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# Victorian Sea Kayak Club

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Cover — second stage of the Fred Fairley re-enactment, sunrise as the pod heads along the Point Lonsdale cliffs towards the heads

# The President comments

by Les Bognar

Dear members,

This October I enjoyed the experience of cycling with 14,000 other riders around our Bay. The following week, Peter Treby picked me up from home and we went for paddle in a fresh blow in our Bay. The water was not cold and it was clean. For those members who live in Melbourne, our bay is accessible within a suburban drive and day trips on our spectacular coast is assessable to all of us.

Victoria has a fantastic outdoor recreational environment for us to enjoy. The milder temperatures of summer and holidays are almost upon us to enjoy our seakayaking. This season the VSKC has more trip leaders capable of leading trips. There are even more sea kayaks to choose to buy and more gadgets! What a great time to organise or go on a trip!

This is my last message to you as 2007 president. While I will see many of you at the AGM, I would like to send a message to those members who cannot make it.

In 2007 we set out to undertake some activities that will position the club well for future volunteers and the members. We undertook a membership survey to poll what you would like from the club and we looked at how we can reduce the workload on those volunteers who drive the club activities. While the details of the survey has been emailed out; the headlines are that you all want more trips and more training and you want to read about what other members are doing. The survey also enabled us to find out who would volunteer to help support these activities.

A reasonable deduction of the survey is that a future committee has a mandate to not change the club direction too much. The current grading system should remain substantially unchanged; however, we now know of the volunteers who can help induct new paddlers into our grading assessments. We also have more level 3 paddlers to run trips. The club should continue to subsidise rolling nights.

We will be upgrading the website so that content can be changed on all pages with less technical support and we propose *SeaTrek* continues in a modified format, including an annual edition. However, the result is that we will request an increase in membership fees to continue to bring you these services.

I want to mention and thank some people who really put in for the club. Firstly, thanks to the diligence of the executive committee, we have thorough minutes of some long committee meetings and we have detailed accounts. Raia has not missed a beat running the process of introducing new members to the club.

Craig and Richard have made some great improvements to the front page of the website so we can use it for news bulletins and they have worked hard on the new site which we will see shortly. Peter Treby and Terry Barry have put in some long weekends for training. A special thanks must go to Peter Costello. Like Bicycle Victoria raises money with the Round the Bay in a Day event for the Smith Family, our club raised money for Ovarian Cancer Australia with our annual charity paddle.

Peter organised this paddle as well as getting *SeaTrek* produced and extending his house. Finally, David Golightly meticulously planned a special project for the twenty-fifth anniversary celebration of Paul Caffyn's Round Australia Kayak Expedition (RAKE).

While you have seen many notices for RAKE, I am going to take this opportunity to remind you of the event. It is a very public event for sea kayaking in Victoria. The VSKC membership has shown strong support for David's effort by our registration numbers for the day. Paul Caffyn and his RAKE team, the Board of the Maritime Museum and many other invited guests will be there.

So if you want to share the celebration, please register with David so we can cater for you. The celebration will take place on 1 December and will feature the unveiling of a commemorative plaque on Shorthand's Bluff, Queenscliff. The beach immediately below the cliff is the spot Paul Caffyn accompanied by Andy Woods landed after the successful 1982 expedition. Immediately after the unveiling of the bronze plaque featuring Paul, we will follow the piper down the hill to the Queenscliff Maritime Museum.

It has been a rewarding year in serving an active club. I look forward to seeing you on the water.

Regards  
Les

Below: pick John!



## Letter

Hi Guys,

FYI just back from the US where we managed to set a new world record 113-way formation for the over 40's organisation POPS.

<http://www.freak-brother.com/POPSRECORD/>

Looking forward to getting back into some more paddling this summer.

Cheers, John Winkler

More Letters on pages 18 and 21

# In the wake of "The Evangelist"

by Greg Gleason

A Brief Description of the Re-enactment of the Rev. Fred C B Fairey's July 1877 Maiden Voyage in the Rob Roy Canoe *The Evangelist*.

Participants: David Golightly – Mirage 530, Terry Barry – Arctic Raider, Jurgen Weller – Nadgee, Peter Dingle – Nadgee, Derek Wilson – Raider X, Greg Gleason – Ocean Raider, Craig Bennett – Mirage 580, John Woollard – Bugga, John Winkler – Eco Bezhig, Yvonne Verheem – Prijon, Boyd Swinburn – Penguin, Jack Renzenbrink – Penguin, John Evertze – Dagger Cortez, Tina Rowley – Nadgee, Mike Morgan, Dagger Cortez and Phil Woodhouse, Mirage 580

## Chapter 1 – "Behold Werribee – Beyond Here There Be Souls To Save"

Thus spoke our fearless leader, His Highness David Golightly, Doctor of Divinity in the age-old art of sea kayaking. It was a bright, sunny Saturday morning when a group of the VSKC faithful gathered at St Kilda to retrace the 1877 steps of the Rev Fred Fairey.

Keen to make an early start, Terry Barry had cleared out from Nayook, and had "crashed" with the Club Treasure the night before – apparently it wasn't a holy spirit Greg was handing out before bedtime but it was apparently pretty heavenly.

We packed up and set off a little after 8.30am, joined for the first section by Mick Young.

For safety, we buddied up and paddled in two pods (one of 6 and one of 5 paddlers respectively).

A light northerly was building as we paddled across to Williamstown – in pod 2, we were not surprised to find pod 1 contained the true non believers – "everything in moderation" does not adequately describe our thoughts when a sea kayak pod (pod 1 to be precise) can't make it to Altona without stopping for a "devil's brew" – the lewd and lascivious cappuccino! However, their unscheduled stop elevated us to our true position – pod 1. We led the way to a casual lunch at Altona, and then on towards Werribee.

As we approached Point Cook, we were surprised at the activity of private planes landing and taking off. Of particular interest were the antics of a WW2 Mustang fighter – the performance (and noise) was amazing. Many in the pod were moved to watch in silence as 70 year-old-technology put on a truly awe-inspiring display.

We stopped at Point Cook Homestead, a beautiful example of colonial architecture reminiscent of the many heritage properties in Portland (Victoria's first permanent settlement). It was built by the Chirside family (as was Werribee Mansion) and sits within 50 metres of the water's edge and in full sight of Melbourne's very impressive skyline. A below ground snake sighting earlier in the day prevented our inspection of the bluestone cellar, once the home of Victoria's most impressive wine collection.

As the sun set, we paddled into Werribee River – a good camping ground awaited (although the Geelong car shuffle saw many of us eating dinner about the time the others were retiring - 10.30pm). I felt particularly for Terry Barry, who hit the hay about 30 seconds before the Club Treasure (Greg) produced a bottle of Bowmore 12 y.o. single malt whisky.

The planned 8am start was about 30 minutes old when we hit the water next morning. In a stiff 20 knot northerly, we made rocketing progress south to the Sand Hummocks – a group of sand islands not far off Port Phillip's western shore. With a 'Portarlinton' view to die for, lunch was especially enjoyable. With Geelong in our minds, if not our sights, we hit the water again.

Our next "obstacle" was the government jetty at Point Wilson – almost 4 km long and with a 500 metre exclusion zone, we were faced with a difficult decision – risk a barrage from the guards' AK47's or paddle half way to Clifton Springs. Phil Woodhouse (an expert in these waters and the closest thing we had to a mercenary on the paddle) said "those guns are notoriously inaccurate over 500 metres in this wind",

so we went for it, recording 9 knots down a wave as we surfed through and under the pier, not 500 metres from shore. Pod 1 (now 2) followed a half km behind – we tensed for the sound of gunfire ..... but they too got through OK. Much as I wanted a close up of the jetty, the camera stayed put till we were well past the exclusion zone – well, at least some of them might have been a good shot!

As we rounded into Corio Bay, Huey let us know just how lucky we had been – a 20 knot headwind had us cringing along the windward shore towards Bird Rock. The two pods merged for the final run, and the winds abated somewhat, leaving us with only a gentle tail wind. Geelong loomed on the horizon, and more than one paddler expressed the group feeling of sadness at the imminent end to an excellent paddle.

Good paddling conditions, great group dynamics, a fascinating paddle for the many of us that hadn't previously sampled the paddling delights of Port Phillip's western shores, and the inspired genius of a man who spends too much time on aeroplanes thinking up new and interesting paddle locations had all combined to create one "out of the box". Accused many times (because of the favourable weather conditions) of having "upstairs assistance", the highly revered David Golightly had done it yet again – produced a miracle akin to wine from water, the loaves and fishes parable, or the Cape Contourer Challenge.

I can't speak for the others, but I'm dumping Rome as my next holiday and continuing on with the next part of this three-weekend saga.

Weekend statistics:

Distance – 39.5 Nautical miles (72 km)  
speed (av.) – 3.2 knots (5.8 Km/h)  
on water time – 12 hours 20 minutes  
max speed – 9.0 knots (16.3 km/h)

(Editor's note – the recorded maximum speed may have been understated. Phil "Ocean Roller" Woodhouse was at times a blur as he surfed down wave after wave.)



## Stage Two – Geelong to Indented Head via The Rip

The re-enactment of Rev Fred C.B. Fairey's 'trail trip' of July 1877 continued on the weekend of June 23 and 24 2007 with the negotiation of the Barwon River to Barwon Heads Caravan Park on Saturday and the next day continuing to Indented Head, a stage which included four hazards:

- crossing the bar in darkness at Barwon Heads;
- an open water paddle over two hours along the Bass Strait coast to Point Lonsdale;
- the entrance to Port Phillip ("The Rip");
- a trip to Indented Head partially against an outgoing tide and moderate head wind.

We set off from the boatsheds to head down the Barwon River at 9.30am on Saturday morning, having arrived early to prepare (a certain trip convenor was seen sitting on the boat ramp at 6.45am). An enthusiastic group of 19 paddlers in 2 pods,

we faced three possible portages – the spillway road crossing, known locally as "Breakwater", a impressive but structurally unsafe aqueduct and a steel sheet pile retention wall complete with mechanically operated spillways, waterfall the all of which crosses the Barwon en route. Sheltered from the wind and weather by the riverbanks and foliage, we made steady progress, arriving at our three waypoint portages in 30, 60 and 120 minutes respectively.

At Breakwater, the principal hazard was the road crossing - a kayak does not assist in rapidly crossing a busy suburban road. As we approached the aqueduct, we found a drooping safety line allowed unhindered access to the river beyond – our guide caught up in time to see us all safely on the other side, proclaiming "No, that's the unsafe structure you weren't supposed to paddle under". Paddlers on this section of the trip may not agree with the poetic licence used by the writer, but no law abiding kayaker would have knowingly

ignored the signs and risked a trip under the aqueduct – even if the alternative was a 2km overland trek carrying the kayaks! The sheet pile retention wall marked the section in the river beyond which high-speed ski boats would not be an issue, but we were "marked" in other ways (mud never looks good inside a kayak)

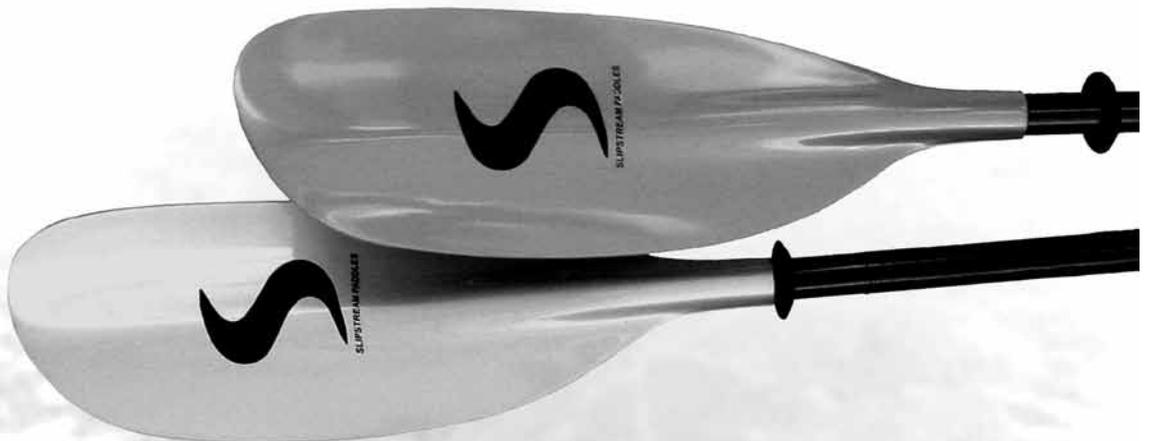
Lunch was scheduled at the picturesque Fisherman's Point on Lake Connewarre where we enjoyed a brief respite before meandering our way through the shallow waters of the lake. To guide us down the river & lakes system, we made good use of GPS technology (not available in 1877) and several "locals" within the club who had become become experienced Barwon River guides. Such technology was instrumental not only in finding our way through a very tricky lake system but also in finding water that was actually deep enough to float a kayak.

We arrived at Barwon Heads and bedded down for the night, but not before a brief visit to the local hotel. The quality of the counter meals appears to have lifted somewhat since 1877, so the assembled throng ate enjoyed their meals then joined in a fortieth birthday celebration for John Evertze who coincidentally shared a birth date with Tina. The paddlers then used a side room for a very early pre-departure paddle briefing before retiring early to prepare for the challenges of the second day.

Twenty paddlers gathered at 6.30 am in the pre dawn gloom before following local surf



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coast experts John Evertze, Tony Chick and Phil Woodhouse out through the channels between the surf to set their sights on the Point Lonsdale lighthouse at the "Rip". The words written by Rev Fairey one hundred and thirty years ago when exiting through the same surf zone "I was Rocked on the Cradle of the Deep" seemed so apt.

The sun rose in spectacular fashion on a clear sunny day with a light northerly breeze blowing. Having made good time along the coast, we assembled while Sheriff John "schooled" a few deputies and then we were "posse'd" in between the breaking waves around Lonsdale Rock to a safe entry into Port Phillip Bay.

Apart from an oncoming cargo ship (a paper carrier, probably bearing a goodly slice of the Otway forests in the form of wood chips) looked to be on a near collision course, but we were far enough west to be beyond her path. It is interesting to review the charts for the area – the cargo vessels often come quite close to the shore between Queenscliff and Point Lonsdale in some weather conditions.

As we headed north, the breeze built to a significant but not unmanageable headwind – we took the opportunity of a brief stop at Caffyn Cove, the site of the event planned for 1 December this year when the VSKC, with partners Borough of Queenscliffe and the Queenscliffe Maritime Museum, will honour legendary sea kayaker Paul Caffyn when in 1982 he used Queenscliff as his starting and finishing point for his successful circumnavigation of mainland Australia.

## 2.

Afloat again, we pushed north pausing briefly at the hulk of the 'J' Class submarine just off the top end of Swan Island, before stopping for lunch on the beach at Edwards Point, north of the entrance to Swan Bay, a pleasant but all too brief escape from the relentless head wind, now aided and abetted by an outgoing tide.

Following an hour-long lunchbreak the pods settled down to the task and fought their way up past St Leonards to Indented Head, arriving at about 3pm. The last kilometre nautical mile after we rounded Indented Head was very choppy but thankfully no longer "on the nose". We hit the shore and were welcomed by Dr Peter Munster, a local historian and recognised authority of the life of Reverend Frederick C.B. Fairey and the Congregationalist Church. After a quick change we packed and hit the road to commence the car-

shuffle back to Barwon Heads.

The vocal majority impatient to participate in stage three of the paddle.

We had now successfully completed two of the three stages that make up the re-enactment concept with some seventy odd nautical miles achieved to date.

### Stage Three – Saturday 21 July 2007

The third and final stage of our re-enactment voyage called for two big days – twenty-two and eighteen nautical miles in succession. The presence of adverse conditions would prove it a major challenge, particularly with the winter season norms of northerly winds. So it was with some trepidation that we entered the final week with a close eye on the unfolding weather pattern.

As the weekend approached however it started to look like our blessed weather of the two previous stages may repeat itself – nothing more than divine intervention, given our aim of repeating the one hundred and thirty year old journey of our paddling minister of the church.

The early morning fog drifted over and around us as we made our way down from Melbourne in the pre-dawn darkness to Indented Head, our designated launch site. Our plan called for a departure at 8 am however car trouble experienced by Roger Taylor delayed our departure until 8.30am by which time the fog had cleared to a beautiful day with clear blue skies, albeit accompanied by low temperatures.

A series of last minute cancellations reduced the paddling numbers to nine so we decided to abandon our two-pod approach and stick together for the duration. Our elected leaders for the first day, Neil Brenton and Raia Wall soon had us off the Wrathall Reserve beach and on our way, leaving Anne Sharp to deal with the essential task of shuffling cars between Indented Head and Werribee River - our first day's destination.

In calm seas and little breeze we enjoyed the trip past the partially submerged wreck of the paddle-steamer "Ozone" before landing for a comfort stop two hours later at Point Richards where an enthusiastic motorist engaged us in conversation about the adventures of sea kayaking. Point Richards was our planned departure point from the Bellarine Coast, from here we would head north-west towards the remote westerly coast of Port Phillip, joining it at 'The Sand Hummocks', north of the military jetty at Point Wilson.

## 2.

No evidence exists about our predecessor's actual route after he left Queenscliffe, rather uncharacteristically the Reverend F.C.B. Fairey's diary does not detail his return journey up the West coast to St Kilda. Nevertheless it is reasonable to assume he retraced his outbound route by maintaining contact with the coastline rather than taking the riskier direct route straight up the bay to St Kilda.

Moreover Frederick Fairey's timetable indicates that onshore overnight camps would have been part of his planning.

A major hazard now lay in our path as we paddled away from Point Richards – the main shipping lane into the industrial berths serving Geelong and Corio Bay – presumably much more of an obstacle today than it would have presented one hundred and thirty years ago! With the usual amazing coincidence in timing, as we approached the port marker a large ship hove into view and was clearly moving at a pace which discouraged anyone from tempting fate by racing across the shipping lane. What a sight a large vessel is when it passes in close proximity right across your path, the underwater bulbous bow pushing a huge wall of water in front as it forces the sea from its path, it was certainly impressive and many photographs were taken as it passed by. Phil Woodhouse was keen to test his theory that you could ride such a bow wave safely, but for some inexplicable reason he couldn't convince anyone to give it a go!

Safely across the shipping channel we continued on a heading that allowed us to pass to the North-east of the Point Wilson jetty, a military establishment protected by a two hundred metre exclusion zone. As we paddled over what was essentially a flat calm sea we marvelled at the clarity of the bay waters, those of us who live near Port Phillip are indeed fortunate to enjoy its natural benefits.

About four hours after leaving Indented Head we finalised our approach to our selected lunch-stop at the Sand Hummocks, a series of off-shore islands with low-lying scrub and a well-deserved reputation for bird life. On cue our club ornithologist, George Appleby appeared, having paddled down from Werribee River during the morning to meet us. Together we negotiated the shallow waters that are so much a feature of our west coast and soon we were ashore for a well earned rest and respite, on what would be known on the Scottish paddling coast as 'machair', a salt tolerant groundcover ideal for creating a comfortable seat. The calm, sunny weather continued as we enjoyed the wonderful surroundings of this remote spot only twenty or so nautical miles from Melbourne but largely inaccessible by road.

Now a pod of ten paddlers we set course for Kirk Point a location well known to many of us as one of the check-points on the 'Canteen' Round-The-Bay Challenge of 2006. The Reverend FCB Fairey had little by way of complimentary comment in regard to this low-lying western shoreline of Port Phillip when he passed this way so long ago.

Arguably he may have failed to examine his surroundings closely enough or indeed to even paddle within range of the shoreline so as to appreciate its unusual nature. Many paddlers believe that this is 'the' unexplored, little experienced side of Port Phillip, but don't tell anyone, it's our secret!



### 3.

After some navigational confusion the boat ramp serving Kirk Point appeared and we then debated whether we had enough daylight left to undertake an optional side tour to the mouth of Little River, arguably one of Port Phillip's hidden gems. It didn't take long to work out that we needed to keep pushing on if we were to avoid being caught out after dark, so we quickly set course for Wedge Point the last headland before Werribee River.

After a final rest stop at Wedge Point the pod embarked for the final section of the day's journey of twenty plus miles, by this time we were all looking forward to the evenings rest and a hot shower.

Bang on time at 5pm we nudged our kayaks onto the lovely wee beach near the mouth of Werribee River a location now familiar to many of the VSKC members, darkness soon fell as we portaged the couple of hundred metres to our on-site vans or tent sites at the Werribee South caravan park.

As the post-sunset winter chill descended on the campsite the unavoidable 'car-shuffle' began. Ann Sharp proving indispensable as she ferried the drivers back to Indented Head to collect vehicles.



### Stage Three – Sunday 22 July 2007

The final day of following in the wake of Reverend FCB Fairey started early with a cold clear dawn following a night of sub-zero temperatures with the resultant white frost on the beach! The pod participants had changed slightly overnight with family commitments seeing the departure of Neil & Raia as well as George Appleby. Partially filling the gap was Craig Bennett as well as Peter Treby, both of whom had been taking a keen interest in the historical aspects of the trip. President Bognar called in 'crook' with the dreaded lurgi but sent his best wishes for the remainder of the journey. The nominated leaders for the day were Roger Taylor and Derek Wilson.

The weather forecast for the day whilst remaining fine and clear. The predicted 10 to 15 knot northerlies would prove the remainder of the re-enactment voyage tough. Following Roger Taylor's pre-departure briefing, conducted at Terry Barry's insistence on the only piece of frost-free ground in sight, we headed out of the river at 8.15am to turn North-east for Point Cook a two hour paddle away. A number of paddlers experienced very cold fingers at this stage as the early morning chill and winter water temperatures took their toll.

As we made our way towards Point Cook we were constantly entertained by the aerobatic antics of the light aircraft testing and practicing their manoeuvres in the skies above us. One couldn't help contrast man's industrial development over the intervening years since the good minister passed this way so many 'inventions' ago!

### 4.

A most enjoyable short break at Point Cook was helped by the unexpected company of a large group of 'mature-age' rambblers who emerged from the bush to make their way northwards along the beach to our landing spot.

Much chit-chat followed with the walkers fascinated by the story of our journey and many of us in admiration of these people out and about early on a Sunday morning enjoying a winter walk. Nothing could convince them however that we really were nautical bush-walkers – *at least we can't drown on our walks*, said one as she strolled away towards the homestead of Point Cook. Our original plan included a lunch-stop at

one of our favourite beaches – Altona, the site of our popular 'cappuccino paddles', a Sunday morning relaxing trip from Williamstown to Altona for a walk up the street to a wet-clothes tolerant cafe for a coffee and a bun. Common sense prevailed however in the face of an increasingly strong breeze which threatened to delay a promised 3 pm arrival at St Kilda where we were meeting Peter Costello and Susan Gordon-Brown, a photographer who wanted to take some shots of sea-kayakers in 'action' – little scope there I hear you say!

So Altona was by-passed as we settled down to a tough two-hour paddle to the lovely little beach at Williamstown. This stretch proved to be the hardest of the six day expedition with the pace slowing appreciably as we forced our way North. No doubt many were still feeling the effects of the long paddle the day before as well as the cold night and early morning start.

The heading for Williamstown is deceptive and navigators are required to have faith in a compass heading as the towering buildings of the CBD rise up behind the beaches giving the impression of a wrong course. We held to our 040 degree mag course and gradually we drew closer to the welcoming beach at Williamstown, just west of the Tenex Shipyards and the historic ball-tower at Point Gellibrand. Eventually we beached in a weary state at twelve thirty then set about getting organised for a well-deserved lunch. Craig Bennett's wife Bev and their two wee girls joined us for lunch before making their way to St Kilda to be part of the welcoming party.

One final man-made hazard lay between us and completion of our journey – the twin shipping lanes serving the Port of Melbourne and Station Pier, sure enough right on cue a large merchant vessel made it's way up the roads towards Webb Dock, from around the corner in Williamstown, the Police launch appeared and warned us to remain where we were until the channel was clear. After a long wait, we scooted across the Yarra leads to safety, we then negotiated the sister channel that is used by the Tasmanian Ferry.

### 5.

By now we were looking good for an on-time arrival at the RMYS where a welcoming party of various family members waited. After a series of suitable poses for Peter Costello's photographer we soon landed on the beach in front of the yacht club where we had first set out six paddling days and three months ago.

In a kind gesture as well as a fantastic piece of organisation Craig and Beverley Bennet produced a couple of bottles of champagne and everyone dived into their kit to retrieve a suitable receptacle for a share of the spoils. Two 'toasts' were proposed, the first in honour of our paddling padre – Victoria's first canoeist, the Reverend Frederick Charles Bonfield Fairey. The second toast was proposed by Derek Wilson, to our families and supporters who had made the journey possible – Cheers!



# From beginner to Bass Strait

by Andy McKie

Why would someone want to cross notorious Bass Strait in a sea kayak? Because its there and it can be done.

In 1995, two young mates, Grant Suckling (then 22) and Andy McKie (then 21), were camped at Waterloo Bay in Wilson's Promontory on an overnight hike when two sea kayakers landed on the Prom's white sandy beach in their sea kayaks. The kayakers were on their way to Tasmania across Bass Strait.

That day, the dream was born to one day take on the challenge of crossing Bass Strait. In 2007, Grant, Andy and Shaun Connelly spent 10 days at sea in their expedition sea kayaks carrying all camping, safety, food and water supplies. Described as the "Holy Grail" of sea kayaking, Bass Strait is where nature commands her up most respect. This story details the five key Ps that took Grant and Andy from beginners to sea kayaking to a successful voyage across Bass Strait.

## Key P #1: Passion

Passion is what puts the drive in your belly to get up at 5am on freezing dark winter mornings to paddle 10km just so you have the fitness and endurance required for the trip. It drives you to seek out those who have gone before to learn from their experiences. It also keeps you up late at

night planning every aspect of your trip from equipment lists to GPS waypoints, researching camping locations and pull-out points, marine radio frequencies, training trips, boat fit out and the list goes on.....

## Key P #2: Planning:

### Long term planning

Our inspiration 12 years ago (1995) turned into a high level plan in 2003 by agreeing and committing to a year in which we would attempt the trip. 2007 was the year, as it had to fit in with other family, work and travel commitments. From the little reading we had done, March seemed a good month for our attempt. In 2005, my wife (Sandra) bought me my first Sea Kayak as a belated 30th birthday present. After reviewing a number of craft, I selected the Mirage 580 not only because it is a great expedition boat, but Grant had already purchased one. He always gets the good gear and it made sense for us to be in the same craft if we were to train and paddle beside each other.

### Medium term planning

Early in 2005, we put a 14 month training calendar in place working back from March '07. The calendar identified the weekends we were available for overnight camping trips. We scheduled them a month or two apart initially. We also identified key events to train for like the Hawkesbury Classic and Murray Marathon.

At the same time we started reading journals on the internet and books such as Derek C Hutchinsons: *The Compete Book of Sea Kayaking*. It was about this time we



Day 2 — at Hogan Island



Day 1 — departing Tidal River



Day 2 — Tidal River to Hogan Island

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discovered the Victorian Sea Kayak Club online (great website!).

**Short term planning**

For each training weekend and event in the calendar we had specific planning. Training weekends tended to focus on navigation, weather, gear packing lists and boat touring setup. Lead up to endurance events focused more on nutrition, hydration, muscle conditioning and paddle position and clothing setup: got to have a wing paddle (Grant would say two).

**Team planning**

Grant and I were happy to have other paddlers on our party and thought safety in numbers. We also knew it was important to be selective as we wanted to make sure we enjoyed the company of those on our trip of a life time and also wanted to know we could depend on the other members in the

team if we were faced with an emergency. Training weekends together were a critical part for us to learn each other’s capabilities and share in the excitement of trip planning together.

**Safety planning**

Each of us had families and young children, so safety in attitude, decision making, skills and equipment was top of mind for each of us. In terms of personal safety equipment we each carried: 406Mhz EPIRB tied to PFD, emergency strobe tied to PFD, flares (1 on PFD) and VHF radios. In addition, we detailed a risk assessment which identified the possible risks and detailed both preventative and reactive mitigation steps.

**Key P #3: Physical Preparation**

We all knew that Bass Strait was no place to come unstuck due to fatigue. From reading other journals we

knew to expect big swells, strong tides and bad weather. So put training programs in place to build up our paddle endurance to paddle strongly for upto 6 hours should we be facing a bad weather front on the horizon that we needed to out-run.

Lead up to endurance events drove a training program which constituted:

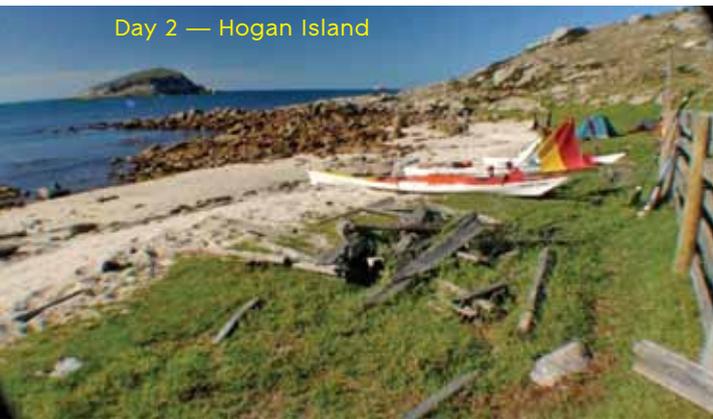
- 3 x 1.5 hour paddles 5am before work
- 1 x 4 – 6 hour long paddle on weekends
- 100 km per week for 4 weeks (final months only)

**Key P #4: Practice**

Grant and I started attending the monthly rolling nights so we could not only learn how to Eskimo roll but practice till it was bomb proof. It also provided a great meeting place to gain knowledge from the



Day 2 — Hogan Island



Day 2 — Hogan Island



Day 3 — Hogan to Erith



Day 3 — Erith Island

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extensive network of ol' club sea dogs. In addition to physical training, we also practice Eskimo rolling in shore breaks, V-tows and other emergency procedures during our weekends. We learnt some good lessons on how not to tow in 50+ knot winds.

#### Key P #5: Patience

The final key to our success was knowing how to decide when to paddle and when not. We learnt our limits the hard way on a couple of weekend trips in 50+knot winds...so our rule was not to paddle on any day where the forecast was greater than 20knots. This would provide us plenty of buffer if the weather should turn bad.

For more information on detailed preparation and video of this trip visit [www.bassstrait.info](http://www.bassstrait.info)

Note: The detailed planning, training and preparation undertaken for this trip was very extensive to the degree it was pursued obsessively over the final 12 months. The other successful results however also included 2nd and 3rd in the 2006 Hawkesbury Classic RCLR1 class

(Grand and Andy respectively), and 1st in the 2006 Murray Marathon RCLR1 class (Andy).

Disclaimer: The above is only the unqualified opinion of Andy McKie. The other paddlers on this trip may have had different experiences or perspectives.

Day 4 — Deal Island



Day 6 — Emitta



Day 3 — Grant Suckling paddling up the Murray passage

Day 7 — Whitemark to Trouser Point



Day 10 — arriving in Tasmania



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Thanks to huge support from the paddlers of the Victorian Sea Kayak Club, the women of Australia will have increased support and awareness of ovarian cancer, an illness notoriously difficult to diagnose.

This year's response was so great that if I list the participants, there will be no room for the story!

But they deserve recognition. Teams and individuals were: David Golightly, Mike Morgan, Peter Sharp, Annie Sharp, Raia Wall, Neil Brenton; Roger Taylor, Robin Boundy; Les Bognar, Terry Barry, Tina Rowley, Tamsin; Grant Della, Clare Della, Stephen Della; Les Doyle, Helen Doyle; Jurgen Weller, Derek Wilson, Peter Dedrick, Suzanne Deed, Andrew Churchward, David Cole; Jarrod Frith, Rob Creed, Peter Manning; Andrew Mathews, David Duncan, Geoff Brewster, David Stewart; Bill Zombor; Richard Rawling; Peter Costello; Andrew Campbell; Greg Gleason; John Evertze; Peter Treby; Phil Woodhouse; Brendan Van De Zand; Nick Dubuc-Timson; Greg Power; Neil Power;

Keith Freeman; Jonathon Chapman and Andy McKie.

Our off-water support crew who worked equally as hard were Jennie Golightly and Lendall Watson.

The OVCA girls were Sarah Duguid and Karen Livingstone.

## The weather and conditions

Partly cloudy with a shower or two developing and the chance of a thunderstorm, mainly this afternoon and evening. N to NE wind 10 - 15 knots. Waves mostly around half a metre. Max 28. Sunday W to SW wind, similar strength. Warnings: nil.

A modified version of the 'round the Bay' paddle we did last year saw 45 paddlers plus friends gather sponsor money from friends, family and business to raise the awesome figure of \$13,450 which is a bucket full of money ~ especially our friends at OVCA who we discover only receive a paltry \$22,000 from the government.

Seems all wrong for an organisation that is working to raise the awareness of the eighth highest killer of women in this country!

Our aim was to raise money and also to help raise awareness of this disease. We have gone a long way towards doing this as everyone we touch along the way now knows more than they did previously. We managed to speak to or get mentioned on air by four radio stations. We received write-ups in five local

papers including the top billing, front page of the Mornington and Southern Peninsula, *The Mail*.

I don't need to qualify why we should have all been running round for quite a while afterward with a warm glow of satisfaction with what we achieved - it was very impressive in any ones language!

## And so on to the paddle

The first leg of 5.5nm (10km) started at Tyrone boat ramp in Rye with the aim of heading to Portsea for the official launch and welcome by Sarah Duguid from OVCA. This would enable those of us planning to do the whole 100km to make up the distance (as no matter how hard I tried with a piece of string, those with GPS assured me that Portsea to RMYS was not 100km!) and also this would allow those wishing to enjoy the first daylight stages to paddle back to cars and still meet any Saturday night commitments.

After an extensive photo session lead by Gary Sissons from Fairfax Newspapers, 31 paddlers hit the water and headed south to Portsea to be joined by Phil Woodhouse and John Evertze who started from Queenscliff.

Well, if we thought the send off was big, the welcome after the first leg was exceptional. People waving, yelling, whistling and plenty of on-lookers wondering what the occasion was. The VSKC and OVCA banners were proudly displayed thanks to Jenny and Lendall.

This was followed by Sarah Duguid from OVCA Australia who really had the attention of the assembly by pointing out



that statistically the chances were that two Australian women will have passed away from ovarian cancer by the time we arrived at St Kilda, and made us very aware of the disease and of the value of what we were doing.

The trip briefing from Peter Costello was followed by Sienna Costello, who gave a well prepared encouragement speech and a cry of 'start your paddles'. (Sienna happened to be the same age – seven – as the youngest Australian to die from ovarian cancer),

The adrenalin was flowing and it was difficult to pace ourselves with a huge pod of 33 paddlers traveling at a good speed on the 8nm (14km), with only slight outgoing tide remaining and the conditions were good. The city just visible in the far distance – this was going to be a long night. Looking back over our heads, the sunset was spectacular. A nice bit of surfing was performed as we traveled the Portsea cliffs). One quick rescue was performed after a capsize, and all were enjoying the paddle immensely. Just on dusk, we must have looked quite unique as we could hear lots of campers and walkers on the beach calling to us – curious at what the light show was all about. Especially as the blue LED 'kayak' light was being trialled this weekend by Andrew Campbell.

A mile or so before arriving at Tootgarook, I got on the mobile to Jennie asking her to get a pen and paper ready for the pizza

order. Paddlers were to file past me and place their request one at a time.

In reality, Jennie and Lyndall ordered 18 large pizzas of various kinds, garlic bread and drinks, arriving back soon after we hit the beach. Tamsin kindly collected money from the hoard of famished paddlers.

A reminder of stick together as it was now dark and dress up for the cooler conditions was a focus of the briefing as 27 paddlers headed of towards Mt Martha (10nm – 18km) with shining lights ablaze into now changing conditions. The wind had sprung up into a steady headwind slowing the group and the sky in the distance had flashes of lightning.

We huddled in the lee of the cliffs at Martha Cove, ate, drank and dressed up as any warmth from the 28 degree day was now long gone. We had not sighted our friends from Coastguard, but had spoken to them several times – they were having a busy day.

We took off to the point with a tail wind and as we reached the point and turned, realised that one paddler who had also put his sail up for this stretch had not turned the corner with us.

A quick search of the group confirmed this, whilst we tried to call his mobile to no avail and so a small search party of Andrew Campbell, Andy McKie and Derick Wilson took off in the down-wind direction. We were keeping in contact with land crew with what was unfolding.

After what seemed like a long wait (5 minutes), Andy was on the phone, they had found our paddler – cold but ok, he was being rafted up and towed back. When they reached us, he was unable to paddle, so quickly clad in garbage bag, warm hat and rafted with another paddler then towed to an awaiting crew at Mt Martha Life Saving Club.

Quicker than an F1 pit crew, he was dressed in warm clothing, given a sweet cup of tea and then into a heated car and off to be checked out at Frankston hospital – confirming mild hypothermia. (excellent work Jennie, Lendall, Terry and other dark figures). I am proud of the calm and efficient way this incident was handled by all involved.

Another vigorous briefing and the 'budding up' of paddlers before getting on the water again, with 21 paddlers for the next 7.5nm (14km). It had been intended to depart here at 10.30, but due to the weather and the rescue, it was now after midnight. We took off into the night with two paddlers at the front and three of us across the back, keeping the pod tight.

The lightning show passed in the east and was quite spectacular at times. Although discussed, we never felt the need to get off the water. Canadian Bay was a welcome sight and another stop for snacks and team changeover.

Hot cups of chocolate, tea and coffee and the discussion whether to cut short the paddle to ensure we could get to RMYS for the welcome back and brunch (eggs, bacon and coffee – hmmm) and that this was more important than achieving the 100km. At this stage we were all feeling it. 20 knots and a metre sea gave rise to a couple of paddlers reaching exhaustion and one feeling seasick. We stopped off Patterson River, with dawn upon us and three of us went in through the surf break on the eastern side of the river, only then realising that there was no street access. Luckily, a beach cleaner turned up in his truck and we loaded a plastic kayak on board but Brendan was not going to see his Nadgee get scratched in the back of the truck, so still feeling ill, he headed back out through the surf with me to land on the car park side of the river and be collected by the awaiting land crew. We arrived at Edithvale with Gary the Fairfax photographer snapping pics left right and center as some very unglamorous exits were made from kayaks by paddlers with weary legs. We piled boats high on cards and trailers and headed to Sandringham to re-group for the final leg.



Sun was up, it was a beautiful morning and once we hit the water at Sandringham, there was only 6nm (11km) to go. A slow start as David G and I did our on-water live cross to Mackka on Radio National's Wake Up Australia program and we were off – what a magnificent sight we were. Full of vigour again as 27 of us made our way towards Royal Melbourne Yacht Squadron at St Kilda joking and laughing (deliriously??) as nothing could stop us now.

It was an amazing sight for the many friends, families and supporters as the colourful kayaks led by the girls, approached then paddled under St Kilda's famous pier. This challenge had undoubtedly given rise to the largest 'pod' that the VSKC have ever had on the water in one group and they were certainly given a warm welcome home.

We were then welcomed by Leigh Brennan Smith, CEO of the RMYS with hot showers and an egg and bacon breakfast as reward for weary and deserving paddlers, crews and supporters.

Karen Livingstone, CEO of OVCA Australia gave an address, thanking the VSKC, paddlers and the support teams who had made the event a success.

Those that are to be thanked are all who donated food, money and time including KR Castlemaine provided the bacon for the BBQ

Port Melbourne, Bakers Delight, donated the bread & other 'goodies'

Peter Manning for the mountains of Uncle Toby's Snack Bars

Yvette Costello for donated the eggs and Annette Golightly for paying for all the coffee's at the RMYS.

Active Concepts for the five PFD's for the auction, and

Rob Smith our great friend and supporter at Sandringham for loaning the kayak trailer, and donating sea kayak hire periods for five people.

There are always lessons to be learned by trips that take you outside what you regularly do and the following are some that will be taken on board for other paddles and next year's event:

Comprehensive on-water rules, clothing, food and paddler expectations sent out as part of the signing on.

No sails at night.

Paddlers must have a lighting system that can be seen clearly from a distance and can be seen if they are capsized

(there is the possibility of a workshop next year to build these).

No Rashies as they are not warm enough when the temperature drops.

Paddlers 'buddied-up' for night time or rough weather paddling.

In large pods, a perimeter of leader paddlers pre-determined. Pod paddlers must stay within this area. At night, these perimeter paddlers will have 360 degree blue lights, the group to have 360 degree white lights.

Assessment of paddler capabilities made progressively and appropriate action taken to keep the on water group within comfortable limits.

Passing on of the knowledge gained from this year to make paddlers as prepared as possible for other paddling challenges.

Have an 'A Team' of paddlers that will work with you to do what ever is necessary when circumstances change out on the water.

I am very proud of what was achieved by the paddlers and their support.

This challenge was fun, and life is not fun without a challenge.

Until next year ...



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## Hard kayakka on Port Phillip for a good cause

MEMBERS of the Victorian Sea Kayak Club paddled from Portsea to St Kilda on the weekend to raise money for research into ovarian cancer.

Paddlers set off just after lunch on Saturday and arrived tired but happy late on Sunday morning after almost 22 hours' hard work.

They raised more than \$10,000 for the national ovarian cancer network, OvCa Australia, which receives \$20,000 a year from the Federal Government.

The Port to Port Challenge Sea Kayak relay was supposed to cover the entire distance from Portsea to St Kilda, but tough conditions and unexpected bouts of seasickness curtailed the journey.

With family and supporters expectantly waiting at St Kilda, the kayakers, to arrive in time, popped their kayaks on cars for the leg between Edithvale and Sandringham.



Portsea paddlers: Members of the Victorian Sea Kayak Club who paddled from Portsea to St Kilda to raise money for ovarian cancer research at the weekend. At the front are co-organisers Peter Costello, Jenny Golightly and David Golightly. Picture: Gary Sissons



CONTINUED PAGE 68

# How to build your own solar panel rig

By Greg Gleason

Pic 1 is the solar panel's battery box

In this picture, you can see how two sets of cables enter the box.

The leads required are:

- 1) Incoming from the solar panel (the two bullet plugs)
- 2) Outgoing to the bilge pump switch (two spade plugs not shown)

The cables are marine grade tinned 4mm cable.

The cables pass through a rubber grommet by drilling a hole in the grommet that is smaller than the cable. The end of the cable is then cut at an

angle enabling it to be pushed through. The end result is a watertight fit of the cable through the grommet.

Two holes (one per each grommet) are then drilled through the case side, just large enough to enable the grommet to be pushed through and a tight fit.

In pic 2, the lid has been opened allowing access to the cigarette lighter plug.

You can also clearly see the three charge indicator LEDs on the charge controller.

This picture (no. 4) shows how the lead from the solar panel enters into the day hatch.

Two small holes are drilled through the rubber day hatch cover. Again the holes are drilled smaller than the cable to ensure a tight waterproof fit.

I have also clamped the cable with a small cable tie that passes through two small holes each side of the cable. This is to stop movement of the cable. I threaded the cable tie around the cable on both top and bottom.

I then have applied some liquid electrical insulation (or silicon) around the holes for extra waterproofing.

The cable stays connected to this day hatch. I have a second hatch cover without a cable passing through it that I use when the solar panel is not required (most times).

In picture 3 you can see the solar panel attached to my rear deck.

The panel is a roll-able / flexible type with tie down corners for easy attachment of straps to attach with.

(The red you see underneath the panel is my spare paddle bag made out of shade cloth which I use for carrying my spare paddle on long trips)

The panel is water/weatherproof and comes with a diode to stop reverse charging when dark, although the charge controller in the battery box also has this feature inbuilt.

You can see the panel connects to the lead that passes through the day hatch (black plug into grey plug next to red sticker).

The hatch cover is attached to a lanyard inside the hatch that is shorter than the cable inside the hatch. This way, I can open the hatch cover without placing any pressure on the cable connections inside the hatch.



# What does this photo mean?

by Greg Gleason

You could be confused about several grown men standing knee deep in Snake Channel (off Snake Island) waving to walkers in the distance. If you knew those specks were hauling sea kayaks behind them, it still wouldn't give you a clue. Perhaps I'd better start at the beginning.

It all started when Peter Dedrick met Derek Wilson and me (Greg Gleason) for an evening paddle at Rickett's Point. A throwaway comment about one last weekend on Snake Island before the winter chill sets in, to this group, is much more than that – it is a challenge! Easter beckoned, so a last minute decision was made and we were off, inviting Peter's son James and Greg Power along for the paddle.

Below you'll see why sunrise adds to the Snake Island mystique – this was another magic weekend in the Nooramunga Reserve. We paddled down to Lighthouse Point (so named because of the lighthouse that is no longer there) on the far eastern end of the island. We explored a few of the local areas and soaked up a starlit night that had to be seen to be believed.

Intending to visit the huts on the way back to Port Welshpool, we came upon a large tidal sand island. Conjecture raged as to which side we should go – this concluded with Peter Dedrick (who favoured paddling to the left of the island) saying to me "Do we go the right way, or Derek's way?"

Derek favoured paddling to the right of the island, and a line like this, whilst all very amusing, was a challenge indeed. Derek recently stepped down from dizzyingly high public office and I for one know you can't run an organization like the City of

Bayside if you can't spot the side of a tidal island where the channel markers reside.

What was I to do? Peter is a lovely man, one of nature's gentlemen, but Derek had seen the channel markers. The dice was cast – I went with Derek.

Two hours later, we landed on one of the sand islands at low tide. During the previous half hour, serious thoughts of morning tea had surfaced. Oh, the guilt of it all. If only Peter and James would appear round the island and join us. Derek was no longer gloating (well, not as much anyway) – he had his binoculars out and was fervently scanning the surroundings.

Then suddenly, Derek collapsed in peals of laughter and there, coming slowly into sight, were Derek and James. Having run out of initially paddle depth but the subsequently any water at all, they had set out to tow their kayaks across the sand island to the "wrong" side – or should that be to "Derek's" side.

By the time they joined us, it was lunchtime for everyone but Peter. Apparently, if you eat enough humble pie, you lose your appetite!

## Participants:

Peter Dedrick (Southern Aurora), Derek Wilson (Raider X)

## Awkward witnesses:

Greg Power (Raider X) and James Dedrick (Penguin)

Author in the middle: Greg "Treasure" Gleason (Ocean Raider)



# Sea sickness off Phillip Island

by Jarrod

# Letter

Paddle: Ventnor Beach Picnic Park to the Nobbies / Seal Rocks and return (22 km).

Trip organiser: Andrew Campbell.

Present: Jarrod Frith, Neil Power, Derek Wilson, Grant & Steven Della, Vincent Drane and Mark Heggie.

Forecast: south to southeasterly winds around 10 knots gradually tending east to northeasterly during the day. Afternoon inshore sea breezes to 15 knots. Seas 1 to 1.5 metres. West/southwest swell 2 to 3 metres decreasing 1.5 to 2.5 metres.

Log: first half of paddle proceeded without any hitch, prior to paddling around Seal Rock we gathered in a group to discuss plans and discuss individual reservations if any, at which point I notified the group of a very slight feeling of seasickness. As a group we decided to continue, track south around the island before returning.

Over the following 30 minutes my seasickness quickly became much worse. Within an hour I was feel utterly terrible, more surprisingly my energy levels rapidly decreased, including muscle cramps in the stomach, back and upper body. Before much longer I was vomiting up undigested breakfast. Given our location it was not practical to return to shore hence tow-ropes were deployed. However I felt better following a good vomit and was able to

proceed unassisted for a while longer although at a decreased speed.

Albeit we had left the rough seas behind us, my sickness did not dissipate in fact I was feeling worse. A little while later I advised others that I was again feeling unwell and increasingly lethargic. While still on the water I changed position into Grant Della's double kayak while Steve jumped into my kayak at which point I gave Grants kayak an acid wash, vomiting yet again. After a good vomiting session I once again felt much better and was able to continue paddling until our return.

Result: apart from physical displeasure and ruining what could have been an utterly delightful day, I totally embarrassed myself in front of others.

I was particularly surprised at the energy drain associated with motion sickness. This event highlighted the dangers coupled with kayaking and seasickness especially given that I predominantly paddle solo - obviously void of assistance.

Conclusion: never leave home without motion sickness tablets, having previously found sanctuary from their use.

Thanks: I simply can't say thanks enough for the assistance, patience and compassion of the other observers and experienced paddlers on the trip.

G'day Peter,

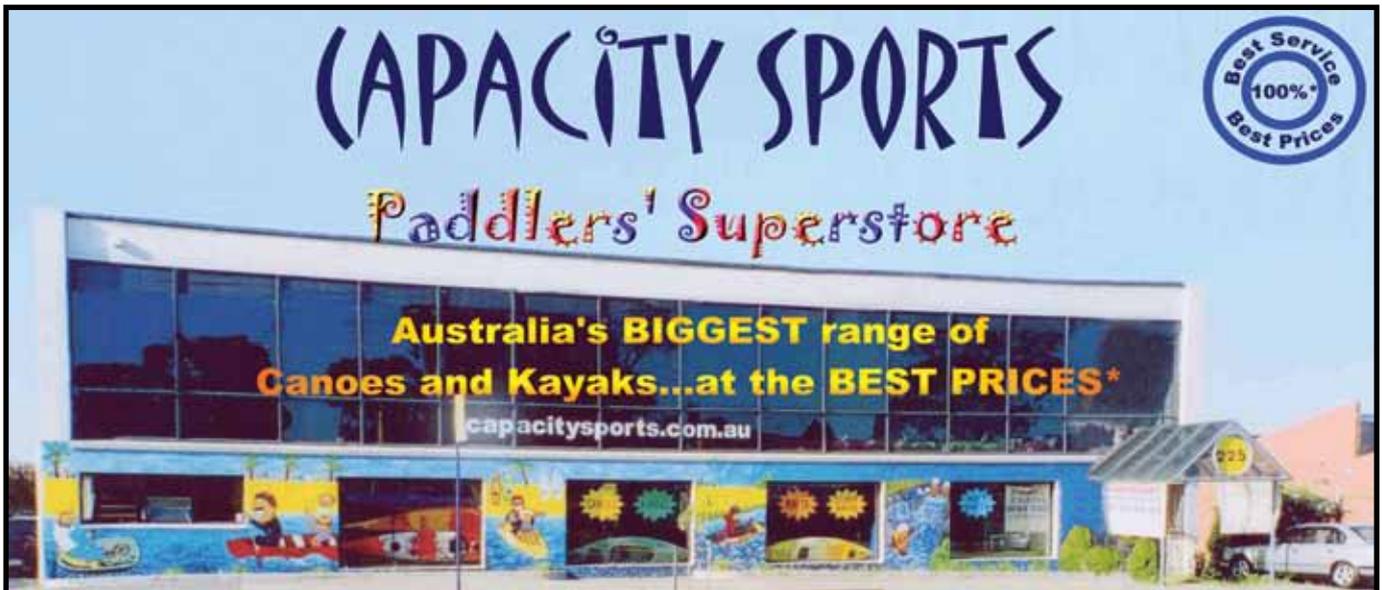
I am involved in an expedition to row a four person rowing boat across the Tasman. As part of our preparation we are planning on crossing Bass Strait and are looking for some information about winds, currents and possible launching and arrival points.

My phone number is 0409 093 938 and this e-mail is good to reach me on also.

I have attached a publicity letter which should answer any questions you have and may help you to provide suitable advice.

Thanks for your assistance,  
Andrew

*ED. Yes, we have become the guiding authority on how to prepare for a safe crossing of Bass Strait (not only in a sea kayak), with a number of our members now having paddled across safely after good trip planning and group cohesion.*



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# On the wild side — the rakali

by Peter Dedrick

'This has been a wonderful day!' said the Mole, as the Rat shoved off. 'Do you know, I've never been in a boat before in all my life.'

'What?' cried the Rat, open-mouthed: 'Never been in a—you never—well I—what have you been doing, then?'

'Is it so nice as all that?' asked the Mole shyly. 'Nice? It's the only thing,' said the Water Rat solemnly, as he leant forward for his stroke. 'Believe me, my young friend, there is nothing, absolute nothing, half so much worth doing as simply messing about in boats. Simply messing,' he went on dreamily: 'messing—about—in—boats; messing ...'

'Look ahead, Rat!' cried the Mole suddenly. It was too late. The boat struck the bank full tilt.

'... about in boats, or with boats,' the Rat went on composedly. 'In or out of 'em, it doesn't matter. Nothing seems really to matter, that's the charm of it. Whether you get away, or whether you don't; whether you arrive at your destination or whether you reach somewhere else, or whether you never get anywhere at all, you're always busy, and you never do anything in particular; and when you've done it there's always something else to do.'

\*Kenneth Graham *The Wind in the Willows*

We in bayside Melbourne are fortunate to have our own water rat, a native amphibious rodent called a rakali, an Aboriginal term for the Australian water-rat.

Their scientific name is *Hydromys chrysogaster*, which translated from Latin means 'water mouse with golden belly'. Found throughout Australia, in both coastal and freshwater habitats, rakali have specialised adaptations such as webbed feet and waterproof fur to enable them to effectively hunt for their prey in an aquatic environment.

Apart from the platypus, they are the only highly specialised amphibious Australian mammals to fill an aquatic niche. rakali are especially adapted for aquatic life. They have broad, partially webbed hind feet and dense waterproof fur. Their tail is often as long as the body and is thick and well covered by dark hair, usually with a prominent white tip. rakali tails act like rudders when they are swimming or diving for food.

Colour varies between individual animals but most rakali seen in Bayside have beautiful dark chocolate brown coats with golden underbellies. Their head and body is somewhat tapered towards the tail with small ears and eyes and nostrils set high on the head. Their total body length, including the tail is approximately 60 cm long. Male rakali weigh an average of 755 grams; females around 606 grams.

Rakali are extremely versatile hunters, taking most of their food from the sea, with a diet consisting of large aquatic insects, small fish, crustaceans and mussels.

Sometimes they can be seen scavenging fresh fish remains from fishermen's catches. Food is often carried to a "feeding platform"; a characteristic behavioural trait of the rakali is to regularly use a favourite log or flat rock to consume their prey. The remains of food items (shells and crustacean carapaces) can often be found on these "feeding platforms".

Rakali can often be seen foraging in full daylight, although most activity occurs around sunset. They swim through the water like small otters, with only their head and nostrils above water, leaving a wake behind them and occasionally diving for prey with a flick of their tail.

Breeding occurs throughout the year but most litters are born in spring and late summer. Gestation is about 34 days and up to 5 litters (although more commonly 1-2 litters), consisting of 3-4 young, may be born annually.

Young rakali suckle for up to 4 weeks, their front teeth grow to curve around their mother's teat so that they are firmly attached and she will drag them around with her. After weaning, they remain with their mother for another 4 weeks until they attain independence. They may fall prey to large fish and birds of prey, and cats and foxes may prey upon both adults and young.

In May 2006, Bayside Council undertook a trapping survey, the results of which indicate that although the rakali population in Bayside continues to appear widespread in the northern half of the municipality, (concentrated primarily around Sandringham and Brighton breakwaters, and the rock revetment wall along the Brighton foreshore, from Martin Street to Middle Brighton baths),

the species is probably still numerically rare. 39 individual rakali were caught and micro-chipped for future identification and a number of these were juvenile animals, indicating a successful breeding population.

Three rakali were also caught at Elsternwick golf course and one large adult male and a small juvenile animal were trapped around the Beaumaris Motor Yacht Squadron; the first successful trapping records for both these areas.

Earlier this year, Council undertook a radio tracking trial to test radio-tracking devices suitable for rakali. If successful, it was hoped that radio tracking individual rakali would identify burrow locations and therefore enable more targeted management recommendations to conserve rakali habitat at specific foreshore locations. An adult male rakali was trapped for the trial and fitted with a 'dummy' transmitter designed to replicate the size and weight of an actual radio-tracking device.

This was to see – if the transmitter would remain on the rakali long enough to collect enough relevant data; and

what the effect, if any, the attached transmitter would have on the rakali – i.e. would the transmitter affect its natural grooming and feeding behaviour?

During a period of three days, the rakali managed to remove two separate transmitters via its normal grooming activities. It also disabled an infrared camera device, set up to record its activities, by chewing through the cable wiring. The rakali continued to display normal feeding behaviour and ate live yabbies whilst in captivity, however, given the failure of the transmitter attachment, it was decided at this point to abandon the trial and release the rakali back into the wild.

(Source: Bayside City Council website)



# Ten little Indians

by Greg Gleason

It was the best of weather, it was the worse of weather as 10 little Indians made their separate ways to the rally point at Duck Point. The changes in weather also brought with it concern and changes in mood which led to dissent as some of the braves now wanted to rally on the protected western side of the isthmus along with their brother braves under chief Big Foot.

Characters and players: Pocahontas – Tina Rowley, Sitting Bull – Les Bognar, Hiawatha – Greg Gleason, Uncas – Andrew Campbell, Cochise – Terry Barry, Hawk-eye – Tony Chick, Chingachgook – Jergen Weller, Red Bull – Russell Blamey, Crazy Horse – Philip Woodhouse, Dances with Thylacines – John Evertze and extras: Big Foot – Bill Zombar.

Princess Pocahontas was the matriarch of the east coast Indians however a leadership struggle was soon to take place. The chief of all Victorian tribes Sitting Bull was travelling with the keeper of skins Hiawatha and Uncas, who likes to wear beaver on his head and ring the camp bell! These three secretly contacted via the latest in smokeless signal technology, the lieutenant of all Victorian tribes Cochise. Cochise was encamped at Sandy Point in the batch of the old but looks weller than most, Chingachgook. Also present were Hawk-eye a.k.a Chick-eye when a child of Must Paddle at Four Knots, the not so fast flying Red Bull who was wanted for rustling a.k.a. 'Russ' and Crazy Horse who was once named lover of horses

After many smokeless signals with out informing Pocahontas, the braves changed the route of the scouting party from starting on the east coast to the west. Princess Pocahontas' heart sank in despair on hearing that a revolt had taken place sparked by her adopted father Sitting Bull. The princess backed up by her loyal boy-servant Dances With Thylacines stamped her royal foot determined, more so out of feminine scorn, to lead the scouting party from the east into the troubled waters approaching from the west. Sitting Bull conspired all night even up until when some of the braves were packing their canoes in the early morning gloom down on the beach. Pocahontas rallied the braves and said "I know I have the body but of a weak and feeble woman but I have the heart and stomach of a king. This day is called the feast of Queen Elizabeth's birthday: he that out lives this day, comes safe home, will stand a tip-toe when this day is named, and rouse him at the name of Queen Elizabeth's birthday."

The waters of Corner Inlet were smooth as the party at a leisurely pace zigzagged across trying to find the deeper channels to avoid hull drag. At Entrance Point mutinous rumblings were heard as the weather produce what some considered a bad omen to what was to come. Near Hunter Point tragedy was to strike. Sitting Bull, Uncas, Cochise and the constant orator

Hiawatha had to turn around and retreat to Chinamans Beach because of a mixture off illness and bad luck. Once there they set up camp and that night sat around the camp fire drinking medicinal fire water in great quantities. Out of the 10 little Indians who set off that morning from Duck Point only six remained. These chased the white horses down to Johnny Souey Cove where they pulled in to eat. Much time had been lost during the day and it was recognised that they would be paddling in the dark in tumultuous water to reach Refuge Cove and so decided to camp.

The next day heralded fine weather and calmer waters but this greeting was like that from a white-man who speaks with forked tongue. After Rabbit Island the six little Indians encountered strange waters that slowed them down dramatically along Five Mile Beach. Continuing on they reached Cape Wellington where some of the braves cursed the Scottish General 'Munro' Golightly for his fetish of rolling in cold waters off of capes. Crossing Waterloo Bay the blackened clouds from the west announced the coming of the braves enemy. Soon the wind swept across the bay making the waters turbulent. The enemy soon cause dissent amongst the few remaining little Indians while sheltering from the oncoming tyranny in the lee of South East Point. Here while trying not to be dashed upon the rocks by the swell they had an on water

pow-wow. The fear of the tyranny caused great indecisiveness and eventually resulted in Hawk-eye and the sage Chingachgook returning back the way they had come. Only four little Indians remained.

Pocahontas rallied the four little Indians saying "We few, we happy few, we band of brothers: for he today who paddles with me shall be my brother: be he ne'er so vile", looking at Dances With Thylacines, "this day shall gentle his condition. And paddlers in Victoria, now retired, shall think themselves accursed they were not here; and hold their manhoods cheap, whiles any speaks that they paddled with us upon Queen Elizabeth's birthday."

Into the fray they paddled hiding behind any rocky out-crop that afforded them respite

and a chance to regroup. General Custer's tyrannical Seventh Cavalry charged down upon 'The Few' and stirring up the surface of the water the bullets screamed past bring 'The Few' to frequent stand-stills. On they paddled, on they drove slashing and dicing their paddles into the tyranny. At Enclave Point Crazy Horse and Dances With Thylacines looked back at Pocahontas and Red Bull who were stoically edging forward. At the cliffs of South West Point the enemy sent in reinforcements intensifying the hurly burly on the battlefield and forcing the few out into the lesser of combined evils the strengthening, but defeated, Seventh Cavalry. After three hours twenty minutes of battle 'The Few' had gained only seven nautical miles; reason why Hawk-eye of 'Must Paddle at 4 Knots' turned back. During the battle 'The Few' became the 'White Knuckle clan'. Darkness was soon upon the White Knuckle clan and the thought of hot showers enticed them on to Tidal River. In the dark with no features to navigate off they tracked their way to an occasional flash of light. Behind the breakers they said their goodbyes to each other and vowed to find the other on the other side. Pocahontas surfed in between surf fisherman, much to their surprise, to find scattered along the beach the rest of the braves cold, soaked, hungry and tired but very satisfied standing in the dark shivering; 'We few, we happy few'.



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# Phillip Island circumnavigation

by Phil Woodhouse

The plan originally was to paddle around French Island (~70km tide assisted) but the weather was perfect to go around Phillip Island (60.8km). As I had not paddled around both in one hit, my preference was for Phillip Island.

So with only the lights of the San Remo Bridge illuminating the out going stream Greg Murray and I launched in to the fast moving stream. I strained my eyes to try and read the rippled swirling water and decide to ferry glide out past the middle of the channel and miss what ever was causing the bridge lights rays to refract and reflect on the western side.

As I set my course around this disturbance Greg called out a warning to me to avoid hitting a reef in front of me. What reef in front of me? There is some thing that I will pass on my right! So in that split second of time I altered my course to starboard while I wished that I had eaten more carrots as a kid or had the sonar of a dolphin. As soon as my boat's nose came around the stream was rocketing me straight in to the reef that was warned to be in front of me!

Greg at this stage (we are talking seconds here) was still giving me helpful advice on how to avoid imminent embarrassment and what ever consequences we both my have to endure if I did not extricate my self from my current situation. As my wish for better eye sight was fulfilled by default of proximity I put in some adrenalin charged strokes that positioned me clear of Greg's original warning. Where would you be with out good mates watching out for you?

As we were carried down towards the ocean the early morning light enabled us to negotiate the tidal race and soon we were cruising around Cape Woolamai heading for Pyramid Rock.

The morning was overcast so when Greg tried to point out Pyramid Rock I could not make it out and soon realised Greg could not see it as well. We set a bearing and

headed off in a significant wave height of 1.5 m (max 2.23) with an 8 to 15 second period.

This made for a lovely and enjoyable paddle with no sea to speak of except that the light breeze did chill me a bit.

At Pyramid Rock (20 km mark) we opted to go through the gap and deliberated for some time about the shallowness of the water and the break on the other side with the obvious risk of being dumped on the rocks.

Distance to paddle around would have been approximately 500 m, but what the heck, you can repair fibreglass. Greg went first as a surge created sufficient water depth for the boats to pass over and I followed hot on his stern however, I was left beached thankfully on kelp and watched as Greg accelerated between and over the boars.

About three kilometres from the Nobbies, we could feel the affect of the out going stream from Western Port. As we paddled under the observatory we could see a large yacht on the other side of the island. We negotiated around the reef breaks and made our way to the entrance with its out going stream and incoming rollers which shoaled and made that rumbling noise that makes you tension up ready to be slammed as you snap your neck turning around trying to get a handle on the situation.

At this time the yacht turned out to be the *Young Endeavour* and for the next 40 minutes or so would be some 200 to 400 metres to port.

It was great to take in the scenery since the sun had appeared and it was a beautiful day and great conditions. On the Western Port side of the Point Grant you could see the observatory and after five minutes it was still there. After ten minutes you could look up while surfing down a roller to see the same aspect from five minutes ago.

As we looked to port the *Young Endeavour* would appear then disappear leaving

only the last metre or so of its main mast and on the odd occasion disappearing all together. After 15 minutes the view of the observatory to starboard had changed little despite all the paddling and surfing we were doing on a heading.

After 20 to 30 minutes the out going stream let us go i.e. slack water was 20 minutes later than predicted, and we took off. During this time we had opportunity to see the break off Point Sambell and dared each other to surf it. As we approached it was estimated to be 1.6 m at the back (as measured using Greg or myself as a gauge). Greg ignored my invitation and taunts to surf the break as I did his through self-preservation (I was chicken).

After Cat Bay it was all very ho-hum but the scenery and company was pleasant. We zig-zagged around to find the deeper channels and hopefully get some current assistance. After Cowes the breeze came straight on and there was no assistance so we just had to slap our way along in the chop and shallow water continuing to hunt for the deeper channels between Rhyll and our destination.

After 7 hours 40 minutes we landed back at New Haven. To the old and bold this may be humdrum but for me it is a must do one day-er as we had a fantastic fun day.

## Letter

The World Masters Marathon Cup started on 5 September in Gyor, 120 km north west Budapest.

Over 300 masters from five continents participated in the championship.

Steve Vegh (world champion) from Patterson Lakes Canoe Club collected what is believed to be Australia's first masters gold medal for a canoe (C-1) paddler.

Conditions on the first day (Wednesday 5 September) were very windy and choppy. The temperature was less than 10 degrees.

Steve paddled his C-1 in the morning 10 am 21 km and won a gold in a field including ex olympian and world champions, and in the afternoon 2.30 pm paddled again with his wife Maggie Vegh in the K-2 and won a silver medal behind the Lithuanians.

The second day (Thursday) Maggie Vegh teamed up with Dianne Chellew in the K-2, 21 km race and won a gold medal in their age group (50-59)

Well done masters!

This photo taken down the West Coast with our own TC casually looking on in the background. Stand up board (SUB) paddling has become a new sport with paddlers in Hawaii taking on huge waves.

Check out [www.paddlesurfhawaii.com](http://www.paddlesurfhawaii.com)





# Crossing Bass Strait

by Andy Mckie



Being a Tasmanian ex-white water paddler, I had come across to sea paddling two and a half years ago. Soon as starting sea paddling, I had the desire to cross Bass Strait. Being a surfer, I like swell conditions, so decided that my first crossing of Bass Strait would be via the western side of King Island then across to the NW coast of Tasmania then S along the west coast to Strahan. My decision to go from Victoria south to Tasmania was based on family concern reasons rather than strategic or logistic concerns. In March I knew I had a good probability of getting favourable northerly winds that would be beneficial in my endeavour.

Considering the charts the first crossing from Marengo near Apollo Bay to Cape Wickham on King Island would be 52 nautical miles (nm). There was no tidal stream or current flow indicated close to Victoria except for a 1 knot (kn) tidal stream on the western side of Cape Otway. I went to Phil's place and consulted with him over refreshments the navigation issues. Hazards would be: shipping, since I had to cross a major shipping lane; paddling at night; tidal streams and currents around the northern end of King Island with their associated reefs; and rocks. It was because of the hazards around the northern tip of King Island I planned to depart around 2200 to 2400 hours so I would have light to negotiate the unfamiliar waters after paddling for 16.5 to 17 hours. This was based on an average paddling speed of three knots inclusive of breaks and other events. During this time I would encounter two to three tidal changes and though I looked for references I could not find any information on the tides around Cape Wickham.

I planned to launch in the beginning of March and had taken four weeks leave but due to continual S and SE winds had to wait at home for two weeks. During this time I had seriously wondered if I should have departed from Tasmania and had become doubtful if I was going to be able to do the trip. The big break came when according to Buoy Weather and BOM weather sites a weather window would come on Wednesday 14 March.

However, it was being closely followed by a SW change due Thursday afternoon. Having waited two weeks already I considered the crossing to King Island achievable if I departed on Wednesday night at 2000 hours.

On Wednesday 14 March 2007, I launched from Marengo near Apollo Bay at 2000 hours. The wind was blowing NE 10 to 15 knots and would be a rear quartering wind. A NE wind I discovered makes it an awkward and frustrating paddle when you are trying to surf and get advantage off of the wavelets. By 0300 hours the wind had change to a northerly and I lost my wet ride in exchange for a breeze strong enough for me to put up my sail.

To navigate this first crossing I illuminate my deck compass with fishing tackle float's chemical light sticks but because of spray the compass was hard to read and this eventually gave me a headache. My plan was to set out on my predetermined magnetic compass bearing and paddle for an hour then check my drift by using my GPS. After about 10 nm I stopped, turned on my GPS to check my drift and found to my concern that I was drifting further to the west than I had anticipated. I then had the choice of either turning back or correct and go on. I made a mental calculation and corrected my westward drift by going further easterly from my planned bearing. After making my correction I would paddle for one hour then check my drift with the GPS.

By 0400 hours Thursday 15th March, I could see the lighthouse on Cape Wickham at King Island and felt quite pleased. It was also a good time to have breakfast. As I sat there eating breakfast, the texture of the sea changed. Soon the wavelets grew bigger and were coming in from my stern. I turned around in my seat to see a container ship passing with in 500 metres of me. This usually is not a problem but I knew the bridge could not see me! After my little scare with a big ship I continued on towards my goal. By around 0600 hours dawn was breaking with the sun casting it's yellow and golden rays on the dark blue waters of Bass Strait. Where as before sunrise I could



see Cape Wickham, King Island disappeared under a brown haze that had been created by bush fires on the island.

As I approached King Island I encountered a west-going stream that was pushing me towards places I did not want to be like Navarine Reef. I corrected further easterly and narrowly avoided the reef and paddled on to the rocky shoreline of Disappointment Bay. By the time I landed at Disappointment Bay I had been on the water for 16 hours. After dragging my plastic fantastic Cortez ashore I estimate that I had taken on board between 10 to 15 litres of sea water into the hatches. Here I set up camp amongst the cattle then after a large meal I walked up to the lighthouse. During Thursday night the SW front passed through bring with it a deluge of rain.

Friday morning I woke up to the sound of rain bucketing down and had to pack up my camp in the unrelenting rain. It was because of this SW front I decided to paddle down along the eastern side of King Island to get some protection from the turbulent conditions on the western side. After an hour of being on the water the rain stopped and I had blue skies. At Lavinia Point I latched on to a school of salmon that became destined to be my lunch at Salt Water creek.

After lunch I paddled on to Naracoopa and camped. While I was asleep at around 2200 hours a light was shone in to my tent followed by a voice asking me "How the %^\$\* did you get here?" after telling the voice my story, he invited me back to his place for beer and mutton birds, which I found very tasty.

Saturday I paddle from Naracoopa to Grassy along a scenic coastline with cliffs and small beaches. During the day I copped strong head winds, which made the section a slog of a paddle. Grassy is an old mining town with few residents but it has a pub and bakery. After I had made camp between two boat sheds a fisherman came along and was able to give me a weather update from Buoy Weather. Had I desired he told me that I had the weather to cross from King Island to Hunter Island that night. I decided to stay around Grassy for a few days and enjoy some counter meals and pies from the bakery, as I did not want to go directly to Hunter Island but visit Albatross Island.

Monday morning at 0200 hours I launched from Grassy harbour. The crossing from King Island to Hunter Island is a more technical crossing compared to the cross-

ing from Victoria to King Island. This is due to the shallowness of the waters and the strong tidal streams. My motivation for leaving at 0200 hours was in case a large swell was running and I had to by-pass Albatross Island and then get around Cape Keraudren. I had a heightened sense of awareness when I left Grassy Harbour as there was a two metre SW swell with no wind creating beautiful conditions but in the back of my mind I knew I had to be on the ball with respect to my navigation in the darkness.

Around 0630 hours I could see Black Pyramid Rock, which rises, ominously black and steep out of the sea. What the?

One of my objectives for doing this trip was to visit Albatross Island and after sunrise I could see land features, which I thought, was Albatross Island, so I departed from my planned bearings and headed towards the feature. When I checked my GPS I was to discover I had been moved to the east northwards from my destination and the features I was navigating off were the prominent Hummocks of Three Hummocks Island. This error was to add two hours to my paddling day! I corrected my heading and followed the new bearing to Albatross Island.

After negotiating the fast tidal streams around Albatross Island, I then looked for a landing place. This prove to be a challenge. The only landing spot I could find required me to empty my kayak down on the water then haul it up the 10 to 12 metres to a ledge. I camped on Albatross Island with the albatrosses and tiger snakes; big ones! During this second crossing of 10 hours I noticed there was a lot more bird life as compared to the first crossing, in particular there were a lot of little grey birds which I think were prions. While having a brew in the evening, I was hit in the face by a rouge low flying prion.

Tuesday morning I set course for Hunter Island in the Fleurieu Group and landed at Cuvier Bay after negotiating Dangerous Bank. At Cuvier Bay, Tony Chick contacted me and warned me about a hurricane warning issued for the Australian Bight.

I headed off northwards to round Cape Keraudren with it's fast tidal streams of 3 to 4 knots and over-falls. An interesting observation about rounding Cape Keraudren is that you are best to do it on an ebbing tide and not the flood. Also it is like 'The Rip' where the maximum tidal stream is not in conjunction with the high or low water. It is

an area where you have to know your tides and tidal streams. At Shepherds Bay on the eastern side of Hunter Island I set up camp after catching some good sized Taylor for my dinner.

Wednesday morning at 0500 hours I set course for Port Stanley. I timed the tides so I had the advantage of an ebbing tide to take me to my destination. My course took me past Cape Buache on Walker Island after which I could see 'The Nut' of Stanley. At 1430 hours, I landed on the western side of The Nut to be greeted and invited in for coffee by a Dutch family who had been watching me from The Nut.



# Training note: collisions

by Tony Chick

My involvement in a collision between two loaded boats near Cape Otway, got me to thinking that certain situations require prior thought, to stand any chance of making the right choices, in the heat of the moment. As popular with a particularly gloomy USA sea kayak publication, I will outline the scenario.

The participants: A burly duo of Bass Strait expeditioners and an in-shore West Coast social paddle dunker.

T.C was coping with the conditions encountered, eagerly accepting his hairy-chested companions mentoring.

All looked smart, outfitted in exotic boats, loaded with the latest campsite aids and carrying appropriate safety accessories.

The rugged group were merrily muscling along, on return to Apollo Bay. Sea state was calm with small swell.

T.R & T.C were positioned parallel, about four metres apart, deep in topical conversation.

"I wonder if you can use the hatches on that handsome looking Sea Leopard for bongo drums" she said.

Before T.C formulated an appropriate response, the pair had inadvertently paddled on top of a dormant bommie.

They had been powering toward this area for some time, no sign of prior wave movement had been noted.

We blame our accompanying Sea Leopard paddler, J.E, for leading us into peril, unfamiliar as he is with paddling with other humans. He of course vehemently denied

this, claiming he saw nothing above his useful glove box, "look at all the food I can stuff in here" the Taswegian exclaimed.

As the hapless pair floated innocently over this reef, a single swell came out of deep water, stood up & pitched, hitting T.C side-on. Never having quite enough ocean to swing his Mirage & unwilling to risk presenting a pointy end to his charming companion. T.C dived into the wave, locking his paddle under water as a sea anchor, trying heroically, but in vain to hold boat position. Sucked up and over the falls, a collision was inevitable, just how bad was the question.

T.C has since been sternly informed, rudely hurling through space in an orange Mirage at your paddling companions is generally considered bad form. Covering low in the cockpit, T.C sullenly conceded that this is probably not something on most people's agenda.

T.R's cat-like reaction was to roll away from the wave and stay underwater, knowing she will cop a hammering.

This tough as teak move took guts and a mind honed razor sharp from years of bobbing about on blue water.

The resulting underwater collision was not as hard as feared, considering both boats were loaded.

The hulls had slid over each other, later verified by the unsightly Nadgee stain on the sleek Mirage hull & the attractive orange highlight on the Nadgee's unusually angular belly.

The cruel sea calmed, T.C amateurishly wallowed upright, now about 15 metres inshore of T.R.

Sprint paddling back to the heroines upturned hull was an anxious moment. Many a scenario entered T.C's guilt wracked mind, considering the isolated location, none of them too good.

After hanging underwater long enough to ensure all thought she was long dead, T.R popped an exemplary example of her casually understated "where's my hat / I've water in my ear" roll. This herculean, but strangely lady-like manoeuvre even momentarily got our Sea Leopard's attention, coolly glancing back over his taut "bongo drum" rear hatch. "Stop playing around and keep paddling", he gruffly mumbled.

Lessons learnt from this unfortunate chain of events?

Think about your response / options to various collision situations. This one happened very fast and at close range, little time for contemplation. I guess no one action can suit all situations, but a boat is easier to fix than body. Pointy ends will do most damage. Most importantly avoid collisions in the first place. It's very easy to zone out on a long paddle, the cause of this incident.. First aid kit and emergency boat repair? The list can go on & on. Finally, be wary when striking up conversation with owners of pastel Nadgee's in open waters, (if this can't be politely avoided, make sure you are to seaward).

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# Where's my land crew?

By Andy McKiee

A distant pool of light shimmers over the night water of the Hawkesbury River. Still probably 2 km or so away yet, but as I paddle closer the pool of light turns into a carnival of flashing lights, music and excited activity. Boats line the small beach, hundreds of people line the bank and the atmosphere is electric as I call for my land crew amongst the crowd. I had made checkpoint I: the halfway checkpoint that signifies a turn of the tide and where many pull out of the race after 65 km.

This was my first Hawkesbury Canoe Classic (HCC) and at 111 km overnight, I can only recommend it as a fantastic event for anyone considering long distance kayaking.

Grant Suckling, Cameron Mackie and I entered the HCC and each had different experiences. The following thoughts are from my experience:

## Getting there

We traveled up from Melbourne leaving on the Thursday afternoon. We stayed in Albury Thurs night and with friends in Sydney on the Friday. This was a good idea in hindsight as it gave us plenty of time to get there and arrive fresher than trying to drive 11 hours straight and then paddle 11 hours overnight.

While we planned to arrive at Windsor (the start line) at 9am we for one reason or another arrived at 9:40. Already the car park was starting to fill up and spots of shade under trees were already taken.

We found a good spot near the toilet block, cos you do need to go quiet a few times before these types of races plus we had our 10min drinking timer on.

I had brought a gazebo shade house with me which was perfect for a long day in the middle of a paddock in the sun. The day was hot and in direct sun, so it's important not to dehydrate.

On the way up in the car, we started a game of drinking every 10mins to Grant's watch timer. This was a great idea in the end. Not only did it keep us hydrated before we got on the water, it's great hydration for any long drive under the windscreen.

Once we had set up our spot for the day, land crew (Michael Young & David Cairns) took over from here. They checked all my essential gear and took it off to be scuteneered. Having landcrew take care of everything was great - and enabled me to "try" to relax.

Once back, land crew and I stepped through the race plan, and we packed a dry bag full of everything required at each pit stop. This was essential and really turned out to be a saving grace at checkpoint E when I arrived 40min ahead of my best predicted time and caught my landcrew unawares. They were able to grab the dry bag labeled Checkpoint E and be in action at the water's edge in the time it

took me to get out of my boat: which was not much time at all.

The total distance of 111 km took me 11 hours 18minutes. According to my GPS log, my checkpoint breaks at E and I took 7minutes and 11 minutes respectively. So out of the total time, only 18 minutes was spent in checkpoints on land.

Believe me, I could not have asked for any better service at the checkpoints. The landcrew were like a Formula 1 pit crew. I simply stood back from the boat, had my clothes changed for me, the boat was serviced and re-fuelled with new drinking bladders and food. Maps were changed and food constantly stuffed into my mouth because I had not been eating enough. I'm sure all on-looking land crews were impressed and taking notes as to the professionalism and speed at which my team had me back on the water.

The reason for not eating enough is because you don't get a chance. Wash Riding is accepted practice and really is your lifeline to a good time and enjoyable paddle. Wash riding with a bunch of boats can add 2 km+ to speed and over the first 60 km made a huge unexpected difference. I had reached checkpoint I over 1 hour ahead of my predicted due time: all because of the effect of wash riding with guys who were paddling fast.

We started paddling at 5 pm. The wind was up as we started, but soon died down as the sun started drop. It was dark by the time we reached checkpoint E - again making it difficult to locate Landcrew at the checkpoint. I used a technique of calling out my number and the names of my landcrew. Others were using an array of flashing lights, beacons and other easily identifiable locators that are a good idea in the dark.

Once the sun goes down, the paddling is magical with glow sticks in the distance from other boats and the stars above.

In a couple of spots I had dropped off the packs and paddled alone. This was the hardest times particularly when there was no one within sight in front of me. In these patches the river is very dark, and hard to navigate. While I did have the required torches with me, I did not want to stop paddling to check maps so I just pushed on. The other annoying thing I encountered was that I could no longer read my GPS once it went dark. As a result I could not see how fast or how far I was traveling. I have since learned that my GPS unit (Garmin 60CSX) has backlighting which I can configure to not switch off. These stats would have been useful to know whilst on the water, in the dark and alone.

After checkpoint I, I ended up by myself again for a few hours so hooked onto a double as I passed low tide pit stop. My intention was to travel with this boat as the father and son crew knew the river

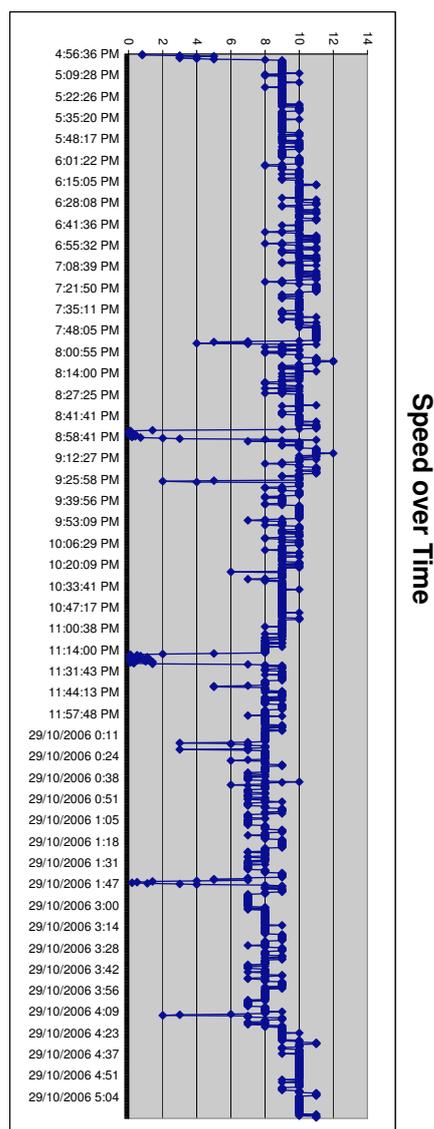
well after completing the race more than 10 times each. While I could feel that my effort had dropped and my pace had dropped, I was keen to stick with them as the tricky navigation of the night was approaching.

10 km from the finish Grant had caught me up by wash riding a double moving at a faster pass than the one I was paddling with. I switched over and tacked on behind him that resulted in a 2kmphr increase in speed for the last 10 km. (refer speed and distance graph)

In the end Grant and I paddled over the finish line as the sun was just starting to rise at 4:18am. I would have loved to have done an Eskimo roll in celebration but my arms were near to falling off. We were both ecstatic to have finished in such great time.

After 111 km, cold and tired, I looked around for my speedy landcrew who were nowhere to be seen. "Where's my Landcrew" Grant heard me cry for the second time that night. So I stumbled out of my boat, legs stiff and arms cactus. I was lent a hand lifting my boat from the water and made my way to the hot coffee line for a warm drink while I waited.

While I have total gratitude for my landcrew and the super effort they put in, this point of the event was really



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# 72 degrees north

By Helen & Les Doyle

We wanted to get as far north as possible without having to mount a major expedition. Pond Inlet is at the northern tip of Baffin Island, 72 degrees north, about 500 km inside the Arctic Circle. In July, the ice cap retreats far enough to make sea kayaking viable. It seemed like a good place to start.

The internet introduced us to Dave Reid at Polar Sea Expeditions, the only person at Pond with a couple of kayaks for hire. Dave put us onto Pacific Rim Paddling in Vancouver Island ([www.pacificrimpaddling.com](http://www.pacificrimpaddling.com)) and they agreed to help us with guiding and logistics. The first load of gear was shipped north in October, 11 months before the trip. Things move slow in the Arctic.

And so, in early August 2007, we found ourselves standing on a beach staring in awe at the glaciers and peaks of Sirmilik National Park on Bylot Island. The sound of our jaws hitting the ground was drowned out only by the thunder of crashing icebergs.

Two guides, two of their friends and a like-minded Canadian couple, along with two adrenalin filled, middle aged Aussies, two fibreglass doubles, 2 Feathercraft collapsables and enough food, medical etc for 14+ days is a lot to cram into a 10 m boat, especially when you have to make room for the shot gun. Bloody big animals those polar bears!

As the boat pulled away, having dropped us on a desolate gravel beach, I heard one

of our guides say to the other "I don't think the sat phone is working". I hoped the shotgun was.



Over the next three weeks, we lived in a surreal world of 24 hour daylight, icebergs, narwhales, polar bears, 1000 m cliffs rising from the seas and total isolation.

We camped on permafrost, rock strewn beaches, ancient Thule sites and whale cemeteries. The weather rarely got below zero degrees and the

water was never above -1.8 degrees. After a couple of days, we stopped referring to our watches and found we would sometimes be paddling at midnight or having breakfast at 1.00 pm. The days, and nights, were mostly sunny with only one day, or was it a night, lost to bad weather.

It was an amazing trip made possible thanks largely to the training and encouragement we received from the VSKC. Come and have a chat with us about the trip next time you see us but be warned it may be hard to stop us talking.



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important. Having been wet from paddle flick over the last 11 hours and temperatures down to 4degrees overnight plus wind chill factor, I was now two parts hypothermic and my core body temperature dropping rapidly. Within 15 min my land crew had arrived and I was able to change into dry clothes, but it took me a few hours to warm up. During this time, I was wrapped in a blanket sitting in the car and unable to raise my arms beyond waist height due to muscle stiffness. Grant had a great idea of a sleeping bag laid out for him at the finish line. I fully recommend it.

Finally, I can gladly report I had absolutely no wrist soreness at all. This I can attribute to the wrist taping performed by the Red Cross at the start.

Finally, thanks to everyone who assisted and supported me through and leading up to this event. You know who you are and your input really did enable me to have one of my greatest experiences. Thankyou.

### Tips:

Know your objectives and make sure your land-crew know them too. Some people are after a certain time, some are there to merely partake. My objective was to complete the course in the best time and condition I could. I didn't want to finish with injuries and I didn't want to finish with plenty left in the tank. I certainly met my objectives and surpassed all my expectations.

Undertake training to match your goal. My training consisted of 3 x 10 km morning sessions per week. These sessions focused on quality and technique. In addition: a 2, 4 or 6 hour paddle on the weekend. I completed only 1 x 6hr paddle about 5 weeks out. The longer paddles are good for testing boat setup, hydration and nutrition.

Land crew have the hardest job of the night. I am convinced of this, so make sure they are fully briefed, aware of your paddle plan and are also prepared.. The saving grace for my land crew at checkpoint E was they had a 40lt dry bag full of everything ready to go. Without this my experience would have been very different.

### Recommended gear

Drink system  
Lunchbox on deck  
Bag for each checkpoint  
Down sleeping bag at finish line  
GPS with backlight turned on  
Gloves and Red Cross wrist taping at start  
Boiled potatoes  
Red light onboard to illuminate maps when needed (red does not destroy your night vision)  
Laminated maps

### Boat setup:

Mirage 580  
Mako Carbon Wing Paddle  
Adhesive foam padding on seat, foot peddles, foot rest and under heal  
Zipped spray deck  
Lunch box Velcro in front of cockpit (changed at each checkpoint)  
1 x 3lt water bladder plus 1 x 3 litre sports drink bladder (changed at each checkpoint). Drinking tubes supported on a neck wire within bite distance.



Photos of the issue

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