

# THE SEA CANOEIST NEWSLETTER

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## INDEX

EDITORIAL	p. 1
KASK Handbook	p. 1
KASK FORUM	
Forum Report	
by Andy Sheppard	p. 2
Overnight Paddle	
by Mark Hutson	p. 2
Book Review	p. 3
TRIP REPORTS	
Kiwis in Tierra Del Fuego	p. 4

## EDITORIAL

### KASK AGM

At the AGM the committee elected for the 96/97 financial year is:

President: Paul Caffyn

Secretary: Peter Sullivan

Treasurer: Alex Ferguson

Committee: Helen Woodward, Glyn Dickson, Dave Herrington, Mark Hutson.

\$10 subscription will remain for another year.

There was some discussion whether KASK should remain autonomous, or affiliate to a national body such as FMC, NZCF or NZ Water Safety Council. A report on the pros and cons of affiliating or joining one of these organizations will be included in a future newsletter, with any decision made subject to a postal vote or a motion for the 1997 AGM.

Helen Woodward and Ray Forsyth have been active on the conservation front, and a request from Helen for notification of any environmental problems particularly in the North Island where KASK needs to be involved.

### 1996 PICTON KASK FORUM

There are two reports in this newsletter on the 1996 Picton Forum, the first by Andy Sheppard on the overall forum, and a second more specific re-

port by Mark Hutson on the leadership and organization of the overnight paddle.

Peter Sullivan has produced two detailed pages each on the minutes of the 4th. KASK AGM and the debriefing held at the conclusion of the forum. These are available from Peter. I have reproduced the salient points of Peter's notes and added a few of my own recollections of the forum.

### 1996 Forum Debrief:

- Anzac weekend is preferred
- 4 days preferred time span
- a cutoff date for pre-registration will be set for 1997
- with a discount for early registration
- Ideas for 1997 Forum:
- more videos and slide shows
- venue in lower part of the North Island

## KASK Handbook

At the 1995 Titahi Bay forum I suggested KASK should be aiming towards producing a KASK 'Little Red Book', or guide to New Zealand sea kayaking.

Twelve months later, the 'KASK Handbook', or to those in the know as the LRB {Little Red Book}, was auspiciously launched by Nora Flight at the 1996 Picton Forum.

An initial scoping document schemed by Mark Hutson, Peter Sullivan and myself met with a good response from paddlers throughout the country in terms of rating what material should be included, and who was willing to write and advise on various topics.

The 133 page 'Handbook' is a quantum leap forward for New Zealand sea kayaking. It has been a concerted

effort, with numerous KASK members contributing, editing and proofing. I was impressed with quality of the material submitted and feel all KASK members can be proud of the result. Some sections were too late in arrival for inclusion and the odd important section such as navigation slipped the organizational net, but what has been produced is a superb effort by all concerned.

Peter Sullivan undertook the time consuming mission of co-ordinating, scanning, editing and producing the first edition of the KASK Little Red Handbook. I would like to record the gratitude of myself and all KASK members to Peter for his outstanding effort.

The scheme for the next six months is to allow a breathing space for refining the contentious bits, adding missing sections, adding photos and diagrams and sorting out funding for printing the 'mother of all sea kayak manuals'.

Feedback to date is positive, with many of the suggestions for improvement already in hand; such as more diagrams and photos, and a full listing of resource books and magazines.

Now is the time to criticize/praise/amend/add a missing section. Send the information to either Peter Sullivan or myself.

This first edition is nearly out of print, however a second print run will include the information which did not arrive in time for the first printing as an addendum at the rear of the manual.

The first edition of 'The KASK Handbook' is available from either Peter Sullivan or myself at \$12 for current financial KASK members or \$18 full retail price for those paddlers not aware of the secret handshake.

**1996 KASK FORUM**

**FORUM REPORT  
by Andy Sheppard**

The 1996 Graham Egarr KASK Forum was held at Picton from 25-28 April. Fine sunny weather prevailed as paddlers from Auckland through to Dunedin exchanged news and views.

It started with a flourish on Thursday night as Nora cut the tape on the first box to launch the 'Little Red Book' more correctly known as 'The KASK Handbook'.

Readers browsing through the handbook were then distracted by the first lecture/strip show of the forum when a portly Stephen Counsell demonstrated what a well (over?) dressed sea kayaker should wear. Attention was riveted on him as he revealed successive layers, including items relevant to members of the opposite.

Ray Forsyth then discussed low impact camping. He is planning to expand his chapter in the manual by adding information on Maori protocol to be observed on certain occasions.

The highlight of the first night was Brian Robert's slide show on his unsupported circumnavigation of the South Island.

Friday morning began with the traditional 'Show and Tell' with kayaks ranging from the latest technology to the traditional, and there was enough to make decisions difficult on the next kayak you wanted to own. Kayak choice and safety gear were discussed briefly. Then a demonstration of rescues by John Kirk-Anderson was followed by a session honing practical skills. Several kayakers were seen practising John's techniques - not all of them by choice.

The Picton Department of Conservation Field Centre Manager presented his views of the activities and problems for recreationalists in the sounds. Questions from the floor clarified some points, and everyone gained new perspectives on the local situation.

After the AGM and dinner, Cathye Haddock presented a session on risk management. Lemons and wild cards became familiar terms.

Saturday saw gadgets and gizmos

being aired (food for thought there). Navigation and weather were quickly dealt with, and then after lunch the preparations for the overnight paddle proceeded apace. Mark Hutson's planning (groups, leaders, sub-leaders, safety gear, etc.,) was detailed and exhaustive, but by 3.30pm all were on the water and well under way for Mistletoe Bay. Fifty three paddlers were quite a sight to see on this calm sunny afternoon, with some groups travelling via Double Bay in search of tame fish.

At Mistletoe Bay there were tents and more tents (a tramping party was also there), and much eating and drinking (some claims to have seen a flaming meteorite were confirmed by the newspaper on Monday). At the campfire there were marshmallows and popcorn, poetry and song until rather late.

Sunday morning dawned fine and calm. Paddlers were refreshed and rested. By 8am the group was heading back to Picton. The debrief (unlike that at the last Forum held here) was very positive.

The organizing team led by Peter Sullivan and Paul Caffyn are to be congratulated on a successful forum, including the first overnight paddle. We look forward to more forums where this concept can be developed.

Andy Sheppard.

***Reflections on Group Leadership  
for the Overnight Paddle***

Picton Forum - April 1996  
by Mark Hutson

Once again another instructive and fun time was had by all at the '96 Picton KASK Forum. Only this time, and for the first time, there was the addition of an overnight paddling trip to Mistletoe Bay (8kms away), which was perhaps the highlight for most of the attendees - I know it certainly was for me. The camp out provided plenty of time to relax and socialize around simmering billies and, later on, a wonderful roaring campfire with old and new friends. By the way, who else was lucky enough to see the meteor that spectacularly and colourfully flamed into view in the northern sky that night. Truly the best I've ever seen.

Having been requested to lead the overnight group paddle to Mistletoe Bay by the organizers of the event, Peter Sullivan and Paul Caffyn, was an honour of their trust I must say, but hey, let's get realistic.... I was probably targeted as the only one silly enough to take on the task of leading and being responsible for a yet unknown number of paddlers, with who knows what levels of experience.

How to safely look after a humongous number of kayakers on the water would need some careful planning, but the basic approach would be the time honoured tactic of delegating the leadership. In the end, this worked very well, primarily because the forums that KASK has been organizing seem blessed with a healthy number of very experienced paddlers. This created a pool of kayakers quite capable of looking after others on the water and was the key to the success of this method.

Several other key points were followed in order to enhance the effectiveness of delegated leadership:

1. The ratio of leader to participants was kept at 1: 5 or better.
2. Early briefings of both leaders and participants
3. Formal group organization was maintained though both check and name lists.

The 1: 5 ratio is close to that used by commercial sea kayak operators and allows for a manageable group size. Safety on the water is enormously linked to group management.

Leaders were selected on the first day of the forum and a 'group leaders' meeting was held on the morning of the second day. Group management, safety procedures, route description and contingency plans were discussed. Photocopies of maps were passed out, as well as a 'leaders' checklist' and 'Names List'.

These lists were another important aspect because they put in place a system in which certain information could be passed on, collected, between myself, the leaders and all the other participants.

The leader's checklist was a reminder for the leader to do or discuss certain things or topics with their group:

group management on the water

rescue/re-entry procedures  
towing procedures  
dealing with boat and ferry traffic  
boat inspection for sea worthiness  
The names list, on the other hand, was created in order to collect the following information from the participants (and the leaders):

- name of each paddler
- roughly determine each paddler's level of experience
- any medical conditions
- an inventory of all safety items carried by the group

This information was then given to me by each leader just prior to each subgroup launching. With all this information collected, we had an exact count of all those participating, their names, as well as several relevant bits of information about each paddler and the safety gear that each subgroup had with them. All very useful information for the leaders, and potentially useful information for myself if any problems were to occur later.

Another aspect in organizing such a large group - to avoid a displeasing dogmatic approach - was to let everyone choose what paddling pace they wished to participate in, or who they wanted to paddle with. Three different paddling categories were set up:

- a fast group
- an intentionally slower group
- and those in between

It wasn't intended to restrict people to paddling only with others of their own experience level, but rather it simply gave people a choice of paddling styles to suit their own mood or social interests, as well as their abilities if that was of concern to them. Some quite experienced paddlers opted for the slower category in order to paddle with acquaintances and savour their time on the water.

Subgroups were allowed to join together on the water as long as the collective size of the group did not exceed 25 paddlers. This was in consideration of boat traffic and to limit the size of any mob as it crossed the ferry shipping lane just outside Picton.

In concluding this report, I'd like to take a moment to personally thank all the individuals who graciously agreed or volunteered to help me with

their leadership. You did a great job for all of us. The confidence I felt, as well as Peter and Paul, allowed us to relax and enjoy the paddling, knowing things were in certain good hands and under control.

And it should be noted that those who were not leaders, but certainly had the background and experience to be, were marvellous in that they accepted the game plan and were supportive of the leaders ... there were no sneering experts to make responsibility roles uncomfortable. Thank you to you as well.

No doubt there will be refinements to this approach of organizing a mob on the water, but overall I felt it worked very well - again because of the quality of the human resources we had at hand at the forum. I felt privileged to be given the role of leading the overnight paddle and enjoyed figuring out the guts of how to do it. But most of all I feel very grateful to everyone's very willing help and cooperation. It was a splendid effort and a very successful outing. Let's go camping again next year!

Mark Hutson

### Forum Recollections

by Paul Caffyn

The organization for the overnight paddle, under Mark's careful planning, worked a treat. There were several humorous moments for me at Mistletoe Bay, which were perhaps a tad embarrassing for Mark, but were simply a reflection of a true organizational zealot.

The first occurred during a last sweep of the Mistletoe Bay campsite to hasten tardy paddlers onto the water. A stunned party of trampers were almost on their way down to the water's edge before realizing Mark's orders did not apply to them. And the poor couple of independant kayakers who had to retrieve their kayaks from the enthusiastic KASK kayak launchers.

Then just as the final water's edge briefing began prior to the paddle back to Picton, the DOC camp manager set his sound system going, with Maori songs of farewell echoing around the bay. The music drowned out Mark's words of wisdom but set the seal on a magic overnight get together of paddlers.

### BOOKREVIEW

Title: 'Argonauts of the Western Isles'  
Author: Robin Lloyd-Jones  
Published: 1989  
Publisher: Diadem Books Ltd, London, UK.  
ISBN: 0-906371-03-1  
Subject: Sea Kayaking off Scotland's West Coast  
Cover: Hardback  
Contents: 192 pages, 12 maps, 11 colour photos  
Size: 135 x 200mm  
RRP: UK£10.95  
Reviewed by: John Kirk-Anderson

"But I've never sat in a canoe in my life" I protested.

"If you're officer material, you can lead anything," was the reply.

Another favourite saying of the course commandant was, "Instructors are expendable, punters aren't."

So began Robin Lloyd-Jones' introduction to kayaking as an outward bound instructor.

Since then the teacher/writer has paddled the West Coast of Scotland for over 25 years, from his home base in the Clyde Estuary. This book is a collection of short stories, with each chapter a separate adventure.

Some trips are multiday expeditions, while many are pre-dawn escapes - 'stolen hours' - before starting work. His joy with all of these paddles comes across strongly, whether they are quietly relaxing or hardcore terror.

Lloyd-Jones is the author of two novels and his writing puts you in a boat alongside him, making the book a delight to read. Because the stories are self contained, it is easy to dip into, and it has sat on my table for a long while.

To finish, an extract from a journey near the Corryvreckan Whirlpool where curiosity nearly consumed the kayaker:

*"The whirlpool! Straight ahead!"  
It was like a revolving saucer, some 20 feet across, with the outer rim 10 feet higher than the center. ... However much I altered course, it hunted me. ... Where next? It opened its eye, saw me, reached out and caught me. ... Yesterday I thought I'd paddled as hard as it was possible to paddle. I was mistaken.*

A hard book to give back.

*Kiwis in Tierra del Fuego*

by Malcolm Gunn

Four of us from Wellington paddled the Northern fiords of the Cordillera Darwin in Tierra del Fuego this summer. The Magellan Straits are notorious for stormy conditions and it was with some trepidation that we opted for this seldom paddled place in preference to the better known destinations. Here is an account of one fantastic trip...

Paddlers were: Malcolm Gunn, Peter Gates, Brent Harison and Paul Lenihan

The trees in Punta Arenas grow at a sickening angle to leeward such is the wind. Was it all a big mistake? Had we come all this way, kayaks and all, with a futile and ill conceived notion of sea kayaking? Not only was it blowing like hell, it was cold in the manner of the best of Wellington's southerlies. Our flight schedule was conceived by a sadist and we were 50 hours without sleep. I had a cold and felt like death. We had arrived on a Friday and had to wait until Monday to see the Capitain del Puerto about our all-important permit to kayak the chilly waters of the Magellan Straits, something which I was less enthusiastic about having seen them.

Ever since I paddled a sea kayak, it had become an ambition to paddle around an iceberg. In 1994 I bought a map of South America to determine whether Southern Chile might provide the iceberg. I drank gallons of coffee staring at that map. Information about weather patterns, terrain and wildlife was gleaned from many sources and gradually a trip began to gel. The fiords on the northern coastline of the Cordillera Darwin seemed protected from the prevailing south-westerly winds. The ice cap atop the Cordillera Darwin could provide the ice and the many glaciers could break it all up into icebergs of various sizes suitable for circumnavigation. Actually fulfilling an ambition of mine was a minor part of the exercise. Rather the ambition had been created to justify such a trip! The real attractions were the glaciers, wildlife, forests and the isolation.

I enrolled in a Spanish night class

and assembled the biggest collection of Spanish language reference books outside Latin America. We used the internet extensively to quiz others who had been paddling in Chile and made some useful contacts. We visited the Chilean Embassy and enlisted the help of the staff there to procure a permit to paddle in the sometimes sensitive border regions.

Once I'd been in Punta Arenas a couple of days, things improved considerably. I got some sleep, the navy were thoroughly helpful, we got our permit, and we discovered that Chilean delight, the *lomito completo*. To the uninitiated, a *lomito completo* is the hamburger to end them all. Instead of a meat pattie, there is steak. This is accompanied by lashings of lettuce, tomato and avocado.

Our permit imposed two constraints on our expedition. We were not allowed within 3 miles of Isla Dawson, a large island bristling with military installations, and we were prohibited from eating shellfish as algal blooms in the area had rendered much of the seafood toxic. In order to comply with the conditions of our permit (you don't argue with the authorities) we implemented plan B. This involved going to Porvenir and then south by road to Puerto Arturo.

Two hours from Punta Arenas by ferry, Porvenir was depressing. Cold, windy, dusty and devoid of the two things which give shelter - hills and trees. It was however Tierra del Fuego and it was closer to the glaciers of the Cordillera Darwin, our ultimate goal. On a clear evening, the peaks of the Cordillera - Sarmiento, Mayo and Darwin seemed a galaxy away. Over the next week or so we gradually approached these giants a paddle stroke at a time until our kayaks pushed aside the floating ice that had been brought down off their flanks by immense glaciers. To approach such a mountain range by kayak over such a long time is the ultimate savouring of a goal. Rounding the final headland and seeing the icefalls rising uninterrupted as high as Mt Taranaki on all sides is not the climax of a day's paddle, but rather that of a week.

Our attempts to pre-arrange transport from Porvenir to Puerto Arturo, from where we were to paddle ap-

peared to have been in vain. The earliest possible transport was still three days away. A New Zealand gold mining venture came to the rescue and the local kiwis provided transport south of Porvenir to the south side of Bahia Inutil (Useless Bay) best regarded as a 40km wide detour. After five hours of bouncing down a gradually deteriorating road, stopping occasionally to secure the kayaks after the snap locks were tested to destruction, we came to a halt in soft mud. We were rescued from that by a passing local, also driving a *hilux*. His one had tyres with tread and a winch. Soon we were cramming an impossible looking mountain of food and gear into our kayaks, watched by some guanacos, handsome llama like animals with an aristocratic manner. The miracle was that we finally managed to get it all in and that the kayaks actually floated with their payloads. The smallest wave, however washed over the foredecks. At last we were on the water. What was more we had a tail wind and a favourable tide.

After two days paddling, we had left the coastal road behind and the only obstacle between us and the Cordillera Darwin was a crossing of Seno Almirantazgo. At 18km the distance was not great, although we were aware of the areas reputation of sudden windshifts and squalls. The water was icy cold and so was the wind. We set off shortly after 9:00am in a steep chop and grey overcast conditions. Launching required some care and the waves claimed a variety of items snatched from under the deck bungs, including charts, water bottles and a bilge pump. After a short while, the marginal conditions dictated a retreat to our campsite and we resurrected the fire. As we sipped hot soup a condor passed low over camp and rose effortlessly on the same breeze that had thwarted our crossing.

A second attempt 24 hours later held more promise. The sea had yielded all of our lost gear with the exception of the all - important pump. As we left, the wind dropped to almost nothing and we were treated to half an hour or so of calm. Sure enough the first ruffle was not far away and a breeze developed from the Southwest. By mid channel there was

a lively sea and a stiff wind which was blowing the tops off the waves. A sense of urgency prevailed and we had to resist the temptation of paddling into the wind, something which improves stability at the expense of progress. The prospect of what the next hour might produce was unsettling. Turning back would be pointless. We were committed to this one. Soon after we encountered a group of magellanic penguins, the wind eased and gradually we gained the shelter of the shore. An hour later we landed gratefully on a beach, at the entrance of Bahia Brookes. Nothing but calm water now lay between us and the glaciers of the Cordillera Darwin. We had watched the vast peaks and snowfields grow bigger every day and now they were within reach. The excitement of approaching our first glacier had been growing over 4 days. As we left our landing spot, we saw our first steamer ducks. Steamers are large and flightless and use their wings in the manner of a hyperactive paddle steamer. They are a nervous species and react to our presence with a sense of panic that subsides only when they have put the best part of 2km between them and us. With perfect paddling conditions, we were unstoppable as we paddled into the entrance of Seno Gallegos for our first view of a tide-water glacier. We were stunned by the sheer size of it as it snaked down from the icefields and ended in a wall of ice 2km wide. Four kilometers from the terminal we made camp and endured the curiously frigid transition from being warm paddlers to being warm campers. A couple of hot brews and we were again marvelling at the lack of sandflies and mosquitos. But for the lack of dipterous blood siphoners, the camp site reminded us of one in Wet Jacket Arm in Dusky Sound. Some pieces of ice floated into our bay with the outgoing tide as if to give us a taste of tomorrows paddle to the glacier terminal. A 3:00am foray to answer a call of nature revealed the full extent of a high tide which was within centimeters of out tents and was in the process of liberating our untethered kayaks! Brent gathered up all manner of flotsam and we were left to contemplate the consequences of being kayak-less.

It was not a pleasant prospect. The tide had covered the grass to a depth of 5cm and there was nothing to suggest this was a regular occurrence. Indeed the two subsequent high tides came nowhere as high.

After a leisurely breakfast of pancakes and coffee, we set out to explore the nearby Ventisquero Gallegos. We had heard the ice falling off the terminal face during the night and on the previous day. Now the ice floes thus produced were moving down the sound. Approaching the terminal, the ice cliffs loomed above like a tangled mass of blue skyscrapers. After dragging kayaks onto a rock, we climbed to the a vantage point for a kodak attack and a bite to eat. Often a loud crack would precede the thunderous crash of ice and rock falling into the sea at the foot of the ice. One particularly large icefall was only briefly a source of entertainment. The size of the wave it produced had us scrambling down the rock to rescue the kayaks before they were washed away. We had about 35 seconds to get them. We took about 37. Two were already at sea - one capsized and surrounded by floating paddles, backrest, water bottles, hatch covers and the like. I grabbed one as it slid backwards into the sea and the fourth was still high and dry. Again we had cause to contemplate the consequences of losing the kayaks. A swim amongst the ice would have been invigorating, but only briefly and the breeze coming off the glacier would have necessitated a good turn of speed in order to catch a drifting boat. The incident was funny, but only just. Then followed a period of kayak custodianship verging on paranoia. Even when that subsided, we were still careful.

Further along the terminal, a more benign environment invited closer inspection. On climbing out of my kayak, I had a first hand experience of frictionless surfaces. The glacial mud had the frictional properties of greased plate glass and the consistency of custard. The result was highly amusing for everyone as I struggled to stay upright while taking on the colouration of the substrate.

Next day we explored the southern reaches of Bahia Brookes. The glaciers just got bigger and more spec-

tacular the further we went. The second (nameless) glacier we visited had calved off so much ice, the sound was choked with it for 3km from the terminal. Paddling through the jumble of ice was a slow and deliberate affair. The ice was also noisy against the plastic kayaks that conversation was yelled. A large block of ice stops a kayak as abruptly as a rock so picking a reasonably straight route through the ice while avoiding the big pieces quickly became the skill of the day. Occasionally a small berg would roll over, reminding us to keep a respectful distance. The ice blocks were invariably undercut at the waterline so that the smallest disturbance in the water made gentle lapping noises. Multiplied thousands of times, it was an eerie sound. The southern extremity of Bahia Brookes was unforgettable. The map showed several glaciers descending to sea level at the head of the sound. This was hidden from our view until we rounded a headland not more than 5km from the end of the sound. As we rounded the headland we were treated to an alpine view at sea level. Icefalls descended, broken only by the occasional rock band, from a peak at 2400m to the sea. Avalanches were nearly continuous and the 80m ice cliffs calved more ice into the sea with a thunderous roar. Camping 400m from the terminal, we would hear the ice falling into the sea to be followed a minute or so later by the breaking of waves on the otherwise tranquil shore. We decided that it was about time to try the pisco (a kind of locally brewed brandy) we had brought with us. Peter and I fussed about, making up some fruit juice, collecting some ice and stoking up the driftwood fire. When we had gathered the mugs we were alarmed to discover...no pisco! Weíd bought two bottles and given one to the driver whoíd pulled us out of the mud. The other had been left in Gordonís hilux.

Bahia Ainsworth, and the mighty Marinelli Glacier, are more exposed to the westerlies than Bahia Brookes. The Marinelli has receded since our chart was drawn and a moraine has made a shallow entrance to the inner bay where the terminal was in the 1950ís. One of the low islets in the moraine is home to a group of sea

elephants which allowed us to approach within a few meters. We spent over an hour among these huge beasts, taking photographs and just being among them. They seem to hold onto every breath, much in the manner of a whale, so that their breathing seems laboured. They squint while they do so and open their eyes almost in relief as they exhale. Their movements on land are rhythmic, awkward and deliberate. They don't move around for the fun of it, it seems, and once they have moved inland for 200m to their resting place, are ill - inclined to leave it just because a couple of humans appear. Good for them!

It was in Bahia Ainsworth that our second omission came to light. Having finished the first of our tins of coffee, we set about searching, with increasing purposefulness, for our second tin. It was never found. For most of us, going without coffee is an inconvenience. At worst, a nuisance. For Brent, however such a deprivation is no joke - a bit like going without oxygen. The list of symptoms reads like those of a degenerative form of cerebral necrosis.

Leaving Bahia Ainsworth gave us our worst paddling conditions of the trip. A rising southwesterly wind gave us a lumpy if quick ride to the entrance of the bay where the sea became confused by the reflection from cliffs and was steepened by a strong weather tide. Fortunately this did not last for long and we were able to settle in for a long although quite easy paddle to the eastern extremity of the sound - the Rio Azopardo. When we arrived we were pleased to find a good campsite in the forest with plenty of dry firewood despite the rain. Soon we had the place feeling like home as we warmed up with hot drinks and a meal. In the morning we went for a stroll to the estancia to see who was in residence. We were met by Juan who was looking after things while the owner was away. Juan wasted no time in inviting us in and feeding us fresh bread, eggs and a deep fried sweet bread (tortas). This was, of course accompanied by coffee. Unfortunately for Brent, he had declined to accompany us and had stayed behind at camp.

We went for a walk in the rain up

the Rio Azopardo for an hour or so to an old derelict bridge - a remnant of the timber days when 150 people lived there. Foxes watched boldly us as we walked about the estancia that was scattered with beaver dams. On the way back to camp we were again fed fresh bread and a mutton soup by Juan who had stoked up the pot belly stove to an impressive degree. When we finally returned to camp at about 7:00pm, Brent had worked out what we'd been up to and was really quite civil about the fact that we were all too full to eat much for dinner. The following evening Juan accompanied us to our camp and we cooked pancakes for him.

Bahia Parry is the Eastern most of the bays in Seno Almirantazgo. Stretching 40km to the south, it has two distinct arms, both of which have several glaciers at their head. We had been told that there were fishermen in the bay and that it might be possible for us to arrange a ride back to Punta Arenas on a boat. This idea had much appeal as it would save 130km of headwinds along a coast which provided little shelter, and would give us more time to explore Bahia Parry. As we entered the bay, we saw the first of many fishing boats and we went over for a chat. As with all the boats, they were after scallops. The scallop divers each spend eight hours a day in the 3°C water, often under ice. The scallops are not deep and the divers are supplied with air from a compressor on the surface via a hose that floats on the surface hissing like an enraged snake from cracks along its length, bound imperfectly with assorted pieces of tape.

Some fishermen gave us a couple of centolla (king crabs) for dinner. Their freshness was attested to by the fact that they were still very much alive. The crabs were stowed away under spray skirts for safe keeping as we continued on our way. Having a large spiny crustacean in its death throes on your lap can mean that your concentration on paddling is less than total. The thought of being capsized as a result of being strategically seized by a large crab was a trifle unsettling. It was not to be, however and the centollas were delicious in a seafood chowder.

A couple of hours paddling into Bahia Parry brought us to a small sheltered cove which was being used as a base for about thirty scallop boats. Most of the fishermen, it seemed lived aboard their vessels, but some who used open boats, had erected small shelters reminiscent of early miners dwellings in central Otago. This small village, or campamento was, to be honest, filthy. Every day tons of scallops were shelled in the cove and all the rubbish was casually cast overboard, be it plastic or whatever, not to mention the sewage. No sooner had we paddled into the little cove, than we were summoned to a makeshift shelter by a group of fishermen. Not until we were ashore did the full impact of the squalor of the camp become apparent. A large part also puppy was busy persecuting a much smaller, if louder one around the camp. We were ushered into the shelter, out of the rain and into an atmosphere similar to that which you might get if you put six wet and unwashed fishermen, four wet and unwashed paddlers, two wet and unwashed dogs, a small drying fish and a 4kg portion of mutton of indeterminate age into a damp hut the size of a bus shelter with a 10kW heater. Soon we were eating fresh bread and drinking coffee. We were amused to find out that one of those present had been aboard the boat that came over to check out our driftwood fire a few days earlier. Raw scallops followed the bread and our hosts were eager to ensure that we ate as much as we could. There was little to reassure us that we were not ingesting a plethora of microorganisms which would wreak havoc with our digestive systems for weeks to come. Still, as they say, when in Rome... So we ate the raw scallops and fresh bread, drank coffee and tried the tea-like maté that is popular in these parts with those who live in the outdoors. I loaded my coffee with sugar in an effort to kill any microorganisms by osmotic stress.

We explained our intentions and where we had come from to our hosts and that we were intending to camp nearby for the night. That precipitated a flurry of activity as they set about clearing the woodpile which occupied the best tent site in the bay

for us to use. We were anxious to avoid camping in the cove as the lack of sanitation and presence of dogs combined to give the place all the camping appeal of a municipal landfill. Eventually, we managed a tactful retreat without offending our friends by promising to visit them next day. Our campsite for the night was not far from the cove and was littered with the rubbish of previous campers. The Chileans have a curious attitude to litter. They don't notice it. Plastic bags and synthetic sacks hang from the trees that arrested their flight and the package-strewn shoreline reveals the food being consumed on board passing vessels. This campsite was no exception. We burned what rubbish we could, but the exercise had more than a hint of futility.

As we paddled down the sound, the occasional icefall from a distant glacier would rumble. A similar, but distinctly closer sound stopped me in my tracks. It took a few seconds to realise that the noise I'd just heard was the explosive exhalation of a whale. A nearby whale. Sure enough about 70 metres away a huge back had broken the surface ever so smoothly and there was a huge rorqual slowly heading in the direction from where we had come. Some frantic paddle strokes took me to close to where I predicted it would re-surface. I glided to a gradual halt and waited - camera at the ready. Sure enough, nothing happened. Eventually we heard it surface again, but were unable to locate it.

Our ride back to Punta Arenas was on a boat which takes the scallops back to port. The boat was loading scallops with the shellfish being carefully weighed and recorded from each of the contributing boats. This process took a good 3 hours. The boat itself was small, no more than 12 metres. On board were 12 people and the decks were covered in large 50kg sacks of scallops. Two kayaks were tied to the wheelhouse roof and two more were on the foredeck. The wheelhouse had two bunks and there was an after cabin which sounds better than it was. It was about 3m by 2m and most of it was taken up by a 3.5litre diesel engine. There were 5 seats. In addition to this there was an

exhaust pipe which was close to red hot and a gas stove. Inside the cabin, the temperature was about 40°C and the noise 110dB. This contrasted with outside at 5°C and 120dB. After moving to another campamento to collect some more scallops, we set off at midnight for Punta Arenas. I found that on the roof of the afterdeck was out of the worst of the wind and settled in there for the night - outside. Gradually the cold seeped in and I improvised as best I could to keep warm. I ended up swathed in some closed cell foam, a lifejacket and my cockpit cover all bound around my legs with nylon tape to keep them from blowing overboard. I must have looked like an avalanche victim awaiting airlift. A night passes slowly in such circumstances. No sleep was possible and a piece of chocolate was a half-hourly treat. Communication was difficult on account of the exhaust and I wondered if my hearing would ever be the same. Phosphorescence produced the occasional flash in the wash over the stern but otherwise there was nothing to break the monotony. Often I considered moving inside, but to what? sitting on the floor staring at a hot noisy engine and unable to move? At least here I could stretch out.

Dawn took forever. When it came, it held little promise - pale grey and the sun merely hinted at on the distant horizon and an unsettled sea. We pulled in at a small cove near Puerto Arturo for a while in the morning and it was not until noon that we passed the small beach from where we had set off in our kayaks some 16 days earlier.

All fishing boats in Chile seem to have one thing in common - a large piece of meat hanging over the afterdeck. Occasionally plucked chickens, but more usually mutton. Our vessel also had a cardboard box containing a dozen of the meanest looking sausages I've ever seen. These had leaked their juices into the bottom of the carton and had effectively glued the cardboard to the roof of the cabin on which they sat. These smallgoods, recognisable as such by shape alone were, (do you believe this?) orange and black speckled on a matrix of grey and crimson. Several went into

our lunch, a stew which, being boiled for longer than the term of many an Argentinian government, seemed safe enough to eat. Safe enough perhaps but for me there was another requirement - taste. I ate the potatoes and complimented the cook: *¡muy rico!*, I lied. Shortly thereafter I consigned the remainder to the sea in a deft and hopefully undetected manoeuvre.

Some dolphins accompanied us for about an hour, departing about the same time I jettisoned my lunch. We swung away from the coast to cross Bahia Inutil and Headed for the northern tip of Isla Dawson. The closer we got to Punta Arenas, the slower we seemed to go. One of the fishermen aboard ate a raw sausage from the box, surely an attempt at suicide. At one point the fuel line broke, spraying diesel everywhere. Within a minute, a new line was fitted and we were underway again. We reached Punta Arenas 28 hours after leaving the campamento ears ringing and red-eyed. We were immensely grateful for the calm passage and indeed for the passage itself. Upon arrival at Punta Arenas, the captain finally accepted half the money we tried to give him and we set off in search of accommodation and a vehicle to transport our kayaks. We spent the next week further north in Patagonia tramping, but that, as they say, is another story.

The trip had been a huge success. We had seen glaciers close up like we'd never imagined. The wildlife was spectacular and plentiful. At the end of each day we'd discuss the day's *¡firsts!* our first condor, first whale, first iceberg... never were we at a loss for a first.

Malcolm Gunn

Photos and map on pages 8 and 9.







*THEKASKHANDBOOK*

The KASK Handbook is now on sale from either: Peter Sullivan, 7 Monowai Cresc. Christchurch or Paul Caffyn, RD 1, Runanga, West Coast. - at \$12 for current KASK members otherwise \$18. Cheques should be made out to KASK(NZ)Inc.

*COASTBUSTERS1996*

Planning is underway for the Seventh Annual Coastbusters Sea Kayak Symposium which will be held at Long Bay, Auckland, over the weekend of 12 to 14 October 1996.

Submissions are invited from people who wish to be key note speakers or lead workshops. Travel expenses may be available. Please send your ideas in writing with a brief CV to:

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