

# Salt

THE MAGAZINE OF NSW SEA KAYAK CLUB  
ISSUE 92 **DECEMBER 2013**



## **FAIL!**

*Winter Blues in Tassie*

**FAR SOUTH**  
*NSW's wild gems*

**CHOPPER RESCUE**  
*Drama at South Head*

## NSW Sea Kayak Club Inc

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The NSWSKC is a voluntary organisation run by members who give their time freely to the club. Membership is offered yearly. Please see the website for details and application. To contact the club, please email:

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IMPORTANT: Please review the Paddler Safety, Required Equipment, Grading System and Club Calendar sections of the club website.

### Front cover photograph by Rob Mercer. South Head in a friendly mood



The new members paddle. L to R: Colin Borrows, Neil Duffy, Campbell Tiley, Jana Osvald, Malcolm Bersten, Rae Duffy, Shaan Gresser, Paul Gibson, Rob McGowan, Zvonko Gravac, Stephen Reid (photo by Adrian Clayton).





# From the PRESIDENT'S Deck

First I must acknowledge the contribution and commitment of the outgoing committee members. David Fisher had served on the committee for four years, two as treasurer and two as president. Apart from this very significant contribution he has been an energetic trip leader and mentor for paddlers developing their skills and initiated the annual Grade 3 weekend. Tony Wennerbom revised the material we send out to new members in his role as vice president. Ian Vaile stepped down as training coordinator after a year which saw 4 new sea leaders and 6 attain sea skills. Megan Pryke finished a busy year as trips coordinator having also updated the club SOPs. Finally, Mark Schroeder who has comprehensively stamped his mark on the club magazine, including renaming it as Salt, has stepped down as editor.

On the new team we have Adrian Clayton as vice president, Rae Duffy staying on as Treasurer, Dave Linco as Rock n Roll coordinator, Shaan Gresser as Trips coordinator and Fernando Charnis as Training coordinator. Unfortunately we have not yet been able to confirm a volunteer as magazine editor. While we will try to keep the magazine afloat, after this edition the amount of copy and number of issues will be greatly reduced until we can identify an editor.

I look forward to working with such a strong, experienced and motivated team.

The first aim of the club noted in the constitution is to 'conduct, encourage, promote and advance seakayaking ...' and we are dependent on an energetic, highly skilled and committed group of trip leaders, instructors and a small group of assessors to make this happen. It is essential that we continue to expand this group to cater for the increased membership over the past decade and to minimise the burnout and drift in priorities that can occur for individual instructors. To this end, congratulations to Adrian Clayton

who is now an AC sea assessor and to Josh Andrews for his successful assessment as a Sea Instructor. Our flat water instructor ranks have also swelled with the addition of Shaan Gresser and Neil Duffy.

It really is a privilege to contribute a little back to the club that has nurtured my slow climb up the skills ladder and has introduced me to so many great paddling companions. Having navigated the AGM with no challenger in the back row to let me off the hook, I am now faced with mulling over what the priorities should be for the 2013 committee.

A high priority for the committee is expanding our instructor ranks over the next few years and providing opportunities for all members to develop their skills. This needs to be driven by individual members at all levels taking responsibility for gaining and practicing the necessary skills and then presenting for an assessment. This can be done via opportunistic instruction on club paddles, practicing on paddles with like-minded friends, via reputable commercial instructors and via dedicated club training sessions. The requirements for assessment at various levels are detailed on the AC website (<http://canoe.org.au/>) and Dave Fisher reviewed the paddler grading system and process to Grade 2 in the December 2011 club magazine. Unsurprisingly the degree of difficulty and level of mentoring required increases with the seniority of the qualification. If you believe that you are ready for assessment or would like advice about options for mentoring that are not immediately evident from the trips calendar, contact the training coordinator, Fernando, directly.

Training options at various levels are always high on the members' wish lists. Harry Havu has blitzed the training calendar over recent months and Adrian Clayton has a sea skills

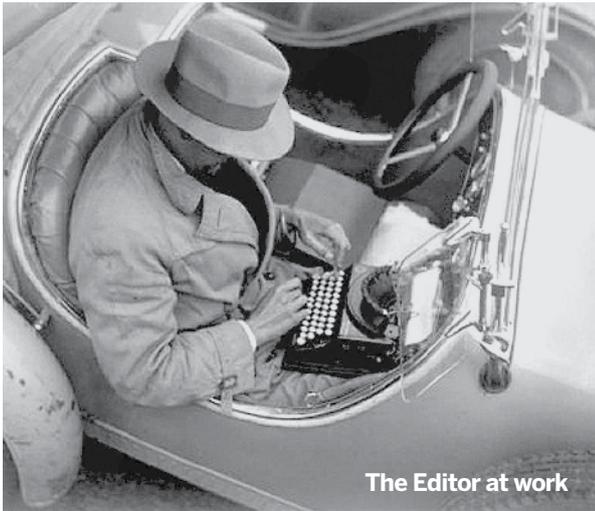
program culminating in an assessment in the New Year. I would like to see a few more options for new members to be introduced to the club. To this end, with assistance from Adrian, Shaan, Rae and Neil, we ran a paddle with 6 new members recently from Apple Tree Bay which was great success despite a little more rescue practice than we had bargained for courtesy of an occasional wind gust (See photo opposite). We aim to repeat this in the New Year.

Ian Vaile's report on page 40 details the nocturnal struggle down the Hawkesbury for the twenty plus club members who paddled the Hawkesbury Canoe Classic this year. This is an event with a fantastic atmosphere and supports a good cause. Congratulations to everyone who completed the run – 100 plus km is a fair paddle in anyone's logbook!

David Linco and his team are well advanced with the planning of Rock n Roll 2014 at Batemans Bay March 7-10 with most of the activities on the Saturday and Sunday. Don't miss this weekend which is the absolute bumper event on the club calendar. For more details see the club website and David's piece on page 22. We expect to be able to formally launch our on-line training resource at RnR. Cathy Miller is currently putting the finishing touches to this fantastic endeavour which has been driven primarily by her energy and production skills with input and starring roles (rolls?) from many senior club paddlers.

I know there is a member out there, or perhaps two, with the energy and interest to help publish our club magazine. It is a highly valued aspect of the club and we need your assistance in the editor role. The form, layout and content of the magazine are very much at the editor's discretion. Both the current committee and the previous editor will provide support and advice and through Mark Schroeder we have streamlined a number of aspects of the production and publication process.

Finally, thanks to all of the members who make club events such a pleasure to be involved in. Keep paddling  
Campbell Tiley



The Editor at work

# From the **EDITOR'S** Offshore tax-haven

## HELP!

It's up to you, but if you DONT help, this could be the last edition of SALT as we know it.

The magazine you now gently fondle has been assembled by a team of unknown benefactors rumoured to be working from an offshore base under the watchful eye of the Unknown Paddler. Who is this elusive genius? Has Assange stepped up, could it be the work of Harold Holt? Perhaps Rupert himself has taken it on as a side project to while away the evenings sans Wendy. Or maybe Elvis lives.

You may never know, but one thing that's clear is that this is merely a temporary stay of execution. Sadly, the magazine cannot go ahead in its current form without a volunteer editor to run it.

All in all we're the little club that could. So ask not what your club can do for you, but what you can do for your club! (Thanks JFK)

Systems are in place, a template established. Our outgoing editor stands by his offer of assistance, training and production support. It just takes somebody with a can-do attitude. Could that be you?

## WE'VE BEEN EVERYWHERE, MAN

There are so many great places to paddle, and it seems that between the lot of us, we're covering a good many of them.

Count 'em off. In this edition we visit (in one way or another) Scotland, Turkey, Greenland (travelling back in time), Tassie, Queensland, the far South Coast of NSW, the far reaches of the Hawkesbury and finally end up back in Sydney town where most of us live. Our travel guides are Dee Ratcliff, Rob Mercer, Stuart Trueman, Matt Bezzina, Mark Schroeder, Neil Duffy, Vincent Weafer, Ian Vaile and Philip Rose.

Also accompanying us on our travels, Russ Swinnerton helps us not to get lost, Fer reminds us to stop and smell the roses in his favourite gardens and he, Josh Andrews and Michael Steinfeld all remind us of the importance of travelling safely.

Thanks again to Emma Kirk for editorial assistance

Everyone should believe in something. I believe I'll go kayaking now!  
Ooroo.

■ ■  
The cure for  
anything is salt  
water - sweat,  
tears, or the sea.

Isak Dinesen



There's an editor down here somewhere. Photo by Shaan

By Philip Ros

# OANDORA

## Going Strong



Our club is lucky to have a couple of longstanding regular paddles conducted under the watchful eye of our most experienced members. One such institution is OANDORA, described fondly by one of its founders as 'the paddle for the unemployed and unemployable'. Regular participant Philip Rose tells us more.



Handy Steve Hitchcock

The OANDORA group continues to enjoy its weekly Friday morning paddles. Normally we launch from Clontarf or Little Manly and enjoy a 3-4 hour paddle over about 15 kms. Depending on conditions we paddle around Sydney Heads, out to the tip of North Head, or across to The Gap. One of our favourite paddles is Little Manly to Fairy Bower and return.

As well as the magnificent scenery, we often encounter a variety of wildlife, including sea eagles, seals, schools of fish, migrating whales and dolphins. In the last few weeks the sea surface has been covered with the amazingly agile shearwaters on their migratory journey. One of the exhausted birds was collected by one of our group and given a brief respite on his deck.

Normally we have about 12-15 kayakers, with a core group of regulars and other occasional participants. The group is organized on a shared basis by Adrian Clayton and Owen Kimberley, hence the name, Owen AND OR Adrian! In their own 'gentle' way they have been raising our collective kayak skills. Each paddle starts with a detailed weather briefing, gear check and skills refresher. Given the size of the group we often split into sub-groups for ease of oversight and to enable participants to develop their leadership skills. We have had the occasional capsized and assisted rescues just to remind us of the dangers involved in maritime activities, especially in the ocean.

The group generally comprises "mature" members with free time during the week to enjoy the delights of sea kayaking. One of the kayakers is over 80 years old and still paddling strongly. It is fun to paddle with a group of like-minded people and to enjoy the camaraderie and mutual support. We all appreciate the generosity of Owen and Adrian in sharing their wealth of experience and knowledge. ■ OANDORA turned 5 this year.



Centrelink's new Shelley Beach branch

# FAR SOUTH



## Point Hicks (VIC) to Eden (NSW)

The first time I felt winter this year was last Saturday night when we got out of the car at Bemm River in cold and rainy conditions after driving straight through from Sydney. We went to the pub and arranged a cabin. After settling in and cooking up dinner we went back for a drink. I asked for a Carlton, Barnabas made things a bit difficult by asking for a Pilsener, and Paul, Barnabas's friend who was helping out with the car shuffle really pushed it by asking for a Baccardi & Coke. "What?" says the barman. "We have beer and what's in those bottles" he said pointing to three bottles, Scotch, Southern Comfort and Gin. When Paul pushed the matter he was told in no uncertain terms "This is Bemm River mate! Its what you can see or nothin". I liked this place already.

Although we had planned to paddle out across to Sydenham Inlet the barman at the pub helped out with some local knowledge and informed us there was a road to the beach at Py-Yoot Bay. Around 9 am the next day there we were, looking at a very windy and wild stretch of coast. We watched the sets for some

time and decided we could get out if we timed it right. I asked Barnabas what he wanted to do and he said he was happy to go for it. We started bringing the boats and ten days worth of food and kit down to the beach.

We packed everything and I decided to go first. I sat in the soup waiting for a lull for a good twenty minutes trying to feel if I'd got the trim in my brand new boat right. It felt fine. What didn't feel fine though was the fact that the forecast was for 30 knot winds going straight through till the next day and intensifying later. It also concerned me that our intended landing for the night at Hicks Pt was completely unknown outside of maps so it was a bit of a risk as we could find ourselves having to land heavy boats in big surf that might or might not have rocks strewn around. We aborted the launch and later decided to have a drive to Pt Hicks to check out the landing and then try launching again the next day. Whilst I'd studied the maps of our paddle the driving was all up to Paul and I didn't realise it was 107 km and over two hours to drive from Bemm River to Pt Hicks. Its less than 30 km along the coast!

There is a light house at Pt Hicks which is a couple of km up the road from a locked gate, our



intended put in/landing spot being a little bay on the eastern side of the small headland that is Pt Hicks. We walked up to the lighthouse passing Honeymoon Bay on the way and agreeing it was definitely doable although there were lots of rocks around and a couple of bombora's (reefs) off the beach which would need to be closely watched. Once at the lighthouse and out on the point we were very pleased we had aborted our launch as the wind had hit its full 30 knots and was gusting past that. The sea was wild and we would have had a very serious day had we got off the beach at Py-Yoot Bay.

We went to the light house keepers cottage to see about getting a key to the gate and to arrange a camp spot for the night. Brian & Elizabeth invited us in, let me use their satellite connected laptop to get an updated forecast and instead of letting us camp down on the beach offered us accommodation in one of the lighthouse cabins! We happily took up their offer and once we drove up and got settled Brian came around and offered us the lighthouse tour.

After climbing to the top and learning about



"This is Bemm River mate!"



View from Pt Hicks on the afternoon of Sunday 19th May

the history and operations of the lighthouse Brian invited us to his house for drinks. We were doing it hard.

The next morning, with a much improved forecast and calmer sea Barnabas and I launched and began our trip.

The initial plan was for a short day of around 21 km to a little Bay on the West Side of Wyngan Inlet which from the map looked as if it would be similar to the spot we just left at Hicks. When we arrived there were big sets hammering the beach and lots of seals in the water which rattled us a bit. I was still keen to land as the next landing from here was Malacootta over 35 km away and it was marginal whether we'd make it there by dark. Barnabas really didn't want to do a surf landing so we had a quick lunch stop on the water. I removed my cag and top so I was down to my summer paddling garb - this was going to be a flat chat run and I had no intention of letting up so wasn't worried about feeling cold. Conditions were good and we were averaging around 8 KM/h. It wasn't enough to beat nightfall and we found ourselves heading into Malacootta



Pt Hicks Light House

well and truly in the dark. There were rollers coming in and breaking in front of us and to our side where the boat ramp was supposed to be. I activated my GPS to see if I could find the ramp. It was 300 metres to our left, right about where the waves were breaking. We paddled tentatively towards the waypoint. "Breaker, reverse". There were waves breaking right where the GPS was telling us to go. We could see a port channel marker inside but although neither of us had ever

been to Malacootta I knew it was a nasty bar and although very dark, there were most definitely waves breaking all through. We really didn't fancy negotiating the bar as it would have almost certainly resulted in a trashing.

We used the GPS to find deep water, 7.2 metres. We decided to head to Gabo which would probably not have a surf landing but would mean paddling another 12 KM.



**Malacootta Boat Ramp. The little breakwall on the right is what threw us as it was taking the breaks so that in the dark it felt like you'd paddle straight into the break zone. One needs to do a bit of a dog leg to miss the breakers.**

Colin I think his name was, offered to drive his car to the ramp, a one minute drive, and we could then head for his headlights. We waited while he arranged this and when he called back he said he had a couple of local surfers, Trevor & Glen, who were happy to paddle out so we could follow them back in. I replied that the car headlights would be enough. We let a set go through and then gunned it for the headlights. We were soon pulling our boats up the gravel

next to the ramp with the help of the few locals who had gathered around. We gave our heartiest thanks. The Malacootta boat ramp is not the best camping site but as the rain started coming down and the cold started to set in getting organised was paramount. When Trevor and Glen realised we were going to camp Glen offered us a night at his house. We left the boats, assured they'd be fine, and took our sleeping gear and clothes. Soon we were having a hot shower, a beer and a serving

of fresh Abalone (Glen's an abalone diver) served up by Jade, Glen's wife, whilst being told all about fairies by their delightful five year old daughter Nina.

Three days in and we still hadn't set up the tents! Glen gave us a tour of Malacootta in the morning and by about 10.30 we pushed off to Gabo.

The trip across to Gabo Island was fantastic. Solid 20 knots behind us, sails up and we were flying. My new boat, Tiderace Pace 17, was on fire, the thing flies, catching every wave I went for responding to every move - all with a fully loaded boat. Poor old Barnabas was pushing hard to keep up and I had to zig zag to keep close. As we approached the island the sea was really picking up and it was hard to see if there was any reef amongst all the white caps and breaking waves. We dropped the sails and I caught a wave all the way to the bay and we were soon on the beach.

We got changed and were about to go up to the lighthouse cottage to see about paying for a night's accommodation in the lighthouse cabins as camping on Gabo is not allowed. The ranger came down on his quad bike and after a



**Barnabas goes wild**



A special place

chat invited us up to the lighthouse for a fresh forecast - and a tour!

A young Humpback put on a great display not long after we arrived on Gabo

With a calmer day forecast but more bad weather on the way we decided it best to make an early start. We headed around the bottom of Gabo and were soon crossing the VIC/NSW border. Later that day we landed at Nadgee River for a quick break.

On the fourth day of the trip we left Merrica River and continued Northwards. The weather was deteriorating and the sea was again rough. We crossed Disaster Bay with the sea on our beam and rounded Green Cape. We were not going to get a tour of this lighthouse!

We stopped in at Bittangabee Bay for lunch and then headed out into a solid 20 knot wind on a very confused sea. We were on high alert as we hammered home, sails up and going hard.

There were no more stops and we went straight on to Twofold Bay where we finished at Boydtown. We were home late that night to wives who were grumbling about us coming back so soon!



Outrigger practice

Barnabas is a competent expeditioner and strong and level headed paddler. This trip had lots of unexpected eventualities and situations, some of which had the adrenalin well and truly pumping. Its the unexpected, the rough conditions and the

on edge paddling that can turn a trip into an adventure and this trip had all of those elements.

I'll be heading south again the next chance I get. ■

# FAR SOUTH

## Two Nadgee nights & Two missed lakes

I was still buzzing along from the RnR, had acquired a virgin wilderness camp chair and a couple days to spare.

Nadgee beckoned.

I left my car at the Womboyn boat ramp early one morn and paddled out through the lake into Disaster Bay to be blessed with a NE wind and following sea.

I found some bushwalking friends (who have done the Nadgee pilgrimage by boat or foot for 20 consecutive years) at the Howe Hilton and stayed the night with them. Next morning dragged my boat to the northern end of Howe beach as the NE swell was pumping and, I figured it would be more relaxing, to get some sea room in the lee of the head. 'Hooned' down towards Gabo pushed by the big following swells, with my heart in my mouth, and my hands locked on the paddle.

Stopped off at the Iron Prince and went for a long wander amongst the dunes, where I took photos which are somewhere close to these words. I had a loose plan to find Wau Wauka Lake (and it looked easy on Google Earth)..... but eventually ran out of time and turned back.

Out on the water again, approaching Gabo, I wasn't sure what the waves and water were doing across the shallow passage, between the island and main land. I made the dumb decision to attempt a

beach (mainland) landing, figuring I could drag the kayak (again) around the sandy point and be in the lee of the swells.

Beach landing hairy but only resulted in one snapped skeg – I stupidly had forgotten to retract it. Never underestimate people's stupidity, especially my own.

The other lake I wanted to check out was Barracoota Lake. Paddled to the pole which marked the track, walked 20 minutes but ran out of light and turned back. Damn – another lake missed.

Paddling in on a little wave for a beach camp that dark evening, I surfed over a ray, which showed its displeasure by holding its barbed tail above the water in a menacing fashion – geez, the nerve of some wildlife in nature reserves.

Next morning paddled down to Mallacoota, found some trustworthy campers to mind my boat and gear and hitched back up to my car.

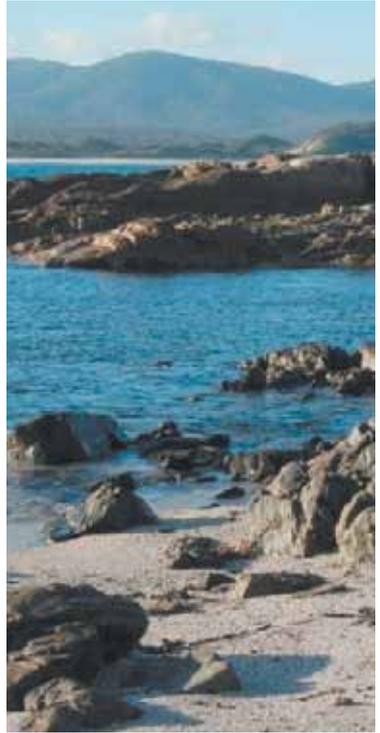
I'll get to those lakes another day.... Nadgee keeps on beckoning. ■



The Howe Hilton



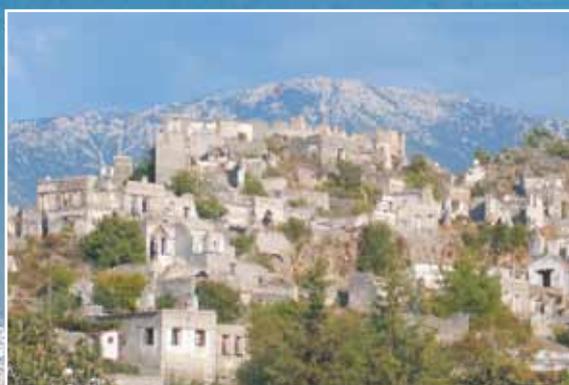
This photo by Gages, others by Vincent



By Neil Gow



Kayakoy ruins



# KAYAKOY Sea

**O**n my recent and first visit to Turkey I wished to do some sea kayaking after having been inspired by Selim Tezcan's video of kayaking a Cesme island near Izmir at the 2013 RNR film night. He had taken his own kayak, but gave me a couple of leads to find kayakers and/or kayaks for hire. One was the Bodeka Club in Istanbul and the other was a web link to a bloke in Izmir. A visit to the Internet revealed a short video of the Bodeka Club kayaking on the famous and crowded Bosphorous and stopping at a restaurant for lunch, but no contact details for the club. Scratch that one. I did locate the Izmir bloke's website and email, but as his business was a general outdoors business including skydiving (no, thanks!), he was not located on the water, and his prices seemed a bit high I scratched that one too. Therefore no trip to Cesme.

More internet searching came up with a sea kayak hire business at Akyaka, on Gokova Bay.

They had Prijon kayaks, at a reasonable price and were situated on the beach. My web search had also found Seven Capes Sea Kayaking near the popular tourist destination Fethiye. They offered Wilderness System Tempest 170 kayaks, and with no language barriers. My basic Turkish did not include discussions about wind, tide paddle length etc etc!

The Akyaka experience was disappointing. The equipment was old and poorly maintained. The scope for paddling was restricted as Akyaka is located at the head of a narrow gulf and a string wind blows from late morning every day. This is great for para surfers who flock there to zoom back and forth across a short beach, but with no surf! There are few landing points with steep slopes and cliffs running down to the water on both sides of the gulf. The town itself was a pleasant enough place to stay and is favoured by domestic tourists who go on day trips on gulets (large wooden sailing boats that never hoist their sails!), out to Cleopatra's Island for lunch and a swim, or

lie on the ubiquitous banana beds under beach umbrellas, whilst talking, reading and consuming food and drinks delivered from the many restaurants and bars. But the greatest limitation was the poor equipment.

Fortunately the Fethiye experience was very different. Dean Liversy's equipment is new and well maintained, he is an accomplished sea kayaker and he is an enthusiastic advocate of the Lycian coast. He lives at Kayakoy, a village abandoned by its Greek residents in 1923 after the Greco-Turkish war and made famous in Louis de Bernier's historical novel *Birds Without Wings*. Dean has surveyed the old walking and pack mule tracks between village and published guide books and leads treks on the Lycian and Carian Ways. The area is blessed with many historical sites including St Nicholas' Island and Lycian tombs.

Dean arranged accommodation with a local family in Kayakoy who provided a small apartment, home cooked food in a quiet setting. More lively places existed in the village, with



St Nicholas island from Gemiler Beach

# Kayaking

swimming pools and bars and there is a bakery and local shops. A local bus runs from Fethiye to Kayakoy. Dean guided us around the St Nicholas Island bay and I also hired a kayak to paddle north across the Bay of Twelve Islands from Fethiye to Gocek. I visited about six of the islands, although only two are inhabited. There is a summer only restaurant on another, but that wasn't yet open at the end of May. Plenty of gulets travel out from Fethiye and there were a few dive boats on the water. The wind came in from the west at about 11 am and I dropped my skeg to pass a few kilometers of cliff line with no landing places. Dean picked me up at Gocek at 4.30pm for a lift back to Kayakoy. After the prior disappointments and false starts, the Seven Capes experience had worked out well. Well enough to consider a return one day for a longer paddle down the coast.

Note: There may be other locations and kayak companies which are just as good, but this article is not meant to be authoritative. ■



By Josh Andrews

# Unofficial Paddles

You are with a group of paddlers, you have paddled with some of these guys before but you don't really know them. You may know what grade they are but you don't really know their capabilities. There doesn't seem to be a plan besides turn up and go for a paddle. So off you all go. One of your group decides to head towards a certain direction, most of you follow along. So the day continues, the group follows each other, members dart away from the group to look at one thing or another and mostly return a short time later. Eventually most of you return to the launch site at about the same time. Some of you pack up and head off while others continue with some skills practice, such as rolling. Eventually everyone assumes the paddle is finished and goes home.

We all know this is not the way we should paddle, even socially, but it still happens. We also know there are long lists of rules that Sea Leaders and Guides follow before planning a paddle. These procedures are very detailed and very necessary for official club paddles, but due to their complexity are mostly ignored for unofficial paddles, where simple fun is the ultimate aim.

So assuming you don't have time or an appetite to drill through all the club procedures, here are a couple of suggestions for groups of any grade to follow before conducting regular unofficial paddles.

## FORM A TEAM

Form a small team of between 4-6 paddlers. With a bit of luck you already have this group around you. The club is a great place to meet people that you can identify with and form a team. You should all share a common approach to Sea Kayaking and have similar skills. It is also helpful if you all have the same type of boats. Mixing fast tour boats with short plastic boats is probably not going to work. The same goes for sails, in general terms everyone should have one or no one has them.

In my experience any more than 6 is too big. It is hard to accommodate the expectations of 6 paddlers in a social setting, but this depends on your team.

At any rate start with a max of 6 and add more as your team see fit. With 6 you can expect at least 4 will make it to every paddle. Of course it is going to be a lot easier if you all live in the same area, or at least have easy access to the same stretch of coast or waterway.

Notice here I am using the term "team" not "group". Remember a team has a common purpose or vision. A team looks out for each other. Many international and local social paddling groups use logos and names to re-enforce a sense of a team.

Your paddles can be organised through any and all forms of modern communications from phones, email to social media. Whichever form your communication takes it needs to be accessible for all members of your team and be consistent.

## HAVE A LEADER

Most social groups find this aspect to be the most challenging and in some ways find it hard to balance the concept of having a leader with a group overall aim of having fun. The simple truth is all good teams have a leader. Having a leader focuses the team and reduces the uncertainty in your paddle. This makes the paddle safer and therefore allows you to enjoy the paddle more.

In practical terms this means you take turns to run a paddle. Anyone on an unofficial paddle can be the leader. If you all have the same skill level then the same person does not have to be the leader each time. Everyone commits to following the leader for the day, even if the leader by-passes features that you want to visit. Next time it will be your turn and you can take everyone to all your features. Don't forget if you are on a two way trip you will be going past these features again, perhaps you can talk to the group at the next stop.

Maybe a better term for some teams would be "facilitator" instead of "leader". The group should all have input for all activities throughout the whole day, but in my experience you need someone to focus the group and designate rendezvous and

navigation points and the like. The actual role of a leader will be unique within your team, but I strongly recommend that all groups have a leader.

Before the paddle the leader picks the paddle and the meeting point for the day and then communicates the general plan to the rest of the team. The general plan helps the team members to prepare and to bring the appropriate equipment and boat. The paddle plan is obviously based on the teams grading or experience. The leader should also arrange for a non-paddling friend (like their spouse) to know the basic details and expected time off the water (a verbal float plan if you like).

The leader of the day needs to facilitate a quick pre-launch team meeting. As a team you need to discuss and clarify the following:

- The plan and general route
- The weather, mostly wind and swell
- Rendezvous points
- Resting points, lunch
- Buddies
- Time off the water
- Skills aim of the paddle
- Safety

When your team is new you will need to spend some more time confirming some safety issues such as what to do if someone is in trouble, safety equipment carried by the team and safety communications. As your team develops, the pre-launch meeting should become short and sweet.

■ ■

**Have fun but be a team, look out for each other and don't endanger your mates**

■ ■

Whilst it is every sea kayaker's responsibility to check the weather, the designated leader needs to confirm that the team has the latest forecast. The team plan must be made with reference to the forecast.

Use a map or at least draw a map in the sand so that everyone is clear on the plan. As a team we respect the leader and listen and contribute to the pre-launch team meeting. If we have something we want to achieve we tell the leader and the rest of the group during the meeting, we don't just split away during the paddle.

### HAVE A SKILLS AIM FOR EACH PADDLE

A great way of developing the team both individually and collectively is to conduct some skills training during the paddle. As part of the pre-launch meeting discuss a skill/s and a place/s where you want to practice. I recommend that all day paddles should include some kind of training activity. This can be as simple as a rolling session at the end or involve complex surf and rock rescues. This only needs to be a small part of the day.

### THE TEAM; ON THE WATER

As part of the pre-launch team meeting the team designates rendezvous points. These are spots where the team comes together before moving on. These rendezvous points allow the team to confirm the plan and assess that our mates are still ok. The team should assume that there will be a rendezvous point at the start and end of every obstacle, such as a surf landing or rock garden etc. If someone does want to go their own way or a different way, they wait until the team meets up at a rendezvous point, then they let the team know what they want to do. Good team members check in and out with the rest of the team if they want to go elsewhere on their own.

As part of the pre-launch team meeting the team should consider forming into pairs or buddies. This is probably more important for new teams. You work together as a pair, looking after

each other. You always confirm that your buddy has got through an obstacle before moving on. Your buddy should have similar skills and outlook.

### POST PADDLE MEETING

A quick post paddle meeting, facilitated by the leader, confirms that everyone is off the water and is a good opportunity to reflect on the day and make improvements to the team's procedures. This meeting is especially important if something goes wrong. A simple way of initiating this is to ask the team "what would we do differently next time". Your team must be self-critical of any incident and all members must be open to constructive criticism. All team members must feel like they have an opportunity to voice an opinion during this meeting.

The final aspect of this meeting is to designate a new leader for the next paddle. If your team is just starting the most experienced paddlers should lead the first trips.

### INVITE A SEA GUIDE/ LEADER/INSTRUCTOR

Once your team has a couple of trips up, invite a NSWSKC Sea Guide/Leader/Instructor or any experienced club members along. Allow this member to observe your group and possibly help out with your skills training. Your team must be open to other ideas and observations to stay fresh and to continue to develop. During the post paddle meeting the Sea Guide/Leader/Instructor should be encouraged to share some observations and recommendations for your team. These paddles can potentially become official paddles allowing members to contribute to a grading. This process should occur regularly.

### OTHER CONSIDERATIONS

You don't need to have a secret handshake but you may find it useful to eventually name your team.

You could look towards having your team recognized by the club.

Lock in a set time each week/fortnight/

month for a team paddle. This trains your family so it becomes normal that you go for a paddle regularly.

Consider holding an annual trip. If you do this every year at the same time your family will eventually expect it.

Avoid meeting the team "on the water". It is much better to meet on land so you can all be part of the pre-launch meeting.

Consider having an annual challenge or goal, perhaps your skills training should lead to this. Such a goal maybe for the team to generally improve in grading, to undertake a committing trip or to complete certain parts of your coast or waterway together.

You may need to eventually discuss some kind of code of conduct, maybe this is as simple as a common agreement on rescues (i.e. self-rescue versus assisted and how to initiate an assisted rescue) or on the teams long term aims or on team and individual expectations.

Hold occasional training days, where the aim is solely perfecting a skill. A local pool or protected water could be used.

### CONCLUSION

At a minimum your team or the casual group you paddle with need to have a pre-launch meeting. If no one initiates this meeting don't be shy, call people together and start asking the group some basic questions.

Finally, have fun but be a team, look out for each other and don't endanger your mates. Think about the consequences for your team if you get into trouble. ■



# ON THE ROCKS

## Impact at South Head



Photo courtesy [kayakessentials.co.uk](http://kayakessentials.co.uk)

I arrived for this paddle that normally attracts more than 10 paddlers, sometimes a lot more. On this occasion we had 7 turn up which is a good number for some play around rocks. However my hopes for that gradually ebbed away as I looked around at the mix of boats: all composite kayaks with rudders and not a single helmet to be seen. So I imagined it would be just a normal cruise along this beautiful coast. During the briefing Rob confirmed my thoughts adding that there were good chances of seeing whales which he had seen almost every day in that last 3 or 4 days... and I hadn't brought my camera!

We launched and paddled out. There was no wind and the swell was between 1 and 2 meters with some reaching 3. The front of the pack was following the coast some 300 meters from the cliffs so I stayed where I like it, closer to the cliffs - some 0 to 5 meters from them.

From time to time I did a sprint from the cliffs to the group and then returned to my silent rocky friends. In that fashion we reached the corner where the 'dragon's cave' is located. I was unsure about going in or not, I didn't want to drag the group in when the stated aim of the paddle was to try and see some whales off the coast. Luckily

Mark was just ahead of me and he turned the corner to have a look. Of course nobody had to call me twice to go after him into the mayhem produced by bigger swells spilling their tops as they 'felt' the shallower bottom in our playground as well as the clapotis and jets of water bouncing from the cliff walls with spectacular splashes reaching high and far. The foam from the spilled waves mixed with the rebounds creating bigger waves that travelled parallel to the wall and I positioned myself to catch them, managing one really nice ride and some not so good.

Unfortunately, without helmets and with ruddered boats were more designed for speed than for playing, the rest of the group was just looking on and after a little while I felt guilty and retreated from the action.

We started the return, still not so close to the cliffs and still the whales were hiding. Reaching South Head I saw the waves breaking seductively over the rocky reef. A few months ago we were coming back from a similar paddle but with bigger surf over the reef and on that occasion I completely misread the waves and got trashed by a wave that broke over my head; I rolled and paddled out before the next set could get me and since then I take more care when trying to surf the South Head reef.

However this time the sirens songs

enchanted me and I could do nothing but head to the reef. I should have known better but I was under the spell.

Suddenly the incantation was broken and the water below me was being drained. Behind me I saw the wave mouth ready to eat me. The cliff and most of the rocks were over my left, so I started to paddle as fast as I could towards clear water on the right. I wasn't fast enough and finally the wave caught up with me. As the wave was already breaking I broached immediately, holding a high brace while surfing sideways over the rocks.

My trajectory and speed was taking me straight for the cliff wall. I tried to move my body to turn the kayak forward to see where I was being taken and hopefully regain the upper hand. You can do that by moving your weight back and stalling the stern of the kayak but I moved my body the other way and what stalled was the bow. I was now surfing backwards among rocks!

With the momentum of the wave carrying me I could not hope to stop the boat and paddle out. Soon I was broaching again and my stern caught a rock, already inside the rock garden. I held onto an aggressive high brace as I slid sideways closer and closer to the wall. I could feel the bumps of rocks against my hull and

prepared for the inevitable hit. I kept my top knee high and I hoped my hull would take the full force of the hit against the wall when it came.

Finally the wave drove my boat against the cliff before the surge receded, leaving me for an instant like a cartoon character suspended in mid air with the kayak laying flat against the wall and me protruding away from the vertical rock sideways at 90 degrees. As I fell into the water I hit the rocky bottom with my paddle and while my head was still above the surface took a quick look to see how much time I had before the next wave. I tucked in to set up for rolling, hoping I had enough depth to perform the roll without hitting rock.

I was neither lucky, nor unlucky. My helmet hit something and my arm brushed the seagrass on the cliff wall. I rolled up and before I could make any manoeuvre the next wave arrived to push me some meters higher onto more rocks - to complete my perfect uncontrolled sideways seal landing on a rock platform!

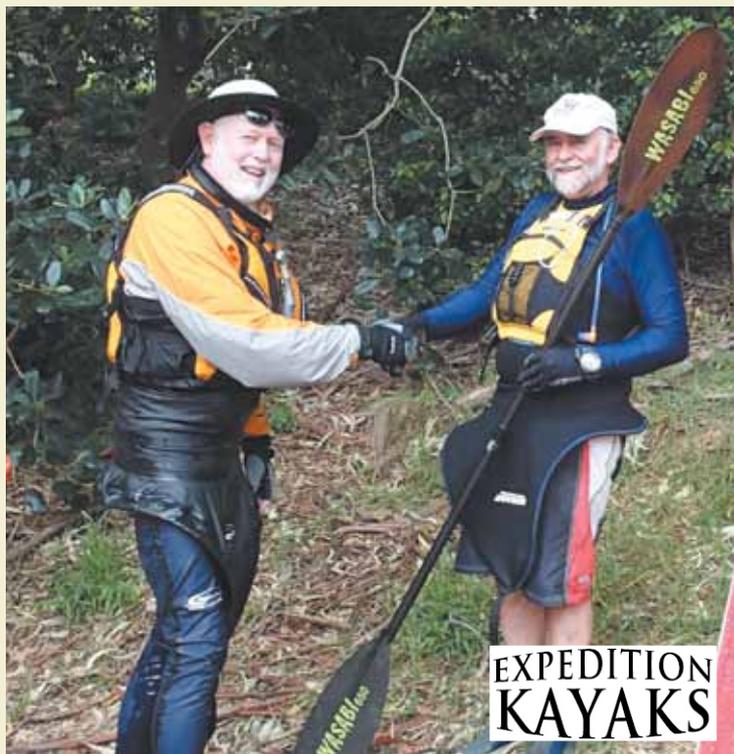
I got out of the kayak onto the rocks and signalled Rob I was ok, then dragged the kayak to the other end of the rock platform to relaunch on the calm side of the bay.

The rest as they say is history! ■



David Linco sets up to get out of trouble

## Saltiest submission **WINNER**



What would it be worth to you to be taught kayak navigation by a navy-trained specialist with the highest possible navigation qualification?

Our latest winner, Russ Swinnerton has shared a lifetime's wisdom and experience across several informative articles in SALT about all things navigation. Adding an excellent write-up about his trip to Canada made him a shoe-in for the latest Best Submission award.

And to prove his commitment, despite running off with the prize, he's prepared yet another exceptional article for this edition!

The club is lucky to have such a resource, and Rob Mercer of Expedition Kayaks was very pleased one Wintry day at Watsons Bay to present Russ with his prize, a carbon Wasabi 650 touring paddle.

Russ fended off prize-worthy contributions from Barry Marshall, Dennis Perigo, John Piotrowski, Mark Alchin, Lisa McCarthy, and regular offenders Alexander Manu and Frank Riitano, Dave Winkworth, Vincent Weafer and Mark Pearson.

To you and all our readers, be assured Russ' multi-article contribution does not set the bar for future winners! Expedition Kayaks' sponsorship extends to two more editions; send us whatever floats your boat – a skill, a thrill, a trip, tip or pic – glory awaits you! ■



# FAIL!

## An attitude

**A**fter almost ten years of working on the same project we were being made redundant and our work was seen as having little value.

The dejected members of my team moved on until I was the only one left. Realising a miscalculation in the strategy to wipe out our efforts of the past I was given my job back. But my responsibilities were slowly eroded until I was left with a bit of admin. It took ten months to be reduced from a confident, motivated, hardworking team leader with aspirations to move up the ladder, to moping about disinterested in performing tricks for those that had devalued myself and my teams efforts over the past ten years.

After a time this demoralising process had an effect on me, but unwilling to admit that work could impact other areas of my life I didn't see it.

The planned redundancy would have

meant that I would just miss out on my Long Service Leave – three months paid leave off work! LSL was something that has always been as remote to me as retiring on lottery winnings and now with weeks to go it was being snatched away. So when it was decided to keep me on the first thing I did was to plan my leave. Two weeks after my LSL was available I took June and July off.

I had already kayaked the western half of the Tasmanian coast but was keen to circumnavigate the island in one go. I had planned to paddle around Tassie in summer and had not entertained the idea of a winter trip, but after the idea got into my head it all seemed to conveniently fall into place.

I ignored advice from others and looked at weather stats and distances with only an optimistic eye. I magnified the rare periods of good weather and played down the bad. I was making sure the trip seemed possible to justify

the two months off work.

One aspect of the trip I was most looking forward to was relaxing at the end of each day; I even planned to carry a bottle of scotch to mellow out the evenings. On reflection this was evidence that a big part of the trip was about time off work to chill out. That's what you would expect if you are planning to sit on your arse in Fiji, but it's not the attitude if you're trying to accomplish a serious kayak expedition.

I had just finished writing "All The Way Round" about my kayak trip around Australia.

The book had been a tonic during the period at work where my self-esteem was being eroded. I was writing a book, I was creating something of value, a story of my achievement. As I worked on each chapter I was reliving the events of a successful trip that represented the pinnacle of my adventuring. This reminded me that I had achieved; I had



kept going and overcame much to achieve my goal. Without the book to remind me of what I was capable of I'm not sure I would have had a shred of self-confidence left.

To launch the book my publisher had arranged two days of radio and TV interviews in Sydney. I was taxied from interviews, to the publishers, out for lunch, more interviews then dropped off at my hotel. I had a few hours feeling a little like a celebrity. It ended all too soon after a live TV interview, which was scheduled to take up four minutes early on a Saturday morning. Glad I had a glamorous reply for anybody who asked "What's next?", I confidently announced my intentions of kayaking around Tasmania during the winter months.

My four minutes were quickly over and with it the celebrity status. That night I was halfway between Sydney and the Ferry to Devonport, sleeping in the back of my leaky

ute on the side of the road while it rained.

June 2013 I set off into headwinds from Devonport with the enthusiasm anybody would have on their first day. Two days later I approached Burnie with a forecast of crappy weather so I ran for shelter at the home of Bob, a kayaker I know, who has helped me get out of trouble a few times. I had put my perfectly good but dirty sleeping bag through a laundry. The result was a six foot bag with a clump of feathers at the bottom, so I needed a replacement and Burnie was my chance.

I had a mixture of weather with the winds doing everything apart from blow me along. I had times when there was no wind at all. It was hard to tell land and sea apart, both were glassy, grey, cold and just drawing breath. Mostly it was headwinds. The enthusiasm that saw me paddle into a wind on the first day had soon gone. Winds don't get tired, bored, demoralised or distracted. Knocking into something you can't see, knowing how much easier life would be if it wasn't against you is almost as bad as sitting on the beach in frustration waiting for the wind to change.

Anyway the realities were setting in, the blinkers had been taken off and I couldn't ignore the hardships now. I kept reminding myself that this was the most benign coast of Tasmania and things were going to get much colder, windier and bigger as I headed south.

I arrived at Stony Point as the daylight slipped away from a hard days paddle. The winds had picked up while I was in open waters making me work hard against the elements for any progress. Then as I approached Robbins Passage, which separates Robbins Island from the main land, I was further tested as I had to fight against the strong currents that flow through the passage.

I had to navigate a maze of sand banks split by fingers of deeper water that often dried up, the main channel was responsible for draining the bulk of the water out towards me. All I had to do to was paddle against the strongest current to keep in the deep water. My reward was the campground of Stony Point which had the luxuries of drinking water, huts to shelter in, a food drop and a sit down toilet.

I had a couple of rest days and then headed for the North West Tip of the main land. This area has complicated currents created as the tides force the sea over and around sand banks, channels, reefs and islands. I was not impressed that my calculations had managed to turn a good days paddle into an obstacle course involving

dragging the kayak over sand, paddling into currents, back tracking and waiting for the tide to bring enough water to justify a kayak. I finally made Woolnorth Point and set up camp in the rain.

I was very concerned about the next leg. I would be turning south down the west coast, if my calculations of the tide were correct I would be pulled round the corner and then committed to whatever conditions were thrown at me. It would be at least three weeks of kayaking along an exposed coast were big surf could be expected, reefs and rocks lay in wait and where there were very few chances to do anything other than make progress or wait until my supplies ran out. The weather changed quickly, so quickly that even during the better spells the sea does not have time to calm down from the last blow. The surf could easily pin me down on a remote beach, this was what I saw as the biggest risk of failure.

But I knew all that before I got to Tassie, and although I had every right to be nervous I was a step beyond just worried, I was scared! I had a restless night as the reality of what I had planned hit home, but what I lost the most sleep over was how I was handling it. My head was not in the right place for this, I was thinking bad things, only bad things. It was as though I wasn't there of my own free will, I was being forced down a path where the rewards did not match the risks. There was no vision of successfully paddling to Hobart, just me floating face down.

I've set off on some dangerous trips but I have never envisioned myself not getting out alive so vividly.

Not coping while lying in the tent with my poisoned imagination while listening to the trees being thrown about in the wind I got up at 5am. I ignored my dark thoughts set about preparing for the day ahead, knowing that when I got stuck into things I'd feel better. It was cold and still pitch black, I had hours to go until there would be enough light to see. I didn't want to paddle around the point in the dark, I knew there was a sunken ship and rocks to dodge as well as the currents to work, but I had up to 0800 until the tide would be against me.

A watery daylight struggled through at 7am to reveal the tide was defying my careful calculations and the current was running against me with a flow more like a river in flood than an ocean.

The forecast that had enticed me out to the point a few days ago was for south east winds with a swell less than 3 meters. I thought I could get some shelter from the winds along

By Stuart Trueman continued



the coast and make the most of the low swell to make progress. But now the forecast had been upgraded and the winds were 25 knot headwinds for days and days with a swell building over 3m.

My choices were to portage my gear 400 meters to the west coast and launch through the reef, wait six hours until the tide changed, or return to Stony Point. But I couldn't wait too long as there was no drinking water. The short days meant I didn't want to set off in the afternoon as there would not be enough daylight forcing a landing on an unfamiliar shore in the dark.

In the end I felt I had no choice, I decided to head back. As soon as I realised it was the only real option, the stress that had built up inside released itself and I suddenly felt very tired.

As I was leaving Woolnorth Point I took a few paddle strokes away from the shore and sat with the kayak facing west as the current swept me back. I was still very conflicted with my decision to turn back, so knowing that I would regret not trying I ignored the futility and gave a few half-hearted strokes into the strengthening current. Then my rudder pedal broke in half which 'sealed the deal' and I turned around and ran back to Robbins Passage.

Nothing bad had actually happened. I had taken the only realistic option as the next forecast promised 30 knot headwinds for days.

As you read this it probably seems like a no brainer that to turn back was the only option. But it was not that simple. I saw turning back as a weak decision signalling the failure of the trip. I was very disappointed with how I handled it. My state of mind had

admitted failure before I'd even started; I'd given up in my sleeping bag.

I had given in, then realising that perhaps I had an excuse I was relieved I was that I wasn't heading down the west coast.

The rudder pedal needed replacing, it was all I needed to get myself out of the area. I had decided on a plan to try and restore some of my self-esteem without the commitment of weeks down the west coast. I'd get down to Hobart, paddle south to Cockle Creek then head west along the south coast into Bathurst Harbour to pick up a food drop and return to Cockle Creek before exploring the east coast back to Devonport. Dave Kelly came to my rescue and I soon found myself at Kettering south of Hobart with 60km's to paddle to Cockle Creek.

I slowly made my way further south, towards Cockle Creek against those headwinds again. It was freezing, at one stage I found myself in a public toilet recovering with some noodles from the early stages of hypothermia. As I got closer to Cockle Creek I paddled out from the shelter of Bruny Island and caught the swell generated from those southerly winds that had been blowing for a few days. It wasn't too bad but just a reality check as to what was around the corner on the south coast. Every now and again one would sneak through that really showed the oceans temperament.

The sea state was with a South East swell of 3m and a South West swell of 3m and a 2m sea running over the top. This meant that all the landings on the south coast beyond Cockle Creek would have 3m swell coming at them from two directions, so no easy landings for a kayaker.

However conditions were expected to improve and remain good for a few days. If I waited another day I could expect a cruise

towards the west and Bathurst Harbour.

On the other hand I could use the good weather to explore the south east of Tassie. The East coast to Devonport was the only section of Australia's coastline I had not paddled and I was keen to explore as I'd heard a lot about the stunning sights.

This was a difficult decision for me as I saw it firstly as another failed plan, preferring to take the easy option without even trying. I had a list of good reasons why I should head up the east coast and a bigger list why I shouldn't head west.

I had no enthusiasm to take advantage of the precious spell of good weather to stick my neck out into the west coast only to come back when the weather allowed. Again the rewards did not seem to justify the risks. It would be unlikely that I would get another chance to paddle the south east coast with such a good weather forecast. So I took the chance to enjoy exploring the area without the disadvantage of bad weather.

This was a completely foreign mindset for me and I was to grapple with its implications on a daily basis as I headed up the East coast. Twice now on the same trip I'd turned back without even trying, I was having doubts about my ability to cope with the conditions without experiencing what I was in for. However I looked at it the trip was a FAIL. Either my plan was the failure or I was, I couldn't even blame the weather this time.

I left CC and making the most of the weather set off for the southern tip of Bruny Island at Tasman Head.

As a consolation the scenery of the East coast was just as others had described. The northern tip of Bruny Island made me sit back and exclaim "wow!" The cliffs were made up of many narrow parallel columns stacked together. They burst from the surf reaching unbroken high enough to have clouds wrap around them. I had a slow paddle around the cape taking it all in until I felt the current taking me some place I didn't want to go. That woke me up and I doubled my efforts until I was heading back towards Adventure Bay.

I landed at Adventure Bay at the first bit of sand I could see after a long 60km day from Cockle Creek. Things didn't look good for a camp spot so I just gave the kayak a lazy pull up the beach as I checked behind the dunes for a camp spot. No luck, I turned around to see my kayak drifting out to sea. It was already well on its way and looking like having no regrets as it picked up speed in the breeze. I couldn't delay and sprinted into the frigid sea and with a few frantic jumps followed by a swim we met up.

As I was swimming us back to shore I kept a look out for the locals as I tried without success to think of a reasonable story to explain my predicament if I was being watched.

Next day I camped on the southern tip of Bruny in a boat shed that looked like it would fall down if I scratched myself. One of the advantages of this time of year is that I could camp just about anywhere, there were very few people about. Tourists were hard to find, so the whole industry had gone into hibernation for the winter. Those locals who had been abandoned until summer just left me to myself as they shuffled by on their way to a heater somewhere.

I had to pick up supplies and headed into Hobart. I landed at Sandy Bay, picked up some food and threw down a couple of coffees, one on the floor and one on the beach! I discovered while buying the second coffee that the next day was the shortest day of the year. Apparently this is a good enough reason for hundreds of people to turn up at the very beach I'd landed on for a 0730 swim in the nude! The temperature had been 2 degs C for the past few mornings. I thought that the temperature alone would not allow the crowd to impress. With my imagination seeing hundreds of aging, pale blue, wrinkled bodies, who had lost the battle with gravity, leaping down the beach with total disregard for their heart condition I set off again.

The weather was holding, allowing me to take in SE Cape and the impressive coast of the Tasman Peninsular.

I spent three days kayaking and walking around Maria Island. In Shoal Bay I found a couple aged 65 who could no longer carry rucksacks so he had built a trolley allowing him to continue to carry their camping gear. He and his wife were set up for a few weeks camping away from the more populated areas. I liked this. He had overcome the problem with his innovation allowing him to keep on doing what he loved.

I arrived at Wineglass Bay in the dark. This was one of the main disadvantages of winter days, they were short. If the weather was good I would make the most of the day and do my 50-60km, which left little daylight as I landed. Wineglass Bay is a beautiful place, clear waters surrounded by a sheltered sickle of sand and bush, highlighted against a steep back drop of wooded hills fringed with rock. But I only saw this as I was leaving in the morning, all I'd seen until then was within the confines of the beam of my head torch!

The spell of good weather lasted until I got to Bicheno, then it blew up a storm. Despite

having a great paddle from Cockle Creek and exploring some of the best coast line in Australia I was having a hard time.

From day one I had aggravated an issue with my elbow which was getting worse. It was painful while paddling and then competed with the cold to keep me awake at night with a dull ache building to a worrying "very uncomfortable, better get this looked at" sort of feeling.

My aches and tiredness were hard to ignore because I was not truly motivated to continue my failed trip. The weather window meant that if I had gone west from Cockle Creek I could have got to Bathurst Harbour and back to Cockle Creek or up the west coast past Strahan. 'Hindsight is a wonderful thing' is one of the standard phrases to make us feel better when we stuff up. If I had made the most of the conditions and had the presence of mind to keep my original objective a priority, as I had on other trips, then I should have used the weather window to get up the west coast.

I spent a week at Bicheno waiting for a storm and 30 knots of northerly winds to clear off and play somewhere else. In my frustration I took a slight improvement in the weather forecast as a signal to move on. Stupid decision! I only got 2km, then without paddling a stroke was blown directly back to where I set off from in half the time.

When the time came for me to actually move on I found the north east coast a bit of a hidden gem. It had a rural feel, plenty of

space and clean waters with bush running down to open beaches. The beach landings were unavoidable and could sport decent surf, but I was lucky having a great time in this unexpected playground for kayakers.

Clear weather followed the storm, which brought cold nights. I could see the first snow of the year on the hills and in the mornings the tent and kayak were covered in frost. My 'dry suit' was over seven years old and could now just be called a 'damp suit', it was wet inside but not too cold.

When things got wet they stayed wet, there were only a handful of times throughout the trip when I found myself putting on dry paddling clothes in the morning. When the weather was good enough to dry clothes I was paddling, if I was not paddling then there was a good chance it was raining. So things got wetter. and the 'Put On Dance' with the cold, wet paddling gear was regularly performed.

The 'Put On' dance starts as you consider yesterdays pile of wet paddling clothes before kayaking. In an increasing state of agitation you circle the pile, brush sand off it, make sure arms and legs are not tangled, lay items out so they are easy to grab, and do anything else that you can think of to put off the next part of the dance. This involves stripping your warm fleeces off during a sub zero dawn and replacing them with the cold, smelly, wet, salt encrusted thermals that take your breath away. The tempo is quite fast as the fleeces come off, but in a race to beat turning blue the tempo is increased until the 'damp suit' is



On the Costa del Tassie

By Stuart Trueman continued

zipped up. Then the dance finale is jumping on the spot as your body numbs itself to the shock before encouraging blood back to the extremities. You are now ready to break out through the surf.

I tried a couple of things to make the days start as painless as possible.

I tried sleeping with the thermals in my sleeping bag to dry them overnight, but that just left me with a wet sleeping bag and wet thermals in the morning.

I tried getting into my paddling gear at the very last minute, when the kayak was all packed on the beach and ready to go. I misjudged the surf and half way into my 'Put On' dance as I was pulling on my 'Damp Suit' a wave crept past the kayak and start to pull it into the surf without me. I had to add a new move to the dance, which was bunny hopping with the 'Damp Suit' round my knees as I pulled my reluctant partner, the

kayak, out of the surf and back up the beach.

I settled on going from the depths of my cosy sleeping bag to the horizontal 'Put On' dance in my tent. This took a bit of organising before going sleep, the reward was short, sharp and just as unpleasant as any other method but it gave a bit of privacy. In the end I had to put the same cold, wet, smelly clothes on.

I worked around the current of the North East corner getting to Musselroe Bay. It had been 14 years since I was last here after completing my first Bass Strait crossing and I was pleased to see not too much had changed. This is the start or end point of many Bass Strait crossings over the years, a classic, three star sea kayak trip which has tested many paddlers.

I had a good run of weather all the way from Bicheno to Devonport, which I much appreciated after noticing all the bushes on the north coast had been encouraged by the prevailing winds to grow

eastwards and point at me.

I had set off to circumnavigate Tasmania during winter and I didn't get it done.

I wouldn't say that I could totally blame my state of mind as the only reason the trip fell apart, perhaps I'm getting too old for this stuff now, it could be that it was just too hard and I don't like that fact.

I have talked to professionals who manage risk and they sympathise with my difficulties in dealing with my disappointments but who have no doubt that I did the right thing by turning back. I'm still not sure. It's been over three months since I caught the ferry back and I'm still questioning my decisions and attitude.

The baggage you carry around in your head can be much more of a burden than the load you carry in your kayak.

Would I try again? I really don't know. ■

# Roll up, roll up for ROCK 'N ROLL 2014



It's that time of year to start planning to attend the premier social and paddling event on the NSW Sea Kayak Club calendar and get ready to Rock n Roll.

Next year we have booked out Batemans Bay Beach Resort, Batemans Bay from March 8th and 9th for a weekend of extensive paddling trips, hands on technical workshops, skills instruction and plenty of opportunity to catch up with old friends and make new ones.

Rock n Roll is a great opportunity to showcase our Club, our sport and learn about the ever increasing scope of what ocean paddling means. Be sure to come along, bring your family, friends, neighbour and introduce them to the great sport of ocean paddling in a controlled and safe environment.

Our theme for 2014 is "Get Connected" and each activity will have a component to meet other paddlers particularly those in your area. If you've never been to a Rock n Roll, make sure to come along and "Get Connected" with a paddling buddy in your area.

Batemans Bay is only 3.5 hours drive south of Sydney located at the mouth of the beautiful Clyde River. Batemans Bay Beach Resort

offers the full range of accommodation options from tenting to glamping and if you mention the NSWSKC, a discount of 10% will apply.

The topography provides the full range of conditions for all paddlers and promises to be a wonderful weekend of pushing skill levels (if you wish to be challenged) or simply enjoying the sheltered waters of the bay.

Rock and Roll has a programme that has been perfected over the years to offer something for everyone so there are no major changes planned for 2013 but we have introduced some new segments to keep this event at the cutting edge of the Australian Ocean Kayaking community.

1. **Saturday Night Dinner** – along with our keynote speaker, a new segment titled "No Holds Barred", featuring a frank interview about a recent paddling incident involving one of our own paddlers.
2. **Sunday Night** – Kayaking Masterchef Cook Off followed by the Pogies" Short Film Festival.
3. **Meet Greet & Paddle** – Over the course of the weekend, helping people get connected to form paddling buddies in their local area. Last year we had 185 registrations and

this year with the close proximity to the "Mexican" border, we are expecting over this number. Registration will open in late January so get in quick as we will need to cap registration if numbers exceed 200. Due to the great work of the club committee, registration costs for Rock n Roll have remained constant over the years. However it is expected there will be an increase for 2014 to keep pace with increasing costs of staging this event.

This event would not be possible without the generous support from our sponsors. If you are involved in the kayaking business community, we would love to hear from you to participate in Rock n Roll 2014 through either a sponsorship package or donation of a prize for our raffle.

If you are new to the club and or never attended a Rock n Roll, make sure you get along to Batemans Bay next year to brush up on your skills and most importantly "Get Connected".

More information will be posted on the club website as the date approaches. ■

David Linco Rock n Roll co-ordinator

# Letter to the EDITOR



Hi,

A great magazine, great content very well presented.

One comment though, after reading the Bass Strait crossing article I thought it might be worthwhile noting that many of the islands in the Furneaux group have leases, are owned by the aboriginal people (eg Clarke Is, Cape Barren Is) and I think some might even have private ownership. ie access restrictions.

It is a good idea for paddlers doing this trip to at least be aware of the "legalities" so uninformed paddlers don't muck it up for others doing the trip in the future by misplaced understanding of the situation or inappropriate behaviour. Permission to use the affected islands should be requested and to date, for us at least, had not been a problem. Maybe a note from the mag editor in articles such as the one featured? (it is also possible to fly under the radar)

By way of illustration and I can't remember all the details, but in the last year or so recently a leaseholder issued a letter saying no access to their leased island which prompted our club to respond to the lease issuer along the lines that this was inappropriate application of leaseholder rights.

Here's a link that may be useful. [http://www.tsc.org.au/TSCC\\_IslandAccess\\_2012.pdf](http://www.tsc.org.au/TSCC_IslandAccess_2012.pdf)

Happy to provide more info/thoughts if deemed desirable.

Regards,

Greg Simson

## Christmas comes early!

### FREE digital edition of Ocean Paddler magazine

Thanks to Rob Mercer's connections with the highly regarded OP magazine (he regularly publishes articles there), we're pleased to offer our members exclusive access to the latest edition – no strings attached! Just go to [tinyurl.com/nswskc-preview](http://tinyurl.com/nswskc-preview)

If you'd prefer hard copy, print it from that site, or to download a pdf go to our club home page.

Ho! Ho! Ho!

### Christmas gift suggestions

What should you slip into at the end of a day on the water? A stupid T-shirt, of course. We liked these but there are many more out there.

See them at [www.tinyurl.com/getmethis1](http://www.tinyurl.com/getmethis1) and [tinyurl.com/getmethis3](http://tinyurl.com/getmethis3)





# Assisted rescue technique (by helicopter)

**I**t was a sunny late winter afternoon as I paddled out from Vaucluse Bay, in my shiny, relatively new, red and white Pace 17. As I passed Lady Jayne beach, I thought to myself 'should I be doing this alone'? After all, I had only rolled this boat once and I had not installed a pump or practiced self-rescue. I knew that the Pace was less stable than my ten year-old Mirage 580 and the Pace had a prominent bow area that catches the wind. It was a fleeting thought. The seas were smooth. There was little wind. It was just a beautiful Sydney afternoon.

I paddled quickly to burn off the stress of the past week's work. Soon I was through Sydney Heads and then heading to the south, in a line 150 metres from the coast. I decided to have a drink so I put my tethered paddle in the water beside the boat as I normally do so I could open the front hatch to get the water bottle. It was then that things started to go pear shaped.

I suddenly noticed that my paddle had drifted away. Flabbergasted, I hand paddled backwards and grabbed it. I didn't have a spare paddle and I wondered what



would have happened if I hadn't been able to pick it up. Then I saw that the clip on the paddle leash had chipped and was damaged. I tied the paddle back to the leash, put it confidently back in the water and went back to enjoying my drink.

All of a sudden rebound hit the bow and I capsized, catching a glimpse of my fluoro orange hat as it drifted off. I didn't have my paddle in my hand and decided to wet exit. The water felt cold even though I was well dressed in my long neoprene 3/4 kayaking pants, socks and kayak boots.

I turned the kayak over and then tried

my cowboy rescue. The boat was really unstable with a cockpit full of water and I couldn't manage to re-enter. I cursed myself for not installing a pump. I had a hand pump but it would have taken a lot of energy to remove all the water. I tried to reenter again and again, losing more energy each time.

There were no boats around. What could I do? I thought about my options but my number one concern was the cold water. So I decided to swim towards the closest rocky outcrop with the intention of jumping back in the kayak. I started swimming sidestroke holding the front toggle of the kayak. To go faster and use both hands, I decided to retrieve my tow rope from my back hatch. When I did this, I got the tow-rope but the back hatch filled up with water.

As I headed to the rocks, I noticed the power of the waves. I swam for about 10 minutes and was close to the rocky edge when suddenly one wave sucked me underwater, then the next wave spat me out onto a rocky ledge. It caught my kayak which ended up between two rocks. I grabbed it, turned it over and reached into the back hatch to grab my dry bag which contained my mobile phone..... but alas it was gone.

Wave after wave broke on me and the kayak. I knew that I had to get out of the water. With trepidation I felt for my emergency kit which contained a light and PLB and I found it in the back hatch..... thank god. I climbed higher onto the rocks grateful that I was out of the cold water and would make it to tell a story. I could only watch as my water-logged kayak was flogged by the pounding waves; I realized that I would be unable to relaunch. Since there was no way up the cliff, I had no alternative but to take out my PLB and trust that it would do its job.

I observed the time as 3.45pm and set the antennae of the PLB and pressed the button. There are no heroics in it, sometimes you just mess up and this was it. I waited for about half hour before the yellow and red Westpac rescue helicopter appeared from the north and headed south out to sea, so far away that I wondered whether it was coming for me. It soon turned north and headed close to the cliff line straight towards me. I felt I was on a movie set (and in fact I was, as I found out later, a Channel 7 helicopter was also

around filming for their program Air Rescue). I stood up on a rock and waved. It hovered above me and stayed there for about 30 seconds until my rescuer appeared on a winch and landed on a rock above me like spiderman. He signaled for me to wait and rock climbed down to me. After assessing that I was still compos mentis, he relayed this via a radio on his shoulder. A harness was put on me and then we were hauled up to the helicopter. I noticed I had blood on my hands which came from superficial lacerations to my scalp.

It was obvious that I was dressed for the conditions, I was wearing a PFD and my use of PLB saved time and worry. I had a grand view of Sydney as I landed at Watson's Bay naval site. I was met by the police and ambulance who had been given the circumstances of my predicament from the water police who also attended the scene. They took my name and I was on my way a little worse for wear but kayakless. The Pace has not been found and my Mirage is happy to have its owner back; I had paid the price for my infidelity. ■

#### MY LESSONS.

1. Paddling alone multiplies the risk of something going pear shaped quickly.
2. Test out any new equipment to ensure that you can confidently self rescue.
3. Keep your paddle ready to use, while taking a break.
4. Don't take valuables paddling as they are expensive to replace.
5. Buy a PLB and carry it on your PFD. It is an item to be used as a last resort but you just never know when you will need it.

**PS.** Channel 7 news carried my rescue and you can see it here in all its glory [tinyurl.com/chopper-south-head](http://tinyurl.com/chopper-south-head)

**PPS.** A big thank you to the Westpac Life Saver Rescue Helicopter Service.



# THE SEA is my garden

## HOW I DISCOVERED ROCK GARDENING

If my memory has not failed me, my first Rock & Roll (R&R) was in 2011, I had joined the club a few days before. Jim Kakuk, from the Tsunami Rangers on the USA's west coast, was one of the speakers at that R&R...I had no idea who he was, I was new to sea kayaking events. Jim offered a rock garden 'trip' and I jumped on it without fully understanding where I was getting into.

A few months earlier I had upgraded my yellow plastic bath-tub that was four meters long and something similar in width, for a 'fast' secondhand composite kayak. It had a white hull and pink deck (hey, it was cheap and we live in Sydney, don't we?) which was the kayak I took to the rock garden session.

By the end of that session the white hull

was white with fiberglass stripes and lighter - the kayak had lost a significant amount of gel coating and composite material. Over the following weeks I spent countless hours repairing the cosmetics and the hole I had made while I wondered if buying the fast composite had been a good decision

I did not regret for a second the fun I had hopping from rock to rock, falling from overfalls or getting stuck on top of rocks as a result of missing the wave to push me over it. I later sold the 'fast' kayak and replaced it with a plastic Aquanaut, in red... I was told red is the fastest colour.

## GARDENING GAMES

That first experience with rocks, salt water and surf is still fresh and I rediscover that thrill and fun every time I go rock gardening. You have to be close to the rocks to feel the energy of the

water washing over them. The bubbles make the water look like it is boiling, and it is so white you wonder where the blue has gone.

I play hide and seek with the rushing waves. When I am behind a boulder the waves look for me, splashing a salty rain over my helmet. I know the moving water has found me when I see a whirlpool forming, pushing my kayak out of its hiding place. Other times, the wave just pours over the boulder producing a waterfall that washes over my bow. When the waves try to catch me coming from behind the cliff I paddle in front to catch a free ride in the confusion of rebounds. It is the sensation of only just being in control, and having to keep concentration from going under that always pulls me back for more.

## MY FAVOURITE GARDENS

When I was living on the northern beaches I would go rock gardening around there. The rock gardens along the northern beaches are not the best but you can still play when the



Masterclass by Fer #1



Masterclass by Fer #2



Masterclass by Fer #3



Matt Bezzine high n dry by Rob Mercer

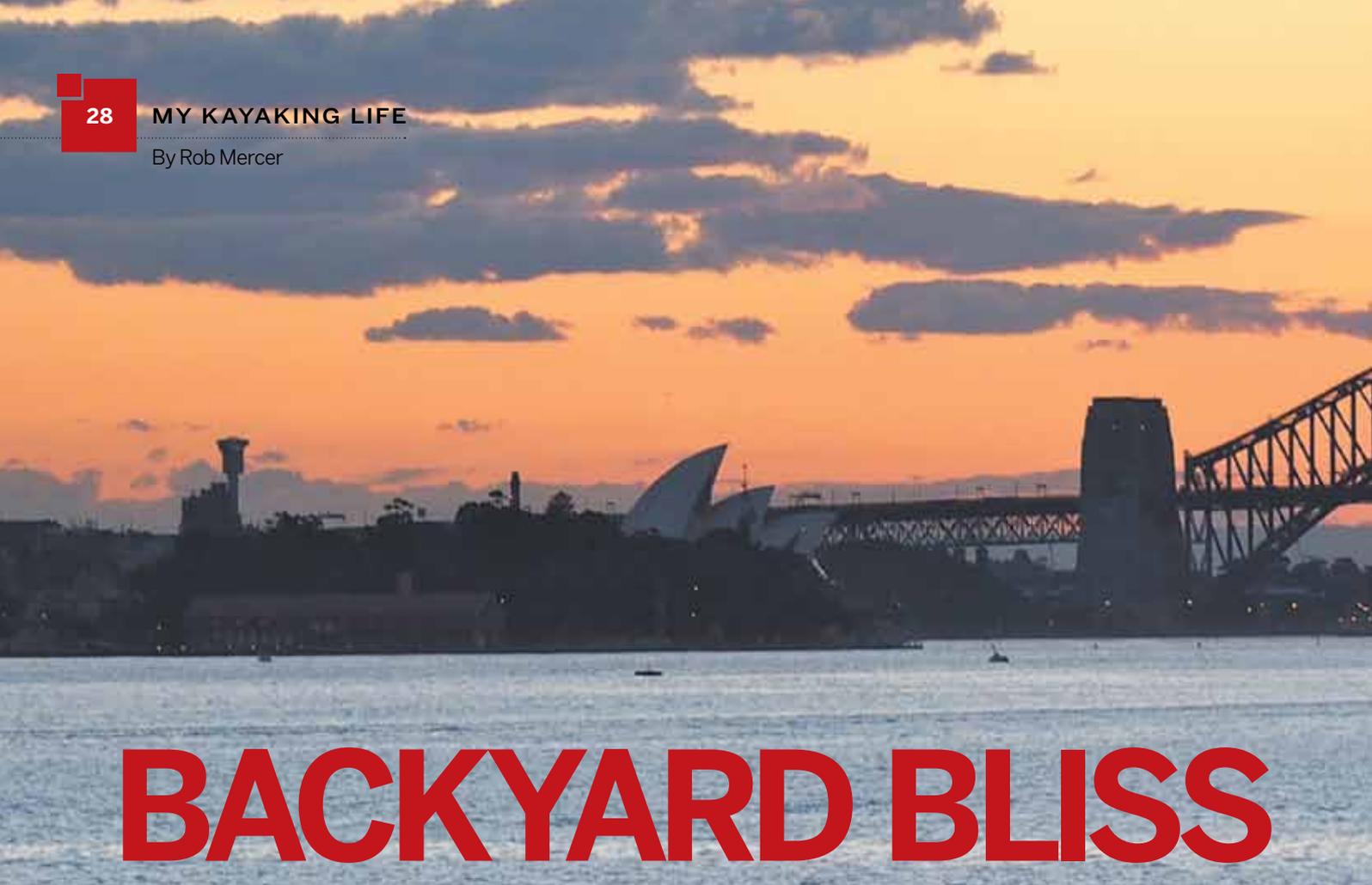


Josh Andrews poking about

conditions are right. Some places I frequented were out of Mona Vale pool, Long Reef or Barrenjoey Head. If the conditions are right you can play out of the Sydney Harbour Heads too.

The key words are always 'if the conditions are right'. When the conditions are not right rock gardening can become scary and turn into a disaster very quickly. A cool-headed assessment of the risks, exits and potential fun needs to be carried out before going into any rock garden.

I don't get away from the big city every weekend (a local paddle is enough for me) but when I do I have found fantastic rock playgrounds around Broughton Island near Port Stephens, and Fraser Beach on the central coast. Josh has been showing me around some amazing rock formations near Minnamurra, south of Sydney, and on a recent paddle trip I found very nice features to play in Batemans Bay. Next R&R will be in that location... youpi!! ■



# BACKYARD BLISS

I think most sea kayakers would agree that there is no typical day on the water. The ever-changing interaction between wind, sea, current and swell is our guarantee that every paddling day will be unique. Add to this the subtle play of light on clouds, waves against a backdrop that includes sandstone cliffs, golden sandy beaches and one of the most distinctive cityscapes you are likely to see from the seat of your kayak and you start to understand the challenge of describing the paddling opportunities that await the sea kayaker wanting to explore Sydney.

As you leave Frenchman's Bay and paddle past the historic battlements of Bare Island you could be forgiven for being a little skeptical. With the major working Port of Botany at your back, the humble monument to French Explorer La Perouse to your North, and international flights skimming ridiculously low over the Bay: it's all very interesting and scenic but what does it have to do with the essential Sydney kayaking experience? Well, I want to share my impressions of our City by the Sea, a place of great contrasts.

Heading North on a summer "southerly buster" or a prevailing winter wind, the conditions on this 32km day trip will provide you with some exciting running in following seas and rebounding swells before you reach the relative calm of Sydney Harbour. In other words you will "earn" your scenic landing and

hopefully feel a sense of the place as you watch the sunset over the major landmarks of central Sydney.

As you continue to seaward out of Botany Bay you will paddle past Henry Head and catch your first glimpse of the swells pounding in to Cape Banks. Tidal flows are fairly gentle around Sydney but water leaving Botany Bay on the ebb can cause southerly and SE swells to stand up and at times break heavily and well offshore, sometimes out to the busy shipping lanes.

Until you reach Sydney Heads (some 14kms away) this is the last time you will have to be wary of heavy shipping and in winter even pleasure craft will be scarce. For company you are more likely to have black browed albatross, gannets, shearwaters, silver gulls and the occasional Humpback Whale: the latter are often seen breaching along this section of coast in Autumn and early Winter as they head North to give birth in the warm tropical waters of Queensland.

Cape Solander on the southern entrance to the Bay has a land-based public viewing platform atop the cliffs specifically to watch this migration and the spectacular return in spring when the whales cruise back to the Antarctic with their lively and inquisitive calves splashing around. For those of us lucky enough to view the whales from our kayaks there are exclusion zones to observe, but the whales don't always follow the rules. I have been surprised by a spy-hopping juvenile in heavy weather with its huge head out of the water

just checking me out and even had them breach without warning only a couple of boat lengths away. Less common cetacean visitors include Southern Right Whales, Blue Whales, Pilot Whales and the occasional pod of Orca preying on the others.

Even more common than the whales are the large sea going Bottle Nose Dolphins that herd schools of fish along the cliffs and will sometimes play if you can paddle fast enough to keep them engaged.

To our port there is a long series of honey gold sandstone cliffs and to starboard an uninterrupted horizon with the nearest landfall thousands of miles away in New Zealand. From seaward of Cape Banks the successive headlands leading to the Harbour obscure the Sydney beaches and it is easy to forget that you are paddling parallel to a seething metropolis of almost 5 million people. Part of this impression is aided by the fact that beyond the cliffs there is a green buffer zone of four championship 18 hole golf courses cut into the coastal heath and linked by pockets of National Park.

This first cliff section finishes at the well-named Little Bay with its obscured dogleg entrance that will allow a safe but exciting landing from most directions in long groundswells to 4 metres.

Then we have Malabar with its resident population of Grey Nurse Sharks. On a sunny day these hefty and extremely villainous



# An ode to Sydney paddling

looking sharks with jagged protruding teeth can occasionally be seen holding station just below the surface off the cliffs of Magic Point. This area is now a marine sanctuary to protect the habitat of these gentle monsters that were wrongly implicated for many years in fatal attacks on swimmers. Today dive boats frequent the area and the spear guns have been replaced with cameras seeking far more sustainable trophies.

Our next beach beyond Magic Point is Maroubra, the southernmost of the eastern Sydney surf and swimming beaches. Aspect and landform make this a "swell magnet" and therefore a favourite spot for board riders. The local scene is notoriously territorial with competition for waves so fierce that "goat boats" are not welcome here which really doesn't matter as it is usually a hard landing in very steep waves; far bigger and harder than most will enjoy in a full size sea kayak anyway.

To the North we will now be able to see into the big embayment between Lurline Bay and Ben Buckler and among the short stretches of cliff and rocky points catch our first glimpses of the famous swimming and surfing beaches of Coogee, Tamarama and Bondi. From the sea they are just crescents of fine yellow sand sandwiched between breakers and buildings but on a sunny day these sandy crescents are teeming with swimmers.

The only coastal island around Sydney is the tiny swell battered Wedding Cake Island

off Coogee. This provides a potential for play as swells often wrap around the Island from both directions and collide along the Western Shore. Wedding Cake Island also represents a crossroads in our day trip. In the cooler months when swimmers will be in the hundreds rather than thousands we can head in to Coogee Beach for lunch. In the northern corner and along the rocks at Dolphin Point, a strong and permanent rip forms a deep channel along the shoreline draining water back out to sea. Although we will paddle against this rip to land beneath a sign that warns of dangerous currents, this current ensures a good safe distance from "the flags" and the deep channel softens the force of the break.

As we enjoy the feel of warm sand under our feet we can look back at the historic Dome of the recently resurrected Palace Hotel, which in the late 1800s housed an aquarium and auditorium. In the spirit of English seaside promenades a 150meter wharf was added but quickly demolished by the surf.

In summer we will paddle beyond Dolphin Point for a less congested landing at Gordons Bay; a deep rocky cove sheltered by a "Bombora" (an Indigenous Australian term for reef break). In light conditions this can be a fun ride for those with a helmet.

Before lunch we can snorkel in the clear waters of this marine reserve and see some of the locals including the sedentary Wobbegong and shy Port Jackson Sharks along with large Blue

Groper, Stingaree and many schools of smaller fish of all shapes and sizes.

From here to Ben Buckler at the far end of Bondi the density of the population is obvious, with the occasional Victorian mansion packed among more modern and pragmatic creations all seemingly stacked on top of one another on the steep approaches and cliff-lines, but to my eye, the Art Deco buildings with their curved walls and round windows seem to fit best. As a backdrop to Bondi Beach these buildings painted in Gelato colours form the perfect backdrop for the vibrant beach culture at their footings.

Bondi is not a kayak friendly place to land. There are defined zones for swimmers, surf schools, lifeguard access lanes and even separate zones for soft and hard boards. Surf ski paddlers tend to arrive at first light or sunset and they are expected to control their craft at all times. So for those of us who are not absolutely certain they can surf onto the beach upright and holding a good line, the charms of Bondi are best admired from the wet side of the break zone. Bondi will have at least 5,000 -10,000 beachgoers on a summer day with numbers as high as 40,000 on Christmas Day - all of these sun worshippers packed on 1km of waterfront.

Beyond Bondi the Sydney Cliffs steepen at the Ben Buckler headland and continue as a wall of weathered ancient sandstone all the way to Sydney Heads and if you know where

Rob Mercer continued



Photo Stephan Meyne

to look there are Aboriginal carvings that remind us this coastline has supported human settlement for thousands of years. I often paddle this section wondering just how rich this environment would have been under the lighter hand of the original Australians before the impact of European settlement.

There is deep water right to the base of the cliffs almost the whole way. I say almost because there are a few reefs that surprise the unwary on a big day.

There are also intermittent narrow rock platforms that are reached by fisherman who scale dilapidated and precarious ladders to fish for large pelagics and reef fish. They are usually the only other people we will see close up along this section and they also have the highest fatality rate of any outdoor recreation in Australia.

The shape of the waves along this stretch is very uneven with rebound often well out to sea. Prevailing swells collide with the cliffs at varying angles as the coast meanders. Locally generated seas are shorter, steeper and hardly ever from the same direction as the swells or their reflections and although weak along most of the coast, a modest 1-1.5 knots of tidal current can work along the cliffs at springs

adding further texture to the surface conditions.

This is one of Sydney's most dynamic natural environments. It is also something of a wilderness on the edge of the big city and if you paddle close to the cliffs, the sweep of the coastline dominates your view and the switch from city to seascape is abrupt and absolute. The empty horizon to the east and the relief from the built environment enforced by the cliffs enhances the already engaging experience of being bounced around in these lively and abundant waters. When the swell is long and the angle of incidence is just right we sometimes surf the reflected waves as they break away from the cliffs, quite a counterintuitive approach to catching waves but serious fun when it works.

About halfway along this section the cliffs rise to a high point and this provides a dramatic site for the oldest lighthouse in Australia, a light that has been operating continuously, from this position since 1790 and as the current Macquarie Lighthouse for most of this time. We will see this lighthouse again once we round the heads and start our final run down the harbor.

The next historic landmark is the colonial signal station. The purpose of this building was to observe, record and report shipping movements to the port authorities at Sydney Town and alert the Harbour Pilot stationed just down the hill at Watsons Bay. The panoramic views from here encompass The City Skyline, The Harbour, The Heads, The Cliffs and endless horizons to the east. Numerous batteries and other artillery installations were also built to take advantage of the commanding position for potential defence of the Harbor entrance and if you look carefully many of these disused and crumbling structures can be seen cut out of the sheer rock faces all along this stretch.

Just north is a low point that looks down

over a large rock platform and enjoys similar city views to the Signal Station. This location is known as "The Gap". Despite its scenic aspect The Gap carries the sad legacy of being mistaken for Sydney Heads in a violent storm and drawing the skipper of the Dunbar onto the rocks with the loss of 121 of the 122 who were on board. On a sunny mild day it is hard to imagine the fate of a sailing vessel trapped in this shallow cliff-lined embayment back in 1857, but when an "East Coast Low" causes storm force winds, driving rain and fierce seas to pound the cliffs then the raw drama of this location can be mesmerizing. The anchor salvaged from the wreck stands at the lookout as a memorial to those lost at the base of the cliffs, so close to their salvation.

The Hornby Lighthouse situated on the very tip of South Head was built in response to the combined loss of the Dunbar and the 888 ton clipper "Catherine Adamson" wrecked on North Head just nine weeks later during another southerly gale.

From a kayak, The Gap is more notable for the deep water along the rock platform allowing close exploration; but from daylight to dusk one of the most prominent features is the sturdy fence lined with tourists and locals just taking in the scene. There is a coastal walking track all the way from Maroubra to Hornby Lighthouse so some of these sightseers may have travelled a parallel route to us for much of the coastline.

We will now also see that some of the cliff line unfolding in front of us is actually on the far side of Sydney Heads and the distinctive vertical profile of North Head will be prominent just starboard of our approach.

Between North head and Manly Cove is a semi detached steep sided rock called Cannae Point, home to Sydney's Little Penguin rookery. They can be hard to spot on a bumpy day or





Communing with the locals

in low light as they fish in the waves but their distinctive 'bark' often gives them away.

The transition from ocean to calmer water can be sudden and happen on the point of South Head or it can be a gradual easing that starts south of The Gap around Dunbar Head, but most days the prevailing swell is south or southeast and once inside the line between South and Middle Heads there are only short fetch waves and the usual boat wakes to deal with.

After passing the Hornby Lighthouse and rounding South Head, the City Skyline will appear for the first time and we will head into Watsons Bay for a break. Watsons Bay used to be a fishing village in colonial times, and the sandstone church of St Mary's with its distinctive spire is an enduring landmark along with the Signal Station and Macquarie light just up the hill. The quaint weatherboard fisherman's cottages are still intact and so are some of the more salubrious "Grand Marine Villas" that followed in the Victorian era although their multi-million dollar price tags would confound the original owners now long gone. After a few minutes walk east through the verdant parkland back to The Gap It is very satisfying to look out over the coastline just paddled and to then take in the vista of the main Harbour on our walk back to the boats.

On the home stretch down the Eastern Channel we will stay east of the East and West Wedding Cake lighthouses that mark the main shipping channels and continue past the popular swimming beaches of Parsley Bay and Nielsen Park, shark proof nets span the length of these pretty bays.

Commercial fishing is now banned in Sydney Harbour and Bull Sharks are one of the less attractive beneficiaries of the abundance this has created. Sydney's coast is home to all manner of sharks including hammer heads, whalers, makos, and even the occasional great white or tiger; but it is the waters of the Harbour itself that seem to concentrate numbers of the testosterone driven



Photo Graham Brown

Bull Shark. This is the beast most implicated in human attacks so the nets are especially reassuring for those who swim at dawn or dusk when the remote possibility of an attack is most likely. All the same most kayakers will happily roll and practice rescues in and around the Harbour without worrying too much about sharks. After all, with abundant fish to eat the sharks are pretty well fed, and as my Dad used to say before throwing me off the back of his boat on a hot summers day "there is a lot of water between sharks."

Beyond Steel point Rose Bay opens up to the south, on our port side Sydney Harbour National park continues as a green corridor of Dry Eucalypt Forest and Coastal Heath backed by a hillside of mansions running all the way to our landing.

On our starboard the main shipping channel leads our eye to the sharp white shells of the famous Opera House and the massive steel arch of the Sydney Harbour Bridge with its granite pylons like two giant bookends. Look closely and you will see a clear space between the granite and the steel girders and note that these pylons were included in the design for aesthetic balance rather than any practical

need, proof that the cities forebears always hoped for a showy rather than just a practical city to adorn this beautiful Harbour. Obscured from our view nestled between these two icons is Circular Quay, off limits to all private craft and the channels beyond offer little refuge for the kayaker. To further complicate matters on a sunny weekend Yacht races will fill all available space out on the harbour and Ferry horns will blare at regular intervals as they try to assert their right of way over wayward sailors. A gaudy and chaotic display best admired from the edge of the bay.

If time permits, a landing at Hermits Beach, will allow us to admire the colours of the sunset over the city skyline before finishing next to the promenade and the heavy traffic of New South Head Rd.

For me this is where my love affair with the ocean began when I first ventured "outside" with my Father in his little timber fishing boat. Arriving here even today evokes the sense of adventure I felt as a five year old lad watching the city light up as we chugged out to sea into the fading light and the easing evening breeze. ■

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# THE RECKONING

## Piloting By The Seat Of Our Boardies

I'm a bad dad. My daughter bought me a wonderful present for my birthday last year, and I only redeemed it a few weeks ago. The gift? An aerobatic flight in a vintage Tiger Moth.

So here's an aeroplane older than I am, a biplane with open cockpits and an engine you start by hand. Goggles on, we took off from a grass strip at Camden, and headed west towards the escarpment. No electronics, just a few rudimentary gauges, and as many visual cues for navigation as you could see over the side of the cockpit.

When you're flying an aeroplane, you're piloting. But the term 'pilot' predates flight. Piloting is what mariners have always done when they look out, feel the wind on their face, make decisions and manoeuvre, all by eye. And piloting is what we do in our kayaks, once we've launched and left our chart tables behind. It's about navigating using the objects we can see to execute our pre-planned route. It's just like flying a vintage aeroplane – although with a bit less engine noise (depending on what you had for dinner last night).

The key to successful piloting is planning. This is when we do all the tricky bits of navigation, in slow time on the kitchen table. This will minimise the work we'll have to do on our spraydeck later.

So let's dig out our charts and maps, and make a plan. Hang on – charts and maps? We often need both: charts have very detailed depth data, but not much detail on land. And maps – topops to their friends – have all the useful stuff on-shore, and very detailed contour data. But there's not much going on below the low-water mark.

### MAKE THE PLAN

In planning, we have one aim – to safely reach our destination. We lay off the planned tracks we want to follow, and measure the distances involved. Then we calculate the tides that will affect our route, and the tidal streams, noting the effect they'll have on planned courses and



Russ in pilot mode

paddling speeds. That lets us figure out how long our trip will take.

Some other things to keep in mind when planning (and thinking through the possibilities on land is going to help if things go bad on the water):

- **Wind** – Check the forecast, to determine what influence the wind will have on your planned trip.
- **Swell** – Consider what the swell will do to beach access, and to bomboras off-shore. A short swell period (a short time interval between crests) usually means small surf – and a long period means big waves – there's a lot of energy stored up in that sine curve.
- **Dangers** – plan your courses to keep you clear of dangers (which is pretty obvious... but make sure your appreciation of dangers takes wind, swell and tidal height into account).
- **Pull-outs** – think about where you can go if you need to get off the water in a hurry, for an unexpected storm or an injury. Look at beach gradients and shelter (and think about the effects of swell), and in-shore access to roads and population centres.

Next, prepare a chart or map extract to keep under the bungies – if you need both, they can be laminated back-to-back.

### IN THE COCKPIT

Once we're afloat, it helps to keep a rough record of position on the chart or map (what mariners call 'the reckoning'), by marking off tracks and distances travelled. Remember the tried and true technique of keeping the green bits to port or starboard, and ticking off the land-marks as you pass them. The technical term is 'handrailing'.

### Position Lines

Sometimes you will need to resolve your positional uncertainty (we kayakers never get lost...), and that may mean plotting a fix. But even a single line of bearing will help. Be sure of the object you're observing, and you have almost resolved that uncertainty: you have to be somewhere on the line of bearing.

A natural or charted transit is independent of compass error, and is even better than a bearing. And if you pre-plan the bearings of a

few transits on your route (that is, mark the magnetic bearing on your chart), you can point your kayak at the transit and check your steering compass's accuracy.

### Distance & distance off: As reliable as a bearing

It is possible estimate distance off, just by knowing how things look at particular ranges. If you can see waves breaking on a shoreline, you're about 4 km away. If you're in a group, try asking everyone to estimate the distance, and then average the numbers – it can be surprisingly accurate. Plot that distance with your single line of bearing, and you've got a position.

You might remember from an earlier article how we can get a more accurate range by measuring the angle between the ends of an object of known width, or the angle between an object and its waterline, if its height is charted. To measure the angle, you can use your fingers (my chubby fingers count @ 2 degrees each) or a kamal – a stick calibrated in degrees, on the end of a piece of string. (You can use the radian rule to advantage here: if your string is 57.3cm long, then each centimetre on the stick is worth a degree.)

Don't neglect other sources of position lines that don't require any measurement. A depth contour line can be drawn where we see overfalls over a shallow bank. And when we're alongside a buoy, we've got an instant fix (as long as it hasn't dragged its mooring).

If you do decide to try plotting a three-bearing fix – no easy task in a rolling kayak – the theory books tell us to aim for 60 degree cuts between bearings. But I'm one for the simple life, and I'm quite happy with two bearings crossing at 90 degrees, or a bearing and range.

But whether you're observing one, two or three objects, follow these guidelines:

- choose near objects, not far (this is REALLY important: a small error of observation will become a very large error of position if the object's a long way away);
- use easy to identify objects, to avoid mistakes;
- use transits whenever available.

### Orienting with the land

This is one of the harder skills to acquire – to translate the two-dimensional bird's eye view of the chart, into the three-dimensional elevation that you can see from the cockpit. It takes practice.

Try to 'see' the shape of the land on the chart. Look at the spacing and relative heights of peaks or valleys, and the line of ridges. Remember, the compass is your friend: look at the separation of objects, in degrees, measured from your rough distance off-shore. And break the north-up rule, and orient the chart to your heading to help match what you can see on the land, to what's on the chart.

'Shooting up' – laying off a bearing from a known position, and seeing where it crosses the coast, is also a great technique when you round a point of land and need to identify an important destination.

You can use a pre-planned position (abeam the point you're rounding, 500m offshore...) to then look along the pre-planned bearing, to identify the objective.

### Tidal streams and leeway

I know we can all use vector triangles to calculate the course to steer to allow for tidal streams. But we can also use our eyes! Pick a natural transit near your destination (an object close to the water-line, and another behind it in the hills), and see what happens to the transit as you paddle. That's the way to ferry glide. And like all transits, its sensitivity depends on the distance between front and rear marks, relative to your distance away.



On deck plotting  
Photo Adrian Clayton

And don't forget the 'boomerang' technique for coping with tidal streams – averaging the effect of the stream by crossing either side of slack water. The flood takes you one way, and the ebb brings you back, while you paddle a steady course. (You should be sure how far up or down stream you'll be taken, just in case the stream carries you onto sandbanks or other dangers.)

Anticipating error – by aiming off

If you've got a long crossing without reference to the land, and you're heading for a featureless coast or one with lots of islands or inlets, then it helps to know which way to turn when you make your landfall. You're never going to steer an exact course (you've only got 5-degree graduations on your steering compass, for a start), and there will always be unallowed-for effects of wind and tidal stream. So aim off, so you know which side of the destination you are, and which way to turn. If you're doing a crossing using the boomerang method, you can bias the effect of the stream by planning for slack water past the half-way mark. That way you'll end up upstream of the destination, with an easier paddle to the camp-site.

### Old tricks for sea dogs

So how was that flight in the Tiger Moth? Sublime. I'm a little late submitting this article, because I dug out my old pilot's licence and log book, and wisely invested some of last Saturday having my first flying lesson in over 40 years. Who says we can't learn old tricks? And piloting is one of the oldest... ■



The planning stage

By Dee Ratcliffe

Photos by Dee, Harry Havu and Tony Hammock



# An Indian Sun IN SCOTLAND

A sea kayaking trip in Scotland has many possibilities. After some internet wanderings, we settled on a guided trip with BCU-qualified guide and instructor Tony Hammock of Seafreedom Kayak based at Connell, near Oban, which is about three hours drive north of Glasgow on Scotland's west coast. Tony lives in the area and knows it well. He kitted us out with kayaks (North Shore Atlantic and Atlantic LV), paddles (Werner Corryvreckan and Shuna), dry suits, PFDs and booties. Our first day was spent under Connell Bridge, in the Falls of Lora, showing our form and learning the dynamics of managing moving waters. By breaking in and out of tidal flow, spinning on forming whirlpools, and chasing tennis balls, we learned new

skills. Paddling back to the launch spot after a day of new challenges, we kayaked against the incoming tides and up a level in the water.

Later that evening we met with Tony to look at the week's tides and weather forecasts, maps and charts of the Inner Hebrides, and using his knowledge of the area, planned our five day trip. This area is a complex region of islands and tidal flows created as the Atlantic Ocean waters rush around and between island obstructions.

Day One started with a smooth crossing from Crinan to the island of Jura, all leisurely and relaxed, until the fabled Gulf of Corryvreckan lived up to its name as a wild and challenging place. For some unknown reason the flow was faster than would be expected for that day's tidal range. What should have been a quick sprint round a headland against the tidal stream

became an epic. Our first two attempts to break free of the strong current ended with us resting in the eddy behind a little island for the second time, a curious seal wondering what the hell we were doing. Perhaps Tony and Harry would have made it, but not me; so the plan was changed and we turned to head back to our lunch spot, a quiet bay protected from the currents. I made a novice's error and quickly paid the price – swimming the Gulf of Corryvreckan.

Tony and Harry were with me in a flash, I hooked back into the flooded cockpit (so glad I'd practiced this move over and over with Peter), and tightly rafted we rode the wild waters. Once I got my breath back, I pumped out the cockpit and sticking right on Tony's tail, copying his every turn and edge, we eddy-hopped and ferry-glided our way back to calm



# Summer



and reassuring waters. I can laugh at it all now, but right then, it was dramatic and I was totally engaged in every moment and paddle stroke.

From there we progressed; after a night on Jura, our little group meandered along the stunning northern section of the west Jura coast, stopped for lunch on a beach, with a raised beach (parts of Scotland are still springing back from the last ice age). With fine sunny days and calm seas forecast, Tony amended our route and proposed a 20km crossing to the isle of Colonsay, a trip he hadn't done previously; now with the right clients and right weather it was feasible. How could we resist? So after lunch instead of wandering 5km back along the coast of Jura, we headed off on a 20km crossing to a distant low-lying island. Colonsay was indeed worth that extra



Decisions Easdale Island

By Dee Ratcliffe continued

effort to get there, despite the small ticks that found each of us that evening. The scenery here was amazing especially in the long sunlit twilight. Next day we headed north into the Firth of Lorne, another long crossing where the outgoing waters from the Gulf of Corryvreckan influenced our line even though we were 6km from it.

With two long days under our belts, we had a leisurely meander among the picturesque Garvellachs. We'd camped on Eileen an Naoimh with its ancient dwellings, a holy place since the times of St Brendan and St Columba. From this island group we crossed to the Black Isles for lunch on yet another hidden and stunning beach. Our next move was a real eye-opener for Harry and I. If you could imagine the capital letter D, we wanted to start at the base of the straight line and end up at the top. But rather than kayaking along that straight line, we followed the curve of the D, moving through and across the tidal flow, again under Tony's careful coaching, turning at exactly the correct spots while finally landing right on the narrow beach at the top of that D. Too far left or right and we'd have been swept past the island. And Tony's navigation wasn't the only magic part of this short section. Two dolphins came to accompany us, swimming under and between our kayaks.

We camped on Jura, Colonsay, Eileach an Naoimh in the Garvellachs, and finally Luing. Each island had its own flavour. The landscape on all was barren with none having trees or even bushes for hanging our gear. Tony showed us how to use tow rope and paddles to set up a clothesline. Choosing campsites in Midge Central is an art – the best sites were exposed to the wind and setting sun. Those tiny, annoying pests waited until the direct sun had departed and the wind dropped before making their presence known, and then they arrived in their masses.

Tony's way of running our trip was excellent. We'd started with an outline, and as we went, and as we got the weather forecasts, Tony would throw some suggestions our way. He included us in all the decision-making, offering ideas of what would work given the weather, tides and potential campsites. The use of transits was so important here, the need to judge how the water was moving our kayaks relative to the land. As each day got sunnier and warmer, Tony gave up trying to convince us that this was not really summer in Scotland. By 7.00am each morning we were out of our tent, it being too hot to linger



longer. Long twilights meant it didn't matter what time we finished for the day, there was always so much time to set up camp, eat and then wander the locality of each campsite.

On the final morning we left our windy, and midge-free, campsite on the island of Luing going to Puffers Cafe on the island of Easdale for morning tea then wending our way up the eastern side of the Firth of Lorne, and completing our journey on the slipway at Oban.

#### TRIP NOTES:

We took clothing that could be worn under a drysuit or dry top/pants combo, as well as our regular paddling hats and gloves. For camping we rented a tent, sleeping mats, cooking equipment and eating utensils. We took with us two blue Ikea bags and one smaller lightweight bag, which proved very useful when camping. We brought our own sleep sheets, head torches (though they were hardly needed in the long twilights of Scottish June) and purchased over the internet head mesh and suitable insect repellent.

Flying from Australia to Dubai with

Qantas and then switching to Qantas' partner airline Emirates meant our second flight took us from Dubai directly to Glasgow. Arriving about midday meant we could collect our hire car, drive to a hotel on the western outskirts of Glasgow, eat and recover overnight. From Glasgow to Oban is about three hours drive. We chose to make it a sight-seeing day and had a wonderful time eating haggis for breakfast, wandering around a heritage village, tramping the hills overlooking the bonnie banks of Loch Lomond, dining in an old wayside inn, climbing the walls of a ruined castle, spying a bagpipe player and kilted men at a chapel wedding, savouring both local seafood and single malt whiskeys, exploring the McCaig's Tower of Oban before retiring to bed at 11.00pm, when there was still light over the harbour.

Oban is a delightful (once you figure out its one-way traffic system) scenic spot with Cal Mac ferries heading to the isles of the Inner and Outer Hebrides, fishing boats and sail boats coming and going in the busy harbour. The local Tesco and Aldi supermarkets are well-stocked with supplies for a kayaking trip. ■



Gulf of Corryvreckan tidal race



Meandering along Garvellachs



Midgebusters

Photos and text by Rob Mercer



# Keppel Bay Sea Kayak Symposium

..  
 “Four days just  
 didn't seem enough”  
 ..



Photo Kim Borg [freedomproperty.com.au](http://freedomproperty.com.au)

In early August this year Paddle Capricornia invited paddlers from far and wide to attend the inaugural North Keppel Island Sea Kayak Symposium: the first major sea kayak gathering for the Keppels and the first gathering of its kind in the Australian tropics. At the end of day 1 as we sat around the fire sharing drinks and stories under a dark starlit sky the two and a half days of driving from Sydney to Yeppoon finally seemed worthwhile.

From the seaside promenade at Yeppoon the hills of the Keppel Islands cluster on the horizon sitting some 14kms out in the bay. On previous trips through Keppel Bay various islands had been stepping stones either to reach Yeppoon as we had done at the end of our North Reef Trip or years earlier when we had crossed the bay from Cape Capricorn via Hummocky and Humpy Islands enroute to the Shoalwater coastline and

always we had relied on brisk SE tradewinds to lighten heavy boats and provide endless hours of fun in running seas. On this trip however, strong southeasters would provide hard going out to North Keppel for many of the 70 paddlers hoping to make the crossing in their kayaks. Against this eventuality Tim Morrison and his team of stalwarts had arranged a ferry not just to take anyone who didn't want to do the paddle but also to carry any provisions including chilled drinks and other luxuries that paddlers didn't want to carry out to the island in their kayaks.

Friday dawned cool and crisp with a moderate breeze blowing but by the time we had assembled on the beach the forecast had come true and we launched into glassy conditions. Groups were allocated to sea instructors and guides drawn from the Queensland Sea Kayak Club along with Sharon and I from NSW



Sharon doing it tough



Must be cocktail hour

and we joined forces with Ian from paddle Capricornia for a languid crossing out to the Education Centre on North Keppel.

This was Keppel Bay at its best with warm crystal clear water, beautiful coastal scenery above the water and coral gardens below. You know you are somewhere special when your training sessions are regularly “interrupted” by the resident dugong, along with turtles, dolphins and the occasional whale spouting in the distance.

Cabin accommodation catered for those who wanted an easier life but there was abundant camping on grassy areas looking out over the bay. Regardless of accommodation most opted for the full catering option and this turned out to be a wise decision as hearty and wholesome meals kept emerging from the kitchen for breakfast, lunch and dinner with

fresh baked cakes and fruit for those needing more fuel between meals to tackle the next paddling challenge.

For four days we blended exploration of our island paradise with tuition so that boat handling was tested in rock gardens and caves; rolling practice was often done over coral gardens and rescue training just had to require a circumnavigation.

In the evenings Queensland Sea Kayak Club members presented on a range of subjects from boat repair/construction with Ross, to Jean Mark on Sea leadership. There were also some inspiring trip reports with Simmo sharing images and anecdotes from paddling in Patagonia and Eddie with his very personal and engaging account of the first kayak expedition through the Capricornia Cays.

The return crossing on day four saw more

paddlers opting for their kayaks rather than the ferry as many plied their freshly honed skills with a new confidence.

As with all events of this kind the organiser’s greatest concern was delivering a safe and inclusive event and there is no doubt they achieved this, but the smiling faces of those who returned as more skilled and confident paddlers must surely have been their greatest reward.

As we carried the boats up the beach our group had one last look to seaward at the silhouette of the Keppels seemingly floating on the afternoon salt haze and four days just didn’t seem enough and for Sharon and I. We still had islands to explore, fish to catch, winds to sail, reefs to snorkel and Manta Rays to swim with. But that as they say, is another story. ■

By various, compiled by Ian Vaile

# Going MENTAL

## The Hawkesbury Canoe Classic 2013

Over a few dawn hours on a Sunday morning hundreds of exhausted paddlers struggled from their boats onto the unforgiving concrete ramp at Mooney Mooney, legs quivering and eyes blurring off into the middle distance. Many of them were from NSWKC. A hundred kilometres of paddling had exacted its toll again.

It was a night which gave with one hand and took with the other. A delightful still afternoon shaded into an evening with a fast outbound tide until just after midnight: then the cruel incoming tide conspired with a laggard late-rising moon to rob paddlers first of their speed and then of their hopes of a PB.

The Hawkesbury is a race that starts as a physical challenge and ends as a mental one.

The club has a long history with the event, and here's how some of our paddlers described the 2013 event.

*(The results are class/placing on time/time/handicap)*



**ANNE MOORE – (Mixed Veteran 50+ LREC2, first, 9:44:42, 8:57:55, second overall on handicap, record and trophy!)**

After the 2012 HCC, I was asked to join the Double Dragon Racing team (Sladecraft SL2) with the view to paddling the 2013 HCC in the mixed 50+ Long Rec 2 class to crack the 2007 record of 10hrs 6mins. I jumped at the chance to paddle with Jack Ward who had competed in 12 HCCs and numerous Murray Marathons and had set a number of records.

This was my third HCC, the latest start time and instructed by the land crew to be at Brooklyn by midnight or else!!!! Our plan was to get to Wisemans as quickly as possible with the tide. However like all good plans, it was much different on the night as the tide was stronger than predicted. We had a short break at Wisemans (change of clothes, loo stop and coffee) and thrown back into the kayak by our land crew of Owen, Colin and Jenny.

We managed to avoid the reef off Bar Point given instructions from Jack and not ignoring channel markers. The river was certainly dark in parts with the moon only making its appearance near our finish. We reached Brooklyn at 3.15am finishing in 9 hrs 44mins 20 secs, breaking the class record by 20 mins and finishing 2nd on handicap. A good way to finish this paddle.

**JOHN DUFFY – (Open veteran 50+MREC, first, 11:02:31, 10:28:04, trophy!)**

I have to thank a couple of kayak colleagues who I shared washriding with to Sackville. We pushed hard at the start, much harder than I anticipated, but that tempo laid the foundation for the rest of the night.

I stooped for 10 mins at Sackville mainly for a stretch. I also felt good at Wisemans and was only on the bank for 5 mins before I got back in. I felt I would pay later for the briefer than usual stop, and I did.

I struggled between checkpoints K and N but snuffed the finish line coming round the corner at O and finished strongly with a double that I picked up at Bar Point. I was grateful to finish my 12th Classic and very humbled to take out the Mens 50+ MedRec class.

I am conscious I have crossed over from simply participating in the Classic to now competing, and that's something that can only eventually end in disappointment, but for now I will enjoy the moment. I also know there is no turning back.

**DEE RATCLIFFE – (Ladies veteran 50+K4, first, 10:53:59, 11:14:55)**

Why, after four years, would I elect to do the Hawkesbury again? I'm not one of those who

find it so much fun they enter year after year after year. But somehow, four years meant my memories had faded and I decided to do it all again. Initially my plan was to paddle my Mirage 530, then an interesting invite came my way – would I like to join a Ladies 50+ K4 team? I'd be paddling with marathon veterans Rae Duffy (who stunned the canoeing world in 2012 by taking out dual handicap wins in both the HCC and the Murray Marathon), Merridy Huxley (holder of no less than three HCC K4 records, and K4 participant in many Murray Marathons) and Clare McArthur (another veteran of many Hawkesburys and Murrays). With no 'K-type' paddling experience and not even owning a wing paddle, I think I qualified because I could tell the difference between a canoe and a kayak, knew how to hold a paddle, and was in the right age bracket. The only other candidate quickly told some story of having to run the Berlin Marathon and dodged the invite! I was intrigued, so I signed up.

Many hours of training ensued, plans and intentions of all sorts were hatched, and at 6.00pm on Saturday 26 October 2013 we commenced. And after 10 hours, 53 minutes and 59 seconds we finished – an amazing and excellent result. We safely navigated 100km of wide river with no mishaps and we all made it to the end.

K4 paddling has an unrelenting pace of stroke after stroke for hour after hour with no other movements, and I mean not even a nose scratch. This wore and tore at my muscles. My left hand and right tricep threatened to revolt, to seize up and freeze completely. Towards the end, light stretches (as recommended by the physios at the briefing) every five kilometres kept them moving. Despite a strict preparation regime with Gurney Goo, I could feel my skin was damaged and torn.

Our land crew provided care, dedication and enthusiasm when we needed them. I watched the sun set, the stars come out and the moon rise. I took in all the smells and scents along the river. We glided along sections in the darkness with a feeling of almost flying. We relished the cheers at the finish line. It ended. And so too has my marathon kayaking career.

### **MERRIDY HUXLEY – (same K4 boat)**

I have been keen to set a K4 record for Ladies over 50 for a few years now. My first taker was Rae Duffy, we then asked Clare McArthur & Dee Ratcliffe & we had our team. The logistics were a nightmare – Merridy & the K4

at Berowra, Rae at Malabar, Dee at Croydon & Clare at Alexandria. So began the early Sunday morning training sessions on the beautiful Berowra Waters.

We all tried different seats & the final outcome was Clare steering, Dee calling the shots, Rae in charge of stroke & technique & Merridy advising on all things K4 from the back. Initially we trained with 6 bricks for added weight & stability – it was a big day when we did 20kms with no bricks on board. Clare also used a metronome to keep an even pace, we paddled with our eyes shut, ballerina strokes, interval training & other fun drills. For instance, Rae wanted to practice tipping it over so we did just that at Crosslands & then later on an unscheduled tip over on the Myall River late one night (read dark & cold)!

We laughed, we almost cried with frustration; we encouraged each other & generally had fun. You don't realise how hard a K4 is until you try it – before you get in the boat – the logistics of getting 4 in the kayak at the same time & place. Then moving a 12 metre kayak to the water – we had a 4WD with a very large roof rack & trailer, only problem was we couldn't reach the rack! On the water the usual stuff associated with paddling - balancing, bracing, trying to keep a certain pace (the caterpillar look isn't great), trying to use a similar stroke etc & then multiply by 4. Plus, Clare & Dee had the added complication of getting used to a wing paddle, no mean feat.

Anyway, with the help of Warren, our back up, we were in the race. Warren fixed the rudder, well rebuilt the rudder, after we forgot about the weight of the bricks & dropped the K4 bending the rudder. He let us use his 4WD & patiently put the heavy rack & trailer on each time. The steering was corrected, the seats were swapped, changed & modified, spray skirts were made, bilge pump was added, boat was polished ready for the big day.

The rest is history – we set a record of 10 hours 53 mins for Ladies Over 50s K4 in the 2013 Hawkesbury Canoe Classic. We all feel a great sense of achievement. We worked our way through a myriad of challenges, as they presented themselves in training & then on race night. It's a great feeling to realise that we four came together, training as a team and we are now elated & pleased as punch that we rose to the challenge of the mighty K4.

Thank you Rae, Dee & Clare for sharing

my dream & making it a reality - it doesn't get much better than that!

### **RAEWYN DUFFY – (same K4 boat)**

I was severely punished last night. We got there (Clare, Dee Merridy in a k4) but didn't fly to Wisemans with a wonderful run-out tide as we'd hoped it was headwinds and an ordinary tide, then it was so dark and the check points seemed hard to find and there was a water ski boat that threatened to tip us in and a C6 with an annoying light and wash that we couldn't handle who haunted us all night, and we nearly visited Spencer and one of us was throwing up and all of us hurting. Is that why we do it??? The team was amazing, everyone just kept going but that finish line didn't come a moment too soon.



### **CAMPBELL TILEY (Open veteran 50+LREC, fifth, 12:12:52, 11:46:29)**

The start of this year's HCC, as always in my experience, had an amazingly positive and friendly atmosphere despite what must be a thousand or more paddlers, landcrew and officials sorting through registration, scrutineering, briefing and getting their own gear organised.

Like most paddlers I was aiming to improve on my best previous time of 12 hours 58. The adverse tide in the second half of the race was a worry but I hoped to make hay with the outgoing tide on the run to Wisemans. The strong headwind for an hour or more was not in my calculations and the morons throwing oranges at paddlers at one point were fortunately not quite accurate enough. This was more than balanced by the camaraderie and banter between paddlers as we ground down the kilometres.

One positive about the early outgoing tide was a beach at Wisemans for my pit stop rather than jockeying for space in the shallows. I pulled in feeling better than on past attempts but was not ready for the siren like effect of the Turkish shoulder massage I was subjected to by Selim, my otherwise trusty landcrew

By various, compiled by Ian Vaile continued

this year. After a very relaxing but longer than planned stop I was off into the incoming tide. Only a couple of navigation mishaps in the dark, some nice phosphorescence and a short period of moonlight late in the race and I was pulling towards the lights of Brooklyn. I was not ready for the photo finish, however, with a kayak pulling along the shore to my left beating me by 1 second and, of course, being in my age and boat class.

I was happy with a PB finish in 12 hours 12. As always there is work to do, perhaps an alarm clock for my Wisemans stop next time and, of course, a warning to others about the Turkish shoulder massage effect. Thanks to Selim for doing a great job and to the organisers for a flawless event.



### DAVE LINCO – (Brooklyn or Bust, 12:47:24)

I sit here in hospital after my kayak capsized at checkpoint M and I had to fight off an Orca..... seriously nothing as exciting as that. That only happens on the weekly Tuesday night paddle.

My initial thoughts in 2012 was that the HCC was all about the mild mannered sport of river paddling or, the tea and crumpets end of the paddlers spectrum.

After jumping off an international flight mid-morning of the race last year and doing it tough with someone else's paddle for the first 25km, I decided the HCC was not a tea and crumpet event and was determined for some payback time. My goal was to simply crack last years' time and very happy I achieved this by 45 minutes coming in at 12.47.

The tides were not the best this year. Apart from a tougher paddle with 2 incoming tides, the drop in entries meant the boats were spread out further apart meaning a more lonely boring paddle in the final stages of the race. The second incoming tide started around 2am which for many paddlers meant a hard run to the end.

It seemed some entrants were "flat water only" and not used to wave action. When two water-ski boats thundered up and down (illegally) in the early part of the race on a lonely stretch of river, a number of skis and kayaks capsized providing some humour... they

were fine (I did offer to help)....probably still swimming...with the Orca....

I had two pit stops supported by my land crew Joe Linco and Mark Hempel (HCC class winner 2012), too efficient at 4-5 mins each stop. I pulled into Sackville at 7.43 to pop on my CAG and top up the water bladder and into Wisemans at 11.23 to replace batteries on the GPS. Each time the crew pushed me out with overly generous back slaps. Mark & Joe also provided useful race information on the VHF as I approached and left each destination which I found essential to pace myself for the next leg.

The most challenging part of the paddle was the late arrival of the moon which meant racing in mostly darkness. Midway between Wisemans and Spencer, I started to regularly hit jellyfish which at first was quite alarming, thinking I was about to run aground and forcing me to change direction into midstream momentarily.

In the early hours when you're sleep deprived, physically exhausted, starting to feeling the cold, in misty dark surrounds with gnarly tree limbs constantly reaching out to engulf you followed by the sudden thud of the paddle hitting something fleshy, the remote possibility of bloodied & vengeful creatures rising out of the water becomes real, helping you dig deeper for that final push. Surprisingly my average speed increased in the final 10km and not because of the zombie jellyfish.

Reflecting after my aches have eased, my lessons from the second time around would be:

- 1) Just keep paddling,
- 2) Paddle point to point, not with the river,
- 3) Infuse water with a few slices of lime,
- 4) Land-crew communication is essential.

Overall found the experience very enjoyable and would consider another run aiming for a sub 12 hr nirvana time in future years.



### CATHY MILLER AND TREVOR WATERS ( Mixed veteran 50+ LREC2, third, 11:15:45,10:21:41)

Ground crew Trevor Williamson, bless his socks. 2 x Trevor Ws made it easy to remember the names. The trip to Wisemans Ferry was fast given the tide was with us, so we didn't stop as planned for a meal after Sackville. The volunteers

made an error taping up the cyalume lights at the front so by around 10pm when we were going through the ferry lights I'd been staring through a green light for hours and was starting to get very disorientated. Problem was, I had the steering. I even had to ask where the river went. I had the sense if I closed my eyes that everything would turn on its head and the sky would close in. Realising I was 'feeling a bit weird' we stopped on the water and ate the tried and true HCC meal – ricecream. All good, the visual hallucinations stopped and we cruised to Wisemans. Then we picked up time in the last half of the race against the tide, by aggressively crossing the river to ride the back-eddies against the flow. The result, the GPS showed 97 kms total and we finished 45 mins ahead of our race plan – always the sign of a good plan.



### ADRIAN GOODWIN – (Open veteran 50+MREC,second, 11:55:20,11:18:08)

The hooter has gone, and the NSW SK guys I'm planning to paddle with have torn off down the river and out of reach. Seething with pent up testosterone they are! Vaile, Tiley, Duffy and Sundin, ripping at the water with animal rage! Nothing to do but settle back into a plodding rhythm and reflect on the journey to this my 3rd Classic... splash... splash... splash...

My Clare was in a K4 crew with Dee, Rae and Merridy, and I was going to do it in my Zegul 550. The K4 lives at Merridy's at Berowra. As an orbiting partner of a K4 crew member, it made sense for me to also train there and get to know the stretch between Berowra Waters and Mooney Mooney. Returning to the car always seemed a bit of a drag until I woke up to one of the advantages of Clare being in a crew that HAD to return home ... I could do one-way paddles and get Clare to pick me up (pretty please??). After all, one of the joys of the HCC is that it's a one-way paddle. So with brownie points secure, I had paddled around to Apple Tree Bay a couple of times before I got one of those BIG ideas that's sort of plausible but mostly just silly ... why not paddle to Sydney? Berowra to Glebe, 75km. The more I thought about it the more possible it became, and so it

was that Harry Harvu (another K4 orbiter) and I waved goodbye to the K4 crew at 8:30am on the 27th September and headed for town. It was a beautiful day with a light northerly and I revelled in the scenery of the northern beaches. Such a beautiful day...

...splash...splash...splash... Sundin is out of sight and determined to settle a score that's less than 11, but I can still see the other three. If I keep my head down I might catch them now that things have settled down...splash...splash... splash...

That Berowra to Glebe day had given me confidence that I'd last the distance in a single. After the 48km Myall Classic two weeks earlier, I had slogged against the tide for 6 hours and had felt pretty spent. How would I survive 100km? Had I been lining up for my first HCC, I think I would have withdrawn there and then. You need faith and support to do something like the HCC for the first time. Without them, you'd talk yourself out of it.

...splash...splash...splash... things are going pretty well. I could have got out of Wisemans more quickly if I hadn't run over to the toilets, but I didn't see many dry alternatives. There is no doubt that to step out of the boat is to step into a time warp – 20 minutes goes in a flash! I'm having trouble with my boat torch which has turned itself on and won't be turned off, and is now cycling through its modes of flash, bright, very bright, and insanely bright, inside my hull and making up for the fact that the phosphorescence has been a bit feeble this year. I'm going hard because I'm approaching Milson's passage and there's a chance I'll finish in under 12



hours. I can hear the K4 close behind as they make up a one hour later start. And now as they pass and we approach Mooney Mooney, I see another boat between me and the K4, but I'm not going to catch it before the end.

#### **IAN VAILE – (Open veteran 50+LREC, third, 11:54:27,11:28:44)**

My tenth HCC this year, though not my last. I felt a bit unprepared but late in my training regime got a secret weapon: a friend lent me her 100% carbon fibre mirage 580, a light and fast boat that almost made up for the speed I lost paddling with a Greenland stick. The run into Wiseman's was exhilarating and swift: in before midnight, ahead of schedule, pushed out mercilessly by my trusty landcrew Trine in just a few minutes and on my way. The change of tide dragged the speed down

and took away all the advantage of the early run. This year I managed not to hit the same tree and the same rock as in both the previous two races, not for want of trying. A little phosphorescence here, a little music there, a little hitting those spooky big jellyfish, and eventually I was heading across the last couple of K to the glittering finish. I was truly wrecked by then, starting to flag, when the K4 paddled by Dee, Rae Merridy and Clare came swinging gently past. A few words from those inspiring paddlers and I was reinvigorated and managed to give it an extra push to the end. Ten races and a thousand kilometres later, I await the eleventh! ■



<b>NSWSKC paddlers who started the race 2013</b>	<b>Class</b>	<b>time</b>	<b>Handicap</b>
Adrian Goodwin	MRec1 50	11:55:20	11:18:08
Neil Duffy (31k)	MRec1 50	04:02:00	
John Duffy	MRec1 50	11:02:31	10:28:04
Mark Sundin	MRec1 40	11:10:17	10:55:32
Campbell Tiley	LRec 1 50	12:12:52	11:46:29
Ian Vaile	LRec 1 50	11:54:27	11:28:44
Anne Moore with Jack Ward	LRec2 50 Mx	09:44:42	08:57:55
Cathy Miller & Trevor Waters	LRec 2 50 Mx	11:15:45	10:21:41
David Linco	BorB 1	12:47:24	
Andrew Kucyper	BorB 1	15:38:50	
Jeff Collins	BorB 1	13:55:40	
Peter Middleton	BorB 1	13:35:40	
Bruce Lew	BorB 1	13:59:40	
Nick & Collette Blacklock	BorB 2	12:18:12	
Rae Duffy, Dee Ratcliffe, Merridy Huxley, Clair McArthur	K4	10:53:59	

# Trial by Carbon

After half a dozen or so carved Greenland paddles I thought had it pretty much in hand. I had the dimensions sorted. I knew how the timber worked, how it smelled, how long it took to get the splinters out from under my nails, how to sand the epoxy coats back to nothing for the third time to start again. I knew how to make the shaft just thin enough to feel strong until you really needed to trust it, then that exhilarating crack as the shaft splits.

I began to hanker for a new challenge.

A couple of years ago I bought some Carbon Fibre sticks from Ron at Novorca. I had no idea how such things may be made...

This is the point at which the Imp of the Perverse habitually stirs on my shoulder and whispers into my ear the familiar words: "How hard can it be?"

Round about then I was lucky enough to paddle with Terry Hayes who had a lovely Kevlar/carbon GP he had made, and he was very forthcoming with advice and, yep, encouragement.

This was music to the Imp, and as I held Terry's blade in my hand on the cool Clontarf sands I knew I had no choice. My course was set. I was like an arrow fired from a bow, with no choice other than to head for the target. Possibly the world's slowest, least accurate arrow.

There are numerous blogs on the subject of making CF GP's, and all of them basically say it's achievable. After my previous successes, that's a flashing red danger sign, but no. How hard can it be?

The plan crystallised in my mind: a core carved from solid balsa, sheathed in a composite sleeve and locked in layers of fragrant epoxy goodness.

Terry put me on to Soller Composites in the US, resplendent in its 1995 website design but boasting the most amazing array of composites: if you want carbon/Kevlar, rainbow-coloured glass fibre, carbon fibre honeycomb in a hundred different weights, weaves and applications, this place is for you.

Then off to the Riley Balsa Surfboards, deep in the shire. Mark Riley makes exquisite balsa-core boards but they also import balsa in big blocks. I eventually ordered a 220cm

blank (three different densities on offer, these guys are serious) at \$75. As I drove back with the featherlight blank strapped to the roof of my little car the Imp could barely control himself.

From my days ruining fibreglass projects I knew getting the fabric and epoxy to conform to a roundish object without sagging or air bubbles was a special hell, so I decided vacuum bagging was the way to go. I just needed something to pump the air out of a three-metre plastic bag. On an Australian specialist site you can get a pump, catchpot (go with me on this), tubing, vacuum bag tape, clamps for a snip: just under \$500 the lot. Alternatively you could buy the cheapest Chinese-made food vac-bagger you can find on ebay, a flimsy and electrically unsafe confection guaranteed to fail at the first use, for under \$40. That might be cheaper but the chances of it doing the job are remote. A fool's saving.

With my order safely placed to Hong Kong, I had everything I needed to make a start. I began to mark up the balsa blank and discovered that balsa does not cure straight, but warps severely and you have to carve the straight block out of it the blank to even begin. Half the balsa hit the floor just getting back to true. Balsa is not like the other wood I've worked. It's fibrous, tenacious, uncooperative. It jams up a plane and when sanded it forms fine floating flakes and dust that look like they would just love to settle deep down in your lungs. It has an aggressive grain that loves to split. After a few frustrating hours I discarded the plane, whetted the kitchen knife and went to work with that.

The blade eventually emerged. Finishing off with the trusty power sander: our back yard and the neighbours' became a winter wonderland of soft blonde powder. For months afterwards.

At about that time the coil of CF sleeve arrived with a cheery note from Soller. It was slippery, lustrous and graphite-coloured, soft and supple to hold, nothing like the coarseness of glass fibre. This seductive stuff looked like fun to work with.

Also arriving in the mail was the unimpressive Chinese food bagger, with a useful three-metre length of plastic bag. I named it after Bilbo Baggins' little-known useless brother Lamo. And all this time the Imp never left my shoulder. How hard could it be?

I had all the equipment, a fully carved balsa blade, a few litres of epoxy, and a weekend ahead. Everything was ready.

Five months later I finally got sick of being nagged by the bare balsa paddle every time I went to the cupboard. The Imp, who had grudgingly been snoozing for months, woke immediately.

I knew that once I got started, I would have to keep going to the end, so I covered the kitchen in drop sheets, set out a dozen vinyl disposable gloves, the crappy food bagger, some robust plastic beakers to mix the resin and of course the slick sleeve of carbon. It was like a cut-rate scene from Dexter.

The first thickness of the sleeve went on smoothly. The Imp had a firm opinion that I should wet the first CF layer before sliding on the dry second: but the prospect of dealing with a wet, slippery 2.5m resin-coated paddle while trying to slide a second sleeve over it was a too much, and I opted to do both layers dry. Strange sort of task, like sliding a snake back into its skin. With each layer I smoothed it tight from the centre, a curiously satisfying tactile experience but one which resulted in quantities of fine wool-like carbon fluff, looking like the friendliest carcinogen in town (after fine balsa dust).

Then into it with the resin. Slop, slop, slop, shoo the dog out of the way, bummer it's walked through the drips and headed for the carpet, nothing to be done, work the resin into the fibre and hope it penetrates. With a beautiful two-metre sodden stick oozing epoxy goodness all over the landscape I belatedly work out how to get it into the narrow 2.5m plastic bag. It obviously won't just pull up over the stick, that will force the wet fibre up the blade – so off with the gloves and turn the bag inside out. On with new gloves, gradually envelope the stick with the bag like a starfish extruding its stomach, stick a bit of old towel in the top of the bag to catch excess resin before it gets into the vacuum device. Gloves off, then lay the top of the bag in the gate of Lamo Baggins.

This is where I discover Lamo has several functions (seal, suck, cut etc) with just one unmarked button and no instructions. I work my way through the possibility space (seal/

not suck, cut /not seal, suck /not seal, suck /not cut) each time using up a bit more of the extra half metre of the bag until just as I reach my bit of old towel I hit the suck, seal, cut combo.

Forty minutes of wheezy sucking noise later (the machine, not me) and the bag seems no more evacuated than the start. The resin is starting to go off, I can tell because the dog's footprints are getting very tacky in the carpet. Come to think of it the dog has been standing still in one place for an unusually long time, looking plaintive. Tentatively I undo the bagger and find I wasn't quite so smart after all, didn't quite get the suck/seal/cut thing working. More fiddling, at last it starts sucking toxic fumes out of the bag and pumping them into the kitchen. Success!

A day later, after the resin has finally gone off and I've chipped the dog free, I cut the blade out of the bag. The edges are razor sharp where the resin has oozed out in a thin sheet and have no trouble cutting through the plastic dropsheet and the tablecloth underneath in one go. The Imp is well satisfied.

The next weekend is a blur of additional resin coats and power sanding ( a whole new world of toxic dusts, now with added carbon fibre goodness) as I gradually fill in the depressions and sand down the inexplicable bumps until the blade starts to feel smooth. The third coat of resin goes on strangely and takes almost a week to go off, leaving a slightly creepy leprous quality to the finished blade. Finally I'm down to the final fibreglass polish: rubbing furiously with a cloth. Just the thing for the recovering tennis elbow.

Then it's done. For about a hundred and sixty bucks I have an imperfectly shaped GP that seems to have a nasty rash, but it feels light and it even works well in the water. The Imp, sad to say, lost interest as soon as things started to go well, and has gone back to sleep until the next challenge. I've got a couple of litres of resin I have to find a use for within the year, a dog who seems to have forgiven me now that the hair on her feet has grown back, Lamo Baggins now resolutely sealed shut by the resin it sucked into its works, and a tablecloth with a stylish slash in it. I have learned that balsa is an uncooperative timber best left alone, that multiple coats of resin multiplies the unpredictability of the end result and that the thing that's used up most is time.

And gloves. And dropsheets. ■



By Mark Schroeder

Photo by Lee Gilbert [www.awholebunchofings.com](http://www.awholebunchofings.com)

# ARCTIC Kayak Dizziness

## Fact or colonial fiction?

Were trumped-up diagnoses used to keep indigenous Greenlanders in check?



Whilst trawling the net for kayak ephemera, I came across two intriguing conditions reported amongst Inuit paddlers called Kayak Dizziness and Arctic Hysteria. As I delved deeper it became clear that I'd stumbled onto a bit of Arctic history that's highly controversial amongst Nordic academics.

As far as I know, the two conditions have had little or no coverage in Australia, despite the fact that they might shed light on early colonial attitudes towards indigenous populations which have fascinating parallels with those in the Australia, attitudes that shaped our own history, and perhaps contributed to the fate of this country's indigenous peoples.

The two conditions were first reported in the mid 1800s by early Polar explorers who recounted that Greenlandic hunters suffered Kayak Dizziness out at sea, usually in calm waters under clear blue skies. They would hallucinate, capsize and often drown in the cold water. They were described as seeing the sea and sky merge into one.

Arctic Hysteria, they wrote, was found

mostly in Inuit women who, when afflicted, would shout unintelligibly, tear off their clothes and run around wildly. After a couple of hours the sufferer would collapse exhausted into a deep sleep before making a complete recovery except for amnesia related to the episode.

Historian Søren Rud, of Copenhagen University's Saxo Institute studied the possible role of factors such as gender, race, culture and economy in the conditions.

Rud viewed those early diagnoses through the lens of contemporary society at that time and the historical period in which they were made, postulating that more than just science may have been at play. For an academic, his conclusions seem highly political and subjective to me, albeit highly thought provoking.

He considered explanations behind the diagnoses stating that the lower the cultural status of a people, the more affected they become when encountering a modern society. It was thought that Greenland's race and culture was not cut out for modern society's rapid changes and luxuries. When doctors first diagnosed kayak dizziness they believed the

Photo courtesy of University of Oslo



Greenlanders had been poisoned by coffee, tobacco and sugar.

“It is still commonly believed that Greenlanders are not as good at holding their liquor as Western Europeans – they get drunk more easily and find it harder to turn down a drink.

As far as I know, there is no research that supports such a theory. It may appear this way because Greenlanders are more engaged in public life and don't necessarily stay at home when they're under the influence of alcohol. What constitutes acceptable behaviour in a society definitely plays a part – and not least how various forms of behaviour are interpreted”.

Writes Rud, “On the one hand it was postulated that this was primitive behaviour and that Greenlanders were only capable of living in the present moment. On the other perhaps they were some of the first people to suffer from modern lifestyle diseases that weakened their nerves.”

“Exotic, culture-specific diagnoses have often been used – and abused – in various ways to control certain groups of people and their way of life. They have also been used for what society regarded as a division of races and classes into ‘us’ and ‘them.’

“We’ are those who live in a modern society and can enjoy luxury goods and stimulants in moderation. ‘They’ are the primitive people, who neither know how to cope with the rapid development in society nor control their use of luxury goods if they gain access to them”.

Amongst the different theories lies a paradox; reports of stranded sailors during the 1800s exhibiting the same symptoms have been found, despite it having been described as a form of a culture-bound syndrome, limited to the indigenous people.

Even though the conditions have a place in historical records and official medical canons, contradictions surround them. Some say they existed before Western contact, while others doubt their very existence, claiming that the stories were created, or at least exaggerated, by condescending and culturally

insensitive imperialists whose interpretation of the symptoms served as a way to restrict Greenlanders to their traditional lifestyle, essentially enslaving them to provide seal products which the colonial masters could trade at great profit.

Others believe they were more likely related to the mistreatment of Inuit societies at the hands of Westerners. In 1988, Canadian historian Lyle Dick, began a substantial challenge to the concept that Arctic Hysteria (or piblokto or pibloktoq) exists at all.

Dick examined the original records of the Arctic explorers, and ethnographic and linguistic reports on Inuit societies, and discovered that not only is the majority of academic speculation about Arctic Hysteria based on reports of only eight cases, but the word “piblokto” / “pibloktoq” does not exist within the Inuit language (although he acknowledges this may have been the result of errors in phonetic transcription).

After several years of research, Dick published a paper in the journal *Arctic Anthropology*, and a book in 2001 titled *Muskox land: Ellesmere Island in the age of contact*, in which he suggested that piblokto is a “phantom phenomenon”, arising more from the Inuit reaction to maltreatment by European explorers in their midst.

It was not uncommon for polar explorers to persuade Inuit women to join them on their expeditions far away from their families. The disorder was first reported by Admiral Robert E. Peary during an expedition to Greenland. Having sent the Inuit women's male counterparts out on distant missions, Peary's extracted sexual from the women. The hysteria Peary and his men witnessed among the Inuit women may have been breakdowns brought

on by this mistreatment, combined with the unaccustomed separation from their close family units. Underscoring this is the fact that their hysteria was regarded by the men as entertainment.

Adding to the confusion is a medical explanation. Inuit nutrition provides abundant sources of vitamin A through ingestion of livers, kidneys and fat of arctic fish and mammals and lays the possible basis in some individuals for Hypervitaminosis A. This is a condition where the vitamin is stored in poisonous quantities and may result in some of the symptoms discussed.

To this day, Kayak Dizziness and Arctic Hysteria continue to be hotly discussed in places like Alaska where significant populations live in long dark winters which have also been widely blamed; do the conditions persist to this day? It's not clear.

I must say the whole story, perhaps partly as a result of poor translations into English of the academic texts, has left me confused. Rud's class and race-based theories – to my thinking – contain plenty of contradictions and his strongly socio-political assertions supported by fairly scant evidence are so subjective as to merit distrust.

But there's certainly something there that rings uncomfortably true to our own early colonial history.

Or perhaps, if you experience a dizzy spell while kayaking, it's just a sign you need to choose your paddling partners more carefully, eat less fish or give up the smokes! ■  
*In compiling this article, I acknowledge drawing on publications by the The Danish Independent Research Council and The Danish Independent Research Council as well as the writing of Ulla Lund*



Photo Melissa Woods

By Philip Rose

# Nansen's amazing Journey North

In 1884 the great Norwegian explorer Fridtjof Nansen began to consider reaching the North Pole by using the natural drift of the polar ice.

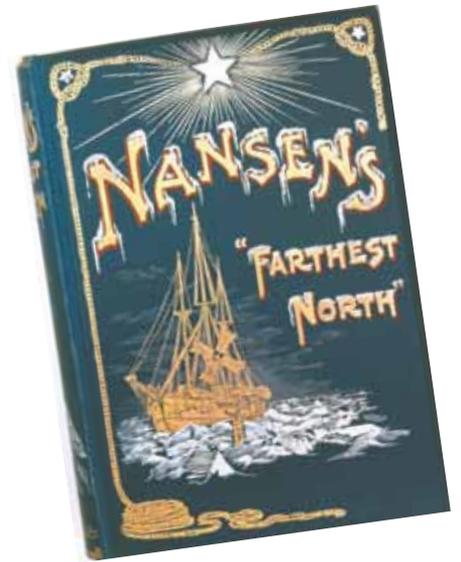
Artifacts found on the Greenland coast had been identified as coming from the lost US Arctic exploration vessel *Jeannette*, which had been crushed and sunk in 1881 off the Siberian coast. Their location indicated the existence of an ocean current, flowing from east to west across the polar sea. A strong enough ship might therefore enter the frozen Siberian sea and drift to the Greenland coast via the pole.

The specially constructed polar vessel, *Fram*, left Christiania in 1893 under Nansen's command. She followed the North East Passage route pioneered by Nordenskiöld. Progress was impeded by fog and ice in the mainly uncharted seas. Nansen followed the line of the pack ice

to a position 78°49'N, 132°53'E, before ordering engines stopped and the rudder raised. From this point *Fram's* drift began.

The ship's northerly progress continued at a rate rarely above a mile (1.6 km) a day. Nansen developed a new plan—a dog sledge journey to the pole. When the ship passed latitude 83° he and Hjalmar Johansen would leave the ship with the dogs. *Fram* would continue its drift until it emerged from the ice in the North Atlantic. After reaching the pole, Nansen and Johansen would make for the recently discovered and sketchily mapped Franz Josef Land.

Nansen and his men built one kayak each, under supervision of local Greenlandic Kayakers from the Nuuk district – one of them survives to this day in a Norwegian Museum. The kayaks were to be carried on sledges until needed for the crossing of open water.



Nansen had allowed 50 days to cover the 356 nautical miles (660 km; 410 mi) to the pole, an average daily journey of seven nautical miles (13 km; 8.1 mi). On 7 April, after making camp and observing that the way ahead was “a veritable chaos of iceblocks stretching as far as the horizon”, Nansen decided to turn south. He recorded the latitude of the final northerly camp as 86°13.6'N, almost three degrees beyond the previous Farthest North mark.

Fredrik Hjalmar Johansen and Fridtjof Nansen pulling sledges on the way south.

At first Nansen and Johansen made good progress south, but on 13 April suffered a serious setback when both of their chronometers stopped. It was impossible to calculate their longitude and thus navigate their way accurately to Franz Josef Land.

Travel conditions worsened as the warmer weather caused the ice to break up. On 22 June the pair decided to rest on a stable ice floe while they repaired their equipment and gathered their strength; they remained there for a month.

The day after leaving camp Nansen recorded: “At last the marvel has come to pass—land, land, and after we had almost given up our belief in it!” On 6 August they reached the edge of the ice, where they shot the last of their dogs, lashed their two kayaks together, raised a sail and made for the land.

Nansen and Johansen sailing the two kayaks bound together.

It was soon clear that this land was part of a group of islands. As they moved slowly

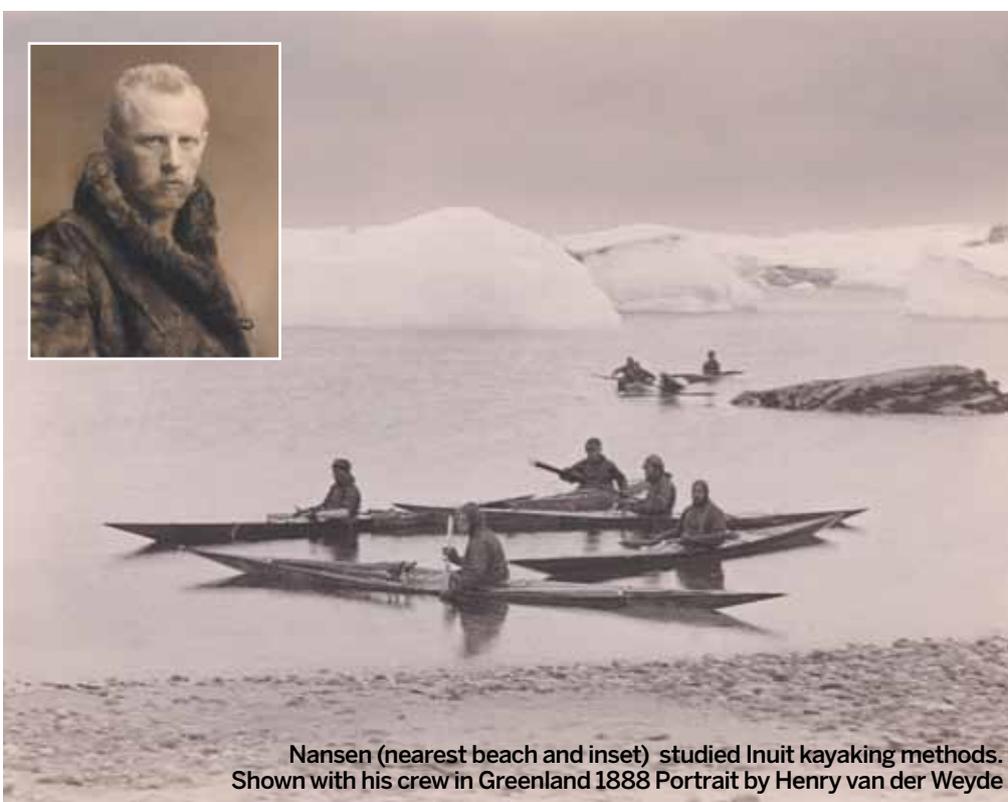


## KEY Routes taken during the 1893–96 *Fram* expedition:

- RED:** *Fram's* route eastward from Vardø along the Siberian coast, turning north at the New Siberian Islands to enter the pack ice, July–September 1893
- BLUE:** *Fram's* drift in the ice from the New Siberian Islands north and west to Spitsbergen, September 1893 – August 1896
- GREEN:** Nansen and Johansen's march to Farthest North, 86°13.6' N, and subsequent retreat to Cape Flora in Franz Josef Land, March 1895 – June 1896
- PURPLE:** Nansen and Johansen's return to Vardø from Cape Flora, August 1896
- YELLOW:** *Fram's* voyage from Spitsbergen to Tromsø, August 1896



L to R: Fridtjof Nansen, Otto Neumann, Knoph Sverdrup, Oluf Christian Dietrichson and Kristian Kristiansen. Greenland 1888



Nansen (nearest beach and inset) studied Inuit kayaking methods. Shown with his crew in Greenland 1888 Portrait by Henry van der Weyde

southwards, Nansen tentatively identified a headland as Cape Felder, on the western edge of Franz Josef Land. Towards the end of August, as the weather grew colder and travel became increasingly difficult, Nansen decided to camp for the winter. In a sheltered cove, the pair erected a hut of stones and moss which was to be their home for the next eight months. With ready supplies of bear, walrus and seal to keep their larder stocked, their principal enemy was not hunger but inactivity. After muted Christmas celebrations, in slowly improving weather they prepared to leave their refuge, but it was 19 May 1896 before they were able to resume their journey.

On 17 June, during a stop for repairs after the kayaks had been attacked by a walrus, Nansen thought he heard sounds of a dog barking, and voices. A few minutes later he saw the figure of a man approaching. It was the British explorer Frederick Jackson, who was leading an expedition to Franz Josef Land. Nansen later wrote that he could “still scarcely grasp” the sudden change of fortune; had it not been for the walrus attack that caused the delay, the two parties might have been unaware of each other’s existence.

On 7 August Nansen and Johansen boarded Jackson’s supply ship and sailed for Vardø. The world was quickly informed by

telegram of Nansen’s safe return. Taking the weekly mail steamer south, Nansen and Johansen reached Hammerfest on 18 August, where they learned that Fram had been sighted. She had emerged from the ice west of Spitsbergen and was now on her way to Tromsø.

The homeward voyage to Christiania was a series of triumphant receptions at every port. On 9 September Fram was escorted into Christiania’s harbour and welcomed by the largest crowds the city had ever seen. The crew were received by King Oscar, and Nansen remained at the palace for several days as a special guest. Tributes arrived from all over the world. British mountaineer Edward Whymper, wrote that Nansen had made “almost as great an advance as has been accomplished by all other voyages in the nineteenth century put together”.

Fram would go on to carry Roald Amundsen to the South Pole and to this day, it’s still the wooden ship that has achieved the furthest North and South latitudes.

Fridtjof Nansen went on exploring and in later life became a prominent scientist, diplomat, humanitarian and eventually Nobel Peace Prize laureate. ■

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Notes on the construction of the kayaks: [http://www.thecheappages.com/n\\_the/bamboo\\_kayak.html](http://www.thecheappages.com/n_the/bamboo_kayak.html)



Above: Fram, photographed by Nansen. According to the plan, she was to drift in the ice with the ocean current from the coast of Siberia across the North Pole to Greenland 1895

By Andrew Peacock



# Photo Mission: ANTARCTICA

Kayaking photographer Andrew Peacock tell us about how he ended up taking the extraordinary photos on this page, and opposite.

I'm a 46 year old medical doctor and adventure travel photographer living on the Sunshine Coast and I've enjoyed paddling since I was a kid. As a youngster in Adelaide I was in the Australian Junior Sprint Kayaking Team and competed at the World Championships in Italy and later as a surf lifesaver with North Bondi SLSC my team mates and I won the National Open Ski Relay. I've paddled with an Outrigger team in the annual Molokai to Oahu race, crossed Bass Strait with a mate in single sea kayaks, paddled and camped along Hinchinbrook Island and been thrown around in some big rapids on an incredible 18 day paddling trip on the Colorado River through the Grand Canyon.

Paddling has been a big part of my life and I hope it always will be.

These photos were taken at the beginning of this year when I was able to combine my skills and passion for expedition medicine, photography and paddling together in one amazing trip. I was the doctor and kayaking guide for a small family group who had chartered a super yacht to explore the Antarctic Peninsula. Each day a few of the group and I would launch from the yacht and explore the iceberg choked waterways and bays looking for penguins, seals and whales. It was at times pretty cold and keeping my hands warm enough to operate my Canon digital SLR was a challenge. I carried the camera in a chest harness which meant it was not well protected

from the water but at least always available in case the unexpected occurred as when a 20 foot Minke whale appeared and headed straight for me. I trusted this intelligent animal to judge just where my kayak hull was and I tried to remain steady and calm while I quickly composed a shot and took a couple of frames. The Minke whale photo was published in 'Outside Magazine' in the US has been seen around the world in an online news story.

My photo website can be viewed at [www.footloosefotography.com](http://www.footloosefotography.com) and if you'd like an archival quality print of one of these photos or any other on my website please feel free to get in touch with me at [andrew@footloosefotography.com](mailto:andrew@footloosefotography.com) or 0425 2254543. ■



A 20 foot Minke whale tests Andrew Peacock's cool as it cruises directly beneath him

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