No. 94 August - September 2001

THE SEA CANOEIST NEWSLETTER

Pics by David and Jane Carman. See Trip Report on p.8.

Surrounded by sea birds off Cape Brett

A boulder beach landing on Barrier Island

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.

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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 Treasurer, Max Grant.

LRB2 - KASK HANDBOOK

For a copy of this mother of all sea kayaking handbooks, contact KASK Treasurer:
Max Grant,
71 Salisbury St.
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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 Max Grant.

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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INDEX

THANKS

To the contributors and the newsletter production team of Max Grant, Maurice Kennedy and Russel Davidson.

EDITORIAL

For the first time in my 10 years as newsletter editor, I have received a surfeit of material, almost sufficient for two newsletters. Many thanks to the contributors and don't be disappointed if your article is not in the current newsletter. The joke supply is rather lean currently, hence the rather rude Arabian Revenge on p.19. Please keep the awful jokes coming, particularly when jet skiers can be included.

In the overseas trip report section, I have included three newspaper articles written by Clint Waghorn that were first printed in the 'Waikato Times. The first article covers planning, preparation and training, and is a great insight into how much time and effort goes into that phase of expedition planning. I have always maintained that with thorough and meticulous research, planning, and training, an expedition should be hassle free. Storms and big seas will disrupt schedules, but critical factors such as tidal ranges, tide change times, tidal stream strengths and directions should be either noted on the maps or included with the navigation kit. Cook Inlet, south of Anchorage, has a huge tidal range and with any large body of sea water exiting to the ocean through a narrow passage, tidal streams are swift and violent. Knowing slack water times and when neap tides occur help to minimize the dramas faced with a crossing such as that of Cook Inlet. Clint on this first attempt struck a strong tidal stream, too strong to paddle against and turned back to his start point to wait for more conducive conditions, and his second attempt went smoothly.

In the third article, Clint describes paddling from Homer to Cordova, and then girding his loins for the open Gulf of Alaska section down to Cape Spencer, where he could turn into the shelter of the fiords for the last leg down to his original start point at Prince Rupert. In the Copper River delta, Clint spent an uncomfortably long time in his boat without being able to reach terra firma, and after some soul searching, pulled the pin and turned back to Cordova. His gut instinct was to save the gulf coast for next year. And sometimes you have the follow your gut instinct. During our first attempt to cross the Tasman Sea with Ron Allnatt, we were caught offshore in an explosive front, and although the 50 knot+ wind was a tailwind, my gut instinct was to fight back to Tasmania. Ron was as keen as mustard to run with it, but my instinct said to turn back.

It is difficult to separate a feeling of apprehension, nervous anxiety or even panic from an instinctive feeling of wanting to turn back or curtail an expedition. And with the growing numbers of novice paddlers on guided trips, it is a difficult call for a novice paddler to know when they well out of their comfort zone, and conditions are more demanding than their level of experience. I would suggest that it is better to tell your trip leader or guide that you want to land or turn back, rather than rely on the skills and experience of the leader/guide to get you out of trouble on the water.

FORUM CALENDAR

KASK 2002 Forum will be held near Titahi Bay (Wellington) on the weekend 1 - 3 March

Coastbusters 2002 will be held at Orewa, north of Auckland, 15 - 17 March.

THE 'BUGGER!' FILE

EDUCATIONAL BUGGER
from Cathye Haddock

SCENE SETTING

A mid year sea kayaking field trip along an open coast route for members of an outdoor course. Two groups of 6 students and 2 instructors intended to set out from an estuary, paddle in opposite directions along the coast, and then return to the estuary. Three instructors were contracted by the organisation and the course tutor was the fourth instructor.

THE TRIP

As part of the 10 day sea kayak programme, students, instructors and tutor travelled up to the estuary intending to undergo further training along the coast. They were aware that a Southerly front was expected shortly after mid day, so they wanted to complete the journey and be back in the estuary ahead of the weather change. They carried their lunch with the intention of going ashore at some point of the exercise. A briefing was held on the beach on what the weather was likely to do and students planned the trip, using the opportunity to practice leadership skills along the way. They left the estuary at approximately 10am. One group went north while the other went south.

The group that went north out of the estuary paddled along parallel to the shore. They intended to go ashore and have lunch and then return to the estuary. The weather was fine and hot with a light northerly blowing. However, during the trip they could see the clouds building over the hills to the south as the southerly approached. They arrived at their northern beach destination at 11.45am and there was some discussion about going ashore through the surf. Most of the students were reluctant to do so as the surf was quite big with some breaks being at least 1.5 metres. There was some time spent in negotiation at this point as two students wanted to go ashore and play in the surf. After some time, these two students in the company of one instructor, made their way into the beach while the rest rafted up and waited. Both students came out of their kayaks in the surf and were assisted by the instructor. The rest of the group, with the course tutor, decided to head back to the estuary at this point and indicated their intentions to the instructor on the beach.

HIT BY THE SOUTHERLY

They paddled back towards the estuary for about half an hour and during this time, the tutor could see the front approaching and encouraged the five students to make maximum effort with their paddling and, as the front got closer, to angle towards the shore. By the time the front hit them at 1.15pm, they were approximately 100 metres off shore and directly opposite some boating clubrooms that were also the Coast Guard base. There was an immediate wind gust of about 45kph that caused an instant change in the water conditions. A wind chop of about 0.5m which rapidly increased to about 1m with breaking crests caused two students to tip out within a couple of minutes. Ann (not her real name, all names changed for this article) was the first to fall out and the instructor paddled towards her to effect a rescue. She let go of her boat, which immediately flew across the surface of the water and out of reach. Jack fell out next and swam to Ann and got into the huddle position by wrapping himself around her. The tutor was struggling to gain control of his boat. Susan meantime had grabbed Jack's boat and was attempting to get it and herself to shore. Shortly afterwards she was forced to let Jack's boat go, at which time she also fell out. She was able to retain a grip on her boat and started to drift to shore in a diagonal direction that meant the process would take some time.

While this was happening, Ben and Matt, in the double kayak, were able to successfully reach the shore and went directly to the Coastguard search control base to brief the controller on the situation.

The tutor paddled up to Jack and Anne and got them to grab the front of his boat. He then attempted to paddle ashore, dragging them along. Due to the drag, they made very slow progress but at least they had something to hold on to.

By this time the coast guard launch was in the water and checked that they were okay before heading further out to search for others. They spent another 15 minutes paddling before the next boat was launched and by this time, those in the water were becoming hypothermic. Ann was of concern as she appeared to be going into shock. The second boat picked up the two students and the tutor surfed to shore where Matt helped him beach his boat.

They then ran up the beach to where Susan was drifting ashore with the help of one of the boat crew. They waded out through the surf and grabbed her, assisted her to shore, then stripped her wet clothes off and got her into some dry fleece clothing that the tutor had been carrying in his boat. This done, they got her up to the clubrooms where she, Jack and Ann were warmed up by people who had been doing a boating course at the clubrooms. They were eventually taken to a medical centre for observation and returned home that afternoon.

Meanwhile, the instructor had re-entered the surf with the other two students, intending to catch the rest of the group up. But more time was lost by the sub-group as one student came out of his boat in the surf yet again. Eventually, the two students turned up at the clubrooms in a ute that had gone up the beach to get them. One student had managed to paddle ashore while the other student was picked up by the first rescue boat out. The rescuers' tractor returned their boats. The instructor paddled ashore at the clubrooms shortly afterwards.

Ann's boat was recovered one mile off shore by another rescue boat that had launched further north.

The group that had gone south from the estuary managed to get safely to shore just south of the estuary. They had been closer in to shore when the front struck and despite a couple of

capsizes, had been able to effect their own rescues and got ashore under their own steam. They made their way to the house of a local resident who warmed them up and gave them hot drinks. A local fishing boat that had been retrieving their own gear adjacent to the group, picked up a couple of paddles that had been dropped.

FOLLOW UP

The following day at 12pm a debriefing session was held at the organisation. All instructors, the tutor and all students apart from one (who did not attend due to reasons nothing to do with the incident) attended. An outdoor professional attended as external facilitator at the request of the contracted instructors.

The debrief was extensive and involved each student sharing with the group, their own story of the drama and how they felt about it.

All realised that they had come close to losing someone. All agreed that although it had been a near miss, it had been a very valuable learning experience.

Students were concerned that the media attention during the incident had been misleading and inaccurate, causing unnecessary anxiety to families who had contacted the organisation before the tutor had even made contact. It was apparent that the local radio station must have been scanning the emergency channels as the word got out while they were still in the water.

EQUIPMENT

Each group was carrying some form of communications equipment. Both groups had a cell phone, one had a marine VHF radio, the other had an EPIRB (electronic locator beacon). Both groups carried flares, tow line, spare split paddle, float, first aid kit, spare clothing, food and water. One group had a thermos of hot coffee. Everyone was wearing polypropylene underwear, windproof paddle jackets and buoyancy aids.

INSTRUCTORS / TUTORS

The SKOANZ Code of Practice recommends a ratio of one instructor to eight novices. With two instructors/ tutors per group, the ratio was 1:3.

CONTRIBUTING FACTORS

A number of factors were identified by the tutor, as contributing to the incident:

- The contracted company instructor team had the wrong sized tow- ball on their vehicle which did not fit the trailer carrying the hired kayaks – this created logistical problems and caused delays to the sea kayak programme the week before the incident

- The tutor had wrongly assumed that the tow-ball problem would be rectified by the following week and his preferred option was to go to sheltered water in view of the impending storm on the day of the incident

- However, the tow-ball problem had not been rectified, which meant that options for the trip that day were limited to the open coast

- The students were not taught any rescue skills by the contracted company prior to going on the open sea journey; the briefing was inadequate

- When the tutor realised this, he 'stepped in' on the beach and demonstrated a wet exit and self rescue for the students prior to departing for the journey

- The tutor initially had an 'assumption of competence' for the company

- However, he realised he was still responsible for the group's safety so felt had to 'step in' even though awkward

- No clear time limit was set for the journey before leaving the beach

- They knew they should be back before the storm but decided to 'play it by ear', students were allowed to make decisions as part of their leadership and planning opportunity

- In hindsight, this was an error of judgement as students did not yet have the experience and knowledge to make decisions regarding marine weather conditions

- The Northern group paddled too far up the coast, reducing the time safety factor by up to one hour

- Once the northern group found the surf too high to land, two male students were intent on their own agendas (surfing), regardless of the safety of the whole group

- The testosterone factor could have been at work here

- This lost valuable time for the group – estimated at 30 minutes

- One or both instructors should have been more proactive to return the whole group to a more benign surf break – probably resulting in the group making it to the beach by the time the storm hit.

- While the sub group was returning to the estuary, it became apparent that the students were tired and incapable of paddling quickly.

- At this point, the tutor felt he should have found a place for them to land their boats rather than continuing on, assuming they would beat the front.

- When the storm hit, Ann and Jack fell out almost immediately and let go of their boats

- If they had had more rescue training and practice this may not have happened

- Without their boats they were immediately reliant on outside rescue

- When the first rescue boat approached them, the tutor felt he should have got it to pick the two swimmers up immediately

- This would have got them out of the water 15 minutes earlier, preventing the hypothermia

- The first rescue boat should have picked Susan up immediately as well

- She was in the water a further 25 minutes after being initially checked by the boat, by which time she was also hypothermic

ACTION FOR FUTURE

1. A contract needs to be drafted by the organisation that clearly spells out the responsibilities of contract instructors.

2. Skill building needs to be progressive and basic skills such as paddle strokes, mutual rescues and self-rescues need to be practised more before students are allowed onto exposed coastal waters.

3. Students will not be given leadership opportunities in any outdoor discipline until they are more competent with personal skills.

4. A more conservative approach to impending weather / sea conditions will be adopted.

5. A marine VHF radio will be purchased as soon as possible to be carried by the tutor while on marine based field trips.

CONCLUSION

There were mistakes made by all of the parties involved, including the police and the coast guard. Decisions were made in the heat of the moment that, in hindsight, could have been different. The media reported that 11 sea kayakers and four instructors had been rescued. In fact, four students were rescued as well as four boats. The rest of the class and instructors were able to make their own way ashore.

This incident was preventable, as are many such incidents. As an outdoor programme we constantly seek to identify and manage the risks such a programme presents. It was a valuable learning experience for all involved and our challenge in the future is to prevent a re-occurrence in any of our activities.

Original report written by the Course Tutor.– Adapted on request by Cathye Haddock to preserve confidentiality

NEW ZEALAND TRIP REPORTS

Mana Island Trip Report by Rob Adam.

For the writer and his wife Dianne, this report almost made it to the bugger file. Next time I will listen to my wife. It all started after deciding to travel to Wellington from Eltham to paddle with the Wellington Network out to Mana Island on 5 August. We arrived bright and early at the launch site at Titahi Bay on Sunday morning. It felt good to be the first ones to arrive, as it allowed us heaps of time to set up and then have time to meet every body as they arrived. The weather dawned fine with northwesterlies of around 15 knots forecast.

The 'on the water time' of 10.30 went by without to much concern and besides, Max and his group were not here yet. When they did arrive, it was like watching a well oiled machine in action. Kayaks were unloaded, gear stowed, clothes changed, fluffy sheep skin seat in place. All this while introductions were taking place happened in very quick time.

The group duly assembled had 19 kayakers. Sixteen Kayaks in all colours of the rainbow including a beautifully home built 6m double capable of carrying three adults. An equal number of men (including one with the woolly seat) and women. The group comprised of paddlers of all levels and was made up of Wellington Network and Ruahine White Water Club Members. After introductions all around, we were given a Safety briefing by Wayne and then onto the water by 11am. We had decided to stay as one pod.

The launch went without problem and the group headed off. The crossing went without incident although at one stage Wayne had to call us back together after the pod became a bit split up and apart from the last 500 metres or so when we came onto a strong current, we made the crossing in 50 minutes, a distance of approx. 4.5km. After an uneventful landing we were met by a D.O.C. Ranger who gave us a briefing on the Island and its inhabitants. Mana Island is claimed to be Predator free. There is no livestock on the island and over the last few years, thousands of trees have been planted and wildlife has been reintroduced. Kathy pointed out a Pukeko on Steroids or Takahae as we country people know them. We were all asked to ensure that we kept our hatch covers in place after removing our gear so as to minimize the risk of a hitch hiking rodent jumping ashore. Lunch was enjoyed on the foreshore with most discussion centred around kayaking as one would expect.

After lunch, we had the choice of either walking around some of the tracks or attempting to paddle around the Island. The majority (some reluctantly) including my wife (first mistake) decided to attempt the circumnavigation and duly set off. The idea was for a couple of stronger paddlers to head out and suss it out as to whether it would be safe. We had a bit of a rip to get over first which split the group, but being in a double - when the going gets tough you both paddle harder so consequently we were near the front. I do not find it easy to look back so was unaware that most were hanging back. At this stage I do not remember it being too bad but poor Dianne who sits in the front was starting to get a bit nervous and told me so (second mistake). We had three singles in near proximity to us including Eskimo Rolling Jan, the German in his black Puffin and although we could not communicate verbally because of the noise of the sea, I felt some sense of security knowing that there was some experience close by. (third mistake). By this time we were about 500 metres around the point and we were heading straight into what appeared to be HUGE seas. I'm told they were about 2-3 metres. The silly thing with this situation is that we try to enjoy our paddling experiences and would normally avoid conditions like this. One must therefore ask himself, why did we do it ? It was obvious that we were out of our depth and would not make it around the island but as I said earlier, in the

double when the going gets tough we paddle harder and before we know it we are out of touch. We are both a bit nervous about turning around in seas like that also, which compounded the issue. By now I was beginning to think that perhaps I should take notice of my wife. What the hell were we doing here? The three singles were still there and we got a sign from Jan to turn around (oh shit), so turn around we did and I tell you what; there was a lot of luck in that manoeuvre.

Now the fun really begins. I think of all I have read about surfing and bracing and capsizing and re-entry as we are pushed forward. Poor Dianne is terrified but keeps paddling. I don't know whether to be excited or wet myself. "Lookout" she yells, "bloody big rocks on right" Just bloody paddle I cry. Almost over that time but onwards we paddle. Then, to our right we catch sight of a capsized kayak. Oh Bugger! We are completely out of our depth and should have been looking at Lizards on the Island. We caught a glimpse of Lindsay hanging onto his kayak but he was a lot further out than us, so away from the rocks and we knew Jan and we thought one other was out there also, so we concentrated on getting back to the main group and sending back assistance. Thankfully we did get back, albeit a bit pumped up. Max and Ken headed into it and two others went ashore onto the island in case they were needed. It wasn't long before they all arrived back safely. Lindsay very wet but not damaged by the experience.

After regrouping it was decided to go ashore again where hot drinks were had and the story of the adventure was told. A brief walk and then into the kayaks for an uneventful 45 min. paddle home.

In all a great trip with lots of lessons learnt. Especially by me who will in future listen to his wife. We will also make a point of staying away from the front of a group. Thankfully this trip ended safely. All kayakers had appropriate safety gear .Radios were on hand and there was lots of experience within the group. It did however emphasise to us just how quickly things can turn to custard through no fault of the Trip Leader. But on the other hand, how quickly it can be put right with experience.

We would like to thank the organizers and the participants of the trip for their efforts and friendliness towards us and we look forward to future paddles.
Rob Adam.

Queens Birthday Paddling Lake Taupo

by Sue Cade

(reprinted from the Wellington Regional Sea Kayak Network n/l August 2001.)

Well what a rush, further optimising my gear packing (more sewing of bags), dehydrating food, cooking Tararua Biscuits, making sure the bottle of port is ready for consumption and then it was a late night Thursday exodus to camp at DeBretts Taupo

Ian Jenkins and I had decided to circumnavigate lake Taupo, all being well.

Day one saw us enjoying a hot swim then parking on the lake foreshore. Once we were packed and the magic lake mist lifted, it was clear blue skies and glorious views in any direction. After we packed unfortunately Ian put his back out lifting my fully loaded Looksha. Now it was re evaluate, remedial stretches and yes just after noon we were off, nothing was going to stop us. That afternoon we paddled from Taupo to a Whakaipo Bay, about 18km. An interesting diversion was a group of scuba divers training in the high altitude freshwater of Lake Taupo using powered propulsion units that ran at about 4 knots. (On reflection Taupo is over a thousand feet above sea level)

Around the eastern side of Okutu Bay (Mine Bay), we discovered the more modern traditional rock carving of the Ngati Tuwharetoa the Taupo Maori people. One very large cliff was filled by the carved face of the Tohanga who features in legends of the lake. Alongside were lizards and other creatures fully sculptured into the nearby surrounding natural rock. I found it very impressive, but Ian felt it had damaged the natural beauty. Soon after the weather became distinctly cooler and the seas got a bit rougher. We camped just after dark on the foreshore with Ian muttering about the wisdom of pitching our tent only 3 metres from the tide mark. However he was reassured when it was explained that a tidal variation of over one inch is exceptional on Lake Taupo (a bit different to paddling on the sea).

Day two saw us doing a more leisurely 33km while enjoying the spectacular scenery of the Western Foreshore. There were spectacular views again of snow clad mountains, cliffs, waterfalls, the odd cave and a bit of sunshine. Finally we camped at Cherry Bay, a tiny bay just Southeast from Whanganui Bay arriving just as the light faded. This bay is noted for being safe in any conditions. I had last camped there with Peter Gates on a previous trip but this time it was somewhat cooler. One of the bays down points is it is so sheltered that all our gear froze that night. I was amused at the way stretched neoprene froze stretched!

Day three, was a somewhat longer day (about 55km) from Cherry Bay to just past Motuapa on the Eastern side of the lake.

Ah! it was a cold start and took a while for my feet to thaw once we were underway. We had been eyeing the Karangahape Cliffs from day one and were now finally paddling around them, the cliffs rising two thousand feet and straight up. It was really a smooth paddle down to Waihi, where we enjoyed looking at the waterfall and village from our boats while enjoying the luxury of the thermal water warming the hulls.

Shortly after it was time to mount our lights and paddle on. This was fun as at times in the dark we grounded on some of the more shallow sandy spots and yes it was a bit hard to find exactly the campsite we had envisaged at

Stump Bay. We even disturbed some wading trousered fishermen in the cold dark air. I could hear the line lash in the dark, so had visions of being impaled by a hook, if they hadn't seen us. They were surprised when we called out to them. Unfortunately they informed us it was going to be minus four that night and expressed pleasure that they were not camping.

We actually had passed between the land and them. We definitely disturbed their fishing; they left soon after this.

The night was a beautiful moon lit night, though so cold the deck of our boats froze before we stopped It was hard to find a good place in the dark at about ten thirty, so we ended up camping in a semi boggy spongy area among the ducks. After searching for a place deep enough to actually paddle in to the shore it was good to stop!

On day four we had 37km back to Taupo. That morning saw me a bit more organised with my frozen gear and we didn't have to worry about thawing and drying the tent. I was now into the routine of thawing things between the layers of clothes down my front! More slow thawing of feet in the boat while the top of the boat thawed as we paddled. On this day I enjoyed the variety of cliffs especially the white pumice ones with submerged logs and stumps in front of them. There were many low lying reefs, as well complete with more stupendous views of the Snowy Mountains. Finally Taupo township with its hot pools and the thought of the long drive home. Time for a break.

Next time I think I will insulate my boat and wear some socks in my booties, maybe use a hotwater bottle even for my feet. But a great trip, approximately over 143 km of picturesque paddling in almost continuous blue skies and full moonlit nights, ideal conditions really. We saw very little boat traffic the whole trip except close to the Southern end. We only saw one short trip sea kayaker on our last day.

Yes I like the solitude and Ian's back has now recovered.
Sue Cade

The Great Barrier Expedition

May 1999

David and Jane Carman

"Some sailed over the ocean in ships, earning their living on the seas. They saw what the Lord can do, his wonderful acts on the seas.

He commanded and a mighty wind began to blow, and stirred up the waves. The ships were lifted high in the air and plunged down into the depths. In such danger the sailors lost their courage; they stumbled and staggered like drunks - all their skill was useless.

Then in their trouble they called to the Lord and he saved them from their distress. He calmed the raging storm, and the waves became quiet. They were glad because of the calm, and he bought them safe to the port they wanted.

They must thank the Lord for his constant love, for the wonderful things he did for them. They must proclaim his greatness in the assembly of the people and praise him before the council of the leaders."
Psalm 107:23-32

The trip was eventful from the start. Steve had agreed to drop us off at the ferry terminal on Friday night in time for our 6:30pm sailing. We ate our takeaways in the van outside Steve and Kirsten's while we waited for him to arrive. He drove up a few minutes after five, and - after Dave had inspected his new bike - we raced off to the terminal. At the bottom end of Dominion Road I suddenly remembered what we had forgotten! We had lent our "coolie bag" to Steve and Kirsten and had meant to pick it up (instead of looking at bikes - Dave!) before we left. We really couldn't do without it if our meat was to stay fresh.

I was dropped off at the bottom end of Queen Street to try and buy a new one - not the easiest thing to find on Friday night on Queen St. in late autumn - while Dave and Steve unpacked our gear at the wharf. After a frantic search for half an hour I gave up and ran down to the wharf. It was 6pm when I turned up , empty handed, and we decided to send Steve off to his place to try and find the original before we left, no mean feat in Friday night Downtown Auckland traffic!

Somehow, with legendary speed, he made it back, just minutes before we were to leave and with coolie bag in hand! We had already loaded our kayaks and bags, so we bid him a hurried farewell, gave instructions for picking us up in a weeks time (with the usual jokes about "assuming we make it back" - ha-ha very funny) and boarded the ferry to Barrier.

The crossing was fairly rough (I thought) made worse by not being able to see the horizon as it was a pitch black night. Both Dave and I felt a bit sick (especially when we were inside) so for the latter half of the trip we sat out on the rear deck, and I tried to focus on the Channel Island light to steady my stomach as the Quickcat bounced from swell to swell. Needless to say I was very pleased to reach Tryphena Harbour at about 9pm.

Before we left Auckland David had contacted to a backpacker's from the information desk, who had assured us that they would be able to take our boats on their trailer, and that they were fairly close to the shore. I don't think they reckoned on our boats being five and a half metres long however, and it turned out they were about two kilometres from shore (a fair way to lug a kayak, fully loaded with a weeks worth of provisions)!

"Gibbo" (the backpacker's bus driver) said he had a "mate" who lived just around the corner, who wouldn't mind if we left our boats on his front lawn. So we perched our kayaks precariously on his rickety trailer and Dave sat on the trailer to hold them on (I was glad we didn't have far to go!) and headed up the road. Gibbo's mate didn't seem to be home when we got there, but Gibbo said that he wouldn't mind us leaving our boats there. We

umm'ed and ahh'ed for a few minutes then decided to camp next to our boats. Gibbo said his mate wouldn't mind that either, so we unloaded our stuff and he drove off.

So there we were, in the dark, on a strange island, on a stranger's front lawn, whom a stranger with a strange name had assured us we could trust; I was feeling less like an island-conqueror every minute!!

We needed water, so we headed back to the wharf in the hope we could find a tap of some sort. We didn't find any, but when we got back to our boats we noticed a light on in (what we assumed was) Gibbo's mates house. So we bowled on up, and the rather aging and lined gentleman who answered the door conceded that he did vaguely recall "his mate" Gibbo, and very kindly let us in. He let us fill all our water bottles with his bore water and insisted that we camp in the middle of his lawn where it was flat, rather than hidden in the bushes where we had planned (in case Gibbo's mate didn't take kindly to strangers after all!).

I didn't sleep too well that night. Maybe it was Gibbo's mate's goat - that sounded distinctly like a thief and axe-murderer - prowling around our tent, or maybe it was nervousness at the unknown that lay ahead.

DAY 1: Tryphena to Medlands Beach.
After breakfast we packed our boats on the beach. They were jam- packed, and we would never have been able to carry them from further away. We left our now empty bags and civilised clothes with Gibbo's mate, and headed off.

The sea was really calm in the harbour, and remained so even when we were out in the open seas. It was an easy paddle, and I was feeling much more relaxed about this whole "paddling around Barrier" thing. In fact when Dave pointed out Cape Barrier (somehow the word "cape" always strikes fear into my heart) I scoffed, and thought to myself , "Is this all you can throw at us huh?!"

The coastline was pretty impressive, and being so calm we were able to paddle close enough to get a good view. Dave and I spotted our "dream bach" in a deserted bay surrounded by rugged cliffs, and crystal clear water. We had lunch just north of Rosalie bay on a nice rocky beach.

After lunch we rounded the western point, and now the swells began to appear. At first I enjoyed the slight headwind, but soon my lack of training started to show. The coastline seemed to stretch ahead of me, a line of unfriendly and unbroken cliffs, and my arms were getting more and more tired and sore as I saw the familiar profile of Dave's back advancing into the distance.

I was decidedly more tired and grumpy as I limped around Shakespeare point into Medlands Beach. Dave reached the beach shortly before me (he had waited for me several times along the coast and at the point) and helped me to shore. I felt like my tired arms would never paddle again.

We dragged our heavy boats up the beach, beyond the reach of the rising tide, and went to check out the local DOC campsite. It was fairly basic, but did have water, longdrops and a cold shower. We had planned to stay here, but after dragging the boats up to the road we decided they were too heavy to move any further, so we set up camp on the verge of the metal road.

After a (cold!!) shower at the DOC campsite we sat by the roadside having pre-dinner wine and cheese. We got some very odd looks from several of the locals that drove by in their dilapidated "cars". I guess we were an unusual sight enjoying our gourmet cheeses and fine wine (a candle wouldn't have been out of place!) squatting in the grass on the side of a dusty track.

DAY 2: Medlands Beach to Whangawahia Bay.
After a much better sleep (I must have been tired!) we awoke to a grey and drizzly day. There was a steady wind blowing into Medlands, and I was feeling much less cocky as we headed out from the beach.

The swells were much bigger than the day before (about half to one metre) and there were intermittent showers as we inched our way up the coastline. We headed directly across the bay, and finally reached Lion Rock. The weather really started to pack in around here, and with rain being driven into our faces by the gusty headwind it was a relief to have a short break in the lee of the rocks at Awana Bay. It was depressing to look at the map (Dave had it on his boat so I couldn't see it while I was paddling) and realise just how little distance we had covered. We were less than a third of the way to our intended destination of Whangapoua Beach, and with a strengthening headwind it was going to be a battle.

After a short break we got back in our boats and continued our crawl up the coast. To my surprise it got easier as we went on, as the coastline headed eastwards towards Whakatautuna Point, and the cliffs provided some shelter from the nor' westerly wind. It was after midday, and I was very keen for some lunch (anything to stop paddling!) and just before the point we managed to find a lovely calm bay in the lee of the wind. It was a tricky landing onto the boulders, but with David helping me I managed it without the loss of too much Gelcoat.

After a half hour lunch break we were off again. As we rounded the point we suddenly ran into a tempest. The wind was full force into our faces, and the crests of the swells were being whipped up into whitecaps. We battled into it, making slow painful progress up the rugged coastline. After an initial thrill of excitement I was becoming increasingly frightened, and with the waves crashing into jagged cliffs to one side and a stormy sea all around we were literally caught between a rock and a hard place! I remember thinking about the disciples on the sea of Galilee in the storm, and could imagine Jesus walking towards me on the shifting water, laughing at my fear and urging me to have more faith.

Eventually we battled our way into the lee of a large rock, and finally I could rest my aching arms a little, and appreciate the beauty of the sun cutting through the clouds onto Rakitu Island, sitting calmly in the raging seas. I managed a grim smile at Dave when he asked me how I was going. The sandy beach to the left of us looked pretty inviting (especially when I looked ahead to more choppy and windswept seas) And when Dave asked me if I was OK to carry on I was sorely tempted to say "No, lets camp here". However we were still a long way from our intended destination, and we were both concerned that with the slow progress we were making we wouldn't complete our circumnavigation in the time we had, so I gritted my teeth, and we headed back out into the wind.

It didn't seem to be easing at all. By now I was audibly groaning with every stroke, and I could feel my tendons burning in my forearm. The wind was again whistling maddeningly in my ears as the coastline inched by morbidly slowly - the best effort I could muster seemed feeble against the vicious wind. Whangapoua Beach was now visible - and infinite miles away - my mind was made up!! "The next beach I see I'm bl**dy well going to land on!"

Finally we rounded a point and saw a wide bay with an inviting sandy beach in the lee of the wind. David had slowed to wait for me and indicated the sheltered beach. Of course now we had to turn our backs to the wind and swells, and I felt decidedly less stable with them at our back.

We landed on the beach on the western side of Whangawahia bay, but although it was out of the wind there was nowhere to camp aside from the sand (which would soon be covered by the tide). I wasn't too keen to get back in my boat (ever!!) but we could see a better looking spot further in the bay. My boat nearly came to grief here, as I paddled right over a semi-submerged rock that I didn't see until I was right on it. Thankfully the wave I was on washed me over rather than into it, and soon I had landed through the surf onto the beach.

We had landed on a sandy gently sloping beach with a steep rocky bank at the top, over which we carried our heavy boats with some difficulty. There was a flat grassy area at the top under some trees where we pitched our tents. We soon had dry warm clothes on, and suddenly this trip was seeming more like an adventure and less like an expedition. There truly is nothing that makes you appreciate being warm, dry and comfortable more than being wet, cold and miserable!

We sat in the tent for the rest of the afternoon (it was only about 2pm) reading our books until teatime. The wind died down later in the evening as the tide came in, and we watched phosphorescence in the waves.

DAY 3: Whangawahia Bay to Miners Bay:
That morning the wind had dropped, but the tide had risen - presenting new problems. Instead of the gently sloping sandy beach of the day before, the waves were now breaking onto the steep rocky slope that we had hauled our boats up the day before.

After a bit of thought we came up with an ingenious plan. We found a large bent log and laid it under the front of Dave's boat with the back supported on a groove in the rocks. After helping me launch, Dave got into his now delicately balanced boat and waited for the right moment to push off.

It worked really well, and as he pushed forward the log in front rolled away, and he slid serenely into the water with hardly a splash. It truly was an awesome take-off, the kind that legend and song are written about, although it wouldn't be a very long song I guess, or legend for that matter. Anyway - we were off again!

That day we made good progress, initially heading straight across the bay to Waikato Point. As we got closer and saw the spray from the surf at Whangapoua Beach I was quite glad that we hadn't tried to land there after all!

Although the wind had dropped the swells were still big, which made it exciting paddling between the end of the point and the rocks nearby. From this point on we kept away from the shore to avoid the surf. Of course that meant that we couldn't stop anywhere for a pee along the way! I got pretty uncomfortable (lucky for Dave he was better equipped for this eventuality!) and the same rugged cliffs stretched on, right to the end of the island.

By the time we reached the northern point of Barrier I was desperate for a pee and looking out for anywhere to land. We had a look at Aiguilles Island - but the beach was too stony and the surf too rough to attempt it. Between the tip of Barrier and the nearby rocks the sea got really shallow, and the waves from each side met in the middle, making an impressive splash. Of course Dave was keen to go straight through it, as there might be a landable beach near the shallow water. I have to admit I was slightly less than enthusiastic, but after Dave made it through alive I gave it a go. It wasn't too bad actually, if you timed it right, and thankfully there was a tiny beach in the lee of one of the rocks that we were able to land on.

With empty bladders (ahh! The relief!) and slightly fuller stomachs we headed off again. Before us stretched miles of sheer cliffs - certainly nowhere to land along this piece of coast. At first I thought there were three points along this coast, the third one being miles away. I was much reassured when Dave told me I was actually looking at Little Barrier in the far distance!

It seemed to take ages to pass each point (we still kept a fair way out from shore) but with only a slight side/ headwind we made fairly good progress. We didn't hang around anyway, despite the calm conditions, because we certainly didn't want to be out here if the wind picked up.

Finally we reached Miners Head, and went closer to the shore to shorten the distance around the point. It was a little rougher closer in, especially with the waves being reflected back of the

cliff, and I was glad when we finally got around it and into the lovely calm of Miner's Bay.

Somehow as soon as we were out of the open sea (and therefore out of danger - in my mind anyway) I suddenly realised how tired my arms were! My paddle seemed like a deadweight - and I'm sure it was the waves rather than my effort that propelled me to the shore.

We had a quick (and very refreshing!) swim in the bay. By now the towel was sodden, and both my shoes and socks were wet and very stinky. Unfortunately it wasn't really sunny enough to dry anything properly, but at least we still had some dry gear (and dry sleeping bags - I was very glad of my lovely waterproof boat).

We were running low on water, since our last campsite didn't have any, so I experimented with using seawater to cook the pasta - I definitely don't recommend it! Anyway, we were hungry enough to eat our very salty meal (and we had plenty of wine left to wash it down with) and shortly after tea took our tired bodies to bed.

I felt that we had broken the back of our trip - although much coastline still lay before us. I guess I felt we had conquered the most exposed coast, and from now on things would be easy going. In some respects I was right.

DAY 4: Miners Bay to Port Fitzroy:
The next morning we headed off into overcast skies and light seas. We again took the most direct route across Katherine Bay to Separation Point. We made pretty good time and were soon heading into the calm seas of Port Abercrombie. We briefly explored Nagle Cove, and were going to land here, but the "No landing, No entry, No fires, No fishing" and of course "NO CAMPING" signs were too uninviting. We had a leisurely paddle across to the DOC HQ in Rarohara Bay in lovely calm seas, and got there in good time for lunch.

The camp had the usual facilities of cold showers, longdrops and running water, but did have the advantage of a substantial shelter/ barbecue area where we carried our boats to and set up camp. After a shower (water direct from Antarctica) we washed our smelly clothes (ie: most of them) in the sink, in the vain hope that the sun might come out long enough to dry them.

We thought we'd make the most of camping in a "civilised" area and headed into town (ie: the shop) at Port Fitzroy. The natives were friendly, and I think quite impressed with our trip, and we sat outside the shop sipping our beer and chatting to them for a while before heading back to camp with the supplies.

We had a lovely relaxing afternoon sitting in the shelter and reading our books (and rescuing our washing every time it rained or the wind blew it off the line) and looking at the map, trying to minimise the distance we had yet to travel. Needless to say, our clothes didn't get dry, but at least they smelt better!

DAY 5; Port Fitzroy to Blind Bay.
The next day was again overcast, but beautifully still as we paddled out of the port. We stopped briefly in Man-of-War Channel to get a photo of a stingray on the bottom. Out of the harbour the sea was still calm (it seemed my predictions about this coast were going to be right) and we were able to stay sheltered between Barrier and the multiple offshore islands/ rocks along this section of coast.

Because it was so calm we were able to explore the coast a bit more closely than before, and found a cool tunnel into Bowling Alley Bay that we could paddle right through. We had a tail wind most of the way and around lunchtime it picked up a little. We stopped on a small island/ big rock for lunch, and it turned out that it (Whangara Island) was a maori pa. We went exploring after a quick lunch, and found a big (deserted) army tent on top - probably belonging to some maori fishermen we thought. We had seen a kingfish feeding frenzy just north of the island, so I guess the fishing was good around here.

It had started to spit so we hurriedly packed up our gear (no point in getting it more wet than it already was) and set off again. Just after we left Dave spotted a distinctive fin and water spout just ahead - Dolphins! We raced to keep up with them, and got a few photos (although they're difficult to photograph as you can't predict where they'll come up). They were going fairly slowly (probably feeding) and had some young ones with them so for a while we were able to keep up. A couple of times they came quite close and had a nosey at our boats.

The shower of rain stopped soon after the dolphins left us, and we had an easy paddle past Whangapara Harbour and around Beacon Point. We saw some fishermen just off the point and since it seemed a good fishing spot we decided to camp near the end of the point, rather than going further into Blind Bay.

After we set up camp and had a quick swim, Dave headed off to do some fishing. I found a patch of sunlight and read my book - rather than getting cold on the windy side of the beach where the fish were. Dave managed to catch a huge snapper - I guess the half rotten bait that we had carried nearly all the way round Barrier was very tempting to it! Anyway we filleted it and cooked half of it for our tea. I tried making batter out of eggs and pancake mix and milk -again a less than successful camp cooking venture - but it tasted OK anyway.

DAY 6; Blind Bay to Tryphena.
The next morning was fine (for a change) but there was a fair breeze blowing, and looking out to sea we could see a bit of chop. We discussed staying another night here, and going to Tryphena the next morning, but the thought of a hot shower and comfy bed in a backpackers at Tryphena was just too tempting after 5 days of roughing it.

So after frying up the other half of the snapper for breakfast (minus batter this time) we packed up camp one last time and set off.

It wasn't too bad at first, although the half metre swells were coming at us from the side, which is always unsettling, especially when the tops "break" under your boat. I wasn't enjoying it much, and it seemed to get rougher the further on we went. We had a brief stop at one of the bays just before Shag Point, then paddled out into the choppy seas again.

As we got nearer the point, and got closer to land the swells got steeper, and we started to feel the effects of the reflected waves as well. I was terrified that a wave would break on me (I would have been history if one had - not being able to roll, and having nowhere to swim to), and I guess my fear, coupled with the thought of those hot showers, spurred me on to finally clear the point. Dave said later we were just lucky that one of the waves didn't tip us out - and I'm sure he was right!

Around the point the waves were still pretty steep due to the wind- tide, and it was unsettling having them pick you up from behind. Heading into the shelter of a rock for a brief respite a wave picked up my boat and surfed me into the shelter. I was glad of the practice I'd had in surf in the white-water boat, and managed to stay afloat.

We rested for a few minutes in the lee of the rock before braving the waves again. Heading close to shore again, we were lucky to miss being capsized. At one point one of the waves approaching me was so steep that I could see a kahawai swimming in the middle of it!

Finally we rounded the last corner to see Tryphena in the distance. It seemed to take ages even with the wind behind us, but finally we landed on the sandy beach. After getting changed we hauled our boats onto the grass and headed into town to find a place to stay. After hot showers and dinner in the local backpackers we headed to the attached pub to meet the locals (although it was difficult for us to find respectable and odourless clothes among our kayaking gear).

DAY 7: Tryphena to Shoal Bay

Tryphena is a little way from the wharf (at least by road) so we still had to paddle back to the wharf to pick up our gear from "Gibbo's mate's" place and catch the boat at 9pm. We still had our aged fish bait with us, and rather than carry it back with us we thought we'd do a spot of fishing.

Gibbo's mate was home when we got there, after an easy paddle across the bay, so we popped in to thank him for minding our bags. We'd seen him at the shop the night before (and I did find out his name but have since forgotten it) and he seemed quite pleased to see us alive! (Come to think of it, I was quite pleased to see myself alive too!)

We took most of the gear out of the boats and packed it in our bags. Leaving them in the shelter we packed lunch and fishing gear in the boats and took off (again! Will this never end!) in the direction we had started 6 days ago (with all the usual "hey, lets paddle around again" jokes).

As usual with fishing trips, the best fishing spots are the least accessible, and eventually we landed in a nearby bay, planning to walk to the end of the southern point of Tryphena Harbour. It was a fair scramble, and not being much of a rock climber, nor having a head for heights, I didn't find it easy going. We eventually found a "way" down to the point (meaning a steep rocky slope where "handhold" meant that if you held it, it would come off in your hand) and Dave set about catching fish. It was pretty cold out in the wind and I soon retreated to the shelter of a rocky outcrop to read my book, intermittently interupted by going down to help Dave haul in yet another snapper. He caught about six fish in an hour - before we both got too cold - and after filleting the three biggest ones (we had thrown the three smallest back, but even they were a good size) we clambered back to our boats.

That night we ate fresh snapper for tea (again!) in the small shelter by the wharf where we had left our bags, and washed it down with the last of the wine. The weather really packed in shortly before the ferry arrived, and as the heavy rain turned the gravel carpark to mud I was glad that this hadn't greeted us the week before. As the boat was being unloaded we heard some splashing in the water, and looking down into the floodlit water we watched as a squid and a small fish battled for their lives (the squid won!).

Finally we were allowed on board. We had to carry our boats up the gangplank and through the upstairs lounge then down more stairs to the outside deck, as the boat had needed to "park" further back than when we arrived (when we had been able to get them off over the railing). We sat outside during this trip to avoid seasickness, and watched thunder and lightning over Coromandel (it looks awesome from way out to sea).

We reached Auckland around 11pm, and Steve was there with the van. Finally we reached our house, and unpacked the gear we had to, before sinking into our lovely soft bed; and as we lay there we could still feel the gentle swaying of our boats rocking us off to sleep.

WEBSITE ADDRESS
Public Access NZ
from Roy dumble

Just caught up with newsletter #91. Interesting site below with heaps of info, including Queens Chain stuff. All from the position of the advocacy group, but a worthwhile read:

http://
www.publicaccessnewzealand.org

Cheers
Roy Dumble

OVERSEAS TRIP REPORTS

'BEAR IN MIND'

Clint Waghorn

The following three articles, first printed in the 'Waikato Times,' were sent back from Alaska by Clint, and cover the build up to this year's trip, the first leg from Chignik to Homer, and the third one from Homer to Cordova. With his kayak stashed at Whittier, in Prince William Sound, Clint will return to Cordova in 2002 to attempt the last leg of his Alaska loop, from Cordova to his original start point at Prince Rupert in northern British Columbia.

Somebody once said, 'your greatest strength is hidden within your deepest problem.' Perhaps. For sure I'll have some great challenges to overcome, but I know they will not be insurmountable. That is half the battle.

A Kiwi in bear country is a bit like KFC in a weightwatchers class. Just asking for trouble.

Nothing can prepare you for sudden, unexpected encounters kayaking in the Alaskan wilderness. I guess that's part of the thrill, the adventure. Be it the sudden arrival of a huge brown bear in your camp, or rogue swells that suddenly rear up and break on unseen reefs, life is suddenly reduced to its simplest terms. Survival.

At any time, fear can rip through you like a blunt chainsaw. I'm talking about, 'Will I see you tomorrow?' fear. Your blood surges, your heart pounds, and some primitive survival instinct takes over. It's one reason I'm in Alaska again.

I've just spent a month in Anchorage working 12-hour nights as a carpark security guard. I'm craving, freedom, space, and the clean air of 'bush Alaska.'

On May 24, I depart for Chignik, a small Aleut fishing village on the Pacific side of the Alaskan Peninsula, 1000km southwest of Anchorage. This heralds the beginning of the third and final year of my round-Alaska-by-kayak expedition.

The flight itself is an adventure. In clear skies, the scenery is dazzling. Glaciers, mountains, tundra plains, volcanic peaks, lakes and rivers stretch away to all horizons. 80 million acres of wilderness are protected, refuges for a plethora of life. Below, the occasional remote fly-in fishing lodge or coastal village are the only signs of human presence.

At Chignik, after a day of kayak maintenance, sorting and packing of equipment, my solo adventure continues.

In 3.5 months I hope to cover 3100km of ocean, kayaking through some of the world's most spectacular, remote, and biologically rich marine environments.

A month working out in a gym has left me physically honed and mentally hyped. It's spring and the last snow showers are gone. The days are nearly 21 hours of light and warming to 15-17 degrees centigrade, In these conditions at sea, I target 50-70km per day. When the wind blows I rest, explore, read, fish, and eat.

Leg one passes through the most isolated stretch of coast in the entire 9000km journey. In a month I hope to cover 1030km from Chignik to Homer, including a 25km 'Cook Strait' style crossing of Alaska's Cook Inlet, which boasts the second-highest tides in the world.

There are no settlements on this coast, and food re-supply was always going to be a logistical problem. Through friends I learned of a remote wilderness lodge 500km north of Chignik, roughly halfway through the first leg. The owner of the Hallo Bay Wilderness Lodge, in typical hospitality, generously agreed to fly in a box of provisions and have dinner and a hot shower ready for me.

In the first few days I'll re-establish my routines of paddling and camping, while continuing to adjust physically and sharpening my skills. Threats to be aware of include rip tides, sudden gusts or ' williwaws' rushing down the mountain valleys, and bears - lots of bears.

Katmai National Park has the biggest runs of sockeye salmon and the highest concentration of brown bears in the world. Some bears have learned to associate humans with food. With loss of fear comes danger. I've already been told places to avoid any potential problem bears.

Bring 'em on I say. I'm armed for battle. I sleep with a loaded rifle, small sticks of dynamite called 'seal bombs,' an aerosol can of bear spray (of dubious advantage) and - at Hallo Bay - will be equipped with newly developed and highly effective (I hope) bear flares.

A VHF radio, flares, EPIRB (Emergency Position Indicating Radio Beacon) and silent prayers make up my safety equipment. The water here is very cold, perhaps 4-5 degrees centigrade, and a wet exit in the event of a capsize could easily be fatal. This is always on my mind.

At Homer, I'll pick up mail, resupply from food provisions I've left with friends and, near the summer solstice, begin leg two.

From Homer I'll do battle with the exposed shoreline of the Kenai Peninsula where green swells from the Pacific pound the rugged cliff-lined coast. I hope to cover the 560km from Cordova in Prince William Sound in less than three weeks. In this time I want to catch a few salmon, maybe a halibut, and paddle among the orca, humpback whales, and the calving ice of tidewater glaciers. The area is also a haven for migratory shorebirds, moose, dall sheep, wolves, caribou and a host of other wildlife.

I've planned the journey's third leg to coincide with both peak fitness and the long daylight hours of mid summer. It could, and probably will, be the most physically daunting leg of all, from Cordova to Elfin Cove, across the Gulf of Alaska.

Rarely kayaked, this coast has a shocking reputation for rough weather, huge west-coast style surf breaking on black sand beaches. There are only a couple of lee landings, at Yakutat and Icy bays. If the seas are calm, high water landing at some river mouths may be possible, otherwise big surf landings or long periods at sea may be inevitable.

If ever there is an Everest of sea kayaking this will be it and, in many ways, my return to southeast Alaska will be comparable to taking a step on to the summit. It'll mean completing the full circle. The last 2-3 weeks will be equivalent to the descent to base camp, to home, to the real world once more.

By late August I hope to arrive at Prince Rupert, Canada, my original starting point and the end of this once in a lifetime trip.

Although the end is far from near, already I can visualise arriving at Prince Rupert. I'll glide silently to the shore with the quiet satisfaction of having accomplished something most would think impossible. There will be no America's Cup cheering crowds, no Olympic medal ceremonies, or media conferences - just the smug satisfaction of knowing I've achieved my ambition. Such simple, intangible reward is ample prize, and one which will never lose its lustre.

Clint Waghorn will continue to record his voyage for The Times.

Land of the Midnight Sun

by Clint Waghorn

This report was filed 1035 km into the third stage of a 9000km trip around the Alaskan peninsula.

Early morning in Anchorage and a taxi helped get me and 50 kg of food and gear to the airport.

Later I enjoyed great views of the Bearing Sea tundra, then snow- clad peaks as we crossed the Alaskan Peninsula back to Chignik on the Pacific side. We landed on a gravel strip amid an odd collection of pick-ups.

Two local processing factories had vehicles picking up summer workers. I feigned as one of them and was soon at Chignik's Norquest seafood processors, re-united with my kayak and equipment I had stored there for the winter.

In gorgeous weather I set up camp, packed and sorted gear and began a day's work on the kayak's hull. It had been getting a rough time being manhandled over gravel and rock beaches and I sanded, fibreglassed and repainted the damaged areas till it was like new - well nearly.

I couldn't find my fleece hat, which I was sure I'd left there. Chignik's one shop didn't have any. I had a number one haircut and needed something to warm my head. It was barely above freezing in the cold south-west wind that threw snow and ice off the glaciated mountains above.

So on a windy, cold day I huddled in the shaking tent, constructing a hat from a pair of fibrepile gumboot liners, cutting and stitching it together with dental floss. The result would have blown the minds of modern fashion designers.

For two days I waited for powerful offshore winds to settle, then loaded the kayak and left shore, destination Homer, 1035km to the north.

As always, the first week was tough. No matter how fit you think you are you're not fit enough. I'd wake with stiff arms, shoulders and back.

Days of 40 km turned to 50, 60 and even a couple to 85km when conditions were perfect.

Gusty williwaws to 30 knots would sometimes funnel down mountain valleys into the bays and around capes. Several times I had to pull ashore and wait. I slept in rock caves, ancient Aleut village sites, on small islands and, once, in the galley of an old shipwreck near Cape Douglas.

Several peninsulas jutting into the Pacific required careful negotiation. These capes are magnets for wind, swell and currents and I have always felt exposed and vulnerable.

The first month passed in clear blue skies, often 15 to 18 degrees centigrade. A scenery of vast, isolated wilderness and rich animal life provide never-ending distractions. Slipping on to the morning tide is always a thrill.

On my first afternoon out I saw five bears and usually three to four every day until Cook Inlet, with the odd one wandering through camp. Often I watched them feeding on beaches, and rolling boulders round like M&Ms. I gave them space, they gave me space. There were lots of cubs.

One day I startled a cub digging in the gravel on the beach. Its mum panicked and ran off. The cub, in desperation, climbed 10 metres up a cliff face and sat with its head on its paws as if to say, 'well come on, let's see you do that.'

Another time I inadvertently paddled through a gathering of mother and baby sea otters. They panicked and dived, leaving a baby behind, choking on sea water and obviously near drowning.

Knowing I shouldn't, but feeling guilty, I picked it up and straight away it stopped crying. It rolled round on the deck cleaning its eyes and ears

while I scratched its belly and admired its dense fur. As soon as I put it back to sea, it bawled its head off. It spotted Mum coming back and I left them to it.

On a glass-smooth sea about 1km offshore, I nearly had a head-on collision with four orcas. My mind was elsewhere with the kayak on autopilot when suddenly I noticed four black knives slicing through the water dead ahead. I made a sudden course change to avoid an encounter.

Rafts of sea otters, rookeries of seals and sea lions, and occasional pods of humpbacks made up the remainder of my on-water wildlife experiences.

On shore, if the bears weren't exciting enough there were foxes, nesting bald eagles, and occasionally I'd spot a caribou or a moose at a distance. I even saw a fishing boat but that was as close as I got to people for 14 days.

I arrived at Hallo Bay looking forward to picking up my food drop and meeting the owners of the wilderness camp there. The problem was, the bay was nearly 30km wide and amid an absolute maze of wilderness. I would not have found the camp without my UHF and the instructions they offered.

I landed at 12.30am, the light of a beach barbecue my beacon from sea. A hot shower and halibut dinner helped ease the pain of a huge day. For two nights I enjoyed their hospitality.

I had 10 days rest on this leg, either self-imposed or 'land-locked' due to rough weather. It's always a good chance to recover. Hygiene and health is critical to maintaining hard days of physical activity. Exposed body parts, like hands, are constantly immersed in salt water and this can often cause salt sores. At every chance I light a fire to boil hot water, enjoy a shower and wash clothes.

My meals are varied, They're based around a high carbohydrate intake of rices, pasta and freeze-dried meats. I'd brought dehydrated fruits, vegetables, beef and wild venison from New Zealand. During the day I snack on energy bars, peanuts, raisins. When I feel like lunch, I stop to boil the billy.

I keep strange hours. If my body's tired it needs sleep. Ten hours is just enough. I'm usually on the water by midday and off by midnight, but not always. It doesn't matter as it doesn't get dark. Often, landing and launching has to be based round the tides.

Over two weeks, barren mountain slopes were transformed to a bright green covering of tundra grasses and alders.

As I left the exposed Shelikof Strait where a flat calm can change to 6 metre seas in 20 minutes (so the fishermen say), the tundra and shrubby alders gave way to spruce forests once more.

Also in Cook Inlet, I ran into rough water. Strong tides and rips have given me a couple of real confidence-shaking frights. At Harriet Point, on the inlet's western shore, I attempted to cross to Kalgin Island, a 10km paddle that would normally take less than two hours. I was sucked out 5km in 30 minutes and with looming whitewater ahead, decided to abort the crossing. Turning for shore for two solid hours I battled the fiercest and most frightening conditions I ever want to. That night, and for five days on shore afterwards, I asked myself, "was it worth it?" critical of my unusually poor judgement. Had I not been in top physical condition, I doubt I'd have made it.

After that scare I holed up in an abandoned cabin that had been torn apart by bears. I dined on clams from the sand flats and discovered 'neighbours' 45 minutes walk around the rocks. Nestled against a dense spruce forest and between the 3000 metre volcanic peaks of Mounts Illiama and Redoubt, the area was impressive. It was also a break to settle my nerves and wait for the spring tides to ease.

With confidence returning and getting low on food, I did a five- hour night paddle to land on the north-west end of Kalgin Island at 4.30am. At a friend's fish camp I rested, shot clay birds from the beach, enjoyed more home comforts and left again that night, completing the remaining 27km crossing of Cook Inlet in four hours. That night I landed near road access to the beach and I realised it was the first vehicle access to civilisation I'd crossed in 4000km. Kind of makes you think how remote this country is. Two days later I arrived in Homer, a month gone and 1035km behind me.

I came close to abandoning the remaining trip but some serious self-counselling and a do-it yourself pep talk has helped me refocus.

Ahead is Leg Two, Homer to Cordova, three weeks and 560 km round the Kenai Peninsula and into Prince William Sound. Known for swell, rips, powerful currents and wind I expect delays.

My philosophy is one of stroke by stroke, day by day. It's a good one that can be applied to many facets of life. And it works.

Clint Waghorn will continue to record his journey for The Times. By late August he hopes to arrive in Prince Rupert, Canada, his original starting point, and the end of his trip of a lifetime.

On Tides of Fury

Homer to Whittier
by Clint Waghorn

Study any topo map of Alaska's south-central coast and it reads like a kayaker's worst nightmare. With names like Gore Point, Dangerous Cape, Resurrection Bay and Killer Cove, imagine the mental pictures a nervous kayaker might conjure up.

The exposed outer coast of the Kenai Peninsula is a wild, remote, inhospitable shoreline dogged by ocean currents from the south- east, swells from the Gulf of Alaska, rip tides, immense tidal flows from the Cook Inlet and the drizzly gloom so typical of the mountain fiords.

Ask a local about conditions to expect and you'll wish you hadn't. Sea kayakers rarely attempt the paddle and you won't find anything in the guidebooks. There's a reason for that.

I left Homer on July 1, a nervous wreck, destination Cordova, about 560km to the east. To make matters worse, as I launched, a lady approached offering a booklet explaining 'How to go to heaven.' Great, I thought, that's just what I need.

I crossed Kachemak Bay in a quiet calm broken only by a humpback whale feeding round me in circles, and recreational fishermen seeking that trophy halibut. I passed a boat anchored up, said g'day and noted our respective vessels shared same name, Serenity. A strong afternoon southwest seabreeze forced me to land, sleep a couple of hours, then push on into the evening calm. At 1am, after a dinner of pot roast beef, pasta, broccoli, zucchini, bread buns, coffee, biscuits and chocolate instant pudding, I crawled to bed.

At 5.30am, 4.5 hours later, I was up eating, packing and launching as a recreational fisherman left the security of Kachemak Bay in the early morning. That too was my plan, to use to use the early morning calm to round the exposed 'Dangerous Cape' as the map indicated. The low tide would also help me negotiate the shoreline's tidal rips I knew existed at the entrance to Cook Inlet.

Sure enough, once exposed to the more southerly conditions, I encountered frequent obstacles, battling not only a rising wind but effectively sea rapids raging between reefs and rock stacks. Breaking, confused whitewater, ocean swells and waves refracting from a steep rocky shoreline created very testing conditions. There were moments that left me shaking with fear.

A building swell and dangerous seas forced a few delays, camping on bouldery, kelp-covered beaches that were favourite places for the wandering black bears I began to encounter. Though much smaller than their brown bear cousins, they still deserve the utmost respect. However I reckoned a good right hand hook and you'd knock one out if you had to. Over the next month I was to encounter 20 black bears at close quarters.

As I escaped the tidal influence of Cook Inlet, and encountered the more sheltered water of the Kenai fiords, the scenery also changed. I paddled into a world of high glaciated mountains, narrow passages, steep forested shorelines and sea cliffs that played hide and seek in the constant drizzle.

The hot sun of June had gone, replaced by very trying cool, wet days. Each night I'd crawl into a sodden tent and the damp warmth of the sleeping bag. Occasionally I'd dry and warm by a raging fire and on the rare days the sun shone, I'd spread everything out to air and dry.

Good landing and camping sites were often hard to find. Frequently I'd land on boulders or rough rocky shores, portaging gear above the high tide where I'd construct a nest of sorts amid massive piles of driftwood, kelp and jetsam.

At sea, my days alternated between the flat sheltered water of the inner fiords and the completely exposed sometimes intimidating three metre seas of the Gulf of Alaska. These seas would combine with inshore ocean currents and tidal flows, creating conditions best avoided, but, in order to progress, sometimes not.

Prominent exposed peninsulas required careful timing in an attempt to round at slack water and nil to little wind. I was lucky to have conditions so good. One day blended into another and it was easy to lose track of time. For long periods I did not know what day of the week it was, having to look up my tide tables to find out. Not that I'd use them much. I prefer to work out the tides and the weather from my own observations.

Once again I found myself completely alone for long periods. In the 19 days it took to Cordova I met and talked with people on just four boats.

Sometimes I'd spot mountain goats, munching their way round incredibly steep sea cliffs, occasionally descending to sea level to wander the rocky shores. Once I woke to hear stones rattling, and leapt from bed fearing the worst, only to watch a nannie and kid sniffing the kayak 10 metres away. I frequently glided close to black bears and families of playful mink. There were few whales but plenty of sea otters, some sea lions, and a couple of 2 metre sharks that glided past.

Closer to Resurrection Bay, the gateway to the port of Seward, tourist boats, commercial and recreational fishermen, float planes and even kayakers became more frequent. I dodged the occasional cruise ship arriving from Prince William Sound.

My own journey to Prince William took several days, broken by one rest day of heavy rain when a need arose to wash, clean and dry both gear and myself.

On that day I landed in a big dumping surf that pummelled the boat and me with gravel, sand and icy cold water. In the broached landing my rudder suffered a major bend and I lost my one map, only to find it as the tide receded.

Onshore, I found an old cabin in the spruce forest, dug up an old tin bath amidst the leaves, lit a huge beach fire and sat soaking in that hot bath while the rain came down.

As I entered Prince William Sound amidst a sea of jumping pink salmon, the weather cleared at last. On mirror-like seas I crossed the 15km-wide Montague Strait, passing a flotilla of 10 kayakers abreast. In the quiet calm conditions I paddled out to sea and, just to keep them guessing, left them with odd renditions of Waltzing Matilda and the New Zealand national anthem.

Frequently I'd trawl a lure and finally I dined on fresh salmon. Until, that is, my reel broke down. I made a new part from a fish hook.

Nearer the 10km-wide Hinchinbrook entrance I stopped to watch one of the many purse seiners hauling its nets. As the pink salmon filled the hold the skipper waved me over, passing down a fat henfish and asking about the trip.

For some reason I was missing part of a map and, going on memory and guesswork, worked toward the entrance. Rounding a prominent point I was certain the island offshore was my target, Hinchinbrook Island. For 20 minutes I set off straight out to sea but a casual glance to the south-east showed land appear from the sea where there shouldn't have been any. I'd made an embarrassing and quite major navigational error, fortunately not too late to correct, turning toward the new land mass that was my actual target.

After an early start I crossed Hinchinbrook in heaving seas from the Gulf gaining shelter 1.5 hours later behind Hinchinbrook Island itself. A few dolphins, sea lions, humpback and orca fed in the rich waters pouring into the sound. Later that day I met another fisherman and, from then on, word of the trip preceded my arrival.

At the end of a long hard 70km day, I was still short of Cordova by 15 km so camped at a creek mouth that echoed with a thousand or two splashing salmon. Black-tailed sitka deer wandered the beaches. In fact, as I sat in the sun enjoying a morning brew, a line of six deer passed by, stopping briefly to sniff the strange yellow and blue log.

To my relief, Cordova came into view and at the small boat harbour I jostled for position in the busy activity of summer fishing boats. Purse seiners, bow pickers (gill netters), tourist cruise boats, barges, processing boats, float planes, recreational boats, dinghies - it was a fascinating hive of activity.

One of my problems was finding a good campsite not too far from town, giving me access to grocery store, post office, laundry and telephone. A small island offshore proved ideal.

As I sorted gear on my small island hideaway, I wandered up to my camp in the trees for a brief moment, and on my return noticed something was missing. My boat! Shocked, I looked round to see ' Serenity' beginning the next leg without me.

About 70 metres offshore my kayak bobbed about. Instantly I stripped off to swim after it, but then realised it was getting a little far out in that cold water. Jamming new batteries in my radio, I thought to call the harbourmaster for assistance. The radio wouldn't work. Surely a passing boat would soon notice and panic at the empty kayak. But the bay was strangely quiet.

Ever so slowly the kayak drifted toward land once more and I waded out to armpit depth before swimming the final 10 metres. Onshore again and numb with cold, I realised an unusually high wake from a passing fishing boat had sucked the kayak back down the steep gravel beach. The one time I hadn't tied up the boat, I'd been caught out. A lesson learned.

In atrocious conditions a couple of days later, rested, restocked and perhaps too keen to progress, I left to cross the Gulf of Alaska, towards Prince Rupert, Canada. It was a stage that filled me with fear, even though I'd already been exposed to the Gulf's open water.

Cordova disappeared from view as I left Orca inlet and entered the nightmarish world of the Copper River delta - a vast harbourlike area of shallow mudflats 80km wide. Swift sloughs drain the Copper River through a marshy swamp-like moose pasture, cloaked in stunted cottonwoods and long grass.

In driving rain and wind I struggled to find a campsite amidst insect-filled swamp. I was miserable, muddy, wet and tired. To make matters worse, both my lighters packed up and I was forced to paddle against a powerful river, stopping at a small cabin to ask the owner for a couple of replacements. I was lucky someone was home.

The second night my luck ran out. I'd been following the low-lying shoreline over the high tide period, battling a 15 knot headwind and driving rain once more. As the tide turned I hurried to find a campsite but couldn't and even if I could have seen one in the poor visibility, getting to the shoreline would involve dragging the laden boat across knee-deep mud. My only option was to run out with the tide, soon losing sight of land and finding myself in a maze of exposed sand and mud bars and blind channels.

Tired and frustrated I explored every option, trying to find a channel back to shore. But until the tide began to rise again, there was none, and I eventually spent 19 hours sitting in the boat. In the dark of early morning finally, up a narrow river channel lined with steep mud banks and swampland ankle-deep in water, there was nowhere to camp. I spent an uncomfortable two hours trying to sleep huddled over the cockpit. Finally, as daylight and the high tide arrived, I pushed on for another couple of hours, eventually landing on a sand beach to camp.

It was two days before I left shore again, having been land locked by dense fog. I could hear the roar of the open ocean beach 5 km south where the swells met long shallow sandbars and partly grass- covered islands. Bumping over shallow mudflats, I worked out toward one of several narrow entrances, arriving near low water and there, with the surf breaking in a wall of whitewater, I sat and looked and thought.

For several days I'd been having ill feelings about the leg ahead. The many trying situations I'd encountered to that point had eroded my confidence and now I faced serious self-doubts, probably born from the experience of what I'd encountered and the knowledge of what I knew lay ahead. I'd been wrestling with the need to push on and the need for self-preservation. To this point I'd always tried to listen to my inner voice, working on the principle of, if in doubt, don't go out.

Despite the calm one metre sea conditions, it's hard for me to explain just

why I turned round at that point, retracing my steps to Cordova. Even during the day and a half it took to return to town, I struggled to accept my decision. I consoled myself with the thought that too many mountaineers have died with the summit in sight, simply because they lacked the strength of mind to turn round when they should have.

Back in Cordova, new plans evolved as I talked to people about the decision. With copies of maps from the library, I prepared to spend a couple of leisurely weeks fishing and sightseeing as I worked back along the northern shores of Prince William Sound to Whittier.

Enjoying T-shirt weather I glided up to calving tidewater glaciers, caught countless salmon and observed wandering black bears in the fading evening light. One afternoon I watched a huge bull sea lion catching and eating salmon in a spray of blood and chomping jaws.

Around camp I picked salmonberries, blueberries and blackberries. In fact, fresh pink salmon, rice, custard and wild berries became a regular meal.

I paddled through diesel slick from a fishing boat that had hit a reef and sunk. And in the last couple of days I picked up Radio New Zealand and squabbling politicians on the shortwave. Not much had changed at home, I thought.

And 2.5 months and another 2000km at sea on this third leg of my trip around Alaska, I landed at Whittier, looking forward to some home comforts. Already I planned my return in 2002. I was not ready to give in that easy and had by now accepted my decision of two weeks previously.

It's easy to feel frustrated at not achieving something you've set your heart on but better to get there step by step than not at all.

Clint Waghorn has returned home, where he filed this story and plans to return to Alaska next year.

TECHNICAL

How to paddle faster! (or more efficiently)

(Reprinted from the Auckland Canoe Club Newsletter, July 2001)

Many people have asked me how do I paddle so fast when I'm obviously not very strong. The answer is technique! The best way to improve your paddling technique is to get some coaching, either from an experienced paddler or from an instructor, and then get out there and practice. Listen to the comments provided by other paddlers, and try out their suggestions. It took me many years to develop my current paddling technique, and many hours out there paddling in all types of weather conditions.

Here are some of the points that I have used to improve my forward paddling technique and to paddle faster:

- Sit up straight, and lean slightly forward. Women may need to lean further forward than men!

- Keep your arms reasonably straight at all times. Imagine that there is a piece of string tied to the centre of the paddle shaft, and that you are holding the other end of the string in your mouth. The string should have the same amount of tension on it throughout the paddle stroke.

- The paddle blade should go into the water near your toes (as far forward as possible), and come out at your hips. For racing, the most efficient forward paddling stroke keeps the paddle blade in close to the boat, rather than the wide sweeping stroke used by most sea kayakers. If you keep the paddle in the water past the hips, this becomes a steerage stroke rather than a forward stroke. The greatest power in the forward stroke is achieved in the first half of the stroke, i.e. when you start the 'pull'.

- The entire paddle blade should be submerged before you start the 'pull' phase.

- The top hand should be pushing forward, at eye-level, at the same time as the lower hand (the one with the paddle blade in the water) is pulling.

- Twist the body (= body rotation) to spread the load over more muscle groups. If you don't know what body rotation is, try paddling without bending you arms and only using the twisting of you body to move the paddle.

- Push the boat forward with your legs! Imagine that instead of pulling the paddle through water, that you have planted the paddle into cement and you are trying to lever the boat forward. You should be pushing with the foot that is on the same side of the kayak as the paddle blade that is in the water. You will need to have a solid foot brace to be able to do this, but if you haven't got this, try pushing with both feet on the rudder controls.

- For racing, keep your knees together! This is a flat-water racing technique and enables you to push with your feet more easily. However, I would not recommend it to sea kayakers until they have developed good balance and support strokes. In rough conditions, and surf, I still recommend that you lock your knees into the knee bracing (i.e. knees splayed out) so that you can rail the boat when required.

- When lifting the paddle blade out of the water at the end of the stroke, try to slide it out without lifting water.

- Buy an Albatross! Just kidding, but, as with all sports, good equipment does make a difference and some kayaks are definitely faster than others.

- Do some sprint training. If you want to paddle faster, then you need to push yourself occasionally.

- Practice, practice, practice! Get out there and do it. (And then send me an article telling me about it!)

PADDLING ETIQUETTE

Over the years I have seen some hair raising near-misses when people have not followed a simple paddling rule... When in potentially dangerous conditions, e.g. surf landings, sea caves, rock gardens, etc., give other paddlers ample room. For example, when landing through surf, there should be one kayak on a wave at a time. Make sure that the paddler in front has passed through the surf zone before you enter it. Just because you might be an excellent surfer does not mean that the person in front is too. When exploring small or narrow dead-end sea caves, it is best to have only one boat in the cave at a time. If there is a swell running, leave at least two boat lengths between kayaks when following through rock gardens and caves.

Fitting a Buoyancy Aid.

Most retailers will give this advice to customers, but in case you missed out...

When buying a buoyancy aid it is essential that you get one that fits you correctly. A buoyancy aid that is too large or not fitted properly could ride-up over the face, restricting breathing and/or movement, or even slip off completely when you are in the water. To check that your buoyancy aid is fitted correctly, reach up with both hands, grab the shoulder straps and pull upwards. If the buoyancy aid rides up more than 5cm, then either it is too large or it is not done up tight enough.

Auckland Canoe Club, July 2001

Trans Atlantic Kayak Crossing

(received via Cybermail from Jane –Creith in Australia)
September 6, 2001.

An exhausted former soldier completed a feat he said was a first when he reached the western coast of Ireland today after kayaking across the Atlantic Ocean. Peter Bray, 44, set off from Newfoundland, Canada, on June 23 in a 7.2-metre kayak with a waterproof cabin. He touched land at this tiny village in County Mayo tonight, about 96km across Donegal Bay from his intended landing spot, the town of Killybegs. He lost radio contact with his land-based support team last night, and a helicopter was sent out to search for him.

A fishing boat spotted him later, but he declined the captain's offer of a ride to shore. "I just paddled into the little harbour at Porturlin and got out," Bray said. "There was no one about and then two guys came out of a house and I shouted to them. They are the ones who are officiating my landfall and the fact that I got out of the kayak myself. "I honestly don't know how I feel," he said later, celebrating with a pint of beer. "I think it will take a few days before I realise I am the only guy ever to have kayaked across the North Atlantic."

Bray, a Briton who failed after just 30 hours in a trans-Atlantic try last year, said the crossing had been difficult. He lost 18.9 kilograms, largely because he lost his appetite during bad weather early in the trip, he said. "In the first month there were 17 storms and two gales. I just had to sit there and ride it out - it was horrendous," he recalled. "The weather was so bad I couldn't cook, so it was cold meals all the way across." Bray, who teaches outdoor education in Wales, said he'd covered far more than the 4,000km of a direct route. "I went all over the place with the weather, north, south, south, north," he said. "It was soul-destroying when I was told once that I had gone back 96 kilometres in one night." Bray hopes the trip will raise STG100,000 ($A273,035) for two children's hospices.

HUMOUR

ARABIAN REVENGE

Ahmed was a high-ranking official in King Akbar's court. He had one long standing wish: to suckle at the voluptuous breasts of the Queen to his hearts desire. Every time he passed the queen he got frustrated. One day he revealed his desire to the King's chief advisor, Birbal, and begged him to do something which would allow him to achieve what he yearned for more than anything else in the world. Birbal, after much thought agreed on the condition that once his desire had been met, Ahmed would pay him 1000 gold coins. Ahmed agreed.

The next day Birbal prepared a high-octane itching lotion and poured it into the Queen's bra whilst she took her morning bath. Soon the itching started and grew in intensity, and the King became very concerned indeed. Consultations with the doctors and with Birbal to whom the doctors reported revealed that only a special saliva applied for four hours would cure the malady. Birbal also advised the King that, in the whole of Arabia, only Ahmed's mouth carried this saliva.

King Akbar immediately summoned Ahmed and ordered him to apply his special saliva to the Queens breasts for four hours and Ahmed dutifully set to the task by licking, biting, pressing and playing with her breasts for the prescribed period thus achieving his heart's desire.

Satisfied, he returned to Birbal but, to Birbal's rage, refused to honour his agreement by paying him the agreed 1000 gold coins knowing, as he did that Birbal could never reveal the matter to the King.

But Ahmed had underestimated Birbal. The very next day, Birbal put the same lotion into King Akbar's underwear.

The King again summoned Ahmed.....

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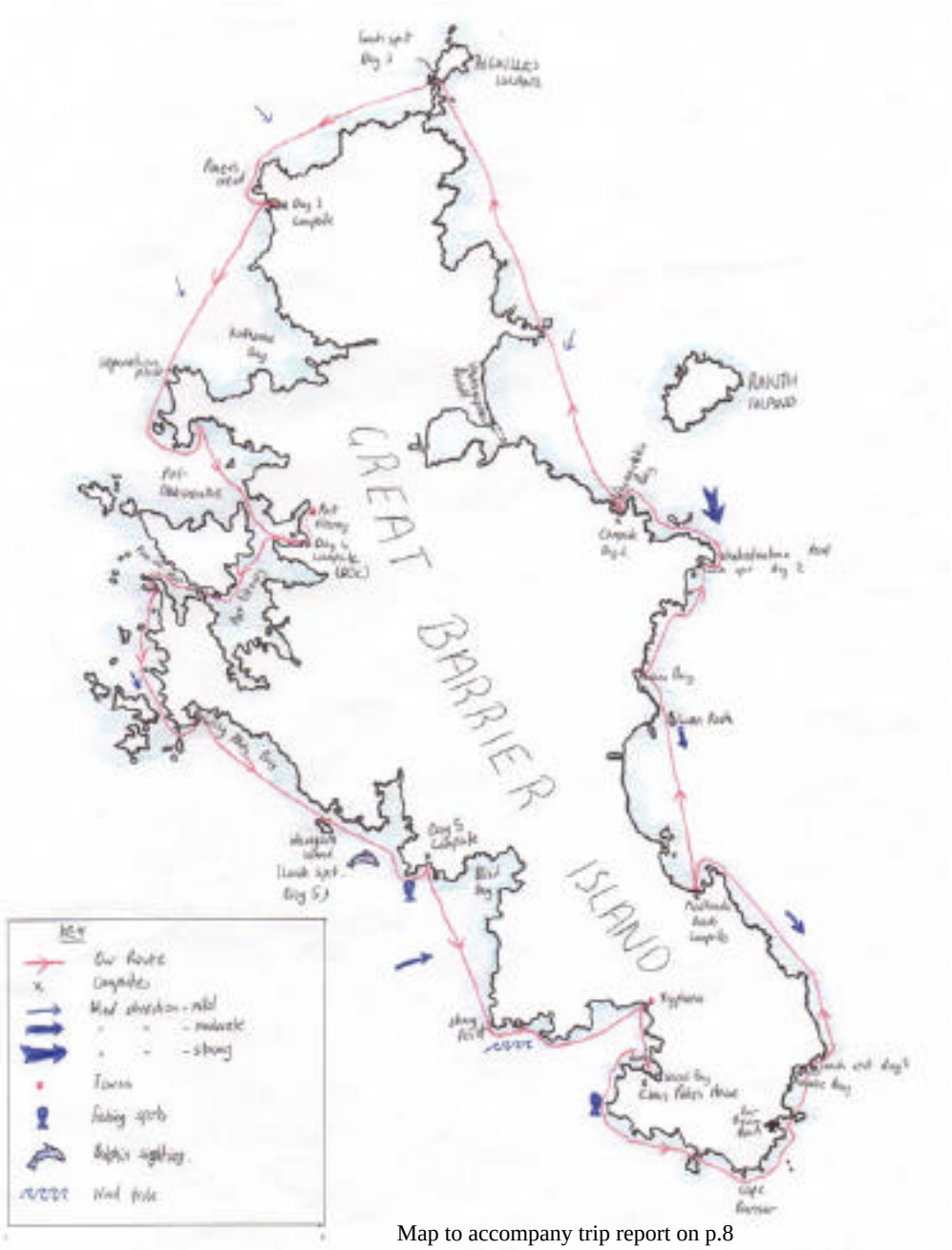

Map to accompany trip report on p.8