

THE MAGAZINE OF NSW SEA KAYAK CLUB  
ISSUE 94 | **AUGUST 2014**

# Salt



**SEA KAYAK  
AUSTRALIA  
EXPEDITION**

**SOUTH GEORGIA  
AND  
ANTARCTICA**

**WALES**

**MALTA**

**NEW ZEALAND**



**ALSO INSIDE:** Book Review | Seal Rocks | Core Exercises | HRCC



*Oandora group in Sydney Harbour.*

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### FRONT COVER:

*Jason Beachcroft approaching Noosa headland in 25 knots. Picture by Eddie Safarik*



## NSW Sea Kayak Club Inc.

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

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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

Congratulations to Jason Beachcroft, now the fourth kayaker to circumnavigate Australia but the first to include Tasmania, and the first to start and finish in Sydney – a massive personal effort. After 533 days including 6 weeks waiting for a weather window to traverse the challenging Zuytdorp cliffs he paddled ashore on Rose Bay on June 28 to complete the epic journey. Thanks to those members who were able to join his 'mountains' friends and welcome him ashore at Rose Bay. I am sure that we will hear more about his trip at a future Club get-together.

With the AGM just passed, it is time to reflect on this year as President. I would like to thank all of the committee members for their contributions and their support of the Club over the past year. These will be detailed in the AGM minutes. While personally rewarding, these committee roles are all time-consuming. Our main task as a committee has been to continue the work of previous committees and keep the club running on well-established rails. In addition we have reinvigorated New Members



Jason Beachcroft successful circumnavigation of Australia including Tassie!

paddles, with the aim of increasing early engagement in Club activities. We have worked to improve communication between the Committee and Australian Canoeing. A practical outcome of this has been the revision of recent changes to Sea Leader operating conditions after we raised concerns to AC. Thanks to Mark Thurgood, the current ACAS Coordinator for facilitating this. We have made some improvements to navigation on the club web-site and have added the ability to record and review expiry dates for AC and First Aid certifications – important information underlying our risk management policy. There is certainly more work to be done to improve the Club's ability to engage electronically with members.

The second Sea Kayak Clubs Summit was held on the Monday after RnR at Batemans Bay. We were pleased to have representatives from Tassie, Victoria, South Australia, Qld and AC and will work to get WA and, perhaps, NZ to the next planned meeting to be hosted by the TSCC. The most important outcomes of the summit were the opportunities to put faces to names and strengthen the ability to network and exchange ideas and information between the clubs.

Sea Skills, or its predecessor Sea Proficiency has been a core component of the Club's training for many years. I would like to acknowledge the important discussion between our Assessors recently coordinated by Stuart Trueman to harmonise assessment standards and scope. The details of this should be completed and published in the next Salt and will be available on the website before then. Gaining 'Sea Skills' involves demonstrating competence across a comprehensive range of skills as well as a knowledge component including weather, navigation, trip planning and risk management. I am sure that you have heard the comment "I am already paddling off-shore, why would I do Sea Skills?" My answer is to quote that modern

day philosopher Donald Rumsfeld that you don't know what you don't know. You may well have holes in your skills and knowledge that become apparent when exposed to a critical eye. Furthermore, engaging in a formal or informal program towards Sea Skills supports other paddlers doing the same as well as helping more experienced paddlers develop their instructing and leading skills. The Club needs members to be working through Sea Skills training as much as this helps the individual paddlers. I strongly encourage you to develop and test your improving paddling skills by taking this step. If you are not sure whether you are ready, talk to any of the Sea Instructors. There is an excellent study guide for the Sea Skills knowledge component, recently put together by Josh Andrews, available on the Club website.

And now a bureaucratic bit. Having recently realised that there was no clear policy regarding incident reporting in the club's Standard Operating Procedures, we have drafted an amendment that hopefully clarifies what should be reported, how to do so and what will then happen. The primary aim of this reporting and review is to improve safety through improved education and processes, identifying 'lessons learned' where possible, but certainly not to push unreasonably conservative paddling or to negatively target individuals. The updated document is available on the website and all paddlers should familiarise themselves with it.

Finally, the pundits say the tides for the 2014 Hawkesbury Classic are the best for years and at least one 'HCC denier' is dusting off a long rockerless streak of carbon-kevlar for the event. If you are planning to paddle the HCC this year, read Ian Vaile's article first, keep an eye out for a 'trip' listing and register so that we can keep in touch.

Keep paddling,  
**Campbell Tiley**



# From the Editor's Desk

STEVE HITCHCOCK

I recall several months ago, while commuting on Sydney trains, looking around to see I was the only person reading the over-sized newspaper; The Australian. A late iPad convert perhaps, but I've now discovered the neat 10 inch screen with ink-less razor-sharp colour images is much more acceptable in the crowded train.

And so is SALT. If The Australian was SALT size, my fellow commuters and I would still be happy. Technology hasn't just advanced in a digital format. The ease and efficiency of printing in colour, means the stories and photos you submit are all professionally reproduced in glorious technicolour throughout the whole magazine.

Looking through past editions, I see that Antarctica featured 5 years ago, except back then it was in matt black and white. Contrast that now with the beautiful glossy shots submitted by Anna Ward of the amazing wildlife on display.

Many of you now include route maps with GPS overlaid that was barely available just a few years ago. Even in familiar waters, this brings a new and useful dimension to the trip reports. You'll see them in Alexander Manu's Port Hacking weekend report, John Kirk-Anderson's New Zealand rescue report and Tom Cox's Broughton Island report, which even includes the group's paddle speed!

This edition includes 10 trip reports, a good mixture of your local and overseas adventures. Plus, in response to feedback, I've strived to balance those with some technical-related articles, such as Cathy Miller's training weekend, Cathy Nolan's core exercises and Josh Andrews' quick release mechanism. I entirely agree with Ian Vaile's 10-point strategy for conquering the Hawkesbury River Classic. And I'm especially pleased to include a short interview with Jason Beachcroft about his epic journey around the whole of Australia.

In addition to your continued submissions, please do tell me what you like to see in here. It's your magazine, I'll do my best to address the feedback, such as Tom provided below. There's certainly a place for iPads, laptops and blogs. But I hope Salt hangs around on your coffee tables a bit longer for your family and friends to pick up and read!

Before closing, I would like to thank our sponsors; Expedition Kayaks and Davlin Wealth Management for their support of our club and this magazine. Both of these organisations have been supporting us for years and they depend on your patronage for their ongoing commitment to the club.

And lastly, I wish to thank Tim Wolstencroft, a design and printing professional and active NSWSKC member for converting your articles and photos into the polished artwork you see before you.

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## Letters to the Editor

*Dear Editor,*

*I refer to Cathy Nolan's article 'It's all about the Twist' (Issue 93).*

*Yes, it is about the twist but as with many kayak skills (including rolling), the secret to success lies below the deck. Sure, the upper back twists, but the whole torso needs to rotate. The hips rotate as the leg drives off the footplates and this initiates the upper back rotation that we see above deck. Using the whole body to power the stroke will not only improve performance but also decrease the risk of injury.*

**Rae Duffy**

*Dear Editor,*

*Here are some things I'd love to see some day in Salt:*

*A series on kayak photography and/or videography – advice from some of the people who do it well.*

*A series on resistance training, stretching, core strength, yoga, Pilates, etc for kayakers – predominantly land-based exercises to improve paddling performance; could also include water-based movement – how to keep your body moving and not cramping/ aching when on long paddles.*

*A series on kayak maintenance, kayak pimping and customisation, cockpit fit out, etc.*

*Technical articles or cautionary tales with responses/commentary by other experienced kayakers.*

*A regular column with links to favourite kayak-related web sites and videos.*

*Regards,*  
**Tom Cox**

# Kite Surfing Safety Leash

JOSH ANDREWS



It all started at Minnamurra. I was part of a team that was guiding a group out over the south bar with a 1 metre break. The group was made up of complete novices. We had given them about 40 minutes of training in the river so I was expecting some of them to go in. The inevitable happened and one of the last of the group came out on a wave. We moved him to a calm area, put him back in his boat and had another go, then another, then another. We had a big day planned and we wanted a fast solution. With the rest of the group waiting off shore steadily getting sea sick, we decided to tow our still happy participant's boat whilst he swam with a another guide looking after him.

As I towed his empty boat through the surf I was hit by a wave. I broke through but when the wave hit the towed boat it yanked me violently backwards. It had enough force to spin my screwed in attachment point on my rear deck and stopped me dead. It did not last long though and I was out the back, with our swimmer not far behind.

I learnt several things from this minor incident. Firstly I was glad I was not wearing a waist mounted tow, secondly I wanted a little shock absorption; thirdly I was not fully convinced my standard snap shackle quick release would have done its job under these circumstances, if I had needed to use it.

As luck would have it I found a ready made system that I still use today. I

was buying a new helmet at a Kite Surfing shop and bumped into this on the way out: It consists of a small stainless steel carabiner, connected to an approximately 1 metre of bungee covered in neoprene. At the other end it has a very simple but ingenious quick release mechanism that does not accidentally come apart (under normal circumstances) and will perform under stress. The arrow tells the rest of the story. Simply grab hold of the plastic slider (the red thing) and slide it in the direction of the arrow and bang – you are free.

It is used normally as a safety leash to connect a Kite rider to his or her kite control system. If the kite goes out of control and starts dragging the rider

across the back deck to accommodate a casualty's position. I can then use it attached to other towing systems or use it alone as a contact tow.

On a recent rescue it was crucial. Big swell, lots of rebound and I went in to tow. After wrangling the other persons bow and hooking on I was over. I was upside down and had rope wrapped around my torso and paddle shaft. My roll worked but I had to abandon the tow – fast. I reached behind and easily found the plastic slider. I pushed it away and I was free. \$40 well spent.

To see the system at work have a look at my boat next time you see me or go to YouTube (see link below).



*The Ozone Safety Leash*

across the beach he or she can hit the quick release.

Using another carabiner I attach the quick release end to my boat just aft of the cockpit, normally on a line running behind the coming. This allows me to move the tow point anywhere

Link: <http://youtu.be/MbZB6iVs02M>



Or search YouTube  
**Sea Kayaking –  
Thoughts on Towing,**  
or scan this QR code.

# NSWSKC and Australian Canoeing

CAMPBELL TILEY

The Club's relationship with Australian Canoeing (AC) is a discussion point from time to time, often in relation to perceived limitations set externally on our paddling activities. This article aims to explain our relationship with AC and why the Club believes this is a useful and important relationship to maintain.

## Standards, Training and Safety

Both AC and our club maintain safety and training as important core activities. These common aims are central to the ongoing relationship between the organisations.

AC, it is registered with AC as a National Training Provider (NTP). Individuals may become AC members through membership of their state's paddling body, in NSW through PaddleNSW. Many of the potential benefits of such membership for the various flat water racing clubs in relation to competitive activities have not been relevant to the NSWSKC. The NSWSKC has obtained relevant insurances through affiliation with AC in the past but in recent years the Committee has arranged insurance far more economically elsewhere.

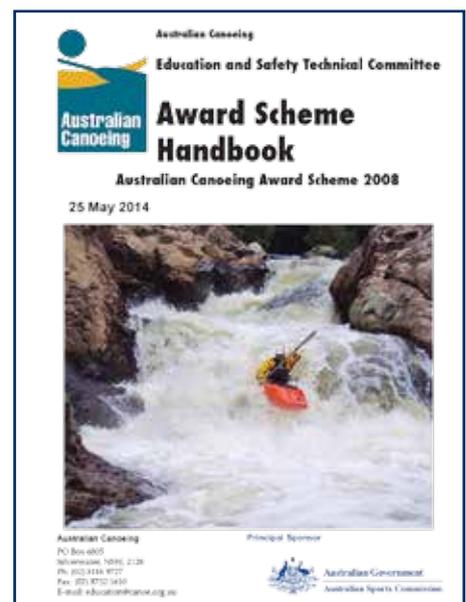
The AC Awards Scheme specifies a set of standards for skills and safety that are

clubs and are widely used in commercial paddling. The awards are not mandatory qualifications and the AC documentation recognises that paddlers may operate at skill levels above those specified without seeking AC certification. An organisation operating independently of these standards would, however, need to develop and maintain its own set of standards. In the event of an allegation of negligence it is likely that those privately developed standards would be judged against the national standard set by AC. For this and the following reasons NSWSKC has adopted AC standards.

Objects of the NSW Sea Kayaking Club	Australian Canoeing
<b>From the Club Constitution:</b>	<b>Australian Canoeing is a national sporting organisation with a charter to:</b>
To conduct, encourage, promote and advance sea kayaking in the state of New South Wales	Provide national sporting standards.
To act as a contact point for members' sea kayaking related activities.	Provide activity rules, safety guidelines.
To promote, organize and conduct sea kayaking training programs for all skill levels.	Develop the sport of Canoeing.
To ensure that priority is given to safe sea kayaking activities	Run National and International Events.
To represent sea kayakers generally in consultations with government departments at all levels.	Select national Teams. Act as the peak industry body for canoeing.

Both individuals and organisations can be members of AC, also referred to as being affiliated with AC. While the NSWSKC is not currently a member of nor affiliated with

intended to set minimum levels for leading, guiding and instructing. The guide and instructor awards are recognised nationally for use in industry, outdoor education and



Cover of the Australian Canoeing Award Scheme Handbook.

## NSWSKC Operates to AC Standards

The ACAS Awards Scheme is administered by a network of national Training Providers (NTPs) that are required to adhere to AC's training and assessment criteria. NSWSKC is an NTP and hence able to oversee and provide training for AC awards. The NTP status also allows our member assessors to provide assessments as NSWSKC activities.

AC has a focus on competitive kayaking at all levels that is arguably not particularly relevant to recreational kayaking, however the AC Safety Guidelines are a nationally recognised document that sets minimum criteria for safe conduct of recreational kayaking activities. AC certified Leaders, Guides and Instructors are required by AC to operate in accordance with these guidelines while paddling in their capacity as a Leader or Instructor for an activity run by an NTP. The guidelines cover a comprehensive range of issues including trip planning, responsibilities of the trip leader, communication, group sizes, equipment, paddling conditions and incident reporting. AC also manage recertification, generally every 3 years, requiring documented proof of ongoing relevant experience from all leaders, Guides, Instructors and Assessors.

By utilising the standards and assessment criteria underlying the AC Awards Scheme and AC Safety Guidelines, the NSWSKC can tap into the work done by AC without having to develop and maintain our own standards, which would be a considerable and ongoing body of work. Apart from avoiding this administrative task, working from AC standards ensures that our activities remain consistent with national guidelines as these change over time, reducing the likelihood of our activities drifting out of step with community and legal expectations. The linkage between

our activities and AC standards provides a level of protection for both the club and for our leaders in the event of an incident and possible negligence allegation, as discussed by Michael Steinfeld in the previous Salt.

This link to AC standards means that changes may, of course, be made by AC that we do not believe are in our best interest. This occurred recently in relation to maximum wind speeds for Sea Skills paddlers and Sea Leaders. As we believed that the restriction was overly conservative we put our case to AC and after discussion the issue was satisfactorily resolved with an increase in the maximum wind speed. Over time, senior club members have been significant contributors to the AC documentation and this potential limitation of not being able to unilaterally set our Club standards independently of AC has not been a practical issue.

The major sea kayak clubs in other states have evolved a variety of relationships with

AC. Some are affiliated with AC, such as QSKC, and receive insurance cover from AC as well as access to a basic but functional website. Alternately, the VSKC has developed their own set of competencies against which they award Instructor and Leader qualifications within their club as well as the rules governing their activities.

The current AC Safety Guidelines and ACAS handbooks, as well as the Club Constitution

and Operating Procedures, are available for members on the Club website. The AC documents can also be located through AC at <http://canoe.org.au/>.

These policies and standards help to protect the Leaders, Instructors and the Officers of the Club in the event of a misadventure but, more importantly, they help to ensure that an inherently risky activity can be enjoyed with optimum levels of oversight and safety.

VIEW IT ON  
THE WEB



### Summary of AC Limits on Paddling Conditions:

CLASS	WIND	SEA	SITUATION
Sea Instructor <sup>1</sup>	25 knots.	Surf to 1m. Overtopping waves at sea to 1m.	Paddlers from novices up. Crossings less than 10nm.
Sea Guide <sup>1</sup>	25 knots.	Surf to 1m.	Paddlers from novices up. Crossings less than 10nm.
Sea Leader <sup>2</sup>	21 knots.	Surf to 1m.	Up to 4nm from shore. Limited to leading Sea Skills paddlers at sea.
Flat Water Instructor, Guide	Sheltered and calm. Minimal wind.	Not applicable.	Inland waters: open lakes and rivers. Ease of access to shore, minimal water flow.

<sup>1</sup> Operations may also be conducted in conditions that exceed the above where a documented hazard identification and risk management process has been undertaken to ensure the participants skills and equipment are appropriate to the environment.

<sup>2</sup> Sea Leaders may lead less experienced paddlers if: wind less than 15 knots, crossings less than 1nm, surf to 0.5m, not rounding a significant headland.



# ON THE ROCKS

## Seal Rocks Training Weekend for Sea Leaders 24-25 May 2014

CATHY MILLER

Begin with the end in mind – and for the sea leaders and instructors weekend the end in mind was ‘mayhem’.

Training Co-ordinator Fernando floated the idea that a ‘mayhem’ scenario in dynamic water would test group management and crisis resolution in dynamic water. The weekend was open to Sea Guides, Sea Leaders and Instructors and Flat Water Guides.

### Participants

- > Josh Andrews
- > Matt Bezzina
- > Fernando
- > Rae Duffy
- > Neil Duffy
- > Karen Darby
- > Cathy Miller
- > Tony Murphy
- > Campbell Tiley

### Saturday 24 May

We started the weekend with a refresher of towing and rescue techniques. Once we were warmed up we headed to the rock gardens to cool off with some practice in dynamic conditions.

We took turns at ‘capsizing’ inside the rock gardens and being rescued. It wasn’t all faked. Matt had to roll up after being knocked over by the confused swell, as did Fernando.

Practice skills became a real rescue, when Josh practiced being the capsized swimmer in the white water. Fernando’s throw-rope was right on target, but sank to the sea floor and Josh was pushed right up onto the rocks at the apex of the cave in the next swell. As the water ebbed, Josh pushed himself and the kayak out and self-rescued with a cowboy scramble then was quickly towed out of the zone. It’s good to know our instructors are prepared to take a hit to practice their skills, and they all demonstrated a high level of skill.

All up we practiced short tows, contact tows, heel-hook rescues and self-rescues. Here are some of the tips we covered.

### Swimmer self-rescue

Can the swimmer safely get out of the situation themselves before others go in to rescue them? For example, can they swim out of area holding their kayak, or can they do a scramble self-rescue.

### Contact tows

We practiced contact tows, where the person in the water holds their kayak and the stern of the rescuer’s kayak. The goal of this rescue is to simply to get them quickly into calmer waters to get them back into their kayak. In bouncy water, this can expose the

swimmer’s shoulder. We experimented with getting the person in the water to hug the kayak (koala-bear style) to reduce drag while being towed out.

### Short tow-ropes

We practiced with a variety of short tow-ropes, using them to tow a swimmer to safety out of the danger zone.

Once in calmer waters, we practiced getting the swimmer back in their kayak with an assisted rescue. We added on a second rescuer putting on a towline during the assisted re-entry to stop the boats drifting back into the rock gardens during the rescue.

### Rescuer throw-rope

This is a specialised piece of equipment. It is not easy to throw a normal waist-belt towline. Josh attaches his throw-rope to the boat with a quick release system.

If you dunk the throw-rope in the water before throwing it will be heavier and reach further.

To improve accuracy of the throw, the rescuer lines up their own bow to face the person in the water before throwing – generally it will go around 6-8 metres directly in front. The throw-rope needs buoyancy on the receiving end (doesn’t it Fernando?).

*Rae Duffy 'rescuing' Karen Darby in the rock gardens with a contact tow.*

## Mayhem scenario

After lunch and a quick recap of what we'd learned we created a highly artificial and very entertaining scenario.

**Tony Murphy** bravely volunteered to be the trip leader. When he did his trip introduction and we introduced ourselves, it was Oscars all round for:

- > **Fernando**, the over-confident beginner who thought he was invincible.
- > **Mattie**, (aka 'Rusty') a Grade 3 who couldn't remember his training and turned out to be a useless 2-IC.
- > **Karen**, a Grade 1 marathon paddler who was nervous at sea so she responded by paddling faster and out of sight.
- > **Rae**, a Grade 1 paddler who followed Karen out of sight.
- > **Campbell**, Grade 2 prone to sea-sickness.
- > **Cathy**, vague Grade 2 who was given a task to do (count the boats, keep everyone together) but wasn't very good at following instructions.

Poor Tony! In real life, you would have vetted this group prior to leaving shore, and re-convened on flat water to do Basic Skills with at least one other instructor! But to his credit Tony took up the challenge, and off we set.

It escalated very quickly. Tony had to deal with multiple capsizes from Fernando, and then group spread set in as Tony had to deal with Campbell being 'sea-sick' while Karen and Rae paddled off out of sight. Cathy forgot to count the boats and lost them.

Meanwhile Fernando capsized near the rocks, with 'Rusty' who was unable to



*Mayhem scenario – Fernando is in the water with his hatches full of water. When Tony goes to rescue him, he capsizes and is unable to roll due to the submerged kayak. Matt Bezzina is also in the water.*

remember his re-enter roll also in the water. Just in case that wasn't enough Josh suggested flooding Fernando's hatches! It really was mayhem, with a very capable group of paddlers all pretending to be totally useless.

## Flooded hatches

So what were the tips for dealing with flooded hatches? In order to keep the rescuer upright you can empty one hatch at a time by tipping the kayak

then pump out the rest of the water with a hand-pump. Then secure the hatch cover on this hatch before emptying out the second hatch and doing the same. The disadvantage is that the swimmer will need to be in the water for all this time.

## Sunday 25 May

The instructors rounded off the weekend by sharing skills with the focus on how to instruct different skills, the problems we'd encountered and the drills that worked.

For example all the instructors had a go at the forward stroke sitting on Rae's esky. Everyone shared their experiences and provided feedback to each other's strokes. Then they all got wet, practicing more rescues.

Sadly, I am disappointed to report that not a single instructor attempted to paddle the esky at sea. To rectify this, there will be a special prize at next year's Rock N Roll to anyone who can paddle an esky for 50 metres. Consider yourself fast-tracked to becoming an instructor.



*Mattie, Tony and Fernando all in the water in the 'mayhem' scenario.*

## Summary

All in all it was a great weekend, with lots to think about and practice. Seal Rocks is a great location and very picturesque with lots of different challenges from breaking out through a small shore dump, landing, rock gardens and swell. The main lesson we learned was don't volunteer to be a trip leader when the scenario is going to be mayhem, full points to Tony for a great effort.



*Rae demonstrating her esky stroke.*

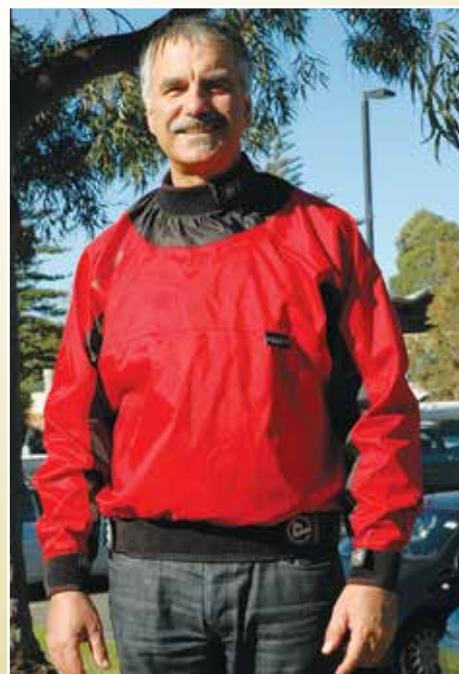
## Saltiest submission **WINNER**

I'm pleased to announce the winner of the 'Saltiest Article' from Issue #93 was **Selim Tezcan**, for his candid and colourful account of some intrepid rock gardening with Fernando. Luckily for us, Fernando had his camera rolling, so we were blessed with some good journalism coupled with great action shots. Definitely a winner from my point of view!

I wish to thank **Rob Mercer of Expedition Kayaks** on behalf of the club, the magazine and Selim, for donating the NRS endurance jacket prize, modelled here by Selim himself on a beautiful winter's day in Sydney.

Rob has pledged his continued support for this segment through to the end of the year, so get cracking with your submissions and photos for the December edition. Meanwhile, I'll be in touch with Rob and Mark to determine the winner from this edition. May the saltiest submitter succeed!

**EXPEDITION  
KAYAKS**



# COAST

## A History of the New South Wales Edge

REVIEWED BY ADRIAN CLAYTON

The coastline of New South Wales is very much our playground. There are places along it which many of us know intimately – where to find the best sea caves and rock gardens, those beaches best avoided, the sheltered havens to which we can escape the hurly burly of an angry sea, and the sand dunes behind which we can avoid the wind and pitch our tents. What we may not appreciate to the same extent is the richness of our coast's history – both natural and social.

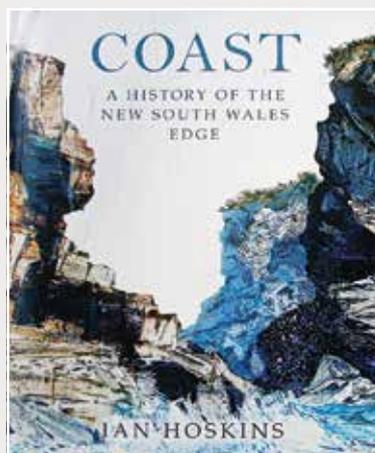
To quote the blurb on the dust jacket *Coast* is "... the first history written of the New South Wales coast, [it] traces our relationship with this stretch of land and sea starting millennia ago when Aboriginal people feasted on shellfish and perfected the art of building bark canoes, to our present obsession with the beach as a place to live or holiday."

The book's text is structured on themes – each given a separate chapter with headings such as Natural histories (geology, flora and fauna); The first coast people (aborigines); Convicts, coal, cedar and cane (the drivers of expanding early settlement); Harvest of the sea; Boats on the coast; Embracing the coast; Sea Change, etc. Each chapter is richly endowed with illustrations – in colour and black and white – which provide great support to the text.

Conveniently for many of us, the author in his introduction uses Currarong as a microcosm of the social evolution that has occurred along the NSW coast – from the days of pre-settlement right up to the coming of the "sea changers". Much of this evolution resonates strongly with my own experience of living in a small coastal community north of Port Stephens during my early adolescence in the late 1950s and again in my early "retirement" years in the early 2000s.

The brief account of the geological history of the NSW coastline explains why its southern region offers a distinctly different sea kayaking experience to that we experience in the north.

As to the man-made landmarks, I was interested to read that Scottish-born James Barnet was responsible



for some of the most notable that we encounter on our kayaking trips along the coast. During his term as the Colonial Architect from 1865 to 1890 Barnet designed and supervised the building of 20 lighthouses along the NSW coast. These include the lighthouses at Green Cape (familiar to those who undertake a paddle in to the Nadgee wilderness) and Sugarloaf Point (Seal Rocks) which is of particular interest to me. His career, and its unfortunate conclusion (brought about by yet another landmark with which some of our members know

well – the shoddily-built gun emplacements on Bare Island in Botany Bay), is well covered in the chapter headed Harbours and lights. A double-page colour illustration of the plans for the Green Cape lighthouse is included in this chapter.

The same chapter includes text references to and a picture of the wreck of the paddle steamer *Maitland* which lies in the waters of the bay of the same name on the Central Coast which is another popular destination for many of our club members.

Kayaking is often referred to as "bushwalking on water". In fact, we sea kayakers along the NSW coast owe a great debt of gratitude to our bushwalking cousins. In the chapter Heritage and the coast, the influence that the NSW bushwalking clubs have had in preserving the natural state of nearly one third of our coastline is acknowledged.

There are many more accounts within this book that will resonate with club members.

Despite the occasional editing error, I found *Coast* to be a very enjoyable read and a great book to dip in to. From it I have gained a greater appreciation of many of those places I pass while paddling along the NSW coastline. I am sure other readers who are sea kayakers will gain a similar appreciation.

**Coast, Ian Hoskins, NewSouth Publishing, 2013**  
447pp illustrated with black and white with colour plates, casebound and jacketed; 230 x 190mm.  
RRP \$49.99.

# Core Muscles and Kayaking

CATHY NOLAN, PHYSIOTHERAPIST



We hear a lot these days about the core muscles and how important they are for improving posture. But what are the core muscles and why are they important in kayaking?

## Core Muscles

The core muscles are those that wrap around the trunk of the body and act as a muscular corset to stabilise the body and spine. They include the abdominals, spinal and buttock muscles, pelvic floor, hip muscles and diaphragm. The core muscles are the centre of the universe in terms of movement, effectively transferring load through the spine to the upper and lower limbs and generating power.

If the core muscles are weak and/or not switching on at the right time or cannot stay on for very long, the body naturally adapts by recruiting other larger muscles and/or adopting a different posture to try to produce the same power for the desired movement. The end result being less efficient load

transfer, less stability around the lower back and spine and increased load transfer to the spine, shoulders, hips and other extremities.

So how do we improve core strength? Interestingly, recent research has shown that strength is not the most important feature of the core muscles for protecting the spine. Instead they have found that it is how well the core muscles activate prior to movement and the ability of these muscles to stay engaged during movement (endurance) that is protective. In particular, the deeper core muscles (transverse abdominus and multifidus) have been found to be key in stabilising the lumbar spine prior to movement.

## Kayaking Implications

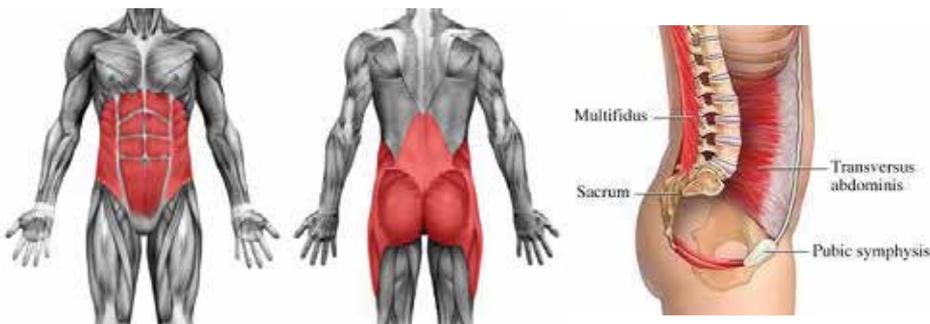
It will come as no surprise that good core activation and endurance is important during kayaking. Kayaking is a unique sport in that it involves prolonged sitting and constant trunk rotation for propulsion. This action

can be quite demanding on the spine as it produces shearing forces (where one joint slides over another). While shearing forces occur in every-day movement and for the most part will be absorbed and/or transferred up and down the spine, kayaking has the potential to increase these forces, particularly if your posture isn't optimum, but good core stability can help you to maintain good technique and protect your back from injury. As paddlers, we know only too well what can result is lower back pain and injury and unwanted time spent out of the boat.

So how do we minimise these shearing forces? There is no better way than good paddling posture and technique, so plenty of hours in the kayak keeping good form is the key. Good core muscle activation and endurance is critical. So if you would like to assess how well you can activate your core and what your current core endurance is like, try the exercises below. As with all exercises ensure good form and if you experience uncomfortable pain, stop! If you have existing lower back or shoulder pain the 'hardy' exercises are not for you.

## Activating Core Muscles

Try this simple technique to make sure you can isolate and activate your core muscles before commencing the strengthening exercises.



Lie on your back on a mat with your knees bent, feet hip distance apart and your spine in neutral, (gentle curve in your low back). Place your hands just inside your front pelvic bones (as above) and try the following cues to produce sustained contraction of your deep core muscles.

Imagine a line that connects the inside of your two pelvic bones (front of hips). Think about connecting or tightening the muscle along this line. You should feel your pelvic bones draw towards each other and a light but deep tension under your fingertips. There should be no movement of your

hips, pelvis or spine as you do this. Hold the contraction for 3 – 5 seconds (remember to breathe) and then release. If you can do this easily move on to the endurance exercises below. If you can't, keep trying until you can hold for 3-5 seconds easily.

## Building Core Muscle Endurance

### Two-legged Bridge



To perform the two-legged bridge, lie on your back with the knees bent and feet flat on the ground about hip-width apart. Start the movement by activating your core muscles then push through the heels and slowly drive the hips up in the air; hold at the top and then slowly return to the ground. Repeat x 10. If this is too easy, try this progression, a one-legged bridge. Exactly the same as before with one leg straight! If you can do 10 of these with each leg without letting your hip drop you have good core activation and endurance!

### Bird Dog



Kneel on all fours on a mat, hands underneath shoulders, knees underneath hips and spine in neutral. Activate your core muscles and slowly straighten your right leg out behind you without rotating your hips. Once you have balance, raise your left arm out in front of you and hold for 10 seconds. Slowly lower your arm, then leg and repeat the other side. Repeat 3-4 times each side.

### ... and for the more hardy!

If the above are way too easy, then move on to the following exercises. Caution with these ones if you have existing lower back and/or shoulder issues and stop if there is pain.

### Planks



Use a mat or blanket underneath and lie on your stomach with the elbows under the shoulders and the forearms on the ground. Make sure you set your shoulder blades (moving down towards your buttocks), then lift your body up until you are in a flat back position, hold 10 seconds and then return to the ground. Repeat 3-4 times using a slow tempo. To progress the exercise and make it harder, you can hold for a longer time at top and/or extend the reps. If you can build to a hold of 1 minute without losing form and repeat x 3, you are doing well!

### Side Planks



Lie on your side on a mat. Place your forearm under your shoulder, perpendicular to your body. Bend your knees at a right angle. Place your upper leg directly on top of your lower leg, turn on your core, keep your shoulder blades down and lift your hips off the ground. Hold for 10 seconds then lower your hips back to the ground. Repeat by 5 and change to the other side. To progress this exercise, straighten your legs, with your top leg directly on top of your lower leg and lift your hips off the ground. Once you have your balance, extend your top arm up. Hold for 10 secs and repeat on other side. If you can easily hold for 10 seconds each side and repeat by 5, you have both good core activation and endurance!

I hope these exercises have been helpful and happy paddling!

# Ten things after ten Hawkesbury Classics

IAN VAILE



Ten Hawkesburys, a thousand kilometres, over a hundred and twenty hours paddling, and maybe 400,000 paddle strokes. What, if anything, have I learned? And more to the point, why have I learned it? There are plenty of club members who've clocked more races than me, but by now I'm starting to sort out a few things about getting comfortably through the race. Here's a list of ten things I have come to know about the Classic – or at least about how it works for me.

1. **A fast race is a good race:** the less time you take the better you feel. It's got nothing to do with competition (though of course there's always a reptile-brain streak of that as well) but simply getting it over with as quickly and efficiently as possible. And no, it's not really 111km, I've never clocked more than 100km and often less.
2. **The worst place for finishing the race is out of the boat.** As soon as you get out of the cockpit, time slows down. The air turns to treacle, synapses go into slo-mo, all your gear is magically dispersed across the paddocks ...

and then the cold seeps into your bones. Stay in the boat. The boat is your friend. OK, I know that's delusional.

3. **The first half is physical, the second half is mental.** By the time you leave Wisemans, your body has settled into the slog, everything that's going to hurt is already hurting, but after that it starts to get really hard. For mine, the worst two stretches are the long southerly reach after checkpoint O (Spencer) and the final couple of kilometres to the finish, when the lights are visible but they never get any closer.
4. **Simple food.** I've tried a few combos and now I'm content with ricecream, energy gels and bananas. A few races, a bag of snakes got me to the finish, big sugar hit at the end. Last two events I've had 750ml of an electrolyte drink over the night but can't say I noticed any difference.
5. **Rig for the night before it gets really dark.** For me, that means changing to a fleece top and maybe a cag, digging out the beanie, the torch and the iPod and making sure my food is accessible. Doing that in the dark is a recipe for confusion.
6. **I love my GPS.** I have it set to just big numbers, so it only shows instant speed, average speed and distance. It's not exactly visually stimulating but it's mesmerising. I find it motivating to try to keep my speed above some arbitrary limit: but equally, dispiriting when the tide turns and I see the speed inexorably tick down to five km/h no matter how hard I paddle. It's like watching ten episodes of

Game of Thrones in one sitting, exhilarating and appalling by turns and nobody is safe.

7. **Don't hit that bloody rock** that sticks out at right angles near the southern shore between checkpoints M and N. Just don't, OK? And stay out of the damn tree branches at the same place for once. But just remember that rock. How often do you have to hit the bloody thing?
8. **Learn to love the tricks your mind plays.** Several times I've had vivid hallucinations, particularly after checkpoint O (again) and maybe it's a sign of a misspent youth but I actually quite enjoy them. Once I recognise what's going on.
9. **Resist the pull of Last Pit Stop.** You may think it is there to help weary paddlers: but it's really a siren call to pull over, relax, and get out of the boat. See (2) above.
10. **Landcrew landcrew landcrew.** It's not about you. You're part of a team out there at night and the team makes it happen. You can't thank them enough.

Talk to everyone. Thank the checkpoint crew: give encouragement to those young men and women in the school boats who are wondering wtf they have got into. Talk to the fish. Give some good-natured lip to the K4s when they power past. Talk to the ghosts. Chat to the boat that's pacing you for an hour or so. It helps you, it helps them. And give some serious stick to that idiot with the torch mounted on the front of his boat.

If you are contemplating having a go for the first time, just do it. If you are back for a repeat run ... well, at least you know what you are in for.



## Hawkesbury Canoe Classic funding exceeds \$3.3 million



The 2013 Hawkesbury Canoe Classic (HCC) raised a huge \$200,000 in support of medical research, bringing the total raised to more than \$3.3 million over the last 20 years.

The HCC's generous 2013 donation will fund:

- Research Scientist, Dr Thanh Vu, at the Blood Stem Cell and Cancer Research Unit of St Vincent's Hospital, Sydney;
- Six Arrow/HCC PhD scholarships; and
- An innovative home based internet health clinical trial run by Professor David Ma.

## Words of thanks from Dr Thanh Vu

Excerpt from a speech presented by Dr Thanh Vu at the HCC 2013 presentation dinner

As an Arrow/HCC research fellow, I would like to thank all of you for participating in the HCC event, and I thank the Arrow Bone Marrow Foundation (Arrow), for supporting our research team at St Vincent's Hospital, Sydney, and for supporting me in my medical research career.

Funding has always been a major dilemma in medical research. It would be an ideal world where medical scientists like us, who are humble, and shy away from the financial world are allowed to stay focused on medical research. Today, the funding issue is becoming more challenging than ever. The National Health and Medical Research Council, a major funding body for medical research in Australia, has suffered from major budget cuts in recent years. The success rate for grants this year is down to 16%, compared to 20% last year, and 30% in years before. And there are more budget cuts happening, according to the Australian Research Council (ARC). In 2002, the chance for an early career researcher like me to get funding was 25%; by 2007 it had dropped down to 15%.

You may be interested to know that according to a national opinion poll by the Australian Society of Medical Research, 90% of the people surveyed agreed that medical research is "very important" to improve the quality of health care in Australia; and 85% are concerned about the amount of medical research done in Australia. However, it is estimated that Australia paid 6 cents a day through their tax to support government-funded medical research which makes up 80% of all research funding in Australia. When asked how much is appropriate, the answer is 4.7 cents a day. A cup of coffee costs \$3.50.

I'm saying this to show you how important this annual fundraising event is for a medical research. Arrow, together with the HCC, have been major sponsors of our leukaemia research. They have done an amazing job. In 2009, with funding from the HCC, Arrow sponsored Dr. Mark Lutherborow on the gene profiling project; and together with Dr. Adam Bryant, another PhD student supported by Arrow and the HCC, had revealed important roles of small regulatory genetic elements, called microRNAs, in leukaemia. Dr Catalina Palma, a former Arrow

Fellow, has successfully carried on the work aiming to discover the diagnostics and therapeutic potentials of these small genes. This year, Arrow has funded the purchase of cutting-edge equipment, including a SpeedVac, allowing more sophisticated experiments to be carried out in our laboratory.

The Cancer Genome Atlas consortium is an international collaborative effort to characterise the genomic landmarks leading to cancers, including leukaemia. Our work on one of these genes, "miR-10a", has been cited by them, stating the significance of the contribution our team has endeavoured to achieve. This shows that although we are not a multi-million dollar funded laboratory, we can still make valuable contributions on an international stage.

Medical research is definitely a long term investment, and the return is not for each individual, but for the community. Supporting medical research will benefit society in terms of minimising health care costs and improving patients' outcomes and wellbeing. Supporting medical research is an investment for the future. I wish to thank all of you, our sponsors, donors, paddlers and volunteers, for your efforts and donations.



Dr Thanh Vu volunteers at the 2013 Hawkesbury Canoe Classic

# SEA KAYAK AUSTRALIA EXPEDITION

INTERVIEW WITH  
**JASON BEACHCROFT**



**EDITOR:** *Who is Jason Beachcroft? Tell our readers something about yourself – where are you from, what you do, your past hobbies and sports, etc.*

**JASON:** Well I live in the Blue Mountains and I work as an Outdoor Education worker for a variety of different organisations; typically TAFE or Outdoor Recreation companies in the Blue Mountains, Mt Arapiles or in the Snowy Mountains. I've been involved in this line of work for basically 20 years. I've instructed and guided in kayaking, rock-climbing, mountaineering, walking, skiing and hobbies in the outdoors. I was born in Victoria but moved to NSW over 10 years ago.

Jason Beachcroft preparing to launch



**EDITOR:** *How did you get into kayaking, and then how did you get into long-distance kayaking?*

**JASON:** I got into kayaking whilst studying for a science degree at Monash University in Clayton,

mainly whitewater and some canoe polo. I have paddled extensively in Victoria, NSW and New Zealand. I then attended La Trobe University in Bendigo to complete a Graduate Diploma in Outdoor Education in 1994, where I started to receive my formal canoe and whitewater kayak training. Whilst there I got my hands on a copy of Paul Caffyn's Dreamtime Voyage and was absorbed into the story. At that stage I had not done any sea kayaking but I guess the seed was planted. I have no formal qualifications or training in sea kayaking, it's mostly been self-taught. However, a lot of the boat handling skills from whitewater kayaking are fairly transferable plus I have a surfing background from my youth. La Trobe University was a financial supporter of my Sea Kayak Australia Expedition (SKAE) for which I am thankful.

**EDITOR:** *What did your pre-trip training involve?*

**JASON:** My pre-trip training was not really about fitness. I figured that I would have a long period of time to get physically fit. I did however do a few small trips in order to test equipment and practice some essential deep-water self-rescue skills.

**EDITOR:** *Is there anything you didn't train for that you wish you had?*

**JASON:** No not really.

**EDITOR:** *What were your first thoughts when you left Sydney Harbour?*

**JASON:** There was a sense of relief that things were finally underway. The last week before leaving was not a lot of fun. I also knew that I had a big job ahead

of me and I was interested to see how things would unfold. It was without a doubt the biggest trip I have ever planned. Prior to SKAE my largest trip was a solo winter traverse of the Australia Alpine Walking Track 750km 53 days. SKAE was a whole lot bigger.

**EDITOR:** *You said that southwest Tasmania was the most beautiful coastline, which people from where do you remember the most from the trip?*

**JASON:** Oh hard question. There were a lot of people who helped, offered to help or just wanted to help. A list of people that I remember from the trip would indeed be quite large. I don't wish to insult people by leaving them off a list of most remembered.

**EDITOR:** *What parts of the trip did you feel most fearful for your life?*

**JASON:** I didn't really feel fear for my life whilst on the trip. At times there was some anxiety arising from circumstances such as getting too close to a large ship paddling at night on the last section into Darwin. But I never really believed that my life was in danger. If things didn't go as planned (and they didn't always), I feared that it would require harder work from myself in order to remedy the situation and get things back on track.



**EDITOR:** *If you ever felt like giving up, what motivated you to carry on?*

**JASON:** No I didn't feel like giving up but I didn't know for sure that I was going to succeed. My motivation is my will. Not something from outside myself. This is something that I wanted to do and I wanted to give it my best shot it's really as simple as that. Self-recognition of success was really all that was significant.

## Kayaking Around Australia

**Paul Caffyn** – New Zealander.

**AROUND MAINLAND AUSTRALIA 1981-82.** Paul has circumnavigated the north and south islands of New Zealand, Great Britain, the main islands of Japan, New Caledonia and Phuket. He has written several books, including *"The Dreamtime Voyage around Australia Kayak Odyssey"*. In 2012, Paul was made an Officer of the NZ Order of Merit for services to sea kayaking and water safety.

**Freya Hoffmeister** – German.

**AROUND MAINLAND AUSTRALIA 2009** Freya has circumnavigated New Zealand's south island and Iceland. She circled Australia in 332 days. Freya is experienced in Greenland rolling, gymnastics, marathon open water racing and sky-diving.

**Stuart Trueman** – English.

**AROUND MAINLAND AUSTRALIA 2010-11** Inspired by Paul's book, Stuart's trip around Australia was low-key, non-supported and self-financed. Upon finishing, he authored "All the Way Round".

**Jason Beachcroft** – Australian.

**ALL AROUND AUSTRALIA 2013-14** Jason was the first person to paddle around all of Australia including Tasmania in one expedition, traversing both the western and eastern sides of Bass Strait. He started and finished in Rose Bay, Sydney and like Stuart, was inspired by Paul's original journey. This interview occurred a few weeks after his return on Saturday June 28.

**EDITOR:** *What distance and where was the longest stretch of paddling at sea between stops?*

**JASON:** There are three large cliff sections; Zuytdorp cliffs near Geraldton in WA, and the Baxter and Bunda cliffs in the Great Australian Bight. These are some 180km to 200km, and took around 31-35 hours each.

**EDITOR:** *What did you miss the most while away from home?*

**JASON:** Friends and family and my pillow.

**EDITOR:** *You had a lot of time for thinking, what were your most common thoughts?*

**JASON:** Food, Water, Shelter, Wind, Waves, Landing, Sunlight.

**EDITOR:** *Apart from your broken ribs in South Australia, what other body parts suffered during the trip?*

**JASON:** My body suffered from a large number of salt sores over the course of the trip. Taking care of these was quite important. But apart from the ribs it was my hands that suffered the most. Strains mostly.

**EDITOR:** *What pieces of equipment that you carried inside the kayak turned out to be the most important?*

**JASON:** Whoo Tent, Stove, Food, Water and Maps.

**EDITOR:** *Which pieces of equipment let you down?*

**JASON:** I had recurring issues with a brand of marine GPS that I purchased. Not nearly waterproof enough.

**EDITOR:** *Who were your mentors or advisers before you left, and what pieces of advice stood out the most?*

**JASON:** I'm not sure I could say anyone mentored me before the trip. But I did seek advice from a variety of different people before and during the trip. Sandy Robson, Les Allen, Tim Trehearn, Dave Winkworth, Stuart Trueman, Terry Boland, Paul Caffyn, Ian Pexton, Geoff Murray. The two best pieces of advice were one from Sandy Robson "you can't plan everything in advance – just plan the first section and be working on the second as you go" and one from Stuart Trueman "on a trip this big you're going to get the week from hell and a week from heaven, and everything in between and you get all of it more than once."

**EDITOR:** *What were your greatest highlights and learnings from such an epic trip?*

**JASON:** People are friendly, supportive and trustworthy – even strangers you've never met.

**EDITOR:** *What are your plans for the next year or two?*

**JASON:** Well no big trip. I've got to start putting money back into my bank accounts. But I want to pursue activities that I haven't had the chance to engage in for some time such as climbing and skiing. Plus spending some quality time with friends and family.

**EDITOR:** *Will we see you out paddling with the NSWSKC anytime soon?*

**JASON:** Don't know. I don't have any firm plans in that regard. I don't have a sea skills qualification and to be honest may become a little bored by the trips below the sea skills level. But if I can find the time I'll make the effort to get my sea skills!

**EDITOR:** *And lastly, what advice would you give to Kayaker Number 5?*

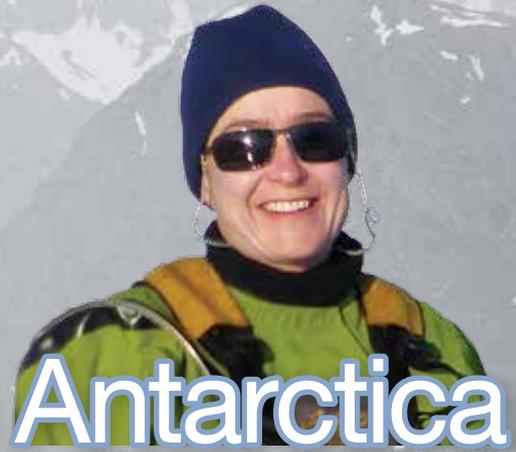
**JASON:** Ha. Do it the way YOU want to do it!



Jason back in Rose Bay after 17 months.

# South Georgia and Antarctica

ANNA WARD



Ocean Harbour, South Georgia (Day 9).

Late in 2013, I had the holiday of a lifetime. An ocean voyage from the Falkland Islands via South Georgia to the Antarctic Peninsula and back to Ushuaia, Argentina. We booked through Aurora on the small cruise ship Polar Pioneer (max 54 passengers), which included kayaking for 12 passengers. This is a summary of the long and fantastic adventure we experienced, a trip I would thoroughly recommend to all!

## Day 1: Stanley, Falkland Islands

We boarded the ship in Stanley, Falkland Islands and started with a safety briefing, donning life vests and packing like sardines into the bright orange lifeboats. After dinner we all chose a pair of gum boots and dry suits (for those of us kayaking), from the ships supply.

## Day 2: Saunders Island, Falkland Islands

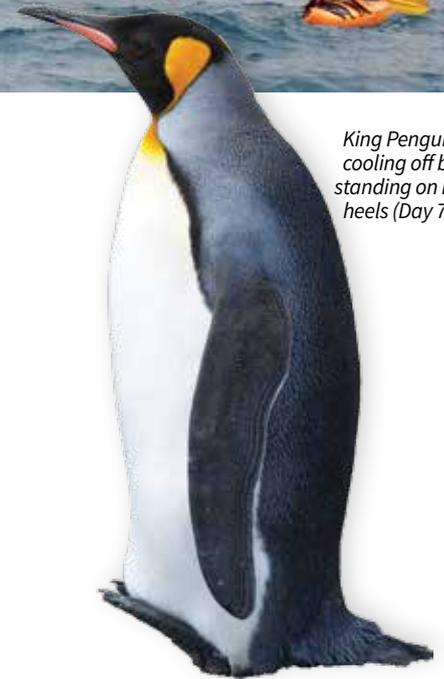
At Saunders Island, the crew checked our kayaking abilities, our gear and most importantly taught us how to climb in and out of the zodiac and up and down the rope ladder into the ship safely. We then went on a short

paddle up the coast, paddling through kelp, trying to avoid it and saw many blue-eyed shags, truly magnificent birds. Unfortunately with a hurricane developing offshore, we all had to return to ship much earlier than expected and missed out on meeting the King and Macaroni penguins. (Distance 2.5km, Wind 15-25 knots)

## Day 3-5: Crossing the Scotia Sea (heavy seas up to 10-13 m wave, easing to 8-10 and by day 3 continuing to calm)

The highlight during these 3 days on the way to South Georgia was reaching Shag Rocks in the middle of the Scotia Sea. It is amazing how exciting a few small rocks completely covered in shags could be and how quickly we passed them. The crew onboard presented lectures every day about the history and wildlife of the region. Environmental rules required us to vacuum all our landing gear, including our pockets, Velcro, zips, packs and camera bags. We were also taught about the importance of properly cleaning our boots each time we landed, by walking through tubs of disinfectant before and after each landing and scrubbing each other's boots.

King Penguin cooling off by standing on his heels (Day 7).



Macaroni Penguins.

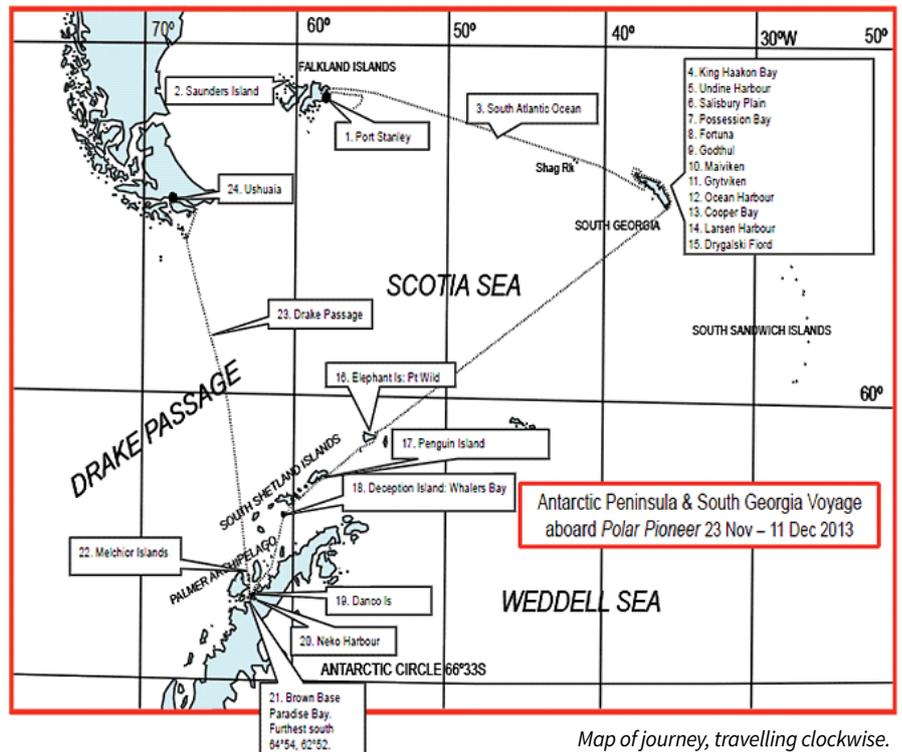
## Day 6: King Haakon Bay and Undine Harbour, South Georgia.

After finally arriving at King Haakon Bay, South Georgia, we transferred to kayaks and paddled northward along the coast through the Vincent Islands to Peggoty Bluff before heading down to the glacier face at the head of the bay. For safety, we kept some distance between the glacier and ourselves, however it was still overwhelmingly huge compared with us. We then went ashore amongst elephant seals, Gentoo penguins and Antarctic terns before returning to the ship. This was our first close up introduction to the penguins, watching them waddle around, checking out us and our kayaks was a delightful experience. (Distance 11km, Wind 15-20 knots)

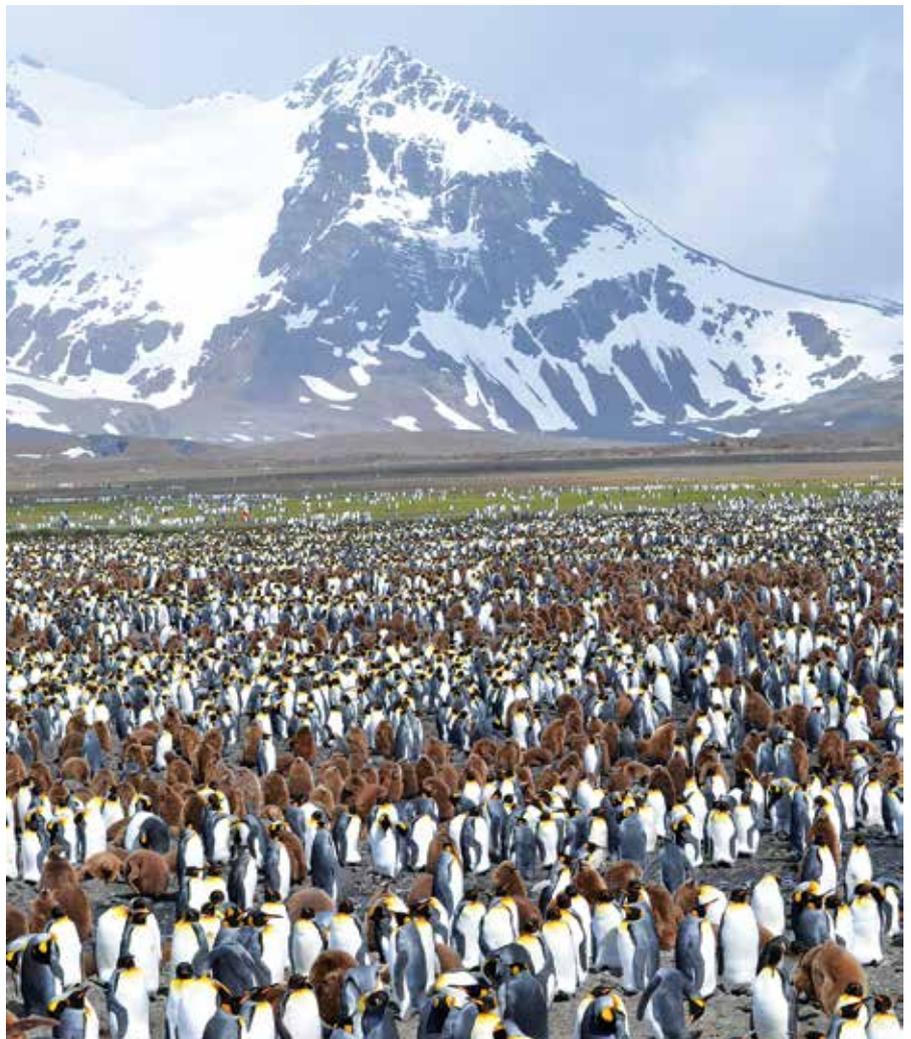
That evening just prior sunset, a small group of 5 paddled into Undine Harbour through kelp and a strong headwind. In the distance it sounded like a huge party was taking place round the next headland – it was the penguins and seals! Watching seal pups on a steep pebbly beach was a highlight, as were the gulches and a magically eerie sea cave. The water was bright aqua in colour, even in the dusk – hard to believe it was real. (Distance 5km, Wind 15 knots from the north)

## Day 7: Salisbury Plains and Possession Bay, South Georgia

We abandoned the kayaks today for a landing on Salisbury Plains and witnessed 150,000 king penguins, elephant, leopard and fur seals as well as numerous varieties of birds. The sheer number of animals was unimaginable and incredibly exciting. While ashore, I saw a group of penguins walking along just like a gang, all they were missing was the caps and thick gold jewellery! I was also lucky enough to see a group of penguins obviously hotter than they would like, standing in a shallow part of the stream on the back of their heels, balancing on their stick like tails. This is how they cool off – through the soles of their feet – see photo.



Map of journey, travelling clockwise.



Salisbury Plain, South Georgia (Day 7).

That afternoon we went for a paddle in Possession Bay. We crossed the bay into the wind, sheltering behind a headland and paddled on towards spectacular glaciers, where the winds picked up dramatically. I thought I heard a crack in the glacier, so when Toby said let's retreat, I was more than happy to move away quickly. We often heard glaciers roaring and cracking as they shifted. (Distance 6km, Wind 15 increasing to 20 knots).

### Day 8: Fortuna Bay and Godthul Harbour, South Georgia

As we readied ourselves for the paddle, light snow started falling on the mountains, the ship and our kayaks. This was my first ever paddle while snow was actually falling – how magical! We paddled past seals tussling on the pebbly beach and saw light mantled sooty albatross flying in unison against the backdrop of the cliffs. Everything was beautiful. Unfortunately, I lost my sunglasses overboard, and had to paddle back with snow blowing into my eyes. (Distance 6.5km, Wind 5-10 knots occasional 15 knot gusts)

Godthul Harbour is skirted by high cliffs on one side, and the other, remnants of a whaling station. The paddle started out with very calm conditions, when we reached the u-shaped valley we were blasted by strong gusts. Luckily not a huge distance in such strong conditions, but a very satisfying paddle all the same. We paddled on till we reached the remnants of the whaling



Baby seal in Cooper Bay, South Georgia (Day 10). How cute!

station where we clambered up to the ridge to see the view over the bay, through the tussocks which hid seals and Gentoo penguins. (Distance 5.5km, Wind 5-10 with 30 knot gusts out of the valley)

### Day 9: Maiviken to Grytviken and Ocean Harbour with the Bayard Wreck, South Georgia

This morning we were taken by zodiac to Maiviken. We then walked across the mountains to the disused whaling station Grytviken over a couple of hours. The whalers left in 1959, abandoning everything as it was, with the understanding that seals and whales would repopulate and they would be able to return and continue whaling.

Grytviken, actually the whole of South Georgia, has a grand population of 3 permanent residents. They look after the post office, the museum, the newly repainted white church and the historical disused whaling station. The church was originally built in Norway, dismantled and brought here in 1913 in order that the whalers might have a focus away from more 'sinful' diversions. Shackleton's funeral was also held in the church. It was restored for the 100 year anniversary.

That afternoon, paddling toward Ocean Harbour, I was delighted to view my first herd of reindeer grazing the hillside in front of us. Reindeer were introduced to South Georgia in 1911, and were released in Ocean Harbour as food for the whalers.

We continued paddling into the Bay past the Bayard Wreck. I was surprised over 100 years later just how thick the iron still remains. The Bayard was a 3 masted coaling ship, 67 metres in length, used for the whaling station in the bay. During a severe gale in 1911, the Bayard lost mooring at the coaling pier and was swept to the Southern side of the bay where she rests, covered in tussock grass and blue-eyed shags. There is very little remaining of the whaling station, now

## Shackleton and the Endurance

-  Early December 1914, the Endurance entered the Weddell Sea
-  By 19 January 1915 the Endurance is trapped in pack-ice
-  27th October 1915, the crew (27 men) abandoned ship
-  21st November 1915, the Endurance sinks
-  9th April 1915, three open boats are launched and they all reach Elephant Island, on 15th April, 250 km's north
-  24th April 1915, Shackleton and his fittest five men depart Point Wild, Elephant Island on the monumentally epic 1280 km journey to South Georgia in the "James Caird" – a 6.1 metre open boat. They put rocks in bottom of boat to stop it capsizing, and ate albatross eggs, penguins cached for winter, and seals
-  Shackleton then arrived on the wrong side of the island in Peggoty, King Haakon Bay, and had to cross heavily glaciated terrain to reach Stromness whaling station on the northern side
-  Finally on 30 August 1916 and after three unsuccessful attempts, the remaining crew on Elephant Island were rescued by the Chileans. All men survived their ordeal.

seals and penguins have taken over the beaches, which are still littered with whale bones. (Distance 6.6km, Wind 5–15 knots)

### Day 10: Cooper Bay and the Drygalski Fjord, South Georgia

4.30am we all got up with the expectation of paddling in Gold Harbour and visit another huge King Penguin colony. Sadly, 50 knot winds picked up, with gusts up to 60 knots and our opportunity vanished.

Instead, the ship headed south to Cooper Bay, where we were ferried



Paradise Bay (Day 16).

across in the zodiacs to the beach and were met by numerous baby fur seals. We then clambered through the tussock grass, careful not to disturb the nesting macaroni penguins. I had the delight of seeing them walking backwards and forwards building a nest out of old grass and also watching two parents sharing the responsibility of their little egg, very carefully passing it between before continuing its incubation – see photo page 20.

Macaroni penguins have fabulous punk hair-dos, and were named by the British explorers, as their colourful head feathers reminded them of feathers worn in the hats young Englishmen in the 1770's at time who were called macaronis.

Leaving Cooper Bay, we sat on the top deck of the ship in the sun, the weather and views were magnificent. We then headed up the Drygalski Fjord, which is geologically fascinating. It is directly on the fault separating Gondwanaland from the Pacific plate, so looking out on either side of the ship we saw different rock types. I am still amazed how close the captain manoeuvred the ship in a U-turn at the end of the fjord. It was as if you could actually reach out and touch the glacier at the end! One of the definite benefits of a small ship.

### Day 11 & 12: Scotia Sea

For the next two and a half days we sailed the Scotia Sea, attending numerous lectures on krill, whales, albatross, explorers, whalers and penguins of course. From the bridge, we watched sea birds circle the ship, and kept an eye out for whales. Not far from South Georgia we saw our first serious iceberg, an enormous Tabular iceberg.

### Day 13: Scotia Sea past Clarence Island to Point Wild, Elephant Island, Antarctica

No one was going to miss this zodiac trip ashore. This was where Shackleton left 19 men before taking his five healthiest with him to South Georgia in the James Caird, a 6.1 metre open boat.

On the afternoon, we arrived it was summer, and still we all left feeling: "WOW, how on earth did those men survive on the small spit of land between the waves and boulders of brash ice washing in?" It was winter, everything must have been frozen, which would have been worse. Even on a summer day we were freezing!

By the time the final boats were returning to the ship, the boulders of brash ice were actually washing into the zodiacs, it was really exciting! ... even a zodiac propeller got broken.

### Day 14: Penguin Island and Port Foster, Whalers Bay, Deception Island, Antarctica

Penguin Island is an old volcano inhabited with Chinstrap and Adelie penguins. We circumnavigated the island, watching penguins, seals and Giant petrels and paddled amongst brash ice. On the other side of the island, we saw ice laden cliffs which looked like candle wax that had dripped down over the cliffs. (Distance 7.2km, Wind 5- 10 knots)

That afternoon we landed at Port Foster, Whalers Bay, which is still an active volcano that last erupted in 1970. Mud flows from the eruption wrecked the British Antarctic Survey base, literally flowing through the buildings and the remains of the disused whaling station.

We sailed into the crater, which was covered in melting snow – all black and white, breath taking! As we returned under a glorious sunset,

whales swam in front of the ship quickly manoeuvring themselves aside, narrowly missing the ship.

### Day 15: Danco Island & Necko Harbour, Antarctica

Danco Island, covered in snow, has a Gentoo penguin colony with a few rookeries on the rocky outcrops. The penguins wandered up and down their penguin pink highways, waste deep in snow. Gentoo penguin's primarily food source is krill.

After lunch we cruised through Ererra Channel into Andvord Bay heading toward Necko Harbour. Those in kayaks were the last to arrive on the continent of Antarctica, which meant that we had some quiet time with the Gentoo penguins and Weddell seals. I went down one end of the beach and sat with some penguins around me, watching them waddle and swim about. The highlight was when a big bit of ice broke off a little iceberg and gave some of the penguins a fright, watching them waddle quickly away. No penguins were injured.

We then paddled through the icebergs and eventually headed back to the ship. It was cloudy and dark but still the surrounding scenery and icebergs were breathtakingly beautiful. (Distance 7.km, no wind)

Back on board it was time for the polar plunge in Anvord Bay. I was told it was minus 2 degrees – absolutely freezing! I couldn't get out of there fast enough!

### Day 16: Paradise Harbour, Melchoir Islands, Antarctica

After a late night (noting it was well after midnight and it was still light), we were again up early with a 4.30am wake up call. Paradise Harbour, aptly named was the perfect way to finish off our kayaking adventure. We paddled past Brown Station, an unmistakable Argentinean base and research station with their flag painted on the roof. Just in front in the shallow clear waters

we discovered a dirty pink Antarctic jellyfish swimming along. There wasn't an ounce of wind, the waters were glassy and full of reflections of mountains and glaciers in the early morning light.

We again had the pleasure of paddling through icebergs and also paddling through frozen seawater, which means that the water was at least minus 3 – 4 degrees. The ice was like a caramelised crust on dessert. By this time, after such a long, gentle paddle, and though I didn't want to leave, my fingers were ready, they were absolutely frozen.

Back on board the ship, we then headed through the Gerlache Strait, seeing a Leopard seal, Fin whales and a pod of Orca on the way to our final destination, the Melchoir Islands, for a final zodiac through an area full of fascinatingly shaped icebergs.

### Day 17 & 18: at sea, the Drake Passage

We spotted our final iceberg and the occasional humpback whale, as well as various sea birds. The crossing conditions started calm but deteriorated rapidly, you definitely had to hold on. Up on the bridge it was great to watch the rough weather pelting the boat as the visibility diminished. Luckily the weather improved enough to see Cape Horn. Later that night in the Tierra del

Fuego Archipelago, it was completely peaceful. Sadly, we were in a line of ships ready to dock the following morning. We had finally hit civilisation, Ushuaia, Argentina

### Five things to consider when travelling to Antarctica

1. Take a spare pair of sunglasses, gloves and beanie
2. Take extra camera batteries (and memory cards) – and ensure they are charged and with you each and every time you leave the ship
3. Only 100 people disembark at any one time – choose a small ship (<80)
4. Take a plentiful supply of seasick tablets, and take them 2 hours prior to setting sail
5. Do the longest trip you can afford, even if that means waiting another year to save annual leave/money

As a kayaker, the guide will take the group out whenever possible. Think about what you want out of the whole trip, the kayak trips aren't long, you might be giving up a better alternative. Personally I gave up two paddles to see the huge colony of Adelie penguins and go ashore to check out Whalers Bay. In Cooper Bay, 30 knots winds stopped us paddling. I wouldn't have missed the Macaroni penguin colony for anything! In fact I would not have missed any of the trip and would go again in a heartbeat.



*Anna doing a Polar plunge in Antarctica (Day 15).*

# Gozo, Malta

PHILIP ROSE



*The Inland Sea with sea cave access to the Mediterranean.*



*Exploring the sea caves.*

In May 2014 I was fortunate to visit Malta for a week. Malta is an archipelago of 5 islands strategically located in the centre of the Mediterranean Sea. Gozo is the second largest island, separated from Malta by the Gozo Channel, about 10 kms wide and containing the third island of Comino.

Due to its location Malta has a fantastic maritime history. Neolithic stone temples date back to 3,000 BC and provide evidence of early kayak journeys across the Mediterranean. In 1565 the Knights of St John withstood a massive siege from the Ottomans led by Sulieman the Magnificent and during WWII Malta disrupted essential supplies to Rommel's Afrika Korps.

My humble adventure required me to present myself at the ferry terminal at Mgarr, on Gozo, at 9.30am. As I was staying in Valletta this required a 7.00am bus journey to the western side of Malta at Cirkewa, to catch the 9.00am ferry to Gozo. On the way I passed the bay where reputedly St Paul, on his way to Rome, was shipwrecked. I hoped it wasn't an omen!





*Philip Rose inside the "Azure Window."*

attraction and it is possible to take a boat ride through the cave to enjoy the spectacular coastal scenery. One of the most popular attractions is a stone arch romantically titled the Azure Window.

We launched our kayaks in the Inland Sea and paddled through the connecting cave into the stunning azure Mediterranean. The bay was dominated by 100 metre high cliffs of limestone and we spent a couple of hours paddling leisurely along the coast exploring the sea caves and grottoes. The young Aussies were rapidly improving their paddling technique and seemed to avoid any relationship stresses despite their earlier difficulties. I guess the kayak principles of adapting to weather conditions and accepting the capacities of the group apply equally well in Gozo as in Port Jackson.

After packing the gear we selected a local "cafe" located on the rocky shore for a much-needed cold Cisk, the local beer. One of the many memorable moments was enjoying the beer and a post paddle de-brief with my new kayak buddies. Many thanks to Benn and Gozo Adventures for a wonderful experience.

*A modest local cafe for a much anticipated beer.*

I booked my paddle through Gozo Adventures and was met by my guide, Benn. After collecting two English tourists and a young Aussie couple, from their hotel, we hitched up the kayak trailer and headed off down the narrow alleys of Gozo. Benn's ability to manoeuvre his clumsy trailer down the medieval streets inspired my confidence.

After a scenic drive we arrived at a place called the Inland Sea, on the west coast of Gozo, near Dwerjra. Malta is comprised entirely of limestone, which is great for building forts and churches. This Inland Sea geographic feature was created when a subterranean cavern collapsed, forming a small lake connected by a sea cave to the outside sea. It is a very popular tourist

Our first paddle was from a bay on the north coast. After our mandatory safety briefing we donned our gear and paddled off the rocky shore into a stiff northeasterly with a lively one metre chop. I knew our paddle was going to be pretty relaxed when I looked back to see the young "honeymooners" in the double kayak only metres from shore and heading for the rocks!

We paddled along the coast to a sheltered bay full of tourist hotels where we left the party. Benn and I paddled back downwind with a lovely following sea, to collect the car and subsequently collect the rest of the group and the kayaks. Perhaps the exposed north coast wasn't the best choice for a mixed group.





# Team Tempest

## Eden to Mallacoota Expedition

**PAT THOMAS** (LEVEL 1 SEA INSTRUCTOR)

‘Well mate, what about an epic expedition next year?’ I asked Ilija (Editor; pronounced “Ill-ee-ah”) as we were paddling from Huskisson to Honeymoon Bay in April 2013. By the time we’d made it back to Huskisson later that day, we had narrowed the expedition down to one of five locations: the Bodensee bordered by Switzerland, Germany and Austria; the French Riviera; the Canals of Venice; the islands off Dubrovnik in Croatia; or the Amalfi Coast in Italy?’ After speaking to our better halves and checking our bank balances, we settled on Eden to Mallacoota! Ilija’s better half needed some extra convincing as over a long friendship spanning more than 20 years, Pat has been known to lead Ilija to the edge of his comfort zone, including a Rock Climbing expedition 15 years earlier, where Ilija broke his leg, so Ilija’s wife cringes every time Pat has a good idea!

Our team consisted of six paddlers, five of which paddled Wilderness Systems Tempest 170s and thus our Call sign ‘Team Tempest’ was born. As most of the team had a military background, the expedition was planned with military precision. Team Tempest consisted of Pat Thomas (Expedition Leader) and Craig Rowe (2IC and Medic) – both of which had done the trip several times as Military Sea Kayaking Instructors; Ilija Ilcesin (Safety Officer); Stuart Laughton (Navigator); Garry Mansfield (Communications Officer) and Pete Murphy (Engineer and Quarter Master).

We planned the expedition to commence immediately after the NSWSKC 2014 Rock ‘n’ Roll weekend when the conditions are typically quite good. Although the paddle itself was not a difficult one, if anything were to go wrong, the isolation was a risk multiplier. By early 2014, the

Activity Instruction was written and the team had participated in a number of pre-expedition skills workshops and preparatory fitness paddles, so everyone was feeling prepared and confident about the trip. We had also pre-organised a visit to Eden Marine Rescue prior to our first day on the



Team Tempest (Left to Right) – Craig, Garry, Pete, Pat, Stu and Ilija.

### The Expedition Schedule

Day	Date	From	To	Distance	Duration
1.	Mon 10 Mar 2014	Preparation Day – visit to Marine Rescue Eden, Equipment Check, Communications Check, Weather Check, Finalise Route, Schedules and Safety Brief.			
2.	Tue 11 Mar 2014	Boytown	Bitangabee Bay	27km	~ 5hrs
3.	Wed 12 Mar 2014	Bitangabee Bay	Merrica River	20km	~ 4hrs
4.	Thu 13 Mar 2014	Merrica River	Nadjee Beach	21.5km	~ 4.5hrs
5.	Fri 14 Mar 2014	Nadjee Beach	Mallacoota	38km	~ 8hrs
6.	Sat 15 Mar 2014	Spare Day*			

water. This provided the whole team with a great insight into how a Marine Rescue Unit operates. It also made Marine Rescue Eden aware of our activity and allowed us to confirm our route, weather and radio scheduling (Scheds) with them. Pat's German 'sinking' joke got blank looks from the patrol: 'We are sinking, we are sinking'. The German coast guard reply: 'What are you sinking about?'

### Preparation Day

We had moved to Eden on 10 March and stayed at the Boydton Caravan Park prior to departure. That day, we pre-positioned three cars at Mallacoota for our return journey. The caravan park was huge and near the water. The owner directed us to camp next to a small caravan, which struck us as a bit odd, as there was plenty of room in the park. The owner insisted, as the caravan was due to leave that day. Reluctantly, we set up camp like Indians around their caravan. A few hours later the caravan owner turned up: 'Could you have camped any closer mate?' We tried to explain. For some reason our joking reference to us hoping they were Swedish backpackers did not seem to help the situation! 'Not bloody leaving, he has the days mixed up!' With that he threw his chair inside, slammed the boot and drove to the other end of the park. Nothing like claiming prime real estate.

The rest of the day was spent packing our kayaks for the four-day trip and checking equipment, weather, radios etc. Garry had enough food for the whole group as well as the lighthouse keeper at Green Cape. Garry's spatial acumen, mixed in with a good dose of determination, saw him fit it all into his kayak, AKA 'The Tardis'. Stu on the other hand had more room in his kayak than any of us and travelled very light. Pete seemed to have everything sorted, including beautiful gourmet food and a coffee machine. Even his paddling was effortless. We finished the day with a trip brief and safety brief, which made the next morning's brief ... well ... very brief! Of course a few of the



*Pat looking relieved during a toilet break!*

boys could not resist going into the Boydton Hotel for a last (decent) meal before we left. How Ilija and Garry were going to survive without a latte for the time away was going to be interesting (although Pete and his coffee machine became their new Best Friend).

### Boydton to Bitangabee Bay

We decided for a late start, as the paddle to Bittangabee Bay was an easy paddle in good conditions. It was a perfect day. The morning water of

Twofold Bay was very still. A few waves came in occasionally from a large wood chip ship near the point. We settled into a very easy pace, so we could adjust to paddling fully laden kayaks. It was great to finally round the point and head south into the open water. Our first stop was a small beach a few hours south. Within walking distance of where we beached, was a very small inlet with an abundance of shells. We spent a good hour there looking around. It felt great to be away from civilisation, e-mails and phones for the first time. It was so quiet.

*Four nights rations.*



As we tracked down the coast we found small tidal races along the way and were able to hug the cliffs as the swell was very small. Bittangabee Bay has a small entrance to it with a bomby on the left, which snuck up on us. Craig and Pat almost got caught but managed to keep away enough as the next large set of waves came through exposing a flat but sharp rock shelf. We all spent the afternoon looking around the bay and talking to a few local campers. They were camped further toward the point, which was out of our way.

### Bitangabee Bay to Merrica River

Next day we were up early and on our way to Merrica River. A strong southerly was due around midday, so we decided to leg it towards Disaster Bay. The first few hours were great paddling. The 1.5m swell was coming in from the Nth East and the wind was pushing us along nicely. There were, however, storm clouds on the horizon, which gave the ocean a grey colour. Not all that inviting.

As we approached Green Cape the wind quickly swung around to the southeast, gusting up to 30 knots. The waves were suddenly white caps and we had to give the cape a wider berth than normal with large crashing waves hitting the outside rock shelf and clapotis coming off the cliffs. As we entered the Bay we had a long crossing to the safety of the river. We rafted up and made the decision to stay in pairs and punch into the wind and waves

towards the other side. Although the visibility had deteriorated, the river mouth remained easy to spot, as there is a large depression in the cliff's ridgeline. After an hour of pushing into the wind, the conditions settled a bit, partly due to the land offering protection from the wind.

Arriving at Merrica River, the water was calm and very clear. Craig found a great cave to look at and the scenery was spectacular. Stu and Gary were looking at fishing options on the eastern side. We were all feeling quite tired from the day so we dragged the kayaks across the sand bar and paddled up the river to an established campsite on the left corner. A great advantage in stopping early afternoon means we can relax, explore and fish. It was also an opportune time to dry our paddling gear. Getting into wet gear for the next paddle leg is not all that appealing. There was mobile reception to the lighthouse from the entrance to the river, which saved us an expensive sat phone call to Marine Rescue Eden that day.

### Merrica River to Nadgee Beach

Day three on the water was a paddle to Nadgee River. Good weather conditions made for a great day of paddling. Early in the leg we decided to look into a few of the local caves. Mostly we backed into a cave, but Craig (Level 2 Sea Instructor) likes a challenge. After heading into a narrow cave nose first, he resorted to getting out of his boat to turn her around and navigate his

way out again. We helped him through this humorous ordeal by offering moral support at the entrance. "Brace yourself, another big wave coming through.' We'd listen for his laid-back reply 'Yeah, thanks for that, mate.' Gary spent some time chasing a pod of dolphins early in the day. That was the fastest we had seen him go all week. His Go Pro was working overtime. The paddle was not a long one, which gave us the opportunity to really take our time. The waves into Nadgee were only about a metre, but a bit of a dump was not much fun. Pat went in first and washed up on the beach after wrestling with a large wave set. Meanwhile Stu had spotted a shark, which cruised under the group as they were waiting beyond the break. It came back for a second look. He thinks it was a Grey Nurse but we all think it was a Tiger Shark, as that makes for a better story. Needless to say, everyone stayed upright on the paddle in. Pat was acting as beach master up to his knees in water, with no idea the shark was cruising around.

A great afternoon was spent fishing off the rocks and exploring the river. Also, another great ready-made campsite made things so much easier. It was always enjoyable sitting around the fire at night keeping warm and telling tales. No tales of the huge fish we caught though. Let's just say it's a good thing we packed sufficient rations that we didn't have to rely on the expertise of the fishermen amongst us. Stu's fishing efforts were the most successful; a paddle whacking technique worked a treat at catching tadpoles. He took the

*The lighthouse at Green Cape.*



*Campsite – Nadgee Beach.*



prize for the largest fish, which doubled as bait for the following day.

### Nadgee Beach to Mallacoota (via Gabo Island)

We decided on a pre-dawn beach exit the next day so that we could see a sunrise on the water. We packed up at 5:00am and moved the kayaks to the beach. It was very hard to see the waves but from the sound of them, it was going to be an interesting departure. The side current was working overtime trying to push our kayaks sideways.

Craig went first into the darkness and all we could see was his small light going up and down into the distance. Garry was next to go but unfortunately a very big set came through. He got knocked over by a large wave and managed a great surf roll in the dark to keep paddling. The next wave was even bigger and over he went again. His half full cockpit did not help matters. A quick exit and a rest on the beach gave him some renewed energy.

While Garry re-grouped, the rest of the boys paddled out, leaving Gary and Pat on the beach. Garry's second attempt was like a pro.

The early cloud cover made a non-eventful sunrise, but it was nice to be on our way. Gabo Island was the next stop. It was about three hours to Gabo Island but a strong current and favourable winds pushed us along with no effort required in quick time.



*One of the many caves that dotted the coastline between Eden and Malacoota*

A sail at this point would have been great fun. We rounded the point and arrived at Gabo Island in time for some breakfast and a good hour recovery. The harbour there is well protected and a great place to explore.

As we made our way on the final leg to Mallacoota, a seal decided to keep us company. Every time we looked behind, it would duck down like a game of hide and seek.

The bar and small inlet to Mallacoota is very deceptive and hard to read behind the break. We decided to keep to the right where we could do an easy landing on the main beach. The beach was quite flat, so the waves were spilling nicely for an easy surf into the shore. The outgoing tide made paddling up the river very difficult, but was good ferrying practice.

We arrived at the boat ramp around lunch time. A local fisherman took a few photos for us and we collected our cars from the caravan park. The Foreshore caravan park was an ideal place to stow the vehicles.

Highlights of the trip: the paddling of course, but you can't beat being paddle-weary, dry and warm, talking around the campfire at night listening to Stu tell another funny story. Yes we could have done the trip in two days, but what is the fun of that? Main tip for any expedition: prepare well and make sure everyone in the group gets on well, which we all did.

We are already planning our next adventure for 2015 – Ilija is currently learning German and Pat is learning Italian – so perhaps it will fall to a flip of the coin to determine where we end up!

Brunch at beautiful Gabo Island.



Endex – Mallacoota Boat Ramp.





# Pembrokeshire Paddle

STEWART MORGAN

Early this year I planned a spring holiday in Wales in the UK. On previous visits to the UK I organised day paddles on the Isle of Skye with Gordon Brown and along the coast of Cornwall with a guide by the name of Richard Uren both found by searching Google.

So I started researching on Google “kayaking Wales”; this threw up numerous sit on top kayak tours and a few sea kayak sites. The sea kayak sites seemed to be focussed on training however one, Mayberry Kayaking offered tours of the coast using “real” sea kayaks for both beginners and sea kayak clubs. They operated around the Pembrokeshire area in the southwest of Wales, which was near the town of St Davids, one of the places we were visiting.

I emailed them hoping to arrange a link up with a kayak club tour however as my trip was a month away and he had no specific bookings, we left it that I would contact him when I arrived.

When in Wales I contacted Mike a few days before the paddle who told me the other members of the group would be a family who were first time paddlers. Being newbies I imagined it would be a pretty tame paddle but was happy to be able to get out onto the water and view the coast which is a national park in this area.

Dressed in thermals and crocs I drove to Fishguard, an old port which now is the terminal for the Ferry to Ireland only 80k away to the west.

Wales



*Stewart coming through archway*

Thermals are a great substitute for paddling clothes, without the bother of taking special gear away on holiday. The guides usually provide cags and my thermals underneath provided enough warmth, plus of course they double for general use even if the weather is supposed to be heading towards a warm British summer.

At Fishguard I met the rest of the group, a guy and his young daughter in a double and his dad in a single with Mike Mayberry and another guide Dennis making six of us.

We left our cars at Fishguard and boarded Mike's van for a short drive to Bryn Henllan a beach to the North East along the coast. While only 5k as the crow flies it's probably about double this in terms of paddling distance back to the cars at Fishguard following the convolutions of the coast. After a safety briefing on the beach the group headed off paddling close to the rock shore. The small swell was creating a bit of moving water amongst the rocks and I was surprised he took the first timers in so close but they, and the well-scratched plastic kayaks handled it well. The guy in the double handled it even better once his daughter tired of paddling, letting her dad do it all!

A few of the rock gardens were deemed too rough for the first timers so the other guide and I went through with Mike taking photos from further out. I mistimed one of the gauntlets and took a wave over the deck causing the lightweight skirt to sag down leaving me with a belt of cold Atlantic water around the waist. Fortunately Mike timed the photo perfectly, the other guide waited for the break in the swell and easily cruised through the gap.

The trip took us into a few caves and a tunnel along the jagged coast, which is part of the Pembrokeshire national Park, from sea level you can't see



*Guide showing how it should be done*

much in the way of civilisation on the top of the cliff despite most of the park being farmland. In the distance towards Fishguard you could see the breakwater which extends out to form a harbour for the ferry from Ireland.

We turned around the last headland and paddled into the old Fishguard harbour. To get the kayaks out we had to walk the kayaks up a shallow

creek, which runs into the harbour, this water was a lot colder than the Atlantic, maybe I will bring neoprene booties next time after all.

After changing into warm clothes and posing for the obligatory group photo I headed back to my hotel for a hot shower while Mike and Dennis went off to collect the van and trailer.

# Expedition Training Weekend with Fernando

PAUL WILLIAMS (PHOTOS BY ADRIAN CLAYTON)

*The month of May in Sydney was a paddler's paradise. Balmy warm days, a cloudless sun-filled sky, light winds and smooth seas, not to mention the sea temperature which was yet to drop from its summer highs.*

It was unsurprising that Fernando's "Expedition training weekend" had a waiting list of paddlers eager to explore the delights of Seal Rocks and the pristine waters of Blueys, Boomerang and Elizabeth Beach. I counted myself lucky to have secured a spot early.

I was not feeling so lucky as I drove through driving rain the last few kilometres on the unsealed road out to Seal Rocks. Who would have thought that the kayaks first roll of the weekend may have been as it was strapped to the roof of the car as we slid towards an uncertain fate. Fortunately the mud gave way to bitumen as I caught sight of the sea, although far from bringing relief the sea was a sullen grey, still and mirror like in the lee of the headland, but uneven on the horizon, as the gusty south westerly kicked up the waves further from the land. The sky was even darker, especially under the black cloud where I found Fernando, Adrian and Geoff huddling in the doorway of the general store. I turned my collar up against the rain and pulled my beanie down over my ears and walked briskly across the road, head skewed against the wind, the first

of many cold rain drops running down the back of my neck. I wondered what had happened to all those enthusiastic paddlers who had signed up for the trip, and felt for the (un)lucky ones who were on the waiting list.

## Trip Plan

Our first task was to go through our trip plans, which Fernando had set as homework. As the rain dripped off the rusting gutter we discussed the conditions (cold, wet & windy), the proposed route up the coast (cold, wet & windy) and our objective for the day, the campsite at Elizabeth Beach (cold, wet & windy). We also discussed the equipment and provisions we would need, how to pack the kayaks, what safety and personal gear we had, both individually and as a group, and assessed our own and each other's skills, for both strengths and weaknesses. Whilst Geoff and I were able to confess to a number of weaknesses it was reassuring to have Fernando and Adrian keeping an eye on things and providing Geoff and I guidance where required. We drove

*Top: Geoff and Paul heading north past the Sugarloaf Point lighthouse. Designed by James Barnet, the lighthouse has been operating since 1875.*

*Opposite: Geoff admiring the impressive geological features of the gulch adjacent to the lighthouse on Sugarloaf Point.*

down the hill to the beach and started unloading the cars and packing the kayaks. In the rain. The transfer from car to kayak was effected with more haste than I would have liked, and in my haste I didn't notice that a few items of equipment never made it into the kayak. More problematically, in my haste to leave Sydney there were a number of other items that were still in my garage and hadn't even made it to the car, let alone Seal Rocks.

**Lesson number 1** Have a checklist;  
**Lesson number 2** Use it; and  
**Lesson number 3** Have a check list for the check list.

What I had forgotten seemed only to be minor items, and at this stage I was unworried and untroubled by these small omissions, after all none were sufficient to jeopardise the trip – or so I thought at the time.



## Rainbow Weather

The plan for the day was to paddle out along the headland, past the lighthouse to “the saw tooth”, explore and rock garden, depending on the conditions, and then head north towards Blueys. Sheltered in behind the cliffs we leisurely explored the caves and admired the geology, and watched as a rainsquall swept up the coast. “The saw tooth” was exposed to a buffeting wind, driven by the squall, but beautifully framed by a complete rainbow, with both ends reaching down to the sea under the malevolent and ever darkening sky. Fernando was keen to keep paddling out to sea and find the pot of gold, but we collectively decided to save our luck for later and paddle north.

The first section of the trip north was along some pristine coastline, past seemingly untouched and unvisited beaches, and as we paddled back in towards the coast we again were sheltered from the wind. The weather became quite balmy, with only scattered cloud, long periods of sunlight, and spectacular colours, the azure sea

contrasted against the glistening (wet) cliffs carpeted in verdant (wet) greenery. This was followed by paddling along several kilometres of a somewhat featureless although nonetheless beautiful beach, with the swell gently breaking along the beach which separates Smiths Lake from the sea. The northern end of this beach was framed by high cliffs, and as we continued our paddle north there was again the opportunity for rock gardening. Sheltered by another wall of rock, yet another rain squall passed, again a few hundred metres out to sea, while here against the granite we were bathed in sunlight, not rain, with yet another elusive pot of gold just out of our reach out to sea.

## Landing and Camping

As we passed Blueys and Boomerang (beaches) we looked for a place to land. Adrian paddled in to check things out and managed a wonderful magical trick of making his helmet disappear. He also took the opportunity of playing with a lovely Golden Retriever as he waited in the soup for an opportunity to

break out. His new found canine friend seemed intent on getting onboard and joining Adrian for the trip. Regrettably both Blueys and Boomerang were a little beyond our ability level, particularly as Geoff and myself were not used to paddling fully loaded kayaks, let alone surfing them in. We pushed on around the corner to Shelly Beach. I had identified this beach in my plan as a safe haven in any sort of swell from the East through to the South, and it proved to be so, apart from the nasty little shore break. Despite the lack of swell a couple of the team managed to still find themselves struggling in the 20 centimetre shore break, one of them despite his years of experience, being unceremoniously dumped onto the shore, covered in foam and sand. My surf ski background, and surf ski style “dismount” proving to be a preferred technique. My research also indicated it was a well known “clothing optional” beach, although as the rain began to fall it was clear that this was not the type of day for that type of sunbathing. After a brief stop we pushed on to Elizabeth Beach and our campsite for the night.



*Fernando going to full lengths with his risk analysis of a gauntlet in Lindemans Cove on Day 2 of the training session: "No problem guys, there's plenty of room".*

caves along the way, a couple of enticing beaches, and a surf landing at the other end. The five kilometres took a couple of hours, with some rock gardening, caving and beach combing along the way. We were blessed with sunshine and no rain, although again the rain and wind passed by a few kilometres offshore. I took the opportunity of wiping out along the way as we landed on a sheltered beach where there was probably only one set of big waves every five minutes – which was exactly the time I entered “the zone”, timing it perfectly exactly five minutes after the last set. Fernando helped me up the beach and we watched as Geoff and Adrian paddled in and stepped out onto the sand without even getting their feet wet.

At “The Ruins” Fernando took the opportunity to play in the surf, and demonstrated a massive “endo” with “air” and “twist”. His second attempt was less spectacular than the first but ended in a lovely wet exit, which was obviously intended as a demonstration to Geoff and I of that particular technique. Adrian boiled the billy, and I was slightly jealous, and realised that all that glitters is not necessarily gold, or more accurately, the promise of a cold schooner and a steak is not necessarily a reason not to bring the equipment to boil water. It was cold on the beach and although we didn’t linger another lesson was learnt. I was starting to feel the effects of cold by the time we were ready to leave.

Breaking out through the surf was Geoff’s opportunity to show us his swimming skills, thus making us all even in the swimming event. We were all cold by the time we got back to Elizabeth Beach SLSC, and the showers and kettle were very welcome. Fernando and Adrian again shared their knowledge and experience with another theory session, after which we split, between a “night in” for some and another night at “The Reccy” for me, as per my trip plan, although Sunday night for the locals ended about 8pm, so it was back home to a warm sleeping bag and my book nice and early.

*A rainbow frames the Saw Tooth off Sugarloaf Point. Paul is favouring the left for the pot of gold.*

After carrying the kayaks up the beach and onto the lawn in front of the surf club I was scoping out the best campsite, ready to pitch my tent before the others, when Fernando revealed that we were staying in the surf club, with all the benefits it had to offer. Happy days. Hot showers, tea and coffee were followed by a theory session with Fernando, some map reading skills and a look at the possibilities for Sunday’s paddle. Adrian provided some useful local knowledge (again) and with the formalities of day 1 concluded it was beer o’clock, and we headed to “The Reccy” (The Pacific Palms Recreation Club). Part of our homework had been to plan our meals and what food (and water) we needed to carry. My research indicated that within 10 minutes walk of the Elizabeth Beach SLSC was a modern club, with bistro, hot chicken schnitzels with chips, and even better, cold beer on tap. I didn’t bring my camp stove or any evening meals. Part of our afternoon discussion was about meals and provisioning, and my

position of being adaptable and using locally available resources was adopted unanimously, especially if that resource was a nice cold schooner. Given the weather forecast (and the actual weather, as experienced) the flexibility of being able to utilise the surf club was also a stroke of brilliance, as two nights in tents would have been less than ideal. Another lesson in being flexible and adaptable, and not being dogmatic about how things “should be done”. Good work Fernando, and thanks to Adrian and his connections at the surf club.

### Feeling the Cold

Sunday dawned much the same as Saturday, the rain having pelted down mercilessly throughout the night, although fortunately the kayaks hadn’t floated away while we slept. The paddle around to the southern end of Seven Mile Beach at “The Ruins” was less than five kilometres, but there were numerous



## Knowing when to quit

Monday dawned as both Saturday and Sunday had, the earth drenched and the wind whistling through the trees (the Pacific Palms??). Lying in my sleeping bag listening to the wind and rain I had studied the weather (using my “smart” phone), looked at the observations down the coast and kept an eye on the rain radar. With some reluctance I told Fernando that I would get a lift back to Seal Rocks (with my brother Damo, a local) and drive home early. Fernando was very understanding and in my view showed leadership in not trying to persuade me otherwise. Although I did not engage in a lengthy discussion with my fellow paddlers, my decision was based in the following analysis:

The weather – my assessment of the weather was that the conditions were forecast to deteriorate during the course of the day and I was concerned that given my relative inexperience I may find myself out of my depth, so to speak, and my clothing, although suitable for current conditions, may leave me shivering in a couple of hours time;

My level of experience and preparation – As indicated above I was concerned about my ability level in the conditions, not greatly, but it was in the back of my mind. What actually worried me more was that the previous day I had been quite cold after only two hours on the water, and my gear was still wet and I had left my beanie in the car back at Seal Rocks. I was genuinely concerned about hypothermia. This possibility had not even crossed my mind two days earlier, but at this point it all came home to me, and if I learnt nothing else this weekend (although trust me, I learnt a lot), it was not to underestimate the consequences failing to bring even the smallest items of “essential equipment”.

Time constraints – I had a busy week ahead, and in fact my trip plan always stated that I wanted to be back at Seal Rocks and on the road by 12 midday. This was not going to happen given our departure time from Elizabeth Beach SLSC, and combined with the other factors identified above, the decision became a “no brainer” for me.

Having said that I am greatly disappointed that I did not finish the trip, I feel to a certain extent that I have let myself down, not to mention Fernando, Adrian and Geoff. However, this is part of the learning experience, part of making sure that you have all your gear, because even such a simple thing as forgetting your beanie can (and a few other things too, but we won't mention them), at certain times of year and in certain conditions, actually stop you from achieving your objectives. And that is a very valuable lesson. It's not the only lesson I learnt on the weekend, and I would like to thank

Fernando for organising the trip and executing it so flawlessly. Thanks also to Adrian for his wisdom, local knowledge and connections. Reminds me a little bit of the “young bull and the old bull”. Speaking of old bulls, it is inspirational to see Geoff, a few weeks after his 70th birthday, finish a trip in quite trying conditions while I headed home early. It is very inspirational. I'll leave it to Geoff to tell us all what happened on Monday on the paddle back to Seal Rocks while this fairweather sailor was drinking coffee at the Blueys Beach Cafe.



*Fernando, displaying great paddling versatility, completes the return to Elizabeth Beach of the fisherman found attempting to swim his kayak to shore against an offshore wind.*

## Epilogue from Geoff

While Paul was drinking coffee at the Blueys Beach Café, the remainder of the team packed the boats for the return journey and headed off.

Shortly after leaving Elizabeth Beach we were confronted with a “real-life” drama at sea. Just off Seagull Point, a guy was swimming in the water with a “rubber ducky” in tow. His outboard had stalled & wouldn't restart, so he decided to swim it in. The wind in the bay was blowing from the west, and consequently he was making no headway to the beach. I'm not sure how long he was in the water, but his speech was beginning to be affected by his condition.

We helped him back into his boat and Adrian & I took it in tow towards the beach, while Fernando alerted emergency authorities, on his mobile. After around half an hour, Adrian made a beach landing with Fernando's boat while Fernando paddled the “rubber ducky” onto the beach. We had the guy and his boat safely back on shore without further incident.

After he changed into some warm clothes and began to recover, other people of authority turned up & took over responsibility. That was about an hour after raising the alarm – not a rapid response!

We resumed our journey approximately an hour and a half after we had set out initially. There was a westerly behind us until we rounded the headland and then the southerly hit.

Although the return paddle was uneventful after the rescue, it was a slog into a strong SSW wind. The wind changed direction to a westerly when we paddled into any bay sheltered by a headland. This gave some relief for a while. At times I was paddling in Adrian's “slipstream” and at other times when the going got tough, Fernando & Adrian paddled either side of me for a bit of re-assurance & encouragement. We eventually landed in a small surf on Number One Beach from where we had started, loaded our gear onto our cars, had a debrief and went our separate ways home.

A great training /expedition experience. My confidence and skills were increased by the attention, consideration, judgement and guidance of Fernando, with the assistance of Adrian. A trip to remember.

ALEXANDER MANU

Frank and I have had quite a few hard core paddling adventures together. It was now time to introduce a new component to our kayaking trips and perhaps one of our greatest challenges, kayaking with girlfriends!

Given we were only in possession of single sea kayaks, the hunt was now on for double sea kayaks. Preferably fibreglass models for weight reduction. Our first find was through Gumtree; behold a 5.8m Q-Craft Estuary model. Our next find through EBay, was a 7.6m Volk Explorer. With our two new fibreglass double sea kayaks it was time to choose a new waterway to explore with a one night overnight camping experience. Studying Google maps for a suitable trip plan, Port Hacking was chosen over the weekend 7/8 December 2013.

We chose the main boat ramp in Yowie Bay as the suitable drop zone. We eagerly loaded up our kayaks with all necessary supplies for an overnight camping stay, including girlfriends Erica and Kerry. Off we went paddling south along Yowie bay admiring some classic waterfront homes on the way. Our aim was to explore the upper reaches of Port Hacking's tributaries, so we headed for South West Arm Creek. All up it was about an 8km flat water paddle on a beautiful sunny day. As we headed up the creek (pardon the pun) we realised how pristine it was, part of the Royal National Park. The very upper reaches were shallow with a beautiful sandy bottom, we paddled as far as our kayaks could explore to its end point where we were greeted by a huge formation of bush rock and a wonderful natural fresh water creek. At that point we exited our kayaks and explored the fresh water creek by foot for some 500 metres – it was nature at its best.

AUGUST 2014 | SALT



# Port Hacking Weekend

## or two guys, two girls and two kayaks up a creek



*Dragging kayaks thru the shallows of (south side of) Port Hacking on our way toward The Basin.*

After having some lunch we were off again paddling back down South West Arm Creek toward our preferred camping spot The Basin, about an hour's trip some 6kms away. But with our inexperienced ladies fading quickly, along with our fully loaded double kayaks, an incoming tide and wind in our faces, and paddling overtime, Frank and I realised we were not going to make The Basin. So the hunt was now on for an overnight camping spot.

After discounting a few potential spots we saw a jutting headland and headed

toward it. We landed our kayaks on a little sandy beach and climbed about 25 metres to investigate. It was the



*Alex cooking up a veg brew for the overnight dinner.*



*Upper reaches of South Arm Creek.*



*Alex and Frank preparing kayaks at Yowie Bay Boat Ramp.*

perfect spot. A large clearing with a grassed area, but totally disguised by a ring of trees. As it turned out this was Yenabilli Point with a fire trail, which makes its way up to Bundeena.

We unloaded supplies, pitched our tents and cooked ourselves a fine meal. It was a beautiful peaceful clear night gazing over Port Hacking Bay towards the lights of all the houses of Southern Sydney's waterside suburbs.

After a restful night sleep thanks to our luxury air mattresses, it was morning and time to pack up and move on to our original destination The Basin, only a leisurely 2km including a circumnavigation on Fisherman's Bay. Unfortunately, due to a lower low tide than expected, the water depth was only some 30cms at best, exposing a large expanse of sand and mud flats. This necessitated us boys exiting our kayaks and towing said kayaks laden with gear and girlfriends. The expected

2kms began feeling more like 12kms! Luckily the tide started coming in so the final part the Journey to the Basin became easier.

After an investigation of The Basin by kayak, some walking and a swim at the local beach, we decided our mission was complete and time to paddle back to Yowie bay, a final journey of some 7kms.

For a while a light wind was blowing behind us, once we rounded Lilli Pilli Headland we were hit head on with

a rather ferocious wind change. All of sudden we were battling half a metre waves with a small gale in our faces. For Frank and I it was entertainment but for the girls it was a point of some concern. As a consequence we lads had to double our paddle effort. After entering the shelter of Yowie bay the wind dropped down and the final leg was a lot more acceptable with the ladies.

The next day Frank and I were already contemplating our next kayaking trip – maybe a boys' only trip.

*Having lunch at the end of South Arm Creek.*



# New Zealand rescue

JOHN KIRK-ANDERSON

*This story is about the rescue of Philipp Cartier on 20 April 2014 off Motunau, North Canterbury, South Island NZ courtesy of and reprinted from the New Zealand Sea Canoeist, the journal of the Kiwi Association of Sea Kayakers.*

Philipp Cartier, a nineteen-year-old paddler from Germany, has often heard people talk about carrying lots of safety gear, but thought, "Who will need all that?"

As a helicopter searched for him in the dark off Motunau, North Canterbury, he wished he had taken their advice. When his cold fingers fumbled and he dropped his only light overboard, he watched helplessly as it sank. Far from him, across dark seas, the thin beam of the helicopter searchlight tried to locate him.

Philipp started paddling at age 12 in Bremen, northern Germany. He paddled mainly white water, but also toured on lakes and the sea. He taught children kayaking at his club, and owned a Prijon Kodiak sea kayak.

He arrived in New Zealand in early December 2013, while on a break from his engineering studies at university. He travelled around the North Island with a friend, and while in Tauranga purchased a Prijon Kodiak on Trade Me. It came complete with a paddle, spray deck, and inflatable PFD.

On arriving in the South Island he and his friend went to Abel Tasman National Park, where Philipp decided to paddle down the east coast, leaving his friend to continue in their car. He hoped to paddle as far as Bluff, but didn't think of it as an expedition. He felt that kayaking was "a nice way to travel, but if I get bored I'll stop".



Philipp Cartier

Starting his journey on March 4 at Kaiteriteri, on the west side of Tasman Bay, he spent two weeks working his way around Tasman Bay and the Marlborough Sounds before stopping near Blenheim. He broke his paddle and so left his gear at a motor camp at Blenheim and went to buy a replacement.

When he returned he found his backpack, clothes, and camping gear had been stolen and so was forced to take a week off while he replaced them.

He then resumed paddling and got to Conway Flat, south of Kaikoura, where he was forced to wait out two weeks of bad weather. This break also allowed time for ulcers on his feet to heal.

On the morning of Sunday, April 20, Philipp stood on the shingle beach at

Conway Flat and faced the dumping surf for which the area is notorious. Deciding against launching he was given a lift south to Gore Bay by a local with a ute, and he prepared to paddle down to Motunau, a distance of about 30 kilometres (km).

Philipp's average paddling speed was 6km per hour (about 3 knots) and for him 40km to 45km was "a good day". His longest day had been 50km.

On this day he was wearing two thermal tops, a pair of thermal pants, with lightweight pants over them, and a pair of water shoes. He was not wearing a windproof jacket. His inflatable PFD had a SPOT Messenger attached, and a waterproof case on his front deck held a small light. His Magellan GPS was pre-loaded with waypoints and in his kayak was spare clothes, food, and camping gear.

Before departing he checked the weather forecast on his smartphone, with both Metservice.co.nz and a Norway-based weather service. He also checked a swell map website.

The forecast shown below was provided courtesy of Metservice:

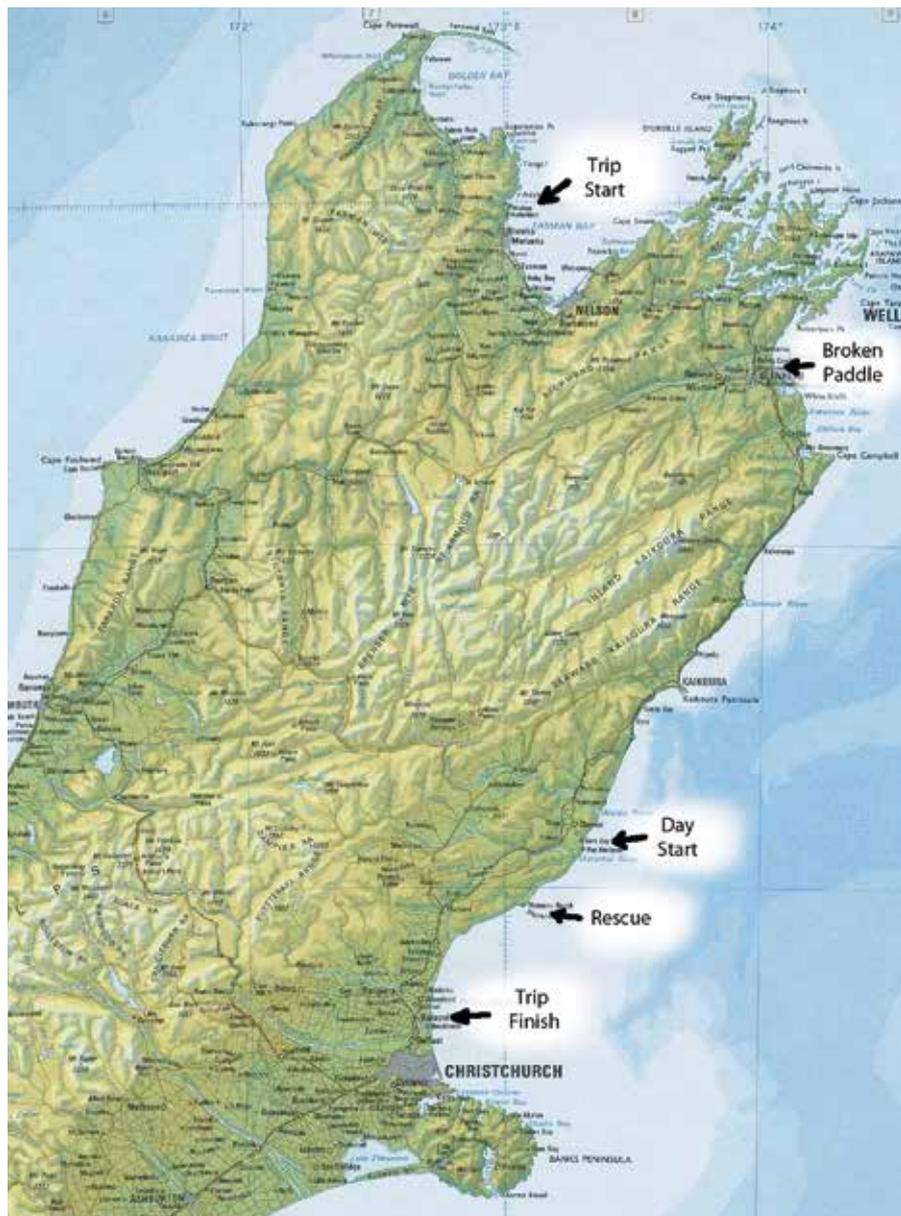
ISSUED: 20-APR-2014 04:53

VALID TO: 20-APR-2014 23:59

#### CONWAY

Northerly 25 knots but 15 knots south of Kaikoura, becoming northwest 20 knots everywhere in

## NZ South Island



the evening. Rough sea in the north easing. Northeast swell 2 metres.  
**OUTLOOK FOLLOWING 3 DAYS:**  
 Becoming Monday southwest 20 knots, dying out Tuesday.  
 Developing Wednesday northerly 20 knots. Moderate easterly swell easing Monday.

Later versions of the report, which Philipp would not have seen, are here:

Issued: 20-APR-2014 12:56

Valid to: 21-APR-2014 23:59

**CONWAY**

\*GALE WARNING IN FORCE\*

Northerly 25 knots but 15 knots south of Kaikoura, rising to 35 knots for a time this afternoon in the north, then becoming northwest 20 knots everywhere this evening and southerly 15 knots Monday morning. Sea becoming very rough in the north for a time. Northeast swell 2 metres easing. Southerly swell 2 metres developing. Fair visibility in scattered rain for a time this afternoon.

**OUTLOOK FOLLOWING 3 DAYS:**

Easing early Tuesday variable 10 knots. Developing late Tuesday northeast 15 knots, easing late Wednesday variable 10 knots. Developing late Thursday northeast 15 knots. Moderate southerly swell easing Tuesday.

ISSUED: 20-APR-2014 16:24

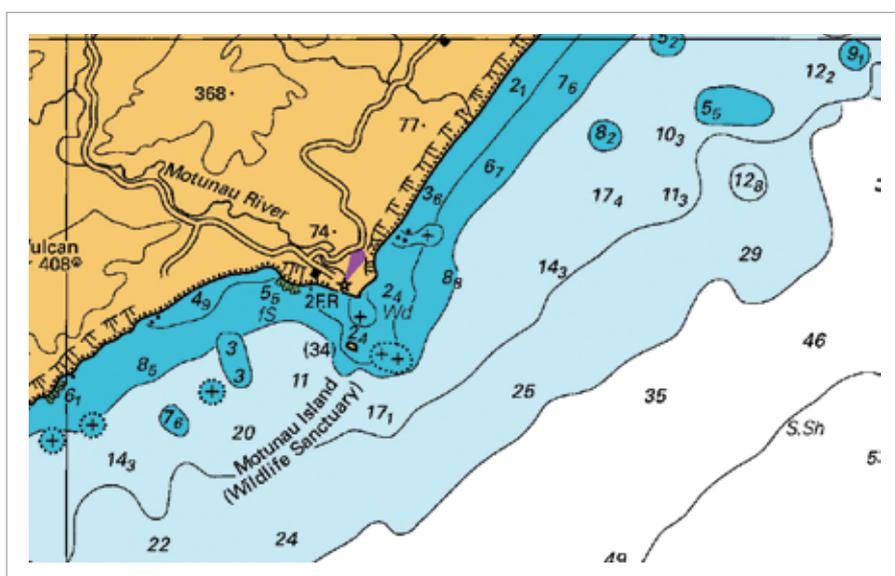
VALID TO: 21-APR-2014 23:59

**CONWAY**

Northwest 20 knots becoming southerly 15 knots Monday morning and variable 10 knots Monday afternoon. Moderate sea easing. Northeast swell 2 metres easing. Southerly swell 2 metres developing.

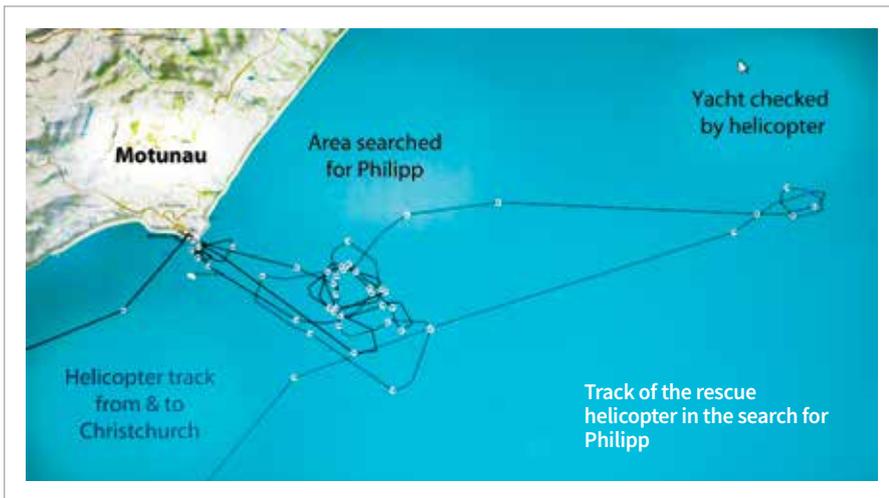
**OUTLOOK FOLLOWING 3 DAYS:**

Easing early Tuesday variable 10 knots. Developing late Tuesday northeast 15 knots, easing late Wednesday variable 10 knots. Developing late Thursday northeast 15 knots. Moderate southerly swell easing Tuesday.



Marine chart showing the Motunau River mouth and Motunau Island

He launched at 10am, into what he described as a 1.9 metre (m) to 2m swell and a light southwest wind.



As he paddled south he kept well offshore, as the swell was steepening a long way out and there are some semi-exposed rocks on which the swell breaks. The northern and southern thirds of this journey are steep shingle beaches, and the centre third is cliffs. There are no sheltered landing spots on this coastline, which is largely uninhabited.

At about 3pm, as he neared Motunau, he realised he was about 3.5km to 4km offshore, much further off than he normally paddled. He generally tried to stay within 2km of land, but the wind was blowing him offshore.

Turning towards the coast he found he was making no headway into the westerly wind, which surprised him. His GPS confirmed his lack of progress, but he wasn't too tired and continued aiming for Motunau, which has a distinctive island 1km offshore.

By 6pm, three hours after he tried turning towards the coast, it was fully dark. The lights of Motunau were tantalisingly close, but still out of reach. His GPS showed he had made no progress towards land despite his paddling efforts.

At this point Philipp decided he needed outside help and activated the SOS function on his SPOT Messenger beacon.

The SPOT is a messenger device that tracks progress using GPS. It can send messages via satellite to pre-arranged email addresses and/or cellphones to provide a trail of points that can be

viewed on Google Maps. It also has "I'm OK" and "Help" functions, which, when triggered, send messages to pre-arranged recipients. The "Help" function does not send a message to emergency services, rather it is designed to alert the owner's contacts that assistance is required and to let them know the unit's location, so they can assist if required.

Philipp had been using the "I'm OK" function regularly to update his mother in Germany as to his progress.

The SPOT also has an "SOS" function, which sends a message to the International Emergency Response Co-ordination Centre (IERCC) in Texas, in the United States. They hold the database of SPOT owners and details of their two emergency contacts. If a distress message is received they contact these two people, and pass details, including the GPS co-ordinates, on to the emergency services in the country concerned, in this case the Rescue Coordination Centre New Zealand (RCCNZ) in Wellington.

When Philipp triggered his SOS, the message was picked up at the IERCC and they attempted to call his two contacts. One, his mother in Germany, was in an area with no cell coverage and the other, a friend in the North Island, was at work and missed the call. The IERCC also contacted RCCNZ.

This call was received by RCCNZ at 6.26pm. RCCNZ treated this as a Class II beacon search and contacted the Police Communication Centre in Christchurch

and the Police SAR co-ordinator. With no other information available via the SPOT Messenger beacon except the SOS signal and its location, it was not known what type of vessel was in trouble. The Westpac Rescue Helicopter in Christchurch, a Eurocopter BK-117, was then tasked with the search.

The helicopter lifted off from Garden City Helicopters' base at 7.35pm, with one pilot and two Intensive Care Paramedics as crew. These paramedics are from the St John Ambulance Service and are permanently posted to the rescue helicopter. These two are also fully trained members of the Water Rescue Team. For this search over water they removed the 30-million-candlepower Night Sun searchlight fitted below the nose of the aircraft and used a smaller scanning searchlight and night vision goggles (NVGs) to search.

After the initial call at 6.26pm from IERCC giving details and the GPS co-ordinates, the next update to RCCNZ was 30 minutes later. RCCNZ requested further location updates at 7.50pm, and then again at 8.50pm.

Motunau fisherman Geoff Basher was called by police to stand by to help. Geoff has been a commercial fisherman based at Motunau for 30 years, and is also the local SAR co-ordinator.

On getting the call he went down to the beach and scanned the sea with his own NVGs, but all he could see were the lights of a yacht on the horizon. He saw the helicopter arrive and begin searching with a searchlight. He was then stood down by police, who said the helicopter would continue the search.

This surprised Geoff, who felt that his experienced crew could have assisted in searching from the water.

Rick Knight, one of the crew on the helicopter, said they had received the GPS coordinates from RCCNZ, but had no idea what they were looking for, beyond a beacon. As the SPOT messenger does not transmit a 121.5MHz homing signal they could not use their on-board direction-finding equipment to locate

it. A 406 Personal Locator Beacon (PLB) does broadcast on this frequency and that signal often leads searchers directly to the unit.

As they approached the area they saw the lights of a yacht about 20 kilometres offshore and attempted to contact it via marine radio. This was unsuccessful, and, unsure if that was their target, they flew over the vessel, looking for signs of life. Despite hovering over the yacht at 50 feet and lighting it up with their scanning light, it took a while for a man to appear on deck. Eventually they were able to get a thumbs-up from him so they headed back closer to land.

They were circling the area of the GPS coordinates, but couldn't see anything. The sea was rough and they were flying at about 500 feet as the westerly wind was buffeting the aircraft and they needed altitude to allow for any emergencies.

Eventually, in the NVGs they saw an oblong object, which looked like an upturned hull. They established that it wasn't, but then the pilot saw a small flash of light about 300m to 400m ahead. Rick also saw it, and then it was lost. They flew directly towards where they had seen it and just after 9pm they located Philipp, "still upright and paddling".

They logged the position on GPS and notified RCCNZ they had found a kayaker.

Rick explained that helicopters generally can't winch over water at night, as there is little to indicate altitude and orientation and the risks are too great. This was certainly the case here, and the rough seas didn't help.

The aircraft flew in to Motunau and landed to fit the Night Sun searchlight, to enable them to light the kayaker and guide a boat to rescue Philipp. On landing they spoke to several fishermen who said they thought there were three kayakers out at sea, as they had been seen earlier in the day and their trailer was at the water's edge.

Concerned that there may be other kayakers they had missed, the helicopter

crew had a fisherman go down and check for the trailer but it had gone.

Fisherman Geoff Basher, who had been stood down earlier, watched the helicopter come in and went down and spoke to the crew. They said they had found Philipp in his kayak, but were unable to winch and would go back out to mark him with their searchlight.

Geoff then launched his vessel, the 10-ton, 42-foot Navigator, with 7 people on board, through the narrow river mouth – "Not one of my favourite manoeuvres". Geoff said they were airborne off the 2m easterly swell.

When the helicopter returned to the position that had been logged as Philipp's location, he couldn't be found, and they began searching again.

The Navigator crew also started searching, using a small spotlight as their large searchlight was blinding the crew on the helicopter.

Philipp, in his kayak far from land, had first seen the helicopter about 1½ hours after triggering his SOS, around 8pm, as it began its first search. He had a small red light inside a waterproof box tied on the front deck, and got it out to signal the aircraft. It had a switch on the back,

and while turning it on he fumbled and dropped it over the side. Watching it sink he realised how difficult the searchers' task had suddenly become.

With his smartphone in a hatch, the only light source he had to hand was the small blinking LED on his SPOT Messenger, which he tried orientating towards the helicopter in the hope he might be seen.

After about another hour the helicopter found him, and hovered overhead lighting him with its searchlight. To his surprise it then flew away, leaving him alone again on the dark sea.

But he saw it land at Motunau and shortly after come back out and resume its search for him. Soon its searchlight was joined by another, that of Geoff's Navigator, and after about 15 minutes he was found again.

Geoff manoeuvred the Navigator broadside on to the wind and Philipp was able to paddle up to the vessel. His kayak was steadied by the boat crew and he was able to climb a ladder to get on board. His kayak was then lifted onboard as well.

Geoff's wife, who is a nurse, was on the vessel and she quickly checked Philipp and wrapped him in blankets. On arriving



Philipp in his kayak, next day on the Motunau River

back on land he was also checked by the Intensive Care Paramedics from the helicopter, who confirmed he was cold but didn't need further treatment.

Geoff and his wife took Philipp in for a few days. Based on his extensive knowledge of local conditions, Geoff believes the kayaker had been unable to make progress towards land because of a strong current that flows northward up the coast until it hits the underwater ridge that forms Motunau Island, where it is deflected to the east, out to sea. With no knowledge of this current, Philipp was marking time on a treadmill of wind and water that kept him in place for 5½ hours.

Geoff said the current was not well known except by locals, but had been the cause of many incidents over the years. Whenever he is called in to search for boatees in trouble near Motunau, he first looks for them out from the island, knowing that this current tends to push them away from land. Geoff said he does up to 15 rescues a year, but Philipp was his first kayaker.

Geoff later put some reflective tape on Philipp's kayak, as he "was blimin' hard to find" and "it was a miracle we found him so quick," the fisherman said.

From talking to helicopter paramedic Rick Knight it seems that what the helicopter crew saw through their NVGs was the tiny LED on Philipp's SPOT Messenger, his only light source. Rick said that with the goggles they can see the screen on a cellphone from 15km to 20km away, on a clear night, and if Philipp had a 406 beacon they would have seen its strobe light as they flew up the coast, while direction finding the 121.5mHz homing signal.

"SPOT Messengers are fantastic at what they do, but a 406 beacon is a lifesaver" he said.

Philipp has since realised that his SPOT Messenger, while effective at recording his progress, was not the ideal distress beacon. Its lack of homing transmission and strobe light made it very difficult to locate him on a dark sea, even when the helicopter had his coordinates. And the

loss of his only decent light to the sea made finding him almost a matter of luck.

Philipp had a long think about continuing

on, and decided that after a few days rest he would finish his trip at Christchurch. In the end he stopped after two more days paddling, at Kaiapoi, north of the city, as his shoulder was hurting.

## OBSERVATIONS FROM THE AUTHOR

Philipp Cartier had seven years of kayaking experience prior to starting this trip, and his white-water skills allowed him to cope with paddling in rough seas for about 11 hours, 3 in darkness.

He was familiar with the kayak he was paddling, as he had owned one in Germany.

His risk assessment was generally sound, as demonstrated by his decision to avoid the dumping surf at Conway Flat. He also checked weather forecasts and swell reports before departing Gore Bay and felt that the forecast northwesterly wind would give him a good following sea down the coast to Motunau. Instead, that wind pushed him offshore and he did not compensate for this, while the east-flowing current added to his problems.

The SPOT Messenger that Philipp was using was not the ideal equipment when needed as a distress beacon. It did alert the emergency services and give them a rough location, but with no homing signal or strobe it was not accurate enough in the circumstances.

Not having a waterproof light secured to his equipment was a crucial failing in assisting the searchers to find him. A lack of any reflective material on his clothing, equipment or kayak reduced the effectiveness of the lights and NVGs used by the searchers.

Philipp had no redundancy built into his emergency signaling equipment, and in my opinion, was fortunate to be found.

NOTE: Several people helped with the compiling of this report, but any errors are the author's alone.

The author would like to thank the following for their assistance:

**Philipp Cartier**, *German kayaker.*

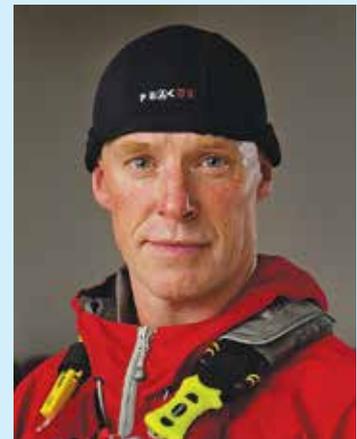
**Geoff Basher**, *Motunau fisherman and local SAR coordinator.*

**Rick Knight**, *Intensive Care Paramedic with the Westpac Rescue Helicopter and the team at Garden City Helicopters, Christchurch.*

**Ross Marsden**, *Consultant Meteorologist, MetService.*

**Neville Blakemore**, *Operations Officer, Rescue Coordination Centre New Zealand.*

*"John Kirk-Anderson is a life member of the Kiwi Association of Sea Kayakers (KASK). A frequent instructor and presenter at sea kayak forums he is a New Zealand Outdoor Instructors Association (NZOIA) Level Two Sea Kayak Instructor, a British Canoe Union (BCU) Five Star and a BCU Level Four Coach."*



# FIRST RITES: Initiation On Broughton Island

TOM COX (PHOTOS BY ADRIAN CLAYTON)

On Tuesday 10th June 2014, I rose in the dark early hours, clambered into my car (loaded the night before), and drove north. It was black and bleak and cold. Every so often, down would come the rain. Gradually black turned to grey as I edged toward daylight, but still the rain fell. I was anticipating arriving in Port Stephens in a deluge, and unloading and packing my kayak in the rain. Not my favourite way to start a trip! Fortunately, by the time I reached the put-in point at Jimmy's Beach, the sky was clearing and the sun was out. As I hauled my kayak onto the beach, a rainbow arched across the bay. I decided that was a good omen. By 11.10 we had our kayaks packed, we'd had our briefing, logged on with Port Stephens VMR and were ready to go. There were five of us: Caoimhin Ardren, Deb Cunneen, Mark Clarkson, myself, and our leader, Adrian Clayton. I was the only Grade 2. This was to be my first trip to Broughton Island, and the furthest I had ever been from the mainland. Mark was also a Broughton Island first timer.

The winds were 10 to 12 knots E to SE. The forecast was for a swell from the SE of around 2 metres and seas of 1.5 metres, and the tide was just past the finish of its ebb. As we approached the heads of Port Stephens, the swell grew bigger. The seas were messy, largely due to the powerful rebound from Yacaaba Head. Combined, the sea and swell was somewhere close to 4 metres. Quite a turmoil! We stayed focussed, paddled on, and eventually



*Tom giving his adrenalin meter a bit of a test on Day 2 to see if it was up to taking on the challenge of Fishermans Passage.*

got in the lee of Cabbage Tree Island. We paused, took a breather, discussed the conditions, assessed the alternatives, and agreed to paddle on. At around 12:30 we set off to the northeast in a big rolling swell. After an hour's paddling we regrouped, had a quick break, and pressed on relentlessly. By 2:30 we reached

Looking Glass Isle. As we rounded it, Mark's kayak was seemingly airborne, caught in the clapotis created by the incoming swell and the rebound from the island. We started heading towards Esmeralda Cove, with the wind and swell behind us and lots of rebound continuing to confuse the waters. As we entered the Cove the waves were big



< Mark testing his boat control skills in the Looking Glass. No gelcoat left behind.

and wild and messy. Adrian was urging us to stick together and paddle hard. A bombora broke close behind me. Once we were in the middle of the cove, the waves abated. We had an easy landing in small surf at Little Poverty Beach just after 3:00pm, 21.3 km from our launch. It had been quite a trip. We unloaded our gear, hauled our kayaks onto the grass, changed into dry clothes, and pitched our tents. Mark and I pitched our tents up on the platform, the others on the grass below. Halfway through pitching, Mark realised there were not enough tie-down points in the deck in the right places, so abandoned me for the grass. That evening we sat around the camp table with our Trangias and Jetboils and ate and talked and laughed until around 8:00. Out at the end of the bay, every so often the bombora would rise up and break. The wind continued to blow strongly from the southeast through the night, accompanied by a little rain at times.

The following day, four of us set out to circumnavigate the island. Adrian was aware that Caoimhin was planning to become a Sea Leader, so gave him the task of leading the trip over the next couple of days. We checked out Con's Cleft, but deciding the swell was too big for us to enter, we bypassed it. We did a big loop around Looking Glass Isle, keeping a good distance out because of the rebound. We took turns backing into the Looking Glass slot. It was my first experience of backing into slots and caves, and it was a great delight to slide in, enveloped by the rock faces that rose up on either side, while all the time watching out for the surge of the next swell that suddenly would come running in. We tracked our way around the coast, rock gardening and playing at the edges. We pulled in to Coal Shaft Bay to stretch our legs, found a tennis ball and played catch for a while. Back in our kayaks, our route took us as far west as Inner Rock, where we ran the slalom through some bumpy



< Caoimhin makes a well-timed run through the slalom course at Inner Rock.

passages. We paddled back to the main island, stopping at Providence Beach, a great north-facing arc of white sand. We made a small surf landing at the western end of the beach.

Deb had been taking in the delights of the island landscape, exploring it on foot. She met up with us for lunch on the beach. After lunch, we launched into small surf and continued east. At one cave, Adrian went in to see if it was safe for us to enter, only to be confronted by an unexpected swell that upended him in the mouth of the cave. He rolled up and paddled out. I was glad that it hadn't been me in there. Eventually we paddled through Fishermans Passage, the gap between Broughton and Little Broughton Islands, one at a time. We tried to time the swells that were rushing in from both directions. Mark and I had

dramatic journeys through the tumult. I was committed, paddled hard, and kept going as the waves crashed over me. It was high adrenalin, but satisfying too. I was glad I was able to respond to the conditions, and didn't end up on the rocks.

Caoimhin's passage was wild too. His deck bag with all his comms gear was torn loose. Fortunately he was able to recover it between waves. We got back to Little Poverty Beach around 3:00, after paddling 15.2 kms, and spent the next two hours exploring the island on foot. Broughton Island is home to many mutton birds (Shearwaters), fairy penguins, prickly pear, turtles, eagles and much more. The waters around Broughton Island are part of the Port Stephens – Great Lakes Marine Park, and some of the waters are Marine Park Sanctuary Zones. In Esmeralda Cove, in

the next little bay around from us, sits a small cluster of fishermen's shacks. As dark settled we again sat around the table, cooking and talking. Over by the shacks, a boat or two arrived each evening, their lights bobbing in the distance. The wind had shifted around to the west and dropped a bit, so the second evening was more comfortable. It was very pleasant sitting on an island, on a beach, under a vast night sky with a near-full moon. We had endless hours of linguistic fun trying to work out the spelling of Caoimhin's name, and still only got halfway.

On the third day, we rose, breakfasted, packed our gear and set out on our return trip. Again we visited Con's Cleft, and again considered it too wild for us to enter. We rounded Looking Glass Isle, and set a course for Cabbage Tree Island. We were paddling into a 5 knot wind and a 1.5m SE swell. It was much easier paddling than on our way out, although our pace was slower. After a couple of hours we reached Cabbage Tree Island, and traversed its eastern coast, backing into some slots, and meeting three playful seals.

We rounded the southern end of the island, and headed east to the northern shore of Yacaaba Head. We stopped at a tiny beach, hauled our kayaks onto rocks to avoid the rising tide, and ate a longed-for lunch. Then it was back onto the water, round the headland and on to Jimmy's Beach just before 3:00pm. We had covered 22.5 km. Tired but happy, we unpacked our gear, loaded our cars and went on our ways. It had been a marvellous expedition with great company. For me, one of the great things about the club is being able to undertake trips like this with other more experienced kayakers, and in the process to grow in experience myself, to face new challenges and to learn new skills. Particular thanks to Adrian for making the trip possible. May there be many more!

## DAY 1: 10 June – Jimmy's Beach to Esmeralda Cove



The chart above shows the amount of time we paddle at the various speed ranges.

The colours on the graph are also shown on the map below – indicating when we were paddling fast and slow.



# A Trans-Tasman Trifecta

IAN VAILE

*Ian in New Zealand.*



I've been to New Zealand more than half a dozen times in the last decade or so. I really love the place and the people.

Earlier this year I was there again with my partner Trine and did a trio of great kayak trips: Queen Charlotte Sound, Abel Tasman National Park and Okarito Lagoon.

## Queen Charlotte Sound

Queen Charlotte was a return trip. Back in 2011 I was there with a few friends from the club and we had the unbelievable luck to encounter a pod of orcas over a few days. It's stunningly beautiful and as you head from Picton towards the Cook Strait the environment becomes more marine and open to the sea... as we found out.

We hired the boat and gear from Marlborough Adventure Company, on the beach in Picton. The boat was an eco-nizh, the standard plastic hire

double. They tried to give us a glass Sea Bear, but that's like an oil tanker so I passed on the suggestion.

We intended to spend six days on the sound: first day out past the ferries to Ratimera Bay, accessible by motor boat and shared with a schoolboy rowing team. Paddling on from there

next morning to Blumine Island, which has been cleared of the pernicious possums and stoats and is a bird sanctuary including the rare and very endangered dwarf barking kiwi, which has a small population down by Okarito Lagoon. On the way we passed a seal up a tree. Curious.

The paddle to Blumine is protected by the islands at the start but ends being a wee bit exposed to the open ocean.

Facing a strong nor'easter we decided to travel up the south-eastern lee of the island to stay sheltered. Great idea until we rounded a head and found we had to do a long flog straight down the throat of the wind for about four or five kilometres until we passed another head, and then had to paddle halfway back down the island to the sole camping spot. A long 25 km day.

New year's eve on the island, a double tot of rum for the crew and a spectacular sunset. With pouring rain on new year's day we decided to have a lay day and explore the track cut into the hillside of the island leading to a set of WW2 bunkers which face out to the Strait. The sound was a major anchorage for the US pacific fleet in the day, and a juicy target for Japanese subs.

And those bloody wekas – obstreperous nosy fearless bloody birds, they ran off with all my coffee

*Three kayaking venues on the top end of the South Island.*



and nicked anything not nailed down. In the undergrowth there were nest sites festooned with gear and kayak bags.

Next day dawned clear so we headed off to Cannibal Cove, the furthest campsite out towards the strait. Delightful paddling, we called in at the very strange monument to Cook at Ship Cove – a mighty block of concrete with bizarre disproportionate trimmings and a pair of unrelated cannons. It's also the outermost place the water taxi can get to.

Cannibal Cove itself is about four or five kilometres further on, in a perfect bowl-shaped bay: an open campground backed by old conifers and dense brush. An alarming sign advised that possum baits (1080) had been laid and we were spooked by whether the water was safe to drink – a touch of 1080 would be a horrible way to spend the night. Turns out the catchment for the cove was excluded, but that wasn't flagged anywhere!

Next morning we were roused by a howling and hammering, and the tent flapping like a crazy thing. We crawled out to find that a mighty

*Morning storms off Cannibal Cove.*



*A faster trip home than the trip out, boarding at Ship Cove.*

wind had come up in the dawn and was thrashing in straight off the sea. Williwaws were being raised a half a dozen at a time on the water and great sheets of spray were being thrown off the sea and carried hundreds of metres into the treetops. And the wind was only getting stronger, the rain bucketing and a high tide pounding in pushed by the nor'easter.

Our little tent was not an alpine tent and it was not faring too well. We climbed inside and used our bodies to brace it against the blast, holding on

to the poles as it bucked. The sound of the wind in the massive pines nearby was like a jet taxiing, far too loud to speak over. I began to plan what we would do if the tent split and we had to stay here an extra few days if the storm didn't let up.

We had limited options to get out: if we couldn't contact the water taxi by 2pm and be at the wharf in the next bay at Ship Cove by 2.30 then we would not get out, and they may not come the next day if the weather deteriorated.



At about 1100 there seemed to be a lull in the wind, though the rain was still belting down. We decided to make a run for it. We managed eventually to raise the adventure company on the mobile – with signal intermittent – and after some infuriatingly chatty response from the office we confirmed we would be waiting at the wharf. A lightning pack of the boat, lashing everything loose on to the deck anticipating being hit by williwaws, full storm gear on, and we set out.

Our luck held: the wind was merely strong during the time we were most exposed, and by the time it was rising again to a gale we were around the point and hugging the shore back to the cove. After an hour or two more the storm eased and in the shelter of the bay we unpacked all our gear and lugged the boat and bags to the wharf. When the taxi arrived the skipper told us it had been a “perilous journey” to

*A kot.*



get out to the cove and kept repeating how we had definitely done the right thing by bailing. On the way back in to Picton he regaled us with stories of two and three metre waves he'd encountered heading out, and he told us the wind in the sound had been clocked that morning at 80 knots (150km/h). Far and away the strongest winds I'd ever encountered at sea level!

So we ended that trip a day early. We had intended to head down to Nelson lakes National Park to do three or four days walking in to Lake St Angelus, but as the weather was reporting 70kt winds in the mountains, snow down to 1700 m and poor visibility, we chose not to take that walk along a narrow alpine ridge. Instead, we made a few calls and ended up hiring another kayak to do two nights in the Abel Tasman National Park

### Abel Tasman National Park

Abel Tasman isn't huge, but it is very varied. It's possibly the most popular national park in the country, with a spectacular but easy walking track, phenomenal beaches if you like that sort of thing, and the biggest kayak industry I've ever come across. We were again paddling a double independently, with a rather more slapdash hiring outfit than the earlier one, but when we left the beach there were quite literally too many kayaks on the water to count. As usual, if you head out to sea a bit you leave the day-trippers behind, so we made a course via Mosquito Bay for an island a few km to sea and soon we were alone.

It's justifiably famous: the limestone coastline is fractal with bays, inlets, small river mouths, all guarded by fantastic crenelated headlands and rock outcrops.

But the best place, for me, was Shag harbour, a small inlet that opens up into a maze of channels and tiny islets between wooded rocky outcrops, with occasional glimpses of a channel back out to sea.

And despite the absolute peak season, the second night's beach was shared with just one other couple. Astounding.

Abel Tasman was an unplanned delight: but once back on dry land we handed in the boat, had a shower under a tap in the boatyard and headed for the west coast and remote Okarito Lagoon.

### Okarito Lagoon

The lagoon, south of Hokitika and a bit north of Franz Josef, is the largest unmodified estuarine lagoon in NZ. It's famous for its bird life, including the white heron or Kotuku or just Kot. As it symmetrically happens, it's also the home of the remaining mainland population of the dwarf barking kiwi, see Blumine island above. There's a small settlement that has a few batches and that's it, but it does have a kayak rental business. Into our third eco-nizh in a week, and out into the 3200 hectare lagoon, with the ragged Alps on the skyline.

It's very different to marine kayaking. The water is still, with a bit of wind-fetch every now and again: you wend through channels in the tall spear grass, and every few kilometres there is a river mouth that leads up deep into a rainforest with tall straight archaic trees. In its own way, it was stunningly beautiful. For all their alleged scarcity those herons were everywhere.

With its reedy expanses and deep, mirror-smooth river channels, the lagoon gave us a gentle ending to the kayak legs of our trip. Three very different paddles, everything from raging storms off the open sea to serenely drifting through rainforests with snowy Alps as a backdrop.

Apparently there's a North Island as well.

**Opposite Top:** Okarito Lagoon.  
**Middle:** Okarito Lagoon.  
**Bottom:** Packing at Mosquito Bay.



# Myall Lakes Trip

GREG NORVILL

Myall Lakes National Park starts just south of Taree and extends down to near Tea Gardens, the site of the 2013 RnR at Jimmys Beach. The park consists largely of the huge fresh water lakes at its northern end and the Myall River, which empties into Port Stephens at Tea Gardens. None of us had been on the water at Myall Lakes before, so we were all looking forward to enjoying all the park had to offer.

We had planned the trip well, with a detailed float plan and had considered most contingencies. There were four of us including Tom Cox, Wayne Petrass, John Friedman and Greg Norvill. The numbers allowed for a car shuffle, although 4 kayaks on one car looked a bit tenuous at times.

## Day 1

10 kilometres from our launch point at Bungwahl, Wayne's car stopped. Clearly this was not in our contingency planning. Three hours later, we were all piled into a tow truck with the car and kayaks on board. With a bit of negotiating we managed to get the driver, a 78 year old veteran, to drop us and the kayaks at Mayers Point, about 2 km off the main road. We swapped the favour for a long chat about his youthful life in the local district. Two hours later we'd set camp in a disused campsite by the lake, having agreed that there was no paddling today. Wayne, over the next 2 days, negotiated a fix for the car but to no avail, so we were left with one car for the journey home.

## Day 2

Pristine conditions greeted us the following morning. There were

countless large flocks of pelicans, black swans and ducks that we regularly disturbed on the lake. Blue sky and a glassy lake allowed us to make up lost time. Our first stop was at the Violet Hill campsite for lunch, where we had planned our first night's camp before the car trouble had occurred. At Bombah Point, we were greeted by a large blue-faced honeyeater determined to share our afternoon tea. With a 26 km paddle that day to Tamboy, we finally arrived at sunset and set up a camp on a small peninsula at the river mouth. The view across Bombah Broadwater in the setting sun was spectacular. Our next day would not be as easy.

## Day 3

15 knot westerly winds came up overnight and challenged us all day. We had some respite from the constant headwind with small areas of protection offered by the river, which winds its way sinuously southwest, but there was some hard paddling that dulled our resolve at times. The day's hard slog however was broken by the many eagles and hawks soaring over the river, and myriad other bird life including the ubiquitous pelicans and ducks. That day, we covered 20 km to arrive at our scheduled stop at Myall River camp. The campsite was a populated bush caravan site, vastly different to the isolated camps of the last two days. As a group of four males we secured a site, despite the declared ban on buck's parties, football teams and large groups of ugly men. With an early stop, three of us headed off on a long night walk to Hawks Nest along a dark deserted road. Two and half hours later and with panoramic views of the stars and the Milky Way, we arrived

back for a late dinner, though John discovered that his favourite billy and loaf of bread were missing, thanks to the campground birds.

## Day 4

John found his billy across the park, but the loaf of bread was gone. We paddled into Tea Gardens five km away in twenty knot westerlies. The mangrove and scrubland islands offered occasional protection. With such a short paddle for the day, we decided to continue past the bridge onto shore directly behind Jimmys Beach. With increasingly stronger headwinds and an outgoing tide we decided to paddle to our journey end point. With half metre wind waves, strong winds, a fast running tide and an oyster lease to negotiate we slogged our way back.

Being my first serious kayak expedition trip, I felt we had achieved a great deal in just two and half days, despite the setbacks. Certainly the Myall Lakes National Park deserves all the acclaim it gets. It is a very beautiful place.

Our trip back home to Sydney of over 220 kilometres, with four kayaks stacked on one car and strong cross winds was a slow one, but ended well.

*Opposite*

*Top Left: 100s of birds.*

*Top Right: (L-R) Tom, Greg, Wayne and John at the end of the trip.*

*Middle Left: Broken down.*

*Bottom: At Myall River camp.*



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