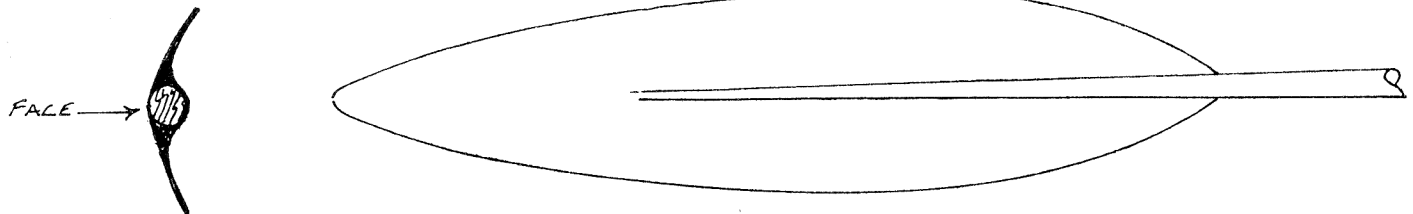


In the last newsletter I mentioned the folding kayak being built by Dave Barnes of Christchurch. I have now located Dave's address which is 402 Wilsons Road, Christchurch. Apparently the unique feature of this craft is its weight - 10 kg and the small size that it will pack down into. The boat, however, is 3.5m which is a trifle on the short size for most people. I have always felt that a good sea kayak needs to be at least 5m in length for ease of paddling, however other design features may allow ease of paddling at a shorter overall length.

Mike Rowley reports that the Canadian firm of 'Nimbus' have developed a rather odd shaped paddle for sea kayaking. At the moment Max Grant of Quality Kayaks has a set to evaluate and we may be able to report on this later. The blade is long and narrow with a convex not concave face something like the diagram below. Apparently you can alter the feather from right to left, or to an unfeathered position quite easily.



Mike used it recently on a trip out to Cape Kidnappers.

'Top Sport' is a company operating out of Christchurch run by two paddlers, Brian Lodge and Richard Brewster. They plan a number of sea canoeing trips for clients next summer. These include the Banks Peninsula area including Akaroa Harbour, D'Urville Island, and two Fiordland adventures into Dusky Sound, a six day trip and also a longer trip that will involve a sea voyage from Doubtful Sound down to Dusky Sound. As yet both these have yet to be approved by the Department of Conservation as commercial permits will be required. A feature of both these trips is that helicopters will be used to give access. These last two trips will cost in the vicinity of \$230 and \$310 respectively - quite a reasonable price I would have thought. 'Top Sport' also hire out kayaks at \$35 per day for a Puysegur or Nordkapp and \$25 per day for a Chinook. Concessions are available for longer hire periods.

The mention of Banks Peninsula reminded me that one of our readers, Tom Arthur wrote to me some time ago and told me about a trip he and two others did some years ago before any of them knew much about kayaking on anything other than flat water. The story is worth repeating as it shows how easily things could go wrong, except in this case things worked out okay because people used a bit of common sense. The intention of the trip was to paddle from New Brighton to Pigeon Bay and back over a weekend, spending the night at Pigeon Bay. Tom was using a glass-fibre 'Ranger' kayak, there was also a plywood kayak and another glass boat with a skeg glued on the bottom.

"... we took our gear onto the beach at 6.15am and packed it into all the boats. The surf looked small; we would have no trouble getting through that. Well, I had the most gear to pack so I was last off the beach - the surf that looked a piece-of-cake from the shore suddenly seemed to rear up as soon as we approached it, making us paddle like mad to get out the back before we were capsized. In our ignorance we had put our spray-skirts on last over our life-jackets which left little channels between the buoyancy-slabs for the water to run down.

Anyway we had made it out to sea, we then set off for Port Levy Heads which course took us further and further from the beach. The wind was blowing about 10 knots with a small chop which splashed its way down the little channels until we were sloshing

around with an inch of water inside the kayaks - most unpleasant. There was a ship anchored out off Lyttelton Heads which we thought would make a grand shelter for us to get into the lee of, raft up and bail out our boats. So we headed off for it.

By now we were at least a mile offshore and we got to thinking that if one of us were to capsize, what would we do? We returned to our original course and finally made a landfall at Port Levy's seaward head. We had food and a rest.

Soon we were off again and John's unweildy plywood canoe was starting to exact its toll, it was high and caught the wind making it a hard headwind slog. John, who had never paddled more than  $\frac{1}{2}$  mile in one burst before was finding it hard on his wrists and hands.

We found the trip around the base of the cliffs fascinating, rugged and majestic with volcanic strata displayed in all its hues and forms eroded and exposed by the sea. Caves, bays, and pinnacles thrusting from the sea, seagulls, terns and shags roosting or wheeling above us. The sensation of being on the ocean in a little 14 foot craft like a cockleshell had a challenge of its own. I had reproduced a map of the coastline on my deck and we were able to recognise the more prominent landmarks. Soon we rounded the point at Little Pigeon Bay where one of the Wellington-to-Lyttelton Ferrys had run aground on a submerged reef and had entered into Pigeon Bay. Around the outlying points we noticed the tide set up a small but unstablising chop and that, combined with the backwash from the waves bade us stand offshore a little for safety. As Pigeon Bay is  $4\frac{1}{2}$  miles long we decided on another tea break before the last leg in so we stopped on a boulder-strewn beach at the foot of towering cliffs. From here on in it was a tail wind and sea although there was virtually no ground-swell. After a short rest we carried on and soon came across a large sea cave on the west side of the bay near the heads. In we went, the sea turning translucent as the light filtered through from outside; this was the sort of cave that fiction stories would have had guarded by a giant octopus or other denizen of the deep. We could not touch bottom with our paddles, and soon we were into darkness as the cave turned a corner, narrowing in roof and walls to a canoe-length wide. Further we went until it was a blackness you could feel so intense was it. Now we could almost touch both sides and still we were not at the end. Neither of us had a torch so we chickened out and withdrew. I promised myself to come back one day with a torch. We came back into the welcome sunlight and carried on around the little headland from our cave to be confronted with a second cave slightly smaller in opening width to the first but heading in such a direction as to join up with the first. In we went again to meet with exactly the same result as the other - we were sure they must be joined even if underwater.

The rest of the trip was a leisurely paddle up to the camping ground which was right on the water edge and where we had a caravan to stay the night in. It was good to ease cramped legs and posteriors on dry land again, then after a phone call back to Christchurch to tell our anxious wives that we were on land again safely, we had a hearty meal and a wonderful night's sleep.

Next morning dawned still and clear, the water on the bay was like glass, what a promising start to the day! John and I swapped canoes to give him a break from paddling the leviathan. Well, I hadn't gone far before I could sympathise with his efforts yesterday. Its sides were so high and with the gunwales being very wide at the deck you had to hold the paddle very high to avoid scraping knuckles and paddles on the edges, plus some little plastic eyes screwed near the edge to hold the rope that books show all sea canoes having running around the top. Well the paddle would every now and then unexpectedly catch one of these in mid stroke with the unnerving sensation of throwing one off-balance. This would not do, so we rafted up and Ray gave me a two inch block of polystyrene he had for buoyancy and I sat on top of that. This was a vast improvement as my paddle cleared the decks. But this was all very well until we cleared the heads and encountered a nine to ten foot swell gently rolling in, then the Canterbury sea breeze started up, giving a chop to contend with from the rear. Well the difference of two inches added height in these conditions made the plywood canoe most unstable - I would never have believed it if someone had told me without experiencing it.

Out to sea between Lyttelton Heads and Pigeon Bay Heads we saw my employer and a work-mate fishing each in their own run-a-bouts, but with the large swell they did not see us until we were quite close, which made me wonder how easy would it be to be run down at sea by a boat that was not keeping a good lookout. When we stopped to talk

to them I found my instability increased so with a shouted "Sorry I cannot stop", I kept going with Ray and John soon catching me up.

We were treated to a display of exercises by the Volunteer Coastguard and the local Reserve Navy boat 'Kiwi'. The long procession of small craft following the 'Kiwi' looked like chickens following a hen and we felt not so alone on the ocean. Near the heads at Lyttelton we were escorted in by Hector's Dolphins crisscrossing our bows, passing alongside and underneath close enough to touch. After entering Lyttelton Heads we stopped at Little Port Cooper for a rest and lunch, this was a sandy bay sheltered from the freshening North-East sea breeze and an obviously popular spot by the seven run-a-bouts and trailer yachts present.

John was still feeling sore in wrists and hands but insisted in finishing the trip in his own canoe. If he could have used his legs to paddle with I am sure he could have left Ray and me well behind but obviously cyclists (John's sport) do not use their arm and shoulder muscles so much. Ray was feeling quite fresh but we all felt the strain in wrists and fingers which neither of us expected. After leaving our sheltered haven and meeting with the chop driven down the harbour by a 15 knot wind, John decided the raised seat idea wasn't very good, which with waves big enough to surf down, made his boat almost unmanageable. So we rafted up and Ray received his buoyancy back again. Immediately the leviathan resorted to a stable boat reminiscent of an aircraft carrier with its width at the gunwales across the deck giving the feeling that one could burrow down below deck and have a snooze while the canoe drifted at will unperturbed by the choppy seas. Incidentally John's canoe was a hard-chine 'V' bottom model.

We made great progress down the harbour, surfing on the larger waves with a wind at our backs pushing us along and as we approached the area of Cashin Quay on the Lyttelton side and Purau/Diamond harbour on the other side, the wind had increased to a lovely sailing breeze of about 18 knots. This area has a tunneling effect as the contour of the harbour narrows here, and is well known by yachtsmen as the area where most of the masts get broken. True to form we saw a 'Hobie Cat' capsize and resist all attempts by the skipper to right it. On its side a cat's trampoline deck acts like a sail and they stream, mast out behind them like a steering oar, and blow down-wind. Ray hailed a passing motorboat to go to his aid, but after a pathetic attempt to get close, did a few circuits and carried on his way. Ray being a yachtsman saw that something had better be done soon or the cat would end up on the rocks, so he paddled up to the mast-tip, picked it out of the water, allowing the wind to get underneath, and the Hobie flipped upright instantly - it was so easy. Leaving a grateful sailor behind we paddled to the public slipway and the end of our trip. We went to the volunteer Coastguard rooms whom we had told of our intentions, they crossed us off their list of potential nuisances and rang our loving wives who came to collect us.

Footnote: This trip made us realise how inexperienced we were, how easy it would have been for something to have gone wrong, and how unsuited some canoes are for long trips. John sold the 'Leviathan' and so far is sticking to long cycling trips such as from Christchurch to Greymouth in a single day. Ray and I went and did a basic canoe course that Ron Beardsley runs and have done a few river trips since then but we intend to go around to Pigeon Bay again.

I did manage to explore those sea caves with a torch in our canadian canoe, my wife and I paddled out from Pigeon Bay on day. We ascertained that they do not join up and that we must have been within a canoe-length of the ends when we had turned back on the first trip.

Tom Arthur.

For those wishing to explore Banks Peninsula there is an excellent little booklet with aerial photographs that can be bought at marine supply shops in Christchurch. Unfortunately I have lost my copy so cannot tell you the exact title and publisher.

