

NSW SEA KAYAKER

Newsletter of the NSW Sea Kayak Club Inc.

P.O. Box A1045 Sydney South, NSW 2000

No..7

April 1991

PRESIDENTS REPORT

In previous magazines we have tried to stress the responsibilities of paddlers when travelling in a group.

All members of this club have a similar responsibility when on any club outing, if the trip leader can not rely upon the more experienced members to set the right example to newcomers, there is little or no point in trying to maintain any semblance of order when on the water.

A situation arose on the recent club trip from inside the harbour out around north head to Shelly Beach, where the group once again became too spread out and a couple of inexperienced paddlers got into difficulties. The group eventually split in two with some paddlers including the trip leader being forced to return to the start point.

This incident came about because the basic law of group paddling was ignored, that is "The speed of the group must be held to that of the slowest paddler". So if you find that the rest of the group is always behind you, it is your fault not theirs, so slow down, enjoy the scenery and be ready to help out those less experienced than yourself.

Secondly but of no less importance is that when someone is being helped back into their boat after a spill the person in command of the rescue should be the only one talking. It is bad enough for the person in the water trying to follow one set of instructions without having to continuously spin around to take advice from other paddlers who have gathered around to enjoy the show.

Enough sermons for the moment, we as a club have been doing very well financially as you can see from the treasurers report in this magazine and new members are continuing to sign up.

Some people have been paddling in interesting places as you will see in the trip reports and even the training days have produced a fair amount of entertainment for those interested enough to attend.

However the trips convener could use some fresh ideas for club trips and the committee would like to know what the members require of them in organising the club, if you care enough about the club to see it continue to grow please let us know at any one of the club trips which are really our club meetings, or by phone or writing to your committee.

Treasurer's Report

Balance brought forward from September 90 \$ 1034.76

INCOME

Membership - Renewals	18 @ \$20.00	360.00
	New members 15 @ \$40.00	600.00
Bank Interest		37.58
		<u>\$ 2032.34</u>

EXPENDITURE

Printing of Newsletter	\$ 96.00
Postage, stationary, Supper for meeting	75.52
Reg. of business name and guide book	31.00
Bank charges	1.46
	<u>\$ 203.98</u>

Balance at bank 26 February 91 \$ 1828.36

OUTSTANDING PAYMENTS

Stationary	\$ 2.95
Postage - Enquiries	3.44
Newsletter No 6 x 64	27.52
	<u>33.91</u>

Shirley Abrahall - Hon. Treasurer

Results of Paddler Skills Survey

Results of our sea kayaker skills survey with a total of 9 responses shows clearly that the club must concentrate on some specific areas of paddler training.

Not surprisingly, most of the replies had some comments to make as well as answering the questions on the form. In general, there is a perceived need for instruction in the bracing and rolling department and several people pointed out that group rescues are only useful if the group is in a position to help you.

Experience	1-5 years	25%
	5-10 years	25%
	10+ years	50%

Craft Paddled	Sea kayaks only	25%
	White water boats	75%

Swimming	Poor	25%
	Good	50%
	Strong	25%

(The following all show percent responding YES):

Skills	Paddling	100%
	Turning	90%
	Bracing	75%
	Rolling	40%

Rescue	Self	60%
	Group	50%
	Exit	90%

Surf	Launching	100%
	Small	100%
	Medium	75%

Experience in variety of Conditions	Open waters	100%
	Enclosed waters	100%

It would seem that we should be looking at basic paddle skills in rough conditions and on self-rescue techniques at our future training days.

Trip Report: Mallacoota to Eden
December 15 - 20 1990

by: Ron Chambers

Situated where New South Wales "bends" into Victoria, Mallacoota Inlet is some 580 km by road from Sydney and 490 km from Melbourne. The locals say that the weather here can be unsettled, and attribute this to it's position on the boundary of the temperate and cool temperate zones - sort of perfect one minute, diabolical the next!

In Victoria, the 86,000 ha. Croajingolong National Park merges with NSW 14,000 ha. Nadgee Nature Reserve and 9,000 ha. Ben Boyd National Park, yielding over 100 kilometres of near-wilderness coastline stretching from the Cann River in Victoria to Twofold Bay in N.S.W.

Sea kayaking conditions are somewhat different from those prevailing around Sydney. The coastline is more rugged, the beaches are fewer and smaller and the weather is less predictable. There are far fewer people.

On December 15, 3 paddlers from the NSW Sea Kayak Club journeyed south to Mallacoota for a week of sea kayaking with 9 of their Victorian colleagues. It was to be a week of thrills, spills, challenge, learning, fun and friendship in a most beautiful part of Australia.

The NSW contingent was:

Bruce Lee	Greenlander
Chris Mills	Nordkapp
Ron Chambers	Mermaid

The Victorians were:

Colin Addison	Pittarak
Andrew Cope	Icefloe
Julia Dolling	Pittarak
Christine Campbell	"
Ed. Sternberg	"
Frank Bakker	"
Peter Dingle	"
Heli Murray	"
Brian Ray	"
Mark Reeves	"
Alice Hesse	Icefloe

Lead by Frank Bakker, the plan was to spend a few days at Mallacoota to allow some of the less experienced paddlers to get their "sea legs" and to prepare all of us for the journey ahead.

Chris Mills and Ron Chambers (who had travelled from Sydney together) were greeted on arrival by everyone departing for a paddle from the Mallacoota camping area to a place called Gypsy Point, some 13 Km upstream, for dinner and a cleansing ale at the pub. Never backward in coming forward (especially at the prospect of a paddle to a pub), Chris had no sooner parked his car before he and his Nordkapp were in the water pointed in the general direction of the Gypsy Point Pub, (all in the name of preparation, of course!).

I decided to join Andrew Cope and drive a couple of the cars to Gypsy Point to bring back those paddlers who were too tired and emotional to make the return paddle which Frank had proposed.

As it happened, both the land and water contingents arrived at Gypsy Point at 1955 hours, with the cook refusing to take any orders after 2000, so it was a case of the land party ordering what they thought the water party might like. An interesting way to go to dinner! Of course, there was no problem whatsoever in ordering refreshments, so a good time was had by all.

The night paddlers (Frank, Bruce, Chris and Julia), hit the water at about 2130 for the return, whilst the remaining boats were loaded on the cars and returned to camp for a well earned rest.

I know the paddlers got back at about half-past midnight because I was awakened by the sound of someone peeing in a cup just outside my tent. Actually, it turned out to be Chris, Frank and Bruce pouring themselves a nightcap of cask port - something to make them sleep they said (likely story)! Anyway, they reported next morning that apart from not knowing where they were (no moon and no nav. beacons "just keep heading right until you hit something hard then ease a little to the left", said Frank), it was an uneventful trip made very beautiful by the phosphorescence in the water. Julia also reported that

Chris's endless supply of jokes kept her spirits up.

Sunday, December 16 saw us heading South-West of Mallacoota looking for a suitable place to land for lunch. With three experienced paddlers with us (Frank Bakker, Andrew Cope and Colin Addison), this was the acid test; if we survived, we could go on the trip!

The first test was Mallacoota bar. An ebb tide was producing half to one metre waves on the bar which made for an interesting departure; good timing was needed but apart from that, it was fairly straightforward. Andrew and Colin positioned themselves at strategic points in the surf whilst Frank made sure that only one paddler was in the surf at one time because an out-of-control boat could cause big problems in these conditions (as we were to find out on another day).

Once through the surf, it was an easy paddle with a 5 to 10 knot easterly breeze keeping us company. At around 1100, Frank, Andrew and Colin started to look for a suitable place to land, not easy on this part of the coast with a largish surf coming up on the falling tide. The leaders settled on Quarry Beach.

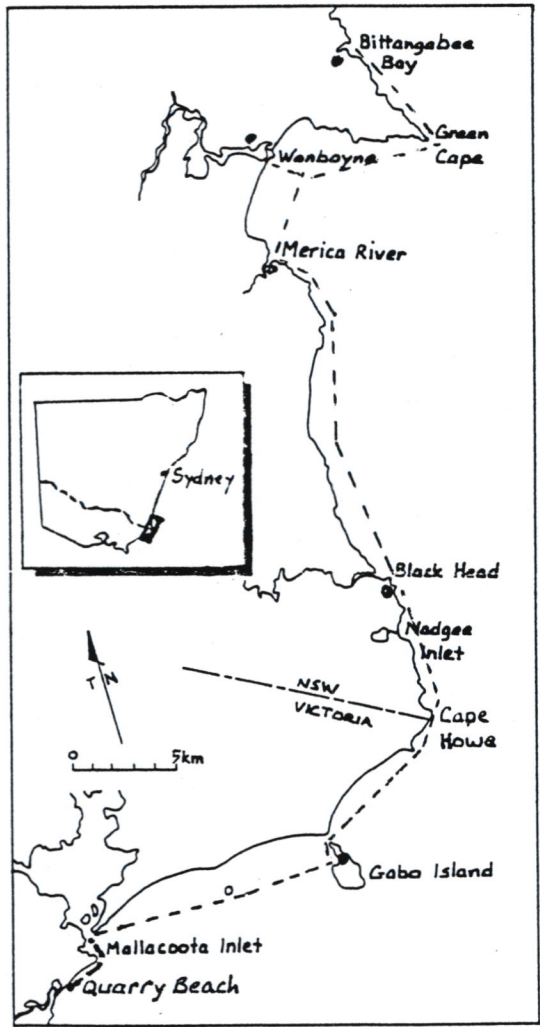
Quarry Beach proved to be difficult because of the very narrow (about 10m) beach area. All the otherwise likely spots had large and nasty rocks in the way. Everyone (except me, I'm afraid) made it to the beach without mishap, although it was a slow process, taking as long to land, as it did to paddle from Mallacoota (about 1.5 hours).

Through a combination of impatience and ignorance, I mis-timed the break and got creamed right in the suds. By the time I had my boat upright, Colin was by my side to steady it for me whilst I made a quick re-entry and headed out to sea to drain the cockpit and try again. The Venturi bailer I fitted would not drain quickly enough, so Colin pumped me dry with his Henderson "Chimp" and buddy pipe (ie a long inlet pipe which can reach into another cockpit). Thanks to Colin for his quick response in difficult circumstances. Second go was no problem.

After all this excitement, we all enjoyed a leisurely lunch in the sun and discussed the finer points of staying alive in rough ocean water in a pitifully small and frail craft, (also known as sea kayaking).

The return journey was quite straightforward; even Mallacoota bar offered no problems, although the last of the ebb tide left so little water over the entrance that we had to drag the boats into the deeper water of the estuary. What was left of the afternoon was spent rolling (or trying to roll), practicing support strokes and saying farewell to Andrew, Colin, Julia, Ed. and Christine, with thanks for their help and good companionship.

Frank decided that we would be heading for Eden on the morrow, Monday December 17, after Alice Hesse and Mark Reeves arrived from Melbourne.



....To be continued so stay tuned for the next exiting episode.

Letter received:

"Trial by Sea" by Ian and Tracy McLeod

After owning our two-person Tasman Twin sea kayak for a couple of weeks, it was time for our first sea trial, which was to be a nice easy paddle from Palm Beach to Maitland Bay, which we estimated would take about two hours. The time and distance seemed to be fairly effortless as we had done quite a bit of river kayaking in a solo kayak involving many hours of paddling at a time. We had, of course, taken into consideration the fact that sea kayaking would be much more strenuous due to wind, wave action and current.

Tracy and I left Palm Beach on a beautiful, sunny morning. Not a cloud in the sky, it was all clear in the weather department as we headed for Maitland Bay. We had a nice leisurely journey and our approximation of the journey taking two hours was correct.

The seas were slight with a one metre swell, and an outgoing tide from the Broken Bay assisted our journey north. We paddled into a light north-easterly wind which we planned to use to our advantage later as we anticipated that it would pick up in the afternoon to assist our return.

We arrived at Maitland Bay to find there was not a soul in sight, so we unloaded our belongings onto the beach and settled ourselves down to soak up the sun. The water was very inviting and luckily we had our snorkelling gear, so we entertained ourselves in the water before enjoying our picnic lunch.

It was mid-afternoon as we finished lunch when threatening storm clouds from the direction of Gosford cut our stay short. Our original plan had been to stay until mid-evening but this was not to be. By the time we packed our belongings into the Tasman Twin we could hear the sound of thunder in the distance and feel the first few spots of rain.

Realising we had absolutely no time to waste, we launched our kayak into the surf and hastily started to paddle back towards Palm Beach.

We had been in the water for only a short time when a second storm from Pittwater to the south approached and in no time at all the thunder and lightning was directly above our heads. The wind velocity increased to approximately thirty to forty kph with heavy rain lashing our faces, making it very difficult to see and pick our course through the waves, which were two metres high by now. We were living in fear of being struck by lightning at any time.

The rain became completely blinding as the storm increased in intensity and a course through the waves could not be judged. Our paddling efforts were in vain against the wind, which had by now increased to about fifty kph. With some apprehension, we made the decision to turn and run before the storm, which would take us out to sea. This was a very tense moment as we did not know how the boat was going to react. Turning the Tasman Twin had to be precisely judged, first by starting the turn as the kayak crested the first wave and second by swinging to the port side to use the wind from the south-west to help us come about quickly so as to have the stern exactly square to the second wave. The whole manoeuvre took place in the trough between two waves.

The following few minutes seemed like hours. We soon realised that the Tasman Twin could handle the situation exceptionally well. The waves were now approximately 2.5 metres with white caps and the wind now lashing against our backs. The visibility by this time was now about fifty feet and we were able to assess the situation with a little more confidence knowing the boat was coping better than we were. Our main aim by this time was to stay upright and afloat.

Without paddling, the wind was driving us through the water at several knots (about seven to ten kts estimated) so we had full steerage. We dug our paddles into the water and used them as brakes and to assist steering; the Tasman Twin would broach very quickly otherwise. Capsizing was always imminent.

We learned later that wind speeds of eighty nine knots were recorded at the Palm Beach sea-plane base of Aquatic Airways. Had we capsized in these conditions, it would almost certainly have been fatal, even with the personal flotation devices we were wearing. At this stage there was ten litres of water in the lap of our spray skirts, the weight of which stretching them down to form a bucket of water which was impossible to dispose of.

There seemed to be no end in sight and we were wondering how long our physical and mental stamina would hold out. It was taking a great deal of physical and mental effort which we knew we would not be able to maintain in these conditions. Our main fear was to be caught by the fall of darkness because we would not be able to read the sea and then capsize would have been inevitable.

Some thirty minutes into this storm and the first signs of shock and exposure were becoming evident. I realised that if I was feeling this way, then so was Tracy. Up until now, we could not communicate due to the noise of wind and rain howling about us. Our only means of communicating was through bashing the sides of the boat with my hands to indicate which side the paddles were needed to maintain steerage. As I could not turn around to talk, all I could do was to scream out that I was extremely cold and that this was the first sign of shock.

The seriousness of the situation was eased slightly when two penguins popped out of the water in the lee of our kayak. Two more joined them and we felt this helped as they were seeking shelter with us, so through their eyes we must have looked better off than they were with waves crashing about them. Their curious barks seemed to be aimed directly at us as if they were asking for help.

Up until now I had been able to keep my sense of direction. There had been three wind changes in the time we were caught in the storm and I estimated that we were heading roughly north-east. We did not have a compass, a very definite mistake for anyone going to sea in a kayak.

Time was the enemy so we made the decision to wait for a lull in the storm so we could come about and make a break through the back of the storm. Another ten minutes passed before such an opportunity became available. I yelled to Tracy start paddling as fast as possible so that we could get up sufficient speed to make our coming about in these conditions safe. Remembering that a Tasman Twin is twenty one feet long and needs a large area to turn, we picked our break in the waves and paddled like crazy, realising that this was going to be the most dangerous manoeuvre so far - just one chance to get it right.

The Tasman Twin came about much quicker than I had anticipated. We still had full speed and started to break our way back directly square on through the waves, the bow clearing the crest of the first waves by seven or eight feet. I could only see by turning my head side on to the driving rain. We kept this up for fifteen minutes or more until we finally broke out of the back of the storm. Using our paddles as brakes during the early part of the storm had worked, slowing us enough to let the storm pass over us. The seas were still rough but the wind and rain had eased and there was an exhilarating feeling of "we are still alive!". If it had been possible, we would have jumped for joy. Within a short period we had blue skies once more and it was time to assess where we were.

The headlands on the mainland were only just visible which meant we were over ten miles out to sea. We could not make a break straight for shore as the sea was still too big to take side on. So, we picked a south-westerly course, which was about sixty degrees to the angle of the wave action, and paddled on. As the coastline became clearer it was unfamiliar to me, and I realised with a sinking feeling that we were also many miles up the coast which meant several hours of hard paddling to get back to Pittwater.

The Tasman Twin was bounding over the waves and surfing down their backs like a wild gazelle, and one could get a full appreciation of the excitement of sea kayaking at its very best, but Tracy did not think this was exhilarating. She was

frightened and wanted out. This sense of excitement overpowered the pain of sore muscle, aching bones, and the wind and rain burn to our faces which was so severe it had split my lips. Nevertheless, we managed to paddle on strongly for about one and a half hours before Barrenjoey lighthouse was in sight.

The exhilaration of escaping the clutches of the storm and of being alive was still surging through our bodies, making our sore muscles keep working. The pain barrier seemed easier to paddle through and of little significance; all we could think about was going home.

The concept of time throughout this ordeal was hard very hard to realise, what were only minutes seemed like hours and hours seemed like an eternity. As we paddled the next few hours, our thoughts went back to the storm and how felt during this terrifying ordeal.

The voyage back to Pittwater was relatively uneventful, except for the occasional bark from distant penguins and the chatter between one and other. We felt that this tight situation had pulled us together - fighting the physical strain, the mental strain and of course - the fear.

By the time we reached Broken Bay, we would have gladly killed for a cup of tea, having had no chance of any break at all for the last few hours. The water near Barrenjoey became extremely calm and we only had to fight the outgoing tide and physical exhaustion. A game fishing boat running in from the same storm passed perilously close with its wash coming right over the deck of the Tasman Twin - we both commented that it would have been a tragedy to have survived the storm only to be capsized by someone else's thoughtlessness.

Darkness was closing in as we paddled up to the beach where the car was parked and stepped out on shaky legs feeling very cold. We unpacked the boat and found there was very little water in the bilge, just a couple of litres which had dripped through stitching of our spray skirts.

Quietly, we put the Tasman Twin on to the roof racks and headed home for a cup

of tea and hot bath with a story to tell!

With the experience we had achieved throughout this unforgettable adventure, we learnt that the minimum necessities for any sea kayak voyage of any kind are:

- Seamanship
- Fitness and stamina
- Personal Flotation Devices
- Waterproof spray skirts
- More than one bilge pump
- Spare paddle
- Compass
- Waterproof jacket
- Waterproof torch
- Flares for long journeys

Club Logo

A reminder..... if any artist out there feels they can come up with a logo for the club, please send it in soon. We will present all proposals in the next newsletter with a request for votes for the most popular.

Queensland Surfari

The intrepid Frank Bakker and "a few other desperados" are planning a two stage trip in Queensland waters for later this year.

Stage 1 Whitsunday group - 3 weeks. It is proposed to cover the area from Mackay to Bowen, 100 Nm as the sea gull flies. There are numerous islands and side trips abound.

Stage 2 Hinchinbrook Island. Lucinda to Cardwell - 1 week. Side trips to Daintree or Tully (rafting) are a possibility.

A few days may also be spent at Fraser Island on the return trip, to check out the whales.

It is proposed to get underway around the end of May with a total time away of six to seven weeks.

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 Ph. 060 76 9360 (a.h)

THE SHALLOW WATER KAYAKERS ASSOCIATION

Reprinted from 'The North Sounder', newsletter of
The North Sound Sea Kayakers Association, Washington, USA.



"Never Over Our Heads"

By Lerek H. Clutchinson

I have never liked long crossings, but occasionally they have to be made. Last Sunday on Lake Union I finally got up the gumption to cross the Ship Canal from Gas Works Park. It was no mean achievement for a member of the Shallow Water Kayakers Association. Perhaps you have not heard of our organization. Our membership is vast but secret. We are a group dedicated to the proposition that if you can not walk to shore or float a few feet and then walk to shore, your life is in dire peril and you could lose your membership.

Our club's safety record is flawless and we never destroy our sinuses learning awkward Eskimo rolls. We discourage such macho dramatics for fear of burying our noggins in the sand. Remember all those hours in the pool trying to mount a slippery kayak full of water as it bobbed and rolled beneath you? There are no foolish re-entry procedures for our members. You simply stand up, walk to shore (don't forget your kayak and paddle), empty your boat and boots, climb in, blow your nose, and push off. (Blowing your nose can take place immediately upon standing up.)

Now I don't want you to get the impression that we are a bunch of namby-pambies. It is just that we are strong believers in ferry boats and airplanes. For instance, I just read about a fellow who kayaked across the Pacific. Aside from wanting to ask him what we are all dying to know--like when, where, and how he went potty--I also wanted to ask him why did not take an airplane. There are no nice sunny beaches or tide pools in the middle of the Pacific.

Long crossings are boring. Not much to see or do except paddle, paddle, paddle. Shallow water kayakers are always yacking about a certain rock formation or excitedly pointing to a Hermit crab scooting along the bottom, and they are always stopping for lunch snacks. You never see any tanned beach boys or bikinied blonds on long crossings.

I tell you, shallow water kayakers just have more fun. So if you're out kayaking and see a fellow boater, just place your paddle vertically into the water until one end touches bottom, and the other end sticks two feet out of the water. This will indicate that you are within five feet of Terra Firma. Your fellow kayakers will immediately recognize you as a proud member of the Shallow Water Kayakers Association. Our motto is: "Ne aborium su cabasa," or "Never over our heads."

--By Dick Asia



"Hothunters!"