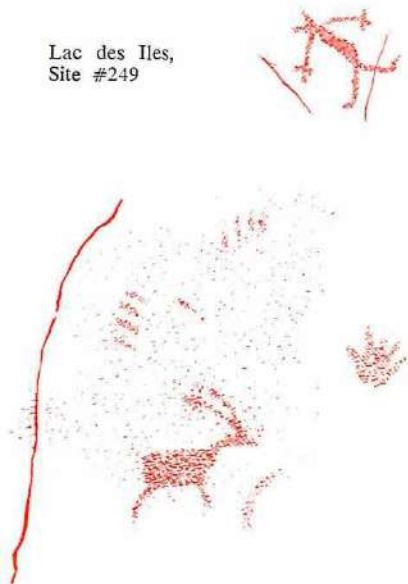


Lac des Iles,
Site #249



was Keith who finally located a man who could pin-point a site on Lac des Iles, over which I had flown once without spotting a single likely-looking rock. It turned out, when I finally recorded the site, that the rock was as effectively hidden as the second site at Darky Lake. Faint handprints and a deer-like animal were on the main face; but the figure on the left, again in the split head style, was in itself an ample recompense for the long search. Farther west, on a long irregular lake called Mooseland, is another possible site.

Between Lac des Iles and the Lake-head is Dog Lake, a source of the Kaministikwia River. On the portage from Little Dog there is a ground effigy of a dog scooped out of the soil

to a depth of a foot and a half, and roughly outlined by a six-inch high ridge of excavated earth. This, studied and recorded by Kenneth Dawson in 1962, has no counterpart I know of in the Shield country, but offers an interesting comparison with a number of effigies outlined in stone boulders in the Whiteshell district of southeast Manitoba, recorded by Richard Sutton of the Manitoba Museum. Recently Dawson has been doing an exciting dig on an island on Whitefish Lake, roughly thirty miles southwest of Fort William, to establish that the area had supported a much larger prehistoric population than had formerly been supposed.

At the east end of Whitefish Lake is a 200-foot escarpment extending halfway around a small plateau where local rumours had placed a group of petroglyphs. My hope ran high when I located a barber who claimed to have seen numerous carvings of deer and other animals while hunting on the plateau some thirty years previously. But after three attempts to find them I was ready to concede defeat. Then Jack Snider wrote to say he had located some carvings by a bush road south of the plateau, and that summer, guided by Irene Dawson, Peter and I recorded them. They were in no way similar to the barber's description, and a crudely scratched Union Jack, among other details, indicated a very recent origin.

The paintings on Pictured Lake, not far from Whitefish, have already been described (p. 75). In '66, having never been satisfied with my photographs, I persuaded Jack Snider

to come along with his camera, without an inkling of the shock I was in for. The magnificent canoe (reproduced on the title page) was just as I remembered it. But on the other face I stared in consternation at a dozen paintings *I had never seen before!*

I have only two excuses: my inexperience then, and the nature of this rock face, a curving, smoothly sculptured granite surface that sunlight threw into such strong relief that the faint paintings on a dark background simply vanished. But they became quite clear as the sun disappeared under heavy clouds and before the rain came I was able to make a careful sketch of the most distinct and interesting one, which is reproduced here.

The Nipigon Country

As early as 1958 I had found, in Harlan Smith's brief *Album of Prehistoric Canadian Art*, reproductions of drawings made by McInnes of paintings on a Cliff Lake in Kenora District. The only Cliff Lake I knew of was just off the Red Lake road, and my bafflement when I compared paintings I found there with McInnes' has already been described. It was not until I went through the geologist's field notes in Ottawa (through the courtesy of the Geological Survey of Canada) that I found the simple answer. There was another Cliff Lake, on the Mud River, north of Lake Nipigon, and this was his reference. In 1965, Chris and I drove up to Armstrong, and got a lift in to Cliff Lake on a tower-servicing flight that

allowed us three hours between drop-off and pick-up. Since McInnes had recorded only half a dozen paintings this seemed to be a reasonable time allowance.

But even as we circled for a landing I sensed that I had miscalculated. Here was a mere sliver of water eight miles long flanked on either side by one sheer cliff after another. The highest and most extensive one invited us to land beside it. Minutes later in the silence that followed the disappearing roar of the pilot's take-off we were paddling towards a dark wall of rock that loomed high on the east shore.

Almost at once I recognized one of the two animals in McInnes' drawings. But thereafter we paddled past



Bison(?), Cliff Lake

Pictured Lake
(see page 75)



ite #119

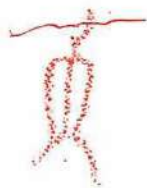
Photograph by Peter Dewdney

rock after rock that had either been smeared or had accumulated the colour of vanished forms for centuries. The latter impression was reinforced by the occasional suggestion of the edge of such a form, sometimes against a patch of red, sometimes, and equally hard to see, against the dark basaltic rock. We fell to work feverishly at tracing and photographing the more discernible ones. In an hour we had run out of tracing paper. An hour later we had used up most of our film, but saved

our last exposures in case the promise of another site on the west side was fulfilled. It was. And just as we heard the first distant hum of our approaching aircraft we were looking over a third site we had found on re-crossing to the east side. And so, as Cliff Lake sank into the misty horizon behind us, I found myself repeating a famous phrase "I will return!"

The following year, with Ken and Irene Dawson's son Dane as an assistant, I did return. It had puzzled me to have found only one of McInnes'

Face IIb, #264



Face Ia, #264



Site #262

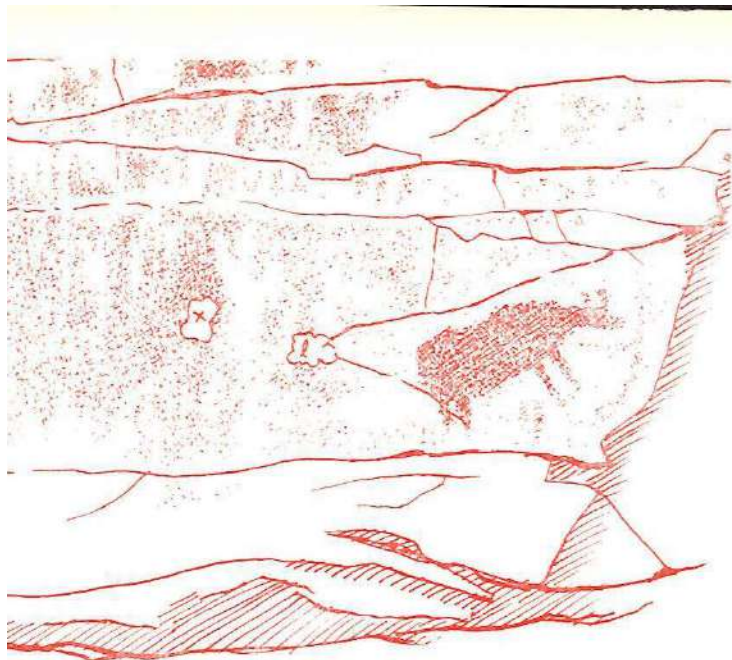
drawings on the previous visit, but the answer was clear when we landed at the foot of a big cliff—one of the few outcrops of granite on the lake. Here were McInnes' feathered human figure, thunderbird, and canoes. But apparently he had ignored, as he had left out similarly enigmatic material on other sites, the peculiar abstractions illustrated here. Nowhere had I seen such contrasting styles within a small group, their separate origins emphasized by the distinct variations of pigment. The dreamlike "legs-that-walk-by-themselves" and associated symbols in a bright orange ochre emphatically differed from the "lone Indian" in a dull ochre so impure that it could only be described as a dirty brown; and whereas the former was painted with coarse, finger-width lines, the latter showed detail, as in the fingers of one hand, so fine that at first they escaped my notice. The "double-cross" painted over the canoe also differed in colour, and the canoe was painted in a fourth hue of the ochre basic to all. This overlapping and the obscuring lime deposit over the human figure both offered evidence of considerable age, although here there was none of the patination (or smearing) so typical of the main site farther down the lake. Yet weathering had taken its toll, too, on other paintings nearby, particularly the figure barely recognizable as human with its unusual centre line. The three "horse-shoes" by contrast seemed strong and presumably recent.

Dane and I had come prepared to stay overnight, but unprepared for the procession of thunderstorms that passed overhead until the first grey of

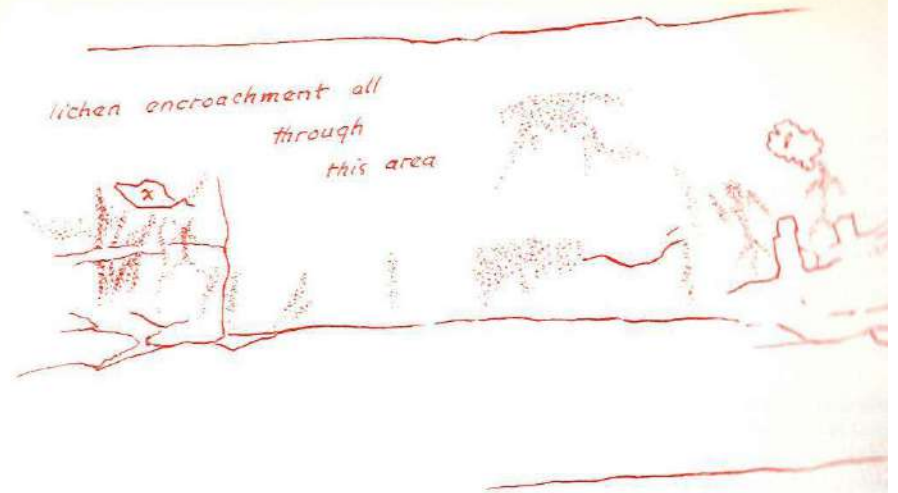
dawn, with lightning so continuous that we could almost have worked by it. We rose early and got back to the rock, not knowing how many more paintings we would encounter before our pick-up in the afternoon. As it turned out we found two more sites that day, to bring the total up to six in a concentration of petrographs that is only exceeded by the Hickson-Maribelli sites north of the Churchill River in Saskatchewan, and by the Bon Echo sites on Lake Mazinaw in southeast Ontario.

By far the largest number of paintings was along the thousand feet of rock wall which, we learned, Chris and I had not thoroughly covered the year before. There were three main groups, designated III, IV, and VIII,





Face III.
Site #219



lichen encroachment all
through
this area

Site

the first and last on a dark trap-like rock which made the fainter details so difficult to distinguish even with the naked eye that tracings were impossible, sketching tedious and confusing, and even the colour photographs—as I was to learn when I had them developed—inadequate. Both III and VIII were smoothed by glaciation,

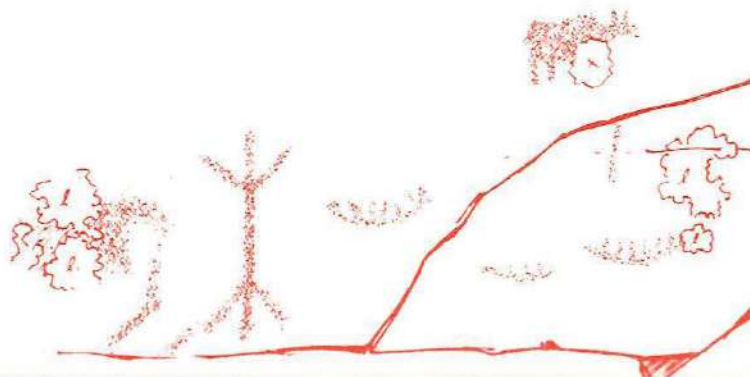
but the former face seemed to have been grooved *vertically* by glacial action, which I still regard as impossible. With so little contrast we came back to work on it after the sun came out, only to find (as a few days later at Pictured Lake) that it threw the glacial grooving into relief and made the paintings almost invisible. Only

McInnes' animal stands out on Face III; the vertical pattern that shows in the reproduction is due to streaking from lime deposits.

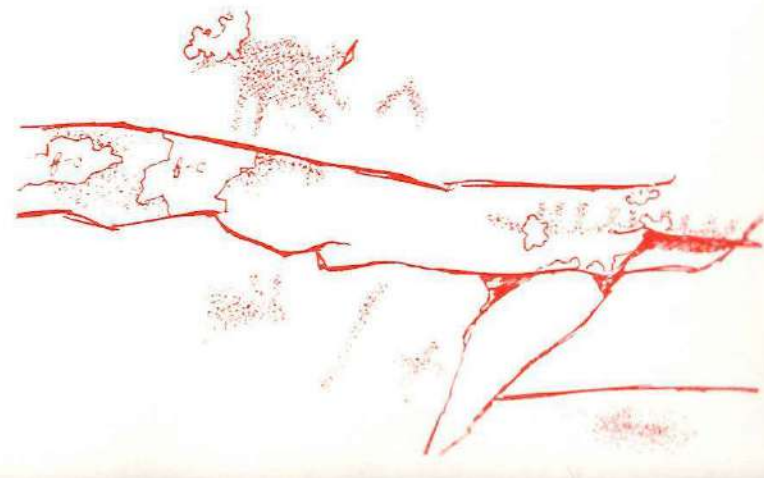
The left portion of Face IV illustrated here is on granitic rock, with some paintings so badly weathered that I have not attempted to include

them. Face VIII was the most frustrating one on the lake to record, and of the confusion to the left I can only say that I erred on the side of clarity! None of the figures that *can* be distinguished vary from the regional style: there are abstracted human figures, the usual canoes, and some

site #219,
Face IV



Site #219,
Face IV



vague abstractions of which two or three might originally have represented animals. The animal reproduced from Face VIII is much fainter in the original. If, as I think, the long tail and great hump indicate a bison, a locale that is a week's canoe journey to the nearest grass country is an extraordinary place to find one.

Little more than the lichen-obscured sauromorph and vague animal shown on this page appear on the other east shore site. On the opposite side of the lake the second site, counting from the south end, is also small, displaying only the figure illustrated and a few vague abstractions. The third site offers little more. The one strong painting begins with a fairly definite head, but trails off into a vagueness that fails even to achieve

the distinction of being called an enigma! And the one small but pleasing design above it to the left is partly obscured by lichen. The fourth site is more extensive, with four groups of paintings, on the last of which are the charming little drawings of an animal—likely, at this latitude, a woodland caribou—and a man. The man is very like two figures I found in Saskatchewan, both of which had a similar projection from the head that I took for a pipe. Here the alternative might be a bird's bill, though I regard this as unlikely. All else on this site is abstract and vestigial, except for the tally marks, canoe, and stick figure reproduced from Face I.

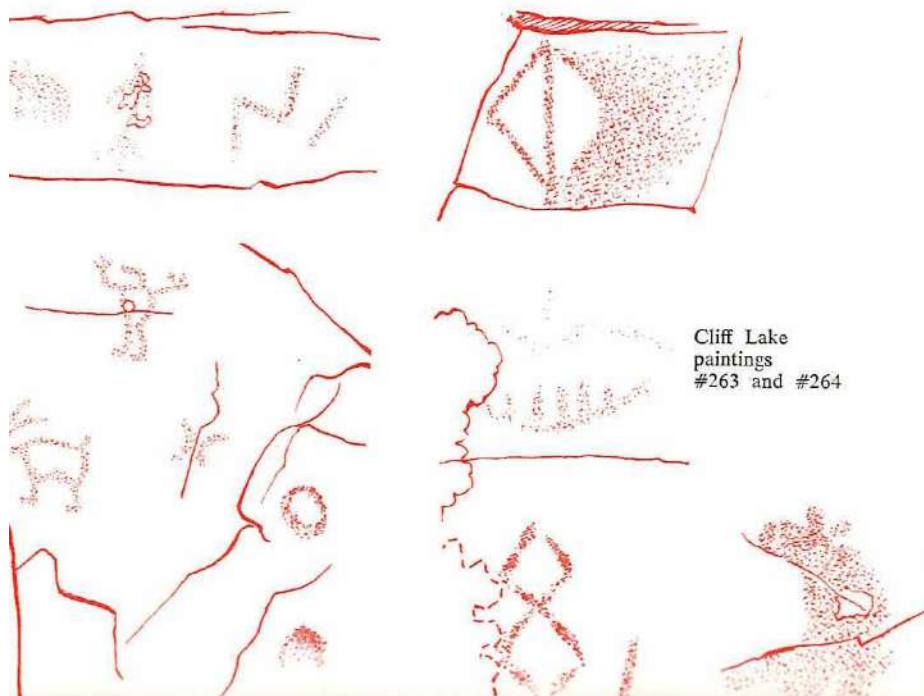
Indeed, the overriding impression of the Cliff Lake setting is one of an age-hallowed place, where paintings

were made at intervals over long periods of time. More than half of them are indecipherable and many more nearly so. But we cannot blame this on the possibility of a more easily weathered rock, for the glaciated sections have remained almost intact since the Ice Age. Perhaps the paint does not bond so well on basic rocks as compared with the acidic granite. Otherwise most of the paintings must be very old.

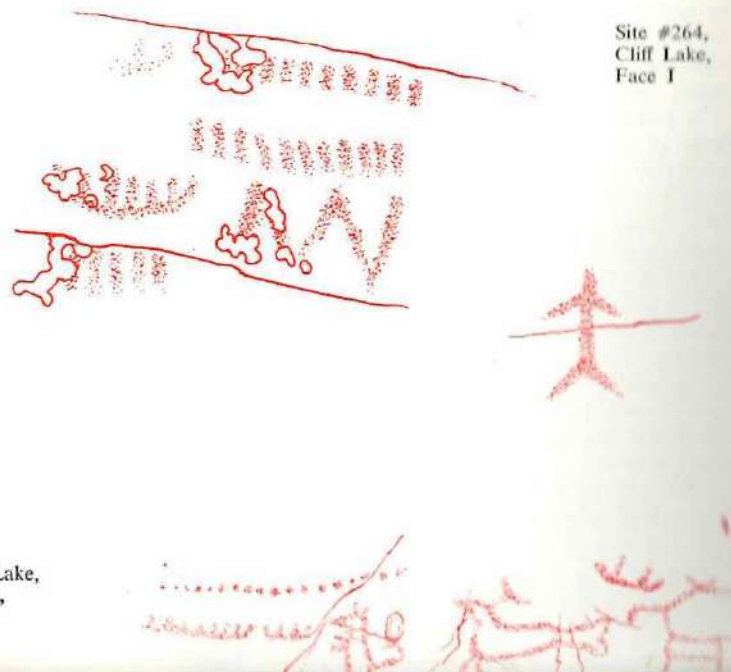
The previous summer Chris and I had gone on a wild goose chase to a small lake east of Inspiration Lake, a short flight from Armstrong, where the rock rose 80 feet above another 100 of rockfall. But as I flew over Inspiration on the way back from Cliff Lake I saw a number of impressive sheer faces that led me to wonder

whether my informant's "east of Inspiration" shouldn't have read "on the east side of Inspiration." On the other side of Lake Nipigon I suspect that another site or two will come to light, although I made two unrewarding boat trips into Humboldt Bay, and flew over Ombabika Bay, where the rumours of rock paintings seem to have had their source.

Just east of the south end of Lake Nipigon it took me two attempts to find a site on Barbara Lake. With John Chambers, a fellow artist from London, I turned off Highway 11 into a maze of lumber roads out of which we emerged on the shore of the wrong lake. Finally finding Barbara, we explored some fifteen miles of shoreline quite fruitlessly. Two years later, having finally found someone who could



Cliff Lake
paintings
#263 and #264



Barbara Lake,
Site #193,
Face IV