

## **Dumoine River Lac Laforge to Rapides des Joachims**



**Participants:** Janice and Bill

**Total Distance:** 90 km, with 3,405m in 13 portages.

We used Hap Wilson's book "Rivers of the Upper Ottawa Valley" (excellent) and the Paddlers Guide Map for Riviere Dumoine and GPS topo maps.

**Sat. June 30/07:** *Janice:* 5 km, 300 yds in 2 portages. Friday, we left Bayfield at 11:00pm and headed up to North Bay. The traffic wasn't as bad as it would have been had we been travelling earlier in the day. After Huntsville the traffic really thinned out. We took Hwy #17 east at North Bay after driving all over to find a gas bar that was open. We thought we were lost at Laurentian Hills and turned back thinking we had gone too far, when actually we hadn't gone far enough. We must have been the municipality sign. We had breakfast at a motel at Rolphton and then off to Rapides-des-Joachims to unload our stuff at the dock by the Swisha airplane. Two fellows came out to say hi. They hadn't heard us come in. Bill settled up and we taxied out on the water at 7:40. The flight was nice, the mist was hanging over the lakes and trees, just enough to make it look pretty. We landed on Lac Laforge at 8:20 and the pilot passed our gear out to Bill. We paddled to the campsite on the point to organize our stuff. We took some pictures and hunted around for the alligator boats. We didn't find them so we left and paddled around the point to the north and around the little bay. We didn't find the alligators here either; but we frightened a beaver. Back to the southwest side of the site we went and here we found the alligators in the trees at the sandy beach. They were cool, we took some pictures and Bill swallowed and choked on a bug. We left at 10:30 and paddled south to the end of the lake to Twin Falls. We did the first well trodden 165m portage RR and put in at the base of the falls. We shortened the next 135m by paddling up to just above the chute RL. Bill told me to put the stuff at the site; we were staying here; so that is what we did. It was a nice site with a beautiful view down Lac Manitou. The black flies are bad and I have resorted to tucking my pants into my socks because they were chowing down on my legs. We had an afternoon siesta to make up for our short night. A father/son team, Peter and Greg, came through the portage as we were about to do the dishes. They were to have the flight before us, but they had forgot one of their packs in Ottawa and had to return for it. Greg slipped and fell as they loaded (really black slippery rocks). They are camped on the point southwest of us. We are ready to sleep at 10:15. Today it has drizzled off and on.

**Sun. July 1/07:** *Bill:* 7 km, 455 yds in 3 portages. We were up at 8:00 and couldn't lie in bed anymore. We woke up to a nice morning. On the water at 10am. We met up with Greg and Peter at the next rapid #R2. They had just finished scouting it and were going to do it so we followed them. We met them again at the triple play rapids #5. We portaged the 3 sets of chutes and ledges and canoed in between them. The last one we got out at the spring landing and this was good because trees had fallen over and blocked the portage entrance by the chute. We had lunch at 1pm when we finished the portage. We scouted the bridge rapids from the old bailey's bridge. Janice felt dizzy when she looked at the moving water through the open girders of the bridge. We decided how to run the rapids and then ran them only taking on a little water (WOOHOO that was fun!). The rest of the rapids were no problem and we ended up at the 2<sup>nd</sup> campsite after rapid #7 on Lac Benoit at 2pm. We put the tarp up because it looked like rain and before I finished putting it up it started. It rained off and on for the rest of the afternoon. The tarp worked well. There is a tent and canoe at the site before this, but we didn't see any people. No one else went by today. The plane dropped someone off on the lake further down between the showers. We had supper and the chores done by 8:30 and were watching the fish jump in the lake. Lots of different birds were singing around us.

**Mon. July 2/07:** *Janice:* 13 km, 615 yds in 3 portages. We were lying quietly in the tent last night, just after dark when we heard a loud bang and Bill thought he saw a reflection of light. Someone had let off fireworks. Happy Canada Day! We slept well and woke to a nice day, misty on the lake and a woodpecker thumping in the trees. We left the site at 9am. *Bill:* Lac Benoit was calm and nice to paddle. We thought we saw Peter and Greg, but it turned out to be a father from Carolina and son from Vancouver. We scouted rapid #8 and then ran it. We saw a large group of canoeists coming down the river. We portaged #9 because we didn't like what we saw and what we couldn't see behind the big rock. The large group was upon us and they were setting up to run the rapid. They turned out to be from Palmer Rapids and the guides were leading 14 to 16 year olds. There were 13 canoes altogether. They had been driven in and started from Bridge Rapids this morning. We portaged Canoe Eater Rapids#10 because we are not using a rental canoe (it is rock garden). We met Greg and Peter at Rapid #11. They just finished scouting the rapid, so we checked it and ran it together. We checked and ran #12 & 13 & then Peter and Greg went for a swim on the Snake Rapids#14. We stopped to have lunch in the sun at rapid #15 Thread the Needle and watched the canoe group from Palmer Rapids show us how to run that rapid. The guide said he never saw it this high of a water level. We did the rest of the rapids without incident and portaged the 340m around Little Steel Falls. We ran the next 2 rapids and swifts and Janice and I stopped at 4pm to camp here at the widening of the river at the 1<sup>st</sup> point. There is a lake in behind with a creek and waterfall. Peter and Greg were going on. It was quite a climb up the hill to the site, but it had a nice view. The other father and son team camped across from us. We set up camp and it started to rain. We had the tarp up already and worked at stuff under there. We had supper and then checked out the falls behind us. The rocks were very slippery, so we only went a little way, but we could see the waterfalls through the trees. We cleaned up camp and went to bed at 10am. *Janice:* There was a beaver out making a late crossing on the river.

**Tues. July 3/07:** 31 km, 1530 in 2 portages. I was up in the night and it was really foggy and when we got up there was heavy mist in the air. The sun burned through as we

packed up and had our breakfast. We climbed down from our high campsite, loaded our canoe and left at 9am. It's a lovely morning and just as we were getting on our way the huge 13 boat party from Palmer Rapids came along singing. We ended up mixed up in their group, so when we got to the end of the lake we let them go through and run Cliff Hanger Rapid first. When we finished our run we stopped to admire the 300' cliff on RR. The big group grabbed a drink and regrouped and we left them behind as we took off down Burnt Island Lake. We slid through the swifts into The Gap. The travelling seems slow now that we are in the lakes. We avoided the big haystacks at The Gap Chutes. Rapid #24 was an Easy Run and then we were almost to Big Steel Rapids. We decided to portage the first CIII boulder garden part of Big Steel. The trail had some fallen trees on it and it was a little rough going. We could see the big group advancing upon us as we carried across. We put in the first trail to the water at the standing waves. The rest of Big Steel was a good run and we had an excellent finish at the right bend. We paddled the swifts that came after that. We figure the water must be high because Hap describes these as 'continuous fun and games through gravel bars'. The swifts were there, but no gravel bars just swirly water. We noticed how the water slowed as it became lakes again. We paddled past what looked like an old rotting log chute RL, just before the Margaret Spry Shelter (Dumoine Club). We had lunch by the fire pit in front of the shelter at 11:30. We were here almost an hour before we headed downstream again. We had a really nice line at Z Rapids and Bill enjoyed how we hit the eddy behind the big rock. More lake-type travel again as we headed to Turner Rapids. The first campsite on RL after Z Rapids had a big camper, truck, and 4wheeler at it and as we left 2 guys in a small fishing boat landed there. Hope no one is counting on that site. We did Turner Rapids and I stayed dry. Now it was a long paddle to Grande Chute. We paddled past old logs still lying in the river and then some rock piles and finally up to the bridge; of course we have heard those falls for a while already. We landed on RR, 3pm, and walked with our light gear up the short buggy trail to the road. We walked out on the bridge and took pictures of this impressive Grande Chute. We decided to walk along the scenic 1km gear trail and were totally surprised to find the bush had blown down and that they were working at clearing a path. There was some of the old trail, complete with bridges and steps, but most of the start and all of the end is rerouted and newly cut through huge trees and roots. Wow, I'm glad I was not here when that happened! The chute is spectacular with numerous drops along the way. We looked at the first site and decided the roar was too much and the water too far away. We chose the second site. We walked to the end of the trail to the junction of the scenic and canoe trails. Bill and I split up and followed 2 trails to find dead ends before we found the new trail. This part of the trail is tough and freshly cut and not well trodden and it zigs and zags. We checked out the put-in and walked the 700yd canoe trail to the road and back to get our barrels. This was a mistake to go without bug spray on. We got back, drank, and snacked and felt better. Bill juiced up with bug spray and headed back to take the canoe to the end put-in. The 2<sup>nd</sup> father and son team came by and left. I think they intended to camp here. They talked to Bill about how rough the trail was. We had a lovely evening on our bedrock front. The bugs left us alone for the most part till dusk. In the tent at 9:45pm.



**Wed. July 4/07:** *Bill:* 15 km, 430 yds in 2 portages. We woke up to rain. I packed up my gear

inside and went out to put up the tarp and start breakfast while Janice packed the rest and did some mending on her clothes. We left the campsite at 10:30 and did the rest of the portage with our gear. We took pictures of all the blow downs and the rough trail. When they finish cutting the portage through on the higher level it will be better. We loaded the canoe and were on the water at 11:30am. We did the rapid #28 & 29 and saw that the next camp has been replaced by a cabin. At Red Pine Rapids we stopped at the island and scouted the run. We went just right of the big rock and ran it without taking on any water. We portaged the 400yd to point P and had lunch at 2:00 at the large campsite. We did the rest of the rapids ok until we hit Initiation Rapid #34. We didn't realize the 2 ledges were so close together, so we didn't get over to the right after the first ledge and ended up going through the large standing waves on the 2<sup>nd</sup> one and took on water. We slogged through the bottom and over to shore to dump it out. The next thing we came to was the R35 and then the short portage around the falls; very nice spot here. The swifts were nice to move us right along. Bald Eagle Cliff was nice too see. We ended up at the campsite at The 3 Sisters or Gunnel Rubber, rapid#36, 4pm. We made camp here and the first thing we did was put up the tarp and put dry clothes on, despite all the mosquitoes. It rained a bit and then we made supper and put the tent up out on the rock front to dry. We had a nice supper and hurried to get everything done because the mosquitoes and bugs were bad and the clouds threatened to rain again. We just got in the tent at 9pm when it rained, but only for 10 minutes. This was the first day we didn't see anyone on the river.

**Thurs. July 5/07:** *Janice:* 19 km, 75 yds in 1 portage. We woke up to the sound of rain on the tent. There were so many mosquitoes, black flies, and no-see-ums waiting for us outside, we really had to kick ourselves out of the tent. The rain eventually turned into a drizzly heavy mist as we got ready to go. A big golden eagle flew low over the river as he headed upstream. Later on he came back heading downstream. We finished getting ready and left camp at 8:45. We did our CI's in front of the site, which were more like swifts. I could hear Ryans Chute quite a while before we got there. We did the short 75yd Bowman's Portage and checked out the 2 campsites at the end. There are tent pads everywhere and the sites now can be accessed from the Ottawa River. We were impressed by the Chute; it had a lot of water coming over it. We ferried out into the current and headed downstream. The river becomes wider now. We checked out the campsite on RL and were disappointed to find it littered with garbage and glass and such. Too bad, canoeists coming down the Dumoine did not leave this kind of stuff. This flooded part of the Dumoine and the Ottawa are visited by motor boat traffic. The river is flat and still, like paddling a long lake. Bubbles rise to the surface here and there and we wondered if there was still debris brewing some swamp gas. We admired the cliffs. I checked out the last site on RL just before the mouth of the river. Nice site, above the water, not too large, medium usage. The heavy air has kept the bugs hungry and it is best to avoid the bush, so I didn't stay long. The Ottawa River was calm and there was a gentle breeze out of the west. We put on sunscreen, had a snack, and headed easterly towards the dam portage into Lac McConnel and then on to Rapides-des-Joachims. It was hot! We arrived at the dam at 12:15pm. We stopped just before the boom and Bill started to unload. I scrambled up the high bank to check it out and we discovered there is no portage and where the dam is they have new high fences. We could have bushwhacked to a 4wheeler trail and checked where that went, but we decided it wasn't worth that so, we loaded and left to paddled around the point towards the hwy 635 dam. After reading my

map, we decided to check out the historic portage by the creek that comes from Lac Bell and maybe walk the road to Swisha Air. We figured the dam by 635 would have nice new fences around it too. Anyway our hunch paid off and we found the old original portage, now a rough lane to some hydro shed. We had lunch and Bill went and got the car. I took the air bags and straps out of the canoe and got things ready to load. Two hydro vehicles came in and out 3 times while we were there. They were doing stuff in the building. We loaded our gear, cleaned ourselves up and left at 4pm.

We enjoyed the Dumoine River. Some of the portages were quite rough. The rapids were spectacular; I'd say we had higher water than what Hap describes in his book. We saw lots of birds; bald eagles, golden eagles, herons, arctic terns, seagulls, mergansers and many more. We only saw a couple beavers and some large rodent (vole?). We didn't see anyone on our last 2 days of river travel. As we left and turned onto the Hwy. heading home we discovered that North Bay had a severe weather warning and it included the area we just left. Severe thunderstorms, wind, hail 2cm in diameter and possible tornadoes. Wow!