

In talking over aspects of sea canoeing lately with a number of paddlers it seemed that we ought to run a get-together over the summer. Having been in this game before and faced with a lack of numbers on the day, it would be necessary to get a preliminary response from paddlers before we advance too far into the planning stages. Thoughts to date is for a weekend of action over Waitangi day, or is it New Zealand day? Anyway - we would get started on Saturday afternoon on February 4 1989 and run the events over Sunday 5 and finish Monday 6 february. Venue will be from the Mapua Leisure Park which is at the river/estuary entrance to the Waimea Estuary and within easy reach of the Abel Tasman coast. The weekend would consist of manufacturers showing off their equipment - kayaks, paddles etc and having these available for people to try out. The evening would have a selection of videos, films etc. Sunday would be given over to a range of instruction workshops on various aspects of sea kayaking. Paul Caffyn has agreed to run some of these for us. Sunday night will be a safety discussion. Monday will round out the practical aspects. A trip around the Abel Tasman coast could then be planned for the remainder of the week, or for the more adventurous - a D'Urville Island trip. The actual workshops have not been planned but we could cover such things as rescue systems, night paddling, kayak sailing etc. Unless we get a Northerly gale we will not have surf to play about in. Costs; as we will need to cover the costs of our instructors etc. we will have to have a registration fee of around \$50 - \$75 for the weekend. So that we can gauge interest please complete the enclosed form and return as soon as possible. Unless we can get two dozen people at this stage we will not go any further. If you do complete the form, this will not commit you to coming.

Well, enough of that. Bevan Walker is a sea kayaker from Nelson who has done a great deal of paddling over the last ten years or more and has probably covered more miles than any other paddler than Paul Caffyn. The remainder of this newsletter is given over to two trips, to D'Urville Island and to Fiordland in a folding kayak accompanied by Nora Flight, who has written these accounts.

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August. I didn't know much about the sea before this trip, so here goes an un-cool account of my eight day encounter with this fickle creature. The craft is a folboat, a double folding kayak made in South Carolina, about twenty years ago, bright red with a blue hull, nicknamed Big-bird. The crew, me, and my buddy Bevan who is a bit of a sea dog.

We depart Tuna Bay, Tennyson Inlet at 11am on Sunday and have conditions mostly with us to a beach by Harding Point. The tide is with us as we cruise on past the Chetwode Islands the next morning, aiming for the Jag Rocks sitting on the calm sea. Two hours to these wonderful hunks of rock in the middle of no-where, then onto Billy-Hook Bay with alternating head winds and oily-calmness. A quick snack there, then around the notorious Cape Stevens with its ominous square holed rock and the Sisters. An out-going tide slows our approach to Port Hardy, but we reach the charming May Island beach with its lush native bush and wekas in time to pitch camp before dark.

Tuesday brings rain but good conditions for paddling out of Port Hardy. We paddle up the South Arm, admiring the bush, collect water, then head out around Nile Head to Otu Bay. We could do many miles today with the tide and swell behind us, but decide to camp in Otu Bay instead. We land in rain on a little ripple of a wave, pitch the tent and listen to the rain. In two hours all we can hear is the continuous roar of the three-four foot surf on the beach that we had landed on. Surprising the speed of change. Wednesday is a tent day due to the rough conditions on both sea and land. Thursday looks much improved so we charge through a bit of surf with the odd curler. Bevan got an eye whacked with a paddle in the excitement. The joys of double kayaking!

SOURCE: NZMS 18 sheet 14
SCALE: Grid lines at
10000 yards



Out around Bottle Point the water is seething and angry, definitely not the place for our chunky kayak. It is no place for a land-lubber like me either - those three metre breakers are monstrous. So it is a compulsory bread-making and report writing afternoon on a smooth stoney beach with heaps of firewood. The stones glowed red-hot under our camp-fire that night.

We saw a ship going past early this morning, Friday. Were getting to the stage of dreaming up schemes to hitch a ride by all manner of ingeneous means. Will we ever get around Bottle Point? It seems that the best advice when travelling along exposed coastlines is to make the most of good conditions while you have got them. At mid-day the wind seemed to have died down, plus the tide had turned so that the waves should be less steep at the point. Out we go. Through the neck of the Bottle aided by a bit of tap-dancing on the rudder foot controls by the grim sailor in the stern. We wouldn't have wanted the surge to push us onto the rocks in the neck.

We spend the next three hours being pushed by the swell, current and wind to arrive at Te Puna Bay by the Southern tip of D'Urville - 22km, not bad. Since it is still raining Bevan decides to experiment with pitching his tent by putting the fly up first.

Saturday we do the usual beach scavenge then head over to Croisilles Harbour. A nice little head wind makes me start to think seriously of beech forests and tussock slopes. At least with tramping you don't get blown backwards. Anyway, this wasn't that bad, but we land on Goat Island in the entrance of the harbour - a glorious wee island covered with bush and surrounded by a rocky reef. We collected paua and mussels, these latter being the fattest and most plentiful I have seen outside a mussel farm. With a dying wind and incoming tide we head around Cape Soucis, and since the whim takes us, land at Oananga Bay. It saw the biggest bonfire ever on its beach that night.

Powered by the last of our Tatarua biscuits we charge out onto a calm sea on this last morning, around Whangamoia Head to Peppin Island. There are mutterings from the stern about sunbathing on deck, but luckily it is still goose-pimplly warm. We land at Nelson Harbour at 5.30pm.

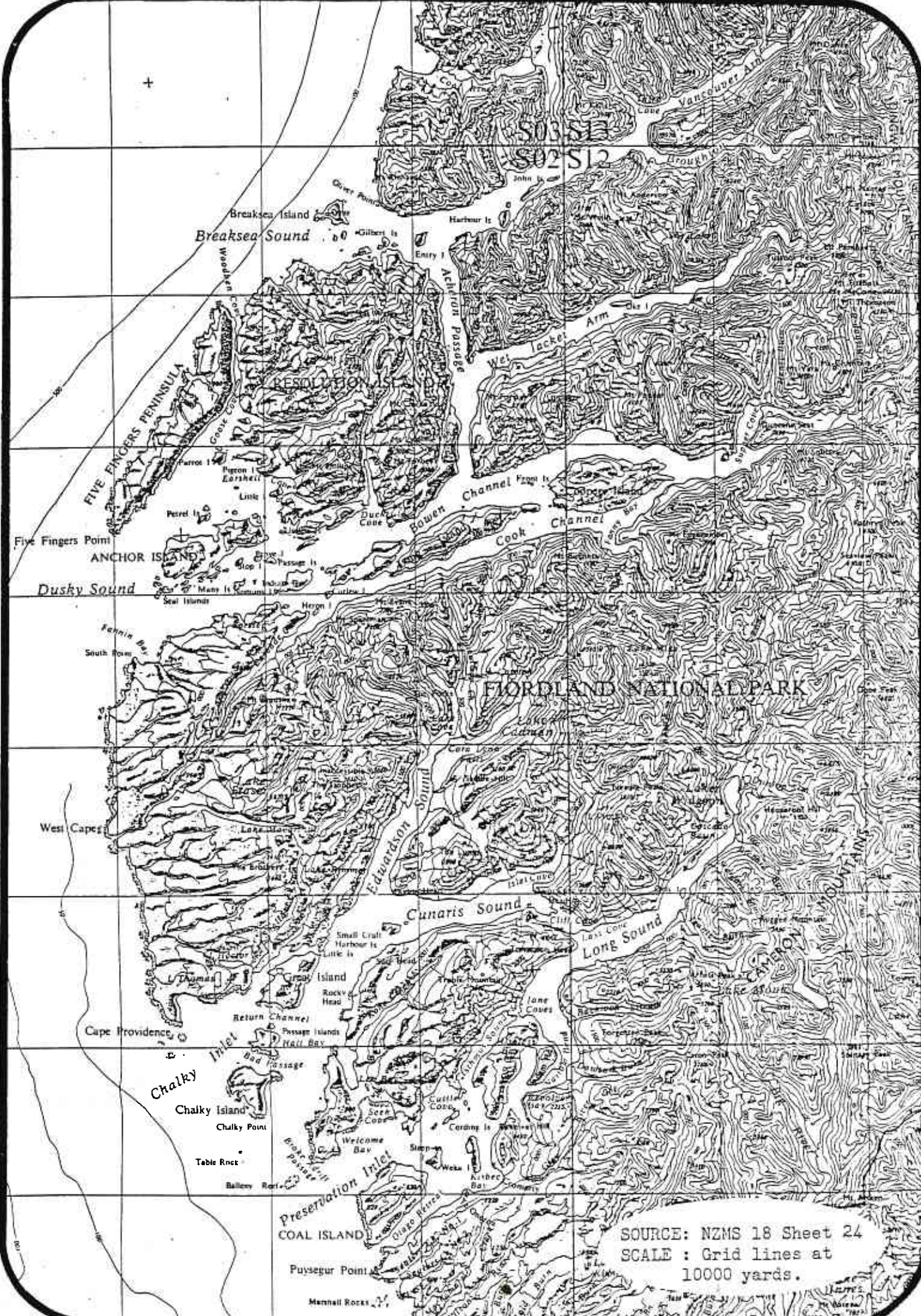
INTO THE LAND OF WATER

I remember the feeling of loss as the floatplane flew away leaving us stranded on a rapidly dwindling beach in front of a luxurious beech forest, surrounded by mountains and the sound of the roaring waterfall outlet of Lake Widgeon. This was the very head of Long Sound, bottom-most fiord in Fiordland on a sparkling sunny day in early September. Before we could ponder on our situation too much, we threw ourselves upon the task of assembling our trustworthy Folboat, and just loaded to bursting with all sorts of goodies. The slight feeling of panic at all the gear was consoled by the thought of the bulky fresh fruit and veges we had for the first week.

We tottered down to Last Cove and made camp next to a small stream in the bush. Throughout the trip we found signs of recent, or older human sign: deer traps, wire, ropes, buoys, tracks, wreckage. We feasted on plump fillets of cod that night as we did for many lunch and evening meals ahead. Quite often it seemed it was better fishing deeper within the fiords.

We were lucky, weatherwise, with the next six days with the odd patches of rain but no strong winds. Our first morning we portaged some food over from Long Sound to the head of Cunaris Sound, via a cut track. Then we paddled to the historic towns of Cromarty and Te Oneroa, both being gold-mining towns in the 1860's. There were a few fishing boats at Cromarty, but no sign of life. This site is now having a hunting lodge built there. We spent the night in a tidy Parks Board 'A' frame hut at Te Oneroa.

Wednesday we visited Puysegur Point. Some people were in the process of pulling down an old house, as the lighthouse has become obsolete. The afternoon saw us paddling across Preservation Inlet to Cording Islands, being intercepted by numerous fishing boats who couldn't believe their eyes when seeing us, and wondered if we knew what we were doing. We lit our easiest fire of the whole trip on this island and also had the least number of sandflies per square cm of body out of all our camps.



FIORDLAND NATIONAL PARK

SOURCE: NZMS 18 Sheet 24
SCALE : Grid lines at
10000 yards.

Thursday after a bit of a tiki tour around some of the historic sites we slipped around the sloop at Gulches Head and into Chalky Inlet. A feeling of getting well underway with the trip was now with us and we were even optimistic that the weather would hold out until we reached Dusky. While looking for a campsite we paddled very close to two unsuspecting pigs merrily rooting up a beach. Our campsite had lots of pig sign also. We visited Small Craft Harbour Island the next morning, then up into Cunaris Sound and caught the full tide to take us up to our food dump. Again we had a loaded canoe, so vows were made to eat like kings for the next few days. Back up Cunaris and around into the impressive Edwardson Sound where we made camp on a steep stoney beach with a cave at one end. The cave provided us with dry firewood.

Unfortunately the weather started to deteriorate on the Saturday. We paddled up to the head of the Sound and caught some good sized fish, then headed back into a chop. On the return we decided to call it a day and crossed a small river bar into a sheltered landing by a tiny beach. Sunday's breakfast was a slow affair as it was a blustery and rainy day, however we were off by 11am and within two hours were into the shelter of North Port behind Great Island. As with many occasions on the trip, I was surprised at how dramatic a change in wind and water conditions a headland or island could make - from a steep chop with wind gusts to oily calmness and no wind, all within metres.

North Point had a lot of boat moorings and the 'S.S. Stella' a grounded boat used as a wharf. We made camp just past North Port, a rising headwind and lump foiling our attempt to reach Landing Bay. We reached Landing Bay the next day, but not without a few apprehensive moments. Just out from our camp we took a wide berth around Breaker Point with its big curlers smoking and roaring horribly where we could see that our destination did not look too landable. Smoking waves seemed to stretch unbroken from one end to another. But, getting closer we saw one corner that had a break in the smokers - so we headed for that. Thus we safely negotiated the reef across the front of this bay. We spent a week here, combing the beaches on the main coastline, exploring Cape Providence, and looking at the waves. Three nights were spent amongst the mud of an established fly camp, then we discovered Grono's cave, used first by the Maoris, then sealers, then the occasional paua collector and hermits, and now us. A palace with tables, chairs, shelves, beds, fireplace, and dry wood and a shower.

So by Monday week the Nor-west storm had passed and we were blessed with a perfect day; a slight southerly breeze with a two meter swell and none of the ominous looking grey cloud bank on the horizon. We were poised ready for this day and we flew. Getting around Cape Providence took longer than expected as we travelled a fair way out from it. At one point a capping wave reared up 30m to our side, which made us burn up a few extra calories. We travelled between 1 to 2 kilometers out from the low headlands in the line of the cray buoys. An increasing tail wind demanded the utmost concentration from the rudder controller. Dusky Sound was a sight we will never forget; sun and skudding cloud amongst big peaks, opening out to low hills and domed islands with the blue choppy sea underlining the whole panorama.

We sheltered between Anchor and the Many Islands and felt a great relief to be there-five hours from Landing Bay to here. Definitely the climax of our trip.

At Luncheon Cove we luxuriated in the hospitality of a generous cray-fisherman for a day, then off into the crappy weather for a look around Pigeon and Parrot Islands and Facile Harbour. Then screeched across to the other side of Dusky with strong tail wind gusts to the relative shelter of Pickersgill Harbour. A rough hut at Cascade Cove sheltered us that night. Three fishermen and a crate of beer arrived by row boat at midnight and entertained us into the wee hours.

We tail-winded down Cooks Passage to Supper Cove the next day; it felt like coming home. After two days of enjoying the comforts of the Cove and the good fishing, we headed up Dusky and around into Acheron Passage. Dolphins frolicked in front of us for a while. The Passage turned on a gut-buster wind for us, but the day ended successfully with us attaining Herricks Creek near the head of Wet Jacket Arm.

Rain and head winds forced a tent bound Monday, with an evening paddle up to the head of this mysterious fiord. Tuesday; we only got as far as the entrance of Wet Jacket Arm due to a strong head wind with gusts screaming down Acheron Passage. Gusts so strong that Bevan even lost his hat. The rain and wind kept up until Saturday, during which time we tried six times to get up the passage, had heavy hail and snow

low on the bush, and willy-walls on the water. Things were getting mighty damp by this time so it was great to be on the move again, even if it was only for one and a quarter hours.

Two days were spent at Sunday Cove, a popular mooring for the Breaksea Cray fishing fleet. We only paddled up to the John Islands due to the wind, but had some dazzling sun for a few hours. The fishermen were as storm bound as we were on the Monday, but Tuesday was good enough for them to fish so we accepted an offer for a lift up to Doubtful Sound as it didn't look like conditions were going to improve enough to allow paddling up there - not within the next few days at least and our time was running out. Fifteen hours were spent on the 'Liberty' - a hard-chine steel-hulled boat and did it roll! Conditions deteriorated enough later in the day to stop the men from fishing and steam directly for Deep Cove. A 16-18 foot shark followed the boat for awhile. Visability remained poor and the rain continued to teem down for the next four days that we were at or near Deep Cove, and it even snowed at sea level!

For the last day of our trip the sun came out and showed us how beautiful Wilmot Pass was, covered in snow and Lake Manapouri with snow down to lake level. It was magic paddling across the mirror lake with the snow blobs on the beech trees.

So our memory of Fiordland is patchworked with thoughts of steep-sided fiords, covered with all the bush one could ever want, generous and hardy fishermen, sandflies galore, curling smoking waves, and wispy delicate waterfalls, with all this unfairly coloured by this last perfect day. A tantalizing memory to entice us back again some other time.

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Note: In the last newsletter I provided a map to go with Tom Arthur's account of a trip from New Brighton to Pigeon Bay and back to Lyttelton. Unfortunately the map only covered the area as far as Port Levy, so with this newsletter I enclose another map with the whole distance given.

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Grahame Sisson who builds the Nordkapp kayak and the Puysegur Kayak is now well into production of his two person kayak for rough water and expeditionary work - while a large kayak it can be used for day trips. Looking over one of these craft recently I was impressed with the quality of work and thought that has gone into the design and placing of all the fittings. So often builders only get as far as thinking out the hull shape. This boat is based upon the original development work that Paul Caffyn and Grahame did for the trans-Tasman kayak. The rudder fittings would certainly stand up to rough treatment yet with its balanced rudder blade should be very sensitive to use. Grahame is threatening to take me for a paddle sometime when he can find a rough enough day. While on the subject of Grahame's canoes, he also hires out kayaks that he sells, the idea being that if you are not sure if you want a Nordkapp or a Puysegur you can try them out on a trip. If you order a boat then Grahame will regard the hire as payment for the kayak. An excellent idea. As Grahame is flat out with orders he asks that if possible please avoid calling on him in the factory until after 3 pm in the day. Grahame personally builds every boat that comes from his factory: the only way to get consistent quality control, and it is best if he can get a straight run on each job.

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Enclosed is a list of paddles available from Steve Chapman. I recently saw a number of these paddles and was most impressed with the quality of workmanship and low weight of these paddles. The whitewater paddle does not have a concave face, which is unusual but those paddlers that have used them say that they are very good to use and are excellent for slalom paddling. The sea kayak paddles have a low area blade and are also very light - anybody interested in multi-sport events would love these paddles too.