

THE MAGAZINE OF NSW SEA KAYAK CLUB
ISSUE 95 | **DECEMBER 2014**

Salt



25 Years

Front Cover: 25 Year Anniversary Group Photo at Little Patonga, moments before the heavens opened.

Dave Linco demonstrating the Currarong Roll.



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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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From the President's Deck

CAMPBELL TILEY

Thanks to everyone who was able to make it to the weekend at Little Patonga celebrating our 25th year. A blustery sou-wester and an impressive southerly change complete with electrical storm added to the entertainment. We had a good cross section of members including five past presidents: Dave Winkworth, Dirk Stuber, Rob Mercer, Elizabeth Thomson and Michael Steinfeld and several other long standing members and past committee members including Stuart Trueman and Andrew Eddy. Dave Slattery would have been the longest standing member present, having joined in 1990ish and still in the kayak building business with his brother John who was the second club president in 1990. We heard some interesting reflections on the past but the event was principally a celebration of the strength of the club of today with sincere thanks for the efforts of the committees and members of previous years that have steered the club to this point. The accommodation at Broken Bay Sport and Rec camp was perfect for our purposes and we may well look at it for future club events.

A feature of the 25 year celebration was recognising the history embodied in NSW Sea Kayaker. Initially a newsletter, it rapidly evolved into the solid magazine that it is today and its contents are a rich historical record of 25 years of Australian sea kayaking. A DVD containing copies of all issues was included with the weekend registration and will be available to all members for a modest fee (while stocks last!). The success of this publication over 25 years is a tribute to the persistence of

the 15 editors who have laboured over it and, of course, to the members who have been cajoled into contributing the copy. Once we can index them appropriately, we plan to have all back issues accessible through the website.

The website review committee has kicked off to an enthusiastic start with no shortage of issues and ideas, all of which will hopefully have been prioritised into a plan of work by the time this goes to press. We hope to be able to introduce new and improved web functionality at Rock n Roll in March next year.

I know that we are a Sea kayak Club, and that the Hawkesbury is flat water, but the 'Classic' this year was punctuated by fork lightning, wind squalls from all directions and a very dark night for most of the race. See the report later in this issue, but congratulations to everyone who finished and commiserations to those who did not. There were 416 starters for this year's event, which as usual, was run flawlessly by the HCC Association with its team of volunteers.

And now on a personal note, in view of the enormous public profile of the Club President role I have been compelled to change my image to protect my privacy and with this in mind have decided to drop the rather thick glasses I have sported for at least 45 years. Admittedly this did require some ophthalmological trickery involving lasers but as I write this, 48 hours after the procedure, I am staggered by the dramatic improvement in my vision. Who knows what it may do to my roll

now that I will actually be able to see that blade sweeping around! Perhaps I will also be able to see the compass and GPS without the intervening filter of salt crystals – the mind boggles at the possibilities.

Upcoming Events

Keep an eye out for the following social events on the trips calendar, in addition to the selection of trips and training also on offer. Please try to register early rather than at the last minute. It reduces the hassle of organising a trip or training day considerably if most of the likely paddlers are known well beforehand.

Christmas Pancake Paddle:
December 21.

Rock 'n Roll 2015:
Currarong, March 21-22.

See you on the water!

Cheers,
Campbell

It is an honour to be in this role just when the 25 years ticked over and to be partially responsible for recording some of the people and their memories that 25 years of history brings. In the weeks leading up to the silver anniversary weekend at Little Patonga, I became increasingly aware of two things:

- How inexperienced I am compared to the decades of experience by long-serving members.
- That many of these experienced paddlers can recount trips and expeditions that could have had fatal consequences, but were saved by the skills they've mastered, experience they've gained and unsung heroic actions by themselves and other paddlers in the face of sometimes great adversity.

To those that missed the weekend, you also missed some wonderful stories from our long-serving members. I urge you to delve a little into our past magazines and read some of the stories

From the **Editor's Desk**

STEVE HITCHCOCK



that relate to these experiences. There are a lot of gems that will lodge in your mind and help you prepare for that next trip or expedition. And I'm sure that many members would be happy to share their experiences before you retrace the route of a trip that might previously have been taken. Of course, I'll be ready and waiting for your trip report when completed!

In closing, may I extend a special thanks to Tim Wolstencroft who is wholly responsible for turning your submissions and my edits into the glossy artwork you see before you. Like many of us, Tim has a full-time job and squeezes his voluntary magazine and other club assistance into his precious few spare hours between work, sleep and paddling.

Saltiest submission **WINNER**

I'm pleased to announce the winner of the 'Saltiest Article' from Issue #94 was Paul Williams, for his account of a weekend's expedition training with Fernando.

You might recall from his article that the conditions were cold and wet, and set to deteriorate. So with only wet gear to wear, no beanie for his head and a healthy regard to avoid hyperthermia at all costs, Paul decided to quit the training early, and hitch a ride back with his brother.

I see that Paul has selected a green short-sleeved jacket from Expedition Kayaks, which looks strikingly similar to one worn by Adrian, the photographer behind the pictures in Paul's story. We should probably thank Geoff too, for closing the story with Fernando's 'real-life' rescue of a fisherman and his rubber ducky.

On behalf of the club and the magazine, I wish to thank Rob Mercer of Expedition Kayaks for donating the jacket, modelled here by Paul himself fresh out of the surf.

Meanwhile, I'll be in touch with Rob and Mark to determine the winner from this edition. May the saltiest submitter succeed!

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Brian's Braces

BRIAN BURKE

I have a mirage 580, a bog standard Kevlar boat with the standard cockpit coaming. At first I was trying to brace and roll with the very edge of my kneecap hanging on to the boat, which was not that reliable. I then tried various bits of closed cell foam glued to the coaming to get a better grip but eventually purchased a "retro fit" pair of knee/thigh braces on-line from Rafta Kayaks in Victoria. They work very well, but for me were a bit

too bulky and required a one leg at a time entry or exit from the boat – not ideal for a beach landing when the next wave is approaching. The solution was to remove the braces and cut most of the front part away. Then it just took a little bit of fibre-glassing, some white gelcoat and the addition of a soft pad on the underside, which was cut from an exercise mat and fixed back on with Sikaflex. Voila, I now have a good hold on the boat with my knees and am able

to exit the boat rapidly. I also added a couple of pieces of foam for lumbar support and my hips giving a good five point contact with the boat .

I hope this is useful and encourages others to custom fit themselves to their boat. As I discovered, one size does not fit all ... !





ROCK 'N ROLL CURRARONG

DAVID LINCO

2015

Your host, David Linco busy with RnR planning.



*I am pleased to announce that **Rock 'n Roll 2015** has been locked in for March 21-23, 2015 at Currarong Beachside Tourist Park.*

The park has again been generous in providing discounted accommodation, late checkout for Sunday and Monday and gone beyond in helping us with the logistics and equipment required for this event. Please thank them on behalf of the club when you book your accommodation.

Currarong is located at the northern end of Jervis Bay National Park only 30 minutes from Nowra, so about 2½ hours from Sydney. It has some truly spectacular and beautiful coastline. Having completed a Beecroft Peninsula circumnavigation in April 2014 on a Matt Bezzina led trip, this was my first paddle on these “hallowed” waters which hold many memories for older club members.

Newer members may not be aware that Currarong is the location of many RnR's over the years and holds

special significance in club history. The structured approach we take for granted when participating on club trips was established primarily at Currarong. After some very challenging weather conditions in 2000, there was a major re-write of paddling safety protocols which we all benefit from today.

In terms of paddling options, for open water paddlers there are gigantic caves to explore, towering linear cliff formations, rock gardening opportunities galore and plenty of sea-life. For those seeking more sheltered waterways, there is also a large bay, nearby creeks and lake to explore.

If you want to enjoy the full diversity of paddling options however, now would be a great time to register for an open water club trip (or two) to get comfortable with the joy and sometimes frustration of open sea paddling.

Over the years the RnR formula has been honed to almost perfection, with some luck thrown in for good weather. The top 3 reasons for attending RnR indicated by members earlier this year were:

1. **Trips,**
2. **Training and**
3. **Catching up with each other.**

Your committee will be focusing on these in coming months as we bring RnR 2015 together.

As such no major changes are planned to this successful model next year. If you have a great idea however for RnR 2015 or would like something else considered, I'd like to hear about it now as we are in the early stages of planning and I'm open to all positive changes to our RnR model.

As with 2014, the theme will be to “Get Connected” and the focus will

be to make new paddling friendships, particularly for those who don't live in the Sydney metro area.

Our interstate paddling friends will again be very welcome but in 2015 we are planning a Paddling State of Origin ... so stay tuned for further details and an early notice to our wonderful Mexican and Banana Loving friends to bring along their A team.

Popular events such as the Kayak Pogies (I'm thinking classifications next year after that controversial "R" type rating submitted by EK), Guest Speakers on Sat night dinner, Stunt Paddling, Boat Maintenance, Sail Fit out, Expedition Planning, and Kayak Diving and many more events will keep us entertained and updated on how to use and not to use your boat.

Registrations will open much earlier for RnR 2015 and I would encourage members to register online early to obtain the early bird discount. This will also greatly assist the RnR team in bringing together the logistics required for this event.

This RnR will also be a product showcase opportunity where anyone in the paddling\watersports industry can showcase their products over the weekend. However registration will be essential for any business wanting to showcase, so please email me at rnr@nswseakayaker.asn.au to register your initial interest now. This year, we're not charging any fees, however donations of gear for prize-giving purposes would be gratefully received.

Additionally individual members can bring along their surplus equipment for a swap meet on the Saturday afternoon. I'd recommend you clean out the garage before RnR so you have room to fill it again with more "essential kayaking gear" upon your return home.

RnR requires a solid team to run smoothly and thanks again to the great team of hot pink t-shirted volunteers last year. No special skills are required

Sandy white beach of Jervis Bay.



Rocky formations off the Beecroft Peninsula.

to part of the volunteer team other than having a love of paddling and some common sense (either order in minimum quantity\quality will suffice). We'll work it out together on the day and have fun along the way.

In particular, I will be looking for help in the following areas;

1. **BBQ Pit master and the Taste Tester Team for Sat night dinner (RnR Weekend),**
2. **Registration Crew for Fri night and Sat morning (RnR Weekend),**
3. **Guest Speaker hosting and/or transportation (RnR Weekend),**
4. **Marquee hospitality area (RnR Weekend).**

Just email rnr@nswseakayaker.asn.au if you would like to volunteer for any specific role and/or generally available to assist.

Before you turn the page, make sure you block out Mar 21-23 next year as you certainly don't want to miss out on a Currarong RnR. Lastly, if you can, register for an open water club trip or two beforehand so you can enjoy those amazing Currarong cliff formations

when you arrive. I look forward to working with you to make RnR 2015 another enjoyable RnR event for all. Further updates to follow closer to the date.

Video

Why not hop on to our website and watch the short video showcasing last year's 2014 RnR at Bateman's Bay.



training

with the **NSWSKC**



STUART TRUEMAN
NSWSKC Training Coordinator

We had a good response from our members in September/October regarding the training that was sought:

Introduction to Sea Skills

Training requested; 12 members.

Sea Skills Training requested; 30 members.

Sea Skills Assessment, 27 members aiming to be assessed.

Sea Guide Training and Assessment; 7 members.

Sea Leader Training and Assessment; 9 members.

Advanced Sea Skills; 3 members

Most training was requested for the Sydney area (46) followed by the Central Coast (10) and South Coast (5).

In order for the club to remain efficient and grow, it needs members who are willing to pursue qualifications with the view that they themselves can later provide trips and instruction for the NSWSKC. There can be no denying that the path can be a long one, but along the way members gain skills, judgement and experiences to prepare for such responsibilities.

There are rewards that make this journey worth taking:

- You will remember the shining eyes of the paddlers for as long as they remember being introduced to the freedom of the open ocean.
- When a kayaker you instructed in rescues writes an article about 'The time he saved the day' you can be satisfied that you made a difference.
- You can be responsible for giving an experience that has great value, on many levels, to grateful paddlers.

One focus of the NSWSKC training is to give members the opportunity to become the next generation of guides and instructors to contribute towards the development of safe sea kayaking in NSW.

Planned Training Schedule.

The club instructors have developed a planned training schedule. This is a list of training events that they intend to hold over the coming months. Providing all goes well, these will be put on the club calendar as the year ahead unfolds. No one will be blamed if the schedule is not met, it is simply published here to show the club's intent and to help you plan.

We hope the schedule will be sufficient for all the members' needs identified on this page.

My friends,
It's been suggested I encourage all of you to have a go at reaching Grade 3, Sea Skills. Having reached this goal makes me realize that signing in with a number three after my name means little. I'm still a paddler with relatively little experience; which is good because I like learning new skills.

What does mean a great deal to me on the other hand is this feeling of absolute trust in my ability to roll should I fall in. Having been taught to roll two years ago by our leaders and others who possess this skill, I was never certain of my rolling ability. "Learn to re-enter and roll in rough water and I'll sign you off for Grade 3", challenged Rob Mercer. Countless rolls over the next two months did the trick, bestowing that elusive feeling of trusting myself.

I can't begin to describe the difference this has made to my paddling experience. That ever-present dread of falling in in rough conditions is gone. Extreme edging turns always made me wary; not anymore! Trying on new winter clothes last Friday, I was boiling as we reached Middle Head. A quick roll or two cooled me off. This freedom from fear is quite intoxicating. It's a skill I'm determined to hang on to and develop, because it makes me feel safe.

So if you see me doing a quick roll at any old time I feel like, I'm not showing off; just practicing. Whenever Owen gives the nod, I hope you'll do likewise; not once or twice but ten, even twenty times. Believe me, it's worth the effort.

Your rolling dervish,
Hans

Introduction to Sea Skills.

This is a very valuable part of the club's training program, which gives those early movers an advantage ahead of other participants when beginning the actual Sea Skills Training. It's usually obvious to the instructor, which members have first attended the 'Introduction to Sea Skills' and which have not when conducting Sea Skills Training. It means the difference between 'hitting the ground running' or not.

Another advantage of Introduction to Sea Skills is simply the wider experience you gain when learning through multiple instructors. As you might expect, there are as many different ways to deliver training as there are instructors. And as different training methods work for different kayakers, the more instructors you have the more you will learn.

Sea Skills.

The largest number of requests for training was for Sea Skills. Apart from the obvious step up in skills and experiences learnt, it also represents the foundation stone for the subsequent Australian Canoe leadership and instruction qualifications. Put simply, Sea Skills Training answers the question: "What do I need to know and how good should I be?"

Before you attend the first training session, jump onto the club website and click through to the Basic Skills Training Resources. You will see that a great deal of effort has already been spent by the club to help you.

Under this tab there is a list of 'Hard' skills that are required by Sea Kayakers. Each skill has video footage and additional text on Technique, Tips, Common Mistakes and Practice Drills. This is a tremendous resource to show what is required.

There is a lot packed into an actual days training. You will stand more

chance of retaining some of it if you reinforce your learning by referencing the website resources before and after a day on the water.

Specific to Sea Skills Assessment, members also have access from the website under 'Other Documents' to the 'Sea Skills Assessment Guide'. This outlines what is required to gain the Sea Skills Award. Plus there is a 'Sea Skills Study Guide', which will help you prepare. It goes without saying that you

will enhance your chances to gain the award if you use all of these resources. This is why they are there!

Sea Leader and Sea Guide.

These leadership awards prepare you to take groups out on the water. A number of our members have shown a healthy interest towards these awards, which is to be encouraged. The club appreciates members gaining these

"SEA SKILLS GAME PLAY"

As we stood on the beach at Little Bay at lunchtime on our Sea Skills training day, Rob passed around an A4 sheet and asked us to have a look at it. In his relaxed way, he said, 'have a think about whether you would like to try this scenario'. We read the sheet, pondered it a bit, and with some feeling a little trepidation, agreed we'd give it a go. Rob asked us to divide into two teams of four. He asked Stephen Reid to be the other facilitator of the game. Each team selected a leader. Our team was ably led by Malcolm Bersten. While we were planning our strategies, Rob and Stephen paddled out from shore about 300 metres. Rob was the facilitator for one team, and Stephen for the other.

We had to start with our kayaks with their bows facing up the beach, away from the water. When it was time to start, Rob raised his paddle and we leapt into action. We turned our kayaks through 180 degrees and launched them. Our team had agreed that we would stick together throughout the exercise. We paddled to Rob, and when we got there, had to wet exit. Three of us had to re-enter our kayaks in whatever manner we thought best. The fourth (Cathy Nolan) had to relinquish her kayak to Rob. Rob paddled off a couple of hundred metres, kayak in tow. We had to transport the swimmer to Rob. We had agreed that we would do this with a rear deck carry. Cathy swam up onto the deck of my kayak and off we went, paddling toward Rob. We got there pretty quickly, without incident. Rob handed back Cathy's kayak, and we had to surrender two paddles. That left us with four kayaks and four kayakers, but only two paddles. Spare paddles were not allowed. We had to get back to the beach as quickly as we could, get out of our kayaks, repack tow ropes, and signal that we had completed our task. In our planning, we considered different strategies, including using a V-tow, contact tows, each using half a split paddle, or two tows each using 15 metre tow ropes. We opted for the latter. We paddled quickly and uneventfully back to the beach, packed away our tow ropes, and signalled our arrival. The other team made some different decisions, including choosing to tow their swimmer. They took quite a bit longer to get back to the beach.

As we stood on the beach afterwards, we all agreed it had been a very useful exercise, and also lots of fun. It would be worth doing the exercise two or three times in succession, refining strategies and testing various skills; and we would have done that had the water been just a little warmer. It is a game that not only gives opportunity to improve one's abilities on the water, but also demonstrates the value of leadership, collaboration and strategic planning. Give it a go!

Tom Cox



SATURDAY, 11 OCTOBER 2014

The sea skills training day started with a chat about the weather. Yes, it was a beautiful sunny day with the gentlest of breezes and the water rippling seductively; but what else? Well, there was the Bureau of Meteorology, (especially MetEye), Seabreeze, willyweather and Swellnet, and what it all might mean, especially what might emerge from hiding over the horizon.

The forecasts seemed to be confirmed by our observations, including the small breaking waves at the south point of the bay.

On the water we headed around to Little Bay, doing a number of group awareness exercises on the way. Then Rob asked us to get out of our cockpits and paddle around sitting on the back deck! The lure of the crystal clear water was too great for some who seemed to feel that this was the time for a swim.

Next, it was time to practice a variety of paddle strokes – gliding high support to link reverse sweeps, low and high braces, forward and reverse sweep strokes, bow and stern rudders and bow draws. It was a bit like dodgem kayaks with boats going every which way, and Rob as ringmaster moving effortlessly from one to another to give guidance. The screaming muscles the next day told this paddler how much more effort is required to do these simple things well.

A great and satisfying start to the sea skills training program – thanks Rob!

Malcolm Bersten

Planned Training Schedule.

2015	TRAINING ACTIVITIES
January	Introduction to Sea Skills – Probably a weekend session, for example based at Bonnievale or Jervis Bay – would involve some practice in the surf. Sea Skills with focus session (rolling, surf, rescues, group management/leading) Sea Guide Assessment
February	Introduction to Sea Skills for grades 0-1 towards getting Grade 2 Flat water trips and training Sea Leader Assessment Instructor Development Weekend
March	Rock and Roll: Training to be arranged Sea Skills with focus session (rolling, surf, rescues, group management/leading)
April	Flat water trips and training
May	Leaders/Guides weekend including existing and aspiring leaders and guides Sea Skills with focus session (rolling, surf, rescues, group management/leading)
June	A gentle introduction to the surf Flat water trips and training

awards, so that more trips can be posted on the website giving more members greater variety to choose from.

Those that have shown an interest must know that as well as the benefits of the award itself, as the organiser, you get to choose where and when you want to paddle on club trips!

Leadership awards also provide an excellent grounding for progress to the Instructor Award.

Instructor Awards.

The Instructor Award is for those experienced kayakers who want to pass on the skills they have gained to the newer members of the club. In return, the club will encourage and support suitable members as much as possible to develop and acquire their Sea Instructors award.

Assessors.

Plenty of opportunity for free drinks ... That's what they told me!

As this article shows, there are several valuable kayaking awards you can acquire. However, as many well skilled and experienced paddlers would testify, don't ever think you're finished, for as long as you gain experience, the more you find there is to learn.

The Valley of Delight

... or why a good kayak is better than sex

PAUL THOMAS

There is a lot to be said for starting off with old stuff. Think of your first car. Chances are that it was at least second hand and without the mod-cons of the day – and probably somewhat unreliable as well. Like me you may have had to park it facing downhill for those mornings when it was going to need a push start. The great thing about this was that it built resilience and initiative. And when you finally upgraded to something more reliable and more comfortable you really appreciated it.

Kayaking is the same. My first kayak was a lot like a plastic bath tub and weighed 36kg. I used several dozen empty plastic milk bottles for secondary buoyancy and it was so loose that if it tipped over I just fell out. Before long I was well and truly ready for an upgrade.

Now I know that the best advice is to try as many kayaks as you can before buying one, but if you don't live in Sydney or any other capital city this is easier said than done. It wasn't as though I didn't do any research before buying Kayak No. 2. There was plenty of info on the web and even videos of this kayak being paddled and sailed around Tassy by members of the Maatsuyker Canoe Club. Surely this kayak couldn't be a complete dog could it? And I didn't think it was.

Kayak No. 2 was a vast improvement on Kayak No. 1 and has served me very well for the last few years. For a start it was a whopping 10kgs lighter. I learnt to roll in it. I learnt to surf in it. It met the club safety standards so I could go to R'n'R and on club trips. Mick MacRobb fitted a Flat Earth sail and it sails beautifully. Until today I thought it would be good enough to see me through to the end of my kayaking career.

But today I discovered that I can do much better than Kayak No.2 because today I

paddled my new Valley Nordkapp. I say 'new' but it's not really new. It's pre-loved. Exactly how pre-loved is hard to say because it's old. Really, really old. Exactly how old is also hard to say but there is a sticker on it that says "British Kayak Expedition Cape Horn 1977" so we might be talking 37 years old.

And it looks old. In fact, it is very possibly the oldest crappiest Nordkapp afloat today. It's had a hard life with many, many repairs, and at some stage it's had 12 inches of the stern cut off to fit a rudder. Actually you may have seen this Nordkapp for sale at the last R'n'R. Stuart Trueman was selling it. You remember – with a deck the colour of baby poo – after the baby has started on solids and the solids are mostly pumpkin.

I saw Stuart put it out on Saturday morning asking \$200. I immediately told him I would buy it to which he said "Bloody hell! I've only just put it out". I was looking for a cheap kayak so I could take other members of the family out paddling so this was just the thing.

That was March and this is July and today I decided to take it out myself, just for something different. It's cold today – and windy. And a 5m swell from the South so I was stuck in Newcastle Harbour. But as soon as I was in it I knew that despite this kayak being old and ugly it was a massive step up from Kayak No. 2. There was an

immediate connection. It rolled easily. It edged effortlessly. It tracked straight and true. It felt light and I could easily catch the little wind waves rolling down the harbour. It didn't matter which quarter the wind was coming from it was easy to hold the course. And this was with no rudder and no skeg.

The difference was profound – especially regarding the rudder. Just last weekend I was out in Kayak No. 2 when there was a nasty twang-thud beside my leg and I knew immediately that the rudder cable had failed. There was absolutely nowhere to land and even then I couldn't have done a running repair. So I turned around and limped back to my starting point – and I mean limped. Kayak No. 2 was almost completely unmanageable without the rudder.

With this recent experience in mind you can imagine my delight to be able to edge and turn or track completely straight in the Nordkapp today. The difference could not have been more stark. So the lesson is yes try as many different kayaks as you can before you buy your next – but if you haven't done your apprenticeship in something inferior, or at least markedly different, you may not be ready to appreciate a really good kayak when it comes along. Where does the sex come in? Sorry, it doesn't. That was just to get you reading.



Paul sitting in Kayak 2 while proudly showing off Kayak 3, the 37 year old Valley Nordkapp.

A few words from Miss Trips!

SHAAN GRESSER – TRIPS COORDINATOR



Ever wondered what goes on at a club AGM!? Well for one thing it's a great excuse to share a great day on the water with fellow club members followed by an enjoying evening at the local. Here we are treated with an evening of entertainment – aside from the actual AGM of course! There is usually also an excellent presentation of a kayaking adventure from one of our members. More importantly though, it's a time where the club formally reports and acknowledges the generous contributions of many of our club leaders in creating numerous on-water experiences that hopefully many of you have been enjoying throughout the year.

As the club's Trips Coordinator, I get to view first hand every trip leader's ocean and harbour adventures that they run for you. What impresses me the most is the continuous effort that these folk provide – no-one volunteers their free time unless they really want to, and for me, it is this spirit and enthusiasm that keeps the club active and also reflects positively on all its members. Unfortunately though, unless you have had the wonderful opportunity to come along to an AGM or spent your lunch break perusing the minutes on the club website then you may be unaware of these quiet achievers. As such the following is a version of my AGM Trip Coordinator minutes modified for this edition of SALT to ensure we all know who to shout a coffee or a beer after enjoying one of their trips!

AGM Trip Coordinator's Report

To begin I have to thank our brilliant committee members, not only for their amazing efforts but also for making my experience as a committee member both enjoyable and supportive. I have

been fortunate that due to the hard work of others before me combined with the amazing enthusiasm and contribution of club leaders and instructors, I have had to do relatively little in my role during the past year.

I think one of the obvious roles of the club is providing members with memorable ocean experiences within a safe, fun and friendly environment. During the last 12 months, I think this club has exceeded that role by providing an awesome array of regular trips and training opportunities. Over this year, 19 club leaders and instructors have been actively helping our members and it is with gratitude that I thank them all here for their generous contributions and continued support for the club.

Our weekly leaders ...

The regular weekly trip paddles continued in the past year with these three leaders amassing well over 120 paddling days:

Rob Mercer's Tuesday evening paddles,

Sharon Betteridge's Saturday morning paddles, and

Owen Kimberley's Friday paddles.

These weekly trips cater for a breadth of paddler grades and ocean conditions. I have benefitted greatly from these trips, especially Rob's, by being exposed to the many sea conditions in the twilight hours that we find outside Sydney heads every Tuesday. They are run mostly all year round within a supportive, experienced and fun community of paddlers. I would like to acknowledge and thank Rob, Sharon and Owen for their generous and voluntary contributions.

Our other top leaders for the year ...

In addition to the weekly paddles, the club registered 75 trips and training events in the club's online system between August 2013 and July 2014.

*I am the waves,
I am the ocean,
I am stillness in motion.*

Three members stand out as running 30 of these events during the year:

Megan Pryke,
Mark Alchin, and
Harry Havu.

Another considerable achievement given these are purely voluntary efforts. Their trips and training events captured all paddler grades and an interesting variety of locations and activities throughout the year. Mark's annual Christmas Pancake Paddle proved to be as popular as ever, recording the highest participation for any single club trip event, 20+ paddlers! I'm not sure what that says about our members but I certainly had an awesome day eating pancakes at beautiful Chowder bay.

It was especially lovely to see Harry return with gusto after a well-earned rest from providing club-training activities. I think this is how the trip and training contributions work for the club in that there is a natural ebb and flow of effort spread among our leaders and I think we have been fortunate that this balance seems to work in everyone's favour.

Adrian Clayton and Josh Andrews were also strong contributors throughout the year in consistently providing valuable training/trips. Adrian in particular has been a solid and long-term resource, providing new members of our club with useful and friendly information including the coordination of new member's paddles throughout the year, of which other committee members have also taken part. In addition, Adrian's Navigation Challenge was a standout event and deserves special mention in this report. Josh's strong and professional approach to training combined with his talent for teaching continues to enrich our clubs' standard in the quality of training and trips provided.

I would also like to highlight a few other special trips including a South West Tassie trip offered by Stu Trueman earlier this year. This special and adventurous trip was a highlight on the trip calendar and I personally would love to see Stuart run more in the future! We are fortunate to have such high quality members in our club who are still keen to share their leadership and wisdom on the ocean.

The fun and enthusiastic energy of Sea Guides Matt Bezzina and Fernando Charnis continues to enhance our experiences on the ocean – Fernando was our Training Coordinator during the past year and no doubt many of us felt his passion for getting our club members out on the water.

Rock'n Roll 2014

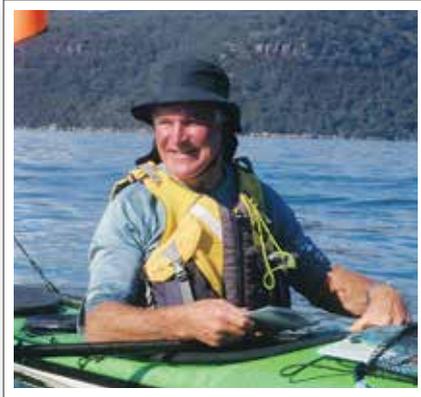
The RnR was successfully held at Batemans Bay this year, a popular location for the club as there are a variety of options for running

interesting trips catering for all weather and paddler abilities. Coordinating trips at RnR is usually an intense process, as general trips cannot be organized ahead of the event due to a variety of factors. However this year, we managed to pre-organise a large number of training and skill based trips, where members could register prior to the RNR. This proved to be a great success and as a consequence the RnR weekend with 160 club members attending was overall easier to manage and coordinate. We will most likely follow a similar format at next year's Rn'R to be held at Currarong.

Finally I would like to strongly encourage our leaders to continue creating amazing kayaking experiences for our members and members to continue enjoying those experiences! This is the essence of our club and undoubtedly has had a special influence on us all.

Happy paddling!





NAVIGATION

Challenge

ADRIAN CLAYTON
Event Organiser



The objective of The Navigation Challenge concept is to give participants (in teams of 2) the opportunity to develop and test a broad range of navigational skills related to sea kayaking. This was the second challenge put on by the club.

Approximately a fortnight before the event, teams receive a map and a “Control Sheet” which provides references, in various forms, allowing them to plot the position of most of the checkpoints (of which there were 30 in Challenge #2) located within the event boundaries. The location of some of the checkpoints can only be established once teams are on the water and are able to identify unmapped features to which the location references apply.

The objective for each team is to plan a route that enables them to collect as many points on offer on each of the two days of the event and to return to base within a designated timeframe (late return means points are deducted). On the morning of each day of the event, teams are told which checkpoints are “live” on that day. The live checkpoints each have a points value, though the number of points differs between checkpoints.

Bonus point questions found at various checkpoints provides opportunities for participants to test their knowledge on a broad range of navigational issues related to effective trip planning.

This Navigation Challenge was conducted on Broken Bay and adjacent waterways in August. The event area had a boundary of some 125 kilometres. The scenic splendour of the area was enhanced by dramatic waterfalls as a result of heavy rains leading up to the event.

Sixteen teams registered for the event (half the number participating in the inaugural Navigation Challenge conducted on Lake Macquarie in 2012). We had a couple of teams drop out prior to the event and were down to eleven teams at the start of the second day.

A “Closest to the Pin” exercise was introduced for Challenge #2. It involved each team establishing their position while on the water through the use of bearings and transits and, when ashore,

Good navigation should take you around sand bars, not over them.



establishing the related coordinates. The coordinates were then compared with a GPS reading taken from the same spot (which differed from team to team). The exercise tested skills such as compass usage, map (or chart) reading and feature recognition. Put into the context of a Search and Rescue situation the relevance of this exercise becomes obvious.

On the first day an afternoon head wind, at its strongest within Broken Bay, coupled with a flood tide slowed teams down to the point that most incurred penalty points for a late return to the event HQ. The lessons from this were learnt and applied by all teams on the second day as all got back on time and no points were lost.

The checkpoints with questions offering bonus points influenced some teams on the route they chose to take each day. There were 108 attempts to answer the questions with the correct answers given in 83 cases (77%). Ruby and Caoimhin were the best performers answering 10 out of 12 questions correctly.

With the Closest to the Pin exercise, three teams managed to establish their positions within 50 metres of the respective GPS readings and thus pick up the maximum points offered by the exercise. Alison Curtin and Rae Duffy, at 10 metres off, were the closest. Alison's adventure racing experience would have helped here. All but four teams were able to get within 200 metres of their "pin".

Alison and Rae in a double were the Wild Oats equivalent although there were valid questions over the legitimacy of their pairing as both had burnt out their respective (male) partners on the first day. They had a good battle with Glen Boulton and Martin Vanderpoel – also paddling a double but disadvantaged by some heavy weaponry mounted on the front deck. Had there been a Best Decorated team award they would have won it handsomely. New member Ruby Gamble (a Grade 1 paddler) and her teammate, Caoimhin Ardren (Grade 3), won the handicap division. The members of the winning teams each received a \$100 gift voucher from Expedition Kayaks.

The success of Challenge #2 will not be known until we offer Challenge #3. Comments received post Challenge #2 from participants were mostly positive. Some expressed that they would like to see a similar event offered by the Club in the future. The most common view expressed was that an event requiring more brain and less brawn and with more "fun" factors included would be an improvement and perhaps attract greater involvement of Club members.

If financial viability is the main criterion for determining whether future Navigation Challenges are offered then the level of participation will need to be much higher than we achieved for Challenge #2.

Gary and Phil helping out with the rigid inflatable

Appreciation must be expressed to those Club members who contributed their time and energy in staging Challenge #2. Russ Swinnerton played a large part in designing the event and acted as the Safety Coordinator during its running. Tim Wolstencroft used his industry connections to ensure we got the maps supplied at a very healthy discount. Mark Alchin was involved in checkpoint research and was on board one of the support boats over the entire weekend. Owen Walton assisted with auditing my Control Sheet checkpoint locations and with scrutineering requirements. Phil Crichton was responsible for recruiting outside of the Club a very generous Gary Henry and his free-of-charge supply of a rigid-hull inflatable over three days. Gary's inflatable was used to lay out and collect the checkpoint markers and as a support craft (with Phil on board) throughout the event. Joanne Alchin was responsible for designing a spreadsheet that allowed us to quickly determine the final point scores despite the complexities of the handicapping system and addition of bonus points. She also acted as event secretary throughout the event. Anne Moore stepped in to fill the gap left by the late withdrawal of Mark Schroeder's partner.

The crews and two IRBs provided by Macmasters Beach SLSC as on-water support contributed greatly to the safety of participants while on the water. Their involvement was recognised by a donation to their surf club coffers. Mitch Holland of NSW Maritime kindly provided us with a PDF file at no cost of the event-branded map from which we were able to print the maps used by the teams. Finally, the continued generosity of Expedition Kayaks in donating gift vouchers as prizes for the members of the winning teams is gratefully acknowledged.





NAVIGATION

Challenge

RUBY GAMBLE
Event Participant

You'd think good navigational skills would be what gets you to the winner's podium in the Navigation Challenge, but it turned out mighty handy if you can also paddle fast for long periods of time.

The course set for us by Adrian Clayton in the environs of the Hawkesbury River, Patonga and Cowan Creek was superb. There were lots of enticing checkpoints in far-flung locations that took a bit of calculation to work out whether you could get there and back in time.

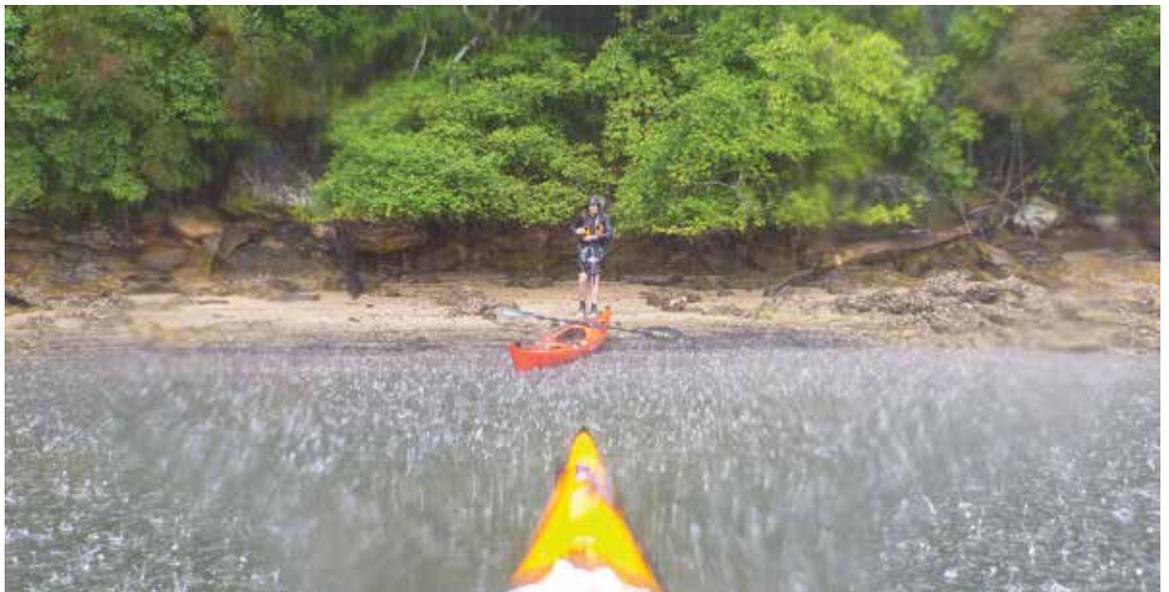
Caoimhin and I took the approach of trying for a few of these far-flung checkpoints, focusing on the ones that had bonus points for answering a navigation question. Fortunately for

me, Caoimhin knew his stuff and bagged us an extra 200 points over the weekend. Being a level 1 paddler and a bit new to navigation, I wasn't much help on the questions.

The first day was eventful. We passed our gear check, despite not bringing a shovel to dig the 150cm deep hole we were required to dig for pit stops along the way (advice passed on from National Parks). There were heavy looking clouds around for the start, but the water was fairly calm. We decided to skip the earlier checkpoints confident we would pick them up on the way back, passed a couple of boats that headed into Jerusalem Bay and headed straight for the distant points down past Cottage Point.

I've never paddled into Cowan Creek before, so I enjoyed the scenery along the way. By the time we got to Looking Glass Bay, the clouds threatened no more, spilling their contents on us in a huge dump of heavy raindrops. We heard other people didn't get any rain all day, but we managed to get caught in two of these heavy downpours.

Caoimhin at a checkpoint near Looking Glass Bay during one of a couple of heavy downpours. Bit hard to avoid water on the lens in this kind of rain.



The tide was out, so there was a bit of running involved to get to checkpoints at the end of bays that had clearly been set during higher water. A quick leap out of the boat, left to float away and be corralled by your teammate ready for your puffed-out return. A couple of the checkpoints were hard to find, with cryptic clues that left you momentarily confused.

As it turned out, we had to miss all of the easy checkpoints saved for our return trip. The wind had picked up, and what had been an easy crossing from Patonga earlier in the day became a bumpy challenge, with waves coming from all directions. Caoimhin's skeg was playing up (cue swearing) and I struggled to enter Patonga Creek through the break (cue crying). We weren't alone in getting back to base late, and nearly everyone got a time penalty.

The second day was a lot brighter. Instead of six hours we had only four, but the checkpoints were also a lot closer and were mostly along the Hawkesbury River. Because of the smaller field the checkpoints were more competitive, with a bit of friendly jostling to get to the card punch first. We picked up a few of the easier points close to home that we had missed the day before.

Our first challenge of the day was pinning down Adrian and plotting his location on a map. He was floating in the middle of the river off Juno Point and kept paddling away on our first attempt to approach, but we got to him on our second attempt after doing a nearby checkpoint.

The highlight of the day was the checkpoint in Refuge Bay. Despite a long slow paddle to get in there, the waterfall made it worth the extra time. It was a gorgeous spot that I definitely want to return to.

*Nick Blacklock, Roy and Bronwyn
Davies and Steve Hitchcock at
Flint and Steel Bay.*

*Caoimhin collecting the checkpoint at
Devil's Hole.*



I was very proud to manage an upright, un-broached surf entry to Flint and Steel Beach, and then we had a quick run across to our last checkpoint near Patonga before returning just before the cut-off time.

We were astonished to realise we had won on handicap, as we hadn't really tracked our points, and of course had no idea how others had done. Rae and Alison had disappeared into the distance early in the day in their double, so we knew we had no chance of bettering them, but there were several other likely looking contenders.

The weekend was a lot of fun, extremely well planned, and well

supported by Expedition Kayaks. Adrian and his team of trusty helpers did an outstanding job over the weekend, and the rescue boats did a brilliant job of haring off towards boats that looked like they were on a collision course with us. This event must have taken a huge amount of effort to organise, and as a competitor I can say it was truly appreciated.

I hope we get to do another event like this in the future. It was way more fun than crashing through scrubby bushes on a land-based rogaine, with the added bonus of getting to see beautiful new spots that weren't accessible by land.



Kayak Specific Stretching

CATHY NOLAN, PHYSIOTHERAPIST



A lot of people ask me what are the best warm-up exercises and stretches to do for their sport of choice. The same in kayaking, so this article is devoted to explaining the different types of stretches, when is best to do them and then sharing with you some of my favourite (and most beneficial) stretches for kayaking, both on land and in the boat.

There are two main types of stretching: **dynamic** and **static**.

Dynamic stretching is a slow controlled movement that takes a joint through a complete range of motion. It helps promote blood flow to working muscles and improve overall performance. It is the preferred type of pre-sport or pre-activity stretching as it prepares the muscles for use. Sport specific dynamic stretching is best as it targets the most intensely used muscles, reducing injury risk further.

Dynamic stretching should only be used after a gentle warm-up and should be limited to a few key exercises.

Static stretching applies a force to a muscle, typically when holding a muscle in one position without moving for 30 seconds or more. It helps lengthens a muscle, improving flexibility and provides a slow cool down period for your muscles, helping to reduce soreness. Static stretching is best used after training or activity.

Static stretching should **not** be used prior to exercising. Holding a muscle on a position of stretch when it is cold and without adequate blood flow can lead to muscle tears. Also as static stretching causes a muscle to lengthen, it can reduce the ability of the muscle to contract forcefully, impacting on the power that can be produced. In fact the latest research from the Journal of Strength and Conditioning has found that static stretching can actually decrease muscle strength by up to 5.5% and power by up to 2.8%, leading to an increased risk of injury during sporting activities.

So the rule of thumb for optimising your performance on the water and keeping injury free is:

1. **Gentle warm-up**
2. **Dynamic sport specific stretching prior to launching**
3. **Kayak event/trip/training**
4. **Static stretching after event/trip/training**

Example Dynamic Stretching

LAND BASED WARM UP (2 minutes)

- ✘ Jogging on spot (15 secs) (or walking your kayak down to the beach and helping others is good enough)
- ✘ ½ squats (15 secs)
- ✘ Shoulder circles (10 each way)
- ✘ Leg swings forward and back (10 each leg)
- ✘ Repeat.

IN KAYAK PRIOR TO PADDLE

- ✘ Shoulder flexion/extension (10 each side) (see instructions opposite)
- ✘ Torso rotation (10 each side) (see instructions opposite)
- ✘ Hip circles (10 each way) (see instructions opposite)
- ✘ Wrist circles (10 each way)
- ✘ Some boat skill drills are another great way to dynamically stretch prior to setting off on the trip.

Example Static Stretching

POST PADDLE

- ✘ Arm openings (good for thoracic spine, pec and shoulder girdle muscles) (see *Salt* May 2014 page 27).
- ✘ Lumbar rolls (good for lumbar spine, spinal muscles and ITB) (see opposite)
- ✘ Hamstring stretch (see opposite).

Shoulder Flexion/Extension:

- ✂ Straighten both arms out in front of you
- ✂ Slowly bring right arm up above your head and left arm down by your side
- ✂ Once at the end range, bring right arm down and left arm up to end range
- ✂ Repeat for 10 repetitions.

Hip Circles and Torso Rotation:

- ✂ **HIP CIRCLES** – With your hands on your hips and feet spread wider than your shoulders, make circles with your hips in a clockwise direction for 10 repetitions. Then repeat in a counter clockwise direction
- ✂ **TORSO ROTATION** – Extend your arms out to your sides, and twist your torso and hips to the left, shifting your weight on to the left foot. Then twist your torso to the right while shifting your weight to the right foot. Repeat for 10 reps each side.



Lumbar Rolls:

- ✂ Lie on back arms extended out from your shoulders. Flex your knees towards your trunk and rotate your knees towards right elbow (use pillows or support underneath your knees if you are tight). Hold 30 secs then rotate your knees back towards your trunk and rotate to the left side. Repeat x 2 each side.



Hamstring Stretch:

- ✂ Lay on your back, legs straight and have a belt in your right hand
Lift your right leg and place the belt just below the ball of your foot and slowly raise your right leg (straight knee) until you feel a stretch. Slowly bend your foot towards you and hold for 30 secs. Repeat on the left leg and repeat each side x 2.



In Kayak Stretches

(Source: K Wagner, 2002 *Sea Kayaking Magazine*)

This stretch that I found in an article by Kay Wagner is my personal favourite during a trip as it targets key muscle groups of the spine, shoulders and arms and allows you to relax your hamstrings all at the same time. I have just made a little adaptation to it to add in relaxation of the key shoulder muscles that often get overused in kayaking.

Place your feet on the floor of the cockpit with knees bent. Bending your knees will allow your hamstrings to relax (and your lower back) and protect your lower back while you do this exercise. Reach your arms above your head. Interlace your fingers and invert your hands to press your palms towards the sky. Inhale, expanding into your chest and as you exhale, draw your shoulder blades down towards the deck. This will release the key muscles around your shoulders and chest. Keep fingers interlaced and palms inverted to the sky, inhale again and as you exhale, lower your arms and round your back and soften your neck, curving your spine forward in a C shape toward the foredeck. Hold for 10 seconds, then pull your navel towards the spine, inhale and keeping your finger interlaced, roll your spine out of the C shape, extend your arms overhead. Repeat 3 times. If you are flexible enough and you don't have existing disc issues in your back, you can add to this exercise a forward bend on the deck. Contract your abdominal muscles and keeping a slight bend in your knees bend forward reach your hands towards the bow of the deck. Inhale and as you exhale try to reach your fingers a little further. Remember just go to where you feel a stretch and don't pulse or if you feel pain stop.

I hope these help loosen you up so that you can continue Happy Paddling!

Presidents

1989-90	Perc Carter
1990-91	John Slattery
1991-92	Ray Abrahall
1992-94	Patrick Dibben
1994-95	Dave Winkworth
1995-96	Dirk Stuber
1996-00	Norm Sanders
2000-03	Robert Mercer
2003-04	Andrew McPhail / Ian Phillips
2004-05	Richard McNeall
2005-07	Elizabeth Thomson
2007-10	Michael Steinfeld
2010-11	George Jessup
2011-13	David Fisher
2013-15	Campbell Tiley

Vice Presidents

1989-90	Michael Richardson / Ken McDonald
1990-93	Ken McDonald
1993-94	Dave Winkworth
1994-95	Patrick Dibben
1995-01	Dave Winkworth
2001-03	Dirk Stuber
2003-04	Tom Parker
2004-05	Elizabeth Thomson
2005-06	Richard McNeall
2006-07	Adrian Clayton
2007-08	Lee Killingworth
2008-09	Lee Killingworth / Jan Wright
2009-11	Ken Day
2011-12	John Piotrowski
2012-13	Tony Wennerbom
2013-15	Adrian Clayton



25 Years of the NSW Sea Kayak Club

CAMPBELL TILEY

While it would have been easier for someone who has been a member of the Club for 25 years, or even 20, to write this piece I think they were all out paddling when the editor called so I apologise in advance for the inevitable errors and omissions that follow and can only hope that they generate letters to the editor and corrections to help fill the subsequent issue.

The club germinated following a meeting on August 8, 1989 coordinated by Ray and Shirley Abrahall which allocated tasks including drafting a constitution, investigating the need for incorporation and public liability cover and convening a first meeting of the Club that was held on September 12, 1989. Of those present, John Slattery remains a member and Paul Hewitson went on to have a major impact on Sea kayaking in Australia with his development and very successful marketing of the Mirage sea kayaks. By May 1990, the club had 33 financial members – a detail that we only know because the records were on paper.

The electronic and other records of more recent years have proven to be far more ephemeral and have been mostly lost with various personnel changes and evolution of the Club's website and its underlying data. In my view this was an unfortunate oversight that the Club should not repeat. That first meeting established sea paddling as a clear priority by determining trip leaders and setting out a trips calendar for the remainder of the year with paddles that would be well subscribed today, as I presume they were then. Office bearers were elected, with Perc Carter the first President.

The first issue of NSW Sea Kayaker was published in December 1989, 6 years after the debut of its US based commercial namesake Sea Kayaker – a publication that unfortunately failed to self-rescue and went under in February this year. Issue 1 of our club newsletter was 9 pages long, included trip reports, the inevitable president's report as well as a first reference to group spread. Perc Carter reflected in his President's

report that “In the fullness of time, I am sure that the New South Wales Sea Kayak Club Inc. will develop into a popular and respected authority on sea kayaking with the same status as the Advanced Sea Kayak Club on the Isle of Wight or the Tasmanian Sea Canoeing Club of Hobart”.

The newsletter rapidly evolved into a magazine format and by 1997 had the first colour cover. Even in the late 2000's the cost of colour printing limited the number of colour pages although some colour was routine from 2002. In recent years digital printing technology has stepped up again and most photos are now able to be printed in all their glory.

In January 1996 the club established its first website and was able to publish colour photographs that could only be reproduced in monochrome in the magazine. For a number of years this was reputed to be one of the leading sea kayak websites on the rapidly growing internet, though subsequently a casualty of increasing data storage costs as well as the rapidly evolving Web framework from static to increasingly sophisticated dynamic sites.

After initial development of our web presence by Jim Croft, Andrew Eddy, Alan Whiteman and Max Brettargh, Peter Kappelmann developed and managed an updated and much appreciated website for just short of a decade through to 2011. Stephan Meyn then picked up the Internet Coordinator cudgels and redeveloped the site using a contemporary content management system with a substantial increase in functionality.

A project is currently under way with the aim of improving the 'look and feel' aspects of the site.

NSW Sea Kayaker, rebadged 'Salt' by recent editor Mark Schroeder, continues to be ground out by hard-working editors, now into issue 95, and is a remarkable and irreplaceable record of our Club's activities and of sea kayaking in NSW for a quarter of a century. The DVD archive of all

94 issues to date, which we have recently produced is both a means of distributing this archive for the interest and entertainment of members and also something of a guarantee that the content will not be lost to possible future gaps in our electronic archiving.

An important tradition in the magazine and the Club has been the eventual disclosure and discussion of days on the water that have not run as expected with the intention of allowing everyone to benefit and grow from the lessons learned. 'Bad day at Tuross Bar' was an early example in 1996 where Mark Pearson describes his rescue off Tuross – concluding with the sage advice “When alone, never cavort with a strange Dancer in an unfriendly bar” – see issue 25 for the detail. Mark can also be credited for the addition of a creative writing section in the 'Flotsam' column of the magazine.

Gary Edmond's dramatic tale in 1993 of a sinking kayak off the Beecroft Peninsula resulting in abandoning the kayak and surfing onto a rock platform with the kayak found by fisherman days later, 25km off the coast and 200km south contained a number of salutary lessons (Issue 19). Perhaps the first of a series of events in the 'Beecroft Triangle', a subsequent incident in 1999 off Point Perpendicular saw a group fragmented with little support when a paddler needed a rescue by the remaining companion, the leader. These events prompted a serious complaint from the paddler concerned and raised a variety of questions regarding communication (issue 37) and group cohesion. A waiver and disclaimer for each club trip was added as a response to this incident.

Club members and friends have been involved in some remarkable trips over the past decades, many detailed in the magazine. Destinations have included Glacier Bay Alaska, Greenland, Patagonia and the Antarctic Peninsula as well as circumnavigations of Australia. The vast bulk of Club member's paddles, of course, involve destinations closer to home although the weather and sea state can dish out

Secretary/ Treasurers

1995-97	Arunas Pilka
1997-98	Doug Frazer
1998-99	Jan Murrel
1999-00	Stuart Trueman
2000-01	Nick Gill
2001-02	Vicki McAuley
2002-03	Laurie Geoghegan
2003-05	Nick Palmer
2005-07	Michael Steinfeld
2007-09	Kirk Pitman
2009-11	David Fisher
2011-15	Raewyn Duffy

Secretaries

1989-90	Ken McDonald
1990-91	Patrick Dibben
1991-92	Gary Edmond

Treasurers

1989-91	Dirk Stuber
1991-92	Peter Adams

Training Coordinators

1989-90	John Slattery
1996-01	Dave Winkworth
2001-03	Andrew Eddy
2003-04	Ian Phillips
2004-05	Ian Phillips/ Harry Havu
2005-06	Harry Havu
2006-07	David Hipsley
2007-08	Adrian Clayton
2008-11	John Piotrowski
2011-12	Guy Reeve
2012-13	Ian Vaile
2013-14	Fernando Charnis
2014-15	Stuart Trueman



Trips Coordinators

1989-90	John Slattery
1990-91	Michael Richardson
1991-92	Cezar Ramos
1992-93	David Miles
1993-94	Dirk Stuber
1994-95	Arunas Pilka
1995-96	Gary Edmond
1996-99	Andrew Eddy
1999-00	Nick Gill
2000-01	Stuart Trueman
2001-03	Paul Loker
2003-04	Laurie Geoghegan
2004-05	Kevin Brennan
2005-06	Mark Berry
2006-07	Stephan Meyn
2007-08	David Hipsley
2008-10	Sally Jacobs
2010-12	Matt Bezzina
2012-13	Megan Pryke
2013-15	Shaan Gresser

significant objective danger without needing to seek an exotic or far-flung location. The magazine is a treasure trove of trip reports to favourite and coveted locations from North Queensland to southern Tassie and beyond.

This spirit of adventure and pushing the boundaries of what is possible was arguably most exemplified in both the extraordinary paddling career and in the tragic and untimely death of the exceptional adventurer Andrew McAuley in 2007 within 100km of the New Zealand coast having kayaked 1500km of open ocean from Tasmania.

The social connections generated within the club have been at the core of its growth and success. Our longest serving President, Norm Sanders, quoted others in Issue 33 to note that: "Sea kayaking is about journeying. Sea kayaking is about sharing experiences and memories with others. There is more to sea kayaking than just paddling".

The annual Rock n Roll weekend has become a highly anticipated annual fixture in the Club calendar. The first weekend tagged "Rock n Roll" was

organised by Dave Winkworth at Merimbula in November 1992 and was focussed primarily on training – to roll. The following event was held at Patonga and has been an annual event since, expanding its social activities but retaining a solid focus on training. While the formula has evolved over time the majority of members look forward to each year's Rock n Roll for an extended weekend of paddling, instruction, inspecting and shopping for gear and, above all else, catching up with old friends and making new ones.

No topic seems more guaranteed to provoke discussion than the question of paddler certification and whether standards should be set by the club, by an external authority or whether there should be none at all with self-assessment and informal peer assessment.

As early as 1990 the Club was considering standards for Sea Proficiency promulgated by what was then the Board of Education of the Australian Canoe Federation. Awards were also available for Basic Skills and an Advanced Sea award. The basic content of these awards was not dissimilar to current Australian Canoeing

standards and contained details of skills to be demonstrated as well as a knowledge component and expected equipment. Club member John Wilde was closely involved in the design and running of early Sea Proficiency training and assessment weekends and other senior members have been involved subsequently with the Board of Education. Sea Instructor and Senior Sea Instructor awards were also available and gained by members.

The Club published a self-assessment scale for paddler grading in 1996 to help match paddlers with appropriate trips. Although the late 1990s saw increasing concerns regarding potential liability issues, this was addressed by improved insurance cover and the mentor based training system within the club, although adequate insurance was not always easily arranged.

Like almost everyone else, the club survived y2k unscathed but the November 2000 Rock n Roll was to be a game changer for the club with the 'Flare Incident'. The discussion and reflection that it provoked in relation to safety and risk management initiated a series of decisions that have shaped the Club into the present (see Issue 44 for details). Key amongst the changes made was a decision by the Committee to substantially tighten the Club's approach to the briefing and conduct of paddles with development of substantial documentation in the club policies to achieve this. There was also a determination to set a direction towards the use of externally set standards for certification for trip leaders, then through the Board of Canoe Education and now provided through Australian Canoeing. Self-assessment of paddler grading was also immediately changed to an observational assessment. A significant contributing factor to the need for change was identified as the rapid growth in membership – to a level where a traditional mentor based training and assessment model was felt to be no longer sufficient. One consequence for the Club from this change has arguably been increased pressure on Instructors and Assessors

given the need to deal with evolving external standards and periodic recertification. The club is indebted to them all for their ongoing support. Rob Mercer's commitment to running a regular weekly Club paddle for over 13 years also deserves special mention.

From dominant Greenlanders early on, through the Pittarak, Arctic Raider and Mirage eras, the skeg vs rudder wars, and now the blunt nosed full bowed boats styled 'fast' sea kayaks; we are blessed and potentially confused by an increasing variety of kayak designs. Fortunately both composite and plastic manufacturing technology continues to evolve, favouring lighter construction, so that ageing kayakers can (mostly) still lift their boats onto roof racks. Hopefully this source of animated fireside discussion, always improved by alcohol, will continue to provide entertainment and choice.

While our club has grown, weathered internal and external storms and matured over these 25 years we are fortunate to have similar clubs focussed on promoting and developing sea kayaking in most other states of Australia as well as in the Eastern Isles across the Tasman. The recent initiative from the VKSC to reinvigorate regular contact between the clubs through an annual Sea kayaking Summit has been well received by all clubs and I welcome the recent suggestion to extend the representation to include KASK. The past two Summits have demonstrated how much the various clubs have in common, that by drawing on the depth of our combined expertise and speaking with a common voice we can influence regulatory bodies with a focus on sea kayaking and that there is real value in continuing this networking.

We are truly fortunate to be able to stand on the shoulders of previous committees, instructors, past and current members and be part of a financially healthy club with well established processes around safety and training and a wealth of experience embodied in our instructors so that we can all spend more time paddling.

Internet Coordinators

1997-98	Jim Croft
1998-01	Andrew Eddy
2001-02	Alan Whiteman
2002-03	Max Brettargh
2003-11	Peter Kappelmann
2011-15	Stephan Meyn

Magazine Editors

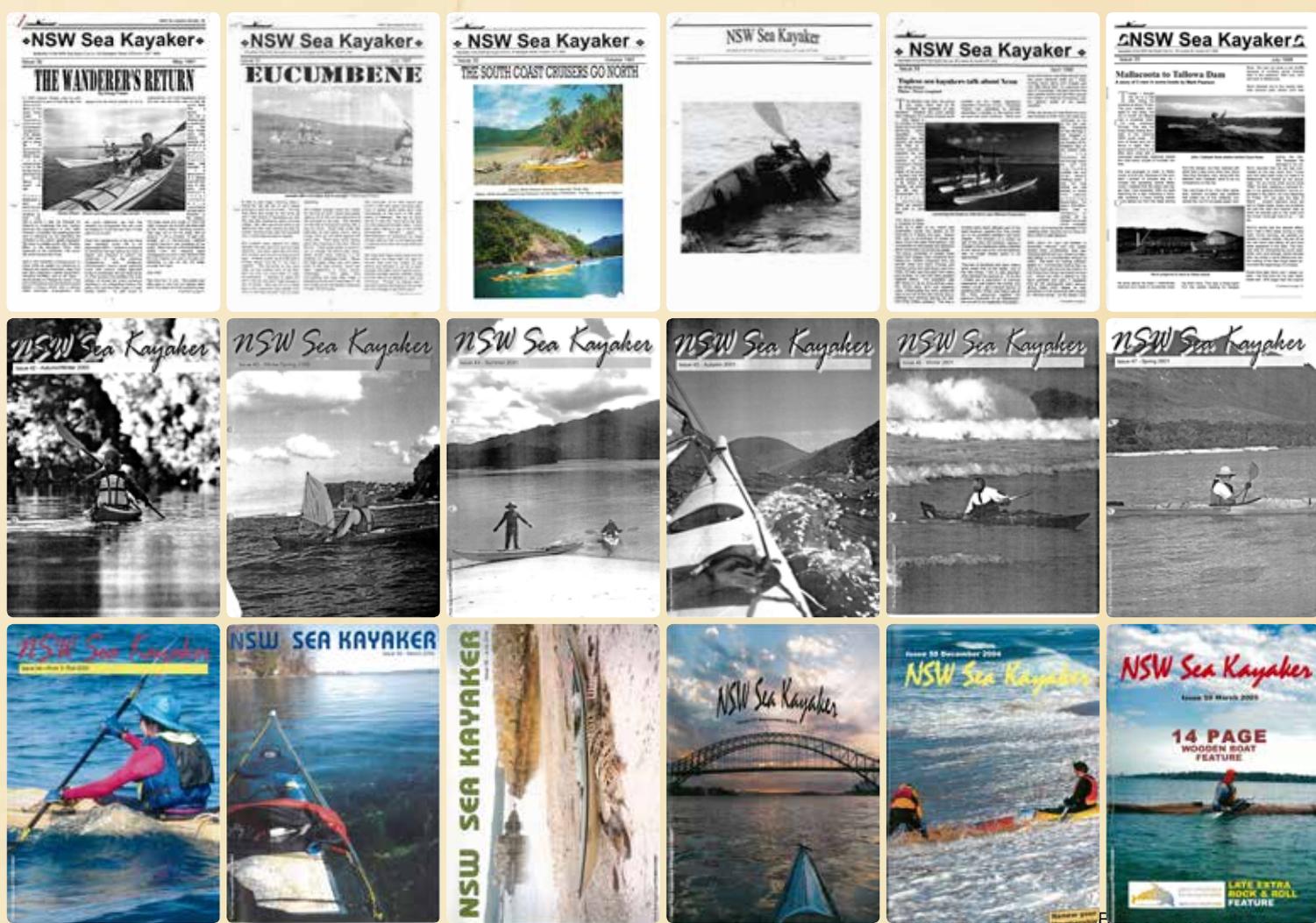
1989-91	John Bamberry
1991-92	John Bamberry / Graham Mundy
1992-93	Graham Mundy
1993-94	Patrick Dibben / Alex Preema
1994-95	Leigh Hemmings
1995-97	Mark Pearson
1997-99	David Whyte
1999-03	Ian Phillips
2003-04	Richard McNeall
2004-06	Ian Coles
2006-08	Sue Webber
2008-10	Jacqui Stone
2010-12	Dee Ratcliffe
2012-13	Mark Schroeder
2013-15	Steve Hitchcock

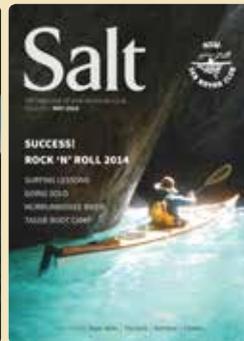
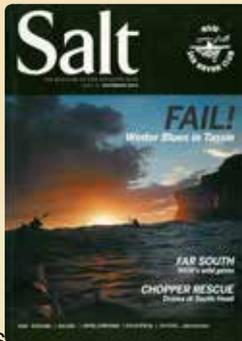
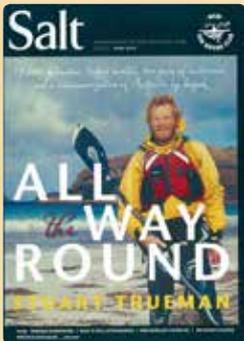
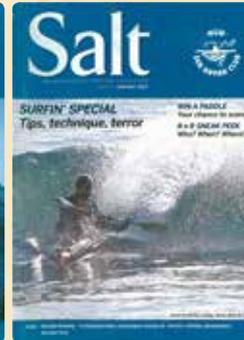
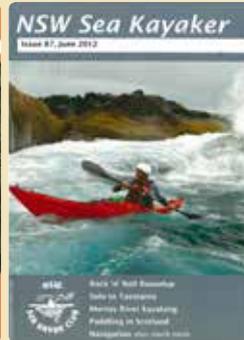
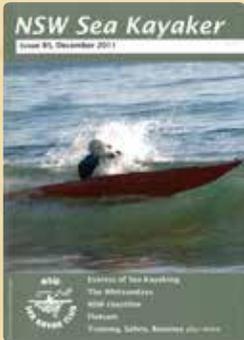
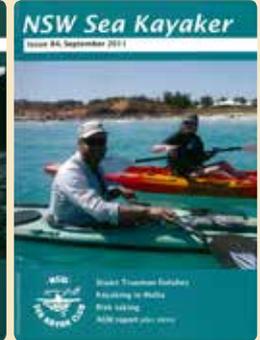
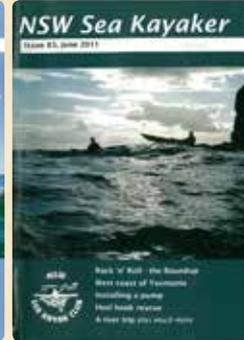
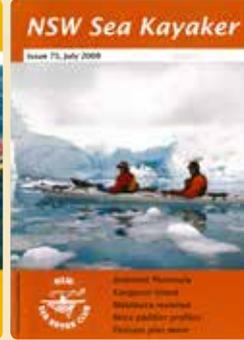
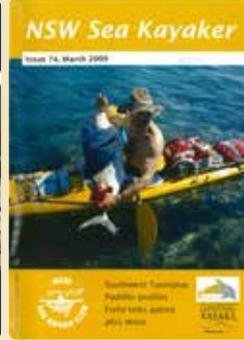
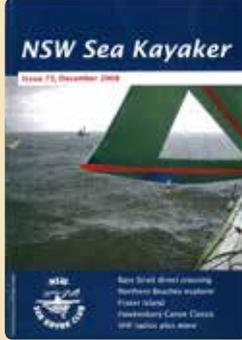
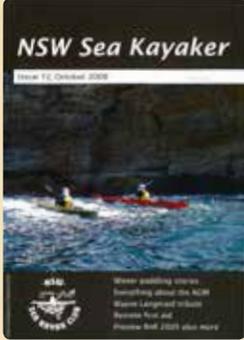
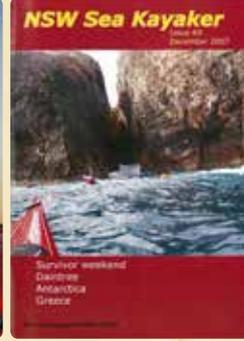
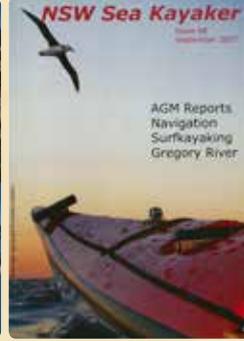
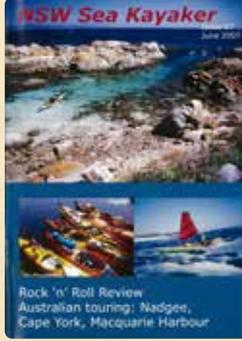
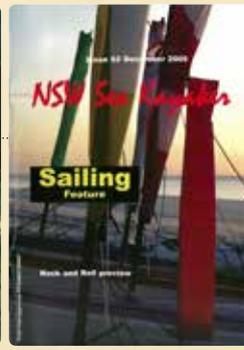
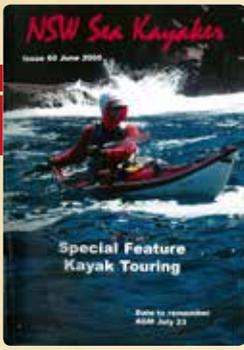


ak Club Magazine

an Kayaking History

e, Ian Phillips, Richard McNeill, Ian Coles, Sue Webber, Jacqui Stone, Dee Ratcliffe, Mark Schroeder, Steve Hitchcock





25 Years

My First Expedition

MARK PEARSON

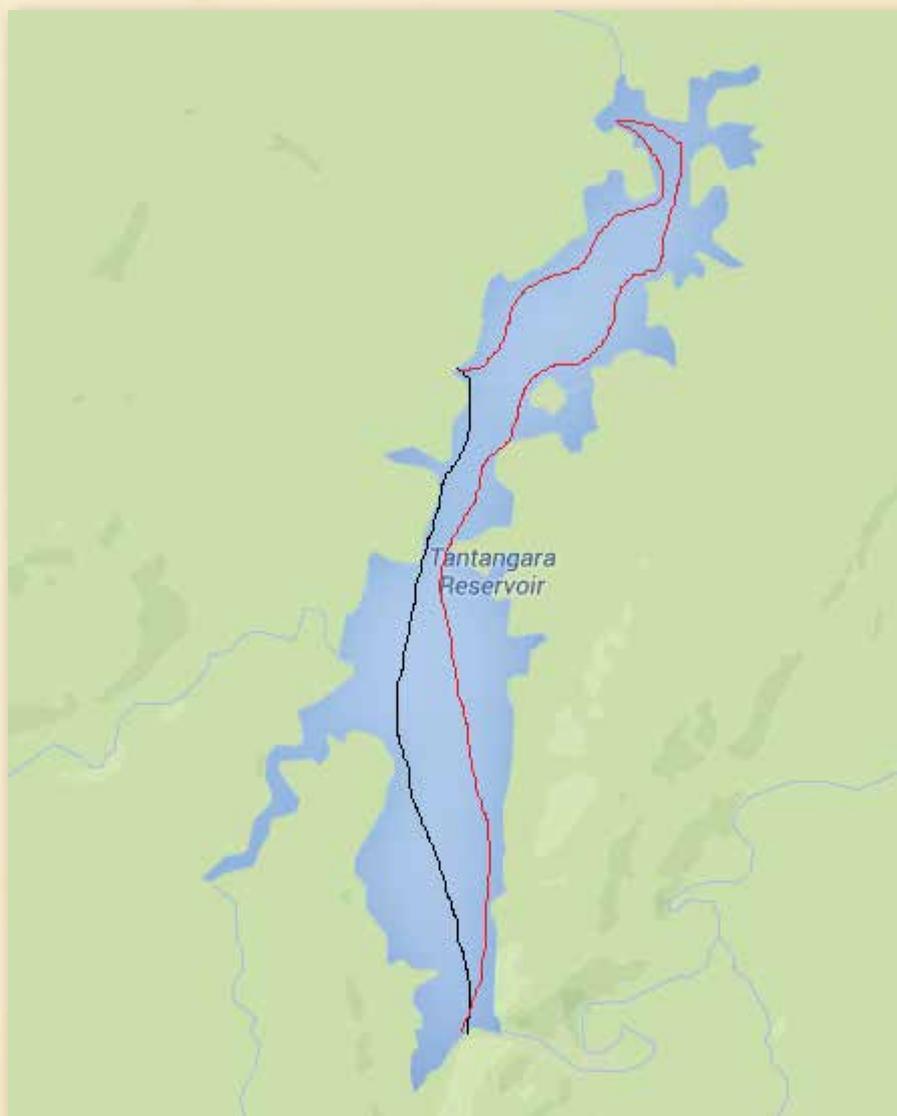
It was 1992. I had recently bought a double kayak to use recreationally with my partner and provide more variety for my fishing hobby. After a few day-trips on local lakes around Canberra, it slowly dawned on me that this new craft offered a whole new range of possibilities in terms of fishing expeditions. I had car camped a few times and started to imagine an overnight trip that combined kayaking, fishing and camping. I had also recently attended a fly fishing course and was keen to have a real go at the noble art.

And so I studied a map of the high country. Within minutes I spotted my wild place – Lake Tantangara! Not only a terrific name but one of the most remote of the alpine lakes. Tantangara was a feeder lake to the bigger and lower altitude Eucumbene and so was often at levels of only 20% of full capacity. But due to a long-term problem with the connecting tunnel that drained it, the impoundment was now nearly at full capacity. Tantangara would be at its best.

I made my plans, borrowed a small tent and a stove, packed some clothes, food and a variety of fishing gear. And so on Saturday 7th November 1992 I left Canberra at dawn. After travelling through Cooma and skirting to the north of Lake Eucumbene I turned north onto a rugged dirt track that ran up a valley with a decent feeder creek running through it. Half an hour later I was there. Tantangara looked great at full capacity, sparkling blue water and surrounded by some pretty hills.

I struggled to get the heavy kayak off the car. My craft was a 'Spree', a lake

Map of Lake Tantangara Reservoir, south-west of Canberra.

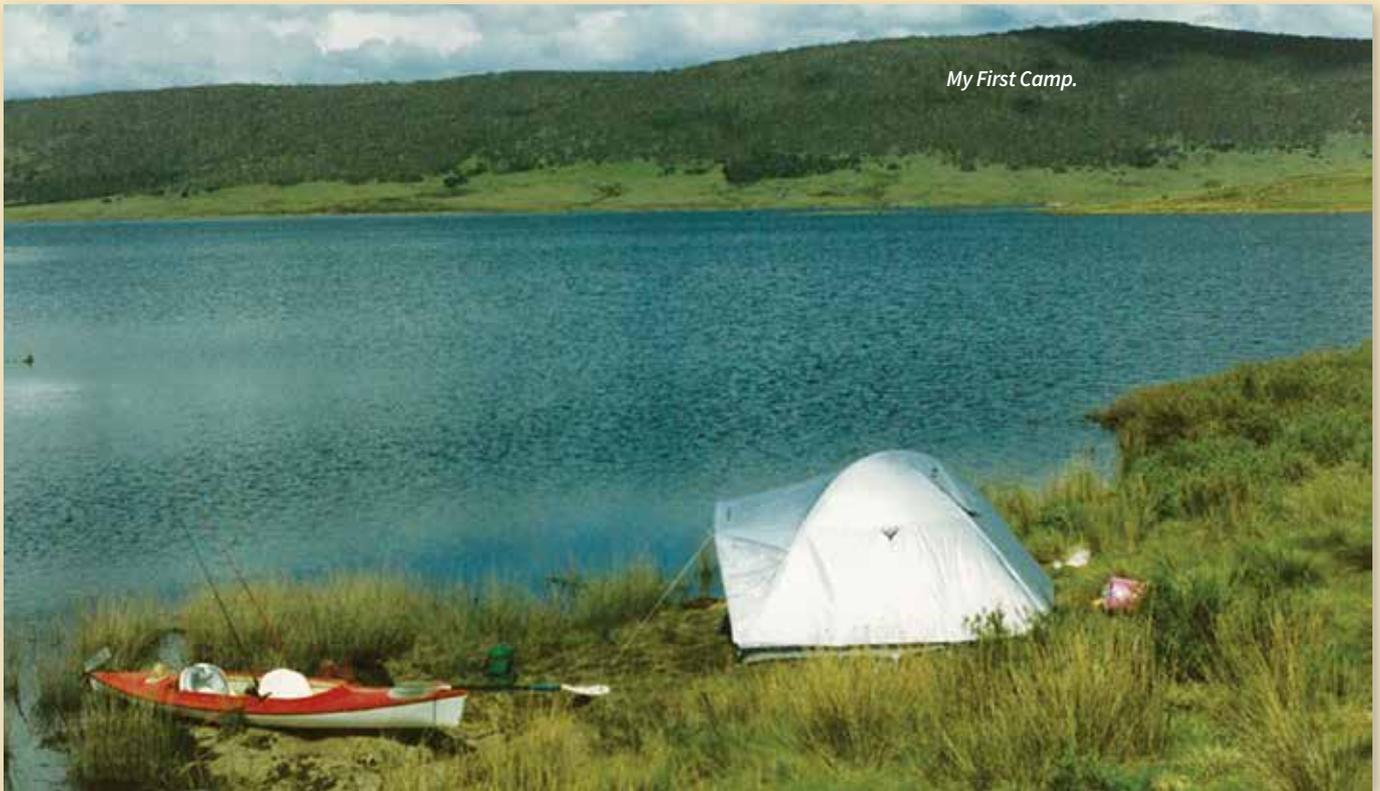


boat, with no bulkheads and two bucket seats in a huge open skirtless 'cockpit'. The only safety features were two long thin airtight compartments running length wise along each side of cockpit floor so she couldn't sink.

After unloading the car I slowly went about the highly unusual task of

putting stuff into a kayak. I packed most of the larger items ahead of the front seat, with the smaller gear loaded though a small hatch cover behind the rear seat. It seemed like a lot of stuff for one night. But I was ready to go.

I was the only vessel on the water and felt pretty special as I headed across to



My First Camp.

the western side of the lake. The kayak was heavy but still steered well enough, and soon I was confident enough to set up a rod and deploy a lure. Within minutes I had hooked a nice rainbow trout. An hour later I picked a small inlet beside a little creek as my camp. After working out how to set up the borrowed tent I made myself a cup of tea on the stove. I'm thinking this is living – my own lake, great scenery, nice camping spot, good fishing. Life is good.

As the late afternoon sun slowly lowered, insects appeared above the lake. I noticed little rings appearing in the water as trout rose for their nightly feed. It was time for me to attempt fly fishing. I set up the rod with an eight foot tippet, to the end of which I tied on a small green nymph fly. I walked around the little bay to a spot where most of the rises were occurring.

I was ready to start fly casting. To those unfamiliar with this art, imagine slowly flicking a length of cord back and forth over your shoulder with a very whippy rod, keeping it parallel to the ground, while simultaneously feeding more line into the movement. After several 'back

and forths' you finish with a forward flick and attempt to land about fifteen metres of the thick tapered fly line and the shorter length of monofilament 'tippet' gently on the water. The fly itself is the last thing to hit the surface.

So there I was, in the dusk alone on the remote shore of a beautiful full alpine lake, with my fly line moving

back and forth in the air just like I was English royalty. I was fly fishing! And then joy oh joy the line tightens and I'm battling a trout – a magnificent three inch rainbow in peak condition! I gently released it.

I resumed casting. Again I marvel at the fly line's majesty as it loops and

Green Nymph.



curls and changes trajectory. How talented am I? I flicked the rod back for the final forward cast and then it happens. Something hard hits me in the face. I tentatively feel up to the impact area. There is fishing line there and something stopping the line from dropping to the ground. It's the fly! After wiggling it around, I surmise that the hook of the said fly appears to be stuck into the cartilage at the base of my right nostril. After a few seconds of twisting and tugging I feel some pain signals and there is blood as the barb did its job to hold fast. I used my reflective sunglasses as a mirror. There it was ... a strange looking green furry thing looking totally out of place hanging off a nostril. The trout were having their revenge. I decided to return to camp to reflect.

Back at camp I again tried to pull the hook out but still couldn't dislodge it. For the first time in my new kayaking career I was faced with a totally unexpected event. What to do? I considered packing camp and heading home. But it would be dark by the time I got back to the car. As I sipped on a cup of tea, I reasoned that as long as I left it alone, the hook wasn't really all that uncomfortable. And it was a brand new fly so I didn't think it would cause infection. I decided to stay the night, so heated up dinner – a can of Hungarian goulash while listening to the radio.

And then with the sun gone it got quite cool so I retreated to the tent and read a book. I was soon asleep but two hours later I awoke with a strange uncomfortable sensation. I was cold. I added some more clothing and after a while got back to sleep. An hour later I was awake and cold again. This time, all my clothing went on. The temperature kept falling. I didn't even have a beanie so had to keep my head in the bag with a blow hole for air. It was a long night.

I emerged from the tent at dawn to find my kayak was covered in deep white frost and there was a thick fog. Tantangara's altitude is over 1200 metres and I had experienced a minus 3C night in a very ordinary sleeping

bag. After a magnificent hot cup of tea I realised that the good thing about the freezing night was that I had totally forgotten that my nose was still playing host to a green nymph. And so as the sun came out and the day looked like it was going to be a beauty I decided to do some fishing and then return home.

After some hot weetbix, I packed up camp and set off for some casual exploration before heading back to the car. I paddled up to where the Murrumbidgee enters the lake, marvelling at some very pretty low cliffs. My solo experience was now slightly spoiled by a couple of motor boats that had appeared. Alarmingly one came close to me. Fearful I would be drawn into conversation with strangers and have to explain the green thing, I paddled hard to keep my distance. I caught another trout and paddled to the car. I returned home via an embarrassing fuel stop where I had to cover my face with my hand as I paid for the petrol.

And then I was home to my dear partner who, thinking that it was some sort of weird trick, at first strangely refused to believe me when I told her what had happened. Eventually she had a turn at trying to prise the stubborn hook out but had to give up after I started to scream. I resigned

myself to a second night in an impaled state. The weekend ended on a slight down note when my spouse refused my attempt at seduction because she "couldn't bear that thing hanging out of my nose."

So next morning I headed to my local GP. I was soon ushered into his room where I jauntily said: "Doc, you wouldn't believe what I've got stuck in my nose!"

He looked at it calmly and said quietly: "Ah, a number 18 size green nymph."

Turns out he was a keen trout fisherman. After injecting some anaesthetic near the wound, seconds later he had used a piece of string and some pressure and magically the hook was out.

As I drove to work I mentally reviewed my first kayaking adventure. Apart from the fly in my nose and the freezing night I had really enjoyed the whole escape and self-sufficiency experience that kayaking promised. So where could I go to avoid freezing temperatures and nasty trout flies. The ocean perhaps? Uhhmmm ...

FOOTNOTE – Mark Pearson joined the NSW SKC in late 1993.



Mark and Fish.

25 Year Anniversary

First Weekend in November 2014

REPORT BY STEVE HITCHCOCK, PHOTOS BY SELIM TEZCAN

There were 40 registered for the event, with only 2 no-shows. Not bad considering the venue was water-access only and Saturday afternoon had us running for cover from lightening bolts and large falling gum tree branches. There were 36 paddlers, plus one who found a ferry and walked the rest of the way, while the other swam in, with grog in tow in a not-so-dry bag.

Dormitory style accommodation was straightforward, clean and ample in space. Cabins were well protected from the thunderous storms, while those in tents found themselves a little closer to nature's fury. The weekend included three generous meals, complimented by a somewhat astonishing quantity of BYO shipped in by club members.

After dinner, we were entertained by the tales and chronicles from some of the past and present distinguished members.

Campbell Tiley, current President

Campbell welcomed the crowd and opened the proceedings by acknowledging the efforts of the founding members and early committees. He used slides to highlight some early club activities and referred to some articles from old newsletters and magazines, including references to the kayaks paddled in those 'old' days.

Campbell had also printed a huge poster showing the front cover of every magazine and then handed out a DVD to all attendees containing them all. The club intends to upload the old magazines to the website.

Stuart Trueman, current Training Coordinator

Referred to the significant changes in

gear compared to 25 years ago, such as kayaks with a lot less deck clutter, no wing paddles and twice the weight and mostly absent of technology that we now take for granted. Stuart also made reference to the increased number of women, which of course is a good thing!

Dirk Stuber, past President 1995-96

Dirk reminded us about the infamous rudder wars. Many newer Mirage members might be startled to know how controversial the arguments used to be in favour or not in favour of the kayak rudder! I'm not sure which type he was paddling, when he ran onto the rocks and had to repair the damaged hull with copious quantities of duct tape.

David Winkworth, past President 1994-95

In case you haven't heard or read about David's heart-stopping story about his expedition with Arunas and Mike from Cairns to Thursday Island, and the resulting crocodile attack, I urge you to do so. The rescue involved a light plane, helicopter, navy ships, SEAL type manoeuvres and lots of media attention. They featured on Today/Tonight, and later David received a bravery award.

Elizabeth Thompson, past President 2005-07

Elizabeth talked about the implementation of tighter procedures and AC qualified leaders. A lot of work was started at this time to develop the policies we use now.

Audrey McDonald

Back in 2004, a large group of new paddlers to the club took part in an intensive sea skills program, over about 5 weeks, camping weekends at Bonneyvale. It was an impressive

exercise involving a lot of dedicated time and effort by many leaders and members, culminating in many qualifications being awarded.

Michael Steinfeld, past President 2007-10

John Pitrowski kicked off a debate about the unpopular helmet policy, due in part to Michael's unfortunate mishap within Cons Cleft in Looking Glass Island, just off Broughton Island. His fellow paddlers applied gauze to the badly cut scalp, then kept it in place with duct tape. There's no escaping the need for duct tape in your repair kit.

David Slattery

David started kayaking around 1964 before dams such as Warragamba Dam were built. David and brother John paddled large Canadian boats and carried flagons of wine to their campsites. At one event, 300 boats turned up. They used to construct their own kayaks and paddles using home-made metal presses. David and John have been members for 25 years and still produce kayaks and equipment to this day.

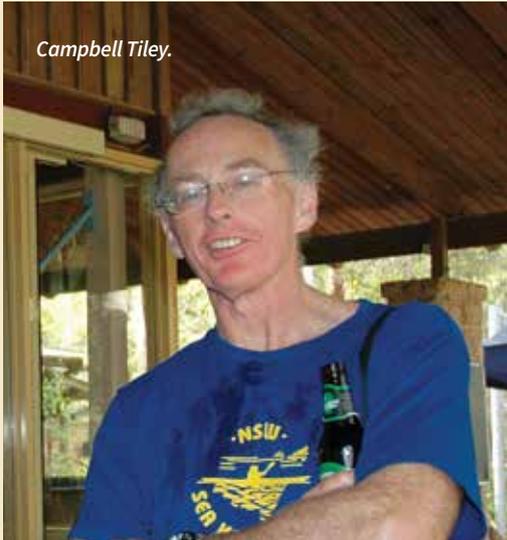
Rae Duffy, current Secretary/ Treasurer

Rae recounted the story of Shaan and herself being capsized in a large wave and scrambling onto rocks under a cliff face. Shaan had dislocated her shoulder and was lucky enough to be able to put it back in because of a shoulder training session that she had organized for the club. Then thanks to a stranger on the cliff top, they were spotted, rescued and winched to safety by helicopter.

Little Patonga.



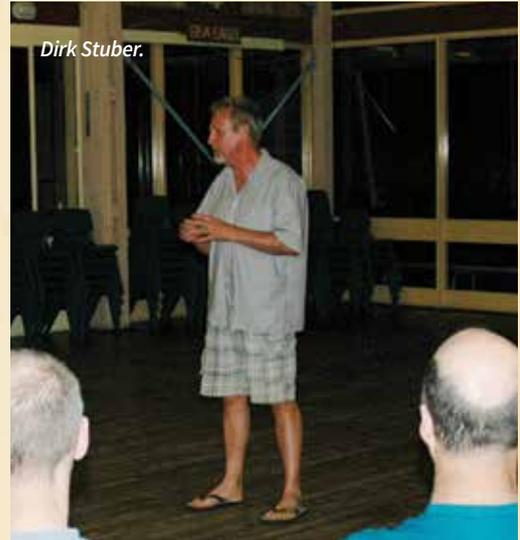
Campbell Tiley.



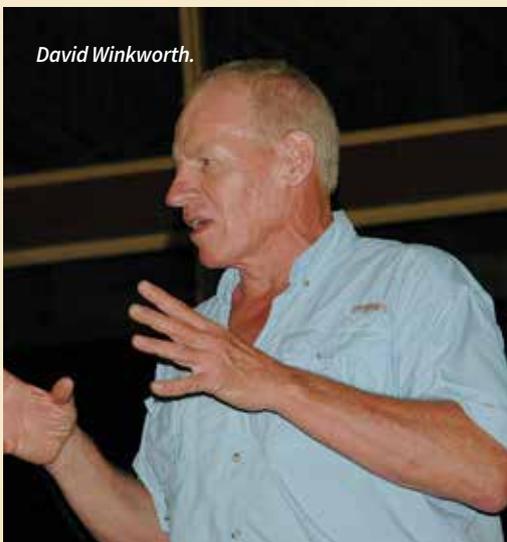
Stuart Trueman.



Dirk Stuber.



David Winkworth.



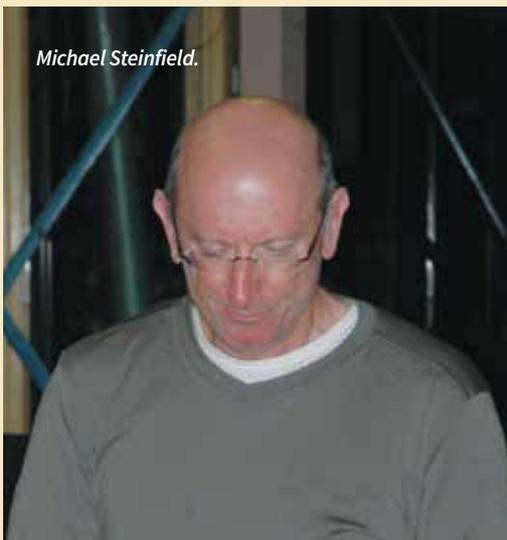
Elizabeth Thompson.



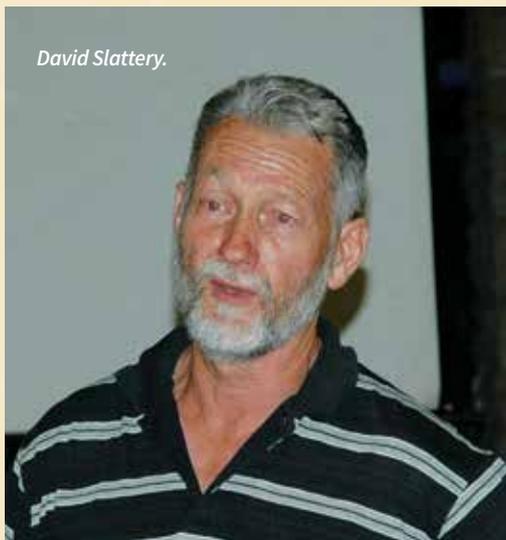
Audrey McDonald.



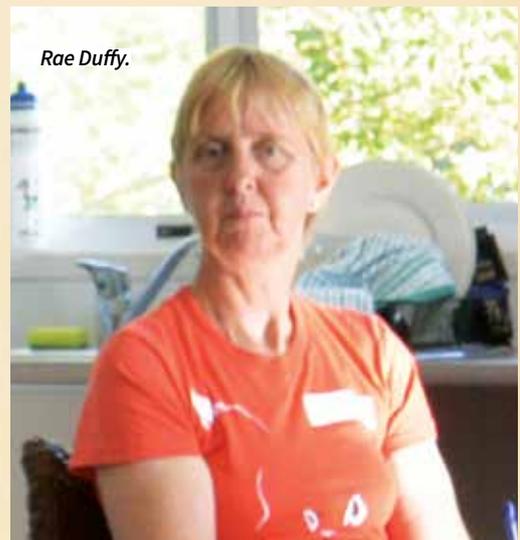
Michael Steinfield.



David Slattery.



Rae Duffy.



NSW SEA KAYAKER

Reprinted below are several pages from the first edition of the Newsletter of the NSW Sea Kayak Club Inc.

PO Box A1045 Sydney South, NSW 2000

Number 1

December 1989

INAUGURAL COMMITTEE, 1989/1990

President	Perc Carter.....(02)	523 6157
Vice President	Ken McDonald.....(02)	520 5349
Secretary	Ray Abrahall.....(02)	528 9091
Treasurer	Shirley Abrahall... (02)	528 9091
Trip Programmer	John Slattery.....(042)	261 833 (BH)
Editor	John Bamberry.....(02)	955 8212
Social Convenor	Peter Ingleby.....(02)	32 2069
Editorial Committee	Ken McDonald	
	Michael Richardson.(02)	907 9765 (BH)
Programme Committee	Ken McDonald	
	Michael Richardson.	

IMPORTANT NOTICE

DISCLAIMER

None of the office bearers or any of the Executive Committee or a trip leader or any other member of the club shall be legally responsible in the event of any person dying or suffering injury or loss while engaged in any activities of the Club, and no action shall lie against any one or more of them, nor against the Club funds or property on account of the negligence or otherwise of any one or more of them.

PRESIDENT'S REPORT

After a long time at the boat builders, the New South Wales Sea Kayak Club Incorporated has finally been launched.

Ray and Shirley Abrahall are to be congratulated for the drive and enthusiasm they displayed in getting the Club started. Similarly, Gary and Wade Burnham of Canoe Specialists at Beecroft, together with Ron Murray and Jill Boulton of Canoe and Camping at Gladesville and Kogarah helped out by making their premises available for our inaugural meetings.

John Slattery of Canoe World at Wollongong has travelled to every meeting and provided advice and encouragement as has Michael Richardson of Q Craft at Manly Vale. We are fortunate indeed to have the support of these leaders in the industry.

At the time of writing, we have twenty financial and many more paddlers have expressed interest in joining. A membership application form is enclosed for your convenience if you have not already joined.

For our club to be successful, your committee believes that

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the club must offer a wide variety of trips, ranging from the easy picnic style to fully fledged expeditions and everything in between. By offering this wide range of trips, the club will make a positive contribution to the paddling skills and expertise of the members.

In May, 1989, Ray Abrahall conducted a survey of prospective members to determine their preferences for future activities. The message came back loud and clear, meetings to be kept to a minimum, trips and activities to be at the maximum. Your Committee will ensure that this is the case and we intend to operate with a minimum of fuss.

Our Incorporated status requires that the Committee shall meet at least three times annually and it is our intention to adhere to this formal requirement, with general meetings to be conducted, where possible, during club trips. In this way we won't get bogged down with administration and waffle.

In the fullness of time, I am sure that the New South Wales Sea Kayak Club Inc. will develop into a popular and respected authority on sea kayaking with the same status as the Advanced Sea Kayak Club on the Isle of Wight or the Tasmanian Sea Canoeing Club of Hobart.

The trip program for the next two months contains plenty for everyone. If you want to lead a trip, please contact John Slattery, our Trip Programmer and discuss your ideas with him.

This is the Club's first magazine. We hope to issue every two months, depending on the availability of material. Success or otherwise will depend on your contributions. Help our Editor, John Bamberry, and his editorial committee by providing your ideas on layout, content, covers etc. All assistance and comment will be gratefully received.

Hand written contributions are welcome, but if it is at all possible, typewritten copy or computer disk would be appreciated.

We can accommodate most formats on either 5 1/4 or 3 1/2 disks, 360kb to 2 mb, using MS-Dos or IBM-DOS. Please write text to disk in ASCII format. A hard copy for checking and as a fail safe would also be appreciated. Disks will be returned as soon as they have been copied.

On behalf of the Committee, I wish all members, families and friends of the Club a happy Christmas and a prosperous paddling New Year!

-Perc Carter

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TRIP REPORTS

BALMORAL BEACH-SYDNEY HARBOUR-FAIRY BOWER, 17TH
SEPTEMBER, 1989.

We met at Balmoral Beach, Mosman for a late leisurely Sunday morning start. Eight people and seven boats assembled. Mic Longhurst and Michelle Vandervord brought their Catcan, Anthony McCarthy, Perc Carter and Bruce Lee (Greenlanders), John Bambrery (Puffin), Peter Ingleby (Estuary) and Michael Richardson (Chinook). The Catcan drew much attention during the day - quite an unusual boat!

At 9:30 am, the weather was fine and seas calm, so it was a perfect opportunity to paddle across to Grotto Point and follow close under Dobroyd Head and Crater Cove. Seas are usually quite unpleasant in this area. Crossing ferry lanes to Store Beach was interesting. Seven boats at 5 metres each can present a 35 metre obstacle to hydrofoils. Line abreast seemed prudent!

The gentle nor'easter tempted us out of the heads to travel up to Fairy Bower (southern end of Manly) for lunch. Poo is certainly a problem. The sea off North Head is none too pleasant with offshore winds. Surprisingly, we found a large, lone seal in amongst it, seemingly quite relaxed and friendly.

The leisurely rate for the morning saw us cover the 10 km Balmoral to Fairy Bower in 1 hour, 45 minutes. The return route took us wide to skirt the worst of the pollution before running down to South Head and turning down the Harbour to Obelisk Beach. Here we split up - Perc and Peter headed back to Rose Bay, the others to Balmoral.

Try as he might, Peter's fishing was fruitless. Michael, however, made the mistake of paddling close under the stern of a yacht and got snagged on a troll-line - very nearly got caught too!

Thanks to those who came - a very enjoyable day!

- Michael Richardson

GUNNAMATTA BAY-JIBBON BEACH. 24 SEPTEMBER 1989.

9:30 am on 24 September, 1989 at the boat ramp in Gunnamatta Bay behind the Cronulla railway station saw 12 individuals on hand for the Club's second official trip. The collection of boats would have done any shop proud and the presence of three doubles made for some interesting comparisons.

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Those present were:

Peter Ingleby	Estuary
Ray Abrahall	Tasman
Shirley Abrahall	Tasman
Ken and Barbara McDonald	Dolphin II (double)
Mic Longhurst and Michelle Vandervord	Catcan II (double)
Des Carter and Gwen Chance	Tasman Twin (double)
Alan Smith	Greenlander II
Perc Carter	Greenlander II
John Bambrery	Puffin

With a gentle breeze blowing in from the northeast, the group set off past the State Fisheries installation at Hungry Point on the southern end of Gunnamatta Bay and paddled north past Shark Island and Cronulla Beach, landing a leisurely two hours later at Boat Harbour at the northern end of Bate Bay. Some large rollers were breaking on the Merries Reef but the landing place was well protected from the surf and no problems were encountered.

Morning tea had just commenced when a large pod of dolphins began to frolic off the beach. Most of our group put to sea and were soon surrounded by jumping, diving and speeding dolphins. What a show they put on (the dolphins that is)!

Mic and Michelle missed the show courtesy of some yobbo who had left a broken bottle hidden in the sand. Mic tested its sharpness with a big toe and provided Michelle with an opportunity to use their first-aid kit.

After the pod had retreated out to sea, the group paddled along the western side of the Merries and across to Jibbon Beach for lunch. Quite a variety of pleasure craft were anchored at Jibbon and a number of nudists sunbaked (so we were informed) just out of our line of sight. A visit from the floating ice cream parlour provided us with extra nourishment for the paddle back down Gunnamatta Bay which can be quite a bore.

The day's pleasant temperatures, glassy rollers, variety of boats and great company made for a most pleasant outing which concluded at the boat ramp about 2:45 pm.

Observations were made during the paddle that we allowed ourselves to become too spread out, OK in good weather but dangerous in bad conditions. Also we didn't take the opportunity to raft up, pass around the eats and make floating conversation. Conditions were perfect for it, so next time, maybe?

All boats were well equipped with life lines, tow lines and all paddlers wore PFDs. Total distance travelled was about 12 nautical miles. Just nice.

- Perc Carter

4

Rambling reminiscences

from a small part of the 25 years

MARK SCHROEDER

25 years, not a bad age I suppose although given the average age of club members is over 50, still a whippersnapper really.

I've actually forgotten how many of those years I've been a member, maybe 8, maybe 9 or 10, who cares, it's been a while, long enough that I've seen members both legendary and otherwise come and go, long enough that the trips over the years blur, long enough that the log book I kept for the first year was chucked out years ago.

I joined as a wannabe with plenty of outdoor experience, but no kayaking. I'd moved to Sydney, purchased a sleek Raider X – the one I still have – and I wanted adventure. I got what I wanted. And a lot more besides.

Soon I entered a period of frustration quite common it seems, where your ability outstrips your experience and your grade holds you back. It's probably for the best to slow things down a bit during this period to let the realities seep in as a bit of rough justice is inevitably served up by the sea. You survive, and emerge wiser.

And finally it was time for sea skills; the practice, the nerves and the assessment day, at the end of which we gathered expectantly around Stu Trueman to hear who had passed and who had failed, only to be heartbroken



when he announced “well you're all fookking useless”... oh no – failed, the lot of us! Of course the bugger went on to pass us all, but we were very clear: this was the start of our education, not the end. As always with Stu, great wisdom roughly delivered, and it struck home and stuck. Can't believe the bloke's still giving his time so generously to the club. People do that, have done for 25 years. Few of us are sufficiently grateful for all that generosity and dedication.

Over the following period, my sea kayaking ascended to obsession level, aided and abetted by finding the perfect paddling partner, Matty, who miraculously sees the world of paddling and also the rest of it too through almost exactly the same lens as I – cynical, a bit ratbaggy, lefty green,



Mark paddling off Currarong.

anti-establishment, anti-development, sometimes grumpy often opinionated. After all these years he's still using a flat blade, goes to show just how stupidly stubborn he can be!

Anyway, lots of trips later, Matty had his sights set on Bass Strait and swept me along in his enthusiasm. Took a bit of effort and we got it done and it was great.

All this time I'd been training on my surfski and those skills and fitness served me well. But the ski is a seductive mistress, you hop on, paddle hard for an hour, and you're done. No silly hats, gloves, pumps, spare paddles, kitchen sinks etc, etc, etc, three morning paddles a week followed by coffee and it's off to work, too easy.

But I keep coming back to the sea kayak and in large part it's about the club. Good people. Trips. The spirit of commitment to a community. Touching base each year at RnR with other paddlers who remember my name. Works for me.

Along here sometime abouts I took on editorship of the club mag, renamed it, and took out my shoulder in a mountain bike accident, followed by a road bike accident onto the same shoulder. Bang bang, a year off paddling and almost another year of recovery. It was frustrating editing the mag whilst scarcely paddling, missing trips that Matty was doing, but that damn mag, a challenging task, was worth it – a labour of love really and I guess it kept my focus on the club while I repaired too slowly. As well as recording the club's history, the mag is part of it and Cambell's spent every waking hour scanning old editions so past editions can all be seen online. Now Steve's made it even better, what a relief it was to be able to hand it on to his rock steady hands.

What's all this really got to do with the club's 25th? Beats me, but the years roll by don't they and the love of the sea remains the same. The club's been like a lighthouse or a safe harbour, you rally there, then go off and do your

thing and come back when it suits you, knowing like-minded souls await. It provides the bedrock of your sea kayaking life, from training, through tagging and bragging, to the red wine round the campfire and beers at some sticky-carpeted RSL. The hard men, the technicians, the theoreticians, the wannabes, the casuals, the facing-fears, piss pots and piss takers, the

teachers, the droners, the egos, the mates, the givers, the takers, the sellers, the buyers, the snobs and the shy. All joined by this club, paddling, and little else. It works and it must have worked this way for lots of people over those 25 years, leaving us with millions of memories and billions of blisters.

Happy Birthday, ya big dag!



Musings and observations gained over 10 years of Kayaking

MATT (BECOME ONE WITH THE SEA) BEZZINA

It's coming up to ten years since I bought my first sea kayak. Since that day I've paddled an average of twice a week and done many coastal trips and expeditions. I started thinking about what I'd learned through all that kayaking and although I'm not technically minded, preferring to leave most things to my instincts rather than my intellect, I have come up with a bit

of a list that some people might find helpful. I accept that some of these points are controversial and that's fine, these are just my own observations that some people might or might not agree with.

Fitness. It was blatantly obvious when I started kayaking that this was a sport that requires both strength and fitness.

I started running as soon as I started kayaking and am certain that, in my case at least, running is my kayaking's best friend.

Frequency. If I'm not paddling twice a week I'm going backwards. Make the time to get out there as often as possible and don't make excuses to avoid punching out those kilometres. A 40 km slog will be a lot more beneficial to your real world kayaking than playing around with a greenland stick in some shallow backwater all day!

Oxygen. A lot of us forget that oxygen is the main fuel we burn when working out. Breathe like you're running and don't be afraid to get that heart pumping and lungs puffing. I really don't think you get much of a fitness benefit if you just potter around. You have to PADDLE.

Carbs. I'm no nutritionist but I definitely go harder and longer on carbohydrates than anything else. Pasta, oats, semolina and rice are my staples before any big paddle and I can really feel the difference. If I try doing a big slug on meat or other high protein foods I'll feel tired and colder than if I'd stuck to carbs.

Catch that wave – As soon as your stern lifts up put in and paddle hard, no matter what. Nothing is more irritating than having that wonderful gift of a following sea squandered by those who either don't lean forward and catch the free ride or worse back paddle or put in a ridiculous stern rudder. Just paddle, and keep paddling. Not only will you start eating up those kilometres but it will be a hell of a lot more fun! (and the wave catchers won't have to keep waiting for you).

Self Rescue. It's important to have a bombproof self-rescue. Work with what is best for you and practice it. In my own real world experience I have seen more cowboy self-rescues actually work in the really gnarly stuff than anything else. Personally, I think the roll is over rated and for the vast majority of us it gets seriously compromised in the really big stuff.

The two times I have really needed it I couldn't get it to work and I nearly lost a good mate who also couldn't make it work when the time came – and he was an expert roller. Yes I'm dirty with the roll because it's let me down too often. Although I roll every time I paddle I rely more on the next point:

Paddle with friends and stick together. Following on from the self-rescue the most reliable rescue will be from your buddies. Paddle with people in similar boats with similar abilities and watch each other's backs.

Don't dress for immersion. I often see paddlers dressed for Antarctic conditions with faces like beetroots. If you overdress you'll get too hot and paddling will become hot thirsty work. Instead of excessive clothing just make sure you're well fed on carbs and then go hard. I always plan on extra food rather than extra layers and I am much more comfortable and can cover more k's significantly faster. Just have a cag in your day hatch just in case and warm clothes to quickly change into when you're off the water.

Get a smaller bladed paddle. It baffles me to see so many paddlers who struggle with speed/distance who use enormous paddles. Get the

smallest lightest paddle you can afford and I guarantee you'll make much lighter work of your paddling and be good for far more kilometres. I still maintain that the difference between wings and flats in sea kayaks is so minimal for most of us that using a wing is a bit like putting a racing spoiler on the family sedan.

Become one with the sea. This is the most important thing I've learned. Just like an Albatross is the master of flight without any understanding of aerodynamics so too must we feel the sea and tap into its energy. Trying to analyse everything about our hull shapes, stroke mechanics, and myriad other technicalities does little to improve real world performance. The best paddlers I know have a feel for what the sea is doing and not only do they move through the water more efficiently but they have more fun doing it and generally have a far richer experience than those who think they know what's going on in the depths that surround them.

Sea kayaking is a great way to interact with nature. I'm surprised it's not more popular considering our fantastic harbours, bays and coastline. See you out there!





Kayaking the Islands of Samoa

September 2014

CATH NOLAN



Samoa is about six hours flying northeast from Sydney (Incorrect scale, the Strait is only about 13kms across!).

reefs and lagoons. The smaller islets of Manono, Apolima and Nuulo are situated around 4-10 kilometres to the west of Upolu; Nuutele, Nuulua, Namua and Fanuatapu, known as the Aleipata Islands are situated around two kilometres to the East of Upolu and Nuusafee situated around 1.5 kilometres of the South Coast of the Island.

Samoa is part of the Pacific I have been fascinated with for some time. Its natural scenic beauty, gentle pace of life and vibrant culture encouraged me one wet and rainy afternoon to spend some time with Dr Google. With my new found basic kayak skills and enthusiasm for a holiday that combined kayaking, exploration underneath the water and local culture, I couldn't believe my luck when I found a 9 day guided kayak trip along the southern coast of Samoa.

Run by Ross Bismead of Outdoor Samoa, a NZ adventurer, located in Samoa 6 months of the year with his wife Frances, this trip offered a variety of inshore and ocean kayaking along the South Coast of Upolu, Samoa's main island, with trips to several of the smaller islets off the southern coast. Several conversations with Ross and the promise of a profusion of wildlife including green sea turtles, frigate birds, Shearwater petrels; prolific coral reef life including the recent find of a bed of giant clams; combined with staying at overnight at traditional Samoan Fales (beach huts) so as to

experience typical Samoan life won me over. It seemed like the trip of a lifetime. One airline ticket to Apia, one deposit and a long wait of nine months later and I can honestly say I was not disappointed. Samoa is an extremely rustic, beautiful group of islands with an equally warm and friendly group of locals that makes travelling there safe, raw and magical. This is a summary of the nine day adventure.

To start and as an overview, there are ten islands in the Samoan group: Upolu and Savai'i are the two largest that are fringed by coral

The trip departed on Saturday 6th September 2014 from Upolu and finished on Monday 15th September. nine days of kayaking were scheduled which included paddling out to Manono island, continuing down the South Coast to Salamumu. From here we would portage to Tafatafa, kayak in reverse to take advantage of the prevailing winds and seas back to Salamumu, portage to the Maleala and kayak to the Alepetia's spending three days kayaking between the islets. Our last day was a challenge kayak from the Alepetia's, north along the east coast Upolu to our destination of Pilu caves. From here we would portage back to Apia where we would rejoice immensely with each other and look back fondly on the adventure.

As with most multi-day kayak trips there was a little tweaking to the above program due to some incoming bad weather but I am happy to say, overall, we managed eight of the nine days programmed. On average we kayaked



Cath and Sue after their wet exit practices.

13 km per day. This allowed us to stop and anchor the kayaks to snorkel on the reefs, share in the Samoan way of life, portage and/or just laze for an afternoon. Our boats were New Zealand Shearwater expedition kayaks. Outdoor Samoa supply the kayaks and accessories such as life jackets, paddles, skirts, water and safety gear as part of the tour, with participants just bringing their clothes, toiletries etc. Our gear was transported daily to the end destination by a combination of car, ferry local boat and we stocked the kayaks with filtered drinking water, some snacks, snorkel gear and other incidentals. I took my paddle and lifejacket along, but really it was unnecessary. While trip numbers vary throughout the year, this trip had just two participants, myself and a NZ lady Sue, with Ross as our guide.

Day 1: Orientation paddle – Lagoon Lalovi Village

Wind 2 knots N–18 knots NW. Sea 0.2–0.5m.

As both of us arrived at the wee hours of Saturday morning, Saturday was spent going over the planned trip details and weather forecasts for the next nine days with a good cup of coffee. Ross used two main sources for weather information, the local Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment (MNRE) which he found was very reliable for local interpretation of wind conditions and Boy Weather, which he reported was consistently reliable for swell forecast. Fortunately, we had superb forecast for kayaking for the first five days with mild to moderate winds and seas. Unfortunately strong winds (20 knots) and swell of up to three metres was predicted for day six and seven when we were due to travel up the east coast from the Alepetia

islands, so our schedule was adjusted to maximise our kayaking days. With all of that sorted the afternoon was spent familiarising ourselves with our boats and safety drills in the lagoon, practising wet exits, re-entries, and for a bit of fun, raft walking. It started out beautiful calm conditions two knots of wind from the North, which within five minutes changed to 18 knots NW with whitecaps on the lagoon. This was my first experience of a kayak being blown sideways, despite having a rudder, so going forward was tough. Mental note, I need a better suite of paddle strokes in my kit to cope effectively with these conditions.

Day 2: Paddle to and around Manono Island

Distance 12 km. Wind NW 4 knots. Sea 0.5m.

Our first day of paddling was literally picture perfect with flat turquoise waters, a light breeze and blue sky. Manono Island is approximately 3km from Upolu across a coral lagoon. It is teaming with sea life and on the way we saw a Mantaray jump right out of the water and dive back in! We knew this was the start of what was going to be a great trip. As we neared Manono we turned North to circumnavigate the island. On the Western side of

the island we were treated to a few green sea turtles swimming on the surface, so we ambled here for a while just watching them swimming along. About 1km to the west of Manono is another of the Samoan islands, Nuulopa, which is home to a colony of fruit bats. We decided on an early morning kayak back to Nuulopa in the morning to watch them migrate off and circumnavigate the island. We continued onto to the western side of Manono Island and anchored our kayaks in the water for a spot of snorkelling before heading to shore for our first night in a traditional fale. We were warmly welcomed by a Samoan family hosting our first night on Manono Island with a traditional Samoan feast, the Umo.

Day 3: Early Morning Paddle from Manono to and around Nuulopa and then to Felelatai

Distance Nuulopa (4km) Manono to Felelatai (12km). Wind 4 knots SE. Swell 0.5m.

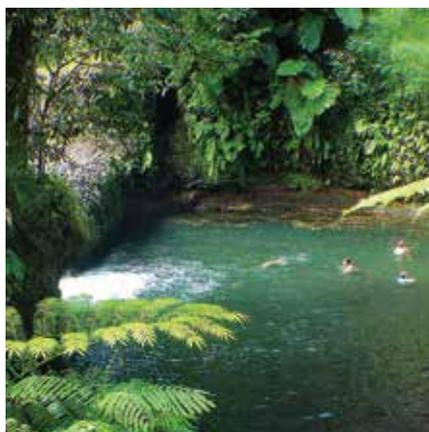
As planned we paddled before sunrise out to Nuulopa Island to see the migration of the fruit bats. The sea was calm and there was nil wind at that hour. Unfortunately it's the early bird that gets the worm and most of the fruit bats had already migrated out by the time we got there but there were the some of the late starters still in the trees squawking away. As the conditions were so calm, we decided to circumnavigate the island and cut across some breaking surf on the western side of the island. For a beginner kayaker I wasn't sure of my ability to negotiate the waves, but gleefully and gratefully managed to



En-route to Manono Island.

pass through the breaking waves and stay upright!

We returned to Manono, had our breakfast, stocked the kayaks and paddled back across to Upolu and continued down the south coast of Upolu inside the reef as far as Felelatai. Low tide on a coral lagoon and no clear breaks in the surf to continue in the open ocean stopped us progressing as planned to Salamumu. So we stopped, hoisted the kayaks out and portaged further down the coast to set up for the next day's kayak to Nuusafee Island. Enroute we took advantage of the extra spare time and went in to spend some time at the Totitogiga waterfalls.



Totitogiga waterfalls.

Day 4: Tafatafa to Black Sand Beach via the Saleilua mangroves, Nuusafee Island and Cape Niutaoi

Distance (14km). Wind SE 10 knots in morning sea 1.1 m, changing to a SSW 14 knots. Seas averaging 1.8m in afternoon.

The morning kayak took us west of Tafatafa to the Saleilua mangroves, a pristine waterway on the South Coast of Upolu. There was quite a strong outgoing tide, so manoeuvring in the mangroves without a rudder required a focused attention on some good boat control skills. Next port of call was Nuusafee Island. Nuusafee sits on the outer edge of a stunning sheltered lagoon, is teeming with hermit crabs and a fabulous reef. Sadly the recent cyclone through the south of Upolu has damaged the coral but is still teeming with fish.



Above: Ross Bismead, NZ Adventurer and Trip Leader with Sue circumnavigating Nuulopa.



Sue approaching Nuusafee Island.

After lunch, we headed further west for our first official ocean paddle. This stretch of volcanic coastline was spectacular with numerous sea caves en-route and black sand beaches. The original plan was for the predicted SE to help propel us up the coast, however the winds changed to SSW so we were heading into 14 knot winds for the 12km journey with some lumpy conditions on the water and a spot of rain. Our destination at Black Sands beach didn't disappoint though, so the effort was well worthwhile.

Day 5: Portage to Malaela. Paddle to Nuutele Island via Namua Island and return to Namua – Ocean paddle

Distance (12km). Wind E 10 knots increasing to 12 knots. Sea 1.4 -1.8m.

Day 5 saw us portage down the coast

for around one hour to get to the Aleipetia islands off the eastern coast of Upolu before the predicted SE winds started to pick up. We arrived at our launch spot of Maleala and kayaked the 20 minute journey to Namua the only inhabited island of the Aleipetia group. Our gear was portaged across by a local boat to our fales and we headed straight off to Nuutele Island, the largest of the Aleiptata group and once a leper colony This was our second official ocean paddle and I must say was a highlight of the trip for me. The Aleipeta's are teeming with sea birds, dolphins, turtles and if you are lucky humpback whales. We made our way out of the reef along with the sea turtles, via a sea channel to the open ocean and made the 5km crossing with a side rolling swell to Nuutele seeing a pod of playful dolphins on the way. Half way to Nuutele the SE

started to come in and made the going to Nuutele quite tough. To add insult to injury the seas increased to two metres with the occasional breaking wave, which was personally for me quite challenging. We stayed close together and continued on as there was a chance we may be able to land on Nuutele and take a look around. As we neared Nuutelle, Shearwater birds flew out from the island and hovered over our kayaks inquisitively staying with us all the way to the island. They were quite majestic. There is only one spot to safely land on the island, which as always depends on the swell and unfortunately for us the SE swell was sending powerful waves into our landing spot, making landing way too unsafe for our skill level. We continued to paddle on to see more of the bird life, then as conditions were worsening we headed back towards Namua and into a nearby channel to get safely back into the lagoon for the paddle home.

Day 6: Namua to Fanuatapu Island return – Inshore Paddle

Distance 5km. Wind E 12 knots. Sea 1.4–1.8m.

Today we headed Fanuatapu, one of the outer Aleipeta islands which lies 2.5 kilometres NE of Namua and home to the Aleipeta lighthouse, from

Ross leading the charge to Fanuatapu.



which, on a good day you can see the outline of American Samoa. Due to the increasing wind, sea conditions on the lagoon were quite lumpy. Access to Fanuatapu is via a channel between two reefs. Due to the wind conditions we had breaking surf on either side of the channel so the landing needed to be timed to avoid a side breaking wave en-route. Ross bravely led the charge and did receive a few breaking waves. Magically as Sue and I entered the channel the sea seemed to calm and we managed the paddle to shore unscathed and still upright. Fanuatapu also didn't disappoint. It was teeming with Prions, hermit crabs and lots of cowrie shells. We walked to the top and had a magical view out to sea.

Due to wind and sea chop we decided to have the afternoon off snorkelling and lazing at our fales on Namua Island.

Day 7: Paddle to Maleala – Lay day, conditions too rough to do the Challenge day from Namua to Piula Cave Pool.

Wind 20 knots. Sea 2.4-2.9m.

After a 20 knot wind blowing overnight into our wall-less fales we were grateful for the decision not to do the paddle



Giant Clam.

challenge today. White-caps in the lagoon, choppy seas, a three metre swell and rain made our decision to go inland today unanimous.

Day 8: Le Faga Bay – Giant Clams, Mangrove paddle

Distance 10km. Winds 10-15 knots SE. Sea 0.5m.

After a portage to Le faga bay, we snorkelled in the morning to take advantage of the tide and see the amazing giant clams. Almost 70cm across these clams have been relocated into this marine reserve and are thriving in the current conditions. Teaming with fish life, the clam viewing was another highlight of the trip.

Our paddle today was into the mangroves near Faleaseala. SE winds in the morning gracefully blew us into the protected mangroves where we had more opportunity to test out our boat control skills. These mangroves were also quite pristine and teeming with fish. It was just great ambling here, exploring the tributaries in absolute silence and of course having a refreshing coconut! Our return journey was directly into the SE which had picked up to 15 knots, making the trip back a bit of a grind! After landing back at Le Faga, we portaged back to Maninoa to set up for our final day paddle to Virgin Cove.

Day 9: Maninoa to Virgin Cove

Distance 12km. Wind SE 12 knots. Sea 1m.

Today's paddle was heading west from Maninoa to Virgin Cove, a pristine cove that is quite difficult to access

via road, however kayaking there was quite straightforward. On this day we have the wind behind us all the way and a running current, so the trip was short to say the least! Despite good conditions, it was still lumpy on the water, but amazingly as we kept travelling towards Virgin Cove, we traversed a number of microclimates, the sea flattened. We anchored for a while half way along to view and swim with the turtles and do a spot of snorkelling before our arrival at the Virgin Cove.

As mentioned at the start, kayaking Samoa didn't disappoint and as a novice kayaker, I found this guided expedition a great way to experience multi-day kayaking, explore a country by sea, consolidate and learn new skills, and meet a great new bunch of kayaking mates! I would love to return one day to do a proper expedition kayak adventure in Samoa. I will put that one on the wish list!

Top: *My home (fale) at Namua Island.*

Middle: *The mandatory coconut stop in the Faleasela mangroves.*

Bottom: *Virgin Cove.*



Hawkesbury River Canoe Classic 2014

CONTRIBUTIONS COMPILED BY IAN VAILE

PHOTOS BY JANA OSVALD



Neil Duffy at the start.

This year's Hawkesbury was full of promise, with a favourable tide chart: but it turned out to be quite different, a memorable race through heat and lightning and moonless darkness. NSWSKC paddlers were once again well represented. The race is always a team event with each paddler supported by their gallant landcrew. Below are some of the NSWSKC stories of the night.

Raewyn Duffy

Merridy and I finished, not as quickly as we had hoped, but that became irrelevant somewhere around checkpoint F. By the time we reached checkpoint G, just finishing was the only question. We literally only just made it to the G checkpoint jetty in time for Merridy to be violently ill. At Sackville we were feeling good but the outgoing tide, pitch-black conditions and all the lightning took its

toll. We hit stuff in the water frequently and just missed others, so weren't prepared to hug the shore as much as we wanted to. At one stage we found ourselves trapped in a tree. The water was deeper than the paddle, backing up didn't achieve anything and we came close to swimming. Fortunately some manoeuvring got us loose but rattled.

We limped into Wisemans, into a headwind even though others talked about a strong tail wind at that stage. My plan had been to stay in the kayak while Merridy jumped out for a few minutes and then be on our way, but we both needed a break. Karen and Tony were wonderful, went to work sorting out the kayak and us while Lane Cove members held the boat and provided a massage. I think secretly I was hoping that Merridy would tell me she couldn't go on, but I'm grateful that she's much tougher than that and

after about 10 – 15 minutes we were off again into a very different night. The lightning had stopped, the tide was turning, the stars provided some light, we could paddle in the middle of the river and we were determined to finish. The conditions were quite beautiful. Merridy was still crook but not vomiting and I was feeling pretty ragged so the end couldn't come soon enough. Hats off to anyone who did it on their own.

We did set a record as the course hadn't been paddled by two old girls in an unrestricted double before and more than happy with our time of 10.52.

Adrian Clayton

My HCC 2014 came to an abrupt halt about 1km north of Checkpoint K (about 25km from the finish) when I ran in to the mangroves with enough force to cause a capsize. The paddle was ripped out of my hands in the process. Fortunately I was wearing a skirt and managed to roll up with the aid of a mangrove bough. With the paddle lost, I paddled by hand to Checkpoint K where I had the opportunity to observe the running of the event from another aspect.

Up to this stage, and with both the body and mind up to the challenge, I was on course for a finish sub 11½ hours – about 30 minutes later than I had originally planned. I left Sackville well ahead of my schedule but took half an hour longer to reach Wisemans Ferry than intended, having underestimated the impact of the flood tide. Watching the ferry at Portland carve a wide arc towards me as it crossed was a sobering indication of

the task at hand. The light and sound show put on in the sky during this leg was both spectacular and scary. Unfortunately, my unintended exit meant that I didn't benefit from the fast flowing ebb on the Wisemans Ferry to Mooney Mooney leg.

Disappointed with a DNF (not to mention the lost paddle) but many, many lessons learnt from the night which I will need to apply if there is to be a next time.

Darren Friend

Those times kill me. I was in the Brooklyn or bust first-off group. Not having done anything like this I got caught up in the "race" and was in poor condition when I pulled into Sackville. Physios descended on me, I was stretched out then pulled myself together and pushed on. I settled, the cramping and nausea diminished and I began to enjoy the trip: the storms, the fish and the fog. Took all breaks along the way including another physio break at Wisemans, plus the low tide pit stop and a final break at Spencer. I finished in 17 hours and 5 min, actual paddling time 14hrs 40 min. Glad I did it and now have a yardstick to improve on for next time.

Mark Hempel

My second attempt at the HCC as a paddler was to involve an extremely unfamiliar boat (SLR-2) with a very familiar paddling partner in Rob Mercer.

The seed was sown in the car park at Fisherman's Rd in Malabar one Tuesday evening after our regular paddle. We had about eight training paddles before the start on Saturday evening.

We all know that this event can serve up surprises in the form of a two hour wash ride that can carve many minutes off your time or a tree branch that can carve bits out of you.

The night was quite entertaining with an awesome lightning display, fish

NSWSKC Results 2014			
PADDLER	CLASS	ELAPSED TIME	HANDICAP
Neil Duffy	Men 50+ MREC	3.53	DNF
Rae Duffy & Merridy Huxley	Ladies 50+ UN2	10.52.35	10.02.20
Campbell Tiley & Warren Huxley	Mens 50+ UN2	10.32.50	11.26.37
Mark Hempel & Rob Mercer	Mens LR2	9.42.10	10.03.42
Mark Sundin	Mens 40+ ORS1	10.27.07	11.09.46
Dave Linco	Mens 40+LREC	12.16.16	12.02.28
Darren Friend	Brooklyn or Bust	17.05.45	
Martin Vanderpoel	Mens 40+LREC	11.57.49	11.54.14
Anne Moore	Ladies 50+ LREC	11.24.30	9.21.58
Megan Pryke & John Hutchinson	Mixed 40+ LREC2	11.27.21	10.54.20
Adrian Clayton	Mens 60+ UN1	9.12.00	DNF
Ruby Gamble	Ladies Open UN1	11.43.06	11.05.50
Bruce Lew	Brooklyn or Bust	14.27.12	
Andrew Kucyper	Brooklyn or Bust	13.39.35	
Glen Boulton	Mens 40+LREC	13.02.09	12.38.14
Eric Filmalte	Brooklyn or Bust	14.28.36	
John Duffy	Mens 50+ UN1	10.25.50	10.47.44

launching out of the water trying to eat the cyalumes (light sticks) and the mystical luminescence in the water with each dig of the paddle. As the river lit up with each lightning strike it made the navigation a little easier giving me

a quick glimpse of my line ahead. The heat was unrelenting and started to take its toll between Wiseman's and Spencer. We dug in and made it to the finish line.

A busy start line.



We were fortunate to have no collisions, apart from the odd weed bed and were unfortunately unable to get a wash ride all night. We came in at 3:12am. 5 minutes after our estimate. I was extremely happy with the 9hrs 42min time we posted.

Not too bad for a couple of 'sea yakkers'!

Rob Mercer

We actually paddled faster than we predicted but stopped for a little longer at Wisemans to sort out hydration lines, we also caught two full ferry crossings. At the first one we had just powered past our sea kayaking mate David Linco, giving him and a few other familiar paddlers a bit of a friendly "revv up" only to have them all sitting next to us looking very amused ten minutes downriver as the ferry finally ground up the ramp and ever so slowly switched off the flashing light.

I am famously not a fan of paddling on flat water, it just doesn't engage me like paddling on the sea and I have been known to make loud and churlish pronouncements to this effect. I do this in the vain hope that I don't relapse in the future so it was with some surprise that I started to begrudgingly admit to myself about half way down the river that I was actually enjoying the whole experience of participating in this event. Some of the reasons why:

- 1. Watching ordinary people do something extraordinary:** I remember when I first heard about the race many years ago I found it hard to believe that mere mortals could do such a thing. Distance is a great equaliser that means often the most determined or experienced will beat the more serious technicians and fittest paddlers to the finish line.
- 2. The unfamiliar palette of scents – both good and not so good:** My sense of smell was sharpened especially when we were paddling in the dark with most

extraneous sounds cancelled out by the white noise of paddles and hulls slicing through the still water. Eucalypts, campfires, flowering shrubs, cow dung, damp earth and a houseboat that smelt like a brewery were memorable by their intensity.

- 3. Thunder, lightning and bioluminescence:** I think the light show alone was worth the price of admission! Forks, sheets and balls of lightning ripped through the darkness. Rain showers washed us down and the occasional blast of headwind ruffled the waters and cooled us against the hot soupy night. Bioluminescence streamed off our paddle tips and flared around our bow wave.
- 4. Celebration of Diversity:** Canoes, Kayaks, Skis, SUPS, and paddlers; large, small, young old, male or female all sharing the experience of a night on the water and all tied together in the darkness by a spirit of goodwill and common purpose.
- 5. Learning:** It was fun to be the student rather than the teacher to ask questions and learn more about the nuances of flatwater paddling from serious flat water racers.
- 6. The training sessions:** Flat water is a more static environment for measuring performance than the sea so it is easier to gauge fitness and technique without the complications of the three dimensional paddling environment you find among the waves.
- 7. Finishing:** By this I don't just mean the relief of finally being able to stop paddling. There is something very rewarding about setting a goal, developing a plan and then executing it as best you can.
- 8. It's for a good cause:** Over the long and auspicious history of the race it has raised millions for The Arrow Foundation to help them continue their research into better cancer treatments.

Mark Sundin

What an experience it was, without a doubt the most interesting and challenging night out on the river of all of the six Classics I've now completed.

From the first checkpoint there were lightning strikes all around, but thankfully nowhere too close.

One massive strike far to the east sent a chorus of ooohs from the pack in which I was furiously duelling, but it was so far ahead of us that the only people in the firing line were the record setting K4 crew, and they were going too fast to get hit.

The fork lightning storm ended with a brief deluge at about the 30km mark, to be replaced as the dark descended by an amazing sheet lightning storm which illuminated the entire world, a blessing as the moon was busy shining brightly on Bolivia.

Somewhere around 85km, I watched ball lightning bouncing around in a cloud out to sea, but that was almost the same time the bright bioluminescent algae dancing around my paddle shaft morphed into tiny aliens, so I stand to be corrected on whether that was there, or not. I was shaken out of my chat to the martians by a severely bloated dead sheep, which I unwittingly jabbed hard with my paddle as it drifted into my ski in the darkness. Don't even ask why I only smelt the poor creature after I'd poked it.

I stopped to change into warmer pants at Wiseman's after 60km, then took off to do the last 40, hopefully within the 4:12 I'd left myself to get under 10:30. I had a brief stop at a houseboat to get my drinking tube unkinked, whereby one of the blokes on board cracked me a beer and handed it over. I'll call him Shhhhimon, because he was shhhhpeaking the least amount of shhhhhit. I took a swig to be polite, then backed out into the darkness, while they loudly debated why any dumb basshtard would row a f#%cking canoe down a f#%cking river in the middle of the f#%cking night. On

reflection they weren't being entirely unreasonable.

Slowly the tide swung as the river widened out, my pace picked up and I began to claw back that dastardly AVG SPEED reading. I was busy bathing myself in hubris at the 100% navigation job I'd done in the dark, when I noticed Checkpoint 'O' far away on the left bank. Bugger, I'm on the wrong side, I swung left to shout out my number only for them all to yell in chorus 'TURN RIGHT!' Bugger, I wasn't on the wrong side, I'd just added 600m to my race by going to the optional Spencer checkpoint.

Whistling along the second-to-last stretch, I heard the familiar whoosh, whoosh, whoosh of a faster craft looming beside me, and like a gift

from Gough I had a fast-finishing SLR2 to draft home. I bumped these hard-paddling generous blokes about 10 times as I surged when they eased, apologising only to hear 'no worries' 'it's alright' barked back every time.

The island at Milson's Passage loomed, followed by the lights of the finish, and having edged past my hairy godfathers in the double, they rightly powered past me right at the end to pip me by a few seconds.

10:27, and now officially retired from the Hawkesbury Classic.

Dave Linco

This was my third classic and while the tides looked favourable, it's not

something I was jumping to register for. Who does? For those who have enjoyed the elation of finishing the HCC you also know there is pain that just has to be overcome in no easy way.

With only 2 harbour training paddles of 4hrs my training was poor but I was still determined to crack my 2013 time of 12.45. The nutrition also changed from the last two years to predominantly liquids, supplemented by muesli bars and gels, a last minute add in. I can eat almost anything but those gels had my gut churning in the first leg after to Sackville after which I returned to my tested nutrition.

The only incident for me was at Wisemans where an otherwise fast stop was prolonged by a generous application of "Extra Heat" Deep Heat on my shoulders and neck. Now, I love my chilli but that potion is pure evil. After trying very hard to stay composed in front of other paddling teams and trying to wash it off quickly in the river, the fire burnt hard on my shoulders with my landcrew crying with laughter. I never did find the first aid tent but the physios gave me some alcohol wipes, which helped dull the pain after which I headed out again trying to make up time.

One micro-sleep whilst paddling on the home stretch promptly woke me up and I paddled in at 5.15am completing it in about 12.15.

I was pleased with my form this year and that I improved my 2013 time but will have to go again to break the 12 hr barrier.

Megan Pryke

The decision to enter the HCC somehow just happened itself. In August 2014 I was paddling with John Hutchinson and we spoke about the HCC. A few weeks later Kevin Kelly offered to lend his Mirage 730 and John's wife offered to be landcrew. On the early bird registration cut off

Eric Filmmater at Wisemans Ferry.





Ruby at Wisemans Ferry.

date John and I had a registered team name of "First timers". We decided to go with the competition class for extra motivation.

Based on the average speed on our longest training paddle and a rough understanding of the tides I calculated a 13.5 hour completion time. Our secret, unstated goal was 12 hours.

Seeing the array of racing kayaks at the 5:30pm line up, I knew we would soon be followers. Once paddling I discovered I had a left shoulder niggle that gently reminded me of the importance of good technique. Before checkpoint A we made our first pass of a paddler who had an earlier start time. He was dressed as an undertaker, wearing a dark suit with tails and a top hat and paddling standing up in a coffin decorated with flowers! We did not see him again, perhaps this was a good omen.

We experienced a few bottom drag moments in the upper reaches, the occasional thud of hitting a log or jellyfish, and glanced past a few

mooring buoys. A kayaker was chatting to a checkpoint while his kayak was sitting at right angles to the river. I was aiming to be close for check in and paddle around the stern of this kayak when he unexpectedly shot backwards oblivious to other kayaks converging towards the checkpoint. I hit the left rudder passing between the checkpoint and the kayak. An alarmed checkpoint attendee sternly told me the boating rules were to pass on the right. At least I followed the over arching rule to avoid collision at all costs!

We made it to Wisemans at 12:20. During a half hour off water break I put on a woollen thermal, hydrated, ate food and topped up supplies before getting back into the kayak at 12:55am.

I had not heard the 5am hourly watch beep when we reached the Milson Island passage so I knew that we would finish before our earliest ETA. We got the finish checkpoint at 4:57am.

Ouch! I needed to lift my arms to peel off my wet layers to find my oblique

muscles the sorest I ever recall them being. Overall I was pleased we made it to Brooklyn in good condition with no illegal or legal drugs.

Campbell Tiley

This was my second time in a double and my 5th Classic, the first having been in 1989 with a friend from work in the agonising time of 14:54.

We got a ripper start courtesy of Warren Huxley's precision steering and a short but satisfying wash-ride off a K4 with a comfortable and fairly fast first 30km.

The electrical storm for several hours after the start provided some distraction and a little mental activity calculating the distance to the strikes, some quite close with sound at 300m/s or so.

The middle section was tough against wind and tide and recurrence of a problem I have experienced intermittently in endurance events – dry retching and a few bouts of genuine chundering. They did slow me down at Wisemans and once I improved after that, Warren started to succumb. The solutions seem to be multifactorial (having done some post-race research) dealing with a shutdown of blood flow to the small bowel due to the adrenergic effect of exercise. Further reducing fibre several days pre-race, maintaining good hydration, better pre-race testing of the planned diet during exercise and acid reducing medications are advocated as potential solutions.

Surfing and broaching with a southerly squall behind us coming down the strait into Wisemans provided an unexpected wake-up at midnight. The final couple of hours were magic with glassy water, stars out, bioluminescence and still a bit of tide to push us along.

We paddled slower than we might have hoped with a perfect run but were very happy to finish and in my best time yet of 10:32.

Owen Walton (Landcrew)

In 2010 my good lady wife Anne broke the old Class record in a Sladecraft "Flash", but was in turn well beaten by Rae Duffy as she went on to win not just the Class, but was overall Handicap Winner; (Annie was 6th).

In 2011 she partnered Jack Ward, in his wicked looking, black, all carbon Sladecraft "SLR2" double. In less than ideal conditions they went on to blitz their Class in well under 10 hours, setting a new Long Rec 2 Class Record.

This year, Annie decided to go in a single again and the boat she decided upon was yet another Sladecraft, the "SLR1".

Col ("Professor") Sheringham and I were again to be her Landcrew, as in previous years. We'd meticulously planned all the details including:

- Boat preparation – ripple rubber seat padding covered with sheep skin (she has a skinny bum), mounting for her two GPS units and pedal set up to suit the long journey
- Food/hydration system – one drink container with energy drink, the other contained plain water. She supplemented this with GU "Chomps" and no other food.
- The course along with all Checkpoints was loaded into her main GPS this meant that at night she basically just had to follow the "pink line" on the GPS, which also gave her speed and the distance travelled.

She got a good start. Her time at Checkpoint D was ahead of schedule, but by G she was starting to lose time. We were concerned as the storms and lightning were quite near and obviously in the path of the paddlers. By the time she arrived safely Wisemans she had lost about 15 minutes.

As we headed out up through the hills between Wisemans and Dural we ran into serious storms with almost continual lightning, thunder and driving rain. I had to have the wipers going flat out and was driving at about

60 Km/hr. I was also starting to become a very worried old man regarding the conditions for the paddlers out on the river.

When we got to the finish at Mooney Mooney, the conditions were quite calm. Whilst waiting we were told that conditions on the river were not as severe as we had driven through, and that no disasters had occurred. She was the first woman paddler to finish at 11.24.30 giving her 3rd overall. Col and I were delighted at her performance and she was satisfied that she'd given it her best shot.

Ruby Gamble

I took just under 16 hours in 2012, just under 14 last year, and this year I did

it in 11:43. I started at 6pm, paddling a Sladecraft Sonic (UN1) in Ladies Open. I was really happy with how I paddled and felt completely comfortable for the whole race, apart from my vision. While I kept stops at Sackville and Wisemans to a total of 26 minutes, I lost 40 minutes to stops at Checkpoints F and K because of blurred vision. This was brought on by dehydration due to the hot and humid conditions on the night.

Highlights were the thunderstorm and sheet lightning, the phosphorescence from Spencer to Bar Point, and checking in with other paddlers along the way. (Members of my other club LCRK were marked by an orange cyalume on our PFDs). It was nice to finish in the dark for once, and there's plenty of spare time to lose in next year's race!



Merridy and Rae at the finish.

Murray River

16-24 October 2014

PHIL ROSE

Paddling in and out of Sydney Harbour, with the OANDORA group, is pretty hard to beat but occasionally it is fun to try a different waterway. Quite a few intrepid paddlers have travelled the full lengths of our inland rivers including the 2500 kms of the Murray River.

Not wanting to spend weeks on the river, I chose the section from Tocumwal to Echuca, a distance of 178 kms, passing through a very scenic part of the river. I was very fortunate to find some fellow enthusiasts, Mark, Steve and Deborah to share my adventure. I still think a group size of 4-6 is ideal for an expedition paddle.

Even before leaving Sydney I spent many happy hours putting together my Float Plan. I was rather surprised to find that the stretch of river I had selected is traversed every year by over 1000

kayakers participating in the Massive Murray Marathon. My planned trip was to extend over 6 leisurely days of 30 km/day as contrasted to their travel times of 2 days for the same journey.

My three travelling companions each had their own views about my Float Plan:

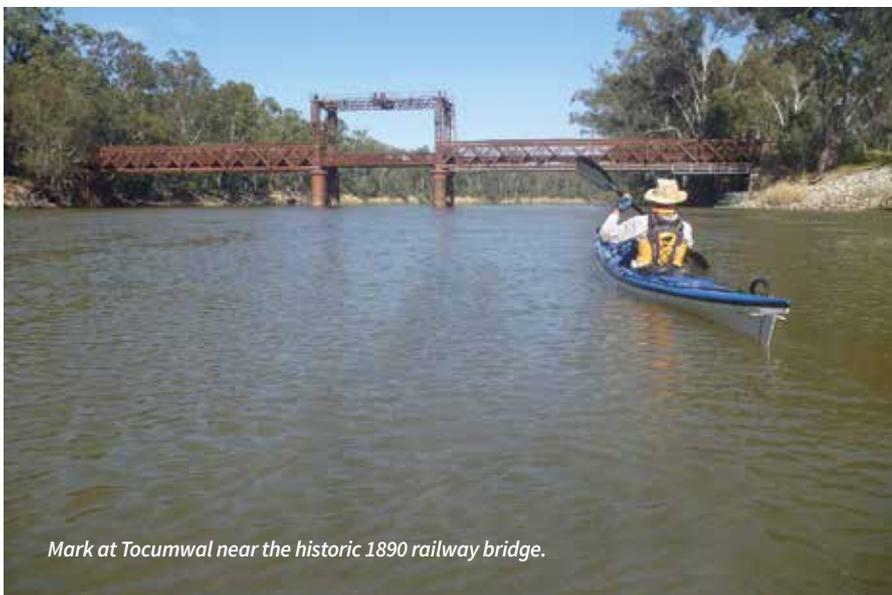
1. Never query the Float Plan.
2. Always follow the Float Plan
3. Never vary the Float Plan

However, I now think a good Float Plan provides a flexible framework

for the trip, tests the logic of the trip, proves it is achievable and, far from being rigid, allows a high degree of flexibility. Another important use is to create a set of shared expectations of the conditions to be encountered and the amount of effort required over the nominated timeframe.

The car transfers were made very simple by having 4 cars, 4 kayaks and capacity to carry 2 kayaks on each car. Our happy team met in Tocumwal on the Friday morning and we drove 2 cars to Echuca to be left for the end of the journey. The cars at both ends were left in safe parking areas with plenty of people around to hopefully deter car thieves.

After two days of driving and mucking around with gear it was a great relief to finally get on the river. Conditions were absolutely perfect with a nice river flow of 2-3 kms/hour, generally light winds from the north and very few mosquitoes or flies. The weather was superb with clear skies and the temperature between a chilly 6 degrees early in the morning to highs of 33 degrees in the afternoons. Our routine was pretty simple, with a slow start in the morning, paddle for 1.5-2 hours, long morning tea of up to 1 hour, another 1.5-2 hours paddling for a long lunch (or siesta) and 1 more hour paddling to reach a camp site around 4.00 pm. We found that generous breaks gave us time to enjoy our surroundings as well as making the paddling very easy and avoid the temptation to undertake our own "Murray Marathon".



Mark at Tocumwal near the historic 1890 railway bridge.

Despite my extensive research I did not take a detailed map. Fortunately, Mark purchased one of the very detailed Murray River maps, no doubt developed in the days of the paddle steamers. Every few kilometers along the river there are signs indicating the distance to the Mouth. We paddled from 1892kms to 1712kms. Combined with a map and a watch we were able to locate ourselves and plan each stage of our journey to arrive at a fantastic camp or rest site.

This stretch of the Murray River flows through red gum forests, part of the Barmah National Park, described as the biggest river red gum forest in the world. (Not sure what other country has red gum forests?) A close inspection of Google Earth reveals that the Murray River makes a sharp turn south at Picnic Point. Between 75,000 and 20,000 years ago a series of uplifts raised a triangular block of land up to 2m above the surrounding countryside, the Cadell Fault. An anabranch, the Edward River, flows north at Picnic Point and re-joins the Murray further downstream.

Campsites were plentiful with the first three days comprising sandy beaches. On our first night we camped under a tree containing a koala and during the night we saw several more koalas climbing trees and making their strange guttural noises. Other memorable moments included paddling through the Barmah Choke, a narrow channel bounded by levee banks, flowing into the Barmah Lake and Moira Lake. Deborah also paddled a little way up the Goulburn River, against the flow, when we encountered its junction with the Murray River.

Our little adventure ended in the historic river port of Echuca as we paddled next to the river steamers and got a friendly greeting from the day-trippers. Apart from our happy days on the river we really enjoyed the many well preserved historic towns.

We shared a final afternoon in Rutherglen vineyards before heading back to Sydney to plan our next adventure.



Deborah and Mark in perfect paddling conditions.



Steve in a creek off Barmah Lake, with beautiful river red gums surrounding.



Our destination at the historic river port of Echuca complete with paddlesteamers.

JUST COME DOWN FROM THE Isle of Skye

GEOFF DAUNCEY



I recently had the opportunity to spend five days paddling the Isle of Skye, located off the west coast of Scotland, with Gordon Brown from Skyak Adventures. The programme was “an over fifties improver”, consisting of three days skills development and a two day overnight expedition.

I arrived at the somewhat rustic Ashag campground in the little community of Lower Breakish and was welcomed by a jovial “landlord” who was only too happy to show me the facilities on offer. The grounds were formerly worked by crofters and there hasn’t been much in the way of improvements in the conversion to a campground. It remains basically a cow paddock, without pegged or mown sites, just

a couple of old converted caravans for a community kitchen and lounge area. After being given a wooden peg to “stake my claim”, I was directed to pick a “site” anywhere in the paddock, as long as it was not too close to other campers.

The next day was overcast, the wind was variable and there were intermittent light showers, typically Scottish. This would also be the weather pattern for the following two days.

I met up with Gordon, his wife Morag and another five members of the group from Sweden, Canada and Scotland. Over coffee we all gave an overview of our kayaking experiences, most of

which were equivalent to a low grade 2, as most of the group members had not had the benefit of paddling and training with a club. Gordon then explained in more detail how the programme would be structured, based on our needs. He then discussed some of the paddling conditions; wind and tides, around Skye. The “rule of 12ths” and calculating “ferry glides” is important when you are negotiating 5.4m tide ranges and tidal races of 9 knots, something not experienced around our local waterways. The Beaufort scale was also an important reference to consult on Skye, as the island is exposed to the Atlantic Ocean and often experiences gale force conditions.

After the morning briefing it was time to get on the water. Gordon had a number of skeg boats we could choose from, around fifty it seemed, scattered around his yard. They were mainly Valley, Tiderace, North Shore and Arrow brands. Werner euro paddles, with either straight or bent shafts were available. We were also supplied with wet suits, as the water temperature was around 12°C.

We practiced forward, turning and bracing strokes while surfing standing waves in a tidal race; caused by wind opposing a strong tidal flow, slalom around bridge pylons in a strong tidal flow; while trying not to lose too much gelcoat, breaking in and out of tidal races, and seeking the calm waters of an eddy. We also practiced self and assisted rescues and balancing exercises, which provided a bit of fun and some laughs. Each day ended with a hot spa, a cup of coffee and de-brief back at base.



Gordon briefing team on Scottish beach.

Fortunately the weather cleared for our overnight expedition. Three members of the group had other commitments and did not join the expedition. The remaining three expedition participants, sorted and packed our kits into dry bags, gathered our paddling gear, loaded the boats on the trailer and we were off to Loch Bracadale, a wide expanse of water dotted with islands and open to the Atlantic Ocean.

The conditions were perfect for paddling in the clear water close to the steep cliffs, checking out the kelp, sea-anemone and “dead man’s fingers”; a soft yellow coral growing on the rocks below water level. The sea birds and eagles were numerous, nesting high in the cliffs. We continued out into the more open water before returning to Wiew, an island in the Loch, to set-up camp for the night. The beach we landed on was a mass of rounded granite rocks, typical of the beaches around Skye. As the tidal range was over 5m in this area, it was necessary to carry our boats about 20m over the slippery cobbles, to an area above the high tide mark.

The next day we paddled across the Loch into a number of sea caves and arches formed in the sheer vertical granite cliffs. Gordon gave us a rendition of a Scottish folk song in one of the caves; the acoustics were incredible and Gordon wasn’t bad either.

It was now time to head home. Back at base we sorted and gathered our belongings, had the obligatory coffee and de-brief before exchanging our final farewells.

This was a week of paddling companionship with people of other nationalities, of learning or refining skills and enjoying a different land and seascape. It was a great experience.

Top Right: *Regrouping on beach after practicing in the tidal race at Sleat.*

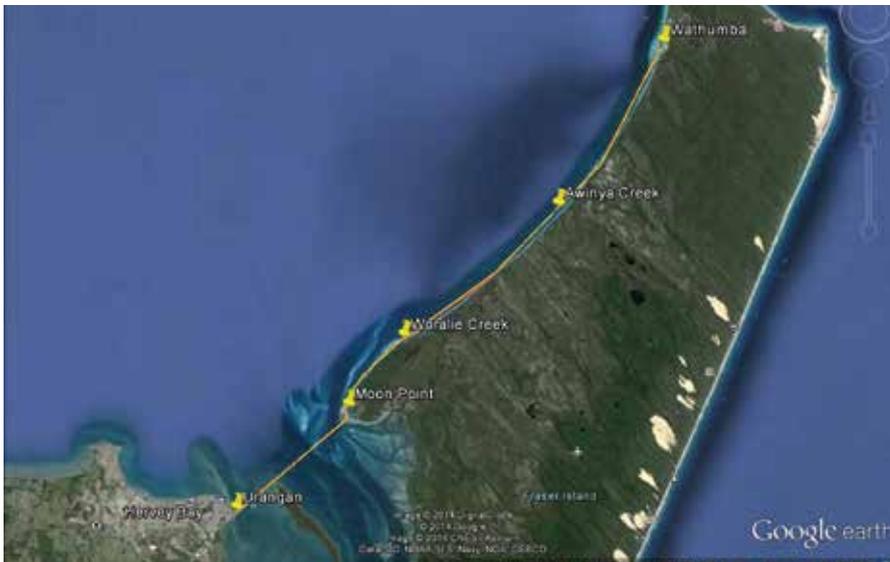
Right: *Entering a cave on the west coast of Loch Bracadale.*



West Coast of Fraser Island

HANS SCHMIDT

Leader: Owen. Troops: Michelle, Debbie, Claudia, Wendy, Brian, Mark, Hans.



Trip route along West coast of Fraser Island.

The decision to go on a two-week trip to Fraser Island without Lek wasn't made without feeling guilty and selfish, but she accepted my wish, our interests diverging a little as we get older. Even the news that I would be sharing the

Claudia's selfie.



driving with Claudia, an attractive woman 25 years my junior, didn't seem to shake her.

Having four weeks to prepare gear, pay for camping permits and book camp sites for the drive up made this part easy and unrushed. Claudia's very comprehensive gear list for a trip of this duration seemed a bit over the top, but proved to be spot on once adjusted to male requirements. Six heavy-duty dry-bags were definitely my best buy.

Freezing temperatures on the New England plateau make us choose the coastal route for the drive north, allowing us to share our camps with Michelle and Owen. Hating long-distance trips by car, I was grateful to have Claudia as my co-driver. She takes to my work truck with aplomb, even in the heavy rain that follows

us up the coast. The kilometres pass quickly as we get to know each other, Claudia's Jazz CD repeating over and over unnoticed. 1200 km in three days mean early stops at our campsites, with spare time for a long walk or to climb a mountain. Owen and I let the women do their thing with the pots while we do what men do best: eat, of course!

While walking the 860 meters to the end of Urangan's heritage pier late on the day of our arrival, a 20 knot sou-wester is blowing white caps across the bay; not a good sign for tomorrow's crossing to the island. Hard ground and traffic noise rouse me before the 5:00am wake-up call. The day begins clear, the near calm conditions a stark contrast to yesterday's blow. An outgoing tide this morning requires a 7.30 start. The eight of us leave Urangan harbour, urged on by shouts from the over-zealous Yacht club guard to "get away from my boats".

Although our goal is visible on the horizon, it takes a while to take on shape and colour. After less than two hours of crossing, we stop briefly at Moon Point to water the trees and us; then Owen urges us back onto the water. We paddle on to Woralie Creek, 15 km further north, with tide and tail winds helping. By mid-afternoon eight weary bodies trudge up the wide expanse of sand to our first camping spot. Numerous tyre tracks remind us to carry our kayaks to the edge of the She oaks lining the beautiful beach. A freshwater creek flows some distance behind the first dune before breaking out onto the beach. Lots of trees to

tie my hammock to, as well as a stout line to hold my six dry bags well out of Dingo reach.

Come dusk, a slow-moving storm puts on a spectacular light show over the mainland. It keeps us guessing for a while, but big drops of rain finally send us scurrying for our beds just after 7 o'clock. Birds wake me early, the east just getting lighter. By the time I've had my Muesli and a cuppa, the beach glows through the she oaks. Finest white sand runs down to a wide expanse of firm tidal flat. The quiet is accentuated by the gentle lap of clearest bottle green water turning azure blue beyond the shallows. Beach stretches north-south in an unbroken curve, fading into the distant mist; a person could walk forever. Overcome by the sheer joy of being here, I look around to share the experience, but in that moment I'm alone on the island.

Well, not quite alone. Dingo tracks are all around the camp; we've had visitors. My bag of oranges and apples has disappeared from where I left it at the bottom of a tree. How stupid of me! I didn't think they'd eat fruit. Now Claudia and I won't either for the rest of the trip. Angry with myself, I walk away from camp and dig myself a toilet hole. About to drop my pants, I see a Dingo quite close in high grass under a tree. It jumps up playfully and rolls in the grass. I get up carefully. Dingos bite people, someone said only yesterday. Forgetting my urgency, I watch the dog get up and lope toward me, stopping not three metres away. Standing resolute, holding my pants up with one hand while waving the other at the dog, I sternly tell it to leave. To my immense relief it does. If ever there was a missed photo opportunity ...

During my absence, Debbie has found my oranges and what's left of the apples. Not partial to citrus, they've left all the oranges and a partly chewed apple. Thankfully, I trim the apple of teeth marks and eat it for breakfast, much to the disgust of onlookers. I can't think what they're so squeamish about. Soon we're on the water for the next leg to Wathumba. Perfect



Owen under sail.



Mark waiting for a wave.



The six monkeys of Fraser Island.



Beach landing.

conditions have us hoping to see whales. I spot the first plume of spray away to the north. They are here, but it's a big bay to find a few whales in. We stop at Awinya Creek for morning tea. It's a gorgeous spot with tall pine trees on a little hill overlooking the creek and beach. We decide to stay here for the remainder of the day and push on to Wathumba tomorrow. I manage to get phone reception home. Lek doesn't seem to miss me much. She's cleaned the house. After a quick reminder to take off my boots outside on my return the line drops out. Hmm, maybe I shouldn't have told her how good a time I'm having.

Some of us decide to go whale hunting. Setting off before lunch, we head north toward a couple of whale-watching boats. Wind and tide behind us, we reach a small pod of whales putting on a good display. Soon whales and boats

disappear, but we spot more spouts to the north. Twenty minutes of paddling bringing us no closer, we decide to return to camp. Lining up a white dune on shore soon tells me we're not making much headway. Wind and tide, now against us, have pushed us further north than intended, making the return very hard. We head for shore, hoping to minimize the effects of wind and tide. Once there, we make better time with less effort. Wendy, ignoring my call, makes a bee-line for camp and beats us there. So much for the weaker sex!

Taking stock over a well-earned cuppa, we agree that chasing across the ocean in near perfect conditions can lull the unwary into carelessness. Had another pod of whales enticed us even further away, we might not have made camp until dark.

I'm getting used to the mostly

vegetarian diet served up by Claudia, each meal tastier than the previous. She planned the meals, bought the supplies and now cooks. Bringing a good cook along was an inspired move. Consisting largely of lentils and peas, our diet is having an explosive effect on our digestion. Miso soup makes a nice change, although the gnocchi are truly forgettable. Evenings we all get together, cook our meals and sit under the stars, warmed by an imaginary fire until at least 7pm, open fires not being allowed on the island.

Early risers, Claudia and I join voices each morning to rouse the troops with lusty renditions of German hunting songs (a CD is on the cards). Today the wind is up, blowing a good 15-20 knots from the sou-west. A nasty 1 metre shore break makes an unaided take-off in fully laden Kayaks difficult. Owen helps me get off the beach, then

Sunset on Fraser Island.



attempts a seal launch. Wind and swell repeatedly turn his bow back toward the beach. He finally gives up and walks the Mirage into the surf during a lull, taking on a fair bit of water while scrambling aboard. No sooner has he joined us when someone clips his rudder and tips in, giving Owen a little rescue practice; then we're off at a cracking pace. Some sails are up and I catch a few waves. For the first time I can't hear Debbie's chatter. Remembering Owen's call to stick together due to the rough conditions, we control our enthusiasm and slow to a steady pace for the 12km to Wathumba.

Approaching the bar protecting the entrance to the lagoon, the swell builds steeply to two metres against the outgoing tide. Backing off a near-vertical wave, I hear the next one breaking behind me. I broach,

get bumped along a bit until free, then get hit again by a wall of white water. Suddenly I'm floating in calm water. That was exciting! My heavy boat behaves much better in surf than when empty. Owen shepherds the last couple of kayaks across the bar without incident and points to shore.

We settle in on the left bank, within sight of a few large boats at anchor or resting on a sand bar. A great spot out of the wind, this will be home for the next two nights. Soon the retreating tide transforms the lagoon into a sandy quilt through which snakes the main channel.

Fishing (no luck), reading and long walks fill the next day and following lazy afternoons as we make our way back to Urangan. Hordes of biting insects make our final camp at Moon Point memorable for all the

wrong reasons. Poor Wendy was still scratching as we had our farewell fish and chips at the local club on the mainland.

A self-drive day trip onto the island the next day exploring its incredible lakes and rain forest interior means Claudia and I spent seven days together driving my old truck. It performed well, while we have become good friends.

To top it all off, a great home-coming. After a big hug, Lek walks me into my man-cave. It's morphed into a proper office plus storage for my hobby equipment; everything is neatly hanging up or sorted into new wire drawers. That was her house cleaning! What a woman!

Lower Left: NSWSKC camp and wardrobe.

Bottom Left: Three wise men: Brian, Mark and Owen.

Below: Michele locking up the house.



Padding Fraser Island.

