

# THE SEA CANOEIST NEWSLETTER

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## EDITORIAL

I have included an article by John Ramwell, from the International Sea Kayak Association Newsletter, on the Lyme Bay Tragedy. On the south coast of England, four sixth form students from a party of eight with a teacher and two instructors, were drowned. The tragedy ended up in Winchester Crown Court where one of the accused was imprisoned on manslaughter charges for three years.

Since the late 70's we have seen the development of outdoor education classes and courses at primary and secondary schools, and more recently polytechs running outdoor education certificate courses. In addition we have various unemployment schemes or courses that take to the sea to introduce participants to sea kayaking. Finally we have seen the rapid growth of adventure tourism throughout New Zealand with a host of guiding and rental commercial companies.

The Sea Kayak Operators Association (NZ) Inc. is making a con-

certed effort to ensure safe commercial sea kayaking both through the guides assessment courses and the establishment of the SKOANZ code of practice. In May this year, the SKOANZ committee requested a member of the association to resign because of non-adherence to the code of practice. This was in response to a number of written reports and complaints from clients.

However for all those non-commercial people who are taking school or polytech or other groups onto the sea, I feel it is imperative to take note of the ramifications of the Lyme Bay tragedy.

In May 1994, four people were taken to Wellington Hospital suffering from advanced hypothermia after a canoe expedition on the harbour went wrong. Fifteen people, travelling from Petone to Wellington in Canadian canoes, ran into difficulty when the canoes were swamped. The group included 12 unemployed 16 to 25 year olds and three supervisors on a Conservation Corps expedition. A Ngaio resident rang police after seeing five canoes, rafted together, tip over opposite the Ngauranga Gorge entrance. The police launch picked up all 15 soon after, with four suffering from hypothermia, two of whom were unconscious and needed to be resuscitated. The water was cold and the group had been in the sea for about 20 minutes before the launch arrived. According to the Police, the wind was gusting up to 20 knots with conditions on the harbour not very rough and conditions were reasonably safe. The party followed correct safety procedures and had huddled together near the canoes after the capsized. Another

member of the party, travelling separately in a kayak, went for help after the accident.

I have no other information apart from a press release as to rescue equipment, clothing etc., however I would suggest if it had not been for the alert Ngaio resident telephoning police, and a quick rescue by the Police launch, the outcome could have been similar to that of the Lyme Bay tragedy.

In a group situation, even close to shore in Wellington Harbour, sufficient rescue equipment must be carried by the group leader or instructors to enable the authorities to be advised if a situation develops where a rescue is required. Flares, a VHF radio or cellular phone are essential equipment.

In the same International Sea Kayaking Association Newsletter, was a letter from Frank Goodman condemning the court decision to jail the centre's manager. Frank felt that a scapegoat had been made.

Perhaps 20 years ago, the tragedy would have been labelled a tragic accident, but times have changed. In New Zealand if such a tragedy occurred, the person responsible for the decisions made in loss of life could be liable for negligence under the Crimes Act or the Health and Safety Act. Safe sea kayaking is responsible judgemental decision making, decisions about weather, sea conditions, group experience etc. A leader or instructor who takes a group to sea is responsible for their safety, no one else.

At least KASK is now trying to increase awareness of safe sea kayaking practices through the publication of a handbook.

**1995 KASK FORUM**

The following article by Glyn Dickson was received too late for the last N/L.

Wonderful weather and Wellington's Titahi Bay combined to create a great location for the annual KASK Forum over the Easter break. Over 40 paddlers got together to learn, share experiences, look at equipment and make new friends. This year's meeting was made even more enjoyable by the small surf that lasted throughout the holiday weekend. The surf was safe enough to provide an exciting training ground for less experienced paddlers while there were still thrills to put smiles on everyone's faces, including one unnamed paddler who turned up with a very short sea kayak which you sit on top of... Strange creation because rather than having one rudder, it had three skegs and none of them were retractable! The design obviously wasn't very successful because even with the three skegs it was observed to change direction extremely quickly, suggesting it had difficulty maintaining a straight line. When we looked closer, it had 'Made in Australia' stickers, so all was explained.

A major component of KASK Forums is education, this year being no different. Sessions offered during the weekend included: paddle design and techniques; sea kayak photography; safety and rescue equipment; solo and group rescue techniques; Eskimo rolling; fibreglass care and repair; launching, landing and playing in surf; kayak design; medical supplies and treatment; and navigation. These sessions typically consisted of a classroom based lecture followed by practical 'on the water' sessions. Given the depth of experience within KASK's membership, these forums allow up and coming paddlers to be coached by a variety of individuals with backgrounds of expedition paddling, commercial guiding and professional instruction.

Hearing about people's trips is a great way of deciding on new areas to explore. We were treated to a number of slide shows which included an account of circumnavigating a Fijian island, highlights of several seasons guiding in British Columbia's inside passage with great slides of Orca

swimming past kayaks, a slide show of the Operation Raleigh expedition in Alaska, and kayaking from Cape Reinga to the Bay of Islands.

No Forum would be complete without a paddle or two. With a large number of 'out of towners' present the good weather presented an opportunity to explore some of Wellington's excellent coastline. From the sandy beach at Titahi Bay a short paddle either north or south takes you to challenging rock gardens where you can play the game of slalom paddling past the rocks. This is a great way of developing your paddling skills while also learning to judge the swell and waves that run through! Being on the edge of Cook Strait you are aware that this is an area that is seldom calm. The tidal flow combines with waves and wind to create turbulent water conditions. We were lucky enough to strike calm conditions allowing some of us a dawn paddle to Mana Island (a short distance off the coast), then the whole group paddled over on Easter Monday. Our large group was split into four parties with individual leaders to make it easier to keep head counts and paddle safely. While most decided to land and walk around the island via the old lighthouse site, one group kayaked around the island before dashing to the summit for views of Cook Strait and the South Island.

Overall it was an excellent weekend that left everyone buzzing afterwards. With next year's forum to be back in the South Island, a number of suggestions were made that it could take in two days of normal seminar/workshops in Picton, and include an overnight paddle either before or after to put the lessons into practice. I can't recommend it highly enough.

Glyn Dickson.

**BIZARRE KAYAK CROSSING OF COOK STRAIT**

The crossing took seven days, started in Abel Tasman National Park and finished in Port Nicholson, the only equipment taken was a wetsuit but no one went along to wear it.

The coastal township of Marahau and DOC staff are still cleaning up after the Big Flood of 13 March 1995. The storm brought heavy rain and big waves that washed away river banks, tracks, bridges, sand dunes and a double sea kayak. The kayak was plucked

off the beach at Tonga Quarry by a big wave several hours before high tide. The group from Abel Tasman Kayaks looked out of their wet tents just after dawn to see the kayak floating bow up about 50m offshore. There was no chance of getting out through the dumping surf to recover it. A marine VHF radio was used to contact base but sea conditions were too rough for the ferry or water taxi to operate. The bridge just north of the camp site had been washed away with the creek impassable. The remaining kayaks were secured then the group walked south to find shelter in Bark Bay Hut.

A motor boat search next day found nothing so the kayak was considered sunk and lost. Seven days later a call came from the Wellington Police saying their launch had found the front one third of a double kayak floating off the heads at Port Nicholson. The bow compartment of the Southern Light was still intact with the VCP hatch cover still on. Inside was a smelly 'unused' wet suit. Peter Garlick. Marahau.

**KASK HANDBOOK SCOPING DOCUMENT**

Following on from the KASK AGM, Mark Hutson and I drew up a list of topics for inclusion in a KASK Handbook. We need input now as to what topics need inclusion, and a rating of importance.

Following on from this, Peter Sullivan produced an explanatory letter with an accompanying spreadsheet questionnaire listing the topics with columns for rating of importance. This has been sent out to some 38 KASK members, a reasonable cross section of skilled paddlers, some who have indicated an interest in helping with the handbook.

If anyone has not received a copy of the scoping document and wished to have input into the handbook, please drop a line to Peter Sullivan.

Peter has placed a deadline of the end of July for the questionnaire to be returned. He will then make some sense out of it and once we settle on a list of contents, then we will request, plead, delegate, demand, blackmail, various experts to tackle one of two of the topics.

The following article is from the May 1995 Newsletter of the International Sea Kayaking Association. As we in New Zealand are now subject to the Health and Safety Act, I feel that this article has particular relevance for all those instructors, teachers or guides who are taking parties of school children or polytech students sea kayaking.

This Lyme Bay tragedy, described in the following article, ended up in an English court where one of the accused was imprisoned for three years for manslaughter.

### **THE LYME BAY INCIDENT**

Most sea kayakers will have heard about this incident. In case not I will give you a brief resume. This will be followed by some conclusions and then I will explore some implications. Why should I bother to share all this with ISKA members when so much has previously appeared in the canoeing and national media? Because as sea paddlers, you should be aware of one of the major sea kayaking incidents in recent times and certainly you should consider the implications for the sport at large and for you as an individual and or club paddler.

### **WHAT HAPPENED, WHEN AND TO WHOM**

It was March 1993 when a group of sixth form students and a couple of their teachers arrived at the St. Albans Centre in Lyme Regis on the English south coast for a multi activity week.

The kayaking group consisted of two leaders (no qualified instructors), one teacher and eight students. A total of eleven. None of the school members had previous kayaking experience and the two leaders, employees of the Centre, had a British Canoe Union (BCU) One Star Test each; this is a very basic beginners' award and has no standing in terms of leadership qualification.

Before setting out on the sea in Lyme Bay, the kayaking group had some initial training in a heated swimming pool which consisted of a two length swim, some 'water treading' and at least two capsize drills each.

One the day of the incident the group were shown how to don a life-jacket (not a buoyancy jacket) but

were not shown how to inflate these jackets in order to increase their buoyancy value from 70N to 150N.

After some preliminary dry land paddle practice, they set off for a short sea trip from Lyme Regis to Charmouth. The plan was apparently to return and in total we are talking of a distance of 3.2 nautical miles.

The group was told to stay together and at 1015 hours they launched. Within five minutes one of the students capsized and one of the leaders assisted him back into his kayak. Shortly afterwards the teacher capsized and the same leader put him back into this kayak but in he went again and this time the other leader affected a rescue.

While this third rescue was going on, the rest of the group with the second leader started drifting away, assisted by the prevailing wind (no mention of strength but from what I have heard, not very strong). This group then formed into a raft. The time would now be about 1100 hours, i.e., 45 minutes after launching.

At 1130 hours this group was continuing to drift away from shore to lost sight of the other leader and teacher. The waves were getting bigger and without sprayskirts, the kayaks started to take in water. Paddles were lost and difficulty was experienced in keeping the raft together.

An hour later the group were now suffering from cold and sea sickness and one by one the kayaks capsized and were lost until only one student remained upright with those in the water clinging on to this kayak. Soon the student capsized and all clung to the up-turned kayak. Lifejackets were not inflated and attempts to swim towards the shore were aborted as futile. By now it is between 1530 and 1600 hours and advanced hypothermia was getting a hold.

Two students left the group to swim while the remainder (we will now refer to them as casualties) made valiant efforts to help each other. Valiant they may have been, but the efforts did not follow any recommended procedure.

At 1746 hours, a helicopter picked up four casualties and another helicopter picked up one of the swimmers before coming in behind the first heli-

copter to pick up a further three casualties.

This leaves a swimmer and the other leader with the teacher. The leader and teacher were picked up by an Inshore Rescue boat at 1738 hours and the swimmer was picked up by a fishing boat at 1840 hours.

The outcome was four students dead.

The 11 paddlers had the following equipment, all of it in very good condition:

- 8 general purpose white water plastic kayaks
- 3 lower volume general purpose white water plastic kayaks
- 8 aluminium shaft ABS bladed paddles
- 2 buoyancy aids
- 9 BSI 3595 life jackets
- 11 wetsuits
- 2 kayak cagoules\*
- 2 sprayskirts\*
- 1 tow line\*\*
- 1 first aid kit\*\*

\* equipment carried by the leaders  
 \*\* equipment carried by one of the leaders

### **THE CONCLUSIONS**

1. Unqualified and inexperienced leaders was a significant factor
2. The planned trip of 3.2 nautical miles was not suitable for complete beginners
3. Sprayskirts were not available to any of the students and the teacher
4. There was no instruction given on the use of the lifejackets
5. Insufficient safety gear was carried by the leaders, viz
  - tow lines
  - flares
  - repair kit
  - survival bags
  - spare paddles
  - emergency food
  - spare dry clothing
  - hot drinks (or capacity to make something)
6. Waterproof anoraks, head and foot wear should have been worn
7. The kayaks should have been fitted with extra buoyancy
8. There was a failure to use good procedure to conserve heat once in the water together
9. There was no means of communication

### THE IMPLICATIONS

Centre management are ultimately responsible in that they have a duty of care to those who take part in activities whilst under the 'umbrella' of the centre.

In the Lyme Bay Incident the Centre in question failed to devise, institute, enforce and maintain a safe system for the execution of the canoeing activity.

This was demonstrated by:

1. The use of inexperienced leaders
2. Insufficient necessary equipment
3. Lack of adequate supervision of subordinate manager
4. Lack of adequate instruction prior to launching
5. Failure to secure a weather forecast
6. Failure to understand the limitations of novice paddlers in the conditions prevailing.

All the above despite written warnings about lack of safety standards provided by previous employees of the Centre.

The BCU have backed the need for a statutory requirement for Activity Centres to register and conform to nationally agreed guidelines for the conduct of potentially hazardous pursuits.

There is now a need for some damage limitation to allow sea kayaking to continue gaining credibility among potential sea paddlers. Had this incident occurred 20 years ago, it might have set the sport back a century - who knows.

We owe it to future paddlers to ensure that sea kayaking remains safe and controlled as they come to us for instruction and leadership experience.

Only when the sea kayaker feels fully proficient and he/she decides the time is right to do their own thing, should they become responsible for themselves. I do not wish to describe the obvious responsibility we have for each other when paddling as a peer group.

Sea paddlers over the years have ensured that we have approached the sport with maturity and professionalism, assisted by such as HM Coastguard and the BCU Sea Touring Committee with many key individuals playing prominent roles.

Books, videos, symposiums and a coaching scheme have all played their

part in communicating and maintaining standards. The sport has progressed a long way in a relatively short time.

If we are to enjoy the freedom of the seas, we must respect the natural environment and so deserve the pleasures it, in particular sea kayaking, has to offer.

John Ramwell,  
Editor ISKA.

**Note:** there is a difference in terminology with some kayaking equipment between the Great Britain and New Zealand. The one that I had to seek clarification with as a result of John's article was buoyancy aid & lifejacket.

The BSI 3595 lifejacket is an inflatable device with some inherent sponge foam buoyancy, which is worn over around the neck and in front of the chest with supporting straps around the neck and waist. The inherent buoyancy is about 14 pounds, while a manual inflation tube allows an increase of buoyancy to more than 35 pounds. The device is normally worn deflated when paddling and inflated after a capsize. The buoyancy in front of the chest and in the neck yoke will rotate an unconscious paddler to a face up position. It has no thermal insulation for the back or sides of the chest. The sponge foam forming the inherent buoyancy is not closed cell foam and will soak up water if the outer and inner fabrics containing the sponge are ripped or holed.

Buoyancy aids are the the closed cell vests worn by most New Zealand sea kayakers.

### ADVERTISEMENT

#### FOR SALE

Payanca fold-up kayak, 20 kgs  
Single, includes pack & sprayskirt.  
Excellent condition: \$1800  
Contact: Duncan Atkinson  
c/o H.N.Z., Private Bag  
Nelson.  
Ph: 03 5464957 H  
03 5475255 W

### BOAT REVIEW

#### Blue Marlin Sea Kayak

Designed by: Max Grant  
Manufacturer: Quality Kayaks  
Length: 5.4m  
Beam: 0.6m  
Weight: 24kg fibreglass  
22kg kevlar

#### Volume:

front compartment = 55 litres  
cockpit = 170 litres  
centre compartment = 45 litres  
rear compartment = 65 litres  
Total = 336 litres

Price: Fibreglass = \$2,540  
Kevlar = \$2,950

**Designers Statement:** The 'Blue Marlin' has been designed for the hardened sea kayaker who will be using their kayak in all conditions, rough and calm. Its low profile allows it to perform extremely well in windy conditions, while its long hull shape allows it to respond in a following sea to surf virtually any wave. This kayak has three storage compartments which all have a self sealing watertight rubber lid, one of which is just behind the cockpit and can be reached while paddling at sea. It also has a deck rope to which you can attach deck nets, split paddles etc.

### BOAT PERFORMANCE REVIEW

by David Herrington

I have just had a chance to paddle the Blue Marlin, Quality Kayak's newest fibreglass sea kayak. It is a refinement of the last two sea kayaks that Max Grant has produced, similar to the Southern Skua with nice lines, it is very pleasing to the eye especially on the water. The design has three separate storage compartments - two of the medium to small hatch covers have changed shape from round to elongated. There is not the advantage of getting gear in as with the large hatch covers but it is surprising how easy things go through them when they are elongated. Because of the lower deck lines, there is not as much storage room as in some kayaks but ample space for an extended weekend trip

**NEW STIRRUP RESCUE  
TECHNIQUE**

or with some thought and planning, room enough for a week or more paddle. There is a separate hatch immediately behind the cockpit where, with no trouble at all, you can reach into it from the cockpit. This hatch provides you with plenty of room for all the daily needs of a paddler. The deck has been made with set-in deck lines so there are no holes drilled in the hull or deck where water can enter.

I found the Blue Marlin superb to paddle, very responsive to the rudder controls and very manoeuvrable for a sea kayak. I only had to dig in for three or four paddle strokes before there was a bow wave and we were up and moving along smoothly. On the day I paddled there was a moderate swell. We were on a 3.5 hour paddle club paddle to Patea. In the choppy sea from the swell rebounding off the cliffs, the Blue Marlin was very stable yet had plenty of feel to it. There was no wind on the day but as with the Southern Skua, Max has kept the deck level low for minimum deck resistance. The trip didn't provide much chance to try out the Blue Marlin in a following sea. The odd chance there was, with a little increase in paddle power it started to surf well or better than the Skua which I know surfs extremely well and with good control.

At the Patea River mouth where the river flow meets the swell, there was a good opportunity to try it in the breakers. Although surfing has never been a strong point with me, I had a ball in the surf that managed to bend the rudders on a couple of other kayaks. The only drawback was I didn't get a chance to have to roll it.

There are a few things I would customize. The rudder pedal bar is very good but I would lower it 50-75mms and possibly extend the foot controls for the rudder to give a bigger surface. Because there are no holes drilled on the deck, there are no shock cords to stick things under on the deck so I would borrow Paul Caffyn's idea and fit a bag on the foredeck.

The Blue Marlin is light to carry and is made using the best materials for maximum strength. It is priced in the upper level of single sea kayaks but well worth saving for.

David Herrington, 16/5/95

The following article is from the March 1995 Newsletter of the International Sea Kayaking Association. It is by Peter Clarke, who is editor of 'Paddlers World'.

The conventional stirrup rescue, which has been demonstrated by Brian Lodge at several of the KASK Forums, involves using a loop of nylon webbing or tape as a foothold to assist a paddler to step up and enter their kayak after a capsize. The tape is secured between the rescuer's kayak and the empty kayak by looping it over a paddle shaft slipped crossways beneath the two kayak hulls.

The following technique, described by Peter Clarke, secures the stirrup tape over the decklines of the rescuer's kayak, which has the distinct advantage of keeping both paddles free for paddling and support as soon as the capsized paddler is back in their cockpit.

To give a better explanation of how to fit and use it, I have produced very rough diagrams. The material I have used were: 2.5cm wide nylon luggage strapping, cut to a length of 254cms, 17cm length of hard plastic garden hose, and some whipping twine.

First thread the strapping through the hose. Second, take the two ends of the strapping and overlap them by approximately 4cms, sewing them together with whipping twine. One must ensure to sew the whole length of the 4cm overlap, as well as both diagonally and straight across. This will ensure that the stitching will not pull apart. To fit the stirrup to one's kayak, just push a loop under one of the decklines, then feed the rest of the stirrup loop through the first (See diagram).

When using the device make sure the person being rescued, to begin with, is positioned at the bow of the rescuer's kayak. The capsized kayak should be righted, emptying it at the same time. When the kayak is upright, position it bow to stern. Throw the stirrup across the upright kayak, just behind the cockpit. Now instruct the person in the water to make their way to the cockpit area of their boat; holding onto their decklines at all

times. The person carrying out the rescue should make sure both sets of paddles are secured before proceeding.

The rescuer should now lie across the empty kayak with their arm furthest from the bow of their kayak, draped across the empty kayak. The arm nearest the bow of the rescuers boat should be positioned just in front of the empty cockpit, gripping the front of the cockpit coaming firmly. Now instruct the person in the water to place their foot, which is nearest to the rescuer, in the stirrup. They should then be instructed to reach across their boat, at the same time straightening the leg which has the foot in the stirrup. As they rise up, they should throw their free leg over their boat, so they can sit astride their kayak, just behind the cockpit. From there they can slide into the cockpit.

Depending on how quickly the capsized kayak can be turned upright, this is the quickest method of rescue. This rescue system was devised to assist less agile or strong paddlers who find it difficult coping with other forms of rescue. With practice it takes approximately 10 seconds from the time a person has their foot in the stirrup to sitting in their kayak.

Once the cockpit has been pumped out dry, or whatever, and the sprayskirt is in place, the rescuer can release the rescued kayak. In lumpy conditions it may be advisable to raft up two rescue kayaks.

During the rescue operation, the rescuer's kayak should not capsize providing support is gained by lying over the empty kayak, and gripping it firmly. Once the person being rescued puts their weight on the stirrup both kayaks are forced together, making a very stable raft.

The only disadvantage using this system appears to be, the rescue has to take place on the side where the stirrup is fitted on the rescue kayak. Which would require manoeuvring into position to get the capsized kayak on the correct side of the rescue kayak. Of course there is another problem, and that is someone placing their wrong foot in the stirrup, and sitting astride their kayak back to front. I'm sure a possible gripe will surely be, carrying another piece of gear to clutter up the deck.

Peter Clarke  
(see diagram on p. 6)

**TRIP REPORT**  
**SOUTH EAST ALASKA**

The following letter was received by Stephen Counsell from a couple in Alaska. Brent and Suzanna bought a 'Dusky Bay' double with a difference - it is a bolt together boat, the two halves making it easier to transport. This was the couple's first kayak, and apart from a couple of short trips in the Marlborough Sounds, it is their first major kayak trip. Their impressions of South-East Alaska highlight why this area is one of the greatest kayaking destinations in the world.

Wow, wee! What a trip! You guys have to do this. Where do I begin...

First of all, we had a few 'snags' getting the kayak to Alaska, but they worked out in the end. We did get paged in Auckland, so Brent had to go up to the desk and pay the \$387 charge. In L.A. we'd gotten all our bags except the kayak and kept waiting for it to come through those oversize baggage doors. Finally when we thought we'd miss our connection to Seattle, a

friendly guy opened the doors and informed us the kayak wouldn't fit in the elevator but if we wanted, he would check it though customs for us and get it on the next flight. Yee ha! In Seattle we contacted a shuttle service who, after hearing the measurements of each half, assured us they could transport us to the ferry. They would send a coach especially for us. Unfortunately they sent the wrong coach! It had bulkheaded luggage bays and there was no way it would fit. The nerdy driver wouldn't let me open the emergency windows where we could have slid it across the seats. Things were looking grim as we had three hours to get to the non-refundable ferry, which only departs once a week. But as with most things in life, just when they seem the worst, something good happens if you just keep your cool and stay positive. A 20 seater van just happened to be returning to the ferry empty and the driver said he'd take us if we could fit it in.

A small crowd gathered to watch us as we poked, prodded, shoved and shimmed each half until, finally it fit. The crowd gave a round of applause. I gave

a sigh of relief, and we arrived at the ferry with time to spare. Pitched our tent on top with scores of others and rested up during the 36 hour ferry trip to Alaska.

Our friends greeted us in Ketchikan and we had a nice three days there getting organized. Talked to a local kayak outfitter who is one of Paul Caffyn's best mates, Geoff Grosse. Finally took off early on May 29 as a cheeky raven squawked farewell to us from a nearby tree. Our first hour was incredible - we were splashing across a bay and before we knew it, we were amongst a pod of nine Orca whales. They were slowly rolling, spouting, splashing their tails and playing right in front of us. It was magic. Took some photos, then eventually went our separate ways.

Had some rain the first couple of days and really appreciated the rain flies we'd made. After that the weather was terrific and we've only been rained on once since. We've paddled over 500km, about 100km of which was some form of sailing

(either light sailing with some paddling or full-on sailing, holding on for dear life and really covering some miles!). Took eight days to paddle around the first big island, through Misty Fiords. Paddled alongside 3,000 foot sheer, rock cliffs with emerald green waters and amazing wildlife. We've seen eight bears, heaps of deer, mink, marten, seals, porpoises, river otters, eagles, hundreds of different sea birds and even a wolf who came within 20 yards of me as I was washing dishes one evening. That night a pack of wolves was howling and I don't think I've ever heard a more beautiful sound.

Brent has caught a few salmon and I'm pretty good at rustling up crabs at low tide... Yum! We're amazed at how much ground we can cover in a day. Our longest so far was 46kms. Physically we're feeling great, with occasional sore wrist or shoulder on days when we've had to push it through a headwind or strong current. We're nine or ten days between towns, and it's always great to shower, do laundry, re-stock on food, and buy ice cream. We're soon ready for solitude again, however and usually push on the same day. Our biggest crossings have been 1.5 to 2 hours, but mostly we're along shore, often in neat, narrow canals. The weather had been great and we've only gotten caught out in a couple of potentially dangerous squalls, but we've always been able to go ashore.

The tides, of course, run our lives. They determine how easy or difficult our carry will be each morning and evening, which direction the current will be flowing and where we set up camp. Last week we had our tent a bit close to the tide line and I couldn't sleep because I was afraid we weren't high enough. The water came within inches of our tent, but then receded.

The next day was a long one, so at night we happily collapsed in the tent and, half asleep, I was thinking about how funny it was that, after paddling all day, I still felt like I was on the water even as I was lying down. Well, that's because we WERE on the water. The flamin' tide that night happened to be the highest one all year .... a 19 footer .... five feet higher than the tide only 12 hours previously. We

frantically grabbed our gear and soggy sleeping bags and ran up the moss covered forest hill behind us. After we realized we hadn't lost anything valuable, and thankfully it wasn't raining, we burst into hysterics, laughing at our stupidity for not checking the tide book that night. Very foolish indeed, 'though I never would have guessed that the water would have risen into the forest like that. Hung our gear out to dry the next day and we were wiser (and wetter) for the experience.

It's hard work to live like this, but we seem to be thriving on it so far. Setting up camp, breaking camp, lifting and lugging gear, cooking outdoors and dealing with wind and weather. But we both reckon this is by far the best trip we've ever done. There's no better way to see S.E. Alaska or to get so much solitude and see so much wildlife. We're so happy to be here and loving life.

So that's the trip so far. We met a man who's 68 years old and paddling from Juneau to Seattle. Quite an inspiration. In Ketchikan we met a woman who was going to paddle south to Seattle. We told her the prevailing winds in these parts were south-easterly, that's why we were going south to north. She'd been told that the prevailing winds were northerly. Well we heard later that she'd confronted such strong headwinds in her first 10 days that she hopped a ride in a sailboat to Prince Rupert, and was considering giving up if the winds continued. She'd been paddling for 14 years and had owned a kayak touring company for six years in California. So it must have been pretty bloody rough for her to hitch a ride. We were loving the southerlies as we sailed up the canals.

We miss New Zealand but SE Alaska is just so ideal for kayaking.

Brent and Zan

## TRIP REPORT

### A LONG DAY AT THE OFFICE A TRIP AROUND EAST CAPE, NORTH ISLAND

by John Kirk-Anderson

"Turn left now and you'll eventually reach yesterday".

Brian Lodge was right. Beyond our kayaks off East Cape was just sea, 10,000 kms of it, past the International Date Line with the next stop Chile.

Four days earlier we had started from Opape Beach in the Bay of Plenty, four lads escaping from a Christchurch winter, bent on exploring the North Island's rugged East Coast and maybe catching a glimpse of the dreadlocked Rastafarians in Ruatoria.

"East Cape?" said the locals as we set off. "Hell! That's ten years behind the rest of New Zealand." Well it turned out that the Rastafarians had metamorphosed into 'happy clappers' (Bible bashers) but there was plenty else to see and some good fishing to be had.

Pat McGregor was sea kayaking for the first time. He had been loaned a Sea Bear and looked on as we loaded it everything heavy, explaining that it paddled better when full of gear. He did not believe a word of it. Wink van der Spek started out fast in his new Arluk 1.8. while Brian was relaxed, for once not having to worry about clients. I darted around trying to get pictures, explaining we needed shots for file, "Just in case".

Two days into the trip on glassy seas we watched volcanic White Island slip past 50kms away, belching steam from its molten depths. The crew of a passing runabout asked if we were brave or stupid.

"We saw a damn big Mako shark in this bay yesterday," they told us helpfully.

Trying to look brave we scanned the calm waters, but the only disturbance was birds diving for fish. Pat dropped his fishing line, hoping for a bite. If he hooked a shark, he was on his own.

We never saw that Mako or any other and while Pat did not hook a

shark, he was a dab hand with the line and we regularly dined on fresh fish. While the fishing was good, Big Billy, as his kayak was nicknamed, paddled a dizzy course.

Soon after Whangaparoa Bay, other less desirable marine life became common. Huge jellyfish floated just below the surface, their thick pale bodies and stinging tentacles slowing our paddles. Spotting an evil looking pink and red brute cruise past, I was pleased for the layers of fibreglass between me and it.

Rounding Cape Runaway was akin from stepping from a doorway into a windy street. One moment was flat calm, the next a ten knot wind blowing straight in our faces. Up to this point we had travelled on flat seas. Were we about to meet the rugged sea conditions that East Cape is famed for? Jagged rocks guarding the coastline made for a tricky landing but beyond we found a well protected beach, complete with a waterfall and ruined farmhouse. As the billy boiled, Pat hunted for Kina and after closing my eyes for the first bite, I was surprised how good it tasted.

A stereotype was shattered that evening at Lottin Point. Our campsite looked perfect - grassy, sheltered, with fireplaces and a toilet block. What more could we ask for? However we were soon informed that the area was owned by a fishing club and we would need to talk to the secretary in Napier. Several options went through our minds, none of them pleasant.

We set up just outside the boundary, mumbling about fools. Within half an hour a group from the club arrived to apologise for the unfriendly greeting and offer the use of their showers.

You know before we came on this trip, people had warned us to expect trouble as a lot of the East Coast is Maori land and camping would not be welcome. However the only problem we had was at a fishing camp, and the person concerned was a European district court judge. We enjoyed asking him for directions on our way to the shower block.

Our last stop before East Cape was Te Araroa. We checked a camp across the river from the town dump but Brian and I decided it was too wet so,

against protests, we set up beside the rubbish tip. We claimed it was more sheltered and rats would not be a problem. Wink and Pat could not believe our choice. In fact everyone we met asked, "Beside the dump? Why?" We found out why as we shooed the rats away during the long night.

The channel between East Cape and East Island, 2kms offshore, has a reputation for confused currents. We were ready for them as we launched early in the morning and probably all were secretly hoping for a bit of action but, feeling like burglars, we slid past on calm seas under a blue sky.

Ten kilometres further on we found a legacy of Cyclone Bola's visit. Sun bleached driftwood covered the beach for 50m above the high water mark. It was an amazing sight and that night's campfire was fed with wonderful driftwood art.

We were on the homeward leg now the cape had been rounded but a bad back and severe tendonitis finally forced Wink and Pat respectively to revert to landlubbers for the rest of the trip as Brian and I paddled on. They hitched into Ruatoria and phoned the farmer who was looking after our vehicle in Opotiki. He drove down the next day.

On a deserted beach at Whareponga, no sooner had Brian and I unloaded our boats that evening then a rusty old Landcruiser pulled up and we were asked brusquely if we planned to camp. We stammered yes, very ready to make that a no if needed, but instead of eviction we were invited in for tea. Ty and Judy Ngarimu were teachers from Gisborne and escaped to their bach as often as they could. Dining on fresh fish with apple cake desert, we sniggered at the thought of the lads cooking noodles in the dark back up the coast.

Ty told us this beach was good in all weather except a south-easterly.

A south-easterly greeted us next morning. Here was the challenge we had expected two days earlier. We carefully timed our break-out through the surf and pointed our bows south towards the longest and most difficult day of the trip.

The deep ocean swells were topping out at four to five metres and exploding against the cliffs. Landing was impossible.

We tried to sneak ashore behind an

island but quickly realized that while we might land in one piece, we probably would not get off again.

After a comfort stop five kilometres offshore (not an easy task in two Arluk 1.8's), we decided to carry on to Tolaga Bay, completing two day's paddle in one. With visibility down to 500m, we misread the coast and had to sprint from a demolition zone with tons of water crashing around us when we attempted to land in the wrong bay. Shaken and stirred, we paddled on, wondering if we were going to have to paddle all the way back to Christchurch.

When Tolaga Bay finally appeared through the mist, we edged into land, fully prepared to escape to sea again. But the landing when it finally came was something of an anticlimax. A jetty loomed from the mist and we landed easily alongside, nine hours after getting into our boats.

A fisherman, standing in the rain, watched us come in and struggle to find our land legs again.

"A long day at the office?" he asked. Well that was one way of looking at it.

#### NOTES ON THE TRIP:

Boats: three Arluk 1.8's, one Sea Bear

Safety Gear: EPIRB, flares, pumps, paddle floats, split paddles, wet/dry suits.

Maps: 1:250,000 topo maps, photocopied and laminated.

Started at Opape Beach, eastern Bay of Plenty. Spent the first night at Omaio Bay, camped on a sand bank. Second night was at Oruaiti Beach by the motor camp. We rested our weary bodies at the dump at Te Araroa at the end of day four. Next day we round the cape to Waiapu River. Whareponga was the second to last stop. The last night was spent at the rainswept and dismal motor camp at Tolaga Bay.

John Kirk-Anderson



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