

Susan Cade

31 May 1959 - 10 September 2022

her kayaking stories



Two of Our Own Have Gone Cathye Haddock and Susan Cade

Sad to report, two of our KASK stalwarts were lost in the Kaikoura boating tragedy on 10 September 2022, Cathye Haddock and Susan Cade.

The Wellington send-offs for both wonderful women were attended by hundreds of mourners, and further afield with live-video streaming. The emotional tributes for both, revealed how diverse their work and play interests were and how they were both loved by so many.

Coromandel paddler Ruth Henderson emailed saying – ‘Two of our own were lost in the Kaikoura boating tragedy’. For many, that term for identifying Susan as ‘one of our own’ will apply, but for sea kayakers, and indeed cavers, there is a bit more to being ‘owned’. Unlike mountaineering or rock-climbing, when a rope links you together, there has to be an implicit trust or mutual bond with your mates on the high seas that they would turn back and help after a capsized. Very much the same with the big cave rope descents or through trips.

And a kinship as well, sharing the memories of the big kayak expeditions and keeping in touch with paddlers through their ups and downs. A fondness for partner dancing, taking a jolly good photograph, good humour and a touch of outrageous dress-ups, round off my criteria for Susan as ‘one of our own’ sea kayakers.

My crystal-clear memories of Susan involve sea kayaking, photography, dancing and her wonderful ‘dress ups’ on our Marlborough Sounds annual pilgrimages. Not long after joining our Kiwi Association of Sea Kayakers (KASK), Susan was elected to the committee and took on the presidential role from 2004 to 2007.

Photos:

Susan's stories, of overseas trips and local, featured often in the KASK magazine while her photos frequently featured as the KASK magazine covers.

Her stand out cover photos for me were of a night paddle through the canals of Venice (p.24), and several stunning night photos of the annual Guy Fawkes fireworks on Wellington Harbour (cover and p.20).



Susan receiving an award from KASK president Julie Reynolds for her four years as president of the Kiwi Association of Sea Kayakers. Ohope, 2008.



In recent years Susan took great interest in photographs of birds and beasts, on land and at sea, from black swans, to pelicans and a shark in Western Australia to Johnstone Strait in British Columbia and huge submarine like fine dorsal fin of a huge bull Orca.

Dancing:

Susan was a superb dancer, salsa, old time tango or jive.

From an early age, Susan accompanied her uncle Colin to big band dances where he was one of the band.

Kerikeri paddler Lynn Burson remembered a dance after a sea kayaker gathering near Whangarei, when a local big jazz band was playing. Susan was wearing a beautiful silver frock with a sprig of flowers. Lynn said the two of us on the dance floor looked magic. I remember the evening for when I needed a wee rest, Susan enticed Wellington paddler Conrad Edwards onto the dance floor. That took a bit of doing.

Pilgrimages:

We used to gather annually in the Marlborough Sounds for an annual KASK pilgrimage, a paddle out from Picton or Havelock to a remote campsite, where at 6:00 pm on the Saturday night, paddlers would disappear into their tents, to emerge resplendent in what the night's dress theme was. Dancing with the Stars, Superheroes, and even Vikings and Virgins. For this pilgrimage, the weather was so bad we ended overnighting in a caravan park, Susan dressed not as a sacrificial virgin but as a splendid Viking warrior, golden tunic and tassels, but her helmet had these massive horns that must have spanned night on three feet. Susan had to carefully slide in sideways through the caravan door due to massive horns.



Susan with her Viking Warrior tunic and helmet with a huge spread of horns



Susan and Paul fox-trotting at a wonderful night of dancing organized by the Northland Canoe Club. Susan in the beautiful silver frock that Lynn Burson remembered. Photo: John Hesseling

Antarctic Expedition 2017:

Susan was one of our expedition team for our last big paddling trip, down the coast of the Antarctic Peninsula.

The charter yacht skipper had told us of a good kayak friendly landing bay, but on our 2nd day of paddling, this bay was surrounded by vertical walls of ice and snow, which left us no option but to continue south. As the elder statesman of our group, I was paddling in a double, while Susan was in a plastic single sea kayak.

It was so cold, not just the near freezing sea, but the wind chill from a nasty gusting tail-wind. If one of us had capsized, and failed to roll it would have been all over quite quickly despite us all wearing dry suits. I have a vivid picture of Susan gamely paddling in atrocious conditions until we reached the sheltered lee of a bulky rocky island.

Susan was a gutsy paddler. She will be sadly missed.

compiled:
Paul Caffyn
6 October 2022

photos uncredited are by Paul Caffyn.



SUSAN'S NEW ZEALAND TRIP REPORTS

WANGANUI RIVER Downstream from Pipiriki

Wellington Anniversary 19 – 21 January 2002

by Susan Cade

The team was Susan Cade, Peter Williamson, Mike Coburn, Mike Wilkin, Wayne Stevens, Katja

We all met at Pipiriki late Friday night and slept in the toilet block shelter there, which had a large sheltered concrete floor. On Saturday morning the drivers dropped their vehicles off in Wanganui, utilizing a driver from the Rivercity Tours which did a great transport deal.

Opposite where we had camped was Captain Andy's house, built prior to 1885, which was handed over to the river scenic board, it is now known as the Colonial House Information Centre and Museum. It sells a reasonable selection of information about the river. However, the lady there did say that some Wanganui River guidebooks were going to go out of print. I personally wonder about how correct this is.

Also at Pipiriki are the deteriorating remains of the 'Ongarue', a river steamer built in 1903, and it once served the upper river. It is now up on a platform and you can see the way the screw was recessed into a tunnel under the hull, which meant that its vulnerable blades were not so damaged by rocks and snags.

I was amazed to see that the original site of Huddles Temperance Hotel, originally built in 1891 and replaced by the large Pipiriki Accommodation House, which was burnt down in 1959, now had a large deteriorating, partly constructed building on it. Apparently in 1990 work was started by a

Maori co-operative on a replacement building, caravan park and camping ground, and for some reason was abandoned.

After a look around we launched at the boat ramp. It was superb weather and we were shortly off downstream in the slightly high muddy engorged river, on a beautiful sunny day. That day we paddled from Pipiriki to Downes Hut just opposite Atene about 38 km.

We had wondered what the state of the river might be because we knew there might be some negotiation required around the remains of old training walls. These were generally built on the diagonal across shallow rapids, the walls reducing the channel width and giving greater depth of water for river steamers. There was clearly quite a number of them in various state of repair. They were built of hard-shell rock, and to run over a wall with insufficient depth of water could cause damage to our boats.

At low river levels they apparently nearly all show above the surface of the diagonal line. Also we were informed that there may be small breaks with displaced rocks lying just downstream. In fact on a few rapids, breaks were deliberately made and flood breaches enlarged and used as steamer channels.

The Regional Council now maintains the walls where necessary. However, with reasonably high river flow we were in luck, many of them were hidden, though we did keep them in mind as we used

the river guide to take the best route down river. This day we were interested in seeing quite bit of remnant bush, clearly areas that couldn't be farmed very readily.

We had interesting views of Jerusalem, particularly the Roman Catholic Church; St. Joseph's which a number of the party had visited on the Friday night. In the late 1800s a Roman Catholic Mission, a school, orphanage and farm were established here by a French Woman Suzanne Aubert, (Mother Aubert later founded the Home of Compassion).

The church and convent were built in the 1890s and the social welfare and catechist work started by Mother Aubert is still undertaken from here today. Also here was the commune led by the late James K Baxter in the 1970s. Up to 200 people dwelled in the commune which dissolved soon after Baxter's death in 1972. Nothing of it remains today

Next stop was an interesting visit to Kawana flour mill, built in 1864 (operated from 1854 for 50 years) and restored to its original state in 1980. The miller's colonial cottage was also restored and sited next to the mill. The mill is open at all times and had some interesting information and photos displayed, complete with water wheel and grindstone. It's well worth a visit.

We visited Moutoa Island, which is said to be a fragment of Taranaki, left behind as he fled from the central plateau. Scene

of a decisive battle during the wars of the 1800s fought on 14 May 1864, the Hauhau were defeated by the lower river tribes and turned from the purpose of 'driving the pakeha into the sea'. The memorial in Moutoa Gardens, Wanganui, commemorates the event. The surviving Hauhau were defeated again in the battle of Ohautahu, upstream of Hiruharama, at which battle the Wanganui chief Hoani Wiremu Hipango was mortally wounded.

From there it was a bit more serious as the weather wasn't quite so kind with a little rain and we were thinking about camping. We did take a walk up to a marae perchance to camp which seemed absent of people. Also looked at a known campsite at the mouth of the Ahauhu stream, on the downstream side but this proved too difficult and extremely muddy as well as a bit steep for landing. In the end it was down river to Downes Hut, and what a great spot.

We landed on a large shingle flat just downstream of the hut and it was a few minutes' walk back and up to the hut. The river in fact came up a bit that night so we were pleased to have tied our boats up high. Downes Hut sleeps eight on a communal bunk. There are beautiful views of the river.

Even though you can see the road on the other side, the river is broad here and there is no road access so it is very private. This originally used to be a historical private family hut, they say it is the best hut on the river. Apparently, there is an old steamer landing below it but I can't say I noticed this. We all enjoyed our stay there feeling rewarded for our effort and had a wonderful feed.

Sunday saw us doing about 25

km to Hipanga Park, an easier day. The river changed a lot on this run. There was a lot more open farmland and also big winding bends. We were fascinated with the Antene Loop, which is an old river loop now high and dry from the river. I would have liked to do the Skyline walk here which gives great views of Egmont and Ruapehu (an 8-9 hour walk) however the day was a bit cloudy.

Soon it seemed we were at Hipango Park. The Wanganui City Council and the Department of Conservation administer this.

There is a wonderful old steamer landing here with about four different platforms. It was fascinating to think what it would have been like in its heyday as it was a favourite for weekend excursions on the stern-wheeler 'Manuwai'.

There is a large camping area, big enough for sports games, a short walk up. It was full of meadow flowers and also had a large shed shelter. Plenty of tables and toilets (in various states of repair) also some hitching rings for horses. The area was also the site of the pa Potakataka and there is a short walk that is now overgrown in places where you can see some of the old fortifications. Once again, a very worthwhile spot, with easy swimming from the wharf.

Last day saw us paddling 29 km to Wanganui City. We had much contemplation re the tides and slow moving reaches on this part of the river, and timed it about right. Our first stop was at Kemp's Pole, which overlooks the mouth of the Kaurapaoa stream which tradition says was named by Kupe, the first explorer of New Zealand.

The pole was erected on the site

of the old pa Mataikai to mark the corner of a large block of land which Major Kemp (Te Rangihwinu) attempted to set aside as a Maori Land Trust in 1880. However, his efforts to save the land for the Maori people failed. The poles erected at the other corners of the block, which extended almost as far north as Waiouru, have long since disappeared.

This pole proved to be a really muddy stop with only three of us venturing through the mud for a closer inspection. Worth it though. We also paddled the long straight that was once used for the World Rowing Championships.

We stopped also at Upokangaro with hopes of a café treat however all shops were closed. We did have a look at the Church, which has a unique triangular spire on a square base, giving the impression of leaning to one side, then the other as you pass by. A senior local invited us in for a drink and showed us his collection of antiques and paintings.

Then it was a smooth down river run into the City of Wanganui and under its many bridges. With timely views of the restored paddle steamer 'Waimarie' a real picture with its steam billowing up and paddlewheels going. This was dug up forty years after its sinking, from the Wanganui River mud and was methodically restored. It now goes up to Upokangaroa with tourists and is often fully booked

For us it was an exit at local wharf and home. A great trip on the lesser paddled length of the Wanganui River.

Susan Cade



DUSKY SOUND

2001 - 2002 by Susan Cade (her photo above)

Wow! What a treat to express interest in a trip and get to go. This happened to me, and I was delighted, Dusky Sound here I come.

The Team:

Wayne Stevens – *Slingshot*
Jeanine Langvik - *X Factor*
Lyndsay Fletcher – *Sea Quest*
Sue Cade - *Looksha*

As background I had been reading anything I could get hold of on the area, and it was the richness of other's notes, the history

and remoteness that just delighted me. The Begg brother's writings and John Hall-Jones in particular I found most helpful (see reading list at end of the article).

In March 1773, on his second voyage to New Zealand, Captain Cook sailed 'Resolution' into a sound, but 'Dusk' intervened, hence 'Dusky Bay' was named. Since then other people such as Richard Henry who fought to protect the rich bird life and many others have left their mark.

Day One

We flew into Supper Cove from Te Anau, with Southern Lakes Helicopters, the four kayaks tied to the Jet Ranger struts. Richard our pilot was very knowledgeable about the area and also had special pinpointing search and rescue equipment on board for more accurate location of activated emergency beacons.

It was good to know that Richard was so experienced, as he checked which route to take through the intermittent cloud-covered tops and passes. He checked two passes before flying us over the third pass, which I think, was Centre Pass. Once over we dived down into clear views of the Seaforth River valley. Richard was deer spotting, as well as pointing out features on the Dusky Track below.

It seemed moments later, that we dropped down on a small grassed shingle flat just east of Supper Cove Hut. What a rush to unload and untie the boats. Before we knew it, we were on our own, surveying a mountain of gear and considering whether we could fit it all into our boats.

We ferried gear in our kayaks to the boat shed which is not far from the hut. Supper Cove Hut is a 16-man hut, with lots of room, sited on a terrace with a great view over Dusky Sound. Towards the entrance of the sound you could see the 400 m+ Duncan's Seat, a prominent cliff face. And yes, lots of sandflies welcomed us whenever we left the hut. Gradually I felt myself connect with the beautiful surroundings. We were finally here.

Day Two

With a new dawn, a very glassy sea beckoned me. Ah! A magic paddle, watching a lone shag

slumbering, on a dead tree trunk protruding from the water and being at one with the tranquillity. I paddled up the Seaforth River as far as I could and up some of the other small streams, such as Henry Burn.

By the time I got back to the hut, the rest of the party were getting organised to depart. With a struggle we managed to get all our gear on board, including utilising the top of the boats.

We headed out from Supper Cove paddling around Girlies Island, which started with a passage through a crack which had created two vertical sides a few feet apart. Soon we started seeing the first of the many beautiful waterfalls that would grace our trip.

Then across to Nine Fathoms Passage and into Cooks Channel to a good lunch spot just east of the entrance to Fanny Bay. After that there were many moments of discussion about camping choices, as with an increasing headwind we paddled west, hugging the shore. We in fact continued along Cooks Passage, eventually past Cascade Waterfall and into Cascade Cove. Boy did I need a break by the time I got there. Over a 30 km day and all afternoon with a headwind.

Cascade Cove is wonderfully sheltered and steeped in history. There are some great-established campsites with readily available water. The trip routines were established, and also the various styles of managing the sandflies, be it Wayne's use of hair fly spray, or insect head nets.

From here we also saw some fantastic views looking north-east over prominent peaks. The lighting effects at sunrise and sunset were just fantastic.

Day Three

Christmas Day we had an exploratory paddle, venturing out and around Indian Island. We visited Indian Harbour via an almost completely concealed narrow rocky channel. This small harbour that was used by Maoris, was close to where Captain Cook first met Maoris in 1773. We didn't explore by foot, however on a high vantage point, I gather there are the remains of several Maori hut sites.

We then circled around the northern side of Indian Island, sea conditions remained calm so we paddled between the Seal Islands. Then we headed west to pass through the narrow passage between Crayfish Island and the mainland, through which Captain Cook took the 'Resolution' ('Scarcely twice the width of the ship') into Pickersgill Harbour.

We first saw the Brass plaque that Begg brothers had placed commemorating Cooks visit, and then entered Ships Cove. 'Resolution' was moored there for a month in 1773, where the ship was worked on and a small brewery made to brew beer from rimu, and manuka tea was made. It was magic visiting Astronomers Point; here Cook's astronomer fixed accurately the position of Dusky Sound and New Zealand. You can still see the stumps remaining from this clearing. There is a protective boardwalk around this site and a lookout platform.

As the others headed back to camp, I took the opportunity to follow quite a good track following Cook Stream to Lake Forsyth. A magic quiet spot completely enclosed by bush and ridges. A welcome moment to read my book for a little and just be. Potential here for really peaceful camping. This lake has been re-

corded as having New Zealand native trout. Paddled about 12 km today.

Day Four

With calm weather we broke camp, to head up the Acheron Passage. Lyndsay had acquired a white plastic seat, which he added to his deck load, nothing like paddling with camping comfort. It actually made Lindsay's boat a lot more visible from afar

We paddled between Indian Island and Long Island, east along Bowen Channel, eventually crossing to Resolution Island. We had lunch just north of Passage Point. It did look feasible to camp here with a bit of effort. From there it was north along Acheron Passage. There are some great waterfalls along this stretch and as we came out of the passage we had an impressive thunder and lightning storm. All except Lyndsay hugging the shore with some muttering about the potential of being a lightning focus out in the wide-open passage.

As we turned into Breaksea Sound it was pelting down with rain. I can recall just being delighted with the pattern of rebounding droplets on the sea's surface. It would be just so hard to capture the magic on film. We camped at Beach Harbour. Good spot here, just to the true left of a stream. We had plenty of open grassed space, and even had a good meat safe we used to cook in, away from the rain and sandflies. About a 35 km days paddle. By the way, Breaksea Sound was originally explored by Cook and named 'Nobody Knows What'.

Day Five

We headed east along Breaksea Sound enjoying the waterfalls and then had the delight of a pod of friendly dolphins. It was just

amazing what paddling power the rest of the party had in the chase. Myself a plodder at the rear missed the moment, but what glee for the others, with the cavorting of the dolphins. Chatham Point was impressive. It is a 935-metre cliff face that divides and commands the head of the Sound, with Vancouver and Broughton going off on either side. About 1791, George Vancouver in the 'Discovery' and Broughton in the 'Chatham' they explored 'Nobody knows what' and converted the name to 'Somebody knows what' and the two arms were named. We made camp in a prominent bay on the true left of the entrance to Broughton Arm. The tidal flats here were big with a good stream just south. About a km up this stream I gather there is an impressive waterfall. The afternoon adventure was a paddle to the head of Broughton Arm; there are two very impressive river valleys here, both with good potential for tramping and camping. 32 km today.

Day Six

For once, no moving of camp and we had a day trip exploring Vancouver Arm. More magnificent country. Today I had my best dolphin moment. At the front of the party, the dolphins were jumping and where I paddled, I had them swimming under me, belly up, riding the bow wave and within touching distance. Lyndsay caught two cod on the way back. This was another gorgeous day. We paddled up a beautiful, significant side stream towards the head of the arm, that could well have been a magic campsite if time had allowed. 30 km today.

Day Seven

Time to retrace footsteps now and we headed back. We had a break at Sunday Cove, where Richard (the helicopter pilot) had an ex-

navy boat moored, which was complete with helicopter pad, solar panels, great accommodation and all the trimmings. There also was a fisherman's barge, which didn't impress us, as there was an open bottomed long drop over the side and a lot of rubbish on the shore where we stopped. I gather that the accommodation hut is built on a moored fuel pontoon and the roof also doubles as a helicopter pad. We stopped on a small beach on the true left, where we found a lot of fisherman's rubbish.

After this we had a relaxing paddle to the entrance of Wet Jacket Arm. More time spent enjoying waterfalls and seeing dolphins cavorting in the distance. The prominent peninsula that looks like an island at the entrance of this sound, isn't, but is worth a look around. Tucked in behind it, on Wet Jacket side is Stick Cove and Stick Island. This cove made a very pleasant campsite, with a little bit of establishment time. 24 km worth today.

Day Eight

One of our longest day paddles to the head of Wet Jacket Arm. (40 km return). This also has some wonderful camping opportunities with some good river flats. However one highlight here was about the elusive moose hunt. Some background first. Canadian moose were introduced into Dusky sound in 1910. This was the second attempt to introduce Moose to New Zealand. Southwest Fiordland with its high rainfall and precipitous terrain, by some was judged to be a crazy choice, as they believed the environment wasn't conducive to their survival. However the moose were released in Supper Cove. Four bulls and six cows that had been hand reared, in Canada and then quarantined on Soa-

mes Island. When the ten-month-old moose calves were released, some actually returned to their crates and had to be tipped out. Over the years there have been a few shot. Ken Tustin did a lot of research about the moose. There seemed to be some evidence that the last moose was shot in 1971.

Over the latter years, there has been ongoing interest and evidence about moose still being in the area, particularly from camps based in the Herrick Creek area. In fact Tustin made a television documentary on his search. Wayne got to meet an enthusiast who was based at Herrick Creek. The moose researcher shared that he grew nuts and some people thought he was nuts. He spends 40 days every summer here and had for the last 30 years, in his search for moose. He clearly knew the area well and spoke of sending evidence such as hair away for analysis. Certainly a wonderfully isolated area to retreat to.

Day Nine

We paddled with a following sea down the Acheron passage and this time we went alongside Resolution Island and into the entrance of Duck Cove. Just inside this on the western side there is a very sheltered harbour. There is a helicopter pad here and also in the bush we found a fisherman's net, creating a corridor in the bush...a bit of concern for the animal life. We had lunch and talked about camping, but we weren't totally taken with the spot. The camping conversation continued, as we paddled on, and just before Fixed Head, there seemed to be potential for camping in a sheltered harbour. However there didn't seem to be any readily available flat sites, so in the end Lyndsay headed back directly to Cascade Cove. The rest

of us took the opportunity to paddle across to Luncheon Cave on Anchor Island.

Luncheon Cove is very sheltered, with fresh water. It is protected by the Many Islands, approximately 25 islands, all steep and bush clad. This was where in 1792 the first European house was built in New Zealand and the first ship was built in Australasia. From 1795 there were 35 people, who had stowed away in the 'Endeavour', who spent two years marooned here. In fact around this time there were 244 people in the Sound, more Europeans than anywhere else in New Zealand.

The area was also like stepping into a tropical paradise. Just very sheltered and peaceful. Sea conditions were wonderful and we met and had a chat with the crew of a French yacht, that was anchored among the little offshore islands. There was also the noise and a momentary glimpse of fur seals.

Then it was back to Cascade Cove once again with a following sea. En route we had good views of Five Fingers Point (Cook named this, due to it looking like a large hand rising from the sea) and I felt as if we could have paddled out to open sea. It was a bit disconcerting to also see a very large cruise boat exiting Dusky Sound. Richard later told us that about 35 ships visit the area a year, paying large amounts to do so. This traffic has occurred since the sea floor has been mapped accurately. café A surreal sight really, when you feel that you are really miles from anywhere and having a wilderness experience. En-route back I loved looking through the magic clear water at the sea life. Great diving country. About 36 km today.

Day 10

A long awaited rest day for some in Cascade Cove. I went for an early morning paddle to explore the cove further. Twas magic, the fish life and the signs of human habitation to contemplate. I spotted an old sealer's boat run, the smooth path of about five feet wide extending into the water with larger rocks piled to the side. There was a fisherman's barge and also a local yacht 'Breaksea Girl' that commercially cruises in the area. Quite a sight seeing it sail out of the cove in the still morning.

After this I did a couple of walks, one to see if I could find the historical Maori cave and the other, to climb up behind the campsite, to get a view. Both proved interesting. The former proved elusive but it was interesting to imagine walking on some of the vantage points, as to what it may have been like to live here. Some Maoris had lived in a natural cave which had an exit climb inside it, going up to the top of the cliffs, providing a good natural lookout. The bush, for doing a climb, heading towards the tops, from behind the campsite was relatively easy going, but due to overcast conditions I didn't go that far.

Day 11

We paddled along the southern side of Long Island. Just before East Point, paddling through a narrow channel - at high tide, makes East Point into an island - which led into the Bowen Channel. By this time the sea was flowing strongly towards Sportsman Cove and we spread out a bit. Racing into Sportsman Cove with a following sea, I felt like a rat going down a drainpipe, and wasn't too happy about this decision, I certainly didn't fancy coming out in the same strong sea. Once we cleared the entrance we

were fine. Sportsman Cove has a very narrow entrance between prominent cliffs, into a large very sheltered harbour. It was just as well that we camped here for the night until the sea calmed some. There were some good bush camps near a prominent stream. We were entertained again with another good thunder and lightning storm. About 20 km today.

Day 12

Sportsman Cove to Supper Cove. Fortunately the sea was much calmer and we managed to get out of the cove smoothly. It was interesting to consider that on the other side of the channel, William Doherty lived for many years. He started prospecting here from 1875, working in the area for about 20 years looking for minerals, mining asbestos and copper. Also he had hoped to find gold.

When we got closer to Supper Cove, Lindsay clearly got the scent of the hut and was off, the rest of us paddled into Shark Cove for a look-see. It was quite different. I paddled up a stream and went for a little wander and the sheer amount of moisture and rich water saturated vegetation was beautiful.

This time, Jeanine and Wayne headed off to check out the Seaforth River and it was my turn to paddle into Supper Cove Hut. A journey almost completed. A 24 km day.

Day 13

The day looked wet and claggy with low cloud over the head of the valley. We packed and walked our gear to the shingle flats and waited, half thinking that we were sure to be staying longer. But with lights shining, the helicopter flew in on schedule and before long we were saying adieu, carrying all our memories.

The struggle for some of the party was too many good days for paddling, though the weather had some variety most days, a mixture of rain, sunshine and wind at times. In actual fact we kept exploring more and more because the weather and sea conditions graced our stay. Hence approximately about 280 km paddled.

We had a mountain safety radio schedule every night, which Lyndsay kept. I carried an EPIRB and took it on my more extended walk. We saw or spoke to three fishing boats, two yachts and one cruise boat.

Overall on my wish list is another visit to see more of the historical points and the hidden lakes and climbs. Particularly around Richard Henry's work. Let's face it I didn't want to come home! Thank you Wayne, Jeanine and Lyndsay for having me along.

READING LIST

Dusky Bay

In the Steps of Captain Cook by A.Charles Begg and Neil C. Begg, 240 pp, published 1966, reprint 1968.

Richard Henry of Resolution Island by Susanne & John Hill, 364 pp, published 1987.

Fiordland Explored

An Illustrated History by John Hall-Jones, 148 pp published 1976.

The Fjords of Fiordland

by John Hall-Jones, 171 pp, published 2002.

The first three titles will only be found in either libraries or secondhand shops.

At the annual gathering of sea kayakers for the 2005 KASK AGM weekend at the Outward Bound Anaikiwa, our guest speaker was David (Crocodile Winky) Winkworth. He is flanked by four gorgeous members of the KASK committee. From left, Iona Bailey, Cathye Haddock, Dave, Susan Cade (president) and Helen Woodward.

Missing committee members: Sandy Ferguson and Paul Caffyn who took the photo (not as gorgeous).

One of the few photos I have with both Cathye and Susan in the same picture



‘A Walk In The Park’ Lake Te Anau to George Sound and Return Xmas 2012 by Sandy Winterton - featuring Susan Cade

For years Susan Cade had wanted to do a trip in the Fiordland National Park, a trip that involved kayaking, portaging and tramping from Te Anau and George Sound and back. I had weaselled every time so far, drawing on an extensive range of excuses. However, we had done more of my style of holiday on our last few travels, so I foolishly agreed to go.

I am no trumper. I do not like walking and when I do go, I suffer innumerable agonies, complain constantly and become clinically depressed. Agreeing to go on this trip was the first of a series of mistakes on my part.

Susan, however, was looking forward to the trip and did her usual detailed research, including dust-

ing off a trip report on the route by Stan Mulvany that she had been guarding for years.

At noon on Christmas eve 2012, we were underway. We left our car at Te Anau Downs Lodge - a week's supervised storage for the price of a few hours at a parking meter. We had a decent paddle ahead of us - across the main lake, up Middle Fiord, then North West Arm, followed by a portage to Lake Hankinson. Susan thought we would need to unload our boats and carry them with a second trip with our kit in packs. I reckoned we would be able to drag the laden boats over the grass between the lakes and plonk right back in. Lake Hankinson is about 5 km long with a hut at the far end, but I thought we could make it to the second hut, arriving at about 7:00 pm. These were my second and third mistakes.

In reality, Lake Te Anau, in glorious sun and dead calm, took way longer than we expected with all sorts of photo stops along the way. Susan was learning a new camera and it was the perfect day to practise. Arriving at the far end, we unexpectedly had to wash down our boats and gear with DoC provided detergent for didymo prevention.

The portage was not over the lawns I had imagined. We spent two hours unloading and carrying boats and packs over a steep forest trail. Lake Hankinson was treacle slow and the first hut had

Susan on a glorious fine day in Middle Fiord on Lake Te Anau the edge of Fiordland - en route to George Sound.

Photo: Sandy Winterton



been washed away by floods - or so we thought, until we found it an hour later, just a few metres past the point that we decided it could not be upstream of.

While Susan scoured the bank for the hut, I kept a myriad sandflies entertained. They had heard we were on the way and had a good reception party organised. We finally arrived at Hankinson hut, just as the late southern dusk closed in. One of us was in a secretly grumpy mood at our slow progress, as one of my schemes had been to get it all over with quickly. However, festive goodies revived the spirits and we collapsed, exhausted.

On Christmas morning we left our boats and a load of kit at the hut and began tramping. An easy romp along Wapiti river lasted all of 500 m before a three wire bridge. Susan was out of practice, and edgy, and urgent trembling of the foot wire telegraphed the state of her nerves. The section to the next bridge was more taxing. There was scrambling over rocks and windfall trees to negotiate. At the second bridge Susan adopted a different technique

and the wires pulsed to a happier rhythm. I thought the track would improve from this point, which proved to be another error of judgement. The sign had said 2 ½ hours, but it took us a full hour longer to cover the 2.5 km to Thompson hut. The track was difficult as it wove over huge moss-covered boulders with fallen trees throughout.

Boulders were placed carefully just far apart enough to let a foot halfway down before the gap tapered, nipping the boot. Walking poles were a hindrance and had to be stowed, as hands were needed for clambering over rocks and logs. A brief respite while we paused and took a gander at a gaggle of Canada geese going about their business.

Eventually we reached the second hut, left a food pack there for our return and enjoyed a glorious lunch in the sun by a roaring waterfall on the Wapiti River. I thought the afternoon would go better – bad mistake. In fact, this was where it started getting tough.

The trail from Thompson hut up to Henry Pass was almost fright-

ening. I had never done such a track. It follows what in rainy weather would have been torrential watercourses up the steepest possible terrain. Snails smirked as they overtook us. It was so tough I even stopped griping.

The track had been pioneered by Richard Henry, New Zealand's first great conservationist. I imagined him striding along with the easy lope of a bushman. He'd be wearing a tweed suit and hobnail boots. On his back a couple of kakapo in wooden crates strapped atop his knapsack. He'd be talking to them in a soft brogue, telling them not to fret and that they'd soon be in their new home, and on the flatter sections he'd be whistling jigs from the old country. He'd be looking forward to a fish supper when he got to the coast and remembering the rock from which he caught a fat blue cod on his last visit.

After the steep stuff there was what appears to be a mercifully flat section on the approaches to Deadwood Lagoon. However we soon wished we were back on a slope because the ground was a semi-liquid and we were con-

Susan's photo of Sandy Winterton on a gloriously calm day on Lake Te Anau





Susan Cade on a gorgeous day in Middle Fiord of Lake Te Anau. Photo: Sandy Winterton

stantly meeting boggy sections. Any particular bog could be an inch deep or knee high, there was no way to tell. The planks of death was a series of 40 some decomposing split tree trunks laid decades ago over particularly deep bogs that tested our balance and nerves. We were getting tired, and beginning to make mistakes. Susan, in a lucid moment, noticed a spot that was level and dry enough to pitch the tent, and so we camped. Ecstasy.

During the day, I had been brewing mutinous plans and scheming ways to abort or curtail the expedition, but they needed a bit more time to ferment and timing would be critical.

“Well, what do sandflies eat when we’re not here?” We realised that there was no hope of ever answering this question, as it was only possible to find out by being there to check, thus defeating the aim of the experiment. Like quantum physics, observing what happens changes the outcome, so the mystery remains unsolved. Instead, we loitered with in the tent.

The forest was weirdly bereft of animal life. In the whole trip we

saw a few wood pigeon, weka and finches. We heard a handful of kea and tui, shining and long tailed cuckoo. One lonesome tomtit and a couple of fantails visited us. We saw plenty of tracks made by deer, pig, possum and stoat but saw nary a land beast. Trout there were aplenty, and according to the hut books, easy to catch. I’d assumed there would be kiwi, but we did not hear a single call over five nights in the bush. In such a huge wilderness, this apparently tiny amount of vertebrate life seemed sad.

The track was very well marked, with orange arrows sometimes only 10 metres apart, and it was usually possible to see the way ahead easily. We fell for the trap of following some arrows that were pointing to the side, only to realise the tree they were on, had fallen and they had originally pointed ahead. If we did get off track, it was usually obvious within a few metres. Only at a few bare rock areas did we have to search for the route and then we would soon find a happy orange triangle smiling at us. A great job done by DoC in this respect – it was tough enough with good marking but without, it would have been a nightmare.

Within 100 m of getting underway next morning, the trail crossed the river but the marked route was too dangerous to climb down, on slippery rock, so we waded thigh deep to start the day. The level ground didn’t last – before long we were scrambling almost vertically up a dank gully which led to Henry Pass. As altitude increased, bush turned to scrub with different species predominating. Underfoot were only roots and rock, just damp enough to keep everything good and slippery. As we approached the saddle, clouds scudded through from the coast and at the very top a pristine white moth welcomed us to its domain.

We had a brief stop by the tarns on the saddle and examined the flowers. Mountain Daisy and other flowers were interspersed with the yellow blooms of Maori Onion. We raised a mental toast to the good Richard Henry himself. The pass is at 830 metres. Susan was thinking, ‘It will be brilliant to finally get through to the George Sound’. I am thinking, ‘If we were daft enough to go down to sea level, there would be 830 metres to climb back up’. My carefully presented bait to Susan to suggest that reaching

the pass was a great achievement and that now we should turn back was completely disregarded. She has wanted to do this trip for years and her earlier attempt had been thwarted. The lady was not for turning. On we went.

The next section crossed the bare rock of the saddle then the track dived down an extraordinarily steep gully which we christened Henry's Crevice. It combined the features of a labyrinth, an assault course and a greasy pole. Next, a flatter section where we left the tent and a load of kit to lighten our loads. A wise move, suggested by tramp mother. We hung a bag of food so that no pests could get at it and carried on. I had thought Fiordland had not been penetrated by possums but we heard one on the roof of Hankinson hut and saw their prints in the mud.

A section of track criss-crossing a beautiful creek, another steep downhill and we spied below us

Lake Katherine – last milestone on our route. As we descended, we had good views of the surrounding terrain. It was unbelievably steep, scarred by landslides, with hanging valleys and craggy tops towering more than a vertical kilometre above us. The forest on the opposite bank of the lake was in places tinged darker by the southern rata, their red flowers in full bloom.

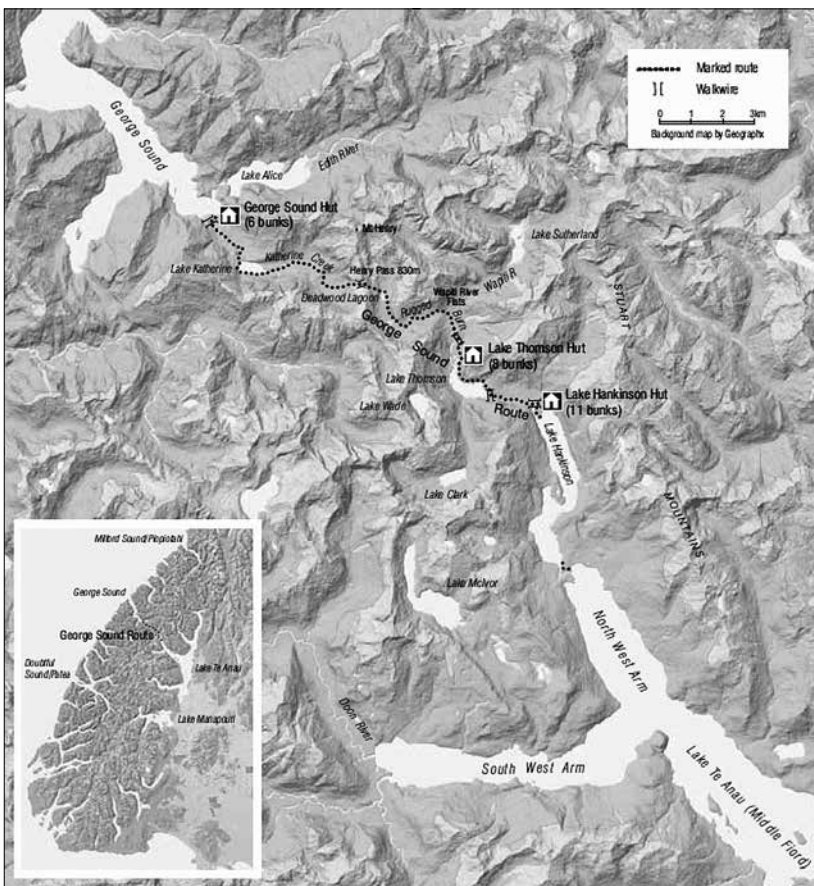
Surely now we would just potter round the lake's edge then stroll down the stream to George Sound. This track had a way of shattering every dream. The potter took three hours to cover a couple of kilometres. There were several huge slips, the newest still harsh and bare, with the first tiny ferns just beginning to grow in cracks. Huge beech trees, tumbled and shredded, lay jumbled along with the smashed rock. The older slips were greener, but steeper and harder to negotiate, and the track climbed many times

to get above difficult ground. At several points there had been recent windfalls meaning big detours, tricky climbs through prostrate branches or balancing along a fallen trunk.

Leaving the lake, instead of sauntering down the leafy river bank, we inexplicably had another grueling climb high up over angular mossy boulders strewn haphazardly, and the last leg took another age to complete. The track had been made by a madman with a broken compass and seemed to wander at random. By now I had finally worked out that every steep slope was actually a slip in some stage of self repair in what is an endless cycle. The first lake we skirted, with so much hardship, had been a mature forest growing from the boulder fields of ancient slips and that's why the going was so tough. I was learning the hard way.

We crossed the Katherine River at last and headed through a final section of bush until we could see the welcome sight of the George Sound hut and the gleam of the salt water that had been our goal. We had made it to the West Coast.

The hut was bliss. My feet, wet for almost 12 hours, looked like albino prunes and enjoyed their freedom, oblivious that they were only on parole. We perfected techniques to keep sandflies out and lazed away a day in recuperation. The hut book indicated that it gets a fair bit of use. People mainly arrive by boat and float-plane and it is the most frequented of the huts. It had some fishing gear and a library of books. Susan gathered mussels which were a tasty entrée to our evening cook up of home dehydrated beef curry. It would have been nice to have stayed another day, but we had already had a Fiord-



land record of four successive dry days. Heavy rain would have made much of the track dangerous or impassable, so we loaded up again, glad of reduced pack weights. Was knowing what was in store for us was a good thing? We weren't sure.

My strategy was to be positive, put one foot in front of the other and imagine that it was easy - and it worked. We got back to the tent, packed it and the other gear, then carried on.

On the way back, we paused at different places; a postcard waterfall on the Katherine Creek, an ancient landslide where the only thing that flourished was lichen with old cairns so encrusted they looked like weird sea creatures, a bog where all the trees had mysteriously died, a stream of bright orange ooze, whereas all others were clean and weed free.

At Henry Saddle, a helicopter was exploring the ridge lines and we waved a cheery greeting. Deadwood Lagoon was named for the ancient tree stumps poking out of the water, each of which had a decorative bonnet of colonising plants. Rugged Burn, the stream that runs into the lagoon was crystal clear and the water delicious. Over aeons, it has deposited masses of dead tree limbs to one area. They are barkless and smooth, tumbled and washed by the waters, and look like a pile of discarded antlers.

We used our previous campsite once again, and dozed off to the rustle of a squillion sandflies on the tent, sounding like light rain. In the morning the noise was still there, but this time it was drizzle.

The journey back was just as hard, with bodies showing a few signs of wear but holding up well.

We used walking poles on the planks of death this time, which was a great help, particularly now that surfaces were wet and even more slippery. We had a break at Thompson hut and lit a fire which warmed the bodies and rekindled our spirits.

In Fiordland terms, it had been so dry since we'd passed through, that the level of Lake Thompson had dropped over two metres, and instead of the arduous track, we walked through mud and water round the lake's edge for a good way. A big brown eel as fat as a farmer's forearm thought the toe of my boot was the head of its long lost cousin and was very keen on making further acquaintance. We discovered that eels can swim backwards, but not as gracefully as they would probably like.

The final sections passed mercifully quickly and at last we spied Hankinson hut. Within an hour of getting there, the rain came on properly. And how. With gale force winds, it lashed so hard all evening we wondered if we'd be able to finish the journey the following day.

But we had luck on our side. The rain and wind eased. We paddled Lake Hankinson, did the portage more efficiently and had a tailwind down Middle Fiord. As we emerged into the main lake, we had half metre waves from astern and now similar ones coming from right angles which had some interesting effects on the boats. Later we heard that section of lake is notoriously difficult in wind.

We were almost home when Susan noticed a movement on the edge of her hat. A caterpillar had stowed away during the portage and for 20 km across the lake, it

had been endlessly circling the brim. This was not your everyday caterpillar that crept along on its belly, but a handsome brown one that progressed by looping itself into a high and graceful arch, and which did a good impersonation of a stick when it thought it was being watched. It became known as the 'haterpillar', and was treated with the sort of care a seasoned mariner deserves, photographed in detail, and set free to frolic among the vegetation of Te Anau Downs.

After seven days away, we got back into Te Anau on the evening of 30 December and treated ourselves to a cabin for the night.

One of the fun things had been reading the entries in the hut books. Many of them were from hunters. The area is home to wapiti - huge elk so sought after that there is a ballot to allocate the limited hunting permits. Someone had made it all the way from George Sound to Thompson hut in one go and had written, '10 hours - not bad for a couple of old codgers with artificial hips'. Not bad indeed - it took us half as long again and we camped part way. One party had lost their EPIRB, and left an address for anyone finding to send it to. Remarkably, the next party found it and said they'd post it on. Another group had been at George Sound hut when an earthquake struck and aftershocks continued for three hours. We thought of the tremendous new slip nearby at Lake Katherine and wondered what if...

Few people, it seemed, did the track both ways - most got transport to or from George Sound. For non-kayakers it's possible to omit the paddling altogether by getting a water taxi from Te Anau, and a second one across Lake Hankin-

son, and yet even this reasonably accessible hut had only had 12 parties logged over the past year. Henry Saddle near the midpoint of the journey would not play host to many visitors. We saw not a soul in seven days away, in peak season. Someone who'd been holed up for a few days waiting for a break in the weather wrote that he'd rather be eating a 'Miles Better' pie in Te Anau. On the strength of this recommendation, we found the shop and sampled their wares. Best pie ever. If you're ever south of Blenheim, it's worth the detour.

The tramp from Hankinson hut to George Sound had taken us 18 hours, and about 20 hours to get back, which we'd done over two days for each direction with a day off between. Either side of the tramping was a paddle-portage-paddle of 25 kms, ½ km and 5 km.

The best thing about the trip? From Susan's perspective, a long held desire assuaged and a week in the wilderness. From my point of view the best points were that I learned a lot about tramping in a short time, and I would never have to do this track again.

This is not a trip to be taken lightly. While I am a tramping duffer, Susan is very experienced at this level, and her impressive bushman ship was necessary.

We were very lucky with weather. A couple of days later Fiordland got almost half a metre of rain over three days. I recalled a recent trip report I read in a magazine where, after a serious incident during a well equipped group trip, the first two or three EPIRBs set off failed entirely to function. It makes yer think.

The annual November paddling pilgrimages to the Marlborough Sounds were a grand excuse to catch up with distant mates at a campsite in Queen Charlotte Sound, and an excuse on the Saturday night to don costumes for the dress up themes.



Susan's auto time 'groupie' photo of the pilgrimage paddlers, assembled with inflatable 'toys' of all shapes and sizes. Dominated by Max Grant's emperor penguin.

Marlborough Sounds Paddling Pilgrimages

Ratimera KASK Paddler Gathering 2016 by Susan Cade

It was my delight to attend the KASK paddle out to Ratimera. There was a gathering of 19 keen paddlers from around NZ, from as far afield as Auckland and Christchurch, some doing extended trips before and afterwards.

Myself and my paddling companion, German paddler Christian, paddled out after arriving on the Friday evening ferry from Wellington and a walk to the launching spot on the foreshore at Picton, finally starting to paddle at 9:30 pm. I must admit that I love paddling at night, to me it feels as if you really have the sea to yourself and it seems much more an intimate remote experience. Particularly when your own lights don't disturb the ambiance and you are working with natural light. This paddle was a joy.

Starting off with me being startled with having a fish jumping over



Nora Flight watched over by Max Grant's inflatable penguin
Photo: Susan Cade

my boat and getting caught momentarily between my arm and body when we had barely started the paddle. From then on we saw a few jumping fish and our boats occasionally getting hit by one.

There was beautiful phosphorescence on the sea as a result of the bioluminescence of organisms on the surface layers of the sea. The luminescence of these organisms is stimulated by mechanical irritation, such as movement of the waves and the collision with our kayaks and collision with other organisms, or it can arise due to a flash of light produced by nearby organisms. It was a delight to see the liquid bright luminescence breaking over our boats and rich glowing syrupy arcs of dense light. It would be a delight to catch that on camera.

To culminate the memorable moments we struck a busy shipping lane. I haven't ever seen it so busy in the early hours of the morning and yes it did cause some consternation when a large lit ship was clearly concerned about our presence and blew their horn at us and then shone their search light on us as we moved well out of their path on to the Tory channel side of Queen Charlotte Sound. A real indication of the critical importance of having a VHF and being knowledgeable and being able to interpret the navigational lights on boats at night. I must admit Christian was more skilful on the latter than I.

After that I was nervous about crossing the shipping lane and my speed as I observed another barge in Picton direction that I

imagined was heading in our direction, then I realized that it was one that was anchored in the channel out from Picton that we had passed earlier. From there it was looking for the right silhouettes at night and navigational cues to guide us to Ratimera to finally get some kip.

It was a delight to catch up with paddlers I hadn't met before and familiar paddlers at Ratimera, in such a beautiful relaxed setting. We had a great gathering and swapped stories on the Saturday. With a contest about our blow up toys, and we didn't let up there as we had John and his inflatable kayak. Max's Emperor penguin was a big hit, for which he had acquired a foot pump to inflate. It was long overdue for an outing; Bevan brought a dolphin that I gather taking a holiday from their home pool - and my contribution was a small green frog.

The penguin won the day. It did get up to mischief visiting other campers' tents, and staring in photo shoots. As you can guess, many stories were exchanged, ideas and sharing of future adventures, examination and sharing of paddling gear and boats.

We all left camp as our schedules demanded; some to stay in the Sounds longer, others for the ferry. On my way back with Christian I was delighted to do a brief underground exploration of a mine I had long wanted to get into. Meanwhile Max took a group to look at a historical Karaka Point Lookout and Maori pa site, which will be on my hit list in the future.



Susan, most elegant in her steam punk dress ups costume



Dancing with the Stars

Opposite right top: Susan with Genghis (AJ) Khan

Opposite lower: Dancing with the Stars - David and Diane Morgan, Melanie Grant, Susan and Sandy Winterton

Vikings and Virgins





WELLINGTON HARBOUR FIREWORKS

November 2014

By Susan Cade

Sandy Winterton and I were pleased that it was a good forecast to enjoy the big annual fireworks display in Wellington Harbour. We made an early start, in minimal wind in our double Sisson Voyager so we could have a picnic tea beforehand. When we got to the main viewing positions area in the city harbour, there were many sailboats and motorboats already jostling for prime positions.

We decided to have our picnic on a convenient floating diving platform, which was conveniently not being used and there was no competition for this. Due to the speed limit, there was also little in the way of nasty wakes that could have upset our sojourn. The raft, had the asset of a ladder and did provide a bit of a damp platform. We were lucky to have the *Helinox* chairs and table that gave us a dry place to eat - being careful that the chair legs didn't slip between the slots. A great dining spot as we watched the sun gradually go down and noticed the steadily increasing throng of boats and onlookers.

This year there were very few sea kayaks. We spotted three other groups of kayaks other than us - much quieter than we expected on such a calm night. We had a paddle around the fancy new apartments on Clyde Key wharf, feeling surprisingly at peace as we were away from the congestion of the crowds. Smelling the waft of food and spotting some of the entertainment on the land. Small surf rescue boats were monitoring craft close to the crowded wharf. The water was

so calm with very few boats in that area and it was well lit. But I thought a pretty risky thing to do. You would only have to have one boat not seeing a head that is pretty small in the water and it could be serious injury.

We then positioned ourselves between the harbourmaster's boat and a large launch, with an unobstructed view of the big event. We only had one request from the harbourmaster to move further back. I had hoped to get a sea kayak or two to photograph, but no luck tonight. The other boats and just about all the other big boats were well back from the front row, including all the sea kayaks.

We wondered if there was some rule we didn't know, but we held our ground, being respectful of the rule (300 metres away from the fireworks launching raft). I just love the wonderful intimacy of the front row as in the quiet of the harbour - you lose any sense of the rest of the onlookers and you feel as if you are the only ones enjoying the amazing vista.

So in peace, we watched another spectacular fireworks display, this time 12 minutes worth. Synchronized with a sound track on the radio, which each year I never get organized enough to hear. There were however wonderful reflections, with the slight smoky haze, due to it being such a still night. Many rockets of fireworks being shot into the air that burst out into shapes and many star bursts.

Special times at moments included a sky falling with cascading gold bursts, smiley faces was a new one. Streams of colour, being shot up from the launching raft, then appearing to burst in the sky and cascade down into the sea. With the accompanying crackle and explosions we are all familiar with.

Afterwards the sea was even flatter, the slight breeze having dropped further, a smooth paddle back to our launching spot, no traffic jams for us. With more smaller fireworks displays going off all around the harbours as well a few from the boats.



SUSAN'S NEW ZEALAND TRIP REPORTS

A photo essay of a paddling / tramping trip to Port Pegasus on the south-east corner of Stewart Island - Summer of 2005/06



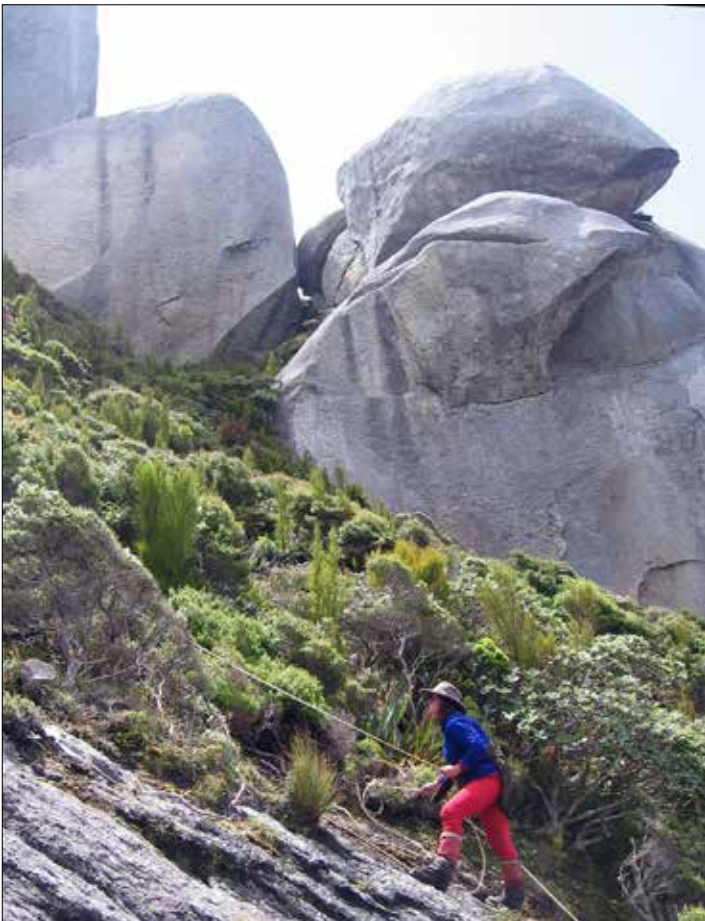
A sea lion - "This is my beach!" - on the beach in front of North Pegasus Hut. Photo: Susan Cade

Susan and the sea lion keeping a wary eye on each other. Photo: Douglas Flux





Susan paddling into a freshening north-westerly chop, in Port Pegasus, with the granite peaks of Gog and Magog on the skyline. Photo: Douglas Flux



Susan the Trampler.

Upper right, the thick scrub bash up to the granite slopes of the skyline peaks of Gog and Magog.

Upper left, Susan on the handline, with the solid granite tors in the background

Lower left, at last clear of the scrub.

Photos: Douglas Flux



SUSAN OVERSEAS

A Venetian Adventure by Sandy Winterton - featuring Susan Cade

Susan Cade and I are in the Italian Alps, and about to drive south. While New Zealand shrugs off the shortest day of 2011, we are getting in some outdoor activity ahead of a family get together, during which the hardest exercise will be lugging the shopping to the car. Yesterday was spent exploring corkscrew tunnels dug high in the Dolomites during the Great War, but today we head to the Adriatic for an escorted kayak tour of Venice.

Having camped outside the ski town of Cortina, we have breakfasted and packed early, ready to drive to the city of canals. Europe has made a mockery of our travel plans a few times already, so we allow plenty of time. The tunnels and bridges of the motorway would bring a tear of joy to the eye of a civil engineer, and we make good time through the mountainous north. With only a breakfast stop at a village and brief foray for maps, we check in at 'Camping Venice'.

Despite our early start, things are almost running late and the tent goes up in record time. Car parking is so scarce in Venice that the only guarantee is a note from the Pope, so we catch a perfectly timed bus into the city. With one eye on the clock, we prowl the street vendors' stalls in the Piazza and explore the nearby canals, cramming a day's touring into an hour. A 'vaporetto' water bus plunges us into the melee of floating traffic which has the maritime equivalent of taxis, boy racers, trucks, ambulances, and bad drivers, over all of which the gondoliers hold sway.

We disembark at 5:30 pm on the island of Certosa and head to the hotel garden to meet René – the somewhat mysterious and sometime frustrating organiser of our tour. There have been erratic emails with her/him over the last few days, but it's all a little bit uncertain. We are not totally sure that the trip is on and are relieved to see our names on the list.

Over the next hour or so, other travellers arrive and we swap tales. The group is four couples from across the world. René turns out to be a strapping Danish fellow, who speaks fluent Italian and excellent English. He's been running the one and a half man company for several years now. He has a couple of dozen surprisingly good sea kayaks in his fleet tucked away between the hotel and a mosquito farm. We select a plastic double, don the spray skirts and lifejackets provided, and pack a few things into the dry bags supplied.

No safety talk, no instructions; just into the boats and away. As René's assistant will not join us until later, he asks us to be tail end Carluccios. Luckily everyone can manage their boats, and the group stays fairly close together crossing the main lagoon, heading for a low slung silhouette looking like a cross section through a squashed hedgehog. It turns out to be San Michele, the cemetery island. The spiky profile is hundreds of pointy cypress trees growing between the graves. We thread a gap between the island's ornate church and a recently erected solid metal barrier. Stone buildings on sinking

wooden piles are not a happy combination with rising sea levels. During storms, waves lash the delicate church so hard that this ugly protective wall has been installed, hopefully on a temporary basis until something more appropriate can be built.

As the sun starts to dip, the group heads across open water, this time towards the city. A modern sculpture floats in the lagoon depicting Marco Polo telling his old man that he's heading east, and not to keep his supper warm. We pass beneath the first of a billion bridges and into the canals. The gondoliers are out in force taking passengers on tours of the city. The prices they charge seem impossibly high to us, and we learn that some aspect of their trade induces amnesia. They are self employed and apparently most of the cash payments they receive for their services are forgotten when it comes to doing the tax return. It's probably the hats.

We paddle on the right in the wide canals, but move to the left in small ones. René explains that the single oar of the gondola is always wielded to starboard, and the gondoliers must not get too close to the canal side, as contact between oar and wall would mean loss of steering and composure. They swap as they enter the narrow reaches to keep their oars towards the centre of the canal.

René uses a Greenland paddle which he had made by one of the local gondola oar makers – a choice which, along with his good Italiano has won him respect among the local boaterati.



As we approach each corner René calls out to warn oncoming craft of our presence and he exchanges pleasantries with the gondoliers as we pass.

René leads, and like a family of ducklings we follow, listening to snippets about canal life and glad of his local knowledge – navigating without him would be a nightmare. Our track would have made an interesting GPS plot as we weave a complex path, not knowing where we are headed next. One moment we are on a deserted backwater and the next we are on the Grand Canal, with restaurants lining the banks. We absorb the unique atmosphere and the diners nearest the water wave as we pass. We scoot down another side canal and turn a few more corners as if to shake off anyone trying to follow.

René pulls up to some steps to a small piazza and gets out. On disembarking, one of the newbies manages to separate boat from bank, and takes a dip. Somehow we have not been told that there's a stop for a meal. We dine on spaghetti, the cost and quality of which would make a Pastafarian blush.

This interlude is to allow the sun to set so we can continue in the dark, and despite the price of the meal, it's worth it. Everyone dons head torches forward and light sticks abaft. An accomplished Aussie paddler tries a seal launch down the stone steps but has insufficient momentum. His stern jams on the bottom stair and his boat turns turtle. To everyone's delight he gets a spectacular dunking which he takes in good humour. Refreshed by this incident, we slip into the night with the canals almost to ourselves. The houses crowd right up to the edges of the waterways, and we

occasionally peer in at families sitting down to their ravioli.

Over recent decades, Venice has cleaned up its act a great deal and the water is not as grim as it used to be. As we are at sea level, there is no elevation to assist with drainage, and many areas seem hardly to be connected by land. How the sewerage system works in these circumstances is a mystery best left unplumbed. Is there a tangle of pipe work beneath the canals and pumps hidden away in old brick buildings? Perhaps Venetian plumbers arrive by boat and come armed with wrenches, mask and snorkel.

René owns up to surprisingly few difficult moments during his guiding days. He relates the story of a couple who booked him for 5 days and who turn out to be a very ample lady and her autistic teenage son, neither of whom had paddled in their lives. The first day started badly and it all seemed to go downhill from there.

René reckoned in four or five years he had only had half a dozen capsizes which we found hard to believe, bearing in mind the two incidents in our little group. However he is good company and since Marco his part time assistant has showed up, Susan and I are freed from rear guard duties. We scamper ahead then stop and get in everyone's way while the ship's photographer snaps away, trying out her splash proof housing for the first time.

Silently paddling the canals at night really is a delight and we navigate a circuitous route, savouring the experience. There's not a breath of wind, and with only stone and brick buildings lining the canals, sound is unmuffled and reflects from all

surfaces. Evening noises of uncertain origin entice us further into the labyrinth. We continue cruising and absorb the evening essence of Venice.

The tour goes on and on...and on. It is meant to finish at 10:30 pm, but it is after that time already and our destination is nowhere in sight. We are getting nervous. Our homeward journey leaves little room for delay. The last boat from Certosa to our vaporetto stop is 11:30 pm and the latest boat from there to our bus station is at midnight, arriving in time for the final bus to the campsite.

Things are getting a bit tight and we are still in a maze of tiny canals. Eventually we emerge back into the lagoon, twitchy by now and keen to get a move on, but the rest of the group is relaxed, weary, and going slowly. They are staying at the hotel on the island and feel no urgency. Headlights sway as tired paddlers cross the lagoon at water snail's pace.

We arrive late and miss our ferry but René gets us the hotel's water taxi. We climb aboard and head away, piloted by a teenage lad who knows the canals inside out. He takes a short cut to the vaporetto stop where our hopes are resurrected by being only five minutes late which, in Italy, effectively makes us early. We heave a sigh of relief and await our boat. We check every arrival, even at other nearby quays. The night wears on, and the interval between water buses increases as they drop their yawning passengers and head away. Not a movement for quarter of an hour. Ours must have gone. We're stuck.

We decide the best thing to do is to find a cheap hotel and stay over, catching an early boat tomorrow. Then, a familiar burbling noise,

and a lurching silhouette comes alongside. It's our vaporetto – 40 minutes overdue and just as we had given up hope. We thank our Blessed Lady of Lateness and hunker down for the long ride to Piazzale Roma.

Once there, we find the last bus has gone and there are no taxis. The vendors are tucked up in bed and the only people around are restaurant workers heading home, vagrants and us. We wander round the deserted bus stands, hoping this will somehow fix things. Two taxis arrive but we get fended off by a fierce looking local whose voluptuous wife and bulging brood take over both of them.

“How do you make a Venetian blind?” The schoolboy answer is “Poke his eyes out,” and we're tempted to try it, but the cabs depart before we get a chance. Again the place is deserted and we wonder what the night will hold for us.

Eventually, a miracle taxi appears, and takes us back to the campsite. The driver repels our attempted conversation. He tells us the only Inglese he speaks is Campeeng Venice. We forgive his late night surliness and would have voted for him as Europe's best cabbie. Back at camp well after 2:00 am, we're exhausted but grateful to be there at all.

The guided kayak trip is recommended. The vagueness of the booking was a bit frustrating, but we were tenuous about dates ourselves and did not pay in advance. Placing a firm booking would have brought more certainty. Like any group trip, the experience depends on the members of the party, and we were lucky in this respect. Our original intent had been to hire kayaks and explore Venice on our own,

but there is nowhere that will hire boats for unaccompanied use. While this seemed ridiculous when we were planning the trip from New Zealand, in hindsight, with the nature of the waterways, their traditions and traffic, it is probably all for the best.

The cost was high in NZ terms – about \$400 each, but Venice is one of the world's expensive cit-

ies and you only do this trip once. It's an experience to see the city by the normal means and doubly so from a kayak after dark. The lack of safety was amazing, and we had a feeling that if there's a serious incident of some sort, which seems quite possible, Venice Kayak will cease to ply the canals.

More details at:
www.venicekayak.com



Johnstone Strait - British Columbia - Canada 2015

A tale of beauty and concern

by Susan Cade

I had been hankering to visit Johnstone Strait at the top of Vancouver Island for a long time and I finally got four days of paddling in August 2015, on a fully catered, guided commercial trip with North Island Kayak Company. The clients were two adventurous retired couples and myself.

My preference is for more wild free-spirited paddling, so on this trip I chilled out, focusing on the wild life and particularly enjoying a couple of early morning solo paddles. Conditions were calm water and the weather fine. We just came in from our trip before a wet weather spell hit the area. Memorable moments included close encounters with orcas, humpback whales and Steller sea lions

On a very memorable early morning paddle, I was delighted to meet a 'gang' of 12 Steller sea lions on the side of Blackney Passage. It was magic to see them pottering around the shore line; magic to see their puffs of moist warm air as they breathed noisily out, and the occasional louder growl in the early morning light. The sea lions appeared to be just hanging out, in their element, and tolerating me as I followed them around with camera in hand.

There was a scary moment when the sea lions rose out of the water, to get a better look, or appear more powerful, like an assaulting line of soldiers. I think the male, when particularly flashing a large red mouth and teeth, was very intimidating and he made me feel, very vulnerable in my kayak as I headed towards them.

I was well aware that if they chose not to be friendly, even a nudge could be serious and I would be in the water. Writing this, I recognize I didn't think of the potential consequence of a sea lion attack, if this occurred. But as I was in the grip of the moment they kindly dived under and to the side of me. What a relief!

Shortly after this, a Humpback whale rose very close to me and then, when I thought it would be well away, rose again a very short distance past me and did a tail flick (a very gentle lob tailing) as it headed towards Johnstone Strait. That was my closest encounter with a humpback whale. We often saw them far away, with their spouts of spray.

The other main encounters were with orcas, which we would see from a distance with their exposed fins, and when lucky when close at hand. We were spoiled by the number of whales we saw.

I found videoing was the most effective capturing photos of the wild, fast-moving marine life. But it was a privilege to see the wildlife so close. Even more so, as I appreciated the environmental issues these animals are living in. So, I thought I would share some details about them and the difficulties they are facing.

Steller sea lions are also known as the northern sea lion, a near threatened species in the North Pacific. The naturalist George Steller, first described them in 1741. They are the largest of the eared seals. Females growing up to 350 kg with an average of 260 kg, and males up to 1,120 kg with

an average of 540 kg. The young pups stay with their mums up until four years old. They eat on average the equivalent of 6% of their body weight in food each day. Pebbles and stones, up to 12 cms in diameter, are commonly found in their stomachs. Scientists aren't certain whether they are swallowed by accident or if they serve a useful function, such as to help grind up fish, act as ballast when diving or ward off hunger pangs when they are fasting on shore.

Steller sea lions were hunted for meat and other commodities by historic communities where their range intersected with human communities. Aside from food and clothing, their skin was used to cover 'skin-on-frame kayaks (Baidarkas). A subsistence harvest in the order of 300 animals or less, continues to this day in some native communities in Alaska. They have great whiskers. In the 19th century, they were sold for a penny apiece for use as tobacco pipe cleaners. The main reason for killing Steller sea lions today was by fishermen as they have been seen as competitors, and a threat to the fish stock. They have had little commercial value.

There has been an unexpected decline in Steller sea lion numbers over a large portion of their range in Alaska. Possible causes of this include parasites and disease, increased predation by orcas, nutritional stress caused by natural and or human induced changes in the abundance quality and distribution of prey. The 'junk food hypothesis' representing the shift in the Steller sea lion's diet from fatty herring and capelin to leaner fare such as



Steller sea lions look so intimidating and threatening when they close on a pod of paddlers. Photo: Susan Cade

pollock and flounder, thereby limiting the Steller sea lion's ability to consume and store fat.

Other hypothesis include indirect prey species composition shifts due to change in climate, meteorological changes (frequency of storms) pollution and toxic substances, entanglement in marine debris and incidental and intentional take by man. What is heartening, is that their numbers have increased in Alaska and they have come off the US endangered species list over the past several years, although that is not the case in others places.

Humpback whales as adults are

about 15 metres long and weigh about 31,600 kg for mature females, while male humpbacks are a bit smaller. They can live up to 40 - 50 years, they cruise at 4.5 to 14 kms per hour, dive for usually about 15 minutes, but this can be up to 30 minutes. Their singing can be heard up to 20 miles away.

Water spouts can be up to four metres high. The Humpback whales were following the krill, small shrimp-like crustaceans, and various kinds of small fish (ideally the adult eats up to 1,3400 kg of food a day). A humpback's mouth has a series of black 270-400 fringed overlapping plates (about 76 cm long) hanging from

each side of the upper jaw (they don't have teeth), they take in large volumes of water and food into the mouth because the pleated grooves in the throat expand.

As the mouth closes, water is expelled through the baleen plates, which trap the food on the inside near the tongue to be swallowed. The plates consist of a fingernail-like material called keratin that frays out into fine hairs on the ends inside the mouth near the tongue. The Humpback whales mainly feed in the summer and live off their fat when they migrate and winter in tropical waters.

Orca or Killer whales, great hunters, are the largest of the dolphins and one of the world's most powerful predators. They grow up to nine metres, to up to 5,400 kgs. They can live from 50 - 80 years. The northern resident group, which is the significant group here, gather in the Johnstone Strait area to socialize, interact, and visit the rubbing beaches of Robson Bight and feast on the numerous runs of salmon that must pass through Johnstone Strait, on their way to spawning grounds in the south.

Orcas live in small nuclear and extended families that are called pods, clans and communities. The core of this is the Orca mother and her children (the maternal group), even her adult sons, stay together throughout life. If a mother is alive and she has no surviving sons, she too may be found swimming with her daughter and grandchildren. Adult daughters who have their own offspring may separate from their mother to some extent in order to take care of their children's needs, but will usually be found travelling nearby.

Susan's chart with the various paddling days in different colours





Susan unperturbed by her closeness to this bull killer whale. Photo: R Schrey

There are 34 matrilineal communities totalling a few more than 200 members in the northern resident community. The whales inhabit an ocean area that has a north-south dimension of about 500 km, taking them from northern Vancouver Island to the south.

Their favourite diet is fish, exclusively salmon in the summer, employing teeth that can be 10cm long. The orcas usually make 3 to 4, 15 second dives, then a dive that lasts 3-4 minutes, repeating this pattern, usually cruising at about 8 km an hour.

On a positive note, because of this amazing habitat there is sig-

nificant research going on in the Johnstone Strait area. The main Orca Lab is located on Hanson Island at Blackney Pass and is perfectly located for reception of radio signals from Johnstone Strait and Blackfish Sound, two of the most important areas used by the whales.

There is also a network of remote hydrophone stations that allows the scientists to listen to underwater sounds in an area of about 50 sq km around each station. This covers most of the orcas core habitat where they spend most of their time in the summer and fall. The orcas sounds are so detailed that family groups and individu-

als can be identified. They also have a video station on a nearby island at Crackcroft Point, underwater cameras at fixed locations and another land observation site on Hansen island. As well as operating a research boat.

At night and during the day we could often hear the orcas vocalizations: clicks, whistles and pulses. Orcas are very social animals. Even if we couldn't see them, their sounds travelled such a long way - we often could hear them.

What I took away from this trip and research is that I want to spend more time in this beautiful area and confirmed my commitment to look after the environment. Affirming also that this is a very special place to visit, with absolutely amazing wild life, that is seriously being affected by the impact of humans contaminating the environment.



The big male killer whale closing on Susan's kayak in Johnstone Strait. Wouldn't that get your pulse racing? Photo: Susan Cade

February 2017 - the Antarctic Peninsula



Susan in the double with Bevan Walker. Photo: Diana Galbraith



Celebrating our safe arrival at the Argentine Island, the site of the northern BGLE base hut. From left: Geoff Murray, Susan Cade, Conrad Edwards, Paul Caffyn, Bevan Walker, Diana Galbraith, John Gumbley



Susan at the head of Edwardson Inlet, in Chalky Inlet, Fiordland where the brown water from Lake Cadman mixes with the sea. 2005 Photos: Paul Caffyn





Above: Cathye Haddock's lovely photo of Susan, with her distinctive brown hat and glow stick, at sunset on 9 September when closing on Picton after returning from Blumine and Long islands in Queen Charlotte Sound - the day before the Kaikoura nature photography charter next morning:



Susan Cade 31 May 1959 - 10 September 2022