

No. 85 February - March 2000

THE SEA CANOEIST NEWSLETTER



Chris Duff with adoring fans at Rapahoe Beach, prior to launching enroute to Westport.



Chris passing the editor's house at the 12 Mile, on 24 March 2000.

**The Journal of the Kiwi Association
of Sea Kayakers (N.Z.) Inc. - KASK**

KASK

KASK, the Kiwi Association of Sea Kayakers (N.Z.) Inc., a network of New Zealand sea kayakers, has the objectives of:

1. promoting and encouraging the sport of sea kayaking
2. promoting safety standards
3. developing techniques & equipment
4. dealing with issues of coastal access and protection
5. organizing an annual sea kayak forum
6. publishing a bimonthly newsletter.

The Sea Canoeist Newsletter is published bimonthly as the official newsletter of the Kiwi Association of Sea Kayakers (N.Z.) Inc.

Articles, trips reports, book reviews, equipment reviews, new techniques, letter to the editor, and moments when the word 'Bugger!' was said singularly or often {referred to by some as incidents} are sought to enliven the pages of the newsletter.

Send in a plain brown envelope, or via cybermail to:

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KASK BADGES

Canterbury paddler Rod Banks produced a badge of a paddler and sea kayak from solid sterling silver, with KASK NZ engraved. The badge can be permanently or temporarily affixed to hats T shirts, ties, evening gowns or dress suits but not dry suits. And the badge is appealing to the eye. Size is 23mm long by 11mm high.

Price is \$15 plus \$1 P+P, and available from the KASK Secretary, Helen Woodward.

LRB2 - KASK HANDBOOK 2nd. Ed.

For a copy of this mother of all sea kayaking handbooks, contact KASK Secretary Helen Woodward:
82 Hutcheson St.
Blenheim

email: h.woodward@xtra.co.nz

COST:

New members: gratis
Existing members: \$10 + \$1 p&p
Non-members: \$18 + \$1 p&p

Make cheques out to KASK (NZ)Inc
Trade enquiries also to Helen.

THE LRB2, or the Little Red Book 2nd. Edition, is a mammoth compilation on all aspects of sea kayaking in New Zealand, by many of the most experienced paddlers in the Universe. Following a brief introduction, the handbook is divided into six sections:

- Kayak, Paddle & Equipment
- Techniques & Equipment
- The Elements
- Trips and Expeditions
- Places to Go
- Resources

Each section contains up to nine separate chapters. The Resources section, for example has chapters on:

- guide to managing a sea kayak symposium
- Paddling Literature
- Author profiles
- Guides and Rental Operators
- Network Addresses
- Sea Kayaks in NZ listing

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EDITORIAL

There was comment in the media some time ago of the age of adventure having shuffled off the mortal coil. The adventures are still proceeding but with little acknowledgement or coverage by the media. Waikato farmer Clinton Waghorn has completed the first stage of a remarkable solo Alaskan paddling mission. In 1999 he set off from Prince Rupert in northern British Columbia, and paddled north through South East Alaska to Skagway. Transporting the kayak and equipment to the head of the Yukon River, he paddled downstream to complete the first stage at the river mouth in the Bering Sea. And North American paddle Chris Duff is well on his way to completing the second solo South Island circumnavigation.

CHRIS DUFF

Chris Duff has certainly experienced his fair share of ups and downs during his South Island solo circumnavigation. And this bloke writes from the heart. His account of the stint around Fiordland is riveting reading, and I'm sure he has more than enough material for a sequel to 'On Celtic Tides'.

The night that Chris's arrival at Milford featured at the tail end of the 6pm TVNZ One news, the late evening news featured breaking of a story that Chris's kayak had been smashed on a beach north of Milford with a helicopter rescue. Next morning Chris rang early to enquire about having his boat repaired or the possibility of borrowing a boat. The full gory details plus Chris's adventures since Dunedin, have been compiled off his website by Sandy Ferguson, with the most recent update after Chris surfed into Rapahoe Beach north of Greymouth.

Re the website address, several paddlers have emailed with difficulty accessing the site. The original address was correct but unfortunately it has been changed to:
<http://www.goals.com>

Once around Farewell Spit, and clear of the trauma of dealing with open West Coast surf beaches, Chris hopes to spend a little time both at Abel Tasman National Park and in the

Marlborough Sounds. Chris anticipates finishing before Easter and hopes to attend the KASK Forum at New Brighton, Christchurch.

BUGGER FILE

Compiler of 'Bugger!' file report, Cathye Haddock has included a few learning incidents from the Wellington area. At the recent Auckland Coastbusters, I heard related several 'Bugger!' moments, two of which resulted from the need to pee. Please take the time to pen any moments when the word 'Bugger!' or worse has been uttered and mail to Cathye at 1/18, Avon St., Island Bay, Wellington.

KASK FORUM

Planning is well advanced for the Easter 2000 KASK Forum at New Brighton, Christchurch. Paddlers need to book their own accommodation at the South New Brighton Motor Camp. And registration is necessary for catering. Please get in touch with:
Peter Sullivan
7 Monowai Crescent
Christchurch 9.
Ph: (03) 3883 380
email: dsullivan@xtra.co.nz

COASTBUSTERS 2000

Over the weekend 17-19 March, Coastbusters was held at Puriri Park, Orewa, on Auckland's north shore. The ASKNET red team organized superb weather for a pleasant change from previous years, and I thoroughly enjoyed myself. Friday night's slide sessions included the trip by David Herrington and Max Grant around Stewart Island, and the first viewing of Donna Hammond and Ross Hickey's trip around Stewart Island.

Workshops filled next morning and early afternoon and a great swimming pool demonstration of paddling strokes, rolls and rescues rounded off the afternoon. No one fainted during the Greenland slide show that evening, which was followed by a great nosh. The caterers commented that although only 100 paddlers were seated, enough tucker had been consumed for 150!

On Sunday 81 paddlers took to the water for a BBQ lunch on Motuora Island. A great weekend.

NEW ZEALAND TRIP REPORTS

SOUTH ISLAND SOLO Chris's Duff's Journey from Dunedin to Bluff

Compiled from Chris's website by
Sandy (Alex) Ferguson

Jan 14: I am sending this from the library in Invercargill - the boat sits on the beach at Bluff 20 miles away - no Internet connections in Bluff. There has been so much that has happened since I last emailed you from Dunedin. I paddled out the harbour and spent a day at the albatross observatory, which is right at the headlands. It is fantastic to watch the albatrosses fly, and to learn a bit about their life cycle. Now when I see them out on the sea I know that they are either enroute back to the nests with food for the chicks on Taiaroa Head, or indeed, they are heading off for a year to circumnavigate the Southern Ocean - not to land again on firm ground until they return to their nest site. It is a rare and special thing to see one of these giants floating so effortlessly on the wind current above the waves with their 10-foot wingspans and an ability to fly 500 kilometres in a day.

I left Taiaroa Head on the ninth and camped that evening on a little beach just ten miles around the coast of the Otago Peninsula. I saw some Yellow Eyed Penguins coming out of the surf as I was landing. They come ashore every evening and nest in the tussocks and dunes. I crept along the shore and photographed several pairs as they ambled higher into the dunes - I can only hope the photos come out as well as they looked in the viewfinder. This was a most memorable camp as there were sea lions just fifty yards from my camp and a penguin colony on the other end of the beach. My tracks of pushing and pulling the kayak up the beach were not that different from those of the sea lions and the penguins.

The next day there was a fair swell running - six-footers with occasional

eight to ten-footers. I made it all the way to St. Kilda's Beach, which is on the south end of Dunedin and the terminus of the Otago Peninsula. I was very tired and did not really want to run the surf, but I had no choice. As soon as I started to come in, I realised immediately that I timed the swells wrong. A huge boomer was closing in from behind at a fast clip. I spun the boat around and managed to spring over the crests of the waves.

At one point the boat was completely airborne as it exited the seaward side of the waves. As they say it here in New Zealand, "I sussed it up again and had another go of it". I turned around as quickly as I could and started in again. At first everything looked good, but then I heard the roar of another monster coming up behind me. There was nothing to do but to try to run it out. The wave caught me and immediately threw me over. I am not sure if I did a complete end-over-end or what really happened. All I know is that after a seemingly very long time of getting stuck in the world's largest washing machine, I hit my roll and was heading out to sea again. Then another wave wiped me out, but my roll worked again and I eventually surfed on to the beach. I have since been doctoring a compressed eardrum from the pounding, but other than that, all is well.

The next day was one of the finest I have ever had on the open sea. I have been thinking of how to describe best this type of exposed paddling. It is more than simply paddling a kayak on the sea - it is ocean kayaking at it's very best and it's greatest. I left St. Kilda's beach and headed off shore for the day. The forecast was for northwesterlies at 15 to 20 knots. Five hours into the day the seas were six to eight-footers and the boat was surfing the waves like an ocean going yacht. I thought of how Karen Thorndyke must have felt crossing the Great Southern Ocean in her yacht Amelia. It is amazing to me, even after all these years of paddling, how well a kayak deals with big seas. It is something I would love to see on film.

I came in at Kaka Point to resupply

and got a double scoop of boysenberry ice cream, then paddled out to the Nugget Light house. Beautiful arches and a low thick swell out of the south-east. The Nuggets mark the start of the Catlins, a very rugged and beautiful coast of massive sea cliffs and golden beaches. I camped that night at Cannibal Beach. Later I asked some locals about its name. They said the beach got the name from the human bones that were exposed by the sea erosion. It is doubtful that it was actually the result of cannibalism that the Maoris are known to have practised.

The Catlins is an area that one could spend a lifetime exploring and not see everything. Unfortunately, I don't have enough time to explore everything. My schedule is dictated primarily by the weather forecasts, on the basis of which I can decide when to paddle and when to sit tight. The southerlies that have been a bit of a problem since the first days are still with me. It is only when they weaken, or indeed shift to the north quarter, that I can make any headway. My only hope is that these same winds will not shift to the north when I need them most on the West Coast.

I am here in Bluff for a couple of days of rest and to resupply for the next big step of the way - into the Foveaux Strait. Then I'll be heading for Puysegur Point, which is the biggest obstacle of the entire trip that I must overcome. I can only attempt rounding the headland if the winds and seas are relatively calm. There are only a few places where I might be able to land before I get there and turning back is not an attractive option. My plan is to leave the Bluff area in the next couple of days and head for Riverton for the last food resupply and when the weather looks good, and I have a fair weather report, I'll make the attempt at Puysegur.

There is a very good weather station in Bluff that keeps the local fishermen informed of incoming weather. A lady by the name of Mary - who I have been listening to every day on the VHF weather channel - will be my contact for the next 50 or so miles. I was told by a fellow in Bluff that,

“You’ve got to check in with Mary and she’ll keep the boys looking after ye”. After that, because of the height of the mountains in Fiordland, radio communication is limited to contacting fishing boats I may see and getting an update from them in terms of the weather.

I am roughly half way into the journey and feeling as if I am approaching the very best of the trip. I also feel like I have earned the right to 'attempt' Fiordland. This first 800 miles has been a very good training ground for what lies ahead. The weather problems have not been insurmountable, but have honed my skills and readied me for what is just around the corner. I have mixed feeling of excitement, caution and eagerness to see what surely is one of the most beautiful coastlines in the world.

Jan 20: Chris has left Bluff and he is now on his way to attempt the most difficult passage along the South Island coast, from Riverton to Preservation Inlet. There are only a couple of places before Puysegur Point where landing may be possible, and even there, the surf could make it very difficult. The map suggests that the west end of Te Waewae Bay, near Port Craig, could be a potential landing and camping site. Beyond that there are a couple of river deltas where he might be able to take refuge: at the Wairaurahiri and the Waitutu Rivers. Chris was told about an old, abandoned schoolhouse, about 20 miles West of Riverton, where he was planning to hold up until the weather is favourable for the big push to Puysegur. Chris will be able to stay in radio contact with Mary at the Weather Service office until he rounds Puysegur Point. That will be a big help, because Puysegur can be treacherous in a Southwest gale. Once he passes the Point he will have no problem in finding safe landings in Preservation Inlet.

As I get closer to this point of departure for Fiordland, I am encouraged by what the locals tell me - they have had excellent weather for the past month, very few gales and a lot of light winds out of the south and south

west. That is exactly what I need. They have warned me that it is the wind out of the Northwest that I have to watch on this coast. Of course this is a shore wind on the west coast and one that apparently kicks up as rapidly as a southerly on the east coast.

Mary advised Chris to contact the fishing boats in the area by VHF. “She has given me names of the captains and assured me that they will do everything they can to help. It is all a very closely knit community of seafarers out here - the conditions breed a tough lot of fishermen but also a need to look out for one another and help as soon as there is a need. This is true worldwide and I am always encouraged by the assistance I get from the “Pros” who are there working on the seas that I am simply attempting to pass through. All the fishermen I have met are captivated by the kayak - the apparent vulnerability of the boat on one hand and the obvious survivability on the other. They shake their heads in amazement and are quick to offer whatever advice or assistance they can. It seems they want to be a part of the journey.

Chris will have limited opportunity for contacting us during his passage around Fiordland. We are hoping that while he is in contact with Mary, somebody will Email us the latest news. We have been lucky this way and want to thank all those who took their time to inform us about Chris’s progress and sent us pictures. Barbara Fisher wrote us: “Two friends and myself were out visiting Riverton Rocks today and we saw this guy camping on the shore with a kayak beside him. Alison thought he could be the chap kayaking around NZ. that she had heard about while holidaying further North. He was. We were delighted to talk with him and take some photos which I am sending on to you. He was feeling so happy with himself after having this wonderful crossing around Foveaux Strait”. Those pictures are terrific, thanks very much Barbara!

SOUTH ISLAND SOLO Chris Duff’s progress to 22 February 2000

Compiled off the website by Sandy (Alex) Ferguson

Progress Report - Riverton to Milford Sound

I left Riverton on Jan 25th. A SE breeze - very rare - paddled a 40 mile day taking advantage of the wind and the slight following sea. Made it almost to Port Craig, but ran out of energy and landed at the mouth of the Hump Burn - three foot surf - and happy for it because anything bigger at that point would have been a struggle.

From the Hump Burn I pushed pretty hard for the mouth of the Waitutu River - this coast is not a place for leisurely exploring or poking around - lots of offshore reefs that break up to a mile out. I kind of threaded my way through the reefs all day - keeping a sharp lookout and avoiding the dark areas ahead that marked the shallows. Six to eight foot waves but clear blue skies that make a passage like this so much easier. Very clear water - easy seeing the bottom at 20 feet. Got caught by one reef break and got buried in the wash - lost my glasses but stayed upright and very sharp eyed after that - a bit of a wake up call. Made it to the mouth of the Waitutu River - a feeling of having passed half way along the gauntlet to Puysegur.

Woke the next day to calm winds and blue sky again - couldn’t believe my luck. Headed off for Gates Harbour. Had a visit by a Royal Albatross - a truly fantastic sight to have such a massive and graceful bird glide over me at 30 feet!! Then some amazing arches and some pretty technical paddling to get inside one of them at Green Islets. All of these experiences are so packed with details that I will have to share later.

Just before pulling into Gates Harbour I came around Long Reef Point and saw the wreck of the 'Duze' - a thirty five foot fishing boat that got

caught by a wave and was thrown on the rocks in early December - all three fishermen survived but had to be rescued by helicopter. Came into Gates Harbour on Jan 27. A perfect natural harbour safe from everything but a direct southerly blow. Large swells breaking on the reefs to either side of the entrance but deep water in the channel leading to the cove. A bit unnerving to have three-metre swells exploding just yards away yet smooth running swells beneath the boat.

That evening I got a weather report - good winds predicted for the attempt to get around Puysegur but only for the morning - high winds predicted by late afternoon of the next day. I had wild dreams of the Puysegur during the night - it has weighed heavily on my mind for weeks.

Left Gates Harbour by 8am on the 27th. My first view of the point was almost surreal - couldn't believe I was almost there and felt as if the point was just teasing me with this fine weather and at the last minute would turn into the terror that it is so well known for and send me racing for cover. But I was absolutely elated and near wild with joy as I approached the lighthouse! Clear skies, the first hint of a northerly, and a fair sized 2 metre swell rolling against the base of the headland. Numerous shearwaters were circling and diving for fish around the boat and suddenly an albatross on ten foot wings, gliding in from open water as only an albatross can - silent, elegant and so graceful in its steep banked turns. A perfect day for rounding the point.

Within three hours of landing at the old supply shed for the lighthouse and walking up to the lighthouse - the winds had built to 25 knots out of the north. Once again the forecast had been right on. I didn't know it at the time but the winds would blow from the north for the better part of a week - winds that went from 25 to 30 to 45 knots!

It is nearly impossible to share everything that happens on a journey such as this - all the little things that make up the day of a traveller - the penguin sightings, the small trickles of a wa-

terfall that winds its way through the bush to emerge in a thin delicious cool stream, the thick thundering falls twenty miles up Long Sound that creates its own winds, the evenings spent at "The Lodge" in Preservation Inlet with Jeff the caretaker, listening to Mary on Bluff Fishermen's Radio checking in with all the crayfishing and tuna boats and hearing her tell the boats to keep an eye out for a yellow kayak heading north.

I spend the time writing in the journal, waiting for the weather and watching the days slip by, aware that Feb 7th, the date Sam, Martha and Gay are due in at Supper Cove is fast approaching. The weather and winds are oblivious of my need to keep moving. Only thirty or forty miles away and yet it may as well be a thousand.

Feb 3: Made it around the Gulches into Chalky Sound - a short little paddle, but the sea looked as though it could swallow a hundred foot ship and never miss a beat in its relentless hammering of the headland. A brilliant rounding of the exposed headland beneath dark black skies but a perfect rainbow out to sea - ten and twelve foot swells some breaking over the cockpit in the confused waters of the rebounding waves off the rocks. A place and time where it is so essential to stay focused on the immediate threats and not get blown away mentally by the huge scale of everything. It's one stroke at a time - four feet of measured pulling at a time - catch a surfing ride for twenty feet of speed then back to the slow and deliberate grind of moving the boat past the booming of swell on rock - maintaining the inner focus while all around there is seeming chaos.

In fact, there is nothing chaotic about it at all - it is simply the Tasman Sea rolling in and meeting the Great Southern Ocean on the shores of New Zealand. It is a perfect harmony of nature at its wildest that I am fortunate to witness momentarily. A moment that leaves one so humbled by the raw, savage and beautiful power that no man can rein in and control. I am a visitor just as any boat that ventures around these headlands.

Spent two days waiting for the winds in a Department of Conservation hut on Chalky Island. Winds on Puysegur are 40 to 45 out of the north. I am stuck and resigned to not making the meeting with my shore crew in Supper Cove. I am unable to contact Mary by radio to let them know that I am stuck here. I am worried they will think the worst - yet there is nothing for me to do.

The afternoon weather forecast predicts an eight hour lull in the northerlies and then a 50 knot southerly coming through. I debate what to do... It is risky to attempt Cape Providence with the swell running as it is. A five-hour paddle if all goes well... I pack, change my mind, change it again and eventually jump in the boat at 4:30 pm. and head out.

Five and a half hours later - and a bit more of a story - I arrive in Dusky Sound as dark overtakes me. I am now at least within striking distance of Supper Cove and the emotional boost, as well as the food that I need for the next leg of the journey.

Feb 6: Hiding from torrential rain and 50 knot winds in Dusky Sound I paddle the last ten miles to Supper Cove. I am overwhelmed by the thought of meeting my friends - I can not believe I am here! This is the place that has only been a name and a point on the map, that Sam, Martha, Gay and I had looked at months earlier and said we would meet at.

I paddle up to the landing jump out and race through the bush to the hut calling out "Hello, Hello." No response... but then the whine and thumping of a helicopter - it took several seconds to realise it must be The Crew! I race back to the boat, jump in and round the point just as the chopper screams in over the water.

A tearful joyous meeting beneath the whirr of the rotor blades. It is all happening too rapidly and my mind can not process everything I am feeling. For the next twelve hours I am treated to letters, gifts from friends, news of home, a special care package from the crew at Safeway, cinnamon rolls from Bonney's Bakery and the

wonderful love of my friends. I hike out a mile with Sam, Martha and Gay and leave them in the shadow of tree ferns and amid the dripping rain forest. We all have a journey to make.

Feb 8: Heading down Dusky Sound for Acheron Passage - a group of bottlenose dolphins approach echoing beneath me - whistles and squeaks that come through the boat and seem to enter my body. Dolphins suddenly leaping in the air around me, surfacing in blasts of curiosity and playfulness, racing with me as I cut in the waves. Then just as suddenly they are gone and I am left wondering as I have so many times in the past "Did that really happen?"

Waterfalls cascading in streams of tea coloured water. Little rivulets and crashing torrents. Trickle I fill my water bottle from and deafening falls that I can only stare at in wonder. Visibility down to less than a quarter mile in rain and low cloud. I am lost and happy in a mystical world of hidden mountains rising from the sea.

Feb 9: Into Breaksea Sound for the night.

Feb 10: Heading for Dagg Sound - overtaken by the Breaksea Girl - a double masted schooner whose captain has heard of my trip through Mary at Bluff Fishermen's Radio. He comes alongside and leans over the railing with an egg and sausage sandwich wrapped in a paper napkin. The sun shines and the swells lift us both..... it is the brotherhood of the sea where the size of the vessel does not matter. It is the respect we all have for the sea that unites us.

Feb 11 -14: Weather bound in Dagg Sound. I meet David and Ray Hayward aboard the 40-foot 'Oraki' - cod fishermen also seeking refuge from the winds that have hit 70 knots in Bluff. They talked with a fisherman off Doubtful - 6 metre swells and 45 knots of wind. Spent three nights aboard the 'Oraki' - fantastic Kiwi hospitality - David and Ray couldn't do enough for me - plenty of good food, a dry bunk and several trips back to my camp that I had left set up

- just to make sure the river hadn't risen and washed it away.

Feb 14: Leaving Dagg under the watchful eye of the 'Oraki' crew as escort. Big swell and an offshore wind of 25 knots - not comfortable with it but once under the relative protection of the mountains, I thought I was safe. Only 6 miles to Doubtful - 1.5 hours if all goes well. I radio the 'Oraki' and tell them I'm OK. They want to see me through to Doubtful but I know they have pots to set and miles of a southern route awaiting them. We part with good wishes for safe passages.

Two hours later I approach Doubtful Sound - the Hares Ears just a mile ahead. The water a half mile off the bow suddenly takes on a misty appearance and is covered in whitecaps - an offshore wind that looks foreboding. I head closer to shore but careful of the 3 metre swell. The wind hits with a vengeance that is hard not to take personally - it is driving me off shore - roaring out of the mountains at 35 knots and gusts that are higher but pointless and dispiriting to even think of placing a figure on.... I am spitting seawater and trying to see where I am going. Muscles scream with the burn of over exertion, thoughts of getting blown out to sea are weighed against the possibility of attempting a landing on a small boulder beach in the three metre swells. I need to rest but a rest means certain loss of painfully slow progress towards the shore a quarter of mile away. I can reach the radio and send a Mayday if I am blown out. But will anyone hear it???

The crayfishing fleet is way up north - the season mostly over with and only the stray cod boat still out. Reception is dependent on line of sight - in the troughs I would not stand a chance of reaching anyone. The radio option is dismissed and every ounce of energy is used to stay focused on the crashing surf on the rocks. An hour later I am ashore - another story in terms of the landing... I was thankful to be safe, in one piece, exhausted but untouched by the rocks.

There is so much to explore in terms of how one survives something like

this - what reserves we use and how we deal with that which we have a vague plan for but hope we never have to endure. It is a study in perseverance and something deeper. Another time and another place I will hopefully have the time to write of this.

Feb 15: Into Doubtful Sound and Deep Cove, Halls Arm, Crooked Arm. Met up again with 'Breaksea Girl' - The skipper will pass word to Mary that I am on schedule for my food drop in Milford Sound with Kevin Beaumont from 'Kiwi Reel and Rifle' - the same fellow who helped Sam, Martha and Gay to get into Supper Cove. Kevin has arranged with a cameraman from the national TV station to film me in Milford.

Feb 17: Up Thompson Sound, past Nancy Sound, Charles, Caswell, and on to George, Two Thumb Bay, Sutherland Sound, Poison Bay and eventually Milford Sound. Half way into Milford - I am two days early due to excellent southerly winds that surf me along at 5 knots amid ten footers. Three days of the finest weather I have had on the entire trip. Winds straight on the stern - racing up from behind and seemingly intent on burying the boat in massive blue rolls of southerly energy. The boat - sweet and nimble craft that she is - rises to the roll - bow pointing to the trough ahead and stern pointing to the clear skies astern, it is open ocean paddling as wild and free as anything earth bound. There is nothing as powerful or as humbling. I am a tiny 21-inch wide yellow sliver of fibreglass racing along on the swells. Occasionally a swell breaks and washes over the stern, cockpit and bow. The boat slows with the weight, sheds it with its secure buoyancy and accelerates on the face of the next swell. Shearwaters tear past on fighter like wings and the mountains of Fiordland National Park rise thousands of feet a mile to starboard. "Race on winds, race on and carry this little boat north!"

Feb 19th: I am in Milford where there is a backpacker's inn and a computer! I am here for a food resupply from Kevin Beaumont in Te Anau, and several days of rest while the winds go

round to the North and basically stall all plans of paddling till they come round again to the south - just as well as I know I need a break. Now an attempt to bring you up to date.

Feb 19: Arrived in Milford. The film crew find me surfing on three foot waves and 25 knots of wind. I am staring at the 5,000-foot peaks soaring over head - the boat wildly racing out of control while I am looking straight up. This is more than I had imagined it to be - it is 6.00 pm., the sightseeing boats and planes have all left for the day and there is only one boat two miles behind me to worry about. I am lost for a while in the beauty and the awe of having arrived under such clear skies and strong tail winds.

Dave, Jim and Nick, the film crew, shout above the noise of the wind and surf and ask if I am the man kayaking around NZ. I yell back "Yes" and they come over for proper introductions - its really rather absurd - this meeting in the midst of near gale force winds and then the realisation that they want to film my arrival. Dave, the cameraman, has a camera on board and commences to get some good footage of the boat surfing. Who knows how it will turn out but it was really rather fun doing the shot - the guys turned out to be really funny and typical Kiwis. Dave is a physical therapist, diver, carpenter, cameraman, big game hunter and a computer whiz - a mind that races faster than any storm wind and one that changes course as unpredictably.

So there it is in a condensed nutshell - the last three weeks of this fantastic journey that I am so blessed to be a part of. What is so very emotionally moving for me is the extent to which everyone is so unselfishly throwing their efforts into helping me. Sam, Martha, Gay, Kevin, the fishermen, Mary,.... This trip would be impossible without all of the help. And that is to say nothing of the tremendous support I am getting from every one back home - my family spread out from NY to MN to NC. My special friends in Port Angeles - Mahde, the folks at Safeway, Bonney's Bakery and espe-

cially Al Zob who is making all this e-mail happen for me. All of you folks are the infrastructure that keeps the paddles turning and I owe you all a great debt. I hope to leave Milford tomorrow if the weather permits. Next update will probably be from Hokitika - but I'm not really sure. All the very best to everyone. Cheers until the next time.

Feb 22nd: I left Milford on the 22 Feb. I paddled 8 miles out Milford Sound and another ten or so miles north. The seas were fairly mild in the morning but by mid day the winds had built to 20 knots out of the south with a large southerly swell. Conditions were deteriorating fairly rapidly so I opted to attempt a surf landing on a steep gravel/sand beach.

I entered the surf zone and got rolled by a ten footer and turned 180 degrees while upside down. When I hit my roll I was facing out to sea. I turned the boat toward the beach and got hit by another large breaker and rolled again. No problems executing my rolls - the boat responding quickly. I surfed in another 20 yards - manoeuvring through some very confused surf and finally putting the bow on the sand. So far nothing out of the ordinary - no injuries and no lost gear - everything nice and tight.

I jumped out of the boat and tried to grab the bow but had to jump clear of the boat as a big dumping wave hit it really hard. Made several attempts to grab the boat but each time I got near it another wave would slam into it and send it flying. The best thing to do in this scenario is to get the heck out of the way!! If you get hit by the boat you can be a goner.

Finally got a hold of the bow and dragged it out of the surf. No room to go into all the details but I was shocked to see the damage - to say the very least. The boat was nearly broken in half under the seat, and again up near the foot braces. The seam where the hull and the deck join was split half the length of the boat and the forward bulkhead was split away from the deck."

The boat was wrecked, but none of his gear was lost! He could not continue without major repair on his boat. He was on an isolated wilderness beach from which there was no way out. The only option left to him was to try contacting nearby ships on his VHF radio. He rigged up a "wind sock, signalling pole" with some salvaged crayfishing rope off a pot that had been torn off the bottom. He hoisted his yellow paddle jacket and red stuff bag twenty feet up and hoped a fishing boat would see it.

It took about 24 hours to get word out via the radio that I needed helicopter evacuation. None of the fishing boats that went by apparently had their radios on - very frustrating. Tried to raise the Maritime Rescue centre on Channel 16 - no luck. Had plenty of food and water and shelter so there wasn't any worry really.

I finally spotted a cruise ship 7 or 8 miles out and heading north. Raised her on the radio and explained my situation to her. While talking to her on the radio, Fiordland Maritime Radio interrupted and I switched to filling them in on the situation. Why they could not receive my earlier message isn't clear, but it really doesn't matter... In a situation like this it is amazing how analytical and how efficient one learns to be with regards to prioritizing options and immediately disregarding anything that isn't moving one directly towards the essential goal - how do I get off this beach?"

Fiordland arranged for a helicopter out of Milford to come and get me. My last transmission with them was that they were working on it and that I was to monitor Channel 16 and they would get back to me. There was nothing to do but wait and see what was to happen. Lots of sandflies to keep me company and no shelter in the tent because I could not get reception where the tent was set up. I took to walking in big circles on the beach reading "The Power of One" in one hand and swatting the flies with the other. Very good book. One I would recommend for those stranded on a remote beach with a busted up kayak."

No forewarning of the arrival of the chopper - suddenly out from behind a bush covered headland it appears. The pilot set the machine down on the sand and in twenty minutes, while they lashed the boat to the struts, I dismantled the camp and stuffed everything in bags. No use trying to think about anything but what has to be done.

Chris Duff's website: <http://www.goals.com>

SOUTH ISLAND SOLO

Compiled off the website by: Alex
Ferguson
Chris Duff
Milford to Hokitika.

March 4: In another hour I will be heading back into Milford Sound. If the winds are calm I should be on the water by noon and paddling out to open water. It feels like a long time since I've been in the boat and I'm very anxious to get going again. My first stop will hopefully be Martin's Bay - about twenty five miles from the dock in Milford. After that, it's another fifty or so miles to Jackson Bay. I've trimmed as much weight from the gear as possible - getting rid of half the cook set, some clothing, an extra water bottle etc. This next four hundred miles could be a bit dodgy in terms of surf, and I need the psychological as well as the physical edge of knowing that I am travelling as light as possible. I don't know where the next email stop will be - it could be as far north as Hokitika, in which case it may be as long as three weeks before I can get a message to you. The weather is definitely changing and the fall winds may hold me up for a while, but I will be in contact as soon as possible. Hope you are all well.

March 19: I just landed in Hokitika and am very happy to have my feet on the ground and the promise of something other than pasta to eat.

The past week has been some of the best weather in the entire trip - calm winds and clear skies. No safe landings since Jackson Bay though - everything is exposed to the surf and there has been plenty of that! There seems to be a sand bar that runs parallel with the beach 100 yards out - this bar breaks most of the power of the swell and if I can time it right I can ride the back of the broken wave over the bar and then only have to deal with the four or five footers on the inside. The waves have been clean and smooth, which makes the surf so much easier.

Once I go out in the morning, I'm out for the day - lots of 25-30 mile days and a couple of 40's. I don't like the surf - too much risk - so I'll stay out as long as possible and as long as the weather and sea conditions allow. Inevitably, I get knocked over at some point of the day - either first thing just getting out to deep water, or at the end of the day when I'm heading in for the night. The roll over count is up to 11.

I have my sights set on Greymouth next - mail and a rest day with Paul Caffyn who has done more long distance paddling than anyone in the world. He has offered me a place to stay for a few days and if the weather is "Crook" as they say here, then I'll take him up on the offer.

Just in terms of camp stops here is a rough scope of where I've been for the past week. Jackson Bay on the 14 of March, Haast on the 15, Bruce Bay on the 16 (a 40 mile day), Galway Beach on the 17, five miles north of Abut Head on the 18, and about ten miles south of Hokitika on the 19th. Had to sit for a day due to low visibility and big surf - and here I am today at Hokitika.

Big surf again today so I may just hang out for a day and see if it goes down - the risk is that the winds may kick up - this is the constant gamble and also what is so wearing on me after almost four months. I am very focused on getting to Farewell Spit -

from there on the surf will be only a memory.

The repairs to the boat have stood the test of many surf landings and launchings. At least that is one thing I am not concerned with anymore.

I've seen two sharks in the last couple of days - both relatively small - one around 5 feet and the other around 3. Amazing what you see when the sea is calm - large swells but no local wind waves. Time to get some real food.

LATEST UPDATE from the editor

Chris spent a wet and windy day in Hokitika, before breaking out through a goodly sized surf on 22 March. I arrived late at the Greymouth Bar, but spotted Chris half a mile out beyond the breakers. Intermittent huge rollers were breaking through the two stone breakwaters, and Chris had called up the harbour master on his VHF radio. Unaware of his experience, the harbour master advised Chris not to attempt the bar.

An awesome surf on Cobden beach ruled out a landing so Chris paddled four miles to round Point Elizabeth, where we spotted him again with binoculars. He was over a mile out when he began using stop start tactics to wend his way in through a mile of three metre high intermittent breakers. Broaching through the shore break, his grin of relief, at spotting us waiting on the beach and having survived the run unscathed, was from ear to ear.

At the 12 Mile we added a fibreglass rubbing strake to the keel line of his boat and waited a day for the swell to ease. Chris launched at 7.30am on 24 March through a 1.5m surf enroute for Westport.

WELLINGTON REGIONAL SEA KAYAK NET- WORK LEAD- ERSHIP & SAFETY TRAINING COURSE

Sponsored: by the W.R.S.K.N. November 19th, 20th, 21st, 1999.

Funded: by Hillary Commission grants from Porirua and Wellington City Councils.

Instructor: Grant Rochfort, Rochfort Water Sports

Coordinator: Cathye Haddock (preliminary setup) Beverley Burnett (training weekend)

Participants: Jennifer Roberts, Noel Winsloe, David Fisher, Diane Morgan, Paul Lenihan, Conrad Edwards

Location: Porirua Harbour, Pauatahanui Inlet, Titahi Bay

BACKGROUND

For this pilot safety course, the participants were approached and asked to take part. Two were already members of the safety committee, the others were known to be experienced paddlers and had previously led or supported Network paddles. The course was limited to six people due to safety considerations, and to maximise learning opportunities.

We had to fit the course into a weekend, due to budget and time constraints. The course was mentally and physically demanding on the participants. The weather provided a challenging environment due to a southerly front bringing frequent showers, and on Sunday, strong winds gusting over 30 knots.

The instructor, Grant Rochfort, a professional kayaking instructor and guide, is a founding network member, and his outstanding teaching abilities were already well known to us when

we approached him to develop the course.

Hillary Commission funding was critical. WRSKN expects to have only \$100 surplus this year, and voted at the midwinter meeting to use it to fund safety training. Unfortunately \$100 does not cover even one-quarter of the cost of one course, let alone the two we hope to run this year. We therefore submitted a regional proposal for Hillary Commission sports funding, requesting proportional funds from each council. The funding proposal was written by Cathye Haddock, Diane Morgan and Beverley Burnett and submitted to Wellington, Porirua and Hutt City Councils (Upper Hutt and Kapiti do not have a second funding round this year). All three councils granted us funds. KASK, our national body, has also granted us \$200 towards the training courses, and Tranz Rail has sponsored us for the \$300 we needed to meet budget for the second course. Our budget covers instructor's fee, food, petrol costs for the support vehicle and a small amount for course materials. We would have liked to provide safety flares and radio batteries for the first course but didn't have the money.

We would like to express our appreciation to the Harbour Master, Captain M. Pryce, for his endorsement, and also the support of his staff.

Each participant provided their own boat, safety equipment and transportation, and volunteered a full weekend of personal time. The network provided a support coordinator and vehicle, hot lunch and afternoon tea. Conrad volunteered the use of his boatshed in Porirua Harbour as a meeting place.

The role of the support coordinator turned out to be more crucial than originally thought. Although all the paddlers enjoyed the weekend, it wasn't a pleasure paddle. After one evening of theory, they spent five hours a day for two days on the water being pushed, stressed and made to think. Having a support coordinator to handle organization, catering and

emergency stand-by vehicle enabled the participants and instructor to focus their energies completely on their activity, and provided a psychological comfort that let everyone push a little bit harder for a little bit longer.

Hot soup and drinks were absolutely essential. Hypothermia is always a concern in sea kayaking, particularly during cold windy weather, and where the learning situation calls for people to fall in the water.

A support vehicle is essential for transporting food to locations where paddlers were stopping for breaks, and critical in case of emergency, carrying blankets and a first aid kit. The coordinator and instructor also carried a cellphone for emergency communication. The coordinator took notes during the theory and debriefing sessions, which let instructor and participants focus on the issues.

CURRICULUM

Friday night - theory. Weather, Group and self rescues, tide and current, response to incidents, strategies for coping with paddlers who are ill, tired, disabled. Introduction of John Heron peer feedback system.

Saturday 9am - 5pm. Discussion of weather. Rescue training - self rescue, t-rescue and all-in rescue. Group management on the water. Each paddler takes a turn to brief the others and lead a leg of the afternoon trip. Participants gained confidence in their leadership skills. Participants also learned the importance of briefing people well and what can go wrong if you don't. Each leg followed by a peer feedback session.

Sunday am - pm. Scenario training on the water. Each paddler takes a turn to lead a leg of the trip. One of the other paddlers on each leg is secretly briefed by the instructor to have a problem, which the leader must identify, then resolve. Each scenario followed by a peer feedback session.

SCENARIOS

No. 1 - One paddler left their hatch cover off and their boat flooded in the rough sea. The paddler concerned

had a hard time convincing the leader that their boat was flooded. Once this was accomplished, paddlers rafted up on each side of the boat so that one person could pump the hatch dry and replace the cover. The other paddlers drew ahead and did not come back to assist; however they waited till the others caught up.

No. 2 - One paddler could not paddle downwind, broached, and lost confidence badly. The leader stayed with the paddler and coached that person along. Coaching a nervous paddler is a good solution and builds confidence.

No. 3 - The leader set up a ferry glide. One paddler could not cope with the ferry glide and ended up pointing the wrong way. The leader used his boat to push the other paddler's nose around and then stayed downwind of the paddler to stop their boat drifting. All paddlers managed to run aground (not planned). Towropes would have been useful.

No. 4 - One paddler became unstable and unconfident in their boat and went downwind to the open sea. The leader had no hope of catching this paddler and delegated the best paddler in the group to go fetch the lost paddler and tow them back. The group behaved very well, answered to voice commands and whistle, and stayed together.

No. 5 - One paddler became very seasick but unfortunately the group did not notice this. Once the leader noticed the situation, the paddler was given options including being towed. (Is it a good practice to ask them to make a decision when unwell, or should you make the decision for them?) Two paddlers then became very tired and each was towed separately.

No. 6 - Three people fell out at the same time. Two helped each other with an all-in rescue. One lost their paddle and then death-rolled (fell back in) after getting back in the boat. Two paddlers assisted this person with a rescue. This scenario had the potential to be dangerous. One paddler was in the water for eight minutes and despite wearing a wetsuit, was at risk

of hypothermia in the cold conditions. This scenario again pointed out paddlers' inability to manoeuvre in wind and waves, or in close quarters.

COURSE NOTES

Friday Night: 1-1/2 hour instructional video covering paddling basics, rescues, support strokes, rolling. Towing basics - what consists of a good towline. When, why and how to tow. Navigation - piloting, or the technique of matching the landmarks you see around you to the chart. Trip plans - mark all crossings and the distance and bearing of each leg. Be predictable crossing shipping lanes. When doing a channel crossing, stay on the bearing, get it done and rest later. Tides - understanding tidal tables. Understand the difference between tides and currents. Understand the influence of wind on tides and currents. Check the tides before setting camp.

Why every trip needs a leader - no matter how democratic the group, someone needs to act as a coordinator, and to make decisions when things go wrong and response time is critical. A designated leader can cope with the dissension between group members. The leader need not be the strongest or most skilful member of the group, but should be able to confidently cope with group members who are tired, anxious, disabled or ill. Vast experience and confidence can be a disadvantage to a group leader who may think that because they are coping with the conditions, everyone else in the group can cope also.

Discussion of the risk management form/system.

The three factors of risk are people, environment and equipment. People factors include differing skill and fitness levels, environment includes tides, current, weather and navigation, equipment includes boats, paddles, towing gear, safety equipment. Do an assessment of all variables on trip to come up with the risk factor.

Discussion of the John Heron Peer Feedback system.

Non-threatening, constructive feedback on a group member by other group members. Improvements round

first, then congratulations round.

Weather forecasting

Understand the limitations of forecast on radio, TV or newspaper. The forecast is old by the time it is written. The forecast is regional, not for a specific local area. It is only one scenario of what might happen, and is not a marine forecast as such. You need to understand your local microclimate and allow for the effect of local terrain, tides, Cook Strait tidal stream.

Tide, wind and fetch affect the size of the waves. Tide plus wind has a different effect than tide versus wind. Tide can affect weather systems. The friction of water flow can trigger a wind change. A tide can turn earlier with a windblown surface current. When the wind stops, the water wants to go back where it came from even if the tide is not quite due to turn. If there has been a steady wind for several days the tide wont match the tide tables.

Further reading:

'Weather-wise Boating: Forecasting for New Zealand's Coastal Waters', Geoff Sivess (Reed Books, 1991)
'A Practical Guide to Weather Forecasting in New Zealand', Alex A. Neale (NIWA, 1993)
'Nigel Foster's Sea Kayaking', Nigel Foster (Fernhurst, 1997)

CHANNEL CROSSINGS

Get it done. Whether crossing a shipping lane (Marlborough Sounds, Wellington Harbour), or a bay with strong winds, map out the quickest route, provide transits and go for it. (See ferry glide.) A channel crossing is no place to raft up and decide what to do next. The leader must brief the other paddlers before the channel crossing and specify a safe place to raft up and regroup after the channel crossing. The leader must be able to point out any hazards the group may encounter (shipping traffic, winds, currents, tides, etc.) Call up the local maritime station to advise them of your movements and ask shipping to keep a lookout. Use a cellphone if a VHF radio is not available.

GROUP MANAGEMENT

The group leader should have empathy for the inexperienced. If you push

someone beyond his or her limits you use up their resources and they have nothing left to get back to shore. If you can keep them going, they are OK. If someone is complaining, they are stressed. Leadership is not so much technical as mental. The group leader has to consciously keep thinking about conditions, building up a mental picture of conditions and potential outcomes, and keeping it in mind.

The basis of group management across a body of water is the ferry glide technique.

Even experienced paddlers may not have sweep or support strokes to handle wind gusts.

When travelling downwind, get the group directly above the target. The leader should be at the front of the group because the wind will blow anyone in trouble down to the leader. It is easier to paddle directly downwind, and the group can raft up and drift.

Further reading: 'Sea Canoeing', Derek Hutchinson (A&C Black, 1984)

TOWING

Towing can help someone else control his or her boat in difficult conditions, can assist a seasick or unstable paddler. Towing downwind is the most difficult scenario, since the towed paddler may overrun or run into the lead boat. Paddlers can manage speed and stability by towing in rough weather. It stabilises the tower as well as the towee.

A towline should be at least a boat-and-a-half length. The towline needs to be set up for quick snap-on, and for quick release. The beginning of the rope should have strong shock cord attached. To keep the rope tangle-free, it is a good idea to 'knit' it and keep it in a stuff bag, with a float at the end to stop it coming out of the bag. Use fittings designed for yachts. Unlike climbing carabiners, yachting fittings don't corrode in the salt. A useful addition to a towline is a sling to fit around the cockpit, so that the boat carries the strain rather than the torso of the tower. The sling is connected to the towrope with a quick-release. Use

flat webbing for the sling so that it does not damage the spray skirt.

When offering a tow to a paddler, the tower needs to keep the potential towee paddling forward. Anyone who is not paddling is going backwards and has to make up the distance again.

Further reading : 'Derek C. Hutchinson's Guide to Sea Kayaking', Derek Hutchinson (Globe Pequot Press, 1985)

RESCUE SKILLS

Get the paddler first, not the boat. Part of leadership during rescues is understanding how to treat the person in the water. It is important to keep talking to the person and telling them what to do.

If hypothermia is a risk, get the person on the beach as fast as possible and deal with it.

The Network should practice rescue skills constantly. You can get someone out of the water faster if they understand how to be rescued. Practice assisted rescues, all-in rescues and self-rescues.

COMMENTS FROM INSTRUCTOR

Network members generally are lacking in manoeuvring, towing and rescue skills. Even if the Network provides further pool nights and other opportunities to practice skills, everyone needs to make a personal effort to improve these skills for their own safe paddling.

The network needs to talk about towing, and to practice towing. Everyone needs to carry a towline. Everyone going on paddles should have rescue skills and practice them. During the scenarios on Sunday, one paddler was in the water for at least eight minutes, which is far too long. Network members should practice manoeuvring in rough water, and develop support strokes. Very few of us have the necessary sweep/support/draw strokes and railing skills for quick manoeuvring in a critical situation.

COMMENTS FROM PARTICIPANTS

It was very intimidating at first to assert myself as a leader amongst pad-

dlers more experienced than I. I learned over the weekend that leadership is not about having the best paddling skills.

The scenarios were realistic. I have been on paddles where people have left the group, been seasick, lost their hatch cover.

I would have liked more supportive feedback on the water. I wanted my efforts to be acknowledged at the time.

We felt very supported by the instructor. We felt quite safe going out in difficult weather and dealing with these scenarios.

During scenarios, people who aren't involved or leading can't necessarily see what the problem is and learn from it. We need to figure out a way round this.

I would have liked to have seen a continual discussion over the weekend of the weather conditions, changes in weather conditions and how they differed from the forecast, and possible reasons for this.

The format was good, and the instructor set an example of leadership. I liked the way the program was adjusted to suit the weather.

The weather conditions perversely added an element of reality. While unpleasant, this created an edge from which I benefited.

I liked the way we all had a turn and were pushed without feeling unsafe.

COMMENTS FROM COORDINATOR

We can't express our appreciation enough to the Hillary Commission and our city councils for providing the funding to make this course possible. We also express our appreciation to Tranz Rail, who sponsored us for the last \$300 needed to make up the funds for the second course.

As far as I am aware, this course is the first of its kind amongst sea-kayaking organisations in New Zealand. We did really well, but didn't get every-

thing quite right. Our experience during this course will help us provide a much better course next time round.

We had to quickly revise the food budget. I didn't expect 7 people to eat so much. This was not a problem; rather, an indication of how much physical and mental energy was being poured into the learning sessions, and how much fuel the paddlers needed to undertake this kind of a weekend.

I would like to see the participants prepare for the course by doing some reading beforehand. Our local libraries contain a selection of excellent books on sea kayaking theory and technique, and also on weather forecasting. Reading 'Weather-Wise Boating' by Geoff Sivess should be a requirement for a course like this.

The effort everyone put in over the weekend, and how the effort was as much mental as physical impressed me. Discussions during breaks and feedback sessions gave an indication of how much thinking and learning was going on. I was also impressed by the team-building resulting from the shared experience and I give Grant credit for facilitating this. I saw the group become more trusting of each other, and more reliant on each other. Besides improving leadership skills, the course provided a team bonding experience. The next time any one of these people leads a group, they are likely to have one of the other paddlers in the group understanding and supporting them in the leadership situation.

Since the course, two paddlers have capsized in heavy weather on network paddles. One of our trainee leaders was on each trip, and the rescues were organized efficiently and quickly. Due to the training, what could have been a dangerous incident was merely unpleasant. At the time of the first incident, a dragon boat also capsized in the harbour, and it took at least 20 minutes and the Coast Guard to get the paddlers out of the water (they were unable to rescue themselves). Our paddlers were rescued within minutes and without recourse to harbour rescue services.

by Beverley Burnett

NZ TRIP REPORT

NEW YEAR PADDLE From the Auckland Canoe Centre email newsletter.

Did you have a great start to the new Millennium? A number of us who spent the night at Auckland Canoe Club at Okahu Bay did. We all arrived in drips & drabs during the evening. Most of us turned up with Thermarests and sleeping bags, nibbles and liquid refreshments and all our kayaking gear, determined to be on the water before first light and to paddle into Okahu

Bay for the Welcoming Ceremony. We watched the fireworks at midnight in a mixture of low mist and drizzle and during the night the drizzle continued. There was also quite a bit of wind and we were all unsure whether we would be able to paddle across the harbour at 4am. One by one people drifted off to their sleeping bags and by 2.30am there were just about 4 of us still talking. At 3am the wind finally dropped. At 4am we were all up and climbing into paddling gear. There were thousands of people walking along Tamaki Drive all getting into position to watch the dawn ceremony. We slid into our kayaks and in a group headed towards Devonport.

There were some nice swells to glide over, but the wind had dropped completely. We had an escort of Police boats which was reassuring when a speeding launch approached us and split the group in two. We were all quite happy when the Police boats turned on their sirens and chased him.

Arriving at Devonport we met up with craft of all shapes and sizes and paddlers with varying degrees of paddling skills. Dawn was gradually breaking at this time. We regrouped and headed back towards Okahu Bay. It was magnificent watching the sun rise. As we approached, a 20 gun salute was fired and the smoke drifted down over us in the still air. There

were hundreds of other craft in the Bay by this time and the Waka was making its circuit. It finally landed back at the jetty. We paddled towards the beach as thousands of people performed the specially created welcome Haka. What a sight. After the beachside ceremony was finished we drifted back towards the Canoe Club. A quick change into dry clothes and we were ready for some sparkling wine, coffee, hot bacon sandwiches and sausages fresh from the BBQ. What a way to start the year. We had set the video to record the event on TV3 and we arrived home at 10am just as they started showing it. We could recognise many of our friends and customers but never managed to see ourselves.. We will probably show the video next time we have a slide evening at the shop. However people who were there and want their own copy can drop a blank tape into the shop and we will copy it for them. It is a memory which will never leave us. Our sincere thanks to Ian Calhaem who came up with the bright idea of staying at the Canoe Club overnight.

WEBSITES

Skin Yak Replica Site

From: Sandy (Alex) Ferguson

An amazing collection of skin kayak replicas, well-displayed on Harvey Golden's Web site:

http://home.pacifier.com/~qayaq/replica_kayaks.htm

Weather & Trans Pacific Rower

from Kerry Howe

weather site which covers Australia & NZ:

<http://grads.iges.org:80/pix/aus2.48hr.gif>

for tropical cyclone warnings, covering north western and south western Pacific:

gopher://twister.sbs.ohio-state.edu:70/0/severe/tropical/ABPW10.PGTW

for Trans Pacific Rower:

<http://www/keepitblue.net/anglais/trgb.html>

BUGGER FILE

by Cathye Haddock

Two reports have been sent in to me for this Bugger File. Remember, if you have had a mishap, or have been involved in a rescue or near miss situation, please write a report and send it in to me at 1/18 Avon Street, Island Bay, Wellington. These reports enable others to take a cheap lesson from what you learned so harshly.

When submitting a report, you may choose to have names or locations changed or left out if you wish. A good format is to write a narrative of what happened, including any factors which contributed or led up to the incident. Include all decisions made (or not made). Finally, attempt to identify what could have been done differently to prevent the incident occurring. Also, identify what went well while resolving the incident.

The names and locations of the first incident have been changed or left out to provide anonymity for those involved on their request. I wish to thank author/s for submitting reports so others may benefit from their experience and analysis.

Cathye Haddock.
Kask Safety Officer

BUGGER ONE

Network paddle & Day trip
Leader's perspective

The day was scheduled as a surf carnage day in a sheltered bay. Due to lack of surf, plans changed and it was decided to paddle out of the bay and head right around the open coast, through a reef to the Boating Club. The predicted 15 knot northerly wind was there as well as sloppy waves due to the large fetch. There were 5 paddlers. The group was happy with the paddle to the Boating Club. The two least experienced, Veronica and a new guy Ted, said they found it challenging but okay. After lunch on the beach I briefly discussed paddling into the

harbour as a more sheltered alternative, but did not do this. We headed back the same way between the two outcrops of the reef. The flat water at the Boating Club beach had changed back to the wavy sea by the reef and progressed to potentially good surfing waves half way to the approaching shore. Our least confident paddler Veronica was coping with the conditions well, running more or less straight down wind. But as we approached the coast there was a need to angle right with the wind on the side. Thus she became less confident and shortly tipped out. Veronica became separated from her boat so Dana, anticipating this rescue, got Veronica to hang onto her boat. Meanwhile, I grabbed the empty boat and emptied it T rescue technique, which I had practised only 2 weeks prior on a course. Dana then delivered Veronica to her boat with Veronica trailing off the stern. Another member of the group, Neil, rafted on the outside and helped stabilise the boats. Veronica said she couldn't get back into her boat, which was to the leader's surprise considering he knew she had successfully practised the techniques before, even if only in a pool. After a few stern words Veronica was getting back into her boat, aided by her sling and the two paddlers rafted alongside.

Neil made a good suggestion to head back (NE) round the point towards a harbour road end. Veronica was towed back by Neil (using Dana's towrope) with Veronica also paddling herself. Now angling into the waves Veronica was happier, also happier to be tethered by a towrope even though making steady progress herself. We all made it back to the beach and road end (under the radio masts) without further mishaps, with myself rafted alongside Veronica for the final down wind run into the beach.

After getting Veronica into dry clothes, two of our group hitched a ride back to the cars to collect them.

LEADER'S ANALYSIS

Leader's suggestions for improvements: Change the return trip, to paddle into the more sheltered harbour and on further if the group was up to

it, or bail out earlier, catching a taxi back to retrieve the cars. (The leader & others had sufficient \$'s and cellphones to do this.)

Criticism: Not having an alternative plan to cope with the realistically expected conditions down wind of the reef. E.g., head left (east) for the road end under the radio masts (174° 51.1'E) where we ended up.

Commendations : The rescuers stayed calm, worked well as a team and got the paddler back in their boat and safely ashore.

NB. Veronica wanted to set off a flare, but I decided against that as I considered we had the situation under control. Even though we were slowly drifting in towards the rocks, we had adequate 'sea room'. I tried calling the coastguard on VHF channel 62 but was not triggering this repeater channel under the cliffs, and got no response.

Suggestions for improvements for others: Encourage paddlers to be honest and realistic about the conditions they can handle, and speak up as early as possible, preferably on shore, before a committing crossing is started. (And for myself as a leader try and realistically anticipate when conditions are likely to be beyond less experienced paddlers).

Commendations to other members of the group: They were all nearby when needed. The second least experienced paddler stayed nearby, concentrating on their appropriate self appointed priority to stay upright as opposed to assisting the rescue.

Further comments: Paddlers Dana and Neil commented that they could see Veronica wobbling when viewed from behind prior to the capsizing but I (the leader) did not as I was consciously paddling alongside Veronica encouraging her in the conditions.

Technical: Neil was paddling a 'sit on top' without a rudder and commented that he found it hard to steer whilst towing without a rudder. We had no better alternatives at the time. Dana

considered herself not strong enough to tow in these conditions and I didn't want to be 'tied up' with towing as leader.

NB. Neil had planned to leave our group and to go snorkel diving at some point, but Dana realised that we wished to retain him as an experienced paddler in our group for the return trip. We agreed Neil would paddle out to the reef and go snorkelling there while we had lunch, and catch us up as we paddled past on the way back, which he did.

VERONICA'S PERSPECTIVE

Veronica takes a swim

The seas were a little higher than I expected when we set off, but nothing I couldn't cope with. The closer we were to the headland, the bigger the waves got, so I was more comfortable when we got further away from shore. I had been paddling with Edward and Sophie before, so I knew I was in really experienced company.

Ed and Sophie are both experienced trip leaders and I trust them absolutely. We've done lots of rescue scenarios together. I don't know that I have been out in a bigger swell, but I have been out in worse weather than that. I tend to cope with rough seas better on my own, when I can choose my own course, and zig-zag up and down wind rather than going in a straight line.

Ed was a little bit worried for me about the trip back. Me too. I put all the loose items I usually carry in the cockpit into the hatch, something I had never done before. The wind had picked up and the water was quite rough out beyond the reef. I knew what Ed was thinking - bay crossing, set up a ferry glide and get it done. We paddled out to the reef and then angled across the bay. However, the wind was so strong that it pushed on my stern and kept heading my boat out to sea, no matter how much left rudder I used. We ended up angling downwind to get across the bay, and I found surfing on the big waves exhilarating. Going across the headland I felt we were a little too close to the rocks, because we were in the surf

zone where the waves are big and the crests start to break. The situation also wasn't helped by reflected waves bouncing back off the headland. I would have been more comfortable heading upwind a bit out to sea, and then zigzagging back into the next bay. Ed was thinking that he didn't want to go any further out to sea than necessary in such bad weather, which I also understand. By the time we were halfway across the headland I'd become so unstable in the surf that it was no surprise I capsized.

I kept hold of my paddle, but when I surfaced the wind had already blown my boat away from me and no matter how hard I swam I shouldn't keep up with it. I was not at all worried - we had done the rescue bit so many times I knew the group would have me back in my boat without too much trouble. Problem was, I didn't want to get in it. I thought that if I got back in the boat I'd be back in the same situation where I capsized and would probably do so again, so what was the point. Might as well stay in the water and swim home the last 2km. Shows you how much your brain function shuts down in a situation like this.

Ed was really good. He didn't whack me over the head with his paddle and leave me there. He organized Sophie to go capture my boat and insisted that I be rescued. Once the boat had been brought alongside his and emptied, he ordered me back in. I got halfway in and then got stuck because the top of my buoyancy vest was jammed against the cockpit coaming. Once we figured that out I was back in the boat. I was out of confidence at that point, and was too cold for my brain to function properly. I didn't want to paddle anywhere and Ed could not prise my fingers loose from his arm so that he could paddle. We were quite close to the rocks at that stage. Ed had to keep one eye on the situation and one eye on the looming shore. I kept telling Ed how I was feeling - cold, frightened, can't think, etc. I thought the information might have been useful at the time, but it might have been stating the obvious. Ed set up Dick with a towline and Dick towed me around the point and into a sheltered bay.

Once more, Ed had difficulty prising my fingers away from his arm so he could beach his boat.

I was shivering with cold by the time we reached the beach. Sophie knows incipient hypothermia when she sees it and marched me off to change into the warm dry clothes I carried in a dry bag. I also knew I was getting hypothermic and was making notes in my head of what was going on. I stopped caring at about the same point I stopped feeling cold. 'I'm quite warm, now', I tried to say, but what came out was 'num num num num'. It didn't take long for my body temperature to rise once I was sitting in a warm car, but I am sure if I hadn't been rescued so promptly and efficiently that I would have wound up in the hospital.

BUGGER 2

Wellington Network evening paddle
David Fisher 1-1-2000

Thursday 2 December, was scheduled for a sea kayak network meeting at the Tugboat with a paddle before hand. Three of us showed up around 6 pm., Chris, Nick and myself David Fisher. The day had dawned fine and calm but by 6pm a 15 knot northerly was making typical waves on the Freyberg beach. Beverley had apparently planned to come paddling in the morning but decided against it on seeing the sea conditions earlier that evening.

We paddled across to the SE corner of the container terminal, hung around there for a few minutes watching one of the tug boats poised off the stern of a ship at the wharf. We then headed into Lambton Harbour along the south side of the container terminal reclamation, past dragon boat(s) training, around the wharves and so to the area off Frank Kitts Park. Here, Wellington Sea Rescue were busy rescuing the crew of Dragon boats that had tipped out, and Beacon Hill radio station reported to some ship on the VHF radio that their weather conditions included northerly 15 to 30 knots. I noticed one submerged dragon boat with about 3 people hanging on, close off the rocks in front of Frank Kitts Park. When I asked them how they

were, they asked if I could get a sea rescue vessel to assist. I was about to do this when I noticed that Chris had just fallen out of his kayak, so I called to Nick to let him know too. Having recently practised rescues on our network leadership training weekend, including T rescues, this was all familiar stuff. I paddled over and grabbed Chris's boat and got him to hang onto the bow of mine. I asked Nick to come alongside my clear side (starboard) while I emptied the water from Chris's kayak, T rescue style (possibly with Nick's assistance - I don't remember this detail a month later). With Chris's boat more or less empty along side mine and Nick aiding our stability, I talked him through getting up onto his boat, then seated in the cockpit. This all went fine, except at one point in the middle when Chris was up on his boat, he got up on his knees like he was crawling, and so raised his centre of gravity, to my concern. With a quick sharp 'get down low' or similar instruction we completed the rescue smoothly.

I then went back to check out the floating dragon boaters, who were still in the same spot. A small surf rescue sized inflatable was down near the southern end of Taranaki St. wharf, and 'UDC Rescue' the Wellington sea rescue Niad was at Fergs floating pontoons at Queens wharf. UDC Rescue was having a conversation on the VHF radio with someone (I don't recall who, possibly Beacon Hill,) and reported that they had all the dragon boaters out of the water. I was surprised at this and concerned for the few mentioned previously, still in the water. So I called UDC Rescue on the VHF and they promptly came over and attended to the people in the water. I noted that the surf rescue sized inflatable was slowly towing a submerged dragon boat up from the Southern end of Taranaki St. wharf.

There was a report in the Evening Post the following night (expressing concern) about 3 dragon boats capsizing in the harbour the previous evening. We three kayakers paddled back to Freyberg beach okay, got changed etc., and went to the network meeting.

Cathye Haddock

OVERSEAS TRIP REPORTS

'NO REASON' The Roof of Britain Kayak Expedition by Ian Wilson & Sean Morley

(this is the third instalment of this account, which is continues from p.17 in Newsletter No.84).

Day 6

Wednesday 16th June 1999 (13 miles, three hours paddling)

One look outside confirmed the forecast had been accurate. It was drizzling and the western horizon was an ugly, dark shade of grey. Well into the routine now we had the boats packed and we were away by 8.30am. We could just about make out Achiltibue on the mainland behind the Summer Isles so we felt confident of at least getting some mileage out of the day. Our first waypoint was the eastern side of Priest Island. Once we came out from its lee we began to feel the first gusts from the impending gale. Heading for the northern tip of Tanera Beg, the smaller of the two main Summer Isles, the sea began to build. We were doing a broad reach with the occasional surf run. We saw several Great Skua, thugs of the bird world. One flew directly at me low and fast, staring me right in the eye as if trying to intimidate me. It worked, the thickset shoulders and hooked beak looked quite menacing from three feet away!

The tops of the five to six foot chop began breaking over us. We took a line straight for Reiff Bay, Wilson dealing well with the increasing seas, the biggest he had ever been out in he revealed later. The Inuks held their line despite the oblique angle of the swell but as we approached Reiff Bay it was becoming apparent that to continue would be foolhardy. After Reiff Bay was the major headland of Rubha Coigeach with little prospect of a safe landing if we needed it. Our only

option was to wait for the wind to drop. We looked into Reiff Bay but the surf made the stony beach too risky. We decided to head into the small bay to the north which should at least offer some shelter from the breaking seas. A tricky paddle around the small headland confirmed our decision to get ashore as quickly as possible before the storm really blew in. As we came into the bay I was disappointed to find just a steep storm beach of large boulders and no sand whatsoever. We had no choice but to gingerly get out on the smoothest rock we could find and haul the boats above the high water mark. I apologised silently to Kirton Kayaks as we left deep scratches in the hulls of their works Inuks. Once they were clear of even the most determined swells we searched for a place to pitch the tent. We found the only patch of level, boulder free turf in the lee of a dry stone wall, an effective windbreak. We got the tent up quickly and dived in for a rest.

It had been an epic morning and we both felt the need to communicate with our partners. We walked alongside Loch of Reiff, a small brackish stretch of water strewn with jetsam both interesting and foul smelling, evidence of many more severe storms that have battered this lonely spot. Arriving at a small collection of houses that in these parts represents a village we met some mountain bikers out for a blast. We sheltered from the rain behind a rocky outcrop as we shared our experiences. They had not seen a phone for a least a couple of miles. We walked on. As we passed a bungalow a young girl swept onto the drive in her Golf GTI. She confirmed the nearest public phone was in the next village, twenty minutes at least on foot. This was her mother's house but she wouldn't mind us using her phone. We did not need to be asked twice. Wilson and I were soon sat in the bay window, the right side of the double glazing as the wind and rain came in with a vengeance. I scored an immediate hit with the elder daughter, a middle-aged, stern faced woman dressed in a donkey jacket, jeans and men's leather boots; "I love that picture"

I indicated a large, bold, colourful oil painting of three fishermen dragging a net in over the side of the open boat. It transpired she was the artist. It really was an excellent work. I particularly liked the way she had used a tartan pattern of blues, greys and black to represent the choppy sea.

We sat for three hours talking to mother and daughter about life in the North West. Reiff was known as 'the busiest dead end in Scotland'. The area had suffered much at the time of the Clearances and was now sparsely populated. Nearby, Achiltibue had until recently an active salmon fishing station and still has a smokery, but now most of the fishing in these waters is done for sport. Many locals still practice the crofting way of life and are part farmer and part fisherman but, to an increasing extent, the revenue-earning activities are now more likely to be related to tourism. The unpredictable weather meant you could not rely on one source of income. Despite (or perhaps because of) the distance to the nearest town, Ullapool, some thirty miles away by road, their quality of life was good. Sky TV kept them in touch with the rest of the world. It was clear though that fashion was not high on their list of priorities as mother sat talking to us in her floral dress and Wellington boots! It was good to talk to Linda on the phone, although it was apparent she was unable to comprehend just how bad the weather was here in Reiff. She was complaining about being sunburnt at home in Devon! When the children arrived after their hour long journey home from school it was time to leave. We thanked them for their hospitality leaving a pound coin beside the telephone despite mother's protests.

We ran all the way back to the tent a mile or so away along a slippery path, the rain soaking our backs. Gasping and laughing we dived into the tent soaking wet. We just crashed out in our wet clothes hoping our body heat would dry them out. We must have slept for well over an hour. I was awoken by sunlight shining through the tent walls. The storm had passed. A strip of blue sky the length of the

Minch was coming our way. The sea was still too rough to make launching for an evening paddle an option. We set about drying our kit and hauling the boats over the narrow isthmus onto the shore of Loch of Reiff. We had decided that to launch into Reiff Bay would be safer if the swell was still big in the morning. A shallow watercourse would allow us to float the boats out of the loch and into the bay. I attempted to take a few artistic photos in the evening sunshine. The quality of light was superb, my skill in capturing it on film questionable. Large clumps of Sea Pink and thick hairy lichen clung tenaciously to the cliffs. The view back towards the Summer Isles explained how they had got their name. An isolated croft in a small valley of its own demanded closer inspection. Not a bothy but clearly someone's wilderness hideaway. I was enthralled by the Hebridean sunset, Wilson found his ThermaRest more attractive! Radio 4's 'Book at Bedtime' then sleep. Another big day tomorrow.

Day 7

Thursday 17th June 1999 (51 miles, ten and a half hours paddling)
The plan to paddle down the loch to Reiff Bay worked well. We walked the kayaks down the man made watercourse and launched without difficulty. There was a residual swell from the previous day's storm but we rounded Rubha Coigeach without much problem. The target for the day was Kinlochbervie or possibly Sandwood Bay, the last possible landing before Cape Wrath. It was important that we achieved big mileage again as we had lost our half day advantage because of the storm.

From Rubha Coigeach we commenced the first of the day's three big crossings. Ten miles to Point of Stoer, the lighthouse clearly visible. Sea conditions improved the further out to sea we went. The substantial north westerly swell rolled beneath us at a rate of knots. We were able to catch the occasional perpendicular runner caused by the light south westerly breeze; just enough to lift the kayaks in a forward surge for a few metres before dying back. The view to the

east was dominated by Cul Mor, Suilven, Canisp and Quinag, the height of these peaks exaggerated by the surrounding ice-scoured lowland. Once as mighty as the Himalayas, the mountains of the North West are now just stumps but no less beautiful for that. The action of wind, rain and ice have left rugged, craggy summits that can provide some of the toughest mountaineering in Europe with extremes of weather and total isolation. Our excellent progress towards Point of Stoer was almost halted by big clapotis caused by the north westerly swell being reflected back off the vertical cliffs. As the rebounding wave met the on-coming swell the wave height would double, sometimes exploding in a burst of spray. It was impossible to maintain any sort of rhythm as we were thrown first one way then the other, the bows of the Inuks slamming into each wave trough. I had to use every bit of strength I had to maintain any forward momentum, heaving the boat up the oncoming wave faces. It was the biggest swell of the journey so far and I would estimate it at around twenty feet from trough to crest. We were suffering the consequences of passing too close to the cliffs, something we would remember for the rounding of Cape Wrath where the clapotis was likely to be much more severe.

As we neared The Point, the 66 metre pinnacle of The Old Man of Stoer came into view. It was first climbed by humans in 1966 but the only rock athletes we saw were guillemots and razorbills. As soon as we got past The Old Man, the clapotis died away. We found nowhere to get out. We had been in the boats for nearly three hours. We resigned to the inevitable. Readers who have not had the pleasure (?) of sitting in a kayak for hours on end will probably be disgusted by the thought of urinating in the boat. Certainly I would not do it out of choice but the bent paddling position and constant twisting of the trunk and abdominal muscles produces an overwhelming desire to relieve the pressure on the bladder. There are catheter systems that have been used effectively on very long open crossings but we were not that well prepared. I

will admit to enjoying the warm trickle down my legs and promised myself a quick dip in the sea at lunch time! The problem was that having given in once, my resistance was gone and the flood-gates opened - literally. During the next two and a half hour crossing I had to go three times. My cockpit smelt pretty unpleasant I can tell you!

As we paddled away from Point of Stoer heading directly for the solid buttress of Handa Island, I began to allow a thought that had been in the back of my mind all morning to come out into the open.

As we sat consuming another pack of 'Bullets' I ran it by Wilson.

"I've been thinking, with this great weather just now and a bad forecast for tomorrow...."

"I know what you are going to say, you want to do Cape Wrath tonight."

As usual we were on exactly the same wavelength. We both knew that Cape Wrath was the crux of the whole trip. Once around the Cape, we should have the wind on our backs or be in the lee of the cliffs along the north coast. At least that was the theory. I hadn't given much thought to what would happen if we were unable to get around Cape Wrath. To paddle back to Fort William the way we had come was out of the question. We would've had to leave the kayaks somewhere safe and make our way overland back to the car. It would be a costly, soul destroying fiasco. I had therefore banished such thoughts and focused on the positive. The problem was that Cape Wrath was still over twenty miles away. It was a major undertaking, a totally committed paddle and not something to be under-estimated. My original plan had always been to attempt it in the morning when we would be fresh. To do it last thing in the evening after a hard 45 mile paddle was perhaps not such a good idea. We agreed to postpone a decision until we had obtained the latest weather forecast from the coastguard at lunch time.

The Cape could be seen emerging on the northern horizon. It did look tantalisingly close. But first we had to finish the crossing to Handa Island.

The cloud cover was breaking and we were soon down to just rash vests. As we approached we were met by dolphins who criss-crossed our path at high speed, seemingly frustrated by our pedestrian pace. A couple of high leaps within feet of my bow and they were gone as quickly as they had arrived. Their effortless grace and vivacious energy made our efforts seem cumbersome in comparison. We could hear the thump of big swell hitting the reefs on the west face of the island. The shock waves caused by the explosive release of compressed air could be felt as well as heard. Several puffin, and many more guillemots and razorbills came to inspect us as we entered the Sound of Handa. An RSPB reserve, Handa Island is further evidence of the excellent work done by this charity. An aluminium launch ran past us ferrying more twitchers to the various hides perched high on the cliffs. I smugly contemplated how none of them were likely to ever get as close as we could to the bird and animal life of this wild place.

We arrived at Tarbet tired but in good spirits. Two major crossings behind us and with the prospect of settled weather for the rest of the day we knew that Cape Wrath was possible. We chatted to the two fishermen from the launch we had seen earlier. Red headed, thickset, Viking blood still in their hearts, they appeared contemptuous at first. But as Wilson chatted to them, outlining our journey so far, their respect for us grew. They confirmed the forecast we had heard that morning predicting a blow the next day. We needed a quick lunch so that we could get back out there. We decided to splash out on a meal at the very expensive but extremely pleasant cafe over looking the small harbour. As we sat there dripping all over the carpet I was very self conscious of our body odour. No-one seemed to mind. The customers and staff were fascinated by our adventure. The French waitress was a slim, middle-aged, good-looking woman with a mess of dark curly hair. Her pleasant, deferential manner reminded me of my mother. She lived in Lourdes but spent three months each summer in the north west of Scotland - she liked

the contrast! The quality of the food matched the price so, fat and happy we headed off again at 2.30pm towards Sandwood Bay. We were quiet though, both of us knew that the afternoon's paddle was potentially the most challenging and dangerous of our lives. Success was essential, the consequences, if things did not go to plan, did not bear thinking about.

I had spent many hours studying the tidal streams around the Cape. We needed to delay our approach if we were to avoid wind against tide conditions with resultant overfalls. I planned to land on the beach at Sandwood Bay before making our final assault. As soon as we came out of the shelter of the Sound of Handa the swell was massive. Huge walls of water threw themselves on the reef slabs just to our right. Cascades of foam and froth poured from every gully as the swells retreated, wounded but defiant. In no time at all we were into the clapotis off Rubh'an Fhir Leithe. A fore-taste of what was to come off the Cape. It confirmed our strategy. We would give the Cape a wide berth and aim to be at least half a mile off the cliffs until we were due west of the lighthouse, only then would we start heading east. The Cape was still six miles away and we needed to wait for the flood tide. Am Buchaille, 'The Shepherd' had been a prominent feature in my sub-conscious. The layered stack of Torridonian sandstone at the southern end of the beautifully remote Sandwood Bay was as significant a landmark as any we had passed on our journey north. It told me we were right there, at the crux of it. Months of training and planning were now to be realised. In my mind, perhaps mistakenly, the next couple of hours would determine the success or failure of the circumnavigation. If we could just get around Cape Wrath surely we would make it all the way around and back to Fort William.

We were unable to land anywhere on the mile-long beach. The surf was huge, well in excess of six foot. The lulls between sets were too brief and every so often a monster would rear up from the sea bed, threatening to break over us as we sat contemplating

our next move. We decided to push on, in spite of the tide. It would be virtually slack by the time we got to the Cape itself. We headed out, making a conscious effort to put distance between us and the towering cliffs. The lighthouse came into view, built by Robert Stevenson in 1827, I wondered just how many vessels had passed beneath its gaze. Very few as small as ours I mused. The swell was large, perhaps twenty feet, but the clapotis was not as bad as it had been off Point of Stoer. We continued to head north resisting the temptation to turn right. Only when we were due east of the light did we allow ourselves to drift in, passing within a few metres of the north-facing cliffs. Viking longships sailed these seas in the Middle Ages, making forays south from their bases in the Orkneys. The name Cape Wrath comes from the Norse, "Hvarf" meaning 'turning-point' and I could see why. For days we had been following the cliffs and mountains forever northwards. Suddenly the coast bore away to the east and the only thing between us and the Arctic Circle was ocean; vast, storm-ravaged ocean.

The huge gneissic slab forming the most northerly point of the 'foreland' was a bird city. A vertical conurbation of individual bird colonies; kittiwakes, guillemots, razorbills, puffins all competing for space on the guano ledges. Thousands of birds whirled above our heads like a plague of huge insects.

"I see what they mean about these Scottish midges!" Wilson remarked.

We hugged the cliffs searching each geo for the slipway indicated on the map. We were both shattered and had decided to call it a day. We knew there was little likelihood of finding a phone on this remote stretch of coast. We resolved to walk up to the lighthouse, hoping that its three hundred foot elevation would be sufficient to enable our VHF hand-held radio to reach Stornaway Coastguard. We eventually found the jetty and a fisherman's hut which would do nicely as our shelter for the night. There was certainly nowhere to pitch the tent in the steep rocky valley. Having lugged

our kit up to the hut using an old wooden thingamajig (I have no idea what it is called but it was designed perfectly for the job!) we soon made ourselves at home. We then set out on a march up to the lighthouse. The track seemed to go on forever, climbing around Dunan Mor giving a view back across the peninsular to Sandwood Bay. Inland the Flow Country of bog, moor and mountain stretched as far as the eye could see without any sign of human habitation. The weather had closed in and it started to rain. Yet again we had made it around a major obstacle in the nick of time!

At last we arrived at the lighthouse, a rather forlorn building lacking the charm of its Southern cousins. It was surrounded by an odd assortment of outbuildings some of which were clearly in use, others seemed to have been abandoned to whatever fate befell them. We took a look around to see if anyone was in residence. I knocked on a few doors but the place was apparently deserted. Our slim hope of borrowing a telephone faded. Suddenly Wilson called out. I ran around the corner to see Wilson talking to a couple of very odd-looking chaps. I use the word 'couple' deliberately. They were clearly very good friends with matching short-cropped haircuts, bushy moustaches and effeminate voices. They were from the Netherlands and had walked all the way from Fort William along the coastal path. It put our efforts into context. They were fascinated by our journey too and Wilson related tales of our adventures so far. I wandered off to try the VHF radio. I was disappointed to find that Stornaway Coastguard were unable to hear me. It further reminded me of our isolation. I was concerned that we were unable to inform the Coastguard of our safe arrival at Cape Wrath, especially since the weather was deteriorating all the time. I did not want a Search and Rescue mission initiated mistakenly on our behalf. I expressed my concern to Wilson who suggested I call up a passing ship. It had worked on the Irish Sea crossing, why not give it a go? I put out a broadcast to "any vessel". I immediately got a reply and was able to relay a message to

Stornaway via a passing trawler. A hint of disbelief in the voice of the radio operator, he seemed pleased to help.

We asked the 'Dutch Boys' to take a photo of us and the lighthouse, then we bid them farewell. They were camping in the lee of a stone wall on the cliff edge and were hoping to catch the minibus that infrequently makes it out to Cape Wrath and return to civilisation. We yomped back to our valley. It was raining heavily by the time we got back. More kit to dry out. We searched the boulder 'beach' beside the jetty for wood for a fire. It was barren. The evidence suggested many other travellers had used this unofficial bothy and almost everything combustible had been turned to ashes in the soot blackened hearth. We found a few meagre scraps and those combined with our own rubbish gave us sufficient for a small fire that lasted long enough to light the dark interior of the windowless hut during dinner. Then it was diaries by headtorch whilst snugly cocooned in our sleeping bags. The wind rushed down the valley sides buffeting our small home, rain clattered on the slate roof. The only radio station we could pick up on my little Sony was Norwegian. We had no idea what the next day would bring but at least we were on the 'Roof of Britain' and comforted by that thought I slept soundly.

Day 8

Friday 18th June 1999 (21 miles, seven hours paddling)

It was windy, very, very windy. Hurriedly I got up and went down to the waters edge. I tried to rationalise it. Yes it was windy, at least a seven with gusts that were much, much stronger. But it was off-shore, or at least cross/off-shore. Surely the cliffs would give us shelter? We did not really want to stay where we were. We had no contact with the outside world apart from the VHF and we needed to save the battery life for a real emergency. We were out of drinking water and the stream had turned brown with overnight rain. We discussed our options. I was keen to press on. Wilson was more reserved. He reminded me that he had sailed in this sort of wind and

knew we would not be able to paddle against it. I argued that we shouldn't have to. Wilson agreed to give it a go with the proviso that if it got worse we would stop at the first opportunity. We were quickly sorted and afloat. The wind immediately blew us out of our little gully. I shouted at Wilson to hug the cliffs. The sea was essentially flat but sheets of spray were being torn from the surface and whisked out to sea by the frequent gusts. The swell offshore was just visible through the murk. Horsetails of spume suggested a valiant struggle as the waves attempted to make headway against the fearsome wind. We made rapid progress in the lee of the cliffs to the small bay of Geodha na Seamraig. Then we saw it! A shark's tooth stack perhaps 150 feet high, wreathed in a swirling vortex of spray. Between it and the towering cliff a narrow gap, twenty feet wide. A raging cauldron of white water. Katabatic winds were descending the peaks of Beinn Dearg, Fashven and Sgribhis-bheinn, accelerating down the Kearvaig River valley so that when they hit the surface of the small bay they were gusting in excess of Force 9. The stack stood boldly in the wind's path and as if enraged by its defiance the wind screamed around the rock tearing water from its base sending it spiralling upwards. You will have to take our word for it, but we had never seen anything like it before.

We had no choice. Although we were only a couple of hundred meters from shore there was no way we could paddle against the wind to reach the rocky beach and if we did manage it - then what? To go outside of the stack meant the risk of being blown out to sea. We had to go for the gap. Into the heart of the whirlwind! It would have been out of the question if there had been any swell. We were blown directly into the melee, we could not paddle, it took all our strength to hold onto our blades. I fought with my tiller bar to prevent my kayak from hitting the rocks. We were blasted through the gap out of control. I was slightly ahead of Wilson. Trying to back paddle to keep us together, I caught a glimpse of his face. He did not look happy! With each gust I was

being pushed flat onto the front deck of my kayak. My wing paddles were trying to live up to their name. They whipped about, trying to take off like some wild bird making a last ditch fight for freedom. All around us water was being sent skywards. There was no distinction between land, sea and sky, it was all one tumultuous, chaotic mess and we were right in the middle of it!

Strangely enough, I was enjoying the experience. This was nature at its most raw. This is what I had come to the North Coast for. This was 'Extreme Sea Kayaking'. I was confident in our abilities and did not allow myself to contemplate the consequences if things went wrong. We had passed through the gap but there were more stacks ahead. Much taller, these megaliths blocked our path to shelter. We braced ourselves as we rushed towards them. As we roared past I began laughing to myself. A crazy, manic laugh of someone on the edge. I was loving it! We were close to catastrophe but I was loving it. I was brought back to reality by Wilson who shouted, fighting to maintain his balance;

"I WANT OUT!"

"Great!" I thought, "what does he expect ME to do about it".

It served to remind me of the seriousness of our situation and I felt guilty about placing Wilson in this predicament. He hadn't wanted to paddle and in retrospect he had been right. There had been no margin for error whatsoever. Eventually we passed the last stack and the wind dropped. Stopping to catch our breath we discussed our situation. Wilson had clearly been shaken by the experience and I was careful in my choice of words. Yes, we had been out of control, but even if the worst had happened and one of us had capsized and failed to roll.....we would have coped? Wilson was unconvinced. I thought back to an article I had read in Sea Kayaker magazine about the tragic death of Lone Madsen off the coast of Greenland when she had got separated from her partner in a squall. Surely we would be able to stay together whatever the conditions? I resolved to listen more

carefully to Wilson in the future. If he was in two minds about whether to paddle we would err on the side of caution.

We had glided into an eerie calm. Looking back we could just see the last pair of stacks in the gloom. I took a photo knowing the drama would be lost in the monochrome grey. Looking ahead the awesome cliffs of Clo Mor disappeared upwards. The highest cliffs on mainland Britain at 920 feet, they were home to hundreds of thousands of sea birds. The stench of guano was over-powering. Puffins, razorbills and guillemots leapt suicidally from perches hundreds of feet above us. Dropping almost vertically towards the rocks at the base of the cliff they would pull up at the last second to fly low and fast across the surface of the sea, their fat tummies bouncing off the wave tops, until they 'landed' in an undignified heap above their chosen fishing site. Sometimes they would not land at all but just fly aimlessly around within a few hundred meters of the shore and having completed a couple of circuits they would return to their nest as if their doctor had advised them to take regular exercise. How they avoided a mid-air collision is a mystery to me. An individual call was indecipherable in the cacophony of squawks, squeaks and screeches that came from the audience on the cliffs. Whether it was a show of appreciation or loved ones telling their partners to be careful I am not sure. As I watched them return safely to the nest I came to the conclusion that they should feature in the next advert for Pepsi Max.

The bulk of Clo Mor provided sanctuary for a while but we were soon heading south east into Balnakeil Bay. The very beautiful Kyle of Durness was hidden from view by horizontal drizzle stinging our hands and faces. As soon as we had gained the 'angle of dangle' we worked a close reach to Faraid Head. This narrow peninsular of jagged rock and cliff linked by high sand dunes provided a little shelter from the wind. Once around the north east tip we were into the teeth of the gale. The small town of Durness was the only opportunity for shelter but it

seemed impossible to reach. As each gust hit us we were at a standstill, sometimes even blown backwards. By hugging the rocks and using the small degree of lee they provided we were able to work from eddy to eddy and slowly but surely we made ground. The spectacular stacks of Clach Bheag na Faraid and Clach Mhor na Faraid were only appreciated for the brief respite they gave from the head-banging toil. It took us an hour and a half to paddle the three miles from Faraid Head to Sango Bay. By the time we arrived on the sandy beach we were completely exhausted. There was no discussion - we were getting out! It was chucking it down, but at least the exertion of the last few miles had kept us warm. Now we had stopped we were quickly overcome by uncontrollable shivers. We needed to get the boats above the high water mark. We had no idea how long we would be stuck there and both of us felt it was unlikely we would paddle again even though it was not yet midday. To get the boats above the high water mark meant a tricky carry up sharp rocks to get to the grass covered slopes behind. As we struggled with my Inuk Wilson cried out in pain, dropping the stern of my kayak onto the rocks. His wetsuit boot had been punctured by the edge of a broken drainage pipe. Typically he was not concerned by the injury to his foot but was upset because in dropping my Inuk it had torn and bent the aluminium rudder bracket. I must confess to a little panic when I first saw it - I did not fancy paddling back to Fort William without a rudder. But closer inspection revealed that, although badly damaged, with some brute force re-adjustment it would probably last out the trip.

We quickly unpacked and changed into warm clothes. The wind was unrelenting. I could only just open the door to the telephone kiosk. Whilst I chatted to Linda I watched a flock of black headed gulls being fed on the wing by a man through the side window of his camper van. The gulls were flapping furiously to stay level and in contention for the best titbits. It was a surreal sight. As the rain battered the perspex panels of the kiosk Linda described how she was having

to be careful not to get too sunburnt in the heat wave back home. Marvelous!

We sought refuge in the Tourist Information Office which afforded a great view of Sango Bay. We got talking to a couple of Swiss girls, their hire car had got a puncture and they could not find the spare. They had left the car and walked five miles in the pouring rain to get help. I offered to take a look - it is, after all, what I do for a living - helping stricken motorists. We had nothing else better to do. I left Wilson 'in charge' of the gear in the warm and dry and having found a lift with an English couple on their annual holiday to the North Coast, I soon located the car and the spare wheel. They had not thought to look under the carpet in the boot! The girls offered to buy us lunch in gratitude. We declined their generosity but did share a table with them very conscious of the fact that as soon as our bodies started to warm up we began to smell - bad!

We found an excellent shop after lunch where we re-stocked on cereal bars and other bits and pieces. On my mission of mercy I had seen the next stretch of coast in glimpses through the drizzle. The wind seemed to be very much cross-shore and would be on our backs for most of the time. By 4pm we were itching to get going. The wind had decreased appreciably so, after a careful carry back down the rocks to the beach, we headed out again. It was fine and we were soon crossing the mouth of Loch Eriboll towards Whiten Head. It was windy, especially with the increased fetch in the middle of the Loch. It lived up to its nickname of Loch 'Orrible given by the serviceman stationed there during World War II who had little to do but wait for battle. Spray stung our faces but we were able to get the angle right to surf most of the way. Whiten Head has the last remaining breeding colony of grey seals in the caves at its base. We were careful not to disturb them as we paddled past. Curiosity as always got the better of them and we soon led a procession of bobbing heads. Dusk was going to arrive early with the heavily laden skies so we

decided on an early finish. Paddling into a beautiful bay near the village of Strathan, a perfect wave curled onto a submerged sandbar. Wilson nearly got caught out as a large set came from nowhere, threatening to send him bongo-sliding onto the rocks. A nifty combination of back paddling and draw strokes prevented that disaster. Discovering a perfect campsite under a rocky outcrop overlooking a virgin beach of white sand we relaxed, pleased to have come through an epic day relatively unscathed.

Needing water and the use of a phone we walked up to a nearby croft. A curious colour scheme, the corrugated iron walls were freshly painted cream, the windows a bright red. Numerous red and yellow buoys were neatly arranged along the front of the cottage. The old man who answered the door was as deaf as a post. Fortunately his wife/sister/daughter (it was hard to tell) came to the door and showed us the outside tap. She explained that they did not have a phone but the local Coastguard lived just over the hill. A mile or more by road, if we followed the dyke over the ridge, his was the newly built bungalow with the Highways truck parked outside. We found it easily and a large burly man dressed in oil stained overalls confirmed he was Her Majesty's Coastguard. He was delighted to help and rang Stornaway on our behalf. We chatted for a while admiring his new pad. He was pleased with it, having built it himself on land he had inherited. He had lived all his life on this remote coast with no plans to go any place else. His wife had made a valiant attempt to cultivate a flower garden but it had been destroyed by the gales leaving the plants in tatters. I asked him about the surf in the bay. He described how sometimes the waves broke from one end of the bay to the other, 'just like Hawaii' he described. Interesting!

We enjoyed a watery sunset from our perch above the bay. Chatting, we agreed that it would be a day we would never forget. We had paddled through the eye of a whirlwind - and survived! What would tomorrow bring? (to be continued in n/l 86)

FOR SALE

Business for Sale Rotorua

Successful Tourism Venture requires new owners. Medium impact activities - Lakes and Sea Kayak related.

Annual bookings with Private Training Establishments, Intermediate and Secondary Schools and Polytechnics are a major part of the business through the low season.

We have established a National client base with Tourism Centres, Motel, Hotel, Backpackers, Conference Incentive and Activity companies, New Zealand Adventure companies (marketing off shore) and Travel Booking Office's.

We have advanced group bookings with the International market including (USA and Japan).

We wish to sell the business as a going concern. Asset Items include:-
Plant and Equipment,
Dedicated Trailer
Registered Company Name,
P O Box #,
Telephone and Fax Numbers,
Mobile Phone and Number,
Email address
Website Address
25,000 Brochures
2,000 Brochure Inserts.
Graphic Photos on CD

Current advertising is with Tourism Offices, AA Guide - What To See And Do, The Lonely Planet, Travel Booking Offices though out New Zealand.

The business has been operating for 6 years and is in a position for growth and expansion due to the trends for greater outdoor activities.

For further information, please reply to:
Business for Sale
C/- P O Box 1715
Rotorua

RISK

The following poem was read by Cathye Haddock at her session on Risk Management at the recent Coastbusters. As there were several requests for copies, I have included it in the n/l.

RISK by Leo Busgaglia

**To laugh is to risk appearing a fool,
to weep is to risk appearing sentimental or weak,
to reach out for another is to risk involvement,
to express feelings is to risk exposing one's true self,
to share ideas and dreams before a crowd is to risk their
loss,
to love is to risk not being loved in return,
to live is to risk dying, to hope is to risk despair,
to try is to risk failure**

**The greatest hazard in life is to risk nothing.
They who risk nothing, have nothing, are nothing.
They may avoid suffering and sorrow,
but fail to grow, to be as much of themselves as they can be,
and
to have as much of time and life as there is
only a person who risks is free.**

KASK FORUM 2000

DATES:

**3pm Easter Friday 21 April
to
Noon Easter Monday 24 April**

VENUE:

**South New Brighton Community Hall,
Beatty St, South New Brighton**

ACCOMMODATION:

**South Brighton Motor Camp
Ph/fax: (03) 388 9844**

CONTACT:

**Peter Sullivan
7 Monowai Crescent, Christchurch 9
Ph: (03) 3883 380
email: dsullivan@xtra.co.nz**

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

From Sisson Kayaks Ltd

Over the past year, several kayak owners have notified us that their boats have been stolen. This problem seems to be getting worse because the calls are becoming more frequent. Until now we were powerless to broadcast this alert.

We have decided to do something positive to help the victims of this rotten crime. On our website: www.sissonkayaks.co.nz we have recently added the Second Hand Emporium. An extension of this page is the stolen boat register. Listings in the Stolen Boat Register are free.

If you can bring this service to the attention of paddlers I am sure they will be active in keeping an eye out for stolen boats. The outline for action to list a stolen kayak is explained in the website. Together let's stamp out kayak theft.

In addition your readers may be interested in listing their used boats in our Second Hand Emporium. By listing their boat here they are getting true nationwide coverage. In fact the coverage is actually worldwide - yes - secondhand kayaks are already being exported. If needed, we can help potential exporters with freight advice.

Grahame Sisson.

FOR SALE

Sea Kayaks, 2 single Puffins, 1 Dobbe Double (fiberglass)

Lots of equipment (Buoyancy aids, paddles, spray skirts etc)

ph (03) 525 9095,

email: nigel@clear.net.nz

Thanks a lot!

Regards,

Nigel Marsden

Planet Earth Adventures

ph (03) 525 9095

<http://home.clear.net.nz/pages/nigel>

IN THE PRESS

CLINTON WAGHORN

The 'New Zealand Listener' March 18-24 2000 has a two page article including colour pics of Clinton Waghorn's Alaskan trip, as noted in the editorial. In May this year Clinton heads back to Chevak, near the mouth of the Yukon River in the Bering Sea where he is aiming to paddle south around the coast of Alaska to his start point at Prince Rupert. Vincent Maire also sent me a photocopy of a feature article on Clinton's trip which appeared on page 13-14 of the Saturday February 5 edition of the 'Waikato Times.'

JET SKI CRASH

'The Press' 29/01/00: Millionaire businessman Alan Gibbs, 60, admitted dangerously driving a jet-ski and was fined \$3000. Gibbs was driving a powerful 1200cc jet-ski near the Cavalli Islands off the Northland Coast on January 5 when he lost control and ploughed into a small dinghy, throwing the four occupants into the water. Gibbs, who was charged under the Maritime Safety Act, had paid \$5000 to the victims in the dinghy and \$5000 to the St John Ambulance who took them to the hospital.

A great pity the judge didn't order confiscation of the wretched jet-ski and pass it on to the Phantom for a jolly good stoning and burning!

MISSING KAYAKER

'The Press' 4/03/00:

Two paddlers headed out of the Kakanui River mouth and were heading around to Cambell's Bay, about 11km south-west of Oamaru. Ricky Stringer paddled back out to sea while his companion stayed on the beach, and then got into difficulties. Police believe ('Greymouth Evening Star' 9/03/00) that Ricky may have been taken by a shark, as a brown gym shoe worn by Mr Stringer was found just north of All Day Bay, about 2km from where he went missing. The shoe had been damaged and part of the heel was missing.

Shark or not, the press clippings noted that neither man was wearing a lifejacket! Readers will note that the photo on the front cover of the newsletter shows Chris Duff wearing a LIFEJACKET prior to his departure from Rapahoe. Chris, like myself, removes his lifejacket once well at sea, but for landings through surf, the lifejacket goes back on! if you are playing in surf in a sea kayak, please wear a lifejacket. There is always a chance of being knocked unconscious by some other wobble in a kayak or in the event of an out of boat experience, being knocked out by your own kayak. Swimming in heavy surf without the buoyancy of a lifejacket or a wetsuit can be extremely tiring.

KAYAKERS RESCUED

'The Press' 22/03/00: Emergency workers pulled two Israeli tourists from cold Lake Tekapo after they were knocked out of their kayaks in rough weather. The pair, both males aged 23, were in the water for 45 minutes and suffered from mild exposure. A policeman noted they should have not been out in the conditions.

KAYAKERS RESCUED

'The Press' 22/03/00: Four kayakers were rescued in rough seas off the Kaikoura coast yesterday afternoon. A Mayday call was received after some tourists and a tourist operator found themselves in choppy conditions about 500m off the Kaikoura coast. A Police and Coast Guard operation was mounted to pick up the people, one of whom had fallen out of a kayak.

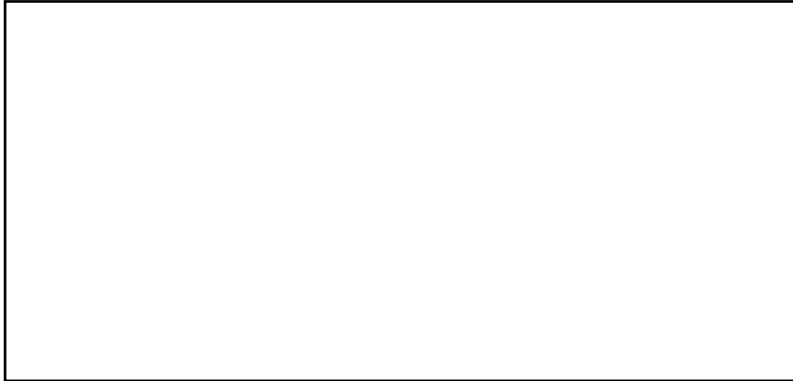
WANTED

Contributors to the KASK Newsletter. Now that summer is waning, please send me trip reports of the summer missions or articles relating to any aspects of sea kayaking. Cover photos are also requested.

THANKS

To the contributors to this newsletter, Beverley Burnett, Cathye Haddock, Sandy Ferguson, and the printing and mailing team of Phil Handford, Helen Woodward and David Herrington.

MAILED TO



If undelivered, please return to: Helen Woodward, 82 Hutcheson St. Blenheim.

