

Salt

THE MAGAZINE OF THE NSW SEA KAYAK CLUB
ISSUE 105 | JULY 2017





Cover: Lisa McCarthy eyes off a sea lion in Antarctica. Above: Fernando passing through a gauntlet with some wave play (images Caoimhin Ardren)

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NSW Sea Kayak Club Inc.

PO BOX R1302, ROYAL EXCHANGE NSW 1225

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. www.nswseakayaker.asn.au

PRESIDENT:

Megan Pryke
president@nswseakayaker.asn.au

VICE PRESIDENT:

Tony Murphy
vicepresident@nswseakayaker.asn.au

SECRETARY/TREASURER:

Alison Curtin
secretary@nswseakayaker.asn.au

TRAINING COORDINATOR:

Nick Blacklock
training@nswseakayaker.asn.au

TRIPS CONVENOR:

Selim Tezcan
trips@nswseakayaker.asn.au

ROCK 'N ROLL COORDINATOR:

Simon Swifte
rnr@nswseakayaker.asn.au

INTERNET COORDINATOR:

Stephan Meyn
internet@nswseakayaker.asn.au

EDITOR:

Ruby Ardren
editor@nswseakayaker.asn.au

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

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



From the President's Deck

MEGAN PRYKE

"Sailin' away on the crest of a wave, It's like magic. Rollin' and ridin' and slippin' & slidin', It's magic".

Ok, maybe I am showing my age. The lyrics of ELO's Livin' Thing is just one of the many tunes that I subconsciously start singing when paddling with following seas. Being able to enjoy lively seas has come through the building up of skills and confidence gained through paddling with this great club.

While trip leaders get to do the fun leadership stuff, getting administration working is often an unappreciated role for it just simply works. Overall I have not heard that many grumbles, which is a sure sign things are working. I have tweaked a few things on the club website such as splitting the Paddler grading system page into two pages. The information on equipment includes links to articles on tow ropes as this is often an area where new members need a

bit more guidance. There has been a bit of policy review to reduce repetition and provide clarification and update terminology such as Lifejackets instead of PFDs.

2017 membership fees from the 1st of July 2017 will be \$43 for a single and \$20 for an additional family, the full year fee is \$85 and \$45 respectively. Statistically the number of new members joining in the cooler months is low. Fees for 2018 will be set by the new committee.

I am pleased that the majority of committee members are keen to serve again for another year, though we are always looking for fresh faces and ideas. Come to the AGM, it is always better to have face to face contact.

If you have not been hearing from the club via email it could be that our emails have been filtered into your spam.

We really do need some help with our website, as Stephan has really done more than his fair share. I have been encouraging committee members to take more responsibility for content. The key functions are events and membership data management. For sale ads also receive reasonable traffic.

Our Facebook page is getting information out there on what our club is about; forming a place for members to share their paddling experiences. How the web is being used is changing. Although I would rather see more sea kayakers out on the water than looking down at their smart phones to get a "like" kick, social media is gradually becoming a channel for prospective members to find us on the web.

New member paddles are an opportunity to meet other paddlers. Thank you to Tony for engaging trip leaders to assist in running a couple over winter. New member paddles are not compulsory although it is a great way to find out more about how the club works.

The NSW Island Challenge looks to be meeting its goal despite weather events causing some delay. The next big club event is our Annual General Meeting. Will an East Coast Low hit town or will it be crystal clear skies and calm water? The AGM is always a great excuse to get together with a bunch of like-minded people.

I hope to see you all out on the big blue, even if it is grey.

The NSW SKC is on...

Search for [New South Wales Sea Kayak Club](#) on Facebook to find our page. We hope you will share your kayaking stories and information. Make sure your posts [celebrate sea kayaking](#), especially our club trips, and keep your comments respectful.

The page is moderated, so your comments will be made live after being approved by an administrator. If you're unhappy about a posting or comment on the page, please notify the committee.





As I sit here unable to paddle (see my story on page 38), I am storing up kayaking fuel for when I'm able to get back on the water by reading the wonderful articles that members have contributed for this issue of SALT.

I have learnt, giggled, and been struck with awe at the information and stories that you'll read in the following pages. I am impressed at the contributions to the NSW Island Challenge, which shows we have a vibrant and enthusiastic club,

From the Editor's Desk

RUBY ARDREN

also demonstrated by the coverage of this year's Rock 'n' Roll, which focused on the training aspect of the weekend.

Adrian Clayton has busily been coordinating the next stage of 'The Coast Boast'. Make sure you enter, because it's the only way you'll be in the running for the \$400 prize from ProKayaks. He's gone to a lot of trouble to set up this competition, so make sure you have a go. You'll find it quite educative - it always takes me a little research to identify the locations > make sure your answers describe where you would be positioned to see the landmark in the photo.

Don't forget to check out Bronwyn and Roy's dramatic news - they somehow managed to be in the right place at the right time...

Saltiest submission **WINNER** EXPEDITION KAYAKS.com

Selim Tezcan, the winner of the 'Saltiest Article' from Salt #102 has been successful again in winning the prize for his contribution to the Solo vs Group article in Salt #104, which shows that it's worth being a regular contributor to Salt!

Selim chose a Vaikobi paddling top. We don't have a photo of his new outfit, as he is once again overseas (where does this guy find time to write articles?).

We didn't follow up properly with



Dee Ratcliffe, who won Saltiest Article for Salt #103 with her article about Sandy Robson's arrival in Australia.

Dee was able to access the full range of Expedition Kayaks' gear from their stand at Rock 'n' Roll with the assistance of Sharon

Betteridge, and also selected a Vaikobi paddling top.

Thanks to Rob Mercer and Mark Sundin of Expedition Kayaks for their generous donation. Don't forget, another winner will be selected from this edition. May the saltiest submitter succeed!



EXPEDITION KAYAKS

Drop in anytime from 0830 to 1800 Monday to Fridays.

3/185 Port Hacking Road, Miranda, NSW 2228
Phone (612) 9559 8688 or mob 0417 924 478

Lost Our Landmark: Old Man's Hat fell into Port Jackson!

Early in April **Roy and Bronwyn Davies** emailed the kayaking community with sad news...

Dear Kayaking Friends,
This morning we witnessed the disappearance of a kayaking iconic landmark.

I was taking photos of Bronwyn between Quarantine Head and North Head in Sydney Harbour.

Much to our amazement, in the background we saw and heard Old Man's Hat teeter then fall with a crash into the sea below.

Incredible, see attached photos.
Regards Bronwyn and Roy Davies

See page 18 for the response to this amazing news!



Rock 'n' Roll 2017 paddles to left: The Tollgate Islands and right: Three Islands Reef (Images Cath Nolan)



ROCK 'N' ROLL

BATEMANS BAY 2017

Batemans Bay is always a popular location for Rock 'n' Roll.

Expedition Kayaks once again put on a fantastic spread on Friday night, welcoming people as they arrived. A few were daunted by the big seas on Friday and the unusually large surf break on Corrigan's Beach but by Saturday it had calmed enough for the majority of

planned trips and training to go ahead. Sandy Robson wowed everyone with her talk at the Saturday night dinner.

Sunday dawned to increasingly calm weather (not so good for the sailing group). After trips and training a rolling competition saw Rodrigo Matamala take out the honours, rolling 18 times in one minute. A good-sized crowd stuck around on Sunday night to see David Linco win the Pogies award with

his video of his Bass Strait crossing, with Vincent Weafer coming second with his surfing video.

Monday brought great conditions for paddling, with many of the remaining crowd taking advantage of improved access to the Tollgate Islands, with everyone finishing just before the heavens opened and a downpour dispersed the few remaining paddlers.

Campbell Tiley enjoyed the weekend, and like many others, was struck by Sandy Robson's talk about her recently finished epic journey retracing Oskar Speck's route from Germany to Australia.

If you missed it and hear of another opportunity to hear Sandy speak - don't hesitate.



"Just a bit of feedback from an ex committee member and past RnR coordinator.

I thought the weekend ran extremely well. The Saturday night dinner was the best for many years and Sandy's talk was extraordinary.

You even tamed the weather for one weekend. Congratulations for a great effort."

Many were also keen to take up Sandy on the offer of some rolling training.

Image Selim Tezcan



David Gibbons enjoyed the session on selecting a paddle with Rob Mercer



I like this photo because it shows both Rob M (armed with paddles) and his focused audience during Rob's most erudite talk on paddle choices. I found Rob's insights revealed understandings not available anywhere else - both theoretical and applied. Rob is very generous and unpretentious in sharing his knowledge and experience - which I find remarkable and welcoming for someone so eminent. Quite a few paddle myths busted!!!!

The best thing about Rock 'n' Roll is hearing about new ideas that you can use at home. There was a lot of chatter about **Matt Bezzina's** session on training your brain to build balance. Many people could be heard planning how to set up a similar balance line at home.



And it turns out Wendy Marceau can balance on anything.

Images from a video by David Gibbons



Previous page top to bottom: Russ Swinnerton helps out Matt Bezzina with his sailing lesson, instructing the group on the best sail setup (Ruby Ardren [RA]); Neil Gow takes a break from helping Simon Swift run RnR to flog some of his famous honey (Selim Tezcan); paddlers line their boats up on Corrigan's Beach ready for trips and training on the Saturday (RA). This page top and bottom: Paddlers gather in the marquee to hear the day's program (RA); a big swell made a trip to the Tollgates exciting on Friday (Steven Walker).



ROCK 'N' ROLL

NAVIGATION EXERCISE

Rock 'n' Roll is the perfect opportunity to pick up some training, sometimes in disciplines for which training is not regularly available throughout the year. **Russ Swinnerton** runs through the exercises they completed on the water.



Briefing on the beach
(Image Selim Tezcan)



Adrian Clayton and I planned a basic navigation skills introduction for Rock and Roll. Our philosophy was to introduce some basic concepts during a short briefing on Saturday afternoon, then try out some strategies and enjoy a good paddle on the Sunday. I'd planned some waypoints to navigate to,

based on what we could see outside the cockpit – transits, a sector light (sadly turned off!), and some compass bearings. We would navigate by dead reckoning from one point to the next. Traditional navigation is all about safe and timely completion of our navigational task – our safe arrival

at our destination – and that's what we achieved.

Above is a snip from my eTrex, which shows the waypoint labels overwritten with the group's estimates of the waypoints. All pretty close -- that's nice work (image above).

Comparing estimates with GPS plots

The distances between the groups' estimate of points A, B and D, and their fix, with the GPS plotted positions, were:

Point	GPS Lat/Long	Adrian's group estimate	Distance between	Russ's group estimate	Distance between
A	35°43.146' S 150°13.130' E	35°43.173' S 150°13.212' E	133m to SE of target	35° 43'.145 S 150° 13'.161 E	46m E of target
B	35°43.598'S 150°14.711' E	35°43.604' S 150°14.833' E	185m to E of target	35° 43'.617 S 150°14'.795 E	131m SE of target
D	35°43.759' S 150°13.616' E	35°43.800' S 150°13.722' E	177m to SE of target	35° 43'.813 S 150° 13'.787 E	276m SE of target
Adrian's Group Fix	35°43.831' S 150°13.707' E	35°44'.00 S 150°13'.95 E	480m to NW	-	-
Russ's Group Fix	35°43'.805 S 150°13'.737 E	-	-	35° 43'.8 S 150 ° 13'.7 E	Nailed it, despite size of cocked hat

A difference in position between observation and GPS isn't a failure

I'm not calling the distances between the groups' positions and the pre-determined positions 'errors' – we were using transits where possible, independent of observation errors, positioning us relative to the dangers, and the land, rather than to a lat/long. As we briefly discussed on the beach, the surveys in this area were done by traditional surveying methods, establishing reference (trig) points, and triangulating key features using horizontal sextant angles – surveys which were less accurate than the GPS receivers under our

bungies. The absolute positions of major objects on the chart will be accurately related to the GPS datum being used, but the shape of the land on the chart won't always be a perfect representation.

And with most pro navigation stuff I've been involved in offshore, I've used positions to one decimal point, or one tenth of a minute of latitude and longitude - an accuracy of around 185.2m.

So when our GPS is giving us positions of three decimal points, it's claiming an accuracy of a couple of metres – 1.8m, in fact. So rather than asking ourselves where we are in Bateman's Bay, we're asking whether we're in the front or the

rear cockpit, in a double kayak. So it's more precise than we probably need, and claiming more accuracy than the GPS is capable of.

Transits are not always as charted

Waypoints B and D were based on the same tricky transit, of the right-hand edge (RHE) of Three Island Point, and RHE North Head beyond it. The chart indicated that the three islands would open to show us the near point in line with North Head beyond. But it didn't. Instead, we had a muddle of islands and edges – but my group's estimates of Point B and D lie on the line joining RHE North Head. So we were seeing the transit consistently (image below).



Know your paddling speed

Even without reaching Point C (which you would have loved – a yacht rounding mark on the spot, and a vertical angle distance to combine with our bearings...), we completed a voyage around Bateman's Bay in a safe and timely manner, consistent with our planned track. We used DR – dead reckoning – to give us a distance and direction to cover between waypoints, and that worked out pretty well. Our measured distance paddles gave us a speed of around 8km/h, which was a bit faster than our eventual cruising speed, which was just under 7km/h. It's worth measuring out a distance somewhere near where you often paddle, and checking your speed (by stopwatch) regularly. If you want to use the speed for DR, it needs to reflect your speed after a couple of hours, not when you're sprinting straight after breakfast.

Paddling the square

Paddling the square is always an interesting exercise. I tried to hold an accurate course on legs 2, 3 and 4, after manoeuvring from the back of the group to the inside on leg 1. Our courses were the cardinals – W, S, E, N (or allowing for variation: 283, 193, 103, 013), giving us the following trace. Not a bad piece of geometry (image right).

Lessons learned – we should make sure we have ruddered boats keeping the course – the aim is accuracy. But it's still a pretty good plot. The GPS positions at

the beginning and end show there was very little tidal stream effect. That's a great teaching point – the paddlers return to the start point on the water (Adrian's paddle float), but the GPS track in a tidal flow is slanted downstream, with the distance between start and finish fixes equal to the strength of the stream over the time taken to paddle the square.

Fixing Position

When my group took their set of bearings to fix their position, we had talked on the water about the criteria for selecting objects: ideal cut of 60 degrees between bearings; near objects, rather than far; and positively identified marks, that couldn't be mistaken.

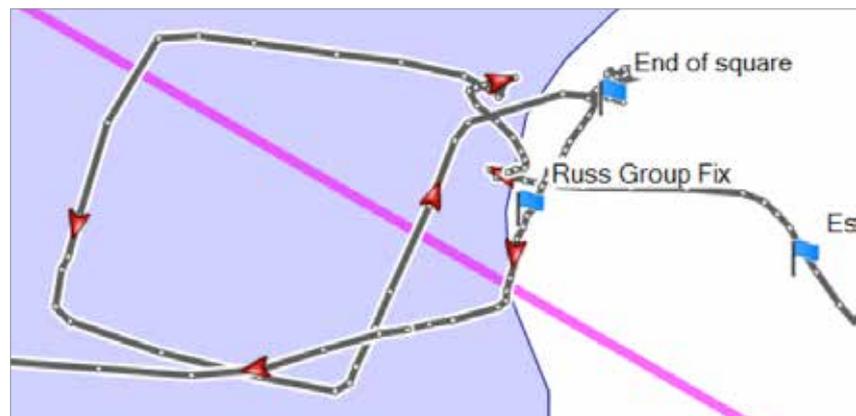
When we applied magnetic variation to those bearings, and plotted them later in the marquee, we produced a large cocked hat (or triangle) with sides of about 200m. Hmmm. But the latitude and longitude of the centre of the cocked hat was 35°43.8 S 150°13.7 E. Forgetting the slightly artificial precision of

the GPS, this is bang on the GPS position, accurate to our one decimal point. Good work, despite the slightly large cocked hat.

Estimating Distance Off

We also tried an estimating distance-off exercise, using the group's average to give us our best estimate. So how far was it to the pull-out, from just seaward of Snapper Island? Sampling the group's estimates gave us nine distances, ranging from 1.3km to 2km, with the average 1.65km. By Adrian's GPS our paddled distance to the destination was 1.64km! Don't expect it to be that accurate every time, but do expect the 'wisdom of the group' to be better than any individual estimate.

So that's a quick wrap-up. We hope all who took part enjoyed themselves – I certainly did. Too much navigation is never enough, so I'm always up for some work on the water. Or to respond to any questions club members might have.



The Tollgate Islands, Batemans Bay (Image Peter Monckton)



ROCK 'N' ROLL RESCUE EXERCISE

With so many paddlers available it was the perfect opportunity to run a team event. **Rob Mercer** designed a rescue exercise to test paddler's rescue skills under pressure.

It seems to me that sea kayakers are usually self reliant and free spirited by nature and strive to manage all but the most serious situations without outside help. Indeed, we have no choice when the remoteness of our journeys puts us beyond easy access to external rescue agencies meaning we must manage by drawing on the resources within our group.

With this in mind I have designed a series of exercises to introduce some of the time-critical elements that many of us only experience when something actually goes wrong. This is when many of us find out for the first time that the slick stepwise procedure that worked so well in the standard training rescue scenarios just isn't enough in a real situation.

Often during the debrief after these incidents paddlers will talk about how the unexpected time pressure, equipment failure or communication breakdown introduced new elements that they weren't prepared for.

"The Challenge" not only encourages initiative, teamwork and flexibility of approach but also, highlights the importance of boat handling skills and general on water dexterity. I believe that, as with most physical skills, improvements in performance can be enhanced by creating competitive pressure. Rescues are some of the most demanding situations that sea kayakers can find themselves in



Rob briefs the group before they set out (Image Selim Tezcan)

and yet traditionally they are taught and then practised in a fairly relaxed environment. Even when scenarios are concocted, urgency is very hard to contrive and often not taken very seriously. Other time-critical skills such as surfing have the pressure built into the skill by the very fact that the wave itself determines the speed and quality of the kayaker's reaction. In the surf if you respond the wrong way the feedback is instant. In comparison, most rescue scenario practice is like practising surfing on flat water without surf; it is an approach that might work for first principles but not for effective performance.

By setting up teams and then giving them a set of challenges including self rescues, assisted rescues, deck carries, contact tows and line tows; then complicating the situation with loss of kayaks and paddles; and finally putting it all in a friendly, competitive environment, we are not just creating some real pressure but also an opportunity to measure what works, what doesn't work and then to reflect on "why". From my experience with this activity teams usually improve quickly, especially given the opportunity to review and try again.

In the Rock 'n' Roll environment this exercise was a little harder to organise than usual. Firstly I had too few participants and then too

many! Also there was the difficulty of trying to create well-matched groups with quite a few unknowns and "wild cards" to team-up. Then the noise of the onshore breeze and small surf made it harder to present and review. This was also the first time that I have run this activity through small spilling surf producing some very tidy single blade surfing, some fantastic rolls, a few optimistic surf landings with no paddle at all and a couple of collisions we could have done without! As usual I learnt as much from running this as the participants did from taking part.

There is nothing unique about the theory behind the session. The coaching principles are well tried and tested in other fields where regular measured, competitive practice is proven to achieve good results for individuals and teams alike. There is also nothing rigid about the design of the activity either, it is just a framework for encouraging problem solving and gauging the progress.

During the debrief participants listed a wide range of specific learnings but I hope they also took away a new appreciation of the value in adding some fun and structure to their practice.

ROCK 'N' ROLL ROCK GARDENING

Saturday at Rock 'n' Roll offered a 'gentle introduction to rock gardening' on rock-free water. For those ready to brave it, Sunday's program included a supervised go at gardening in real rocks. **Steve Hitchcock** tallies up the chips in his newly-refreshed gel coat.

From the dozen or more sessions that were posted on the Rock 'n' Roll website, this one grabbed my attention, so I booked. For the novice like me, it was the words 'introduction' and 'easy' that swayed me, as I was still proud of my new gel coat that I had professionally done just a few months prior. I mistakenly thought that 'easy' translated to safe, perhaps envisaging that Caoimhin had found some rubber-backed rocks out there.

Alas, the weekend weather was forecast 15-20 knots with swells around 2m plus, and those rocks looked like all other rocks up and down the NSW coast, decidedly sharp. I took comfort that I was not alone in a fibreglass hull. Maybe our leader would keep us in deep water.

Some introductory lessons exposed a few revelations. My sideways maneuvering skills were only average, my wing blade disadvantageous, and the surging waters alternately provided deep water then expanses of exposed rock. This was going to be interesting.

The cleft on the opposite side of the river to the campsite provided our first challenge. The cleft started wide, then narrowed down quickly with a couple of doglegs to get

around, both channels having underwater rocks in centre position at those key bends. It was a falling tide.

My mathematical mind told me to paddle when the water was gone, to catch the surge as it passed over that contented rock. Yet my kayaking brain wanted to see full water coverage before striking out. After several failed attempts, I closed my eyes and just went. Generally, closing ones eyes is not the best approach, and it didn't work well for me either. My kayak got stuck on the rock, and only several surges later, could I free myself to the other side. One/Nil to the grinning rock. After watching the others pass through, with mixed success, we turned around and approached the doglegs from the other side. This should be easier I thought, as the surges were more

visible and I had experience on my side.

Two/Nil to the laughing rock. It caught me again, balancing the hull and its contents precariously in mid-air. Some ominous scraping could be heard. Or was it just the other five paddlers chuckling out loud? Mercifully, I escaped faster this time and waited in the rock-pool for the others to get through. I took some sadistic comfort in watching others struggle at the same point.

We moved onto other rocks, where my counting edged up to four or five times that my hull was likely to have been damaged. Meanwhile, between gardens, I noticed that neither end of my kayak was below water, so I figured that it wasn't holed. By now, and finally accepting the fact that the gel coat was well and truly disfigured, I took greater confidence with the remaining





challenges. It started becoming fun. After several hours of practice, I realised that I do like this type of gardening, and was gratefully happy on our return to base.

Somewhat intrepidly, I upturned my boat on dry land. The hull was scratched in very many places with a couple that had caused tiny holes. The front compartment had indeed been taking a little water. A quick repair job was needed before next week's paddle.

Next action item after posting this article - to buy a plastic boat.

Geoff Dauncey also decided that rock gardening might be best left to plastic boats.

Although I hadn't pre-registered for Caoimhin's "introduction to rock gardens", I turned up to the trips briefing on the off-chance that someone would cancel and allow me to join the trip. This was the case and I was in.

As the group paddled out from Corrigan's beach towards Snapper Island, I could see the surge and white water against the rocky cliffs. Had I made the right call, should I be taking my little XCite into such

places? Why didn't I bring my "plastic"?

After we sat off the NE point of Snapper Island for a while, observing the wave action, it was decided that it was too rough to enter the gardens. We then went to the southern side and Rhys was sent into a "gulch" to check it out. Too rough for the "inexperienced".

Next stop was the eastern side of Square Head, where there is a protected channel. Caoimhin went in to assess the possibilities. A little narrow in parts and low surge, but doable.

The group managed to negotiate the obstacles, reasonably unscathed. I was relieved that my little boat had survived. The order was then given - "OK, now turn around and go back through". My heart sank. Rock gardening it all about timing. I sat and watched the surge covering and exposing some nasty looking rocks in the middle of the narrowest part of the channel. Where's my plastic? It was time to go. The surge was against me. Unfortunately I had insufficient momentum to carry me through the slot. The grating sounds were excruciating, until I was left high and dry on the rocks waiting for the next surge to come through. As there wasn't enough room for paddle strokes, I had to use my hands to drag myself through to freedom. With mixed emotions of achievement and visions of gouges in the gel coat, we returned to Corrigan's beach via a reef on the southern point of Square Head. Everyone negotiated this challenge OK, except for Troy - that's another story. Thanks to Caoimhin, Rhys and other members of the group for sharing the experience of a "fun" activity. Next time - bring the "plastic"!





Soldier Crabs

Ruby Ardren was fascinated by this photo by **Mark Sundin** and decided to find out more.

What makes these crabs come out in such large numbers? Mark noted that “we had an extra obstacle to overcome this evening on the way to the water, a sudden invasion of giant soldier crabs. These little suckers were threatening to carry my ski away”. He and his friends noted that while they had often seen the crabs on the Towra side of the Kurnell peninsula on the opposite side of Botany Bay, they hadn’t seen soldier crabs in the Dolls Point area for 25 years.

Soldier Crabs are so named because of their habit of emerging from the sand in their thousands on a falling tide to form ‘armies’. They are found amongst intertidal mangroves, and on beaches and estuaries all down the eastern coast of Australia. They have a distinctive blue body, with long jointed legs with purple stripes. As they emerge on the falling tide, they mould

the sand into pellets, mining it for organic matter and filtering it for microscopic organisms.

When soldier crabs are disturbed they bury themselves in the wet sand, burrowing in with a corkscrew motion. Their habit of scurrying along the beach may be triggered by another less visible threat. Under the sand lurks the moon snail, which until recently was only thought to eat other molluscs. The University of Queensland now has visual evidence that moon snails will eat soldier crabs. The snail surges up out of the sand to grab the crabs, then envelopes it with its ‘foot’, drilling through its shell to suck out the insides. You might have seen shells on the beach with a small neat hole drilled through it? This is the moon snail’s work.

The presence of soldier crabs is an indicator of estuary health. The crabs help remove nitrogen and carbon from the system and ‘cleanse’ the sediment, which reduces sediment mobilisation. It’s a fine balance, because organic enrichment on estuarine beaches

as a result of urban development can reach a point where soldier crab populations will die off. So a falling population of crabs can increase the impact of nutrients and carbon on the estuary.

So while a thousand crabs marching towards you may give you the heebie-jeebies, they’re doing an important job, and are a sign that the beach is healthy.

Australian Museum (2014) Soldier Crabs, <https://australianmuseum.net.au/soldier-crab>

Dr Huelsken (2011) Danger lurking below the sand, UQ News

Lee, Ka-Man (2010) Impact of urbanisation on estuarine mudflats, PhD Thesis UNSW



Top: Soldier Crabs at Dolls Point (Image Mark Sundin). Bottom: Moon Snail.

The Coast Boast

Thanks to all of those who submitted entries for the first round of The Coast Boast. We must have made it too easy as nearly half of the entries correctly identified each of the six locations, which were:

Location	Answer	% correct
1	Approaching Cabbage Tree Island from the NE	100
2	Swansea Heads (charted), aka Reids Mistake Head	100
3	Looking at Steamers Beach and Cape St George from SSW	50
4	Refuge Bay, Cowan Creek (off Broken Bay)	70
5	Blue Fish Point, (Manly) from NNE	86
6	Honeymoon Bay, Jervis Bay	100

The pictures for Round 2 (locations 7 to 12) appear on the next pages with clues (including a couple of anagrams), which you might find are a little more cryptic than those in Round 1. High quality images and clues for each location will also appear on the Club's website (accessed via 'The Coast Boast' link in the navigation bar on the left hand side of the home page).

We are going to be looking for more precise answers in future rounds. For example, rather than identify the main feature/s within the photo, please include the photographer's location. For example, in Round 1 all entries identified Cabbage Tree Island as Location 1 (and were deemed correct) but only a few nominated that the photo was taken from the northern quarter of the island. Put this into a Search and Rescue context and you can see why we are encouraging your answers to be more precise.

Remember that all the locations have figured in a NSWSK Club activity within New South Wales during the last five years. In other words, they fall within an easy day's drive of Sydney.

If you didn't submit an entry for Round 1 it's still worth you entering the competition at this stage. You have the opportunity of identifying 18 locations. Get them all right and there's a good chance of coming out in front. You'll also benefit from developing your feature recognition skills – essential if you want to know exactly where you are as you paddle along the coast.

Email your entries to the coastboast@nswseakayaker.asn.au. To be in contention for boasting rights and the \$400 gift voucher from ProKayaks we will need to receive your answers before the copy deadline (30 September 2017) for the next issue of Salt.

Send us your pics

Members are encouraged to submit photographs to the competition coordinator (thecoastboast@nswseakayaker.asn.au) for consideration as being suitable for inclusion in the competition, however, acceptance of such pictures will be restricted to one per issue of Salt per contributor.

Acceptance of any submissions does not preclude the contributor from including the location as one of his/her answers. The same applies to any Club members who appear in any of the pictures.

Any pictures used in the competition have to be taken in an area in which the NSWSK Club has conducted an activity such as trips, training activities, Rock and Roll events or Navigation Challenges – over the last 5 years. They should show an identifiable feature (even though one might need to look hard to find it!). Shorelines, significant rock formations (such as islands, stacks, hollows, caves, arches, etc), land forms (dominant peaks, unusual contours, ridgelines), buildings, training walls and signage are examples of such features.





Location 7

Richard Starkey's tools of trade in view from this safe haven.



Location 8

Is this beach a gathering place for Maharishi Mahesh Yogi and his ilk?



Location 9

Here you will find an unpunctuated swarm and kayakers' left with Hillary's accusation of the Russians.



Location 10

Pinto foal Argus remounted at this location.



Location 11

Was Adam Lindsay inspired here?



Location 12

Resettled Pops in the nest here.

Lost Our Landmark: Old Man's Hat fell into Port Jackson!

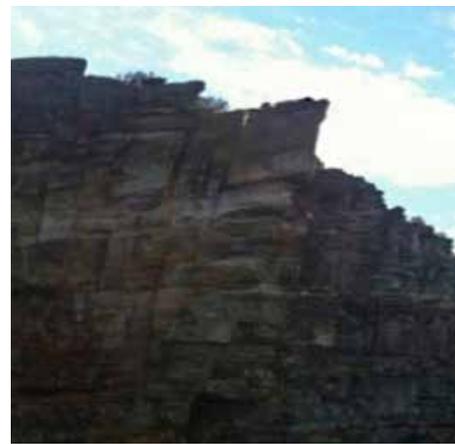
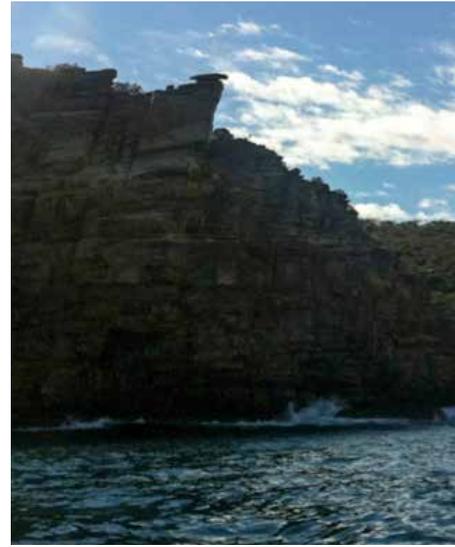
Early in April **Roy and Bronwyn Davies** emailed the kayaking community with sad news...

Dear Kayaking Friends

This morning we witnessed the disappearance of a kayaking iconic landmark. I was taking photos of Bronwyn between Quarantine Head and North Head in Sydney Harbour.

Much to our amazement, in the background we saw and heard Old Man's Hat teeter then fall with a crash into the sea below. Incredible, see attached photos.

Regards, Bronwyn and Roy Davies



Wow lucky no one was under it. Reminds me of the day I walked over London Bridge near Port Campbell and the next day four people had to be choppered off due to it collapsing.



There was another big rock fall at North Head a few months ago so maybe something is subsiding under water and the whole escarpment is sinking and causing collapses.



Thank you Bron & Roy, what an incredible sight this must have been. Add to that your being there with a camera at that moment!



Amazing! What caused that to happen? Did u send the pic to your daily paper?



Amazing and great pictures Talk about being in the right place at the right time!



I am soooooooooooooo glad that someone witnessed it.



That is amazing that you were there for the collapse and saw it.



Blimey. Thanks for sending that through to us. We measure Australia's geological age in millions of years and here you are to witness erosion happening before you.



Good to have alert people on the spot, and quick with the camera. Definitely a picture for the Coast Boast in Salt.



Lucky you weren't in close or you would have got one hell of a fright when a giant rock crashed down.



Extraordinary, thanks Bron



Great sequence.



How did it fall in?



That is indeed amazing! Thanks for sharing the pictures.

On the other foot

There's a wide range of boots designed for use when paddling a kayak. **Ruby Ardren** reviews the ones she has tried.



I underestimated how many paddle boots I've tried in my five years of paddling. The things I consider important when choosing boots are:

- comfort
- ease of getting them on and off
- how much sand gets in
- hardness of sole and what you can comfortably walk on
- bulk
- warmth
- drying speed/smell
- how quickly they wear out and in what way.

The prices below reflect various shipping policies. And there's plenty of other boots out there - these are just the ones I've had experience of.



O'Neill Ninja 3mm Wetsuit Boots \$27.95-\$54.99

My first boots were actually surf booties. I was flatwater paddling in winter, including on early winter mornings, so the warmth of the sock was welcome. They're just like a sock and are perfect for a tight cockpit. They're a bit tricky to get on and off (it's more of a peel action), but fit snugly and don't let any sand in. The soles are a bit thin and you can certainly feel what you're walking on, but there's enough sole to stop your feet getting cut. They take a while to dry but don't get smelly. I've worn them pretty consistently, and still do occasionally, and the only thing that's worn out is the heel. The separated toe was comfortable.

Peak UK Neoprene Shoe \$35.20-\$55.00

These lightweight boots are very comfortable, well-fitted and easy to wear. Fortunately they are easy to take on and off, because you're almost always going to have to empty the sand out after you've launched off a beach, including from the little pocket on the inside arch where the velcro strap is attached. Overall though I was disappointed with these boots for two reasons: you can feel every little thing through the soles and they wear out very quickly across the entire sole, including the sides – the rubber is just too soft. These are a good shoe for summer and dry quickly and are fine for flatwater kayaking in smaller boats, but they're just not durable enough for the kind of environments I regularly paddle in.





NRS Freestyle Wetshoe \$54.00-\$86.62

These boots are so comfortable it's like wearing a glove. We bought them to wear over our dry suits, so we were aiming for warmth and the fleecy lining provides this. I haven't had them a long time so I can't comment on durability. Like most high-cut boots, they're difficult to get on and off but the pull-tab on the heel makes it easier than with other boots of this style. They definitely keep out the sand and to some degree, water. They dry okay and I've had no problems with odour. They're more pricey than some other boots, but I'm really happy with them so far.



Bare feet – free!

Many people prefer to paddle with bare feet. I've never been a huge fan because I find my heels get sore and there's always the oysters and rocks you might have to clamber over when you're getting in and out of your kayak. The upside is that there is a much better connection with your footplate and rudder pedals and there's less bulk in sometimes tight cockpits. You might get cold feet, and if they're smelly you've only got yourself to blame! Paddling in bare feet is not compliant with club policy.

Sea to Summit Blitz Boots - \$59.95

This is my newest purchase. Having previously owned the Sea to Summit Bomber Bootie, I was confident I'd be happy with this new upgraded version, which also comes in an ankle-height Ultra-Flex Bootie. My main problem with the older style had been the loose fit and cord with toggle at the ankle, and this has been rectified. The Blitz has a snug fit that takes a tug to get on and off. Sometimes the velcro strap can re-attach itself, restricting your ability to get your foot in and out of the boot. No sand gets in and they're warm. They're bulkier than most boots because of the thicker sole, but on the upside, you are able to walk over any surface without discomfort. They seem to take a bit longer to dry and this means I've noticed odour, which I haven't in any of my other boots. The soles are so solid I can't see them wearing quickly but I got a deep cut in the sole recently and I'm not sure how (rocks or it just split?). They look like they'd last a long time.



Burke Wetsuit Sneaker - \$39.95

I always called these Caoimhin's clown shoes because they flopped around so much. He does say that he bought them to wear with neoprene socks. Definitely not a snug fit, but comfortable, hardy and long-lasting. They dry reasonably well and don't have odour. Like most ankle boots, they'll let in lots of sand, but they're easy to get on and off. The ridge at the heel means that you rest your heel on a hard piece of rubber that becomes a pressure point. These are designed for use on boats rather than kayaks.

NSW ISLAND CHALLENGE

There's been a lot of club activity circumnavigating islands as part of the 2017 NSW Island Challenge. In fact, people have been so inspired by the challenge that they've been circling a few islands in their own time.

Bronwyn and Roy Davies report circumnavigating Cabbage Tree, Little and Boondelbah Islands on 24 February 2017 and Fingal Island 8 March 2017.

The first Five Islands circumnavigation inspired a group including Selim Tezcan, Josh Andrews, Alison Curtin, Tony Murphy and Karen Darby to do a repeat effort on 6-7 May 2017.

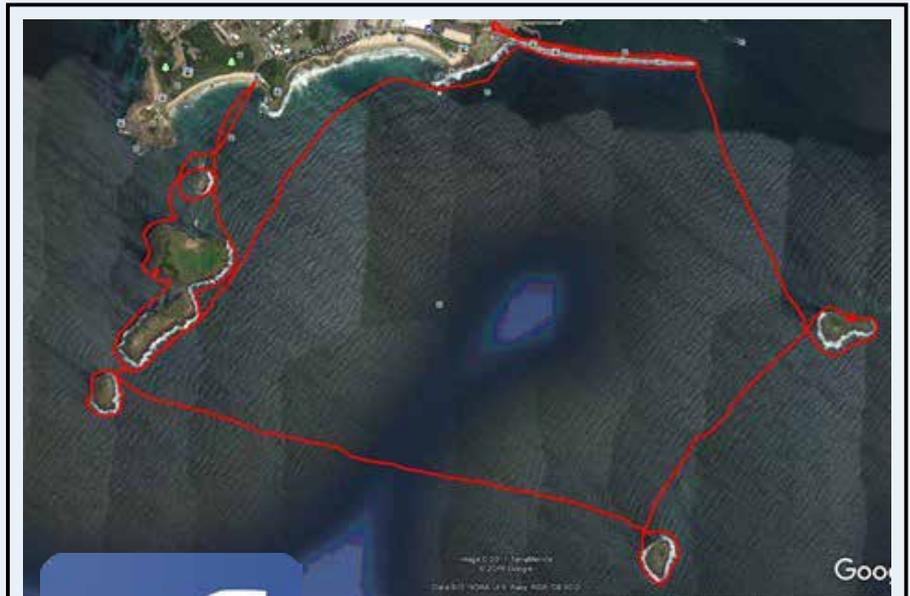
Ruby and Caoimhin Ardren took off to Coffs Harbour to suss out the Solitary Islands for a club trip, only to have the club trip cancelled due to unsuitable conditions - read about their trip in this issue.

A group consisting of Caoimhin Ardren, Geoff Dauncey, Cecilia Goon, Les Allen, Margot Todhunter, Troy Dunn, Melanie Tarantik included a circumnavigation of Bowen Island in their travels on 20 May.

Neil Gow even rang in to report circumnavigating three islands in Lake Trasimeno. That's in Italy. He also reports doing Big and Little islands in Clyde River after RnR.

At Rock 'n' Roll Snapper Island was bagged, but although most paddled out to the Tollgates, it seems only one or two, including Harry Havu, managed to go right around both islands.

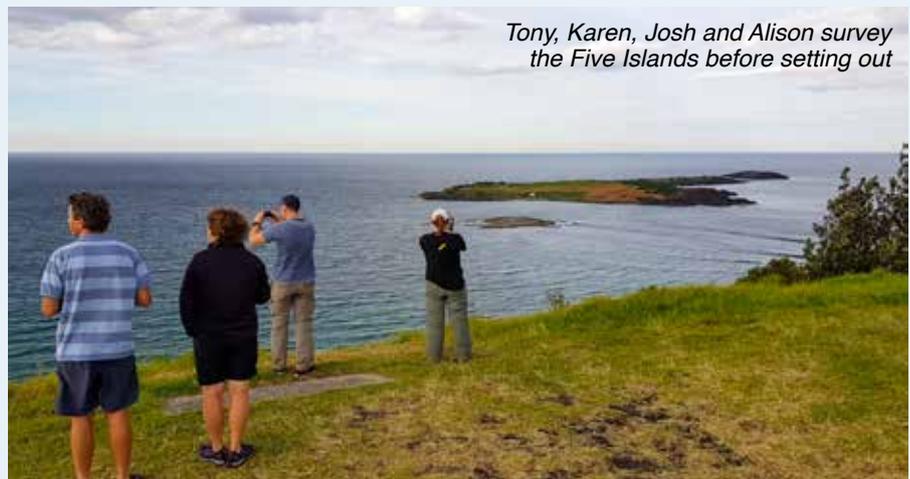
We're going around in circles!



It was a "Wonderful Wollongong Weekend" trip on 06/07 of May.

Circumnavigating the Five Islands at Wollongong was a great experience with a sunny day and lots of seals on Big Island. It was a relaxed 20km paddle with good encounters with wild life. Highly recommended to those club members who have not done this trip as yet.

SELIM TEZCAN ON NSW SKC FACEBOOK



Tony, Karen, Josh and Alison survey the Five Islands before setting out

NSW Island Challenge

Fingal Island, Port Stephens

This on-again off-again island was officially surrounded by water when **Megan Pryke** completed the third trip for the NSWKC NSW Island Challenge, which aims to provide a focus for and inspire club trips.

Trip participants: Richard Hackett, Megan Pryke, Matt Yager.

On Thursday the forecast for Saturday morning was a brief period of moderate wind nestled between thunderstorm events with 25-50mm of rain. At 8 pm on Friday the F3 was drenched by a severe storm.

I was figuring Saturday morning conditions would be grey and muggy with passing showers possible. But hey, I was planning to get wet, so the possible rain did not concern me. We planned to finish paddling by early afternoon to avoid the chance of thunderstorms. When we arrived at Fingal Bay there were clear blue skies and a light swell. It was a magical day to be on the water.

Our route meandered. We knuckled it over the sandy Fingal Spit, well actually I gave up and did the old kayak drag. A timed punch out through surf stirred up our senses. Then along the north side of Fingal Island and an anticlockwise loop around the smaller Shark Island. Our route meandered south then

westwards before returning to Fingal Bay. On the return trip, we dashed through gaps, which due to the rising tide had just enough water.

During the morning the Bureau of Meteorology forecast changed from a moderate to fresh south wind to a steadily building northeasterly wind. We returned to within Fingal Bay by 12 noon with only a light headwind.

Having noted a hut roof on Fingal Island, we set out on a mission to locate it. With three people, one of us acted as a deepwater kayak anchor while the other two portaged the kayaks out and then later back to the water. Richard navigated through dense Bitou Bush to locate the Fisho's hut.



Right: Matt Yager securing his kayak on Fingal Island, Below: Richard Hackett playing in the rock gardens



NSW Island Challenge Broughton Island, Port Stephens

Lisa McCarthy joined an unofficial club trip to Broughton Island in May with a group of club members preparing for a club trip to Tasmania's Hunter Group in 2018.

Broughton Island is one of those magical places that lure sea-kayakers to visit it repeatedly. With its clear water, sandy beaches, dramatic, rugged coastline and views to die for, what's not to love?!

We six met at Soldiers Point on Saturday morning for a slightly longer-than-normal paddle out to Port Stephens entrance. Glorious sunny weather, no wind and calm seas made for an enjoyable couple of hours, with some dolphins performing for the local tour boat. A detour took us around Boondelbah Island, and then we homed in on Broughton. Along the way, we came across a fluffy, downy Muttonbird (Wedge-tailed Shearwater) floating along aimlessly. Nick was awarded hero status as he scooped up the young bird and nursed him between his knees back to the island. Even a surging Con's Cleft passage didn't daunt this rescuer, although it was noted he did put his spray deck back on for this particular part of the paddle.



After landing at Little Poverty beach, most of us set up our tents, had a late lunch and then all bar one headed back out in our kayaks to circumnavigate the island. This was at a more leisurely pace, and enabled us to admire the shoreline and arrive back in camp quite relaxed.

Ferocious mosquitoes ensured near-total skin protection, and we were treated to a dessert made by John; cheesecake cooked on-site! Delicious!

The next morning, our anticipated slow start was pushed aside, and we were ready earlier to try to avoid the south-westerly wind, which was now forecast to then turn southerly and stronger earlier than originally forecast.

We headed towards Dark Point on the distant shore, and stayed in reasonably close to the beach where we watched 4WDs driving along the sand. The westerly wind was minor at this stage, and we progressively aimed toward Yacaaba Headland where a short break for lunch was held, in its protective northern corner.

Once alongside the point, there was a small amount of bounce, and then we turned to head into the building wind. A long, slow slog followed as the wind strengthened to a solid 15 knots. It was good to reach shore, where we could stretch our legs after 6.5hrs 'in the saddle'.

A great weekend with sunny weather, great scenery, good company and plenty of dolphins.

Clockwise from top left: Late afternoon sun on Broughton Island; John heading into Cons Cleft; Camp for the night at Esmeralda Cove; Heading for Looking Glass Isle; Michael on crossing to Broughton Island (with Cabbage Tree Island and Yacaaba Head in background); Lisa and Mark heading for Boondelbah Island; Leaving Port Stephens passing close to Yacaaba Head. Images all by Nick Blacklock.



NSW Island Challenge

Cockatoo Island, Sydney Harbour

In March a merry band of paddlers, including **David Whitfield and Kate Wall**, took a zig-zag tour of Sydney Harbour, visiting a long list of islands and camping overnight on Cockatoo Island.

Leader Adrian Clayton
 Paddlers: Doug Mulvenna, Charles Summers, Mark Fuller, Kate Wall, David Whitfield

While cyclone Deb had all but died, the left over winds were still heading down the coast. The forecast for the first day was placid but for the second it threatened winds that could leave us stranded. Adrian had the solution, there was always the ferry. Kate, the weakest paddler of the group and the only female, pictured herself giving the royal wave to the boys, gallantly towing her kayak home in wind and rain, from the warmth and safety of the ferry (can you get grade two sign off for towing an empty kayak?).

Day One and we were ready to start the Zig Zag tour of the harbour islands. The plan now to pack in the islands on the first day and scoot home early on the second before the big winds came.

We headed out from Sirius Cove, Mosman, past the zoo and Bradleys Head. Then for the first zig over ferry lanes to Shark Island. We

watched our food being choppered onto the island, but with National park fees and restrictions being what they are, we couldn't land to collect. We were destined to starve until our next landing.

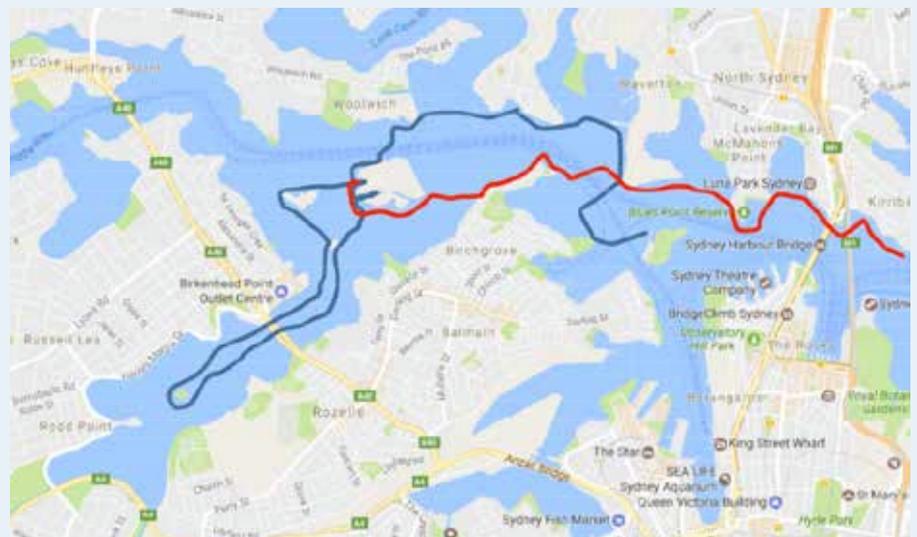
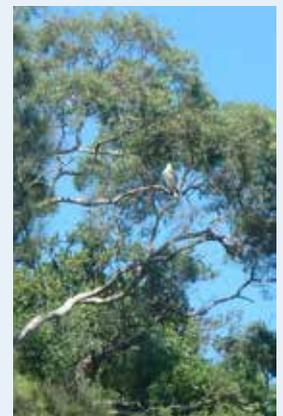
Off to Clark Island, keeping a beady eye on ferries for a zag to Fort Denison. We had magnificent views of the domestic icons, the orange peel (opera house) and the coat hanger.

A dash across the bay to Kirribilli Point; waving vigorously at the looming houses just in case someone important was at home. We travelled around the shoreline and then under the bridge, which was a bit like a t-shirt in a washing machine, swirling chop. It was cool to be so small under the hanger. Then along to Luna Park.

A short cut across Lavender Bay, around Blues Point Reserve then a zig across to Goat Island, west side. Here the leader sought the sea eagle. We were told he had placed it there as one of a few from his taxidermy days, very impressive.

(note from Ed: Adrian has been known to see wildlife in the same place so often that he can claim prior to arriving that he has left a stuffed version in location)

Around to Snail Bay for a while then a zag across to Balls Head. Over to



Manns Head, around to Greenwich Point, across to Clarks Point, then a zig to the southern side of Cockatoo Island for landing.

We set up camp and headed out to circumnavigate the islands in the bay of the Parramatta River.

Spectacle Island and Snapper were ticked off and we paddled upstream to Rodd Island. With Kate left at Cockatoo Island to procure the alcohol, the leader took the opportunity to entertain his followers with lewd sex stories of Sarah Bernhardt on Rodd Island (it's a male thing – note from Kate).

Since our food drop had been unsuccessful, we were excited to see the large pizza oven at our campsite. Official firewood was in short supply so we opted to

sacrifice the wooden boat. David was a bit concerned about getting home until Adrian reminded him of the ferry.

After all were satiated, later fun included musical and opera trivia with bursts of rendition = one line.

It was a sweltering night with some venturing to sleep under the stars. Adrian and Mark said they did not notice the heat. We packed up and headed out in the morning confident of beating the wind home. Passing the other side of Goat Island, across to Blues point Reserve, and under the bridge, Adrian added a few diversions, posing a skills test for some.

The next test needed a slightly smaller boat, so only he could do it.

Doug decided to get his grade two towing signed off and Mark obliged as the towee (no you can't get signed off for towing with an empty kayak).

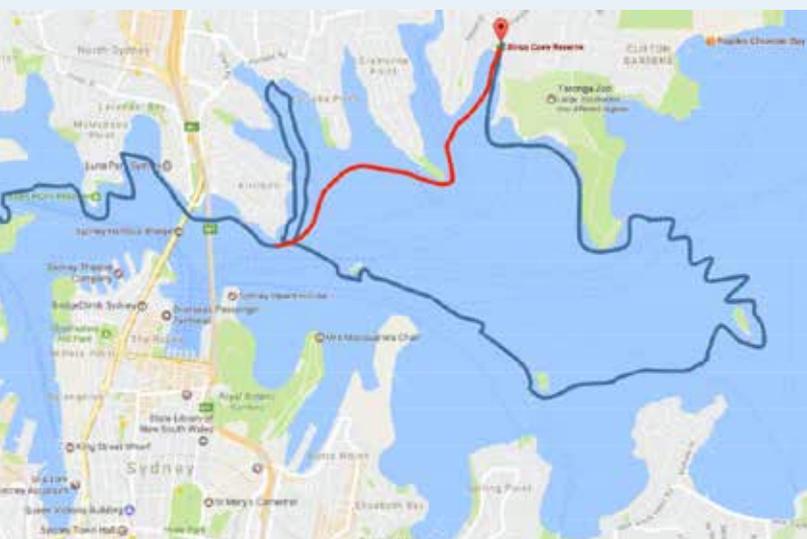
We got to Sirius Cove just as the rain started to fall and it kept falling all the way home, but the wind was nowhere to be seen and paddling in the rain was a pleasure.

We landed, packed and headed off home, and then the big wind came.

Thanks to AC for the enjoyable trip.



*Opposite top and below:
Orange peel - Image DM;
Stuffed sea eagle - Image DW.
This page clockwise from left:
Firing up the oven - Image AC;
Mark starring in a gauntlet
skills test - Image AC; I know
I can do it, easy! - Image MF;
Grand finale photo - Image AC*



NSW Island Challenge

Hawkesbury River Islands

There were so many islands to tackle in the Hawkesbury River, the challenge had to be split over two days. **Troy Dunn** sums up progress on Day 1 and **Steve Hitchcock** closes out Day 2, with islands to spare.

Leader – Caoimhin Ardren
Followers - Ruby Ardren (Day 1), Tony Murphy, Karen Darby, Mark Dabbs, Selim Tezcan, Troy Dunn, Geoff Dauncey, Rhys Ward, Darren Friend (Day 2), Steve Hitchcock.

DAY 1 - TROY

We launched in Parsley Bay, Brooklyn and the first island on our paddle was nearby Dangar Island. The sun was shining over Little Wobby beach to the northeast, whoops...wait a minute, back to the launch.

From a group of ten paddlers we had to wait for one last paddler with the funny reason for his late arrival being that he had gone to the Mooney Mooney boat ramp just off the expressway waiting for kayaks to arrive. So off I went on the glassy brown water, thinking of someone I knew who told me stories about her time on Dangar Island. Her eyes would light up talking about the many hours and years painting landscapes; and the Bridge to Bridge water ski race, which she would go in year after year.

Practising my edging around Dangar Island and looking up at the Brooklyn train bridge, off we went heading across to Croppy Point on the northern side of the river on our way to Lion Island. We tracked along the side close to the rocks where the more adventurous

paddlers started circling a large rock. On navigating our way around this large rock we had to name it, with a quick vote deciding the name 'Shit Rock' - I say no more.

Moving on, the rock gardening, or should I say paddling around rocks

to add more circumnavigations to the day justified wearing safety helmets of course. First stop was a little beach around the corner from Patonga close to Dark Corner – sounds inviting I know. After morning tea we headed out to Lion Island in Broken Bay.



We reached Lion Island from the south then paddled around to the east where one of the paddlers stood in his kayak, as you do out to sea. Soon after there was an outbreak of paddlers rolling their kayaks. After the pod had finished playing in the clean water we rafted up for a photo. Moving on we circled Lion Island and headed for our next stop which was on the south side of the river at Flint and Steel Beach. We had lunch there and watched a local paddler using his barista skills.

We next went up the Hawkesbury to a place called Refuge Bay where the waterfall was putting on a great show. Paddlers ran for the waterfall to find that it was very powerful when standing under it. On the way home the tide was moving along at a good pace that was not in our favour but we made it back okay.

Opposite Top and Below: You can always claim a rock when there aren't enough islands (Image SH); Lined up in front of Lion Island (Image RA). Below: Caoimhin and Rhys take an overdue shower at Refuge Bay (Image SH).



34kms for the first day and against the tide both ways!

I was happy to call it a day and was looking forward to having that first beer. This was day one - Steve Hitchcock had opened his home for the large group to stay overnight and put on a feast which included three different dishes with green curry for all to enjoy. I had a great time over dinner and dessert, which was kindly donated by Cecilia, thank you again to all who joined the paddle and our host and his B&B. It will be remembered.

DAY 2 - STEVE

Around 7am Sunday morning, it was time to arouse my sleepy paddling lodgers. They were dispersed around the beds and floors of my humble abode in Brooklyn, These NSWKSC members were well-behaved quiet guests, unlike the hoards of teenage daughter friends that stayed a few weeks earlier. Well apart from Selim, who had come with whisky bottle in hand to celebrate his birthday today.

Happy Birthday old man, time to wake up and get your paddling gear on.

Like clockwork, we were all down at Parsley Bay ready to launch at 8:30am. Two more joined us at the ramp; Darren in his new boat and Rhys still harbouring an ailment, so not his usual jovial self. The skies were greyer than yesterday, and BOM was predicting a shower or two, with a southerly at around 15 or 20 knots. We debated the merits of fully circling each island

versus a broad arc, then the merits of clockwise versus anti-clockwise, then finally the decision about which ones to visit and which ones to leave out. The tide was in our favour today reaching high (1.4m) at 12:30pm, meaning we had it both ways.

Consensus was to ignore Triangle Island at Spencer, being too far, and to leave Snake Island until our return, once we knew how we were faring. So plan of attack was: Launch Parsley Bay, past Long and Spectacle, inside Peat, around Milsons, inside Bar, around Friendly, around Bar, inside Milsons, past Peat, upstream past Spectacle, option up to Snake, then back past Spectacle, returning to Parsley Bay. The others seemed wary about the distances involved. This was my familiar stomping ground, not only was the trip well-known, but I knew intimately the tides, eddies, oyster farms, history and hidden rocks along the way. It was a pleasure to have fellow paddlers to show around.

Passing Long Island, I pointed out the old concrete walls where the Hawkesbury Bridge was constructed. Each span was completed on the island across these walls, then towed out by barge to the pylons. The barges would position the span at exactly the right spot, then as the tide went out, the span was left high and dry above the river.

Alongside Long Island, which is a protected nature reserve, are beautifully water-sculptured rocks with almost aboriginal-like colouring patterns. Then we crossed the river, passed under the highway and motorway to reach Peat Island. This was home to a mental institution until a few years ago – it stands boarded up and derelict now, while awaiting a developer's fate.

Onto the Parramatta wreck, just north of Bar Point. In WW1, as a torpedo-boat, she patrolled the Pacific regions and even the Mediterranean, before being

decommissioned in 1928. After a stint hosting prisoners on the Hawkesbury River and while being towed downstream, a gale wind picked up and ran her aground, where she has rested ever since.

As we left the Parramatta and turned south, we felt the 15 knot headwind and battled down to Bar Island. We squeezed 10 kayaks onto the tiny beach, explored the church ruins and old graveyard, and took a well-earned coffee break.

After a little procrastination, we took off and turned west towards Friendly Bay and Island. This was a compulsory island inclusion in Darren's honour, where we witnessed a huge eagle seize a fish right in front of us. We sensed a little rain now, but held off with the cags. It had reached the day's maximum of 22 degrees, but wasn't cold.

Back past Bar Island, and swiftly to Milsons Island, with a comfortable following wind. Along the way, Tony explained the pros and cons of his GPS watches – a valuable source of information if you're considering purchasing one. Originally called Mud Island, it has had a colourful past as a pleasure resort, home for inebriates, extension of Peat for the mentally ill, hospital for soldiers from WW1 with STDs and then a prison. Milson is now part of the NSW Sports & Recreation system, with a nice wide beach, so we stopped for lunch and watched Selim intricately make his Turkish coffee – more coffee than water it seemed. Maybe as an antidote to last night's whisky. Just as we finished, the rain came down and some cags were donned. The food may have lifted our spirits, but the weather taketh away. We paddled quietly through Milsons Passage, back in front of Peat and the Mooney Mooney boat ramp, then turned north into the boat channel alongside Spectacle.

Ahead of us a T-junction, left to Snake or right to go home. Tempting in this weather to go right,

but left we went and flew up to the tiny island with the following wind. Folklore has it that Snake Island is infested with deadly brown snakes that were washed down by floods. We didn't see any. Pointing now straight into the southerly wind and rain was harder work, but ahead of us, beyond the railway bridge and into the distance was home, so we gritted our teeth and paddled back.

Thankfully as we rounded Flat Rock point, the rain stopped allowing us to disembark, clean-up and load the kayaks in dryer conditions. Final

count was six islands today, seven hours on the River and 35kms travelled. Thanks Caoimhin for jointly organising this trip – perhaps we can make the weekend an annual NSWSKC event!

Below Top and Bottom: Caoimhin at the WW1 wreck of the Parramatta at Bar Point; Cramming 10 kayaks onto a small beach on Bar Island. (Images SH)



Beecroft Peninsula/Booderee

A Sensory Experience

A common goal amongst paddlers up for a challenge is to circumnavigate the Beecroft Peninsula. **Josh Andrews** achieved the dream with three other paddlers, and then did a little more.

The month of May can be an excellent time for paddling in NSW. Besides mostly clear and stable weather, the cooler temperatures see fewer people on our coast. When Rae Duffy presented the club with an opportunity to paddle along the extraordinary Beecroft Peninsula/Booderee coastline, I just had to come along. Rae asked me to guide a pod on Saturday on a circumnavigation of Beecroft Peninsula (Honeymoon Bay to Honeymoon Bay, clockwise), whilst she guided another pod from Currarong to Honeymoon Bay. The circumnavigation of Beecroft Peninsula involves a portage of about 600m across the narrow neck of land north west of Currarong.

On Sunday, the plan was for us to all go as one pod along the Booderee coastline, south to north.

For those who don't know, Beecroft Peninsula is controlled by the Royal Australian Navy who uses the rocky headland for target practice. During weekends and school holidays most of the Peninsula is open to the public. For a small fee, you can car

camp at Honeymoon Bay, giving a sea kayaker direct access to Jervis Bay.

We all met up at Honeymoon Bay on Friday night for dinner and to flesh out the plan for the next two days. Our group was:

- Rae Duffy, Taren
- Neil Duffy, Pace 17
- John Wilde, in his new Nadgee Solo
- Mike Snoad, in his classic home built craft
- Tim Reid, new member from Tasmania, Greenlander
- Michal Taylor, Nadgee Solo
- Jean Jackson, visiting from Tasmania in Rae's Nordkapp LV
- Alison Curtin, Mirage 530
- Josh Andrews (me), Nordkapp FortiNeil, Alison, John and myself were in the Circumnavigation Pod. We headed off at 0800 on the dot from Honeymoon Bay and headed north to Carama Creek. The other pod drove to Currarong to launch. The plan was for both pods to travel in the same direction, with Rae's group exploring all caves, allowing the Circumnavigation Pod to potentially catch up, or at least remain in VHF range in case of a mishap.

We timed our arrival at Carama Creek for just before high tide for good reason; the creek is shallow and muddy. Alison precisely homed in on the landing point that was



hiding in the mangroves; I thought it was a little further on. For those that are interested the best place to land is 34°59'34.8"S 150°47'12.9"E (cut and paste into Google maps). If you are new to this area I would recommend you put this into your GPS before you set out.

After a sticky and smelly mud landing we trundled our kayak trolleys up the road to Hammer-Head point. Don't let the name fool you, it is not much of a point, just a small reef. A quick pee and muesli bar and we were off. It was great to be out of the mud and on the ocean, heading south east to Beecroft Head and beyond.

SIGHTS. Can there be a better sight than a blue ocean under a blue sky with the textured sandstone backdrop of the walls of Beecroft Peninsula? One sight



Left: John Wilde, Alison Curtin, Neil Duffy at Point Perp; Right: Inside Devils Cavern North.
Previous top: Neil Duffy at Point Perp

I always savour on a paddle, if I am lucky enough, is the gannets fishing. Is fishing the right word for these birds? Maybe hunting is more appropriate. Paddling along near Beecroft Head, one flew low over my head, coming up from behind. A short distance to my front the bird performed the classic gannet wing-over and started its plunge. Wings locked back in attack position, the bird manoeuvred down on to its prey. Spearing through the water and in an instant later, re-surfacing, gobbling another hapless victim as it re-launched ready for the next sortie. A spectacular sight that is particularly special from a sea kayak.

We headed straight for Gum Getters Inlet for our planned break, which we decided to call lunch. Again Alison pointed us in the right direction. As we approached the inlet we bumped into the other pod just leaving the creek. (Gum Getters Inlet, Google Maps: 35°02'41.1"S 150°50'00.6"E).

After saying hello to a group of seals and cutting in between the Drum and Drum Sticks (without banging the drum) we headed south. We had identified the coast between Drum and Drum Sticks and Crocodile Head as where we would slow down and visit the best caves.

SOUNDS. The ocean is a noisy place and whilst I have found peace there, I rarely find quiet. This trip was no different. The intimidating roar emanating out of the sea caves was amplified to stupefying levels inside the caves. Whilst backing in, there was more than one occasion when this roar built up to a frightful crescendo blasting us from the rear or a side cave, usually from a pitch black void. Thankfully it was all bark and no bite!

We caught up to the other pod as we explored the caves. A first for me was to paddle through the arch at Crocodile Head/Three Graves. The ocean had previously denied this to me.

After Crocodile Head our pod 'played through' the other pod and shot down the coast with a helpful following sea. Around Point Perpendicular and near the Torpedo Tubes (relics from WW2) we were buzzed by a mini quadcopter that captured my best 'WTF is that' look. We then had a run through a feature I call 'The Curtain' (35°05'04.4"S 150°48'00.5"E), a long passage that runs behind the cliff face.

A short stop at Black Boat Cove allowed the other pod to overtake us and then it was back to Honeymoon Bay for dinner, stories and bed.

Whenever I bump into a non-paddler and talk about my paddling day the conversation normally

occurs in three phases. Here are some extracts from a conversation I had with a fisherman that night:

Comprehension Phase.

FM: Where did you guys go today?

Me: We went right around the peninsula; you can walk over the neck to get to the other side.

Disbelief Phase.

FM: So you went outside? How far was that?

Me: Yes the cliffs and caves are amazing here, about 37 KM.

Realisation Phase

FM: You're crazy.

After a 37 KM day I slept well despite a turbulent sky that delivered thunder, lighting and light rain over night.

Next morning we setup a car shuffle launching from Summercloud Bay to paddle north to Murrays Beach Boat Ramp. This is the Booderee National Park (in the Jervis Bay Territory) and your NSW Parks pass is not recognised here, so you have to pay for car access.

Real life reclaimed Alison and Tim, so we are down two members on the Sunday. With our boats on the shore of Summercloud Bay, the southerly wind seemed stronger than we had expected and the sailors among us preened their wings in anticipation of a downwind run on the other side of St Georges



Top: Map showing route from Summercloud Bay to Murrays Beach.
Bottom: Eagles flying at Steamers Head

pungent, I can't fully describe it, it is unique.

After lunch we headed to Stony Creek where some of us poked into the intimidating, but in this case, safe creek mouth. The mouth of the creek is guarded by a 200m long, north/south reef system. In moderate conditions the only feasible way in is from the north into the channel. Meanwhile the surf rages on the rocks ineffectively to your left.

From Stony Creek we enjoyed a mild following sea. Some optimistic sailors 'shook out a reef', but I suspect there was more wind in our boats than out of our boats.

FEELINGS. Sea kayaking is a particularly tactile experience, made only more intense when paddling against deep sea cliffs with rebound. It is not just the contact between the paddler and the boat, there is also the sensation of pressure, vibration, falling, pushing, plunging and sometimes shuddering. As our kayaks slide across the dynamic skin of the ocean, our touch sense is extended through the boat and to the tips of our paddle. I feel the ocean underneath me and I push my Nordkapp to grab a wave, surging forward momentarily. Many a time I am careening along on a wave, but shearing off to the left or right. Occasionally I get it right and have that (maybe Zen?) moment where everything comes together, boat, body, skills, paddle fitness and the ocean and I zip along actually in the direction I want to go.

Too soon Bowen Island looms large and we turn into Jervis Bay and the boat ramp. All that remains is carrying, car shuffles, cleaning, farewells and driving home.

Thanks to the amazing Rae Duffy for organising a fantastic trip.



Head. Under an overcast sky we slanted across the wind and a lumpy sea. Feeling the wind on our faces we felt like true seafarers, as we headed for St Georges Head.

Rounding the head we were hoping to visit some of the excellent caves along this coast, unfortunately the ocean had not approved of our plan.

After some discussion, we landed

incident free through soft waves for a lunch break at Steamers Beach.

SMELLS. One word, seals. Delightful creatures that are always a welcome sight to a sea kayaker. We had our fill both off Drum and Drum Sticks and Booderee. But there is the smell; you will smell a haul out site long before you see it. How to describe the smell? Oily,

Around The Bay In Four Days

Dee Ratcliffe writes about the four days when she, Cath Nolan and Margot Todhunter banded together to investigate the shores and waters of Jervis Bay.

Cath, Margot and I set ourselves a challenge – to circumnavigate Jervis Bay, which all coincided with a suitable weather window. The forecast winds favoured an anti-clockwise expedition. We had no other agendas: no minimum distances per day, no early starts, no need for speed. Our intentions were fluid, we'd let the Bay reveal and unfold before us.

All my preparations went well. I had the car loaded and ready for

an early departure from home when the unexpected happened. Something I ate severely disagreed with my stomach and much of the night was spent in the bathroom and on the couch. When my alarm went off at 5.30am I felt absolutely wretched and unsure of what to do. Deciding not to delay my departure, I set off to collect Cath, and we met Margot as scheduled at Barfleur Beach, Vincentia. The three of us had never paddled as a group, yet the pre-launch enthusiasm, high spirits and all-important social media broadcasts quickly formed us into a coherent and happy team.

Amusedly watching a 4WD vehicle towing a jet-ski get sand-bogged, we slid our kayaks into the waters and launched into the Bay. Jervis Bay, a drowned river valley formed

after the last ice age, is 102 square kilometres in size. It is home to an Australian Navy Base, a bombing range, two National Parks and is increasingly popular as a holiday destination.

Paddling south, we followed close to the shoreline with low, rocky cliffs, white sandy beaches, gum trees, and happy holiday-makers. The clear blue waters over sandy sea beds became mesmerising. The play between cloud and the sea added to the beauty of the day.

Margot sensed a good landing place, and indeed she was spot on. We lazed, lolling in the water of the bay before rinsing off in the brackish, fresher water of the lagoon behind the beach. We sat in the soft sands, on dolphin



watch, breathing in the changing play of light and shadow created by the lowering sun, the clouds and the skies. I was relieved and amazed at how normal I felt again, how I'd recovered so quickly from my overnight illness, and how the company of good mates kept me feeling good.

Day Two saw us meander along the beautiful southern shores. We wondered if the big NE storms of June 2016 had caused the erosion we observed. The seas were calm and grey, the skies overcast and grey, and the pace chilled, even meditative.

Gliding past underwater rock gardens, we spied many fish and I made a mental note to sometime return and snorkel this section (west of Murrays boat ramp). At Murrays Beach we landed for a break. This area came close to being the site of a nuclear power station back in

the late 1960s. Luckily the proposal never got any further than a call for tenders and the construction of concrete footings.

Crossing the gap to Bowen Island we encountered the novelty of moving water. We paddled along the western shore of the island then along the northern end, far enough to gain a view to the south. After that, we lost our security blanket, that edge-of-the-Bay. It no longer existed just to our right. We were exposed from all around as we crossed the Straits of Jervis. I'm known for being drawn to empty horizons, out to the deepest blue seas. Margot paddled to my right, gently shepherding me and keeping me on track for Point Perpendicular and the lighthouse. Once there, Margot boldly announced that we should "go outside". Not having any agendas to follow, any meetings to attend, any deadlines anywhere, Cath and I simply agreed. The

three of us moved in unison into the bouncing and rebounding waters along the cliff line. With relaxed hips we settled into this changed environment and paddled north for a few kilometres until one of us called out "Time to turn!" Back south we sped.

Again under the soaring cliffs of Point Perpendicular, we spied an approaching kayaker; none other than our mate Stu. On one of his regular solo outings, he chatted and then decided to return into the Bay with us. Did he seek company? Or was this his delaying tactic in order to allow the northerly winds to increase in strength for his paddle towards Currarong? Either way, we all landed in Black Boat Cove, and stood along the shoreline, chewing on day-old sourdough baguette, gazing out at the waters while making intellectual and philosophical small talk. After tea in the shade, Stu left to face the





now 20 knot Northerlies while Cath, Margot and I donned snorkelling gear in order to better acquaint ourselves with the underwater features of Jervis Bay.

An officer from a passing Police boat enquired about our intentions, concerned about the “howling” 20 knot winds on the Bay. He was reassured by Margot’s explanations of how skilled we are and how well-equipped. He was also happy to learn that we’d be able to find shelter from the unrelenting sun under Cath’s tent.

Day Three and we back-tracked to the tunnel we’d by-passed the previous day. Cath loved the experience of disappearing into the cliffs and insisted on doing laps while Margot kept our social media audiences alerted. Unfortunately Cath’s video camera was not recording on her final lap when a bigger swell set triggered higher-than-normal oscillating waves inside the tunnel. Her yelps and whoops concerned me; would we need to carry out an in-tunnel rescue? Then Cath emerged, a huge grin on her face.

Proceeding back into Jervis Bay, we entered Honeymoon Bay, full of holiday campers busy with their holiday activities. After a quick lap, we continued on to Long Beach, where more tourists kept the atmosphere lively with their power boats and music blasters. Each to their own, I guess. At the more serene Cabbage Tree Beach we pulled ashore and had lunch under the trees. All the clouds had dissipated and the hot sun beat down. We again donned snorkelling gear and wandered over the sands and rocks, spying much of interest. Time to cruise further north, between Green Island and the mainland. We meandered as we hunted for a suitable campsite.

Day Four and there was dissent, unrest and even complaint. A shocking moment as the team’s cohesion threatened to shatter. In our tent erection the previous afternoon, we’d stretched out in one long line: Margot to the north, me to the south, and Cath the equator to our polar opposites. Due to the evening’s clouds of mosquitoes, we made sure we dived into our tents

as soon as the setting sun dipped below the horizon. To continue conversation, Margot and I enlisted Cath as the middle-man, so to speak. She patiently relayed our witty conversation pieces along the tent line. But the following morning, she quietly spoke up and suggested that we needed to camp closer to each other in future.

Tent-rage settled; we raced to launch against the endless, puddly flats exposed by the outgoing tide. A serenely calm morning, the sky now totally devoid of clouds. Turns out it was too shallow to paddle up Carama Creek as planned. Instead we turned and glided over the seagrass beds until we happened upon a long, deep, sandy-bottomed stretch with the most incredible array of eastern fiddler rays and eastern shovelnose rays, as well as your more garden-type common ray. For at least thirty minutes we drifted over and across and back, enjoying the quiet and peace, watching also the three black whaler sharks who patrolled the waters. Ever onwards, we stopped at the northern most end of Jervis Bay, marvelling at yet



*Previous page: Cath launches on day four (Dee).
Opposite: Dee enters the 'Curtain' (Cath). This page
clockwise from top left: Dee and Margot snorkelling
(Cath); Camp in Jervis Bay (Dee); Dee sailing (Margot); Team
finish (Dee); Ray (Cath); Cath and Margot on the bay (Dee)*

another of the Bay's pristine and empty beaches.

Turning south, the winds rose gently as we glided past Callala Bay and Callala Beach, the latter having at least one representation of each type of Australian beach house architecture. Seeing a car parked

on a rocky flat reef, and two dog-sized horses on the beach provided amusement. By now the winds had risen considerably and, after a brief stop at a beach in Huskisson, we set sail for our final destination – back to where we started. The expedition done in four days – we'd simply run out of bay to paddle past.

Coincidentally, we each paddled a Mirage 530. These kayaks were great whether we were point-to-pointing, meandering and manoeuvring amongst rocks, sailing when the winds allowed, bumping into rebound and excited sea-state, or feeling the need to speed.



Outside the paddler's box

A trip north to the Solitary Islands at Coffs Harbour had an unexpected outcome that left **Ruby Ardren** with a dislocated shoulder.

As part of the NSW Islands Challenge, Caoimhin and I headed north to Coffs Harbour to circumnavigate the Solitary Islands. As I had a kayak marathon in Coffs Harbour on 3 June, we decided to stay up there for a week to work out which islands were the most attainable, with the aim of circumnavigating a few of them with club members on the June long weekend.

The trip started well. We paddled out to South West Solitary Island and South Solitary Island on the Monday, to North West Solitary Island and North Rock on the Tuesday, and North Solitary on the Wednesday; all in perfect conditions. It was looking doubtful whether the weekend plans would go ahead, as the forecast was for 20-30 knot winds, 3+ metre swells, and rainfall that varied from 10mm to 50mm each day. Not surprisingly the enthusiasm of the registered club members to arrive on Thursday dwindled, until by Wednesday everyone had cancelled, despite a slightly more favourable forecast. (In the end it wasn't the best weather – this was the weekend the humpback whale washed up on a beach near Coffs Harbour and couldn't be towed out because the seas were too rough).

Never fear – now that we've done the research, the trip will be on the program in the future and it's well worth joining as the islands were fabulous.

South West Solitary

Starting from our campground at Woolgoolga Beach, which was an excellent protected launch spot, we paddled south along the coast to Flat Top Point before heading out directly to the island. This totalled about 7km. The alternative option was to continue south to Bare Bluff to shorten the open water crossing, but conditions were so good there was no need. This island didn't have any exciting features to interact with, but was attractive with impressive cliffs. It's only 1.5km to paddle around it, so we were shortly on our way to South Solitary.

South Solitary

One of the stand-out islands of the group, South Solitary was not only beautiful and interesting to look at, but had two gauntlets of varying difficulty, and a sea arch for the brave. I'm sure difficulty depends on conditions, but on the day we were there, one gauntlet was calm, one was full of clapotis with enough "umph" to make you airborne (which I achieved much to my horror), and we didn't attempt the arch. It's 7.5km to the island in a direct line from Bare Bluff, or an additional 5.5km from South West Solitary Island, so it's a substantial distance from shore. We ended up doing 30km from Woolgoolga and including circumnavigations

of both islands. South Solitary is home to one of only two lighthouses still standing on islands in NSW and is open for tours once a year. These days the island is accessed by helicopter. I have no idea how on earth they accessed it by boat because it was surrounded by cliffs on all sides. It was approximately 2km around the island, more if you don't go through the gauntlets.



North West Solitary

Access to this island is from Red Rock, home to exposed beaches with 'interesting' surf. Either side of the headland is a low-tide terrace, with rips that go along the beach then push out past the rock, waves that break a long way out where they hit the sandbars, and on the northern side, a tidal river mouth (Corindi River) that creates messy standing waves on the ebb tide, and has strong flood tides. This is not a launch spot for the beginner. On this day we launched on the southern side of Red Rock. I got past most of the break on my first attempt then failed to come up after a roll under the last break and had to swim back to shore, with my kayak brushing over multiple rocks (thankfully covered in cunjevoi). After a quick break to recover my breath, I tried again and got out successfully. Once you've got past all the waves,



it's 5km in a direct line to North West Solitary Island. This was a nice little island, once again only 1.5km around, and with a landing point. Do not land! We were desperate for a wee break, and looked up to behold a Marine Parks boat with a ranger gesticulating wildly at us and ordering us off the island. Apparently it's one of the few land-based nesting areas for Osprey, and unfortunately also the only Solitary Island you can easily land on. There's a small gauntlet at the southern end, but no other features you can really interact with as a kayaker.

North Rock

On the way back from North West Solitary we diverted to North Rock, which is officially part of the Solitary Islands Group but obviously didn't rate a 'Solitary' name. It was much lower than the other islands, and really does only just rate as an island, with a small green area maintained above the high tide mark. It was 4.5km back across from North West Solitary, and then just over 1km to circumnavigate



it, with an easy gauntlet to play in. There were a lot of birds on this rock, more than we'd seen on the other islands. It was 2.5km back to Red Rock beach, with the total days paddle tallying to about 15km. We had a beautifully calm landing on the northern side of Red Rock at the mouth of the Corindi River, with the tide just starting to flood into the river. I surfed a wave most of the way into the beach, then had a gentle landing, where we were able to wade our kayaks back to the track to the parking area.

Opposite top: South West Solitary Island. Left and below: South Solitary. Above: North West Solitary





North Solitary

Our original plan to do Split Solitary and some islands close to Coffs Harbour was put aside when we realised we had the perfect conditions to make the trip to North Solitary. This is the most distant of the islands from shore, 16km from Red Rock, with an additional 3km to circumnavigate the island, amounting to a 35km round trip. North Solitary is well worth the effort to get there. It's an attractive island with lots of features. There's a wonderful cave that is accessed by first passing under an arch, and we managed to clamber up and drag our kayaks up on the rocks for a lunch break, which perhaps wouldn't be possible at a lower tide. We were lucky enough to see a pod of humpback whales swim only 50m in front of our boats, a small hammerhead shark passing through a green wave next to us, and a turtle fishing in the cave. The conditions were good and generally uneventful, until we got back to Red Rock beach.

How not to surf your kayak

I was tired by the time we returned to Red Rock. Caoimhin landed first, while I waited out behind the break. We hadn't really discussed the landing, other than that he would go first and then I'd come in once he'd landed. I waited for the set to finish that came through after Caoimhin went in; then looked for him, couldn't see him, and decided I might start to head in.

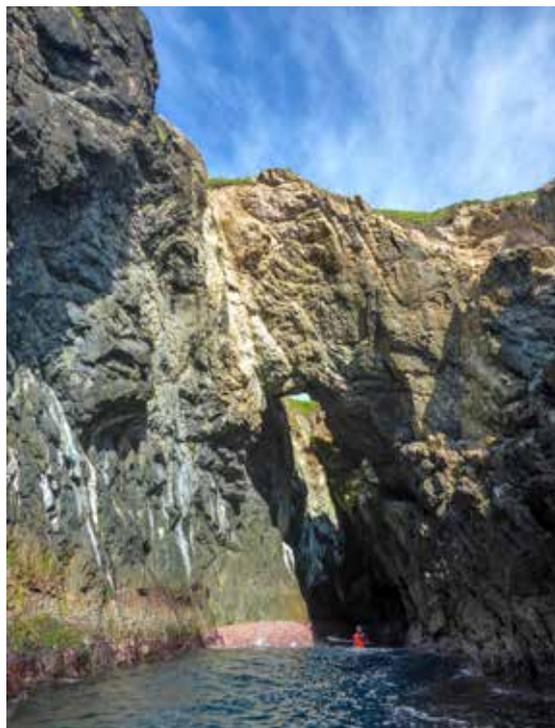
I was sitting side on to the break and passed over a couple of waves at the back, when one started to break right above me. I had no time to react and was suddenly being shuttled along in a broach position but still had my head above water and was able to breathe. I had been surfing well recently and thought that since I could breathe, I should only need a little push up to be in a proper brace position on top of the wave instead of just resting inside it. I also remember worrying that I might let go of my paddle, which was new and not something I wanted to lose. Meanwhile I was getting pushed along at a great pace and my arms got dragged further around above my head,

still hanging on to my paddle.

Then suddenly I couldn't move my left arm. I pulled out of my kayak immediately with my right arm, took a few goes to turn it up the right way with only one arm, after which it immediately turned over again and got carried to shore. I couldn't use my arms to swim and simply got washed into shore.

Caoimhin was swimming across the flooding river trying to get to my boat. As I was able to stand, the pain suddenly hit me as the water no longer supported the weight of my arm. I started crying, still holding my paddle and Caoimhin only had to take one look at me to realise I had dislocated my left shoulder. My left arm was sitting below my left shoulder joint, creating a square corner to my shoulder that looked completely foreign to me.

I was blessed to have Caoimhin there to take over. He grabbed my kayak and paddle, walked me back to the river where he paddled the kayak, with me holding on to the rear deck lines and kicking behind the kayak to try and help get it across the flooding estuary mouth. We were pushed 50m upstream by



and sculled with one or two sweeps of my paddle to lift myself up. This is perhaps something I need to practice in safer conditions. Alternatively I should have rolled over to get out of the wave, then set up and executed a roll after the wave had passed over me.

When I felt I was out of control, I could have exited from my boat. Unfortunately I was convinced that I could pull myself out of my predicament.

We should have removed ALL my wet clothing as soon as possible.

Finally, I shouldn't have assumed that the easy landing the day before (on a different tide) would be replicated the next day, even if all the other conditions were fairly similar.

North and South Solitary are by far and away the best islands, but are also the most demanding paddles. We'll definitely be returning to Coffs Harbour, especially as we still have Split Solitary to circumnavigate to complete the set!

Opposite top left: North Rock. Opposite top right: a landing in easier surf the first day at Red Rock. Opposite below: North Solitary. This page top left to right: Caoimhin dragging his kayak back into the water on North Solitary Island; The arch and cave on North Solitary. Below: Warming up in hospital.



the time we finished what was only about a 20m crossing.

He then got me to the car, helped me remove most of my wet kayaking gear, carried both kayaks up from the beach and loaded them on the car, and then drove me 45km to the nearest hospital. My shoulder was dislocated for an hour before it was reinstated, and I also managed to tear one of my rotator cuff tendons and damage the labrum (the cartilage around the shoulder joint). I felt cold and had a low pulse rate, but my temperature was fine. I was in shock, and it took an hour of heated blankets to feel warm and get my pulse back to normal. Fortunately I only need physiotherapy at this stage, but I'm off paddling for three months. I imagine I'll be a bit tentative in surf next time I'm out!

With the benefit of Captain Hindsight we were able to reflect on a couple of things. Caoimhin had noticed the plunging wave breaking onto the edge of the sandbar when he had come in. He was moving into position to signal me in, but took much longer to swim across the river than expected so I had

already begun to move in before he was ready. Ideally we should have made a plan for how we would land, including me waiting until Caoimhin signalled before I came in.

It wasn't the best idea to be floating over the breakers at the back in a side-on position, especially with a rip subtly influencing my position by pushing me backwards to a breaker zone. It would have been better to be in a position ready to paddle perpendicular to the waves/beach, so that if a wave did break I was in a much better position to react to it. I should also have been propelling the kayak either in or out of the surf zone, which extends from the swash on the beach to at least 50-100m behind the rearmost waves.

I let my arms leave the 'paddlers box' and was not in a strong brace position. Hanging on to my paddle meant that my arm got dragged and forced up and behind me, resulting in dislocation of my shoulder. I should have either let go of my paddle with one hand, holding it with the other or let go of it altogether.

To attain a high brace, I could have shifted into a high brace position

WEST COAST OF TASMANIA



In early 2017 **Stuart Trueman** paddled from Smithton to Hobart along the West Coast of Tasmania.

As I progressed down the coast the locals enthusiastically regaled tales of previous kayakers who had dramas in this area.

The purpose of this article is to try and prevent you being one of these stories.

The absolute north west tip of mainland Tasmania

The 25 knots of wind from yesterday had conveniently swung 180 degrees round to come from the north east and the sun was shining. I was only about 200 metres from the fearsome Southern Ocean. After putting myself in the grasp of the currents that were enthusiastically heading out to sea, there would be no return. I would be drawn out to face Cape Grim, beyond which lay the entire west coast of Tasmania.

My imagination was projecting worrying images of what I was to expect based on the word 'Grim'. I would have felt more comfortable if it was called 'Cape SometimesGrim'.

Whatever the conditions, it's a spectacular and committing start that sets the tone. There is no

gradual easing into the West Coast from Woolnorth Point. You leave the shallow waters of the low, north facing coast to turn south east alongside the Southern Ocean to face unchecked winds and swells that are finally challenged by a rugged, wild coast.

Having made the move and realising that 'Grim' did not make the spectacular views and relatively benign conditions any more challenging, I set off for Hobart.

It was a slow start to my trip. Next day winds picked up to 40 knots, then dropped but turned southerly. A few days later I had managed to work my way down to Sandy Cape, where more high winds kept me off the water for three days.

During my first two weeks I had three strong wind warnings, three gale warnings and an additional four days of good conditions but swell of 4-6 metres.

My camp at Sandy Cape on the first night was on the beach. Realising I would be there for a few days, then further motivated after a visit from half a dozen quad bike riders at 2am, I moved behind the dunes to a camp site used by the 4x4 drivers.

On the fourth day I was able to head south, making for Pieman River.

Harbour Definition:

1. A part of a body of water along the shore deep enough for anchoring a ship and so situated with respect to coastal features, whether natural or artificial, as to provide protection from winds, waves, and currents.
2. Such a body of water having docks or port facilities.

Any idea you may have of making your way up the Pieman River disappear when you get there. As the river flow heads out and meets the swell it drops silt, leaving a battle zone of currents, waves, sandbanks and reefs.

Your next option is to go to Conical Rocks Harbour on the headland to the south. This is the first of three 'harbours' between Sandy Cape and Hells Gates (Strahan) that challenge the definition.

All three have shallow waters with no facilities and are only marginally protected by reefs.

I arrived at Conical Rocks Harbour on a 2.5 metre swell. Waves break over the rocks guarding the entrance and then continue undaunted to smash themselves against the shore reef. I was a little concerned that if I got to the next 'Harbour' to find it closed out my options would be severely limited, and all bad.

So I investigated Ahrberg Bay. I checked out the rocky coastline that had little to inspire, then nervously started to look at the northern end of the beach. I was close to convincing myself that a surf landing was worth a go: "Just got to get past the first dumping waves, make sure I don't run on those rocks, then get behind that small island and bingo." As these thoughts were forming so was the swell; desperate back paddling over a set of three saved the decision being made for me.

I returned to explore the reefs more aggressively. There was a cross set on top of one of the larger rocks. I wondered why someone would go to that trouble if not to mark 'safety'. After showing a bit more commitment than my first pass I found a safe place to exit close to the cross. I was soon camped in the shelter of the bushes, eking out the last of my water.

I found out later that the cross was made from the anchor of the fishing boat 'Eastern Star', which went down in the bay with all hands.

A gale was forecast the next day, after which the swell would build to 4-6 metres over four days.

So I made a dash for the second and most accessible of the three harbours 'Granville Harbour'.

If you are from Europe, USA or mainland Australia, you will be struggling to feel relaxed on your approach with your predefined notion of a harbour.

The entrance faces west and when the swell reaches three metres, waves break at all points across

the entrance and on reefs in the harbour itself. There is only one place to land, a small ramp on the southern side.

I paddled into the harbour with two metres of swell running and I could feel the rise caused by the reefs but had no problems. The next morning the wind had dropped but the swell had built to three metres and was breaking all over the entrance.

The third of the harbours is 'Trial Harbour'. The name should indicate the protection afforded, best to just assume that you will have to paddle past to Pilot Bay.

So from Sandy Cape to Pilot Bay do not assume the three harbours are guaranteed places of safety, they are considered harbours relative to the surrounding coast. The most reliable will be extremely dangerous at three metres or over.

General tips are:

- If you are heading for Granville in marginal conditions be mentally and physically prepared to continue to Pilot Bay or Sandy Cape.
- Aim for a finish with plenty of daylight to allow for contingencies.

Opposite: Mt Rugby View. Below: Cannonball Bay, Granville Harbour; Log Jam.



- Tether your kayak overnight.
- You could be grounded for days as the winds blows and the swell is 5-6 metres. Your supplies reduced to food and water and team conversation is starting to get repetitive. Everybody is keen to move on, as the next forecast promises a massive improvement of 15-20 knots and a three metre swell. While the forecast is better, it's worth realising you still have a three metre swell.
- There is little or no mobile reception on the West Coast (as of 2017). I use a radio with Single Side Band capability. Forecasts available do not include the swell period.

Swell

The main reason kayakers are caught out on the west coast is the size and effect of the swell generated by the Southern Ocean.

These are actual weather forecasts for the day I wrote this article. There is a warning for the coast off Sydney and ideal conditions off Western Tasmania.

Forecast: Sydney Coastal Waters

Forecast for Friday until midnight

Gale Warning for Friday for Sydney Coast

Winds: Southerly 25 to 30 knots, reaching up to 40 knots in the late morning and afternoon. Winds tending southeasterly in the evening.

Seas: 3 to 4 metres.

1st Swell: Southerly 1 to 1.5 metres, increasing to 1.5 to 2 metres during the afternoon.

2nd Swell: Northeasterly 1 to 1.5 metres, increasing to 1.5 to 2 metres offshore.

Weather: Cloudy. Near 100% chance of showers. Rain and showers heavy at times offshore in the afternoon and early evening. The chance of a thunderstorm.

Caution: Large and powerful surf conditions are expected to be hazardous for coastal activities such as crossing bars by boat and rock fishing.

Forecast: Tasmania Central West Coast

Forecast for Friday until midnight

Winds: Variable about 10 knots.

Seas: Below 1 metre.

Swell: West to southwesterly 3 metres.

Weather: Mostly sunny.

If you had the choice you would head for the west coast of Tassie for a paddle.

The best you could expect off Sydney would be a shitty time.

You would set off down the West Coast on a nice sunny day, with no winds worth considering. Relaxing as you took in your surroundings, aiming to end your day at a sheltered landing behind some conveniently arranged reef with the lofty title of 'Harbour'.

If we isolate the main swell for Sydney we can expect 2 metres, with 3 metres of seas being blown over the top. The combined wave height is calculated as 3.6 metres.



I know that I'm simplifying things but it's worth staying with me. Try and imagine the conditions that would give as you edged closer to the beach considering a landing. You would wish you had gone to Tassie.

However, back in Tassie our paddlers are sitting offshore wishing they were just about anywhere else.

The swell period in Sydney is 8 seconds.

The swell period on the West Coast is 15 seconds.

Swell definitions

7 - 9 Seconds

A good sand bank or bit of reef can generate decent waves, and large storm swells at the upper end of this range can produce decent waves at the right spot with the right local winds. The surf produced by these swells will normally be slightly smaller in height than the swell that creates it, losing power as it enters shallow water, but a good reef can create a wave face larger than the swell size at the upper end of this period range.

10 - 12 Seconds

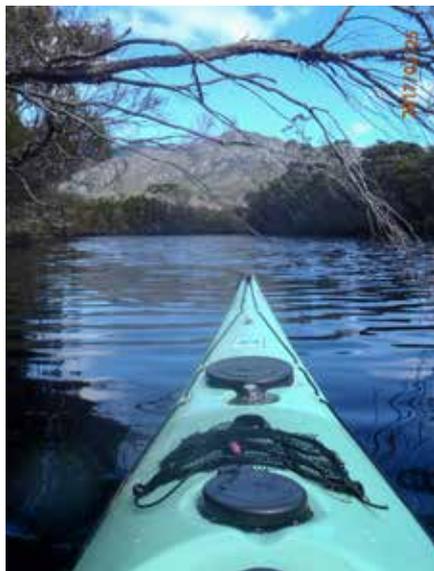
These swells won't bend or 'refract' into hard to reach surf spots and are less likely to barrel when smaller than longer period swells. On average sandy beaches these mid period swells can create some of the best conditions, a reef or point break needing the swell to refract can prefer a longer period of swell. The waves produced by these swells will often be about the height of the swell itself given the right direction on the average beach.

13 - 15 Seconds

These swells are definitely 'groundswell' - normally created some considerable distance from the beach by powerful storms. They most often arrive without the storm that created them, making for a good possibility of calm local conditions. They're powerful, they will bend or refract around headlands or into more sheltered coves and create, especially when smaller, hollow barreling waves on even average sand bottomed beaches. Typically the waves created will often be bigger than the swell height as the swell refracts to focus its energy in shallow water and the wave shape changes.

16+ Seconds

Extremely powerful swells generated by distant storms and often travelling the breadth of the largest oceans to reach the beach. These swells can refract considerably as they approach shallower water, bending into sheltered coves, around significant headlands and focusing their energy on beach to create, with the right local conditions, waves considerably larger than the swell height at the right spots. At just a couple of feet this sort of swell can create 2-3 metre waves on the beach.



Opposite: Claytons Corner, Bathurst Harbour. Below top: Spring River, from Port Davey. Bottom: Bramble Cove, Port Davey



During a two week paddle on the West Coast you can expect to deal with swells of three metres or over. The swell always comes from the south west or west, directly onto the coast. The swell will often be generated by far off weather systems, so a significant swell period can be expected.

It's common for significantly larger swell sets to pass through. The danger here is that kayakers get caught out when the bigger sets develop as you are negotiating reefs or working out a landing.

The swell and sea state gets more complicated as it combines with currents, headlands, wind waves, lifts, bombies, reefs, sandbars and secondary swells.

Your options are harder to determine if you are unfamiliar with the area.

Longer period swells travel faster than short period ones. A 19-second swell travels around 23-25 knots per hour in deep water (meaning it isn't feeling the sea-floor in any way) while a 10-second swell is closer to 10-15 knots.

Swell is what catches out paddlers on the West Coast.

Our West Coast paddlers are sitting on a three metre swell with a period of 15 seconds.

Solid walls of the densest blue draw up, then mercilessly bear down with a speed that punishes

indecision. The power to heap this cold hearted, hound of Neptune and send it running is only fully realised when you get close. The battles of this ageless dual along the coast are best avoided by kayakers.

It will be hard to find landings not affected, the fast moving swell could be creating 3-4 metre barrelling waves.

The imaginary solid iron door, through which it's impossible to view failure, has now been reduced to a gossamer thin cotton sheet, through which it's easy to see the frailty of mortality.

Words like 'challenge' and 'exciting' used during planning have been replaced with 'desperate' and 'survival' as options are considered.

The main lesson for kayakers caught out by large swells is to not get into the same situation again.

The oceans generosity is not boundless.

South from Strahan

Granville was forecast to be closed out for the next four days with a swell of 4-6 metres running in. So despite the hospitality of locals I decided to accept a lift round to Strahan and explore Port Macquarie and the Gordon River. I thoroughly recommend a circumnavigation of the harbour and a paddle up the river; it's stunning.

A few days later the weather showed signs of improving, so I

positioned myself at Pilots Bay, a safe beach just outside Hells Gates. Although Pilots Bay provided no challenge, a dramatic atmosphere was generated in the darkness by the surf outside Hells Gates. It sounded as if an 80 km long freight train was running past the tent throughout the night.

I was treating the optimistic forecast with a little scepticism after the weather dealt me during the first two weeks. My plan was to paddle hard before it had a chance to change its mind.

There are many places that kayakers have pulled in for a camp, but some are more capable of providing safety than others. Sanctuary Cove behind Hibbs Pyramid is the safest option south of Hells Gates. A long day, but a safe bay with a dramatic backdrop is worth the effort.

My run south continued well until the day I paddled into Port Davey. I had forecast winds of 25 knots, turning west, south west early afternoon.

I managed to time it so I was heading into Port Davey as the wind swung round.

The first shelter in Port Davey is as dramatic as it gets. The rain laden winds whistled along trying to shred my jacket. Waves were breaking over my shoulders, as I tried to make out the outline of grey hills hidden behind the grey skies, which blended into the grey white-flecked seas.

The coast looked impregnable as I approached down the waves of the day; it was a one-way ride. Blending against the steep hills was the superbly named 'Breaksea Islands'. Once behind these it was as if someone just turned off the 'rough seas' switch. It took half a dozen strokes to travel from one world of winds, waves and stinging rain, to relax in calm, flat waters cloaked in drizzle.

Left: Ketcham Bay



The campsite at Bramble Cove was made easier to find due to a bright yellow kayak parked outside. Jenny from the Tasmanian Sea Canoe Club was spending three weeks paddling around the area; we were both pleasantly surprised to find another kayaker in the area.

I had a great week paddling up rivers, exploring, climbing Mt Rugby and walking around Melaleuca after picking up a rather disappointing food drop. I should have delivered myself something more appetizing than my usual diet, at least some goodies. Better than going hungry, but only just!

The fine weather just kept coming, so I moved on. The leg down past South West Cape usually starts from a great spot in Spain Bay. Nice beach, a great walk across to Stephens Bay and a sheltered campsite make this a good choice.

The leg down to South West Cape can be broken up with a visit to McKays Gulch, a few kilometres before the cape. From here many head for Ketchem Bay on the south coast. The beach can sport dumping surf, but there is a safe option a short distance away on Ketchem Island. It's worth noting that the island has no water. If you think you need water McKays Gulch is a good spot to fill up.

I arrived at McKays to find two double kayaks on the beach. I had run into more kayakers of the Tasmanian Sea Canoe Club heading up the West Coast, an active bunch.

Unfortunately, a few days later one of the team needed an airlift out due to injuries sustained after being hit on a reef. These were experienced local kayakers who had paddled the area before. Another story you will no doubt be hearing from the locals.

My remaining time on the south coast was leisurely and unhurried, where I spent more days walking than paddling. I managed to paddle to Southport, which is home to the most southern pub in Tasmania,

before being rescued by Roy Fenderson of the Tasmanian Sea Canoe Club.

This article may give the impression that I'm attempting to discourage kayaking in the area; all I'm trying to do is let you know what you should prepare for.

Since 1979, when John Brewster and Earle De Blonville first kayaked the coast, there have been many successful trips along this coast.

I have paddled past SW Cape five times and spent a total of around three months paddling the West Coast.

Why, despite the difficulties, do I, and others, choose to keep coming back to paddle this coast?

It's a wild place. In a world where risk to a large extent is managed with signs, policy and fences, there is a freedom in spending time in an area where with a brief weather forecast I'm left to make my own decisions.

The mountains, bays, rivers, and beaches are untouched; allowing wildlife to continue to live undisturbed in one of the most accessible wilderness in the world.

A paddle down the West Coast is a significant challenge, guaranteed to deliver an adventure in an area that should be appreciated.

Kayaking allows me to visit special places, and overcoming difficulties increases the rewards of exploring.

Some Landing Options

Woolnorth Point
Green Point (Marawah)
Between and including Mawson Bay and Temma Harbour there are many fishing villages with landing options:

Sandy Cape
Conical Rocks Harbour
Granville Harbour
Trial Harbour
Pilot Bay
George Point
Birthday River
Point Hibbs
Hartwell Cove (near Wanderer River)
Mainwaring Inlet
Low Rocky Point (Elliott Bay)
Mulcahy Bay
Wreck Bay
Alfild Bight
Port Davey / Bathurst Hbr
Spain Bay
Ketchem Bay / Island
Louisa Bay - Louisa River mouth/
Louisa Island
Deadmans Cove
Rocky Boat Inlet
South Cape Rivulet
Cockle Creek





THE DRAKE...QUACK

Their latest adventure took Lisa McCarthy and **Mark Dabbs** to Antarctica.



Wait on; this is a sea kayaking magazine. Nothing to do with ducks! Maybe I should rename this article “The Drake and Beyond...”

Ok, I’m getting ahead of myself. Let’s step back a little.

Late 2015/early 2016 I spent quite a considerable amount of time researching and organising a trip to the Arctic. Just prior to locking in dates and starting to send off deposits the trip fell apart. Doom and gloom! Lisa didn’t dare come near me; thunderclouds and lightning bolts followed me everywhere. Then she spoke one word...and once again, the sun shone, birds chirped, peace had arrived and there was a “smile on the dial”: “Antarctica?”

So began 12 months of intense research and

planning. The rough plan: sail on a 70 foot ex-round-the-world racing yacht to Antarctica; taking kayaks with us, paddle and camp in Antarctica and return. Simple?!

What started out as simple became very complicated. Early March I put a large deposit on a yacht only to find two weeks later they were pulling out. So began two months of intense searching to secure another suitable yacht capable of sailing us down to Antarctica along with six kayaks (one was a double). Heaps of paperwork and organising. Guess it kept me out of Lisa’s hair for a while.

Finally, at the end of December seven of us were ready to head to Ushuaia in southern Patagonia. Geoff Dauncey, Cecilia Goon, Mark Fuller, Lisa McCarthy and myself from NSWKC plus two non-members. We spent January 2017 sailing to, kayaking around and sailing back from Antarctica.



The Drake Passage is world renowned for extreme weather, strong winds, high seas and being generally very rough. I think it is all a big hype! We had calm seas, with little wind for the trip down. Actually, we had the motor running the whole way and managed to get the sail up for a few hours only. The views were unreal. Looking to the north, east, south and west made no difference. Flat seas in every direction and nothing to see...other than the amazing Albatross soaring with little effort. We watched them for days. Absolutely mesmerising.

Antarctica is certainly worth the effort. Early in the trip we paddled off to circumnavigate an island of ice and glaciers but I sort of got a little misplaced. I should explain, it is very hard to differentiate between what are large icebergs and what is land; however the mistake was well worth it! Out in the sea were about 100 whales feeding. The next two hours was spent paddling between

each feeding group and watching as they rose skyward with gaping mouths draining the krill, rolling, diving and heading towards us out of curiosity. We couldn't believe our luck. They are enormous yet gentle, knowing where we were at all times. We just drifted at times with the whales coming almost too close!

Another day saw us paddling near a penguin colony. You can spend hours and hours watching these cute, comical little creatures. They each seem to have their own personality. Some stealing rocks

*Opposite top: Glaciers, ice and calm; below: who invited Mark??
Above and below: Gentoo penguin colony; icebergs.*





from each other's nests when there is a load of rocks a short distance away, squabbling over whom has right of way, trying to decide how close they can come to us yet stay safe. At times they appear quite drunk falling over all the time as they waddled over the snow. At their water entry platforms they all gather and seemed to "egg" each other into who's going to take the first plunge. Then out of the water flies this rocket, a penguin on its return from feeding. We had a rope running over some rock and this seemed to create great disturbance. The penguins refused to step over it. It was something new on the ground and they were not sure what to do! They really are a comical lot!

Yes, some of us did manage to camp on the snow. There was a rumour that my "tent" may not have been suitable. I could not understand what was wrong with a tent fly. It allowed the breeze to pass straight thru offering no resistance hence it had no problems staying up. The views were unobstructed and there was good fresh air! Maybe it was a tad cold.

Kayaking thru the ice flows, around the icebergs, watching ice travelling fast due to currents and the resulting collisions kept us all on the alert. None of us wanted to get caught between two large moving icebergs. A lead would open up and we would all go hell for leather to get through only to find the last one or two kayaks in line didn't make it as the lead closed up. Some interesting kayaking indeed. The icebergs are not little by any stretch of the imagination, many 100+ metres high and hundreds of metres long. Something you don't want to be near when it rolls or starts breaking up. We were told icebergs of 1km or greater in size are marked and tracked for shipping safety as they can float a long way out into the oceans. Landings created an issue as the ice usually ran all the way to the edge of the water and then had a three metre or higher wall. There was no way of climbing these from the kayak.

There was only one member who attempted the "Antarctic Polar Plunge". I must admit, it was more an accident than an attempt. He was moving from his kayak into the

zodiac when the zodiacs handle broke, leaving him horizontal. Legs still in the kayak on its edge and sinking, arms outstretched trying to keep his head above water. The rest of him was in the water. Attempting an assisted rescue was not easy as there were no deck lines on the hired kayaks! However, he was spared a head dunking and the drysuit certainly worked well!

We were blessed with almost perfect weather, missing no kayaking days. Our return across the Drake was a repeat of our outgoing trip. Very calm, other than one night of 30 knot winds, but I was asleep in my bunk so missed that.

The day after our return the winds came up and there were reports of horrendous seas and difficult conditions. I guess we seem to bring the good weather, or maybe we have contacts in 'high' places!!

Top: Snow camping; Opposite: Whale dive; Whales close by; An iceberg not to be messed with.



*The original Aussie kayak
(Image Stuart Trueman)*

