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# Sea Trek



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Issue 68



# VICTORIAN SEA KAYAK CLUB

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### COVER CREDITS: Conrad Edwards

Paul Caffyn passing a low tabular berg off the south-east coast of Greenland. Paddling through this one was not considered given the state of the archway roof. There was no warning of bergs collapsing. While Paul was filming Conrad stalking a sleeping seal on an ice floe, a nearby large berg collapsed and rolled over, startling not only the seal but both paddlers. Bergs such as this one, so holy it looks like it has been blessed by the Pope himself, were given a very wide berth.

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## EDITORIAL



Yes, a lot has happened since the last Sea Trek issue both in personnel and events, some conspiring to delay the release of this issue. In an attempt to reduce any further delay, this issue of ST is being circulated in both electronic (via email and VSKC web site download) and hard copy form.

Many will be aware that Phil Dyer has recently relocated to the USA, handballing in the process the role of ST editor to me. I'm sure all club members will join me in thanking Phil for his contributions to the club, not least through his role as ST editor. He's left me with some rather large shoes to fill. All the best mate to you and your family.

Since the last issue of ST, there have been a rich variety of VSKC activities on offer. In this issue, thanks to contributions from many club members (some for the first time I should add) we have a veritable smorgasbord of articles under a range of categories. Many thanks to all contributors and a very warm invitation to others who have a story to tell or some pictures to share in forthcoming issues. You can be sure that I'll also be busy 'conscripting' volunteers as well. I hope you enjoy this issue as much as I have enjoyed putting it together.

Cheers.  
Bob Fergie (Editor)

## PRESIDENT'S pod-cast



Welcome to the first issue of Sea Trek for 2011. As you will read in this edition, the VSKC Sea Kayak Forum & AGM at Anglesea was a huge success and has set a new standard for our annual gathering with nearly 150 in attendance.

For a club of our size to put on a weekend with over 18 different workshops demonstrates the great volunteerism of many members. We all owe a great deal of thanks to those who presented such a great variety of professionally run learning experiences over the weekend.

Planning is already underway for the 2011 gathering which will be at Phillip Island on the 4<sup>th</sup> – 6<sup>th</sup> November. More details later in the year but mark these dates in your diary now!

We had quite a few interstate and overseas visitors as well, and a reciprocal invitation has been received from the President of KASK for their KASK National Forum 2011 in April. For more details <http://www.kask.org.nz/events>. There are already a few members planning to cross the ditch to attend.

Following the AGM there has been a change in the committee line up. Tina Rowley has stepped down from the role as Membership Officer. Raia Wall has kindly stepped in to fill the vacancy and is doing a cracking job. Phillip Dyer has also stepped down from the role of Sea Trek Editor as he has moved to the USA. Bob Fergie has taken up the position and we look forward to the enthusiasm and skills Bob will bring to this role.

Committee meetings are held every two months and are posted on the web site along with the paddles. Any member can attend the meetings, please email the Secretary –David Golightly to advise of your attendance. You will be made most welcome, there are always tasks to be done!

We have held three committee meetings with much time and effort directed towards the organisation of the very successful visit of Ginni Callahan (USA) and Axel Schoevers (Netherlands). Other issues discussed have included- separating the AGM from the 'Forum' which after some consideration was not supported. The committee has also made a start at auditing our approach to risk management, auditing the VSKC Training scheme against the Australian Canoeing standards, and the consideration of an annual award (although no decision made as yet).

The Illustrated talk by Ginni and Axel at Mordialloc was a great night of entertainment and socialising. Many thanks to all those who helped make the night a success. This was followed by a 'train the trainer' day at Flinders and I'm sure many of you will benefit from the skills and knowledge passed on to the club instructors over that day. Sunday saw around 24 members receive tuition from Ginni and Axel in small group workshops. From the excited talk at the end of the sessions this was a great success!

Let's not forget what the VSKC is really all about – PADDLING.

The real success of the club is demonstrated by the health of the trip calendar. Over the summer months the calendar has been full of opportunities to participate in a variety of graded paddles from day trips, overnight adventures and expeditions.

I think we have had a very healthy start to the year. Let's keep this momentum going. Any member can organise a club trip. You don't have to be a Grade 3 paddler. You just need a Grade 3 to lead the on water stuff. So why not plan and advertise that paddle to an area you've

always wanted to visit? I'm sure you will easily find a grade 3 to assist you. See you on the water

Terry Barry (VSKC President)



Level 3 Candidates training weekend, November 2010

## AN INTERVIEW WITH GINNI CALLAHAN (part 1) with Bob Fergie



Many Club members enjoyed the opportunity to be involved in training sessions run by two internationally renowned Sea Kayaking instructors, Ginni Callahan (USA) and Axel Schoevers (Netherlands) last February. I also very much enjoyed the opportunity to tape an interview with Ginni towards the end of her time in Melbourne. What follows is the first part of that interview (see subsequent ST issues for the rest). What a delightful person is all I can say! (Ed)

*Ginni, what are the things that you most enjoy about the world of sea kayaking?*

In two words, freedom and connections.

**FREEDOM** relates for me to being on the sea in unstructured time. My favourite, favourite moments in all of life I think have been launching out from a little beach in Mexico before sunrise and paddling around a little island and coming back before breakfast (about 11nm), watching the sun rise; seeing the bi-illuminescence in the stars as you watch the sun rise. Sometimes there's whales or dolphins, but it's just time to be and breathe and observe and there really isn't any agenda except returning.

Also I think just allowing that unstructured time to connect with what's inside of us and out there is so valuable. Even the sea doesn't have 'lines' on it (like a road). I guess there are shipping channels but not where I paddle often. We live in a life where there are car lanes and time structure, so just to let the mind go free, and the heart go free and the body wander--it's so worth it!

### **CONNECTIONS:**

And then the connections would be the coaching and guiding aspect of it, which I find really exhausting, I think because I put so much into it. So, there's got to be a balance but I absolutely love doing it. There have been some amazing moments with people breaking through

learning barriers or even trust. Things like learning to roll or balance brace--you can actually feel when they kind of trust and relax.

It's almost easier to tell stories about this. For example, I was on an all-women's trip in Mexico some years ago and it just happened to be the year I was recovering from my cancer surgery and I was back in Mexico. It was a huge inspiration to recover and get fit again and back down there because almost everyone in that group were either a cancer survivor or knew somebody with cancer in their family. In the mornings I would often play the flute at sunrise. One of these women was a professional singer and sometimes we'd do duets together.

On the very last morning one of our friends asked us to do a duet of the song 'morning has broken' (Cat Stevens). Just as the sun rose we were all standing around, with all these shared life experiences culminating in this week-long sort of retreat. Talking and processing all this stuff on that final morning as the sun came up was very emotional--so hard to keep playing/singing and not cry. Those are the moments where it's so worth it--so very profound.

Or when somebody just gets it in something about paddling, and it's just paddling, but you see their face light up. Those moments are awesome!

*Ginni, we were aware that you'd been crook, but also that you'd come through it and that's been a wonderful inspiration for seeing someone so bravely battle through that. None of those experiences are wasted are they, or at least they don't have to be!*

Yes that's right. Actually I feel really really lucky. I definitely didn't have it as difficult as some people do. I came through my battle with cancer fairly easily--pretty much just surgery. However, I think going through the process--like when you get diagnosed with it--you just kind of stand there and look at life and ask, 'what have I done, what am I doing, where do I want to go from here, what's it all worth when nothings guaranteed Just that process and also being able to relate to other people in that position is precious. In a way I think my cancer was a gift because it enabled me to just ask those questions and look inside and go, hey you know what, I doing what I love. Thanks life, let's keep going.

### **Ginni on the health of the VSKC:**

It's been a wonderful experience. An obvious plus of the club is the obvious priority on continuing to improve, and the investment in your own instructors and coaches for the benefit of the club. I also appreciated very much that you are open to new ideas. Thanks for having Axel and I. It's been great. ('And so say all of us')

# 2010 VSKC FORUM COLLAGE a photographic journal from forum coordinator Terry Barry





Robin Boundy provided a really thorough and practical presentation on planning for expeditions at the 2010 VSKC Forum. He is of course very well qualified to do this given his extensive sea kayak expedition experience, including two Bass Strait crossings, the most recent in 2010 as leader. What follows below is part 1 of Robin's forum paper (with the rest to be published in subsequent ST Issues).

When considering a multi-day expedition, especially in remote areas, there is a great deal of planning involved. Some of the area's that need to be considered when planning an expedition are –

1. Who should participate on the expedition
2. Rules of participation
3. Training for the expedition
4. Planning the Expedition
5. Gear and equipment
6. Food and Consumables
7. Navigation
8. Environment, weather, stream flow, tides etc.
9. Safety / Risk management

In part 1 of this paper I will deal with the first two areas.



## 1. WHAT SHOULD YOU LOOK FOR WHEN CHOOSING PARTICIPANTS FOR AN EXPEDITION?

Before selecting participants for an expedition, you need to clearly define the demands of the trip including sea conditions, required skill, equipment needed, proposed

route and approximate length of daily paddles. Ask each participant to detail their experience and check that they are confident that they can manage the demands of the trip.

It is also helpful to ascertain the following information –

- Have you paddled with the other paddlers before over an extended period of time in a variety of conditions? People can behave differently, sometimes for the worse in stressful situations.
- Do they add strength and security or could they weaken the group and be a liability?
- Consider their overall health and fitness. Will they be able to achieve the required fitness necessary?
- Do they have good paddling, rescue and in particular good self-rescue skills?
- Do they have sufficient knowledge of weather and tides?
- Do they have the necessary land skills such as camping, cooking, communication, fishing and eager group participation?

## 2. RULES FOR PARTICIPATION

Once you have your team assembled, it is worthwhile to have an initial meeting allowing members the opportunity to express opinions and explore ideas.

Trip goals and itinerary can be clearly defined, expectations and responsibilities made clear so that all understand what is expected of them.

Expedition rules may consist of the following -

- An agreement to attend most if not all training sessions
- Agreement to train outside the scheduled training sessions
- All gear required for the expedition must be of a high standard, tried and tested prior to the trips commencement
- Once the expedition commences, all must agree to paddle as a pod at all times unless a group decision is made to separate. This would need to be an extraordinary situation.



Part 2 of this presentation follows in the next ST issue

## EFFICIENT PADDLING

by Annie Sharp



Having paddled for a number of years now, I have tried to improve my paddling stroke but always felt I was struggling to keep up on club paddles. A perfect opportunity came along with Dave Winkworth's 'Efficient Paddling Workshop', which took place on the Anglesea Creek on Saturday morning of the AGM forum.

What I really loved about this workshop was that Dave broke the instructions down into easily applied tips and he even gave out laminated tip sheets to place on the deck as reminders and reinforcement of what he had said. This included:

- Sit up! Slight lean forward
- Straight arm for catch. Loose grip on shaft
- Blade immersed *before* power
- Keep paddle angle up!
- Blade moves *out* from kayak, arm only slightly bent
- Follow blade with torso rotation. Exit level with hips
- Thumb support on shaft for return phase

What a great instructor in the way that he shared his knowledge in a caring manner both to the group and on a one on one basis. We were advised to bring along a stop watch, GPS or in my case, the second hand of my waterproof watch, pen and notebook/paper.

Starting with a normal paddle over a marked distance, then over the same distance we timed our runs using the tip

sheet and verbal instructions. There were all levels of paddlers and most learnt something or corrected bad habits.

We gathered at the end of each of the runs and compared times against the previous one. Even with all our chatting, Heather T and I both improved on every run.

The promised morning tea never eventuated as we quickly ran out of time. Everyone seemed to be enjoying their time on the water. The rain held off and it was a really great way to learn how to challenge one's self, assess and improve our paddling efficiency and mostly have fun on the water.

Thanks Dave, I still have your tips on my deck as a reminder.

## GREENLAND PADDLE CRAFTING

by Doug Farram

At 1:00pm Saturday afternoon of the AGM 2010 Anglesea the people who had registered for the "Making a Greenland Paddle" workshop assembled around a bench on the veranda of the Troup Hall. On the bench were a collection of rules, tapes, pencils, joiners planes, spoke-shaves and clamps. Over against the wall was a range of saw horses and work-mate benches and of course a stack of cedar blanks already cut into a basic paddle shape.



Grant Stewart, leader of the workshop explained how to take the measurements of our hands and arms to determine the dimensions of our individual paddles. After introductions

we broke into pairs or three's and selected a piece of cedar. The fun began as we measured each other. All sorts of numbers had to be recorded and then transferred onto the paddle blank. There was a little confusion and larking about at first until the penny dropped and the resulting marks on the blanks were joined by lines showing where to cut.

Under the watchful eyes of Grant and Bob Fergie (experienced GP craftsmen and users) the real work began. Soon we were wading around on a carpet of sweet smelling cedar shavings and the shape we were looking for began to emerge. Because we all worked at different rates there was always an example of what to do next to see. To see an instruction in a book is one thing but to see a practical example is much easier so we all helped each other as we went along. Working together as we all did was a fantastic way to meet new friends. All too soon the first session was over.

The next day work continued to the point where finishing the job would have to happen at home. Since the AGM several of the finished paddles have been sighted at the Saturday morning "Red Eye's" at Ricketts Point.

Carefully faired and smoothed with fine abrasive, rubbed down with pure Tung oil and buffed to a nice gloss, the colour of the cedar really shines out resulting in a most satisfying beautiful light paddle that you can say you made yourself. All that is left to do now is to learn to use and enjoy them.

Special thanks must be given to Grant and Bob who sorted through a huge stack of cedar at the timber yard to select the clearest knot free straight grained timber for us to work and also for all the preparation and organisation of the workshop, itself a great skill.



## 2008 SOUTH-EAST GREENLAND EXPEDITION by Paul Caffyn

The 2010 VSKC forum was a remarkably rich experience not least because of the inspiring input of the three visiting speakers: Terry Bolland from WA; Stuart Trueman, (at the time part way through his epic paddle around Australia); and legendary Kiwi (or should that be Queenslander) expeditioner extraordinaire, Paul 'kayak-dundee' Caffyn. In Caffyn's presentation, the forum was treated to a contagiously passionate account of some of Paul's more recent expeditions to South East Greenland with his good mate Conrad Edwards. The following article is a summary of his 2008 trip that Paul talked about during his forum presentation. As one participant was heard to say, 'All forum speakers were great but if Paul Caffyn's had been the only presentation I heard it would have made the forum more than worth it for me.' (sentiments shared by many no doubt).



Late June (2008) we flew into Kukusuk airport, and walked into the village through 3m+ deep cuttings in remnant winter snow banks. Our kayaks were stashed under the schoolteacher's house from our 2007 trip. Timing of this south-east trip was critical in terms of the summer break-up of the winter sea ice.

On 4 July, having sorted a food dump with a local hunter, and mailing a 2nd box of tucker to the Prins Christian Sund weather station, we headed south from Isortoq. Ice conditions varied from impenetrable shorefast ice, to bashing through brash ice, to passing huge stunning bergs.

The beauty of the Nordkapp bow is that at speed, the kayak would slide up onto ice floes, great for stopping for a pee and a look around, and searching for leads through the broad pans of sea ice – without getting feet even damp.

10 July, the wind was too strong for passing the bold cliffs of Kap Mosting, but backtracking into a cliff-lined bay, we were exceedingly lucky to haul ourselves



and boats onto steep rock slabs. With not a tad of level ground for the tent, we each levelled a sleeping bench under glacial erratics (huge blocks) for a moderately good night's sleep.

13 July we reached the abandoned Inuit village of Skjoldungen, and found our vital food barrel and containers of fuel. Emptied of tucker, we added soap powder, water and paddling clothes to the drum, and did the grape-trampling act to wash the clothes.

Evidence of recent rapid glacial retreat was clear next day

when we paddled down a fjord, which the map showed was crossed by a glacier. Terminal moraine was visible on one wall, twin remnants of the glacier on the other. Clearing the pack ice, the last 10 days to Prins Christian Sund was on horrifying big seas, formed by a big low out to the east. Front after front seemed to romp through, and we became chronic barometer watchers, making our breaks across fjords and around massive capes during brief lulls. Several expeditions have been rescued attempting this same trip, an Icelandic team and an Aussie group in 1986. The afternoon we were caught by a gale on a 12 mile fjord crossing was very close to where Danish paddler Lone Madsen capsized her kayak and drowned in 1989.

The photos on our faces show the relief of escaping into the shelter of the sund on 30 July. An hour later, we sat down to a sumptuous feed with the crew at the weather station. 10 August we stopped at Narsaq, where we had paddled into, on our West Greenland trips in the late

90s. It marked a successful conclusion to the 7th paddling expedition that Conrad and I had undertaken.

Our trip, retraced what was termed the 7th (open boat) journey of Gino Watkins, August Courtauld and Percy Lemon in 1931 at the end of the British Arctic Air Route Expedition. We also followed some of the route taken by Fridtjof Nansen, when he was attempting the first crossing of the Greenland icecap. We tried to find, land and camp at the few Inuit house sites marked on the topo maps, and once on the west coast, we were in the heart of the eastern settlement of the Norse. So much history.

On a small cluster of offshore islands with an Inuit site marked, we found the remains of two old rock-walled sod houses, and where the sea was eroding one entrance wall, I found a large section of a soapstone pot, what would have been a household treasure for boiling seal meat, until it cracked and

was discarded.

Both Conrad and I have a passion for the history of the Inuit kayakers, how they survived in such a barren, ice moulded landscape, and the history of the very few maritime explorers who breached the pack ice to map east Greenland. This SE Greenland trip was one we had both been hankering to do for 15 years or more, especially after making a kayaking pilgrimage in 2007 to Lake Fjord in East Greenland where Gino Watkins disappeared without trace while out seal hunting from his kayak on 20 August 1932.

In summary, a superb expedition with all the training, research and planning paying off handsomely. It extended me physically and mentally to my limits at times, well for hours at times when every stroke was crucial in staying upright in the icy cold seas.



#### PHOTO CAPTIONS AND CREDITS

##### Photo 1 Conrad Edwards.

Paul Caffyn during a long crossing of Ikertivaq, the ice factory fjord, on the second day of our 2008 trip.

##### Photo 2 (inset) Paul Caffyn.

East Greenland self portrait

##### Photo 3: Conrad Edwards.

On the south-east coast of Greenland, huge mushroom-shaped icebergs had been blown by a fresh north-easterly into the entrance to a channel, forming a near impenetrable ice choke. Paul and Conrad paddled through the ice choke rather quickly then stopped well clear to photograph the marvellous spectacle.

##### Photo 4

Conrad Edwards (left) and PC celebrating safe arrival at Lake Fjord in E Greenland, and the site of the base of Gino Watkin's fourth expedition. This was the 2007 trip.

## SEAL ISLAND TRIP: THREE BRUISERS AND A PUPPET by Roger Davey



*The following is (very loosely) based on a true story. Stage names are used to protect the identity of those involved.*

We expect Peter Treby was very pleased with his 40km solo paddle to Seal Island from Port Welshpool, as he walked to the top of the island to stretch his legs, take in the view and enjoy the solitude. His next thought was probably “Wot tha ....” after he spotted four kayaks paddling the short distance from Notch Island back to Seal Island.



This was Sunday of the 2010 Australia Day weekend, the second day of our Coffee Cruise to the Seal Islands, which departed from Duck Point and included a “side trip” around the southern tip of the Prom to Tidal River.

A recurring theme during this trip was lateness. It was much to the disgust of our self-proclaimed trip leader, “Crusty” that we left Duck Point a couple hours later than planned and sometime after high tide for our run across Corner Inlet

to the Singapore Deep channel and down the east coast of the Prom to 5 Mile Beach. The balance of the crew, International Guest Speaker (“IGS”), the “Doctor” and the “Puppet” preferred to operate on ‘chaos’ principles and didn’t give a hoot.

The Corner Inlet crossing was a rush thanks to a strong WSW wind up our backsides and was marred by two troubling incidents. In the first of these the Doctor, as always, ‘composed, considered and articulate’, was surfing his Raider X on the chop at close to 10kph when he was nearly run down by 70 kilograms of Double King Island Brie, Red Wine and Mirage 580. Had it not been for his ability to execute a text book emergency stop manoeuvre a major ecological disaster would have resulted when the cargo of the 580 spilled into Corner Inlet.

IGS, who witnessed this near catastrophe from behind (and almost capsized due to convulsing laughter), summed up the incident succinctly – ‘Puppet you are an idiot’.

The second incident saw us frustratingly bogged! For the most part Corner Inlet is very shallow and not the place to be at low tide. Crusty, vehemently denying any responsibility for this, took the opportunity to remind the rest of us of the virtues of punctuality, ramping up his stress levels at the same time. However,

there may have been something else on his mind (yes, he is a complicated beast!).

After a pleasant Al Fresco lunch at Biddies Cove which included a take no prisoners jelly fish fight (would you believe the average age of this lot was 46 years) we headed off down the Prom’s east coast toward our first nights camp at 5 Mile Beach. It was on this leg that a further series of disturbing events unfolded.

Shortly after passing Lighthouse Point, the reasons behind Crusty’s dour mood became more apparent. Clearly being out in the wilderness, invigorated by fresh sea air, and away from the day to day distractions of city life, had ignited a primeval urge from deep within the Nadgee owner’s psyche. He needed to mate - and immediately proceeded to mount an unsuspecting bombie a short distance from the point.



This first dalliance was obviously not successful, as a short time later after sighting a number of French Canadian backpackers on Three Mile Point he engaged in another mating ritual by

rolling his Nadgee and showing off the now gouged and scared underbelly of his boat to the girls. While privately they may have been impressed, they politely declined his advances. When Crusty barked "what do you mean, no" it was time for the rest of the pod to take off toward 5 Mile Beach and avoid any further involvement in this embarrassing display.

The camp site at 5 mile beach is one of the better ones on the Prom. Access to the site is from a stream that is open to the sea on most tides. It is quite sheltered and due to its location may not be as regularly frequented by bush walkers. It is just a pity Parks Victoria allowed these four sea kayakers a camping permit as they squabbled over prime tent sites like rabid seagulls, and partook in displays of public nudity, and when greeted to the delightful chorus of crows first thing in the morning, yelled from their beds, "please be quiet" (or words to that effect, let's say).

Sunday was the day for our trip out to the Seal Islands and with little or no wind till the afternoon this group of alleged "bruiser" paddlers made good time. At one point we disturbed 100's of mutton birds resting on the sea surface. Their startled panic saw a mass lift off that sounded alarmingly like a rogue wave breaking on a bombie. Needless to say we all froze in fear for a moment - it was very funny at the time.

The four main islands of the group are approximately 17 – 22km offshore and while it is "possible" to land on both Seal and Notch Island, this is on rocks and can only be done in good conditions. Camping on the Islands is not permitted and even if it was it would be difficult at best.

On Crusty's insistence we circumnavigated each of the islands which was worthwhile doing as we spent some time looking at the lighthouse and remnants of a crane platform on Clifty Island.

One of the highlights of the Seal Island Group was running a gauntlet that passes right through Rag Island. It has all the essential elements of a first class gauntlet, being open to the swell, is

narrow with nasty sharp bits, and the rocks on the bottom can suck dry on the wave surge. Further, it commonly causes a slight restriction in the sphincter muscle when passing through it.

A small number of Australian Fur Seals (a majestic animal when in the water) also called a small ledge three metres above the gauntlet their home. However, they are anything but majestic when on land and in particular when trying to escape to the water off the said rock ledge at exactly the same time the Doctor was passing through the gauntlet. The Doctor was quite relieved when one of the bomb diving seals missed the front of the Raider X by millimetres, causing the rest of us to ponder the question – would he be able to swim the 20km back to the mainland if the boat had sunk?



It was early afternoon when we headed toward Seal Island and met up with Peter Treby and then back to the camp at 5 Mile Beach.

One of the main requirements of the "bruiser" kayaker class is a not-so-high IQ. Crusty is a case in point. When he decided to run the length of 5 Mile Beach first thing the next morning he did a quick calculation of the time he thought it would take and let us know his ETA before venturing off. When he finally returned an hour later than predicted, he explained his later-than-expected arrival with the profound statement that he 'thought 5 Mile Beach was only 5 kilometres long'. The Doctor, whose brain works faster than Tiger Woods at a Las Vegas nightclub, just shook his head in amazement.

It may be opportune at this point to discuss gauntlet etiquette (seeing the gauntlet in question was "here"). When approaching a gauntlet, a pod should form into single file with each kayaker progressing through the hazard in an orderly fashion, one at a time. At the entrance to the gauntlet each kayaker

should survey the gauntlet looking for hazards and quickly undertake their own risk assessment - and then with perfect timing charge the gauntlet.



One moron in this group ignored all this and overtook the entire pod (which included 2 club instructors) at the entrance to the gauntlet. His risk assessment consisted of yelling "paddle Puppet, paddle" as he tried to clear a metre high wave that was now breaking over the rocks on the far side of the gauntlet. Lunch followed at the boaties camp at Refuge Cove and then in near perfect conditions the pod continued on to our next campsite at Little Waterloo Bay, about 8km further south.

Alert readers may have picked up that there were 3 senior kayakers in this group and one, well, novice. This is usually an ideal 'mentoring' situation as the more experienced paddlers pass on the wealth of their sea kayaking knowledge accumulated over the years to the novice. On the face of it this seemed to be the case when IGS willed the Puppet to bag Cape Wellington, as part of the VSKC's Cape Contour program. Upon successfully rolling up the Puppet was informed he had bagged a no-name point, and that Cape Wellington was in fact 2km further south. To add insult to injury he was further told to bring a topographic map next time in order to know where you really are!

After making camp at Little Waterloo Bay that same afternoon, the Doctor commented that he had noticed a general deterioration in the condition and demeanour of the pod over the past 3 days. His diagnosis – too much healthy food. As a result, dinner consisted of chips, dips, chocolate biscuits, fruit cake and custard for desert, and all washed down with any remaining red wine scavenged from the hulls of the boats. An immediate improvement in the

health of the group resulted, although it was noted that nearby campers had incorrectly diagnosed a foul odour hanging around the Little Waterloo Bay camp site a consequence of a septic tank exploding overnight.

Our final day was Tuesday with approximately 30km to cover. As is often the case with expeditions we were racing an approaching SW change. Fortunately we were able to round both South East Point and South Point before the change arrived getting in close to the granite cliffs of South East Point (with a great photo opportunity to boot).



The paddle north from South Point included running a number of gauntlets and while the wind was now from the west, it was a relatively easy paddle. Even so, one final event left an unsavoury cloud over the whole trip. Having arrived back at Norman Bay, all that remained was for Crusty and the Doctor to hitch hike back to their cars at Duck Point and then return to collect the



kayaks, IGS and the Puppet.

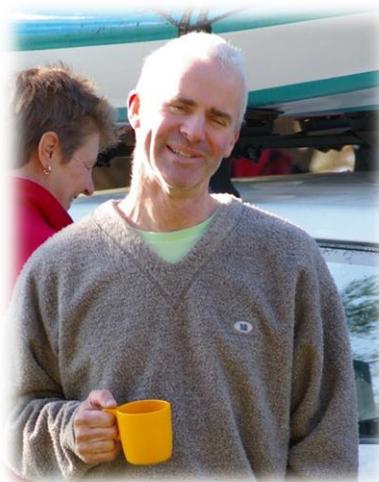
The guys arrived back in quick time but when lifting his Nadgee onto his car, Crusty was horrified to see the hull had not been cleaned of sand. It soon became clear that IGS and the Puppet had spent the last 2 hours having hot showers, exfoliating dry and damaged skin and gorging Prom Burgers with the lot, but had failed to clean the kayaks as agreed.

It is not necessary in this text to detail the content of the ensuing tirade but needless to say the kayaks were cleaned in double quick time. Two Nadgees were loaded onto the roof racks and then Puppet's Mirage was put into position upside down on top of the Nadgees. At

this moment, Puppet's P..s (yes, wee) gushed from the inverted cockpit and splashed all over the roof of the car, in through the open rear car window, soaking everyone within 5 metres with the acrid amber liquor.

Puppets explanation of "where did you think the 3 litres of water I drank today went" was, to say the least, unfortunate. There was some good news however as the car only required a "cut and polish" and a steam clean of the upholstery. Even so, VSKC members are advised to refuse any invitation to travel in the vehicle.

*The Kayaks: Crusty – Nadgee Expedition; International Guest Speaker – Nadgee Expedition; The Doctor – Raider X; Puppet – Mirage 580*



*The 'Puppet'*



Participants- Roger Bell Chambers (Nadgee Solo) and David Lee (Dagger Exodus) March 2010.

The plan was to paddle from Marengo to Portland or reverse depending on wind direction, over seven days.

Our planed start date, Monday 1<sup>st</sup> of March, was looking like a No-Go the day before (windy choppy seas with 3m swells). However, after a positive forecast for Tuesday through Thursday we decided to get down there Monday and check it out. We were dropped off at Marengo by Roger's friend Max just after lunch. We decided to go with a forecast 15-20 kts south westerly (headwind) for a short 13 km paddle to Parker River.

The trip got off to a good start as Roger rolled successfully after being hit by a breaking wave, cutting through the reef at Marengo. The wind and swell made us keep our distance from the shore as we headed past Shelly Beach and Blanket Bay. As we passed Point Lewis we were

forced even further out due to rebound of the cliffs. When we came around Point Franklin, with views of the Cape Otway light house, we realized we had gone too far and missed Parker River! At this point Roger was feeling sick and started throwing up over the side so we turned around and paddled about 2 km back and found the entrance to Parker River which looked impossible to land through from where we were. We initially decided to paddle further back to Blanket Bay, but after taking a closer look we decided to go in at Parker River. I got dumped out of my boat coming in,

but Roger made the landing look easy. We did a bit walking in the afternoon around the area on the Great Ocean walk track before camping the Night.

We made an early start in the morning with good weather (10-15 South Easterly). We passed the Cape Otway lighthouse with a few spectators up on the hill making good time past Air River and Castle Cove. We originally planned to stop for lunch somewhere around Milaneaia beach but after paddling 30km we decided to go in early at a secluded beach just past Johanna (we would later



find out it's called Cannon Ball Surf beach because of the shape of the indentations in the surrounding cliffs). After landing in reasonable surf we had a good feed but by the time we were ready to set off the swell had picked up. Yes, it was going to be a bit of a challenge getting off the beach we agreed. I only just managed to get out through the surf and I waited out the back for Roger. I lost sight of him for a while before I saw him make a number of unsuccessful attempts to get out. I decided to go back in but got dumped on the beach too. Roger by this time was cold and a bit shaken up given that his boat had been washed up on the rocks!! So, we decided to call it a day, got changed and warmed up. Luckily the damage to Roger's boat wasn't too bad, and we taped it up before camping the night.

We had another early start in the morning after long discussions about where to launch and trying to time the sets. Roger didn't give up and battled with the surf for over 2 hours with no luck. After chatting to a local surfer (our only visitor) we followed his recommendation to try about an hour after high tide. That worked, and our trip was then back on track just after lunch on day three.

Paddling from Milanesia past Moonlight head, Devil's Kitchen through to Princetown was a real highlight of the trip, given that it's all just so rugged and exposed. Arriving at Princetown that afternoon, at the mouth of the Gellibrand River (pretty much the only possible landing point off the day), the surf was big. I was hesitating a bit and trying to pick the lull between sets when Roger yelled out "Let's go" and he was

off. I just followed, managing to drop off the back of the first wave. However, the next one broke on me and I ended up rolling three times on the way in, with my spray deck blown off and the kayak full on water. Roger had made it most of the way in before capsizing and swimming his boat in. We had put a show on for a number of surf fishermen we discovered: two of them thought we were bloody idiots while the other two seemed really interested in our trip. We paddled about half a km up river to the caravan park, had a hot shower and camped there the night (a pretty eventful 27km day).

In some ways being stuck on Cannon Ball Beach wasn't such a bad thing because it meant we had near perfect weather for the most spectacular part of the trip. We were able to paddle close to the Twelve Apostles and go through the many stone archways. We stopped for lunch on a hidden beach, just past Lock Ard Gorge. We went through the archway in what's left of the London Bridge, past Port Campbell before stopping for a snack at Peterborough. We also gained a bit local knowledge from some fisherman there before continuing on and exploring the Bay of Martyrs followed by the Bay Of Islands, probably the highlight of the day with a whole Bay of big rocky pillars and archways to explore! We camped the night at the Bay of Islands boat ramp, the only possible camp spot in the bay (another great 38km day). We ate pretty well that night thanks to a commercial fisherman who sold us a fresh snapper otherwise destined for the fish tanks of a Chinese restaurant on Little Burke Street.

We woke up to rain on Friday morning and got on the water to a hazy overcast

sky, constant light rain (which lasted almost all day) and calm seas and minimal swell. The sea cliffs noticeably start to change just before Childers Cove with much greener vegetation. The tops of the cliffs in some places are really irregular and pointy too. After an 18 km paddle to Childers Cove (the only landing point between Bay of islands and Warrnambool) we had to decide whether to end the trip there (with a long portage up the sand dunes) or continue on 24 km to Warrnambool with nowhere to land in between. With a forecast of an afternoon wind change (15-20kn North Westerly headwind) we decided to capitalize on the good conditions and keep going. We got to Warrnambool and landed in front of the surf club at about four in the afternoon before the change.

We ended the trip here with poor weather forecast for the weekend. This was a very interesting and scenic trip with some reasonable distances between landings, big swells and surf (but could have been a lot bigger). It turned out to be an enjoyable paddle and a good deal more eventful than we thought.



## FRANKSTON TO QUEENSLIFF by Brandon Stewart



The day began with a rendezvous at South Frankston beach, the usual launching spot for regular 'idle Friday' paddles. However, on this occasion we were all loading our boats for an overnighter at Rosebud, with the necessary essentials for this epic journey from the calm waters of Frankston to the fast moving tides of the southern waters at Queenscliff.

The crew for this journey was the quartet Bob Fergie (Maelstrom), Ben Newman (Nadgee solo), Grant Stewart (blue and white "sharkie" aka West River 18), Brandon Stewart (Valley Nordkapp).

The sails were hoisted as we set our course for Rosebud with a gentle 10kn NE pushing us south to our destination. The seas were calm and soon the tales of adventure and the sea began to surface. After only a short while the masts of Mornington yacht club were in sight. The landing was negotiated without need for any combat rolls (although certain members found this temptation too hard to resist). Coffee was ordered and lunch was eaten with all of us decked out in our two piece or one piece skirts (much to the amusement of other Café patrons). It was an interesting sight watching mussel boats unloading for the fish market.

Once back at the boats we were greeted by someone else who was making the most of the day's sunshine. He'd cycled down to Mornington and was intrigued

by the sea kayaks and especially the "sticks" some of us were paddling with.

Photos were taken and then it was sails up again (for some) as we headed further south for the sights of Mount Martha and Rosebud beyond.



The wind was still from the NE but soon all the assistance we had had earlier in the day began to dissipate. So sails were lowered and sticks and paddles were put into motion once more. As the pod neared the easterly side of the channel the Spirit of Tasmania came roaring her way up the channel at some 25kn, a real reminder of the need to remain vigilant when paddling close to shipping lanes.

The breeze increased a good deal to 15-20kn at the same time swinging around to a SE direction and whipping up some wind-wave chop on our nose. The wind was sure making us earn the last 5km to Rosebud. At this point our pod shrunk by one as Grant left us to drive back to Melbourne for work (he'd done pretty well keeping up given that he was the only one without a sail).

The rest of us found our camp for the night another 2 km further south at the Rosebud foreshore caravan park. Unfortunately with the tide well and truly out we had a bit of a lug carrying our boats up past the high tide mark. Once that was done our kayaks were soon unpacked with an array of coloured dry bags scattered alongside the beached kayaks. Tents were put up, some for the first time, expanding our brightly coloured home away from home. There was even a 'jet engine' stove on display (one of Ben's recent you-beaut camping acquisition) providing a welcome cuppa to warm our weary bodies. We'd covered about 36 km on our first day. Following a great dinner feed we were soon off to bed as darkness descended and blood thirsty mosquitoes invaded 'our space'.

The next day we were greeted by warm sunshine, a gentle NE breeze and a fairly calm sea. After a relaxed breakfast we packed up and pushed off heading in a SW direction in order to get across the south channel shipping lane quickly before turning south for the South Channel Fort.



Sails were again deployed to take advantage of an assisting 10kn breeze. The old fort, built in the late 1800's to fend off any Russian invaders, now is home to hundreds of nesting.....birds. It seemed hard to believe that people really thought Russians were going to come all the way down into Port Phillip Bay.

After we all clambered down the jetty ladder and back in the kayaks we were on our way to our next stop 4km away-- Mud Island. The waters from the fort to Mud Island were shallow and confused as the tide ran out. However, it was still relatively calm as the wind dropped right away giving us a chance to watch a few of the large freighters cut their way in and out of the channel.

I'm sure many of these freight trains of the ocean could tell a few stories of the many vast oceans travelled and ports visited. Before long Mud Island was only a few hundred metres away and my mind drifted back to the task of focusing on finding a landing spot amongst its shallow shores.



We weaved our way through the shallow foreshore of the island before finding a great little lunch spot to boil the billy and stretch the legs.

I was not quite sure why some early adventurer had come up with the name 'Mud Island' until I wandered up the sand dune and looked into the centre of the island which was lined with a circular mass of mud and water. I'm sure it's great for the birdlife or the mud crabs that we came across but not so good for any lost soul looking for fresh water. As we left Mud Island in our wake we deployed our sails and headed towards Chainman's Hat (aptly named given its appearance of the later). However, we were not visiting it to find some shade from the sun. Instead we

came to say hello to the hat's permanent inhabitants, a tribe of 40+ slippery seals.



We enjoyed some rotary cooling with these playful puppies of the sea as they swam in and around our kayaks, showing off their acrobatic talents as they leapt on and off the pontoon. We then waved them goodbye heading west towards Queenscliff with the outgoing tide pushing us along at a good 10km/hr, rendering this last leg of the day an easy one. A brief stop at Pope's Eye brought us into contact with a group of scuba divers who were intrigued by our Greenland paddles and use of sails.

The trio of adventures continued on ferry gliding across the remainder of the leg, landing at Queenscliff around 3pm after another 35km day. Being aware that this was also the place Paul Caffyn completed his year-long circumnavigation of Australia 30 years ago, we were keen to see his famous Sisson Nordkapp. So with kayaks brought up the beach we made our way to the Queenscliff Maritime Museum. What a treat to see not only Paul's boat but also Freya Hoffmeister's as well -- not to mention all the other memorabilia housed at the museum. Like icing on the cake, Les the museum curator gave us the royal treatment yarning with us for the best part of an hour, past an old pilot boat, photos, stories, and models of ships that were once roaming the oceans.

Then of course we drooled in awe of Paul and Freya's kayaks hung proudly on the wall reflecting all of the remarkable individuality, passion and courage of these adventurer pilots. There were also photos and details about their respective journeys, each one different but just as significant as each other. Paul's journey was the one I was interested in the most not just because I also paddle a Nordkapp, but more importantly because he loved meeting people and sharing stories of life. This to me is a large part of why many of us choose to

belong to the VSKC., sharing our similar passion for and love of the water and sea kayaking. We're not made to go through life alone but are made for journeying relationships.

My mind moved on to other legendary sea kayakers at this point. The late Andrew McAuley, who clearly enjoyed both solo and small group expeditioning, experienced what it was like to be in utter isolation during his fatal attempt to cross the Tasman in a kayak. How really, really tough that must have been! An extract from his video diary recovered from his up-turned and empty kayak expresses this loneliness in very sobering terms, *'So it's howling. It's windy. There's big waves. I'm in a kayak. I'm in the middle of nowhere. I'd rather be home. I can't wait for this to finish. You know, I live for adventure. I love it and savour it. But on this occasion, it's just... that...far...out there'*. Wow, lots to think about and process there! For me (and I suspect for Ben and Bob too), our appreciation for the opportunity to paddle together even on a relatively short overnighter like ours was heightened. We'd covered just over 70km and really enjoyed sharing the adventure together.

While this trip was all but over, we quickly found ourselves plotting more trips in the not too distant future. After carrying our boats onto the ferry for the final leg back to Sorrento we reflected back on our little adventure. Yes, it had been a great paddle and a terrific opportunity to grow our friendships. For me it also reminded me of an old, but profound proverb of the sea, *'paddling as three it should always be'*. Yes, I think there's something in that.



## PILOT PETE'S PASSAGE! by David Golightly



The warnings should have been heeded; they certainly were signaled by Peter Dingle as he invited participation on his Bellarine trip last weekend. Come ready to understand the black art of using a GPS he said, come prepared to partake & compete in a gourmet meal he said, come ready to enjoy he said. So five VSKC members dared to take the challenge on: Terry Barry, Jac Rezenbrink, Gerard O'Reilly, David Golightly & the lead role in Master & Commander, Pirate Pete himself.

The reference to Master & Commander comes straight from that veritable font of knowledge – Pres Terry Barry, who en-route mentioned that it was Peter Dingle who many eons's ago took Terry on his very first sea kayak trip. Master & Commander indeed!

Getting to the launch site in time for the 0800hrs meeting was the first of the challenges, involving for some, (Jac & Gerard) a ten minute drive from their respective Bellarine homes, for Terry & David – a 0400hrs alarm call & we think Pirate Pete set out from Bendigo the week before. The chosen launch site was on Point Henry, which for those of us who had obeyed the initial instructions to bring maps, charts weather forecasts etc., held some trepidation – wasn't that where the giant Alcoa plant was located e.g. an industrial nightmare? The opposite turned out to be the case – a lovely beach with the shortest carry from

roof-rack to water's edge imaginable, which coupled with the forecast weather set the scene for a great weekend.

Pirate Pete's passage plan was to meander down to Indented Head some 31 ++ km over the horizon, others in the pod e.g. everyone else, wondered quietly if they had it in them, not just to get there with kayaks loaded with camp gear and other essential medicinal supplies, but also to get back the next day! 'Straight line or a coastal contour' asks the Pirate, coastal contour we all yell (we want to bail out as soon as we feel the first onslaught of muscle soreness, so the closer to the coast the better!)

We set off at 0930 hrs. with a slight sea breeze ruffling all the grey follicles abundant in the pod, lunch was consumed at Clifton Springs on a lovely beach near the old jetty & in great weather. Again we set off making our way to Portarlinton, which given the school holidays & the glorious weather was like Blackpool & Morecambe combined. On top of all this activity it seems that we had stumbled upon the annual convention of seaborne motorbikes, the noise was incredible!

The Master offered the choice of camping at Portarlinton or continuing on another couple of hours to our planned destination of Indented Head – needless to say on we went, this turned out to be the right decision. We had

been allocated a nice campsite above the beach escarpment with a great view down to the wreck of the 'Paddle-steamer Ozone' and onwards to the South-East. After setting up camp the great gourmet cook-off commenced, or so Terry & David thought anyway, it turns out that Pirate Pete was winding us up & immediately tucked into a healthy but boring looking salad sandwich, it then transpires that the two Bellarine 'Buoy's', Jac & Gerard, had ignored the order (punishable by keel-hauling), leaving only Master Chef Terry Barry & apprentice cook David to contest the title!

David had been winding Terry up all day in the vain hope of panicking him into error – little chance as Terry then proceeded to produce one of his signature dishes involving something with satay sauce embedded in it. Up until this stage David had steadfastly refused to divulge the ingredients of the planned masterpiece, however after the turnip had been prepared then the potatoes, while all the time humming away some Robert Burns compositions – Terry piped up "I hope you are not cooking that dreaded Scottish dish – HAGGIS"!

Indeed I am announced David and don't forget our deal, I taste your dish, you taste mine! 'Yes but that was before I knew you were cooking offal' pleaded

Terry, too bad David replied – the deal was unconditional was it not?

Pirate Pete quickly reminded everyone of his special status – *‘I’m a vegetarian so I can’t touch that dish’*. And so it came to pass that Terry, Jac & Gerard were inducted into the haggis eating club – an honor they all exclaimed, bestowed rightfully on the chosen few. This honor of course was undertaken only after listening to David reciting some unintelligible piece of Burns poetry entitled *“Tae a Haggis”*. They were forced in the circumstances, being close to the Anniversary of the birth of Robert Burns, to then wash the haggis down with a wee drop of whisky which Terry had the good sense to bring along in case of medical emergency.

The next day dawned with a decent sea rolling onto our South-East facing beach & a good wind doing the driving,

however we were soon underway, everyone excelling themselves by meeting the planned launch time of 0730 hrs. As soon as we were around the first headland the seas abated & the wind dropped & continued to do so all day, by 1030hrs we had completed half the day’s total of 31 km so again we stopped at Clifton Springs for a break & a stretch. Underway again & in search of a suitable site for lunch, we had a great time paddling over shallow water threaded with sea-grasses and sand patches. Soon the pirate pipes up – *‘This is the spot for lunch’*, so the pod dutifully turns left & heads for the nearest beach some couple of hundred metres away – no no says Pete, I mean here, as he gestured downwards with his hooked claw!

The next thing we knew we were all standing in waist deep water (chest deep in David’s case), consuming various

lunch choices while chatting away as if we did this sort of thing all the time! After the four other paddlers in the pod had kindly helped David back into his elevated kayak we set off on the final leg of the journey.

In the distance the industrial bulk of the Alcoa plant was unmistakable, as was the vessel unloading bauxite at the end of the dedicated jetty projecting some half a kilometer into Corio Bay, so on we continued in superb weather finally landing at 1330 hrs. within metres of our parked cars.

What a fantastic weekend we had been part of, a lovely stretch of coast that without doubt we should see more of. Well done the ‘Master’ and of course the ‘Commander’.



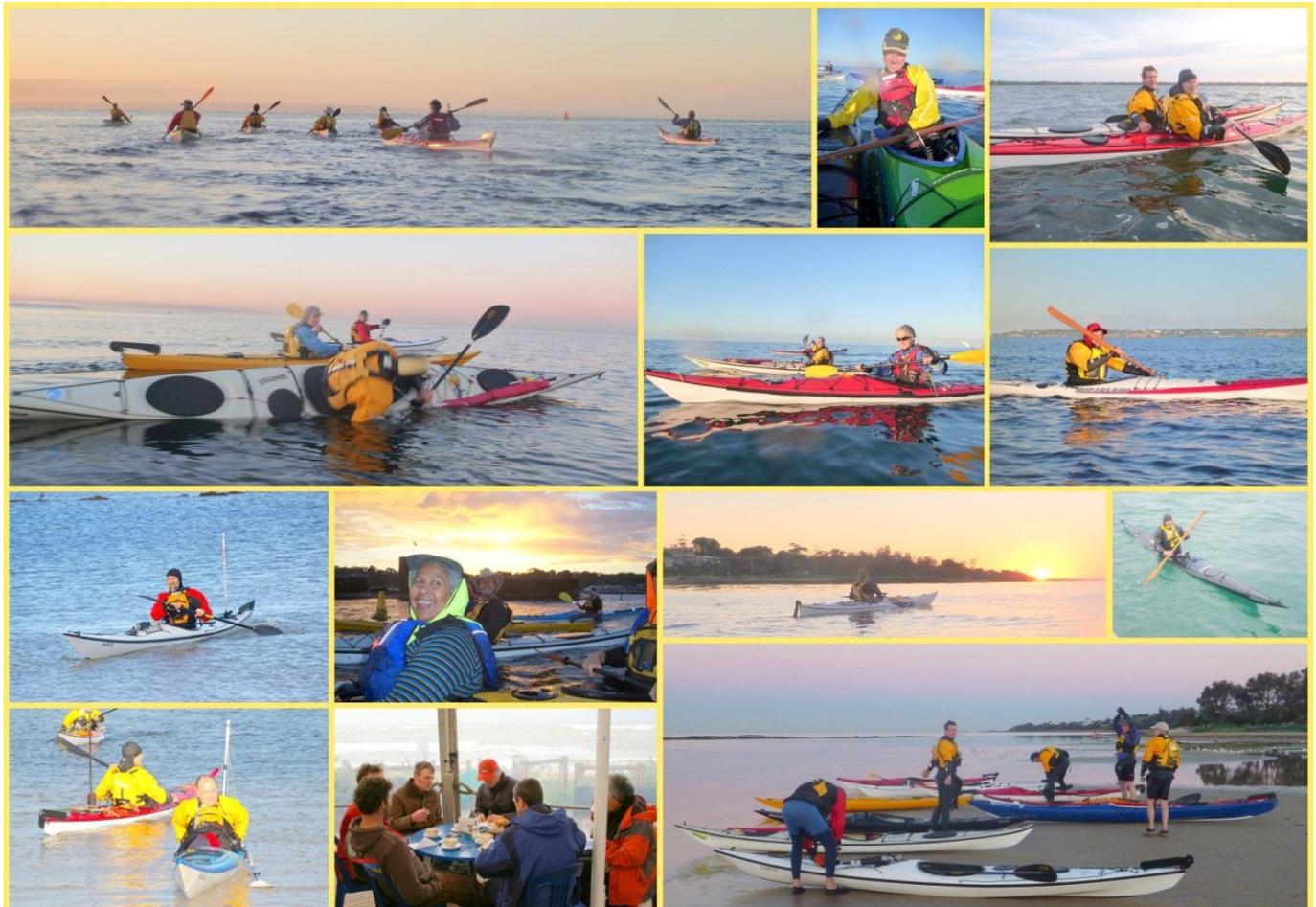
# RED-EYE-RICKETS REFLECTIONS by Bob Fergie



The 'Red-Eye' is a weekly, all year round, two and a bit hour long early Saturday morning paddle in Port Phillip Bay. It accommodates paddlers of all levels and is a fantastic way to start a weekend. The pod departs Ricketts beach at 6am and usually covers a 12km return trek to either Sandingham or Mordiallic depending on wind direction, arriving back at Ricketts beach a little after

8.15am. Lights on boats are required for autumn to spring periods given that sunrise occurs closer to 7am than 6am. The paddle is commonly punctuated by cries of 'Half-over' when every half hour or so those keen on rolling do just that (actually there are a few who seem to relish more regular 'rotary cooling' opportunities). Upon return to Ricketts, skills practice and rolling are the norm –

so a great learning environment. Following a leisurely pack-up, most 'Ricketters' adjourn to the adjacent beach-front Café enjoying a good yarn over a coffee or two before ambling home to households only just beginning to surface from bed. It really is a terrific club paddle and well worth getting up early for. If you'd like to join in, contact Peter Costello or Andrew Campbell.



highlighting one of the many regular VSKC paddles



As a certified member of the “God-botherer” squad, I’ve long been fascinated with the Biblical story of the encounter at Peniel. It was there, as a consequence of Jacob’s wrestling with God, that Jacob walked away from that sacred space with a reminding limp.

For many years I enjoyed the solace and sacred space afforded to those who like me who embraced the world of the long-distance runner. Much of my meditating, thinking and wrestling through issues took place during long runs, either on my own or in the company of like-minded companions. Somewhat paradoxically, it was the very movement and rhythm that provided an inner stillness and contemplative capacity. In more recent times a chronic achilles injury (acquired originally from running to catch a train to watch the magnificent Geelong Cats play...) has seen a shift in my physical capacity to run for any real distance. I am limping and missing that provision of sacred space.

In his book “The Active Life”, Parker Palmer reveals his struggle with the intentional disciplines of the devotional life, but that he has discovered that there are “moments of unintentional contemplation that unmask the illusions to reveal a reality often hidden by the very busyness of life.” He also believes

that “before you can have a spiritual life, you must first have a life,” - a life immersed in the active world. It is a world where one is alone and also part of a community. A spiritual life is not one which flees the world of action. [Palmer, Parker J. [1990]. *The Active Life: A Spirituality of Work, Creativity and Caring*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass]

So, in the graciousness of God and with the helpful encouragement of a few special friends, another sacred space has emerged... enter the world of the Sea Kayaker!

Originating from New Zealand, I have always enjoyed an active life, especially getting “out on the briny” (boating). One of my earliest boating memories was being thrown into the water and ending up being trapped beneath a capsized trimaran. It turned out that Dad’s home-made craft had some design glitches that proved a little hazardous on the yacht’s maiden voyage! From that somewhat terrifying encounter has emerged a new challenge to overcome those fears of entrapment and discover the delightful exhilaration of a successful Eskimo Roll.



Even more surprising than my new found capacity to master an upside-down skill was that the cockpit of my kayak has become a new sacred space.

Long-dormant skills acquired when working part-time in a boat-building factory during university years were re-kindled when I built a 'strip-plank' timber sea kayak through the winter and spring of 2008 [a very narrow 20" x 18' Nick Schade, Guillemot high deck Night Heron, Ed.]. It was a very satisfying project and the boat was duly launched just over two years ago.

What I hadn't realized was how venturing into the deep in a narrow, somewhat 'tippy' craft would challenge me on a number of levels. There was the obvious one of learning sufficient paddling skills in order to stay upright! Then of course there were core muscles to strengthen and the flexibility challenges of an aging runner's body squeezed into a tight-fitting cockpit... but the biggest challenge has been overcoming the almost primal fear of capsizing and its consequences.

In his writing, Parker Palmer also tells of life's invitation to embrace the 'monsters' (those fears that paralyse and immobilize us) and ride them down into the deep! Appropriate imagery indeed!

Embracing my fear of the sea (and its monsters!) has enabled me to discover a new sacred space – the cockpit of my beloved Kayak! I have found a sense of God's presence not only in the stillness of quiet waters but even in the testing

tempest of an angry bay; in the solitude of an evening paddle and in the adventure of blustery blue-water expeditions with fellow paddlers. I am still learning how to balance and brace amongst the wind and waves, and continue to practice the comforting skill of an Eskimo roll in order to regain equilibrium when capsized!

The Sea Kayak Association has a saying: "Less than three shall never be" in order to encourage safety in numbers. I reckon that's not a bad reminder for those of us who not only value the

companionship of the Triune God but also that of good friends who travel with us in our sacred spaces.

*Editor's note: Grant Stewart is a Baptist Minister who in recent years has discovered the pleasure not only of paddling sea kayaks, but making them as well. He is one of a growing number of club members enjoying the challenge of paddling and rolling with Greenland paddles. In addition to having made quite a few himself, Grant led the very successful forum GP crafting workshop.*



## HOW I STUMBLED INTO KAYAKING by Ben Newman



As we get older, it seems the Big Fella takes delight in taking away the things given to us in our youth, my hair and general (average) good looks have been in decline for nearly a decade now. The only consolation seems to be a free pass on stamina, and strangely enough that how I got into Kayaking.

My eldest son is a First 8 rower with his school and I mistakenly thought that this youthful enthusiasm could be converted into a father and son hobby. With the purchase of a shiny new “double sit on top type piece of junk” and one rather reluctant son in tow, we “set off on a three hour tour” (hmm that sounds familiar, flashback to Gilligan in this story).

As it turns out First Eight rowers do not have stamina beyond the standard two thousand metre race length and pudgy old blokes do. At the two hour mark the lad was stuffed and that’s about the time I made my fatal tactical error. Tapping him on his shoulder I consoled, “its OK mate let your old Dad take you home”.

Arriving back at the beach it was all over. My lad was the proud owner of a dented ego and I was rather tersely told that I should have bought a single sea kayak because we (son and me) will not be doing that again. Well I was wild, not with the lad of course but with myself for being so stupid.

It was a week or so before I realised I had really enjoyed the paddle and that it suited my needs more than my lads. I schemed and cajoled my better half and once the funds were approved by the finance department (my wife) I was

down to the local kayak shop “faster than a rat up an aqueduct” (Monty Python). The rest is pretty much history apart from the fact that I now have four kayaks and a family whose response to this fleet varies from mild amusement, through to dismay.

I was paddling over a year before I joined the VSKC and I feel at least two of those kayaks purchased could have been bypassed if I had joined the club earlier. Since being a member I have enjoyed the company of a great bunch of very diverse people and continue to grow in confidence and ability.

I cannot recommend the club experience enough. It adds an essential social element to paddling; provides safety in numbers; and offers terrific experience beyond your wildest dreams. If your experience is like mine you will end up tackling elements and situations not previously dreamt of, just great stuff. Kayak camping is introduced and a bunch of social functions into the bargain. I guess I am preaching to the converted, but it’s good to be on the record regarding the many positives to be experienced as a member of the VSKC.

Finally a big thanks to all the enthusiastic senior club members who have taken the time to cheerfully assist us novices as we practice drowning and the various other skills necessary for challenging and enjoyable sea kayaking adventures





# TIPS FOR TRIPS

### **PLANNED TRIP - SOLO PADDLE OF APPROXIMATELY 40 KM RETURN: ERITH ISLAND TO SOUTH WEST ISLE, FEBRUARY 2011.**

The plan was to depart Erith Island at 5.30 am with the last 3 hours of the flood tide to arrive South West Isle around slack tide at 8.30 am. This would allow one hour to explore the island before returning to Erith Is with the Ebb tide. The forecast for Bass Strait and Approaches was 5 to 15 kn S.W. changing to N.E 20 kn in the evening.

I knew the wind could make it a bit of a slog heading out to the island but felt it was more likely to be around the lower range forecast for that time of morning. Most importantly it looked like a tail wind and favourable tide to bring me home. With everything packed the night before I decided to call my son at home to check the Marine Wind forecast for the area to be paddled. Surprisingly he told me that between 5 am and 11 am the wind would turn N.E to 20 kn! That

would be 20 kn on the nose and wind against tide. No problem in the Bay but in the middle of Bass Strait, paddling solo this not a good scenario so reluctantly I cancelled the trip.

By 9.30 am the wind was already blowing 20 kn from the North East. Bill Robinson and I walked to Wallaby Cove to view the sea conditions out to South West Isle and it wasn't pretty! It would have been a real battle to get home and with no guarantee of being able to land on S.W Isle. In fact a yachty moored in West Cove came ashore and straight away said "where the hell did this N.Easterly come from, it wasn't forecast!" I told him it was on Marine Winds which contradicted the Bass Strait marine forecast. He was an experienced sailor who had just sailed down from Darwin on his way to Hobart and even he wasn't aware of the Marine Wind forecast on the BOM site! Also of some surprise to me, the Bass Strait and Approaches Forecast did not forecast the N.E wind at any time during that day but

maintained their S.W wind direction forecast on their 4.30 pm report!

**TIP** - If at all possible, check the marine wind forecast for the area to be paddled and compare with the written forecast for that area. If they don't complement each other, BEWARE!

#### How to access the Marine Wind Chart information:

Go to the Bureau of Meteorology website; Click on the Marine and Ocean icon on the left of the screen; Click on the Australia Wind Forecast map for the area to be paddled; Click 1 to 7 days as required.

Note - I would only rely on the first and maybe second day forecast. My experience to date suggests that the current to next day wind forecast is quite accurate.



## TRIPS FOR TIPS

I thought it high time I contributed to Trek. A recent kayaking cock-up supplied my subject (one I could have happily done without). Currently landlocked after being x-rayed & poked & prodded by the doctor, cabin fever is setting in.

I stuffed up a surf landing, an unspectacular dumping shore break / steep beach combo, at regular West Coast lunch spot, Red Rock. I have landed here a hundred times; I took things a bit too casually.

My kayak was spun on the steep beach as I was exiting, causing me to fall A over T to seaward. You can guess the rest. Barely got to my feet & jumped as the kayak, with now flooded cockpit came hurtling back off the beach, taking out both my legs.

Had my feet been solidly planted I'm sure I would have a broken a leg. The damage? One foot as big as my head & other leg, black as the inside of a cow! Not a happy camper! Don't know how my wing paddle survived either as the kayak went over that too.

Here are a few ego-denting observations, licking my wounds after stuffing up!

Getting hit by a sea kayak HURTS. I paddle in local surf regularly & tend to get a bit slack. I think I will be further increasing my margin for error in regard to those around me in future.

I have no idea exactly what hit me. My kayak is pretty good, no sharp edges etc. A sharp corner on a rudder assembly or

keel may have created a much more serious scenario.

I took landing far too casually, usually I charge a beach at speed & get as far uphill as possible, atop the surge of a set wave, not a lull, in theory creating maximum time & gaining highest beach position to scramble out. This time my position was too low & not quite 90deg, the kayak spun very quickly, I thought could safely exit in time, but in hindsight the steepness of beach & strong surge guaranteed failure. Note to self; if it isn't perfect, float back out into the surf, take a few waves on the head & try again. It's far less painful.

Keyhole cockpits, with timing can be "legs out" on hitting the sand, be out, up & hit the beach running. (The reality is often a less than graceful, but very entertaining face-plant!)

Ocean cockpits or deep vee hulls, great in the water, but landing on steep inclines I need more practice. Speed in exiting and clearing the kayak is the key if it's a dodgy landing.

Position some hairy-chested paddler pals on the beach to assist, doh! (Don't be the first paddler to land!)

Finally; a not so obvious tip, originating from The Kalaru Institute of Hydro Physics & Material Sciences. Apply a slippery silicon based spray such as Mr Sheen on the floor of your kayak (but obviously not in foot / heel contact area near front bulkhead).

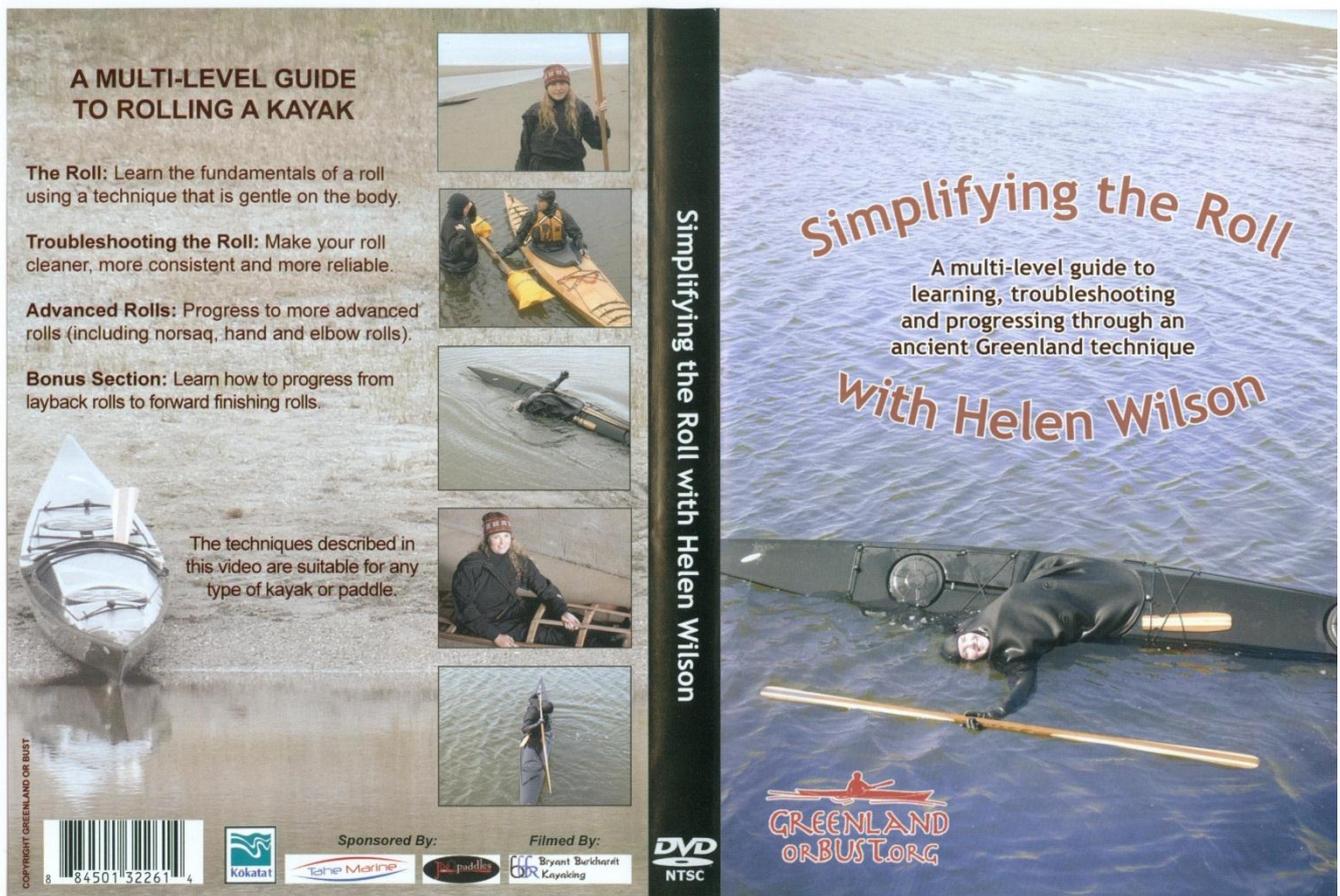
Slide out like a greased pig! I mean lightening.



*Another great tip from 'the great white pointer'.*

# 'SIMPLIFYING THE ROLL' DVD with Helen Wilson

A SEA KAYAK RESOURCE REVIEW: by Bob Fergie



## Learning to roll is one thing, but learning to roll really well is another.

Many of us have participated in pool training sessions run by the club and have greatly benefited from these. I'm one of them. Many will also have watched a range of good rolling DVDs in the hope that these would help improve technique, competence and consistency necessary for 'combat rolling' in the big stuff.

In this regard, Helen Wilson (USA) has produced one of the best rolling instruction DVDs I've come across.

Yes, she paddles a narrow west-Greenland kayak replica Tahe Marine boat (black like mine, and with a very low back deck). Yes, she wears a replica Inuit Tuliq (all-in-one CAG/skirt), and yes she uses a wooden Greenlander paddle (the easiest paddle I've ever used to roll with). However, these are all rather incidental apparel when compared with the amazing effortlessness of her rolling technique, which is what really caught

my attention. Her oft-repeated phrase, 'it's really all about the body' was at first frustratingly irritating until, that is, I began to understand what she meant in practice.

The DVD is divided into four chapters:

1. **THE ROLL:** demonstrating the fundamentals of a roll using a technique 'that is gentle on the body'
2. **TROUBLESHOOTING THE ROLL:** providing practical tips to make your roll 'cleaner, more consistent and more reliable'.
3. **ADVANCED ROLLS:** detailing and demonstrating progressions to more advanced layback rolls in particular.
4. **BONUS SECTION:** demonstrating the progression from layback rolls to forward finishing rolls.

Since watching this DVD and working to apply her tips, my often energy sapping muscling of rolls has started to change

for the better. As Helen Wilson says, it all has to do with the positioning of the body rather than the type of paddle or boat used.

I confess again that initially my sceptical little brain responded, 'yea, easy to say for a young, short and still very flexible lady like you!'

However, not for the first time I was wrong! I'm a rather large, late 50's male with early-onset rigor mortis, yet even I have found her techniques possible and her tips very helpful.

If you're interested, you can order a copy on-line through the 'Sea Kayaker' magazine web site book store at a very reasonable price.

On the other hand, if you want a taste before you pay, go on-line and Google 'Helen Wilson', then follow the links to a U-tube video to see a snippet of the DVD. You can also check out her web site, <[greenlandorbust.org](http://greenlandorbust.org)>.

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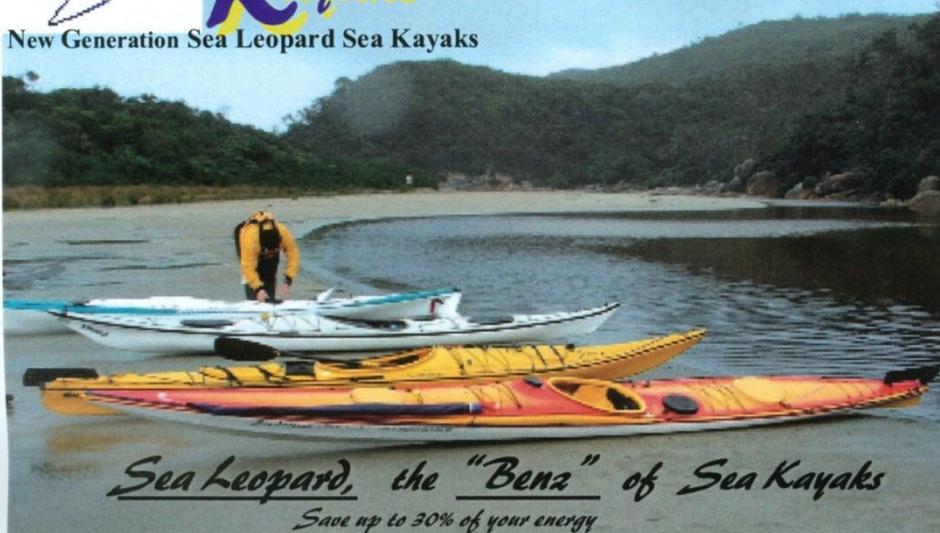
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# We are the vskc



You've got to wonder what the poor people are doing! (another 'cracker' Paul Caffynism)