

THE SEA CANOEIST NEWSLETTER

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As I sit writing this newsletter Paul Caffyn has completed his Alaskan trip two days ago. I received three reports of the trip from Nome to Inuvik this summer (Northern summer) but the trip seemed to go so fast that it was all over between newsletters. Paul left Nome on June 2 but was unable to paddle for more than a few days because the ice had not retreated sufficiently to allow even a kayak passage. Paul returned to Nome but was able to set off again on June 18. The temperatures for the whole trip were lower than expected and the summer ice break-up much later than normal. Point Hope was reached on July 5. Food dumps were some 10 days apart but these each had sufficient for 17 days or more as there were days when Paul had to sit tight waiting for ice passages to open. So with a heavier than usual kayak (the extra food) and with more than his share of head winds, progress was slow for the first month or so.

The major open-water crossing, from Shishmaref to Kotzebue came early in the trip.

Highlights of the trip were a stop at Herschel Island, meeting musk-oxen and being charged by a herd of caribou.

The trip ended with a paddle up the Mackenzie River against a swift current.

The trip this summer covered 2415km which took 73 days - 10 of which were lost waiting for ice to clear, 7 when weather conditions kept him ashore, and one rest day. Paul averaged 43km per day for the 55 days spent paddling. This speed is much slower than some of the earlier expeditions, indicating that conditions were much more difficult.

This expedition must now place Paul, without doubt, at the top

of world sea kayaking, and indicates that the Nordkapp kayak, and techniques developed here in New Zealand (and in particular, Nelson) are the most appropriate for this type of expedition.

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The Marlborough Sounds Adventure Co, renting sea kayaks and running guided trips in the Sounds, has recently been sold to Bruce Maunsell and his partner Melanie Barton. Bruce and Melanie had been running a charter yacht business in Turkey, but felt the need to return to New Zealand. The company will now be based in Picton.

Bruce and Melanie have re-equipped the company with Southern Light double kayaks for the summer.

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KAYAK BUILDING

Sandy Fergusson recently started a ply-wood sea kayak building group in Christchurch. The boats are a stretched version of the two boats that Sandy had built for himself previously.

This particular design originated in the UK but, over the years the half-dozen or so boats that Sandy and others have built, and the fact that Sandy lost the original drawings, means that the original boat has evolved into a boat which is particularly suited for NZ conditions. At the last two sea kayak forums in Nelson, Sandy was often to be seen looking over my own kayak and, apparently my rather rude comments about clipper bows on sea kayaks have caused Sandy to alter the design to a spoon-bow - much more suitable!

The design is now 5.4m in length and 600mm beam. The biggest variation in the current batch will be in the detail of

cockpit construction - either you go for quick and cheap using plastic hose, or you take a bit of time and effort and laminate the rim up from ply off-cuts.

Sandy has made comments about the possibility of making up a jig and cutting out kitsets that would retail at a reasonable price. The current batch of boats will come out at around \$350 ready for the sea, so even if you added labour costs, you could get a kayak at 50% the cost of a comparable glass boat. As far as labour goes, Sandy's estimate of about two months of 2-3 evenings per week will be about right.

The performance difference between these craft and, say, a Nordkapp is not sufficient to worry most paddlers except those planning expeditions and/or heavy surf landings. Plywood has the potential to get more paddlers into the sport at an affordable price.

I should imagine that if you harass Sandy enough, he will eventually produce kitsets and/or plans for his boat.

You can contact Sandy at 12 Dunn Street, Christchurch.

Refer to issue #29 when we discussed wooden kayaks.

Russel Ginn and friends in Wellington have for many years been paddling wooden kayaks of a variety of designs. In a letter recently Russel pointed out the virtues of a modified dory type of hull shape - a narrow flat bottom with flaring sides and maybe an additional chine. Such boats are easy to build, have good tracking, stability and load carrying ability. Construction can be either tape & epoxy (stitch & glue) or the traditional chine battens at the floor/side and chine joins. A slightly rockered bottom will stiffen the floor panel and the

sides can be built up from that - that is, elaborate jigs for frames are not needed. The floor panel allows the boat to be car-topped, trolleyed, and dragged along the beach without excessive chafe and wear. A minimum base width at the midsection of 300mm seems desirable to provide sufficient initial stability. On a short hull some pounding can occur in choppy conditions, but this same criticism can also apply to glass and plastic hull shapes.

The currently popular 3-bulkhead arrangement can be built into these boats but with the advantage that the flat floor allows the seat to be free-standing and adjustable.

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Also in issue #29 of this newsletter I discussed the concept of the minimalist approach to sea kayaking. It was not long after having written that, that I was in Australia and happened to wander into a climbing/outdoor equipment shop (what my wife refers to as adult toy shops). Sitting on the shelf was the very object to gladden the heart of a sea kayak minimalist. It was a stove with the glorious title of a 'Simon Stove' - 'Simon' as in Simple Simon I assume.

The 'Simon Stove' is about the size of your average coffee mug and has no moving parts, nor uses pressurised fuel - therefore not only is this stove small and light, able to fit through any hatch, or even in your pocket, it is also most unlikely to break-down. It runs on Methylated spirit and will boil a half-litre of tap water in around 4 minutes from light-up. It is finished in a high polish - it wouldn't look out of place on the dinner-table! Price is around \$34 Aus. I have yet to see this stove available in New Zealand.

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Russel Ginn wrote some time ago about problems he had

experienced with lack of fluid replacement on a trip. At the Forum he had an ingenious device for taking a sip while paddling, and it seems that Russel has improved the device still further. The device consists of a wine cask bladder on the cockpit floor with plastic tubes plugged in and leading up through the spray-deck to be sucked on when needed. The recent modifications consist of using a knitting needle as the stopper in the tube (the end being drilled and a lanyard used to avoid loss of the stopper). A foam mat placed under the bladder is now used to stop the fluid temperature dropping to the temperature of the hull/bilge water. Are there better gadgets around? Cyclists have all manner of similar devices - at a cost and without the enjoyment of hours of dreaming up solutions and tinkering with the device until it works.

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SEA KAYAKING IN FRANCE

A report from Vincent Maire

Sea kayakers visiting Europe should consider a trip to Brittany and the 'Association TARIO' in Douarnenez. This is a private organisation run by sea kayaker and author, Bernard Moulin.

Bernard established TARIO in 1987. Primarily it operates as a tourist venture but it also serves as a focal point for sea kayakers in Western France; and area of Europe well suited to sea kayaking.

Douarnenez is a major fishing centre and popular holiday destination. The beautiful coast and surrounding countryside are home to the flourishing Breton culture which is part of the wider Celtic culture. This is Asterix country, complete with Menhirs.

The Baie De Douarnenez stretches out into the Atlantic but is protected from the North by a peninsular, Cap de la Chevre, and from the south by

the Pointe du Raz. The almost semi-encirclement of the Baie provides an ideal environment for exploring the coast by kayak.

Heading west in the direction of the Pointe du Raz, the coast is rocky with high cliffs interspersed with small bays. The Atlantic swells drive into the many headlands making it an exciting and challenging run for the experienced kayaker.

The journey north from Douarnenez is somewhat calmer. The coastline has many beaches separated by rocky outcrops with Celtic names such as Pointe de Trefeuntec, Greve de Ty-an-Quer, and Pointe de Talagrip. One almost expects to be hailed by Obelix himself. This is more than just a sea kayak trip, but a journey along a coastline that has been travelled for many thousands of years. The Romans were here 2000 years ago, the Germans 50, but it is the original Celtic inhabitants who left the most enduring mark and sea kayaking is the best way to follow in their footsteps.

Bernard Moulin recently had a book on sea kayaking published in France - 'Le Kayak et la Mer' - covering design, equipment, navigation, safety, weather, and a chapter on associated sports such as wave-ski and river kayaking.

In addition to sea kayaking, TARIO also offers ski surfing, and canoe polo. It may also be possible to hire river kayaks to explore the many miles of canals and rivers that flow through Brittany. It costs around \$45 to hire a sea kayak for a day, and trips of up to 5 days can be organised providing there is a minimum of 6 people.

Bernard can be contacted at:

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