

# NSW Sea Kayaker

Newsletter of the NSW Sea Kayak Club Inc.

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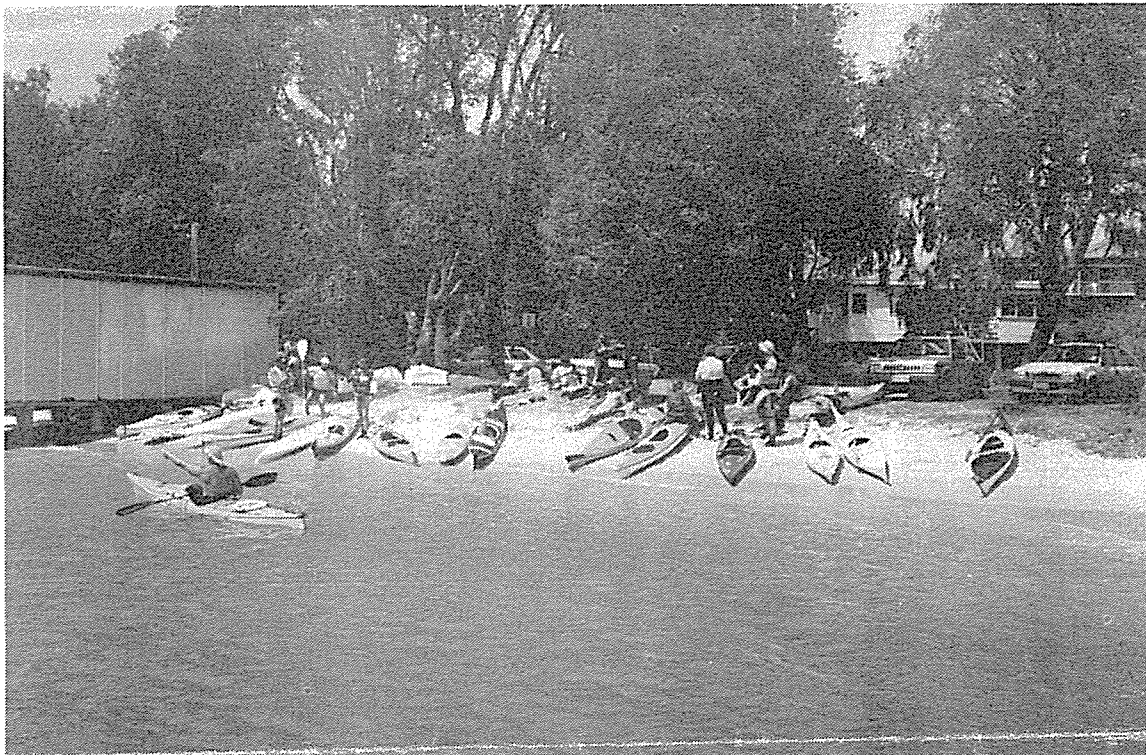
Telephone : 552-0028

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## Rock and Rolling at Merimbula

by David Winkworth



*Above: Some of the crowd soaking up the sun before Sundays coastal paddle (Photo: David Winkworth.).*

All week the weather was terrible. Strong SE winds and rain lashed the South Coast and I prayed for fine weather for the weekend.

It only half worked. 'Blew like a bastard' on the Saturday but cleared to a fine spring day on the Sunday.

Around twenty paddlers rolled in on Friday and Saturday from as far away as Sydney, Woilongong and Canberra.

After a brief theory session participants paired off and practised various manoeuvres in their boats at 'Mitchies Jetty' just inside the bar at Merimbula Lake.

At various intervals, cheers could be heard as one by one the challenge of rolling was mastered.

The days rolling instruction and practice was interspersed with surfing activities on the bar and generally mucking around in other peoples boats. When participants had mastered a roll efforts switched to fine tuning and achieving consistency in their efforts.

As the wind picked up on Saturday evening, we huddled around the barbecue plate while Arunas provided 20 cent pieces to keep the food cooking. Thanks !

Monty Python got a look in during a pregnant pause in discussion about freak waves removing the bell from a

lighthouse 250 feet up in 1913 ..... "And you tell that to the kids of today and they won't believe you !"

Sunday dawned fine and clear and Merimbula lake bar settled down and provided some lovely surfing waves.

Further rolling practice and boat swapping and then a short coastal paddle to Short Pt/Long Pt followed by some pleasant surfing rounded off the weekend for most paddlers. Most people drifted off and headed home around lunch on Sunday.

Twenty paddlers was an excellent roll-up (no pun intended) for a weekend venue so far from Sydney.

Considering that we also received enquiries from paddlers who ultimately couldn't make it on the weekend, it would appear that there may be a case for a similar weekend closer to Sydney.....so.....

...If you feel you might be interested in attending an Eskimo Roll weekend near Sydney sometime in the new year, would you please give the info NSWSKC Info Line a call and leave a message to this effect (02 552-0028).

Special thanks to Frank Bakker, John Slattery and Ron Mundie for their help.

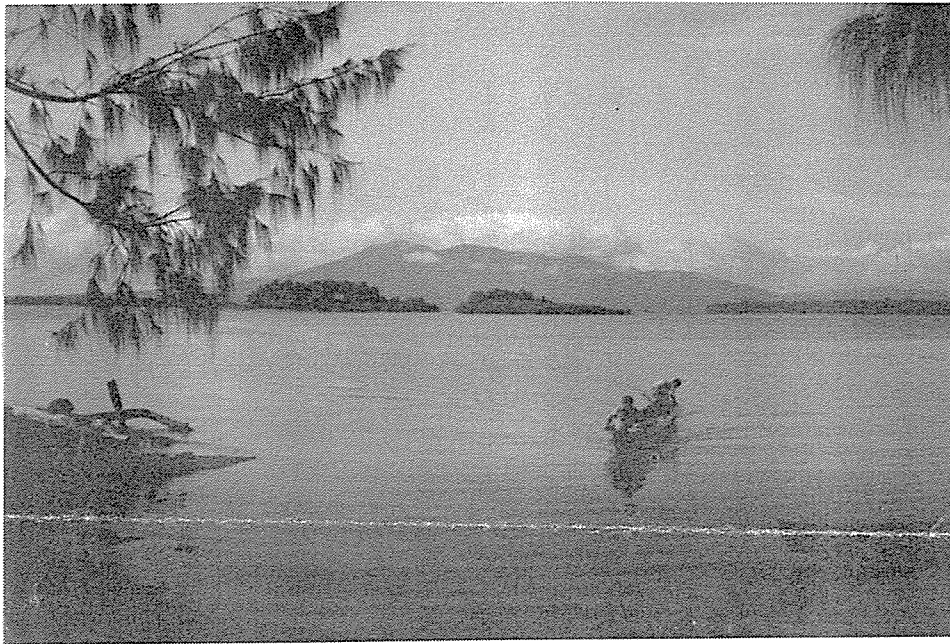
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## Presidents Report

We have had an influx of new members in the last few months so on behalf of all the members I would like to welcome those who have recently joined us: Christopher Birks, Peter Blunt, Peter Cannan, Leigh Hemmings, Rob Jung, Julie McIntosh, Carlos Stetz, Rob Thompson, Ian Tringham and Jiro Yaginuma.

What has the club been up to ? We have had very successful and well attended trips recently.

The Paddle/BBQ/Slide show was wonderful with about 25 people attending. Wade showed some magnificent slides on both the Solomon Islands and Patagonian trips. For those who missed this Wade has also contributed to this newsletter with an article on his Patagonia trip. Thanks once again to Wade Fairley for a excellent slide show and talk.



Above : *Roviana lagoon, Solomon Islands. (Photo - Patrick Dibben)*

My Durras weekend had about fifteen participants including three of the new members above. On the Saturday we paddled south down to Emily Miller beach for lunch then returned as conditions were starting to worsen. The return through the surf back at Durras was either fun, challenging, wet, scary or all of these depending on your experience and whether you opened your eyes or not. On Sunday everyone (except me who was dying from abalone -itis) drove down to Batemans Bay and enjoyed a wonderful paddle out to the Tolgate Islands for lunch although they were a little under dressed for the occasion - the resident host wearing a smart black tuxedo - OK so it was a penguin but it's his island..

The Rock and Roll weekend had over twenty participants and even got some publicity in the local press. Thanks to David Winkworth for the work he put into organising this. Both a trip report and postscript to the Rock and Roll course are included in this newsletter.

Continued on back page

# Patagonia

By Wade Fairley

Christmas day 1991. Light misty rain continued. Rain had become a regular feature by now, rain for the past 11 days and it would continue, more on than off for the next month. The glacier stretched out at the end of the fiord, bright, stark against the heavy lead coloured sky, the dark water and surrounding mountains. It's halo of reflected light beaming strongly through the thick weather.

We had found a camp easily the night before. It had been a pleasure to come across a site so simply after the constant hassles we had been having to find suitable places to pass the nights. This morning Angus had pulled out a thick chocolate Christmas cake that he had by some miracle of physics managed to hide packed below his deck. I had known nothing about it; if I had on the day we stuffed two months food beneath our decks, I probably would have insisted that we eat it then, as I couldn't have justified the weight. But now I was so thankful for the secret Angus had kept.

The fiord's dark still inky surface parted smoothly beneath our bows. Our boats are empty and they feel so light, easy and pleasant. We had a base camp on a small island in the fiord where we will return tonight.

We reach the first ice berg, a little cautious first we just circled it and kept a distance but the excitement of this new spectacle is too much and soon we are running our hands over it's glistening cold surface and Angus paddles between it's pillars while I take pictures.

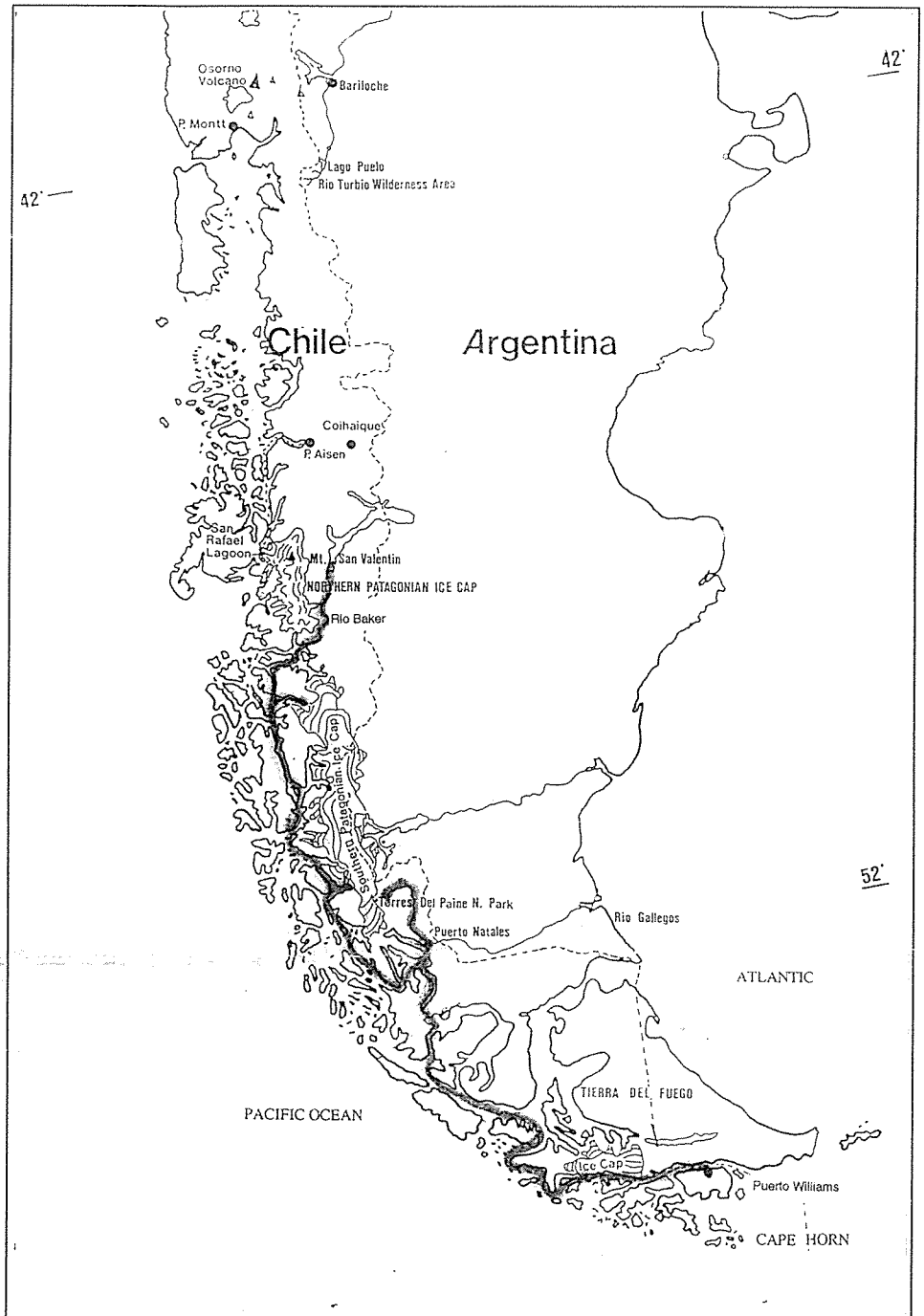
We paddle on. There are more and more bergs, the older one are polished by the rain like massive gem stones. We reach the snout of the glacier and cautiously pick our way through the pack ice. The skin of my folding kayak is much more durable than Angus's, so I bulldoze floaters aside and propel off them

with my paddle. Angus is more cautious, his thin nylon hull could be cut by the irregular edges of the floating ice and of course the water is fatally cold.

We continue towards the glacier snout. It towers over 50 metres above the water. Blocks of ice the size of mini-vans regularly peel off from the walls and crash into the water below, and still the granite

manoeuvring our boats just that bit closer.

I land on a granite slope, drag up my empty boat and climb to get a good vantage point to take pictures looking down on Angus paddling in the ice below. He nears the snout, the compressed ice at it's very base is an unbelievable deep blue colour. I quickly click through a roll, sometimes you know through the



walls of the peaks and ice dramatically amplify their impact. We know that we shouldn't get so close but this incredible place, so wild and new beyond our imaginations mesmerises us and we can't keep ourselves from

view finder that a shot will be great. This is one of those moments. Angus pulls up next to a berg the area of a back yard pool. Carefully he tests his weight on it, then slides out of his boat and stands on it. Nothing moves and he walks excitedly about, I can hear the ice

crunching beneath the soles of his rubber gum boots.

I put my boat back in the water and when I join him he is also back in his boat and we paddle towards the ice walls. Waterfalls of ice water pour out of it's sides and tall precarious sculptures tower at alarming angles. We pass close, both nervous and engrossed not saying a word, enthralled at the majesty of this place. We turn away from the wall and head back out towards the pack ice. We are forty metres away when a loud crack rings out behind us. We turn to see a block of ice the size of a house crash down. The sound of the impact hangs in the air. The tallest tower moves. Slowly this chunk of compacted water-ice the volume of a house topples and collides into the water with an awesome force. It explodes and rains ice blocks the volume of bowling balls about us. I scream 'WATCHOUT!' . Maybe Angus does too but we both hear nothing over the calamity of tonnes of ancient ice tearing apart.

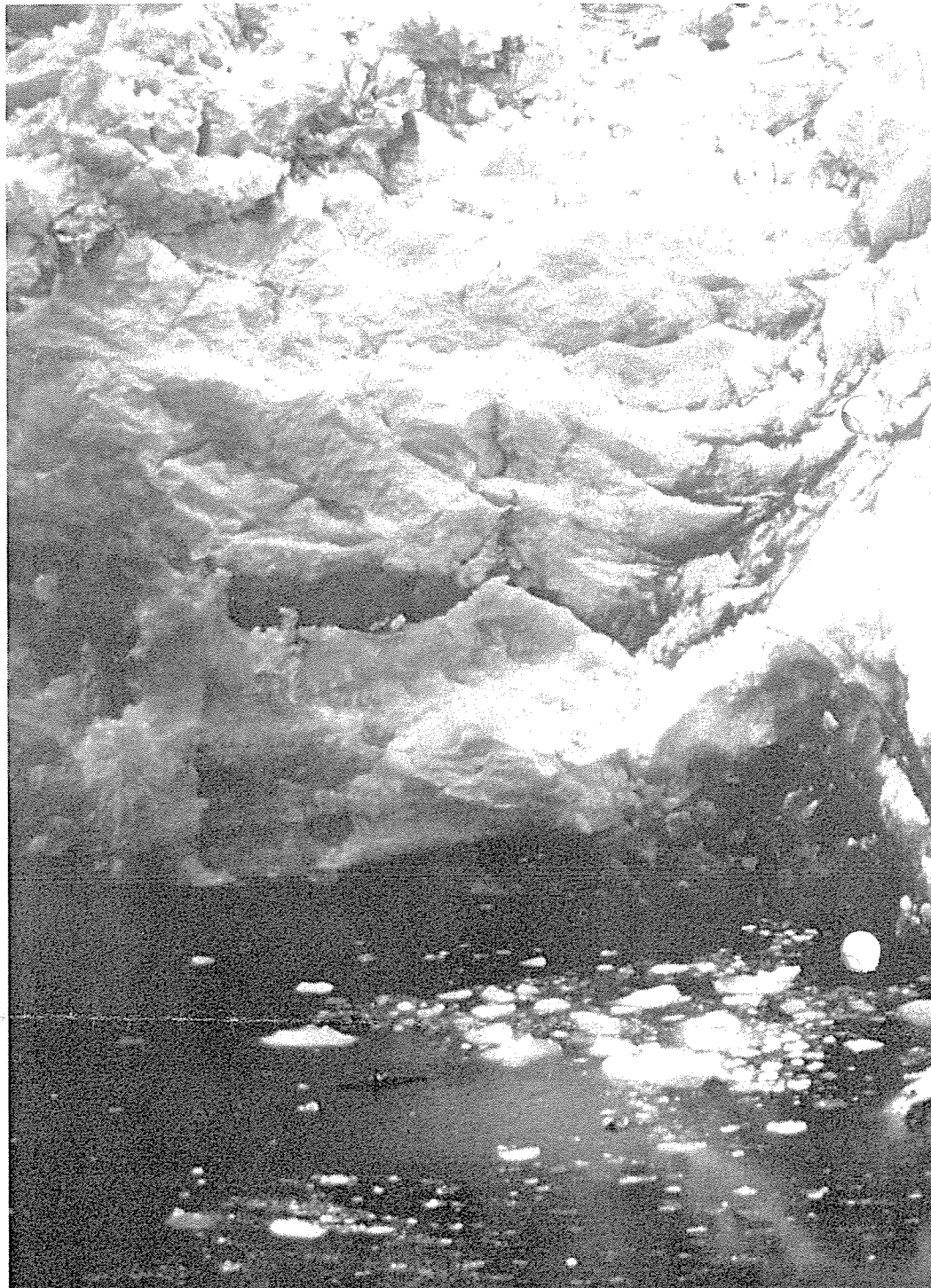
Ice bowling balls rain down about us. One plonks down between us. Miraculously neither of us is hit. A wave rises up from the displaced water and we both turn so that we meet it head on. We bob over it's crest easily and the waves continue unabated out to the pack ice where it clacks the floats together as if they were applauding the show.

We are both grinning with the adrenalin of a narrow escape and the zeal of a ring side seat to witness such an event. We paddle quickly heading away from the ice cliffs.

Falling ice had a fair impact on the historical circumstances of Chile's coast. Magellan in the 17th century

had for months made a southerly course through the straits that bear his name and separate Tierra del Fuego and South America. He decided to set about and steer north when he heard what he presumed was surf on a near shore. He was

ships. As it was he made way through to the Pacific. Where he heard surf, there is no open shore for hundreds of km. What Magellan must have heard was the rumbling of ice into water from off the steep walls of Mt Sarmiento.



 Note Angus's Kayak in the foreground .

convinced the sound signified an open coast and that he had reached a new ocean. Had he not turn then he would have continued into a hapless dead-end maze of islands, canals and fiords that may well have destroyed the voyage wasted

Two hundred years later a young Charles Darwin rescued the party's long boat from being dashed on the rocks by a wave sent up by falling ice. If not, the bones of the world's most celebrated naturalist may still remain in the ancient bogs.

So grateful was Cpt. Fitzroy to Darwin that he named Tierra del Fuego's principal mountain after him.

Some one hundred years later an incredible event occurred in my

Tempango we chose not to push our luck with falling ice again.

The Straits of Magellan. March 1992. The weather has been bad

ice. The country before us is a bleak place, kilometres of steep bare granite, but it is infinitely beautiful in its harsh rawness.

The wind has dropped and to cross a bay we have drifted off shore a way. The water is a mirror. We must be in a

thick of krill because there is a concentration of Penguins and other sea birds. Albatross wheel supremely overhead and a 10 meter Southern Right Whale is cruising gently among the birds. Each time it surfaces it barely makes a ripple. It emerges less than 5 metres from Angus and its blow hole sounds a tubular note like a church organ.

A shaft of sun projected through a break in the cloud sweeps the steely granite. A bunch of Fur Seals is frolicking on their backs enjoying the afternoon calm. They must be an incredibly social animal, gathered in a circle floating; they seem engrossed in conversation. One casually turns his head and spies us paddling by. I can see him saying to the others, "Hey check this out!".

The others all stop and crane their necks to see us, then they dart at speed swimming straight for us. They leap out of the water, their fins tucked sleekly against their glistening, shiny, wet fur. They quickly reach us and swim rapidly about the boats. They are cheeky but cautious too. Stretching their necks, sculling to get their heads as far as they can above the water for a better look, but if

you catch their eye they quickly duck beneath the deep, dark water and surface at your back.

A ripple of wind disturbs the surface, not far on our right over to the west a squall is racing out a



(Photo - Wade Fairley)

personal history as curiosity is nearly our own demise by falling ice. Over the next three months we came upon many more glaciers. All were incredible, dramatic and beautiful. But we avoided repeating this experience. Satisfied with our luck on Christmas day in Fjord

for sometime and we have been cautious to hold a course close to the coast. To the left the last piece of South American continent is visible through the rain of a thinning squall, ahead is the island of Tierra del Fuego, Land of Fire. Seems an ironic name for a place of wind and

deep valley headed this way. In literally moments the sea has transformed from a mirror to a mash. White caps bristle in the stout breeze, the birds, seals and

whale have all disappeared. The sea that had just a minute before been so benevolent is now a torment of freezing waves that break over the bow and fill my eyes

with stinging salt. We push back towards shore. □

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The article below was written by David Winkworth for those who attended the Rock & Roll weekend at Merimbula. As it has general relevance to all of us who are attempting to master competent rolling we have it reproduced here.

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## POST SCRIPT ESKIMO ROLL WEEKEND



*Above: Rob McLaughlin sets up for a roll while Arunas Pilka looks on.*

Thank you for coming to the Eskimo Roll Weekend recently. All participants made tremendous gains in rolling proficiency and I hope it's the start of development of a reliable roll for you.

I think you would agree that proficient rolling is not something that you can acquire overnight. The various components for a successful roll are simple, but the smooth blending of these requires practice.....lot's of it.

For you to be able to depend on the roll as a primary self rescue method in ocean or surf, it is advisable for you to practice rolling EVERY time you go for a paddle - even in winter. Make it a rule...with no exceptions.

Reliable rolling ability is self-reliance. You can't always depend on a travelling companion to rescue you, especially when you capsize in a narrow rocky channel or big surf. 'Comes down to the old saying: YOU GOT YOURSELF INTO THIS, YOU GET YOURSELF OUT.

As you may have found on the weekend, it is easy to fall into bad habits in rolling technique. If you do, then it's time to go right back to basics and analyse your style. Do it straightaway before the fault becomes ingrained. You'll know you're doing something wrong when your roll becomes a "muscle up" affair. As you would have found on the weekend, a good roll feels EASY.

Below are some points on the various aspects of rolling that may be of some use to you in self-analysis of your technique. If you have a friend who is a proficient roller, he/she may wish to add or delete some points here too.

- \* Use a dive mask for repeated practice. You won't do a dose dribble over the dinner table six hours later.
- \* Have frequent breaks from rolling practice. Don't get stale.
- \* **Set-up.** Do it properly. Get this bit wrong (eg when you're tired) and you can muck up the whole exercise.
  - (a) Paddle over the side in the screw roll or extended paddle position
  - (b) Lean well forward.
  - (c) Push paddle forward too far for a longer, more effective sweep.
  - (d) When upside down, you'll need to use your stomach muscles to hold yourself in the set-up position. Roll over either way....
  - (e) Push paddle to the surface - WATCH THE BLADE ANGLE.
  - (f) Rear blade must clear the bottom of the hull when upside down.
- \* **Paddle Sweep.** Watch the angle of the working blade - too steep and it will push water and provide poor support. Too flat and it will be easily pulled down. When you get it right, notice where your rear hand is on the edges of the rear blade.
  - (a) Sweep paddle in a firm, powerful arc. It needs good motion for support.
  - (b) Keep the blade up. Don't pull on it too early. Remember it needs to be moving for support.
  - (c) Swing the body out with the blade - keep watching it all the way. This may ensure that you keep your head down for the hip flick/exit.
  - (d) Looking towards the bottom will also help keep your head down
- \* **Lean Back.** The hip flick is an important part of the roll.
  - (a) Practice your hip flick against a jetty or the side of a pool. You should be able to flick up with minimal force on your hands. Progress to fingertips when you can.
  - (b) Lean back. The lean back as you rise brings your body closer to the longitudinal axis of your boat. If you do it well you should not have a problem with your head coming up first.
  - (c) Try an exaggerated throw-back of your head with the lean back.

The most common errors in rolling are probably:

1. Head up first.
2. Paddle pulled to the bottom.
3. Failure to lean back.

Are any of these your problem? Once again, if you have to "muscle up", you've mucked it up. When your rolling OK on one side, swap to the other for variety. You'll find it quite different but at least you won't have to wet exit to get up. Try varying the power put into your roll. You'll soon work out how much is needed for the conditions you're in. It will also save you the embarrassment of "going round again!".

I wish you competent rolling,

**David Winkworth**

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Yes, the Noddy all 25ft of kevlar/carbon fibre with twin electric bilge pumps draining all four storage sections and the cockpit. Upswept large volume bow giving unprecedented big sea performance while the combination 'V' hull and 'U' sections give it incredible turning and handling ability without compromising stability. This kayak is virtually self righting and must be the easiest to roll. Comes with illuminated deck mounted compass and optional mounting for satnav and sea phone gear.

Yeah sure, but you could advertise here for a nominal fee based on our printing costs. This space is FOR SALE !

You will have received the club stickers with this newsletter (unless you were given them at Durras). We've given everyone two - one for the kayak, one for the car. If you would like more they can be purchased for \$1 each. These will be available at the BBQ etc on January 16th.

We still don't have a club Secretary since Ken McDonald has now left us for life in Armidale. It really doesn't involve a lot of work so don't be shy volunteer. I will ask for nominations before the January 16th slide show.

The NSW Sea Kayak Club Info Line (552-0028) is working well but only a few members are letting me know of trips they are planning. Even if you aren't prepared to run a trip let us know what you would like to do and we will advertise to put you in touch with others who might be willing to lead a trip.

I've had a couple of suggestions from club members which could be discussed at our January 16th get together.

- Firstly David Winkworth suggested we have an annual get together which would be a social/paddle weekend. I was already considering something along these lines and started to make some preliminary plans.

I'm considering the last weekend in March (not too cold/hot ?) and the venue would be Patonga on the Central Coast. There is a council camping ground here which we could book. The cost is \$13/night per camp site which covers two people plus \$3 per extra person. This camping ground is right on the water with both surf and still water. It is just over one hour from Sydney and you could even paddle to it from Palm Beach ! The reason for choosing a site close to Sydney is so that shops can be invited to use this weekend as a trade show and demonstrate their latest gear. It would be a great opportunity for us to compare the different craft. Well what do you think ?

- Norman Bull suggested we organise some sort of kayaking skills competition, not a race but something more relevant to what the sport is really about. Perhaps this could be a team event and could involve rescue procedures etc ? Maybe the annual get together (Patonga) could be an opportunity for this. Have a talk with Norman or myself if you are interested.
- David Winkworth rang me with another suggestion which was to have the AGM on a weekend so non-Sydney members could attend. This is what I was planning .

He also had another suggestion which was to have a moving AGM held in different parts of the state each year combined with a paddle weekend so numbers attending are better. He also wanted to suggest changing this AGM from August to May so that it was in a warmer month. This idea would have to be put to the committee for consideration if there were any changes to the AGM but maybe some informal discussion first at the January 16th BBQ would be appropriate first to get an idea of consensus and alternative view points.

You'll gather from this newsletter that we are short of contributors, there being only two apart from myself here. We need your articles. This could be the start of your writing career. It is also a good practice if in the future you wish to submit a kayaking story to the commercial magazines. This is one way of financing your adventures and there a plenty who do this. So come hone your skills here. We could also do with technical articles or just some practical tips which we can put into a column - perhaps how to do simple fibre glass repairs, fishing tips, how you have set up your puffin/mirage/greenlander/arctic raider whatever.

Lastly let me wish everyone a happy new year and all the best for the year ahead. I hope to see you at our BBQ/Paddle/Slide Show on January 16th.

*Patrick Dikken*

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**Are you in the red ?**



**If the box above has a red tick then our records show you have not paid your 92/93 membership fee.**

**Annual membership is only \$20 and falls due in August after the AGM.**

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