

THE
SEA CANOEIST
NEWSLETTER

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GREYMOUTH



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Subscriptions to the newsletter now stands at 45, and 25 have indicated they'll be at the forum. That's a pleasing response.

We've also had a good response to the database questionnaire. If there's an area or subject you want to know more about, drop us a line and we'll be able to put you in touch with an expert on almost anything!

We've received a number of trip reports. Unfortunately our resources don't stretch to including them all. So the suggestion is that we print summaries of all reports received and circulate the full report to anyone that asks. Only those reports that are likely to have wide appeal or illustrate an important point would be printed in full. All you need to do then is write every few months and tell me which reports you're interested in. That way we maximise the concentration of information in the newsletter while still reaching those interested in a particular trip. We've tried that approach in this issue, so let's know what you think.

TRIP REPORTS

1. Great Barrier Island

Date: March 1990
Duration: 10 days, 187 miles approx.
Report Details: 5 pages, plus map
Participants: Leigh Hudson, Lawrence Bugbee, Ross McKenzie, Fred Underwood.
Route: Auckland, Coromandel Peninsula, Circumnavigation of Great Barrier Island, Return to Auckland via Waiheke Island.

Notes:

Route modified slightly due to weather conditions but generally trip went as planned. Two "Southern light" doubles were used.

2. Waimate to Timaru

Date: 25 Dec 1991
Duration: 1 day, 47 km.
Report Details: 1 page
Participants: Alan Woods

Notes:

Inaugral trip for a new Arctic Raider.

Pelorus/Kenepura Sound

Date: 3-5 Jan 1992
Duration: 3 days
Report Details: 2 Pages
Participants: Sandy Ferguson, George ?
Route: Havelock, Kenepuru, Goulter Bay,
Broughtons Bay, Havelock.

Queen Charlotte Sound

Date: Jan 1992
Duration: 4 days
Report Details: 1 page
Participants: Shane Bond, Ian Tate, Phil and Maxine
Handford, Alex Lowans and Eric van Toor
Route: Picton to Cape Jackson and return.

BOOK REVIEW

TITLE: The Starship and the Canoe
AUTHOR: Kenneth Brower
PUBLISHER: Harper & Row (paperback)
NZ COST: \$28
AVAILABLE: Topsport, P.O. Box 24-005 Christchurch

This is the story of a father and son, one a astrophysicist, the other a dropout from society, both products of American culture. The father, though born and brought up in England, emigrates to the USA at the start of the "space race" and becomes part of it. His are grandiose ideas, but in their own field, no more so than those of his son. Nuclear powered spaceships lose favour as atmospheric bomb testing becomes antisocial, but his son's ideas are also extreme - to build a 20 metre kayak (baidarka).

The book follows (jumps) between the two as it tells their story and leads to a reconciliation between father and son.

For those with an interest in, who have gone or are going to, the description of part of the trip by the son and the writer from Glacier Bay to Vancouver may be of special interest. It does make it easier to understand the central characters if one has spent some time in USA - preferably California.

There is a description of the building of "Mount Fairweather" and her launching and for a further description of the building of the "Mount Fairweather", plans and history of baidarkas, and some other details of the baidarka used in "The Starship and the Canoe", one should refer to George Dyson's book, "Baidarka".

Sandy Ferguson

ALASKA 1991

On the 13th of August 1991 I completed my tidewater circumnavigation of Alaska. In a cloud of steam and mosquitoes, I sweated my way against the strong current of the Mackenzie River to the township of Inuvik which has the only road access on the Arctic coast of Canada.

It was a long slow haul this year - I anticipated a total of 47 days and ended up knocking up 73 - mainly due to the appalling ice conditions. It started off as a really good year for the ice with a 6th of May break up at Nome but the Canadian Coastguard at Inuvik say it ended up as being once of the worst years for ice in recent times. (The breakup is when the ice pack moves away from the coast. I left Nome on the 2nd of June but hit impenetrable ice within four days. I spent the next four windless and sunny days waiting for a shore lead to open up and also trying to get around the ice pack without success. Waiting for ice to melt is similar to watching grass grow!!! I soon realized that bad weather, that is strong winds and wind generated current is necessary to move the ice pack and not simply nice warm weather.

Ended up going back 60 miles to Nome for more food and arrived back on day 10 feeling pretty frustrated having to backtrack. Kicked out again on the 16th of June and passed through Bering Strait on the 18th before being stopped by the ice yet again. From then on it was a slow, stop-start game of tag with the ice pack. One of the toughest days was a 14 hour crossing of Kotzebue Sound - my route involved a direct 35 mile crossing of the sound which would keep me well clear of the shallows near Kotzebue, however it took me 5 hours to find an open continuous lead through the ice then another 9 hours to reach the north side of the sound. At least with this crossing I was able to paddle the Nordkapp up onto ice floes at speed and step out high and dry for pee stops and and to pull on the immersion suit when conditions deteriorated. Highlights of that early stage were being charged by an old bull musk ox and seeing a herd of over 100,000 caribou on and near the beach.

I reached Barrow on the 17th of July, a grey clammy foggy evening with the ice packed in tight against the beach. I was using the Nordkapp bow as an icebreaker, powering into the floes at speed to force a passage. An old Eskimo chap, walking along the beach, would not believe that I had paddled along the coast that day, the ice was that tight. He reckoned I had launched just around the corner!!! I spent the next three days recuperating at Barrow, staying with Geoff Carroll and Marie Adams. Geoff was a member of the 1986 dog sled expedition to the North Pole. Ever since Geoff has kept a team of dogs and the highlight for me at Barrow was going out on a sled behind his dog team across the tundra.

On the 21st, in fog and diabolical ice conditions I peddled round Point Barrow and passed from the Chukchi Sea into the Beaufort Sea. Ice conditions did improve for the next stage past the massive oil fields of Kuparuk and Prudhoe Bay. My last food dump was at the small Eskimo village of Kaktovik, 350 miles east of Barrow. Back into tightly packed ice floes, I meandered my way eastwards for the Canadian border which I rounded on the 4th of August. I hugged the border monument then took an obligatory self portrait for posterity and buggered off into the Yukon. A reception committee of two musk ox and a brown bear were waiting as I closed on Herschel Island. My tent was knocked flat during the night by a quick moving Arctic front but I was offered a sauna at Pauline Cove the next day by the two Inuvialuit rangers. Fall was setting in with snow building up on my survival suit as another front passed through en route to the Mackenzie delta. In falling sleet and snow, I landed at King Point briefly where Roald Amundsen spent his second winter during the first transit of the NW Passage. I spent the last three days grinding up the McKenzie River to Inuvik, dodging a strong current, mudbanks and mosquitoes. My ribs were sticking out when I landed at the barge dock but quickly put some weight back on with pizza and beers to celebrate.

It is sad to note that Eskimo style kayaks are no longer in use anywhere along the coast of Alaska. The traditional skills of building and paddling skin boats has virtually disappeared. Aluminium runabouts and powerful outboards have totally replaced the old kayaks. However it is pleasing to note that at the villages of Point Hope, Wainwright, Wales and Barrow, the traditional skin covered umiaks are still used for hunting the bowhead whales.

Paul Caffyn