

Salt

THE MAGAZINE OF THE NSW SEA KAYAK CLUB
ISSUE 97 | JUNE 2015



Bass Strait Crossing

ALSO INSIDE:

Rock 'n' Roll Wrap up

Club Trip turns into a Rescue

Curtis Island Holiday

Ten Lessons from Tasmania

NZ: Doubtful Sound and Milford Sound

Front Cover: Albatross en route to Hogan Island
March 2015, by Campbell Tiley.

This Photo: A new selfie angle, by Rodrigo
Matamala at Rock 'n' Roll 2015.



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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.

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Contributions yes please! Salt the magazine of the NSW Sea Kayak Club is published three to four times a year by the NSW Sea Kayak Club. The NSWSKC welcomes articles relating to sea kayaking for inclusion in the Club's magazine and website. Publication in the magazine and/or website is at the sole discretion of the editor. All articles submitted are subject to review by the editor who reserves the right to reject or edit material. Please email contributions as Microsoft Word or text files. Images need to be supplied at the highest possible resolution. All material is copyright. The contributor retains underlying intellectual property rights in the contribution however the contributor grants the club a global perpetual all-media license to publish the contribution in club communications, including in print and digitally. Reproduction in whole or part is strictly forbidden without written permission from the editor, author or photographer. Advertisers must adhere to legal requirements and undertake to indemnify NSWSKC against any consequences arising out of their advertisements. For further information contact the editor.

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



From the President's Deck

CAMPBELL TILEY

I am writing this watching some interesting white-water – unfortunately flowing past a friend's sitting room, where I am trapped by floods, having been unable to get home due to the water. Although a little short on power and Internet, we have sufficient wine supplies. At least I am getting down to my magazine contributions!

Thanks to everyone who contributed to another successful Rock n Roll at Currarong. David Linco did a great job coordinating the event, helped by a strong team of volunteers. Our visiting instructors Nick Cunliffe and Kate Hives commented how much they enjoyed the communal and social atmosphere of our event. We enjoyed excellent presentations from Nick and from Jason Beachcroft. With Stuart Trueman and Shaan Gresser's help we had over 130 paddlers on the water on the Saturday, many paddling in lumpy conditions down to the impressive Drum and Drumsticks. Sadly, access to the caves was precluded by the conditions although on Sunday we had the opportunity to explore the crevices and gauntlets inside Point Perpendicular. Thanks also to all the instructors and leaders that got the club safely on the water. This year, for the first time we were required to have on-water support vessels. While we hope to re-negotiate this issue before next year, we need to recognise that without the help provided by the Marine Rescue units at Shoalhaven and Jervis Bay and their volunteers we would not have got on the water at all.

We went back to catering on-site this year with the aim of improving the social aspect of the Saturday night. I enjoyed the atmosphere of the marquee with no bar queues and pokies, BYO for dinner, and thought that there was a lot more social chat before dinner without the need to commute to a commercial venue. On the other hand, we will need to improve our catering and ensure that we have sufficient food if we run with this next year.

The question of the best locations for Rock and Roll is debated every year. Batemans Bay is an excellent location and arguably the best location accessible either side of Sydney. It has good access to the water and good paddling options in a variety of weathers. It is, of course, also well south of Sydney and there is some merit in using a range of locations for variety. I would be interested on the membership's views on this question – should we run all Rock n Rolls at Batemans Bay and perhaps plan smaller events, or perhaps one additional smaller event annually, at a greater range of locations up and down the coast? Either let me know directly or, even better, come to the AGM on August 15 and let us know your thoughts.

We are likely to have some vacancies on the Club Committee for next year, for both the Treasurer and Vice President positions. If you think you might be interested in putting up your

hand and contributing to the running of the club, please give me or one of the other committee members a call. All members are, of course, free to nominate for any Committee position at the AGM.

Finally, thanks again to Steve Hitchcock for hassling you all to contribute content for the magazine and putting each issue together. Thanks also to Tim Wolstencroft for doing the layout on Adobe InDesign. This is Tim's last issue as he has enrolled in a university course and no longer has time to help. We are, of course, dependent on members to volunteer when they can to maintain all current club activities.

See you at the AGM and on the water!

Cheers,
Campbell

This edition has been one of my favourites. Fantastic trip reports accompanied by amazing photos received from numerous members. Plus the Rock 'n' Roll weekend provided additional material from adrenalin charged attendees. It has been a pleasure liaising with the contributors and photographers for another stimulating release of your magazine.

To address those queries for extra copies and soft copies of the magazine, please beware:

1. The glossy printed magazine comes to your home, one copy per quarter per household. The budget is tight, so only a few spare copies are printed, which mostly go to potential advertisers and new members.
2. On the members only area of our website, you will find PDF copies of the most recent editions of the magazine. Magazines are moved to the public area 12 months after release.
3. The entire collection of all NSWKC magazines are available through Campbell Tiley on DVD.
4. You can also visit the www.issuu.com website or their app (free to download) and search for SALT. In recent years, our magazines have been uploaded here for the general public 12 months after first released to members. This is a more user-friendly way to read magazines than the PDF format.

What is Issuu?

This is a commercial website which showcases over 20 million magazines across a massive range of sports and interests, spread across the globe. We pay a small fee to have SALT listed, so members of the public can access them for free. Their statistics confirm that SALT has been read thousands of times in these countries (in order): Australia, US, Germany, NZ, Lithuania(!), Canada, Ireland and UK.



From the Editor's Desk

STEVE HITCHCOCK

By the time you read this edition, the wild storms that hit Sydney and the Central Coast up to the Hunter Valley on 20-21 April will be a distant memory. For those fellow members who regularly paddle out of Sydney Heads, it was hard to believe that on those days, Sydney Harbour was closed and the ocean liner Carnival Spirit ordered to stay outside. According to Manly Hydraulics Laboratory, wave heights were literally off the charts, exceeding 8 metres. According to Ed Couriel, the principal engineer at the Manly Hydraulics Laboratory, the highest wave recorded off Sydney was a whopping 13.6m, at about 11am on Tuesday 21 April.

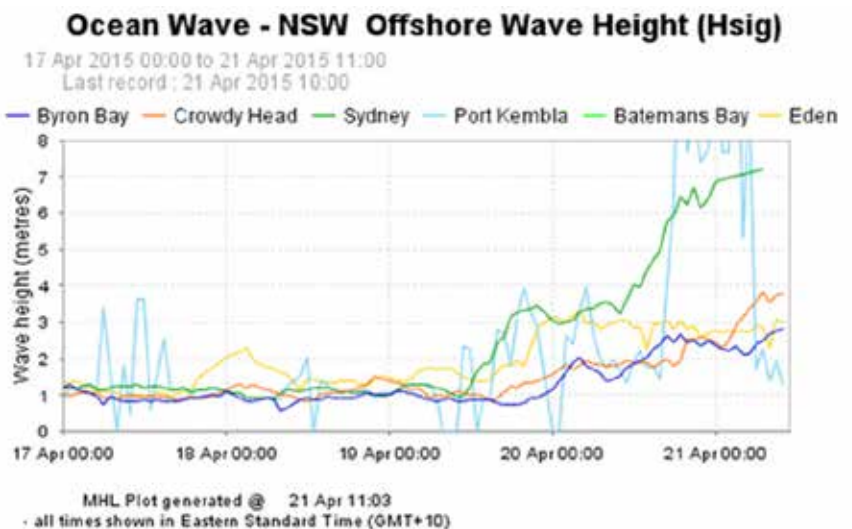
Finally, thanks to Tim Wolstencroft for laying out this magazine using Adobe InDesign. These days, it takes two people to turn your stories into the professional magazine that you've

become used to. However, this is Tim's last edition as he has enrolled in a demanding university course, so very many thanks to Tim for helping me out over the last 12 months. Please contact the editor if you have the skills and would like to help out in his place.

Salt #100

Next March 2016 will mark our 100th edition of the magazine. We have some ideas to help mark the special occasion, but will need your help. To kick things off, between now and Christmas, please email me with your short answers to:

"What my club magazine means to me ..."



As a UK sea kayaker, I've been drawn in the past to exotic destinations such as Norway, Alaska, and Chile. When the invitation arrived, however, to spend two months coaching sea kayaking skills in Australia, it suddenly struck me that I had a history of foolishly focusing on cold-water destinations around the planet. As the January rain turned to sleet against my North Wales cottage, I realised that, whatever else happened Down Under, numb fingers and frozen feet would not form part of my experiences.

I travelled to Oz with Kate Hives, a Vancouver Island resident also solely accustomed to more challenging temperatures. Six weeks into our trip, we finally washed up in Sydney – as guests of the New South Wales Sea Kayak Club – where the air humidity was matched only by the warmth of welcome extended to us by Neil and Raewyn Duffy. A couple of days later we made the journey south to Currarong, host venue for the 2015 Rock 'n' Roll weekend. We looked forward to the event, a chance to meet new paddling friends. We also eagerly anticipated the Saturday night open forum discussion about 'Sea kayaking and world hunger'!

A welcome paddle with Neil took us out to the NE tip of the Beecroft Peninsula, where the swell collided playfully with the sandstone cliffs, driven ashore by the fresh SE wind. After two weeks of mild conditions in Victoria, it was delightful to bounce around in the reflected waves off this beautiful corner of Australia. Back at base, a few beers courtesy of Expedition Kayaks completed the perfect event introduction.

I've visited a few sea kayak events over the years and was curious to see how Rock 'n' Roll compared in its organisation and atmosphere. After a business-like instructor meeting, we were treated to the unforgettable sight of Stuart Trueman cajoling the participants to 'stop f*****g running around, you b*****s, or we'll never go paddling!' I considered, and rejected, the temptation to copy Stu's style at my next UK event.

Paddling Days Down Under – A Pom's Reflections

NICK CUNLIFFE



Two days of sea kayak coaching gave us some wonderful experiences with a diverse and varied group of paddlers, all sharing the same passion and enthusiasm for their sport. The morning drift down the tidal creek (and afternoon battle back) was a fun and unusual way to access the ocean each day.

The variety of kayaks in Australia was also a revelation to us. Rolling skills in Greenlanders, sea kayak surfing in fixed-rudder Mirages, downwind speed enhanced by sea kayak sails – all new experiences for us, fresh instructing challenges for two skeg-boat paddlers. Throw in a few sets of wings in each group and we were kept on our coaching toes throughout our stay!

It's always great to learn within a new sea kayak culture – my personal favourites included Mick Robb's fantastic sails (we bought one each), electric pumps (great pieces of kit) and venetian cord towlines (I purchased a few metres, to fix my bathroom blinds). Perhaps my most abiding memory from Rock 'n' Roll was the morning

spent teaching rolling skills – two hours spent wading around in 22°C water. The contrast, two weeks later, of North Wales sea kayak rescues in a 7°C Atlantic ocean, was striking.

Our final week of the trip, wonderful hosted by Tom and Carolyn Cox was enlivened with sea kayaking in Sydney Harbour. One trip under the South Heads, in the midst of a thunderstorm, was almost memorable for all the wrong reasons! A big thanks to Rob Mercer for his support and assistance, especially when I succumbed to man-flu on our final coaching day. Thankfully, Kate and Rob saved the day.

Our final day afloat in Australia was spent with a team of NSWSKC instructors, exploring coaching styles, progressions and skills – a well-attended day, filled with enthusiastic discussion and great way to bring to an end a memorable, fun and absorbing trip to Australia. All the club paddlers we met in NSW gave us a wonderful welcome – thanks guys, for making our trip such a good one. Hopefully we'll be back again one day.

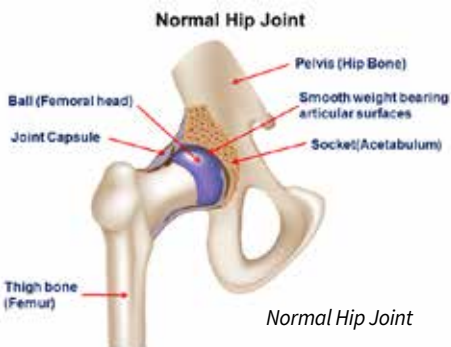
Hip Flexibility

CATHY NOLAN, PHYSIOTHERAPIST



Hip flexibility is important for enjoying your day, weekend or expedition out on the water. No doubt most of you, including myself, have felt some tightness or stiffness in the hip joint as you go to get out of your kayak after an extended paddle. Your back bends forward to compensate and as you try to straighten up you feel stiffness and sometimes pain at the front of the hips. There are some very good reasons why.

The hip joint, which comprises the head of the femur and the acetabulum (a deep socket in the pelvis), is designed for weight bearing in an upright position. The hip is stabilised by the bony structures particularly the acetabulum, the ligaments around the joint and of course the various muscles acting over the joint (22 in total). The hip joint's major function is to transfer and distribute loads from the lower limbs to the pelvis and help propel us forward in a smooth, balanced motion when walking or running. To achieve this the hip joint needs to flex, extend and to some degree rotate.



Normal Hip Joint

In a kayak we are seated with our hips in 90 degrees of flexion (or less when you bend your knees) and weight bear on the sit bones of our pelvis. In this position the hip joint, along with our core muscles, transfers loads from the lower limbs to the pelvis when pressing on the foot plates to rotate the torso for forward stroke (we will just focus on forward stroke in this article). The hip joint still needs to flex, extend

and rotate to achieve the desired hip movement. So the key differences between the two positions for the hip joints when kayaking are:

1. They are taken through a much smaller range of movement in this seated position for movement compared to an upright position, and
2. They operate in a flexed as opposed to neutral position as in standing.

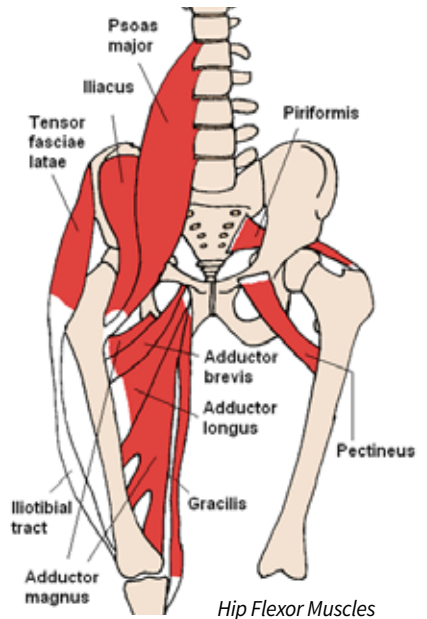
As with all sports and activities if you can achieve good biomechanics this posture won't cause you problems. On the converse, if you don't have or can't sustain an optimum upright posture with your trunk and/or can't extend your leg fully to rotate your hip, the hip flexors can overwork in a shortened position, leading to hip tightness and pain in the front of your hip joint which sometimes can also present as lower back pain. This is due to the attachment points of the key hip flexor muscle.

The hip flexors

The hip flexors are a group of muscles located at the front of the hip joint. The major and most powerful hip flexor is the iliopsoas muscle, which extends from the thoracic spine via the lumbar vertebrae to the insert on the inside of the thigh bone. It is made up of three separate muscles the psoas major, psoas minor and the iliacus.

Other important hip flexors that assist iliopsoas in hip flexion include, sartorius (the tailor muscle), rectus femoris (part of the quadriceps group) and the tensor fascia latae (often a key player is lateral hip pain).

Iliopsoas is an interesting muscle in that it extends from the thoracic spine to the lumbar spine, inside the front of the pelvis to insert on the inside of the thigh. If it operates in a shortened position, such as flexed seated position for extended periods it can tighten



Hip Flexor Muscles

causing pain not only at the front of the hip but into the lower back and the lower thoracic spine. It is a key muscle in anterior hip pain and also a source of lower back pain in not only kayakers but other sports where prolonged hip flexion is prominent such as cycling.

Preventing Anterior Hip Pain

GOOD POSTURE & TECHNIQUE

This is always key in kayaking. Try this test to see how it affects your hip movements. Sit on the floor or on a chair with your legs straight out in front of you with a slight bend in the knee. Sit in slouched position, use the wall like a foot plate and extend your right leg to rotate your hip and trunk, repeat with the left. Now repeat the same movement with your trunk upright. Were you able to achieve more hip rotation and lift your butt cheek off when your trunk was upright?

In this upright position you can achieve better hip extension and rotation (leg drive) along with increased trunk rotation.

STRETCHING

- **DYNAMIC STRETCHING PRIOR TO KAYAKING**
Dynamic stretching is the preferred type of pre-activity stretching as it takes a joint through a complete range of motions and promotes blood flow to working muscles in preparation for use. Try these dynamic stretches for your hip joints
- **BACKWARD/FORWARD LEG SWINGS – STRETCHES HIP FLEXORS AND EXTENSORS**
Standing against a wall (or tree or holding onto the shoulder of a fellow kayaker) swing your leg backward and forward x 10 each leg. This gently and dynamically begins to stretch both your hip flexors and extensors.
- **HIP CIRCLES & TORSO ROTATION (SEE SALT 95)**
With your hands on your hips and feet spread wider than your shoulders, make circles with your hips in a clockwise direction for 10 repetitions. Then repeat in a counter clockwise direction.
For torso rotation, extend your arms out to your sides and rotate your torso and hips to the left, shifting your weight on to the left foot. Then rotate your torso to the right shifting your weight to the right foot. Repeat 10 reps each side.
- **FOR THE FLEXIBLE, REVERSE LUNGE WITH ARMS OVERHEAD**



Reverse Lunge, courtesy of Popsugar

Stand with feet hip distance apart. Take one leg backwards into a lunge position, bend your knee until you can feel a stretch at the front of the thigh. Once you are stable in this position extend your trunk and raise your arms up overhead into a stretch. Release the arms, straighten the back leg, then repeat on the same leg, lunging a little further each time. Repeat x 5, then change legs.

STATIC STRETCHING POST KAYAKING

- **HIP FLEXOR STRETCH**
Start by kneeling on the floor (use a blanket or something soft under your knee) with the knee of the hip to be stretched underneath your hip. Your other leg is bent in front of you with the foot on the floor. Push your pelvis forward of the hip until you feel a stretch in the front of the hip. Hold for 30 secs. Change legs and repeat each side x 3
If you can't kneel on your knees due to hip pain, try the hip flexor stretch by lying on your back, your hips close to the end of a bed or couch. Take one knee towards your chest as far as possible, letting the other leg slowly drop down towards the floor until you feel a stretch at the front of the hip. Don't let your back arch. Hold for 30 secs. Change legs and repeat each side x 3.
- **QUADRICEPS STRETCH**
Standing on one leg using a wall for balance if required. With the same side hand pull your foot up towards your buttock until you feel a stretch in the quadriceps. Ensure your knee is pulled back slightly if possible so that your hip is extended. Hold for 30 secs. Repeat each side x 3. (if you are tight in the quads and can't reach your foot easily, try a belt around your foot instead.)
- **FOR THE FLEXIBLE, PIGEON POSE**
Kneel on the floor in a four point position, (hands underneath shoulders and knees underneath hips). Bend your right leg in front of your body, make sure your knee is in line with your right hip. You should feel a stretch into your right buttock. If you would like more of a stretch, bend your elbows, or if you can, extend your arms all the way out in front you. Your rotators will thank you for it!



Hip Flexor Stretch



Quadriceps Stretch



Pigeon Pose



NOTE: As with all stretches and exercise, none of these should be painful. If they are, stop and see a health professional for advice.

NSW SEA KAYAK CLUB

RESCUE

DATE	Friday, 6 March 2015
WEATHER FORECAST	Min 16 – Max 28. Sunny
CLOSED WATERS	NW 10/15 easing to W 10 0.5m
COASTAL WATERS	WNW 15/20 easing to ESE 10/15 2.0m
SWELL	S 3m
TIDE	High 1.7m at 9:30am. Low 0.4m at 4pm.
WATER TEMP	24.1°C

First on Scene by Barry Marshall

It was a typical Friday morning paddle by the NSWSKC Oandora group. 10 paddlers were paddling back into Middle Harbour into a 15-20 knot westerly at about 1pm, after having paddled to Neilson Park for the usual refreshments, when we came across a group of 4 people in hired kayaks in trouble. I could see the group even before rounding Grotto Point and it appeared that all was not well with the group, which became more apparent on approach.

As I rounded the point I could see a Mirage 730 double kayak about to be swept onto the rocks on the western side of the point. The forward paddler was an elderly lady, the rear paddler was a young bloke and it was two thirds full of water (PFDs were on, but no spray skirts). The other two

single kayaks (the daughter and dad, the elderly woman's husband) were managing to stay clear of the rocks without being able to offer any assistance. Just as I got to them the double rolled and the young bloke half tumbled out but I was fortunately able to right the kayak without the elderly lady coming out. The kayak was now full of water and very close to the breaking waves, which were tailing off the Point. The young bloke was back in again. By now we had the cavalry and towlines were quickly deployed. Bill helped stabilize the kayak from the other side to prevent it capsizing again and Stewart, Steve, Hans and Brian began towing the craft to Castle Rock beach a few hundred metres away. Pumping was useless as water lapped into the craft with every swell.

The family group was Indonesian and I was fortunately able to talk to them

in Indonesian, which helped calm (or at least distract) them while we towed them to safety. When we landed the lady on the beach she was unable to get to her feet (being invalid) and there were a few anxious moments as the heavy kayak threatened to wash over her, which could have broken her legs.

We managed to get them comfortable and insisted that they stay put while I paddled off to the hire place at the Spit so that they could be rescued.

First Tow by Stuart Morgan

The last leg of Friday's paddle usually turns into a bit of sprint, this Friday was no exception. Barry and Bill were first past Grotto Point and as I approached I could see them rafted up with a double close to the rocks on the western side. I wondered who the kayakers were they were chatting to.

As I rounded the point I could see they were not chatting. A 730 Mirage was swamped, listing and being pushed onto the rocks by the wind. Barry and Bill were on each side holding it upright.

I hooked my long towrope onto the stern, which was further away from the rocks and proceeded to tow the kayak at least away from the immediate danger of being washed onto the rocks.

Towing a swamped Mirage double into a 20 knot wind is not easy especially when you are towing it backwards and the rudder is fully to one side adding to the resistance. Not to mention I was pulling Barry and Bill along for the ride as well. I made little progress but kept it clear of the rocks.



I remember yelling at them to pump it out and saw that the guy in the rear cockpit was doing so with someone's hand pump. It was however a fruitless exercise as the wind and waves were filling it quicker than it was being emptied.

When John arrived and hooked onto the Mirage in a V tow, I was greatly relieved. Shortly afterwards Owen hooked onto my bow and Michelle onto John's boat, and with the 4 of us we made good progress towards Castle Rock beach.

With everyone safely on the beach Barry was organising the family, convincing the elderly couple to stay on the beach and wait for Sydney Harbour Kayaks to retrieve them, with the younger couple paddling the singles back.

I then continued the short paddle back to Clontarf with some of the group unaware of the continuing problems with the other two in the singles.

The Second Rescue by Hans Schmidt

Without spray-skirts and into rough seas, the male occupant of the Mirage fought a losing battle with a hand pump. Barry steadied their boat and did a great job calming both occupants by speaking to them in their native Indonesian, while I came alongside on the other flank, aiming to reduce the amount of water sloshing into the Mirage's cockpits.

After reaching the beach and helping out the family, the two single kayakers came back onto the water accompanied by Bill and Barry. They were aiming to reach Sydney Harbour Kayaks. After paddling into the wind for two hundred meters, it became obvious that the task was beyond the skill of the novice paddlers. Barry told Bill and me to guide them back to the beach while he informed SHK to collect their customers off the beach.

The young man struggling next to me

handed me a plastic shopping bag before attempting to turn his boat around. Moments later he tipped over and I rushed to the rescue. I told him to move to his boat's stern while I emptied it of water. That was easy. Guiding him alongside his boat hatch into the proper rescue position, on the other hand, took some doing. Stop! Head-first into the hatch definitely won't work!

While dealing with his language/clumsy problem, I tried to get a firm hold on his kayak. There were no handy deck lines to grab. While he heaved himself into his hatch in the most impossible, ungainly manner, I hung on to a slippery deck. "Stay low and reach for my deck", I implored. Ignoring my plea, he fell towards me and pulled both of us into the drink.

Resisting the urge to wet-exit, I felt for my paddle, found it and checked the wing was the right way around. It seemed OK, though the leash felt stretched to its limit. I rolled up like



magic, almost doing a 360. Turned out, my friend had climbed onto the upturned hull of my boat while I took my time setting up. As it rolled under him, he grabbed for an edge and helped pulled me around, thank you kindly. After directing him to hang onto my kayak's stern, I slowly paddled us back toward the beach.

Owen sped up proceedings by getting my companion to climb onto the back of his boat. After my recent experience with him, I had no intention of being that generous.

I don't know what happened to the parcel entrusted to me. Never mind, a mobile phone wrapped in a shopping bag would have been useless even before I got hold of it.



Commentary by Bill Raffle

You wonder how the Indonesian family would have viewed the events that day. The two or three kilometre push from the strong westerly wind towards the rocks was about 20 metres from its inevitable conclusion, the boat was swamped, all energy gone, the elderly invalid lady was subdued and the children were helpless, and then around the corner comes the Oandora group in full flight – they didn't need to know we were racing!

Barry pulls up beside them and immediately starts calming them in the native tongue whilst confidently issuing instructions to the other Indonesian kayakers to ensure the situation did not deteriorate further. Stewart whips out a rope and starts towing them away from the rocks and is quickly assisted by a group of four rotating paddlers in a v formation who drag them safely to a beach – everyone was calm and at the ready and no one rushed in to make things worse – a great team effort.

It was only when we got to our towing destination at Castle Rock Beach that I realised how bad this could have been. There were small wind waves as we pulled up on the beach. With the 730 sideways then Barry's boat then

my boat we tried to get the elderly lady out. She couldn't stand up on her own. Once we helped her stand up it was clear she couldn't walk unaided so the yelling at her to move out of the way was to no avail. Thankfully she was helped away by other family members with legs intact.

The drama wasn't over. Two of the younger family members decided they would paddle back to the hire place, against our advice, and it wasn't long before it was clear that this was a bad idea. The rocking from side to side got bigger and with no spray skirt it was just a matter of time before the bloke capsized. Hans came to the rescue and before long this bloke was climbing up Hans like a goanna up a tree. After pulling Hans over he was clambering up onto Hans overturned kayak and I cringed – convinced we were in wet exit territory. Amazingly Hans rolled up in one of the best combat rolls under pressure that I have witnessed – I was so impressed with the roll I almost forgot about the poor bloke in the water who was then ably assisted to safety by Hans and Owen. Plenty of post paddling discussion ensued about how to deal with panicked rescues.

Meanwhile the hire place had gone across to the beach in a big cruiser,

which couldn't land on the beach so Barry had to help the family members out to the cruiser.

Discussions ensued that day and on following Fridays, about the role of the hirer versus the experience and ability of the hirer, the use or absence of spray-skirts and the role that we all play to ensure that sea kayaking continues to have the support of the authorities and the public in helping to ensure safe paddling in the future.

Some of us that saw the state of the weak elderly invalid lady in what looked like a big wet winter overcoat and worried that this could have ended very badly if we had arrived a few minutes later. It was a very lucky coincidence that the Oandora group was there at the time to prevent what could easily have resulted in a tragedy.

Photography by Steve Hitchcock

At first sight upon rounding Grotto Point, somewhat after the leaders had arrived, I saw a semi-submerged double, with a cautious Stewart starting his tow. A real-life rescue mission was underway, and already well under control. I held back.

Shannon O'Brien, Managing Director, Sydney Harbour Kayaks

On behalf of Sydney Harbour Kayaks, we greatly thank the members of the NSW Sea kayaking Club for their assistance in helping the Indonesian family.

Safe Paddling is our top priority and we maintain a very strict set of programs and policies to keep our customers safe. We are regularly audited by NSW Maritime (RMS) and have always comfortably passed these audits.

On the day in question, the conditions were well within our limits of operation and the customers did go through our regular pre paddle briefing.

The kayaks that the customers were paddling were suitable for their ability and the conditions.

The members of the Indonesian family were all aware of our procedures, they understood these in English (one needed translation) and all members seemed to have full physical capabilities when they arrived and went paddling.

Although we have a rescue boat on standby, it was lucky that your members were able to assist and alert us to the situation.

Best Regards
Sydney Harbour Kayaks



No need to rush in and complicate matters. No one was panicking. The 730 occupants weren't exactly thrilled at their predicament, but they were (just) buoyant. This unfolding story would need some photos.

As the V-tow stretched out ahead, I hung back taking some snaps of the stern-first tug. I had plenty of time. As became obvious, double Mirages full of water heading backwards into a strong wind, are slow movers. I snapped away until I noticed that the two singles were even slower. The young girl was ok, and

agreed to a photo. The old man agreed to a photo and tow. I hung up my camera, affixed the towline and headed off in pursuit of the main group.

Once they were all beached, I considered the event over and headed back to Clontarf. I had an appointment to keep, and couldn't hang around. I let it be known I was leaving and to pass on my email address to the rescuees, if they wanted the photos for the family album. Not sure these memories were the ones they were anticipating when they started their day.



ROCK 'N ROLL

What a wonderful weekend was had by all at Currarong. The combination of varied paddling options, wide range of exhibitors, inspirational guest speakers meant we all should have left RnR, tired, spent and inspired. Well, at least till the following weekend.

Despite some challenging weather it did not deter members who wanted a taste of the open seas.

Thanks to NSW Marine Rescue, Currarong Beachside Tourist Park and the volunteer team who once again made it a very smooth weekend.

Currarong holds a special place for the Club. Whilst certainly less forgiving, it is one of the better paddling environments to test your skills.

Special thanks again to the exhibitors and for their donated prizes; Expedition

Kayaks, Sea Candy, Rosco Canoes and Kayaks, Jervis Bay Kayaks, Helinox, Greenland Downunder, Fly Kayak Sail and Gippsland Kayak Company – who due to a family illness were unable to attend at the last minute.

As RnR Coordinator my role is carried out predominantly before the weekend and once again a great team of volunteers took over from Friday, to help me out.

On Friday I was able to play along the length of Currarong Beach and try my hand at some reverse surfing. On Sunday, I was able to get out past Point Perpendicular and enjoy the rebound and massive swell. On the return leg, I added to the tattoos on my boat by running the gauntlet through the many caving options. On the way back as we neared Honeymoon Bay, I even landed an Australian Salmon. My

elation turned to astonishment when after dispatching and cleaning my prize during the final rinse, the fish slithered out of my clutch and swam away. That was one for the record books as the one that truly got away.

It's ironic that over the years, we've not required support from external authorities. However the one year we were required to have Marine Rescue attending from NSW Maritime, we required their assistance for an incident on Saturday afternoon. A kayaker had severe leg cramping and required transportation back to Currarong.

The injured kayaker was transported back to the Currarong boat ramp where due to the low tide, she was assisted back ashore with the help of several kayakers. With NSW Marine Rescue providing great radio coverage and support (in many cases shadowing



2015 WRAP UP

DAVID LINCO



groups of kayakers) over the weekend we were always in safe hands.

The Saturday night dinner with guest speakers; Jason Beachcroft and Nick Cunliffe kept us enthralled. Well done Jason for your relaxed attitude of a very significant paddling expedition. Thanks to Nick and Kate for subsequently entertaining us with paddling tales, videos and a wonderful sense of humour. To quote one of Kate's jokes:

Q: What's the difference between a sea kayak guide and a large pizza?

A: The pizza can feed a family of four.

Thanks also to our members for your feedback over the weekend. According to you, what worked well were:

- Fundraising BBQ – corn on the cobs were in higher demand than the sausages
- Two Beachmasters each morning made this role much easier

- Hospitality area in the double marquee was well utilised again
- Broad exhibitor range of equipment on display
- Great speakers on Saturday night, with good presentations
- Flare exercise – who doesn't like to play with flares?
- Significant advance notice for RnR
- T-Shirt & Caps were a hit (get in quick for 2016)
- RnR budget was achieved

And a few points worth noting to improve on next year:

- Low Pogie submissions, though those submitted were excellent – well done to all!
- Formal time and place for new members to meet, perhaps after Friday dinner, and first rights for trip bookings on Saturday and Sunday
- Online registration vs membership renewal difficulties (we hope to

have resolved this now by changing the renewal date to 1 January each year).

Time now for me to take a breather from the RnR paperwork until later this year but early indications suggest we are definitely heading north.

Lastly, applications will be closing soon for another member to take on RnR from 2017. The significant "RnR benefits" package makes this a very attractive volunteer role within the Club. For those that are interested, you may wish to work with me on RnR 2016.

Far left top: Expedition Kayaks.

Far left bottom: Sea Candy.

Middle left: The expert from Wales, Nick Cunliffe.

Left: The one that got away ...

Right: Jervis Bay Kayaks.

Below: Fly Kayak Sail.

Far right: The humble circumnavigator, Jason Beachcroft.

Lower right: Greenland Downunder.





As my first major kayaking event, this year's Rock and Roll celebrating 25 years, proved a great value for money experience and one that I would recommend to any kayak lovers. It was a thoroughly enjoyable weekend of training, skills, trips, talks, equipment updates and knowledge sharing.

I arrived early Saturday morning and found myself pitching a tent next to Greg, who I had met at a previous club event, so straightaway felt like I was amongst friends.

A strategically placed arrangement of marquees, flags and sponsor's tents signalled the business end of town. After grabbing a cup of tea I introduced myself to Campbell Tiley and David Linco and was made welcome. The registration team then sorted me out with cap, T-shirt and paperwork. I quickly realised what a well organised and serious event it was.

At about 8.30am a crowd grew to attend the day's briefing including an introduction to the sea leaders and a brief description of which trips or training they were offering for the day. Following the briefing you were invited

ROCK 'N ROLL

First Timer

PETER MONCKTON

to place yourself on an activity list of your preferred choice.

I quickly learnt that some events seemed to be pre-booked so that knocked those off my list. After working from the back of the queue, I put my name down for a paddle south along the cliffs but was the last person for an already oversubscribed group.

I eventually discovered Stuart Trueman who had assembled a group for some sea skills training. I tentatively asked if he had room in his group. He just handed me his clipboard and said "stick your name here and see you on the beach in 10 minutes!"

The next few hours were full of challenges and amusement. After we performed some requisite sea rescues in relatively calm waters, Stuart took us out into a reasonable sea of about 1.5m and 20 knots of breeze and then asked us to repeat the same sea rescues. This highlighted the complexity presented in likely rescue conditions. The added difficulty level was staggering. Stuart observed the general chaos that confronted him and offered some descriptive words of encouragement. The whole exercise was unforgettable.

Later on, showered and dried, I met up with Tom Cox and we walked to the

beach to attend the featured event of burning flares with the enthusiastic Coastal Patrol team. The spectacle of the orange plume against the deep blue sea and setting sun was impressive.

Saturday night's dinner and show was clearly the big social event that the RnR is renowned for. I sat with a Queensland table who, like all of those at the event, were having a good time sharing the common kayaking passion.

Jason Beachcroft gave a presentation on his astonishing Terra Australis circumnavigation in a very succinct and unassuming way, which attempted to downplay his remarkable feat. The long journey was an arduous trial presenting constant challenges, which he somehow managed to overcome by pure endurance and gritty determination.

Nick Cunliffe's very entertaining presentation by contrast was an informative talk about a short journey to the small island of St Kilda, off the coast of Scotland.

As an RnR first timer I was then given the honour of drawing out the generous sponsor prizes, which provided some lucky ticket holders with a surprisingly varied offering of goodies.

On Sunday I joined a sailing trip lead by Tony, who proved that when it comes to sailing a kayak first and foremost one needs wind. In the absence of ideal conditions, we sea caved and I felt rather privileged to be in such a small group of four.

I am full of admiration for the organisers and volunteers who did an amazing job to keep us all entertained, fed and amused over this special weekend. I think that this event proved to me that this club has an amazing resource of members who are dedicated and generous with their time and energy who, through their love of the sport and professionalism, offered this amazing event for the enjoyment of us all. It was an inspiring experience. Thanks everyone!



Impressive flares at dusk – photo by Rodrigo Matamala.

ROCK 'N ROLL 15

New Member



PAUL MONARO

The 2015 NSWSKC Rock 'n' Roll was my first. Having joined the club just a few weeks before, and not even knowing about this annual event, I had booked myself in for some of the regular half-day training sessions. Basic skills, rescues & forward stroke instruction from Rae & Neil Duffy, followed by towing and a 15km paddle with Peter Osman, left me wanting more. I checked the website for what was coming up, read the description of this upcoming Rock 'n' Roll event, and reasoned it might be just the thing for me. After begging a leave pass from my wife (who I thought agreed a little too enthusiastically), I started planning my weekend. I had been paddling for only a year, and possessed little more than a kayak, paddle and PFD. I visited the club website for the recommended equipment list, then placed an order with Expedition Kayaks for some additional items I'd be likely to need. I also purchased a spray skirt, did some food shopping, had the car packed ahead of time, and set off for the south coast at 5am on Saturday 21st March.

I arrived at the Currarong Beachside Caravan Park a little before 8am and made myself a cuppa. I had a quick look at the exhibits, registered, and milled around waiting for things to begin. I wasn't standing around on my own for long. A few people introduced themselves. I met some fellow-Sydney-siders, a bloke from Canberra, another from the South Coast. All of them had been paddling for a lot longer than me, and had been to previous RnR's. Closer to the 8.30 briefing, at lot more people were turning up. This event looked like it was going to be pretty big.

Leading up to the weekend, I had taken a good look at the programme, and was impressed with the range of options available. The choice between

these wasn't easy. There were some great looking 15 to 20km kayak trips, and several training sessions that covered the many things I needed to work on. With my limited experience, I decided training sessions were what I required, and pre-booked online for the Saturday & Sunday morning. This was just as well. All the sessions turned out to be very popular.

At the 8.30 briefing, event organiser David Linco explained the format of the weekend, went through important safety issues, and introduced NSWSKC trainers and committee members. This was good for me, because I didn't really know anyone. Next, it was time to split off into our allocated groups, to meet our trainers and receive our instructions. The Saturday morning session I had opted for was Rolling, and it turned out to be a particularly good choice. The official instructor was Welsh-based Englishman Nick Cunliffe, a BCU Level 5 Kayaking coach in sea

kayaking and white water. He and his partner Kate ran tours and paddled the famous tidal flows near Anglesea off the west coast of Wales. They were the special guest instructors for the weekend.

The morning with them turned out to be challenging, somewhat tiring, but great fun and very rewarding. The training steps Nick and Kate went through were cleverly sequenced, with gradually harder drills leading up to the eventual challenge of attempting to roll. They taught us about edging, high and low bracing, and getting a feel for the different degrees of contact between paddle and water. Then we paired off, and worked on quarter and half rolls, alternatively using the bow of each-others boat to control going from upside-down to rolling upright. My partner for this activity was Brendan, who could already roll very well, so he generously let me have more than my fair share of practice.

Ruby Gamble making great progress with her roll under the watchful eye of Nick Cunliffe. (Photo Megan Pryke.)



The chief aims of the exercise were to learn correct head position, while also using the necessary leg drive to assist with returning to upright. This gave me some confidence, and a sense of what was required. Next, it was one-on-one instruction with Nick or Kate, and practice of the movements involved in the full roll.

For this ultimate challenge, our instructors seemed to use different strategies depending on what each participant needed most help with. For me, Nick chose to guide my paddle through the water, simulating the sweep action required, while I was left to control my head position and leg drive. What resulted was a lot of paddle pressure through Nick's hands, and not enough of my leg action. I rolled upright each time, but only with a lot of help. My disappointment was tempered by Nick saying my very stable Shearwater kayak seemed to be just as stable when upside-down, and challenging to bring upright. Of course he was able to jump into it soon after, tip it over and bring it around effortlessly first go. At least I knew my boat was capable of rolling. And while I wasn't successful with my first lesson, I got to feel the technique in action, and have a better idea of what I needed to do.

I'd hoped to follow-up Rolling with an afternoon surf skills session. But it had been a tiring morning, and I felt I'd already taken enough seawater up my nose. Besides, I still had my tent to set-up. So I figured three excuses were enough, and packed up for the day. I got organised with my afternoon duties, including setting-up camp, and afterwards had some time to spare. This allowed me to visit the exhibits on display. There were so many interesting pieces of equipment it left me contemplating what I'd be ordering next. Then I had an hour or so to kill before dinner. The day had been cool and overcast, but the sun came out late in the afternoon. I took advantage and set myself up with chair, a beer, and my newly acquired Salt magazine, and soaked up some warmth in a quiet and sunny corner of the park.

The Saturday dinner was a great night. Around one hundred and seventy people were seated and fed with roast beef & veg, while listening to some great presentations, and sweating on their ticket number being read out for the impressive raffle prize draw. My tickets were duds, but there's always next year...

The first presenter that night was Jason Beachcroft, who talked about his recent kayak circumnavigation of

Australia, including Tasmania. He made it sound like a (17,000 km) walk in the park. What most amused and horrified many of us was his description of the night he was awoken to find a crocodile intent on dragging his kayak off the beach and into the water. He was forced to engage in a tug-of-war with the beast. Jason won the contest, but only after further dissuading the croc with a few jabs from a sharp instrument. It wasn't the close encounter with the deadly reptile that upset Jason as much as his resulting loss of sleep.

The next presentation was from my rolling instructor Nick, who talked about his kayaking in Wales, and a trip he recently completed from the west coast of Scotland to St Kilda Island. He rated this part of the world highly as a kayaking destination. But he did acknowledge that the waters we were currently enjoying around Jervis Bay were somewhat warmer than the 7°C seas he paddled back home. His talk was fascinating, giving us an amusing and enlightening insight into the nature and history of a unique part of the world most of us knew little about.

Whatever discussions or otherwise went on after Nick's talk, I couldn't say. That was the time I felt the call of my tent. Sunday morning activities

*Kate Hives' rolling session.
(Photo Ruby Gamble.)*



were kicking off at 8.30am, and I was booked in for a Rock Gardens lesson with Adrian Clayton & Nick Gill. I had very little idea what this would involve, but a good night's sleep was going to be one ingredient. Next morning, after another briefing, we were soon back on the water. I was testing more than just my aptitude for rock gardening that morning. In my possession was a Lendal Cadence paddle, loaned to me by Expedition Kayaks. I soon realised it left my clip-together plastic & alloy model for dead. But even with this great paddle I was pushed beyond the limits of my (lack of) expertise. We were soon practicing a range of unique paddle strokes – ‘bow-rudder’, ‘side-draw’, ‘side-rudder’, ‘forward’ and ‘reverse sweep’... These were intended to help us with what was to follow. The ‘rocks’ Adrian arranged were three kayaks, positioned in an open triangle and kept in place by the instructors & various participants, all standing in waist-deep water. The rest of us took turns at progressively harder drills of entering, turning, gliding sideways, and backing-in and out of the triangle. All with the intention of avoiding any contact with the ‘rocks’, & more importantly with the people holding them. Nick demonstrated each new drill and made them look easy. The rest of us had varied levels of success. For myself, I can only say

that if the kayak triangle had been real rocks, I might have been doing some serious Shearwater patching. The real challenge was picking the best stroke under pressure, and making it work within a split second. At one stage when Nick screamed “side draw!” I barely had time to think “what’s that?” before feeling my kayak bounce quite impressively off his.

The highlight of the morning was each of us negotiating the same rock triangle, suddenly awash with violently choppy water. This was created by Adrian’s ingenious wave machine – three kayaks humanly assisted in ‘sea’-sawing rapidly end-to-end, stirring up the enclosed surface water, and simulating a lively sea-cave environment. This was putting rock gardens in greater perspective, minus the rocks of course. Even Nick was impressed.

We finished with a slalom event where we paddled in a line out to the open water, each rear boat overtaking the ones in front while weaving between paddlers, practicing our forward sweep & bow rudder. This was manoeuvring with continuous forward motion, and for me it proved to be harder than I expected.

At the start of the morning, most of us

had little idea of what Adrian’s rock garden session was going to involve. If you’d arrived with high expectations, you were still surprised. The exercises were constantly varied, increasingly challenging, generally nothing you would have imagined, and most of all a lot of fun. I came away having learnt a lot, but more so with a tremendous amount now to learn. I guess that’s the reality for a novice sea kayaker on his (or her) first trip to RnR. I’m still unsure of which is going to be the more challenging – achieving my first solo roll, or mastering the paddle strokes and manoeuvring skills from that Sunday morning.

Unfortunately, my RnR weekend finished there. I had to pack up and return to Sydney in the afternoon. I was reasonably happy with what I had accomplished in my one-and-a-half days. But I wished I’d had more time to make use of what was a great weekend at very little cost. The whole event was so well organised, and turned out to be a great social as well as learning experience. Virtually every paddler I met had skills that I am only just beginning to work on, and this has heightened my enthusiasm to keep practicing. I’ll be returning to RnR, but next time I plan to make it for the whole weekend.

New member Brendan Murdoch staying upright in the “wave machine” during the Gentle Introduction to Rock Gardening Session. (Photo Adrian Clayton.)



Clayton's Rock Gardening

THE KIND OF ROCKS YOU LIKE TO PLAY IN WHEN YOU HAVE A KEVLAR BOAT.

FOOTNOTE BY CATHY NOLAN

With the weather forecast being a bit glum for the second day of Rock 'n' Roll, the offer of rock gardening without the rocks was both intriguing and inspiring. This 3 hour training course, ran by Adrian Clayton and assisted by Nick Gill was held at Currarong beach in front of the caravan park.

It started out with some theory at the beach on manoeuvring around rocks and then focused on how we

would simulate the rock gardens with three plastic kayakers and 6 energetic human pillars who adjusted the 'gaps' in the rocks depending on the task and/or individual skill level. Nick Gill would demonstrate the manoeuvre, expertly I might add, followed by each of us tentatively trying the move, the main goal being to avoid the 'rocks'. Lessons on bow rudder, side draw, side rudder and reverse sweep gave each of us some new boat skills to try the manoeuvres again.

With some new skills learnt the next lesson was to adapt the situation of playing in rock pools with waves. The human pillars jumped up and down in the water to create a wave action in the centre of the 'rock pool' and then each of us would enter and once again use our new found skills to avoid the rocks. Incoming real wave action also added some unexpected challenges to the scenario. Those that could then rolled in the garden among the wave action, fabulous to watch I must say.

This training course was fun, challenging and I must confess a great way to build some confidence in among 'rocks' without the threat of damage to the boat. Thanks Adrian!



Nick Gill manoeuvring through Clayton's Rock Garden, with Adrian, Ruby and Todd generating the waves.



Todd Tai handling rougher conditions in the next rock garden, courtesy of Paul Monaro in the background, amongst others.

Saltiest submission **WINNER**

I'm pleased to announce the winner of the 'Saltiest Article' from Salt #96 was Chris Thomas for his excellent and honest report of a near miss off Cape Banks.

Many members have told me that they appreciate reading honest account of paddling incidents, and often it's those stories that I hear recounted at RnR and during club trips. The Cape Banks incident illustrated how easy things can go pear-shaped, but now, through his frank recount of his cold and exhausting experience, the whole club gets to benefit from the lessons learnt. If you haven't read the article, I urge you to dig out your copy of Salt and commit those lessons to memory.

Here is Chris receiving and modelling his prize from Mark, a green short-sleeved jacket courtesy of Expedition Kayaks,

On behalf of the club and the magazine, I wish to thank Rob Mercer and Mark Sundin of Expedition Kayaks for donating the jacket. I'll be in touch with Rob and Mark to determine the winner from this edition. May the saltiest submitter succeed!

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ROCK 'N ROLL Fundraising Rescue

BY CAROLYN GIBBINS



(L-R) Carolyn Gibbins, Brittany & Ella Trueman and Sam Gill, photo by David Linco



Marine Rescue NSW.

and especially to those volunteers, young and old, behind the serving counter!

It started with an email from David asking for volunteers to help with the Fundraising Sausage Sizzle Lunch, in aid of Marine Rescue NSW. "Well" I said, "I can't paddle, and I would only be sitting in the cabin knitting – this is something I can do as an accompanying person." So I sent back an email saying I can help ...

The first rescue manoeuvre I performed was to save the President's reputation. How many sausages? Possibly fearing a rebound wave of left over uncooked sausages, the President was discovered to have over-promised and about to seriously under-deliver. The President was immediately seen to do some emergency reverse sweep strokes out of the main tent, on his way to the nearest butcher in the backwaters of Currarong. (He also nearly popped his hatches on his return with yet more loaves of bread!)

It was concluded the corn quantities were about right and no rescue actions were required.

The second rescue manoeuvre was by Stu Trueman's two beaming daughters; Brittany and Ella. Earlier in the day their father was overheard to say in his (nearly) acquired Aussie accent (something like) "I'm not going to stand up to my waist in water all day teaching people to roll – and I'm not going help on the Sausage Sizzle Lunch." He nevertheless did contribute to a training session, however he handed over the lunch role to his daughters.

Brittany and Ella saved us from their father's bearded face and military like sentences ("You'll have whatever logistics gives you!") ... and other verbal equivalents of rock garden

hull crunches, and instead we were greeted with beautiful smiles, girlish complexions and demure service giving us exactly what we needed for a perfect fundraising lunch service.

The third rescue manoeuvre was performed by young Sam Gill, who when he discovered his pea-less whistle had disappeared, managed to find a loud hailer instead. Young Sam and his hailer succeeded – with a lot of spunk and cheek – to get paddlers from all over the caravan park to come to the counter for our sizzling sausages, cracking corn cobs and a dose of beautiful smiles. Well at least until the corn ran out!

Every rescue has post event forensics. Here are the stats: 250 sausages and 50 cobs of corn sold, with plenty of dollars raised in support of Marine Rescue NSW. Main lesson learned; even non-paddling RnR attendees can have a role (roll) in helping the event run smoothly.

Thanks to Marine Rescue NSW for their safety support role at our 2015 RnR,



(L-R) Peter Leman, Sam Gill, Simon Swifte, photo by David Linco.

ROCK 'N ROLL

FLOTSAM

RESCUE PROVOKES ALPHABET ROW

Senior sea kayaker Nick Gill has responded firmly to speculation that his rescue technique may have had 'physical repercussions' for his rescuee. Following an unexpected capsize only 500 metres from Currarong Creek, Trip Leader Gill was immediately on the scene and initiated the prescribed 'Heel and Hook' rescue with the capsized kayaker.

However, witnesses have since come forward to state that due to 'communication issues' the rescuee may have become confused and attempted to re-enter the kayak using the dangerous 'Hook and Heel' technique. The 'Hook and Heel' is a far more extreme manoeuvre and is only recommended for use by female gymnasts under the age of ten and only then after they have warmed up.

Mr Gill flatly denied the claims, telling Flotsam 'I carried out the rescue according to Club protocols, using my alphabetical skills to ensure the Heel was initiated before the Hook - I have a PhD and so am confident in my knowledge of the alphabet!' Club Training Coordinator Stuart Trueman told Flotsam "We are obviously concerned at the possibility that 'Heel and Hook' could become 'Hook and Heel' in the chaos of a real life situation, so we will discuss this matter at the next Safety Protocol meeting."

Meanwhile several club veterans contacted Flotsam to state that the previously favoured 'V' rescue was generally effective and required no advanced alphabetical knowledge.

DRAMA AT CURRARONG

High profile sea blogger Matt Bezzina paid a heavy price as he tried manfully to keep up with tough Sea Guide Megan Pryke on their fast paddle to Currarong from Sydney.

Arriving at dusk on the Thursday before the event, in dramatic scenes Bezzina was attended to by paramedics after making landfall in an "exhausted and disorientated" state. In contrast Ms Pryke, according to reliable witnesses, looked "as fresh as a daisy".

A close friend told Flotsam "Matt's used to paddling with average

paddlers like Schroeds (Mark Schroeder) so Megan's natural pace would have been quite a shock."

A Flotsam reporter was granted two minutes with the stricken kayaker in the Intensive Care Unit of Nowra Hospital. Although barely conscious, Mr Bezzina croaked "She ... fast ... Schroeds! Schroeds!", before doctors placed him in a medically induced coma.

Footnote: Mr Bezzina made a full recovery. Matt's highly stylised description of the epic paddle with Ms Pryke can be read on his blog.

RAFFLE PRIZE INCIDENT



Bill's fitting.

The raffle draws brought about the usual list of undeserving winners, but interest was aroused when the largest man in the club, gentle giant Bill Thompson, won the smallest surf kayak ever raffled. However things didn't go to plan during a fitting session on Sunday morning when Bill's two metre frame was eventually squeezed into the tiny craft, but triumph turned to despair for Bill when he found he couldn't get out of it due to 'swollen

ankles.' Despite the vendor applying lashings of hot butter and peanut oil to Bill's limbs the popular kayaker was jammed solid, and was only released from the playboat after the local fire brigade arrived and deployed the 'Jaws of Life'.

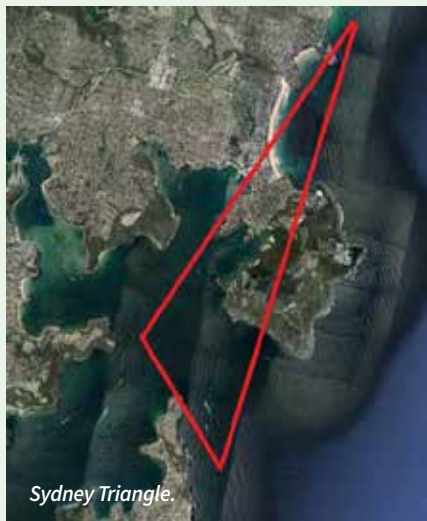
Speaking shortly after the rescue, Bill told Flotsam "the whole incident was a lesson, although I'm not sure in what, probably a lesson in not to buy Rock 'n' Roll raffle tickets."

The Sydney Triangle is Confirmed

The NSWKC Paranormal Phenomena Committee (NSWSKCPPC) has announced that the so called 'Sydney Triangle;' is to be formally acknowledged as a 'zone of mysterious sea kayak disappearances'. Committee Chair John Pitrowski told Flotsam "the zonal criteria has been met following confirmation that a third sea kayak was lost near middle harbour in the late 1990s, although this incident was not reported at the time."

The Sydney Triangle has gained increasing notoriety due to the fact that undamaged sea kayaks, when abandoned by their paddlers at sea, are never seen again. Mr Pitrowski continued "Following the well documented losses of Andrew Eddy's kayak after his yacht rescue off the northern beaches in 2011, and Michael Steinfeld's more recent loss following his helicopter winching of the south head cliffs in 2013, the committee became aware of a third loss after Mr Steinfeld broke the news that he abandoned another kayak in middle harbour many years ago before joining the Club."

Mr Pitrowski added "and as Mr Steinfeld has now lost two boats, the Committee is of the view that should he lose another one we will consider formally declaring our Ex President an official Paranormal Sea Kayaker, a rare honour indeed."



WANTED: Freeloader

Rock 'n' Roll organisers were outraged after reports of yet another event 'freeloader' emerged. Club President Campbell Tiley told Flotsam "Yes it's regrettable that this year we seem to have had another character enjoying our annual event without once putting his hand into his pocket to pay for all the great entertainment."

The freeloader apparently justified his appalling behaviour by telling acquaintances he had granted himself 'Life Rock 'n' Roll Membership' because he had "paid for twenty Rock'n'Rolls and the club is rich from overcharging for two decades!"

It is thought that the cheapskate used several techniques to avoid paying a cent for the weekend, including:

- Sleeping in his SUV outside the park, even using the adjacent disabled public toilet as if it was his own;
- Using the nearby cabins of 'friends' for breakfast, lunch, dinner and long showers;
- Using counterfeit 'Harry Havu' name labels to gain entry to presentations; and
- Using said labels to pretend he was the respected Mr Havu while flirting with attractive Swedish lady paddlers.

Mr Tiley added "on top of all these demeanours, this character actually moved his car right beside the boat ramp at dawn to get prime access to the water, and so avoided the nasty trolley traffic. Club members who have any information about this man are encouraged to contact anyone on the Committee – anonymity will be respected." The Freeloader is described as "tall and fit", and was seen driving a white X Trail with a distinctive white hard-chined plywood sea kayak.

HIGH FLYING HAVU IS BACK! 21

Senior kayaker Harry Havu has apologised for his 'limited involvement' with the Club in the past year due mainly to his rapid career advancement. Havu, recently promoted to a tough corporate role with a major Australian airline, told Flotsam "yes it's been a hard time for me, particularly having to say goodbye to colleagues whose long careers I've brutally ended, but of course in many ways it's been very satisfying. Under my watch revenue has increased by 2.1 per cent, statutory Profit after Tax has increased to \$206M, there has been a Comparable Unit Cost reduction of 4.8 per cent, and of course a very healthy share dividend for the shareholders."

Havu added "but now I have more time to devote to the Club I'm keen to apply what I've learnt in the corporate arena to sea kayaking." Asked what this would mean for a typical NSWKC paddle event, Havu continued "well, for instance, could we achieve the same with four kayaks when we have six? Can we reduce leg room in our boats while still maintaining a minimum level of comfort? Can we reduce day hatch baggage allowance? Cut out food consumption on shorter paddles? As you can see I'm full of ideas."

Harry's delightful partner Dee, who initially was 'over the moon' at Havu's career progression, told Flotsam "Ladies be careful what you wish for ..."

Are you experiencing heart palpitations? Shortness of breath? General anxiety? The NSWKC offers counselling for club members who suffer trauma after featuring in Mark Pearson's Flotsam compilations. Help is available on 1300 FLOT SAM (toll free).

BOAT RAMP CHAOS

The narrow gate joining the van park to the boat ramp area was the scene of several nasty incidents as hundreds of very keen kayakers jostled for position in their rush to get their beloved kayaks onto the water.

Horse loving sea kayaker Margot Todhunter told Flotsam "that was really scary. It was like the Running of the Bulls, but the bulls were Mirage 580's on trolleys ... I got

knocked over at the gate and I'm sure three of them ran straight over me!"

Rock 'n' Roll Coordinator Dave Linco told Flotsam "yes we might have to look at traffic flow issues and perhaps a rostering system for boat ramp departures. But it is disappointing to see Sydney-like traffic tensions emerge on what is supposed to be a relaxing weekend get together."



ROCK 'N ROLL

22

Wendy Marceau and Adrian Clayton in Jervis Bay



Launch spot (by Ruby Gamble)



Anne Moore in a lumpy sea



Helen McGregor on the Kayak Ergometer



Mark Clarkson inspecting a rock formation



Seals at Drumsticks



Bob and Anne Cummings



Eel at Boat Harbour



Dolphins (by Rodrigo Matamala)

- 2015 in Pictures



David Gibbins in the pristine Jervis Bay



Approaching Perpendicular Point (by Mark Clarkson)



Eddie Safarik exiting the twin caves



Green Point in Jervis Bay



Hans Schmidt in Gum Getters Inlet



Rodrigo Matamala edging



Twin tunnel caves (by Rodrigo Matamala)

Not Another Bass Strait Crossing

Campbell Tiley and Alison Curtin, Autumn 2015

REPORT BY CAMPBELL, POSTSCRIPT BY ALISON,
PHOTOS BY CAMPBELL (CT) AND ALISON CURTIN (AC) AS SHOWN



A grey haired loon – day 16 (AC)



Alison – day 16 (CT)

Bass Strait looms large on the local sea kayakers' list of rites of passage. Until very recently it had seemed well out of reach for me. The opportunity to paddle on Stuart Trueman's trip to SW Tasmania in February 2014 expanded my personal paddling horizon and a few Hawkesbury Classics

convinced me I could do the distance. Navigation, rescue and rough water skills have progressively improved courtesy of multiple club instructors, Rob Mercer's Tuesday paddle as well as the challenge of satisfying Sea Leader and Sea Guide assessments – but were they good enough? Having done extended trips in the bush and mountains in the distant past as well as a couple of multi-week paddling trips in balmy Queensland locations, I was comfortable with the camping aspects of the trip.

I was keen to have company for the trip, both for sanity and a modicum of extra safety but primarily because a shared experience is so often more enjoyable – and how would I have got any photos of myself otherwise? Fortunately both Alison and I managed to swing the requisite three-week window off work and planning slowly progressed. A third paddler would have been ideal, but we left our search a little late and I found it difficult to market the trip widely until we were fully committed. Alison flagged some late concerns regarding a wrist injury so we really did not absolutely commit to

the trip until a couple of weeks before our departure. This guaranteed an absolutely frantic final fortnight.

To add to the stress I made a late decision, just over a week before driving south, to abandon my trusty Mirage 580 and buy a Pace 17 for the trip. I was keen to have a more manoeuvrable boat and also liked the more practical hatch sizes on the Pace. The new boat then needed all the usual paraphernalia installed with frantic hole drilling for a sail, a pump, a water tube, a compass – at least there was not too much agonising over whether or not the holes were in the right place. I also talked Alison into a sail, so we needed to fit that as well.

It was a relief to eventually get on the road to Port Welshpool after a 5am start on Sunday morning, collecting Alison on the way through Sydney. I reminded myself how to use the sat phone, we experimented with the Spot tracker, we got our waypoints and routes uploaded to both GPSs and we updated our PLB details on the AMSA website. It seemed to take most of the trip south to get these various electronic details sorted but we had a good trip via the Monaro Highway through Cann River, had a great burger lunch in Sale and got to Port Welshpool before dark. We had a brief weather window the next morning, with a strong SW change due in the early afternoon. After a practice pack at the Long Jetty Caravan Park that evening we confirmed arrangements to leave our car with Darren from Port Welshpool Boat Storage who met us at dawn and drove the car back to his secure yard for my mate John to pick up in a fortnight, all being well.





Wilson's Promontory from Kersop Peak, above Refuge Cove (AC)

We packed before dawn and launched with the first orange glow of the morning to catch the run-out tide down Corner Inlet to Wilson's Promontory. We were easily covering 10kph and had knocked off 30km by 10am. Shortly after dawn we had the interesting and unfamiliar experience of dense fog rolling in. Although we had a compass bearing that we believed was correct, the GPS was very handy with limited visibility and the strong tidal flow. We had our first taste of the remarkable red weathered granite rocks as we cruised along the coast past Rabbit Island.

Just short of our planned destination of Refuge Cove we made one of the few bad decisions of the trip and elected to paddle across what was clearly offshore wind blowing out of Sealers Cove. We could see whitecaps, but completely underestimated the strength of the wind howling down the valley and out of the cove which proved to be around 30-35kn on our beam, gusting higher with rapidly rising steep seas to 1.5m. We were being blown sideways out to sea and had great difficulty making any distance upwind, primarily struggling to remain upright. We reached the southern side of the bay just short of Horn Point and found a small rocky inlet out of the wind. Having dragged the boats up onto a rock shelf we decided enough was enough for the day.

On day 2 we had our shortest paddle of the trip, reaching the picturesque shelter of Refuge Cove in less than an hour. We spent the next two days waiting for the howling easterly and the seas it had whipped up to settle. We also debated the calculations to estimate the impact of the tides and the course offset we would need to

reach Hogan most efficiently. Having eventually agreed on the assumptions and calculations we were at least equally incorrect or correct, fortunately proven to be the latter. Although the walk up to Kersops Peak to get phone reception and weather was enforced activity, the views down the Prom and back over Horn Point were magnificent. We also saw our first tiger snakes. We had passing bushwalkers and yachties to chat to in this popular anchorage and bushwalking campsite. One of the sailors even had a Mirage, had got as far as planning a crossing in the past, and did not think we were mad! We were grateful to score afternoon tea on board a comfortable catamaran with a WA family en route around Australia. They pointed us to a very useful weather app, Pocket Grib, which can make the most of poor bandwidth, rapidly downloading compact data files for expected weather and sea state for a week ahead.

Another dawn start on day 5 saw us paddling ESE to Hogan, not expecting to be able to see our destination

for several hours. We had a bit of headwind from a slight southerly and the seas of the previous few days had settled to an irregular 1m slop. There was an ominous dark cloud mass poking around the Prom from the west and several rain squalls on the horizon. We had both slept intermittently, our minds mulling over the weather forecast and the decision to paddle into open sea for 50km. In many ways it was a relief to finally get on the water and get the true crossing under way. As the sun started to clear the distant cloudbanks, we had one of the most remarkable experiences of the trip, with around 20 albatross circling us for some time as we paddled, their wings skimming just over the waves as they soared by. It was hard not to take this as a good omen for the journey. I was still surprised a couple of hours later when Alison chose to reveal that her nickname at school had been 'albatross', stirring vague recollections of the Rime of the Ancient Mariner. In fact we had albatross checking us out on each of our crossings. The ebbing tide was with us for most of the



Refuge Cove (CT)

crossing. We were completely stuffed when we eventually negotiated the small tide race inside Long Island and rounded the point to see the chimney marking the site of the hut which, until last year when it was sadly burnt down, housed a visitor's book with entries from virtually all east Bass Strait crossings. Further on were the cattle yards where we had decided to camp. The landing was a little rocky at dead low tide. A narrow shelf of flat springy grass provided a comfortable campsite adjacent to the old yards. We did not locate the trough, which we had been told contained some manky water but had assumed that there was no available water on the island anyway. We had panoramic views from the old light on the 136m summit of Hogan Is.

After a comfortable night, only punctuated by the brief entertainment of Alison chasing off a large rat, we had a 10-15kn NE wind and 1-2m sloppy seas for our crossing to Deal Island. From the navigation perspective, our main concern was how much to compensate for the leeway expected from a beam wind. We launched again through small surf in the early dawn, on the water by 6:15. We had an uneventful crossing, keeping clear of the tidal currents in Murrays Pass and paddling round to Winter Cove, giving us the shortest line to Flinders. On the crossing I learnt the importance of trimming the Pace when packing. I had inadvertently loaded the boat a little nose down and was around 2kph slower than usual – a frustrating and exhausting discovery. After landing in another picture perfect bay, we left our camp to the resident Bennet's Wallabies and walked the 4km to the



Dawn start – Winter Cove, Deal Island (CT)

caretakers' house on the other side of the island. Andy and Maria from near Hobart made us very welcome with a hot shower and a cup of tea. They wisely offered us the tea sitting outside, and subsequently offered the shower – we could only imagine why. There is still a record in the guesthouse of the NSWSKC group who set up a small solar power system there in 2003. We headed back to beautiful Winter Cove in Andy's small truck, water bags full and weather forecast updated at one of the two chairs on the island set up where reception is possible.

Day 7 was an enforced lay day due to a strong easterly. We were worried by the deep low forming below Tasmania, forecast to bring a severe and prolonged SW change two days on. Not for the last time we pondered whether we would get the weather breaks we needed to complete the trip. On the other hand, Deal Island is a fine place to spend some time. That evening we enjoyed dinner and a glass or two of wine with Bruce and Naomi who invited us on board their very comfortable yacht for dinner and

ferried us back to our camp afterwards.

Another 5am alarm call on day 8 and we were on the water before first light through small surf with our last night's hosts on deck in the dark to wave us off. With little wind, 1.5m seas and an ebb tide for most of the crossing, we elected to bypass Killiecrankie, hoping to round Cape Frankland on Flinders Island at slack tide. The forecast NNE tailwind did not eventuate and we gradually ticked off the miles to our destination, the longest leg of the crossing at 65km and of itself a physical challenge. At least this leg was punctuated by the landmarks of Wright Rock and Craggy Island, both seeming to pass exceptionally slowly. Although the tide was carrying us sideways at over 4kph at its peak, we kept fairly close to the rhumb line with the help of the GPS and occasional discussions regarding the best offset to steer as we slogged our way to Roydon Island, just off the west coast of Flinders.

We stayed in the very comfortable Landcare hut, only marred by the most aggressive March flies of the trip





Cape Barren Geese, Deal Island (AC)



Bennets Wallaby, Winter Cove (CT)



Castle Rock, Emita, Flinders Island

on the beach when we landed. The altocumulus clouds announcing the forecast SW front were rolling through with the sunset so we planned an early departure electing not to be stuck on a small island for the expected 5 days of severe weather.

Day 9 saw us departing at a relaxed 9am (should be more of it) and paddling some 15km across Marshall Bay to Alports Beach, Emita. The westerly was already increasing, with steepening 1.5m seas and a few white caps. We were happy to make the 'mainland' of Flinders Island. We had crossed Bass Strait and could now get to the pub and explore the island. Although camped in a small carpark, we had gas BBQs, water and toilets handy, the regional museum just up the road and other tourists dropped in regularly at Alport's Beach so we received equally regular feedback about the wisdom of paddling kayaks at sea. As we met more locals, we were invited to have a hot shower in a nearby cottage and eventually invited home for a couple of nights by another local - thanks so much Liz. The 'no

camping' sign at Alports did not seem to carry much weight!

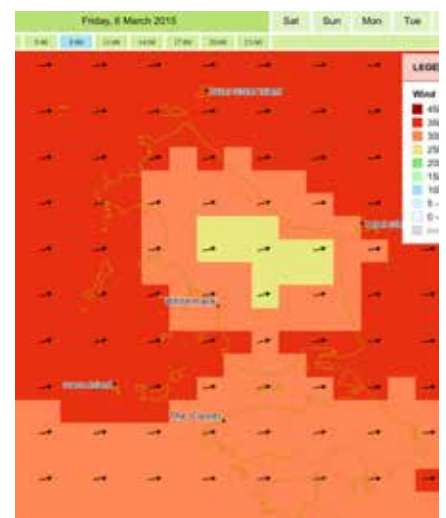
The local museum was excellent and had a number of artefacts from The Sydney Cove, a trading vessel that in February 1797, en route from Calcutta to Port Jackson, started taking water off eastern Tasmania and the captain elected to beach her on Preservation Island, south of Cape Barren Island, rather than sink. He then sent 18 men north in the longboat, which was wrecked at Point Hicks leaving a 500km trek to Port Jackson. Only 3 survived, to be found at what is now Wattamolla in the Royal National Park. The survivors in Bass Strait were eventually picked up by two vessels sent south from Port Jackson, one of which foundered on the return leg with all hands lost. The local history at Emita is also sobering being the place where the last of the Tasmanian Aborigines were exiled in miserable conditions in the 1830s, most dying of disease and buried at Wybalena.

In early December 1797, perhaps prompted by their story, naval surgeon

George Bass took an open 28-foot whaleboat and 6 volunteers south from Port Jackson. They named Wilsons Promontory and continued west to discover Phillip Island and Western Port. Because of the tidal flows and strong SW swells Bass believed that Van Diemen's Land was separated from the mainland. The existence of Bass Strait was definitively established by circumnavigating Tasmania on his subsequent trip on the Norfolk with Matthew Flinders in November 1798. Tragically, Bass's adventurous spirit led him to attempt to run black market goods to South America and he was never seen again after leaving Port Jackson in 1803.

Back to the present, we filled in our time during 4 days of either strong wind or gale warnings by hiring a car and having a good look at a rugged, isolated and beautiful island. The food in the cafes at Whitemark and Killiecrankie was good, and the pub meals in Whitemark really excellent. We fitted in a trek up Strzlecki Peak for stunning views over the island

Pub Weather on Flinders



Banks Strait and Tassie from Rebecca Cove (AC)



Campbell arriving at Rebecca Cove, Clarke Island (AC)

from 756m but left Alison pining over Pillingers Peak, which we had to leave for another visit. Flinders Island is a wonderful isolated gem that I would love to get back to.

On day 12 we had a brief widow to head south before an expected early afternoon deterioration in the conditions. We stuck to our game and launched in the dark in 1m seas and a steadily strengthening westerly. We were able to set our sails once we had punched into a 15kn headwind and rounded Settlement Point. Although we had planned to head to Whitemark, we were moving fast with the wind on our beam and thought we could make Trousers Point, the SW tip of Flinders. With wet conditions due to spray and wind, and more bracing than paddling, Alison was cooling fast as the morning

wore on so we diverted to Big Green Island for a pit stop and an opportunity to add an extra layer. We made it round Trousers Point travelling fast in 2.5-3m following seas and a following breeze that was now around 25kn and gusting. We were in the lee of the point in the nick of time as the weather rapidly deteriorated.

During day 13 off the water due to a strong SW wind we started to check out the Bridport to Lady Barron ferry timetables more seriously as we could only see a possible two and a half day window to reach Tasmania before a longer patch of ugly weather. Day 14 was forecast to be 1.5m swell and a beam wind 15-20kn so we were on the water by 7 on a grey overcast morning. We had a good run across Franklin Sound to Cape Barron Island and

started down the west coast without incident in slack tide as planned. We were concerned about wind against tide and tide race conditions on the points in this area due to the strong and complex tidal flows through the network of islands. The seas progressively became more lumpy and steep, often breaking, as we headed south, the tide starting to flood, and we had our one capsized for the trip off GVH rocks. Off Cape Sir John, on the SW corner of Cape Barren Island, we had the worst conditions of the trip with disorderly following seas peaked up by a strong opposing tidal current to 4-5m, breaking frequently and with wind now behind us at 20-25kn. We were surfing down every wave whether we wanted to or not. These conditions would have been fantastic fun on a day trip close to home but were rather gripping in our isolated situation. We were mightily relieved to pull into Thunder and Lightning Bay for a rest. The camping did not look great so we were glad we had planned to head on to Preservation Island. We had a fast run for the 9km to Preservation with following seas and wind, sailing and surfing most of the way and electing to camp near the hut on the NE end of the island.

We had good phone reception on the hill behind the hut and at last felt confident enough to book the ferry back across to Port Melbourne. There were 3 large circular cairns on the island, which are said to date back two centuries to the Sydney Cove wreck. The views over the Armstrong Channel and back to Cape Barren were, as usual for this area, magnificent. We elected to sleep in the hut rather than camp after seeing a tiger snake at least 2m long who clearly lived nearby, was curious rather than scared of us and was in no hurry to move from the area.

Although we had initially expected the weather to keep us on shore, we launched after lunch on day 15 for the short hop to Clarke Island, planning to catch the ebbing tide. Despite the tide tables for Swan Island, on the south side of Banks Strait, indicating a tide change we were still paddling into a



Pace 17 Fancier, Rebecca Bay (AC)

flood tide for most of the afternoon and were relieved when Alison glimpsed a patch of sand through a rocky outcrop indicating that we had reached Rebecca Bay. The camping was not great, and I had another very close encounter with a large snake, but we were comfortable once we had lugged our gear to the top of the dune, with a good view across the Strait to Swan Island Light and the Tasmanian mainland. Camping in Spike Cove may have been a better option.

Weather and tides appeared to be cooperating for our last day, day 16, with a couple of hours of ebb tide to cross Banks Strait and a strong SW change not due until around midday. We were still apprehensive about this famously rough stretch of water with the strongest tidal flows of the trip and were not at all keen to see what wind opposing tide would look like. We were up at 5am and on the water by just after six. Although moving sideways to some extent, with the tide pushing us we were often travelling over 11kph and had crossed the main channel in two hours. It was sobering to paddle

through several large swirling boils of water in open sea 10km offshore. We then struggled against the tide for a further 90 mins after we expected slack water, speed dropping to 4kph, convincing us that the Swan Island tide table was not even accurate at Swan Island. We had a weak westerly for the crossing, slowly strengthening into a 10-15kn headwind for the final leg.

With all the physical and especially the mental challenges that are typical of such a trip, the feeling when we could see the small bar at Little Musselroe Creek and could also see that we would

make it before the impending weather change was one of overwhelming relief – we had managed to pull it off! We landed around 10am and unpacked for the last time. Thanks to my mate Warrick who had driven up from Hobart to drive us to the ferry at Devonport and to John who cycled to Port Welshpool to collect the car and met us at Port Melbourne. And thanks to Alison for great company, advice and some excellent home dehydrated food. What a great way to spend 18 days, cover 340km, meet some interesting people and see some wonderful country.



Little Musselroe Bay – “Made it” (AC)

Postscript by Alison

Bass Strait was definitely on my list of adventures when I started kayaking a few years ago and the opportunity to go this summer was too good to pass up. Highlights were definitely the many albatross that soared on the waves and at times landed by Campbell's boat, – mostly white-capped albatross I think. Albatross are one of my favourite birds. Deal Island which is a jewel in Bass Strait, and would be well worth a longer stay to explore the nooks and crannies and granite slabs; and Hogan was a favourite too – it felt truly remote, supporting scores of penguins and shearwaters and unfortunately for my water bladder – rats.

Large plates of Tasmanian scallops at the Whitemark pub and the generous and friendly people we met on yachts, and on Flinders Island were also highlights. And the excitement of learning to sail in Bass Strait and tackling the tide races off Cape Barren Island – where focussing on staying up right and manoeuvring through the steep cresting waves was pretty intense. At least the water was warm!

Food was also a highlight, as we did some long

days on the water, stopping hourly to refuel and drink. Campbell had a large supply of Parmesan cheese and condiments, but no coffee (I was as surprised as you are) and he may have been hiding other stuff after my comments about the size of his cheese supply. Coming from a mountains and adventure racing background I tend to travel lightweight. I subjected Campbell to my home dehy chilli beans (they are pretty good) and other secret recipes and ate a lot of muesli bars and Vita-Weats. We were both pretty happy to get coffee and fresh food on Flinders and to raid Liz's vegie garden.

I think the snorkelling would be magic in good weather and the history of shipwrecks in Bass Strait and settlement is also fascinating. It was really good to have a bit of time to look around. Thanks to Campbell for a great trip, we really had no trouble with decisions – and I was really happy that Campbell was there when the paddling got scary. All in all, it was an excellent and at times exciting trip, and I felt a real sense of achievement to have made it to Little Musselroe Bay.

Don't go without – thick socks for the mossies!

Curtis Island HOLIDAY

BARRY MARSHALL



Ready to leave Refuge Cove

The plan was to spend more time down in Bass Strait after having kayaked across with a brother and friend two years ago. I wanted to have the luxury of being able to explore some of its many islands.

I had a sail fitted to my Mirage 580 and tested it on Narrabeen Lakes the day before I left. I bought a smart phone with 'blue tick' (for regional coverage) the same day – never having owned or even used a mobile phone before. With this device I would be able to check the BOM's weather forecasts. The previous week I had purchased a Garmin G.P.S. marine unit and I would be carrying my P.L.B. for the trip.

With favourable weather forecasts for the near future I set off from Sydney on the eighteenth of February. My first error was to drive via Melbourne and not down the coast or via Cooma. I thought I could easily skirt Melbourne to the east but found myself in peak hour traffic on the southeastern freeway from Melbourne. I arrived in Foster after dark and pitched my tent in

the caravan park. The son of the owner helped me use the new mobile phone to find the BOM site.

I was in no rush to get on the water early at Port Welshpool as it was an incoming tide till lunch. Having made sure that I had left nothing behind in the car and that everything was secure, I set off at eleven thirty. With a following breeze I unfurled the sail and was quickly past the first Island but then had to bring the sail down once abreast of Snake Island. A flock of three hundred Cape Barren geese were feeding in the shallows. By the time I was half way across Corner Inlet the wind increased from the east so I made for Wilsons Promontory where I landed for lunch. Dingo, or wild dog footprints were all over the beach. After lunch I paddled along the spit and out into the



sea (the closer in to the Point the better to avoid the shallow spit which extends out to sea) and turned left making for either Rabbit Island or Refuge Cove. There didn't seem to be much shelter from the sun on Rabbit Island so I continued on to Refuge Cove. The benefit of camping at Refuge was that I could talk to some 'yachties' about the weather.

Sure enough there were three boats at anchor in the bay when I pulled in to camp. It was only on unpacking the boat that I realised that I couldn't find my maps (they had to be there somewhere as I hadn't seen them left in the car) and that the front hatch was taking in water through the mast mounting. Finding Hogan Island wouldn't be a problem and I would probably find the map when I unpacked everything there. I lathered the mast mounting with Sikaflex convinced that would solve the problem.

I launched at eight the following morning and spoke with some 'yachties' who confirmed that the weather was looking very light and variable for the next two days which would give me enough time to make Hogan Island and then on to Deal Island the following day. I paddled out of the bay and searched the horizon for Hogan with its strobe beacon. I tried to picture the map in my mind and reasoned that it would be roughly southeast. Visibility however was poor so I set off on a southeasterly heading (on my deck compass) figuring that it would eventually appear. The wind was blowing westerly (roughly 3 o'clock) at 10 to 15 knots so I set sail. An ominous dark cloud bank sat low to the west but fortunately never proceeded my way.

After two hours of paddling I finally caught a glimpse of 'Hogan Island' on the horizon and was relieved. From this point on I didn't have to refer to the compass as the island slowly took form. At one point on the crossing something bumped my rudder, which had me looking around to find the culprit – I saw one seal and had a pod of dolphins criss-crossing under my bow at another time. The wind at one point picked up to the point where I decided to drop the sail.

After seven hours of paddling I approached the eastern end of 'Hogan' (the strobe wasn't visible because a heavy cloud shrouded the top of the island). A current was flowing eastwards which made for a difficult approach but I eventually gained the lee of the island. Nothing was familiar so I figured that I had probably approached from further west than the first time. I paddled along the coast and was stunned by the towering granite cliffs, hundreds of metres high plunging straight into the sea. On I paddled until, eventually, I had my first pang of doubt about my actual location. I decided to use my new G.P.S. unit, which required my glasses.

(DISAPPOINTED – VERY, VERY DISAPPOINTED!)

My G.P.S. showed Hogan Island kilometres away to the east. I was



Campsite on Curtis Island

floundering around the base of Devils Pyramid (I assumed). I was reminded of a story that I'd heard years before about a kayaker having to be rescued from Devils Pyramid. I thought at the time how stupid could one possibly be?

I took stock of my situation – three-thirty in the afternoon in the middle of Bass Strait with seemingly no pull outs on the island. Either I head to Hogan, back to the mainland (both arriving at night) or I spend a night in the boat before heading off early the following

day. Any of these choices would require a very uncomfortable night. I didn't have my 'kag' handy so I thought I should keep paddling. I chose Hogan because of a following breeze. Not far from the lee of the island I got cold feet when I saw a large breaking reef – I didn't want to encounter something like that at night (moonless to boot)! So I turned back and opted for plan 'B' – to paddle back to the mainland with the aid of the Southeast lighthouse and the strobe beacon at Refuge Cove. The wind had abated a little by this time.



View from Curtis Island to Devils Tower (shudder!)

Kayak stored safely above high tide (hopefully!)



As I passed out from the lee of the island to strike off, I saw the faintest chance of a pull out point to my left. Paddling over I studied the swells rising over a shelf and further along another similar shelf. I preferred the second option and fuelled by a sense of desperation I nosed my kayak onto the shelf with the first surge and was up with the second. Out I leapt and held on to the kayak as it was battered by ensuing swells. The cockpit was full of water (and the front hatch was half full of water which explained its poor handling!) but further waves pushed the boat higher (across the shell-encrusted rock!). I emptied the boat as fast as I could, depositing everything above the surging swells. I pumped the boat dry and managed to carry the kayak to a safe spot. The stern had been damaged but not too badly.

So here I was on Devil's Pyramid, safe for the time being, with all my things intact and the boat in one piece. I

secured everything above the high tide mark and set up tent on the only piece of level ground I could find which was only big enough to lay down on. I applied more Sikaflex (fast drying out) and duct tape to the mast mounting and the stern. From my elevated vantage point I spied Hogan Island for the first time to the northeast with its strobe beacon. I ate dinner and ran through all possible scenarios;

1. The swell comes up over night preventing me from launching, forcing me to exist on the island, so perhaps need to consider rationing my food and water which could possibly last two weeks at a pinch,
2. Attempt to launch at all costs and possibly holing my virtual lifeline (the boat), or
3. Activate my P.L.B. which may or may not function, in which case I would sit there for a very long while until someone reported me missing and hope that someone may think about Devils Pyramid as a possibility.

I slept in fits and starts – twice checking that the boat and supplies were safe. With the high tide, the swells began to slam into the rock face above the shelf creating plumes of spray so I became convinced that I would not be launching the following day. The wind had changed to a more favourable direction for a paddle back to the mainland and the heavens cleared revealing a beautiful, starry night. Gannets, or some such birds, circled above – disturbed by my presence. I got out my mobile phone to check the weather and it read, 'batteries extremely low'. I must have forgotten to turn it off after having been shown how to use it back in the caravan park and then freezes just as I'm about to click on the BOM's 'wind'. Perhaps I could text my brother back in Ballina. Even if only one word, 'Devil's' ... and it might give the search party a clue as to my whereabouts. I thought I better check that I am indeed on Devils Pyramid by using my G.P.S. and sure enough I find

Curtis Island



that I am sitting on Curtis Island. Devil's Pyramid was further Northeast, and is actually called Devil's Tower – just another mistake!

At one stage during the night I went to leave the tent to relieve myself and found the biggest bird – a metre tall and solid – that I'd ever seen sitting unflinching no more than a metre away. I was probably camped in its nest! I tried to shoo it away but it wouldn't move. I imagined myself wrestling this peeved, goliath of a bird on the granite boulders of Devils Pyramid. Eventually, in exasperation, I threw my 'croc' at it only to find that it was a pillar of granite.

In the early hours I turned on my radio and there was some guy saying that ones' muscle mass starts declining after the age of forty – so I was now being told that I was twenty years past my prime for the hard paddle ahead – GREAT! I turned the radio off

immediately. I began to wonder if I was up to all this physically and mentally.

On daybreak, I find to my great relief that the swell hadn't come up overnight too much. I decided that without any means of obtaining weather reports, and with a leaking boat, that the mainland was my safest option. I had no appetite at all for breakfast, which didn't please me. I packed up and discarded everything that I felt I wouldn't need for the paddle back. So serious did I view my situation that I even jettisoned all but one can of beer! I thought about emptying all the excess food and water out and bringing all the packaging back, but thought that if I damaged the boat on launching I may be needing all that food to survive. I reasoned that if I was airlifted off the island that I would be leaving a lot more rubbish behind, including the kayak.

I carried the boat to the rock shelf and packed, making sure that I had my

'kag' handy. I dragged the kayak back over the rock shelf and waited for a lull before launching – rudder first. I leapt on whilst shoving off. I was greatly relieved to be sitting back in my kayak – the wind was blowing easterly (roughly 3 o'clock) 10 to 15 knots so I deployed the sail and was on my way to salvation in a choppy sea. I thought that if I kept Redondo Island to my left (I thought it had been on my left on the way over – another mistake as it was actually East Moncoeur that I had passed on my left!) I would be making a beeline for Refuge Cove.

I paddled for about four hours, during which two ships passed close by to Redondo Island heading east and was making good time when the wind began to increase and began tending more from the north which was not good news. I wasn't far from Redondo Island and could see a distant island behind it that never disappeared, which indicated to me

that with the combination of current and the increasing wind I was making no forward progress. The wind began to really howl now and was becoming seriously dangerous, so I decided that I had to seek refuge in the lee of Redondo Island. By the time I neared Redondo the wind was screaming and it had pushed me about two hundred metres past the island and was threatening to push me out into the great expanse of Bass Strait. King Island would then become an option! I beat back into the wind to gain the lee and it took me twenty minutes to paddle the two hundred metres into a wind that, in squalls, tried to wrench the paddle out of my hands. There were wind gusts that were lifting the water right off the ocean – definitely in excess of forty knots – the shrouds of a sailing boat would have been shrieking!

The lee was the size of half a tennis court and I constantly found myself back paddling to stay off the incredibly

steep, towering cliffs. I reasoned that wind as strong as this couldn't possibly continue forever so I waited for some remission. I waited an hour and it seemed that there was some letting up in the intensity so I paddled close to the shore and stuck my nose out. It wasn't good (gusting at twenty knots), but it was manageable so I continued. Roughly eleven kilometres to go and crossing a shipping lane which always worried me – the ships are enormous particularly when viewed from a kayak. Southeast lighthouse was to the north, which would have been difficult to reach with the wind so I aimed to make landfall where ever possible on Wilsons Promontory so as not to end up in Bass Strait for another night. When I was close enough to shore (off South Point) and realised that Tidal River (now my intended destination) was not in front of me. Without a map I only knew that it was to the left. I turned with the wind and set sail. The tidal flow was against me creating waves and with the stiff

breeze behind I was surfing along without paddling – past the southern point of the 'Prom'. When I skirted the point I found that it was actually a small island. I paddled on for almost another ten kilometres, past stunning rock formations before I found a sandy beach to land in Oberon Bay. I again mistakenly assumed that it was Tidal River. I had left at a quarter to eight in the morning and arrived on the beach at six and was greatly relieved to be back on the mainland. I set up camp contending with the most persistent and numerous march flies I have ever encountered but I couldn't care less by this stage – just happy to be safe.

The following morning, after a large meal and a sound sleep I paddled around to Tidal River where I stored my gear and hitched rides back to Port Welshpool to retrieve the car. All in all, very many useful lessons were learnt. P.S. the maps were on the kitchen table back at home!

Campsite at Oberon Bay Wilsons Promontory



EXPLORING *Doubtful Sound, NZ*

LISA MCCARTHY AND MARK DABBS



Due to having friends with ‘connections,’ Mark and I were extremely privileged to have the opportunity to do a private kayaking trip in Doubtful Sound, Fiordland National Park, New Zealand in February 2015 with its rugged mountainous scenery, rocky shoreline, emerald coloured seas and extensive waterways. Our Kiwi friends Stanley and Belinda were keen to show us their ‘Southland backyard’.

Friday: Distance 21km. Wind S/E 15 rising to 25 knots

We had the usual challenge of trying to fit all the gear required for a 10-day trip, into an unfamiliar kayak. Somehow, it all worked out and we departed from Deep Cove under blue skies and calm seas ... for now! High peaks covered in low, dense bush dropping steeply into the water enclosed us as we paddled north.

The wind then made its presence felt, picking up very quickly. Being behind us, we enjoyed a fast ride before it strengthened, becoming very choppy, with clapotis off the points making things interesting at times. Being the first day in fully loaded, unfamiliar kayaks, we were taking care not to get too close to the rocky shoreline, whilst aiming for some protection simultaneously from the strong gusts that threw us around. Elizabeth Island and surrounding area had no landing areas, so we continued to Kellard Point, where we turned into Crooked Arm.



Side creek off Camelot river



View from near Grono Mountain

The steep hills provided shelter from the wind and we had a late lunch on a grassy bank. Next, a long paddle, being all of 5 minutes to our campsite! With a waterfall behind us, and superb views, we made camp and enjoyed a pleasant afternoon, which we shared with the friendly sand flies.

Saturday: Distance 32km Wind S/E 15 knots

Today we retraced our steps back towards Malaspina Reach, where from behind the sheltered point, we could see foam flying off the tops of big wind waves hurtling down the channel.

We retreated, deciding to explore the length of Crooked Arm instead. Our good fortune saw a pod of Bottle Nosed dolphins approach us on their way past, so lovely to see. Further along, we spotted a NZ fur seal, languishing in the water. Lunch was consumed at the Arm's end before we set off for the supposed 45-minute walk across the narrow isthmus to Dagg Sound. As the track was overgrown and not well marked, it took over an hour. This track supposedly provides a portage opportunity, should the weather turn nasty. This would be an extremely strenuous exercise!

Upon our return we had a shorter portage of our own as the tide had ebbed. The paddle back to our previous night's site was therefore current assisted and fast. Another enjoyable evening, shared with the sand flies.

Sunday: Distance 27km Wind S/E 10 knots

The resident Weka made an appearance in the morning, but caused no mischief. The sea was glassy in the calmness and the sand flies were a nuisance with no wind. We turned left into Malaspina Reach where we crossed the channel over to Secretary Island. NZ Dept of Conservation has an extensive eradication program to remove stoats from this island. Morning tea was consumed on the small pebbly beach. Bauza Island is opposite the beach; this rather long island is located relatively close to Secretary Island, with a narrow channel running between the two, called 'The Gut' which is also



Mark and Stanley doing rudder repairs



a Marine Reserve. The current can be quite strong here and today our good planning had it assisting us (no...let's be honest here; we were just lucky!) doing 20km in 2 hours. At the end of the passage lie the Shelter Islands, standing like stone guardians of the entrance. We paddled around these impressive rocky islands, with Black Billed gulls that flew over to inspect us as we progressed. There were some seals dozing nearby, and on the way back around the west side of Bauza, Mark and Belinda spot the only Fiordland Crested penguin on this trip. Lucky them! Back at the pebbly beach we pulled in and carried our gear up to the Gut Hut (sounds rather unappetising) to spend the night, free of sand flies (dammit, shut that door!).

Monday: Cloudy and 'Happy Birthday Mark'

This day we attempted to walk to Grono Mountain, which is the highest peak on Secretary Island at 1200m. Stanley re-set some stoat traps along the way, which had been accidentally set off. Typical NZ forest, with tree roots for handholds on the climbs up and down, and trees covered with many mosses and lichens; quite beautiful. Above the bush line the alpine wildflowers were plentiful and provided a mass of colour, perfect for framing photos of the amazing views of Thompson and Bradshaw Sounds. Sadly, we were bluffed out by cliff lines and Grono Mountain remains on the 'to do' list. We were lucky to see the endangered bush parrot Kaka, along with Fantails, Rock Wrens, Tuis, Bush Robins and some Kiwi holes, unfortunately no Kiwis though. A great day out.

Tuesday: Distance 29km Wind N 15 with 20 knot gusts

We paddled off in calm seas under an overcast sky, heading south and then west into Blanket Bay, where there was a fisherman's shack built entirely over the water's edge. We asked nearby boaties the weather forecast and then made a final decision on the day's destination based on this. We entered Thompson Sound, where the weather began to deteriorate into showers and the headwind hits us. With an incoming tide, the going got hard as we were in a direct line for the wind as well. We split up, with the others crossing over immediately, unseen by us, as we struggled to put our cags on, hindered by the bumpy sea. Mark and I continued on, paddling hard to catch up, as we were unable to visually see our friends. They remained out of sight, so we decided to cross the channel, still searching in vain for them. One thing led to another, and without a map, not knowing exactly where the intended camp site was plus being unable to locate our friends, we pursued the safest option, retracing our steps to the hut from the night before. With a photographed copy of the map inside this hut, we planned to try for Deas Cove hut tomorrow.

Wednesday: Distance 18km Wind N 18-20 with 25 knot gusts, overcast then rain

With showers during the night, it was still overcast as we set off into the gloom. Shouldering the point, we ran full on into a headwind, which was working with its teammate,

the incoming tide. Together they created a force which, whilst not quite overpowering was steadily increasing, as was the fatigue in my arms (what about my core muscles? Hey, they hurt too!). Mark decided we should immediately tackle the crossing, thereafter hugging the rocky shoreline closely. The dismal grey water was accompanied by low cloud, making the steep hillsides look like squat little headlands. The wind continued to strengthen, but this didn't affect a certain Black Billed gull, that hovered closely over and behind Mark, who paddled on unknowingly. Would it swoop in an attack? I figured he wouldn't hear my warning anyway, so there was nothing I could do. Unharmd, we rounded a vertical rocky bluff where the wind almost stopped us dead. Digging deep, we made painfully slow progress until we observed the gap leading to the protection of Deas Cove. It wasn't far in when we noticed two other kayakers approaching us; with relief we discovered our friends! We all made for shore, discussing our separate adventures and where we had all ended up. Despite my fatigue, we actually made better time today, arriving at Deas Cove at 11.30am. Unwinding later in the warm comfort of a typical good NZ hut, we yet again fully appreciated these safe havens, shelter from all kinds of inclement weather.

Thursday: Distance 26km Wind N 12-15knots

With solid rain overnight and continuing in the morning, it was a no-brainer to elect a sleep in and wait for



Weather picking up

it to cease. The wind was due to ease around midday. Right on schedule, it stopped blowing and raining, and we loaded up and paddled off after lunch. We had a fast paddle down to the corner, which took us into Bradshaw Sound. There was a brief shower then it cleared up completely. We stopped to inspect a campsite at MacDonnell bay; it was deemed of poor quality, so off we went, in the search for something better. Up around the Rum river were smelly, muddy, tidal flats; the other bay was too lumpy; the beaches were too pebbly and sloping; even the Island was voted out, despite Mark's high recommendation. After all, what was wrong with difficult water access,

steep slippery rocks rising to a rough, lumpy platform, with high tide lapping at the tent's Plimsoll line? Although we appreciated its 360-degree views, our disdain was quite disappointing to him. Tails between our legs, we retreated to the original site, which suddenly appeared a much better option. Another beautiful evening, despite the overabundance of sand flies.

Friday: Distance 19km Wind-Nil

The sand flies thrummed like heavy rain against the tent inner during the night, they were so numerous. The day dawned with clear blue skies and fog on the calm water. Belinda goes into

photography overdrive; using us all as models (she didn't have too many other options). Gliding into Precipice Cove, we spotted a seal that was doing a spinning swim past, ignoring us completely. We then swung southeast past Gardner Head into Gaer Arm. At the head of this arm, we inspected the campsite as we passed by; it met with our approval. At the bay's end, we continued up the Camelot River, as far as possible. Boasting some attractive cascades and rocky banks, we played around here, lunching and some swimming in the freezing stream. Right where we launched we discovered a good-sized eel, un-noticed prior to landing. An exploration up a short side creek exposed a scenic waterfall that thundered into a large pool. Set in a luxuriant green nook, we spent time admiring and photographing before returning to set up camp. We saw a pair of Paradise ducks flapping madly over us on our return. The sand flies in this area were so irritating that we all were forced to wear our head nets as we paddled. Yes, they even had the Kiwis defeated ...

Saturday: Distance 27km Wind N/E 10-12 with 30knot gusts

An overcast start and before too long, the wind made its presence felt and we 'cagged up'. Up ahead we saw an



Mark & ferny reflections



Belinda (sailing) and Mark paddling into Halls Arm

enormous pod of dolphins putting on a tremendous display of jumping. Then it began to rain. Belinda and Stanley had pulled into shore just off Pendulo Reach and were trying to shelter from the ever-increasing breeze. The wind funnelled down the Sound and although Stanley was reluctant initially, we ended up all agreeing to continue on to Crooked Arm, where the camp area was much more protected. This meant an open channel crossing, which we executed grouped closely together. With Malaspina Reach behind us, Ranson Head then exposed us to a ferocious squall, with whipping sea spray and powerful, intermittent gusts that threatened to part us from our paddles. We ladies had been chatting, and our delay in rounding the point was evident as we were hammered with strong gusts, spray being lifted off the water and spewing over us. We didn't have to paddle, just stern ruddered to the protection of the bay. Safely at camp, we erected a tarp as the rain bucketed down, unpacked our kayaks under it and then hid in our tents for the remainder of the afternoon. Later in the evening, we poked our heads out, copping an eyeful of hillsides that were literally leaking waterfalls.

*Protected campsite in Crooked Arm
(Photographer – Stanley Mulvany)*

Sunday: Distance 20km Wind N/E 0-15knots

A glorious day with lifting mist. We again encountered many dolphins having fun and many photos were taken. Today we went back out into the Sound, then turned off into Halls Arm, exploring along its steep rugged shoreline for some distance. The wind builds so we had to paddle back into a headwind with assisting tide. It made the trip 'interesting' for the 2 guided groups we saw in there too. We found a nice spot in the jungle that was level and just clear enough to set up the tents, with Mark finding us a nice creek nearby to wash, cook and relax by.



Even the sand-flies loved it ... mmm ...

Monday: Distance 6km Wind-Nil

After a sleep-in, we headed off after 9am. A gentle paddle in beautiful conditions, we arrived at the boat ramp at morning teatime. We unpacked, washed and spread out the gear to dry in the sunshine. Here we were fortunate to meet Sim Briggs, who had paddled a considerable distance with Tara Mulvany on her circumnavigation of NZ South Island in the winter of 2012 (book: *A Winter's Paddle*). So came an end to our extremely enjoyable adventure in Fiordland, NZ.

Milford Sound

MARK DABBS AND LISA MCCARTHY



Mark, at the start of what looks like to be a beautiful day

After our expedition in Doubtful Sound, Lisa and I thought we would make the most of our NZ visit and paddle Milford Sound too. Stanley, our Kiwi friend, drove us from Invercargill to Milford Sound arriving at 11.00am. We were unpacked and on the water by 11.20am, 3 March 2015.

Weather was scattered clouds with blue sky and sun. Temperature was cool with little wind. We had occasional glimpses of the mountain peaks covered with snow through patches of low cloud.

Our aim was to paddle the whole Sound out to the ocean and return.

As we progressed down the Sound the wind started to increase, though we were absorbed by the fantastic views. Around us were sheer cliffs projecting straight up and waterfalls cascading directly into the ocean. It was a bit cool for a shower so we stayed out of their range. The cliffs were covered in beautiful mosses, ferns and trees growing down the cliff faces to the water's edge. The waterfalls were

unreal, and the sides of the Sound were very spectacular.

As we paddled down the Sound we began to realise there really were no landing spots. We were wanting lunch and a bit of a leg stretch. Fortunately, rounding a point, we came across the only landing spot in the whole Sound.

It was a good pebble beach not far from one of those waterfalls that dropped

straight into the sea. The wind was strong enough to blow the waterfall back upon itself. Sand flies? We were fortunate, not very many here at all for a change.

We could not believe the number of tourist boats passing up and down the Sound while we ate lunch. It felt like every 5 minutes another boat cruised past. We watched with amusement as one tourist boat went up to our waterfall, while the wind was blowing the water away. The wind changed and those on the front deck enjoyed a very cold shower. The waterfalls after all generally come from the melting glaciers higher up!

The wind eased a little as we hit the water again, so we continued our paddle out to the ocean arriving there around 3pm. Just to be sure we paddled a short distance past the headland and out into the ocean. The swell was quite small, only about 1 – 1.5 metre with about 7 knot winds. Quite calm.

Our return was a little more fun. We had a following sea so able to ride some of the waves for a short distance back up the Sound. When the weather cleared a little, we glimpsed some great views of those mountain tops.

By now, many of the tourist boats had returned to shore so we were almost on our own. We were not sure why this was but we were soon to find out.



The drenching of the tourist boat

Around half way back the clouds and wind began to increase. We had one boat ask if we were OK or wanted a lift back. We declined. Maybe we should have accepted!

The wind kept increasing. We passed a few seals basking on rocks then had some fun riding the waves, at the same time as the wind was making them bigger. And yet the wind increased more. Around this time we came across a commercial group of kayakers in doubles. They were rafted up for stability waiting for the wind to die, or maybe it was for a rescue ...

As we headed across the Sound, a boat came alongside and offered us a lift. They were on their way to pick up the other kayakers. It was now around 25 knots and building. We again declined. We assumed the wind would soon drop.

But no, the wind increased with gusts to about 35 knots. The wave tops were being whipped off and shot across the surface making visibility a little difficult. We were about half way across the Sound at this stage (around 1.5km wide). By now, the waves were rearing up steeply as they had a good fetch of 10km or more. And they were bouncing off the steep cliffs so creating some "interesting" cross-waves.

Around this time we started asking ourselves whether or not we should have taken up the earlier offers of assistance. We had already passed our lunch spot, and there were no other landing spots around. Fortunately the wind and waves were from behind, though we had to keep a tight hold on our paddles otherwise they would be reefed from our hands.

Around this time we went into preservation mode and spent the next half hour or so just bracing and letting the wind blow us along. At least we were heading in the right direction. I think we were averaging 5-7km/hr just from the wind.

Finally we reached the other side and rounded a small headland. A bit of shelter! We could paddle again. And

Commercial group rafted up in increasing wind



breathe! And now of course, the wind started to die down, and continued to die down.

By the time we arrived back at our launching ramp, 6pm, the clouds were still hanging around, but the wind had

died completely away. It felt like we were on a millpond and from shore, the afternoon views were stunning!

We had completed 26km in some very variable conditions. A great but eventful day!



Increasing winds

A kind of 'Nadgic' ... Nadgee Wilderness Plus

MEGAN PRYKE



SEA KAYAKERS: Nick Blacklock in red Mirage 530, John Hutchinson in Tiderace/ Pace 17, Dragomir Pejic in blue Mirage 580 and Megan Pryke (Leader) in pale daffodil Mirage 530. **WHEN:** February 2015. **MAPS BY:** Megan Pryke and husband Alan, courtesy of Google. **PHOTOS BY:** Nick Blacklock.



John off Green Cape

Day 1: Boydtown to Bittangabee Bay ~ 32kms

John and Dragomir hesitated. They seemed to be questioning whether this was the correct landing spot, were Megan and Nick crazy they were asking? Meanwhile I had donned my helmet, a sure sign to them we were going in for a closer look. Bittangabee Bay was meant to be our most surf free, end of paddling day, landing on this trip, but it was also the least obvious to visually find. The paddle in was a zigzag route to a small sandy beach leading to the bay itself. We had been quite a long

way out from the cliffs to assist Nick in managing a bout of seasickness. And now the two metre southeasterly swell created a lot of rebound. I paddled towards a line of white water abutting the cliffs. What John and Dragomir had not seen was a gap. I initially estimated that the gap was maybe ten metres, hoping that there was more room for side slewing. Increased wave steepness pushed us in quicker and closer up it became obvious that the north and south headlands and reefs were offset and by heading in on a diagonal the gap was a very comfortable width, and therefore we really did not need those

helmets. The zig angle was to head straight to sunlit cliffs then turn left to zag into the protected bay.

A pleasant afternoon was spent at Bittangabee Bay. After a late lunch we got back on the water to explore the calm northern end of the bay. It was occupied by several striped stingrays, possibly Eastern fiddler rays, as they had dorsal and pelvic fins which reminded me that rays are related to sharks. With unloaded sea kayaks we playfully caught waves on the shoulder of a reef break.

Bittangabee Bay campsite can be accessed by car, so we were not as yet in wilderness, although we were in Ben Boyd National Park. A few of our fellow campers were bushwalkers, who had completed the Boyd Tower to Lighthouse coastal walk.

A group of fishermen had caught a fish that I wish had got away. Estimated to be eighty kilos, it was at least six foot long, a beautiful striped Marlin. The fishermen engaged in a long period of planning what to do with their unexpected catch, eventually they started carving it up. Curious Dragomir got a small sample, which he fried up. Not surprisingly it was very much like swordfish.

Day 2: Bittangabee bay to Merrica River ~ 20kms

The next day we were off and paddling by 8:30am. The swell was a little less than yesterday and it reduced further through our trip as it swung from the east southeast, to east northeast and later north east. I knew that an easterly swell would create surf at Merrica River.

Once around the pointy Green Cape headland we had protection from the direct swell and spent time exploring the rocky shoreline. Up close to the cliffs we could clearly see geological folding created millions of years ago. I ducked my hand into the water and found Disaster Bay water cooler than I was accustomed to.

The forecast said that a mild southerly front would come through in the afternoon. A few odd gusts reminded us of the potential change. So we ditched a plan to stop at Wonboyn Beach and headed straight across to Merrica River. As we crossed, I noticed wispy upper clouds travelling northwards.

Nick and I decided that the beam wind was strong enough to put our heading to the right of Merrica River, Dragomir

Megan protected from the easterly swell inside Disaster Bay





Top: Nick at Merrica River. Lower: Shark.

and John decided to head straight for it. The slight difference in our angle resulted in large amount of spread over the kilometres it took to Merrica River, which was later verified and compared using our GPS plots of the two routes in.

I went in first, getting broached by a wave. My sea kayak felt strange being heavily laden. I landed OK; clear of rocks and with water underneath to cushion the kayak. The others landed with better timing than me. A towrope proved quite handy for pulling our kayaks against the tidal river outflow, which was by far the hardest physical activity we had done on the trip to date. Nick opted to use his ferry gliding skills when the water became deep enough to get a paddle stroke in. Throughout the trip we would generally be launching near high tide and landing at near low tide. Plus it was nearly a new moon so the tidal range was bigger than average.

We arrived at camp before lunch. A couple was just putting away their tents as we arrived and poached their optimum site. Then soon after, the southerly wind arrived, bringing a light and welcoming airflow to our new our campsite. We had a very relaxing afternoon with an uphill walk to mobile reception. If we were stranded here no one would have minded. Merrica River was a decision point, would we go on to risk landing and not being able to launch from Nadgee Beach or turn back? With a slightly decreasing swell forecast and northeast wind forecast we decided to keep going.

Day 3: Merrica River to Nadgee River ~ 20kms

In the morning our kayaks sterns were lifting with the rising tide as we packed. We shot out of Merrica River around 8am, not bothering with any pause for wave sets. There was some surf so we

did feel justified wearing our helmets, though in comparison to yesterday the surf zone was uneventful.

The variety of clouds were fascinating – multileveled, tons of white to dark grey and blues, and virga wisps further out to sea. A large hole in a clump of cumulus lined with brightly fringed edges revealed a small patch of blue. A thunderclap just off Newtons Beach set our hearts racing briefly. A light sprinkle of rain started, and stopped soon after or perhaps we had just paddled further south past the large, cloud-shrouded mountain. The sun became more dominant as the day progressed.

We passed Little River beach, noting that there was perhaps an okay landing spot on the northern end facing a rip. The rest of the beach had barrelling waves. The swell was still running at one and a half metres, and was not as rough as our first paddling day though it was a bit too large to make unnecessary landings and launches.

The coastal cliffs were magnificent. Grey, red, yellow sandstone and siltstone layers that had been folded into synclines and anticlines. The red layer appeared and then submerged. The cliff tops were a smooth green from the dense coastal tea tree. It was a beautiful coastline especially when lit by the morning sun.

Black Rock stuck out punctuating the end of our trip southwards for today. We had reached Nadgee Beach with its northeasterly aspect. Willyweather forecasted the wave period around eight to ten seconds. We had been paddling towards the left (ie south east) end of the beach when I decided to get in on a lull. I got in beyond the larger outer break, then a wave broke just behind me though I was clear of it, catching a few smaller waves to an easy shore landing. The others noticed the set come in behind me and landed a little further along the beach.

We located the fresh water supply, though sourced from a swamp was stained with tannin so we decided to only use it if boiled or treated preferring



to drink our own water we carried. Lunch was enjoyed near the campsite on the north side of the river before settling in for the afternoon. After a bit of personal time reading or just resting, Nick, John and I went for a walk to view Nadgee Lake which was a couple of kilometres further south, while

Dragomir explored the coastal rocks. Along the walk there was no mobile phone reception so we deferred to the satellite phone. This connected to the Immarsat network, which relied on a satellite above PNG and consequently needed to be held pointing northwards at about 50 degrees. The 1710 Marine

Rescue forecast verified that we could get VHF channel 81 when up the hills. The northeasterly wind as predicted picked up in the afternoon creating white caps out to sea.

Top: Nick's kayak on Gabo Island.

Lower: Wildlife on the South end of Gabo Island.





Nick, Megan, Dragomir and John at Gabo Island lighthouse. Over 150 years old and looking good.

Day 4: Nadgee River to Mallacoota via Gabo Island ~ 32kms

This was to be our most challenging day. The longest paddling distance with loaded kayaks and the most difficult launch. Unlike Merrica River, the higher tide did not tame the Nadgee Beach waves. The breaks just moved to different spots. The forecast swell drop had not arrived early.

It was getting close to high tide as we loaded our kayaks. I agreed to signal talk to Nick on our VHF radios if I had insurmountable problems getting off the beach alone. We chose to go out near the same spot that the others had landed where a small rip had created a waveless section in between sets. Nick launched first with a push off. Then Dragomir followed soon after. John got side surfed, I helped him reorient his kayak, and eventually pushed him off.

I got my skirt on, edged forwards, when almost able to paddle my kayak was washed sideways. The weight of the loaded kayak meant I had to get out to correct the kayaks direction. I

saved energy by using the wave wash to reduce friction to line up the kayak. I repeated this probably three times as the tide rose, positioning the kayak in a slightly different location or direction, I was being washed sideways before getting my spray deck on. At one point the shore wash had spun around my kayak backwards but afloat, I paddled backwards hoping to reverse launch. However with the unfamiliar Mirage rudder and insufficient reverse stroke power I was washed back up the beach by small but steep waves.

The rising tide was reducing the sandy area and waves were now lapping rocks. There was no point trying the same thing again and again expending energy dragging around a heavy kayak. I was not paying attention to lulls, my goal was just to get to the trough, and from there I could wait out any outer wave sets. I took advantage of the extra water depth of a larger set by quickly getting into the cockpit and paddling, wasting no time fitting the spray deck. The near shore waves dumped water into my cockpit, I paddled through them and was finally in the trough.

I did not want my kayak to be washed ashore on to the rocks. If I had to roll in front of a wave to limit being pushed back I did not know how it would turn out with a swamped kayak. Timing to avoid the larger wave break point was all the more important; the time between sets was only a few minutes. The weight of gear and a swamped kayak meant I had limited acceleration, though a little compensated by the force of inertia. My swamped kayak submarined through at least four broken waves. The electric pump was running, I did not care if the battery ran flat, I wanted every bit of extra help in between the wave top ups. I had drifted to the right and outside the channel, damn, no wonder the sets seemed more constant. Back on the right line I paddled and finally reached the others. Our launch had taken 45 minutes, mostly by me!

Another strategy I had considered was to have John who is a competent, regular ocean swimmer have Nick or Dragomir mind his kayak while he swam in, pushed me off the beach and swam out again. However I am glad that I did not have to resort to this plan, as I wanted to know if I could get off the beach independently.

Within the next half hour we listened into Marine Rescue's 0910 weather update. We had a slight head breeze today, contrary to the northeast wind forecast.

It was as though the state border had a distinct line of cloud to mark our arrival from New South Wales into Victoria. The Victorian clouds were heavy and low, it was easy to imagine a Bass Strait covered in sea fog. Steely grey clouds in the background contrasted with brightly lit yellow dunes of Cape Howe in the foreground. Once around the corner of southeast Australia the northeast swell was nullified. Getting through the gap between Gabo Island and the mainland was a cinch in these conditions.

Gabo Island was a real highlight of our trip, it provided an easy off water break for lunch after twenty kilometres of

paddling. We walked to the lighthouse admiring the mathematical precision needed to create a conical, round structure hewn out of hard, pink granite. The lighthouse is over 150 years old and looks like it will last the next 150 years.

Back on the water we passed by Tullabergh Island on the ocean side in the negligible swell. The presence of kelp indicated we were in southerly waters.

Mallacoota Inlet became visible. As we got closer we could see the surf on the bar. The small surf provided a bit of end of trip excitement. John and I were ahead when I looked back and noticed Dragomir's bow at a strange angle. A little while later Dragomir was upright and elated by his execution of a combat roll with a fully laden sea kayak. We arrived at Mallacoota and luckily we got a campsite close to the inlet's boat ramp. After a good long shower we had a celebratory dinner at the pub, leaving the car collection until tomorrow.

John off Tullabergh Island

On the way back

We finished the trip in four days straight carrying six days of food supplies. Northeasterly swell and winds continued. After a day's rest and another car shuffle we spent a great half-day paddling from Pambula to Eden, thus we completed the south east coast from Pambula to Mallacoota.

From Pambula we paddled over the bar and out to sea. The northern Ben Boyd National Park coast had more of those wonderful multicoloured cliffs. It was a beautiful sunny day. The tide was too low and the swell too much for exposed gauntlets, however we enjoyed weaving close to the rocks on the inside of Two Fold Bay. I backed into a sea cave, which had a low ceiling in a narrow section, a wave caused me to quickly paddle forwards before my head met the ceiling. After 26kms we arrived in the safety of Eden Harbour and enjoyed fish and chips for lunch.

To break the journey we drove closer to Sydney. We camped at Lake Conjola completing a paddle out through the bar and up to near Sussex Inlet with surf practice on the way. The

easterly swell was increasing in size. I had missed catching a wave, finding myself with a looming one behind me that I would have preferred to miss. I caught it, held a high brace, surfed backwards then inevitably capsized. By the time the white water died off I was close to the sand. At least it was much easier launching out through surf with a day load! Ironically this was our longest paddling day of about 36kms. We completed the week with six days out of seven spent on the sea in a very civilised manner. No extra early morning starts, lunch off the water, afternoons spent revelling in the wilderness.

It is such a beautiful part of the world that I would happily go there again. We were lucky to have conditions, which provided some challenges and I was lucky to have a good group of sea kayakers with solid skills to share it with. Thanks to Marine Rescue Eden and Coast Guard Mallacoota for keeping tabs on us, National Parks and Wildlife for their permit and advice on fresh water and all those club members that I have learnt so much from. Oh and yes, I need to thank Huey, the weather god.



Ten lessons from **TASMANIA**

RUBY GAMBLE



LESSON ONE: *regardless of what the forecast may tell you, the wind in Tasmania will always be against you. If not at first, it certainly will be by the time you are tired and paddling home. On our second last day the Tas Maritime forecaster noted with some surprise that there were no wind warnings current for the east coast. We nearly fell over. After weeks of changed plans due to high winds, it was almost ironic that they should ease so close to our departure.*

It's always good to have a plan. Just don't expect to stick to it. Caoimhin Ardren and I had planned our entire month in Tasmania down to the day, and the first two days went well. The Tasmanian Canoe Club put us on to Dave Kelly, who was more than happy to put us up for a couple of days and take us paddling. I achieved a couple of firsts on my first day in Tasmania: an attempt at Greenland rolling (Dave is a Greenland rolling enthusiast and can roll whilst not spilling a glass of wine) and my first sea cave entry. I fell in

love with both straight away, and have some admiration for a Tasmanian who chooses to spend the year immersing himself in cold water, albeit in a dry suit.

We moved on from Devonport to Freycinet, arriving there in time to set up camp. We woke to a blustery day and a savage forecast of torrential rain and winds of over 30 knots for the next few days, which put paid to our plans to paddle out to Schouten Island and surrounds for six days. We had a quick paddle along the more protected section of the Freycinet peninsula and took stock of lesson two: check the forecast before driving any distance for a paddle.

We checked our plans and the forecast and discovered that the weather was destroying the entire east coast, so we headed inland to do some hiking. This brings me happily to lesson three: it's surprisingly quick to cross Tasmania to pick up an alternative plan. We had perfect weather for our three-day hike on the Arm River Track to Mt Ossa via Pillion Hut, the highest mountain in Tasmania, which is found halfway along the Overland Track.

With the weather still rough we headed up to the north coast again, and spent a day paddling out to and around Waterhouse Island, a privately owned island populated with Cape Barren Geese and with stunning crystal blue seas on the inland side. The following day included a quick rock garden session at Bridport before heading back down the east coast to Swansea.

The day started well at Rheban for our crossing to Maria Island. Rheban is a great spot to launch, and there's a small public reserve where you can leave your car. We set off in reasonable

Paddling through the lifting sea fog on the Freycinet Peninsula





Maria Island with Bishop and Clerk in the background

conditions, only hitting a headwind once we passed Lachlan Island. It was a fairly forceful one, which made our entry into Encampment Cove a bumpy one, so we quit there and set up camp. A couple of yachties decided to go out fishing in their lifeboat, which then got swamped and required a rescue from one of the other boats nearby. Our camping fun was dampened slightly in the process of learning lesson four: always check the esky when packing your kayaks. We had no protein, so we were forced to survive on mushrooms, our dried meals and peanut butter sandwiches.

We had intended to begin circumnavigating Maria Island the next day, but once again the wind bested us, so we did a 20km round trip hike to Haunted Bay at the southern end of the island. This gave us the chance to check out the isthmus for suitability for portages, and while the portage isn't too bad, the seas were too big on the eastern side to consider it unless we carried our boats right down the far southern end of the beach (either fully loaded or with several trips for gear).

We had resigned ourselves to taking a short, uninteresting paddle up the west coast to Darlington the next morning. On leaving the bay, Caoimhin observed that the seas were calmer than expected, and after a quick assessment of available food we decided to go ahead and do the circumnavigation.

I pointed out that we could always top up supplies at the coffee shop in Darlington, a historical settlement at the northern tip of the island.

There was still a lot of chop and rebound, but circumnavigating the southern half of Maria Island was achievable. We had a quick break in Haunted Bay, I took a quick swim off Bald Cape, Caoimhin completed a quick rescue, and then we headed to camp at Whaler's Cove. A very interesting (slowly creeping every few waves) tidal pattern in the cove caught us by surprise, and found me leaping into the water in my warm evening clothes when I heard my kayak hitting a rock (where it lodged thank goodness). Caoimhin's kayak however, was hell bent on going back to sea no matter how long the channel it had to navigate to get there. We put paid to its ambitions and practiced lesson five: beach your kayaks high on the bank for the night, and tether them to trees in case they get any ideas.

Once we rounded the most easterly point the next day, we enjoyed the best conditions of the whole trip, enabling us to enter the many caves along the eastern coast of the northern part of the island. This section was definitely a highlight of the trip. On reaching Darlington, we headed straight for the buildings and sought out the much-awaited coffee shop. Boots off, headed inside, to discover that the coffee shop

was actually an historical display of a dining room, with no coffee to be seen (or food or any other drinks for that matter). You may imagine Caoimhin's mirth at my mistake, which brings me to lesson six: the thought of a real coffee is a wonderful incentive to keep paddling. Finding out there is no real coffee may be detrimental to motivation to complete the remainder of the day's paddle. We got back to Rheban at dusk.

After spending the weekend in Hobart to attend the wooden boat festival (where we ran into Mick MacRobb), we headed over to the Tasman Peninsula. Our original plan to do a circuit from Pirate's Bay north to Blackmans Bay via Denison Canal in Dunalley and then south through Norfolk Bay to Eaglehawk Neck had to be discarded due to uncooperative winds. Instead, we had a great day of caving, heading north from Pirate's Bay as far Deep Glen Bay, home of the popular cave with both a northern and eastern entry.

The following day it was too windy to paddle out of Fortescue Bay, so we opted for Port Arthur, hoping to head out along the coast to Tasman Island, along which we would be protected from the north-easterly wind. Big, confused seas proved that cliffs provide little protection when you need it, so we turned back in to circumnavigate Port Arthur. The eastern side was pleasant, but it was after dropping



Caoimhin paddling along the Freycinet Peninsula

by the Port Arthur convict settlement that we were happily surprised to find unexpected caves of high quality south of the Isle of the Dead. We found the deepest cave of our trip, and a few others that were a lot of fun to play in and good skill-builders.

The next morning we paddled out to the Lanterns, paddling through the channel past the Candlestick, but giving the channel past the Totem Pole a miss due to breaking waves. We followed this up with a hike to

Cape Hauy to look down on the Totem Pole, then another hike to Cape Raoul – another highlight of the trip. The columns at the Cape are awesome, and Adrian Clayton tells us they are even more so from the bottom.

The weather forecast was going downhill at this point, so we picked the place with the best conditions in the whole of Tasmania – Bruny Island. Unfortunately the interesting side of Bruny was a bit too interesting, and newly met keen-to-paddle campers

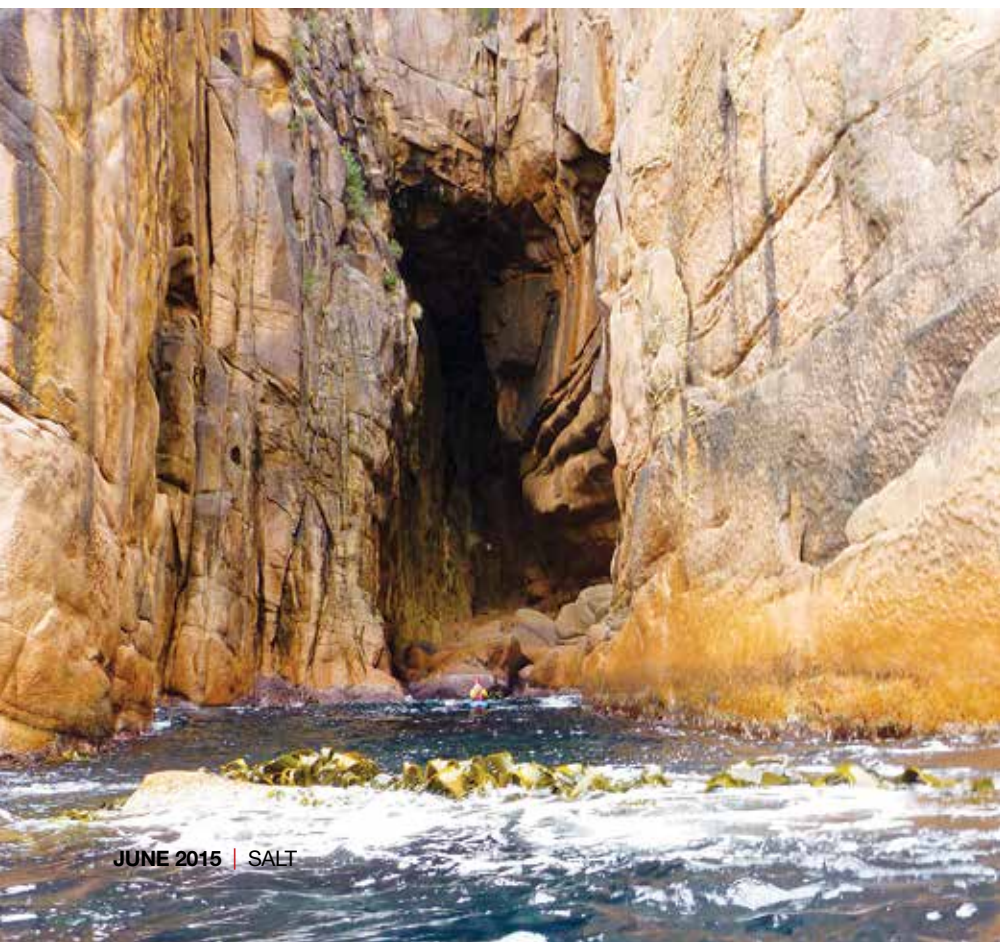


Our neighbourly (but frisky) Little Penguins

were not so keen once they'd sobered up the next morning. After missing out on a boat trip from Adventure Bay to the south-eastern point, we went for a run (not recommended) before driving back to just miss the ferry because it was full and spend an hour and a half sitting in a ferry queue.

So it was back through Hobart to make another attempt at Freycinet, the third time we had seen this coastline in one trip. We started out on a beautiful calm day after a torrential night of rain, which reminds me of lesson seven: look for a high point on your National Parks campsite at Freycinet and keep a paddle handy in case you start floating away.

The calm seas lasted until we rounded the point past Cooks Beach, where we found a fair headwind, and big seas on the channel across to Schouten Island. We arrived amidst 20 plus yachts, taking part in an annual circumnavigation of Tasmania with the Royal Yacht Club of Tasmania. Fortunately they were all sleeping on their boats, which left us camping alone, or so we thought. During the night we discovered that a mating



A cave at Freycinet

pair of Little Penguins lived about two metres from our tent. They were a bit frisky, and kept us awake throughout the night (and the ones to follow), and in so doing taught us lesson eight: look for penguin nests before setting up your tent.

We attempted a circumnavigation, but due to big seas and seasickness we had to turn back, recovering to complete the circumnavigation the next day. I took another swim at Cape Sonnerat, and Caoimhin completed another rescue. We abandoned our plan to paddle up the Freycinet coast due to poor weather and decided to camp at Cooks Beach. Our climb to Mt Freycinet was obstructed by heavy cloud cover, but was an enjoyable walk nonetheless. We awoke to heavy sea fog the following morning, before returning to Coles Bay on a bejewelled and glassy sea to complete our Tasmanian paddling adventure. There is a ninth lesson in the siren call of Freycinet: despite it being beautiful as you leave, remember that the weather crapped all over you during your stay (every stay).

Before we jumped back on the Spirit of Tasmania, we headed to Hobart for a third time to see Nick Cunliffe talk to the Tasmanian Canoe Club under the invitation of Geoff Murray. We then had an eventful drive past Great Lake in the centre of Tasmania back to Devonport, and here comes the final lesson: for preserved meats like ham, it doesn't make for comfortable travel if you cook it then let it cool before eating it, especially when you're travelling on a winding dirt road with no toilet stops.

We bought a two-year National Parks pass, so it looks like we're going back to Tasmania next summer to put our lessons learnt into action. We have some unfinished business on the Tasman Peninsula ...

Link: <https://youtu.be/LLcVbXpJE5g>

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YouTube



Or search YouTube
Sea kayak caving in
Tasmania, or scan this
QR code.



The Candlestick and the Totem Pole, near Fortescue Bay on the Tasman Peninsula



Cape Raoul



David Linco exploring cliffs near Point Perpendicular (photo by Rodrigo Matamala)