THE SEA CANOEIST NEWSLETTER

Issue 60 **December 1995 - January 1996**

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The Sea Canoeist Newsletter is published 6 times a year as the official newsletter of the Kiwi Association of Sea Kayakers (N.Z.) Inc.
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EDITORIAL

Best wishes to all for a safe paddling and prosperous 1996. The met. office long range forecast is for a La Nina, the antithesis of our harbinger of rotten summer weather, El Nino. La Nina if and when it arrives, promises a weakened pressure gradient across the Tasman Sea with lighter winds and less rain in the South Island than a normal summer. The north of the North Island is destined for a wetterer than normal summer as tropical lows move further south than normal. This La Nina has not arrived yet - today (28/12/95), on the West Coast it is blowing its bollocks off from the northwest with heavy rain warnings current for Fiordland. The lousy weather of the last two weeks has been exceedingly frustrating for our small group of wave skiers. Prior to that, we were building up fitness and skill again in superb offshore bar breaks off Rapahoe and the 12 Mile. Late evening, three of us were waiting outside for the big sets, legs dangling in the clear water, when the sight of a fin brought the legs up ever so quickly into the footrests. Hearts stopped pounding as a pod of eight Hector Dolphins played around us. Absolute magic.

For those paddlers who are scared, worried or traumatized, by the thought of launching or landing through surf, I would like to suggest trying out a wave ski. Prior to my big trip from Juneau through the Gulf of Alaska to Nome in 1990, I was training in a surf-yak, but for ever looping in the dumping West Coast surf. My two neighbours were on wave skiis and I managed to borrow one for five minutes. Next weekend I bought one and sold the yak. That summer we were spending two hours every night and up to five hours a day during the weekend surfing. Both physical skills, bracing & rolling, and mental skills of reading the surf and building up a positive frame of mind in big surf, were honed to perfection. And the result: in the big Gulf of Alaska surf, I was grinning like a Cheshire cat in the Nordkapp.

South Island Circumnavigation Attempt

Colorado paddler Brian Roberts, set off from Picton on October 22 to attempt a solo, unsupported kayak circumnavigation of the South Island. An electrical engineer, Brian who has been living in Christchurch for the past 10 months, reached Christchurch in early November. He anticipated the trip would take three months, including several rest periods and possible delays due to the weather, and that Fiordland would provide the most challenging section of the journey. Brian spent the winter training around Banks Peninsula, perfecting his self rescue techniques, and collecting maps and estimating distances.

Christchurch Sea Kayakers Escape Amorous Advances of a 'Sea Lion'

Six Christchurch paddlers will be attending night school marine biology classes after a front page photograph and story in the 'Christchurch Press' which described the amorous advances of a gender unknown, sea lion which showed a definite attraction for red kayaks at Cass Bay. The paddlers were leaving for a Canterbury Sea Kayak Network pre-Christmas dinner on Quail Island when the 'sea lion' was spotted off the beach. Delighted oohs and aahs quickly turned into dragging the kayaks up the beach when the massive mammal began rubbing against the craft, particularly those of a red colour. Spreading the kayaks along the beach, provided confusion to the mammal and allowed one boat to launch, which was followed by the friendly 'sea lion', and the other two boats used the distraction to make good their escape. John Kirk-Anderson's close up photograph of a whiskered face, chin resting on the bow of a red kayak, with love at first sight in the big brown eyes, is a corker. As for the night school classes, the 'sea lion' has been re-identified as a sea elephant.

Otago Sea Kayakers Association (OSKA)

Recently I received the latest newsletter from OSKA, Vol.1, No. 3, with a busy trip schedule, trip reports etc. The editor and trip organizer is:
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The Voyage of the Blue Fox

by Conrad Edwards

This story tells of an intrepid expedition by an English man, a Kiwi woman and a German kayak, from Farewell Spit to Picton along the rugged coast of New Zealand's mainland. They met with many adventures, mostly of the wet and windy variety, and only ran out of oat bars once.

Christmas Eve 1994 saw Maria Bogers and I at the base of Farewell Spit, assembling the boat and dry loading it for the first time. For want of room we left with Maria's father the Thermette, my raincoat, and her sleeping mat. Maria abandoned also her party dress and shoes, evidence that her ideas on sea kayak trips were evolving rapidly. We had more or less adequate clothing remaining, although Maria stole my rafting sandals whenever she could, and I her fleece top.

We moved quickly, and I was soon standing in the shallows, watching the water under the boat ebb while Maria said her fond farewells. We got away just in time to avoid embarrassment, and followed the channel markers out. There was a gentle drizzle and little wind - perfect paddling. Looking back, we saw our lift driving home, and we were on our own, miles from the nearest tavern.

The third member of our party was the Blue Fox, a Klepper Aerius II double sea kayak, of the same variety and vintage that Hans Lindemann crossed the Atlantic in. Despite the invention of fibreglass, Kleppers remain the choice of many military forces and scientific expeditions, as well of course as of the odd eccentric.

Like me, the Blue Fox was in her thirties, although she looked as new: varnished ash and blue canvas, classically beautiful and demonstrably seaworthy. Like her owner again, she creaks and groans reassuringly in the waves.

Our plan was to paddle the South Island's north coast, from Farewell Spit to Picton. The only other element of our plan was to take about two weeks doing it, and we carried sufficient supplies for that.

GOLDEN BAY

Our hope was to paddle first to the end of Farewell Spit itself, either crossing the mouth of Golden Bay, or doubling back to the coast, but the gale and heavy rain warnings suggested that we stay inshore.

The western coasts of Golden and Tasman Bays are generally low lying and unchanging, and so shallowly shelving that, from water deep enough for easy paddling, shore features became confused. For identifying landing places and camp sites, and locating the shallows, we used Aerial Surveys Limited's Coastal Photomaps. Their excellent black and white aerial photographs gradually turned to pulp in my imperfect map case. They would have been our main navigation aid even if I'd remembered the maps.

The first camp site that we reconnoitered was rejected on local aesthetics. By the time we had made this weighty decision, the boat had been stranded by the continuing ebb, and had to be juggled and then towed free. Luckily, I towed Maria fast enough to prevent a rotten shark's head being hauled aboard as bait. Our second attempt was more and most successful, an uninhabited and steeply shelving beach, with flat sand up against the sea grass. We hoped that six inches above the high tide mark would be good enough, and it was. Both exhausted from the long hours of work pre-trip, rather than from the two hour paddle, we slept for fourteen hours, waking to a beach scattered with people, walking, collecting Tuatuas, and pulling in crab nets.

The weatherpeople, full of Christmas cheer, had changed their mind on the northwesterly gale, and opted instead for sou'westerlies of forty knots gusting fifty. As there was only twenty knots or so when we arose, and our course lay close to a soft shore, we headed off. Approaching Collingwood, we veered offshore to clear an uncovered sand bar, which moment the malevolent southerlies chose to hit with full force. The sea foamed, all the worse for its shallowness, and we pointed the bow through the short sharp chop to shore. As some particularly ominous waves approached, Maria stopped to inquire which way to lean, but must have just heard my pleas of Keep paddling! We barely made headway into the wind and spray, finally hauling ourselves ashore to collapse under a giant Macrocarpa tree. Too windy for a fire, we erected the tent to thaw out in. Months later, Maria confessed to a friend that she was thinking that I must normally paddle in conditions like that, and was mighty relieved when the tent went up and the boat stayed tied down.

Maria shocked me by suggesting that she walk into Collingwood for some cigarettes, so I gave her her Christmas present - a pipe. And so went Christmas day, with fresh Tuatuas for dinner, followed by a powwow.

We carried a collapsible trolley, vintage Klepper courtesy of David Banks. We tested it on Boxing Day morning, on a portage across the half mile of beach that low tide had revealed. The wheels, designed for concrete-clad Europe, sank into the soft sand, but it sure beat carrying.

We paddled off on a flat sea, staying close to the shore, and the land slipped gracefully past, a pleasantly varied wooded coastline, dotted with luxurious looking batches. We passed the remains of an old jetty, standing detached in the water, adorned with shags.

With light winds and a glassy sea, we crossed directly from Patons Rock to Abel Tasman Point, rather than follow the coast past the mouth of the Takaka River and Pohara. Australian Gannets and swarms of shags accompanied us. The wind swung around to the north, a sea breeze, broadside on but not unpleasant. Maria's arms got more tired, the pauses more frequent and longer. Eventually we arrived at the far shore, where lay a glorious cove of coarse golden sand. The place was deserted, although Tarakohe resort was just around the coast: tourists are delightfully gregarious, and so easily avoided. We collapsed there, the Blue Fox swaying on rock moorings. Maria the hunter-gatherer supplemented dinner with oysters, mussels and banana passion fruit. We discovered that Voltarin makes a passable massage oil.

THE PADDLING DAY

Thus we entered into some sort of a daily routine. At 5:03am the alarm sounds for the marine forecast, which I soon leaned to write down, as snoozing dulls the memory. At 6:30am the watch bleeps again, for the general forecast. I get up, fossick around, take photos, brew coffee, and update the memoirs. Sometime later, Maria emerges, lights a cigarette, and gradually transforms herself into a human being. Breakfast follows, usually something with bacon in it.

We strike camp, and squeeze it into a dozen dry bags of all sizes and colours. We carry the boat to the water line and, load by load, the bits and bags that travel in her. We load the boat in the water - everything in its place - fit the spraydecks, try to remember to lower the rudder, and off.

Paddling was the essence of the trip: the ever changing nuances of wind and sea; the breeze and spray on the face; the delightful rhythm of two paddles in unison; the vistas ever opening and changing around one; and the growing satisfaction of aching muscles and distance covered.

At 12:30, the watch would bleep a third time, for the long range weather forecast and our pre-arranged cellphone listening schedule. An enforced fifteen minute rest, usually on the water, and a chance to delve again into our dwindling supply of oat bars.

After some hours of paddling, we would land for lunch and rest, perhaps leaving the boat afloat, moored to rocks, or pulling her ashore. I would put on light clothes to protect myself from the midday sun, and Maria would take off hers. Sometimes a short stop, sometimes a long one, dependent on the venue, our tiredness, and Maria's sunbathing schedule.

On again for the pre-prandial paddle, often in the afternoon's sea breeze. Choosing a camp site, we would beach, unload the boat and carry everything ashore, the process accelerated by the prize of dry clothes. Then we could relax, tie down the boat, set up camp, start a fire, beachcomb, and plan in our ad hoc fashion the evening meal and tomorrow's paddle. Dinner was typically pasta with those staples of life: oil, garlic, cheese, tomato and pepper in varying combinations. After dinner, Maria started working on reasons why she should have my mattress that night.

There is something magical about ending the day tucked into an unknown and deserted beach, self-contained, travellers rather than mere tourists. The sea breeze would usually die at dusk, and we would sit around a drift wood fire, digesting dinner, relaxing the paddling muscles, and talking with the confidence of those who have achieved something together.

To describe the trip requires some form of chronology. But an itinerary of landings and launchings, seas and beaches, risks missing the real attraction of kayaking. That lies in the intangibles, ultimately the freedom to come and go as one pleases, at home and alone with the ever changing elements. They are the essence and magic of sea kayaking, the reason for this trip, and they will be the reason for the next. Those who have been so seduced choose a route to paddle, rather than choose to paddle a route.

WEST TASMAN BAY

We paddled on the next day in silky seas, past impressive rock formations, and on around Separation Point into Tasman Bay. Known for its rough seas, the only movements around the point were from a noisy seal, sweeping terns, and a Blue Penguin. We paddled fast and with tempo, driven by a lust for cappuccino, and were soon strolling up the path to Awaroa cafe. Back on the beach we took up our usual positions, Maria in the sun and myself in the shade, when the sea breeze started building up rapidly. We crash launched to round Awaroa Head before being weathered in. Once around, the wind strengthened further, and we rode it through, reaching Tonga Island in no time. A boat full of snorkelling seal watchers were out of luck - only one seal in the water. We swept on with following seas, a few support strokes and extensive rudder work giving an exhilarating ride, through the Mad Mile and into the shelter of the Astrolabe Roadstead. The sheltered coast there was plagued by campers, every beach taken with fizz boats, yachts, kayaks and bodies. For peace and quiet we headed to Fisherman's Island, helped on our way by more tail winds. The beautiful sheltered beach there had a fine wooden yacht moored offshore, but at least such vessels are the least of tourist evils.

In one easy day we had paddled the length of the Abel Tasman park, the destination of so many kayakers for multi-day trips. The winds continued rising, so out came the tent, obediently pitched away from the "no camping" sign. Maria dragged me into it.

Next morning we headed off towards Ruby Bay, barely discernible on the horizon, steering well clear of the tourist haven of Kaiteriteri, and the sand shallows south of it. We paddled for five hours, made epic as we'd forgotten to separate out our play lunch.

Most of the time we paddled in silence, each enjoying the surroundings. That morning we also debated and chose the Klepper's name: she had started the trip without one. Just before the trip I had an unusual and childish dream, of having a faithful little blue fox as a pet, surely prophetic. The name Blue Fox stuck, being so appropriate in colour and cunningness. Perhaps, more properly, she should be a vixen, but vulpine feminists will have to accept the generic.

We trolled a jig as we paddled, just in case. Off Ruby Bay, terns were feeding out to sea. As custodian of the rudder I steered the Blue Fox for them, and put on the speed. Maria wondering what was going on, until I pulled in a plump Kahawai. We pulled in at Ruby Bay for pan fried fish and a rest, on the pebble shore of the hippie commune. Lunch was again cut short by rising winds, and headed on for the shelter of Rabbit Island.

We could hear the breakers guarding Mapua from afar. Negotiating the deep channel, the flood tide catapulted us through the horrendous guardian breakers into the inlet. Just inside, all was calm, sun and gaiety, the holiday campers, fizz boat joy riders and swimmers. Normally worth avoiding, the scene appealed in its total contrast to the harsh gray world of the bay. Salt encrusted and adrenaline enriched, we relaxed at Mapua cafe: a beer for me, a tonic for Maria. I ordered two ports to toast the Blue Fox's new name:

luckily, Maria's self control lasted.

We headed behind Rabbit Island to camp on the appropriately named Bird Island, idyllic once we had carried our evening loads through the mud banks, and once the water skiers had returned to their televisions.

NELSON TO FRENCH PASS

The morning paddle to Nelson around the back of Rabbit Island was like no other. A cold swirling mist had descended, reducing visibility to about 200 yards. The inlet with its waterways, many flat islands and prominent trees emerging out of then fading into the mist was serenely eerie. We saw many shags and white herons, but more mae-maes than ducks. The compass had its first use, but even so, navigating the channels was hit and miss: we were blocked once by an experimental seaweed station.

By the time we left the shelter of Rabbit Island, there was a fair northerly blowing. The aerial photographs were invaluable in finding the deep channel, which we followed out, successfully negotiating a clear route through the gauntlet of monstrous breaking surf. So started our journey up the east side of Tasman Bay, the most exposed coast of the route.

In Nelson harbour we met with Maria's parents, armed with muffins, a brew, and a re-supply of oat bars. In the big smoke we re-stocked with a few fresh rations, and lunched in luxury at the Boatshed Cafe. The faithful Blue Fox waited patiently for us on the sailing club ramp, a tiny patch of blue and gray against the harbourscape.

While we were in Nelson the wind dropped to nothing, but as soon as we started it rose again: 5, 10, 15, 20 knots, as we grunted against it. Opposite the village of Glenduan we hardly seemed to be moving at all: I had to line up telephone poles to detect any advance. Eventually we found ourselves amongst the white rocks and crashing surf of Ataata Point, squinting into the spray towards Pepin Island, trying to make out the best camp spot. We found a dark, rocky cove set just back from the turbulent western tip, nicely sheltered from the northerly, with fresh water, but some small drawbacks: football sized rocks rather than sand, tennis ball sized rocks instead of flat grass, and a foot or two of surf pounding on the steep bank. Still, we were tired, there was nowhere else obvious to go, and this would do for the night. I froze standing deep in the surf unloading the Fox. Enough wood for a warming fire at least, and our fresh rations included steak and claret. We slept on anything and everything soft: air mattress, lifejackets, boat seats and clothes.

The next day we were stranded as the surf rose, blown in by 30 knots or more, so we endured a second day in this bleak spot. A cave exposed at low tide provided shelter as a second front passed over. I broke my fishing rod tugging on a huge Snapper, which had the tenacity of solid rock. We consoled ourselves with a spectacular bonfire, but the spark holes in the air mattress didn't make the second night on the rocks any more comfortable.

Next day the wind had dropped, although the remnants of swell and surf gave us an exciting launch. The west point of Pepin Island offered spectacular scenery, made complete by spectacularly breaking seas. On the basis that the open sea couldn't be worse, we fought through them and carried on. It was no worse but, once we left the lee of the point, just as invigorating. Maria successfully managed her first pee in the boat, but the maneuvering involved made her seasick, so we stopped for recuperation and lunch at the delightful Hori bay.

A youth high in the bush climbed down to join two more fishing below, and all three left quickly carrying very basic fishing gear. Maria the hippie reckoned that fishing was the excuse, cultivation the reason.

After two hours the wind dropped, but by the time we had launched it had risen again. We carried on north east anyway, our next objective Cape Soucis at the mouth of Croisilles Harbour. We didn't quite make it. The wind veered to the northwest and encouraged a side on 2m chop, breaking occasionally. The Blue Fox and I were enjoying it, but Maria turned green, so we took the first turning to the right and found ourselves in the wide and sandy Oananga Bay, with a big surf running. We headed for the middle of the sandiest part, sprinting the finish. The Blue Fox didn't even think about broaching, and slid gracefully to a halt on the soft, flat sand. The tide was out, and we had a lengthy carry to the high tide mark.

Apart from the pounding surf, Oananga bay was perfect: a long crescent of golden sand, bounded by rocky points, backed with rolling tussock and mature Manuka. Deserted, too. We made camp on a raised sand plateau, amongst a maze of driftwood. It was blisteringly hot, and we erected the tent to shade vulnerable items, such as the cameras and me. We explored inland, finding a classic driftwood bach in the shade of large firs. That night was New Year's Eve, and the party was down at the tent.

The east coast of Tasman Bay is exposed to the prevailing nor'westerly winds and swells: negotiating it is the trickiest part of the route. There is no alternative, so one has to move by bounds as the weather allows. Bay by bay, we were fighting our way up this beautiful and little frequented coast, and would soon be in the lee of D'Urville Island.

The west coast of D'Urville Island is even more exposed. With a strong northwesterly pattern forecast, we ruled out adding a circuit, which would anyway have been marginal on time.

At dawn it was crystal clear outside, so much so that, until I emerged from the tent enough to see land, I thought all was mist. Coffee for two, oat bar for me, cigarette for Maria, and we were ready to go. On a glassy sea we rounded Point Soucis into the first rays of the morning sun, and continued on across the wide mouth of Croisilles Harbour, alluring in the soft morning light. The wind freshened, veered to the west, and the swell built up remarkably quickly. Maria wanted a pee but didn't want to risk a balancing act in those seas, so we popped in behind the next point to obtain relief. Three fluffy gull chicks looked on from atop a pinnacle.

After a few more miles of great surfing, Maria turned green again, so we pulled into the shelter of Okuri Bay. Rest and seafood bisque saw

her right, and Maria the mermaid was soon perched cheerfully on a rock, wearing her wide brimmed hat, which she would have felt naked without. By then the winds had dropped to nothing, and so the third leg of the day commenced.

That morning I had been wondering whether to tackle French Pass on the 2pm slack turning against us, or wait for the 8pm slack turning with us, the latter being the generally recommended approach. Delayed by our two unexpected stops, we decided to head for the pass while the going was good, waiting there for a few hours to nip through to Elmslie Bay in the evening. We paddled on beautiful glassy seas, the morning's swell having flattened as fast as it had arisen. In mid-channel, approaching French Pass, I phoned my parents in England, who are a little behind the times, to wish them a happy New Year. We realised that we had inadvertently made excellent time when we saw, from a mile off French Pass, the silhouettes of four kayakers negotiating it. It was ten minutes past the scheduled end of slack, and we sprinted. Two fishing boats remained reassuringly in mid-pass as we raced through on full throttle, and circled wide to the safety of Elmslie Bay: New Zealand's most treacherous pass taken on the fly.

Elmslie Bay was a picture postcard image of blue sea, golden sand, and moored boats, made ugly by the tents, tourists and cars. We beached for water, and raided the basic shop.

THE SOUNDS

After a biscuit frenzy on the beach, we paddled off towards Clay Point, the northernmost tip of the mainland Marlborough Sounds, on a glorious evening. Spying a promising looking camp spot, Maria suddenly fatigued, and my arms didn't object when we decided to head in. The chosen spot turned out excellent, a narrow beach of small pebbles, a sufficiently raised grassy platform behind, with a fine tent spot under a cabbage tree.

The south end of the beach curved out to a point, and must act as a wind trap, for there was a frightening amount of rubbish: as much drift plastic as drift wood, mostly broken containers and lids, but also netting, food bags, a flower pot, assorted tubes and pipes, a soap tray, a foam float and expanded polystyrene. Such is the lot of the modern explorer.

We so enjoyed the comfort of the first soft grass of the trip that we didn't emerge until late, and then to strong nor'westers. We spent the day hoping that the winds would drop, with Maria "just practicing being a lady of leisure". By mid afternoon the wind was still blowing a tiresome 20 to 25 knots, but we decided to go anyway - we could always turn back. By the time we were on the water, the wind had dropped to a comfortable 15 knots. The shore being steeply shelved and straight for once, we paddled in close, eyes turned right to admire the rockscapes. The winds freshened, the seas rose, and our eyes swung left onto the incoming breakers.

A right turn saw us surfing down two huge waves across the line of Clay Point. Tremendous winds whistling through a gap in the point drove spray in violent vortexes. An impressive vista, of rugged, barren, stern heads and outlying islands, and the jagged pinnacles of rock reefs projecting off them. A solitary Gannet soared and plunged in the bleak expanse of ocean.

We settled into a breakneck, wind- and surf-assisted paddle. The stern of the boat lifted to herald the arrival of each free ride. Once, a huge wave rose high above us, and had us both frozen, eyes glued over our left shoulders onto it, but this mother of all local waves slid harmlessly away. We reached Paparoa Point in no time at all, and surfed into the shelter of it on a series of gentle giants, huge glassy swells refracted around the point.

We were greeted with a dramatically stern and somber view of the entrance to Pelorus Sound: steep cliffs running into an ominously black skyscape, slopes clear felled and eroding, the whole dark and foreboding. Ahead of us, the water foamed and two williwaws sped across the Sound. Although early in the evening, it was already getting dark. We opted for the nearest camp site, in Port Ligar. Approaching the Port's mouth from the calm of the headland's lee, violent gusts of wind buffetted us, tearing the map case from my lap. We stowed it inside, and battened down all hatches. Even so prepared, we were taken aback by the vehemence of conditions in Port Ligar itself: forty knots or more, raising a vicious short breaking chop, dramatically reversing the old maxim of any port in a storm. We fought our way in, yard by yard, stroke by stroke, gradually passing the sharply musselled rocks of the point itself, and the buoys of the mussel farms, barely visible through the spray. Eventually we arrived at Fishers Bay, a splendid grassy spot offering - we discovered once the storm abated - a tremendous view down Pelorus Sound.

A short but exhilarating and memorably variable paddle - side on chop, huge following seas, glassy swells, sheltered calm, and a whistling holocaust, all in about six miles. As the shag flies, we were only two miles from our previous camp site on the other side of the peninsula.

With a southerly forecast providing little incentive, we slept in, but arose to light winds and brilliant sunshine late morning. Waiting for the midday forecast, I disassembled the Klepper, cleaning and rinsing her skin and bones in fresh water. The forecast was fine, so I suggested we head off, but Maria the barometer predicted a hail storm and hid in the tent. I had nearly reassembled the Klepper when her hail storm struck, bullets the size of peas, and I was half soaked in the short dash to the tent, to join Maria the told-you-so.

The forecast was for two days' fine weather followed by strong northerlies, so rather than follow the edge of Cook Strait to Queen Charlotte Sound and thence Picton, we opted for the shelter of Pelorus Sound and a portage. We now had a whole five days to cover two days' distance at our pace to date, so we could enjoy a leisurely cruise. And we did.

Another late start, as Fishers Bay is sheltered by hills, and Maria wouldn't surface until the sun struck the tent. When it did and she did, she was aghast to find me wearing my sandals. I finished reassembling the boat, and we packed up and left at a relaxed pace. We decided to visit the shop at Waterfall Bay to stock up on essen-

tials, such as bread and honey. On the way over we chatted to the mussel farm workers on their vessel: a knowledgeable, interesting and friendly man recounted his sixteen years in the business, moaning like farmers everywhere and every year about the latest harvest. Of more immediate and practical use, we learnt that this area was clear from the shellfish toxin ban, and he kindly suggested that we pluck a few mussels from his farm in passing. We carried on, looking at the competition seeding their mussel lines, using a Heath Robinson contraption to turn them into muslin sausages.

Our chores done, we headed out, stopping at the mussel farm to partake of our offer. Disappointingly, the mussels were too far down, and their lines too heavy, to pull up from a kayak. We carried on across Pelorus Sound, a northerly sea breeze against the ebb tide raising quite a chop. As luck and lunch would have it, Post Office Point was encrusted with blue and green mussels, to which Maria soon added honey and garlic.

In preparation for an early start the next day, and having discovered Maria's pagan tendencies, we decided on an east facing camp spot. We aimed for Clara Island, which we knew about from Alex Ferguson's useful if mercifully incomplete Sea Kayaker's Guide to Tasman Bay and the Marlborough Sounds. A classic spot, with just room enough for the three of us to tuck ourselves in between the flax bushes, native bush behind and high tide mark immediately in front. Wekas rustled through the flax, oyster catchers called along the shoreline, and later a Morepork started his evening hooting.

We awoke to a glorious dawn chorus of chirps, bells, whistles, chimes and jingles, and the pecking of a boldly nervous Weka around the tent. Up for a photograph, then back to listen to the chorus in warmth, and up again with the first rays of the sun. Despite our good intentions, we were reluctant to leave such a fine spot, and weren't paddling until eleven. Shortly after setting off, the sea breezes came in strong, gusting off our starboard bow. My shout of "Incoming!" meant little to Maria, until the submerged shadow surfaced as a small dolphin, which alas declined to play with us: it was the only cetacean sighted on the whole trip, but enough to win me a chocolate fish.

The seas ahead were more white than blue as we turned into Tawiiitinui Reach, the reach and seas increasing as we surfed to Tawero Point. That point lies on the end of a long thin peninsula, and in rounding it we turned back into the same strong winds that had sped us there so quickly. We hugged the peninsula, fighting up the small bays along it against wind and outgoing tide. Eventually we made shelter in a large, pastoral bay, where we stopped for a late lunch, huddled under a bank. When the wind dropped we headed off for somewhere less bleak. No camp spots were apparent in the spectacular native bush leading up to and around Stafford Point, so we headed for Jacobs Bay, to find it occupied.

Although high season, we had had a beach to ourselves every night: this was the only occasion when, to do so, we had to paddle on. I suggested Yncyca Bay across the Sound, on account of its wonderful name, but Maria out-voted me, so we continued around the reserve to Fairy Bay. Magnificent bush, but no place to pitch the tent except an inland rectangle of purpose cleared bush. Toilets and signposts, it was all too much: we spent all our waking time on the beach. A cicada cacophony, a Tui feeding on the flax nectar, and later the ol' Moreporks started up.

Next day we continued south on the flood tide, with a tail wind alternately balmy and gusty. Green, silky water through peaceful country.

We passed many white and chrome launches motoring out for fishing and cocktails. How they must envy us and our intimacy with the elements! Or so we liked to think. Perhaps we should envy them their ability to find satisfaction without sensation.

Heading up Kenepuru sound we found at last a delightful, shady dell, to which Russell Ginn had given us steer. A grove of mature Manuka touching the water's edge. The sand soil between the trees had been flattened in a couple of places. A solid timber frame resting on mussel farm floats formed a table, on which were carefully laid out pieces of cord and a candle stub. An old mattress lay airing on a line. A small section of fence had been constructed of interleaved driftwood and twine. None of the departmental formality of over-used camp sites, tracks, signposts and toilets. Rather, a site evolved by successive care. Although only one o'clock, we immediately decided that that was the perfect place to spend our last night before civilisation.

We ate popcorn, smoked our pipes, sunbathed, read and generally lazed about. The disadvantage of the camp only became apparent at night: the local possums were many and crazy. They sneaked around the tent, leaped at and slid down the fly, and reached under for the food bags. I heard the clash of wood on wood, and jumped up to find two of the fat varmints fossicking in the Blue Fox. I gave chase until we were all exhausted, and from then on slept beside the Fox, stick to hand. They didn't return.

We woke to a fine penultimate day. I started wondering where tickets and keys were, sure and depressing sign of an approaching end of trip. We headed off to Te Mahia, where our old friend the nor'wester came in strong, and we were soon surfing into the beach through a sea of whitecaps.

Here the Klepper wheels really came into their own, to portage over the saddle the two miles to Queen Charlotte Sound. We tried fitting the wheels in the water, but there was too much surf and cross current. Defeated, we just managed to heave the loaded boat ashore. A jury-rigged rope body harness, inspired by Ranulph Fiennes, was useless uphill, as the bow kept tripping me, although it worked splendidly on the downhill. Uphill, I pulled by hand, Maria assisting by carrying the camera. Despite gloves wound with cloth, the agony of the thin rope across the palm dwarfed the effort of pulling. My log reads: "Golly gosh and dash it all, that Maria can certainly haul a boat (the Klepper) over a large land distance. She's simply amazing and I must remember to buy her a nice bottle of perfume for her efforts" but, hey, that doesn't look like my writing.

Down to Waterfall Bay for lunch and to launch off the jetty, and a very fast run to the Queen Charlotte Sound, a strong tail wind chasing us. Turning into the Sound we saw ahead of us a sea of sails, scores of gregarious yachties seeking the wilderness together. Truly we were back in mainstream civilisation. In contrast to the bay we had just left, the Sound itself was calm, and we headed diagonally across it to the entrance to Picton Harbour.

However, a distinct and fierce line of whitecaps ran across the Sound into Picton, induced by the gale howling down through Lochmara Bay opposite. After searching in vain for the Karaka Bay camp spot that Alex Ferguson mentions, in very entertaining seas, we ended up at Bob's Bay: the dreaded signposts, loos and BBQ table but, surprisingly and fortunately, no tents. We pitched ours at the bush edge. I walked into Picton for a bottle of claret to celebrate our last night, and rolled back with a Guinness or two inside me. A final pasta extravaganza, and our last night under canvas.

Next morning, two bedraggled, hirsute but satisfied kayakers carried their boat ashore amongst the concrete, cars and people of Picton foreshore. There they continued their quest for cappuccino, while the faithful Blue Fox waited faithfully, a tiny patch of blue and gray against another harbourscape.

Conrad Edwards - 18 June 1995

English Paddlers in Fiordland

In August I responded to a fax from an English couple, Tim and Marie Riley, who requested information on paddling from Te Waewae Bay around the southern end of Fiordland up to Doubtful Sound. Their available time slot was October. Tim noted they were fairly competent paddlers with a wide experience of the West Coast of Scotland and Welsh coast at all times of the year. Tim asked: 'Would it be madness to venture out around the coast or should we stick to the fiords?'

In view of the fact that October generally brings unsettled Spring conditions, my advice to the couple was to stick to Milford and Doubtful sounds. If the opportunity arose with settled conditions for an outside trip from Milford to Doubtful, there was a chance of getting stuck on the coast given the frequency of cold fronts.

The following letter and trip report arrived by fax on Christmas day:

Dear Paul

You may remember that I faxed you back in August regarding paddling round the coast of Fiordland. Following your fax we scaled down the trip so that we would paddle from Deep Cove in Doubtful Sound via Dagg Sound to Breaksea and Dusky with a pick up from Supper Cove. Bill and Daphne at Fiordland Wilderness would not hire us boats so we bought a couple of plastic tubs - a Puffin and a Narpa from Bruce Conway at Invercargill with a deal whereby when we returned they would be sold to another couple of paddlers. So although it was a bit worrying whilst we were out in the field that the deal might fail it did indeed work out fine in the end.

We used Bill and Daphne to transport us over to Deep Cove and spent three nights in Doubtful Sound. We then went around to Dagg. The swell was as expected - bigger than we had ever seen up here but the weather was relatively settled with no more than 10 - 15 knots of wind from the SW. A bit choppy in the entrance to Dagg Sound and we had to paddle about 6kms in before we could find a beach with a small enough swell to land.

We spent three nights in Dagg whilst a tremendous storm passed over and after an early start made Sunday Cove in Breaksea by 3pm. Sea was rougher than for the first trip with a couple of nasty squalls, one of which lasted 40 minutes when we were off Coal River. Fishermen said the swell was 3 - 4m but was certainly impressive for us. After rescuing the last kayaker they had seen (a Japanese chap trying to emulate your circumnavigation) I think we improved the reputation of kayakers as they seemed quite impressed with our speed from Dagg and our apparent freshness when we arrived. The rest of the trip through Acheron Passage and around the historic places in Dusky went without problem and we got picked up by Waterwings of Te Anau.

In all we were out 16 days and spent five days not going anywhere, sitting out the weather in the tent. Thanks for you help and if I can reciprocate at any time give me a call.

My wife Marie has been writing up part of the trip and her article follows - you can say, 'I told you so' afterwards if you like.

Tim Riley

ON THE DARK SIDE OF THE MOON

"I don't think we can land there," I shouted to Tim, as nearer we came to the beach the worse the surf looked as it crashed on the boulders. This would make landing in our kayaks a hazardous undertaking in fit conditions let alone in the state of exhaustion I had got myself into today. I was hungry, tired and absolutely sick of the sea swell. We had already come a couple of miles inside the sound and morale was pretty low but this was the only landing site we had spotted so far. "What do you want do then, go in or what?" Tim got impatient as he always is when I start whimpering.

"The further we go into the sound, the further we have to come out."

"Let's go on a bit further," I said,

"maybe we'll find something better." More wishful thinking perhaps.

The morning had brought new promise with almost clear skies and a mild breeze from the south, just that good day to venture out of Doubtful Sound and what this so-called three to five metres swell really looked like. Did New Zealanders in the switch to the metric system think that feet were the same as metres? How would it feel to go up and down every 12 seconds with the height of a bungalow. After all we were only going to have a look, to plan for our two major open water voyages. On return we would go to Deas Hut which would take us further from the mouth of Doubtful but we had plenty of time and the weather seemed so unpredictable that perhaps it was better not to worry about it too much. But worry about the weather and the inaccuracy of the forecasts, we did all the time.

The wind was a bit strange, coming from all directions, the sea was far from calm but it wasn't as bad as we had seen before. We had come from Deep Cove, the head of Doubtful Sound in two half day trips in quickly deteriorating weather. Today was a lucky break, and so far it looked good. It took a long time to get out of Doubtful Sound. The scale is just so enormous that you tend to imagine that you travel faster than you really are. The sea was very confused with fresh water pushing out into the Pacific and the Pacific trying to push in and both flanks of the sound turning the swell towards the middle. It seemed to go all right and without saying too much to each other, we gradually committed ourselves to the first big ocean hop. Dagg Sound here we come.

Well it took some paddling to get there. With the tremendous swell breaking against the cliffs, we kept about a mile offshore. The gentle breeze was building to more substantial wind and the swell began to get a chop running on top of it. Whitecaps started to appear and because of its enormity, the scene didn't change much, it seemed to take for ever. With one eye firmly focused on the dark clouds above the mountains we continued to make progress of about 2.5 miles per hour. Dagg Sound has a very wide opening and the ocean rolls in unhindered. That's what I had imagined but we cut the corner a little too much as we entered the sound and had to struggle through the clapotis produced by the cliffs of the entrance. I know such a mistake should only be made by beginners but we had been sitting in our boats for about six hours and this may have impaired our judgement.

The New Zealand Fiords (called sounds) are amazingly steep, rising to 1500 metres in less than a kilometre from the water's edge. They are densely forested with all sorts of trees and ferns and have much unusual wildlife. To go for a walk in Fiordland is a major undertaking and you will not be able to cover much ground due to the lush, dense rain-soaked vegetation. It's not called rain forest for nothing! The tops and peaks are not forested but are difficult to reach due to the dense forested lower slopes. Another problem is the rain. It is claimed that this is one of the wettest places on earth with an annual rainfall of approximately 6000mm. When it rains you are able to fill up your billy can as if you were holding it under a tap.

The sounds penetrate the mountainous region up to about 45kms and are remarkably deep. At the head of the sounds the water is fresh on the surface as the run-off from the surrounding land is tremendous and fresh water is lighter that salt water. The colour of the water is dark due to the peat and tannins from the leaves. There are no people living on the west side of Fiordland because of its inhospitable character.

So we went on and spotted another boulder beach about four miles inside the sound. It looked good. Fantastic as all I wanted to do was get out for a wee and eat and sleep. Holiday of a lifetime? We both agreed and made camp. We were astonished by the number of sandflies. They rattle between the flysheet and inner of our tent and made a noise as if it was drizzling. When you looked out of the mosquito net, it was if smoke was drifting from our tent and surely they were out to eat us alive.

In the night some deafening sound from nearby kept waking us up, surely one of those strange flightless birds, I thought, comfortable with the idea there were no man-eating animals in New Zealand. The next morning was so gorgeous that it was hard to take in, but you had to be on the water to escape the sandflies. Totally weakened by the previous day's experience, we set out to explore Dagg Sound, surely one of the least visited sounds.

All day long, we worried and discussed how we would get out of Dagg Sound, by foot via a mile long portage which would bring us back to Doubtful, paddling on towards Breaksea (seemed foolhardy and reckless) or catch a lift either way from the crayfishing boats which use Dagg as a night anchorage. This of course assuming they would offer a lift. Paddling didn't seem to be an option. I had been rather scared by the unpredictable weather and the enormous scale of the seas, and disappointed with our very slow progress at sea.

Fretting about this dilemma we had a marvellous day, playing with the dolphins, observing the penguins,

our neighbours who were responsible for the astounding amount of decibels produced at night, and generally enjoying the magnificent dynamics of the landscape. It was not too cold but cold enough for us to have permanent woolly hats on. There was still a lot of snow on the tops, almost down to the treeline. We explored the portage and were disappointed by the track which would cause a limbo dancer severe problems, let alone two fully laden kayaks and two exhausted paddlers who after all had taken up paddling because they didn't like carrying heavy packs. And those sandflies were something else.

We made our meal and settled for the night by listening to the BBC World service and Radio Australia when suddenly Tim heard a diesel engine gently coming nearer. Adrenaline rushed through our veins; perhaps we could have a lift after all. We rushed out. Careful not to stumble over the driftwood, we made our way by torchlight to the beach. Great spotlights were focused on us while we shone our miserly Petzl back, which was just as well as the skipper and his mate had thought we were deer which would have supplemented their dinner. Deer don't carry torches so Tim paddled out to meet our saviours. Full of hope I waited.

"They are the Doubtful boys, but probably tomorrow there will be some Breaksea boats coming."

Another day in Dagg Sound with the sandflies. During the morning it started to drizzle which later turned to rain, so we settled for playing chess and did not leave the tent until 4pm to stretch the legs. Fully covered against the sandflies and penetrating rain we had a walk up a nearby hill to get a view. You get soaked quickly as all the trees are covered in an inch of spongy moss which on touch will release half the water it is holding. It is also amazingly slippery and the forest 'floor' is covered with half rotten trunks which are covered in moss, making walking a balancing act. And unless you walk for a day and reach the tree line, you will not be rewarded with a view as the vegetation is so dense. Returning to the tent we scanned the horizon and a cray boat was heading in. Tim paddled out and was told another boat with a skipper called Cyril would take us. All we had to do was be ready at first light. Totally relieved we settled for the night.

At night the lovely stream which provided us with excellent fresh water burst its banks. A rain storm was raging and many trees fell or cracked. The pebbled bar created by many ocean storms, which almost provided a bridge to the other side of the stream, was washed away and the stream changed into a raging torrent. The noise was deafening. Huge boulders and tree trunks swept past with the cascading water. At least it kept the sandflies quiet, which was handy when we checked the boats. I didn't sleep at all in fear of being drowned by the river rising.

Next morning we overslept. Not by much but we were not ready at first light. We saw the first boat head out, and a second but the third boat never came. So we headed out into the sound to suss out what was going on. Tim went to Anchorage Arm where the boats spend the night but it was empty. Our hopes of a lift were dashed.

The weather seemed to have quietened down although it was gusty at times. The sea seemed pretty big. We discussed the options and re-arranged the kayaks so emergency gear was easily available. I kept on thinking, 'we can not risk this, look at the weather, it is a hell of a distance, we have to play it safe.' But we were going to have a look at the open sea and then make a decision.

Getting out of Dagg was not too bad, some expected confusion around Towing Head but nothing too dramatic. We were actually going quite strongly and the weather improved. So we pushed on and passed our halfway mark. Coal River, to us would be a landing of sheer desperation if we had to try there. We were about three miles off the coast and you could see the surf crashing on the beach; not a good sign for an emergency landing.

It was now about 12 noon with another three to four hours of paddling to go. I was going full throttle but could I sustain it? Little bits of mars bars kept up energy but I got a bit thirsty. We met our first squall. I didn't like it but there was an end visible and you only had to hang on, and that's what we did. This cleared relatively quickly and in 15 minutes we were back on track, Time taking pictures and me just wondering why Breaksea Island did not get larger. We saw lots of petrels and gannets, and passed what later turned out to be Cyril but he never saw us as we were quite small in such a big sea. Quite often Tim would disappear out of view for some time when we were both riding in a trough. As the chop on top was not from the same direction as the swell, this made the kayaks crash up and down for an exciting ride.

All of a sudden, there was another squall. It got pitch black and the wind picked up very quickly. Whitecaps formed and progress was extremely slow with the kayaks crashing through the waves. The noise was overwhelming. I started to panic but thought at the same time that all I could do was keep paddling. I scream to Tim to stay near to me. I'd lost control of one of the footrests. Tim shouted to paddle harder. The sky did not change colour and clouds were racing inland. Then it stopped and after 40 minutes, we got back to normal. Determined to get to Breaksea before another squall hit us, we really went for it.

It was really great to enter Breaksea, with the swell on our backs. We head for Sunday Cove and the fishermen's barge and what a lovely surprise it was. We were invited on board for a shower, to dry our clothes and to stay in a fantastic cabin for as long as we liked. I thought it was all worth it.

We stayed three days and sat out another of those amazing storms in which the fishermen didn't venture out. We had a great time with the fishermen of 'Electra', 'Trojan', 'Surprise' and 'Rat', and learned about their plight and how familiar it sounded with quotas and overfishing. We met up with Cyril who never made it to Dagg Sound due to the poor weather. He assured us everyone was on the lookout for us and in radio contact, and that we would have been picked up the next day.

They entertained us with meals, beers and endless cups of tea. Our trip had not quite finished but the major hurdle had been taken and passed; if only just.

Marie Riley.

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

I read with interest the 'bad taste' letter from a visiting paddler who spent some time in the Hauraki Gulf recently.

Rather than being a 'wally' this person has given a view of the Auckland scene that I believe if fairly accurate. Detailed trip planning and management systems are the exception rather than the rule. I would take a punt and say that this is common throughout N.Z.! Unfortunately, the knowledge of these aspects of safe kayaking have not kept pace with the exploding popularity of the activity.

There are two main reasons for this lagging. One is the Kiwi 'she'll be right, I'll give it a go' approach is alive and well, and it will take a couple of generations of the new legislative environment for that attitude to change. The other is that many who have experienced river kayaking think that sea kayaking is a 'soft option'. No raging rapids or waterfalls to worry about. The seduction of a tranquil sea and sandy beaches beguiles paddlers into a false sense of security. Hopefully prospective paddlers will wise up and see the benefits of education and professional guidance.

His identification of the 'specialized' boat is his only comment I would agree with. New Zealand is developing its own sea kayaking culture - the environment, the conditions paddlers and commercial guides are viewing as acceptable, the equipment carried and the type of boat used. I am not too sure what he means by 'specialized' but I suspect it is a rudderless kayak. Anyway the Skerray is still few and far between and the Nordkapp is hardly what I would call specialized any more in NZ. Most have rudders and there are now many low volume, 'minimalist' boats on the market that have been designed and built here.

I believe many paddlers are caught in a sea of egos and image and that as a generalization, Kiwi sea kayakers are individuals who sometimes paddle together and don't particularly enjoy it when they do. My view is confirmed by actions seen and reports heard and read from sea kayak symposiums around NZ.

The maturity of New Zealand sea kayaking will only be shown when we can take notice of such comment with reflective critical thought, not black power contracts.

Roy Dumble.

BOOK REVIEW

Title: The Sea Runners
Author: Ivan Doig
Published: Penguin Books, 1982
ISBN: 0 14 00.6780 9
Reviewed by: Stephen Counsell
Available from: Canoe & Outdoor World, Christchurch.

'The Sea Runners' has a seemingly impossible escape plan to kick off an exciting story that is based on truth, and the more the reader gets into it, the better it becomes. Set in Alaska and the coast of British Columbia in the year 1853 'The Sea Runners' tells of the adventures of a group of escapees from the Russian colony of New Archangel as they attempt to paddle an open Indian canoe the length of the treacherous Pacific coast from Alaska to Oregon. They fight hunger, fear, fatigue, Indians and the moods of the sea, all of the while propelled forward by the dream of freedom.

Ivan Doig uses a clipped writing style that keeps us on our toes. The story moves with a zest that won't quit. It is hard to put down once started. Mr Doig is a wordsmith that makes his choice of words almost as pleasing as the story they unfold. His style is quite refreshing. Somehow the writing style itself helps to transport the reader back to the time in which the tale is set. Perhaps a direct quotation would help.

"Ought've left him, Melander". The one named Braaf, here.

"Ought've left him cooped up in New Archangel."

The slender one of them called Karlsson, stays silent.

They turn away to the abrupt timber. As the trees sieve them from sight, another white wave replaces the rolling hill of water by which the four were borne to this shore where they are selecting the night's shelter, and where one of them is to die.

This is not a 'we went here, then did this' account of an epic trip. It is the story of the struggles between the main characters with each other as they are thrown together, and of their survival struggle. The characters are developed cleverly throughout the book. Just when one wonders why a character might be reacting this way to a situation, Ivan Doig slips in an episode from their past that has shaped their response. The characters are not so known to the reader that they become boring though.

This short book is a great read about adventures few people could expect in their lives. It is hard to remember it is a novel as you read it, and its basis in truth helps make it real. Don't pass the opportunity to read this one.

TECHNICAL TIPS

from the November 1995 'Sea Trek', the Newsletter of the Victorian Sea Kayak Club.

Keeping Milk - by John Basemore

Milk is an item we usually go without on an extended trip, or use condensed of powdered milk. Neither of which suit my cup of tea. Milk makes breakfast civilized and opens up cooking possibilites. Unfortunately the small milk containers require two just for a cup of coffee. The next size is a 250ml carton that can't be closed once opened. Fortunately Coke have a plastic 250ml screw top bottle that can. Once opened, Long Life goes off like ordinary milk, but the Coke bottle of milk if buried in a damp and shady place, will keep long enough. I brought home some of the milk I took to Queensland a forthnight earlier. At no time did I go without milk.

Flower Pots and Bread Making - by John Basemore

Therese produced a bedoury camp oven from the big double kayak and made wonderful bread. We paddlers of single kayaks can't carry such bulky items. BUT Glen Cant brought a terra-cotta flower pot lined with aluminium foil that did the job beautifully. Two small holes in the rim make it easy to lift from the fire using wire hooks. Flower pots are cheap, born in fire, give an even heat, and come in just the right size to suit your needs. Above all my wife won't even miss one or three. Fresh bread every day. But don't stop there, anything you choose to roast will cook equally well.

From the SKOANZ Newsletter

No. 5, November 1995

SKOANZ's (Sea Kayakers Operator's Assoc.NZ) objective is to improve professionalism and standards of safety, management, service and knowledge within the NZ sea kayak industry, and to promote the interests of commercial sea kayak operators.

SKOANZ Membership Listing

A user friendly summary of information on the 27 SKOANZ members has been produced by Bill Gibson. In bound form, it also contains information about SKOANZ and its Code of Practice. From June 1, 1996 only approved members will be listed. It is intended for distribution to information centres, DOC offices and enquirers. Cost is about $5 per booklet, from Bill Gibson, Tel/fax: (03) 249 7700.

SKOANZ Membership to be Restructured

A three tiered membership is to be introduced from June 1996; full membership divided into approved and non-approved operators. The former must have accepted by a neutral assessor(s) an operating plan, detailing procedures. Documentation and guidelines for the operating plan will be out by June 1996. The existing Code of Practice will form the basis of the guidelines, with operators required to take into account the specific conditions under which they operate.

The status of non-approved operators is for newcomers to the profession to develop and have accepted an operating plan, and membership of SKOANZ cannot be advertised.

Associate membership will also be offered to those with a interest in SKOANZ and the sea kayak industry. Schools, polytechs, retailers, manufacturers, guides and instructors are viewed as potential associate members. Cost is $50 as from June 1, 1996.

Part Time Executive Officer

Bruce Maunsell, former SKOANZ president and owner of Marlborough Sound Adventure was appointed part time E.O. with responsibility for administration, co-ordination/facilitation, and representation, liaison and reporting. His contact address is:

Bruce Maunsell, Papkauri Rd.,
RD, Mahoenui. 2553.
Ph: (07) 8778 619
Fax: (07) 877 8882

Guides Assessment Scheme

Three course were run in 1995 for a total of 18 guides. Roy Dumble will act as assessment co-ordinator; Ray Button will be asked to oversee the redrafting of the syllabus. People who were deferred or failed during recent assessments on points that will be redrafted, will be credited where necessary.

Sea Kayak Safety Course

SKOANZ has a $9,500 grant from the Water Safety Council for the instigation and development of a sea kayak safety course.

KASK Stalwart in Hospital

Russel Ginn, our veteran Titahi Bay paddler has unfortunately spent Christmas in Ward 4 at Wellington Hospital. In November I received a long letter from Russel:

'My first thought in writing is to make a plea that Conrad Edward's excellent little tale "The Voyage of the Blue Fox" be reproduced in full, i.e., not abridged, in the newsletter. He was kind enough to provide me with a copy about three weeks ago, while I was in hospital. I have enjoyed reading it at least three times and know it won't go stale with me. His quite humour I appreciate very much.

Thank you for your last letter written in July. Apart from other things it set me to musing about how older people are seen by younger people.

Youth is hot and bold
Age is weak and cold.

No doubt about that but weakness which is handicapping to a marked degree is much later in life than youth can imagine. So far as sea kayaking is involved it seem to me a gentle exercise which requires stamina rather than strength, 90% if not 100% of the time. Certainly a fit man 30 to 50 will get from A to B quicker than a fit man of 50 to 70. Actually I think one begins to taper off between 65 to 70 but even so there's a lot of life left in the old bod past those years. As for the coldness, one way to keep warm it to get in the cockpit, with windproof jacket, do up the sprayskirt and set off.'

In February 1992, Russel planned a Cook Strait crossing from Titahi Bay to Cape Koamaru - at the tender age of 75 - with a friend in a motor sailer as an escort and a bottle of Glenfiddich in the kayak to celebrate a successful trip. The whisky bottle was a mistake, Russel noted, as he ended up in hospital with a niggling prostrate. Worse still, the day planned for the crossing was perfect, neap tides, no wind, no sea and he was stuck in bed looking at a cloudless sky.

During the 1995 Easter KASK Forum at Titahi Bay, Russel joined us for the paddle out to Mana Island, and later I felt guilty for growling at Russel for straying off our transit line back to the bay.

Best wishes from KASK for a speedy recovery Russel, and I hope the readers enjoy Conrad's article as much as you did.

Paul Caffyn.

ARTICLES REQUIRED

Deadline for material for newsletter No. 61 is late February. Please keep material flowing in:
book reviews
trips reports
product information
technical tips
elephant seal identification guide

If undelivered, please return to Sandy Ferguson: 12 Dunn St., Christchurch 2.