

Graham Egarr  
50 Tahiti Street  
MAPUA

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PADDLES AROUND THE KAPITI REGION

Bob McKerrrow

The paddle from Paraparaumu around Kapiti Island and back to Paraparaumu is an easy six-hour paddle in reasonable conditions, a distance of approximately 33km. The island is a birdlife sanctuary and permission for landing needs to be obtained. The south-western corner of Kapiti is the most beautiful part of the island with its rocky outcrops and spectacular archways that can be paddled through. Make sure that you have a copy of Chart NZ4631 and work out the direction of the tidal stream in the Rauoterangi Channel, which can be up to 2 knots in certain conditions.

Kapiti Island was the home of the great chief Te Rauparaha for many years and it was from Kapiti that he embarked upon many of his canoe voyages to the South Island. After reading accounts of Te Rauparaha's numerous canoe voyages south, I decided to repeat one of these - from Paraparaumu, Kapiti to the South Island.

On December 10 1988, after phone calls to the Met Office the previous evening and to the Bakers at Cape Jackson earlier in the morning, I left from the south of Paraparaumu, solo, at 9.45am. Conditions were perfect and I paddled to the southern end of Kapiti and headed on a bearing of 222 degrees Compass for Cape Koamaru.

For the first three hours in brilliant conditions I was in a world of my own as Raumati, Paekakariki, Pukerua Bay and Mana Island slipped by on my port side. I was going with the south ebb tide through the strait and was hoping to be off the Brothers/Cape Koamaru around 5pm, at which stage the tide would be flooding north and would, hopefully, take me towards Cape Jackson. Around 4pm I was 2km north-east of the Brothers Islands and I seemed to be pinned to that spot for at least half an hour by the strong local rip. As I neared Cape Koamaru a strong north-easterly sprung up, gusting to 25 knots with willi-waws. At 5.30pm the tide was still ebbing south despite the fact that the tide table book showed that it should have been going north. However I recalled the words of my old mentor, Turi Elkington, who lived on D'Urville Island for 40 years and who knew the Cook Strait area very well, "Sometimes the tide through Cook Strait can continue one way for up to 12 hours, and even 18 hours." I had obviously struck one of these rare occasions.

For three hours I battled against the tidal stream from Cape Koamaru towards Cape Jackson with a gusty north-easterly and one metre swells crashing onto my deck. At 8.05pm, 10 hours 15 minutes after leaving Paraparaumu, I arrived at Cape Jackson to be met by David Baker on his farm bike. This was my third crossing of Cook Strait in 1988 and definitely my hardest.

As I arrived at David's parents home, Betty and Tony greeted me with a warm welcome and instructions to have a shower, a meal and a beer. Tony and Betty have lived at Cape Jackson for around 25 years and were recently awarded the QSO for services to mariners. I had phoned Betty that morning and said that if I did not arrive at Cape Jackson by 8.30pm something would have gone amiss. I also carried an EPIRB (Emergency Position Indicator Radio Beacon), flares and plenty of emergency food and equipment.

On February 9 1989 I kayaked one of the remaining stretches of the Kapiti

coastline I had yet to paddle, from Hokio Beach (near Levin) to Kapiti Island. This 42km stretch took us seven and a half hours, including a stop at the Otaki River mouth, and two hours battling against the strong tidal flow in Rauoterangi Channel between Kurukohatu Point and Rangatiā Point.

In early March I also did another enjoyable solo trip from Raumati to Mana Island (3 hours) where I spent an enjoyable day exploring the island and kayaking around the various off-shore pinnacles and rocky outcrops. The next day I paddled back to Paekakariki via Pukerua Bay.

For anyone contemplating paddling in the Kapiti Coast/Cook Strait/Marlborough Sounds area, get hold of the Mana Cruising Club guide 'Cape Palliser to Marlborough Sounds and Tasman Bay'. I have also compiled a lot of notes, particularly relevant to paddlers, which I am very happy to share with anyone.

Bob McKerrow can be contacted at 'Adventure Magazine' Phone (09)371-469 or PO Box 8900 Symonds Street, AUCKLAND.

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PEOPLE IN THE NEWS: Recently returned from a trip to North America and the Vancouver area, Bevan Walker and Nora Flight dropped by home to fill me in on the details. It seems they did a lot of paddling along the Pacific Coast using borrowed kayaks. We will have to have a story sometime, perhaps a slide evening at the forum. One thing Bevan did bring back was a parafoil kite for kayak sailing. Bevan recounted an occasion when a number of kayaks rafted up and the kite pulled them along at a fast clip. A demonstration is obviously called for!

Welcome home also to Rick Hellriegel and Jim Napelka - both were at the Sea Kayak Forum last February. Rick has been getting this newsletter since it started, but never received the last few issues as he was floating around off the East Coast of the North Island with Jim Napelka and two others aboard a capsized trimaran. I am afraid that I had given up on these fellows some time ago, but the radio news of their arrival on Great Barrier Island was a very emotional moment. I guess there is a fair bit of catching up to do.

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COASTAL GUIDE BOOKS: 'Boating-New Zealand' magazine published, last year, a small booklet titled North Island - A Coastal Guide which was prepared by the Ministry of Transport. The guide contains sketch maps of the coastline and notes for boat owners - details such as launching ramps, areas of danger, and currents. To most boat owners this booklet provides no more than the New Zealand Pilot and is much inferior. For example, Opunake (a small coastal area much used by small craft in South Taranaki) is described thus:

...Opunake Beach is unsuitable for boating at all times. There is no coastal shelter and west to outhwest winds which prevail are unsuitable for boating. The southerly drift is strong at times... Launching & Retrieving facilities: Middletons Bay: Concrete ramp. All tides. Only usable in good weather. Beware of Danger Rock off the launch ramp...

Overall, this comment is contradictory and not much help. I would have thought that a book designed with the small boat owner in mind would have added details that the New Zealand Pilot does not, given that the Pilot was written for shipping rather than small boats. I would have also thought that tidal differences for launching ramps would have been one piece of information of

vital interest for the small boat owner - but this is omitted.

I am told that the South Island volume is soon to be published. However, it seems to me that this book is hardly of any interest at all to those for whom it was written, so don't waste your money. It certainly is of very limited interest to sea kayak paddlers.

Recently I was shown a draft of a series of coastal guides being prepared by a private company. The proposal is to publish a series of coastal guides covering the entire country. The guide will use Topo maps from the Department of Survey & Land Information (formerly Department of Lands and Survey). These maps will have information such as water depths added from nautical charts and there will be a text describing dangers and local conditions. If this series is anything like the draft I was shown, then these books will be worth waiting for. The company requires corporate sponsorship to enable the guides to be published at a reasonable price but that sponsorship has yet to be obtained. I will let you know more details as they come to hand.

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1990 SEA KAYAK FORUM: This is to be held in Mapua, Nelson over the weekend 31 March/ 1 April 1990. The main theme will be kayak navigation and will include, weather allowing, a night paddle along the Abel Tasman National Park coast. Also at the forum will be Bevan Walker with his kayak sailing rig. A leaflet is enclosed. In order to gauge interest, those who would like to attend are requested to complete the form and return as soon as possible. Please give details of any other subject you would like covered so that we can include it in the programme. Last year we included catering for lunch and evening meal in the cost of the forum, this year we will provide lunches, but not the evening meal, so costs have been reduced accordingly.

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SUBSCRIPTIONS: I am afraid that it is that time of year again for most of you. Subscriptions for the next year, of eight issues, are now due. \$6.00. This works out at \$0.75 per issue. A subscription form is enclosed for those whose subscription is now owing.

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Increasing interest in and use of Banks Peninsula waters is being made by sea kayakers and other canoeists. The importance of this coastline is being recognised in the setting up of a group by the Lyttelton Harbour Board called 'The Public Interests Committee' whose task it is to assist with the Local Government reorganisation. The Lyttelton Harbour Board is being replaced by the Banks Peninsula District Council, and some members of the Board have been concerned that the maritime interests of the public may not be sufficiently recognised by the new body.

How does this affect kayakers?

If you feel that insufficient concern is being, or has been shown to the interests of environmentally acceptable users such as ourselves, it might be wise for kayakers to look for the opportunity to be represented. While these comments refer to Banks Peninsula, it may well apply to other Harbour Board areas.