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VICTORIAN SEA KAYAK CLUB c/- POST OFFICE, MALLACOOTA. 3889

January newsletter.

Dear Member,

And a Happy New Year to you all!! Have you made a "New Year's Resolution" yet?? I have. "...let's get things straight in '88..."!

To this end, at last we have been able to fix upon a date, time and place for our long-awaited AGM, which will, hopefully, suit most members. Apologies for such short notice, but with our membership "spread out like Brown's cows" from one end of the State to the other it's been very difficult to set this one up AT ALL!

We will be close enough to celebrate the Chinese New Year as well, hence the quip "...so drag on down to 'Coota for the AGM..." and at the time we didn't even know it WAS the "Year of the Dragon"! One of the friendlier varieties, thank goodness and ours is definitely the sea-going sort- note fins!

This year, the Agm will be held at the residence of our Secretary, Larry Gray, in Mallacoota (map etc. follows)... on SATURDAY, FEBRUARY THE 20th, at 8PM. Last year we made a "bad blue" by setting the muster time far too early, but with any luck, we can all learn from our mistakes, eh? It should prove a good opportunity to hear (and hopefully see) about the Cape York Expedition too. Should you need a billet with member(s) for the weekend, or further info, just contact either of the RSVP numbers. Hope to see ya!!

Some very interesting contributions this issue. In case you don't recall David Huxtable (see April '87 newsletter) who has been rather like a "Roving Reporter" (and boy does he get around!) sending back all kinds of fascinating comments and insights into the sea-kayaking scene from all sorts of far away places- one of the spin-off benefits of this job for me and such a delightful writer he is. Through him, we hope to make contact with other like-minded sea-kayakers overseas and, especially in this Bicentennial Year, expand our horizons and look to the future!

Cordially yours,

*Sally Barton.*

Acting Secretary.

LETTERS from Members....

410 Station St.,  
North Carlton.

Dear Sal,

I wrote this precis of J.M.Scott's biography of Gino Watkins some time ago with the intention of including it in a proposed Annual VSKC magazine called "VOYAGE".

I thought of including it in the next issue of the newsletter, feeling a twinge of loss that "VOYAGE" never left the beach, so to speak.

Then an idea came. Why not forget the annual 'Big Production' and simply upgrade the regular newsletter? It would have the effect of spreading the workload of an Annual and emerge as a smartly formatted regular issue, which would generate wider interest in the Club - and in Sea Kayaking generally.

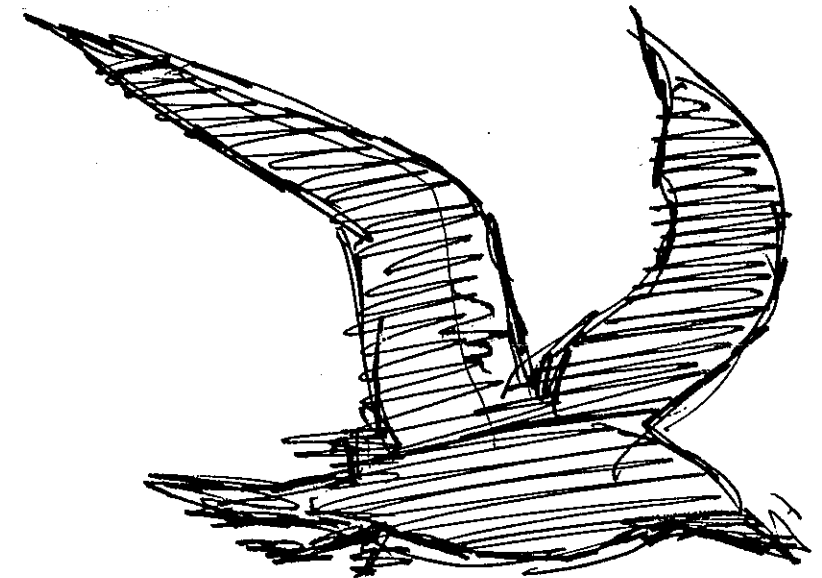
I envisage this as an opportunity to embellish the dreary and dreadful with an educational backdrop of History and glimpses into the wider world of exploration.

In order to kick start the project, I will donate the front covers. I've already paid for the artwork and will happily fix the printing as well. That gives us a start. Next comes the content. I already have a collection of suitable material which would get us four editions down the track. By then I should have more, and who knows, we may have generated some wider interest? Plumbing the depths, dare I say it, of hitherto uncharted seas of literary fertility??

Enclosed is a copy of article and cover art.  
Let's have your opinion.

Kindest,  
Earle.

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# VOYAGE

OFFICIAL JOURNAL OF THE VICTORIAN SEA KAYAK CLUB



Sal, something like this 3



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## GINO WATKINS

"WATKINS EXPLORER ENGLAND". It was a laconic address, but the cable was at once delivered to a small second floor room at the Royal Geographical Society in London. No one, except perhaps the man who had received it, was surprised that the meagre address had proved sufficient. There were, of course, thousands of people in England in 1932 called Watkins; but only one was an explorer and he, although only twenty-five years old, had already gained an international reputation. He had been presented to two Kings, and many eminent geographers placed him on a level with Nansen, Scott and Shackleton; for he had already led three successful expeditions and bore promise of achieving far more in the future.

H. G. (Gino) Watkins, seated thoughtfully at his planning table amid tea cakes and dance records, was the absolute antithesis of the hard bitten explorer. He was not a man of long grizzled beards & facial lines carved deep with suffering who rejoiced in glorious defeat (which is how England had come to see her explorers); Gino, despite comparisons, was no Franklin, Shackleton or Scott. Instead he was De Bono's classic later thinker and in terms of his polar exploration was one of the greatest breathes of fresh air to ever stir the dust on polar literature in the R.G.S.

For the most part he appeared as an elegant and unserious young man, confident in his popularity among acquaintances, and his charm of manners among strangers ensured his enjoyment of the game of life. A study of his head revealed a strong thin-fleshed face, lively clear blue eyes, a line of very white teeth and a long nose, pointed and straight. Above a high unwrinkled forehead his fair hair, parted neatly on the right, was swept back smooth and flat. His every feature blended to make a face of purpose and strength.

Gino was a delicate child when a schoolmaster introduced him to rockclimb. He found it thrilling and satisfying and more fun than having his shins kicked at football or wasting a glorious afternoon standing about on a cricket field. Switzerland was the best climbing playground but guides were expensive and good companions hard to find. It was cheaper and far more exciting to lead himself or climb alone, and he quickly became a first-class mountaineer and one of the leaders in the emerging school of guideless climbers. By the age of nineteen he had also become a very

good skier. At twenty he planned and led his first expedition which successfully mapped the coast and mountains of Edge Island, north east of Spitsbergen. His achievements by now were such that he had little difficulty in financing a second expedition, this time to Labrador, the very next year. This trip met with many of the traditional hardships of polar travel and developed in Gino a unique philosophy to polar exploration and approach to leadership. Next came Greenland.

Gino had proposed an Arctic Air Route linking England with the Pacific coast of America. By travelling across the Arctic, island-hopping via Iceland, Greenland and Baffin Island, there was a great saving of time and increase of safety compared to the alternative long ocean crossings. To complete the AAR planning picture, weather conditions governing flying over the Greenland ice cap needed measuring and evaluating and to this end Gino, on a budget of £12,000 (~~£170,000~~ or <sup>(AUS \$340,000 today)</sup>), set off with thirteen men, two aeroplanes, sledging dogs and provisions aboard Shackleton's <sup>old</sup> last ship, the Quest. He had by then developed new high-fat sledging rations and invented the down sleeping bag. The rations were extremely successful in providing the members with a lightweight and sustaining diet whilst suffering from the hardships of high altitude sledging. There is little need to mention the impact of his down bags, a spinoff from his early years in Switzerland (formerly polar travellers used cumbersome reindeer skins).

The expedition was based at the head of a fjord twenty miles from Angmagssalik on Greenland's south-east coast. During the following year 250 miles of the coast north of their base, unusually clear of ice, was charted by the Quest and her float plane, a record altitude for the Arctic was obtained when three members of the expedition climbed the 11,100 foot Mt. Forel and August Courtauld successfully survived one hundred and seven days of storms and drifting snow isolated in a tent high on the ice cap. The conditions on the ice cap were terrible and although a great deal of valuable meteorological data was gathered many of the mapping forays had been unsuccessful and storms had wrecked both aeroplanes.

As a finale to the years work, two parties crossed the ice cap to Holsteinsborg and Ivigtut while Gino led a six hundred mile open boat journey around the south to Julianehaab on the west coast. Food, fuel and equipment were carried in two whale boats each powered by a ...

(more next issue)



LETTERS ( continued)

2558, Glen Green,  
Hollywood,  
California.

from David Huxtable  
(in America at the moment)

Hello Sally!

You were interested in establishing lines of communication with fellow sea kayakers, here in sunny Cal-if-orn-IA!! Well, it just so happens there is quite a healthy nucleus of sea kayakers, who range the entire California coastline. They are split roughly by climate & geography into the Northies and the Southies. The Northies originate mainly from the San Francisco Bay area, with an advanced cadre naming themselves the Tsunamis, a Japanese word for tidal wave!

They are fairly advanced paddlers, and have a different concept of sea kayaking, as they are basically river or surf kayakers looking for thrills and spills on the sea and have come up with a very unique and interesting design of sea kayak, which they regard as being the best of its type in the world! No small claim!

I received your (news)letter and was much amused by the Cape York expedition. What with sharks, crocs, and Brahma bulls, I am now thinking of giving up sea kayaking for tiddly winks!

The man to contact in northern California is a chap called Ben Licht, who runs an import, sea kayak and rental shop called "Seatrek"....again, he is in the know...he has been very helpful to me and has paddled with the lads from P & H Fiberglass, Derby, who make Derek Hutchinson's designs. In fact, Derek Hutchinson has recently completed a training course with the American Fish, Game & Wildlife Patrol Service- in the art of sea kayaking, as it is such a useful and stealthy weapon in the apprehension of poachers. These guys carry night sticks, guns, handcuffs, knockout sprays, the lot! So a sea kayak is ideal for their operations. Have you ever thought of approaching their counterparts in Australia...? I'm sure they'd be interested.....

Another person I have been in contact with is Ed Gillet- you could call a bit of a sea kayaker- he has just recently completed a solo kayak crossing of 63 days from San Diego to Hawaii!! ..... almost turned back at one stage, feeling almost overwhelmed by the exposure, but eventually arrived in Hawaii early in the morning, to be greeted by a bum who asked him where he'd come from, "Hey, Bro," the drunk asked the sun fried and emaciated Gillet, "Where you paddle that little boat from?" "California" said Gillet, staggering as well, his legs had atrophied after two months in a boat. "Man, must have taken two or three days, huh?"

What is it about sea kayakers?!

(tune in for the next exciting episode from David in our next issue)