

The  
**GORDON  
LAKE**

(SOMEDAYS)  
( I would rather be exploring than fishing)

FIELD  
GUIDE

By  
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(2005 Limited Edition)

# INTRODUCTION

“Time spent in the wilderness is seldom time wasted, because it rejuvenates the soul.”  
Henry David Thoreau

Gordon Lake is a beautiful lake. I don't think many people would argue with that sentiment. It is also a very interesting area because, for the Northwest Territories, it has a lot of history associated with it.

This guidebook is designed to give you a brief introduction to the lake, to its history and to its important mining and archeological sites. Also for those of you who are interested, there is a section on geology.

Every time that I visit the lake or prospect the area, I find something new, so this guidebook shall remain a work in progress. I also hope that people with other insights or areas of expertise will make contributions to it.

Since this guide is written primarily for visitors to Sandy Point Lodge, more emphasis will be placed upon the features and the sites closest to the lodge and to the areas where visitors to the lodge, are most likely to go.

## PHYSICAL SETTING

“I once spent time camping, at a spot so beautiful, it shall remain in my minds eye forever.” The Naked Canoeist

Gordon Lake sits approximately 100 kilometers NE of Yellowknife. The Lake is roughly 32 km long and 8 km wide with hundreds of islands and numerous picturesque bays.

The lake sits on the Precambrian Shield, so most of the rocks in the area are very old. They have also been glaciated, so many of the outcrops are rounded and smooth. One of the interesting features of the lake, are the remains of a glacial esker, which runs down part of the lake. This accounts for the sandy areas and the sand beaches to be found around parts of the lake.

The gravel and boulders left behind also provide ideal spawning areas for the fish. The lake is a great habitat for fish. It has large shallow areas for spawning and for the small fish to grow up in and it has numerous deep sections, for the larger fish to mature in.

The lake is connected to Yellowknife Bay and Great Slave Lake through the Cameron River system. It has a number of small creeks flowing into it and the outlet for the lake is at its southeast corner.

Another interesting feature of the lake is that the bays on the east side tend to be clear water bays, while those on the west side tend to be much shallower and are brown water bays.

The lake is close to the northern limit of the boreal forest. You only have to go a few kilometers NE of Gordon to cross onto the tundra or barrens. So the lake, has all the flora and fauna, that you would expect of the northern boreal forest and it has some of those of the tundra. Every winter the caribou and wolves of the barrens, migrate south to the lake.

It is one of the largest lakes in the area and personally, I find it one of the prettiest and most interesting.

## ACCESS

“You can always get from here to there, it just depends on how much effort you are willing to put in.” WJH Bush Tales

In summer the usual way to get to Gordon Lake is to fly in by floatplane and it is a short half-hour flight.

However, the lake is connected to Yellowknife by the Cameron River System, so a person could boat there, if they were so inclined and willing to paddle against the current. Certainly a number of people have made the trip that way, especially before floatplanes became as common and popular as they are today.

In the 70s the canoe route from Gordon Lake to the Ingraham Trail or even all the way to Yellowknife, was a fairly popular trip for people to make. They would be dropped off at the northern end of Gordon Lake and paddle south. The trip would take one to three weeks, depending on their proficiency and the speed they wanted to go. It is considered a fairly easy canoe route but it does involve numerous portages.

In the winter, the road to the Diamond Mines runs the length of the lake. This road is put in every year and operates from late December through to early April. In the summer, it is a little hard to imagine that when the road is open

over ten thousand trips are made to the mines hauling fuel, explosives and supplies.

Before the diamond mines started, the road was used almost every year from 1980 on, to service the Lupin Gold Mine on Contyoto Lake. Before that, the route was used sporadically and it was first used by motorized vehicles in 1937, when cat trains hauled supplies up to Gordon Lake and Camlaren Mine.

However, the route to Gordon Lake was used long before airplanes, trucks and snowmobiles arrived in the north or were even invented. Some of the Dene people came to Gordon Lake by dog team, usually in the winter, to hunt caribou and to trap.

# **PART ONE**

## **THE HISTORY**

“Thar be gold (and other geological treasures) in them thar rocks.” Unknown Prospector

### **PREHISTORY**

“There was a time when Giants roamed the earth ..... and when you read the exploits of the early explorers they sound like Giants to me.” Mark Senkiw

In 1771 Samual Hearne, along with a Chipewyan leader named Matonabee and members of his tribe, walked from Fort Churchill on Hudson Bay to the Coppermine River and back. He was looking for the source of the native copper the Yellowknife Indians used for their knives. He did find some copper and the trip could be considered the first real prospecting journey into the NWT.

Not only was the trip itself remarkable but the journal that Hearne left behind provides some real insights into that time in the north. People traveled a lot and were constantly on the look out for food most of the time.

When the fur traders came north live began to change considerably. People could trap furs and trade them for food staples such as flour, sugar, tea and coffee. They could also trade furs for trade goods. Steel axes replaced their stone axes, muskets replaced bows, they bought matches, fish nets, cooking pots and clothes. People started to use dog teams and trap during the winter, so there travel patterns changed as they set up trap lines and traveled to and from trading post.

In 1898 when gold was discovered in the Yukon and the Klondike Gold Rush got started, a number of prospectors passed through the NWT on their way to the Yukon. One of these parties reported finding gold along the Yellowknife River. It was an interesting find but it was years before anyone followed up on it.

The first mine in the NWT was at Port Radium on Great Bear Lake, there Gerald Labine discovered pitchblende in 1930. This discovery brought a new wave of prospectors' north and companies were starting to use aircraft to ferry men and materials around.

In 1933 two prospectors working for B.E.A.R. Exploration, Johnney Baker and Herb Dixon, using the Yellowknife River explored the country between Great Bear Lake and Yellowknife Bay. They discovered gold north of Yellowknife Bay at Quyta Lake, approximately 45 km north of Yellowknife. The next year on the east shore of Yellowknife Bay, they found a vein that was full of visible gold.

## YELLOWKNIFE

“During the great depression if a discovery was made in the north people and entire families would flock to it in the hopes of finding work and a better life.” WJH Bush Tales

In the winter of 1934-35 Johnney Baker and a couple of men were sampling the RICH vein on the Burwash Property. They heard some dog teams coming down the Bay from the Yellowknife River so Johnney recalls walking out to meet them, to see if he could trade for some fresh meat. They were returning from a caribou-hunting trip to a big Lake to the north (Gordon). He was told he would have to talk to the chief so he went to Detah, which at the time was a small settlement of four or five cabins. No one knows who first visited Gordon Lake but obviously by the 1930s the Yellowknife Dene were regularly hunting and trapping on the Lake.

This was during the Great Depression and as word of the discovery at Yellowknife Bay leaked out, people began to head north. Weaver and Devore arrived with a barge full of trade goods and began to build a store. Noel Barlow and a couple of teenage friends build a raft at Peace River and came north looking for work. Noel became a cooks helper at the Burwash Property.

In 1935 and 1936, Yellowknife was a busy place. On the east side of Yellowknife Bay, Major Burwash and his crew were busy trenching and mining the first discovery, which became known as the Burwash Mine. Johnney Baker was on the Giant Property, with a crew for B.E.A.R. Exploration. He was in charge of exploring that property and the surrounding area.

Men were busy working at the Con and Negus properties and Con was thinking of opening a mine. So you had four separate and self contained mining or exploration camps in the area.

Tom Payne a prospector at Cameron Bay great Bear Lake moved down to Yellowknife. He worked for Burwash and then on his own staked the Rycon property. This was eventually sold to Cominco for \$250,000.00 a fortune during those years.

The town of Yellowknife was also starting to take shape as more and more people arrived to take advantage of the boom. Many came by boat from Alberta

and others arrived by floatplane. Houses, stores, offices and warehouses were being built on Jolliffe Island, Latham Island, around the rock (Pilots Monument) and on Willow and Peace River Flats, so a town was starting to take shape. Dene people living around the lake also started to move to Yellowknife to find work and because it was becoming a supply center.

## JOLLIFFE LAKE

“What’s in a name. It is but a way to designate a place, a way to honour those who have passed or to give a place a little character. If you had to rename Gordon Lake what would you call it.....” A Drunken Speculator

In the 1930s, you could get to Gordon Lake by water up the Cameron River or of course, if you had the monetary resources, you could fly in by floatplane. In the winter you could walk or take a dog team.

In 1935 a GSC (Geological Survey of Canada) party lead by Doctor Jolliffe was in the north to map and explore the country. They set up a base camp on Jolliffe Island and sent parties out to explore the region.

Prospectors and geologists were also fanning out looking for new showings, prospects and mines. Many went by boats and canoes to explore the land, using the various waterways as access routes. Others, particularly those working for the larger companies took advantage of the mobility that aircraft allowed.

A GSC field party visited Gordon Lake by canoe in the summer of 1936. The lake was originally named Jolliffe Lake. (However, he declined the offer and the name was changed in 1938 to Gordon Lake to recognize the federal Minister of Mines in Ottawa.)

Companies flying over the area in 1936 probably spotted some large quartz veins from the air and landed to investigate. Some of these veins were mineralized and either panned gold or had visible gold in them, so mineral claims were staked. It would appear that the Mining Corporation of Canada made the first significant find on a large Island by Wolverine Bay. (This is the same island where Sandy Point Lodge has their current northern shore lunch spot.) They staked this ground with the KENO CLAIMS.

The company started working on this property by building a camp and trenching the larger veins. They also started to explore the lake looking for and staking other good showings. They staked up Burnt and Green Islands and in September recorded claims on Camlaren and Zenith Islands.

Other prospectors and companies working in the area began to make finds and they in turn staked claims. Soon, there was a steady stream of aircraft

flying to and from Gordon Lake. Others in Yellowknife so realized these flights meant a discovery and more crews arrived to get in on the action. A small staking rush ensued.

### JOHNNY BAKER and SANDY POINT

“If the NWT ever builds a mining hall of fame, Johnny Baker is sure to be honoured there.” NWT Mining Heritage Society

On September 7<sup>th</sup> 1936, Johnny Baker sent a coded message from Yellowknife to the head office of B.E.A.R. Exploration in Toronto, describing an important new discovery at Jolliffe Lake. So, word of the discoveries was certainly getting out.

He must have then headed up to Gordon Lake with a staking crew to check things out. On September 12<sup>th</sup> in a letter he says *“I saw the Mackenzie (?) discovery at Jolliffe Lake. It is a wide quartz vein – must average about 6 feet in width – and traced for about 500 feet. I didn’t see any gold but they claim there is some visible and it is said to pan. M.A.S. (Mackenzie Air Services) moved their radio station up there yesterday.”*

On September 28<sup>th</sup> he sends a telegram saying that *“the prospecting party has returned after staking three groups of claims that are well located along strike”*. These claims, they called the GEM Claims.

One of the GEM groups covers the ground that Sandy Point Lodge now sits on. The second group was on some islands to the north and the third was on the north end of the lake.

The claim maps for Gordon Lake made in October of 1936 shows that the East shore of the lake from the south end of Zenith Island all the way to the North End of Gordon Lake is almost entirely staked up. Also the northern end of the west shore is also staked up, as well as any islands of any size. Judging by the pattern of staking it would appear that companies got most of the east side of the lake while a number of individual prospectors staked up the west side.

In the fall of 1936 trenching was done on the Camlaren Property and the results were so good that a permanent camp was soon established there.

### D’ARCY ARDEN and RED VACHON

“It was a different time and there was a different way of doing things.” D’Arcy Arden

There is a story that in the fall of 1936, an independent prospector named Red Vachon, climbed on a plane that was leaving the Camlaren Property.

Somehow, some of his samples got mixed up with some of the Camlaren samples, so when he got his assays back they looked very good.

He told and wrote to a number of friends in the north, saying that they had better get to Gordon Lake because things were really active and there was still lots of good ground to be had.

D'arcy Arden (senior) got such a letter at his cabin at Great Bear Lake. He read it and told his teenage son, Sonny (Darcy Jr.), to pack up his stuff because they were heading to Yellowknife the next day. It was the middle of winter. D'Arcy and Sonny walked from Great Bear Lake, over three hundred miles, to Rae. They then came to Yellowknife and up to Gordon Lake to meet with Red and stake some claims.

After spending a couple of months on Gordon Lake, on April the first 1937, they stopped at a little bay on the NE side of Green Island to camp for the night. The next day they stopped at the Camlaren Property for a meal and then walked on into Yellowknife.

So even in the winter, there were people coming and going from the Lake and at the time it looked like Gordon Lake might soon rival Yellowknife as a gold camp.

Sonny became a well know northern mining person and made a lot of money during the Pine Point rush in the 1960's. His brother Huey also became well known for his work on pioneering the building of ice roads in the north. A third brother Jimmy was also active in exploration until his passing. So the name Arden is well known and respected in the north.

Now, can you imagine turning most teenagers today and saying "Pack your bags, we are going for a four to five hundred mile winter walk, to a lake we just heard of, on the off chance that we might be able to stake some claims."

### 1937-1939

"As war clouds develop over Europe, people still travel hundreds of miles into the Canadian wilderness to escape the great depression."

Camps were being built, properties were being explored, quartz veins were being trenched and some companies were using the newly invented diamond drills to test their best showings underground. All this work in search of the bright shiny native mineral called gold.

Shafts were being sunk at Camlaren Mine, on Zenith Island and at the Goodrock Property. Sawmills were in operation at West Bay and on Green and Burnt Island to provide timbers for the mines and camps.

During 1938, a GSC field crew ran a survey line from the south end to the north end of Gordon Lake. They did this to tie in all the properties and showings and to help map the lake.

The southern half of the Lake was staked up and a number of camps were build to explore that area and work on properties. Some of the crews arrived by boat from Yellowknife and others flew into the area. In the winter cat trains arrived with supplies and mining equipment.

It is estimated that during the summers two to four hundred people were at Gordon Lake in over a dozen large camps with another dozen or so smaller ones. During the winters there were between fifty to one hundred people at the lake at any one time.

### THE LONG COLD WINTERS

“To truly know an area you must spend a couple of years at one spot, so that you can learn the changes, both subtle and profound, that the seasons bring.” WJH

Mine development, shaft sinking and saw mills can be operated year round but mineral exploration or prospecting is primarily a summer activity. However, this was the height of the great depression and some of the men would rather spend the winters in the bush, then return to the bread lines of southern Canada. Often one or more men would stay behind as semi official and often unpaid watchmen.

So, when the camps closed down in the fall that didn't necessarily mean that everyone left. Years ago, in a book on the depression, I remember reading an account of two men who stayed in the bush. They weren't paid in cash, but they were given the grub that was left over at the end of the season. They were also given one tin of tobacco for every month that they would be there. If they cut firewood for the next year they would get a small fee per cord.

They spent the winter hunting, trapping, fishing, cutting fire wood and doing a bit of high grading. They picked through the muck piles from the summers trenching, ground up the better looking rocks and panned out the gold. They even sold some wood, fish and meat to other camps in the area. They claim they had a good winter and by spring they had even made what was considered a fairly good winter's wage.

Gordon Lake was not completely isolated from the outside world. Camlaren had a post office and a telegraph station run by the Royal Signal Corp. Also during the winter cat trains arrived with equipment for the mine and a lot of dog teams were going between Gordon Lake and Yellowknife with mail and supplies.

Native and Metis hunters and trappers also spent the winter in the area. So the areas wasn't as isolated as some might think.

## WOMEN IN THE NORTH

“Ah yes the fairer sex. They can break your heart and drive you to a life of solitude or they can become your better half or soul mate and they can help you to achieve greater goals. Either way, where would the world be without em.” Anon

Someone should write a book about the contribution women made in the north, even during the early days, because that aspect of both northern and mining history often gets minimized or ignored.

The native and metis hunters and trappers often had their wives with them. Also some companies like Cominco use to hire married couples to go prospecting for them. In the exploration camps, some were all male and that was probably the norm at the time but a number of camps had a woman or two cooking for them.

At both the Camlaren and the Goodrock properties, once the camps were established there were a number of women there. As an example in the fall of 1938 there were four women and two children at Camlaren Mine.

Other women came north to earn a living, in a way as old as time. A number of women of the evening set up shop in Yellowknife and there are tales that a few would occasionally venture out to bush camps to service the crews. They are even tales that occasionally some companies arranged the trips and paid the bills.

Some took a shine to someone in particular and in time became quite respectable wives. Life is full of twists and turns and affairs of the heart can be more then a little complex and confusing.

Now I'm not saying that any of this happened at Gordon Lake but it could have.

## THE WAR YEARS 1939 - 1945

“Many men and women left the north to fight in the war. Some had distinguish careers and some unfortunately didn't return .....” Mel Brown

Rumors of impending war began to circulate even in the far north and towards the end of 1938 some companies were cutting back on their operations. Camlaren was shut down after Christmas in 1938. In 1939 when the Second

World War did indeed start more and more camps shut down. Mineral exploration almost stopped entirely.

In time many of the abandoned camps were taken over or used by hunters and trappers.

An exception to all of this was the Goodrock Property. They had some scheelite, the ore of tungsten, in their quartz veins. Tungsten was considered a strategic mineral because it was used to harden steel. So the property stayed active and became a small tungsten producer.

Also to the south of the Goodrock Property sits the Storm Claims. They were staked in 1941 by the Consolidated Mining and Smelting Company. They were explored for tungsten. Trenches and two small shafts were put in before the company decided the property wasn't economic in 1942.

In Yellowknife the Con Mine stayed in operation although towards the end of the war it was shut down briefly due to shortages in supplies.

Elsewhere in the Territories the war had other effects. The Eldorado Mine at Great Bear Lake was taken over by the Canadian Government and reopened to produce uranium for the War effort.

Also the US Army put in the Canol road and pipeline from Norman Wells to Whitehorse to provide fuel for Alaska. It wasn't in operation for very long but it was a tremendous feat to build. Like the ALCAN Highway they were built because after Pearl Harbour the USA was very worried about a Japanese invasion from the North West through Alaska.

## AFTER THE WAR

“Let the good times roll ..... not with peace and prosperity.... but with whiskey, weed, women and wailing guitars.” A Drunken Sailor

When the Second World War ended in 1945, not only was the war over, but the country also went into a post war economic boom. The men and women returning to the country from the armed forces, wanted to get back to their civilian lives. They wanted jobs and families so the baby boom generation was also born.

Soon Con Mine was back operating at full strength and Giant Mine was built and went into production in 1948. Yellowknife was growing and individuals and companies returned to the north and were busy exploring for new showings, prospects and mines.

At Gordon Lake in 1945 the Burnt Island property became active again and a shaft was sunk on the main zone. In 1946 the D.A.F. property was staked and

it was worked and high graded until 1948. Several other properties were also being actively explored so Gordon Lake was once again a fairly busy place.

However, the operations were small, no big new discoveries were made and mining had changed. Companies wanted big new deposits and after the initial burst of activity at Gordon things had gone quiet by 1950 with only the occasional sporadic flurry of activity on individual properties.

Ore was taken from Camlaren Mine to Discovery Mine in 1962 and the property was mined down to the 1000 foot level in 1980. Also in the mid 1980s a decline was sunk on the MAHE or Sentinel Lake property.

In 1990 when the price of gold shot up Knut Rasmussen of Yellowknife put a pit in on the old DAF property and Bill Knutsen did a bit of mining on Burnt Island.

As you can see work at Gordon Lake was very sporadic and in a way it was cyclical depending on the price of gold. When the price of gold was up, people would take another look at the area and do a bit of high grading on known deposits. When the price was down people were exploring for other things elsewhere in the NWT.

Sandy Point Lodge opened around the same time that Camlaren Mine shut down and it operated on the lake. However it didn't really become a fishing lodge or a going concern until Bruno Jurell took it over in 1990.

Gordon Lake became much better known again after the diamond mines were discovered and a winter road was put in to service them. Now every winter hunters and ice fishermen travel up the road to Gordon,

## HISTORIC OVERVIEW

“Timing is everything.....in love, in life and in mining.” Anon

When gold was discovered at Gordon Lake in 1936, at first it looked like Gordon Lake might rival Yellowknife as a gold camp. A number of quartz veins with visible gold in them had been discovered at both locations.

In 1938 the Con Mine in Yellowknife went into production and the Negus Mine and Rycon Mine soon followed. In 1938 the Camlaren Mine at Gordon Lake had gone underground but it was closed because of economics and the impending Second World War.

History, geography and geology in their own ways all conspired against Gordon. Before the Second World War there had been a number of small gold mines in Canada, which mined gold in quartz veins. After the War companies

wanted bigger and richer properties. The hay day of the small independent mine was fading and big companies want big deposits.

So the coming of the Second World War, so soon after the initial discoveries at Gordon Lake had been made, had a profound effect on mining in the area.

Gordon Lake was sixty miles NE of Yellowknife and was fairly isolated and hence expensive to work at. So its location at the time also worked against.

Both Giant and Con Mines have quartz veins with visible gold in them and these were mined. However, the bulk of the gold came from a large shear zone located on the properties, which contains a lot of disseminated gold. No such shear or structure has to date been found at Gordon Lake, so the properties and deposits remain small by comparison.

It is interesting to speculate at what might have happened at Gordon Lake, had the Second World War not occurred. There could have been four or five producing mines and a number of high-grade operations. But the War did happen and that is the way of history.

## POTENTIAL

“If I had a dollar for every dream or won the lottery and could afford to do some drilling.....”                      The Prospectors Lament

As a prospector I still feel that Gordon Lake holds some potential and certainly deserves more work.

There are three possibilities.

Obviously there are a number of known gold showings and small deposits in the area. More, no doubt exist waiting to be discovered. So there could be a series of veins large enough and rich enough to warrant a mine. If you compare the number of veins found on the islands and compare the area of the islands to the unexplored lake bottom, one can certainly imagine a number of showing or deposits hidden out under the water.

It is a pity one couldn't drain the lake for a few years in order to explore its bottom thoroughly.

Also, there is still the possibility that someone will find a shear zone containing gold or some other large geological structure hosting gold.

We know that gold and tungsten showings occur. There are also a number of sulfide minerals in then area. Like any area in the NWT it is possible that Gordon Lake hosts a mineral deposit of a type that hasn't been discovered in the

area yet. The lake could even be hiding a number of kimberlites and possibly a diamond deposit.

In fact, BHP Billiton recently staked a large area to the NW of Gordon Lake. The ground has been optioned to Perigrine Resources and they are still exploring it.

So Gordon Lake still has the potential for new discoveries and it is certainly an interesting area to explore.

## PART TWO

### OLD CAMPS and ARTIFACTS

“But what does it all mean or signify.” Confused Archeologist

Odd as it may seem, to your average avid fisherman, but there are people who would rather go exploring than fishing. Now don't get me wrong, there is

nothing wrong with fishing but after a couple of hours in a boat, dragging a metal lure threw the water, I want to go ashore and look at some rocks.

That is because, at heart, I am a prospector.

Going back and forth over the same stretch of water, particularly if you aren't catching anything, may be therapeutic to some but after a couple of passes I want to see new areas.

Gordon Lake is a big lake with lots of areas to visit and explore and it would take you several weeks to see it all in any sort of detail. There are also lots of old camps and exploration sites to visit.

When people come across an old camp they ask the basic questions. Who was there? What were they doing? When were they there? Where were they working? And of course the infamous Why?

I am going to attempt to answer most of those questions for a number of the old camps and mining sites on or around the lake.

Knowing these things is of course part of the job of being a prospector or geologist. When you plan on working in an area, you do some research to find out what work has already been done in the area.

Also knowing the overall history of an area is interesting because it adds a new dimension to the scenery. I must have a bit of archeologist in me because when I come across an old camp or artifact I take some time examining it. I try to imagine who left it behind, why it was left behind and what the person was like.

Here is an example. At the south end of the lake there are the remains of a small exploration camp. A couple of airtight wood stoves where the tents were set up and a pile of old tin cans. There really isn't much there to see and no point stopping at it unless you were prospecting that area.

What I found interesting was the way the tin cans were opened. Now, it is not uncommon to see tin cans in the field opened with a knife. The prospectors either forgot to bring a can opener along or they lost theirs somewhere along the way.

Most people would use their knife as a can opener and run it around the side of the lid but these cans have the lids carefully cut into eight wedges like pizza slices. This sounds simple enough until you try it. After cutting four or five wedges you are left with a triangle of metal which bends as you try to cut the remaining wedges.

So you have to start in the middle and start all the wedges then slowly expand them several times until you end up at the rim. Then you have to bend

them all back to get the contents out. So who ever opened all those cans was a very methodical patient person. (Some might even say anal retentive)

Each and every artifact has a story to tell.

## " SANDY POINT LODGE "

"Too everything there is a season." Old Testament

The physical setting for the Sandy Point Lodge is truly wonderful. The sandy beaches, the openly spaced forest and the crystal clear bay. It can be beautiful and at times gorgeous.

A misty morning sunrise can be breathtaking. When the fall colours are in full bloom and the lake is dead calm, it can be awe-inspiring. At night watching the northern lights dance in the sky and seeing their reflection in the waters, can be mesmerizing.

The sand deposit at the lodge comes from a glacial esker that ran through the area. If you want to go for a hike, you can follow this sand deposit all the way along the west shore of the bay, which runs north of the lodge.

The little peninsula that runs to the south of the lodge is also a more intact section of this same esker and is a great place to look for rounded glacial pebbles and stones.

The area around the lodge is a great place to go for a hike and the observe the splendor of the northern boreal forest.

## THE GEM CLAIMS

"It is a gem of a place" Johnney Baker

Gold was discovered at Gordon Lake in the summer of 1936. The original discovery was on Keno Island near the northern shore lunch spot for the lodge. Gordon Lake suddenly became a very active area.

Johnney Baker, who made the original gold discoveries around Yellowknife, was working at the Giant Property in Yellowknife and he was in charge of exploration for a company called B.E.A.R. Exploration. He obviously heard about the activity at Gordon Lake and on September 7<sup>th</sup> sent a coded message to the head office in Toronto, informing them about it. On September the 12<sup>th</sup> he

writes that he has seen the discovery vein and on the 28<sup>th</sup> he sends a telegram saying that three claim groups, named the GEM Claims have been staked.

The southern most GEM Group, covers the area where the lodge now sits. The second group was to the north covering some Islands and the third was at the North end of the Lake.

In 1937 Gordon Lake was a very busy place. Henry Jones was working there for an independent contractor who was cutting timbers and building cabins. He said that they had a sawmill on Burnt and Green Island to cut logs and timbers for the Goodrock Property. After it was built they came to Sandy Point and built a camp there. It is believed that B.E.A.R. Exploration used this camp as a base of operations for exploring their GEM Claims and prospecting the area. Johnney Baker no doubt visited the camp several times.

The prospectors' cabin, that sits at the lodge now, was one of the original buildings. It is believed that it was used as an office and sleeping quarters for the camp boss. Beside it, was a much larger log cabin that was used as the kitchen and cookhouse. Around this were several sleeper tents with log bases and walls and of course there were a couple outhouses and other camp structures like a dock.

At one time this was probably one of the nicest camps on Gordon and it certainly had one of the nicest locations.

The camp was used for a couple of years while a crew of men explored the claims and put in a number of trenches. Unfortunately, nothing of any great significance was found and the camp was abandoned before 1939 when B.E.A.R. shut down all its northern operations, except for Giant Mine and Johnney Baker left to join the R.C.A.F.

After that the camp at Sandy Point was used sporadically by trappers or exploration crews working in the area.

## KATAMAVIK LODGE

“If the walls could talk .....they might say ouch.” The Cosmic Carpenter

In the early 1970s a group businessmen from Yellowknife decided to turn the site into a Fishing Lodge. This was at a time when the government had stopped letting out cottage leases but they still allowed lodge lease. So often a group of people would get together and get a lodge lease. They of course called them lodges and took the occasional quests but in many ways they were private fishing and partying spots for their owners, their friends and associates.

I first visited the camp in the summer of 1974, just when they were starting to prepare the site. The small cabin was in good shape and was being fixed up to make it habitable. However, at some time a large door had been cut in the back of the larger cabin, to drive snowmobiles in and the cabin was starting to collapse. So, it was eventually torn down.

The quest cabins and the kitchen came from Camlaren Mine when it shut down in 1970s. Claud Voisey was the watchman-caretaker for the place and he liked to go around the lake collecting caribou antlers and gold samples. In the 1980s he was involved with selling a group of claims, which some believe was salted, by person or persons unknown.

Meanwhile "the boys" would go out to the lodge to party, drink, hunt, fish and shoot off their guns. The bullet holes in the dining room wall, at least one of the boats and a couple of the buildings attest to the fact that a couple of them liked to shoot off their guns after they had started drinking.

### SANDY POINT LODGE

In \_\_\_\_\_ Bruno Jurrel took over the camp and turned it into a proper fishing lodge. Bruno ran a very tight ship and built the business up. His wife Denise ran the town and booking end of the operation. Bruno and his brother Thor, who came over from Sweden every summer, ran the lodge along with the help of a camp cook.

Bruno fixed the place up and added the screened in porches, onto the quest cabins. He also collected up many of the artifacts now on display. On the porch leading to the dining hall there was Bruno's wall of shame. If a prop from a boat was dinged beyond repair, Bruno would nail the prop to the wall, along with a little piece of slat with the offenders name written on it. Bruno had a thing about his props.

Then in 2001 Tom Johnson and Duncan Cook took over the lodge.

The first year they took turns running the lodge. When 9/11 occurred, Duncan, Byron the cook, Walt Humphries and Ryan Silke were the only people at the lodge and on Gordon Lake. It was a little eerie to suddenly have no planes flying over.

For the next two years the lodge was run by Tom and Vanessa, with Toms mother Joyce doing the cooking. In 2004 after the spring fishing was over in July the lodge was essentially shut down. Tom had decided to quite the lodge business and to leave the north.

Duncan Cook now owns and operates the lodge.

We wish him well because the lodge has been an interesting and a beautiful place to stay.

## **“DARK ISLAND”**

This island is sometimes referred to as Northrup Island but I prefer the name Dark Island. It can remind the kids of Star Wars and the dark side and for others there is the literary reference to “It was a dark and stormy night....” WJH

Due east of Sandy Point Lodge there is a small island. This island was originally staked in 1936 as part of the ALEX Group of 18 claims, which tied on and extended east of the Gem Claims.

I have been unable to find out who staked or owned these claims or what if any work was done on them.

On the west side of the island there are the remains of a small tent camp, which might date from this period. There are also a number of trenches scattered around the original Alex claims and running along the west side of the island, there is a small quartz vein which has been trenched. This vein does have some gold values.

The property was allowed to lapse.

In August of 1958, the island was restaked by Pascal Smith. I have no idea why the claim covering the island was called the DARK Claim but I like to think that it was because it was a dark and stormy night when Pascal arrived to stake it. A few days latter the claim was transferred to J.M.Harriman.

In 1959 the property was optioned to Beneventum Mining Company. They did some x-ray diamond drilling on the property from April to June of that year. In 1960 it was optioned to Sand River Gold Mining Company and they did some further x-ray drilling. Sand River dropped their option and it was then reoptioned in 1961 to the BIG FOUR SYNDICATE. The Big Four were all companies owned or run by the Byrne family and consisted of the Discovery, Northland, Rayrock and Radiore Companies. They in turn did some drilling.

There are three quartz veins or zones around the island and it is not known how they may be related to each other.

Beneventum did 1,583 feet of drilling in 25 holes on veins 1 and 2.

Sandy River did 2,090 feet of drilling in 11 holes including a hole on vein

3.

The big four did 2,005 feet of drilling in 8 holes on vein 2 and 3.

**VEIN 1** It is located on the NW side of the island under a shallow boggy bay which separates the main island from a smaller island. The vein has been traced for 415 feet strikes N45E and dips 65 degrees south east. It varies in width from 1 to 5 feet but averages around 2 feet. Visible gold was reported in some of the 23 drill holes, which cut this vein. It did have some gold values but was considered to be to low grade and narrow for further exploration.

**VEIN 2** This vein sits out under the lake around 160 feet off the SE edge of the island and it can actually be seen on a reef in that area. The vein varies from 1 to 34 feet wide. It contains some visible gold, pyrite, pyrrhotite, chalcopyrite and arsenopyrite. It was cut by 12 xray holes and its best value was 3.76 oz Au per ton over 2 feet. The Big Four drilled this vein but their results are unknown.

**VEIN 3** At the SW tip of the island some blocky quartz float can be found. A 200 foot drill hole was put in out under the lake to test this zone. It gave four intersections of gold bearing quartz 0.935 oz/4.5 feet, 1.2oz/4.4feet, 1.98oz/1.3feet and 1.35oz/2.8 feet. The big four drilled at least three holes into this zone but their results are unknown.

Apparently the Big Four decided that the property didn't warrant any more work and they let their option drop.

The claim is currently in good standing and owned by.....

On the NW tip of this island sits a rare occurrence of cementite.

If drill holes are put into a zone under a lake, it is fairly common practice to cement the holes after they are drilled, just in case one eventually wants goes underground on the zone. The drillers must have left several bags of cement in a pile. Over time the paper bags have disappeared and the cement has hardened, leaving beside this cementite monument.

## **“BURNT ISLAND”**

“An ideal place if you are so inclined to run naked through the woods”  
The Naked Canoeist

### **INTRODUCTION**

This island is the first large island SW of the lodge. It is also one of the most interesting and most visited islands on the lake. The southern half of the island is made up of sand and gravel material left behind from a glacial esker. The trees are wellspaced and there is little underbrush so it feels as if you are walking in a park

like setting. Since it is also one of the highest islands on the lake, it is also a great place for scenic views.

It is a great place to go for a hike, have a picnic or if the mood strikes, you run around naked.

There is even a sand beach on its SE corner if you feel like going for a swim.

The island also has a long mining history and there are a number of sites and artifacts on the island for the curious.

## A TOUR OF THE ISLAND

It is suggested that you read the history of the property before you take the tour, as it will give you a better appreciation, of and for, what you are seeing.

It is possible to get a boat into the large central bay on the east side of Burnt Island. The narrow entrance is shallow but there is enough water to take a boat through, slowly. From this bay on its south side you can see the old log wall of the mill and its pump house.

However the best place to start is to tie your boat up at the dock on the east side of the Island. This dock was put in in 1989 when Cameron Mining held the property but older docks going back to the years were located in this general area.

Just inland from the dock is a burrow pit put in by Cameron Mining. The material was used to build the dock and roads. The pit gives you a good cross section of the esker and there are some interesting glacial boulders and rocks.

The first section of the road runs along the shore north of the dock but it has grown in so much with willows it is difficult to walk so one can walk in the woods beside the road or go west up the side of the burrow pit.

The road goes a little way north of the dock, then swings west and turns south to run up the hill. Part way up the hill due west of the burrow pit is a small pile of core. The road branches here. The part running SW takes you to where Cameron Mining had their trailer camp, the part running west takes you to the adit.

A lot of people walk this road but miss seeing the old camp. When you can see a small depression running down towards the bay, there is a small road heading north. Less than a hundred feet along it, to the west sits the old log cabin camp. If you follow the road towards the bay it is an easy walk to the west around the bay to where the old mill sits on the outcrop.

From the mill you can walk up the steep outcrop hill to the adit or you can back track to the road and follow it.

The road will take you to a waste rock pile and the adit is clearly visible on the west side of the pad. This is where the Cameron Mining mill once sat.

The adit or decline was started in 1982 by Burnt Island Gold Mines and finished in 1989 by Cameron Mining. It runs for 404 feet before it hits the vein, which explains the pile of waste rock in the area. The adit is boarded off and I wouldn't suggest going past the barricade. In the summer you can hear water dripping down and inside the adit is soon blocked by ice.

On the waste rock pad one can find good samples of sulphide mineralization and quartz and even a few pieces of quartz with specks of VG (visible gold) although it usually takes a lot of looking.

The road continues to the right and left around the adit but the first part is choked with willows. West past the adit the road is clear and runs up to the headframe and original mine site.

There is a rack of drill core from the 1982 drilling, the log headframe and a diamond drill left there in 1982. The shaft itself is covered with wood and timbers and dirt and sits in the middle of the original 20 by 20 foot. trench.

**DO NOT.....I repeat.....DO NOT ATTEMPT TO STAND ON THE SHAFT OR GO INTO THE TRENCH.**

The timbers are rotten and falling into the shaft would not be a smart thing to do. Also the log head frame is over 60 years old and the timbers are rotten so don't climb on it.

If you stand in front of the headframe you can see the fold in the metamorphosed sediments that the vein followed. To the NE of the shaft on a flat outcrop one can see the small quartz pieces which is where the original muck piles sat.

To the west of the shaft just off of the outcrop and in the trees there is an old road which runs north and then swings east down to the bay. At one time there was a small camp or tent by this road. The old cook stove sits there so it was probably a place where the shaft sinking crew could warm up and get a bit to eat. This road might be how supplies came up to the shaft and ore went down to the mill.

From the shaft the main road continues west up to the tailings pond then to the top of the hill on the west side of the island. There is a small road which swings south to the southern ridge of the island. A circular pit there as been jokingly referred to as a meteor impact or UFO landing site but is actually a pit left behind when Cameron Mining blew up the last of their explosives on site.

One can follow this southern ridge all the way back to the dock and it is a beautiful walk. At its eastern end there are what may be three graves. On surface they certainly look like three graves but I am a little skeptical. There is no report or information about any graves on the island until the lodge got up and running and I suspect a previous lodge owner may have put them in to protect the island.

Maybe these are the secret graves of three high graders who got caught stealing gold. Maybe they are the remains are three lodge quests who complained about the service one time to many. Maybe they are legitimate graves from years ago. I just find it a little suspicious that there is no mention of them in any of the old reports.

The sand and gravel on the Island is an easy and understandable target for the winter road builders. However it would be a shame to mar the island with a bit pit and in 2004 Walt Humphries convinced them (at least for now) that an existing burrow pit at West Bay would be a better choice, as it is not visible from the lake.

One can walk down this ridge to the old saw mill camp or take a boat around to it as it is located on the SW corner of the Island. From the dock one can also have an enjoyable walk north along the sand esker to the entrance to the bay.

## HISTORY

## ARDOGO CLAIMS

This ground was originally staked in 1936 as the Ardogo group of claims, which also covered Green Island at the time. I suspect they were staked initially because they covered two large islands with obvious quartz veins that were on strike with the original Keno Island discovery.

It appears to have been staked by the Gordon Lake Prospectors Limited. I have no idea of who they may have been but companies were very easy to form in those days and this may have been a group or syndicate of prospectors that formed a company. The name Ardogo is interesting and may be tied in with their names. Something like Armstrong Dodman Gould or Art Don Gord. Sometimes prospectors would name claims using a couple of letters from each prospectors name.

The first camp on the Island was on the west side of the south shore of Burnt Island where a saw mill and logging operation was going on in 1937. They were cutting wood and logs for the Argonaut property and possibly for other properties or camps on the lake. One can still see the log base to the kitchen tent and a pit in the floor, which was probably used to store items that needed cooling.

There are three or four bases for sleeper tents, evidence of outhouses and of course near the shore a pile of saw dust and log slabs. The old stumps left around the southern end of the island show that they were cutting some pretty big trees at the time.

In 1939 a crew from the Mining Corporation of Canada put a large trench in on the main showing where the shaft now sits. A quartz vein follows the nose of a fold in the sediments here. The pit was 12 feet by 12 feet by 3 feet deep. That is quite a pit and tonnage of rock to be removed by hand.

The zone was sparsely mineralized with pyrite, chalcopyrite, sphalerite and galena but gold is described as being plentiful in the quartz. One can only speculate at what happen to all this "plentiful gold in quartz". Some of the "ore" may have been removed by the company or the men doing the trenching probably did a little high grading on their own. Samples with visible gold in them have a habit of disappearing.

The claims were allowed to lapse. Sometime between then and the early 1940s, when the ground was restaked as the Good Hope Group, a fire must have given the island its name.

## ZOLOTA YELLOWKNIFE MINES

The ground was acquired by Zolota Yellowknife Mines Limited and in 1945 an 8 ft x 8 ft prospect shaft was sunk on the main zone to a depth of 43 feet. The log head frame sitting by the shaft is certainly a classic one.

This is probably when the log cabin camp was built. It consisted of the log cabin sitting there today, which was the cookhouse and kitchen. This is one of the most photographed cabin in the north and is certainly a wonderful example of early log cabins. They used peat blocks to insulate the walls and covered the roof with dirt and peat for insulation. Obviously at some point they used the camp during the winter.

North of that there is a bunkhouse tent with a log base that would have slept 4. Next was a tent that might have housed one person but seems to have been a place to store fuse and probably powder. South of the cookhouse was another log cabin, which has unfortunately, been destroyed. It was probably the office and a place for the project manager and engineer to stay. One can only assume that there also must have been a summer place for some other workers to stay and the tin can piles would indicate it was to towards the bay.

During the sinking of the shaft a considerable amount of quartz with visible gold in it was stockpiled on the property near the shaft. It was put into piles of very high grade, medium high and medium. The owners complained that during the winter when they were gone and the camp was empty some nefarious black hearted souls pinched the very high grade pile. The next year they no doubt left a watchman on site and this spurred them on to erecting a small mill.

The mill was built down by the bay. The ore was crushed near the shaft in a building that has since been destroyed. The crushed rock was taken to the mill, pulverized and the gold separated out using a jigging table of some sort. The small amount of tailings ended up in the bay and they assay around one ounce per ton. So the remaining stockpile of ore was processed. The property was run for a few years and then the operation was shut down.

In 1958 the shaft was dewatered down to the 25 foot level where ice was encountered. The shaft was mapped and sampled by A.G. Hodgson for the Byrne family who seem to have optioned it

The ground was again allowed to lapse and in 1959, it was staked as the GOO group by G. McDonald and Jake Woolgar of Yellowknife.

### **BURNT ISLAND GOLD MINE**

In 1980 Grover C. George purchased the mining lease from J.Woolgar, which covered the shaft and Burnt Island Gold Mines was born. In 1981 3250 feet of diamond drilling was done in 20 holes near the shaft. A diamond drill sits near the shaft and it was left behind during the drilling. The main island and smaller island to the east were also mapped and sampled. A decline was started to cut the vein and it was driven in 324 feet but it was abandoned in 1984, 80 feet short of the vein, when the company ran out of money.

In 1986 Burnt Island Gold Mines and its properties were taken over by New Era Developments Limited who did no work on the property.

### **CAMERON MINE**

In 1989 Bill Knutsen optioned the property with a syndicate called Cameron Holdings made up of private investors. They finished sinking the decline to the 120 foot level. They then mined out the vein from 120 feet up to the original shaft. In 1989 they shipped the ore to Yellowknife to be processed and in 1990 they had a small mill on the property. The tailings were pumped to a small tailings pond a few hundred feet west of the shaft. It has been reported that they continued the decline down almost to the 220 foot level.

The vein is in the form of an M and averages 40 feet long by 3 feet wide and runs 5.3 ounces per ton, with some reported spectacular visible gold sections. The vein is known to extend to at least the 200 foot level.

Once again the claims were allowed to lapse and the ground is currently held by Walt Humphries.

## **MISSING ARTIFACTS AND GOLD**

When the shaft was being sunk there must have been a winch on the head frame and a diesel generator to provide power. There was a crusher in a building beside this. They must have also had one or more vehicles for moving stuff around. When the decline was being put in there also must have been considerable equipment on site. What happened to all this stuff is a bit of a mystery. Most of it was probably moved to other properties, brought back to town and sold or stolen.

When Knutsen operated the property unfortunately a number of the earlier buildings were destroyed. The mill building by the shaft was taken down and burnt. The log office building by the camp was demolished when they put a road in and for some reason the mill by the lake was knocked down and covered with brush. Cameron Mines set up a trailer camp and all their buildings and equipment were removed when they shut down the operation.

One interesting aspect of Burnt Island is that it has a long history of high grading or of gold and gold samples disappearing. This problem faces a lot of showing, that have good visible gold samples.

What happened to all the ore that was produced when the original 20x20x3foot trench went in. The quartz was said to have plentiful amounts of gold. The company may have taken some of it out but no doubt a lot ended up in the packs of the people who put in the trenches.

When Zolato was putting in the shaft right on the zones they had stockpiles of gold ore and the high grade pile went missing one winter.

When Cameron Mining was working on the properties there were rumours of plastic buckets full of high grade samples leaving the property. Some no doubt went to dazzle the investors but others probably ended up in private hands.

A good sample of visible gold is worth much more than the amount of gold in the rock. It can be worth 5 to 10 times as much. So an important lesson is to keep an eye on the visible gold samples and any company mining visible gold should sort out the good gold samples and sell them as such.

## **“TREASURE ISLAND”**

Just to the east of Burnt Island are a small group of islands collectively known as the Treasure Islands because they contain visible gold in some of the quartz veins.

The area was drilled in 1982 and didn't warrant further work at that time.

The claims were staked by Didier Bourgois of Yellowknife. He along with Mike Beauregard collected some spectacular gold samples from the veins by wading along the reefs. The claims are currently in good standing and still held by Didier.

## "GREEN ISLAND"

Green Island was originally staked along with Burnt Island in 1936 and covered by the Ardogo claims. It has been worked on sporadically since then.

At the spot where Sandy Point Lodge has their shore lunches, back in the bush, one can see evidence of a saw mill operation from back in the 1930s. It is unknown if a camp was established on the Island at that time.

In 1938 the geological Survey of Canada ran a survey line up the lake. One of their survey tripods can be seen on a small island S of the SE corner of Green. Another tripod is back in the bush west slightly north of the lunch spot and a cairn and bronze marker pin are located on a small island just west of the SW corner of Green.

The long point sticking out on SW side of Green Island is part of the sand esker running down Gordon and it can be followed well out into the lake using a fish finder.

On the west side of this esker next to a shallow bay at least three old camping spots can be found. Prospectors preferred this spot as it was more sheltered than the lunch spot, which takes a pounding if the wind is from the south or south east.

In 1959 the G.Y. Claims were staked by Fred Lypka and F.Dudlow, two prospectors working for Giant Yellowknife Mines. Jim Kelly mapped and sampled the property and wrote a report on it. Several veins were trenched but the best assay was only 0.2 oz Au/ton.

One story that Kelly tells of his adventures at Green Island should be a cautionary tale for all who boat on Gordon Lake. They had been working on the north side of Green Island in the relative sheltered channel between Burnt and Green. In the afternoon when they started to head back to camp that channel looked relatively calm. They were going full speed in a semi freighter canoe with an engine but when they hit the lake proper they sudden got caught in some large swell and the boat flipped.

They had to hang onto the boat for over an hour as the waves carried them along until they managed to get ashore to warm up and to dry out. They were lucky it was a warm summer day and they weren't in those still cold waters much longer or they wouldn't have survived to tell the tale.

Cruising around the relative calm of the bays and Islands it is easy to forget the main body of the lake is 20 miles long and can get quite rough.

On the west side of burnt Island run the remains of an esker so it is another beautiful area to go hiking. Also along the lunch spot beach or the esker point running into the lake, one can find some very pretty and interesting polished rocks, stones and pebbles left behind. If you are looking for garden rocks or aquarium stones it is an ideal place to go looking.

## "GOODROCK PROPERTY"

West of Green Island, on the east shore of Gordon Lake, there is a narrow channel that leads into Jackfish Bay. This is a fairly popular fishing spot for people from the lodge.

Once you are in the bay, clearly visible on an outcrop on its east shore sits a small modern cabin owned Joe Mcbrides, owner of Buffalo Airways. Sitting beside it is a much older log shed.

When I first visited this spot in the 1970s, 1980s and 1990s it was one of the most beautiful and interesting spots on Gordon Lake. The entrance channel was surrounded by lush vegetation and forested hills so it felt like you were entering a secret or hidden passageway.

As you got closer to the bays east shore hidden behind the cabin you began to see buildings, a lot of them tucked away in the forest. It was a truly beautiful spot for a camp and the camp resembled a small town with close to a dozen building.

There was a large log bunk house that could house a dozen people. It still had wooden beds, windows and you could see where men had stuffed old soaks and shirts to chink the logs. There was an L shaped cook house and mess hall, a machine shop, office and five or six other cabins. There were several outhouses and even a couple of dog houses all built out of logs or locally cut wood. Behind the camp was a core logging area and to the east along the shore of the bay was a big shed for a generator which supplied the camp with electricity.

One could find old cans, bottles and artifacts all over the place and you could easily spend a couple of hours exploring the place. The outcrops in front of the camp were also a great place to stop for a picnic lunch.

Red McBride, Joes father lived, worked and raised a family at the site in the 1937-1944. So in 199\_ Joe had a small new cabin build at the site so his parents could come and visit the old site. Unfortunately a forest fire came along and most of the camp was destroyed.

There use to be a trail from the camp to the mine site but it is rather hard to follow now. I find the best way to get to the old mine site is to take a boat to the other side of the bay.

On the east side of the main bay there is quite a large weed bank. On the south shore between the weed bank and close to an outcrop there is a small sand beach and one can pull a boat ashore. At one time there was an old dock at the spot.

It looks like a swampy area but its not bad walking. If you walk due east across this area then up over the outcrops you are paralleling the think growth around a babbling brook. Around a thousand feet in you will see a small pond and on its south shore sits the remains of the old mill.

Originally it was a two story building with an eagles nest at a doorway on the second story. Now all you see is an old cement pillar that the crusher sat one, There is some drill core laying around and you can see the remains of a second small building, There is part of an old ore car and a few bits and pieces lying around.

To the east of the old mill are the trenches on the main zone. Beside them are the old shaft timbers and some wooden water pipes. On the east side of the pond there is a large trench and that is where the original shaft was.

Stuck in the swampy area east of the pond are some old wagon wheels. At one time there was a bit of a road from the shaft to the mill and from the shaft to the camp. There was also a track from the mill running down to the bay where your boat is. Since it is no longer there one must assume and was removed and taken to another property in the late 1940s.

If you are a prospector or comfortable walking in the bush it is a pretty easy walk and an easy site to find. However, since the buildings are all burnt down, there is not a whole lot to see there now. Unless of course you are really interested in geology and old mine sites.

### **PORMAC and GALLOWAY**

In 1936 three groups of claims were staked with rather interesting names. At Jackfish Bay there was the PORMAC CAMEX Claims, between Burnt Island and Sandy Point Lodge were the PORMAC MAIN BREAK Claims and to the north covering some islands in the middle of the lake were the PROMAC PALEX Claims.

I haven't been able to discover what if anything PORMAC stands for.

In 1937 Galloway Gordon Lake (N.W.T.) Mining Syndicate Limited was incorporated and took over the claims. The name proved to be a little cumbersome so in 1938 they shortened it slightly with a new company called Galloway Gordon Lake Mines Limited.

Three vein systems were trenched. One was on a small island in the bay, the second was on the shore near where the camp was built and the third, which became the main showing on the property, lies inland.

A camp was built on the NE shore of Jackfish Bay, two thousand feet of diamond drilling was done and a 35 foot shaft was sunk on the number one vein. They were of course prospecting for gold and the number one vein looked promising.

### **GOODROCK MINE**

In 1942 Goodrock Gold Mines Limited acquired a 60% interest in the property. C.Watt then directed the work on the property. This was during the Second World War and they discovered that they had some scheelite mixed in with the quartz. Scheelite is the ore of tungsten and tungsten was considered a strategic mineral at the time.

They installed a ten ton per day mill and started producing some tungsten concentrate. It was estimated that the rock contained 0.1 %  $WO_3$  (scheelite). Scheelite looks a lot like quartz but it fluoresces under an ultraviolet light so that is the best way to identify it and prospect for it.

### **ARGONAUT**

In 1944 Argonaut Yellowknife Mines limited acquired the property. Between 1944 and 1946 they did some diamond drilling on the property which indicated a 300 foot length of the vein contain commercial gold values.

Eventually the claims lapsed and Walt Humphries, the current owner of the property, staked the ground in 2004.

## **“THE STORM CLAIMS”**

“When you look at some of the old trenches and contemplate the human effort put into the drilling and then removing by hand the volume and tonnage of rock involved, one gets tired just thinking about it.” WJH

I have included a brief description of this property because it is of general interest to the history of the area. However, I suspect only geologists and prospectors would be keen enough to hike in to see its showings and trenches as they are----- to the east of Gordon Lake.

The Storm Claims were staked in 1941 by C.Brock, G.E.Mcleod and H.Cambell for the Consolidated Mining and Smelting Company of Canada (owners of the Con Mine in Yellowknife at the time).

The claims were being explored for gold and tungsten during 1941 and 1942. On the north shore of Storm Lake sits the number two vein. It is exposed for around 600 feet and is ten to fifteen feet wide. It does have some sulphide mineralization but no reported gold values. Towards its SE (hanging wall side, often associated with carbonate it contains scheelite grains.

Number 2 exploration shaft sits 250 feet NE of the lake. A zone here 61 feet long and 7 feet wide is estimated to contain 0.38%  $WO_3$ .

Number 1 shaft 375 north of the lake has a zone 69 feet long and 5.9 feet wide that runs 0.51%  $WO_3$ . A 215 pound sample taken from the number one shaft to a depth of 12 feet assayed 0.32% tungsten oxide, 0.12% phosphorous with a trace of gold.

On a plan of B zone, which is presumably number two vein, half way between what may be the two shafts, it shows a gold assay of 3.26oz/ton across 2.6 feet.

Jolliffe of the GSC in 1942 found a third vein on the property in 1942. It sits 1 mile 35 degrees north of the number two vein and also contained scheelite.

However the company was disappointed with the results and no further work was done.

## "THE CABIN AT THE NARROWS"

"For some reason this just feels like a romantic spot. It feels as if some couple spent their honeymoon here and left behind such love and good vibrations, that they linger here even today." The Naked Canoeist

This is one of the nicest log cabins left standing on the lake and well worth the visit, before it too collapses.

Not that many people from the lodge venture this far south but it is a very easy run and one can go full speed. It takes less than an hour to do the run and is easier to do than to get up to Keno Island. From the lodge you can head due south to a large hill you can see from the lodge, north of Jackfish Bay. Then you parallel the shore of Gordon SSE to the tip of Camlaren Island. The channel to the south between Camlaren Island and the mainland narrows and when you see a rock in its middle it is time to slow down. The cabin and old camp is hidden in the woods but if you look carefully or come ashore close to the channels narrowest spot then you have arrived.

This cabin was probably built in 1936 and was the original Camlaren camp site before the mine site was built. In front of the cabin sits some drill core and behind the cabin are the remains of an assay operation. To the south of the cabin are the remains of old tent floors and there are another set up on the hill to the SW. At the point to that hill is a large old stone meat cache and to the SE of the cabin is a large stone oven.

I assume that this was the original Camlaren camp and that after the main mine site camp was built, then one of the married couples stayed in the cabin. I did find a pair of women's shoes at the site and it would be an easy paddle or walk south to the mine.

In the late 1950s or early 1960s there was a commercial fishing operation on Gordon Lake and this camp was used as their base. The tables inside the cabin were put in for cleaning fish. Boxes or grates inside the cabin say -----  
-----

If you look at the inside of the cabin carefully one can see that at some point that a curtain separated off the back section and there is a little sleeping loft with what may be a child's hammock.

One of the interesting natural features of this spot is that at the narrows in winter there is a patch of open water where a current passing through the narrows and over the reef keeps a patch ice-free. This makes it an ideal spot to have a cabin and made it ideal for the fish operation.

However if you are travelling on the lake in winter and you don't know it is there, it can be a real hazard. One year when the winter road to Lupin Mine was open there wasn't much snow on the lake. In February a couple of men hunting caribou in a Voxewagon drove off the main road and were having a great time chasing a group of caribou around Camlaren Island trying to shoot them from the car. Caught up in the excitement of the chase they drove right into the open water and luckily got hung up on the shallow reef.

They got out of the car and waded ashore and then walked out towards the main road. Luckily Tony Shearcroft driving a Nodwell up the lake spotted them. He got them into the cab warmed them up and then drove around to winch their car back onto thick ice.

I got to know this cabin well because in ----Scott Boise and I spent the night there when the lake was too rough to make it back to the lodge. It was an interesting night because it was very windy and the east shore of Gordon was engulfed in a forest fire. We could hear the trees burning and would occasionally get clouds of smoke billowing by.

We are probably the last people to have slept in the cabin.

## “CAMLAREN MINE”

“Tis a bra brick moonlit nick d’nick laddie and the ghost of olde Camlaren roams the hills calling, where is me gold.” A Bushman’s Tale

To get to the mine site continue through the narrows and keep going straight but close to the east side of Camlaren Island, which is on your right. The reason for this is because there is a reef towards the center of the bay, right where people would have a tendency to go. After you pass a small Island you can clearly see the berm around the tailings pond. You can go ashore anywhere but most people continue on down to the south end of the Island.

Give the south tip of the Island a wide berth as it also has a reef.

### TODAYS SIGHT

You will go by a small bay that has a cement wall running through it. This was put in and pumped out to keep the mine from flooding when they removed the crown pillar in 1982. If you don't know what a crown pillar is, then here is a quick lesson in mining.

The Camlaren vein is exposed on surface and some of it actually ran under the lake. So when they went down to the 350 foot level and started mining out

the vein, they had to leave a good solid cap of rock. This is called a crown pillar and it is left in place to keep the lake, surface water and even rain from getting into the mine. It has to be thick enough to support itself. I'm not sure how thick the crown pillar was but I would guess it was between 50 and 100 feet.

That is 50 to 100 feet of ore that when a mine is closing is often taken out as it was here. If you walk out on the cement wall you can see the hole where the crown pillar was removed and you can in fact see into the mine. If you were a very brave and bold skin diver you could swim down into the mine.

If you continue along the southern shore you will come to the old dock and a hillside covered in broken mine rock. If you land here and walk up the hill you will come to a cement pad between two rock cuts. This is a cement cap on the mineshaft and sits where the headframe once stood.

Back of this is a big cement pad where the mill once stood. If you look around the area you will see where a few of the buildings once stood but there is not much left. Then there is the tailings pond with its rock berm around it. If you are looking for samples of quartz with sulphide minerals in it the berm is a good place to look. The broken rock lying around the site also contains some sulphides and people have even found a few pieces with a little VG in them.

A little farther along the shore is another old wooden dock. It has gotten pretty rotten so I wouldn't suggest walking on it. Between that dock and the mine waste rock is quite a growth of willows and small trees. Hidden in thee is an old chimney made out of rocks and stones which was the chimney of the old mine managers house.

That is about all that is left of Camlaren today: an old chimney, an area of broken rock, a couple cement pads and a tailings pond.

## IN THE BEGINING

“It is every prospectors dream to find a new zone or showing but to be the first person to see a quartz vein lousy with gold, must be the thrill of a life time.”

A Bushman's Tale

The first discovery of gold at Gordon Lake was on Keno Island towards the north end of the Lake and so that was where most of the action was. On September 12-28 when Johnney Baker and his crew were staking claims they are staking up what eventually became Sandy Point Lodge so word of the Camlaren discovery hadn't got out yet.

I don't know the actual details of the discovery but one can imagine two prospectors paddling around the tip of Camlaren Island on a beautiful fall day.

They see a large quartz vein in a shallow bay outcropping on a small reef and then running over to the mainland. They come ashore to have a look at it and see that it is rusty and has some sulphides with it and then, right there, shining out at them some beautiful yellow masses or nuggets of visible gold.

It must have been a very exhilarating discovery and they set about staking claims immediately. They started staking at the south end of the island and staked all the way to its north end. They then added a line of claims to its West Side and staked south to cover the north end of Zenith Island and east to the east shore of Gordon Lake. In all they staked 34 claims which was a rather big property for those days.

Not only did they have gold on Camlaren Island but they discovered a quartz vein containing gold on a small island to the west and then another large zone on the north side of Zenith Island. These claims were staked and then recorded on September 9<sup>th</sup>, 1936.

The stakers were D.W.Cameron, ----- and the claims were called the Cam - Laren. In November they were transferred over to G.C.Ames although he didn't record the transfer until June 8, 1937. The property was held jointly by the A.X.Syndicate and the Mining Corporation of Canada.

It must have soon been apparent to them that they had made a major find and the biggest find on Gordon to date. They would have started building a camp and trenching the zones almost immediately.

In the book "Yellowknife Tales" it says that Bill Brown of the A.X.Syndicate hired Emile Dagenais to go to Gordon Lake trench and sample on the Camlaren Property.

*"He agreed to remain at the camp as caretaker (with his dog team) and with plenty of time on his hands, combined with a natural sense of adventure, he embarked on an enterprise which was reported in the Northern Miner. It involved sampling a vein that dipped into the lake, starting from the shore and going out 50 feet along the lake bottom during winter. He would wait until the ice had built up to a safe thickness around what became an ice trench and extend it further out. Once he was too anxious and the water pressure broke part of the trench with the result that it filled with water. It froze so Emile started the whole process over again until he got back to where he'd been before and continued on."* Emile was probably the one to build the dutch stone oven at the Narrows camp since he built ones at other camps.

Winter diamond drilling indicated some ore on the main vein.

### CAMLAREN MINES LIMITED

In July of 1937 Camlaren Mines Limited was formed to develop the property. A.K.Muir was in charge of the property and it was worked until Dec 1938. During that period they had spent \$411,874.00 on the property.

They did 14,994 feet of diamond drilling, sank a two compartment vertical shaft to 380 feet and at the 200 and 350 levels put in 2,241 feet of drifts and cross cuts. Their work indicated 13,177 tons of ore grading 0.86 oz/ton uncut and 0.63 oz/ton cut.

That sounds pretty good by today's standards but in 1938 they were looking for one to two ounce per ton material. That combined with a World War looming on the horizon caused the mine to be moth balled.

Most of the wood and timber for the mine came from saw mill camps at West bay due west of the mine on the west shore of Gordon Lake.

In the book "Yellowknife An Illustrated History" there are a number of references to Gordon Lake. It talks of Smokey Stout and his partner Walter hauling supplies by cat train to Gordon Lake. There was a Signals station at the mine staffed by s/sgt. George Benkhe.

In the fall of 1938 Margaret Anderson went to the mine to join her husband Blackie. At the time the main mine camp had been built and Blackie had built a small tent cabin close to the mine for his wife and small son.

On the east side of Camlaren Island, just north of the tailings pond there is a shallow weedy bay. On the SW corner of this bay are what I believe to be the remains of this cabin.

At the time there three other women in camp Kay Muir, Wyn Graham and Slim Winters with her three year old son Jimmy. She describes a bit of life in the camp.

*"The husky dogs were kept busy carrying supplies. The men had fished during the summer to feed the dogs and a line of fish hung frozen, near the camp. What a thrill to go and pick a fish for dinner! I still remember Gordon lake fish as the best in the world.*

*Sometimes I had company; an Indian selling caribou meat, and an elderly whiskered trapper named Henry Swanson who visited with a club-bag full of awful home-made beer. He said that he liked to bring some cheer to the ladies and that he couldn't imagine being without us."*

At Christmas dinner at the mine she talks "Our noses twitched as our eyes took in the row of golden fragrant turkeys waiting on the counter. Laughing and chatting we joined the gang of men around the long painted tables. Jack, the cook, produced enamel jugs of homemade wine. Enamel cups were raised as toasts were made to the ladies. Bottoms up!"

George Needham was one of the diamond drillers working at Camlaren on page 38 of Yellowknife Tales it says "but it (the mine) never went ahead, because the South African money backing it was tied up, prior to World War II."

After the mine closed in the spring of 1939 Larry Sheck and Hans Hansen took a cat train to Camlaren to haul back mining supplies mining equipment for the Negus Mine in Yellowknife.

### NORTHLAND - DISCOVERY

In 1958 Consolidated Northland Mines optioned the property. They did some mapping and resampling and got an indicated reserve of 15,000 tons grading 0.9 oz/ton.

In 1962 Discovery Mines Limited got an agreement that they could mine the ore above the 350 foot level and they would split the profits 50 50. The ore was mined and trucked to the Discovery Mine for milling. They in fact mined 12,174 tons of ore and it produced 11,885 oz of gold and 3,738 oz of silver for a grade of 1.14 oz/per, which turned out to be better then the indicated reserve. It is always important to remember that exploration just indicates a reserve you never really know what you have until you mine it. Sometimes you are pleasant surprised and sometime the surprise is not so pleasant.

Discovery did some further exploration and drilling from underground and in 1964 they got controlling interest of the mine. In 1968 they did some rehabilitation work on the mine site and in 1974 they dewatered the shaft and deepened the shaft to 838 feet with levels at 600 feet and 800 feet. Their work indicated a resource of 56,000 tons averaging 0.62 oz/ton from the 350 level to the 800 level. There was also 5,679 tons of material stock piled on surface which graded 0.42 tons. This material came from their underground development work.

In 1974 Mike Byrne and myself were sent out to the mine in March by Precambrian Mining Services Limited. We were to start to prepare the site and tear down or destroy a few of the old buildings. We set up our tent up in the old bunk house because the one building we could have stayed in, the cook house was full of caribou guts left behind by irresponsible hunters. They had been using double track snowmobiles and there weren't many of those in the north at the time (although the military had a few).

While we were there, a couple of native trappers with dig teams stopped by for a meal and a convoy of trucks arrived from Yellowknife with equipment supplies and a trailer camp which we helped to set up.

Also an adventure walked into camp from Yellowknife and stayed for a couple of days. He was walking up to the Barrenlands to film muskox. We tore down the old cook house and when Jim Magrum and Johny Larkin were in camp we burn down the old mine managers house, because it was beyond repair or use.

It had so many layers of tar and paper on the roof that it certainly did burn and send up a black cloud of smoke they could probably see from Yellowknife.

When they wanted to dewater the shaft they first wanted to see how much ice there was capping it. A diamond drill from Titan drilling was set up on the ice in the shaft and a group of VIPs gathered around the collar to watch this historic event. After around forty feet the drill bit went through the ice. The helper without thinking loosened the chuck. The drill rods with nothing to support them plummeted down and the water swivel hit the driller on the back of the head and knocked him out as the bit and rods sank to the bottom of the shaft.

Apparently it was quite a show for the VIPs.

### MINING CORPORATION OF CANADA

Gold rose in price to \$500 US per ounce and in 1979 the property was leased to Noranda Mines Limited and Pamour Porcpine Mines Ltd with the Mining Corporation of Canada hired to do the work under the supervision of Bill Case. A 150 ton per day mill was set up on the property and the shaft was deepened to 1,050 feet.

They were in production by July of 1980.

However all did not go well. Mechanized raising caused more dilution than expected and they encountered an unexpected barren dyke between the 600 and 800 foot levels. The mine shut down in august of 1981 and the mill shut down in September.

They had milled 63,314 tons and recovered 23,073 oz of gold and 6,154 oz of silver.

Drilling from underground indicates that the vein continues, At 1120 feet it grades 2.648 oz/ton and at 1155 feet it grades 0.345 oz per ton. It is very difficult to predict grade from a couple of holes but from these results one would expect the grade and vein to continue producing gold somewhere between the 0.6 to the 1.1 oz per ton range.

In the 1990s when the parent company wanted to official abandon the mine and let the ground return to the crown all the mine building were removed and the tailings pond was covered with a layer of sand from West Bay.

The company, people who used the lake and the airlines all wanted the headframe to be left standing. It was one of the last wooden headframes in the north, it was a beakon for all who used the lake or flew over the area and it had an eagles nest on its top. It would have been a nice monument to have leave

standing and a tourist attraction. It would have lasted for decades as it was in good shape. With a little care and periodic maintenance it could have lasted centuries. However, the government in their short sighted thinking and with their peculiar biases insisted it come down.

I, like a lot of others, still miss that old headframe.

## H VEIN

To the west of Camlaren on a small island sits the H vein. It was trenched and drilled in 1937. The vein is only a foot or two wide and runs across the small island. It contains 1 oz per ton gold in small flour specks but was considered too small for any further work.

## ZENITH ISLAND

From the H vein you can follow a channel due south to the "31 Vein" on the north shore of Zenith Island.

This vein was trenched and a few drill holes were put into it. One of the trenches exposed a pocket of "spectacular visible gold samples". In 1937 a shaft was sunk on this vein to a depth of 220 feet with drifts and cross cuts totaling 309 feet.

On the site today you can see the trenches, a pile of wood (which was the headframe and hoist room), the backfilled and timbered over shaft and the remains of some sort of dock.

If they properly had panned out they were going to barge the ore to Camlaren. The grade and extent of this zone are unknown but the rock stockpiled under the old dock runs 0.5 to 0.9 oz/ton and contains a lot of sulphide mineralization.

If you are in the area this site might be worth a visit.

## **"E.P PROPERTY"**

"Good time or bad times, with a little faith and hard work, you will get through them all." A Bushman's Tale

These claims lie due east of the southern end of Zenith Island. They were staked by A.N. Greathouse and Gus DeStaffany. By hand steepling they put in a number of trenches on some quartz veins and one trench 9 feet long was 10 feet deep.

At one time there was a pretty little cabin on the claims but unfortunately it was destroyed when a forest fire went through the area and not much remains to be seen. Some old tin cans and bottles and a few artifacts that would only be of interest to those really keen.

I am listing this property because there is an interesting tale to it. This was during the height of the great depression. Greathouse and DeStaffany had found a small vein with some visible gold on it. The trenches are so deep because they were high grading. They would sort out the best looking material, grind it up and pan out the gold.

They didn't make much but it was enough to keep them going and allowed them to live in the bush where they could also hunt, fish and do a little trapping in the winter.

I found some old beer bottles around the camp sealed with corks and tar and I assume they may have been some of Swansons home made beer mentioned in the Camlaren story.

Destaffany and Greathouse may have been going through hard times but it must have paid off because in 1942 they opened the Destaffany tantlum berryllium and tungsten mines on Great Slave Lake.

## **D.A.F. PROPERTY**

“Strange things done under the midnight sun by the men who moil for gold”  
Robert Service

This property is located towards the SE corner of Gordon Lake so it is a long way from the lodge and it takes about two hours to get there. As a consequence not many people visit it but a tour of the south end of Gordon can be quite a pleasant experience.

Jake Woolgar and George Wonnacott staked this property in June of 1946 after they discovered a high grade gold bearing quartz vein. I have never been able to find out why they called them the D.A.F. Claims but it must mean something.

The property was optioned to Zolota Mines ( the same folks who were working on Burnt Island). After trenching and 6,700 feet of diamond drilling the property the option was relinquished in April of 1947.

Not to be deterred by this set back the Jake and George went into partnership with J.McAvoy and they set up an improvised mill to treat ore from

the main vein. From September 21 to October 12<sup>th</sup> they treated around 18 tons of ore and recovered 49.75 ounces of crude gold.

The property was eventual allowed to lapse and restaked a couple of times by various people.

In 1977 John Doucette and Allan Reid restaked the property and tried to do a little high grading on it. It was an interesting operation as they were doing everything on a shoestring and by hand.

In 1982 Blackridge Gold acquired the property and did 1,400 feet of drilling. In 1984 Cruiser minerals got the property from blackride and did another 3,968 feet of drilling. They calculated that they had an ore shoot 60 feet long by 4.5 feet wide that averaged 0.888 oz gold and ran to a depth of 300 feet.

Around this time Fred Bestina who was working at the camp climbed into a boat during a party. The driver of the boat didn't notice that at some point Fred fell out and subsequently drowned before anyone knew he was missing.

In 1948 West-Bay Yellowknife mines Ltd. optioned the property and put in a 5 to 10 ton per day mill. The site had about 15 men working at it and they basically put a glory hole in on the vein.

A glory hole means you start at surface and basically just follow the vein down into the rock. They put in a pit 40 feet long, 12 feet wide and 22 feet deep. The ore was basically hauled to surface using a bucket and winch.

A mine tract was laid from the dock 650 feet inland to where the vein and mill were located.

They treated 289 tons of rock and recovered 221.3 ounces of fine gold, 10 ounces of grude gold and 28,61 fine ounces of silver. The tailings still ran 0.28 oz gold.

In 1989 to 1990 Knut Rasmussen of Yellowknife put in an open pit to extract some ore which was trucked to Yellowknife for processing.

Now there is a story that one spring day Knut was driving a grader down the ice road after it had officially closed for the season. The warm sunlight coming through the window caused him to doze off, the grader drove off the ice road, hit a batch of thin ice over a reef and broke through. Knut awoke with a start as the grader sank to the bottom of the lake, into about 20 feet of frigid water.

He managed to get out of the cab as it filled with water and headed for surface. Unfortunately he bashed his head on a chung of ice and cut it open.

He manage to pull himself out of the water and there seemed nothing for it but to walk down the lake to his camp on the DAF Property several miles

away. So there he is head-bleeding, cloths frozen stumbling along like a knight in ceased up armour. It just so happened that two end of the season hunters were coming down the lake in a pick up truck when the apparition that was Knut appeared in front of them. His cloths were so frozen he couldn't even wave.

They gave him a lift back to camp where he proceeded to warm up.

It just so happened that a plane flying into Yellowknife at dusk saw the grader tracts go off the road and into a hole in the ice. They circled and saw the grader sitting on the bottom of the lake and Knut was no where to be seen. They flew into town and reported that Knut was missing and presumed drowned because he was of course in bed sleeping off the accident and not answered his radio.

The next day when the search party arrived, he wondered what all the fuss was about. He wasn't about to head into town with a few cuts on his head and after a swim in the lake, when there was work to be done.

## SOUTH END OF GORDON

The south end of Gordon Lake is a long way from the lodge but for you who want to explore the whole lake I have marked some old camps and showings there although I wont go into to many details.

**GSC MONUMENT**> There is a rock cairn, pole tripod and brass pin in the rock from when the GSC ran a survey line up Gordon lake in 1938. It is a good place for a picnic and to sit a contemplate all that is Gordon Lake.

**RELIC OF THE WINTER ROAD**> On the winter road near a small island if you look carefully you will see the top of an old truck that has sunk in the lake. It was there in 1974 so its been there a long time. At the time when I asked people about it they said a pickup truck with a camper had sunk at the south end of Gordon. It is hard to tell but this looks more like a fuel truck to me. Someday maybe a skin diver will investigate or the NWT Mining Heritage Society will try to salvage it.

**WILDLIFE CABIN**>On a point due south of this are the remains of a site where wildlife use to maintain a winter cabin at the south end of the lake. They would man it when the winter road was in to check fishermen and hunters. It was there in the 1980s but apparently burnt down.

**OUTFLOW**>The outlet of Gordon is in a pretty little bay and people are usually surprised at how small the outflow of Gordon Lake is. You could almost jump across it and most times you could certainly wade across it. It flows into a

very small lake and then into Lee lake. This is a good spot to see bears and wolves as the neck of land between the two lakes funnels them through this spot.

CARIVOU HUNT> To the very south west end of Gordon there is a very long narrow shallow bay. It is so shallow it is even a little hard to get a boat in. Years ago when I was prospecting this area I came across some very old native winter camps on its south shore. I also found a can of musket balls on a rock ledge on its north side. It is my supposition that they would herd the caribou into this bay, block off its entrance and then they could shoot the caribou as they milled around on the bay.

## “ TREACY CLAIM ”

“Necessity is the mother of invention, but some inventions work better then others.”  
A Bushman’s Tale

this property is located on the south shore of Knights Bay. One report tells you to be careful boating into the property as the author bust his engine on a reef trying to do it.

Mitchell staked the claims in 1946 by Alex Mitchell who tried to run a small high-grade operation there. In July of 1950 they were optioned to Boreas Yellowknife Gold Mines Limited who drilled 8 holes on the property. In 1959 they changed their name and presumably their focus to Expander Mine and Petroleum Limited. The claims were allowed to lapse and were subsequently staked by various people. In 1980 they were sampled by Giant Yellowknife Mines Limited and later drilled and sampled by Giant bay Resources, with discouraging results.

There are five quartz veins exposed on surface, they have been trenched and they do contain gold, there is no question of that. When the trenches were being put in there is an assay of almost 2 oz/ton across five feet reported. Assays from the trenches latter were much lower so in a report Dave Nickerson concluded that the high grade pockets appear to be mined out.

There are some piles of rock or ore sitting on surface. The course and medium crushed stuff seems to have been broken to size by hand and then the fine stuff was put throuh a home made crusher, One trench holds what is described as tailings. So here is Daves estimate of the piles and the average of samples assayed.

Coarse Ore (variable size) 12 tons	0.33oz/ton	= 3.96oz gold
Medium Ore (< 2 ½ inch) 10 tons	0.28oz/ton	= 2.8 oz gold

Fine Ore ( < $\frac{1}{4}$ inch)	8 tons	0.70oz/ton = 5.6 oz gold
Tailing	5 tons	0.88oz/ton = 4.40oz gold

This gives of a total of 35 tons of rock averaging 0.48 oz/ton and it would yield approximately 16.76 oz of gold if it was all processed and you got 100% recovery.

It does seem a little odd that the tailings run higher than the ore stock piled to be processed. They might have handpicked the very best ore and ran it first or these might not be tailings but they could be pulverized material waiting to be processed.

Sitting between the trenches and the ore piles are the remains of the little mill they used. The crusher was designed and built by Alex Mitchell and apparently there are a couple more of this laying around in the north.

Three pieces of steel were cut, flat on top with a curved bottom. A strip of steel was welded, on so they form a hollow curved drum. This was set up on site and it was filled with cement on to give it added weight. It was set up so that fine ore could be gravity feed under it and it would be crushed as an engine rocked the steel plates over it. The material was then feed through a sluice box to recover the free gold.

The crusher has the name Alex Mitchell Yellowknife painted on its side and the cement pad it rests on says 1953-Boreas Yellowknife Gold Mines Ltd. It is unknown how much gold they recovered from this operation. The crusher worked to a fashion and was certainly an improvement from rolling a round boulder back and forth over the rock, as some high graders use to do. Unfortunately better crushers came on the market and made the Alex Bush Crusher obsolete.

Their old camp sits a few hundred feet along the shore to the SSW. If you are in the area the property is worth a visit just to see the old home made crusher.

## "MAHE PROPERTY"

"You just never know what adventures you will have or what you will find when you set out to do a job in the bush." WJH

This property lies on the north side of Knights Bay. It was staked in 1937. It was staked by Borealis Company Ltd. and in 1938 Sentinel Mines Limited was incorporated to acquire and develop the property.

At one time I had the chance to read the early reports on the property. It described how the crew in the spring loaded their supplies and canoes onto a train in Edmonton and traveled up to Waterways Alberta. They then took a boat down to and across Lake Athabasca, down the Snare River and across Great Slave Lake to Yellowknife which was a frontier town still under construction.

They camped out at Yellowknife for a couple of days and then using their canoes headed up the Yellowknife River and then the Cameron River to Gordon Lake. This trip took them close to three weeks, involves going against the spring current all the way and doing a couple dozen portages.

One can only imagine their utter relief when they finally hit Gordon and paddled into Knights Bay. They then had to build their camp. A log cabin cookhouse and log bases for their tents with pole beds. They then started to explore the property and to hand steel holes into the rock to blast in their trenches.

They had just got started on this work when a plane from Edmonton flew in with the VIPs for a visit. Apparently they were a little disappointed that more hadn't been accomplished. The report hinted that had the VIPs traveled the same way as the crew, they would have understood.

Forget the trip from Edmonton to Yellowknife. Imagine leaving Yellowknife with heavily laden canoes. You have your big old and heavy canvas tents, food for a couple of months, shovels, axes, sledge hammers and drill steels. You have dynamite, assay equipment, gold pans, water buckets and wash tubs. You are going against the current and have to portage around the tartan rapids, Cameron falls and dozens of other rapids. You are being eaten alive by the flies and battling the current and the weather.

You get to Gordon and you have to build your own camp. You have been living on bannock, beans and canned goods. You have been away from home for close to two months and are dirty and tired. Then some well-dressed VIPs who had been playing golf in Edmonton the day before fly in for a short visit and they complain about your progress to date.

I'm willing to bet that there were a few in the crew, who would have cheerfully throttled them.

The property had three main zones and the vein north of Sentinel Lake had VG in some of its trenches. They did some x-ray drilling and then the property went idle during the Second World War and the claims lapsed.

In 1944, this ground was restaked by J. Herriman, along with the Lynx property to the north. It was transferred to Lynx Yellowknife Gold Mines Ltd.

the same year. This is a company the Jim Mason was a director of and in 1954 they transferred the claims to him.

The claims were allowed to lapse but in the 1970s the price of gold went up and after some mining adventures in Alaska, BC and other places Jim Mason and his wife rusty returned to mining in the north. He restaked the properties and optioned them to Giant Bay Resources out of Vancouver. At the time it was called the MAHE property.

### MAHE

In 1983 Jimmey Mason hired me to look after the summer field program at Gordon Lake. We were suppose to drill some hundred foot holes into a small quartz vein showing north of Kidney Pond.

At a hundred feet we had cut the veins but we were still in a zone of small quartz veins and bands of arsenopyrite crystals, unable to contact Jim in town I kept the drill running and we ended up using every rod we had on site. At 300 feet we cut some small quartz veins with visible gold in them.

We continued on drilling deep holes and every one encounter a wide zone with VG out under Kidney Pond. This was a new discovery and lead to some excitement. The next year they had two drills on the property and a lot more men and equipment. I declined the offer to run the project (because I don't like running big camps and I am not officially a geologist and hence not a P.Geol or P.Eng.) so Bill Knusten took over. Instead I had a small crew to prospect the southern end of Gordon lake.

In 1984-85 they sank a decline on the property. The zone certainly has gold but after sampling underground they decided not to proceed with mining.

If you walk NNW from the Sentinel camp along the outcrop then turn west at Sentinel Lake and cross a creek, this will take you to the decline. If you continue west over a small hill you will see Kidney pond and racks of drill core on either side of it.

The Mahe camp was further in on Knights bay but other then the dock there isn't much to see there and it is a more difficult walk to get to the mine site.

Bishop Resources currently owns the MAHE claims.

**"LYNX PROPERTY"**

The entrance to Lynx Bay is rather narrow and somewhat hidden but the north channel is quite navigable. The camp sits on the first big point on the south shore of the bay.

At one time there was a log cabin sitting on this point but it got destroyed along with the dock and part of the mill/assay site when Bill Knutsen and Giant Bay resources drilled the property in 1984. If you walk south up the hill and then turn east hidden by trees you will see an old cabin, which was the kitchen cookhouse. Unfortunately the roof has fallen in and bears have been tearing at the walls.

You can find some artifacts and stuff on the road leading from the old dock up to the trenches.

### MARTHA and JOHN JACOBSON

“Ah..... to be young and in love. To share a dream and a cabin in the woods, it makes the most cynical old prospector turn a little misty-eyed (and a little envious).” A Bushman’s Tale

In the book *Yellowknife an Illustrated History* Martha Jacobson talks about going to Gordon Lake from 1946-47 and working on the Lynx claims with her husband John.

*“We lived in a big tent first, then a cabin- made halfway with logs and a canvas tent on top. We had a bedroom, made a wooden bed and later got some padding on the bed.*

*I did all the paper work and kept the camp running as well as working on our claims. Cranberries at that end of the lake were thick and I got a pail in a few minutes.*

*We came to town only to stock up. We travelled by Dog team and plane. The planes were sometimes loaded to their limits and I often traveled on top of the boxes.*

*We were neighbours to the Lundquist’s at Gordon and we knew Jake Woolgar well. He was a pilot and flew us a couple of times. Joe Herriman came out nearby on some claims. And there was also Claude Watt. Claude had those ten claims optioned at one time, did some drilling, took assays etc.’*

Later on, presumably after John had passed away, she says “Another sister Alma came here once when I tried to hold onto the claims at Gordon Lake. I had to do some assessment work. We rented a skiff.

*We had some free gold that I panned on blankets. I panned a nugget, rather two, the size of a small dime. I gave the man who helped me one, and I kept the other.”*

*“I eventually sold the leases at Gordon.”*

They also had claims and a cabin at Ryan Lake and claims at Mousquito Creek where they got some gold in “mercury rock”. They also had some claims with amethyst (purple quartz) which sit along the current road to Yellowknife. John did lapidary work and turned some of his samples into jewelry for his wife.

This means he was one of the first jewelry makers in the NWT using local materials.

### LYNX Yellowknife Gold Mines

It is quite possible that someone was grubstaking or financing the Jacobsons. The property went to Lynx Yellowknife Mines, then to Jim Mason and was then optioned to Giant Bay in 1982 and they drilled the property.

The large trenches or pits at the site do contain some gold and visible gold has been reported but the drilling failed to indicate a mineable resource.

When I first visited this site in 1974, I kicked an old tobacco tin lying on the ground. It rattled so I retrieved it and when I opened it, it contained around fifty blasting caps. So be a little careful when you are exploring old sites and if you find any caps or explosives let them lay.

## "WEST BAY"

The entrance to West Bay is easy enough to find as it is due west of Camlaren Island and it is quite wide. The problem is that it is also quite shallow and you have to go slow and keep an eye out to get through it.

Once in the bay it is over a hundred feet deep but its shores tend to be shallow with rocks and reefs.

A sand esker runs along its north shore.

One can find a few old camps along the north shore and most were part of the logging operation that supplied timbers and lumber for Camlaren Mine.

You will also see a plywood cabin on a beach on the north shore. This is owned by the Archuks of Air Tindi and used occasionally.

If you look on some maps they show a winter road running from Camlaren, across Gordon Lake, down the middle of West Bay and around some Islands to its NW corner. This road was used to haul ore from Camlaren to Discovery Mine in 1962.

The bay is a little shallow and weedy but you can get a boat to where the road comes ashore. Just inland there is a big burrow pit where sand and gravel was obtained to cover the tailings pond at Camlaren. It really is a nice spot to visit.

I have suggested in letters to the government and the current winter road operators that if the road to the diamond mines needs sand and gravel that they get it here, rather than from Burnt Island. The material here is as good or better than the stuff on Burnt and this pit is out of sight of tourists, visitors and fishermen on Gordon.

### THE NEXT TWO SMALL BAYS NORTH OF WEST BAY

There is a sand beach in each of these bays. There are also the remains from caribou hunting camps from the 1980s or 90s.

The second bay north, is a particularly beautiful spot and ideal to stop for a break, a swim, sun tanning or in the fall, it is one of the best berry picking spots I have found on the lake.

## NORTH OF LODGE

### "TRAPPERS CABIN"

"During stormy weather, I once spent a couple of nights in an abandoned trappers cabin. It had some traps and stretching boards still hanging on the wall. The wind was howling, the moon was full and there was thunder and lightning as rainsqualls sailed across the night sky.

I had the strangest dream of rich folks draped in furs and diamonds, at a party drinking champagne and smoking cigars, while outside their window World Wars raged on and thousands died." The Naked Canoeist

A 1937 map of Gordon Lake produced by the GSC shows three cabin sites, which would have predated the gold discoveries on the lake.

The first site is on a small island due west of Camlaren Mine and nothing remains there, to be seen today.

This is the second site. It is a little difficult to get to as it is set on the mainland in a bay with some small islands and reefs to avoid. It is not an obvious place for a cabin but you have to remember that it was located for winter usage by dog teams. There are the remains of a small one-room nine foot square cabin. It has one small door, no windows and just enough room for a bed and a woodstove.

Cabins in those days tended to be very small because it meant it took less wood to heat them and windows were a pretty rare and valuable item. It was probably a trappers cabin.

Near it one can see that a tent was set up at one time with a pole base and door. It may have been used as an outbuilding to the cabin or as a spring and fall camp for the trapper when the cabin would have been a little claustrophobic.

To the north of the cabin is a great section of slate pop ups and to the east back in the bush are a series of big trenches on a quartz vein.

The cabin is worth a visit just to see how small it is. The roof has fallen in and it wont last for many more years.

## "QUARTZ ISLAND"

"Someone should find an island on Gordon and name it No Quartz, No Mineralization, Nothing of any Geological Interest Island." WJH

To the west of the cabin there is a large island known as Quartz Island. On the SW corner of this island there is a quartz mass that extends out into the lake. It does carry low gold values in places on shore, so I am rather surprised no one has drilled it.

A peninsula on its west side has some quartz veins that have been trenched and there are the remains of an old tent camp.

North of this site on the shore one can see the remains of an old dock and when you pull ashore there are a couple of airtight wood stoves and some old tin cans. A trail leads up the hill to a site that has a couple of tent sites.

Some prospectors particularly during a bad fly season liked to put their camps up on a hill a little way away from the lake, to get a breeze. This cut down on the flies. This camp probably dates from the 1960s when some other trenches were put in on the island.

There are a couple of large trenches on the other side of the Island NW of this camp and I suspect those are the ones they put in.

## "GORDON LAKE CITY"

It was a different time .....before the plane, before the snowmobile, before the engine, before the radio, before glass windows.....in the north people lived out in the bush hunting and fishing for food and in the winter they trapped for furs which they could trade at posts far away for items unknown to them a generation before.....the north like the rest of the world was achanging.

The Island that Sandy Point Lodge uses for its northern shore lunches doesn't have a name, but we could call it Keno Island after the first claims which were staked there.

On the west side of the Island, a long narrow peninsula sticks out to the SSW. In the middle of this peninsula, the third cabin site from the 1937 GSC map occurs. What the map doesn't tell you is that there are several old cabins and tent cabins located there. We found at least seven but didn't explore the entire peninsula. Most were small and windowless.. There are old tables, saw horses, tin cans and camp stuff scattered about.

This was probable an area where a group of Dene hunters and trappers spent the winters over a number of years. The location certainly suggests winter use.

At the site we found a couple of old wooden sled runners sheathed in stovepipe. There were also beside a couple of cabins pens or corrals probably used to confine young dogs.

Every year the caribou come down off of the barrens to Gordon and I suspect this camp was chosen because it was a good place for the winter hunt. It was also a good base for trappers.

This really is a site worth visiting, if you are in the area.

## **“KENO ISLAND”**

“The fortunes of a prospect or of a prospector can be very fickle indeed. You make a new discovery and you are elated. On paper you can suddenly be worth a lot of money, then a few bad assays come in or the commodity prices change and you are yesterday's news.

From beans to T-bone steaks and back to beans again, that is the nature of the business. But most are in it for the long haul because they like the life style and they enjoy the search as much as they enjoy its temporary success and failures.” WJH

If you have read this far you will know by now that this is where Sandy Point Lodge has its northern shore lunch and where the first gold discovery on Gordon Lake was probably made.

After the gold discoveries in Yellowknife prospecting parties set ou to explore the region by boat and canoe and companies sent out crews using aircraft.

### **THE DISCOVERY**

I suspect that a crew working for the Mining Corporation of Canada ,flying over Gordon Lake, spotted the quartz vein from the air and landed to

investigate. They probably landed at the small sandy beach and walked over to the vein, which is located along the east shore of the island.

The vein was big and looked good so one of the prospectors gathered up some of the weathered material from its surface. This they took to the lake, crushed and panned and "by Jove and by Jimminy" there were some specks of visible gold. Their pan had colours, so they immediately set about staking claims and sent word back to town with the pilot that they had made a discovery.

They staked up the east side of the island first then added claims to tie up its western side and the northern end. When the plane arrived back with more men and probably the boss he would have said "OK this looks good and it looks big, so you boys start trenching it and the rest of you prospect the area and stake anything that looks good.

So more ground was staked to the south as the PICTURE, ORO GRAND and El GRAND Claims and to the west as the BONANZA Claims.

The original vein is big. It is described by Henderson (a GSC geologist who visited the site in 1939) as follows:

"Its width ranges from 3 to 38 feet and averages 6 to 8 feet over an exposed length of more than 700 feet. The northern part consists of two parallel members, the westerly being 1 foot to 3 feet and the easterly 3 to 38 feet in width. To the south the two members join. They parallel the bedding, and the 1 foot to 1 ½ feet of greywacke separating them appears to be the same bed over a length of 400 feet.

The quartz is milky white and irregularly banded. Pale pinkish albite and rusty weathering carbonate occur throughout the quartz. In places chalcopyrite, pyrite, sphalerite and galena are fairly plentiful, but most of the vein contains little or none of these sulphides. The vein has been trenched and sampled at 20 foot intervals over its entire length. Visible gold has been found in places....."

### THE WORK

Keno Island would have been a rather busy and optimistic place in the summer and fall of 1936. A new cabin had been built as a kitchen and cook house and a number of log based tents were set up.

There are close to thirty trenches on the vein. They were drilled by using hand steel and they were mucked by hand. Striping of the overburden, drilling, blasting and mucking thirty trenches represents an incredible amount of work. In those days it was common to trench an important zone every twenty feet so that fresh samples could be taken across the zone to determine its grade.

If that work showed promising results then the newly invented diamond drills would be brought in to drill the zone.

Other veins in the area were also being discovered and trenched.

Other prospectors and companies working in the areas could hear and see the activity, so they came over to have a look and stake up some ground.

Pretty soon even those in Yellowknife started to notice all the planes heading up to Gordon Lake and back and even Johnney Baker arrived in early September with a crew to stake up some ground.

### THE BUBBLE BURSTS

Henderson's description of the vein concludes "but the sampling showed that no part of the vein was of sufficient grade to warrant further work." The other veins and showings in the area also failed to show "Ore grade material".

Meanwhile that September, prospectors working way to the south, discovered veins with a lot of gold in them on Camlaren Island. By the summer of 1937 the focus of interest had suddenly shifted from the northern end of the lake to its southern end.

### THE ISLAND

Keno island is a big and beautiful island and a good place to explore or go hiking. It has the old camp to visit as well as the original vein to look at. The vein is located a few hundred feet up the east shore of the island. Willows and new trees hide it from view from the lake but if you go ashore it is only a few feet back in the bush.

As you go through the northern channel on the mainland you can see some nicely rounded glacial erratics.

The northern point of the Island has some quite large trees and one of them has a bald eagles nest in it.

Also there is the old hunters and trappers cabins on its SW peninsula.

One word of caution however, the northern half of the bay on the south side of the island is very shallow and it is very difficult to get from there through to the lunch spot. So you either have to go around the north end of the Island or swing south around a cluster of islands.

### "THE INSIDE PASSAGE"

"We entered the secret passage way, expecting to encounter pirates around every bend, but little did we expect to find the lost world of our imagination." The Book of Childhood Adventures

To the NE of Keno Island, on the west shore of Gordon Lake, there is a very long thin island that looks a little like a fishhook.

On the northern part of this Island there is an unused tent frame. Two thirds of the way down the island there is a cabin, that I believe belongs to Jonas Sangris and is used mostly in the winter. On the northern point of the mainland, south of this island, there is a tent frame full of building materials and traps. It seems to have been sitting there like this for several years and is starting to collapse.

On the backside of this Island there is a passageway you can boat through and it really is a pleasant and scenic trip, if you have the time. You have the feeling you are going down a river. Rock cliffs run close to the west shore and the bays are weedy. If you go almost to the north end of this channel, there is a waterfall cascading down steeply bedded rocks.

To the north of this channel, on the west shore past a couple of islands, are the remains of an old tent camp. There are a couple of empty 45 gallon drums and you can see that they used wood from the old wooden dynamite boxes as part of the log base for one of the tents. I am not sure who's camp this was or what property they were working on but it looks like a camp from the late 50s or early 60s.

## "HUNTING CAMP"

Some people go to the lake to hunt and others to fish. Some people want to look at the rocks and other want to watch the birds. If we were all the same, life would be exceedingly boring.

There is a hunting camp on a point near the north end of Gordon Lake. There are three cabins and a tent frame there. There is a dock, fish drying racks and an outhouse. Fred Sangris and others own this camp and it is used primarily for winter hunting.

In front of the cabins near the point is another of the 1938 GSC survey markers.

## "OTHER CAMPS AND ARTIFACTS"

I have tried to describe the main camps and artifacts that one can find around Gordon Lake. I sure that there are others waiting to be rediscovered because it is a big lake and I am still exploring it.

In 1974 I can remember quite clearly visiting a big trench in a quartz vein and as we walked towards it on a mossy Labrador tea area, we walked through

an old camp. It had a two-seater outhouse, log frames and bases for tents and pole beds. Darned if I can find that camp again.

There are a few camps I have marked on the map but haven't described because there is not much left at them and no real reason to visit them. The same is true for numerous trenches and exploration properties that didn't amount to much. There are also lots of small camps or campsites I haven't included because they are too small to bother with.

However when you come ashore and walk into the bush, you just never know what you may come across. The bush has grown up a lot since 1936 or forest fires have gone through some of the areas, so a lot has been lost or destroyed but I am sure that there is still more out there to find.

## GEOLOGICAL FEATURES

### ESKERS

An esker is composed of the sand, gravel and boulders left behind by a river that flowed under a glacier.

It is hard to imagine what the world would have been like during the last ice age. An enormous sheet of ice over 5000 feet thick covered the northern half of North America. As the snows built up in the Keewatin they turned to ice and then got so thick they began to push outwards.

They scrapped across the land removing all the soil and overburden and ground down even the rocks. Surface material from the NWT ended up dumped in the Mackenzie valley or south into the prairies and even into Ontario and Quebec.

During that period there were still summers and winters. During the summer the top of the glacier would melt and water would percolate down through cracks and crevices and flow along with the glacier, lubricating its base and encourage the glaciers movement.

When the ice age ended 16,000 years ago, the melt increased and rivers formed under the ice. They carried with them sand and gravel and these formed riverbeds which built up in time, hemmed in by the crevices walls in the ice.

The ice finally melted and left the north around ten thousand year ago. The eskers were left behind to show where these under ice rivers once flowed. On the barrens you can see eskers running for miles and miles across today's landscape.

Below the tree line they get covered with vegetation and are harder to see. The ones in the Gordon Lake area were also under a big post glacial lake

as well so they have been reworked. The esker at Gordon starts in the NE corner, runs across Keno Island, down to Sandy Point then over to Burnt and Green Islands and across the Lake to West Bay and then goes inland to the SW.

When you look at the rounded polished rocks left behind along this river course you get a feeling that at one time it was a pretty powerful fast flowing river. Looking along the course of the esker is a great place to find a wide variety of aquarium stones.

### GLACIAL STRIATIONS

Try to imagine a great sheet of ice with a vast area and over 5,000 feet thick slowly inching its way across the country, moving only a few feet a year but over hundreds of years the distances add up.

Occasionally it plucks a piece of rock from an outcrop and pushes it along grinding it into the outcrop beneath. The smooth surface you see on a lot of outcrops was ground smooth by glaciation. Also the occasional rock would put a line or groove into the outcrop. These parallel lines or grooves are called glacial striations and from them you can tell the direction the glacier moved.

The same ice sheet might change direction and flow in a different direction in which case you will get a second set of parallel lines running in another direction. Sometimes you can even get a third or fourth set of lines.

These striations are important to geologists because they tell the direction the glaciers moved. The diamond mines were originally found because a trail of indicator minerals was traced back to their source and other mines have been found by tracing glacial boulders back to their source.

### GLACIAL ERRATICS

As the glacier moved along the rocks they picked up rocks, which as they are moved along, slowly become rounded. These rocks can be moved, hundreds or even thousands, of miles and then they were left behind when the glacier melted.

A rough rule of thumb is the more rounded the rock the farther it has moved or the converse the more angular the rock the closer it is to its source. Some glacial erratics are mere pebbles but occasionally you can find a truly huge glacial erratic.

### POP UPS

These occur around the lake and usually in fairly flat area. Because the beds have been turned to 90 degrees and slate tends to break along its bedding planes, water seeps down the small cracks and pools at the bottom. When it freezes it expands and wedges a piece of the slate up. Depress and grit wedge it in place and the next year it moves up a little farther.

Sometimes it is an individual plate or piece of slate, which pops up and looks like a tombstone. Or you might get in an area of them and it feels like you are walking through a graveyard. At other times a section of a bed will begin to pop up and it looks like a wall. Sometimes it is a short wall, a couple of feet high, but I have seen ones close to a hundred feet long, ten feet wide and fifteen feet tall. It looked like someone had started to build the Great Wall of China. Occasionally a block will get popped up and from a distant it looks like a square building. On Burnt Island the pop-ups are rising up through the sand and it almost looks like coffins, are rising up out of the ground.

### BEDDING BLOCKS

Along the NW shore of Gordon near where the waterfall occurs a fault runs along the shore. A combination of gravity and the freezing action of water has broken the greywackies along their bedding planes forming quite a spectacular pile of rock blocks along the fault of cliff face. From personal experience I can tell you it is difficult prospecting through those blocks because some of them are rather precariously balanced and the face is still actively being eroded or broken into the blocks.

It does make for some interesting photographs and certainly shows the bedding planes of the greywackies.

### FAULTS GEOLOGY

To understand the geology of an area, it is always best to get out into the field to see examples of what is being discussed. If you go to a smooth flat outcrop along the shoreline, one that is clear of any moss or lichen, you will see alternating bands of gray and black rocks.

These are your basic rock types in the area. The gray rocks are called greywackies and the black ones are called argillites. They are Archean meta-sediments and form part of the Precambrian Shield.

Archean is a geological age and this basically means that the rocks are very old. They have been age dated at around 3.2 billion years old. They started out as sediments that through mild heat and pressure became sedimentary rocks. These in

turn were subjected to more extreme heat and pressure and were metamorphosed into the rocks you see today.

As you look at the light and dark bands, something may strike you as a little odd. Most sediments are laid down in horizontal layers, usually under water. Yet these bands seem to be vertical. This would mean that after they were deposited and turned into rock, then at some point the whole package of sedimentary rocks was turned onto its side. This is indeed what is believed to have happened.

Your next question may be “Ok they started out as sediments, but what kind of sediments were they and how did such a thick package of rocks get turned onto its side?” Well, every rock has a fascinating story to tell and the ones at Gordon Lake are no exception.

### **THE EARLY CRUST**

To understand this whole process we have to go back in time, way way back. So lets go back around four billion years. The oldest known rocks in the world are located up towards Great Bear Lake and they are a metamorphic rock called the Acasta Gneiss, because they are located on the Acasta River.

The theory is that the Earth started out as a big molten ball of material, all mixed together and churning up with convection currents. A little over four billion years ago a thin crust of rock developed on the surface of the planet as it cooled. This trapped a lot of lighter materials and gasses underneath the crust.

As the heavier materials sank towards the center of the earth forming what is believed to be an iron core, the lighter materials and gasses rose to the surface and many wanted to escape up through the crust. So there was a whole lot of venting and volcanism going on.

Even today when a volcano erupts, by volume gasses form the largest part of the eruption. These gasses, particularly carbon dioxide formed a rather toxic early atmosphere around the planet. Hydrogen and oxygen combined to form water and an ocean soon covered the planet.

Lava was forced up into this primordial ocean and thick beds of pillow basalts were formed. At Yellowknife one can see these pillow basalts and they form a layer a few kilometers thick. On top of them are some lava flows. It is believed that on top of the first crust a layer of pillows and flows was laid down.

By volume after the gasses, the next biggest component of volcanic eruptions, are volcanic ashes. Enormous clouds of volcanic ash billow out and these can be carried hundreds even thousands of kilometers by the atmospheric or ocean currents. When mount Saint Helens erupted a blanket of volcanic ash was laid down covering thousands of square kilometers. So it is believed that on top of the early crust and volcanic pillows a thick layer of volcanic ash was laid down.

The grey coloured rocks, we call greywackies, are actually layers of volcanic ash that have been compressed and metamorphosed into rock. The black bands started out as volcanic smoke made up of very fine particles. We call these argillite when they get turned into rock. These have been compressed and metamorphosed and because they have a very distinct layering they also form shales and slates.

### **FOLDING**

The crust is actually the skin of the planet. It may appear solid and unmoving to us but through long periods of geological time it is actually quite pliable and moves a lot. In the 1960s geologists developed the theory of continental drift.

If you put a finger on either side of the back of your hand and squeeze them together your skin begins to bend and fold forming ridges. This happened to the earth's crust. It began to bend and fold.

At the same time large oceans of lighter elements collected below the crust and began to solidify into granites. These formed large domes and being light rose up folding the pillows and ash layers.

Most of the Precambrian shield is actually composed of granite. From Yellowknife all the way to Rae Edzo is one big mass of granite. Running North South from Yellowknife is a band of volcanics pillows and lavas turned on its side. This band runs from out in Great Slave Lake through Yellowknife north to Discovery Mine. If you go east of Gordon Lake to Fenton Lake you encounter another band of overturned volcanics and then another big mass of granite.

Between the two granite masses and bands of volcanics are the overturned meta-sediments typical of the Gordon Lake area.

## COMMON MINERALS

**Arsenopyrite** FeAsS (iron arsenic sulphur)

Occurs as grains or masses, crystals can be diamond shaped or needles.

Colour - silver white, luster – metallic, hardness - 6, specific gravity – 6, brittle.

Sometimes occurs with gold, it has a garlic smell when hit with a hammer.

**Chalcopyrite** CuFeS<sub>2</sub> (copper iron sulphur)

Usually is specks or masses

Colour - golden, luster – metallic, often tarnishes greens and blues, hardness – 4, specific gravity – 4.2, brittle

Often mistaken for gold but is harder and brittle.

**Galena** PbS (lead sulphur)

Often form cubic crystals and look like multiple cubes

Colour – lead gray, luster - metallic, shiny, hardness - 2.5, specific gravity – 7.5, breaks into cubes

The chief ore of lead

**Gold** Au (gold)

Colour – rich yellow to silvery yellow (silver mixed in) to reddish (if copper mixed in), luster - metallic, hardness 2 ½ to 3, specific gravity – 19.3, very malleable and ductile ( you can pound it into any shape).

Gold is very soft so you should be able to scratch it or smear it with a pin or knife point and it is very heavy so it is easy to pan. Less than 1 oz/ton in a rock you may

not be able to actually see the specks of gold so VG or visible gold usually means gold values will be over 1 oz per ton.

It has a wide range of uses from jewelry, to electronics, to high tech applications. You computer has a gold coating on its electronic contacts and some energy efficient buildings use a thin film of gold on the windows. In the north most gold comes with a little silver mixed in with it.

### **Sphalerite ZnS (zinc sulphur)**

Comes in a variety of crystal shapes and colours so difficult to recognize in the field visually.

Colour – yellow, green, red-brown, black, luster – resinous, hardness – 3 ½ to 4, specific gravity – 4

On a streak plate has a creamy slightly tan or yellow streak with a distinctive rotten egg or sulphur smell. This is the easiest way to test for sphalerite.

### **Scheelite CaWO<sub>4</sub> (calcium tungsten oxygen)**

Often occurs in high temperature quartz veins.

Colour – white, glove brown, light green, hardness 4 ½ to 5, specific gravity –6, fluorescent - blue to white or yellow. Often hard to distinguish in a quartz vein without a UV light.

The ore for tungsten.

### **Pyrite FeS<sub>2</sub> (iron sulphur)**

Very common mineral found in rocks and with quartz veins.

Often forms small cubes.

Colour silver to very light yellow, luster – metallic, hardness – 6 to 6 ½, specific gravity – 5

Sometimes confused with gold but it much harder.

### **Quartz SiO<sub>2</sub> (silica oxygen)**

Crystals are common in vuggy veins. Crystals are six sided columns that then have a pointed end.

Colour - white, clear, yellow, purple rose. Luster – glassy, hardness – 7, specific gravity – 2.6

Quartz is a very common mineral and occurs in a wide variety of rocks. It also often occurs as veins as in the Gordon Lake area. Sulphide minerals and gold can occur along with the quartz veins.

Quartz sands used for making glass, quartz crystals used in electronics and some varieties used for gemstones and jewelry. Amethyst is purple quartz.

### **Rocks**

Slate-shale

Greywackie

Diabae