpretation of each. I also re-examine Morse's "obscurities" and attempt to resolve other problems not considered obscure by Morse.

THE MANUSCRIPT AND MAP

MacLaren (1991) cites three extant, and quite different, descriptions of the massacre of a group of Inuit by Matonabbee's party at a place known as Bloody Fall, about 16 miles from the mouth of the Coppermine River. The various accounts of the massacre illustrate how Hearne's field notes and initial report to the Hudson's Bay Company evolved into a manuscript by the author and then into a manuscript "readied for the press" by a ghost editor. Readying for the press meant, among other changes, adding spicy details to make the story more attractive to prospective buyers. Glover (1958) indicated in footnotes where the published version differs from an earlier manuscript that still exists. MacLaren (1993:25), however, expresses concern about "an unquestioned dependence on Glover's edition." For the most part, the discrepancies relate to accounts of the people and their behaviour, habits, or beliefs rather than to descriptions of routes and rates of travel. MacLaren (1993) deals at length with one

discrepancy between the first edition (1795) and all later editions that is of critical importance for the identification of Point Lake.

Hearne's map, like his text, has gone through several stages. His original map was apparently copied by hand, more or less accurately, by several later explorers. Some of those copies still exist. A photographic copy of the original, which has been preserved in the archives of the Hudson's Bay Company, was published by Wilson (1949). A cleaner, but smaller, reproduction is in Ruggles (1991).

Hearne may have deliberately obscured some features, and omitted from his manuscript some astronomical observations and distances travelled, to make it difficult for his critics (such as the Hydrographer to the Admiralty) to work out exactly where he had been.

Because the map that appeared in the first edition of the *Journey* varies in several respects from the map that accompanied Hearne's manuscript, it is necessary to state that the "published map" referred to throughout this paper is a numbered copy of a limited facsimile edition (Association of Canadian Map Libraries, 1979) of the map in the 1795 edition of the *Journey*. I have used both that facsimile of the published map and the manuscript map published by Wilson to reconstruct Hearne's track on modern maps.

I begin with a general observation so obvious that it is easy to overlook. The route followed by Matonabbee must have been well known to him and his companions. How could he dispatch a small advance party to Clowey Lake unless the party members knew the route? How else could the men leave the women to travel at their own speed and then, after a lapse of several weeks and a journey of about 180 miles, rejoin them at a designated rendezvous? Even the fact that the Indians had names for the lakes visited shows that they were on known routes of travel.

I have retained the mile as the unit of distance travelled because that is the unit that Hearne used, and there seems to be no benefit gained by converting all his distances to kilometres.

THELEWEY-AZA-YETH

On 7 December 1770, Hearne left Fort Prince of Wales (near Churchill, Manitoba) in the company of a group of Chipewyan (Northern) Indians and their leader, Matonabbee. By 7 March 1771, the party was on the western shore of Wholdaia Lake. Thirty-two days later, on 8 April, they reached Thelewey-aza-yeth. (Hearne also uses variants such as Thelewey-aze-yeth and Thlewey-aza-yeth). No landmarks of any kind are mentioned between the two lakes. All we know from the text is that Thelewey-aza-yeth is a small lake with a high hill on a point at its western end. Given the incomplete maps of the day, Tyrrell (1911) had no possibility of identifying Thelewey-aza-yeth.

Dr. John Richardson (1836:152) wrote "The next place, whose position it is very desirable to ascertain, is Thelewey-

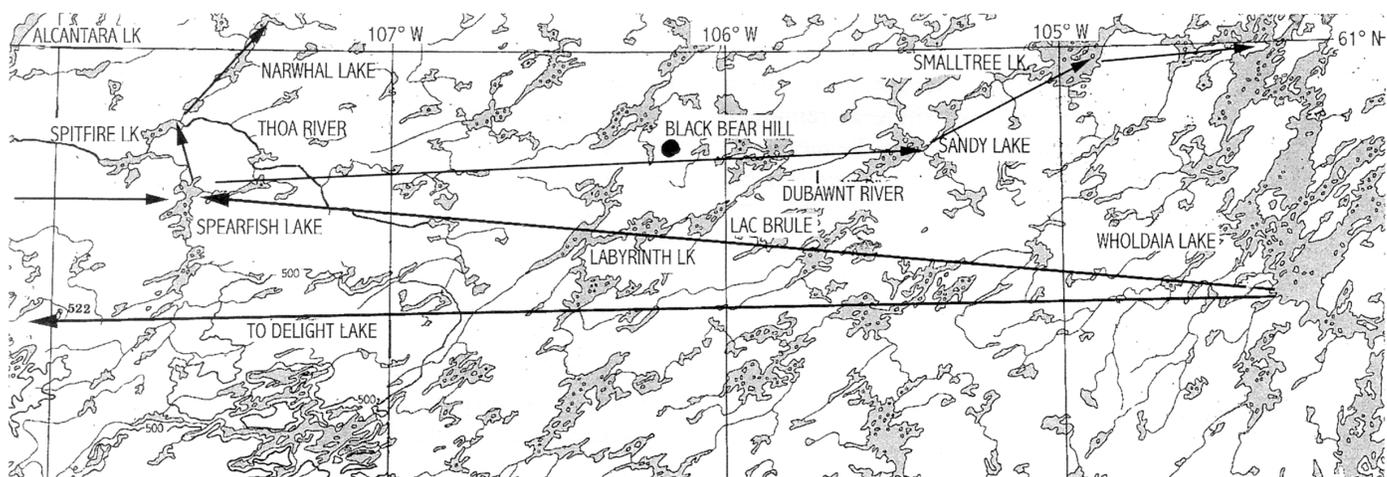


FIG. 2. Hearne's Thelewey-aza-yeth has a central place in the part of his journey from Wholdaia Lake to the mouth of the Coppermine and back. Spearfish Lake is proposed as the modern name for Thelewey-aza-yeth. Alcantara, Labyrinth, and Delight Lakes have also been proposed. The point of departure from Wholdaia Lake is arbitrary; it could have been anywhere along the eastern shore. Note that a direct course to Delight Lake crosses a plateau defined by the 500 m contour line.

aze-yeth, or Little Fish Hill... The position of Thelew-ey-aze-yeth is important as forming the junction of three branches of Hearne's route." Richardson estimated coordinates of 61°55' N and 106° W. That would place Thelewey-aza-yeth near the north end of Pennylan Lake, well beyond the limit of forests, and about 90 miles from Wholdaia Lake.

Because there is no shortage of small lakes on the Precambrian Shield, the task of identifying Thelewey-aza-yeth with a lake on modern maps has been daunting. Recent attempts have been published by Wilson (1949), Blanchet (1949), Morse (1971, 1981), and Fuller (1980). Both Wilson and Blanchet did field surveys in the general region, but did not have the advantage of modern maps based on aerial photography. Wilson suggested Alcantara Lake (Fig. 2), which was quickly rejected by Blanchet, who suggested the northwest portion of Labyrinth Lake (Fig. 2). Morse canoed extensively in the north and made a special trip by air to examine Delight Lake (Fig. 8), which he thought to be Thelewey-aza-yeth. Peake (1991) agreed with Morse. Fuller visited Spearfish (Fig. 2) several times in the 1950s and again in 1975.

To be considered a candidate for Thelewey-aza-yeth, a lake must satisfy several criteria drawn from either the text or the map, preferably from both. In the first place, Hearne (1795:88) states that "on the eighteenth [of April 1771] we moved about nine or ten miles to the North North West, and then came to a tent of Northern Indians who were tenting on the North side of Theleweyaza River." The modern name for the river is "Thoa", the Chipewyan name for marten (*Martes americana*). According to the text, then, Thelewey-aza-yeth must lie 9 or 10 miles south of Thoa River. The published map shows it lying between the main stem of the Thoa River to the south and a tributary of the Thoa River to the north. In fact, the main stem of the Thoa River lies to the north, and an unnamed tributary to the south. Spearfish Lake, while not lying between the

tributaries, is actually drained by the southern, unnamed, tributary (Fig. 2). Hearne's map shows that they crossed a lake on the unnamed northern tributary. If they walked north-northwest from Spearfish, they would have encountered Spitfire Lake, through which the real Thoa River runs. Delight Lake lies about nine miles to the south of the main stem of the Thoa River, but there is no lake on the river to the NNW of Delight Lake. Alcantara, which is north of Thoa River, and Labyrinth, which is well east of Thoa River, do not meet this criterion.

In the second place, there should be a high hill on a peninsula at the west end (but Hearne used "end" and "side" indiscriminately elsewhere in describing lakes). Both Delight and Spearfish pass this test.

The third characteristic is an island suitable for a campsite for some 70 people near the peninsula with the hill. Both Delight and Spearfish have an island associated with the high hill.

The fourth requirement, and the reason for visiting the lake in the first place, is availability of birch bark for canoes, and poles for both canoes and tents. Delight and Spearfish meet this test as well.

Point five is the distance from the western shore of Wholdaia Lake to Thelewey-aza-yeth. We know that the party was 32 days on the trail, including both the day of departure (8 March) and the day of arrival (8 April). In order to convert that number into distance travelled we need an estimate of their rate of travel. As a first approximation, the rate in the days leading up to their arrival at the western end of Wholdaia would seem to be the most instructive. In the course of 30 days, they covered about 85 miles, for a rate of 2.8 miles per day. In the last 14 days, however, they covered about 47 miles, for a rate of about 3.4 miles per day. The lower rate translates into about 90 miles in 32 days, which I consider to be a minimum. The higher rate translates into about 109 miles. The distance to Spearfish is between 105 and 110 miles, depending on the

point of departure from Wholdaia (Fig. 2). The distance to Delight is between 120 and 125 miles, which requires a rate of about 3.75 miles per day. That, in itself, does not rule out Delight Lake, given that day length increases rapidly after the equinox, which would permit longer days on the trail. But the direct bearing to Delight Lake crosses the north end of the Abitau upland, a plateau that rises some 200 feet above the surrounding landscape. In the text, no mention is made of such a barrier.

The final test is distance from Hill Island Lake, the nearest of all definitely known points to Thelewey-aza-yeth. Full discussion on this point is postponed until the appropriate place in the return journey (See Thelewey-aza-yeth Revisited below).

CLOWEY LAKE

Clowey Lake is the next point that needs to be identified. Morse (1981:29) made this unsupported statement: "They arrived on May 3 at the next known [sic] point, Eileen Lake (Hearne's 'Clowey')." Morse seems to have ignored all the clues provided by Hearne in the five quotations that follow. All page numbers are from Hearne (1795).

1. "On the twentieth, Matonabee sent one of his brothers, and some others, a-head, with birch-rind and wood-work for a canoe, and gave them orders to proceed to a *small lake near the barren ground* called Clowey" (p. 91, my emphasis). Obviously, it is easier to carry the raw materials through the woods than to carry a canoe.
2. "...it was the third of May before we could arrive at Clowey, though *the distance was not above eighty-five miles from Thelewey-aza-yeth*" (p. 94, my emphasis). The distance from Delight to Eileen is 110 miles. Allowing for Hearne's tendency to overestimate distance, the disparity between a real distance of 110 miles and what is probably less than 85 miles seems to rule out one or both of Morse's lakes.
3. "The Lake Clowey is *not much more than twelve miles broad* in its widest part" (p. 95, my emphasis). Eileen Lake is more than 20 miles broad in the widest part.
4. "A small river which runs into it on the West side, is said by the Indians to join the Athapuscow [Great Slave] Lake" (p. 95). A river on the west side of Clowey Lake must run *out of* the lake in order to run *into* Great Slave Lake. Hearne's published map shows only one, unnamed, river flowing into Great Slave Lake, but in reality there are two, as shown on the manuscript map. Eileen Lake is connected by the Eileen River to Snowdrift River. The second, more southerly, river is the Taltson.

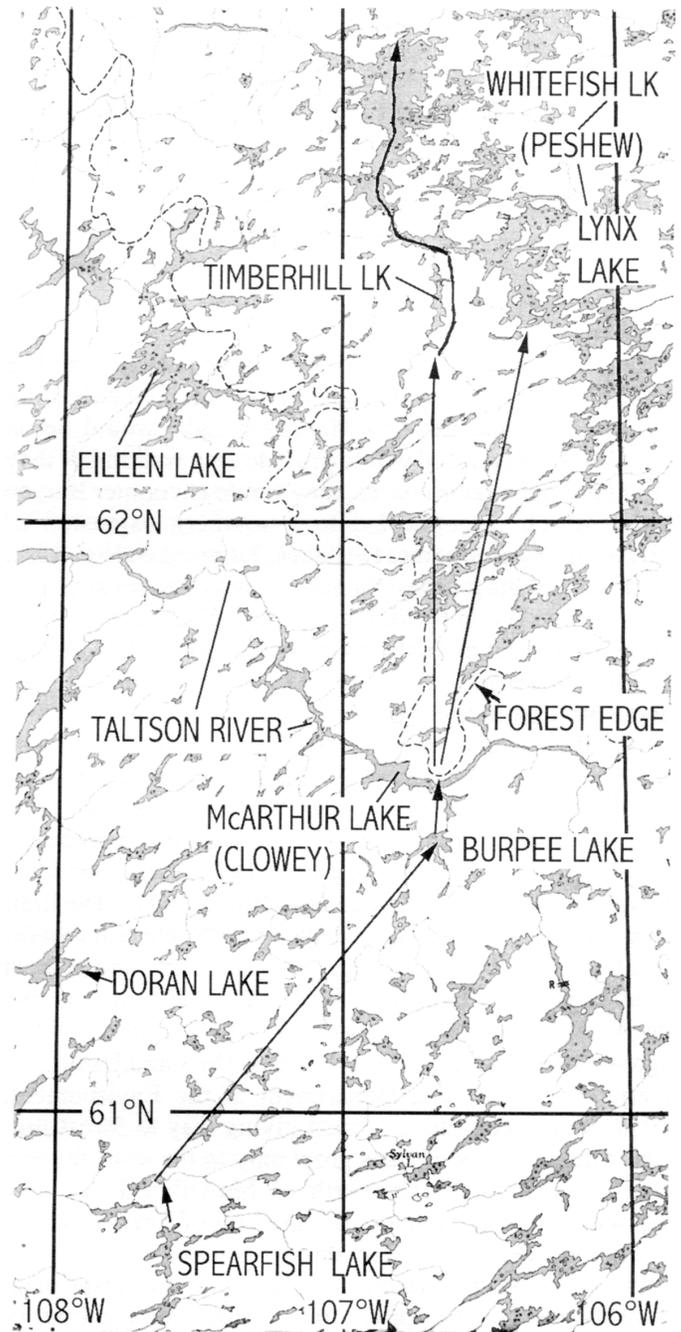


FIG. 3. Evidence in Hearne's account shows that his Clowey Lake is in the Taltson River basin. Doran Lake is also in the Taltson basin, but it is almost 50 miles from the nearest tundra. A prominent indentation in the limit of forests supplies a motive for selecting the route indicated. McArthur Lake possesses all the characteristics of Hearne's Clowey Lake. Note that a straight line drawn from Spearfish Lake to the south end of Lynx Lake passes through McArthur Lake.

5. If we knew which river runs through Clowey Lake we could remove all doubt about Morse's choice of Eileen Lake. The clue that settles that point comes much later in the story. From 15 to 24 February 1772, the party was making its way up the east side of the valley of the Slave River. Hearne (p. 271) wrote: "We walked along a small river that empties [sic] itself into the Lake Clowey, near the part where we

built canoes.” The small river in question can only be the Tethul, which is a tributary of the Taltson River. Clowey obviously does not receive the water of the Tethul, but it must be in the Taltson basin. Therefore, Eileen Lake cannot be Hearne’s Clowey Lake.

Where then is Clowey? On modern maps there is a lake about 12 miles long (east to west) on the upper Taltson River that I believe to be Hearne’s Clowey. Its modern name is McArthur Lake, and its distance from Spearfish Lake is just over 60 miles in a straight line, which is well within the limit of 85 miles (Fig. 3). If they crossed Spitfire Lake after leaving Spearfish, then a chain of lakes leading through Narwhal Lake to Mansfield Lake would be on their line of march and would provide easy walking. If they maintained the same course, they would encounter Burpee Lake, which is connected to a southern extension of McArthur. Hearne names two lakes, Tittameg and Scartack, on this leg of the journey, “neither of which are of any note, though both abound with fish” (p. 94). There are no clues, either in the text or on the chart, as to their modern names.

The course from Spearfish Lake to McArthur Lake lies about 30° east of true north, although Hearne’s text (p. 94) says: “We began to move forward and to shape our course nearly North.” The published map suggests that they travelled just slightly east of north, which agrees with the text. Why would Matonabee go east of north when his final destination lay west of north? The answer, I believe, lies in the vagaries of the tree line (Rowe, 1972). The limit of trees (Fig. 1), which is well above 63°N where it crosses Artillery Lake, dips strongly to the south and almost touches 62°N at longitude 106°W. Then, in less than one degree of longitude, it swings back north and crosses 63°N again in the vicinity of Tyrrell Lake. The Land Use Information map (Canada, Department of the Environment, 1979) shows continuous forest giving way to forest-tundra, where clumps of trees grow only in the most favourable sites, immediately north of McArthur Lake. The topographic map (Canada, Department of Energy, Mines and Resources, 1975) also shows an invagination in the limit of forest. Furthermore, Hearne’s manuscript map, with its line of little spruce trees, shows that the limit of continuous forest (as opposed to the limit of trees) lies very close to his Clowey Lake. Clearly, Matonabee must have known that this was the shortest route back to the “barren land.”

Peake (1991) chose Doran Lake as Hearne’s Clowey Lake and Eileen Lake as Hearne’s Peshew Lake. Doran Lake lies an acceptable distance north of Delight Lake, and it is on the direct route to Eileen Lake. It is also about the right size, and it is in the Taltson River basin. Where it fails is in the first point—it is about 48 miles from the nearest barren ground, which, as it happens, is just beyond McArthur Lake. Two days travel from Doran Lake on 22 and 23 May at “the rate of fourteen or fifteen miles a-day” (p. 100), plus a few miles on 20 and 21 May, would hardly place them beyond the continuous forest, let alone “clear

of all the woods” (p. 100–101), which I take to mean the limit of trees. Furthermore, if the canoes were assembled at Doran Lake and carried through the woods from Doran to either McArthur or Eileen Lake, why not build them at Thelewey-aza-yeth and be done with it?

PESHEW, LYNX, AND CATT LAKE

Hearne’s party left Clowey on 20 May, and on 22 May, as noted, they cleared all the woods. To take advantage of the dip on the line of continuous forest, as well as the limit of trees, they would have continued on a northeasterly course. Once clear of the woods, they would have been free to alter their course. On 27 May they made a walk of “about twelve miles to the Northward; most of the way on the ice of a small river which runs into Peshew Lake” (p. 102). Confusion arises here because no Peshew Lake appears on Hearne’s map. On the other hand, there is an island-studded lake (labelled “Catt Lake”) on the map, but no lake by that name is mentioned in the text. As pointed out initially by Richardson (1836:155), Peshew is the Cree name of the lynx (*Lynx lynx*), which is a member of the cat family, so it seems reasonable that Catt Lake, Peshew Lake, and Lynx Lake are one and the same. Those who believe that Eileen Lake is Hearne’s Clowey Lake have been loath to accept the modern Lynx Lake as Hearne’s Peshew Lake because it would require a diversion to the northeast instead of continuing due north. If McArthur Lake is Hearne’s Clowey, there is no such problem. It is no coincidence that a straight line from Spearfish Lake to the south end of the modern Lynx Lake would cross the western end of McArthur Lake (Fig. 3). There is virtually no chance that three lakes chosen at random at intervals of about 60 miles would lie on a straight line, which suggests that the choice of route was not random but deliberate.

I believe that this analysis not only supports my arguments for the modern names of Thelewey-aza-yeth and Clowey lakes, but is also a tribute to the knowledge of the country possessed by the Chipewyan Indians in the days before European contact, printed maps, or even a compass.

There is, however, still a problem, which Morse raised, with respect to Lynx Lake. Hearne wrote that his party spent three days and two nights traversing it. He estimated that they walked nearly 40 miles on the lake ice, but Lynx Lake is much less than 40 miles long. One solution to this problem would be to assume that Hearne considered Lynx and Whitefish Lakes to be a single lake. They are, in fact, joined by a narrow channel less than a mile long. From the south end of Lynx to the north shore of Whitefish is close to 50 miles, which would solve the problem.

Unfortunately, two facts argue against easy acceptance of this explanation. First, the traverse from the south end of Lynx Lake to the junction with Whitefish Lake is needlessly long, which conflicts with the just-demonstrated skill of Matonabee in selecting the most direct route. Second, even large-scale maps do not show a small

river that Hearne could have walked on for 12 miles running into the southern extremity of Lynx Lake.

However, a small river that runs northward through Timberhill Lake and enters Lynx Lake near its junction with Whitefish Lake would provide a shorter and more probable route (Fig. 3). It would require a change of only a few degrees to the northward in their course once they had cleared the woods, but it would accommodate only the first day's march of 22 miles or so, and that mainly on Whitefish Lake (which would then be Hearne's Peshew). The difference between 22 miles and 39 miles is too great to be explained by Hearne's tendency to overestimate distance. The missing 17 miles and two days remain a minor mystery.

THOY-NOY-KYED AND THOY-KYE(COY)-LYNED LAKES

Before leaving the north shore of Lynx-Whitefish Lake, "Matonabee selected two of his young wives who had no children to accompany us," and the other men in the party, "particularly those who had a plurality of wives, and a number of children," did likewise (p. 113). The remainder of the women, children, and the elderly were left behind to follow at their leisure to a "particular place appointed by him," where they were to await the return of the men from the Coppermine (p. 113).

Matonabee's party departed in the evening of 31 May and "pursued our journey to the Northward with great speed" (p. 117). In 16 days, they walked a straight-line distance of about 180 miles in spite of weather that was "so precarious, and the snow, sleet, and rain so frequent" (p. 117) that it made travel difficult.

Perhaps because of long days on the trail, there is a minimum of information (12 lines of text) in Hearne's account on this leg of the journey, so we are heavily dependent on the map for what little information we may glean about the route. Both maps show the party crossing the smaller of a pair of isolated lakes, which are joined by a short stretch of river. The manuscript map shows that a river connects the larger of the two lakes to the end of the East Arm of Great Slave Lake. Without a doubt, it is Artillery Lake. The smaller lake must then be Ptarmigan Lake on modern maps (Fig. 4). Peake (1991) reached the same conclusion.

On the manuscript map, the label Thoy-noy-kyed is set opposite Artillery Lake, but on the published map, it is beside what must be Ptarmigan Lake. Presumably, the label belongs to the lake they crossed, although it is not clear why Hearne would give it that name. He was probably aware of the aboriginal name for ptarmigan because on 6 February 1771, he "came to the side of Cossed Whoie, or Partridge Lake" (p. 75). On his chart, it is named Rock Partridge. At that latitude, the only partridge-like bird would be the ptarmigan. On modern maps the lake is shown as Kasba (= Cossed?) Lake.

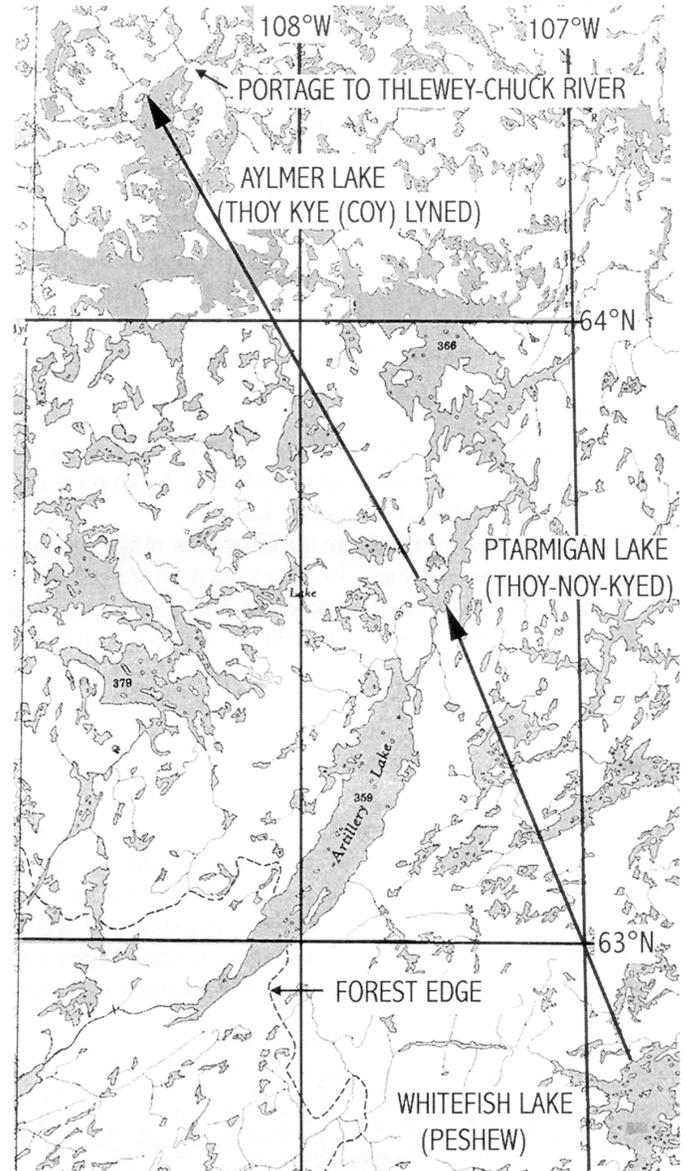


FIG. 4. The route shown departs only slightly from a straight line beginning at Whitefish Lake and ending at the southern end of Contwoyto Lake. The actual route would have taken advantage of all ice-covered lakes near the direct route. The proximity of Thlewey chuck (now Back) River to Thoy-kye-lyned Lake proves that the latter is the modern Aylmer Lake.

On the other hand, Thoy-noy-kyed has nothing to do with ptarmigan. Back (1836: 135), while searching for a way out of Lake Clinton-Colden, wrote that his guide, Maufelly, "again directed us west, through a kind of straight, where there was an island, consisting of one conical mount, about two hundred feet high. Some sand was visible round and near its apex, and it was distinguished, as I afterwards learnt, by the name of the Sand-Hill." Richardson (1836:155) gave "Sand-hill Mount" as the translation of Tha-na-koie and said it "is the name given to the narrows between these two lakes." He therefore equated Hearne's Thoy-noy-kyed with "the lakes Aylmer and Clinton-Colden," even though both versions of Hearne's map have only a blank space where Clinton-

Colden Lake should be. Pike (1892), searching for a way out of Aylmer Lake, wrote “It ended in our taking the middle bay, and, for the benefit of the next party that crosses this lake, I may state that there is a peculiar conical butte lying roughly twenty miles south of this island; it is just visible above the horizon, and is a capital leading mark to bring a canoe into a long narrow arm of the lake.” Blanchet (1924) referred to the modern Ptarmigan Lake as “Casba” Lake, and to the river joining it to Artillery Lake as “Casba” River. According to Blanchet (1924), the Indians considered Clinton-Colden and Aylmer Lakes to be a single lake called “The Lake of the Sand Hills.” The narrows between those two lakes is what they called “Thana-koie.”

It should be noted that there is a Thonokied Lake on modern maps. It lies northeast of MacKay Lake on a line between Lac de Gras and Aylmer Lake.

The next feature to appear on Hearne’s map is a lake with three prominent bays in its eastern shoreline. It is labelled “Thoy kye lyned” and referred to in the text as “Thoy-coy-lyned.” The north arm of Aylmer Lake has three prominent bays on its eastern border (Fig. 4). Peake (1991) also noted that “its three large bays, and its northern trend bear a striking resemblance to Aylmer Lake.” That is a first, although not a convincing, clue to its identity.

The second, and defining, clue is on the published map but is missing from the manuscript map, which is generally the more accurate. A river called “Thlewey chuck” heads off in a northeasterly direction from near the north end of the lake with the three bays. Hearne consistently wrote “chuck” for “cho,” which means “large” in the Chipewyan language. The English translation of the name of that river

would be “Large (or Great) Fish.” On modern maps it is the Back River, named in honour of the first European to explore its whole length. The head of Great Fish, or Back, River is only a short portage from the northern tip of Aylmer Lake (Fig. 4), which identifies Aylmer as Hearne’s Thoy-kye(or coy)-lyned. It too was crossed by Hearne on the ice. Once again, Peake (1991) and I made the same observation: “The river that runs just to the north, called Thelewey-chuck...is, in fact, the Icy River, a major feeder of Musk-ox Lake and the Back River.”

From the north end of Aylmer, their route took them to the vicinity of the south end of Cogead Lake (Fig. 5). Richardson (1836:151) noted that “Cogead Lake is the Cont-woy-to, or Rum Lake, of Franklin,” and nobody has contested that conclusion.

Finally, it is worth noting that a straight line running from the north end of Whitefish Lake to the south end of Contwoyto Lake crosses the western end of Ptarmigan Lake and runs the length of the north arm of Aylmer Lake. This is another impressive demonstration of the knowledge of the country and the navigational skill of the Chipewyan Indians.

CONTWOYTO LAKE TO THE COPPERMINE AND RETURN

This section of the journey is straightforward. Outbound, the travellers were able to cross the bays on the eastern side of Contwoyto Lake on the ice; on their return, the ice had melted, and they were forced to avoid the bays. The lake to which Hearne gave the name “Buffalo or Musk-Ox Lake” is Takijuaq Lake on modern maps. Whether Hearne actually went to the mouth of the Coppermine River has been the subject of a controversy to which I have nothing to add. He did, however, visit the copper “mines”—the true objective of the journey.

The women who accompanied the raiding party were left at the crossing of the Conge-ca-tha-wha-chaga (Burnside) River between Contwoyto and Kathawachaga Lakes on 3 July. When the men reached the crossing on their return, they discovered that the women had already left. About two o’clock in the morning of 25 July, the men caught up with them “by the side of Cogead Lake” (p. 185). On 31 July they arrived at the place “where the wives and families of my companions had been ordered to wait our return” (p. 187). Some of the women were already there, and the rest were not far away; the smoke of their fires was visible to the east. Matonabee sent some young men to help the women move camp. The two groups were reunited on 5 August, along with “a great number of other Indians” (p. 188).

According to Peake (1991:3), “Hearne’s map clearly shows the rendezvous lake below Cogead (= Contwoyto Lake) as the middle of three small lakes, shown on modern maps as Migration Lake.” If, however, the rendezvous was located at the point where the northbound and southbound

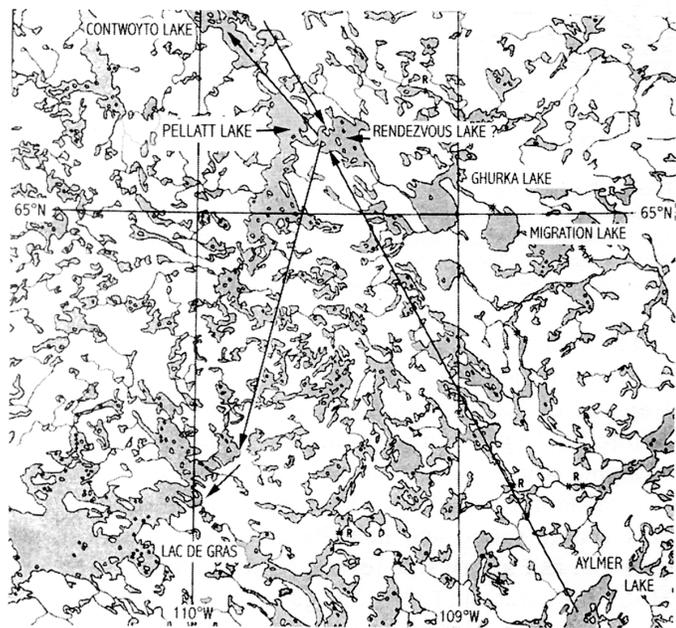


FIG. 5. The point where outbound and return paths crossed is taken to be the site of the rendezvous arranged before leaving Whitefish Lake. Judging by Hearne’s map, the crossover point is north of Migration Lake, which Peake took to be the rendezvous lake.

routes cross, as seems logical, the rendezvous lake should be either Ghurka Lake or the large eastern bay on Pellatt Lake (Fig. 5).

IS IT POSSIBLE TO IDENTIFY "LARGE WHITE STONE LAKE"?

I am in complete agreement with Morse's conclusion that Hearne's Thaye-chuk-gyed Whoie, or Large White Stone Lake, is the modern Lac de Gras (Figs. 5 and 6). The description given by Hearne, "about forty miles long from North East to South West, but of very unequal breadth" (p. 126–127), misses the important fact that the lake is actually crescent-shaped with its points directed to the northeast and the northwest. Its "unequal breadth" is caused by two prominent peninsulas that jut into it from its northern shore.

Hearne's description continues (p. 195): "A river from the North West side of this lake *is said* to run in a serpentine manner a long way to the westward; and then turning to the Northward, composes the main branch of the Coppermine River, as has been already mentioned, *which may or may not be true*" [my emphasis]. The Coppermine River does indeed run out of the western extremity of Lac de Gras, but it is clear from the quotation that Hearne had no personal knowledge of it. This observation has a direct bearing on the next question.

HEARNE'S MYSTIFYING MISPLACEMENT OF POINT LAKE

Richardson (1836:151) wrote "At one time, we were inclined to doubt the identity of Franklin's Point Lake with the one so named by Hearne, but we now consider them to be the same." Morse also believed that Hearne's Point Lake and Franklin's Point Lake, which is also the modern Point Lake, were one and the same. He concocted a far-fetched explanation of how Hearne managed to "misplace" Point Lake, in the course of which he accused Hearne of "no doubt trying to accommodate his text to his faulty map" (Morse, 1981:32). Morse assumed that the party did, in fact, make the long side trip to the modern Point Lake in order to secure caribou to "make winter clothing, thongs, shoes, parchment, and dried meat to carry." If that were true, Hearne would have had personal knowledge of the outflow of the Coppermine from Lac de Gras instead of depending on hearsay as noted above.

Furthermore, Hearne wrote (p. 194) that "from the nineteenth to the twenty-fifth, we walked by the side of Thaye-chuk-gyed Whoie, or Large White Stone Lake." He went on to say (p. 195): "Deer were plentiful the whole way...the Indians killed great numbers of them daily, merely for the sake of their skins; and at this time of year their pelts are in good season, and the hair of a proper length for clothing." Given an abundance of caribou on

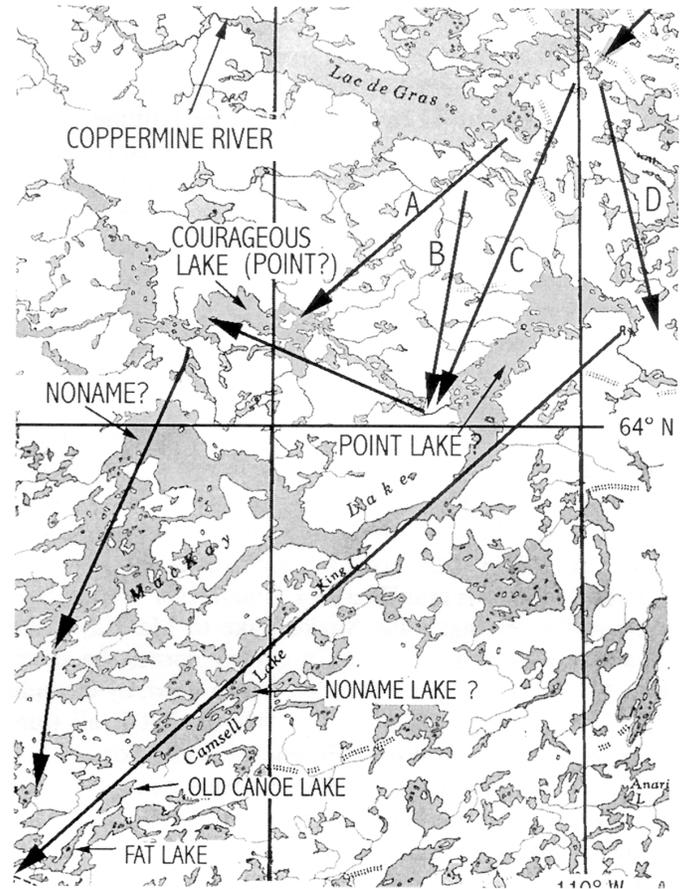


FIG. 6. Lac de Gras is Hearne's Thaye-chuk-gyed (Large White Stone) Lake. For explanation of lines A to D, see text. Because Hearne located Lac de Gras much too far east, he had no choice but to claim that his course was southwesterly.

their route, with their pelts in good season, there was no reason for the party to make the long side trip to the modern Point Lake.

The distance they could have travelled in six days, considering that they killed a large number of caribou each day, has a bearing on what follows. I suggest that the time spent hunting, skinning, butchering, and preparing the meat and hides every day would have reduced their rate of travel to a snail's pace. I would not be surprised if they only managed one or two miles per day. It is possible that they did not cross 110° W longitude (Fig. 5).

To return to Morse's "mystery," the obvious solution is that Hearne's Point Lake was not the Point Lake on modern maps. If so, the question becomes which lake is Hearne's Point Lake? There are only two possibilities: Courageous Lake and MacKay Lake (Fig. 6).

This issue is clouded by Hearne's misplacement of Lac de Gras. According to the map in the Hurtig facsimile edition, five degrees of latitude (300 nautical miles) measure 163 mm, so that 1 mm represents 1.84 nautical miles. The minimum distance between Lac de Gras and Aylmer Lake is about 8 mm (15 nautical miles), and the maximum is about 15 mm (28 nautical miles). On modern maps, these minimum and maximum distances are about 33 and 41 nautical miles. Thus Hearne plotted Lac de Gras,

especially its northern end, too close to Aylmer Lake: it should be further west. In the north-south direction, the lakes should not be side by side, but the northernmost point on Aylmer should be in about the same latitude as the southernmost point on Lac de Gras. It is the misplacement of Lac de Gras that results in the apparent strong southwestern trend of Hearne's track. This fact throws some doubt on whether his real course was always southwesterly, or whether there was some accommodation of his text to his map, as suggested by Morse.

Hearne says (p. 201): "After leaving White Stone Lake, we continued our course in the southwest quarter." He does not say when they left White Stone Lake, but his silence is taken to mean that they left on 26 September, after the six days of hunting, and that they walked southwesterly for the next eight days. He continues: "On the third of September, we arrived at a small river belonging to Point Lake." This is the point at which Peake and I differ.

Peake's thesis is that Hearne's "small river" is the short stretch of river that joins Snake Lake to MacKay Lake (Snake River). After a delay in getting across the river, they "shaped [their] course to the *North West*, by the side of Point Lake" for 18 miles (p. 202). If that is all true, Courageous Lake would be Hearne's Point Lake.

The first problem with Peake's thesis centres on the word *North* in "North West by the side of Point Lake." This is the critical discrepancy mentioned in the introduction. In all 83 copies of the first edition examined by MacLaren (1993), "North" occurs as the catchword at the bottom of page 201 and the first word on page 202. The second edition of 1796, the Champlain Society edition, and Glover's edition have all changed "North" to "South," and the Hurtig facsimile has "North" at the bottom of page 201 followed by "South West" as the first words on page 202. If Hearne really meant "North West," Peake's thesis may stand up.

The second problem with that thesis is that if Hearne's party had really maintained a southwesterly course upon leaving Lac de Gras, they would have gone straight to Courageous Lake and not to the small river (Fig. 6, line A). If they followed the south shore of Lac de Gras to the point where it begins to run to the northwest (as seems to be the case in Hearne's chart), their course to the stretch of river between Snake Lake and MacKay Lake would have been only a few degrees west of due south—certainly not southwest (Fig. 6, line B). If they left Lac de Gras in the vicinity of 110° W, their course would have been between south and southwest, and they would almost certainly have become aware of MacKay Lake (Fig. 6, line C).

The third problem is Hearne's chart. In it, the principal axis of Point Lake is north-south, whereas if Peake is right, Hearne would have camped on the part of Courageous Lake that lies east-west.

My thesis is that the "small river belonging to Point Lake" is the Lockhart River where it leaves MacKay Lake, and that the latter is Hearne's Point Lake. To my eye, Point Lake in Hearne's chart has a strong resemblance to the north end of MacKay Lake. Furthermore, his chart shows

that the river he crossed runs for some distance eastward before passing through a lake that could be Outram on modern maps. It then continues in the direction of Aylmer Lake. All of that is consistent with Lockhart River, but not with Snake River.

In the second place, Pike (1892), who named MacKay Lake, was told by his Indian and Métis guides that a portage route between the northeastern tip of MacKay Lake and Lac de Gras was part of a well-known trail to the land of the muskox. Pike crossed the portage between the two lakes twice in each direction, once on bare ground and once with a dog team in winter.

The first problem with my thesis is that once across the river, the party would have been walking "*South West*, by the side of Point Lake." If the word "North" in the first edition was not an error, MacKay Lake cannot be Point Lake.

A second problem concerns the direction of travel after they left the side of Lac de Gras. On modern maps, the northeast tip of Lac de Gras is almost due north of the eastern extremity of MacKay; thus, it is not possible to strike the Lockhart River east of MacKay by going southwest. It can only be reached by going east of south (Fig. 6, line D).

A third problem concerns the distance travelled on Point Lake. Hearne mentioned only 18 miles (8, 9, and 10 September). If the party stayed in one small patch of "scrubby woods" from 10 September to 30 September, they could not have reached the next lake in the sequence by a walk of merely six miles.

POINT LAKE TO GREAT SLAVE LAKE

On 1 November, Hearne's party "walked five or six miles to the Southward" (p. 210). In the next paragraph, Hearne states that "From the first to the fifth of November [presumably he meant from the *second* to the fifth] we walked on the ice of a large lake..." to which he gave the name No Name Lake. According to him, "No Name Lake is about fifty miles long from North to South, and, according to the account of the Indians, is thirty-five miles wide from East to West." No lake in the region comes close to fitting that description. It seems inconsistent that such a large lake, if it existed, did not have a name when lakes as small as Clowey had names well known to the Indians. Perhaps this was one of Hearne's deliberate attempts to confuse his detractors.

Which lake is accepted as Hearne's No Name Lake depends on which lake is accepted as Point Lake. A walk of about six miles south from Courageous Lake would bring one to the north shore of Warburton Bay of MacKay Lake, as pointed out by Peake (1991). From north to south, the western shore of Warburton Bay is at least 30 miles long. Its maximum width is about 20 miles.

If the long, narrow north arm of MacKay is accepted as Point Lake, their route would have been a short portage into King Lake, and another from King Lake into Camsell Lake, which would be Hearne's No Name Lake. Camsell

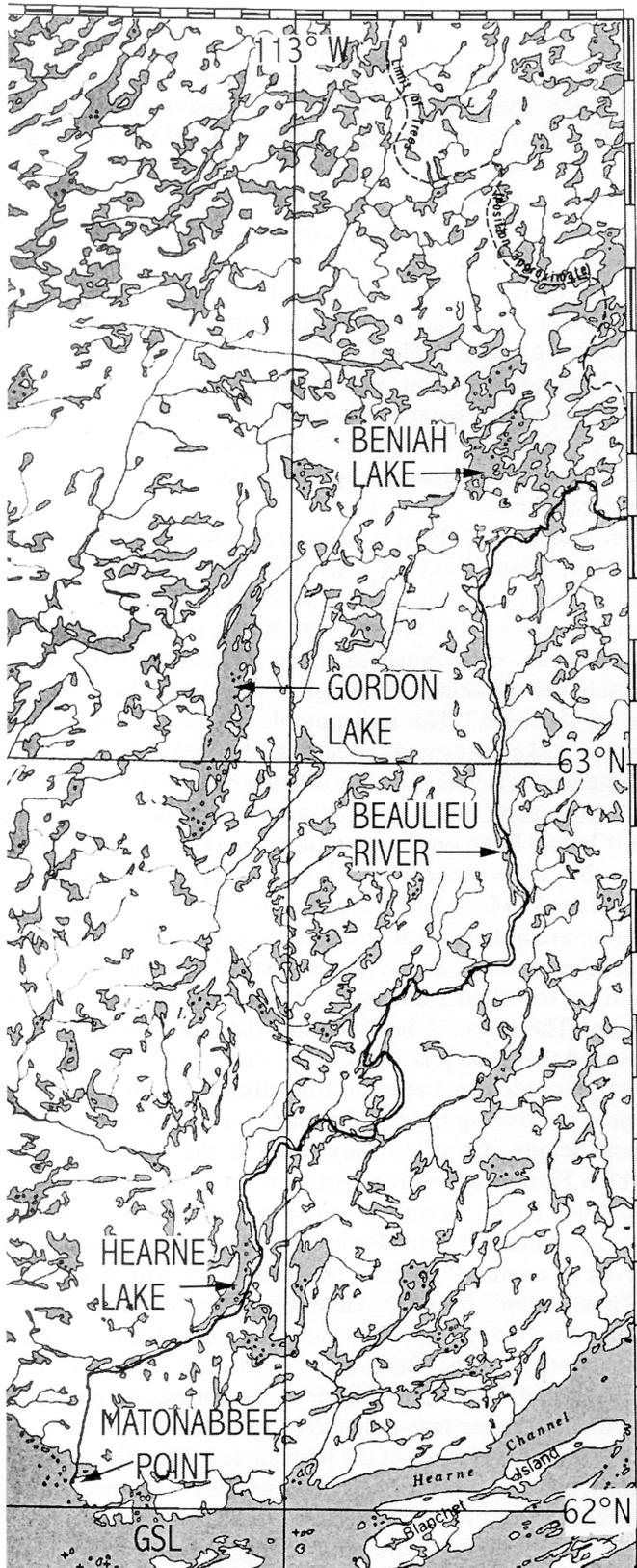


FIG. 7. The Hearne party followed what is now the Beaulieu River to Methy (now Beniah) Lake, and then southward to Anaw'd (now Hearne) Lake. They left the river there and followed a chain of lakes off the southwestern tip of Hearne Lake before turning south to Great Slave Lake (GSL) at, or near, Matonabbee Point.

Lake is about 22 miles long, but not over four miles wide at any point.

Arguments in favour of Warburton Bay are, first, that the approach from Courageous Lake is straight south, as stated by Hearne, rather than southwest. Second, the relative size of the lakes certainly favours Warburton Bay.

Arguments in favour of Camsell Lake are, first, that it lies on the known route from Lac de Gras to the north shore of Great Slave Lake near the long-abandoned Fond du Lac outpost (Pike, 1892) via the north arm of MacKay Lake, Camsell Lake, and a chain of smaller lakes. Second, Hearne states (p. 211) that on reaching the south end of No Name Lake "we shaped our course to the Southwest." A portage from Camsell Lake into Old Canoe Lake, followed by one into Fat Lake (Fig. 6), extends the course in a nearly straight line for another 15 miles to the southwest, whereas the course from Warburton Bay lies to the south whether Hearne's Methy Lake is Rivett Lake (Peake, 1991) or Beniah Lake (this paper). Finally, the point where the Lockhart River leaves MacKay Lake is about 80 miles, in a nearly straight line, from the Beaulieu River at the south end of Fat Lake. It seems to be in keeping with Matonabbee's ability to travel directly from point to point that he would choose that route.

According to modern maps, the Beaulieu River enters the main woods a few miles upstream of Beniah Lake, which I believe to be Hearne's Methy Lake. It then crosses the south end of Beniah Lake and runs nearly due south for about 45 miles before angling to the southwest for another 35 or 40 miles to Hearne Lake (Fig. 7). The actual distance from Beniah Lake to Hearne Lake is close to the 80 miles that Hearne estimated, so the modern Hearne Lake appears to be the one Hearne called Anaw'd (spelled aNu'd on his chart) or Indian Lake. Peake (1991) chose Turnback Lake to correspond to Hearne's Anaw'd Lake.

Hearne says (p. 222): "We once more packed up our stores and, on the first day of December, set out, and continued our course to the South West, leaving Anaw'd Lake on the South West." The Beaulieu River leaves Hearne Lake from the east side, about two-thirds of the way down from the north end, so Matonabbee must have left the river at Hearne Lake. Hearne continues: "From the first to the thirteenth, we walked along a course of small lakes, joined to each other by small rivers, or creeks, that have communication with Anaw'd Lake" (p. 222). There is a series of small lakes running to the southwest of Hearne Lake (Fig. 7), but they do not have communication with it. If Hearne and his companions turned south after crossing three of the lakes, they would have struck the north shore of Great Slave Lake in the vicinity of Gros Cap, and not far from Matonabbee Point.

WHERE DID THEY CROSS GREAT SLAVE LAKE?

Morse (1981:33) suggested that Hearne's party may have used Pike's route all the way to the East Arm, near

Taltheilei Narrows, and crossed the lake in that region. Morse must be in error for several reasons. First, the islands and peninsulas in the east end of Great Slave Lake have cliffs rising 150 m or more above the water level. They are certainly impassable, and avoiding them would add many miles to the crossing. Second, on arrival at the south shore, Hearne was happy to see “a fine level country, in which there was not a hill to be seen, or a stone to be found” (p. 250). Had he crossed in the vicinity of the narrows, he would have encountered the McDonald Fault, a high ridge of the same stone they had left on the north shore. Third, Hearne’s Plate IV (facing p. 248) shows many small, low-lying islands, which is what one sees lying to the west of Preble Island, the Simpson group of islands, and Wilson Island. By skirting the edge of the island groups, they would have had easy walking on ice with easy access to land for camping and gathering fuel.

Mackenzie (1789:167) described his arrival at Great Slave Lake via the Jean River and his stay at the houses of Grant and Leroux while waiting for the ice to clear. Eventually, he made a “traverse” of about eight miles to land on a small island. He crossed from one island to the next as winds and ice permitted, eventually reaching the north shore in the vicinity of Gros Cap. Surprisingly, he returned the same way instead of simply following the south shore. He landed at “the point of the Old Fort” on 2 September (p. 232). The next day, after paddling for three hours to travel five miles, they re-entered Jean River. Because Stoney Island is about five miles from Jean River, it must have been the site of “the Old Fort.” Back (1819–20) described four crossings of Great Slave Lake, one by canoe (p. 71) and three over the ice (p. 102–103, 114, 200). In each case, Back, and those with him, followed the south shore to (or from) Stoney Island. In 1890, Pike (1892) crossed by canoe from the south to the north shore, en route to Fond du Lac near Taltheilei Narrows (p. 25). His point of departure from the south shore was Stoney Island. On his return trip in winter with a dog team (p. 152), Pike struck the south shore at Stoney Island. Even today, the same route is used by travellers in small boats for passage between Yellowknife, or the East Arm, and the delta of the Slave River. In all likelihood, then, Hearne reached the south shore in the vicinity of Stoney Island.

THELEWEY-AZA-YETH REVISITED

Morse (1981:33–34) is also wrong when he says that Hearne ascended the Slave River “for forty miles and thence due east to the Taltson valley. By way of Largepike and Bedodid Lakes they arrived at Hill Island Lake....” Forty miles would have put them at about 60°50' N, whereas the point where the Tethul River (which they followed southward) joins the Taltson is at about 60°30'; the north tip of Bedodid Lake is not much above 60°20'; and the northern tip of Largepike Lake is at about 60°10'.

Had Hearne gone due east at latitude 60°50', he would have passed to the north of Hill Island Lake (Fig. 8).

Although Wilson (1949) chose the wrong lake as Hearne’s Thelewey-aza-yeth, he did make an important contribution to its ultimate identification. He followed the existing Indian trail from Fort Fitzgerald through Large Pike and Bedodid Lakes to Hill Island Lake, and he suggested that Hearne and his party had probably followed the same route (Fig. 8). It is uncharacteristic of Matonabbee to depart from a direct route, but in this case there may have been two reasons for his doing so. First, he had apparently hoped to meet the “southern” Indians. Second, the hunting was good, which enabled the party to dry a large supply of meat for the coming journey across the tundra. Hearne’s descriptions of Largepike and Bedodid Lakes are quite accurate, and both lakes still retain their ancient names.

In late March, Hearne “arrived at Noo-shetht Whoie, or the Hill-Island Lake, so called from a very high island which stands in it” (p. 282). Camsell (1916:56) wrote: “It gets its name, Hill Island, which is a translation of the Chipewyan name Nusheth, from a cone-shaped island” which, though small, is a prominent feature when looking down the lake.” The indisputable identification of Hill Island Lake is critical, because that lake is closer to Thelewey-aza-yeth than any other definitely known point.

Morse and I differ on events following departure from Hill Island Lake on the eastbound journey. Hearne wrote that they crossed the Thoa River on 7 April and rejoined it on 14 April. Morse (1971:59) shows Hearne making a long detour around the great northern loop of the Thoa River. It has already been amply demonstrated that the Northern Indians travelled from point to point by the most direct route. Therefore, I believe that the party would have crossed the Thoa just a few miles east of Hill Island Lake and proceeded in a straight line slightly north of east, to rejoin the river at the small expansion where the northern loop begins. En route they crossed the Marten River, which Hearne may have mistaken for a southern loop of the Thoa River, as shown on the manuscript map, but not on the published map (Fuller, 1980:67). This hypothesis gives us another “known” point, which I will refer to as “Thoa Camp” (Fig. 8). Hearne’s party stayed at Thoa Camp for 10 days, during which they hunted and prepared “a quantity of the flesh and fat to carry with us” and “completed the wood work for their canoes, and procured all their Summer tent-poles, &c” (p. 286).

The men, and some of the women, left Thoa Camp on 25 April, and that day “walked twenty miles to the Eastward” (p. 287). In all likelihood, they walked on the ice of the Thoa River, which runs remarkably straight, and only a little north of east, for approximately 20 miles (Fig. 8). After waiting two days for the rest of the women to catch up, the entire party set out on 28 April and sometime on 29 April they “passed by Thleweyaza Yeth” [sic].

The rate of travel of the whole party was ultimately governed by the rate of its slowest component—the women,

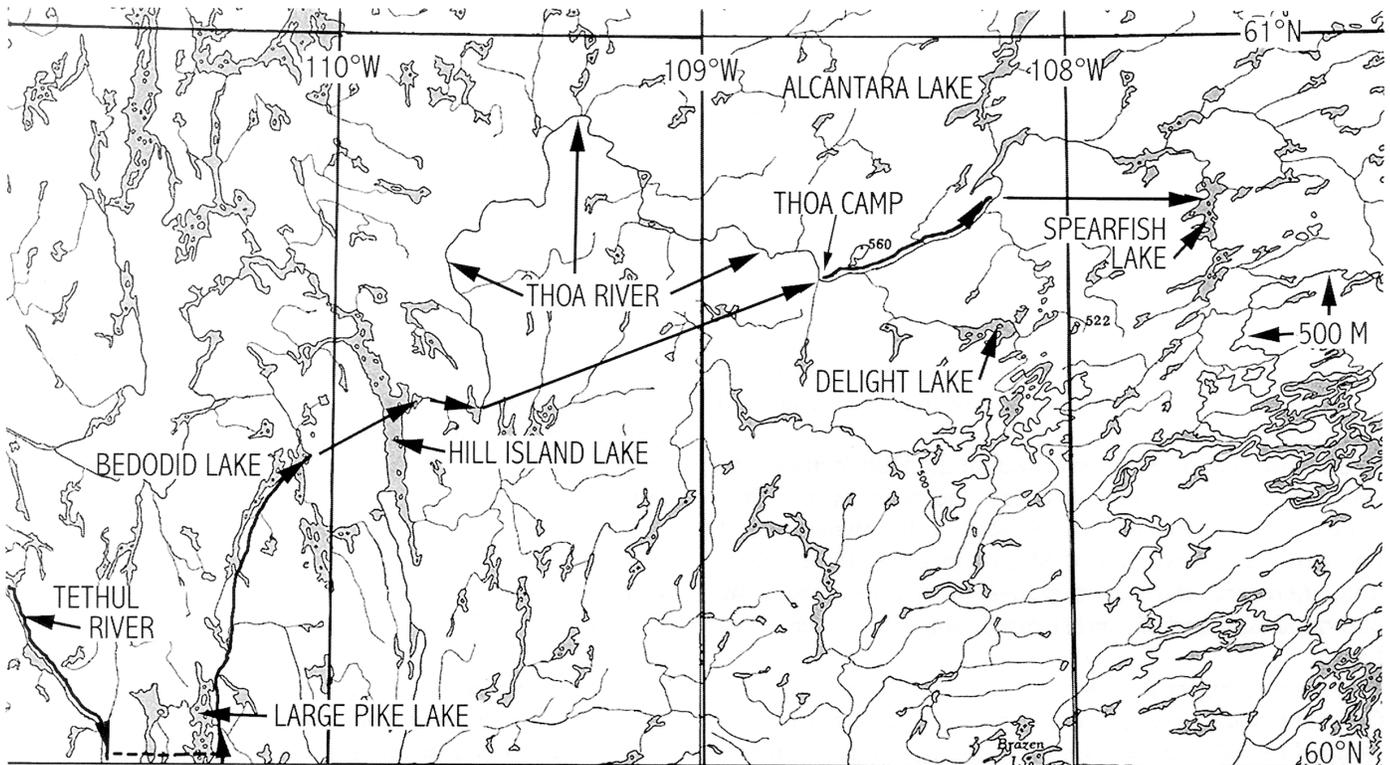


FIG. 8. The route shown dips below the 60th parallel then goes northeasterly to Hill Island Lake, which still has the Dene name that it had in Hearne's time. After rejoining Thoa River, probably at the point marked "Thoa Camp," the men walked an estimated 20 miles in one day, and it took them another full day and part of a third day to reach Thelewey-aza-yeth (Spearfish). The first day's march would have taken them to, or beyond, Delight Lake, which cannot, therefore, be Thelewey-aza-yeth.

children, and elders. Because the slowest women caught up to the men in three days or less, depending on when they left Thoa Camp, they must have been covering between 7 and 10 miles per day. If they travelled at 7 miles per day on 28 and 29 April, Thelewey-aza-yeth could be no more than 14 miles from the point where they left the Thoa River, and the direct distance from Thoa Camp would be roughly 30 miles. If they travelled at 10 miles per day, Thelewey-aza-yeth could be as much as 20 miles from the Thoa River and near 40 miles from Thoa Camp. An arc with a radius of 40 miles, centred on Thoa Camp, passes just to the east of Spearfish Lake. Delight Lake, on the other hand, is surely too close (15 miles) to Thoa Camp to be Thelewey-aza-yeth.

An arc with a radius of 110 miles, centred on the west shore of Wholdaia, passes just to the west of Spearfish Lake, which is the only candidate lake enclosed by the two arcs. I conclude, therefore, that the approach from the west satisfies the seventh and last criterion set out in the section on Thelewey-aza-yeth.

The modern Spearfish Lake must be Hearne's Thelewey-aza-yeth.

WHERE ON HIS RETURN ROUTE DID HEARNE PROBABLY STRIKE THE DUBAWNT RIVER?

The reason that the westbound and eastbound courses differ is quite obvious, as noted by Morse (1981). The

westbound part of the journey was made in winter, when lakes were frozen over and the wind-driven snow packed so hard that snowshoes would not be needed in many cases—conditions that make lakes ideal travel routes. In summer, quite the opposite is the case; large lakes are absolute barriers to travel on foot or in small canoes such as those Hearne's party carried for the sole purpose of crossing rivers. Wholdaia Lake, for example, provided 20 miles (Hearne's reckoning) of easy travel on the westward leg, but had to be avoided on the return journey.

The specific question posed in the heading for this section, however, is difficult to answer for the following reasons: 1) we do not know precisely where Hearne crossed Anaunethad Lake; 2) we do not know whether his homeward route was totally independent of his outgoing route (published map) or whether it split off from his outgoing route at the Dubawnt River (manuscript map); and 3) there are many days for which Hearne gave no estimate of miles travelled.

About the only thing we do know is that, according to his account, Hearne travelled at least 29 miles on the Dubawnt River on 12, 18, and 19 May. The party left the river system some time on 20 May at some point on the eastern shore of Smalltree Lake (Fig. 2). Some part of the 15 miles travelled that day was on the Dubawnt system, so the total distance on that system was probably more than 30 miles but less than 40 miles. Allowing for some over-estimation, the real distance could be as short as 25 miles.

Assuming that Hearne and his party returned along their outbound route, they could have crossed the Dubawnt no further downstream than Lac Brulé (Fig. 2). The distance from Lac Brulé to the east shore of Smalltree Lake, measured along the river, is about 70 miles, or at least twice the distance reportedly travelled on the Dubawnt. Therefore, they did not follow their outbound route.

Assuming that they went directly to Anaunethad Lake, they would have intersected the Dubawnt about midway between Mountain Lake and Smalltree Lake, which would leave only 12–15 miles of travel on the Dubawnt system. Because that is only about half of the probable minimum distance, it is unlikely that they followed a direct course to Anaunethad Lake.

Because the distance travelled on the Dubawnt system was certainly less than 40 miles, the point where they struck the Dubawnt must have been well downstream of Lac Brulé and upstream of Mountain Lake. By elimination, therefore, the return course must lie between the outbound one and the most direct route to Anaunethad Lake.

So where might they have struck the Dubawnt River? On other occasions, as noted above, when Matonabbee stopped to make canoes, sledges, or other items appropriate to the coming season, they camped by a small lake. If they did so on this occasion, then they may have struck the Dubawnt about five miles above Sandy Lake on 11 May, travelled the five miles to the lake on 12 May, and spent the next four days there building canoes (Fig. 2). The distance from Sandy Lake to the eastern side of Smalltree Lake (where they would leave the Dubawnt) is about 20–25 miles. By the most direct course, the distance from Spearfish Lake to the assumed point of contact with the Dubawnt is about 65 miles.

This analysis allows for speculation about the location of Black Bear Hill, which is mentioned on both the outgoing and the return journeys. Assuming that they reached Dubawnt River near Sandy Lake, the distance from Spearfish is about 120 “Hearne miles,” and the distance from Spearfish to Black Bear Hill is about 88 “Hearne miles,” that is, about three-quarters of the way to the Dubawnt. If the actual distance to the Dubawnt is about 65 miles, as estimated above, Black Bear Hill should be about 48 miles east of Spearfish Lake. The direct course passes just south of a small area (the large black dot on Fig. 2) that exceeds 1600 feet (490 m) in altitude, whereas the lakes are at about 1450 feet (442 m), and over most of the landscape there is only the 1500 foot (457 m) contour line. The approximate co-ordinates of the high ground are 60°46' N and 106°12' W, and it is about 46 miles from Spearfish Lake. Could this be Black Bear Hill?

SUMMARY

I have admired Hearne since the first time I read his account of the journey, and I believe that he got less credit,

and more criticism, than he deserved for completing such an arduous task. Although denigrated and consigned to obscurity by his critics, Hearne did accomplish the main purpose of his journey, which was to investigate the deposits of copper near the mouth of Coppermine River. His opinion that they could not be exploited profitably has been verified several times in the last two centuries. He was the first European to walk across the barren lands, to reach the Arctic coast overland, and to see Great Slave Lake. He also made important observations about the people with whom he travelled and others that were met en route. In addition to his observations of the country, the fauna, and the people, he demonstrated the importance of adopting Indian methods of travel, the necessity of having women in the party, and the importance of a competent Indian guide.

Thelewey-aza-yeth has long been recognized as a key point on Hearne's trip. Spearfish Lake satisfies all the known criteria for Thelewey-aza-yeth. McArthur Lake (Clowey) on the Taltson River is on the edge of continuous forest and therefore an ideal location in which to build canoes to save carrying them through the woods. It also lies on the direct route from Spearfish to the south end of Lynx Lake. If Matonabbee travelled in another straight line from Lynx-Whitefish, he must have crossed the modern Ptarmigan Lake (Thoy-noy-kyed) and followed the northern arm of Aylmer Lake (Thoy-kye-lyned) en route to Contwoyto (Cogead) Lake. Lac de Gras is undoubtedly Hearne's Thaye chuk gyed Lake. Hearne's Point Lake is not the modern Point Lake. A case can be made for either Courageous Lake or MacKay Lake as Hearne's Point Lake. The party crossed Great Slave Lake near the base of the East Arm and reached the south shore to the west of the edge of the Precambrian Shield. Hill Island Lake (Noo-shetht Whoie) is the last definitely known place before Thelewey-aza-yeth and provides the strongest evidence in support of Spearfish and against all other candidates.

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