

Salt

THE MAGAZINE OF NSW SEA KAYAK CLUB
ISSUE 91 JUNE 2013



17,000 Kilometres, sixteen months, two pairs of underwear
and a circumnavigation of Australia by kayak

ALL *the* WAY ROUND

STUART TRUEMAN

Inside TRUEMAN CONFESSIONS | ROCK 'N ROLL EXTRAVAGANZA | MARLBOROUGH SOUNDS NZ | JIM KAKUK'S ISLANDS
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6am: Deal Island. 66km to Killiecrankie
Photo Richard Barnes

From the **PRESIDENT'S** Deck

..
It has been an honour to serve the Club for the past four years, to contribute back to the Club back to the Club ..

Well, well, well. This may be my last piece that I write under this banner, as President. If all goes according to plan, my plan is, a successor will take on my role at the Club's next AGM. I have been President of the Club for the past two years and for two years before that I was the Club's Treasurer/Secretary. It has been an honour to serve the Club for the past four years, to contribute back to the Club that has taught me so many kayaking skills. It is now time to offer that same opportunity to serve the Club to the 'next generation'.

The Rock and Roll has been and gone. What a great event. I have an indelible imprint on my brain of a hundred kayaks storming in the heads at Port Stephens and landing on the beach, of dozens of kayakers defiantly taking on Sunday's windy conditions and a big squad of us cruising to Shoal Bay to enjoy a café latte. I enjoyed sliding into the Hawks Nest Golf Club for an ale and kicking back to listen to Nigel Foster and Les Allen inspire my dreams of my next trip. The world is full of wilderness and magnificent places to explore and my thanks go out to these two gentlemen

for sharing some of their experiences with us. I'm sorry if you missed the Rock and Roll weekend and if you went, make sure you let everyone know who didn't go what they missed out on. I won't risk doubling up on Campbell Tiley's RnR report but I do want to raise a paddle in thanks to our guests, Nigel and Les, our club instructors, guides and leaders who got an extraordinary number of paddlers on the water, our sponsors, beachmasters, presenters and all of our club members who always make RNR one of the biggest and best kayaking events in the country.

On the ANZAC day long weekend, Raewyn Duffy and Campbell Tiley travelled to Victoria to conference with all of the other sea kayak clubs from around the country. You'll read about the event in this edition of Salt. Working together can only be good for our sport to encourage safe participation and leverage off our common ground like training and interstate trips.

Keep paddling
David Fisher, Club President

Contents

- 6 Review: *This is the Sea* 5
- 7 Saltiest Submission prizewinner
- 8 Review: *Paddlers Guide to NSW*
- 9 Review: *All the Way Round*
- 10 West Coast Scotland
- 12 Contact towing technique
- 13 Dennis rolls
- 14 Making videos - tips
- 16 Canberra Lakes & Mt Kosciusko
- 18 Agendas: Pindimar to Seal Rocks
- 21 Leaders training weekend
- 22 Bass Strait crossing
- 24 The GPS miracle
- 25 Sea kayak clubs summit
- 26 Oskar Speck
- 27 Rock 'N Roll 2013 special section
- 36 Vancouver in winter
- 39 Raewyn Duffy profile
- 40 Islands - kayaking paradise
- 44 Marlborough Sounds, NZ
- 48 Stuart Trueman profile
- 53 Winkworth in NZ
- 54 Judgement Day Wilsons Promontory
- 58 Club details

Great kayak quotations

"To take to the sea in a kayak is to know humility. To cross the sea in a kayak alone is to know God" Ed Gillet (*Paddled solo California to Hawaii*)

"When I was 30, to catch up with the young guns in the paddling group, I had no need for either skegs or rudders. To achieve the same results at age 40 I needed a skeg. At 50, I need a rudder".

Club member Andre Janacki plays the age card in the rudder debate

Every day is Christmas for kayakers



Cute keyrings from hobkey.com



Paddling top for Greenland lovers from qajaqua.org

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Photo by Bruce Mozart a pioneer of underwater photography who worked as an underwater motion picture cameraman for NBC, ABC, CBS and many Hollywood productions. Visit mozartstudio.com to purchase his photos or the book: *Silver Springs: The Underwater Photography of Bruce Mozart* by Gary Monroe



Reviewing our digital feedback

From the EDITOR'S Sea cavern

World exclusive scoop!! Salt recently invested significant club funds to send a team of investigative journalists to Las Vegas for the sole purpose of tracking down the elusive Stuart Trueman who was there on a media junket to promote his newly published best-seller 'All The Way Round'. We intercepted him being ushered into his limo, leaving Caesar's Palace where he had spent a few days enjoying the Presidents Suite. As we shared martini after martini en route to the Palm Springs Invitational golf tournament, this most private of men exposed his demons – not a pretty sight. The results are here for you to enjoy. Do buy the book which is reviewed in these pages.

... pages which, for this bumper post-R'NR edition, are made of paper following the digital adventures of the last issue which turned out to be mostly well received but had the unexpected effect of antagonising a few members. I thank everybody who provided feedback – both kinds! Digital plans moving forward? It would be wrong of me to impose the direction of the magazine on a yet-to-be-named new editor, but based on the recent experiment I have amended my ideas slightly and you'll no doubt hear and see more about this in the near future. Please respond if asked for your input.

As my stint at the editor's desk comes to an end (along with the longer and more generous periods of volunteering by Dave Fisher and Campbell Tiley), I have been thinking about the satisfaction that came with doing my thing for the club.

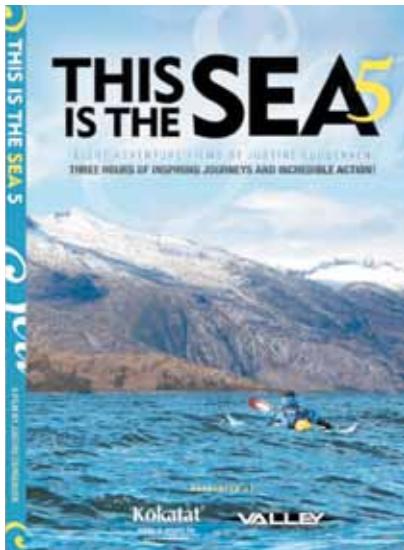
The highs were significant. Working

alongside and getting invaluable support from the volunteers on the committee; great people - generous, supportive, dedicated, funny and warm every one of them. It's easy to forget that your committee spend a lot of their personal time to help the club for no reward other than enhancing the benefits of membership. My time as editor has taught me in future to thank them more often and provide feedback to them more carefully.

I've made some pretty big changes to the magazine, so thanks to Dave Fisher for backing me. Thanks too go to all the club members who so generously spend time preparing material for the magazine, repeat offenders of note being Vincent Weaver, Mark Sundin, Ian Vaile, Adrian Clayton, Dave Winkworth, Cathy Miller, Meagan Pryke, Russ Swinnerton, Mark Pearson, Rob Mercer and others; your unstinting support makes the editor's job possible...thank you. It's also been a buzz dealing with contributors from around the world, legends like Paul Caffyn, Jim Kakuk, Nancy and Eric Soares, Wayne Horodowich and Tadhg de Barra – all so generous. And a final shout out to volunteer sub-editor for this edition, Emma Kirk and proofreader Peter Osman.

As my shoulder injury finally heals, I'm back on the water again and I can't tell you how good it feels. See you out there!

Cheers
Mark Schroeder, Editor



THIS IS THE SEA 5
By Justine Curgenven
Run time: 3 hours
PAL DVD
Filmed in High Definition
16:9 Widescreen
Available from: cackletv.com
Reviewed by: David Winkworth

TITS, as the 'This is the Sea' DVD series is affectionately known, first appeared on the sea kayaking scene in about 2005. For us down under in the southern hemisphere, it was a great connection with sea kayaking in the big northern hemisphere paddling centres of Europe and the USA. It was sea kayaking action up close, it was alive, it was fresh and it made Justine Curgenven with her trademark cackle laugh a household name in sea kayaking.

Curgenven pioneered movie photography from a kayak, grabbing scenes that no-one had tried to catch before and teaming them up with modern music themes. It was most likely a bit of a punt with the first DVD, but it paid off for her and she has travelled all over the world in recent years paddling and filming successive editions. If you're a sea kayaker and you haven't heard of her - well then - you should get out more!

This is a review of her latest offering: No. 5 in the TITS pentalogy.

VOLCANOES, VOLCANOES... MORE F***ING VOLCANOES!

There are eight segments in TITS 5, ranging from six minutes to about 50 minutes duration. Each segment can be individually selected from the DVD menu. Total run time is around three hours.

After a brief action-oriented intro we meet Paul Kuthe, an American surfing cold dirty water in Wales. There are some great kayak surfing scenes in this segment but what is it with the higher latitudes of the northern hemisphere? Is it really that bleak and cold?

This is followed by another much longer (42 mins) piece on Sarah Outen, an English girl getting around the world by human power and raising money for various causes. Naturally, some of the trip is by kayak and Curgenven accompanies Outen on the sea kayaking legs across the English Channel and from Russia to Japan. Actually, Curgenven joined Outen's team as the expert kayaker, a role she is eminently qualified to fill. This does carry risks however if the subject turns out to be a dud paddler. Thankfully that is not the case but we do hear from Outen when she flops onto the Japanese shore that the just-completed paddle of 50 kms was her longest ever! Really!

Paddling scenes along the Russian island of Sahkalin are beautiful with great wildlife footage. Much of this segment is shot in the dark or in dirty water and it had me reaching for the blanket to warm up. There is a bit of unnecessary hype in this segment too. Curgenven tries to convey a sense of urgency with Russian bureaucratic and diplomatic stuff-ups but it doesn't work. It reminded me of TV home improvement shows where the renos need to be completed before the owners come home!

Rolling maestro Turner Wilson features in an all-too-short piece on rough water rolling. Great footage, and great rolling wisdom from the man with the smooth-as-bourbon voice. For my money, it's worth buying TITS 5 just for this segment! If this gets paddlers working on their combat rolls then that's terrific!

How about these pearls from Turner Wilson: On going from skiing to kayak rolling: "Add the idea of swell and rhythm and stir."

Or this: "Take advantage of the full circle sea worthiness of the kayak."

And this: "Rolling technique allows you to become as one with a powerful sea."

Yes, give this man his own show!

of 40 sea kayakers. It's a pretty damn busy half hour as we check out active volcanoes, more volcanoes and ice cream shops. There's even a dog rescue off a cliff! Then it's back to Sicily to harvest grapes in a vineyard. There is some great flat water paddling scenery including caves but that's not enough to redeem this piece – it's a stocking filler. (Ed: or was that a shocking filler?)

Then it's onto downwind surf skis for a 15 minute segment in which we meet surf ski identities Oscar Chalupsky, Greg Barton and Joe Glickman. The latter is the author of Fearless, the book about Freya Hoffmeister and her around Australia paddle. A world of alpha males it seems, with Chalupsky leading the pack.

Back in the Mediterranean for a 500 mile pre-season circumnavigation of Sardinia, the second largest island in the sea – this time it's just Curgenven and her partner Barry Shaw. I like watching these two – they have good chemistry between them. They could make a full series by themselves and I'd be cool with that. They complete the circumnavigation of this very pretty island, and along the way get flooded out in their tent, weatherbound and Barry gets to do an awful lot of eating for the camera. How come you're not fat Baz? A nice segment and a warm-up for the best bits to come.

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Yes, give this man his own show!

Turner Wilson also featured with Cheri Perry in Curgenven's recent instructional 'This is the Roll' DVD. The last segment (50 mins) again sees Justine Curgenven and Barry Shaw tackle a 1,000 mile circumnavigation together. This time it's the island of Tierra del Fuego right at the southern tip of the South American continent. It's high latitude, cold and very windy. The scenery is just stunning – glaciers tumble into the sea and wildlife abounds.

There is a nice intro to the pair in Wales – followed by the trip south, the collection of their kayaks from customs etc. and with Argentinean bureaucracy it takes them 10 days to get on the water. Unfortunately, after only eight days on the water, Barry gets tenosynovitis in his wrist. It's a nasty, common disabling injury for a paddler and despite three week's rest it remains stubbornly painful for Barry. The pair has no choice but to put the trip, and Barry's wrist, on ice for 12 months.

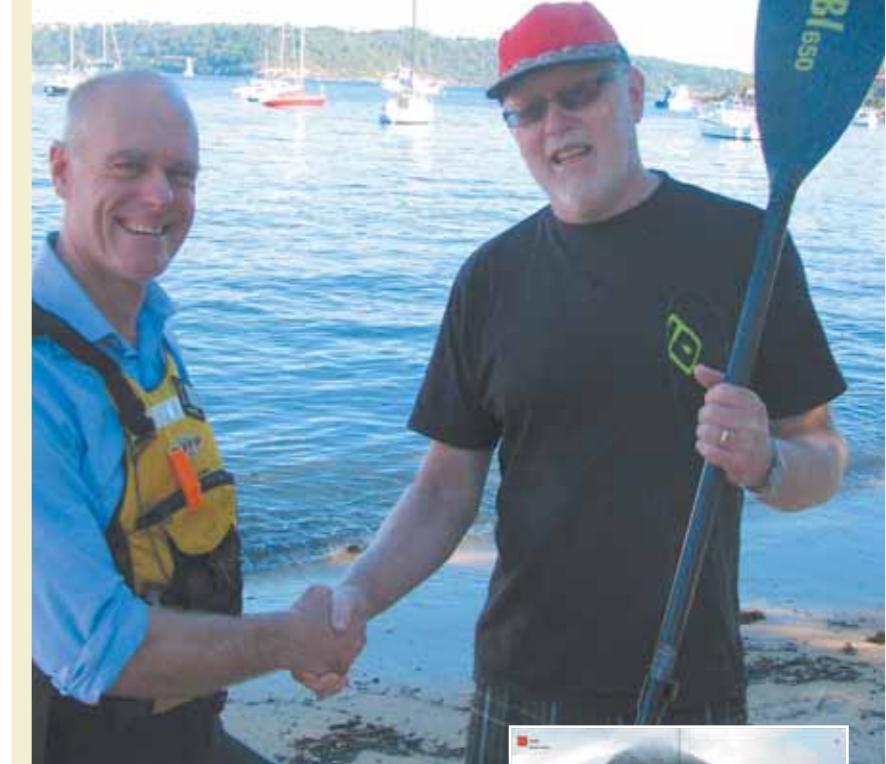
They return the following year and complete the circumnavigation with part of it in the reverse direction to dodge blistering headwinds. Some might wonder if this qualifies as a legit circumnavigation! I'd be keen to give a go. It is beautiful!

This segment is vintage Curgenven – laughter, Barry eating, tears, problem solving with minimal campsites, fierce winds and glorious paddling scenery – all beautifully filmed by the paddlers. One minor gripe – I would like to have seen a gear list for the trip and some more detailed trip info.

So, what of the future for Cackle TV and the TITS series? Do we want her to do it again? I'd love to see more, perhaps with Justine focusing her lens on some more instructional segments. The TITS series is widely viewed by sea kayakers and it's a great opportunity to stick in a little training segment here and there. And – no one would dare call it padding! ■

Review first published in New Zealand Sea Canoist which pays Mr Winkworth more for his journalistic skills than Salt could ever hope to afford.
Thanks Paul Caffyn for stealing our talent!

Saltiest submission WINNER



EXPEDITION KAYAKS

A delighted James receives his bounty from Rob Mercer.



LADEEEZ AND GENNELMEN, WE HAVE A WINNER!

James Johnson may have written up a sailing trip and cunningly thrown in a few paddling mentions, but his article about a journey through Patagonia's Beagle passage had it all... A real sense of exploration in a very exotic environment, breathtaking encounters with wildlife, the manly use of a drysuit and – best of all – simply stunning photography.

James' effort in writing up his exploits and sharing such a fantastic adventure with the club scored him the inaugural **Saltiest Submission** award. Near misses by Dee, Alexander and Frank and Vincent. Don't give up guys, you're all contenders!

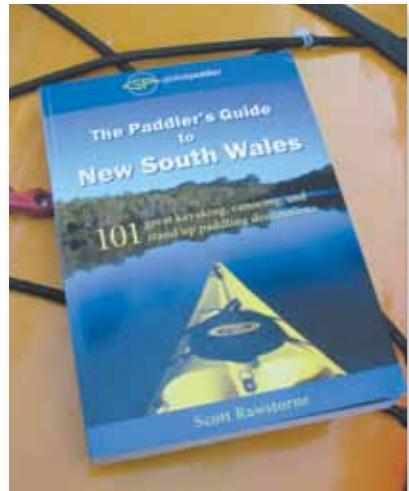
Rob Mercer of Expedition Kayaks caught up with James recently to present him with his prize - a carbon Wasabi 650 Touring Paddle, just the thing for keeping humpback whales at bay on the your next adventure, James!

To all our readers, be assured you don't need to go to such lengths to win the next prize – one will be awarded in each edition – you could simply write about your dream kayak, a new skill or local trip to nab the prize – without even getting wet. Keyboard at the ready....■

Inset: James' winning story

The Paddler's Guide to New South Wales

101 great kayaking, canoeing and stand up paddling destinations by Scott Rawstorne



This is a quite lavish A5-format paperback publication of 360 pages of glossy art paper with more than 240 colour pictures plus a map for each of the 101 destinations covered.

Authorship is attributed to Scott Rawstorne, an Australian Canoeing Flatwater Kayak Instructor. Scott has worked for quite a few years in various sectors of the paddling industry – guiding, instructing and as a state representative for a popular kayak brand offering a broad range of recreational kayaks. The printed guide is a progression from the Global Paddler web site that has been around for some years covering similar content. One needs to be a subscriber to Global Paddler to access the information online. However, a visit to www.globalpaddler.com.au reveals a sample entry for one of the destinations covered in the printed version.

Written in a breezy, often quirky, style, the guide does well to encourage paddlers to visit each of the destinations it covers. Scott comes across as a paddling enthusiast. Some of the place name derivations are a result of self-confessed inventiveness on his part (Dora Creek being named after Dora the Explorer; Mungo Brush taking its name from the songwriter of Mungo Jerry's 1970s hit In the Summertime)

The preliminary pages contain general information about paddling activities – from

types of craft, paddles, PFDs, clothing. Transporting paddle craft and safety issues are also covered in the preliminary pages. Although canoeists and SUP paddlers are part of the guide's target market, these pages are mostly related to the needs of the recreational kayaker.

Within the guide proper, the state is broken into four colour-coded regions: Sydney & Hunter (32 trips); Mid North Coast & Northern Rivers (33); Illawarra & South Coast (16); Inland regions (20). Each destination is given three pages, one of which is devoted to a snapshot of the trip where information is provided under the headings of:

- Waterway (eg Karuah River for Allworth, the first destination covered in the guide)
- Distance
- Time (based on a paddling speed of around 5kph)
- Start (location of the put-in)
- GPS (expressed in latitude and longitude)
- Finish (location of the pull-out)
- Parking (availability and where)
- Toilet (loo options – if any)
- Conditions (e.g. Open areas, mostly tidal, light traffic, shallow areas)

This page also includes a teaser paragraph and a basic map identifying put-in and pull-out with some additional reference points. The other two pages combine a free-flowing descriptive text (often including a potted history) and a couple of photographs relevant to the trip.

Distances of the featured paddles range from eight to 32 kilometres. Most are on enclosed waterways. In the context of the NSW SKC Club's grading system, the most challenging would rate at a mid level Grade 2 (when related parameters are applied). Even hardened sea kayakers enjoy the occasional flatwater trip and the guide identifies some paddles that will definitely go on to my Bucket list.

Little mention is given to the combination of kayaking and camping and no attempt has been made to promote the multi-day expeditionary opportunities that some of the destinations offer (e.g. The Myall Lakes/Port Stephens/Karuah River system, Hawkesbury

River/Broken Bay/Pittwater system, etc).

I think the snapshot offered for each destination would be improved if some sort of rating was applied to the challenges likely to be encountered. The recently developed PaddleNSW rating system would represent a good starting point in this regard.

While the advice on safety offered in the preliminary pages and elsewhere within the guide is generally quite sound, there are some causes for concern.

The statement "...paddlers officially have right of way over motorised craft" is wrong and could result in a tragedy if applied. Nowhere in NSW Maritime's Boating Handbook does it indicate that paddle craft have any right of way over other craft (it's a different situation for windsurfers and kitesurfers). Reinforcing this view is the instruction on the Paddle Smart sticker issued by NSW Maritime which states "When Paddling You MUST ... keep clear of larger vessels -- cross behind, not in front..."

Also, the route direction indicated for some of the Sydney Harbour trips where the near shoreline is on the left give rise for concern (the rounding of Yurulbin Point, Birchgrove and Blues Point, are standout examples of the increased risk that the proposed routes present).

In my view there are other issues relating to safety where the advice offered is questionable or inadequate.

The author invites feedback so it is hoped that these concerns will be addressed immediately with the online content as well as in any future printed editions.

Despite the criticisms expressed above, the guide should prove a valuable resource for those who enjoy their flat water paddling.

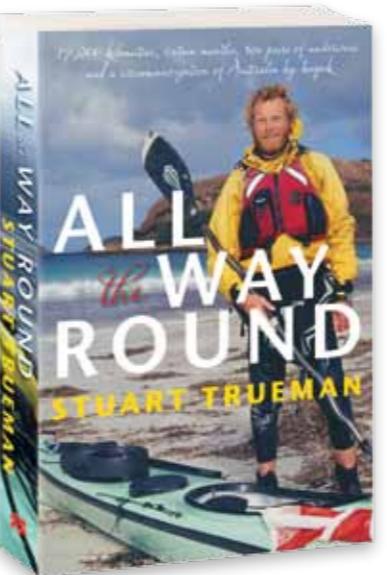
Copies can be purchased for \$39.95 plus P&P from globalpaddler.com.au and selected retailers. ■

WIN your copy of the guide

The author Scott Rawstone at Global Paddler has kindly donated a signed copy to give away to Salt readers; it will be given to the next flatwater trip write-up we receive.

All the Way Round

by Stuart Trueman



gradual build-up of anxiety and apprehension approaching the big, perilous challenges: the Zuytdorp and Bight cliffs, the Gulf country. Stuart increasingly alludes to these as they draw nearer, until he rounds a cape or commits, and then it's on. And finally like a bass thread running beneath the narrative is the heartbeat of his thoughts about Sharon and the girls, the pulse that grounds his trip and provides the centre of gravity for everything he writes about.

Stuart's style is not lyrical or overblown: there are no page-long descriptions of a sunset or the beauty of a cliff face, nor exquisitely articulated moments of epiphany or enlightenment on the sea. Rather we get a catalogue of events, of his reactions, his concerns, how his body was bearing up, how the gear was faring, interspersed with back-story about his climbing or kayaking trips. It's not prosaic, the utterly extraordinary nature of the journey ensures that, but the book clearly reflects a pragmatism, thoroughness, and ruthless self-deprecating honesty that characterises his approach to paddling.

Unquestionably to pull off a trip like this needs an unwavering faith in yourself, a bloody-mindedness when it comes to obstacles, and a willingness to subordinate everything to the end. Never mind that end is over a year and 17,000 km away. Stuart obviously shares some traits with Freya. But Stuart evinces something else altogether: an empathy and respect that shines through when, over and again, he encounters the generosity of strangers and the faith of friends.

A repeated theme is how a single person's acceptance of his dream and confidence in his ability to carry it off overrides a crowd of know-nothing naysayers. He clearly doesn't suffer fools gladly and doesn't withhold his opinion,

for example the procedural buffoons who futilely attempted to derail his traverse of the Bight, adding bureaucratic grief to an already immense strain. But there is a charming repeated astonishment that time after time when things are tough strangers step in with a feed, a beer, a bed, a lift or sometimes all of those things. Especially the beer.

You can't help but feel that the journey is shot through with the people who emerge unbidden to help him, replenish him, and wish him well. I was personally gladdened to read about his meeting with my lifetime paddling gurus Roger Price and Barbara McGrath in Port Macquarie:

it speaks of Stuart's attitude that every time he talks about someone who helps him he has a personal anecdote that gives some flavour about them, a human touch so often missing from the egotist world of adventure writing.

This is also true of Stuart's reaction to the environment. He's deeply in it the whole way: these are not just miles to be covered but areas with attributes and almost personalities, to be respected and appreciated. While he's not prone to hyperbole (!) and often it's a long walk between adjectives, there are times in the book when you get a sense of the transcendent subordination of self in the landscape that is the hallmark of great adventure writing. There's a particularly strong passage as he encounters tour ships in the Kimberley and is finally left alone in the ancient silence.

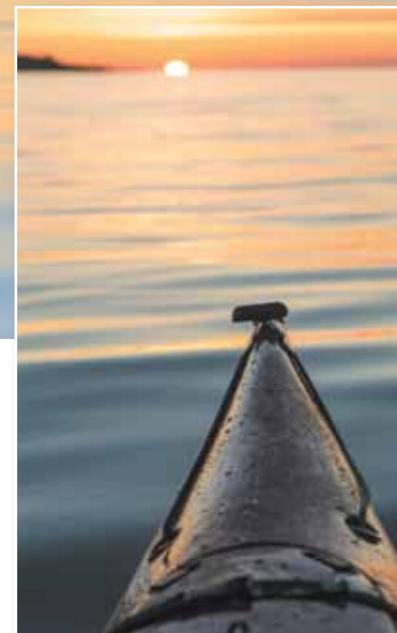
I won't commit a spoiler and reveal the kicker in the last couple of pages when a ten-year old asks Stuart a question that utterly stumps him and provides a deep and unexpected insight into the soul of adventurers: but it perfectly rounds out a book that, countering a tendency to become a list of events and places, emerges as a very human story about determination, fortitude, humility and resilience. It will join Paul Caffyn's book on the top shelf of personal narratives of kayaking adventure. I look forward to his next trip and his next book, though possibly Sharon may have other ideas. ■

Published by Pan MacMillan



Would you trust this book reviewer?

Sunset behind Ardnamurchan Point, the most westerly point of the British mainland.



Sunset in the Sound of Arisaig with the Small Isles of Eigg and Rum in the distance.

Yes we are pretty lucky paddlers in the west coast of Scotland. We have an incredible variety of paddling conditions which have been created by the complex coastline made up of some of the oldest rocks in the world and some of the youngest. These have been sculpted by glaciers during the Ice Age then drowned by the sea to form a maritime maze of islands and deep sea lochs. We are exposed to North Atlantic storms and swell and so have big surf beaches. There are also powerful tide races like those round headlands like the Mull of Galloway and

Endless Shores

The west coast of Scotland

through narrows like the Gulf of Coryvreckan. We also have some very sheltered waters with great views of mountains, ancient castles and archaeological remains up to 9,000 years old. White shell and cold water coral sand beaches contrast with dark grey rocks. The sea changes from turquoise to ultramarine and the tropical appearance is emphasised by palm trees which have been planted near some of the remote villages. The Gulf Stream means that although we are so far north (and the sea freezes in many places of similar latitude) the open sea temperature rarely falls below 6C.

The sea is full of all sorts of cetaceans from porpoises and dolphins to orcas and fin whales. In summer sunfish and leatherback turtles are occasional visitors. Fortunately our 8m sharks bask and don't bite. Shoals of mackerel provide a delicious supplement to rations in our hatches. Otters are frequently seen round the shore and the many bird species include colonies of tens of thousands of noisy gannets, comical puffins and Manx shearwaters, which nest underground and make such weird noises there that foraging Vikings thought they were trolls. They even named a mountain on Rum after them, calling it 'Trollaval'. Golden eagles and sea eagles are often spotted, soaring high on wide wings.

Winter conditions can vary dramatically though. These sunny photos were taken on the 19th of February but as I write this on 23rd March, we have 4" of snow, 35 knot winds, a wind chill of minus 16C, most major roads in SW Scotland are impassable, thousands of homes on the mainland and islands are without electricity and ferries are disrupted. The moral is, we sea kayak when we can! With such rapidly changeable conditions, safety is a pretty big consideration. In winter and much of spring and autumn, dry suits are essential with thick double fleece suits under. In the remote areas there is almost no mobile phone signal and VHF communication with the coastguard is really patchy. PLBs are therefore a pretty good idea for unplanned emergency situations. I don't like to camp much before the end of February because the nights are so long and in good weather there will be a hard frost. My first camp this year was on 26th February and the sun had set by the time we arrived at the beach, so the temperature dropped like a stone. During the night we could see the ghostly green flickering of the Northern Lights. In midsummer it never quite gets dark so that is a compensation which allows long lazy paddling days. However, in summer the Scottish predators come out of

hibernation and there are billions of them: the fearsome Scottish midge! In Scotland humans are not top of the food chain.

Recreational sea canoeing started in the 19th century and one of the prime movers was a Scot, John MacGregor, who developed the "Rob Roy canoe". His book, '*A Thousand Miles in the Rob Roy Canoe*' published in 1866, did much to popularise touring on the sea, lakes and rivers in Europe and North America. The Rob Roy was double ended and decked. It was paddled, while sitting and facing forward, with a double bladed paddle. In Scotland the terms canoe and kayak are used pretty interchangeably, we don't need to go off to Greenland or somewhere else to look for our true heritage! From the beginning sea canoeists took trolleys to portage narrow isthmuses, which are often called Tarbert. This place name is derived from the Norse "draw boat" and is somewhere where Vikings portaged their longboats to take a shortcut, avoid a headland or claim the land they had just "circumnavigated". All the early sea canoes had sails and even well into the 1960's many still sported a sailing rig: just look at the photos in mid 20th century Scottish sea kayaking books such as '*The Canoe Boys*', '*Kayak to Cape Wrath*' and

Argonauts of the Western Isles'. Unfortunately with the development of GRP kayaks, in the 1970's and 1980's, paddle sailing all but died out in Scotland. A few years ago, I imported a Pacific Action sail from NZ and one of Mick McRobb's Flat Earth kayak sails from Australia. Mick's sail proved highly suitable for our gusty cyclonic winds and many can now be seen in Scottish waters indeed a Scottish retailer is now the Flat Earth European distributor.

The west coast of Scotland is well served by

many sea kayaking retailers, outfitters, guides and coaches. The coastline of just one county, Argyll, is longer than the entire coastline of France. There is plenty of room, so you would be most welcome to visit. ■

Douglas runs a beautiful kayaking blog at seakayakphoto.com which if you enjoy these photos is well worth a visit.



Alpenglow on Rois-Bheinn (Rushven), 882m from Glenug Bay. (The paddler is the author's daughter)

By Megan Pryke
Photos by Lynn McNaughton



Towing without a line: Contact tows

It was dark with lively seas. A brisk south easterly wind, powerful swell rebounding off the cliffs south of Sydney heads. My kayak was rafted to my buddy's completing an assisted rescue. I knew that a secondary capsize was a real possibility so I insisted on keeping the raft until the electric pump had done its work. Meanwhile the seas and wind nudge us closer to the cliffs, the rebound intensifies.

Rob, the trip leader, paddled over to check in on our rescue as I was monitoring the distance from the cliffs and considering a separation plan. Rob was not sure how the rescue was progressing and yelled out "contact tow". So I acted. "Bob, grab and hold onto the front of my kayak". Once I knew Bob had a good grip I reversed paddled. The rafted kayaks provided extra balance as I felt the rise up and slap down the steep sea waves. After about ten strokes, Bob communicated his cockpit was empty and he was ready to paddle solo. We broke the raft and paddle out to sea.

This was the first time I had ever used a contact tow other than in practice. It was remarkably effective, providing time for a largish flooded cockpit to be emptied while keeping a distance from further hazard. Although the cliffs were still a good distance away another capsize would have resulted

in the need for a rescue complicated with a tow line. The further away from the cliffs, the less rebound, and the less chance of another capsize.

If a rescuer is able bodied, in their cockpit and responsive to commands a contact tow is quick to set up. I recall the first time I reversed paddled in lively conditions, I capsized due to being more unstable as the waves behind are experienced before they are seen. The two kayak raft provided stability that a tow line wouldn't. Another advantage

would be to use the opportunity to turn the kayaks into a safer direction for release.

Contact tows can be done in various configurations. Contact tows bow to stern, stern to bow, bow to bow, reverse paddling, forward paddling. In addition to maintaining a good grip, the rescuer can use edging and foot pressure to help keep the kayaks together. I was appreciative of having prior training and practice in milder conditions and recommend that sea kayakers get out on the water and test what works. ■



Mine's ham and tomato, what have you got?

This is my usual reply to people who enquire about my roll. I took up paddling six years ago.

Due to an onocular knee replacement, I had to give up a promising career and future in football. I searched far and wide for a substitute sport.

I came across an ad in the National Parks magazine, for a paddling day on Lane Cove River.

After that first day I knew I had found an activity that would be satisfying. It seemed like bush walking on water. You could stride out or hang back and have a chat.

I bought a sea kayak from eBay (formerly belonging to George Jessup) and joined a flat-water kayaking club. Where they taught me the basics of paddling.

I spent the next two years paddling up and down the Hawkesbury with my new-found friends, who showed great patience with my inability to remain upright in my boat for any length of time. I became very proficient in wet exits and assisted rescue.

The club put on a rolling class which I flunked and was banished from the pool with the instructors words ringing in my ears "you will never roll".

About this time I teamed up with a very gung ho fellow club member who suggested we join the New South Wales Sea Kayaking Club.

Now, I had heard of the club and in fact had visited the website prior to joining the flat-water club. But the website scared the xxxx out of me and I quickly moved on.

With a lot of prodding from my gung ho friend, I joined the NSW SKC club.

I am still a member of the flat-water club and I enjoy paddling with my very good friends. People I regard as a very significant part of my paddling family.

I turned up at Clontarf where I met Owen, Adrian and the OANDORA Paddlers. Up until this time I was not game enough to paddle past Grotto point. As a matter of fact I did not know where Grotto point was.

After 4 years I can now paddle past Grotto point.

Within the club, rolling seems to be the starting point in the search for the Holy Grail. If I wanted to find the Holy Grail I had to push the memories of my past experience with rolling to the back of my mind and brace myself with a good pep talk in front of the mirror.

I then signed up for Adrian Clayton's rolling course.

After a year and even with Adrian's encouragement I still had not been able to master this elusive exercise. This one failure does not overshadow Adrian's many successes in teaching rolling and I thank him for his patience and the time that he so selflessly gave me.

We all seem to need reference points and with my birthday looming I thought a good goal would be to perform a roll before that day arrived, so at Rock & Roll this year, with the encouragement and help of two of my fellow Oandorians, Brian and Geoff, I was determined to execute a roll!

I was on the water, relaxed and in position. Brian said "keep it simple". Over I went, bent forward swept the paddle and all of a sudden I popped up the other side. I had done it! I had rolled!!

I did it again to prove it wasn't a fluke. Yes!!! And again. And again. Adrian's instructions had finally sunk in and he won't have to mark me down as a lost cause.

Now, when I remember that instructor saying "you will never roll" I smile the smile of accomplishment, or as it is more commonly known the 'up yours smile'.



Plus, I had achieved the other goal, I had rolled before reaching my birthday, my 71st birthday. Tick one off the bucket list.

I need no longer brush off questions about my rolling with those moronic bread roll jokes. I can now nod my head and speak knowingly when the conversation around the campfire turns to the finer points of rolling.

As a postscript; I would take this opportunity to thank all the club members for their fellowship, generosity and hospitality.

I have found that paddling has given me the same camaraderie that I had experienced in my 25 years of playing rugby league and the following 30 years of touch football. I think it may be from being a member of a team facing a common foe, in this case the sea and her many moods. ■



Dennis upright

By Dennis Perigo

By Oscar Award winner
Vincent Weafer



Vincent's guide to

Our home-grown master film-maker shares the secrets
Palm D'Eau award at Rock n' Roll 2013

If you create something it's really difficult to tell whether it's intrinsically good and whether people would like to share it....

I love sea kayaking and it's relatively easy for me to make videos of it, but my non-kayaking partner finds these videos boring. My brother-in-law once showed me a very long video on stationery engines – he found it fascinating and I was bored poo-less.

I live in a scenically beautiful part of NSW and am lucky to have a pretty and unbusy coastal National Park just 12 minutes drive away.

I like images and photography; and just had to buy a GoPro camera, when once I sailed my sea kayak (without a camera) between a flying sea eagle and flying pelican.

MAKING VIDEOS TAKE A LOT OF TIME

It's really really time consuming including:

- mounting cameras
- charging batteries
- downloading from camera
- editing – you will need to cut out large chunks, and then join the remaining clips into something (hopefully) watchable and then 'marry' music to it
- encoding and exporting 'finished' vid
- distributing – how do you get it to possible viewers?

For me to get a worthwhile 3 - 5 minute video would take an average 3 - 5 hours editing and I prefer doing the vid from the one 'outing'. Some video editors spend much more time editing.

VIDEO EQUIPMENT

The price is dropping dramatically for smaller waterproof video cameras

- usually people end up getting other mounts and accessories

You will need computer hardware including

- a relatively fast/powerful computer
- largish screen for editing
- a lot of space on your hard disk.

You will need computer software

- I like VLC video player for playing videos (which is free)
- Adobe Premiere Pro for editing (which is expensive, as in \$500 to \$900, but teachers and students can get it cheaper)

Oscar glory

that scooped him the highly coveted

VIDEO STUFF YOU MAY WANT TO THINK ABOUT

Who is your audience? (it could just be you).

How long will they/you want to watch?

- sea kayaking can be a bit boring for non-sea kayakers so I like to keep my videos short, preferring around three mins to no more than six mins in length
- I'm a sucker for the aesthetic side – low angle light on water matched with slower paced music... what floats your boat?... and hopefully someone else's

I will do a rough edit, sleep on it, and do at least 1 or 2 further edits down the track. The more you watch the same vid, the more bugs you'll see

Look very closely at video clips

- what seems good in reality, sometimes doesn't quite 'sing' when you look at the footage
- sometimes it's the inadvertent footage which grabs you

VIDEO TECHNIQUE

I'm still experimenting and blundering on but ...

- I try to mount my camera in a low position so you can see my kayak otherwise, with the constantly rocking, it can make viewers queasy
- a camera within arm's reach allows you to adjust the camera if it gets bumped or a wave dislodges it
- a tether for your camera is a really good idea

On the editing side...

- I don't like to 'treat' my videos much usually using only auto contrast and auto levels. Too much emphasis on titles, effects and transitions can be a distraction from the movie

PROBLEMS WITH VIDEOING

I have sometimes inadvertently switched on the GoPro and flattened the battery. Also I have had problems with fogging inside the camera waterproof housing which can be reduced by

- anti-fog treatment on the inside of the lens
- GoPro inserts
- not having the camera running for long periods of time to reduce heat build up

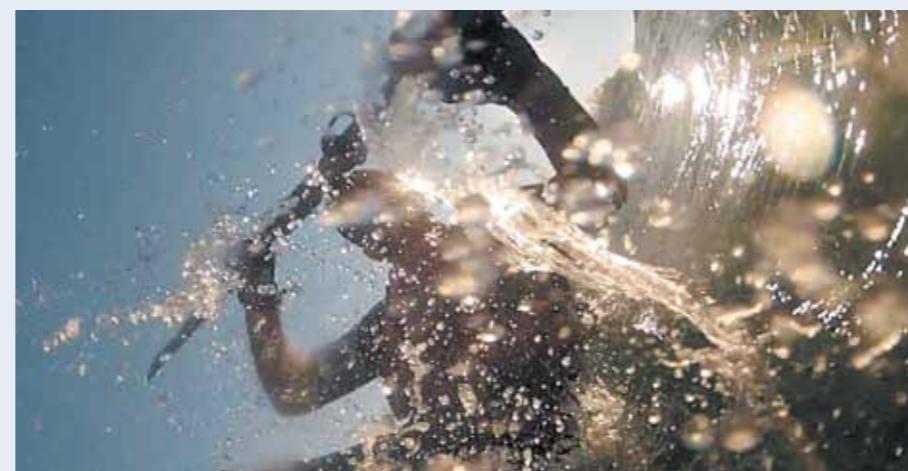
WATCH VIDEOS

- I enjoy looking at videos occasionally.... but usually I'd rather be kayaking!

– my videos can be viewed if you Google 'Vimeo Vincent Sea Kayak' or 'Youtube Vincent Sea Kayak'

Some other people's videos, which I like, which you can find on Vimeo, are

- Cascada
- rwp 2012
- Noccalula Falls
- Phantom Water Edit
- OfSouls + Water: The Teaser
- Atacama Starry Nights: Episode 1 ■



By Alexander Manu and Frank Riitano

TWO Guys, TWO Sea Kayaks, TWO Lakes AND ONE Mountain

Circumnavigations of Lakes Burley Griffin & Jindabyne by kayak and bike

Up to now our trips were pure kayaking. But this time the combined passion of kayaking and push biking was the inspiration for this trip. Our trip plan was to circumnavigate first by kayak the national capitals lake Burley Griffin, then back it up by biking the lakes' perimeter. We also timed our visit to attend the Summernats; the petrol heads mecca of hot rodded fast cars. Then we would press on to Lake Jindabyne and circumnavigate the lake and find the legendary snowy river that feeds it, entailing an over night camp stay. Finally, we would cycle via Charlottes Pass to the highest point in Australia, Mount Kosciusko and then drive back to Sydney.

As per usual full prior trip preparation was undertaken as a prerequisite to ensure survival. Just like the unpredictability of the ocean, Australia's Alpine region can serve up some very challenging conditions which can overwhelm the unprepared. Namely Lake Jindabyne, very strong winds can besiege the lake. In fact in the past fisherman had perished boating on the lake. Second was the bike ride to the top of Mount Kosciusko, snap cold conditions even snowfalls can befall the region.

So, with kayaks, mountain push bikes and all necessary provisions loaded we set off from Sydney on the 2nd of January 2013. What we had not planned for was the heat wave that

was gripping the entire eastern seaboard at time of departure. After a 3.5 hour drive we arrived in Canberra to a sweltering 35°C. It was late afternoon when we checked in to our comfy hotel in downtown Canberra. Almost immediately we were in exploration mode, the push bikes were unloaded and off we went. In a few hours we had covered old and new Parliament house, the foreign embassy area, the war memorial and the CBD. We had some nice Thai food for dinner and it was back to the hotel. That night we contemplated the next days kayaking. Lake Burley Griffin ... 28kms to circumnavigate about 4 to 4.5 hours kayaking.

We woke to a predicted 39°C day. We drove down to a drop off point at the lake edge near the new Australian Modern Museum, unloaded the Kayaks and off we went hugging the shoreline in a north western direction. It was 10am and oh boy, yes it was hot, very hot. We were right into our paddle strokes as we meandered through some beautiful scenery and birdlife. We passed Yarralumla



The long, hot hill



the PM's residence, then passed under the Commonwealth Ave Bridge. Having notched up at least 2hours of paddling in sweltering temperatures it was time to have a break. We saw a lake wall where we could tie up our kayaks and go for a stroll. As we wandered, by chance we came across the Australian National Museum. We sure were a sight as we walked into the museum with our webbed kayak booties, board shorts and wet T-shirts. But we were in the Capital, the home of political correctness, so even as odd as we looked no one dared blink an eyelid. After our little parade through

the museum it was back to the kayaks. Replenished we paddled hard still hugging the shoreline passing under another road bridge toward the Jerrabombera wetlands. Once we arrived we were greeted by black swans and a abundance of creatures, fish, turtles and even cows having a drink at the water edge. After about 2kms upstream it was time to turn back. We re-entered the main lake and to the right side was the mouth of the Molonglo River. If you kayaked the river some 12 kms it would take you to the junction of the Queanbeyan River and Queanbeyan City proper. It was very tempting but that was for another time, so on we went. We were now focused on that large water jet in the lake in fact the Captain Cook Memorial Jet which was some 3kms in the distance. Once there, we cooled off with the water jet pounding down on us from some 60 metres high. It was now only 3kms to get back to our original starting point so we power paddled racing each other to the finish line. We made it back and realized it was still very very hot so we had a dip in the lake. We loaded up the kayaks, changed and then decided to have a look at the modern museum spending some 60 minutes there, it was a very informative display of Australia's last 200+ years of history.

It was now approx 4pm, we had not had enough. So we unloaded our push bikes and did a 25km circuit around the lake in 35°C with some heartbreak hills to keep us honest. Once we arrived back at the car ... finally now we were satisfied. That night we had a great meal and finished it off with a well deserved body massage at the Canberra Mall.

Next day it was Summernats day. We headed out to the Canberra Exhibition showgrounds in 41°C heat. Basically we spent most of the day watching the petrol rev heads of Australia show off their pride and joy street machines, culminating in the biggest burnout in world history of 69 cars smoking and burning their rear wheel rubber tyres right to their rims. But they weren't finished yet, that night a rock concerned smashed our ear drums into submission. It was all a far cry from the peaceful tranquil lake we had kayaked the day before.

It was now the morning of the 5th of January 2013, after a hearty hotel breaky we set off for Lake Jindabyne. This would be an approximate 56km kayak circumnavigation of the lake with an overnight camp stay. We arrived that afternoon and the cars thermometer was recording an incredible

38°C !! We found a lakeside park just out of town and unloaded the kayaks. With eagerness off we went paddling into a stiff northerly wind. About 4kms into the paddle Frank's paddle suddenly snapped in half. It had been a bit suspect for sometime as it had been previously repaired. Here we were in the middle of the lake with no paddle. So I quickly rigged up a tow rope.

Dragging frank's kayak behind me I was now really feeling each paddle stroke for the 2kms to make it to decent shoreline to effect repairs. We made miraculous repairs to the paddle via means that would make any survivalist proud. Before too long (after a dip in crisp pristine water) we set off again. After about one hour of paddling that unpredictable weather lived up to its reputation. A massive South-Eastern storm front was brewing and fast approaching from behind. The weather began to change and the wind really picked up. Before too long we were battling very strong winds and a 0.5metre swell on the lake, then rain, blinding rain. It was brilliant, an adventurer's dream come true. Our attention quickly turned to finding a camping site as it was now getting late and the conditions were to say the least challenging. We saw a perfect little clearing in wild bush, so we paddle over to it.

We quickly setup our tent where we could and gathered dry firewood. We had dinner cooking on the fire in a flash. But we quickly found out we were not alone. We had setup camp on a Kangaroo colony's home turf.

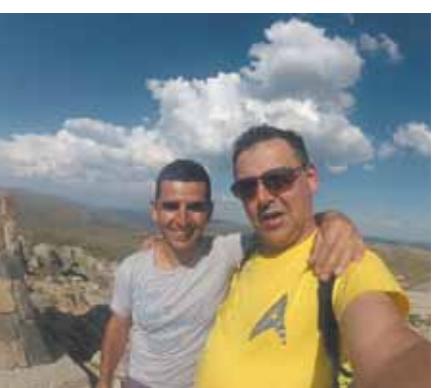
Before too long we had about 15 Skippy's stalking us. It was a night to remember, Kangaroos everywhere, in our kayaks, in our supplies, going through everything and anything they could... all night !! After very little sleep we were up at the crack of dawn.

Had breaky, packed up, into the kayaks and off we went paddling for 2 hours to make it to the end of the lake, going thru some pristine granite flooded gorges along the way. Now it was time for the return leg. Temperature update: 36°C and sweltering. After approx 22kms we had made it back to the starting



point. It was about 4pm. After a brief discussion it was decided to push on.... Mount Kosciusko here we come. Kayaks were unpacked and loaded back on the car and off we went. After about a 45 minute drive we arrived at Charlottes Pass.

It was 30°C being very unseasonal weather at such a high altitude. We unchained our bikes and set off on a 9km uphill bike ride to the summit. It was a gradual two hour slow bike peddle grind to Rawsons Pass. Here we chained the bikes and walked the last 1.4kms to the summit of Mount Kosciusko, along the way touching some snow patches still there from the winters snow. There we were at the top of Australia 2228m, what a ride, what an effort, what a day so far as the scenery and landscape was so inspiring. After revelling in our achievement we quickly decended back to our bikes and from there it was a quick 20 minute downhill speed thrill ride back to Charlottes Pass. It was then a mad 6.5 hour dash drive straight back to Sydney arriving about 1am the Sunday night. Frank and myself were ready but not eager for work the next morning. ■



By John Piotrowski
Photos by John, Shaan, Dave and Matt

Agendas and INJURY



The 'Red Cordial twins' V-towing with Shaan supporting

Terry was immobilised trying to find a less painful position... he was in a lot of distress

It's not till you paddle with someone over a long distance, that you really get to know them - their moods, their emotions and their motivation. Throw in some hidden agendas, some discomfort and a serious situation and you find out a lot quicker.

A few years ago, six of us set out to paddle from Pindimar, within Port Stephens, to Forster, a total of 95km over three days. David Fisher runs a trip out of Pindimar most years, between Xmas and New Year, usually to Broughton Island, but this year he thought he'd make it a bit more substantial. Along for the ride were Matt Bezzina, Mark Schroeder, Terry Walsh, Shaan Gresser and myself.

Car shuffles are never fun and our car shuffle to Forster in driving rain and Xmas Holiday traffic, funnelling three lanes into one through Buladelah was a slog. However we found a well lit place near the boat ramp at Forster and parked three of the cars and then had a pre-paddle dinner at a Chinese restaurant, before getting back to Pindimar about 11:30pm and a comfortable bed to sleep in before setting off early the next morning - luxury.

The wind was benign when we left Pindimar, paddling around Corrie Island heading towards Yacaaba head and the ocean. We decided to stop at the eastern end of Jimmies' Beach much to Marks' protests.

"What are stopping here for?" Personally I hadn't paddled for about three months, so any chance to stretch the legs was snapped up by myself. 8km of paddling and the group was already showing signs of tension.

We rounded Yacaaba and explored a few sea caves and gauntlets along its jagged shoreline before then deciding to take the long way to Broughton Island by following the coastline along the entire length of Bennetts Beach. I was the one grumbling now - I wanted to take the shortest route possible to Broughton - mainly due to my lack of recent paddling.

The rest of the group stuck to the shoreline, a safe distance beyond the breakers, I sulked, paddling about 1km out to sea - hoping to save myself a precious few kilometres of paddling. Group spread was becoming a problem, and to exacerbate the problem, Mark, Matt and Terry had bolted and were about a kilometre ahead of Dave and Shaan before Dave decided to blow the whistle and hoist the paddle straight in the air to say "come to me".

I obeyed the call and paddled over to them, but not without whining and whining about how boring it was paddling along the beach. They should have just tipped me over then and there. The others kept paddling, claiming they didn't hear the call. They eventually stopped and waited, bobbing around off Dark Point at the end of Bennetts Beach and only



couple of kilometres from the northern tip of Broughton Island.

More tension as Dave raised the issue of group spread, whilst Mark countered with the issue about slow paddling speed, whilst I was eyeing off the chance to stretch my legs at the inviting little beach nestled cosily inside Dark Point. Mark chorused in with "What are we stopping here for?"

"Because it's there" was my response. Dave was keen to land as well because he'd never landed there before. It's often listed in Broughton Island trip plans as an escape route if the conditions turned nasty, so I wanted to do a recce of the place.

Matty, Terry and Shaan weighed in on Marks side and the group voted 4-2 to head straight to Broughton without landing. Dave paddled off with them whilst I still contemplated landing before languishing way behind - akin to a toddler digging his heels in whilst being dragged along. Poor form I know.

We landed on the beach on the northern side of Broughton Island - a southerly had hit and it was starting to rain as we put up our tents. Mark and Matt were first to put up their tents and then back into their boats wanting to paddle around the island before dinner. Phhht ... too much red cordial in their drink bottle ... I just ignored them. They ended up paddling out to Storm Petrel Island and back before joining us for dinner. I'm sure I heard Mark say to Matty when they were coming in to land "What are we stopping here for?"

So here's where the hidden agendas come in to play. Matt, Mark and Terry were using the trip as a training run for a planned Bass Straight crossing in a few months, hence the lively pace and dislike of stopping anywhere. Dave was interested in joining them, but hadn't really paddled much with them before and wanted to make sure they would get along together - it takes two weeks to paddle Bass Straight - you would want to be sure that you were all going to get on.



Terry aka TJ. Solid paddler when uninjured

Shaan always harboured a desire to paddle Bass Straight and had her own agenda of seeing if she could match it with the boys as a tester for a future Bass Straight crossing. Me - I was only ever going to do Bass Straight if the islands were spaced 10km apart and I stopped, explored and stretched the legs at each little island.

We checked the forecast for the morrow - 15kn southerly and a 1m Easterly swell - we would all be sailing to Seal Rocks the next day. We had a chat before setting off on the morning of day two. Because of the conditions we would all stick together, if some wanted to blast ahead they were to keep sight of the group and tack back to rejoin them - no bolting like yesterday. These were prophetic decisions.

The paddle from Broughton Island to Seal Rocks was about 18km point to point - there was virtually nowhere to land safely and it was one long beach break all the way. The southerly wind was filling our sails, but it had a chill to it and the quartering swell from the east meant that we had brace and lean into the swells often to stay on course in between brisk bouts of paddling. Rain had set in as well, but we were all enjoying the conditions - this is why we paddle - to enjoy nature and the ocean - well I do anyway. We all obeyed the agreement that we reached before we set off that day - the red cordial twins, Matty and Mark, stayed with the group and I didn't sulk and drag my heels.

We were about half way to Seal Rocks - in the middle of nowhere - when Terry started to lag behind - then stop - I thought he was just getting his cag out of the day hatch or something mundane, but then we realised he was having some difficulties - his back had spasmed and he was in considerable pain. He tried stretching - or trying to - but it only made it worse. The bracing and leaning along with the chill wind had caused him to seize up. This was serious. We were at least 9km from Seal Rocks, the rain had set in, the visibility was poor and we were maybe 3km from the nearest shore which was a deserted beach break. An assisted V tow was quickly agreed, however it took us a good ten minutes to get Terry into a cag, before the Red Cordial twins took up the tow and we cycled through turns supporting Terry who was immobilised in his kayak just trying to find some less painful position huddled forward in his cockpit. He was in a lot of distress.

We knew there was beach camp named Yagen about 5km north - that would be our interim destination. As we towed Terry, we discussed options. I had my doubts about landing at Yagen - I had studied Google Earth

..
This was serious.
We were at least 9km
from Seal Rocks, the
rain had set in, the
visibility was poor
and we were maybe
3km from
the nearest shore
..

in the weeks leading up to the trip and saw some photos of the campground which was basically a few pit toilets and a grassy camp area behind some towering sand dunes - not to mention a surf landing with an incapacitated paddler. It wasn't a good option.

We decided to press on to Seal Rocks... we couldn't see it because of the heavy rain - but we knew it was only a few kilometres further on and the beach should be protected from the wind and the swell. All this time we cycled through supporting Terry - he had gone very quiet - I thought it was just him focussing on his pain - but we were soon to find out it was the early signs of hypothermia. I was asking what will we do when we get him to Seal Rocks - should we ring for an ambulance



Shaan enjoying bleak conditions

as soon as we get a signal on our mobiles? Or do we assess him once we land him.

We were soon in the protected waters of Boat Beach - still raining - but the water was as smooth as silk. This might have been a relief to reach a safe landing spot, but we still had to look after Terry. Whilst we were deciding the best spot to land, the shortest carry etc, a gentle swell crept up on us and nearly dumped Terry and Shaan, as the support, onto the beach. Phew ...don't turn your back on a wave ever.

Once we safely glided Terry's kayak onto the beach we carried him shivering and incoherent, through the pouring rain, up the beach towards the lone picnic shelter next to the boat ramp. We wrapped him in a space blanket and were discussing where we could pitch a tent and get him warm inside a sleeping

bag. Should we call an ambulance?

This is the point in the movies when the guardian angel appears ... not Nicholas Cage this time, but rather a good Samaritan by the name of John. He owned a majestic beach house overlooking Boat Beach and was having lunch with some friends under the cover of his verandah perched high above the beach when he saw us carrying Terry up the beach. He came down in the pouring rain and offered his house to us to assist Terry. Dripping wet we carried him through his lavish abode and got him under a hot shower. We got him warm and dried off, into his dry clothes. John and his wife gave him warm food and hot sweet tea and then let him sleep under a warm blanket on their lounge whilst we decided the next stage of our journey.

Terry's paddle was over. He was still in pain but no longer hypothermic. He didn't want an ambulance and thought that he would be able to sit up in a car to get home. We rang his wife to let her know - she wanted to drive up and pick him up, but you know what - I gave Terry a lift up to Pindimar in my car -- it was only right that I should take him home too, as all his gear was in my car now parked in Forster ... so what if my trip was cut short ... there would be other trips ... and besides the great thing about this club is the culture that has been built up over the years and that is we look after one another.

Terry didn't make the Bass Straight paddle. Matt and Mark did. So did Dave, but with a different group and that sly dog Shaan went and paddled it all by herself. Me - I did it vicariously - with plenty of leg stretches along the way. ■



L to R: Shaan, Terry, Mark, John, Matt, Dave

Leaders training weekend



David Page makes a statement

The annual club trip leader training weekend was held at Shoalhaven Heads on the weekend 6th & 7th April. Nineteen Sea Leaders, Guides and Instructors as well as several Trainee Sea Leaders attended.

After an early morning weather and safety briefing we headed down to the nearby lagoon for rescue and contact towing demonstrations which proved to be informative and entertaining. We then split into small groups and practiced various rescue techniques including assisted, hand of God and scoop rescues. We practiced various tow line and contact towing methods. We also experimented with a quick release tow line system which proved to be a useful method of releasing tow lines in a hurry. (Megan has written elsewhere in the magazine about contact tows).

Saturday afternoon was spent practicing surf launch and landing on Seven Mile Beach. Due the small swell, sand bars and dumping waves sea kayaks were not suitable for catching waves but several members brought small surf kayaks and showed us how to surf waves in a craft designed for that purpose. John Wild enthusiastically demonstrated the extremely manoeuvrable capabilities of these kayaks which made most of us green with envy. Fernando ventured out in a surf kayak for the first time and after a few spills, followed by snappy rolls of course, carved up the waves like a pro.

After dinner at the local pub, Josh

Andrews, a new club member and experienced army adventure training guide, regaled us with the function and operation of this training program. He's basically paid to scare the @#\$^#! out of all the participants. Imagine going out into surf and rock gardens your very first time a sea kayak.

This experience is designed to mentally and emotionally prepare soldiers for battle.

On Sunday we split into two groups with some heading back to the surf zone and the remainder following Adrian to practice rock gardening techniques. Real rock gardens are rather sparse on Seven Mile Beach so we had to be creative. Once simulated rocks were in place (kayaks) and Adrian's ingenious wave machine kicked in, we were able to practice maneuvering, rescues and paddling through hoops in tight, choppy conditions. A lot of fun was had by all. Sunday afternoon was spent assisting prospective Sea Leaders preparing and present a trip plan using forecast conditions, virtual paddlers and mock up emergencies.

All in all, a very productive and informative training weekend. Many thanks to instructors Adrian Clayton,



By Barry Marshall

Four became three in Bass Strait

The idea of paddling across Bass Strait (still a somewhat iconic achievement amongst paddlers) was first suggested by my brother Geoff a year ago and, as usual, I enthusiastically consented to going along. The photos on Google Earth were spectacular and the opportunity for a holiday away from driving cabs in Sydney were all the incentives I needed. Brian, a Canadian friend of ours in Melbourne was in on the venture from the beginning, having crossed the strait a couple of years earlier with a group from the Victorian sea kayaking fraternity led by Julian Smith. The fourth member of the group was John, a longtime resident of Byron Bay who I'd only recently met when we paddled from Cronulla to Batemans Bay. Prior to the Batemans Bay paddle we spent an invaluable day with Rob Mercer who was more than willing to offer advice gained by considerable experience. The subject of sail assistance was discussed and although both Brian and I thought it a good adjunct to paddling, Geoff's vehement opposition resigned me to an unassisted crossing for the sake of harmony. In the final month before departure we were to familiarize ourselves with current navigation thinking (with varying degrees of application).

Geoff and John drove down from the north coast and picked me up on the way to Melbourne. With Brian on board we arrived at Port Welshpool on the 5th of March for a departure the following morning after an eight a.m. high tide in order to ride the outgoing tide. The weather was hot and, from all predictions, was going to continue for some time to come as an unprecedented series of high pressure systems were lining up to enter Bass Strait. Easy day paddling to Refuge Cove at Wilsons Promontory.

Seven a.m. departure the following morning for the first leg of the actual strait to Hogan Island, 50 kilometres away. Incredibly, even at that distance, Hogan was visible on the horizon aided by a strobe beacon which we had all failed to see indicated on our nautical charts (a rather damning reflexion of our inexperience)! I was

anxious to clear the marked shipping lanes and was happy when we had done so. This crossing was on an oily, calm sea with an unrelenting sun beating down. Nine hours of uneventful paddling except for schools of fish, an inquisitive manta ray which swam along under my boat for a couple of minutes and minor differences of opinion regarding navigation had us arrive at the campsite on Hogan. A small channel on the north-east approach would create an interesting tide-race at times! Stunning scenery of rocky outcrops. No discernible drinking water on the island and colonies of Cape Barren geese, Little Penguins and marsupial (we think) rats. At the setting of the sun a cacophony of wailing, screeching and honking fauna, which continued all night, made for a difficult sleep. The Kent group of islands were clearly visible looming on the horizon which was heartening.

The reports for the third day of paddling were a little concerning, being 10 to 15 knot head winds, but the prospect of another night on Hogan was enough incentive to have us launch at first light for the 40 kilometre paddle. The Kent group was barely visible this morning as the weather had turned hazy. With heads down we paddled into the breeze, all expecting a fairly rough day at the office. An hour or two into this crossing, a sea fog began to loom, heading our way. We were a bit surprised when the wind actually increased upon being enveloped by the fog when we were all expecting a moderation of the breeze. Visibility was reduced to 200 metres which called for an immediate tightening of ranks. Tension was palpable when Brian's GPS ran out of power due, no doubt, to over usage. Luckily John's unit proved to be a reliable backup. After a paddle of 9 hours we finally arrived at our camp site on Erith Island which was a little surprising as most of us were led to believe that we would be camping on Deal Island. At this juncture the group dynamic suffered a setback with Brian declaring that he would be continuing alone. Common sense prevailed so that we did continue as a group, at least until Killiecrankie on the north coast of Flinders Island.

A day of leisure was called for so we crossed

Murray Passage (which separates Deal Island from the islands of Erith and Dover) and spent an enjoyable day on Deal Island visiting the lighthouse and meeting a lovely couple who had just taken commission of the caretakers job for their three month stint. There is an eight year waiting list for the posting due to its' popularity. It was a bit unfortunate that on this particular day the winds (10 knot nor-westerly) were perfect all day for a crossing to Flinders. That afternoon, back on Erith, we were entertained by the local pod of dolphins performing an incredible show of synchronized acrobatics. We planned to leave by 5:30 the following morning to take advantage of the conditions and the tides at the Flinders Island end.

We launched into Murray Passage in the dark and were dazzled by the light show of phosphorescent algae rippling from the bow and exploding with every dip of the paddle. Flinders was clearly visible all the way after sunrise and the crossing was uneventful until we neared the coast at Killiecrankie. We were still a few kilometres from shore when my paddle blade began to meet genuine resistance which I found interesting, as we were supposed to be arriving at slack tide. Brian quickly exited left down the bay, John altered course to his right to offset the considerable drag to our left and I promptly followed. Geoff followed Brian which was reassuring. As John and I tried to make the shore to the right of the bay the current increased and we countered by altering our heading further right. The last two kilometres were a slog which required the bending of our backs to make any headway. John and I landed and proceeded to the point to see if we could catch a glimpse of Brian and Geoff which we

were unable to do. We sat out the tide for an hour and made our way around the point into Killiecrankie in a freshening sou-easter and were greatly relieved to see Brian and Geoff had arrived before us. The relief that we felt was not reciprocated by Geoff and Brian, who felt that we had strayed from our planned approach. It was this incident which really brought home the truth, to me at least, that in these regions we were complete and utter novices and lessons were to be learned and due caution taken. We met very interesting people immediately on arriving in Killiecrankie, not least of whom were Matt Watton, a very experienced Tasmanian sea kayaker (who provided us with every assistance regarding conditions) and his father, Tony, on a bicycle tour of Flinders Island - a most fortuitous meeting indeed!

Brian accepted a lift back to Tasmania with some young fishermen aboard the punt from Lady Barron which left the three of us to continue. A most unfortunate circumstance which proved to be unavoidable. On our last night together Geoff and John drained the local bar of a particularly tasty German beer and the normally teetotaler Brian a bottle of wine. The next day the three of us headed off around the north-east capes of Flinders heading for Emira, Geoff and John a little less effusive in their demeanor. A strengthening easterly wind had us take a prolonged lunch break along the way.

And so on to Whitemark with its' renowned pub and excellent meals. Two days in Whitemark and an ascent of Strzelecki peak which revealed the island and its terrain were greatly therapeutic. A night in Trouser Bay and off the following day to Preservation Island.

Another crossing into a fresh head-wind which eventually became a following wind on turning the corner on the approach to Preservation. Off Cape St. John on Cape Barron Island I elected to go wide to avoid some shallow reefs and Geoff and John decided on the inside route. As I was first through I waited and after some time I began to worry that something had gone wrong closer to the rocky coast. I turned back and searched the coastline without success, all the while attempting to blow the pea out of the whistle. I turned back again assuming that we had missed each other and sure enough we had - they had turned back by this stage and were contemplating setting a flare off. The ease with which paddlers can become separated whilst in close proximity in a choppy sea is astounding - another good lesson! The house on the eastern shore of Preservation Island is part of a lease controlled by 23 partners on a share arrangement. A couple who happened to be there at the time were surprised to have anyone turn up as they had flown over from Launceston. The young bloke was less than happy to see us although his girlfriend was fine. A tolerable truce ensued after boundaries were established. The atmosphere greatly improved after they flew back to Tassie! In hindsight we would probably have done better finding a campsite on Clarke Island but I'm not really sure. We sat out a stiff westerly for a day before heading off to Little Musselroe Bay on the Tasmanian mainland.

The usual early morning ritual of launching had us catch the ebbing flow out around Clarke Island out into Banks Strait. Great weather for our last day had us surging towards Swan

Island until the inevitable change of tide had us trying to gain the channel on the inside of Swan Island. The tidal current increased the closer we got to Swan Island and we were relieved to round the point. The alternative would have been to drift west on the outside of Swan Island and perhaps sit out the tide whilst visiting the lighthouse and buildings. Little Musselroe Bay was a favourite of mine with very interesting, hospitable characters. Donated fresh mullet fillets cooked in a Thai curry sauce that John produced from his considerable stocks was a fitting way to celebrate our arrival in Tassie.

Enjoying favourable conditions we continued on to St Helens on the east coast over the next two days. After rounding St Helens Point, with a 15 knot trailing breeze and an incoming tide we were propelled swiftly up Georges Bay to the quaint township of St Helens to be met by John's wife Julie who had trekked down from Byron Bay!

The beauty of the Bass Strait Islands was offset by the terrible desecration of the past, which began with sealing (we saw 2 seals the entire trip!) and whaling before the ravages of cattle rearing, wrought by European settlers.

THE KAYAKS

Geoff paddled a Valley Nordkapp (not the low volume one) which, being the smallest, necessitated him attaching a sleeping swag to the aft deck creating problems when into a head wind due to resistance. His cockpit admitted water (not sure of the reason) which had to be manually hand pumped hourly. His skeg at one stage became jammed with coarse sand in its' box which fortunately was overcome with a bit of careful maintenance.

Brian paddled a Nadgee with a sail which was never used due to contrary winds.

John paddled a Rockpool Taran which allowed ample room for provisions - stowaways however were a problem! It also admitted some water into the cockpit.

I paddled a Mirage 580 which gave me room for provisions. My hatches proved very waterproof but prior to leaving I was having trouble with the forward hatch which I overcame by cutting off the carry toggle and deck line and filling in the holes with sikaflex and this worked a treat. I don't understand why these holes are not bored through solid fiberglass/ kevlar to prevent this problem (perhaps later models have been rectified). ■



By Russ Swinnerton

Sea Kayak Navigation the Easy Way

Electric Dreams: The GPS miracle

For those of us who've had to make a living out of finding our position at sea, the satellite-based Global Positioning System (GPS) is a really big deal. And for those who do it recreationally, it's just as big an innovation: as well as being global, it works pretty well locally too.

Satellite navigation systems originally appealed for their ability to give reliable positions when out of sight of land – but they have evolved into systems for precise navigation in confined waters. Their continuous coverage and – when fitted with a plotter – their ability to show positions graphically relative to dangers, makes them invaluable in high-workload situations where navigational difficulty is compounded by problems of collision avoidance.

So how accurate is GPS? It's very accurate. It will tell you your position with single-figure accuracy (between three and eight metres), 95% of the time. And that's using the single frequency mode. Differential GPS (where a correction is applied by a reference shore station) is available in many areas, and new multi-frequency capabilities coming online will give even greater accuracy – and will be compatible with some of the other satellite systems coming online, such as Europe's Galileo.

With a sextant, I was pleased to be able to find a position to around one nautical mile, twice a day at morning and evening stars (if it wasn't too cloudy). The general standard is to within three nautical miles. GPS is continuous and orders of magnitude more accurate. No wonder navigators love it!

SPACE LIGHTHOUSES

GPS uses a constellation of more than 24 satellites in six orbits which fly at an altitude of around 20,200km above the earth's surface, circling the globe twice

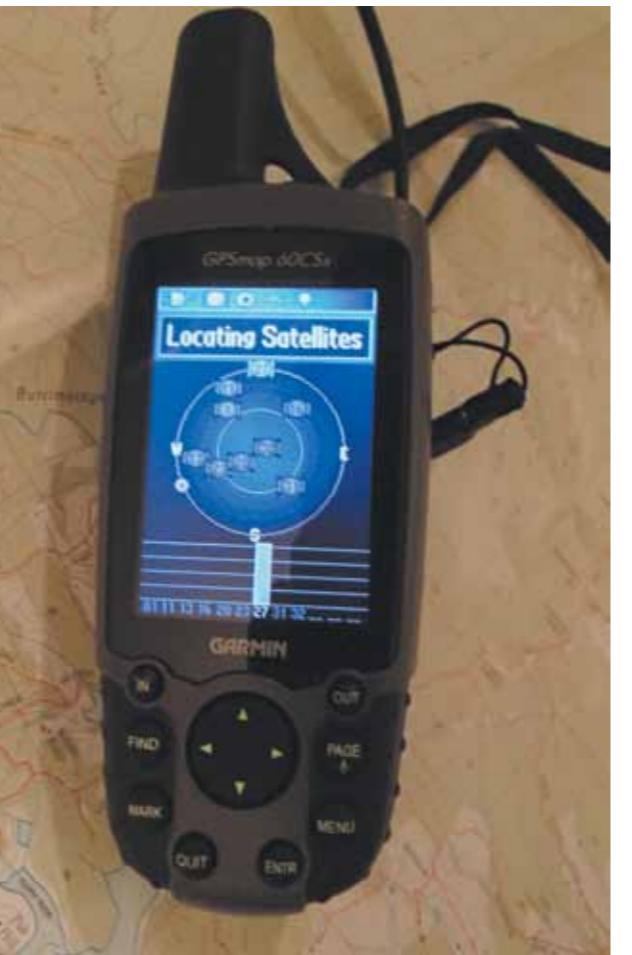
per day. The US Air Force manages the system, and brings satellites in and out of operation to maintain the minimum coverage of four satellites above the horizon, anywhere in the world – enough to fix your position. They fly 31 active satellites, and several residuals – decommissioned birds that can be reactivated when necessary. Since 2011, they've aimed to keep a minimum of 27 satellites on the boil at any one time, improving the performance of the system.

How does it work? Well, it's basically a ranging system. The satellites transmit a signal giving their locations and precise time from on-board atomic clocks. Our GPS receiver records the time of the signals' arrival, and knowing the speed of light, it can determine the distance from the satellites, and calculate a fix. The process is analogous to plotting a fix using radar ranges. And with signals from four satellites, the receiver can find a position in three dimensions.

The US military used to have the ability to degrade GPS performance for non-military users, with a thing called selective availability. The US has since legislated to remove the capability – which they stopped using in 2000 anyway – guaranteeing that we'll get uninterrupted GPS unless some nasty adversary jams the signal.

GPS receivers either show your position on an electronic map or chart, or give you coordinates to plot on your paper chart. The more capable the display options, the more \$\$ and amperes you'll need. Yachts and power boats usually use a large-screen chart-based plotter, but power-starved kayakers make do with hand-held receivers, map-based preferably.

But here's the thing. The charts and maps we use for navigation were drawn with far less capable tools than GPS. So while the absolute



Garmin GPSMap 60CSx – finding its satellites

accuracy of GPS is spectacular, you have to remember that it's the relative accuracy – relative to charted dangers – that really counts. So navigators are always checking, to make sure the GPS rendition of the world matches what they can see through the charthouse window – or from the cockpit.

GPS works with a mathematical model of the earth called World Geodetic System 84 (WGS 84). And your chart or topo map probably doesn't. But your marine chart will tell you how far GPS-derived positions need to be moved to accord with the datum on which it's based. It can be metres, or hundreds of metres, depending on the age of the chart. And it's often zero. The map set loaded into your GPS already compensates for the datum difference – this only applies when transferring positions to paper charts. And of course electronic charts need to be kept corrected up-to-date (by downloading updates), just like paper charts.

Australian topo maps use the Geocentric

Datum of Australia 1994 (GDA 94) that is compatible with coordinates produced by GPS, to the accuracy that hand-held GPS receivers are capable of working to. Many GPS receivers allow you to specify the output in Universal Transverse Mercator (UTM) grid, rather than lat/long, so your eastings and northings can be plotted directly onto the topo.

IN THE HAND

I use a Garmin GPSMap 60CSx receiver – a very capable piece of equipment. It's waterproof and ruggedized, and runs off two AA batteries, rechargeable or alkalines. It will run for about 18 hours from one pair of batteries, enough for a weekend of paddling. Mine's loaded with marine charts for the east coast of Australia – and I've got a micro-SD card with charts of the Pacific Islands to cover my Solomon Islands folding-kayak trip.

The Garmin lets me set up waypoints, and plan routes, using either the hand-held receiver or a laptop. And the GPS records tracks travelled, which can also be downloaded to your computer. Its data entry interface is not brilliant – one day, hand-held GPSs will work as well as smartphones – but its PC interface is slick and easy to use. If you're deciding on which model to buy, it's good to try out their user-friendliness first.

It also has a man overboard function, and an anchor-drag alarm – although the latter may not be much use in your kayak if you're sleeping ashore... the alarm isn't very loud, and if your kayak does float away, it will probably be out of earshot before it announces it's gone!

It can be loaded with the highway system, too, and can navigate to the put-in just like a car's GPS (although it doesn't provide voice commands – it just beeps).

So do you need GPS? Of course not. We're able to navigate our kayaks safely and efficiently by traditional means, using a compass and a chart or map. But needs and wants are very different things: I'd hate to be without my little Garmin.

And it can save a lot of anxiety if you're caught out in fog, or are trying to find a pull-out spot (or get back to the put-in) in a heavily indented coastline or amidst a bevy of islands. You can do it with a chart and a compass (and if your batteries go flat, you'll still need to...) but if you've got the tool, why not use it? ■

By Campbell Tiley

Australian Sea Kayak Clubs Networking Summit, Snake Island, April 2013

Who said being on the club committee was all talk and no action? Sometimes true self-sacrifice is required, and so Rae Duffy and I found ourselves jetting down to Melbourne on Anzac day with as much paddling and camping gear as we could carry. We had responded to an invitation from Terry Barry, outgoing president of the VKSC, to join a weekend meeting of Australian sea kayak clubs which the VKSC had offered to coordinate and part fund. Our destination was Snake Island, just across from Wilsons Promontory.

Terry met us at the airport and ferried us Eastward. Over lunch on the way we met the other representatives: Raia Wall (incoming VKSC president), Greg Simson and John Dawson (TSCC former Commodore and incoming Commodore), Eddie Safarik and Will Winton (QSKC President and Treasurer) as well as Bob Fergie from the VKSC as facilitator, holder of the texta and butchers paper and peacekeeper. WA was unable to send a representative and contacts were not identified in NT or SA.

On the beach at Port Welshpool was a fleet of kayaks kindly loaned by VKSC members. Rae scored a grey plastic Avocet and I had a Tempest. We loaded up and paddled off into the 20kn headwind that Terry had also organised. After a couple of hours we trundled ashore through the sand dunes to the Cattleman's Association huts on Snake Island, an absolutely magic spot used for grazing cattle for over a century.

The strong sou-wester kept up the whole time we were on the island, maximising opportunities for networking on shore, although we did find time on the Saturday for a paddle over to Wilsons Prom.

A wide range of issues were discussed in an open, and occasionally animated, exchange of opinions and ideas. Our overwhelming impression was that the clubs had very similar aims in relation to skills development and enjoyment of sea kayaking for members. Although there were differences in grading and certification, there were many similarities, with most clubs basing their paddling competencies on the national standards. NSWSKC and QSKC are closely allied to Australian Canoeing in terms of training as is WASKC. We agreed

that clearer understanding of the differences would facilitate interstate paddling and is a work in progress. There were interesting variations in the overheads paid to umbrella organisations and for insurances, with QSKC at the high end and NSWSKC consistent with the other clubs.

The following were agreed in principle, pending approval by the committees:

- Paddle Signals: we will jointly communicate the concern to AC that aspects of the recent changes are inappropriate for sea kayaking.
- Visiting Experts: we will work together to organise and jointly fund overseas instructor and paddling expert visits, building on Geoff Murray's (TSCC) efforts in recent years.
- Proficiency Standards Mapping: we will work to map their training standards against the national standards with the aim of more easily hosting paddlers from other clubs.
- Sharing of Club resources: we will look at facilitating access to newsletters, magazine archives and other resources. That clubs also give consideration to strengthening visiting membership arrangements.
- Inter-club specialist collaboration: we will consider putting our specialists in contact to address common issues such as training, web resources and lobbying.
- Collaborative Inclusiveness: we will include WASKC and other state clubs we become aware of in these and any further initiatives.
- ASKCs Networking Summit continuation: clubs are encouraged to participate in regular summits, hosted on a rotational basis. The next summit will be held in March 2014 at Rock'n'Roll, Batemans Bay.
- The weekend was a useful and positive event with clubs now having a better understanding of each other. The benefit of personal contact with committee members will improve communication and advice or paddling opportunities when heading interstate. I am looking forward to browsing the magazine archives of other clubs and hope we can implement access for members of all clubs. The summit may facilitate initiatives in the future such as inter-club workshops for senior instructors.
- Thanks to Terry Barry and the VKSC for putting so much effort into such a well organised weekend – except for the wind, which was 20kn on the nose on the way back as well. ■



Artefacts from Oskar Speck's remarkable journey that began when he launched his kayak in the River Danube, Germany paddling 50,000 kilometres to Australia are now on display at the Australian National Maritime Museum.

The museum holds 600 pieces including photographs, letters, documents, and passports from Speck's epic voyage. The Salvation Army has sponsored the conservation of this collection, which was donated by Speck's late companion, Nancy Steele.

Speck's achievements are well known in Europe, and Australian canoeing and kayaking groups, but few others know his story. A German film company is now in contact with the Australian National Maritime Museum to make a film about his life.

If you do not know the story it is extraordinary. It starts in Germany post WWI when the country was being crippled by economic downfall and millions were unemployed. A keen kayaker, Speck took to the water in his collapsible Sunnschien to seek work in Cyprus copper mines.

The museum quotes Speck in an interview with Margot Cuthill, for Australia's SBS TV in 1987 saying: "I had no idea that I would eventually end up in Australia... but I took my collapsible boat, went to Ulm and then down the

Danube to the Yugoslavian border... leaving Germany... and seeing the world seemed like a better option."

Speck's seven-year voyage was full of adventure and challenges. He could not swim and had to make many alterations to his kayak in order to survive. Along the way Speck overcame malaria, beatings and lootings and he arrived in Australia the week the country declared war on Germany.

Australian authorities labeled Speck an enemy, because of his German nationality, and sent him to internment camps around the country. Speck was released after the war, became an opal miner a Coober Pedy, then retired to the NSW Central Coast. The museum is continuing research to learn more about his voyage, internment and life.

Speck is now inspiring a new generation of adventurers. In 2011, Sandy Robson, a sea kayaker from Western Australia, launched her kayak in the River Danube, Germany to

retrace his voyage.

On her website Sandy says: "A few years ago someone told me about a kayaker who paddled all the way from Germany to Australia. This has to be one of the most amazing kayak journeys of all time. I am going to find out."

Sandy's last update was from India on the 14th March 2013 where she was preparing to leave Palk Bay for Sri Lanka.

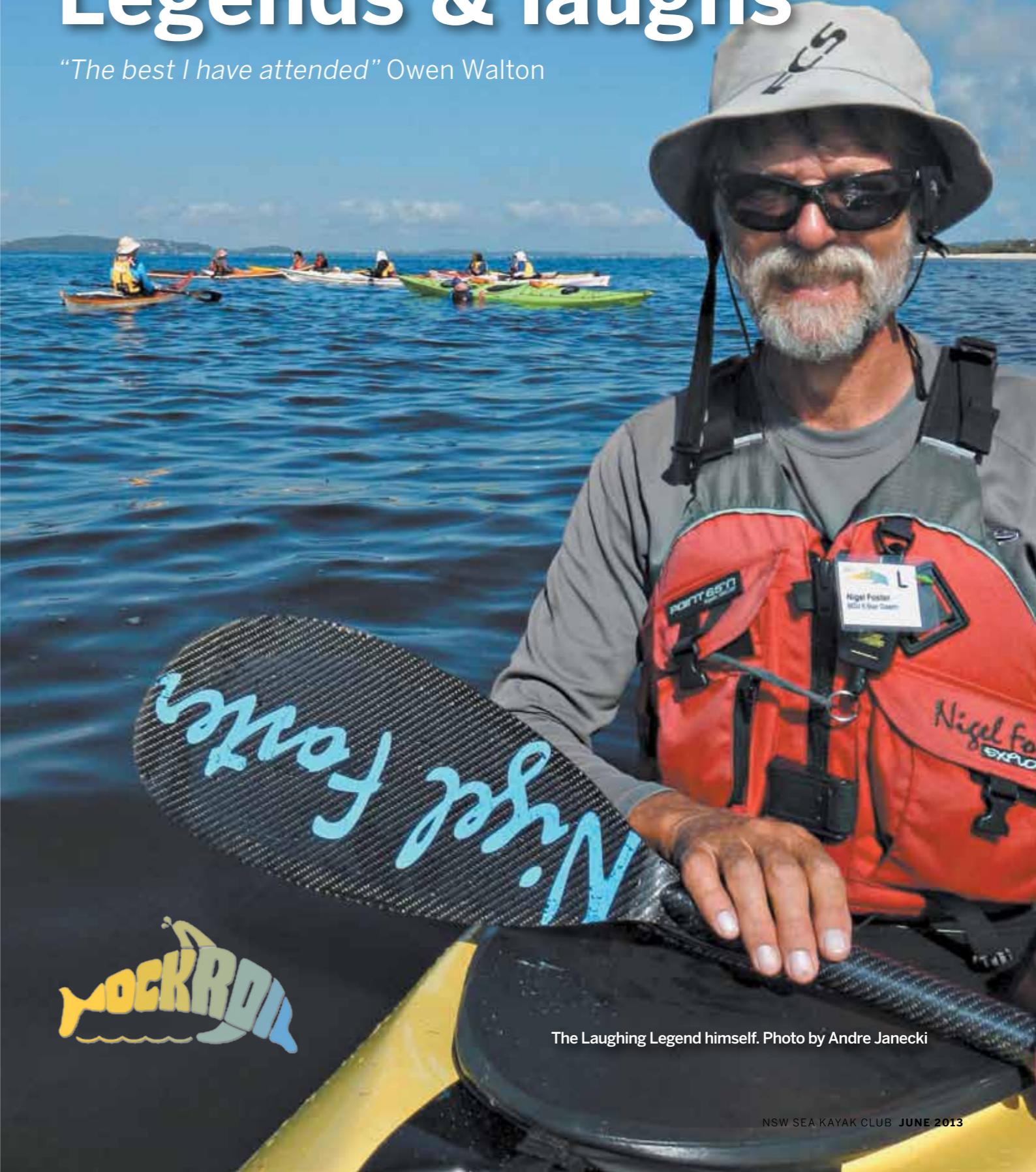
So, next time you are in Darling Harbor it is worth taking time to check out the Oskar Speck display on Level 1 of the Australian National Maritime Museum (unfortunately only a small number of items are on permanent display). Who knows how it might inspire your next adventure ■

Photographs courtesy of the Australian National Maritime Museum. Read Specks story in his own words in our club magazine at tinyurl.com/ospeck



ROCK 'N ROLL 2013 Legends & laughs

"The best I have attended" Owen Walton



The Laughing Legend himself. Photo by Andre Janecki

Report By Campbell Tiley

ANOTHER YEAR, ANOTHER ROCK 'N ROLL

172 Rock 'N Rollers at Jimmys Beach made the 2013 event a roaring success despite a less than encouraging weather forecast. Once again registrations were a record for the event. At least 250 paddlers got onto the water on club paddles over the weekend with the assistance of trip leaders from our own club as well as 14 experienced paddlers from Queensland. We were pleased to welcome 18 paddlers in all from beyond NSW borders.

Fortunately we had no significant rain during the day. The strong Southerly on Sunday provided ideal conditions for a training session on manoeuvring in chop and strong wind off Jimmys Beach after onshore sessions by both of our invited speakers Les Allen and Nigel Foster. Nigel went further, demonstrating that with precise edging and minimal but precisely placed paddle strokes it is possible to run rings around Andre in the wind and surf. Occasional enormous rollers from the cyclone to the north east earlier in the week made the Saturday trips to Cabbage Tree and Boondelbah Islands all the more interesting.

by Campbell Tiley



Les and hosts



Wrong way up, Shaan



The incredible shrinking Nigel

DAILY HIGHLIGHTS

The weekend began with what is becoming an RnR tradition with the beer and whatever excellent nosh Mark Sundin from gold sponsor Expedition Kayaks could hunter-gather from the local environment, rather good seafood and chips this year.

Saturday was a great day on the water with 167 paddlers getting wet, assisted by 26 trip leaders. Our guests Nigel and Les ran training sessions with Les focussing on Surf for grade 2 paddlers and Nigel running two on-water boat control sessions. Mike Eggleton ran a forward stroke clinic with Rae Duffy in the hope that one day she would have some competition in local kayak endurance racing. There were a wide variety of other paddling options on the menu from basic skills, kayak snorkelling at Fly Point, as well as a bit of surf drama at Fingal Spit – apologies to Hans for being landed with some post R'N R maintenance courtesy of a reversing Mirage.

The afternoon was primarily social once the sand and salt were rinsed off, with plenty of interest in the tempting offerings from sponsors EK, Flat Earth and Solar Australia.

Sunday morning brought a strong wind warning from the south and an interesting challenge for our Trips Coordinator Megan Pryke who did a great job getting 75 paddlers on the water. Activities ranged from thwarted attempts to dodge the wind in the Myall River to revelling in it by paddling across to Shoal Bay with a very rapid wind assisted return trip back to Jimmys Beach. Nigel Foster ran his 'dry' session with an effective and rather unique chair paddling approach.

The opportunity to work on turning and control skills up and down wind worked out well in the strong onshore wind and waves.

Sunday afternoon provided time for yet more socialising. Mick MacRobb from Flat Earth did an informal session on the use of folding kayaks. The Gizmos and Gear session was well attended, kicked off by our President demonstrating just how many VHF radios the well-connected kayaker needs.

Shawn Armitage took out the first prize of a Solar Panel donated by Solar Australia for his commitment to improving the diet of kayakers on tour. In easing conditions on Monday a further 44 stayers paddled before wrapping up RnR for another year.

Photos by Mark Sundin, David Gibbins, Ray and Bron Davies, Michael Taylor, Henry Vonderpoel and others



FUN BY NIGHT

The Saturday evening proceedings opened with our President Dave Fisher's welcome and acknowledgement of Megan Pryke, Shaan Gresser and Fernando Charnis being assessed as Sea Leaders in the previous year as well as Rae Duffy as a Flatwater Instructor. After rejecting the Golf Club's attempt we were fortunately able to rapidly deploy Mark Alchin's PA system so that the speakers could be heard. The raffles were then drawn with winnings seeming to be disproportionately distributed to Queensland. Thanks to the generosity of silver sponsors Greenland Downunder for the split carbon Greenland paddle; Flat Earth Sails for the Inflatable PFD, deck line and netting kits and a split euro paddle; Solar Australia for a solar panel and to Bronze sponsor Helinox for a lightweight and extremely comfortable 'Chair One' collapsible chair.

Nigel Foster presented on his 'Stepping Stones' adventures in Labrador in 2004, completing a trip from Baffin Island to Nain cut short in 1981 at the northern tip of Labrador after an epic 40 mile crossing of the Hudson Strait. He painted a vivid picture of rocky landings complicated by enormous tidal ranges and marauding polar bears intertwined with the fascinating Inuit history of the region. After dessert Les Allen followed up with an eclectic and entertaining presentation on paddling in WA leaving us convinced that we needed to overcome the tyranny of distance and 'go west'. Les was brought over for RnR by gold sponsor Expedition Kayaks. Then back to the campground hoping that someone had had the presence of mind to hide or destroy Mark Sundin's ukulele.

Sunday night's short videos session – the kayaking Oscars – was a great success with excellent submissions from as far afield as Queensland and the mysterious deep south of NSW. After an exhaustive scoring process by randomly selected judges from the audience, and a mentally exhausting process adding up the scores, Vincent Weaver was the clear winner and took home a Chair One donated by Helinox so he can plan future videos in seated comfort. The video screening continued into the late evening until curtailed by noise restrictions. Selim Tezcan needs to be acknowledged and thanked for arranging the large plasma screen for the videos and for coordinating and running the session. Thanks also to Toshiba Australia for lending the screen.



Les Allan – a giant in the sea kayak world
Photo by Ian Watkins Sea Kayak WA



The daily commute





FIRST TIME ROCK 'N ROLL... WHAT A "BUZZ"!

I remember hearing about the annual Rock 'N Roll on my very first club trip to Tomakin Beach last October long weekend. I was lead to believe that it was an event not to be missed.....they weren't lying!

We strapped the kayaks onto the roof, packed the gear, cooler box, insect repellent and headed for Jimmy's Beach. As a first timer, I wasn't too sure what to expect, but I had been on several club trips so was no stranger to some of the faces, and knew the company would be good if the weather decided to misbehave.

The tent was pitched and the crowd started to gather, there were not many kayak-free zones around the campground, it was an awesome sight! So many kayaks, so many stories to be heard, so much experience to be shared.

Now it was time for beer and pizza (disguised as fish and chips).

The 2013 Rock 'N Roll had officially begun. There were demo boats for all to admire and test drive, latest gear and much more on offer. There was a lot of laughter, smiles and conversation amongst the sound of skin slapping as the mozzies set in. Who would have thought that kayakers were such a friendly bunch? It was a great start to a great weekend!

Blessed with good weather, the trips were announced early the next morning. I quickly signed on to one of the trips around Cabbage Tree Island with Rob and Gary. It was a real treat to paddle around such a magnificent island with such experienced guides. We stuck together as a group and Rob provided an interesting commentary of the history of the island and the birds that breed there.

Beautiful scenery, especially seeing the rainbow of colours in the water as the kayaks ventured out.

Now it was time to tee off at the golf club for dinner with guest speakers on the menu. There was a real "buzz" in the air as we enjoyed our meals, and this time it wasn't the mozzies, everyone was relaxed and busy exchanging stories. We were later entertained by some amazing polar experiences from Nigel, and all inspired to travel over to Western Australia to borrow a kayak from Les and explore the west coast.

The wind picked up and the trips were limited to skills training close to shore the next day. The perfect opportunity for the brave paddlers to play in the wind, I was happy to observe and learn onshore.

For some, it was now time to say farewell. It was my first Rock 'N Roll, definitely not my last. Great times were had, good friends were made and hopefully plenty of memories will be shared with a collection of stories from the event.

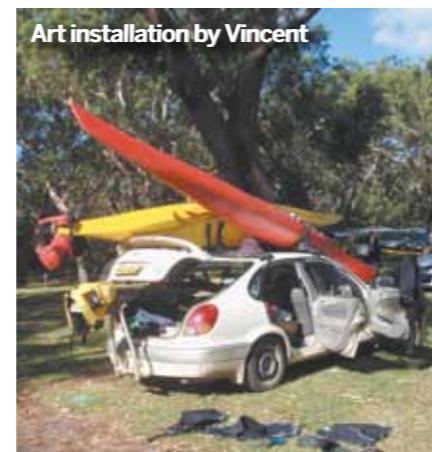
Happy paddling!

By Gemma Collett

TERRIFIC

I wish to express my gratitude and admiration to all on the committee for a "job well done" with Rock 'N Roll 2013. Pulling together such an event is no easy task, yet Campbell and his team made it appear so. And indeed RNR is always just that, a team effort where the committee members all work together on the many tasks that come together for a fun-filled weekend, providing club members with a terrific experience.

By Dee Ratcliffe



TRIPS GALORE

A big thank you to all our trip leaders who helped run trips over the three days. We had a number of AC qualified interstate paddlers who helped run trips including Les Allen from WA and a large number from Queensland and the internationally famous Nigel Foster.

I also would like to thank the beachmasters Roger White on Saturday and Rozzy on Sunday. It is an important function to have a system of knowing numbers and groups on the water especially with so many groups of kayakers.

I have provided a chart of the trips and training sessions run. In some cases, there was a bit of swapping of participants agreed amongst trip leaders. There were a few private trips conducted as well, this draft report is just club trips.

Sunday presented a challenge with gale force winds out at sea and strong winds within Port Stephens. Thanks to Les Allen for the presentation on 10 ways to turn a kayak and Nigel Foster for conducting an extra theory, un-programmed lesson on that windy day.

Many participants got to then test out the theory on water, either on a skills training session on Myall River or a near shore grade 2 plus session off Jimmys Beach. Others watched Nigel perform his refined turning skills on the water.

I have not heard of anyone missing out on the on-water opportunity at R 'N R and thus regard it as a success. I had a great time.

A big thank you to Campbell Tiley our club Rock 'N Roll Co-ordinator for being so pleasant, professional and keeping things simple when it came to organising what is probably the largest sea kayaking event in Australia.

By Megan Pryke, trips co-ordinator



NIGEL FOSTER FIXED ME PROPER

I came to NSWSK Club Rock and Roll 2013 as a 'plateaued Grade 2', sceptical that I had any motivation left to change. However all this was fixed for me in Nigel Foster's Sunday afternoon where we all sat in chairs on the grass as our imaginary kayaks – holding our paddles in hand trying to repeat what Nigel was telling us.

Nigel Foster's patient, sparkling explanations of the mysteries of kayak physics and how this gives us the power to use 'just right' paddle strokes (and no more) for everything was wonderful. We fired question after question at Nigel and he always gave thoughtful and independently considered answers peppered with smiles and humour.

Then from the comfort of standing on the shore we watched Nigel on the water seemingly effortlessly suspend the laws of nature in his real kayak in gale force winds with just the right paddle strokes. We had the proof in front of us that what Nigel told us on the land really works!

I thank the Club for inviting Nigel, and I can't thank Nigel enough for turning my head and heart around. Chatting with others in the class indicated I am not alone in this appreciation.

It's up to me now to work all this out in practice so Nigel's gracious sharing of his years of experience is not wasted on me.

Thanks so much again.

By David Gibbons

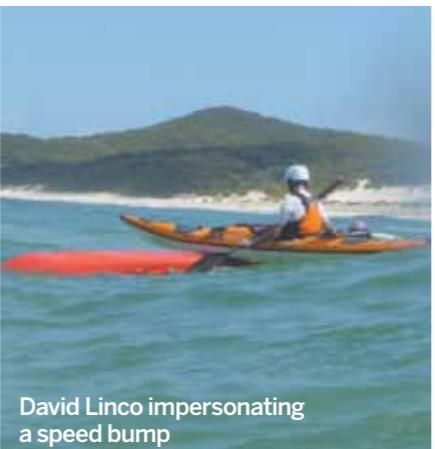
FLOTSAM GOES TO ROCK 'N ROLL

TRUEMAN SHOW 'DEBACLE' THREATENS BOOK SALES

What was planned as a major promotion for his new book quickly turned sour for tough 'Around Australia'© kayaker Stuart Trueman. While attempting to show off on an unfamiliar surf ski front of a large and adoring crowd, Trueman quickly found that a carefully manufactured legend can be destroyed in minutes. The muscle bound kayaker fell off the ski almost instantly and then compounded the error with several ungainly attempts to re-mount.

Shocked onlookers stated their displeasure to the roving Flotsam reporter "I was expecting a show of skill and power, but he was rubbish!" said John Friedman. High performance junkie Rae Duffy told Flotsam "I used to think that he was kind of cute, but not anymore. I like a man who can get on and stay on!" Silvio Testa, leader of the Queensland invasion commented "it was, like, totally embarrassing .. there's no way I'd buy his book after that display!"

As further evidence of the magnitude of this PR disaster, Flotsam can reveal that Hokum Publishing has reduced the initial print run of All the way Round© from 10,000 to less than 250 copies.



David Linco impersonating a speed bump



Dee happily hydrated



Trueman's audience. John Friedman particularly unimpressed.



ANGRY MOB TURNS ON THE ED

Meanwhile Editor Mark Schroeder spent the weekend avoiding hordes of angry "Saltites" (a term loosely based on the Luddites of the early nineteenth century), who, with trangia burners strapped to their paddle blades, marched on the Executive marquee 'looking for blood'. The cause of this furore was the recent release of a soft copy only Salt magazine.

Saltites spokesperson Dee Ratcliffe told Flotsam "A real magazine is a piece of art ... I love to pick it up from the coffee table, hold it gently in my hand, waft the pages backwards and forwards, feel the medium weight coated 70gsm paper, smell the sweet aroma of the synthetic gravure ink. It's a tactile sensual experience for me, and I think for many other women. Now all we are getting is a characterless assortment of bytes on a screen, and it's all thanks to Schroeder and his meddling!"

Fellow protester John Piotrowski was also fired up "I hate it! When you move the cursor thing to the right the screen pans to the left, when you move it down the screen pans up! This totally does my head in. Schroeder must DIE!"

But the besieged Editor had some supporters. Ex-Editor Mark Pearson sprang to his defence telling Flotsam "I'm too proud to wear glasses, so couldn't even read the last few issues of SALT and its new age font, although of course I pretended to everybody I had – so give me a zoomable pdf any time."

The Queensland invaders enjoyed the Northern location



A LITTLE FURTHER NORTH EACH YEAR

With only a handful of members from south of Nowra attending, President Fisher triumphantly announced "we're almost there! It's taken 20 years but we've at last found a venue where we can enjoy the weekend without hordes of those southern recalcitrants criticising everything we do and banging on about the good old days when they ran the club." Mr Fisher continued "next year we plan to move the event even further north just to make sure these characters really get the message!"



Members contesting committee roles

NEW INITIATIVE ANNOUNCED

Following rumours that RNR Coordinator Campbell Tiley had "gone beyond exhaustion" in trying to resign from the Coordinator position over the event weekend, the club leadership has stepped in to address what is a perennial issue. President Fisher said "we've long known that many committee members, after years of good work, almost have a breakdown in the act of simply trying to step down. So I can announce today the establishment of the Transition to Normal Membership program which will be available in the future to all those seeking to leave office." Designed by former President Elizabeth Thomson and former Training Coordinator Harry Havu, the program will provide participants with a range of skills including influencing and negotiation techniques, and even menace, stand-over tactics and blackmail. President Fisher added "unfortunately all these skills are required to convince naive paddlers to put their hands up for an executive position in the NSWSKC."



MUP AWARD ANNOUNCED

In a development that surprised no-one, new club member Josh Andrews was a unanimous winner of the 2013 RnR Most Unpopular Paddler (MUP) award.

The MUP Committee's commendation stated that Mr Andrews, a serving Sergeant Major in the Australian Defence Forces, "demonstrated a total lack of people skills in forcing club members to assemble at dawn besides their kayaks" and furthermore "adopted an overbearing military style demeanour while carrying out a strict 'spit and polish' safety inspection."

Trip Leader Matt Bezzina told Flotsam "mate, that was nerve-racking, I nearly wet myself when the Sergeant Major screamed 'wots all this then!!' in my ear when he spied something not tied properly on my deck!!!"

Sergeant Major Andrews upholds a proud tradition of former unpopular ADF paddlers such as Major Doug 'ADFA Incident' Fraser and Midshipman John 'the Bastardiser' Lipscombe. Flotsam salutes you.



Winter paddling in VANCOUVER

A chilly pilgrimage to Feathercraft country

It's five days before Christmas, 8am, and there's snow all over the hire car, a couple of centimetres thick. OK, back to bed, no paddling today.

We're spending Christmas in Vancouver, British Columbia, with partner Meg's family. And we'd decided to bring along kayaks.

That made it two paddlers, and two Wispers, so we were all set. But with a rather bemused Canadian side of the family! It's important to make a 'splash' when meeting your partner's family for the first time, and they weren't entirely sure about winter kayaking.

So during November and December, I was checking ebay and craigslist for second-hand folders in the Vancouver area – but no luck. And then on the folding kayak forum site (foldingkayaks.org), I found a near-new Wispex XP at a great price – but in New York! Well, that was closer than Sydney. And

the seller was offering free postage in the continental US, so we did a deal for shipping to Vancouver. I'd already arranged to visit the Feathercraft factory there to pick up a few things, so they kindly agreed to babysit the new boat until our arrival.

Last year in Sydney, as we were planning the trip, I'd taken a quick inventory: folding kayaks, one (a Feathercraft Wispex); number of grown-up NSW Sea Kayak Club paddlers needing a boat, two. Hmm – we were going to need reinforcements.

FLYING TO VANCOUVER
The Wispex folds up into a big backpack for travel, and Air Canada offers a good excess baggage deal, just CAD\$70 for your second 23kg bag. To minimise the risk of damage, the skin is rolled first, and placed in the centre of the back pack, with the frame rods either side.

Bridge to nowhere, Squamish



Seals – no dry suits needed



Wheeling to the put-in



The real thing, but not for hire!

cockpits are small, but there's a larger size for the tubbier paddlers amongst us.

You build the frame of the Wispex in two halves, bow and stern, and slip them into the skin through the cockpit. Then two-piece longerons and deck-bars are added and extended, to complete the frame and stretch the skin longitudinally. Sponsons (air bags) run the length of the boat under the gunwales, which when inflated stretch the skin laterally. The boats come with a sea-sock to compensate for the lack of bulkheads, and the cockpit has a coaming that fits the sea-sock and a proper spraydeck. There are even hatches, with roll-down sealing, dry-bag style. Thigh-brace rods complete the cockpit, and there's a footplate (or bottom-pivoting rudder pedals) to give you something to push against.

How long do they take to build? The handbook says 30 minutes, but it normally takes me a bit longer. The end result is well worth the trouble. The boat flexes a little, like a skin-on-frame should, but feels very sure and secure on the water.

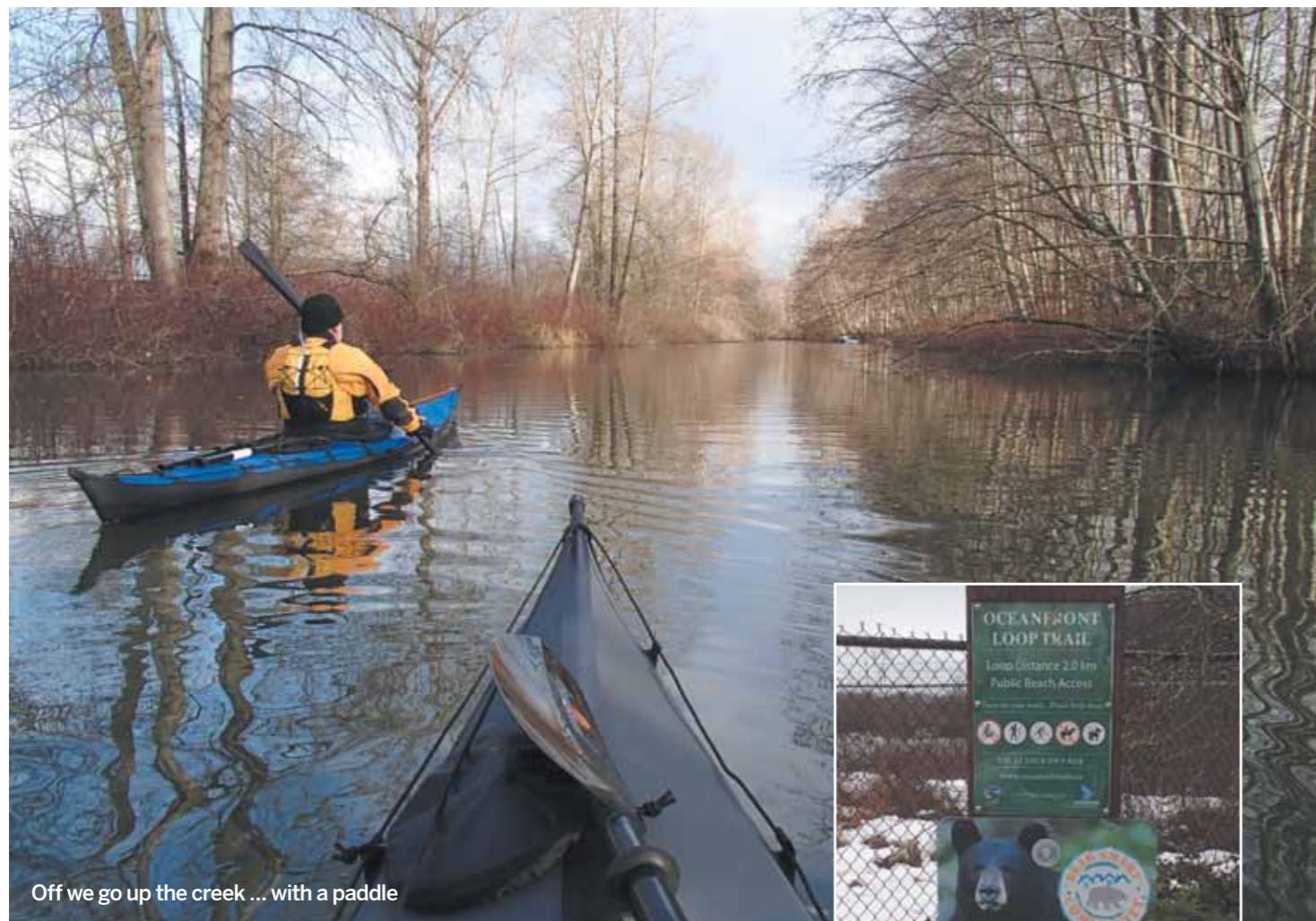
CHILLING OUT, ON THE WATER

We probably over-prepared a little for our first experience of cold-water paddling. I'd emailed

the local sea kayak clubs, but no one had any trips scheduled during our visit (a lesson there, maybe?). And they warned about the conditions.

Tidal range was up to four meters, water temperature around seven or eight degrees, and air temperature between zero and eight. And did I mention that it rains a lot on Canada's west coast?

So we'd equipped ourselves with dry suits, from an ebay seller in China. Although they only cost about \$360 delivered, they worked fine. The suits had latex neck and wrist seals that worked as intended. Might even get used on the lake in Canberra in winter! You do need to vent them through the neck seal before a swim – otherwise you end up looking like the Michelin Man, as all the air gets pushed up into the chest and shoulders (as it did, to the delight of passers-



by, when I float-tested the suit in the ocean pool at Curl Curl).

We'd gone for the Tizip version – a lightweight (but still waterproof) nylon zipper across the shoulders that needs a friend to unzip. So you need to go paddling in a group of at least two. Underneath, we wore thick thermals and polar fleece, with hiking socks. Polar-fleece beanies, and gloves rounded out the costume. We opted for neoprene gloves, which weren't perfect, and left us with aching fingers. Next time we're in cold climes (ever the folding-kayak optimist...) I might try the old windsurfing dodge of cotton gardening gloves under washing up gloves – bargain-priced dry gloves.

After crunching across the residue of last night's snow on the first morning out, that first step into knee-deep water at the put-in was a revelation – no feeling of cold at all!

NOT-TRAVELLING, MAN

Our preparations hadn't extended as far as roof racks. With the daytime temperature eight degrees max, and almost daily rain, nothing dries quickly. And given assembly/

disassembly times, we decided to stay local, and not try to load up the hire-car boot with wet kayak skins.

Feathercraft makes a foldable trolley that works either with the back-pack or with the boat assembled. So we were able to build and store the boats in Meg's brother's garage, and wheel them a hundred metres to a creek that flowed into Dees Slough and joined the Fraser River. Fabulous paddling – wetlands, marinas, and plenty of birdlife.

The Fraser itself can be challenging, with lots of outflow on top of a large tidal range, but we were lucky during our visit to have mostly neap ranges during the day, and pretty benign conditions. Weather patterns come through pretty quickly, but as you can see in the photos, we had some beautiful days for paddles. On one day, we could actually see the beautiful snow-covered peaks surrounding Vancouver; the rest of the time, it was crisp, wet and cloudy.

There was a sign at the marina, giving year-round timed slots on the slough for different water activities, including paddle sports. But we were lonely on the water – just us and the



bird life – so we paddled right through the times allocated for water-skiing! It must be Christmas -- everyone else was either hunkered down in front of the fire, enjoying mulled wine and Christmas pudding, or off skiing in the nearby resorts. But we paddled every couple of days, and thoroughly enjoyed it.

When we did travel out of Vancouver (through the inner islands to Victoria on Vancouver Island, and to Squamish, at the head of Howe Sound), we were reconnoitring for a return in the summer. The offshore islands are beautiful, and several commercial companies offer guided trips of varying degrees of difficulty.

So we'll be back, with our boats in a bag, to enjoy the place with the sun shining. ■

RAE'S DOUBLE



If you thought paddling 100km overnight down the Hawkesbury was tough, try five days and 400kms down the Murray taking on heat and the strongest headwinds the race has experienced in ten years. And while you are it, smashing records.

This is just what Rae Duffy did late last year when she won both the Hawkesbury Classic and the Murray Marathon on handicap.

Seven years ago Rae had ankle surgery that left her struggling to walk. Having always been active she was feeling frustrated by her situation until a friend mentioned sea kayaking.

"Sea kayaking," she thought. "I can do that."

Five months after taking up kayaking, Rae competed in her first marathon event with Kate Nicholls who she met through the sea kayak club.

Kate suggested they paddle the Hawkesbury Classic together in a double. Not one to hold back from a challenge Rae agreed, and they began training several times a week.

Rae said: "I learnt a lot from Kate, the race went well and we were very excited when we set a new record in our class."

Last year was the first time Rae raced in the singles division, just to prove to herself that she could do it alone.

She said: "I am competitive but not really with others in the race, it is more about giving

it my best shot to see what I can do. Finishing is the most important goal."

Having competed in the Hawkesbury four times, Rae had some idea of how she might go in last year's race.

She set goals for each checkpoint including the stop (only one of five minutes) and applied the same goal setting strategy to the Murray stages, but had no idea how she would manage backing it up each day.

"The Murray event is gruelling, we paddled up to nine hours each day and had to be at the start point at 6.30am each morning

"With the driving and preparing for the next day there was very little time to relax or socialise.

"It was tough too for our amazing land crew, who had to contend with the heat and dust and climb down steep banks to stand in the mud swatting flies while they waited at the checkpoints."

Even though Rae admits marathon events can be gruelling, what she enjoys most about racing is the feeling you get when everything comes together.

"When it is smooth and effortless it feels great and the euphoria at the finish can last for days."

"It is very different to most sports. Paddling hard down the mighty Murray River is tough but you are surrounded by massive gum trees, and chatting and laughing with the other competitors."

Rae's husband Neil also competed in both events.

Neil said: "We are much happier now Neil is kayaking. He could see how much fun I was having and I was hardly ever home, so he overcame his fears and joined me on the water."

"One day we plan to just get in our sea kayaks and head north or south from Sydney for a week, depending on which way the wind is blowing."

"I feel alive when I am out on the ocean, there's a wonderful sense of freedom."

Rae has encountered some hair-raising moments sea kayaking, one of which required a helicopter rescue.

"I learnt an important lesson that day, stay alert and never take your eyes off the ocean."

Not one to be discouraged Rae says her first love is sea kayaking, and talks about some of the amazing experiences she has had on the ocean.

"The best moments have been encounters with whales, orca and seabirds swooping past the bow of the kayak, and the expeditions with my kayak buddies exploring coastline the way only kayakers can."

Rae is already in training for this year's Hawkesbury Classic, she will be competing in a K4.

"It has not been done in a K4 by women over 50, so as long as we finish we will set a record."

"We have been out once and that was pretty wobbly but we have not fallen in yet."

"Four of us working together in a fast unstable kayak for about 10 hours is an exciting new challenge." ■



ISLANDS

SEA KAYAKING PARADISE

There are some 27,000 islands charted in the oceans around the world and while they are all different, according to Jim Kakuk, they share many things in common.

About the photo: in Wayag, Raja Ampat, West Papua, home of the last Sea Nomads, destructive fishing techniques employing homemade fertiliser bombs and potassium cyanide have become common practice, driven predominantly by the live fish trade – a \$1bn industry centred in Hong Kong. Target species like grouper and Napoleon wrasse are key to the preservation of coral ecosystems. These practices have not only decimated reefs in the most diverse marine bio-region in the world but have destroyed countless human lives as well.

The Bajau Laut, some of the last true marine nomads, have perhaps suffered the most. The Bajau Laut have for centuries lived out their lives almost entirely at sea between Malaysia, the Philippines and Indonesia living on long boats fishing and freediving for food and pearls. In the last few decades, many have been forced to settle permanently on land, leaving a dwindling number who still call the ocean home; a rich ethnic culture facing extinction.

Photo & inspiration by James Morgan. <http://jamesmorganphotography.co.uk>



Islands Sea Kayaking Paradise continued



Hopeall Island, Newfoundland by blogger Lee Gilbert www.awholebunchofings.com

Flying over the Pacific coastline of Aotearoa "the land of the long white cloud", the view below is a daisy chain of rugged green islands with jagged rocky shorelines surrounded by a shocking blue sea sprinkled with sun diamonds. New Zealand, one of my favorite kayaking destinations is comprised of 33 main islands and many more small ones.

ISLAND IMAGES

As a sea kayaker what captures your attention more than an island in the distance? Sailor's lore is peppered with stories of islands appearing as mirages in the open sea. Photos of islands look like natural movie sets with blue tropical water, sandy beaches, coral reefs and lagoons. Islands evoke a peaceful and alluring image in literature, they draw you in, tempt and seduce your imagination. My early fantasy was to live like the castaway Robinson Crusoe" on a deserted Island, making it on my own. Images of buried treasure chests filled with gold coins infiltrated my daydreams. The adventurous life of a pirate, 'Treasure Island' must have been every child's fantasy. I remember watching TV's 'Gilligan's Island' and later 'Fantasy Island'. The TV reality series 'Survivor' is filmed on an island and the iconic two-piece swimsuit was named after a Bikini Atoll in the Pacific Ocean.

For holidays we think of exotic island

destinations like Hawaii, Fiji, Tonga, etc. The attraction is isolation and pristine beaches, your own territory surrounded by the sounds of ocean waves and a fresh clean breeze blended with the smell of salt water and tropical flowers. Island hopping is a form of travel and there are tropical islands, desert islands and volcanic islands. There are island countries (New Zealand), island nations (Micronesia) and one island continent (Australia).

THE ATTRACTION IS INSULAR

Accessible only by boat or plane and usually remote, people and birds travel to islands regularly. There are many stories, lore and legends associated with islands throughout history and music is rife with island songs and poems. Painters like the composition of sunny beaches, blue water and colorful flora and fauna. Sanctuary and solitude is synonymous with islands and the term "island paradise" is heard often.

An island gives you the protection of the surrounding water, a fortress of independence with a wide moat. Islands have a weathered and a leeward shore, a sunrise from the sea and sunset over the water. On a small island you are familiar with all the boundaries and hiding places. The well traveled paths follow the natural terrain to tucked away corners or perches. There is often something new around the bend on the trail or interesting to be found on the beach after a high tide. Formalities

are few, it is a low stress environment with a casual dress code, no worries be happy! On a primitive island your senses are heightened and you are able to notice subtle changes in the environment. Communication by sight and sounds with your neighbors IS called the "coconut telegraph". Time passes in a different way as you observe the sunrise and sunset looking out over the water. Island time is based on the light of day, weather and the mood of the ocean. The main source of transportation on or around is by foot or small paddle craft, perfect for kayakers. The sport of surfing came from the islands and was first noted by Captain Cook in Hawaii in 1779 at Kealakekua Bay on the Kona coast.

Houses are small quaint bamboo huts in clusters surrounded by coconut trees. Small paths lined with tiki torches connect the dwellings and community areas. A simple primitive and tribal way of living, you must use creative ways of making things from available materials. Fishing and gathering food is a daily ritual along the beaches or rocky tide pools. Cooking is on a small wood fire, pit or camp stove. Let's not forget romance, the ultimate fantasy is of finding love on an island - 'Blue Lagoon'. Wedding ceremonies are a popular theme on an island, with white sandy beaches, blue water and solitude. Colorful dress, native culture and a barefoot warrior protector in a traditional sarong make for a memorable setting and lasting union.

EVOLUTION, MYSTERY & SURVIVAL

Science is indebted to islands as a clear track of biology's evolution and the specialization of species to the environment they live in. Darwin and the origin of the species on the Galapagos is one example. Islands hold many mysteries also; the statues of Easter Island and the fortress of Nan Madol on Pohnpei, Micronesia are just a few that come to mind.

Disappearing islands like Atlantis are a common theme in history and have always stirred the imagination of sailors. Non-existent islands that show up on the map or that are rumored to exist are called "fly away islands" and are usually the result of legends, optical and navigational mistakes or deliberate misinformation.

Living on an island has some disadvantages. With a limited cultural exchange some people experience "island fever" after a while and feel the need to leave and travel abroad. Islands are subjected to major storms that come from the sea. The term "marooned" usually applies to shipwrecked sailors being trapped on an island. Sailors lament being stranded on a deserted island and become crazed like Tom Hanks in the movie 'Cast Away'. There are numerous jokes and cartoons about being marooned on a small island. "If you were trapped on a desert island who would you want to be with?"

Finding water on a small island can be the

bigger problem if there is no fresh source. People who are isolated on an island in a survival situation show their real character and values. Personal vices, habits and addictions become paramount when human nature and individual interests are put at odds with the common good. 'Lord of the Flies' is a novel about a group of British boys stuck on an uninhabited island who try to govern themselves, with disastrous results. Fletcher Christian and the mutineers of the Bounty fled to Pitcairn Island in 1790 with other Polynesian men and Tahitian women. Though they learned to survive comfortably by farming and fishing, infighting soon ended the tranquil setting and nearly half of the male inhabitants were killed over prejudice, land and women.

ISLAND STORIES

In September 2001 the Tsunami Ranger retreat was held on Santa Cruz Island in the Channel Islands. On the 11th we were camped in Scorpion Bay when the ranger came to inform us of the World Trade Center attack. We were concerned but not traumatized like those who watched it on live TV. We spent the day paddling along the island coast and noted the absolute tranquil even serene environment. There was a noticeable lack of boat and air traffic, it felt like we were insulated from the event and on a different reality from the rest of the country.

Dreamer Island is a small rock Island in Oregon that the Tsunami Rangers claim as a

spiritual place, we named it after the Dreamer faith of the Nez Perce, the native American people living in the Pacific Northwest of America. The Nez Perce believed in the power of revelations through dreams, songs and dances. Eric Soares and I first landed on Dreamer Island in 1987 and over the years went there often on retreats and vision quests. We have had many interesting experiences and special times on Dreamer Island and it has become part of Tsunami Ranger history. On our last visit to Dreamer we honored Eric's request and scattered some of his ashes in a ceremony on the island.

I have had many wonderful adventures on islands along the Pacific coast and in Baja, each with their own story. In New Zealand I have kayaked in the Bay Of Islands, explored and camped on islands along the outside coast and looked at charts plotting new islands to visit. When my mind has time to wander and I dream of my next kayaking adventure, I always remember the view from the plane and think of the island of New Zealand. ■

Jim Kakuk is Captain of the Tsunami Rangers and lives on the coast in Sonoma, Northern California. In 2011 he was a guest of NSWSKC and appeared at Rock 'N Roll tsunamirangers.com



Dreamer Island the spiritual home of Tsunami Rangers

Marlborough Sounds New Zealand

1500 km of coastline to choose from

Party: Adrian Clayton, Mark Dabbs, Lisa McCarthy. Kayaks: Mission Bezhig x 2; Perception Contour x 1

**Thursday March 14; Crail Bay-Kauaura Bay; Fine & Sunny, Windy;
Distance Paddled: 15 kms**

Plan A....swiftly changed to Plan B.....

Due to our proposed plans of circumnavigating D'Urville Island being dashed because of the weather and strong, poorly timed tidal currents, we settled on another very pleasant option of exploring the Marlborough, Pelorus and Kenepuru Sounds.

There was great concentration, as we carefully packed, (read: shoved!) enough gear into our kayaks, to last us for six days. There were certain priorities, naturally, Mark's

home-made apple crumble being one of them, that had to go in a 'safe place'.

We left Crail Bay, which is about 2 ½ hours from Picton, at 2pm, with a good stiff north-westerly breeze making us pant a little. It was great to finally be on the water.

The forecast was looking good for the next couple of days. We pass what is to be the first of many mussel farms, their black and red buoys bobbing gently on the surface. We paddle north, around Whakamawahi Point,

and cross over to our first nights camp, in Kauaura Bay.

This is a nice spot, although a little small. We find suitable spots for our tents, and are entertained by the resident Weka, a native

chook-sized NZ bird. These birds ended up being a serious pest, attempting to steal, not just food, but anything that wasn't tied down. They are not afraid of humans at all, and had to be closely watched at all times.

This area experiences four metre tides, so we dragged the kayaks up to high ground and tethered them to the sign. This was just as well, as during the night, when checking on them, the water had begun to lap at the hulls!

We collected our water from a nearby creek, which had a waterfall, where at the bottom, the water disappeared underground. We visited the waterfall again, later in the dark, and enjoyed the glow worm display put on for us.

**Friday March 15;
Kauaura Bay-Wynens Bay (Wharf);
Cloudy, Sunny Breaks, Light Wind;
Distance Paddled: 28 kms**

Our morning ritual was waiting for the 8.35am weather forecast, before setting off for the day. The reception was very crackly, and we couldn't really determine what was reported.

We paddled off, with no sign of the resident Weka.....maybe they are not early risers...?

Our first stop for smoko was Ketu Bay, and inspected its campsite potential. Mark got out to investigate, and suggested it was fine. Adrian and I began to paddle off; however, 'where is Mark??' He was taking a long time

consideration. We found most beach/landing places were littered with a profusion of driftwood, in the form of old logs etc. The scenery was undulating, forested with some farmland interspersed. Luckily there wasn't

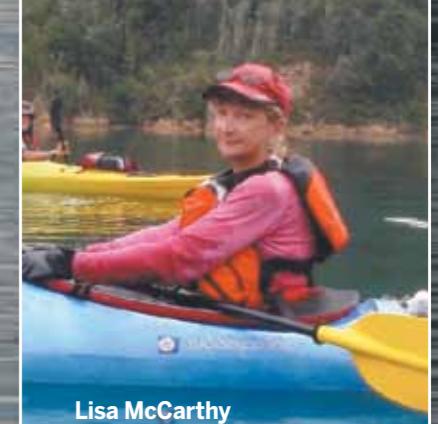
too much wind, but my kayak was suffering from 'nose dive' and the front was often submerged. This was corrected after moving the water containers around, and re-arranging other items. This improved its handling significantly.

We arrived at the wharf in Wynens Bay, and inspected its campsite potential. Mark got out to investigate, and suggested it was fine. Adrian and I began to paddle off; however, 'where is Mark??' He was taking a long time

to catch up, and we turned around to find him just paddling from the wharf. We returned, as something was clearly wrong.

It appeared that the screw-on flag on the rear of the kayak, had come un-done, and fallen off....disappearing into the clear, green depths below....

Knowing Mark's overt reluctance/aversion to deep water, along with the low temperature of same....well, it was never gonna happen that he was going to dive into the drink! Adrian, however, showed no hesitation in ripping off his PDF and spray skirt, stripping off some clothing, donning his goggles and diving into the deep, green water....cold, cold water....suddenly,



Main photo courtesy Wildernessguides.co.nz

Lisa McCarthy

Marlborough Sounds NZ continued

there was a 'pop' as the bright yellow flag emerged from its watery grave! Yay! Adrian was a hero! Just add 'Flag Rescuer' to his list of qualifications, please!

From here, we crossed from the northern point, Kaitira Point, to Forsyth Island, going along Duffers Reef, approaching the open water. This changed to a rockier landscape, with many interesting formations to investigate. Adrian withheld his urge to rock garden, using a loan kayak, and without a helmet. We paddled around the isolated rock columns, navigated around fast tidal races and explored up as far as Goat Point. Then a long slog back to the wharf; we had the wind affecting us, and we were pleasantly tired by the time we reached our intended campsite.

The best tent site was occupied by a smelly dead sheep....Mark and I ended up camping on the wharf itself, while Adrian set up at the end of it. We enjoyed our tea, overlooking the bay; the resident Weka(s) were gorging on the sheep carcass, but still managed to pester us later in the evening. Occasionally an aroma would waft towards us....I, for one, was glad to move on in the morning!

**Saturday March 16;
Wynens Bay – Matai Bay hut;
Fine & Sunny, but Cloudy later;
Distance Paddled: 28 kms**

After listening to the weather forecast on the radio, we set off over to the distance shoreline, down Waitata Reach through very calm waters. It was quite hot as we paddled down Waitata Reach, stopping for smoke just past Reef Point. We follow the shoreline past Clara Island, admiring Maud Island on the opposite shore. Today I try a different paddle; this was lighter than what I had been using, and I



Avoiding dead sheep

found it much easier (am missing my own light paddle very much!). My arms were quite tired today.

We stop at Waiona bay for lunch; it would be a very nice place to camp as well. Then, down through Apaua Channel, all the way past Maud Island (Tom Shand Scientific Reserve), across Tawhitinui Reach, to Cregoe Point.

Here we stopped, just prior to Tawa Bay, for a snack on the water. We had local knowledge that the sandflies were terrible at Tawa Bay, so we were not keen to stop and camp there, unless there were no other options. As there was a hut down and around the next bay, we decided to push on for another few kms to reach this. Pulling into this bay, we wondered if we had missed it somehow? A thorough search of the shoreline eventually uncovered this extremely well-hidden hut. We had it to ourselves, which was great! It sleeps six, so there was plenty of room for us to spread out and make it homey. Plus, it was an escape from the ever-present sandflies. It was a very long portage, where again we tethered the kayaks to a tree. Again, the overnight tide almost floated the boats; it was crucial to carry the boats up high.

**Sunday March 17; Matai Bay hut-Elaine Bay-Matai Bay hut; Cloudy, then Rain;
Distance Paddled: 27kms**

We decided to stay here another night, so left our gear behind. It was a nice, easy kayak portage to the distant waterline, a very pleasant change. Upon our departure, we found that the resident Weka had stolen Adrian's neoprene front hatch cover (whoops there, who forgot to lock that up?!). We did a search, and Mark found it under a nearby bush. The missing sponge, however, was gone for good....

We set off in light drizzle. The

accompanying cloud made for some beautiful ethereal images, and we glided along, seeing a number of big stingrays in the clear water. Today was our lazy day, and we paddled around the corner into the bay, where the water was absolutely still, and we were surrounded by mountains, partially covered with mist. It was incredibly beautiful, and we spent much time here, taking photos of each other, and the mirror images that the mountains and still water reflected.

Moving along, we encountered an enormous number of jellyfish. Leaning over the kayak...but not too far out! There were jellyfish downwards to infinity. We were amazed by the vast numbers.

As we moved through Tennyson Inlet, it began to rain properly. The decreased visibility made navigation more challenging, and we kept a close eye on the map and compass. We had Elaine Bay pegged as our lunch spot....there were some facilities there, according to the map....I began to dream of hot chips, followed by a cream bun....Ahhh, I should have known better!! There was fuel there, yes; but, only off the jetty, to serve boaties. No shop, or anything else besides holiday cottages! However, as we huddled underneath our puny umbrella, soggy, cold, trying to eat our sandwiches without getting them wet....a friendly couple in a motorhome approached us, and invited us to come sit under their awning, on their chairs, and eat our lunches. Thanks guys! They even took our rubbish away for us!!

Although the rain had now set in, there were pleasures of a different kind to enjoy; we saw more stingrays; the birds that we recognised included pied cormorants, shags, a white faced heron, terns, Australasian Gannets, sooty oyster catchers, and a solitary pied oyster catcher. At Elaine Bay, the resident Weka had some half-grown chicks. Also, a first for me; I saw my very first penguins, whilst kayaking! I was thrilled!

We returned via Tawhitinui Island, along the south end, then headed south back to Matai bay hut. There was no sign of the 30 kms winds that were forecast, but they were right on the nose with the rain! Back at the welcome hut, we quickly got warm and dry, and the hut resembled a Chinese laundry in no time!

**Monday March 18; Matai Bay hut – St Omer; Rain & some Strong Wind gusts;
Distance Paddled: 52 kms**

After raining all night, with the nearby creek rising quite high, we packed up in dismal conditions, all primed to paddle 34 kms to our next camp site at Pipi Beach. The forecast winds were expected to turn southerly and



Atmosphere by NZ

become 30 knots, not good news for us. The water was calm to begin with, and as we turned east at Cregoe Pot to paddle along Tawhitinui Reach, there were some very nice rollers here. I paddled hard, and managed to get the little blue boat moving enough to enjoy a few rides, but it was hard work and I couldn't afford to get too tired too early in the day! We turned

south at Tawero point. It just kept raining and we stopped briefly for a break. It was at this point vaguely suggested that we could keep paddling on past Pipi Beach.....go all the way back to the finish....ohhh....that's a long way. I tried to get my head around this, from what was already a big day, to what was now threatening to turn into a 50+km day,

in the rain, in a short, heavy, plastic kayak....hell yeah, let's do it!!!! Who wants to put up a tent in the rain, hide all afternoon, all night, cook etc in the rain, then pack up a wet tent, and wet everything else, in the rain? Especially when the alternative is to only paddle on a few more hours (another 17kms!) and reach the house???

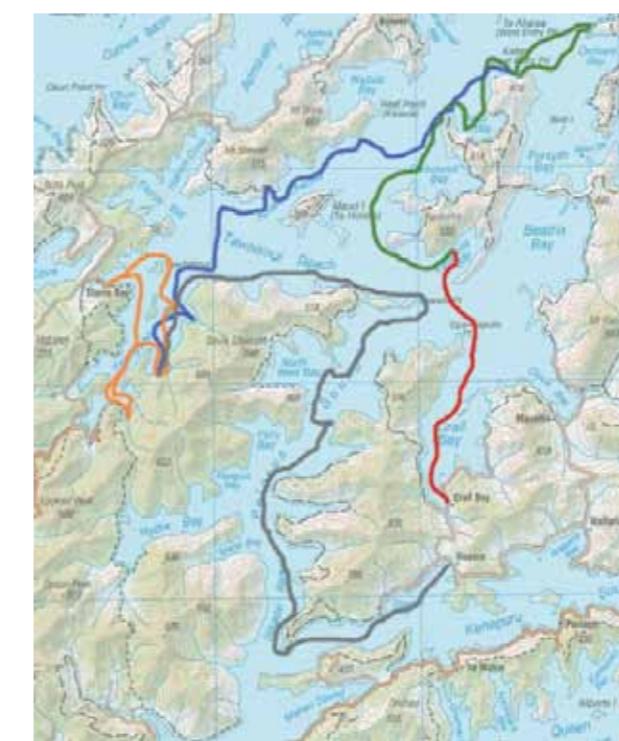
We had a quick lunch on an inlet near Stafford Point, and then continued on. We saw some kayaks and tents pitched at Jacobs Bay, which looked a very inviting place to camp, except for the current conditions. Adrian and Mark talked to these young people, who were

from NOLS (National Outdoor Leadership Skills). I saved myself a few extra strokes going in there, and focused on my chocolate intake, which had suddenly, seriously, increased!

As we passed Turn Point on Pelorus Sound, the wind picked up and we had some 25-30 knot gusts thrown into our faces. This sent us scurrying (well, struggling for me) to the protection of the shoreline. I cast my gaze toward Pipi Beach as we went past; this didn't appear to offer the protection from the elements that we would have required, had we stayed there. Our final bend was made, Koutuwal Point, with a last 10 km to go. It was the last slog that had me drained. My arms were tired, my left foot hurt from pressing on the footpeg (maybe my Croc had a poor angle?) my butt was sore from sitting on it for so long, and the many wet clothing layers and PFD had begun to chafe a hole in my lower back....but, who's complaining? We were nearly there! After reaching the next (last) point, which was hiding our intended bay, and consuming yet more chocolate, I found the energy toiddle along the final 5 kms to St Omer Bay. As we could finally see our destination, it was easier to find the last bit of grunt needed to get there; the chocolate intake also helped (By this time I was reaching chocolate saturation point!).

Yep, you guessed it....as we pulled in....it stopped raining!!!!

A great trip, in a highly recommended area. ■

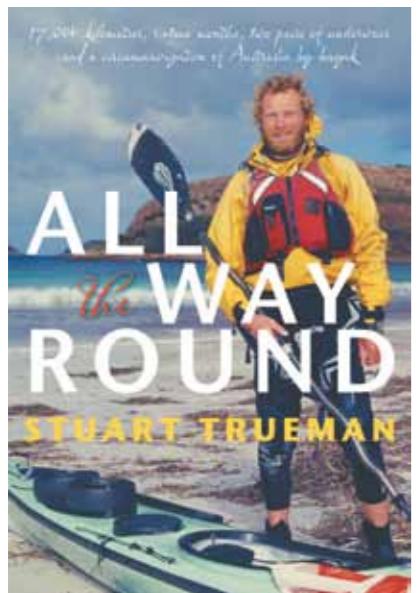


Trip log: Day 1 – red Day 2 – green Day 3 – purple
Day 4 – orange Day 5 – grey

By Mark Schroeder

First to be third, and satisfied at that

Our club's living legend paddled around Australia then wrote a book. SALT dared ask his least favourite question: 'Why'?



"Twenty years from now you will be more disappointed by the things you didn't do than by the ones you did do."
Mark Twain.

Perhaps it's the fear of life passing by too readily that makes people like Stuart Trueman push themselves to the brink of their abilities, enduring almost unimaginable hardship and deprivation along the way.

Perhaps. But in Stu's case, like so many other extreme adventurers, the reason they do it is not something that comes easily. Unable to come up with anything satisfactory when his daughter asked him why he was doing the trip, Stu put his mind to his own motivations.

"I knew the most common question would be 'why' so I worked on it and now my answer is 'I just like testing myself while exploring the outdoors'."

And a test it was. 16,000 km in 16 months solo and unsupported. When Stu's wife, Sharon, wrote of his "drive passion and get-up-and-go," arguably she sold him short. Many of us never paddle 40 km in a day. Stu averaged nearly that every day for 16 months.

What kind of man does that make him? What lies behind the bushy beard, crinkled eyes and gruff Midlands accent? And is Stu's explanation of 'Why' a satisfactory one?

Salt caught up with this humble achiever to scratch the surface a little further and celebrate the imminent release of his book of the trip 'A Long Way Around'. It speaks volumes about the man that he happily sacrificed a precious Saturday to travel by public transport from his home in the Blue Mountains to attend Salt's headquarters in the Eastern suburbs for an in-depth chat. The fact that track maintenance required him to change to a bus significantly extending the already long trip appeared not to have phased him one bit.

Driven to achieve a supremely high level of achievement in adventure he may be, but he hasn't got ants in his pants – he seems more satisfied than restless. His marriage to Sharon has lasted he says, "at least 375 years", claiming he met her when he was 18 and she

was "47 or so". He's in a "job for life" working in IT, a career he has dedicated himself to all his adult life. He's steady. But hardly a plodder.

In company, Stu can be warm and he's definitely a funny bugger when he wants to be, but like many men, in particular to English men perhaps, he's more comfortable talking about his deeds than the more elusive, abstract issues like motivations, fears and weaknesses. Conversely he's not afraid to point out other peoples. At the end of my Sea Skills test day under Stu's assessment, he drew the group together on the water. We nervously waited to find out who he had failed and who had passed.

"The first thing you need to know," he said as we held our collective breath, "is you're all fookin' useless". We couldn't believe it – all failed!

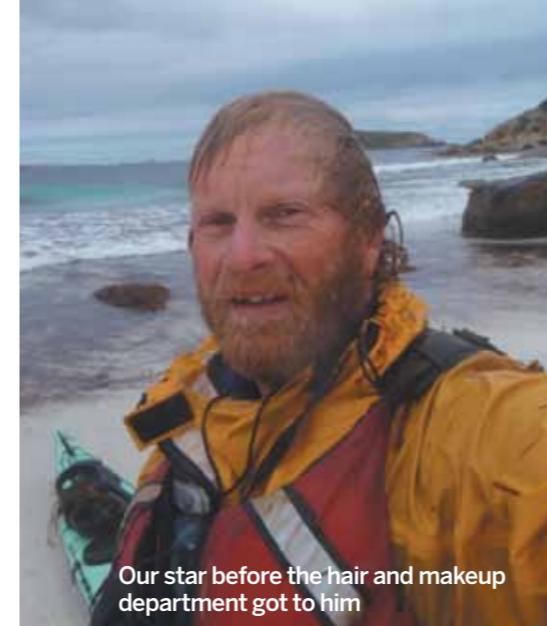
He went on to make the very valid point that Sea Skills is just the start of sea proficiency and we had much, much more to learn... and then passed us all. It was classic Stu, a compelling lesson not easily forgotten. (Sorry if you pull that stunt with every group, Stu, I've just blown it for you!).

THE INTERNAL ADVENTURE

'Au fond de l'inconnu pour trouver du nouveau.' (Through the unknown, we'll find the new). Charles Beaudelaire.

Where, then, does the restless pursuit of adventure stem from? Frankly Stu doesn't know. Like many men he's more about actions than words. This is not to say he's taciturn, he's not, and his warmth and humour is never far away. But he's no navel gazer.

Solo adventure is a specially committing kind of endeavour. You battle not just your environment, but also your own doubts and fears. Those of us who like to push our skills by heading out into wild conditions know what it is to be concerned



Our star before the hair and makeup department got to him

the trauma of these experiences, but there are a few telling comments. During his thirty-hour epic crossing the Baxter cliffs, suffering hypothermia "I repeated the name of my kids and told myself that to weaken and give in to the physical and mental strain would mean I'd never see them again".

After completing the Bight, he made a presentation to the VSKC in Melbourne, speaking for the first time about the journey across the cliffs, he found himself choking back the tears as "I realised what I'd put myself through... the tension I'd been hiding from myself surfaced".

He put it more prosaically to Sharon "I'm never doing that shit again!"

Endurance performance is mentally tough; the best athletes are able to push themselves through physical fatigue and remain psychologically positive over long distances and durations. Andy Lane, of the University of Wolverhampton has researched ultra endurance athletes and found this doesn't happen by chance; endurance athletes can train the mind to develop emotional control.

Lane says: "In the same way you train your body to cope with the demands of training you also train your mind to think positively about the experience".

Stuart's lifetime of endurance expeditions has given him an instinctive, inbuilt ability to cope.

"Any negative thinking, any doubts that I was going to make it, would just exhaust me further and help make my fears a reality".

Thirty, thirty five years of expeditions is more preparation than most of us could ever draw upon. How many of us can casually remark, "it's not unusual for me to hallucinate when I've paddled for extended periods without sleep"?

Or indeed the enormous self-confidence in this simple statement: "All was going to plan, and if it wasn't I'd change the plan".

So if for Stu the how can be explained by a lifetime of getting out there, mostly solo, what about the why?

As I mentioned earlier, his official answer is "Because I like testing myself while exploring the outdoors".

Yes, as his youngest daughter would say: but why?

To get to the real drivers behind Stu's ability to push further than just about anybody, I suspect you'd have to delve further into his psyche than he bothers delving himself. If adventure compensates for some missing element in his life, he doesn't show it,

or seem to know it. Perhaps it was growing up in a small country village, spending much of his childhood time outdoors, but then again there are many people who grow up that way without being left with any appreciation of the wild places.

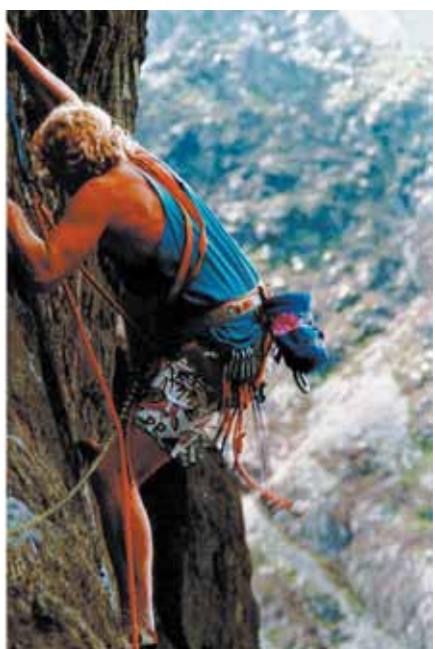
Stuart told me about school hiking trips in England, which he loved and it was probably there, he concedes, that the seed was sown. The hiking trips quickly led to rock climbing, then, on leaving school, to mountaineering which he attacked with characteristic vigour, spending consecutive seasons in the European Alps.

Climbing partners would sometimes prove frustrating. "I didn't have a car and relied on others to take me climbing. I used to get furious when they let me down because I hated missing my climbing weekends. I figured it was easier not to rely on anyone."

It was during this period that he discovered the benefits as well as the dangers - of going solo. He rationalises it in unemotional – and uncompromising – terms: "Being solely responsible meant I could give myself full credit for all that went well, and would have nowhere to hide when things fell in a heap."

And sometimes falling in a heap, solo and unroped, is exactly what he did. Several bones were broken, clearly some lives were used up.

Nevertheless, solo has become his signature style. His friend and Antarctic paddling partner Lawrence Gaeoghegan put it this way: "I've known and paddled with Stu for along time now and always



Stuart Trueman continued

Hanging around in England



admired the "style" that he accomplishes his paddling trips. Solo is his choice for his more challenging trips that require that little bit of edge over each previous one".

One of his close shaves served to drive home another aspect that has formed an important part of his ethics: don't compete with anyone but yourself. One day his brother, a publican, served a climber who after too many drinks started noisily claiming feats which sounded a little unlikely. In the mischievous spirit of the Truemans, he suggested the climber hook up with Stu for a day at the crag. Stu was only too happy to buy into the plan to show up the self-appointed big shot. As Stu tells it, the guy was so slow getting ready "by the time he was reaching for his boots I'd already soloed half the routes there". The humiliation was complete but then a handhold broke, sending the unroped Stu plummeting to the deck, breaking a leg and his coccyx. He survived a motorbike ride in that condition to the local hospital, and vowed from that time on to compete only with himself.

He relates an exasperated radio



Freezing in the French Alps

interviewer who, on finding out that Stu's circumnavigation was the third ever to be completed successfully (after Paul Caffyn and Freya Hoffmeister), asked him, "well were you first to do *anything*?"

"Sure" Stu fired back, "I was first to be third". Tellingly, that quip became one of the titles he submitted for his book; beating anybody to anything is just not what it's about for Stu, and in fact he writes "if your main object is to impress rather than enjoying the journey, then motivation would be harder".

During his climbing exploits of course, he also learned about himself, his mental and physical capabilities; mountaineering demands endurance, brute strength, perceptive risk management in a dynamic environment, problem solving skills under stress and an appetite for long periods of exposure to danger – he was knocked unconscious by lightning twice during one ascent. Steadily he built a base of mental and physical resilience which could be equally be applied, as he has shown, to different sporting endeavours.

He loved climbing, but his knees didn't agree. Aged thirty-five he faced a new challenge...that of his own body failing him. It became clear that the pursuits he loved - which had become his lifestyle for the past fifteen years - were no longer an option. A crisis ensued.

His solution was characteristically pigheaded - run the City to Surf. He overtrained and gave himself shin splints in both legs. Told he had the arthritic joints of a sixty year old and reduced to crutches, he found himself depressed at a climbing festival in the Blue Mountains.

It was here that the super fit but hobbled expeditioner happened upon a talk being given by Peter Tressider about kayaking across Bass Strait. "Aha, you can sit down, I can do that," he thought. For most total novices, Bass Strait would be an idle dream that would come to nothing. When Stu says such things, he means them – and he has the chops to pull them off.

"I must go down to the sea again, to the lonely sea and sky" John Masefield

And so it was in 1997 that the man descended from the mountains to sea level, knowing nothing but wanting everything. First stop: the bookshop. He bought the late Derek Hutchinson's kayak instruction book and Paul Caffyn's tale of circumnavigating Australia *'The Dreamtime Voyage'*. Some people are content to read about extraordinary feats. Not Stu.

He went out and bought a kayak, taught himself to paddle, to roll and to survive the sea. Not for Stuart the "start slow and see where it takes me" school of kayaking – within a few weeks of taking up the sport he paddled solo from Sydney to Brisbane.

"Men dull in mind find no cause for wonder anywhere; they just idly sit at home instead of going to see what is on view in the great theatre of the world" Conrad Gesner 1541

Within six months he'd soloed East Bass Strait. 'A promising student' they would no doubt have called him. Or maybe a prodigy.

When he joined NSW SKC, he knew nothing about paddling with others and the old guard like Dave Winkworth, Norm Sanders, John Wilde and co taught him what they knew. Later he had his first close shave on the water, a navigation error that nearly saw him washed out to sea on an unsuccessful attempted first solo crossing of West Bass Strait.* (see the club magazine archives for a gripping write up of this near disaster at tinyurl.com/straitdirect). This was followed by successfully pulling off the second unsupported kayak trip down the Antarctic Peninsula paddling 800km, further South than anyone before (with the late Andrew McAuley and Lawrence Geoghegan). This was his only notable group expedition and whilst he enjoyed the group dynamic, (they were close friends), again Stuart took away a lesson: keep it low key.

"That trip was sponsored, and they insisted on us being clean shaven in all the photos...in Antarctica! I just don't need all that, I go out there for a holiday, I didn't want the extra work and obligations".

QUIET ACHIEVER

There are two kinds of people who don't say much (the saying goes): those that are quiet, and those that talk a lot.

Stuart's the first kind. He self-financed the big circumnavigation, receiving only a few bits of gear by way of 'sponsorship'. But he chose what he used and there was never any kind of deal, or expectation put on him. And he has no plans to do it any differently in the future.

"I don't want to be obligated to use some crap bit of gear," he explains.

In fact anyone who's spent time with Stu is struck by how down to earth the guy is. He'll talk about his trips if asked, but never introduces them into conversation.

Despite this, writing the book was surely a no brainer?

"It's a tradition isn't it: do the expedition, write the book. I wanted to. It's sort of a debrief".

He's pleased with the book, but that doesn't prevent him from being self-deprecating. "If you have an unsuccessful expedition and write a book, the book has to be really, really good. You can have a successful expedition and write a crap book and that's OK – so I had to finish the bloody trip!"

Little did he realise the writing would take longer than the trip – but more of that later.

BEHIND EVERY GREAT MAN...

Stu's the first to acknowledge his wife Sharon's critical role in the expedition. First, with two young children to consider, she needed to agree to it. He broached the subject three years before the trip eventuated and her acceptance was pretty immediate.

"She's used to it," he says jokingly, "besides I always tell her this'll be the last trip".

Mid-way though the planning period, there was the terrible tragedy of Andrew McAuley's loss at sea. How did this affect his family?

"We've lost friends to mountaineering, we both understand it can happen when you push things. Andrew went out there with absolutely nowhere to hide for weeks on end. I was planning to hop along the coast, sheltering from weather when necessary. Sharon understood the different risk profile, but Andrew's death upset Brittany my eldest daughter who for a long time associated every kayak trip, even regular training days, as having fatal possibility. It was really hard for a while".

Still Sharon's support didn't waver, even to the extent that when their other daughter Ella needed minor surgery at a time when Stu was mid way through a difficult section, she delayed

the news till he was through it in order not to distract him from the task at hand.

"I must admit" she writes "there were times of resentment towards Stu...but generally these moments were short-lived. I found strengths within that I never knew about".

"It takes a strong woman to put up with a prick like me", agrees Stu.

MAKING FRIENDS AS HE MAKES THE DISTANCE

If you head out to the farthest reaches of Australia, you're going to come across some pretty unusual folk.

"You'd be surprised about what goes on out there. There are all sorts of people just doing their thing quietly. You pull into a small NT town, chat about your plans to paddle the Kimberley and somebody'll tell you 'Oh yes, the butcher did that last month'.

The scene: a ragged looking man with a several month growth and a strange accent kayaks onto a remote beach, exhausted, his presence inexplicable to the outback character who happens to be fishing there. To the local he seems a race apart. What happens next could frequently have impacted on Stu's success or otherwise.

The English don't have a great track record with this sort of thing. As their Colonial might swept through the world, they developed the belief that English will be miraculously understood by people of all tongues – so long as you speak it veeeery sloooowly! Explorer William Edward Parry took a flag painted with an olive branch on a trip to Greenland as a gift to the 'Esquimeaux', never thinking that the symbolism of an olive branch may not be apparent to a people who scarcely saw any vegetation in their lives, let alone a southern Mediterranean species!

As it turns out, Stu's contact with locals

Man of the people; with Bron and Roy Davies



Meeting the media

became the source of some of the best of times...and worst.

Almost wherever he went, this lone dragon slayer's story fired the imagination, and his charm fanned the flames. People responded, and the book details some astounding acts of generosity from strangers – a surprising number of whom seem to have got him happily drunk!

But then there was the outback bureaucrat who very nearly stopped the trip dead – in a way that nature's rawest forces could not.

He met the lot: "Deep in the outback in the most remote far North I came across an old woman shacked up in an ancient caravan – she was covered in sores. I asked if she was OK 'Oh yes, love' she answered 'I'm just allergic to the sun'".

Following a moderate surf landing he was welcomed by a couple who had been watching him horrified, convinced they were about to witness a drowning. As he pulled up on the beach, the man literally danced around his boat, singing at the top of his voice with relief!

Stu's a bloke who gets on with people. As Lawrence Geoghegan put it "Not only is he a bloody good paddler on the ocean, rock solid in his decision making, cool under pressure and reassuring when it comes to the tough stuff but better than that he is a great person to hangout with whilst camping I have always enjoyed the pommy accent whilst sitting around the fire, watching him sipping on his whiskey and sucking on that god-damm pipe!!"

People both at home and those he met out in the back of beyond were equally touched by the adventure. Stu was forceful in asking me to convey the immense importance of the support he received, both moral and financial, from our club and our equivalents around the country and to reiterate his deep gratitude for it.

Talk to Stu about his trip and it is hard not to be inspired. For this reason alone, clearly, it was worth writing it all down. And that became his book. And his book

Stuart Trueman continued



became his thank you.

THE CHALLENGE OVER... ANOTHER BEGINS

"We are lonesome animals. We spend all our life trying to be less lonesome. One of our ancient methods is to tell a story begging the listener to say – and to feel – Yes, that's the way it is, or at least that's the way I feel it. You're not as alone as you thought." John Steinbeck

Was Stu kidding himself, his wife or the rest of us when he wrote how the trip made him feel "satisfied at last"? It's not uncommon on returning from expeditions to hit an emotional slump as you return to the comparative banality of the day-to-day routine. Stu's been there, particularly after his Antarctica trip, "that was such a foreign environment."

But not on this trip, "I was happy to be back, after 16 months I was done with the trip. I'd been away long enough that being home was the novelty, not being away."

"Even being back in the office was fun," he adds with a laugh, "for the first two hours!"

And so he settled back ... and picked off another battle: the book. Pan Macmillan expressed an interest and gave him his brief: come back with 100,000 words and we'll let you know. The notion of a ghost writer never came up. Starting with not much of a plan, he set about it, realising after several months' work that his extensive notes needed fresh eyes to extend them into a novel. A friend "who writes a bit" offered to help and Stu ultimately handed over the draft to Pan Macmillan's editor, having no idea what to expect next.

To his surprise they didn't rewrite anything. "They made suggestions but mostly just asked me loads of questions that I had to clarify. Oh, and they rejected all my suggested titles."

It remains to be seen how he'll process

the heightened profile that will no doubt come with the book release, but you can bet he'll stay grounded. As he says: "the person next to me may not look like they climb mountains or paddle kayaks, but it's a fair bet that I haven't achieved what they have".

Having written the book, Stu has little interest in the rest of the process, in fact he may even be away on his next trip when it's launched.

Exactly what do you do after you've paddled the entire continent... every last inch of it? Stuart confirms: you feel satisfied! Perhaps after 16 months, a better word would be satiated. But as with every good feast, the flavours fade and the hunger reappears. You start planning the next meal. For somebody to whom adventure is necessary nourishment, it's only a matter of time.

"I'm off to do a winter circumnavigation of Tassie".

Is this an extension of the mainland circumnavigation? "Absolutely not. Nothing to do with it, I just love it down there and it should be a bit harder in winter".

And this time he intends to provide Facebook updates, so we can continue to live our adventures vicariously through him.

And then? Who knows. A throwaway comment in the book is an unintended but marvellous metaphor for Stu's life:

ROB MERCER'S VIEW:

Many years ago I remember sitting on the beach at North Era reluctantly deciding to join the rest of the group portaging all our gear and boats about a kilometre over a steep hill and muddy track to South Era to avoid an almost impenetrable surf that had built up overnight. I say "almost impenetrable" because Stuart Trueman was already sitting out the back.

After an intense hour of silently watching the maelstrom and planning his breakout, with a minimum of fuss he had paddled straight through the whole horrible mess. An air of dread descended among the so-called "hard men" back on the beach. Discretion was no longer an option and boats were readied for the challenge. (So much for the non-competitive nature of sea kayaking!)

A paddle was broken, backs strained and egos battered but ultimately the rest of us walked to South Era. From that day forward I realised Stuart was a pretty unique and focused character.

As I watched him paddle into Watsons Bay on his way around Australia many years later nothing had changed except the challenges just seemed to get bigger

Stuart's respect for the achievements of others is one of the qualities that separates him from most others at the sharp end of the kayaking world. On numerous occasions I have seen him listening to vivid accounts of more modest adventures (my own included) with the same genuine keenness as he would if he were comparing notes with peers. Then again he has so few equals in the sea kayaking world that these exchanges are probably an important means to remind Stuart that there are many people from a pretty broad demographic in the paddling community who share his passion for open water adventure.

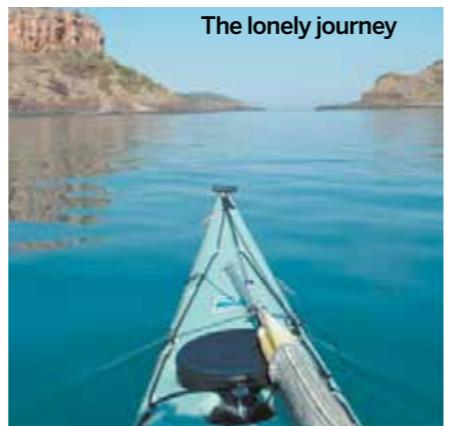
I think Stuart is refreshed by these meetings with paddlers experienced enough to grasp the enormity of his project. To sit around a table with people who at least speak the same language of sea kayaking, must be very reassuring when compared to the chance meetings with so many strangers who, despite their good intentions, know nothing of kayaking and just keep asking WHY? or even worse, dismiss his efforts as "madness".

"Still water is only really appreciated when reached through a challenge".

There's a world of adventure out there for Stuart. Self-supported, often solo and never with any fuss or fanfare.

"Imagine...the amazing variety, grandeur and beauty of a thousand astonishing sights; the pleasure of seeing only totally new things...in some sense...finding yourself in a new world" Nouvelle Héloïse, Jean-Jacques Rousseau 1761*

The lonely journey



* In Nouvelle Héloïse, Rousseau tells us to do what is imposed upon us by society only so long as it's consistent with our own ethical framework. It might have been written for Stuart Trueman.



Dear Sir/Madam,

Are NSWSKC members being secretly brainwashed in the Eastern Isles?

Not being a rugby fan, I have nothing against our quaintly spoken brethren in NZ, but I wanted to make you aware of some recent events that have set an alarming tone.

First, it was Gina Hooper running away with a kayaking cult based in the Bay of Islands. Tragically it took her family some two years to extract her from their clutches, seriously depleting the local paddling talent as a result. Gina's in recovery but the odd slaughtered vowel still slips out occasionally.

Concerned, Adrian Clayton infiltrated the annual KASK forum (KASK stands for Kiwi Affected Secret Klan). Adrian's discoveries there about our former President Dave Winkworth were so shocking, he swore me to secrecy, but after much soul searching I feel it's my duty to share.

Exhibit 1: Dave won a trophy for 'most significant contribution' to NZ Sea Canoist, KASK's extremist nudist rag that barely bothers to disguise itself as a kayak magazine. Apparently his 'significant contribution' referred to a part of his anatomy. Such rampant exhibitionism is the sort of thing Kiwis as well as Germans are commonly inclined to do but members of our club should NEVER swing so low. When I rang the High Priest of KASK, Paul Caffyn, to complain he warned me off, telling me, "KASK is now seeking international rights to use Mr Winkworth's body as a marketing tool".

Letter to the EDITOR

photo) competition, including a gorgeous Kiwi whitewater paddle who was wearing only a helmet and a lifejacket, and questions are now being asked by Kiwi paddlers as to if he bats for the 'other side'.

Addressing these concerns will be a top priority for the incoming President.

Yours, A proud Ozzie Mirage paddler



Editor's update:
In an unexpected development, our spy appears to have gone double agent. We received the following blackmail attempt.

"Because you are known to be a man who loves a scoop, I'm favouring you the first opportunity to buy these hot NZ pics. Just think of what they'll do to your circulation figures and ad revenue potential. I reckon \$100,000 is a bargain (and I'll even throw in some steak knives). If you don't want to take up the offer there are others who would be very eager to have them (Flotsam, Gnarly Dog, Fat Paddler – the list is endless). Dave himself would probably offer that just to prevent them being published. Payment by month's end and they're yours"

Regards, Adrian Clayton"

Salt's policy is never to bow to terrorist threats and so I've published and be damned. See you in court, Clayton.

By Mark Pearson

Judgement Day

Another gust of wind chilled my face. My forward speed stalled as the wind and swell combined for a few seconds. But this was just wrap around stuff, the real westerly - the one that had blown all night – was waiting around the corner. As we closed on the lighthouse high above an impressive headland I could see the lumpiness of the ocean on the horizon to the south east. The big right turn into relentless wind and a really developed sea was now only minutes away. 13 kilometres of south facing cliffline awaited. Cliffs that would energetically repel the powerful western bass strait swells back across very large wind waves. Air temperature was around 10C, with the wind chill meaning it felt not much above zero.

I looked left and right to my companions. Were they having any doubts about this? Couldn't they see the brutal evidence before them? Were they blind – was I paddling with three Mr Magoos, blissfully ignorant of what they were heading into? But I didn't think so. The three men were obviously in 'weather denial' as evidence mounted that the much cherished plan was not going to work. They plodded on into the increasingly hostile conditions.

As I chew on making what would be a very BIG decision, my mind wanders back in time to try and understand how the hell, despite all my warnings, a sensible paddler like me had got into such a terrible position.

PLANNING

It was coming up to the 'Chaos' time of year, but then came news that Laurie Geoghegan, the 'brains' behind the annual event, had decided, along with his acolytes Richard Styles and Stuart Trueman, on a north west Tasmania trip with only a week to play with. My friend Paul Loker rang me to discuss Laurie's plan. "Mate," said Paul, "that sounds a bit dodgy, so how about we do Wilson Prom - better weather and not so far to travel!"

Now I had been meaning to paddle the 'Prom' for at least fifteen years, so I signed up without thinking. The world class Harry Hava then came aboard, then Rob Richmond, an experienced kayaker who I had met only briefly some years ago, who like Paul had also



Momentary relief in Refuge Cove

semi-retired to the NSW south coast. Rob's professional occupation was interesting and I looked forward to discussing it. Rob 'did' bulls. That is, he is an expert at extracting the valuable semen from huge stud animals. Respect.

Paul also had come up with a plan. We would start at Yannake, paddle east out of Corner Inlet, turn south down the Prom's east coast, then turn west around the rugged southern headland to our destination of Tidal River. Paul added that "this would give us a more interesting finish than going the other way". In my ignorance I thought this all sounded fine, not realising at the time that it's not common at all to go east-west around this striking peninsular that thrusts 60km into Bass Strait.

We agreed on the second week in October. I asked old salt and multi Bass Strait crosser Mike Snood if he would like to join us, but he politely declined while also adding that we had rocks in our heads in doing this particular trip so early in Spring.

So with this warning in mind I began to monitor the weather at the Prom. It was indeed volatile and more like a Tasmanian climate with an average temperature of 15C in October. On 12 September I emailed Harry, the only other 'worker' in the group, about his flexibility if

weather was looking bad. I said I could take any week off, and was happy to delay the trip a month for better conditions. Harry said he could move the week if need be but was confident our week would be OK. Harry said he expected it to be typical Victoria - when the wind blows from the north it's warm, when from the south west it's freezing.

In the two weeks leading up to departure I took an even more forensic interest in the weather of Wilson's Promontory. A website called Accuweather gave a 14 day forecast for nearby Port Welshpool. Even 10 days out, the forecast was for our trip period to be days of 11 and 12C, with regular rain. I didn't like this at all - and when I looked at the swell forecast I liked it less - a five metre swell forecast for western Victoria slap bang in the middle of the expedition. Knowing that the others would be oblivious to this intelligence on 2 October I emailed them. Tellingly, only Paul responded – he remained optimistic, saying that these forecasts 'always exaggerated', and that "it would all be fine."

So I resigned myself to the week chosen by Paul Loker and tacitly supported by Harry and Rob. However, on October 4 as I gloomily prepared for the trip, there was a late ray of hope.

Harry emailed to say he was struggling with a sore throat and was doubtful. I encouraged him to pull out, but unfortunately, showing the toughness exhibited by his Finnish forebears in the 1939 war against Russia, he said he would be OK. A raspy voiced Harry arrived at my place on Friday night with a throat so sore it required almost constant gargling with my red wine.

SATURDAY 6TH OCTOBER – THE DRIVE SOUTH

We set off from Canberra at 8am in cool grey skies. Paul and Rob left from the NSW south coast at about the same time. After 20 minutes of polite conversation Harry and I realised we had absolutely nothing in common so I suggested we put on Barack Obama's talking book "Dreams from my Father." As we listened to the President's silky voice I realised that this was my first experience listening to a 'talking book' and it proved to be an interesting way to pass the kilometres. I thought about Rob in the other car. Rob probably didn't have a talking book, but he did have the next best thing in Paul Loker.

After lunch in Cooma, I took my turn at driving Harry's X Trail diesel. After getting used to the different power curve, I spotted the trip computer and became fascinated by the instantaneous read out of fuel consumption. Two hours later, by using advanced techniques such as changing gear on hills (scorned by Harry), the fuel consumption came down to 6.5L/100km, totally smashing Harry's rather ordinary 6.6L/100km. Harry didn't take this well, protesting strongly that I had had the benefit of 'driving downhill' from Cooma to Lakes Entrance. After this unpleasant disagreement we resorted to the 4th CD of Dreams of my Father.

We arrived at Yannake to meet Paul and Rob and found someone sleeping in our cabin. It was the Victorian Sea Kayak Club's ghastly version of Goldilocks – one Greg Murray. Murray, a tough sea paddler we had all known for several years, has a hobby of making visiting NSW paddlers feel inadequate by completing their entire expedition route in one day. For this reason alone he had driven through the night from Melbourne to paddle the 80 kms from Tidal River to Yannake, starting at 3.30 in the morning. So although

Greg was about as welcome in our cabin as a fart in a spacesuit, he did say one thing that stuck with me – at this time of year he always wore a wetsuit when paddling. Always. None of us NSW greenhorns had one.

Paul then produced a chart and we

reviewed the trip route and possible camp spots. We discussed the plan and the forecast. It was looking like Wednesday would be the rest day as we waited for the 'big front' to pass through.

While this conversation went on and on, I observed the cabin Paul had booked was of the 'basic' variety. This meant a 'living area' of about 6 square metres with a double bed at one end, and a tiny room with two double bunk beds at the other. All in all it had the look and feel of a large Bulgarian prison cell, except that it had no toilet bucket in the corner. As I sipped on my red wine I did a quick analysis of the four men that fate would have me share this sleeping area with. Harry had a bad cold and was nasal, Greg looked like a corpse after his 80km paddle, Rob looked he could be a black belt in sleep apnoea, and Paul probably talked even in his sleep. Within seconds I had made my decision. Tonight, one night earlier than planned, would be my first in my new Big Agnes one-man tent!

SUNDAY 7TH OCTOBER DAY 1 – YANAKEE TO FIVE MILE

A mild south westerly greeted us as the group emerged from tent and cabin. We had planned to get away by 8am latest to avoid a nasty tide change as we crossed 15km wide but relatively shallow Corner Inlet. But as we jumped in the boats proud of the fact we were on schedule, the ever unhelpful Greg pointed out that daylight saving had started overnight and it was now already 9am. We paddled off frantically, all of us thinking that the first chink in Paul's leadership skills had been revealed even before we hit the water.

An hour later we were making good progress but I was already unhappy. In the early planning for the trip Paul had promised to invite a 'slow paddler' along, in recognition of my strong dislike of being Tail End Charlie. I had assumed this would be Rob, but the man was built like the animals he pleased, and he was pushing his big Mirage 580 along at a fair clip. In desperation I put up my sail and caught up but I knew this was not the solution.

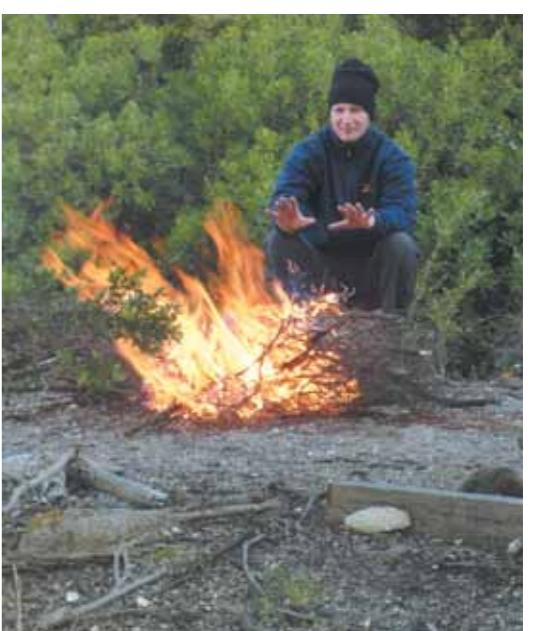
We emerged from Corner Inlet and I got my first sight of the Prom's east coast stretching south as far as you could see. Here the result of the fires of 2009 was evident with thousands of blackened trees rising up

behind the beach. The south westerly now gusted almost as a headwind, sometimes with squally rain that shocked me with its chill. Felt just like Canberra rain in July. Even worse Rob was showing no sign of tiring and my position as Tail End Charlie in this group was officially confirmed. Two hours later, with the scenery improving all the way, we turned west to the camp at Five Mile beach. The last two kilometres were into a persistent westerly and choppy sea, and the landing in the picturesque creek entrance actually involved surf.

Camping at Five Mile was pleasant despite some light showers. I had purchased a down jacket, some decent woollen thermals and a new beanie that felt great in the cold. We knew that the Victorian National Parks bureaucrats, presumably because of the 2009 fires, had applied a total permanent fire ban to the Prom. Yes, some genius had come up with an all year fire ban despite the Prom being a cold and wet place for 9 months of the year. Anyhow we had brought an assortment of LED lights and by clustering them together we witnessed a miracle – our virtual fire seemed to be generating a fair bit of virtual heat and smoke!

MONDAY 8TH OCTOBER – FIVE MILE TO SEALERS COVE.

Cool and cloudy weather couldn't obscure the fact that the scenery was mighty impressive as we cruised down the 14 kms to Sealers Cove. To me, the Prom was just a piece of Tassie that somehow floated away



Harry's best 'virtual fire'

and attached itself to the underwhelming coast of Victoria. At Sealers Cove we found a great spot at the northern end of the beach. While my companions engaged in meaningless conversation as they huddled around a roaring virtual fire, I picked up the local general weather forecast. The forecast for Melbourne for Thursday, which according to 'the plan' was our chosen day to round the peninsular, was 13C with severe hail. I broke the dramatic news to the group, and this at last seemed to shake off their mental sloth. At last I had their attention.

Harry then used his smart phone to get a detailed marine forecast, and it was even worse than anticipated. Thursday would bring an intense low pressure system with 30 knot winds and 4 metre swells on the west side of the Prom. Meanwhile Wednesday's forecast hadn't changed much – a decent front bringing an increasing westerly throughout the morning which would then drop off in the afternoon. It was clear that the great plan, with its rest day on Wednesday and a triumphant attempt to round the peninsular on Thursday, was in tatters.

We held a team meeting. Paul came up with the bright idea that we attempt the peninsular at dawn on Wednesday which would give us a chance of "beating the wind". Paul added optimistically that there might be "a few bumps" but that "it wouldn't be too bad". We could then perhaps camp Wednesday at Oberon beach only 5kms from Tidal River. Harry cautioned that this might not be wise if Thursday's swell was indeed of the several metre high variety. So it was looking very possible we would finish at Tidal River on the Wednesday.

As I watched my companions high five each other with the cleverness of the 'beat the wind' plan, I noticed, as I had in the past with men like these, the prospect of finishing the trip early was not unwelcome. In fact my companions saw many positives in this debacle! Harry could be back in Sydney with Dee by Thursday! Paul could be back to Leonie, Rob back with his roses and the kinky Judy etc etc.

But this did not please me. To emphasise my displeasure I decided to give these three men, who I had assessed as barely numerate, a maths lesson. Slowly, I explained I had 20 work days of holiday each year. Five of these precious days were invested in this trip. If we finished on Wednesday I was missing two days leave, or fully 10% of my annual leave, against the wall. And as I couldn't just go home (I had arranged to meet my partner

Kerrie in Melbourne on the Saturday) there were no good things about finishing the trip after four days for me.

And this is the point where I began to really resent the wilful deafness that had greeted my warnings over the past month. Thanks to this obstinate group of weather denialists, it looked like we had driven nine hours for a four-day trip in ongoing cold cloudy showery weather, with the last day's paddle likely to be dangerous and at the very least an ordeal of some magnitude. I now felt justified in officially adapting a jaundiced view of the trip and the paddlers who had organised it.

TUESDAY 9TH OCTOBER – SEALERS COVE TO LITTLE WATERLOO BAY

Heading south again we stopped at the beautiful Refuge Cove, which looked great during a rare spell where the sun actually came out. Then on to our target of Waterloo Bay, the launch pad for the next morning's 'beat the wind' plan. A kilometre later there was a gap between a small headland and a rock. I considered going through the gap but then noticed the occasional powerful swell was sweeping across it, then peaking up alarmingly and changing direction at peak height. I noticed Paul going through. As I passed the outside of the rock a larger set went under me and I turned around to see Paul in difficulty on the peaking swell and then capsizing as he was hurled sideways. Due to the rapid lateral movement there was no roll and Harry, who was behind Paul, calmly came up and executed an excellent assisted rescue in the danger zone.

Now this was the first time I had ever seen the very competent Mr Loker being rescued and it made me think. And worry. These Bass Strait swells weren't huge, but what was obvious was that they had more weight and grunt than an equivalent sized swell in NSW. We pushed on.

Some time later, Paul, Harry and Rob landed at a beach on Waterloo Bay. Rob got wet trying to get out in what was a powerful shore dump. I bobbed around for a few minutes while the trio wandered about looking for what I assumed would be a camp. After a confusingly brief hand signal from Paul Loker I then landed only to get into trouble for misreading his directive, which apparently was meant to convey the message "I f*cked up this is the wrong beach there is no camp site here." I then got smashed by a side-swiping shore dump as I attempted egress, and had a brief swim in the refreshing water. Even Harry lost his cool in the chaos. All in all it was bad end to the day.



The author: beached and jaundiced

That night at Little Waterloo Bay we clustered hypothermically around yet another life saving virtual fire. My companions seemed to be relaxed and confident about what lay ahead in the morning. I was searching for some personal optimism but wasn't finding it.

Sensing a lull in the conversation, I again suggested that we should have delayed the trip until November. And then, in a pivotal moment for the entire expedition, the truth finally came out. Paul said he would have been 'too busy' in November. He had several multi-day cycling tours lined up, not to mention a commitment to help with Leonie's furtive 'horse whispering' activities. I realised with some dismay that Paul's steadfast refusal to move from the second week in October, despite the ominous weather forecasts, was simply because any change would have disrupted his meticulously planned leisure calendar!

With these revelations I then realised something. I was heartily sick of these bloody retirees and their self-induced busyness. The constant listing of their plans and activities - their Monday bike rides, Tuesday lake paddles, the double yoga on Wednesdays, the renovation projects, the gardening, the camp-trailers, the going to India next month. Enough!! I decided there and then to never join this tedious tribe and their concocted lifestyles. I would work, five days a week, until I died.

That night, while my companions snored mindlessly, I lay in my tent thinking, listening and looking. High above our camp, on a ridge exposed to the west, the very same west we were

going to take on in the morning, the trees were swaying in the wind. I woke up several times throughout the night, the trees were still swaying and stronger gusts even found their way down our creek bed camp. 'Beat the wind' was doomed and I knew it. My morale sank to record breaking lows.

WEDNESDAY 10TH OCTOBER – LITTLE WATERLOO BAY TO 700 METRES FROM WILSONS PROM LIGHTHOUSE

And so it is 9am and we are 700 metres from the most southerly point of the Australian mainland. I'm expecting sanity to prevail any moment with a group meeting and a decision to go back. But it isn't happening. My brain is active, as you would expect a brain to be when faced by a clear and present danger. I compile the facts and the risks, and it is quite a list. Beat the Wind plan f*cked - tick. Poor weather forecast - tick. Westerly wind over 20 knots all night so a developed sea - tick. Conditions already worse than expected - tick. 13 kilometres of cliffline ahead - tick. Powerful swells and horrible rebound - tick. Slowest paddler - tick. F*cking freezing - tick. 13C ocean - tick. No wetsuits - tick. Totally pissed off - tick.

I sounded out Rob, hoping that this would give him the chance to voice any inner concerns he might have on actually executing this plan. But no, he said, in his understated way, he was happy to 'give it a go'. But I knew from long experience that once we hit the conditions around that corner, things would pan out a certain way. There would be unavoidable group spread. There would be difficult communication in that wind and sea state. There would be hours of tough paddling and fatigue would be a factor. And it was cold above and below.

And that all this could lead to consequences. That if anybody got into trouble they might not be seen to be in trouble for some time. That if there was a capsize and a lengthy rescue process under those cliffs it was a hypothermia situation. The visions of helicopters and winches weren't unreasonable. We had pushed our luck so many times in the past. Maybe not this time.

So, as my internal voice screamed 'F*ck this' for the 20th time, my decision was made. As we sheltered momentarily behind a small headland, solemnly and apologetically I told the trio I was turning back. Harry and Paul tried to persuade me but they could see in my eyes it was already a lost cause. And with that

I turned the kayak and ran with the wind while the three others mulled on a possible Plan B which might have got them to their cherished destination of Tidal River.

As I sped away I experienced a range of emotions. An initial feeling of guilt was very quickly overwhelmed by one of relief. And then of triumph. I had finally broken free from the twin evils of optimism and denial. It was brilliant to at last take control of the trip, to no longer be the victim. I smiled as I imagined the miserable faces on the trio behind me, their dreams of rounding the Prom shattered. And then, like a madman, I laughed out loud.

We rendezvoused at Refuge Cove. There was a strained atmosphere and little chat but we agreed to head for the camp at Jonny Sui beach to the north. As we pushed out of Refuge I put my sail up and pulled away. The thought that my companions would not like this made my extra speed even more enjoyable.

But time heals everything. Three hours later we arrived at Johnny Sui. The sun came out and it actually felt warm as the temperature hit 13C. We set up camp. Rob went fishing and caught fish. Paul and I did some stretching. Harry built a huge virtual fire. We were back as a group. Life was good again.

That night we ate Rob's excellent fish and got slightly drunk on our final rations of red wine. We discussed the day. At one stage Harry mumbled that I may have made the right call. But Paul stuck to his guns, clinging to the belief that "it wouldn't have been too bad." Conscious that I had delayed my companions from the comforting loins of their women for at least 24 hours, I offered to buy everyone lunch in Foster. And then the still of the night abruptly ended as a strong north wind kicked in. A very cold north wind. In Victoria! Harry was wrong again. The much-hyped intense low had arrived, its vigorous clockwise rotation bringing the northerly. We retired to our tents.

We woke up at dawn to a solid 20 knot easterly and a decent sea. More freezing paddling as we headed north, the waves threatening enough to force us to regularly change direction and paddle hundreds of metres from shore, the black and scary low pressure system clearly visible ahead of us. We watched the huge dark cloud in awe as dozens of lightning flashes lit it up. It was snowing just east of Melbourne in what I was to learn was the coldest October day in 40 years. And then the final fifteen kms across Corner Inlet in washing machine conditions as that arctic wind fizzed across the shallow inlet. My hard chined kayak was in its element and I was pleased to see that in these testing

conditions I at last wasn't the slowest paddler. But after the excitement of the crossing, on arrival I had a strong suspicion I had mild hypothermia.

Rob and Harry retrieved Rob's car from Tidal river, returning with the news that the BOM forecast was rubbish and that the western coast of the Prom was flat calm. We had long hot showers and Rob and I spent a few extra minutes enjoying a shave and the feeling of looking civilised again. Arriving in Foster for lunch the guys went easy on me and the cost to my wallet for my outburst of common sense was only \$65. As we shook hands to say goodbye, I felt a touch of sadness as I realised I would never paddle with these men again.

As their cars drove away I sent to a text to the very wise Mike Snoad asking him to email me the weather observations for the week and the detailed observations for Wilson Promontory lighthouse on the morning of Wednesday 10th October. The general observations showed that over the last five days, the week that suited Paul Loker had been colder than even NW Tasmania's miserable Cape Grim.

As I bring this account to a close, I believe I could sum up my experience of the Wilsons Promontory expedition of October 2012 in just a few words. Analysis. Warning. Optimism. Deafness. Denial. Cold. Judgment.

And to this list I'd like to finish with one more important word. Facts. ■

Wilsons Promontory Lighthouse Observations – Wednesday 10th October.

| Time | Temp | Direction | Speed (knots) | Gust (knots) |
|---------|------|-----------|---------------|--------------|
| 10:30am | 11.1 | WSW | 19 | 26 |
| 10:00am | 11.0 | WSW | 28 | 31 |
| 09:30am | 10.9 | WSW | 28 | 32 |
| 09:00am | 10.6 | WSW | 30 | 33 |
| 08:30am | 10.4 | SW | 27 | 35 |
| 08:00am | 10.3 | SW | 24 | 30 |
| 07:39am | 9.6 | SW | 30 | 34 |

Footnote: A PhotoStory of this disastrous trip (with a brilliant soundtrack) can be seen at tinyurl.com/pearsonjudgement

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Membership is offered yearly. Please see the website for details and application. To contact the club, please email:

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



Lisa McCarthy plays with the wildlife off South Head. Thought to be a Long-beaked common dolphin, one of a pod diving on a 4m bait ball of Yellowtail.
Photo by Adrian Clayton



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