

OF completes 740 mile solo paddle on the Northern Forest Canoe Trail



On 15th June this year, Peter Macfarlane triumphantly paddled into Fort Kent, Maine, to complete a successful solo through-paddle of the Northern Forest Canoe Trail. The Trail itself, 740 miles from upstate New York across northern New England and parts of Quebec, was challenge enough, but the four weeks that he took for this endeavour saw some of the most hostile weather for this time of year, which took the challenge to a whole new level.

Peter left Old Forge, New

York, on 19th May (see photo of first stroke) in his self-built 14-foot cedar-strip canoe, and paddled anywhere from about 15 to 40 miles per day on large lakes, small ponds, flat-water and white-water rivers and streams, both upstream and down. He carried with him enough camping equipment to be self-sufficient, although managed to spend some nights indoors in some of the communities along the way.



The month before his departure was unusually warm and dry, and he was worried about water levels in the rivers, a worry which proved to be unfounded. The rain started within two hours of his departure.



Thunderstorms started on the second night. There followed days of heavy continuous rain and bitterly cold northerly winds as he crossed Lake Champlain and started to make his way up the Missisquoi River in northern Vermont. This river, swollen to flood conditions was flowing at over 5 mph against him as he made his way up eddies for over 70 miles, sometimes having to portage. Long days of paddling, often 10 – 12 hours, took

their toll and he was hypothermic more than once. His reliance on a stove that uses wood to be gathered along the way proved unwise as often there was nothing burnable to be had, and so cooking food was impossible.



Despite the conditions (May turned out to be the wettest on record in Vermont), Peter reached the Connecticut River valley between New Hampshire and Vermont on time to play for a scheduled musical engagement on the one “rest” day of the trip; his wife, Viveka, brought his fiddle, as well as a re-supply of food (and a gas stove as a back-up). His hope that the weather in the second fortnight would be better proved in vain. Of the 28 days he spent on the Trail, only four were without rain, and one of those was the rest day.

The ubiquitous rain clouds did have silver linings, however. Most of the rivers proved to have plenty of water, making for some very enjoyable white-water runs with few encounters with rocks. His canoe suffered a couple of non-life-threatening splits, multiple scratches and scrapes, many of which will disappear on re-finishing, and a broken



seat (pictured), Peter's own fault and a story in its own right. It performed admirably in highly diverse water conditions and has now been dubbed "The Little Canoe That Could And Did!"

The full story is being posted online at <http://users.gnavt.net/petermac/peterNFCT.html> , a transcript of Peter's journal that he kept, and succeeded in keeping dry throughout. At the time of writing, he is now resuming life in Vermont, looking forward to some less strenuous canoe-camping trips with Viveka, preferably with less rain and wind. What he carries forward is a profound sense of achievement, made all the more poignant for having been shared with a canoe of his own creation, and made all the more rewarding for having been achieved despite all that the weather threw at him. He emerged weatherbeaten, but not beaten by the weather.

The picture below was taken at the end with his wife Viveka and friends. The canoe still looks in very good shape and Peter's now sporting a beard.



See the next page for an assortment of other photos taken by Peter on his amazing trip

