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EARLY EXPLORATIONS IN THE COAST MOUNTAINS

By W. A. Don Munday

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379 YEMPE CRESCENT
NORTH VANCOUVER
B. C.

Aug. 10, 1942.

Mr. Robie L. Reid, K.C.,
1736 Westbrook Crescent,
Vancouver, B. C.

Dear Mr. Reid,

Death of the editor of the Canadian Alpine Journal prior to publication prevented me from using all the information you so kindly gave me about William Downie, but perhaps another opportunity may come later.

We are back recently from climbing Mt. Queen Bess which stands south of Tatlayoko Lake. We found some revival of interest among Chilcotin ranchers about a road to Bute Inlet, but found them not well informed on the true character of the country in the heart of the Coast Range.

With kind regards,

Yours sincerely,
Don Munday

EARLY EXPLORATIONS IN THE COAST MOUNTAINS

By W. A. Don Munday

Romance of exploration has lingered longer in the Coast mountains than in the other alpine ranges of British Columbia. Early fur traders seemingly felt little need for passages through the Coast mountains. Even now between Howe sound and Skeena river only the incomplete Bella Coola road penetrates the range.

As the Coast Indians were such notable sea travellers the Hudson's Bay Company had not even found it necessary to place many trading posts along the coast of the mainland.[1]

When the gold rush to Fraser river began in 1858 the residents of Vancouver Island and the mainland shores were for the most part—from Governor James Douglas down—servants or ex-servants of the Hudson's Bay Company.

Governor Douglas thus easily commanded all available knowledge of explorations in the Coast mountains when commercial rivalry on the part of the city of Victoria, as well as needs of the miners, called for a cheaper, easier route to the upper Fraser river than by way of newly founded New Westminster.

If such a route existed it must cross the Coast mountains. "Major" William Downie (he lacked military rank) was foremost and most persistent of those explorers working with the governor's approval.

Douglas wrote to Sir Edward Bulwer Lytton, secretary for colonies, on March 25, 1859:

> I have for some time past had in the Government employ a respectable Scotchman, named Downie, one of the most successful miners in California, and known all over that state as Major Downie, the founder of the town of Downieville. He accompanied Mr. M'Kay last summer in his overland journey from Harrison's river to Howe's Sound. He has since explored Jarvis' Jervis Inlet, where he spent the greater part of the winter, and lately made an excursion with Indians into Desolation Sound, which he has in part closely examined with reference to

[1] Posts along the eastern coast of Vancouver Island served the adjacent mainland northward from Fort Langley on Fraser river.

> its mineral character. He thinks favorably of the country, and proposes crossing the mountains from the head of Jarvis' Inlet into the valley of Fraser's River as soon as the snow disappears from the mountain passes . . . Mr. Downie has no fixed salary, but I undertook to furnish him with provisions and other means of travelling, provided he reported on the state of the country for the information of Government. He is not therefore expensive to the Colony, and may possibly, from his practical knowledge of mining and enterprizing turn of mind, make some valuable discovery, and will at least contribute much information respecting the mineral character of the country. (Provincial Archives).

Downie was born in Glasgow in 1819, raised in Ayrshire, and his schooling seemingly ended when he was "old enough" to go to sea on a coastal boat. Seafaring eventually took him to lakes Erie and Ontario. Then he drifted into the lumber business in Buffalo. He threw this up to join the California gold rush.

"I believe I was the only foremast hand who received any wages," he remarks thriftily of his voyage to San Francisco.

Like so many miners, he often left good claims on the chance of finding richer ground somewhere beyond. Unlike so many, he prospered. News of gold on the Fraser brought him to Victoria in July 1858. True to his nature, he again sought untouched fields for prospecting, but this time with the government "grubstaking" him.

Like all explorers, Downie had some measure of liking for exploration for its own sake, and he soon developed an ambition to find a route through the Coast mountains for the already proposed trans-continental railway. He sometimes forgot his own degree of self-interest, as in the following:

> The reader . . . will also perceive the anxiety and vigor with which these explorations were being pushed, for the sole purpose of affording greater travelling facilities for the miners, who, coming from Victoria, made the upper Fraser their destination. At that time when the exact course of the Fraser was but imperfectly known, it was naturally to be supposed that there would be some way of making a cross-country road to the gold fields. (P. 259, *Hunting for Gold,* by Major William Downie, California Publishing Co., 1893).

Quotations from Downie's book will be indicated by page number unless context makes this clear. Other quotations are from documents in the Provincial Archives and information collected for me through the kindness of the archivist, Mr. Willard E. Ireland.

Downie's first expedition seems to be the earliest record of an occurrence which is still a matter for conjecture among visitors to Garibaldi Park. Downie wrote the report, although he was possibly an assistant to J. G. McKay. Their aim was to examine an alternative route connecting Howe sound with the Harrison lake-Lillooet lake-Anderson lake route to the upper Fraser.

They left Fort Langley Sept. 1, 1858, took the Harrison route, and, on the 8th, by way of Green river reached the still unnamed pass at Alta lake. On the 9th they started down Cheakamus valley (properly four syllables; *Tsee-ark-a-misht* seems close to the original pronunciation). There was some sort of trail. (About 1876 the "Pemberton Trail" was built by this route, reaching the present harbor of Vancouver by way of Seymour creek, but never being used for its main purpose of bringing cattle to the coast).

Downie's field notes are distinctly different to those prepared afterwards. Periods or capitals rarely mark end or beginning of sentences.

On Sept. 9 the party reached a section of Cheakamus river known now as the Stillwater.

> about noon we struck into a lagoon, or a large tract of overflowed land, the Indians say this was overflowed three years ago we found the cause of it as we came along, a Lake has broken away in the mountains, and swept away ridge, after ridge, covering a whole forest of timber, with rocks and sand for a space of 6 or 7 square miles, changed the course of the river, and not left a stump to be seen, where the tall timber stood three years ago, our trail over this was about two and a half miles, we would like to go up and have a look at the sides of the mountains where they were cut away, but we have no time as our provisions are getting low, and we dont know where we are going, camped at a small stream near the land slide,

No trace has been found of this former lake in Rubble creek valley below the lofty lava barrier which dams the upper valley and retains Garibaldi lake. In 1913 a bridge used during railway construction utilized as piers nothing but old tree trunks standing in the new channel being cut by Cheakamus river. Forest growth has now hidden most of the devastated area.

The explorers made their way through Cheakamus canyon, and approached an Indian village near the fork of Cheakamus and Squamish rivers. Downie's report gives

a less spirited description than his book. Apart from a few touches which suggest Mr. Chris Waage's editing, the book account is probably authentic, and the squaw incident rings true. Where marked tendency to romancing appears in the book it always smacks of the "littérateur of some note," not notably of Downie. With a man who is not a facile writer it would be expected that a second account would bring out things omitted from the first, which, after all, did not profess to record more than he thought would interest or impress the governor.

> We got a right royal reception when we approached the first Indian village. The whole population came out to meet us, but the welcome was sent per musket ball, and we did not care for it. Some of the braves mounted a pile of wood and continued pointing their guns at us, but I realized that the first sign of fear would mean death to us and told McKay so. (P. 206).
>
> Linked arm in arm, we marched bravely forward, and when we reached the base of the stack of wood, we held out our hands for them to help us up, which they did in a mechanical sort of way, apparently taken aback by our cool demeanor.
>
> My eye caught sight of one old dame, who carried a long bag, apparently containing lumps of something. My curiosity was aroused, and, thinking that it was gold, I made up my mind to lay siege to the goodwill of the ancient beauty; but I entirely lost my ambition in that direction, when I saw her opening the bag a few minutes later and take from it a number of musket balls, which she distributed among the young braves, that they might make holes in us . . .
>
> After awhile, we succeeded in making friends with the Indians, who were known as the "Unamish," [Squamish] and were considered a treacherous tribe.(2)

Downie's report continues:

> McKay got a canoe in exchange for a musket and we embarked in our frail leaky concern eleven of us the water coming in pretty fast made us feel rather uncomfortable when we came to the rapids

The report tells how they paid the same price for another canoe, but the book says they took the canoe and left a musket. The owner overtook them and had to be

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(2) Saturday 11th . . . came upon two Indians in a canoe who jumped on shore and grabbed their muskets upon seeing us we got them to come over to us and they carried our packs in the canoe down to a point where we had a mess of Salmon they told us it was two miles to the village so we started for it on nearing the village fired a couple of shots, and we could see that this created quite a consternation as they came running out shouting and cutting up all sorts of capers raming the balls down in their muskets & they got up on a log to stop our going further but we marched along, taking little heed of them up to the village, took of our packs and rested selves untill they got over their powwowing

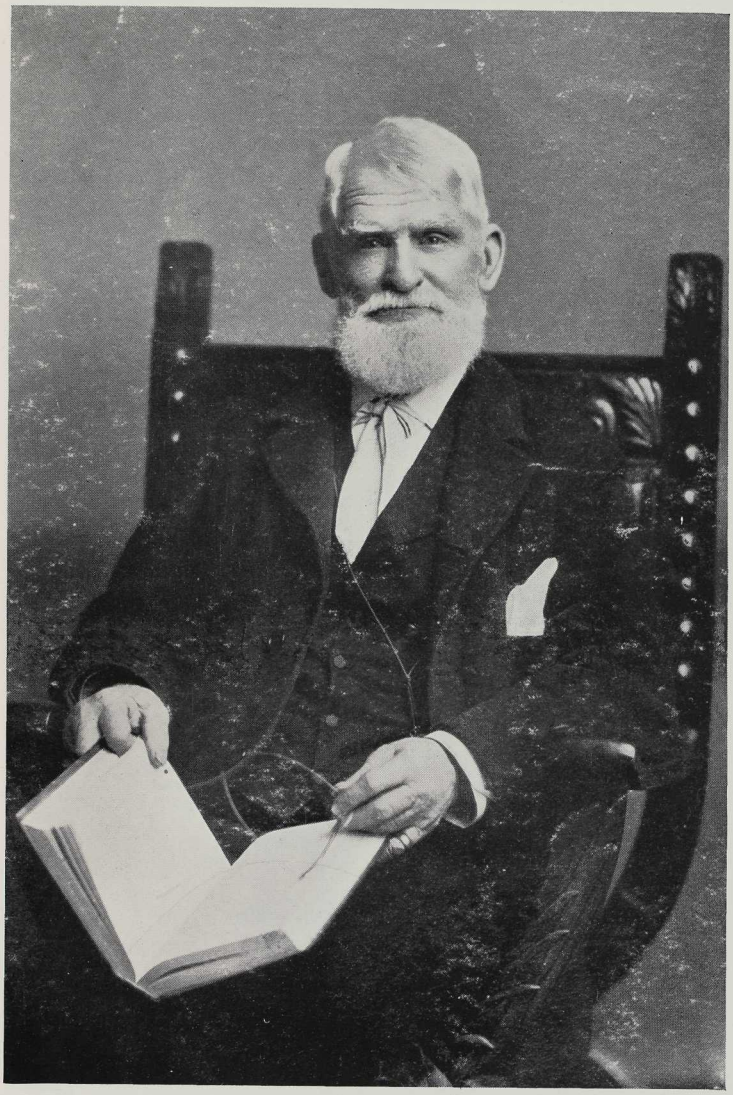

Photo courtesy of *B.C. Provincial Archives*

WILLIAM DOWNIE
in his later years

C.P.R.
G.N.R.

appeased. Downie admits " I did not relish our navigation very much." Presents had to be given at villages, and the villagers "had a disagreeably insinuating way of hanging over the gunwale of our canoe with big bowie knives in their hands . . . on the occasion of my first introduction to these people, their manner of approaching strangers offended my sensibilities."

Within a few years the power and pride of the coastal tribes was to be broken by smallpox and other epidemics introduced by the white men; some tribes no longer had a separate existence. But at the time Downie came down "Le Quamish" river, the fact of Governor Douglas' rule having been extended to include the mainland had not been impressed on the Indians.

Downie's report records:

> passed another Indian village gave them some tobaco and passed on here they had their muskets out ramming the balls down, as if they were going to blow us out of the water

On reaching Howe sound, as they were anxious to get down without being troubled by the Indians, they started about midnight. At the mouth of the Sound they met a sailing vessel, and a marginal note observes "Where we have been treated Gentelmanly by Capt Stewart Dr. Benson and Mr. Horne."[3] Next day they sailed for Nanaimo, from which Hudson's Bay Company post Downie a little later outfitted for his Jervis inlet explorations.

Downie says it was Governor Douglas' idea that a road might be possible from Jervis inlet (p. 209). The fact that Adam G. Horne accompanied him seems to imply that the Hudson's Bay Company shared the Governor's interest. Downie left Nanaimo on Oct. 11. Part of the intervening time had been spent in a visit to "Gold Island," the westerly one of the Thormanby islands, where a few specks of gold had been found.

> the Le Sheathe Indians used to live here untill about three years ago the Simpsons [Tsimpsean, Tsimshian] came upon them one night and cut off forty seven of there number since that time the island is abandoned by them . . . But as we proceed eastward up Jarvis [Jervis] inlet the granate is passed

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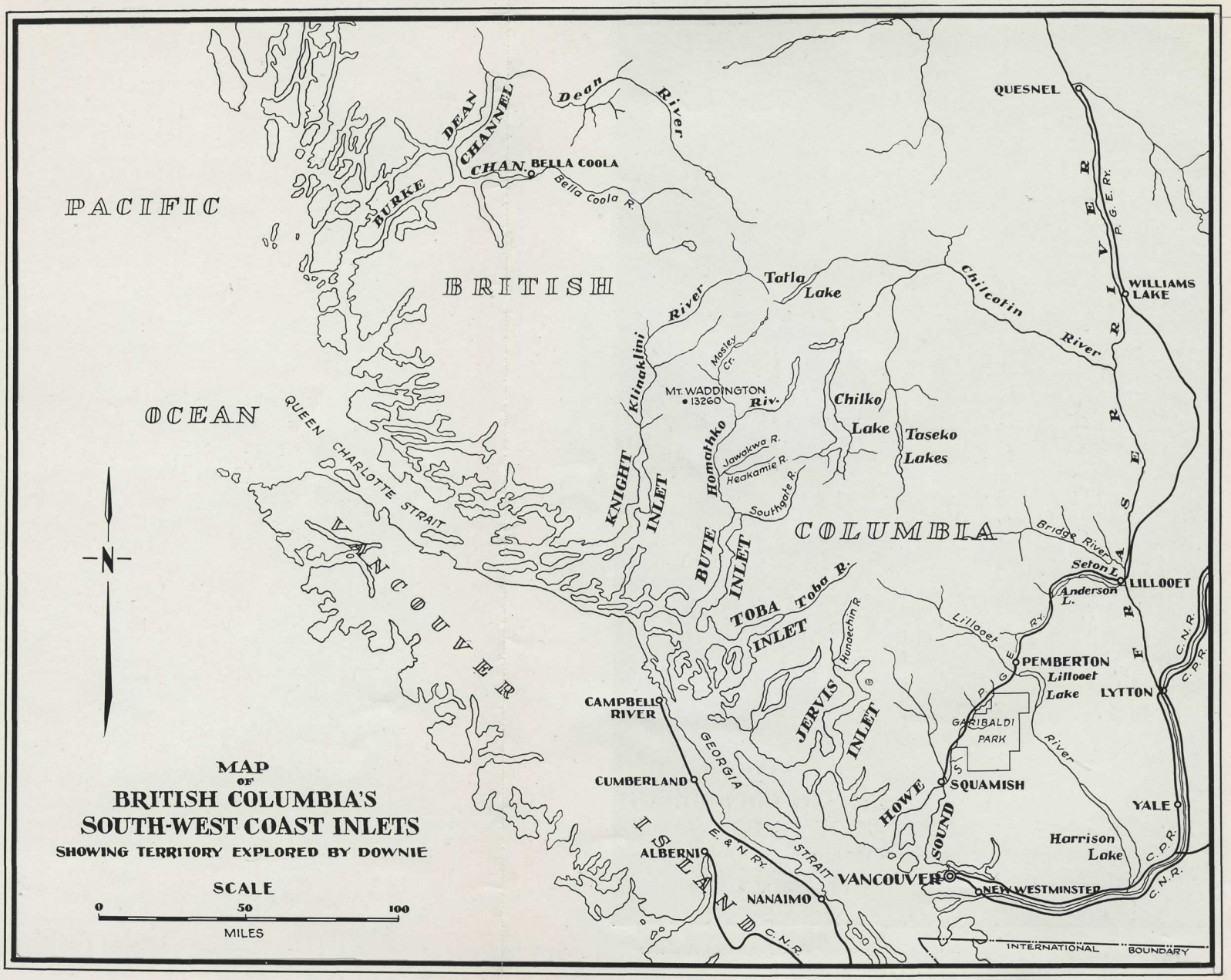
[3] Capt. Chas. E. Stuart, at this time in charge of the H. B. Co. post at Nanaimo; Alfred R. Benson, M.D., in the service of the H. B. Co. 1857-62; Adam G. Horne, also in the Company's service at Nanaimo, and said to be the first white man to cross Vancouver island by way of Horne lake.


PACIFIC
OCEAN
BRITISH
COLUMBIA
QUEEN CHARLOTTE STRAIT
VANCOUVER ISLAND
DEAN CHANNEL
BURKE CHAN.
BELLA COOLA
Bella Coola R.
Dean River
Klinaklini River
Mosley Cr.
Mt. WADDINGTON • 13260
Riv.
Homathko
Jawakwa R.
Heakamie R.
Southgate R.
KNIGHT INLET
BUTE INLET
TOBA INLET
Toba R.
Hunaechin R.
JERVIS INLET
Tatla Lake
Chilko Lake
Taseko Lakes
Chilcotin River
QUESNEL
WILLIAMS LAKE
P. G. E. RY.
FRASER RIVER
Bridgs River
Seton L.
Anderson L.
LILLOOET
Lillooet R.
PEMBERTON
Lillooet Lake
LYTTON
C.N.R.
C.P.R.
GARIBALDI PARK
River
SQUAMISH
YALE
Harrison Lake
HOWE SOUND
GEORGIA STRAIT
CAMPBELL RIVER
CUMBERLAND
ALBERNI
E. & N. Ry.
NANAIMO
VANCOUVER
NEW WESTMINSTER
INTERNATIONAL BOUNDARY
N
MAP OF BRITISH COLUMBIA'S SOUTH-WEST COAST INLETS
SHOWING TERRITORY EXPLORED BY DOWNIE
SCALE
0 50 100
MILES

and then comes in slate of every description on edge (which is the way it ought to lay in a gold country) forming mountains that rises perpendicular from the waters edge[4]

I do not expect to find much mineral of any description until I get away eastward beyond this coast range of mountains, glaciers, and barren rocks . . . I will here make mention of a little incident with regard to the Indian name of this inlet that is Le Sheath Le is great in English and Sheath is road so here we have the Indian name, *great road* pointing us to this Inlet as the great highway into the interior of British Columbia taking courage at this little coincidence we are inspired with new hope to push forward with vigor, and do what we can to get a road.

Arrived at the Indian village [at the head of the inlet] we were welcomed by the Indians all of them coming out shaking hands with us and crossing themselves this I looked upon as quiet an improvement, upon taking aim at us with there muskets they are poor here being poorly clad

Friday 15th we left the Indian village with nine Indians all packed with provisions Mr. Horne intends sending them all back except the guides when we cross Le Quamish as we intend to cashe some of the provisions the trail we have come along this afternoon is very good . . . we have come about eight miles this afternoon . . . we can see a glacier South East of where we are camped distant about ten miles this I know to be part of the glaciers laying between where we are now and the Le Quamish

Saturday 16th the guides have taken us across and recross the river 15 times this forenoon it is evident they wish to turn back and they think to discourage us by taking us across Streams and through Swamps where there is no necessity for us to go, as there is a good road all along the right hand bank of the river [Hunaechin]

We have not come over eight or nine miles to day the guides sitting down sometimes, not willing to go ahead, they are all the time telling about the snow that we have to cross . . . the mountains here is high on either side, I would say not less than four thousand feet . . . we still keep going about N East and the Indians say we are past one mountain

Sabath 17th we have not come far to day, in fact under any other circumstances we would not have moved to day the trail has been rough, the bushes bad the Indian guides sat down and would not move for Mr Horne I am afraid we will have trouble to get them along

It has commenced to rain and it is snowing on the mountains

The 18th was too wet to move camp. Downie believed that one ridge separated them from "Le Quamish," and "that will be over the roughest of the coast range of mountains." A. T. Dalton's article in this issue of the

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[4] Where gold bearing streams flow across such tilted stratified rocks, natural riffles are formed to collect the gold. But rivers originating in the severely glaciated Coast mountains failed to yield much gold.

Canadian Alpine Journal describes the region Downie travelled.

> Tuesday 19th at half past one oclock this morning the water came pouring down in torrents driving us out of our tent so that we had to look sharp and save our provisions from being swept away this is a little the hardest looking sight I have seen for some time

The Indians said they did not want to die in the snow; and in the opinion of the white men high water in the streams began to endanger retreat.

> Now is the time to see water falls from the cliffs that almost hangs over head, we might enjoy the scenery if it was fine weather as it is our ideas are not of the sublimest about this time and here we have a rushing Stream to cross that cools us pretty well and takes the romantic notions out of our head for the time being in crossing the Indians takes the packs and we stretch a rope over so that we can hold on with our hands when we lose our foothold.

Possibly another version of this trip appears in the book (p. 235).[5] Downie was back in Jervis inlet in February, 1859, but his report, March 19, seems to imply that he did not go inland because "The snow and rain set in, so as to make it impossible to start over the mountains."

> In March, 1859, I made my first inspection of Desolation Sound, situated about sixty miles west of Jarvis Inlet. This time I was

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[5]P. 235. At the entrance to the inlet we met several Bridge River Indians, and with them for our guides, penetrated to the head, and after two days' hard journeying we found ourselves in a canyon entirely closed in by steep mountains. Never in my life have I beheld such a scene as presented itself to our wondering gaze in this solitude. We were completely shut in by this wild nature. On either hand, lofty mountains reared their precipitous sides far above us, pointing to the leaden overcast sky, and looking like threatening giants guarding the entrance to some land of mystery. Not a vestige of vegetation, not a branch on the bare, solemn-looking rocks as they cast their gloomy shadow over the ravine below, making us feel like prisoners behind barred and bolted gates. Ahead of us lay a field of unsurmountable glaciers, forming a barrier to any further progress, and giving to the situation additional awe and grandeur . . . It has always appeared to me in this solemn situation as if I stood face to face with the angry Jehovah, who stretched forth his hand to remind human beings of their utter insignificance . . .

When I asked the Indians how they proposed for us to proceed any further, they said we would have to ascend the glaciers in the best way we could, and pull one another up by ropes. "And the wagons—?" I asked. "Pull them up after you!" came the reply . . . We camped here for the night, and spent a wretched time waiting for dawn to break . . . Our traps—even our provisions—were carried away, and we had to stand up most of the night holding on to our blankets and utensils, for fear of seeing them carried away by the waters and the violent gusts of wind that came down upon us.

> the only white man in the company and was accompanied by a party of Indians [four] . . . We penetrated to the head of this water [Toba Inlet], and then proceeded to ascend the river which has its mouth here. The land on either side of this stream we found to be low, sandy and overflowed, but some distance from the mouth the mountains begin to rise to considerable altitudes. It was not possible to proceed with the canoe more than four or five miles from the Inlet, and we reconnoitred the land on foot . . .[6] but the ridge on the western side could only be traversed by goats and bears, of which there seemed to be a great many. The bears came tearing down the mountainsides to welcome us, but we did not stop to shake hands, preferring to wave them adieu from the canoe. I thought it possible to penetrate from here to Bridge River, but the Indians told me it would take at least a month to reach a group of small lakes where that stream takes its rise. (p. 237)

Downie's report seems to gloss over what may well have been his chief reason for leaving the Homathko river at the head of Bute inlet unexplored at this time.

> This river looks most favorable for gold, and I should have liked to prospect it; but the Indians would not go, as they were afraid of the Euclitus tribes; the principal reason, however, being that the canoe was small, and we were not prepared to give it a fair trial. It was snowing most of the time and most discouraging.

Canadian Pacific Railway surveyors in 1874 relied on the presence of a warship to overawe the Bute inlet Indians.

Downie went on to Loughborough inlet which was uninhabited at this time of year. He describes it briefly, emphasizing its "appearance of utter desolation and loneliness."

Although the report closes with a reference to supplies sent by the Governor for him at Jervis inlet, presumably for the new attempt mentioned in the Governor's letter (quoted already in this article) there seems to be no record of a third visit, unless the quotation from p. 235 is one.

Downie (p. 240) refers to two trips up Knight inlet where he "saw plenty of upland Indians, who came down

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[6] The Indians told me it would take five days to the head of it . . . The Indians have gone this route to the land of Bridge River (Heystier), which it may be the best route to try. It is very evident there is a pass in the Coast Range here. (Downie's report, "Explorations in Jarvis Inlet and Desolation Sound, British Columbia." By William Downie. Communicated by Sir Edward Bulwer Lytton, Bat., Secretary for Colonies. *Geographical Journal*, 1861, xxi, p. 249). This pass is almost forgotten now.

here to trade for grease [oolachan oil, still produced in some quantities at the mouth of Kliniklini river] . . . The natives with whom I came in contact, gave me some information about the interior. They said it took one month and a half to travel to their country." One trip was a trading venture. Indians at Tsawadi village proved friendly, but visiting Indians so aggressive that goods were hurriedly loaded and the schooner sailed away. Traders were often attacked and their vessels sometimes captured in these times. Downie gives a spirited account of the incident.

Bella Coola, Dean (or Salmon), Kitlope, and Kitimat rivers were visited, and finally, after a disappointing search for gold on Queen Charlotte islands, he went up Skeena river.[7] where he recorded on a tree "I claim this Pass for the Overland Railway." The government paid expenses of this trip.

Although Downie wintered in the Cariboo and did a bit of mining, the Coast mountains seem to have held him still in their strange spell, and the spring of 1861 finds him back at the coast.

Downie's Bute inlet explorations in 1861 lacked any direct governmental support.

> In order to ascertain whether a projected railroad might be brought to Bute Inlet, to be there connected with Vancouver Island, a meeting was held in the early part of '61 at the old government building [in Victoria] . . . I also recollect seeing Lady Franklin there . . . Among others . . . were Dr. Helmcken, a Mr. Burnaby, and Alfred Waddington . . . I strenuously opposed the idea of paying anybody in advance. I suggested that parties willing to explore the country might do so at their own cost, and if they returned with bona fide reports, they should be remunerated for their trouble, whether successful or not.

Possibly this was meant to discourage rivals less able to finance expeditions. Harry Harlan and Alexander

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[7] (P. 244). Myself and two companions were in reality the first white men who crossed from the coast to the Fraser River, but Mr. Alfred Waddington, who was jealous of my successful explorations of that part of British Columbia, took pains on several occasions to ignore the fact that I was the one who led the first expedition.

McDonald (or Macdonald)[8] had a small schooner outfitted to go elsewhere, but Downie won them over.

> For this purpose I with my partners fitted out a small Schooner, and sailed from Victoria on the 26th June last taking with us plenty to pay the Indians, so that no failure to the expedition might arise on that account.[9]
>
> On the 3d July we arrived at the head of Bute Inlet which is distant from Victoria about 225 miles . . . At the head of the Inlet on the West side and close inshore there is a sandy bottom in 20 fathoms water and good shelter from the Southwest winds blowing up the Inlet.[10]
>
> There are three Rivers which fall into the head of the Inlet, one from the East, one from the North, and one from the West, the latter being the largest and the one by which the Interior Indians [Chilcotin] come for Salmon.
>
> I determined to proceed up this one [Homathko] first and accordingly made arrangements with the Indians to go with us, making them presents to keep them all right, until we got a fair Start. I may say that they are as hard a Lot of Indians to get along with as I have seen on the Coast, and it required all my tact to get them to go up the River at all. I used them well before starting and gave them all papers for a Blanket each and sundries when we came back.

Naval support for Canadian Pacific Railway surveyors in 1874 has already been mentioned.

> Mr. McDonald and I with 8 Indians in 3 Canoes started up the River Homathco on 7th July taking along with us plenty of provisions &c to supply us in going over the Mountains. This River runs through low sandy flats thickly timbered . . . The River runs [from the] North West winding in its course.
>
> The first day we passed two Glaciers on the East side of the River, the snow lying all along the face of the Mountains on the West side. A large Mountain on the East presents a Mineral appearance. I followed a reddish vein until I got it low down, in hopes that it might contain Mineral but without success.

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(8) Downie terms McDonald "one of the best of friends, and one of the most generous of men." McDonald's pack-train with supplies for the Waddington trail was ambushed by Chilcotin Indians in 1864. Accounts of McDonald's last stand differ, but agree that he fought to the end.

"Although I did not succeed at the time in crossing the range personally, our experiences there had much to do with the later success of Aleck McDonald, who indeed was the first white man to perform the feat of traversing the mountains at the head of Bute Inlet." (p. 252).

(9) Downie to Douglas, Aug. 17, 1861, Provincial Archives.

(10) Waddington's map, dated Jan. 31, 1864 (in Provincial Archives), shows "Downie's claim" shrewdly located on the shore beside this anchorage, the only safe one at the head of the inlet. Without mentioning this, Downie says (p. 265) "Had I wished to get into the pay of the speculators, I could have made enough money on Bute Inlet to amply repay me for my outlay and hardships endured, but all I wished to do was to make a fair and unbiased report of what I saw and learned."

The River became swift in its course the second day so that we had to use poles—from all appearance it is a hard River to get up.[11]

The Canoe I was in whilst passing round the end of a long tree struck a strong current, the Indians could not keep her head to the Stream, and it came down broadside on, and went crashing under [the fallen tree—"a sweeper"—projecting from the shore].

Canoe, Indians, and all I had in it disappeared in the twinkling of an eye, as I saw the Canoe fill I picked up my pistol belt and got hold of a log, as the Indians came to the surface, they struck out for the shore. I felt thankful for my safety. Mr. McDonald as soon as he saw that we were all right and out of danger started down stream after the floating wreck, and succeeded in recovering several articles. As for the Indians they stood trembling on the shore, without even once making an effort to save anything.[12]

As I had the most of what was valuable in my canoe, our loss was a considerable item under the present circumstances. Mr. McDonald picked up the Canoe about Two Miles below where the accident occurred and hauled it on shore, and although pretty well broke up, we fixed it so as to be in order to proceed onward.

The Indians were unwilling to go any farther after the disaster, so that we had no other alternative but to buy a Canoe and go on without them as we were determined to hold on to a Canoe whether the Indians went or not, having no idea of turning back till we satisfied ourselves that we could go no further. I succeeded after a good deal of talk in getting a Canoe in Exchange for Blankets and Shirts. We sent down to the Schooner for a fresh supply of what things we lost and made another start, this time we had only one Canoe and two Indians.

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[11]"Up the Homalka at Whirpool Corner there was another ranch owned by the Hickleton boys. They left; and my brother and I were detailed to get their stuff out by canoe. That was a job, the place was over-run by grizzly bears and skunks. We had some close calls with both and almost lost the canoe and goods on one of the trips (of which we made three) for the large sum of $7.50, which was big money in those days [1893-1897]." (Dennis G. Walker, Ocean Falls, B. C.).

"Driftwood in the river now threatened the canoe frequently. In the log-jams we noted many fragments of boats and rafts, for many hunters, prospectors and timber cruisers had lost outfits in the Homathko river; one party arrived at the river mouth on foot in their bare feet." ("Explorations in the Coast Range," *C.A.J.*, 1926, p. 126).

[12]P. 253. "I was heading the procession with two natives . . . she turned first broadside, and then bottom up. In one moment we were all in the water. I saw what was coming and warned my companions, but they did not heed in time. I caught my pistol belt and clambered on to a drift log which took me down the stream toward the other canoes, but for some time I looked in vain for the other Indians. It did not take me long to meet McDonald and his crew, who picked me up, and by this time my late companions had reached the shore, where they stood shivering after their cold bath, while we went in pursuit of the escaping canoe, and soon overtook it."

From here on, both book and report confuse the total number of the party, which was almost certainly four. (p. 254 . . . "with only two Indians for my companions, one of whom was a chief").

> Camped near the mouth of a very swift running stream [Heakamie creek] which flows from the Eastward, where there appears to be a pass through the Mountains. The name of this stream is called by the Indians "Hickhanum" this being the name of the Indians on the East side of the Mountains in the Valley.

The valley on the east side of the mountains?

> I thought it was very probable we could get through there and as the Indian Chief I had with me told me I could see the good land on the other side in one day, I took him along, knowing that if he could go in one day we could.
>
> Started for the low pass in the Mountain lying East, we followed the stream through wooded and boulder flats, until we came to a narrow chasm where a muddy torrent rushed forth at a fearful rate with a deafening noise.(13)
>
> By the color of the water I knew we were in the vicinity of a Glacier, scrambling up the Rocks forming the chasm we saw the Glacier sure enough, lying between two Mountains rising abruptly on either side of it. Descending the rocks forming this Chasm to a boulder flat one mile brought us to the foot of the Glacier. This is the first Glacier I have seen that comes down to level Ground, in width it might have measured one and a half miles, whilst it extended in length as far as the eye could reach to the Eastward.(14)
>
> It was something grand to ascend to the face of this enormous mass of ice and mark the verigated [sic] hues of transparent blue in the crevices where the sun was making inroads by its beams in softening this ice bound mass. In vain does old Sol send forth his powerful rays of sunshine and warmth, fast locked in perpetual ice no ray of sunshine can ever lighten these dark caverns, hollowed out underneath by the continual driping [sic] of water. As if designed for the greatest contrast in nature the tiny little swallows which I had not before observed are numerous around the face of this wonderful Glacier.
>
> The Indian Chief now looked blank when I asked him where the trail was. He said this was a bad time to cross as we could not travel on the Glacier owing to the crevices caused by the sun shining on it, but in the winter it was good travelling over the Glacier. I had no doubt of that myself.
>
> We thought it might be possible to get through this Glacier Gorge by keeping alongside of it as there appeared to be a small bench close under the Mountain. We went on over a

---

(13) "The journey was a dangerous one, and we made slow progress through woodland, and flats covered with rocky bowlders." (p. 256).

(14) "Ice river, for example, issues from a glacier only two miles from the main valley [Homathko] and only 300 to 400 feet above sea level (See Plate 7)." *Water Powers of British Columbia*, Commission of Conservation, 1919.

Photo A. R. Munday

A glimpse of Heakamie glacier from Homathko river at a point north of the mouth of Heakamie creek. Mt. Teaquahan at right.

Photo A. R. Munday

Downie left his canoe near this point and continued up the Homathko river on foot.

Photo courtesy of J. R. Farrow, Water Rights Branch

Aerial view of Toba river area, looking east, showing fork of Filer creek (by wing strut). Little Toba river is first valley on right. The pass Downie heard of is up one of the more distant valleys on right (true left of river). It must have been down one of these valleys that Stanley Smith came in 1893. (See *Stanley Smith's Travels in the Coast Mountains, C.A.J., 1941.*)

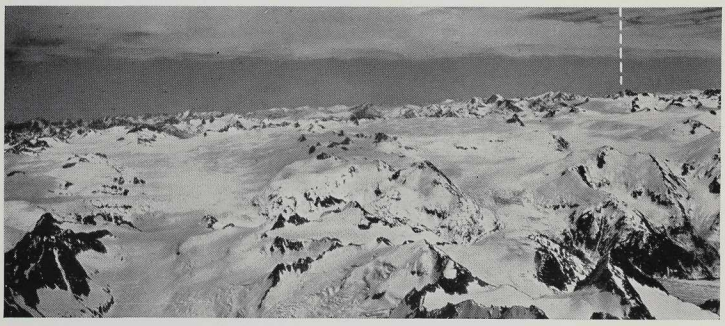

Photo courtesy of J. R. Farrow, Water Rights Branch

Aerial view, from over 12,000 feet, of part of Homathko snowfield, taken from a point above Homathko river near mouth of Waddington canyon.

> Boulder hillside, picking our steps and keeping a sharp look out as we stepped from rock to rock, catching hold of a friendly twig to steady us from being precipitated down along side of the Glacier, in which event there would have been little chance of our ever getting out of those dark granite slimy caverns underneath.
>
> We went as far as Man could go alongside of the Glacier, and climbed the Mountain to ascertain whether or not we could see the other side of it. Nothing however could be seen but a continuation of Snow. We judged that we could discern ten miles of this Glacier on the West side of the Mountain. How far it might have extended to the Eastward it was impossible to say.

The corresponding passages in the book do not differ substantially. The height they climbed remains unknown, though several thousand feet might be inferred from the description, "We could see nothing but snow-fields as far as the eye could reach and the horizon itself seemed shut in by ice and snow."

> We considered we had done our best duty and retraced our way back to camp, loaded our Canoe and started up the Main River.

Downie's report oddly omits mention of Jewakwa valley which opens to the same great boulder flat as Heakamie (Downie's Hickhanum), and contains one or more large glaciers likewise draining from the vast Homathko snowfield which Downie had just discovered and had seen in part. (For descriptions of the Homathko snowfield see " Peaks of Bute Inlet," by Tom Fyles, *C.A.J.*, 1930, and " Beyond Bute Inlet," by the writer in this issue of the *C.A.J.*). Downie's book contains a passage which fits neatly enough as describing a trip up Jewakwa creek but mentions no glacier.[15]

The report continues:

> Our progress was slow as the River [Homathko] was swift besides having to cut our way through drift timber. We got up to a River coming in to the Main River from a Westerly direction.

---

[15] "We had not proceeded very far when we came upon another river, falling into the Homathco, and for the second time we left the latter, travelling up an auxiliary, coming from the east. We had hard work journeying up this stream, which ran with great force. We had to make a portage at one place, while at others we were obliged to tow the canoe up the stream, making fast the line round a bush every now and again, while we cut our way along the bank. It was one of the most trying journeys I ever undertook, which is saying a good deal." (p. 256). In spite of the definite opening sentence I am not quite sure, considering frequent signs of geographical ignorance throughout the book on the part of the editor, Waage, that this passage is not a paraphrase of Downie's account of the trip up the Homathko.

> This River like the one on the East rises in a Glacier. We had hard work now in getting the Canoe along, towing with a line and cutting away timber, got up to where another River comes in from the West side.

This is the torrent from Whitemantle glacier. My 1926 party abandoned canoe travel below this point. The elbow of the river beyond this is almost a rapid.

> Here we had to make a portage as it was impossible to get along with our Canoe loaded. Packed our stuff about half a mile, hauled the Canoe up and loaded again, got out the tow line, having at intervals to pass it around bushes and timber, with a determination to go to the head of the river if possible.
>
> Our Indian began to get sick and commenced crying and wanted to turn back, but as we could not go on without his assistance in working the Canoe, we would not permit him to return. 17th July 1861.
>
> We were now most of the time in the water, pulling the Canoe along and cutting away masses of drift timber. Got up to the mouth of another stream coming in on the west side, went up a short distance to ascertain how it looked. Discovered a very rough Canon which takes its rise in a group of snowy Mountains. [Scar creek and Whitemantle range].
>
> Started ahead hauling the Canoe along, came to a bad place for whirls and riffles. The Indian now seemed overjoyed as he supposed we could turn back now . . . The Indian when he saw us getting rollers, and cutting a trail for the conveyance of the Canoe began to look chop fallen indeed.
>
> 20th July 1861. Found it was impossible to proceed farther with the Canoe and came near loosing it again. Mr. McDonald and I then started on foot leaving the two Indians in Camp. Passed a large stream on the west side, where the Bella Colla Indians come down in the fall for Salmon. This River like the others rise out of the Snowy Mountains. The Indians have a trail by which they come through a rocky pass at the head of the River.[16]

Downie and McDonald followed the main river for two days—they had left the canoe not more than four miles below Waddington canyon.

> As we could not follow it any further we pronounced it impossible for any kind of road to be made this way.[17]

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[16] Now Coula creek. Downie was on the east bank of the river. Victoria newspapers at this time often used "Bella Coola" as though properly interchangeable with "Chilcotin." Language difficulties probably misled Downie so that he concluded the Chilcotins came *down* Coula creek, instead of *to* Coula creek (by way of Homathko river; the rocky pass would be Waddington canyon). Chilcotins had massacred nineteen coast Indians about seventeen years before this at Murderers bar, site of the massacre in 1864, of Waddington's road gang.

[17] (P. 256). "I thought that under more favorable circumstances it might be possible to penetrate further up, and I felt that I should like to make another attempt." Waddington had forced him to review his opinion.

> We next tried a Stream coming into the Canon about South East. We followed up this stream one day when it also run into a Canon . . . It is beyond doubt the hardest looking part of British Columbia I have yet been into.

This is Downie's creek on the Waddington map, and now Klattasine creek. (Klattasine fired the first shot in the Waddington massacre). Glaciers at its head link with the Homathko snowfield.

Having recorded their return to the schooner after sixteen days up the river, Downie twice remarks on the uselessness of trying to find a route for a road up the Homathko.

> The next river we tried is called the Teaquahan flowing into the head of the Inlet from the North.[18] The Tuachon Indians informed us it was not far from here to the Hickhanum Indian country and that we could see their land if we ascended the Mountains. We tried this River and found it as far as we went similar to what it was in the Homathco, if anything somewhat more difficult of access than the Homathco. It is here the Indians cross the Mountains at certain seasons of the year, hunting Mountain Goat, when the snow is hard and I have no doubt that we could have crossed over now but as it was impossible for a road to be made through this pass I considered our object accomplished in ascertaining this fact.

Downie records that the schooner anchored twenty-three days at the head of Bute inlet, probably a slip, as Southgate river was also explored. Downie calls it Memyza (Memria in his book) and also says they spent a month and a half on their Bute inlet explorations.

> It runs from the Eastward. I learned from the Indians that the Lock-Wallas,[19] come down here occasionally and that there is a trail from the head of this River to the Lilloet . . . This River is not so bad for some distance up, but about 20 miles from the mouth, it runs into a Canon where there are falls, above this the trail is bad and the Mountains rise abruptly.

Downie's report, dated Aug. 17, 1861, makes a covert bid for governmental payment of the party's expenses.

> This experimenting is rather unprofitable when it falls on a small company like ours, still we will dig along in hopes some day to realize our Golden dreams.

But Downie also made a bid for public support by hiring a hall and calling a meeting.

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[18] See "Peaks of Bute Inlet," *C.A.J.*, 1930.

[19] Downie was again mistaking "to which" for "down which." Lockwalla is to be regarded as one of many widely varying forms of Lokwiltah, a large coastal tribe whose name appears in another form as Yuculta or Eucletaw, the spectacular tidal rapids near the mouth of Bute inlet.

> No sooner had my hearers understood from my remarks that I could not recommend Bute Inlet, when it seems that one and all took it for granted that I was in some kind of collusion with the [New] Westminster people to squash the big land schemes of Bute Inlet . . . And then various articles were thrown across the hall, breaking sundry lamps in their route towards myself. (p. 265).

Downie made a second trip up Dean river, this time penetrating as far as Nechaco lake where he recommended the country as suitable for settlement on a large scale, and forecast a railway by this route to Fort George, now Prince George. He again mined in the Cariboo in 1862.

> It was evident that I had more luck when looking for gold than when trying to find mountain passes, for I struck it rich . . . The gold seekers as they had done in California . . . let go of a good claim to pursue a phantom—I with the rest of course . . . We pumped mud day and night . . . till my finances were completely pumped out. (p. 266).

Downie went to Naas, Stikine and other northern rivers with little success. In 1874 he went to San Francisco, then south to examine mines in Panama and Costa Rica.

As an old man, getting rather deaf, Downie sold books by subscription in Nanaimo, B.C., I am kindly informed by Robie L. Reid, K.C., of Vancouver, who adds that in 1894 Downie was taken to California to reproduce the beginnings of Downieville, but died as the ship entered San Francisco bay.

PURCHASED 10th Aug. 1942

FROM author

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