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# Sea Trek



Spring 2011



Issue 70



## VICTORIAN SEA KAYAK CLUB

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COVER CREDITS: Bob Fergie

*Brandon Stewart in his Valley Nordkapp (Hezekayak) paddling with his home-made Greenlander 'stick', rounding Rabbit Island, during the recent Queen's Birthday VSKC trip out of Port Welshpool*

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

### REGULAR COLUMNS

<b>Editorial</b> , Bob Fergie	2
<b>President's pod-cast</b> , Terry Barry	3
<b>Onda Watereporta</b> , David Winkworth	4

### OVERNIGHT PADDLING ADVENTURES

<b>A Family Affair</b> , Melanie Pollock	5
<b>An unexpected pleasure</b> , Judy Wilson	6
<b>Whew, that went well</b> , Derek Wilson	7
<b>Snake Is circumnavigation</b> , Greg Gleason and Derek Wilson	8
<b>West coast Wander</b> , James Bate	10

### CLUB MEMBER STORIES

<b>Boating in Wales</b> , Elizabeth Thomson	12
<b>Palangies in Paradise</b> , Terry Barry	14
<b>Sandy Robinson</b> , Peter Treby	16
<b>Surf's up John, seriously!</b> , Tony Chick	18

### TIPS FOR TRIPS

<b>Quantifying strokes</b> , Dave Winkworth	18
<b>Expedition planning</b> (3) Robin Boundy	19

### GEAR AND RESOURCES

<b>Magnetx pump switches</b> , Neil Brenton	20
<b>Pimp my boat</b> (2), Andrew Hurnard	21
<b>Fitting deck ties</b> , Richard Rawlings	22

### SPONSORS

<b>Nadgee Kayaks</b> , Lawrence Geoghegan	23
<b>The Kayak Shop</b> , East Coast Kayaking	23
<b>Brasca paddles</b> , Canoe Innovations	24
<b>Rafta Kayaks</b> , Bob Mitchell	24
<b>Silverstorm Paddles</b> , David Winkworth	25
<b>Fitness Lifestyle</b> , John Lisica	26
<b>Fozzy's kayaks</b> , Glenn Ian Foster	27

### SPECIAL VSKC EVENTS

<b>Stuart Trueman Live</b> , 8 <sup>th</sup> October	27
<b>VSKC Paddle Fest/AGM</b> , 4-6 November	27



## EDITORIAL



While the winter season curtails many outdoor sports, not so with sea kayaking. In fact many club members have been out on the water enjoying the magnificent beauty and power of the untameable ocean 'out in the cold'. If you're like me this experience often leaves you feeling humbled given our relative insignificance in the grander scheme of things. Yet one feels wonderfully alive too, as with all of our senses we connect with creation in all its shades and moods. But it's not just the seascape that captures our hearts and drives our passion is it! It's also the people we get to know and appreciate as we paddle together through fair and foul weather. In this regard I'm sure you join with me in conveying condolences to Doug Farram following the recent passing of his wife Ros after a long battle with cancer. As terribly sad as this has been, I know Doug has greatly valued the support of the VSKC community through it all. To me this is one of the precious bi-products of our club, reflected variously in the stories of this issue of Sea Trek. I hope you are encouraged and inspired as you, like me, enjoy something of the shared journey in long skinny boats. Thanks again to all contributors to this issue. Keep them coming. Bob (Editor)

## PRESIDENT'S pod-cast by Terry Barry

Welcome to another edition of Sea Trek, with many thanks to Bob who is doing a cracking job.

With the weather starting to warm up, the club is emerging from winter into a busy season with much happening. Trips of note include the recent solo paddle by Adam Fritsch from Mackay to Cairns, well done Adam on what must have been a tremendously rewarding journey. Grant Kelly, Mick Shankie and Brian Roberts completed a paddle in Lombok Indonesia, David Golightly, Heather Torbet, Deb Barry and yours truly enjoyed a delightful paddle in Tonga, you will hear more of these exotic journeys at the Paddle Fest In November!

I'm excited that we have been able to secure Stuart Trueman for the evening of Saturday the 8<sup>th</sup> October to regale us of



his remarkable achievement in his unsupported circumnavigation of Australia. Following his timely visit at last year's forum I'm sure like me, you will be eager to find out how the rest of his journey progressed. Details of this event are elsewhere in the magazine as well as on the VSKC web site. Please support us by attending and bring along your friends & family.

Planning is well underway for the highlight of the VSKC year, our Paddle Fest and AGM weekend at Phillip Island on the first weekend of November. The emphasis will very much be on getting out on the water with a great selection of trips planned accommodating a diverse range of skill levels.

I urge you all to book now for this terrific weekend, a highlight will be our special guest Jeff Jennings from Tasmania who will enthral us with paddles in Tasmania as well as his international standing as a first class photographer of all things sea kayaking.

We are also fortunate to have two international guests arriving in April 2012. Cheri Perry & Turner Wilson. World class exponents and instructors in Greenland paddling. Cheri & Turner will be here from the 5<sup>th</sup> to the 15<sup>th</sup> April. During



this time they will be spending time with the VSKC instructors as well as providing group and private lessons to members. There is much to be learnt from these two even if you don't use a Greenland paddle, the balance and skills involved are readily transferable to euro paddles. Details of how you can access training will be forthcoming.



CANADIAN BAY paddles have been the backbone of the VSKC for as long as I can remember. We are now changing the title of this regular monthly paddle to THE VSKC MONTHLY PADDLE.

This change is to reflect the intent to periodically conduct this paddle at other locations with the intent of allowing us to offer a variety of learning opportunities that may not always be conducive to the Canadian Bay area. When booking onto this paddle be sure to check the location as it may not always be at Canadian Bay from now on!

Late in August the VSKC instructors got together at Phillip Island to chew the fat and discuss the current VSKC training and assessment scheme. Guest presenter at this weekend was Tony Wennerbom

who has spent many hours mapping the VSKC and Australian Canoeing competencies against the Australian Standards. This has allowed us to have an external audit of our training scheme to ensure we are meeting (or exceeding) best practice. From this we have identified a few areas we will add or modify as well as insuring we continue to be on the right track.

Changes to log books, competencies and requirements will be announced as we work through the information gathered over this busy weekend. Special thanks to Dave Winkworth and John Woollard who travelled considerable distances to attend.

Finally with the AGM occurring before the next edition of Sea Trek I would like to take the opportunity to acknowledge the work and dedication of the current committee and thank them for their support during my first term as President.

While many are planning to continue on the committee in 2012, some are taking a well-earned break after in many cases, years of involvement on the committee. Derek Wilson will be standing down as Vice President, Peter Sharp from Treasurer, Peter Treby from Communications Officer as well as Robin Boundy from Special Events Coordinator.

May I encourage you to consider nominating for a role on the committee as without your input there will be no VSKC. It is your club so make the most of it. Even if you are new to the club don't be shy in stepping forward!

Safe Paddling

Terry Barry  
President

'Had an interesting discussion with friends recently about EPIRBs and PLBs. It all came about after reading a press release about the new ACR ResQLink PLB. This thing really is tiny! Damn, I wish it was around when I bought my 406 PLB!



Notice that I call it a PLB? Yes, that's what it is... a Personal Locating Beacon... and NOT an EPIRB! Sure they do the same thing, that is bring in the cavalry when you really need help but there are differences and sea kayakers, of all outdoor adventurers should know them.

An EPIRB must:

- transmit for at least 48 hours
- be fully waterproof for use in the water
- float upright unaided and transmit a signal while afloat
- have a lanyard to attach to you



A PLB must:

- transmit for at least 24 hours

- be water and dustproof to IPX7 standards (lower standard than for EPIRBs)
- float, but not necessarily in an upright mode

Hmmm, bit of difference there! You'd think we'd all be using a genuine EPIRB wouldn't you, ... and not a PLB... and yet, I don't know of any sea kayaker who does use an EPIRB! Further, PLBs do not pass as safety gear for use beyond 2 nautical miles out to sea.

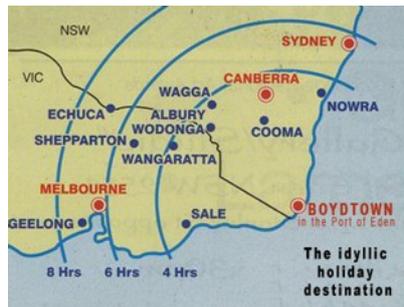
We do love our PLBs though, because they're compact, fit in PFD pockets well and they do their job when called upon. EPIRBs are bulkier than all PLBs and yet they cost significantly less! Isn't that funny? We pay less for more plastic, bigger batteries and longer wires! It possibly has to do with the numbers of them out there I suppose.

Let me leave you with these warnings: Do check your PLB for good waterproofing. There have been instances of spontaneous activation through water ingress. Tape up the seams with duct tape if unsure.

Lastly, if you carry your PLB in your PFD (as many do), then you assume you may have to use it when separated from your kayak. Right? Then answer this question: If you do need to activate your PLB in the water, how are you going to secure it in an upright position to transmit while keeping your head out of the water in the ferocious seas that separated you from your kayak?

We had over 40 people at Winky's Weekend at Mallacoota in March. It was a fun weekend!

Some advance notice for next year: We'll be moving the weekend to Boydton on the southern shore of Twofold Bay. Only a few kms further than Mallacoota because our campsite at Boydton will only be 1 km off the highway!



The point of the advance notice is to give you a chance to plan for the trip. We encourage you to take a couple of days

off and have a good paddle and look around the NSW Far South Coast.



Some of the attractions: Eden Killer Whale Museum, historic Davidson Whaling Station, Boyd's Tower, warm water, camping right behind the beach, great coastal national park paddling and walking. Kiah River paddling. What a great place!

No date set yet. 'Will advise in next Sea-Trek for those who need to apply for leave.

## GUIDELINES FOR SEA TREK CONTRIBUTIONS (from the Editor)

*It would be great to have YOU write up an article and it's quite a simple process.*

**E-mail to [bobfergie@ozemail.com.au](mailto:bobfergie@ozemail.com.au)**

- Text as a MS Word document,
- Pictures should also be emailed as high resolution jpeg files (because of their size email one per email)

CATEGORIES	LENGTH	pics
New member bios	100-150 words	1
Humour	100-150 words	1
Interviews	500-1000 words	3-4
Member stories	500-1500 words	4-5
Safety articles	500-700 words	3-4
Boat outfitting articles	500-1000 words	4-5
Gear and boat reviews	150-300 words	2-3
Resource reviews (dvds, books, articles)	150-300 words	2-3
Photo galleries	one line captions	5-10
Training event reports	500-1000 words	3-4
Day trip reports	300-500 words	2-3
Short overnight trip reports	300-500 words	2-3
Expedition reports	500-1500 words	5-6
Tips for trips articles	300-500 words	3-4
Club event reminders	100-150 words	1-2
Regular club paddle features	300-500 words	5-8
Commercial advertisements	Contact Editor for specs	1+

**Issue 71 deadline: 1<sup>st</sup> December 2011**

A quick Google search would suggest that it would be irresponsible to take any child under the age of 4 out in a kayak. When my husband I decided to have a baby, we figured that our paddling fun would have to go on hold for a few years. To my delight, that couldn't have been further from the truth.



Our sea kayaks have given us a fun activity to do as a family, a means to affordable weekend escapes, and a way to get my preggy belly back into shape. The added bonus is that the kayak is a fool-proof way of rocking a baby to sleep. Our son is now a permanent feature sitting in our back hatch, whether on a day trip out in the bay, or a weekend away at the Prom.

A decision to introduce babies to the kayak can only be made by their parents, but here are a few tips for those who are thinking about making the great outdoors part of their children's lifestyles.

- Get a good quality lifejacket designed to self-right Bub. We bought ours from BCF for \$125, but it is adjustable and will last a good 3 or 4 years.
- Combine this with appropriate clothing to ensure any splashes are not the end of your paddle. A cheap raincoat from Aldi will do the job, but Baby Bunnings sells good waterproof pants and tops to go over warm fleecy gear. I haven't found any Kokotat gear for juniors but I'm on the lookout.
- Keep Bub shaded and dry by getting your pram shade to multi-task as a shelter for your back hatch. You paid enough for the pram, you might as well get some use out of it.



- Try a "Bumbo" chair to get Bub sitting comfortably in the back hatch.
- An adult skirt will do the job of sitting over the top of the hatch, to minimize water intrusion.
- Consider having a support crew in a larger boat or car, to carry the extra "stuff" that comes along with a child, or the child, if the conditions prevent the trip.

Let me add a final word on safety. As paddlers, we always need to assess the conditions when paddling.

When you're paddling with your baby, this is even more important. What would happen if I was to capsiz- am I paddling with others who could help right my boat? What if Bub jumped out? Do I have a first aid kit, in case there is an insect bite while I'm on the water? Will I have phone reception, in case there is an emergency. Consider these risks, and ensure that you have a plan if they were to occur.



My son absolutely loves paddling in the boat, exploring the beaches, and snuggling with us in our tiny two man tent. We've learnt to adapt existing baby equipment to suit kayaking, and to take cues from our son when he's had enough. Hopefully on our next VSKC trip, he'll have a buddy to hang out with!



## AN UNEXPECTED PLEASURE by Judy Wilson

After years of finding excuses why I could not go on a sea kayak trip, I eventually ran out of excuses and agreed to go with my husband on the Queen's Birthday Snake Island trip. Hope resurfaced briefly as early in the week, Victoria was hit by a major cold front and snow fell in the Dandenongs. However, the weather forecast dashed such hopes by predicting almost windless, waveless and rainless conditions over the coming weekend.



There was no escape!

We packed thermal after thermal until late on Friday night. The Saturday 5am pickup by Peter Costello arrived too soon and we were racing through the dark of the early morning with two large white kayaks protruding like mismatched elephant tusks from the roof of the car. The sun rose and the Port Welshpool launching point looked inviting in the sunlight, with hardly a ripple in sight. Cars adorned with kayaks began arriving and normal looking people joined us on the beach. Many were club regulars, a few brave souls were complete newcomers to the club, and one couple even had a two year old with them!



Our borrowed craft was one of the longest kayaks on the beach, a double called the QE3. After stuffing the hatches full of gear and getting into wet weather gear that dispelled earlier illusions of normality, the pod set off. There was friendly advice on how to paddle by rotating one's torso rather than doing all the work with one's arms. And better still, friendly advice to my husband regarding not attempting to instruct me in the art of paddling! Everyone obviously wanted a pleasant weekend. The water was calm, the paddling easy, and we soon arrived at Biddy's Cove (on Wilson's Prom) to enjoy a snack and have a welcome rest for arms and back.



Then it was back across the water to the sandy beach of Snake Island. Laden kayaks were hoisted up and hidden in the sand dunes. After unpacking we set off down a sandy track for the Cattlemen's Huts.

The clearing with the huts was peaceful with kangaroos and hog deer grazing in the paddock, and functional dwellings comprising the bunkroom, kitchen and outbuildings. It was rather like an overgrown version of some of the buildings at Sovereign Hill. But the beds had great mattresses, the loos flushed and there were tanks of rainwater. Not so bad! Even a shower if one could be bothered to hoist 20L of water to the height of 2m and manage to shower with lightning speed before the ice cold water ran out.

Lunch was enjoyed in the warm sunshine. Then, with good forethought for the coming night, our trip leader instructed all his "Indians" to collect wood. Hunter-gatherer instincts emerged untarnished after years of city living and after 20 mins a formidable pile of wood stood against the fence. This was going to be nearly as good as the (now outlawed) Guy Fawkes nights of the seventies.

It was time for the annual Snake Island golf challenge. The wildlife melted away as golf irons smacked balls towards the distant flag. Water challenges abounded and fishing in the pond for golf balls seemed to be an activity of choice for some. Others simply powered their way to or past the flag with one hit of the iron. Yet others were ambushed with exploding golf balls, much to the enjoyment of the bystanders.

The next activity was getting lost in the bush as the walking tracks never seemed to lead to the beach. As the sun sank lower, caution prevailed and the walking party back tracked to find the smoke curling upward from the camp fire. The cold bit deep and comfortable vinyl arm chairs were pulled up to the circle of the campfire. Drinks appeared and snacks circulated endlessly making dinner seem superfluous. Campfire conversations flowed and laughter broke in waves. I got excellent advice on designing my new kitchen from two recent survivors of the experience. Very useful as I had planned to do that on the weekend had the weather not let me down. As the night wore on people quietly drifted off to warm sleeping bags and silence fell.

Sunday morning was bright and clear with patches of frost explaining the chill in the air. As the sun climbed, the air warmed and by the time we were all assembled on the beach for the various paddles on offer, it was warm enough for the prospect of kayaking to be pleasurable. The beginners' paddle we joined went across to the Prom. We paddled in clear green water close to rounded granite boulders, arriving in time for lunch at Tin Mine Cove. We ate lunch, brewed tea and sunned ourselves like lizards. Four late arrivals for the expedition joined us before we headed back to Snake Island and another night of campfire, and this time, some singing.

Monday morning was even colder than Sunday but we were soon warmed by the sun. It was all gear out of the cabins, sweeping the floors and cleaning up after ourselves, then back to the beach for the paddle to Port Welshpool. This time with a high tide with us, we paddled between Big and Little Snake Islands in shallow water to arrive at our destination at lunch

time. After getting into very welcome dry clothes we packed the pub for lunch before heading home.

The weather had fulfilled the weather bureau's predictions, the company had been good, the paddling had not been too hard, the scenery had been lovely... and it has been an unexpected pleasure .... the sort of thing that memories are made of.

## Whew! That went well!

Derek Wilson

Trying to get a non-paddling partner along on a kayaking trip can be fraught with danger at the best of times. What if the weather turns foul and one's better half gets cold and wet and tired! You'd never hear the end of it and you could probably forget about ever getting a second chance to show them that it was actually great fun.



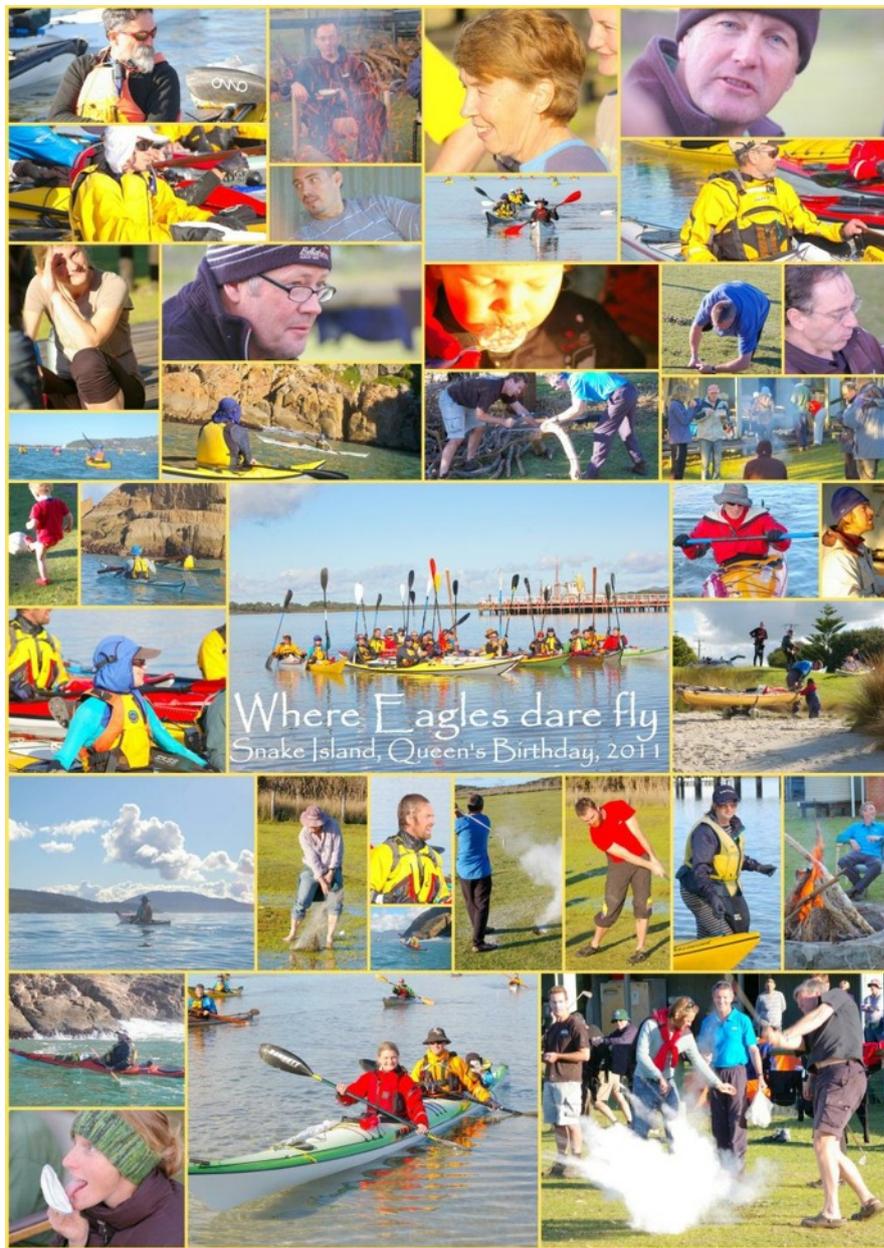
So it was with some trepidation that I talked my wife, Judy, into coming along on the Queen's birthday weekend paddle to Snake Island and the northern Prom. I reassured her that there were huts to sleep in and cook in and sit by the fire if the weather turned foul but she was still sceptical. Then in the week leading up to the event, some of the worst weather we had had all winter hit Melbourne. To make matters worse, Judy's work colleagues did not exactly help by telling her she was crazy even to be thinking about such a venture in the middle of a Melbourne winter!

But, I said, I knew better! (What a silly thing for a husband to say!) I reassured her that one of the things I had learnt since taking up sea kayaking was how to read synoptic charts. In the midst of a terrible Melbourne storm, I declared that I could see on the long term synoptic charts that there was a lovely big "high" moving over the Bight that would be

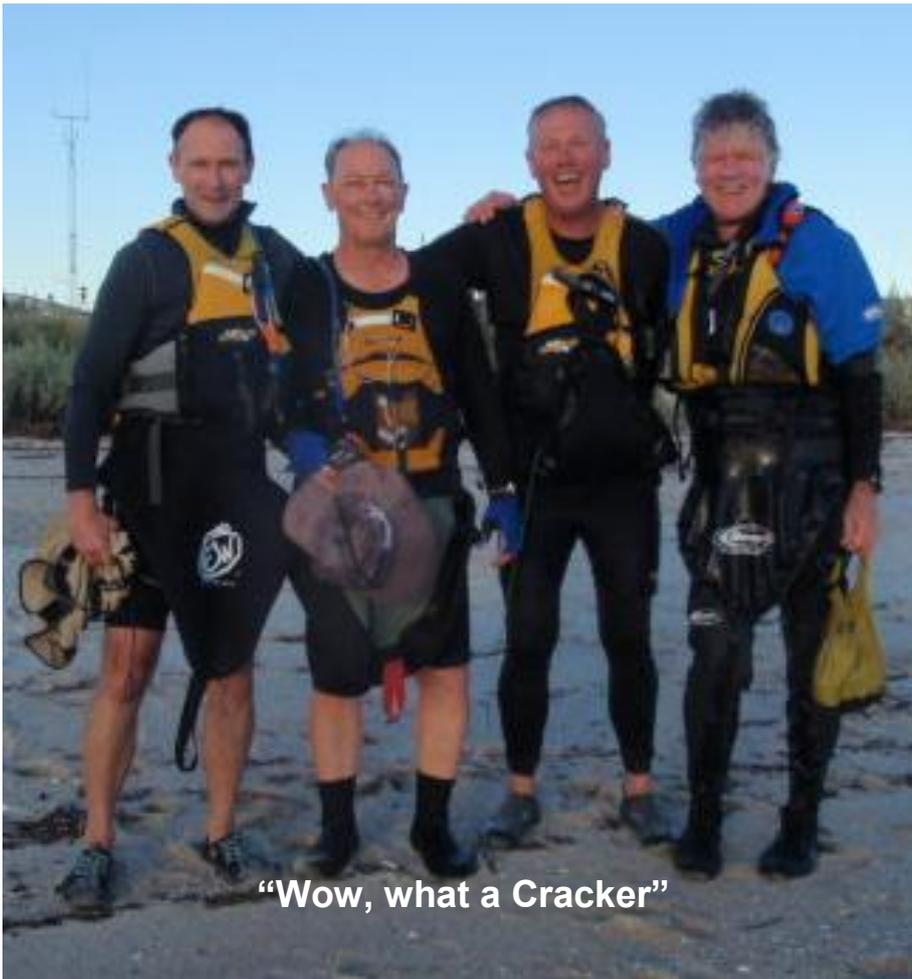
right over Snake Island by the weekend and promised her fine weather and light winds all weekend. She relented – but I was nervous. What if I had got it wrong?

But thanks to my excellent club instructors, I did actually get it right. The weather was perfect for a first timer. Yes, it was cold at night – but that made the camp fires better! And the good natured banter and ribbing that livens up these camp fires had Judy in stitches of laughter at times and I could see that she was actually having fun!

Definitely something I might talk her into again!



# SNAKE ISLAND CIRCUMNAVIGATION by Greg Gleason



“Wow, what a Cracker”

*The opening quote was shamelessly stolen from Richard Rawling, because none of us could better it.*

*Participants – Derek Wilson (Nadgee Solo), Ian Tovey (Mirage 530), Richard Rawling (the lariat “stars & stripes” Nadgee in captivity) and Greg “Treasure” Gleason (bright yellow Maelstrom – easier for geriatrics to find their own boat on the beach). Distance covered – 56.5 km, average speed – 3.8 kn (7 km/h), paddling time – 7hrs 53 minutes.*



The weather looked good – strong westerlies on Saturday to help us hit Lighthouse Point & beyond (far east of Snake for night one), then not so good – strong westerlies to punch into from Snake’s eastern sandbars to Townsend Point (Snake’s southernmost point), then a 45

degree turn towards Bentley Harbour (they call this place a harbour?), near the Cattlemen’s Huts for night 2. Day 3 looked too good to be true – light winds, blue sun-drenched skies and propitious tidal flows to help us explore Corner Inlet, the top of the Prom and to wend our reluctant way home to Port Welshpool before dark on Easter Monday.

By all accounts, this was going to offer 56 km or 30 nautical miles of paddling heaven, plus a fun night “roughing it” at the eastern end of Snake Island, followed by a night of sheer luxury at the Huts. Small wonder we all arrived early at Welshpool, and packed rapidly for the departure that couldn’t come soon enough. However, it is not easy packing a kayak on a beach exposed to 20 knot westerlies. We headed off down the Nooramunga Channel at near breakneck speed – our leader, Dirik Wulsun (it translates out of Sith Ifricin as “Derek Wilson”) was swayed by the Maelstrom Geriatric who meant to say “in this breeze, if we put up sails, we may never get them down again” but it came out as “no sails, boys, I want to see physical commitment”. Derek added “you can use your sails tomorrow”, and we believed him, as one of us isn’t an engi-

neer. So here I was, one crusty old bean counter amongst three engineers – it could have become the trip from Hell. As a commentary on our good fortune to be on the trip, I asked the inevitable rhetorical question “Is my glass half full or half empty?” The instant responses were “it’s irrelevant - we are clearly over-engineering drinking glasses by 100%”. Hmmm, looked like being a long trip...



There was enough chop to keep the trip to the east end quite fun – a few small runners, a bit of competition (“did you see my last wave? Can’t do that in a Nadgee”, etc) and way too much wind to stop for afternoon tea at one of the otherwise inviting mud islands near middle ground. “Dirik” had consulted the Australian Ambassador to the Cattle Republic of Snake Island (a guy who looks a bit like our esteemed President). This Ambassador gave him “solid gold” GPS coordinates of the perfect camping area. It turned out to be a large mangrove swamp, teeming with all manner of slimy smelly but otherwise harmless wildlife. Makes you wonder about some people’s camping preferences, doesn’t it?

We camped in thick bush high above the mangrove swamp in cramped conditions, the pain worsened by Greg’s ukulele – Richard asking “are you a string quartet? Surely only one person couldn’t sound THAT bad?” But the pain only worsened – we arose early to find a near perfect campsite less than 500 metres away, marked by a large tree in a “V” shape. Someone said “is that tree a message to Terry?”



We headed off, the east end rounding eased by a smaller than usual swell on the multiple bars and a bit of north in the westerly, sheltering us for the first kilo-

metre or so. After that, the chop settled in, the westerly settled in and we had no choice but to grit our teeth and settle ourselves in for the long haul. The sight of a nearing Townsend Point was a Godsend, but our spirits rose further when we realised that a small wind shift had occurred – a small but very helpful swing to the south. Rounding Townsend Point, it was “break out your sails boys” and we paddle/sailed our way to familiar territory, the outline of Bentley Point evoking the ancient VSKC folklore tale of the day current President Terry first photographed the Bentley Point Blowhole.

At the Cattlemen’s Huts – flushing toilets and brand new mattresses that (then) didn’t smell strongly of horses (by the June 2011 long weekend they did, unfortunately). A roaring fire, more low quality music and an early night (“put that ukulele away Treasure or we’ll surgically insert it where it’ll never trouble the VSKC membership again”) and we slept, dreaming of the forecast conditions for the next day.

Wow – when we luck out, we totally luck out. We awoke to a day that the Whit-sundays can’t hope to match. Not even receding tide to prevent an assault on Granite Island could dampen our spirits. Lunch at Tinmine (no, Terry, Treasure didn’t sit on the native pigface ..... this time). Treasure found huge fish swimming around the reef at the north end of Tinmine – the plan was to get the camera ready, roll under, get as many close ups as possible and then roll up – the result was one very blurry close up photo followed by shots of a deserted reef (lacks subtlety our Treasure but at least this time he didn’t leave his prescription sunnies in 30 feet of crystal clear water ...)

A well-received lunch, a chat with some fishermen and a moderate easterly breeze to aid our trip north to Welshpool and we were away. Paddle-sailing in a strong cross breeze, we were generating a bow-wave indicative of 8 or 9 knots. What? The GPS says 2 knots – wow, what a tidal flow. However, when we reached the corner near Biddy’s, the tide flow was now side on – in 100 metres, speed across the bottom jumped from 2.1 knots to 8.5 knots. Yippee – this is living.



We rocketed home to Welshpool, to find Club local Lyn Atkinson on the beach having herself done the best of the

Nooramunga National Park to enjoy the day. Thankfully, she obliged by taking the mandatory trip end photos (neither engineers nor accountants can operate the time delay facility on a digital camera).



Greg Gleeson

Yep, Richard, you were right about the trip – what a cracker ....”

### FACT SHEET by Derek Wilson



#### EASE OF PADDLE

This is a relatively easy paddle with modest daily distances - particularly if one spends 3 days on it as we did. As ever, however, the ease of the paddle depends very much on the weather conditions on the day. Prevailing westerly winds mean that one paddles to the west end with wind behind – great fun – but you have to paddle back again!

#### THINGS TO LOOK OUT FOR:

**Tides:** Parts of the Nooramunga channel between Snake Island and the mainland are very shallow. “Middle ground” (where the tide meets from opposite directions) is approximately one third of the distance from Port Welshpool to the Port Albert entrance. At low tide, the middle ground is almost all dry land. The best bet is to try to hit middle ground at high tide so that you can enjoy tidal assist from the incoming tide between Port Welshpool and middle ground and tidal assist from the ebb tide between middle ground and the Port Albert entrance (or vice versa if you are going the other way).

**Camp site:** There are only two marked camp sites on the Parks Victoria map of Snake Island – both at the west end. Although one can camp anywhere on the island (with a permit from Parks Victoria) there are not many suitable spots to camp at the east end of the Island. After camping on a previous trip at the East end of Snake Island itself, we were tempted this time by reports of a camp site on the second of the two little islands at the east end of Snake Island itself. However, the coordinates we were given (in an apparent clearing in the satellite photo) turned out to be a swamp! The actual camp site is shown on the attached image from Google Earth and may be found at 38 44.789 S 146 38.181 E.

**Other:** Beware of the large exposed sand flats at low tide that can result in fairly lengthy portages if you get your timing wrong. The sand bars in the area are subject to change.

At Easter 2011, the sandy spit shown in the image below to the east of the easternmost little island was not present.





I had been thinking about it for a while, but hadn't had the opportunity to execute it. That is a trip from Port Welshpool to Flinders or alternatively Apollo Bay to Melbourne. Both of these options had attraction as they didn't involve extensive pre-trip travel and could be organised at short notice. I had been restricted due to injury for a time, so had the general shape of the trip in my mind, but hadn't progressed much further than that.

At the 2010 AGM I was chatting with Richard Rawlings and Peter Treby over red wine, when Richard mentioned he had been thinking of an Apollo Bay to Melbourne trip for some time. I was out injured at the time, so didn't make any plans to join Richard.

By April, I was able to commence paddling and steadily increased my time in a boat. All seemed to be going ok, even though I was coming off a low fitness base. Port Welshpool to Flinders was out due to the PROM still being closed as a result of the floods, so Apollo Bay to Melbourne looked the go. I didn't canvas for any companions as I still wasn't sure whether it would eventuate. My wife Heather didn't have time off from work. So it looked like a solo trip it was to be.

By late June I was ready to go and Heather delivered me to Lorne on June 24. This starting point was a compromise with other family commitments that needed to be met on the 25<sup>th</sup>.

This would be my first solo multi day trip, so managing risk would be more pertinent than usual as there is no-one else there to assist if things went astray. I had waited for a weather window in between the winter cold fronts storming across the Victorian coast. I had plenty of time up my sleeve, so there was no perceived pressure to keep moving, and Heather was happy to collect me where ever I got to. I considered being separated from my boat to be a risk that had to

be controlled. Being able to roll and having a tethered paddle ensured I wouldn't lose contact with my craft. However, I wanted to make sure. I use a PFD which incorporates a white water rescue harness which has a quick release mechanism. I used this feature to attach a short lease between me and the boat. This would ensure I would stay with the boat in the event I came out, particularly in an off shore wind situation. The quick release made it safe to use. This was taken off when departing or arriving at a beach.



Saturday June 25, I was loaded and ready to launch at Lorne. I sat on the beach waiting for some more light, before heading off at 0730 hrs. The forecast was for NW to W wind of 10-15 kn. This is either a cross tailwind or directly off shore for the majority of the section between here and Torquay. Due to the forecast wind direction, I intended to stay close to the shore, but outside the wave zone. There was an underlying ground swell from the S of approximately 1m+.

I made good progress past Eastern View and the Aireys Inlet Lighthouse and had a short break at Point Roadknight, west of Anglesea, for a leg stretch and some lunch. This next section of coast is dominated by cliffs that make landing in most locations not possible. I considered stopping at Anglesea, but as the conditions were good, decided to push on for Torquay. This was a good move till within 1.5 hr of Torquay when the wind came more from the N and became a steady head wind, with no protection available. Plenty of surfers were out at Bells Beach and Winky Pop as I pushed into the wind. I was reconsidering the wisdom of my earlier decision! By around 1430 hrs I was onshore in front of the Torquay Surf Life Saving Club (SLSC) and glad to be off the water after 38 km.

Two weeks earlier I had Nadgee paddle wheels fitted to Heather's Mirage 530 and my 580. Now the wheels came into their own. I had originally planned to use the SLSC ramp but found that the ramp was now marooned by the sand being washed away in front of it. It looked like I would have to unload the boat before I could lift it up over the large step from

the sand to the concrete. A bit of a recce found a path around to the left, on the creek side of the SLSC, which brought me to a bitumen car park. It was then a short walk with the boat to the Torquay foreshore caravan park. I booked in and set up my tent. The manager was most interested that I was travelling by water. A hot shower went down well.

Sunday June 26 was forecast for strong offshore winds of 30 kn +. This was what the day developed into, after a still start to the day. I was glad I had opted to stay onshore and was not in my boat, battling to stay close inshore. The forecast for Monday was promising for a move to either Barwon Heads or Point Lonsdale, depending on the conditions and how I felt.



On Monday June 27 I departed Torquay at around 0730 hrs with a forecast for 10-15 kn W wind. The ground swell was the same as two days earlier. I headed along the coast with a steady wind pushing me along. Small wind ripples travelled in my direction. I passed the Bancoora Beach SLSC, Blue Rocks then Barwon Bluff. I had made good time to Barwon Heads, and feeling okay after yesterday's enforced day of rest, decided to continue onto Point Lonsdale. I tracked along the coast passing the Point Lonsdale SLSC, just prior to Lonsdale light. I had a break and observed the fringing reef at Point Lonsdale.

I rounded the headland on which the Lonsdale light stands, by picking the gap in the reef. It was a good ride for a dollar with standing waves of 1 m+ and haystacks exploding for about 250 m. With hindsight I think I would head out further E before turning in. I had been monitoring the VHF for commercial traffic and visibility was good. Lonsdale light is manned by a radio operator for commercial traffic and monitors VHF 16 +12.

Within 4.5 hrs from setting off at Torquay, I was sitting on the beach adjacent to Pt. Lonsdale pier having lunch. I wish 30 km always went by so quickly. I knew the foreshore camping park was closed, so wasn't sure where I would stay. There is a year round caravan park on the main

road to Queenscliff, but this was a bit of a walk with the boat. I was fortunate to find the caretaker onsite at Golightly Caravan Park, which is near the foreshore park, doing some cleaning. This park is normally for annual residents only. As it was quiet, the caretaker, Kaylene was happy for me to throw up my tent. Fortunate timing for me. This park is next to a concrete ramp leading up from the beach. When the seasonal park is open, you would use this same ramp for access.

At 0710 hrs on Tuesday June 28 I set off in half-light for Shortland Bluff approx 3.5 km away. I was targeting reaching the Bluff by 0730 hrs, so I had 2 hrs of flood tide to work with on my way to Portarlinton. With flood tide assistance the GPS was recording 8-11km per hour with little paddling effort. There was virtually no wind, but some unusual cloud formations further up the bay. By 0745 hrs I was in sunshine and moving N past the rear end of the Queenscliff / Sorrento ferry parked in its dock. There was little traffic on the VHF or on the water.

I cruised up the E coast of Swan Island which is part golf course and part military training establishment. At the NE tip I stopped for a break to take some photos of the J class submarine wreck. There was a small pod of dolphins at the S end of the wreck cruising in the current. This wreck was placed there by the military years ago when the submarine was sold for scrap.

They bought it and placed it in its current location with the intention of using the generator on board to power the base on shore. Many years later it is a rusting hulk filled with sand, in a similar fashion to the one within the Sandringham Yacht Club Marina. I headed N past the Coles navigation marker.



Shortly after this, the cloud formation that I had noted earlier enveloped me. It turned out to be fog that a light N wind had blown onto the bay.



Visibility was down to as low as 50m at times. I opted to stay close to shore to ensure I was out of the way of recreational vessels that I could hear but not see. In the distance cargo vessels were sounding their fog horns and talking to Lonsdale Light regarding the lack of visibility. I knew where they would be travelling but not the recreational craft.

Using what visibility was available and a mapping GPS I contoured my way up the coast to Portarlinton. I tracked past St Leonards and Indented Head without sighting them. I was within 80m of the marina at Portarlinton before a faint outline and dark shape could be made out. In these sort of conditions it is easy to start disbelieving your compass.

I overnighed at the Portarlinton Seaside Resort which is right on the beach, perfect for those travelling by boat after a 30km day. In some ways the part between the N end of Swan Island and Portarlinton was like being on an indoor exercise bike as there wasn't any scenery to distract the eye or mind. As a result the

distance and time seemed to take forever to pass. I will have to redo this coastal section in the future to see what it looks like. By 1500 hrs the fog had lifted to reveal a beautiful sunny couple of late afternoon hours.



The plan for Wednesday was to head to Williamstown, or if not feeling great, as far as I got and Heather would collect me after she finished work. The other option had been to stay at Indented Head and head directly for Ricketts point, a distance of 32 km. I had decided against this due to the forecast for fog and a NE wind up to 15 kn.

At 0820 hrs on Wednesday June 29 I launched heading straight across to Werribee South. This is a crossing of approximately 16.5 km and crosses the start of Richards Channel which services Corio Bay. Fog was in evidence with visibility varying between 50-100 m. I had waypoints for my crossing loaded into my GPS and a backup unit. I wanted to ensure that I knew when I was approaching Richards Channel to ensure I crossed it quickly and without commercial marine traffic nearby.

From the chatter on the VHF it was apparent that the fog horn I could hear to the E was out bound from Richards Channel. The only concern now was the recreational craft. Conditions were calm with little wind to move the fog.

About 5 km across, the fog dissipated and it was a sunny day. I had a short break near the Werribee River mouth and then headed to Point Cook. I then tracked directly to Point Gellibrand, behind which is the Williamstown cricket ground, and then the breakwater at Williamstown.

These last few legs had a steady head wind accompanying me from the NE. It seemed to take forever for the breakwater at Williamstown to come into view. I passed the time ball tower and rounded the breakwater, passing the blue stone dry dock in the ship yards.

The journey was over when I wheeled the boat out of the water at 1600 hrs between the Workshop Jetty and the Royals Yacht Club pens, Williamstown.

A solid day of 40 km was complete and it felt like it

## BOATING IN WALES by Elizabeth Thomson

When Nigel Dennis visited the NSW Sea Kayak Club at RNR 2007, he gave a blanket invite to visit him in Holyhead, Anglesey for a bit of Welsh kayaking. Well, little did he know at the time that I took the invite seriously and when the opportunity arose, I would decide to visit.

And that's how it happened. During July, I found myself on a quick work trip to the UK with one free weekend. There was no question about how I'd spend that free time. The only issue for me was how to get to Holyhead from Cardiff. And low and behold, there is a direct train!

So Friday afternoon, I trained it to Holyhead and got an unexpected tour of Wales on the way. On arrival, Nigel picked me up and explained that I was to join an advanced course over the weekend. Advanced? OK. That's when the anxieties kicked in. I quickly explained that I had a dodgy roll, had never been in tidal races and didn't really know how to ferry glide across fast moving water. He said, "Well if you can surf, you'll be fine". I didn't feel fine. I didn't feel like I could surf anymore – well, I never could, really. But I faked it and put on a brave face.

I stayed at a cute BnB, *The Beach Hut*, where, by chance, the other advanced course punters were staying. The next morning Nigel picked the three of us up. Oley was from the Jersey Isles now resident in New York and Dirk was the real thing, a New Yorker, that is. The fourth punter was a local, Pete.



The plan for the day was to head out before the weather turned sour and play in amongst the races at Penrhyn Mawr (aka The Fangs).



These races work on the flood tide. We were going to be playing in the race towards the end of the flood tide with an ESE wind blowing at about 10 knots. Not sure how fast the tide was racing but the height difference between low and high tide was 5 metres that day.

Nigel gave me a brand new Romany to paddle. It had a black deck with a white hull and yellow tape seam. Very classy. This is the boat that features regularly in the *This is the Sea* DVDs by Justine Curgenven. I would suggest it is the signature boat of the Nigel Dennis Kayaks range. It is a rudderless, chine-less fibre-glass boat. It can come with a skeg, but my little number was skeg-less.

Anyway, being used to the Commodore of the Australian sea kayaking world, the Mirage 530, I was a little apprehensive about paddling a rudderless boat straight into demanding conditions. But I'm proud to say, I adapted quickly. The boat was very responsive; tracked nicely and was easy to turn. It was great to paddle. As far as I know, the only distributor of the NDK range in Australia is through Expedition Kayaks (Mark and Rob). If you want to have a play, I suggest you contact them for a trial.

So, back to the adventure..... As well as the advanced punters, we also had two guys along who were being assessed by Nigel for their BCU Five Star Instructor ticket. Little did they know, they had a lot of instructing ahead of them as it soon became clear that I needed a lot of rapid and urgent advice. The plan was to paddle around the outcrops off Pen where the current cuts between. Through the middle of the outcrop were standing waves, with eddies on the either side close in to the rocks. The aim was to go through the waves, peel off into the eddy, and then pick our way back around to do it again by ferry gliding across an adjacent race.

As we approached the standing waves, I was reminded of Mark Sundin's advice on surfing, "Are you the chicken or the pig? Are you committed or not? If you are, then go like the pig. Give it all you've got."

And so I did. I went straight at that wave determined to conquer it. Over I went (the wave, that is), and then over the next one. Woohoo. The instructor, Gaz, is shouting at me to peel off and get into the eddy. OK. OK. I got there and rested, waiting for the others. Everyone got through, all of us with big smiles.

The pod then rounded the rock into the race to go up and around. All but me

seemed to glide across the race. The rest of the pod clearly knew how to ferry glide. Despite some quick instructions on how to cross, I just succeeded in getting caught in the race, spun around then sent down stream. Instructions were shouted...

"Edge into the current. Point your nose upstream. Look at where you want to go!"



None of it worked. I was just going south, paddling uphill. Solution? Paddle like stick. And, of course, in the stress of the moment, my fine torso rotation when south, too. I became the most pathetic paddler, fighting the elements with only my arms!

So anyway after some effort, I got across, caught up with the others and we went at the standing wave again. Oley was in front of me doing fine in the wave. Next second, it was my turn and I was in the cauldron, not really watching her, just looking out for myself. Until suddenly directly in front of me there was a standing kayak, and a standing wave. Oley was paddling one second, vertical the next, then upside down and broadside in front of me. She was coming at me like a like a surfing log. OMG.

For a split second I worried about her, "Was she drowning? Would she roll up?"

But then my survival needs kicked in and all I wanted to do was stay upright and get away from her. I peeled off right, somehow got around her and exited into the eddy. As I turned to see how Oley was going, a big shout went up and there she was, wet, upright and pumped. She had rolled up. The pod hooted in support. It was very exciting.

And so around we went again. Me battling the ferry glide and getting a bit shaky, everyone else appearing at ease and loving it all. My third go at the wave seemed to be going well. Through two big lumps of water and then, facing down the third lump.... I don't know what happened.... something got me. I was upside down. Oh. But I didn't think about rolling up. I just wet exited. Survival instinct? Or folly? To add to the drama, my skirt was really tight and it took a lot of time and effort to get it off. So, by the time I was out, Gaz was right there. Without much discussion, we did a T-rescue. It was seamless. I was back in the boat – never more relieved. The Welsh paddlers don't like paddle leashes so this complicated the rescue. Gaz had to retrieve my paddle and then give me both his and mine to hold (while I was holding on like a koala to the front on his boat, he was emptying mine). It did add a degree of difficulty to the process. But the good news (for me, anyway) was that I was safely back in my boat. Pooped.

Given the impromptu rescue, we got carried south. We worked our way back to the eddy beside the rock and waited for the others to come through. At this point Nigel decided it was lunchtime. He then glided across the race and slipped into a slot in the cliff face to our lunch stop.

I had to negotiate the ferry glide for a third time. This time though, with two previous attempts and a better understanding of the movement of the water, I, too glided across. Pointing the boat into the current and looking across at where I wanted to go, the boat just glided there. I was so pleased. I ferry glided straight across the race, got to the slot and paddled into a beautiful grotto for lunch. It was a well-deserved rest.



As for the rest of the day? Well, thankfully it was the kind of stuff that I was more familiar with. A cruise, rather than a bruise. We headed off, back across the race, which by now was a spent force on slack tide, and then meandered along the coastline towards South Stack Lighthouse.



On the way we did a bit of open water bumping around, then snuggled into the cliffs to play in the rock gardens and admire the sheer beauty of the sheer cliffs standing before us. There was a castle folly teetering on the edge above us. And then there were thousands of Guillemots



and Razorbills nesting on the cliff faces, squabbling, squawking and flying on and off the ledges, between and around us. A complete cacophony.



We timed our paddle under the suspension bridge to avoid the rocks and sucking sea before paddling around the island on which the lighthouse stood. Majestic.

By now the tide had turned and it was time to ride it home. We headed back down the coast, passing by Penrhyn Mawr which was now flat and harmless – no longer an adventure ride, just a bunch of rocks off the end of a point. I couldn't believe it was the same place that three

hours earlier had left me numb with nerves.

What a day. I'll never forget it.

But, there's more.....

The enigmatic Nigel, apart from being a boat builder, sea kayak instructor and renown kayak expeditioner is also a volunteer coast guard patrol pilot. Yep, that's right. He drives rescue boats in the Irish Sea on Sundays! So, lucky me got an invite to go out with the 'boys' on a patrol exercise.



I was decked out in the emergency kit and given a tour on the boat before we took off for a morning of official hooning. We were on the largest self-righting lifeboat in the UK.



What can I say? It was a lot of fun. I couldn't get enough. I got to see the coastline again, this time at speed. We smashed our way through sea and swell and then went in close to the cliffs to spot the crazy rock climbers.

And then before I knew it, the adventure was over. I was back on a train heading to London, thinking I must tell my kayaking buddies about my Angelsey adventure. And so I am.

Thanks, Nigel.

## PALANGIES IN PARADISE by Terry Barry

Situated just west of the International Date Line and east of Fiji, Tonga is unique in that it is the only Polynesian country never to have been colonized, and the only monarchy in the Pacific. A proud, independent nation with a rich cultural history, the Kingdom of Tonga offers visitors a sense of discovery and adventure. It has many sought-after attributes including a pristine natural environment; beautiful reefs and beaches; a warm tropical climate; friendly dignified people; cultural traditions; and few tourists locally called "Palangies".



Terry & Deb Barry, Heather Torbet & David Golightly recently had the pleasure of a six day guided sea kayak tour in the Vava'u island group with Friendly Islands Sea Kayak Company 'FIKCO'.

Situated approximately 240 km north of Tonga's main island, Tongatapu, lies the Vava'u Island Group -- a smattering of 50-odd islands, in an area 23 by 25 km, protected by a semi-circular reef. The islands are separated by reefs or open water, but are not great paddling distances apart. In his book, "The Happy Isles of Oceania: Paddling the Pacific", author Paul Theroux describes sea kayaking in Vava'u thus: *"It was a perfect area for paddling a kayak - perhaps the best in the Pacific. There was a surfy side and a safe side to each island - the lee shores usually had the beaches - all were se-*

*cluded, all were lovely."*

We couldn't agree more, our trip started from the town of Neiafu the main township of Vava'u. Here you will find the Port of Refuge, reputed to be one of the safest harbours in the Pacific, a focal point of the many cruising yachts that congregate in Vava'u. Our party was made up of the 4 of us, plus two couples from New Zealand and two Tongan guides- Kava and Ofa.

The trip started after a briefing from Kava the previous day which covered a number of points including cultural customs (we were going to be visiting some of the villages) group safety on the water and around camp (no climbing coconut trees!), environmental care and a host of other logistics.

The taxi driver who picked us up from the hotel for the briefing had the radio on and we heard the word TSUNAMI !! What's happening we asked? Tsunami warning for Tonga he muttered, and despite our best efforts to gain more information we were none the wiser as we were driven from the Hill Top Hotel to the water front! I couldn't help but imagine that this is how Palangies come to grief in foreign parts. Naturally the first question we had of Kava was in regard to the tsunami warning. "Nothing to worry about, it won't come here".

The warning was withdrawn 15 minutes later, subsequent familiarisation of the area in the coming days made sense of his lack of concern as the grouping of the 50 or so islands that make up the area would protect Neiafu from the surge of a tsunami.

Early the next day we awoke to what was now familiar early morning church bells: 5 am for a wake up; 5.30 for the start of services, and again at the end of morning mass-- all interspersed with delightful singing that permeated the township. We



were picked up from our 'hotel' and transferred to the Friendly Islands Kayak Company base just out of town, and after transferring all our gear to the beach down some precarious looking stairs, began packing the doubles with our gear wondering if it would all fit in. Not to worry as anything that didn't fit got strapped on the rear deck! Including tarpaulins, large cooking pots and snorkel gear, certainly not expecting any kind of roll in these babies!



The town was full of much anticipation this morning as overnight a large cruise ship had entered port for a stopover and there was opportunity for tourist dollars. We paddled past as boat after boat load were being transferred to shore. The ship dwarfed all around and seemed quite out of place. We were told it arrives once a year and stops for one day. I felt pity for those on board who would only have a fleeting visit to such a magical place. Another ship of interest was the Soren Larsen a tall ship from New Zealand which we later discovered was picking up a new 'crew' for the next leg of their voyage to Fiji.



Temperatures during the day were in the mid to high 20's and high teens to mid-20's overnight. Water temp was around



24 degrees!!!! No need for sleeping bags, jumpers, thermals wetsuits or shoes-should have left them at home. About an hour into the first day we had a tropical downpour, but it was warm even paddling in a cotton shirt. The shower lasted less than half an hour and was replaced by clear blue sky. The only other rain we had was on two nights and one afternoon.

Having paddled the Whitsunday Islands a number of times I was pleasantly surprised to find Vava'u even more stunning. The clear deep water is a myriad of blue colours that defy description, lush tropical foliage covers the islands, white sand beaches, very friendly locals, few tourists and you really got the feeling of experiencing the culture of the place. One of the great benefits I found was that are few biting insects, no sand or march flies, just some mosquitoes and wasps. The latter of which I was glad we didn't have a problem with. Having never been on an 'escorted tour' before it took a bit of getting used to not having to cook or clean anything, having base camp set up for you and receiving 3 delicious meals a day served with a smile by our friendly guides.

About 70% of the population of 20,000 have no income and live off the land and sea, as has been the case for over 2000 years, so I was a little disappointed by the lack of fish and coral quality compared to the Whitsundays but not surprised. The cultural experience, description defying beauty of the environment and beautiful weather more than made up for this.

We fortunately planned to arrive a couple of days before our kayak trip and found this to be of great benefit. It allowed us to settle in to 'Tongan time' and explore Neiafu shopping for last minute items as well as going on a 'whale swim'. This was a highlight of our trip and we now have lifetime memories of snorkelling with humpback whales which were as interested in us as we were of them. I couldn't believe I was eye to eye within touching distance of one of these creatures as it swam to us to check both the



boat and us out. A feeling that's difficult to describe. We also went snorkelling at Mariners Cave which is entered by a two meter dive for about 4 meters. The light

reflects into the cave making the inside take on a magical glow made even more special by a fog that appears each time the swell surges in and out, apparently caused by the compression and decompression of the air inside. David made a heroic dive to get himself inside the cave but then wondered how the hell he was going to ever get out again having used all his energy to get there in the first place. Ever the friend and great leader, I took his picture so Heather would have some memory of him and left him to it! He emerged a minute or so later none the worse for wear but a little red faced. We then went on to Swallows cave, a famous cave of enormous proportions which we explored on snorkel and later returned to in sea kayaks in the coming days.

The paddling each day was quite easy, the trips are catered for novices. The whole area is easy paddling territory, little fetch between the bodies of water surrounding the islands. Always a stunning vista around every corner and plenty of places to stop and stretch the legs. Each morning we were treated to a delicious cooked breakfast and a leisurely pack up before departing for our next island, and paddle times were commonly around 4hours.

Our guides knew these waters well and being with them enabled us to hear the traditional stories of the formation and history of the area as well as access to many of the villages en route to resupply with fresh water. We were treated to a traditional 'umu' feast. We dressed in our finest Lava Lava's brought especially for the occasion, the locals were quite bemused as they hadn't seen tartan lava lava before, David had imported his one specially. The village had prepared a feast which we were led to, laid out on a low table inside what turned out to be the old school room. Most food was traditionally wrapped in leaves with a young suckling pig as the centre piece.

The guides explained the various foods which included fish, beef, abalone (actually turban shell) octopus, raw fish and many tropical fruits, all of course cooked in coconut milk! We were then invited to join in a Kava drinking session accompanied by beautiful music and singing. Kava is the dried and ground up root of the Kava plant, soaked in water and strained through cloth to form a muddy looking brew. It is then placed in a traditional bowl and drunk from a half coconut shell. If you want a drink just clap and the cup is passed to you, two claps means a full cup.

Best skulled, as it has what some call a disgusting taste, it numbs the lips and tongue and has a somewhat anaesthetic effect if you drink enough. The locals sit in the kava circle for hours each evening.

The routine seemed to be sing a song, drink some Kava, have a smoke, drink more Kava and sing again. This was repeated over and over. The singing and music was delightful.

We were fortunate enough to have a second umu on our last night as a special treat from the guides. Fresh fish was caught for the occasion. It was fascinating watching the whole preparation and cooking process from start to finish.



We also did our bit for the environment. FIKCO promote themselves as an eco-friendly company and so we collected rubbish washed up on the beaches where we camped. This we left in garbage bags for latter collection by boat. The volume of rubbish washed up on the beaches is astounding. Much from far away places, but also disappointingly a fair bit left by the locals, including broken glass. Foot-ware is unfortunately a necessity.

By the end of the trip we had made new friends from all those on the trip as well as the guides and had experienced real Polynesian culture and hospitality that we would never have had in other tourist type destinations. No wonder this was the place that Mutiny on The Bounty occurred!

Deb and I were also lucky enough to spend a further eight nights post-trip chilling out at the Tongan Beach resort. I don't think we could wind down any further without being in a coma!



Would we go again? You bet!

*If you want to know more details of the trip be at Phillip Island Paddle Fest in November where the Tongan trip will be a feature on Friday night.*

## CHASING O. SPECK WITH SANDY ROBSON by Peter Treby

Enthusiastic WA paddler Sandy Robson is currently on the first leg of her bid to retrace the remarkable journey of Oskar Speck, a German electrical contractor, who between 1932 and 1939, paddled from Ulm, Germany, to Torres Strait, Australia, where he was detained by Australia for WW2 as a security risk.



Oskar headed down the Danube, out to the Mediterranean and down through the Greek islands, then to Cyprus, seeking work in difficult pre-war times. The trip escalated from there and he kept going to Australia. Some memorabilia is now housed in the Australian National Maritime Museum, Darling Harbour, Sydney, <http://www.anmm.gov.au/site/page.cfm?u=1416&c=915>. What is it like to travel down the Danube and island hop across the Aegean Sea now?

Have a look at Sandy's blog on her website: [www.sandy-robson.com](http://www.sandy-robson.com), and check the map of her trip so far at <http://www.vskc.org.au/ExpedChart.asp?ExpedID=13>. But for the real flavour of the enterprise, here are Sandy's responses to a few random questions about her trip so far:

**How many locks did you have to pass through on the Danube?** About 33 locks I think in total, I lost count after a while and praised the days with no locks. Either I passed through or portaged around each of the locks. The little German guide book for the Danube has a map of each lock and shows you the side of the river to go to and how to pass through with a *kanu*. It was invaluable, however, the best tool for the locks was my German sprechen paddle companions who got on the lock phones and talked them into letting us go through with the ships so we did not have to portage every time. My German would not have been up to these phone conversations and I would have had to portage my heavy *kanu* a lot more without Hane and Paddy. Having a group of us also made the

lock people more likely to let us in. Just one kayaker would have been harder.

**What was the most time consuming lock?** Djerdup I - six and a half hours wait to be let through with a ship. This was pretty frustrating because I arrived there late and I didn't get through until after midnight. This is one of the biggest dams in Europe and it has two locks to go through to get to the other side. Each one takes at least 40 minutes to pass through.

Luckily I met some nice Bavarians in a motor boat called Jeanette. This was my Djerdup transit lounge and much more comfy than rocks on the side of the river. You can't wait on the grass next to the dam or the dam platform because Djerdup is on the border of Serbia and Romania (on the opposite side of the river) and they are precious about border territory, it is a security restricted area.

**How many other paddlers are there on the river Danube?** Too many to count - canoes, rowers, kayaks of all shapes and sizes, stand up paddle boarders, traditional danubien boat paddlers...The Donau has a paddling culture that goes back hundreds of years.

**Have you had to pay for campsites much?** No, up until I reached Halkida in Greece I had only paid out 57 Euro for accommodation. Now that has increased because I have stayed in some large Greek towns where there is no campsites available and too many people around to safely wild camp. In the big town you can get a cheap hotel or pension room which is very basic for between 20 and 40 Euro per night. It would be easier if it were not high season.

**How much would a paddler need to budget to do this trip?** I'll have to get back to you on the total figure, but for

Greece I calculated around \$2500 plus airfares, excess luggage, kayak and equipment - that is for around a month and doing as much wild camping as possible.

**What is the worst thing you have eaten so far?** Spiritus in my dinner! That's metho for those not acquainted with German.

**Has anyone heard of Oskar along the way?** No, I was hoping someone would remember him but I guess it was just too long ago. A lot has changed in Europe in the last 79 years too, like WWII, Yugoslavia divided etc. In Germany most people had not even heard of their countryman Oskar Speck, even the kayakers didn't know of him. The media for my trip put Oskar on the map in Germany and Austria, but nobody came forward to say they remembered him. In Greece where I am now, VSKC paddler Nick Tzamouzaki thought that his grandfather may have come across Speck on Samos, but then Nick realised that Speck didn't go to Samos at all. It would be unlikely for someone here to recall Speck because many Greek villages have changed dramatically, for example, villages were abandoned and left for ruins in the 60's when there was a huge migration from Greece to Australia, the US and Canada. The relatives of those migrants have started to return to their roots and homelands in the Greek Islands in recent years and they have started to fix up the old houses and get involved in the tourism industry, but with the economic situation at present some of these people are now mumbling about maybe having to go back overseas again. They are the lucky ones with dual citizenship and the option to leave. Some people can't even put food on the table and lots of businesses are closing their doors.



**Have you been hassled when stealth camping?** I got hassled a bit by some people in Kladovo, Serbia...but I wasn't exactly stealth camping with my tent set up on the main beach outside the hotel. My stealthiest camp was probably the night I accidentally camped in Croatia, not realising that I was not allowed because my visa was for the other side of the river in Serbia - the Croatian border police and lookouts (the eyes on the river) did not see me sneak into the dunes, but I awoke in the night to the snorting of feral pigs right outside my tent and spent a few sleepless hours wondering what was the best way to exit the tent should a territorial feral pig with little oinkers decide to charge the tent! In Hungary my guide book said wild camping is not allowed, but you can camp anywhere on the riverside and loads of people are doing just that. In Greece a rule is something that means very little, so you can camp where ever you like really, just being discreet with putting the tent up at sunset on busy beaches is the best option.

**Any issues as a lone woman paddler?** In Serbia everyone said it is not safe to go alone as a woman, but the Serbian men and the Serbian paddlers took me under their wing and made sure that I was always safe. Dejan, from the Serbian Veslaci club planned my campsites for me in places that have proven to be the safest and he contacted people in the towns to say I was coming, often his contacts were as high up as the Mayor of the town. He would say to them that I am coming and to make sure nothing must happen to that kayaker! So I joked with him that the Serbian Veslaci Mafia were watching my back. Dejan gave me a print out with all of the contacts I needed in each town, including an English speaking contact in each place and the phone number and name of the chief of police. I felt very lucky to have this kind of support. They know how to look after their women in Serbia, that's for certain. People said I should watch out for Gypsies too in the Balkans (Serbia & Macedonia), but I didn't meet any. So the issues for the lone woman paddler are mostly boredom with not having a buddy to chat to along the way and wishing I could pee like a man! I am hopefully getting another paddler to accompany me for a while in Turkey - that'll keep me sane.

**Do you have a photo of the clothing optional beach?** No, I didn't think it was clothing optional correct to take photos...

**How many languages do you now speak?** Um, Deutsch, Bayerish, Srbskje, Pantomime, and a bit of Greek!

**Is the German canoe any good?** The Lettmann Magellan is great, it suits me, except I am not sure if I look good in

yellow. I have not had a chance to road test it in any surf yet.

**Have you got any security plans for the next sections, from Cyprus onwards?**

I am still researching the section after Cyprus and my biggest security plan is I will not paddle any of that alone, I need a man to come with me into those countries if I go at all (my family don't want me to go there at all). A local in the group would also be of huge benefit because, unlike Europe, they do not speak English. I am talking with people I meet about which way I could go in the current political climate and there does not seem to be any easy way. I am even going to consider maybe doing a non-paddle leg like by bicycle maybe? If anyone has any ideas then e-mail me.

Spek went from Cyprus to Syria, then through the Euphrates River to the Persian Gulf because he was refused entry to the Suez Canal. A yachty told me the other day that if you can't do a consistent 5 knots then they do not let you in the Suez Canal, so I think that option is not open...hmmmm. I met a girl in Exmouth last year who drove from Germany to Nepal and in Pakistan they had to pay to have a local guy with them and cater for his meals and accommodation too. After Cyprus I have to get the maps out and nut out a route. It won't be easy to figure out. Crossing borders by kayak is not really condoned. I have a lot of research to do.

**What has been the most enjoyable day's paddling?** That's a hard one....I will tell you my highlights.

- Weltenburg Gorge, Germany - stunning magic place
- Day trip Paddling from Straubing, Germany with the crew from the Kanu Club - funny funny day, crazy Bavarians
- All the days I paddled with Johanna and Patrick on the Donau (Linz to Budapest)
- Novi Sad to Belgrade, 100 km with Yugo - the wild horses on our little side trip and the moon rising as the sun set over Belgrade
- Donji Milanovac to Kladovo, Serbia - Paddling Djerdup NP and the Iron Gates, this is the BEST section of the whole Danube.
- Demir Kapija Gorge, Vardar River, Macedonia - breathtaking
- The day I got out of the rivers and onto the sea at last was a huge highlight!
- In Greece my highlights have been the Pelion coast north of Evvoia Island, Koufonisis and Amorgos in the Cyclades, Kalymnos and Nisyros and Alimia in the Dodecanese and all of the lovely generous people who have helped me on this

section. If you think paddling in Greece is idyllic, then you are wrong, it is hard with the Meltemi (wind), but there are hard won idyllic places that you end up in and quite a few beaches with goats!

- If you have to do just one part of the Danube then go to Serbia.

**What's your best & worst bit of gear?**

**Best gear?** probably my paddle, I love my paddle and I couldn't get far without it (go Werner, why won't they sponsor me?). My towline has also been invaluable, especially on the Danube Locks. For the Danube, the guide book given to me from Max was great, as were the Tour International Danube maps for the river. For paddling in Greece you can't go past the information on the Eagle Ray Nautical Publications sea charts - just brilliant.

**Worst gear?** stupid map cases that are not waterproof or that fall apart, I usually laminate everything, but I couldn't afford it for this trip. I am still looking for the ultimate map case. Hiko high ankle wet-suit booties with seam stitching where there shouldn't be and resulting blisters (I gave them away).

**Is the trip living up to expectations?**

The trip is beyond expectations with memories and friendships to last a lifetime. Who would have thought you could paddle from Germany to Rhodes in just under 3 months! What a great trip.

**Funniest moments:**

- hanging out in the Lettmann Forest (this is what he calls his garden) with Klaus Lettmann and family (Lettmann made Sandy's kayak).
- realising that the two German reporters had been watching me take a pee in a lock on the lock security camera screen - that's how they found me!
- the Brucken Snapps and crazy Bavarian antics
- trying to learn the Bavarian word oachkatzlschwoaf with Niko, Hane and my teacher Patrick and a bottle of German Red
- Yugo teaching me Serbian "nama problema" and the three finger salute, and seeing people's faces when I used it...
- A dog for a day with Brza (funniest day and sad day too)
- Dinner in Demir Kapje with 3 Macedonian paddlers, including funny man Angel - we laughed sooo much.
- Accidentally calling my host's shop Malaka (masturbator) instead of Mataka (a nice shell from the beach)...it's all Greek to me :)

## QUANTIFYING CHANGES TO YOUR STROKE

In the last issue of *Sea Trek*, David Winkworth provided some very practical 'efficient paddling' suggestions. In this article David continues with some additional advice designed to help paddlers measure their paddling efficiency progress. (Ed)



So, you've found some errors in your stroke? It's all very well to believe you've got more speed...or more distance for the same number of strokes but how can you REALLY tell if you've improved? Here's how:

I used the test method below in the development of the NADGEE Expedition. I have data from hundreds of "runs" which is still relevant to me today. It can work for you too! Let me emphasise here that these runs are NOT done at race speed but at your very own cruising speed. More on this in a moment.

Near your home where you paddle regularly, you'll need to find a non-tidal flat water section where you can paddle for about 10 minutes. If your course is not subject to too much wind so much the better. Find a couple of permanent markers at each end of your course...a jetty perhaps or an old tree...something that will always be there for you. I use a boat ramp at one end and a sign at the other on my coastal lake course. Duration-wise about 10 minutes is OK. Any shorter and improvements may not be evident, any longer and you may be disinclined to paddle your course regularly. Hopefully your course has no shallow areas where bottom drag becomes a factor in your times.



It is important that your runs are done with the same equipment each time. If not, comparisons will not be relevant. So, use the same kayak with the same gear load, same paddle and same rudder posi-

tion – up or down, each time. You'll need a stopwatch or ordinary watch, a notebook and pencil. I advise against using a GPS to check speed. I find paddlers subconsciously increase effort to maintain a speed showing on the GPS.

For these runs you need to maintain your favourite paddling cadence. I find certain songs have a good rhythm that helps me do this...one of them is even a nursery rhyme! So far no-one has heard me reciting it! Don't paddle beside your mates on your course – they may influence your speed.

Now, get on the water in your comfortable paddling gear. Build up to speed before you reach the start marker. Click your watch as you pass the marker and cruise along...without racing...at your ordinary 'ol cruising speed...in your ordinary 'ol paddling style. Click the watch when you pass the finish and record your time. There! You now have your first baseline data. Do a run back the other way. Average the times. Do a few more runs over a few paddle outings and average the results.

NOW you have figure to work against when you change your stroke...or change your kayak...or change your paddle. Remember to work on only one element at a time for comparisons to be valid. If you switch kayak and paddle at the same time and you record improved times, you won't know to what to attribute the improvement!

A variation for you is to count the number of strokes you make on your course instead of elapsed time. Try different paddles and see how they go.

If your course time has improved, change the time difference to a percentage. Then you can tell everyone you're really a 20% better paddler than you used to be!

## SURF'S UP JOHN, seriously!



Club Senior Training Instructor John Evertze on solo 22 km Point Roadknight to Torquay paddle during July swells.

Waves 2.5-3 m with bigger sets, raw long period swell from shifting directions with SW wind 25 kn. big current & breaking whitecaps, all punching through the swell. The pictures are of the open ocean, nowhere near surf zone (Tony Chick).

Photos by Russell Blamey

## EXPEDITION PLANNING part 3, by Robin Boundy

In *Sea Trek Issues 68 and 69* Robin provided some really helpful advice about expedition planning, addressing, who should participate, rules for participation, training and planning for expeditions (based on his 2010 Bass Strait crossing).

### GEAR AND EQUIPMENT



It always amazes me on how much gear we take on an expedition. It starts with a list and by the time you're finished, it takes up a whole A4 on both sides! Yet somehow it all fits in your kayak! The first group of items are for getting from A to B and should be accessible from your cockpit!

- Kayak, Paddle and leash
- Spare paddle and Spray skirt
- PFD / Life Jacket and Cag
- Gloves, Thermals, Hats / helmet
- Sun Glasses and Booties
- Water bottle or bladder
- Phone with emergency #'s in an aqua pack and GPS in an aqua pack
- Strobe, Epirb, Signal mirror
- Whistle
- 15 m tow rope and 1m tow rope
- First aid kit / medication
- First aid book if not first aid savvy
- Sun screen and Flares
- Repair Kit
- Poncho and Safety blanket
- HF Radio
- Hand pump
- Sea anchor and Knife
- Spot tracking device
- Satellite phone and Cameras
- Charts and tide tables
- Head lamp / Torch and Watch
- Bungee cord with olive cleat
- Paddle float

And then you have your land gear. All items should ideally be packed into dry bags or doubled up in garbage bags unless unaffected by moisture. And of course for some of the items listed, you may need a sub list!

For example your first aid kit will need its own list of contents, the repair kit will need its own list of contents and you may very well have a list for your land and paddling apparel.

- Cockpit cover
- Tent and Tarp
- Sleeping bag and liner
- Pillow and Towel
- Head lamp
- Land clothes and Boots
- Rain gear
- Extra paddling gear / thermals
- Trangia and methylated spirits and Utensils

- Bowl / Plate or both
- Cup or mug and Wash cloth
- Wilderness soap / Dettol / Baby wipes
- Deodorant and Lanolin for abrasions
- Toilet paper and Trowel
- Rubbish bags
- Matches, lighter or flint
- Fishing line and Spare batteries
- Fly net
- Battery chargers, solar panel
- Short wave radio
- Hand held compass
- Pen, pencil and note book
- Money, credit cards

### FOOD AND CONSUMABLES



Just when you thought you had enough lists, you have your food lists and on an extended expedition, the simpler the better. I had a breakfast list, lunch list, dinner list and an on water food list as many lunches will be on the ocean.

On an extended expedition, you want food high in energy but not too bulky or heavy to carry.

- My breakfast list was easy. Porridge, brown sugar and milk powder plus some dry fruit muesli for variety. I also carried a tall plastic cup with a lid; I simply added the milk powder and water, put on the lid, gave it a good shake for smooth great tasting milk.
- Lunches most days may be on the water unless your expedition is following land with many stopping opportunities or islands very close together. When lunch is required on the water, it may need to be prepared before departure each day. Again simple is best. I tended to stick with Vita wheat crackers, saos

biscuits with kraft cheese, vegemite, peanut butter and salami. I also included a pun net of roma tomatoes. The Romas can take a beating in the day hatch and last for days. The taste and spurt of moisture from one Roma whilst at sea is very refreshing. I also carried sachets of tuna and salmon.

- I always carried nuts, scroggin mix and jelly beans for added energy when needed or if conditions were too rough and uncomfortable to stop paddling to eat.

On our trip, we agreed to stop briefly on the hour to drink some water and eat some nuts or other quick snack. The aim is to not allow your energy levels to get so low that you feel fatigued or risk dehydration. You can't go past dehydrated food for multi day expeditions and if you are prepared to do a little research, you will realize how quickly you can produce 30 days of great tasting meals at a very reasonable cost.

I also like to add the odd dinner of fresh fish or abalone for a break from dehydrated food. But remember that certain areas may be a marine reserve where fishing is illegal. You need to make yourself aware of these areas as part of your trip planning. Much of the area around Erith Island, Tasmania is a reserve, however, you can fish around most of Deal Island but not in Murray Passage.

Most of the campsites we selected were known to be relatively sheltered in most conditions and some of them had a water source available to us. By far the heaviest item carried apart from yourself is the water you need and at 1 kg per litre, the weight quickly adds up. I generally carried 17 litres of water, a 6 litre bladder, 2 x 4 litre bladders, 2 to 3 litres in my PFD bladder and my drink bottle.

As with most things, food and consumables taken on an extended expedition can be wide and varied with some paddlers being quite creative.

As well as your primary dietary needs, there always seems to be some space available for some luxury items such as a litre of red wine, port or other favorite campsite drink, pre-dinner snacks and the odd sweet desert.

Next issue, Robin continues with directions regarding Navigation (Ed)

# SWITCHING BY MAGNETX AND REED SWITCHES by Neil Brenton



## COLLECT ALL YOUR GEAR

### FOR THE PUMP SWITCH:

- 4 x core cable suitable to carry 2.5Amps  
(Long enough to allow all connection in the Battery Box)
- 1 x Waterproof ABS box for relay and reed Switches 65mm x 50mm x 30mmH
- 1 x PCB - small piece for mounting reed switch
- 1 x 16mm cable gland
- 1 x 30 Amp automotive driving light relay
- 3 x Glass reed switches
- 1 x magnet about 19 mm Diameter
- 1 x 20mm PVC conduit end cap or drink bottle top
- 1 x Araldite or equivalent
- 1 x Selley's All Clear (for plastic kayaks)
- 1 x Sikaflex 291 (for fibreglass kayaks)
- 1 x 1.2 A/H Battery

### BATTERY BOX (OPTIONAL):

- 1 300mm of 50mm Velcro Male and Female
- 1 Pelican Box 1020 Clear Lid
- 1 12mm Cable Gland
- 1 16mm Cable Gland

*Optional water proof Battery Box - I strongly recommend this as the bare battery in the day hatch only needs to get damp from salt once and corrosion will occur.*

*I recommend the closest size box for the battery you wish to use. I use a 1.2 A/H 12 Volt Sealed Lead Acid Battery, available from any good electronics shop. The case I choose is a Pelican 1020 with a clear lid. This has 2 purposes: firstly you can see any condensation in the box and secondly, the solid colour lid boxes have foam glued in and you need to carve this out, so the battery does not force the box apart.*

## STEP 1

Drill 16mm hole in the PVC box at one end. Place gland in the box  
Strip 100mm off the outer sheaf of the cable. Place cable through gland. Hand-tighten at this stage.  
Trim the relay contacts. Strip about 10mm back on each of the 4 cores. Twist the two black cables together and solder

to the negative of the relay. If possible slide some heat shrink up the cable before soldering to the relay.

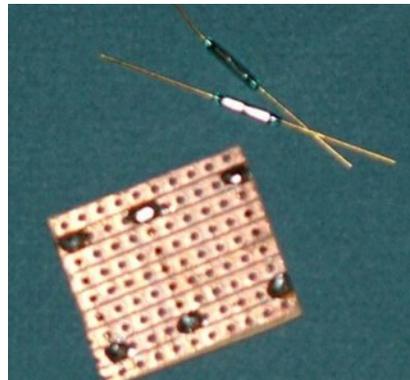
Once the black cables are attached slide heat shrink down over the spade lug. There are two other cables in the 4 core cable: one is for the battery supply in and one is for the pump. Solder the cable for the pump to lug that is on the Normal/open contact. Solder the battery lead to the other side of the switch contact. There should be one lug with no wire on it. This is for the Reed switch cable.



## STEP 2

The reed switches are very fragile and tend to break if you don't handle with care. When you bend the wire on the end, I recommend you use two pairs of long nose pliers.

The reed switches are soldered to the



PCB about 10mm apart. Cut off any excess tails from the reed switch. Solder 2 short lengths of wire to each side of the reed switch and PCB. If possible check that there are no shorts between the 2 wires with a multimeter. If there is you need to look carefully at your soldering and remove any shorts. You may find in the course of soldering you can overheat the contacts on the reed switch and they will stay closed. Throw away the crook switch and replace with a new one.

Once the reed switch is correct you can solder one leg from the PCB to the spare lug on the relay and solder the other one to where the battery positive lead is connected.

You may now test that the relay works. Strip the other end of the 4 core cable. Strip the black cable or the negative lead for the battery and the positive lead for the battery; place these leads on the right terminals. Wave a magnet near the reed switches and you here a click sound on the relay. As you pass the magnet back and forward you here the relay clicking on and off.

You may choose to test the voltage coming out of the other two wires for the pump with the multimeter. It should read 12.0 volts

## STEP 3

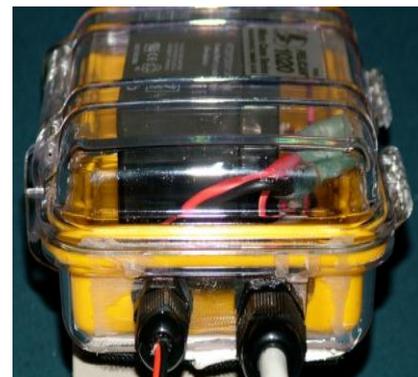
Undo the cable gland and slip the excess wire back into the box. Glue relay to the bottom. Tighten the gland firmly. Carefully lay the reeds facing up in the lid of the box and glue into position. Allow all glue to set. Once this has occurred you may shut the box, paying attention to the O-ring in the lid - that it is clean and evenly applying the screw tension to the lid. Reconnected the battery and check you still get the click sound.



## STEP 4

Take the 20mm conduit cap and make sure the magnet fits inside the cap. Glue the magnet into the cap leaving about 10mm of space between the top and the magnet. This can be done by creating a little space out of 20mm conduit cut to 88mm long and hammered into the cap before the magnet.

Once all is set, normally 24 hours, drill a 5mm hole through the side of the cap. Cut the excess length off the bottom.



The cap is now ready for the shock cord to be threaded through. *Don't do this until you have the Magnetx switch into place.*

#### STEP 5

Remove the rubber liner out of the pelican box. Drill a 12mm and a 16mm hole in the end of the box. You may need to file the lock ring down to allow the glands to fit. Once glands fit, cut the rubber liner around the gland lock ring so the liner can sit back the box.

Cut 2 pieces of 50 mm Velcro to the right length of the box. Turn the box upside down so the bottom is facing up. File all ridges off and roughen the shiny surface. This increases the surface area for the Sikaflex to stick to. Glue the Velcro to the box and allow to dry.

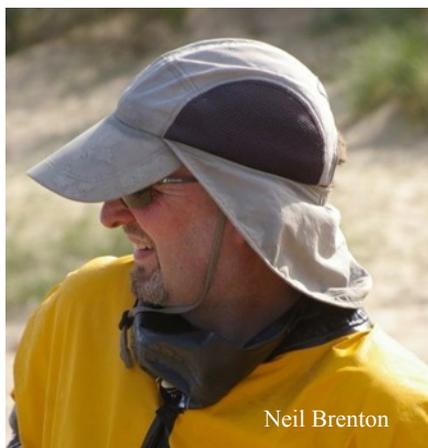
Decide where the Battery box best fits into your day hatch and glue 2 pieces of Velcro of the opposite sex into your day hatch. I find behind the seat is best but this can also depend where your pump may end up. Some kayaks have the pump in the foot well and the Battery box end up in the front hatch.

Place the wires from the pump through the small gland and the Magnetx switch in through the 16mm glands. Crimp 2 spade lugs on the battery leads and join the pump leads with a crimp joiner. Heat shrink joint or use self-amalgamating tape.

#### STEP 6

Decide where the Magnetx switch is best suited for your use and make sure you can mount the Magnet in the cap somewhere that shock cord can be placed between to existing tie down point or even use existing deck rigging. This is really up to you. Once you have decided turn the boat upside down and glue the Magnetx switch box to the underside of the deck. If you have a plastic boat use Selley's All Clear or if fibreglass kayak, use Sikaflex.

Good Luck!



Neil Brenton

## PIMP MY BOAT

### SEAT BACK REST CUSTOMISING

by Andrew Hurnard

I've never been a fan of back bands: they rub, they pinch and they never seem to be in quite the right place, but I didn't think there was an alternative.

There is. I found photos of foam block backrest on the internet - in fact I found a few, but no real description or guidelines on how to make one and shape it to fit you. So off to my friendly local chiropractor I went with a prototype under my arm.

He showed me that the key to a well-fitting supportive back rest is your sacrum. Where or what is that I hear you ask? Well - stand up, run your hands down the skin of the middle of your lower back. Just before your bum starts, you will find two bumps, one on each side of your spine. These are the bones of your pelvis - these and the bit between them, forms your sacrum.

A lot of kayak back bands claim to provide lumbar support (the bit above your sacrum where your spine curves in). The problem with lumbar support is that it provides the wrong sort of support (yep - this is true of your office chair too) because you don't need to maintain an upright position or engage any muscles. The lumbar support is doing it all for you.

Sacral support on the other hand promotes good upright posture and encourages you to engage your core muscles. On top of that, torso rotation when paddling is not encumbered, and it won't get in the way when getting in or out of the kayak.

My backrest goes straight up until the top of my sacrum then curves gently back to the cockpit combing. This is right for me but you may prefer the base to angle out slightly to support a more aggressive padding style or for the support to come higher up your back. Cut the backrest larger than you need to so you can trim it down over time to the shape that best suits you. I used the same foam as the Nadgee seat but you can use anything really that does not compress very much.



#### Handy Hints:

- Get a friend to measure the distance between the two bumps of your pelvis and allow for at least an extra cm or more overall. It is vital that both these bumps are fully supported by the backrest. For example I use a 16 cm wide backrest and my "bumps" are about 14cm apart.
- The backrest should butt up against the bulkhead behind your seat. Like foot peg/brace bars, back rests take a lot of force when you're paddling, so you want it solid.
- When working out the correct shape for your backrest, use a cardboard template. The shape can get surprisingly complicated especially if the bulkhead is angled. Cardboard is cheaper than foam...
  - Carry sandpaper or a Stanley shureform with you when you're doing test runs and paddle somewhere you can pull up on the beach to make alterations as you go.
- Down the middle of the face of the backrest that supports you, cut an approximately 2 cm wide 5 mm deep slot. This is so the backrest doesn't push directly on your spinal column.



## FITTING DECK TIES - a bomb and foolproof method by Richard Rawlings

Fitting sails, deck nets, cargo ties and the like on kayak decks can be a very, very painful task. Many paddlers end up spending hours flaring ends of spectra lines and then trying to neatly fibreglass this into place in very awkward locations underneath the deck. The challenges include smoothing out the fibreglass to avoid areas where gear can catch on, getting a good bond so that the deck loop is strong enough to resist loads imposed by sails and ensuring a neat hole through the deck.

As a wooden boat builder I had already conquered this challenge by using a fairly well known method involving the use of webbing tie downs. To do this requires repeatedly looping 25 mm webbing in a perspex jig and then bonding this to another piece of webbing flooded in epoxy resin. Once this is set it can be cut into individual loops and inserted from the underside of the deck through a slot. Since the bearing plate of the fitting on the underside of the deck is bigger than the slot and because Sikaflex is used to bed the fitting, it ends up being very strong, totally waterproof, elegantly neat and consistent in appearance (Pic 1). On wooden boats this matters a lot because there is nothing worse than spending hundreds of hours on a project to have it ruined by an ugly fitting not suited to a fine wooden boat.

This got me thinking. There must be a better way that is bombproof as well as fool proof on fibreglass and plastic boats. A lot of people are installing sails, adding a whole new dimension to kayaking. Nevertheless, many kayakers who are keen on sails are much less keen on the hassle of installing them, especially if it involves putting ugly and dangerous metal tie down fittings on the deck.

I have developed a simple method that is bomb and foolproof and takes less than 5 mins to install. Anybody who can accurately drill two holes in the kayak deck and can operate a caulking gun to squeeze out Sikaflex can do the installation.

The system consists of a purpose moulded half sphere with a 6.4 mm poly tube embedded in it in a U shape (Pic 2). The fitting is made from a very light slurry of micro-balloons and resin, usually coloured black (these weigh ~50 gms each and are 40 mm in diameter and 25mm thick (Pics 3). The mould I am using here is one I made up especially from a special silicon casting rubber. Once demoulded (Pic 4) the fitting is cleaned up and is then ready for use. You will note the projecting tubes with a sharp angle cut at the end, as well as 3 mm spectra in the tube.

The 3 mm spectra is removed after moulding because it prevents the tube contracting as it is bent into a sharp radius. The angles on the tubing help guide the fitting from under the deck into the holes (you do not need mirrors or lights to do this as you can very easily feel your way with a leading finger). Once the holes are located the fitting is pulled up from the outside against the deck using the tube ends (Pic 5). These ends are then cut off for the finished effect (Pic 6). Sikaflex is used to bed the fitting in place and all that projects under the deck is a smooth half sphere that is completely safe in terms of gear storage as well as guaranteed to be waterproof.

The installation procedure is outlined below, using the pre-made fittings described above (Note: I am not suggesting that people make these fittings themselves unless they are skilled and have moulding facilities):

- Place masking tape on the deck where the fitting is required
- Mark a line and the holes at 20 mm centres
- Slowly drill two 5 mm holes through the masking tape and deck – take care!
- Lightly sand the underside of the deck where the holes are and clean with meths or turps
- Test fit the deck line fitting and if necessary adjust the surface contour by sanding to best align with any deck curve (usually this is not required and in any case Sikaflex will fill any voids if the fit is not 100%)
- Put a latex glove on (this is up to you but Sikaflex is horrible stuff)
- Put Sikaflex onto the flat surface of the fitting only – be reasonably generous
- Hold the fitting, insert arm through your hatch and search for holes to insert pointed tube ends through (use a free finger to feel for the holes)
- Gently pull fitting into place using pliers (a helper is a good idea here but it can be done solo). Make sure it is pulled up evenly and firmly, not over tight.
- Run your finger around the edge of fitting on the underside of deck to smooth the Sikaflex (hence latex glove!).
- Once Sikaflex is set, carefully trim tubes back to flush with deck (use a very sharp razor blade and take care not to contact deck – mask off if concerned)
- Insert 2mm spectra line as required (e.g. knotted loop or connected to a clip fitting, preferably neatly finished with heat shrink tubing–Pic 6)
- Go paddling

Seriously, this takes only minutes to fit and the appearance is very professional and rock solid. It is truly bomb and foolproof! If you want to see these fittings in the flesh then let's go for a paddle and you can check them out on my boat. If anyone wants any of these fittings I can make some up for a small cost to cover time and materials.



## LAST BUT NOT LEAST, A WORD FROM OUR SPONSORS

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or email [kayak21@aapt.net.au](mailto:kayak21@aapt.net.au) for my FAQ file. David Winkworth.

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**UPCOMING TIME TRIAL EVENTS**

<b><u>Beaumaris Bay (Melb.)</u></b>	<b><u>Geelong - Corio Bay</u></b>
24th September, 2011	1st October, 2011
8th October, 2011	15th October, 2011
22nd October, 2011	29th October, 2011
5th November, 2011	12th November, 2011
19th November, 2011	26th November, 2011
3rd December, 2011	10th December, 2011

**WINTER SERIES (All events from July to Dec 2011)**  
**2 x Prizes of \$500.00**

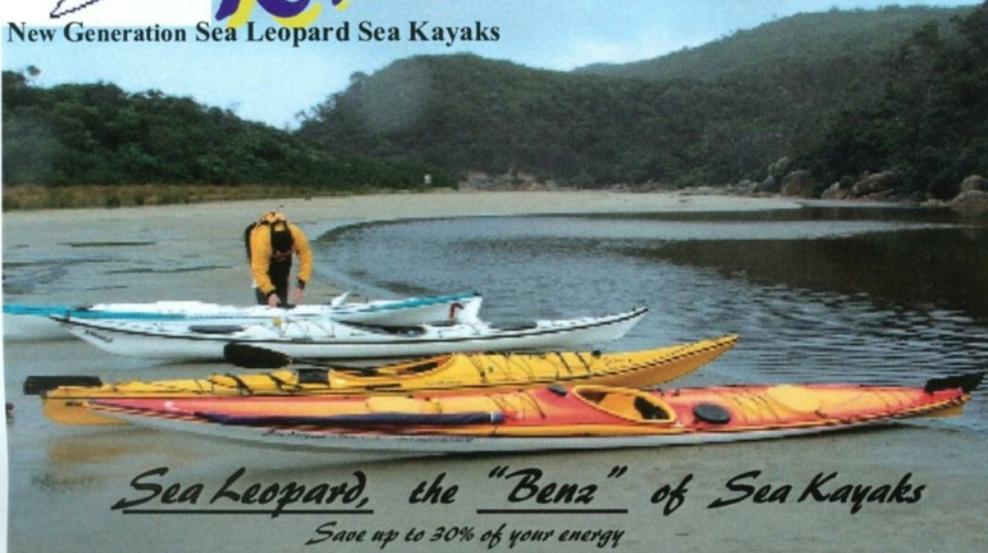
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**SPECS**

- Height: 3.7" (9.4 cm)
- Width: 2.6" (6.6 cm)
- Thickness: 1" (2.5 cm)
- Weight: 5.2 oz (147.4g)
- Operating Temp: -30C to 60C (-22F to 140F)
- Operating Altitude: -100m to +6,500m (-328ft to +21,320ft)
- Humidity Rated: MIL-STD-810F, Method 507.3, 95% to 100% cond. Per SAE J1455
- Vibration Rated: 3 AAA Energizer™ Lithium Ultimate 8X
- Battery Type:

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# PADDLE FEST

## & VSKC AGM



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**If you're not capsizing, you're not learning!** (Ginni Callahan)