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# Sea Trek



Spring 2013



Issue 78



## VICTORIAN SEA KAYAK CLUB

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Generational bonding between  
Grampa Terry & grandson Lucas

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## EDITORIAL



What do you make of the 42 BC quote from Publius Syrus at the bottom of page 28 I wonder? I came across it in a very interesting book I read recently about a Welsh lass who broke all sorts of records paddling row boats across the Atlantic and then Indian oceans with a couple of other brave women.

One of the things she valued most about these two epic voyages was the enjoyment of the company of her fellow rowers. In the words of Publius Syrus she under-scored something that we enjoy in our club. Indeed, 'an agreeable companion is as good as a carriage'.

In this issue of Sea Trek, the truth of this very very old maxim is well illustrated through the various stories and reports. Our club provides wonderful opportunities to appreciate the unity-amidst-diversity that is reflected across our VSKC community.

Even in these recent winter months many members have joined in a variety of club trips and training days, and if my experience has been anything like theirs, it has invariably been rich times with 'agreeable companions'.

Again we have a great mix of contributions including those of three first-time-contributors (Rob, Craig and Ben). Keep your stories and reports coming. Issue 79 deadline is November 20.

Cheers, Bob Fergie (Sea Trek Editor)

## PRESIDENT'S PODCAST by Terry Barry



### Greetings once again

As we emerge from winter it is been very pleasing to see the trip calendar so active in the past few months of winter. Many trips were on offer as well as a number of training events taking place, albeit with a few cancellations due to some very windy conditions. As we move into the warmer weather I'm sure this will continue. A great sign of a healthy club! There are a number of exciting major events taking place in the near future.

The committee has been slowly working on making changes to the 1981 Model Rules which govern the VSKC. This process started 3 years ago. On calling the meeting to finalise the changes we became aware that Consumer Affairs had in fact re drafted a new set of Model Rules which will come into effect automatically on November 24th 2013. These new Model Rules for incorporated bodies contain the changes and flexibility we wished to achieve by introducing our own VSKC rules. This has made any decision to have our own rules unnecessary.

By now you will have received the official notice of the 2013 AGM and Sea Kayak Forum. This year it will be held at Camp Coolamatong on the Gippsland Lakes on the 8th, 9th & 10th November. This will be the VSKC's second forum with around twenty six different workshops on offer (most being on-the-water skills-based sessions). I hope as many of you as possible will be able to take part in what will be an exciting weekend. We will also be

presenting quite a few well earned certificates to new club instructors, grade 3 graduates and life members. This is a 'must attend' event so make sure you register to attend.

We are also excited to announce that we will once again be hosting a renowned international Sea kayaker in 2014. Phil Klegg is from the UK and will be with us for a two week period in late February 2014. Details of workshops and other aspects of Phil's visit will be announced at the AGM.

The VSKC membership continues to explore the globe, Neil and Raia are off through September to Raja Ampat--a truly spectacular sea kayaking location. Other members have paddled in South Africa and Sweden as well. We look forward to hearing about these trips in a future Sea Trek.

This will be my last "Pod Cast" as president as I will be stepping down at the AGM. It's time to welcome fresh faces and ideas onto the committee. It has been a privilege to serve as President for the past three years and as a committee member for quite a few prior to this. I will be focusing my energy on running more trips and actively contributing to club training. Please consider 'putting your hand up' and joining the committee. As with others I have found this labour of love both a fruitful and fulfilling experience.

This is your club and I am a firm believer in that you get out what you put in. To all the past and present committee members I have worked with I would like to say a very big THANK YOU. Without the team effort the VSKC would not be the thriving sea kayaking community that it is today.

See you on the water.

Terry Barry  
VSKC President



# VSKC

## FORUM & AGM

CAMP COOLAMATONG  
Gippsland Lakes, 8-10 November



# BASS STRAIT SOLO REFLECTIONS by Rob White



## THE TRIP

### Day 1

#### Port Welshpool to Refuge Cove NE 15-20 kn, seas 1.5 m.

I headed down the coast and stopped at Rabbit Island for a quick bite to eat. I continued down to Refuge Cove with the following seas. As the seas increased my auto bilge was continuously turning on and I was noticing the cockpit had a lot of water in it. I broke open my spray deck to find the bilge hose had come out of the PVC pipe and the water was just recycling and filling as the waves hit. I had to do a reverse cowboy and put the



hose back in. It was a tricky little manoeuvre and I was waiting for a swim to occur but managed to re-enter the boat without a wet re-entry and roll. I used some silicone at Refuge Cove to fix it properly. The rangers hut at Refuge Cove was closed. If using water from the stream I would recommend purifying it.

I had phone signal above the boat-er's camp. Average speed 4.3 kn

### Day 2 Refuge Cove to Hogan Island NE 15 kn, seas 1.5 m.

I woke up at 0430 and had a big breakfast. I was on the water at 0620 and it was still dark for a little while. There was a bit of rebound off the rocks exiting Refuge Cove which cleared as I pushed further out to sea. The conditions became calm about two hours into the journey. I was paddling on a bearing for the first three hours before Hogan showed itself through the haze. It

took me just under seven hours to get to Hogan. There was a small tidal race between the twin islets going around the North end of Hogan which was a bit of fun to play in. The spring on Hogan would be a last option for water and would need treatment. There is no water tank off the hut.

Phone signal towards the obvious saddle. Average speed 4 kn.

### Day 3 Hogan Island to Deal Island NE 5-10 kn, nil seas.

I left Hogan at around 0720 to get to Murray's Pass at slack water. I could see the Kent Group for the





first hour before they disappeared in the sea fog shortly after. I would only see the Islands on two other occasions during my crossing. The sea fog lifted as I approached Murray's Pass.

I went into Erith and resupplied with water and had a quick meal. I wanted to get back out of the northern end of the Pass before the current became too strong. I slowly made my way out of the Pass and once clear had an easy paddle around to Winter Cove where a pod of dolphins played. I had small surf with about 4 ft faces to negotiate as I made my way to the beach.

I used my sat phone to access the forecast for the next day. I believe you can get a phone signal from the saddle above the Cove. Average speed 3.8 kn.

#### **Day 4**

##### **Deal Island to Whitemark**

NW 10 -15 kn, nil seas.

I made my way out of Winter Cove just on first light. As I cleared Deal Island it was a magic day. Unfortunately the NW wind forecast which would have helped me was non-existent. I saw a large shark a couple of hours into my trip but it showed no interest in me. I was making good time as I approached Flinders and decided to take advantage of the changing flooding tide and head for Roydon Island.

I arrived at Roydon and went for a quick swim and look at the hut which is now fitted with a water tank. I really wanted to stay the night at Roydon but I still had a

few hours of flooding tide and daylight left. If I stayed the night I would have been looking at another early start or wait for the afternoon tide. I decided to push on to Whitemark, rocketing down the coast with the current assisting me until the last hour when it changed and I had to grit my teeth after a long day. I arrived at Whitemark in the dark and just pulled my bivi bag out and crashed. I woke up and headed for the Bakery for a big breakfast.

The forecast for the next day was not great with head winds and currents not in my favour. I decided to have a day off and eat a large amount of food and sort through my gear. Average speed 4.2 kn.

#### **Day 5**

##### **Rest day at Whitemark**

#### **Day 6**

##### **Whitemark to Thunder and Lightening Bay**

NE 15 kn, seas 1 m.

I set off at 0700 to take advantage of the tide. I looked at my ipad

during the night and the wind was blowing NE to 26 kn but had eased a little in the morning. The forecast of 15 kn was already been exceeded one hour into my paddle. The wind was gusting in the vicinity of 30 kn with a steady 20-25 kn. I stayed as close to shore as possible to get some protection until I could use it to my advantage and shoot across to Trouser Point with it behind me. I had a max speed reading of 10 kt over this short crossing of the bay. I landed at Trouser Point where there is a great camp ground with water and toilets. I observed wind gusts of over 30 kn and so I waited for an hour or so to see if the winds would abate. I changed paddles to my flat blade with the anticipation of a rough crossing of Franklin Sound to Cape Barren Island.

It was going to be wind against current but as the wind had eased a little I decided to make the crossing. I had quartering seas for the crossing and the skeg I fitted to the Taran was showing its worth. I went on the inside of Long Island and around Cape Sir John where I was sheltered from the NE winds.

Due to me stopping at Trouser Point I had lost my window with the current to get a run down to Clarke Island. When I stopped paddling I found I was being blown backwards at 1.5 kn. I wasn't that worried as the forecast for the next day was not looking good for a Banks Strait crossing. I explored Thunder and Lightening Bay and set up camp on an elevated flat rock, it was my best night's sleep of the trip. Average speed 3.8 kn.





**Day 7  
Thunder and Lightening Bay to  
Clarke Island**

SE 15- 20 kn, seas 1-1.5 m.

I had a bit of a sleep in and waited until just before high tide to depart. It was a very still morning as I headed out on the western side of Preservation Island. I got a nice straight run to Clarke with the help of the current and was making great time for the first 45 minutes. Then the SE wind kicked in and built in strength. I had the current with me but as the head wind approached the 25- 30 kn mark it became very hard going with constant waves breaking in my face. It was the shortest paddle of the trip but also the hardest. I battled my way into Spike Cove with a rough tidal race around the head land. A couple of fishing boats were seeking shelter there as well. They offered me a beer as soon as I told them my launch location of Victoria.

Average speed 3.7 kn.

**Day 8  
Spike Cove to Little Musselroe**

SE 15-20 kn, 1-1.5 m seas.

The wind was howling during the night but the forecast was for it to ease the next day. There was a change approaching the following day so I was keen on getting the last leg of the trip completed. I could only see the higher ground of mainland Tasmania with the coast being hidden until the final three nautical miles from Little Musselroe Bay. It was another rough paddle with wind against current for the second half of the crossing. Average speed 3.9 kn, and a very fitting end to my adventure.

**REFLECTIONS**

**My Motivation**

I believe everyone gets their motivation from different avenues in their lives. Am I a highly motivated person in all aspects of my life? Simple answer, no.

So what motivated me for a solo crossing of Bass Strait? What gave me the drive to get up at 4 am and knock out a 60 km training paddle for the Hawkesbury Classic in preparation for the crossing, or in the past to train for three months to be able to successfully complete a Special Forces selection course?



The simple answer is PASSION. I believe you need to be passionate about anything in life that you wish to be successful at.

Other motivating factors for me related to having a young family to get home to successfully and safely.

To do this you need to train hard for all contingencies you may be faced with as a solo paddler both physically and mentally.

**My Training/Preparation**

I run a sea kayak guiding and instruction business and preparing for Bass Strait necessarily meant

interruption over the busy Christmas period. However, my planned departure in early March (the most favourable weather window) meant a modified preparation schedule.

I broke my training into two stages. Prior to Christmas I paddled in the Hawkesbury Classic. Spending eleven hours in a kayak gives you a great gauge to any comfort issues and other modifications which may be needed in a new kayak. Through November I continued to do one 40-50 km paddle a week as I have done for the last few years. I also undertook another short but hard 10-20 km paddle mixed in with one surf session a week. I find the surf is a great class room for sharpening your skill set.



On top of that I was starting to take out groups which are all low intensity 10-15 km paddles with the occasional tow! I would also start the day with 100 push ups for the three months prior to the trip. I found this kept the shoulders strong given that I had had a shoulder reconstruction whilst serving in the Defence Force.

Other preparations included meeting members of VSKC at Tidal River who had completed the trip and asking unresolved questions. I also paddled to Refuge Cove for a communication check and to just take a look around this spectacular area.

I won't go over all the administration involved except to say that Navigation data sheets, risk analysis with emergency run sheets, tidal information, and chart work were critically important for a trip like Bass Strait.



### My kayak modifications

I bought a Rockpool Taran from Expedition Kayaks around June 2012 for the purpose of my planned solo Bass Strait crossing in 2013. I spent about three months paddling this kayak in lots of different conditions from surf to large seas to flat water paddling in preparation for the Hawkesbury Classic.

Following this, I decided on some modifications. A good friend of mine Rob Howe from Howe shipwrights helped with all this on weekends which was fantastic.

The modifications included:

1. Replacing the aluminium rudder blade with an over-sized carbon one. I also got two others made as back ups and to trial different lengths.
2. Carbon fibre skeg.
3. Day hatch
4. Water witch sensor with electric bilge.
5. Deck compass

The Taran is capable of being paddling without a rudder but I would not like to do this over a long distance, in large seas as you would be using a lot of unnecessary energy.

I had two thoughts in mind when I decided to put a skeg in the Taran. The first was that if I had a rudder malfunction whilst in the middle of



one of the larger crossings I would have to spend a lot more energy keeping the boat tracking. With the skeg deployed, the Taran is a pleasure to paddle without the rudder. Secondly, I liked the idea of a skeg in large seas when the rudder is airborne or in quartering seas. Needless to say, this modification made a huge difference.

The cockpit water sensor has a fifteen second delay and it took a little playing around with the height to get it just right so it would not cavitate the pump. It has worked well since the final adjustment prior to the trip. All the other modifications are pretty self explanatory.

Some of the items I took on this trip included:

- spot tracker
- PLB
- Satellite phone
- Phone
- VHF radio
- Flares
- Ipad – I used to access tide tech when possible along with charts, navigation data sheet and emergency run sheet.
- Spare spray deck
- Alternate paddling gear
- Emergency hatch covers
- Repair kit
- Spare carbon rudder blade and cables
- Hand operated bilge
- Spare paddle
- Clothes
- 10 – 12 days food, 22 litres of water and water purifier
- Camping equipment with clothes

The total weight of the gear was 52 kg.

### and finally...

Thanks to my family and friends Mark Clarke, Steve Holley and Rob Howe from Howe Shipwrights in Sydney for helping me with the kayak modifications. Also thanks to Karel Vissel for the weather forecasts. I also used BOM and Willy weather and tidetech for my weather forecasts and tidal information.

Contact Rob through Ocean Wilderness Sea Kayaking <info@oceanwilderness.com.au>

## SOUTH AFRICA PADDLING EXCURSION by John Evertze and Tina Rpwley



A lot of trips are conceived whilst sitting around a fire drinking red wine and eating good food, well this one was no different. The enticement to kayak along part of the South African coast was formulated by Greg Murray.

Greg still has many family members and friends in South Africa, and the proposed period of the trip also coincided with his 60th birthday. Added to this, the opportunity to paddle around a couple of the greatest capes of the world was irresistible for Greg. All he needed was a few co-conspirators

as silly as himself to join him, and yes he didn't have too far to look--come in Tina, John and Roger.

Taking note of the weather forecast for 12 months before we left, we were under no illusions that this was to be a challenging undertaking given the open exposure to Antarctic swell and wind.

The section of coast that we were hoping to paddle was a section between Struissbaai and Cape Town, a distance of about 300 km. This section of coast includes the well known Cape Aghulus and Cape of Good Hope. It is also home to the largest population of Great White Sharks in the world.

We left Melbourne on St Patrick's Day March 17th which was the start of many incidents that we were to encounter on this trip. One of the intrepid four forgetting their passport was the first mishap, rectified by a quick thinking family member speeding to the airport with just five minutes to spare.

Twenty eight hours later we arrived in Cape Town to be met by Greg's many relatives. We naturally had to have a celebratory Brai (B.B.Q.) and drink to welcome our arrival and meet Greg's family and Pumba the family pig dog!

We were also held up by customs for a week trying to clear our kayaks--a week as it turned out that was perfect paddling weather. Speaking to different people that had varying degrees of experience with South African bureaucracy, we were told that Africa moves in its own relaxed time. In other words, be patient and you will receive our kayaks in good time.

NB. When planning kayaking expeditions overseas, you need to prepare for a bit of frustration and disappointment. So add a bit of extra time to counter for this.

So ended up spending our 'extra time' sightseeing around the Cape Town area. We went for a walk up Table Mountain, which offers a



spectacular view of the Cape Point Peninsula and surrounding areas on a clear day.

We realised that there is a bit of bogan in all of us, so we went to a Super 15's Rugby Union match. The Cape Town Stormers took on the ACT Brumbies and won by a narrow margin, which was probably a good thing considering we were in a stadium full of fanatical Cape Town supporters.

Before we left Australia Greg had been in contact with Derek and Margaret from the Paddler's shop in Simons Town which is on the western side of False Bay. Derek and Margaret operate in a beautiful paddling area, where they hire kayaks, do paddling tours as well as stock a great range of paddling equipment. These people helped us no end, and they took us paddling when we were waiting for our kayaks to clear. They also introduced us to local paddlers, helped us with weather reports and provided us with a kayak trailer to get to the start of our kayak expedition. In fact the expedition would have been very difficult without their fantastic help.

Another activity which was quite high on our to-do list was eating and drinking the local fare. It was readily available, of good quality and inexpensive. In fact it was whilst we were sitting in a restaurant overlooking the ocean, eating seafood and drinking beer that we received a call from our customs agent telling us that our kayaks had been cleared. Yes, our expedition was finally on.

Driving through the suburbs of Cape Town you can't help but notice what a city of contrasts it is.



Seeing areas of wealth and opulence contrasted in the extreme by shanty towns and squatter camps was sobering. However, we were now driving to our destination at Struissbaai. Greg's brother-in-law, Everhard kindly acted as our chauffeur for our adventure. We safely arrived at Struissbaai and immediately set up camp at the local caravan park.

The weather was fine when we arrived but quickly deteriorating with strong winds. We went for a walk towards the jetty where we came across a local fisherman. We asked him for a weather forecast and told him what we intended on doing. His response was "Good luck with that, try the same day next week". His predictions were right as the weather continued to deteriorate rapidly. Strong winds, building swell and lots of rain saw the Easter weekend at the local caravan park start with lots of happy campers but dwindle to just a few die hard caravan-ers and us!

We spent many days at the local cafe or pub trying to escape the weather and after a few days of being very wet we decided to pack up camp and walk up the road to a bed and breakfast place. Mov-

ing camp boosted morale and gave us all time to dry out, refocus and get ready for the trip. We spent one day walking to Cape Aghulus and as we watched the large swell breaking kilometres out to sea this did not make us feel any easier. We also spent an afternoon talking to Darny, the local sea rescue volunteer for knowledge. Finally, a week later at 4 am and paddled off into the wild blue yonder.....

*To be continued at the AGM.*



## SURF TRAINING AT CLEELAND BIGHT, PHILLIP ISLAND by Robin Boundy



Most months the VSKC holds a training event and on Sunday the 30th of June, the training day was held at Cleeland Bight on Phillip Island. Training on the day was led by Robin Boundy, assisted by Mick Shankie, Raia Wall, Tom Davis and Bob Fergie.

The skill-focus for the day was leaning, edging, bracing and surfing in a safe and enjoyable environment for all levels.

Cleeland Bight at the right time is perfect for the job, allowing easy access to the beach with toilets, shop and plenty of parking and a variety of surf conditions across and around the bar.

Seventeen paddlers of all levels turned up for the day which commenced with a basic off-water demonstration of body and blade positioning for boat control, edg-

ing, leaning, bracing and stern rudder. Then it was on the water for a scenic warm up paddle to Cape Woollamai.

On the way back and after a brief off-water snack, drink and discussion, the pod was evenly divided into two groups. The first group, consisting of four new club members, found an area of small surf offering some really nice runs that would taper off before building again.

The new guys, Greg, Jack, Mike and Helmut were impressive with their eagerness to learn new skills. There were also lots of humorous moments when they got it wrong--veering off in the wrong direction, only to get it right on the next couple of goes. Invariably, a look of surprise was followed by exhilaration as they practiced lining up for and then being rocketed forward



by the surge of the waves. Bracing and support strokes naturally came into play.

The second group found bigger waves on the ocean side of the bar where they were encouraged to surf backwards, sit side-on to the wave, and practice rolls etc between larger sets with most experiencing a decent pounding at times. Back at the beach, the more experienced practiced their sculling support and a variety of rolls.

The day finished with some good laughs and camaraderie at the San Remo Bakery.





## LEVEL 3 SURF ASSESSMENT AT WARATAH BAY by Bob Fergie



### Level 3 aspirants

This year there are five VSKC members working towards their level 3 qualification. They have participated a number of rigorous training and assessment days over the past six months. Their most recent assessment day was at Waratah Bay on the 15th September.

The surf assessment requirements included a number of advanced competencies including:

- the ability to roll under an incoming wave;
- rolling up after being capsized on a breaking wave;
- re-enter and roll in the surf zone.

In addition they were required to demonstrate competency in surfing and launching and landing in surf.

The level 3 intake this year includes a very experienced group:

Tim Pearce, is an Army Captain who has a lot of sea kayaking experience having paddled a good deal with Julian Smith.

Brandon Stewart is a university student and a VSKC member for the past four years. He is arguably the club's best Greenland 'stick' roller.

Tamsin Visik is a Physical Education teacher and has been paddling with the club for four years. She

recently completed a Bass Strait crossing led by Robin Boundy.

Glen Evans is a carpentry trades teacher and has been a club member for quite a few years. He has lots of experience and skill not only in paddling, but kayak building too.

Nathan Belsar lives at Inverloch where he works as a teacher. He joined the club three years ago and has also completed a Bass Strait crossing in recent years.

### Assessors for the day

Peter Costello and Bob Fergie, with the help of Andrew Campbell assessed the candidates over a period of three hours in moderate surf.





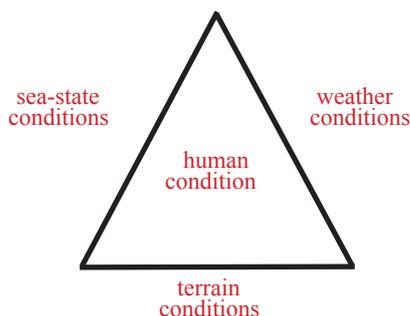


## How to think situationally for better sea kayaking safety

As an expedition paddler I have been fortunate enough to experience a huge variety of environments, conditions and situations all over the world. From experience not only for myself but also from that of my numerous students, learning situational judgment and decision-making has been one of the most valuable outcomes each person has gone home with.

We all recognize how dynamic our sport is. It is a constant puzzle of different terrains, weather conditions, sea states and human conditions as per the..

### 'Decision making triangle'



How then do we observe and plan thoroughly when anything can change from minute to minute? Let me show you how. The first thing I think about each and every time I am planning to go sea kayaking is the acronym 'E.P.C.'

**E** = exposure

**P** = protection

**C** = commitment.

## Exposure

Exposure is all about identifying each of the hazards that will be present or might become present whilst we are on the water. Running through a decision making triangle is a great way to remind you of what must be considered as well as guiding you towards what (if anything) needs to be managed based on your current real-time situation.

To use the decision making triangle go to each of the four elements of the triangle in turn, observing what is relevant (see the table over on p 15) and then giving your observations a rating based on traffic light colors. ie

**Green** = go/no obvious hazard

**Orange** = caution, potential hazard, too much uncertainty or conditions are deteriorating

**Red** = stop, danger, do not go because a hazardous situation exists.

*Note: topographic maps, nautical charts, tide tables, a Beaufort scale or anemometer and weather forecasts are all resources that will assist you with working out and anticipating all of the above.*

## Protection

“When the winds are ripping, the waves are crashing and people aren’t coping where would you honestly rather be: out at sea wishing you were on land or on land wishing you were out at sea?”

This is an old saying that holds true about protection. If you think about protection in terms of a ladder with the best type sitting right up on the top rung, then a “pull out” will always be it. A pull out is any opportunity where you and your pod can land your kayaks and get off the water. Every passage/float plan must always start and finish with a pull out.

Right at the bottom of the ladder would be your ability to stay upright in your kayak in order to breathe... if you are not upright you are getting wet and most likely getting colder and weaker as well. You certainly can’t rest, relax or help anyone else like that so we call that one “survival”.



| Sea Conditions | Weather Conditions | Terrain Conditions    | Human Conditions  |
|----------------|--------------------|-----------------------|-------------------|
| Waves          | Wind               | Pull outs             | Experience        |
| Tides          | Rain, fog, snow    | Commitments           | Skills            |
| Currents       | Clouds             | Protection            | Communication     |
| Sea State      | Local patterns     | Shoals, reefs, rocks  | Attitude          |
| Water temp     | Barometer          | Boomers, bars, points | Strength/wellness |
|                | Weather report     | Boats                 | Equipment         |
|                | Air temp           | Ice bergs             |                   |

Second from the bottom rung on our ladder is another form of protection we sea kayakers use. It is called a “Pod”. For those of you who don’t already know, a pod is what we call a group of sea kayakers. We have pods because there is greater safety in numbers. An effective pod is one where all boats/members can communicate easily as well as respond rapidly to each other if assistance is needed.



In open water situations with no nearby land a pod can also raft up for additional stability and opportunity to rest.

A word of warning for sea kayakers who do not heed the principles of maintaining a reasonable position within a pod is adequately expressed by the following saying regarding pod formation:

***“the first thing you lose is your ability to communicate, second is your ability to stay together, third you lose your ability to stay upright and when that happens the last thing you lose is your life..”***

The good news is that from our third rung upwards, the variety for when, and how protection can be found is huge. Protection can be found in lagoons and coves, around headlands, beneath outcrops, behind large rocks, moored boats and breakwater walls, it can be found within boat harbors and behind jetties, even within large eddies or behind a surf break. So long as you can find a place large enough for a kayak (or an entire pod) you can find protection.

The only limitation is how comfortably your position enables you to escape the wind, waves and currents and to hold position with minimal effort so you can temporarily relax, eat, drink, toilet, make adjustments and communicate all that need be known for what is going to happen next. The more comfortable your protection, the higher you can rank it on your ladder.

Make it a game and practice recognizing and anticipating the best protection. Learn everything you can from more

experienced paddlers around the where’s, why’s and how’s of protection and always ensure that any pod you are part of has a very clear plan for paddling from protection to protection.

## Commitment

Woohoo! This is the final piece of the puzzle where sea kayakers show themselves to be more strategic than a chess-master. Commitment is an expression of time that sea kayakers use to describe how long it will take them to paddle to their next protection.

A weather window is another expression of time that is a guesstimate for how long sea kayakers can reasonably expect paddling conditions to remain stable and safe. So by consciously ensuring that their commitment never exceeds their weather window the theory is that sea kayakers are minimizing the risk of them being exposed to potentially dangerous conditions.

## Putting it all together

Know your hazards and decide if it is safe to go given current conditions. Use maps, charts, tide tables and weather reports to map out all of your points of protection. Ensure that you always start and end with pull outs. Understand the weather and your sea conditions to determine what your weather window is and then make sure that your commitment is well within this.

Happy paddling!



## RED-EYE-RICKETS WITH A POLLIE by Craig Horne



The Red Eye Paddle on Saturday morning, 22nd June 2013 had two differences to the norm.

Firstly, the Victorian Sea Kayak Club paddled with The Hon Andrew Robb AO MP, then the Federal Shadow Minister for Finance.

Secondly, although Andrew is acclimatised in cold Canberra, thawing him out after a fall from his paddle board (see above) into the ice-like Bay water took four litres of HOT chocolate.

Andrew bravely joined an early morning photo shoot at Half Moon Bay, Black Rock along with fourteen VSKC members and ten Stand Up Paddle Victoria (SUP VIC) members. The autumn weather had been lingering around giving Victorians a gentle introduction to winter but that all stopped a week before the photo-shoot.

On Saturday morning the air temperature dropped to 3° C. Anyone who tried to say it was warmer in the water than out clearly hadn't Eskimo-rolled in it. Just watching someone try gave me an instant ice-headache.

We all arrived as usual with military precision at 0545 am at

the Ricketts Point car-park and unloaded our kayaks onto the beach. With a larger group than normal, the mood was high with barbed jokes flowing thick and fast. 'What are the wind and waves doing?' one kayaker called out in the dark. 'It's more your wind than the waves I'm worried about', another retorted.

At 0600 am we all launched out onto the Bay and headed North to Sandringham. With such a large group, we were soon spread out and Peter Costello, who was leading, was calling people back into the group from 100 m seaside to 20 m shore-side. After a threat to the group to enforce a mandatory Eskimo-roll upon the next directional transgression, the group closed in faster than seagulls on a hot chip.

At one point Andrew Campbell drifted up alongside beginner paddler Bill Kennedy and myself, asking whether Bill was enjoying himself and whether he thought the water was cold. Anxious to appear confident, Bill replied 'The water's great, feels fine to me!' Andrew suddenly fell into a roll and came up spluttering 'It's freezing, what do you mean it's fine!?' Bill's expression was priceless.

After paddling six kilometres and





reaching Sandringham, it was time to turn around and head back to Half Moon Bay. Dawn was breaking and the sky was lit up with amazing rose-coloured clouds rolling softly across it. Arriving at the Surf Life Saving Club there, an Inflatable Rescue Boat (IRB) was already out on the water, zipping around in preparation for the photo shoot.

tow behind her, dipped a toe in the water and squealed loudly before running away.

Everyone gathered in front of the pier and with the brilliant morning sun shining brightly to light everyone up, the photo-shoot began. The star of the show was fairly relaxed-looking dog perched on top of one of the paddle boards. The craft and owner cruised around and the dog simply lay down to curiously watch all the activity.

The SUP VIC enthusiasts were just arriving and launching their craft as well. A young lady in a wet suit, who carefully negotiated her way down the pier with her board in

After enough photos to get Kodak back in the black, the kayakers split off and started to head off back to Ricketts Point. As often happens, the leisurely cruise suddenly turned into a sprint and suddenly conditions weren't quite so cold any more. After steaming back into our start point, the boats were packed away and everyone crowded into the nearby café for hot breakfast, coffee and tall stories.

Another great winter Red Eye paddle completed.



## NAVIGATION WORKSHOP, ROSEBUD ON THE BAY by Robin Boundy



In August, Terry Barry and Robin Boundy ran a Navigation Workshop at Rosebud Secondary College followed by an on water Navigation Workshop two weeks later. Eleven club members signed up for quite an intense day of learning, covering everything from understanding and reading maps and charts, to taking bearings from maps, charts and from land and sea to distant objects.

Participants also learnt about compass variation and deviation, navigation strategies, triangulation, understanding the grid system and measuring distances, transit lines, ferry glides, and the buoyage system. This and more was topped off with the 50/90 Rule and the Rule of Twelfths in relation to tides.

Six participants made it for the on-water session with Robin Boundy, assisted by Trainee Instructor Mick Shankie. Participants were given homework leading up to the day using the skills they had learnt on the first day of the workshop. A bearing was calculated from Stony Point to a given destination on Westernport Bay where another bearing was calculated to guide the group through a narrow channel to Tankerton on French Island. Upon arrival at Tankerton the group enjoyed a lunch break before calculating a

ferry glide back to Stony Point on the full flood tide. Unfortunately the strong forecast NW winds hindered our initial plans forcing us to stay of the west side of the Bay. Participants enjoyed some tidal paddling, navigation exercises at Woolies Beach before having lunch on Sandstone Island. From there we rafted up for a group sail feeling the full effects of the strong wind countering the incoming tide.

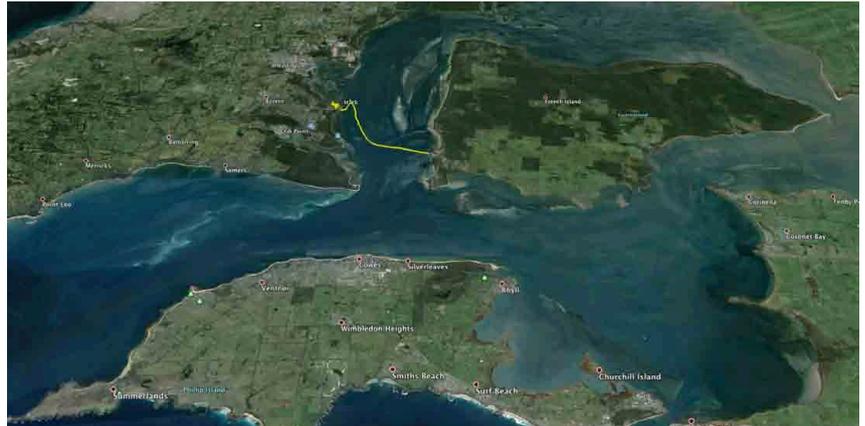
Congratulations to all those who attended the workshops!



## WOOLIES TO TANKERTON RETURN VIA SUBMARINE by Brandon Stewart

As a part of Level 3 training and assessment, the club requires candidates to organise, plan and run a club trip with up to eight paddlers including the candidate and his/her mentor. Initially it looked like I would have a pod of six but at the last moment two were unable to come. That left me with Helmut, Grant, and Bob to enjoy a really interesting 11-12 km paddle.

As it turned out, the day was picture-perfect with a very slight NE breeze of 2-3 kn and an ebb tide well and truly on its way out as we launched from Woolies Beach around 10 am. The plan was to ferry glide across the main channel on a bearing of 90° M so that we reached the channel marker just north of the Tankerton jetty. This all worked well and after a about 80 minutes and a few rolls for fun we arrived just before slack water.



We then enjoyed a 40 minute lunch break with a very civilised cup of coffee thanks to Grant's very flash brewing 'gadgets'. We also enjoyed some jesting banter with a local fisherman who took Bob to task about his 'traditional' skin-on-frame West Greenland kayak. I think the problem for the fisherman was the use of ballistic nylon for the skin as distinct from the real-deal seal skin of the Inuit!

As it turned out, we did come across an unsuspecting seal on the way back which was great. By

the time we left French Island, the tide had turned and was on its way in requiring another ferry glide on a bearing of 270° M. As per the forecast the wind had changed direction and picked up a tad (SE, 8 kn) which made for an easy return paddle. In fact we made such good time that we decided to visit the old beached submarine just north of the Woolies jetty before finishing our paddle.

All in all, a very pleasant and interesting day with great company.



## THE RE-BIRTHING OF 'KOMPRIMIS' by Bob Fergie

### Reflections on building and fine-tuning a replica skin-on-frame West Greenland Kayak

I'm a very fortunate lad in that I have had a couple of special mates and mentors in the craft of wood-working, especially as applied to Greenland and Aleut paddles and replica skin-on-frame kayaks. You'd know them as Grant and Brandon Stewart who over recent years have patiently initiated me into the noble wood crafting guild. As a threesome we now answer to the collective name of the 'two and a half revs' (although the title 'the Masters and their apprentice' is clearly a more accurate descriptor, me very obviously being the apprentice).



In spite of this obvious skill imbalance, the truth is that we share much in common. From a family perspective we are connected given that Brandon, Grant's son is also my son-in-law (being married to my daughter Safina). In terms of vocation we are in the same industry, so to speak. Grant and I both are ordained Baptist ministers and Brandon is currently half way through a degree in Theology. Finally (at least for the purposes of this yarn), we also share very similar recreational pursuits. Indeed, we all suffer from a recently identified psychological condition called the 'LOO-SKA' syndrome (late-onset obsessive sea kayaking addiction). Mind you, I suspect we are in very good company with many of our VSKC mates.

As a consequence of our LOO-SKA condition, we spend a good deal of our spare time building, modifying and paddling sea kayaks



with 'sticks'. To-date we have made close to fifty traditional paddles of both Greenland and Aleutian design. Over the past couple of years we have also built two skin on frame kayaks: an 18 foot Aleutian Biadarka replica for Grant (with its distinctive bifurcated bow) and an 18 foot West Greenland Inuit hunting kayak replica for me christened, 'Kompromis'. In the case of the latter, we have recently undertaken a significant overhaul in an effort to improve its performance consistent with traditional Inuit kayak design.

### What's in a name?

My choice of the German word 'Kompromis' may be a little misleading at first glance. Sounding remarkably similar to our English word 'compromise' the meaning of 'Kompromis' is subtly yet profoundly different. It was used by a nineteenth century German Theologian by the name of Earnst Troeltsch to convey a much more creative, exploitative, adrenaline pumping and positive concept.

The best way I can explain it to lovers-of-the-surf-zone is to point



to the dangerous but exhilarating positioning of a kayak on the front of a wave just before it breaks. Setting up is critical to catching a wave and being powerfully catapulted in to the beach. While this means taking the risk of being trashed big-time if one mucks it up, when it all comes together there is an exhilaration, the equal of the best adrenaline rush you could ever hope to experience.

Respectful awareness, courage and timing are the keys to pulling this off (mighty ocean waves are no respecters of puny men/women in long skinny boats).

Troeltsch's point and mine is that it is possible to work in sync and harmony with this magnificently powerful (and dangerous) part of God's creation. Naming my kayak 'Kompromis' reminds me of this. Certainly it sums up the vulnerable, yet exhilarating joy of sea kayaking. At a deeper level, it represents for me a challenging metaphor for Jesus' profound purpose statement for those who put their trust in him, 'life in abundance' (John 10:10).

### **Kompromis Mark 1 and 2**

As many VSKC members will recall, this 're-birthing' process began at last year's November VSKC Paddle Fest. In addition to removing the skin, I was able to demonstrate the remarkable strength of ballistic nylon coverings using a hammer and screw driver no less (a trick I would challenge any glass boat owner mates to try without being reduced to inconsolable tears). This was more than a stunt I hasten to add. The simple string-tied skin-on-frame design is indeed very strong and durable. Even so, after eleven months of padding my prototype last year I became aware of a number of subtle design flaws that made it much more of a challenge to roll than should have been the case.

While one solution might have been to discard the boat and make a new one (actually I have some 'friends' who behind my back stuck the denuded and vulnerable frame in a wheelie bin at the close



of the Paddle Fest), I thought that redemptive tweaking rather than terminal re-cycling was a more than viable option. The idea of removing the skin, and then adjusting the chines and keelson appealed to me both from a learning/tweaking point of view as well as a time/cost perspective.

Actually, and as I discovered in my own research, this was not without precedent. Indeed, it was not uncommon for seal hunting Inuits of past centuries to re-skin (and repair/modify) their kayak frame every couple of years. Empowered by this age-old practice, here's how the re-skinning progressed from the initial Kompromis Mark 1 (launched early January 2012) to the current re-modelled Kompromis Mark 2 (re-launched mid 2013).

### **KOMPROMIS Mark 1**

(launched 15th January 2012)

#### **Building:**

It took six very part-time winter months, working out of the 'Hollygreen factory' in Doncaster (ie. Grant Stewart's home garage) on Friday and Saturdays to build Kompromis Mk 1. While we loosely followed Chris Cunningham's book on building a West Greenland skin-on-frame kayak, we also departed from his instructions on a number of occasions in deference to a US-based master skin-





on-frame builder Corey Freedman (of skinboats.org). While we made slow progress by expert standards, we enjoyed designing various jigs and learning a range of simple tool crafting techniques that will serve us well in any future building projects. By Christmas day the framing of Kompromis Mk 1 was all but complete and like a trio of young school boys we excitedly prepared for the first major test--a glad wrap paddle and roll.

### Glad wrap testing:

In the afternoon of Christmas Day 2012 Kompromis Mk 1 was glad wrapped and launched in between impressive thunderstorms at Lilydale Lake. To say that we



were pumped is an understatement. Being a little larger than the average bear, or as Turner Wilson put it, not possessing the 'optimal body shape', it was an interesting squeeze/shuffle for me to wriggle my way in for this epic inaugural launch.

The first roll was successfully completed with the whole event videoed and up-loaded to you-tube for the irreverent entertainment of family and friends into eternity (see. [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=COdK4\\_eF1eM](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=COdK4_eF1eM)). At the time it seemed as though Kompromis Mk 1 was close to perfect! As often happens however, my pre-emptive pride proved misplaced.

For a start, the next step of sewing the extremely strong ballistic nylon skin onto the boat left us in a rather 'sticky spot' as they say. Sewing the skin went well with the skin tightening up like a drum. However, in our haste to complete the 'gooping' job (using a two-pack polyurethane concoction) we (actually, it was me) failed to adequately mix the two parts together.

To my embarrassment, after mixing vigorously for 2-3 minutes, we were to discover that what was really required was vigorous mixing for 5-6 minutes. Had I followed instructions properly, the goop would have gone off within 8-9 hours. The reality was that even after 6 months there were bits that were still 'tacky' around the cockpit making wet exits a little more challenging than they should have been, let's say!



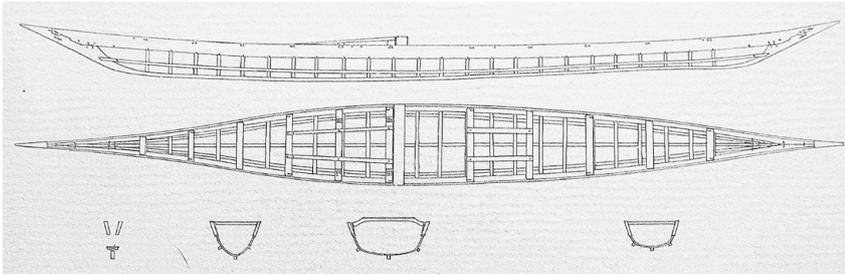
### 11 months test paddling:

In spite of this unfortunate oversight, Kompromis Mk 1 still got lots of use over the next eleven months. Grant in his Biadarka and me in my West Greenlander enjoyed weekly 'stix-and-trix' paddles out of Frankston most Fridays. While Brandon often accompanied us in my Tahe Greenlander T, he also enjoyed paddles in the two skin-on-frame boats. In fact, with his far superior Greenland rolling skills, he demonstrated that in its Mark 1 form, Kompromis was capable of all the rolling tricks possible in my Tahe 'cheater' boat (as Turner Wilson is apt to describe it).



The only problem was that while Brandon could make it dance with graceful ease, I couldn't (yes, that 'non-optimal body shape' issue





proved an embarrassing flaw). Even so, with growing experimentation and careful comparative research, I began to see that it was not simply a case of boat-body mismatch. As I studied the chine line profiles of both old traditional West Greenland boat photos together with the lines of my glass Tahe Greenlander T, I began to notice subtle but significant deviations in Kompromis Mk 1. Further, I began to understand how these subtle variations were compromising a number of performance issues related to primary and secondary stability; rolling efficacy, tracking efficiency in quartering winds above 10 knots and so on.

### All was not lost!

I became convinced that I could favourably address each of these problems by making relatively minor modifications to the chines and keelson, and replacing the key hole cockpit with a shorter but wider ocean cockpit. By implication, this also meant the need for modifications to the masik (gunnel to gunnel thigh brace bar underneath the front of the cockpit). It needed to

be extended back towards the stern by five or so inches in order to improve thigh contact and connection with the boat. Of course the downside was that the 'Greenland wiggle' became a necessary reality (ie, squeezing in and out of the smaller cockpit space). In addition, I realized that I needed to come up with a much simpler and more comfortable seating arrangement.

In the first configuration of the boat I had experimented with a number of seating options. The best of these was fitting a NZ made 'bum-fortable' closed cell seat which included adjustable back brace straps. While this was reasonable, it tended to stretch the longer I was in the boat and/or when practicing multiple rolls (as I like to do). The result was an increasingly sloppy sitting position with diminishing firm body/boat contact at back-side, thighs and feet points. Further to this, I wanted to set up a back rest system that gave both firm support when doing lay back rolls as well as easy stowage access for dry bags and the like (no bulk heads or front and rear deck access hatches made this all the more important).



One final issue that I realized needed attention was that of post-capsize buoyancy. While both of our skin-on-frame boats had large inflatable buoyancy bags (sourced from Corey Freedman in America, and while these also doubled up as large 'dry bags', with no water tight bulk heads to restrict capsize water ingress, a wet exit inevitably meant being totally swamped. Consequently, the boats became very very unstable especially after a re-enter and roll, something both Grant and I discovered one very windy winter day out from Frankston.

### Always wear your socks!

Following a comedy or errors in very choppy conditions with an offshore wind of 20-25 knots, Grant and I both ended up swimming in the cold wintery Port Philip Bay. While we both successfully re-entered and rolled, we found it impossible to stay upright and even more difficult to try to use our hand pumps effectively.

In the end we both realized that we would have to swim our boats in. This proved difficult with our boats swamped and it took us both a good 20 minutes to reach the shore no more than 150 m away. By this time we were both somewhat hypothermic and exhausted even though we were both clothed in all the right full-immersion gear.



It was a bit of a sobering wake-up call about the need to include a water containment cockpit 'sock' to our boats. Had we both had one then, there would have been no hypothermia drama.

The moral of the story is clear: 'always wear your socks' when paddling skin-on-frame sea kayaks.

# KOMPROMIS Mk 2

(re-launched 8th July 2013)

## STAGE 1 skin denuding

(at 2012 VSKC Paddle Fest)



## STAGE 2: rocker adjustments

(removal of the first 'fat' rib, deepening the keelson at the bow)



## STAGE 3 new chines fitting

(gunnel parallel placement, string attachment variation, wider shallower V configuration)



## STAGE 4: cockpit adjustments

(adjusted masik placement and thigh braces, shorter but wider cockpit, remoulded back rest and seating arrangement for easy rear storage access and comfy fit)



## STAGE 5: glad wrap test

(trim, stability, rolling)



## STAGE 6: skinning refinements

(stretching and stitching)

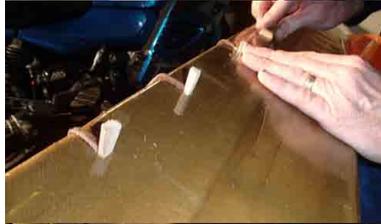




**STAGE 7:  
Gooping hull and deck**  
(this time making sure the two pack poly urethane was mixed thoroughly in order for it to go off in 8 hours, not 6 months as in Mark 1)



**Stage 8:  
Deck lines**  
(leather cord and adjustable toggles immediately in front and behind the cockpit, plus bow and stern paddle stowage lines)



## STATISTICAL DETAILS

### Dimensions

Form: slightly Swede  
**Overall Length:** 5.27 m  
**Waterline length:** 4.0 m  
**Beam:** 53 cm  
**Depth:** 30 cm  
**Cockpit:** 50 x 70 cm  
**Weight:** 18 kg  
**Storage capacity:** two blow up  
**Paddler weight:** up to 125 kg

### Materials used

**Gunnels:** Western red cedar  
**Chines and keelson:** Hoop pine  
**Ribs:** laminated bamboo  
**Cockpit:** laminated hoop pine  
**Binding:** synthetic twine  
**Skin:** ballistic nylon  
**Sealant:** 2 pack poly urethane goop  
**Deck lines:** leather

### Equipment fit out

- Removable closed cell foam back-rest
- Cockpit sea sock
- Watertight storage and buoyancy bags
- Aleut laminated paddle
- Tuliq (combining CAG and spray skirt)



## KOMPROMIS Mk 2: the wash up



Kompromis Mk 2 has been on the water for almost three months now in a range of sea states.

### Observations to-date

While the cockpit is a good deal shorter than that of Mark 1, it is easy enough to shimmy into for me (6'2" and 120 kg). Making the cockpit a little wider has helped with recovering from a roll, allowing the hips to sit much closer to the water-side gunnel and thus making it easier to position the boat a good deal away from the perpendicular. It is definitely easier to roll than Mark 1 and wet exits are relatively panic-free.

The re-shaped and re-positioned chines have decreased the angle of the hull V and increased the below water breadth. Together this has improved the primary and secondary stability of the boat and further enhanced the ease of rolling. That being said, the angle of the V shaped hull is still a good deal sharper than that of my Tahe Greenland T.

The boat's edging capacity, without compromising stability, is improved. Not only does it sit on its edge comfortably, this releases the bow and the stern so that turning the boat

is very easy. The boat tracks well with its built-in skeg operating more efficiently given the deepening of the keelson at the bow. In moderate winds there is minimal weather cocking. It surfs very well and is as quick as my Tahe Greenland T. Certainly the adjustment made to the hull shape is proving to be every bit as effective as I'd hoped. Is it perfect yet? No! Improved, yes but even now I can see things that can be further improved. However, I don't see me fiddling any more with this boat.

No, it's time to help others build a skin-on-frame boat incorporating the various improvements we've gleaned to-date. In fact, Grant, Brandon and I are planning to offer a West Greenland skin-on-frame building intensive late January 2014 (see advertisement on right).

We have secured factory space for the project and expect to be able to offer places to the first eight people who sign up and pay a deposit. If you want to find out more, give us a ring. But don't leave it too long! There could well be a fight for places.



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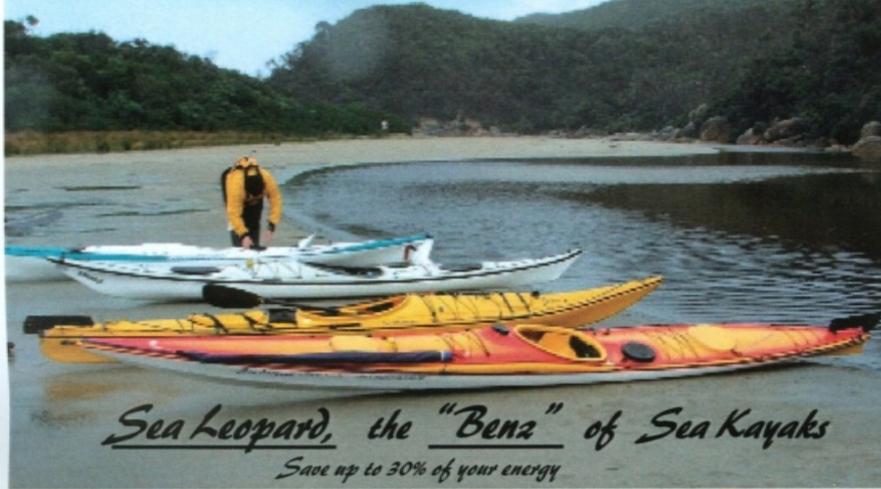
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**'an agreeable companion is as good as a carriage'** (Publius Syrus, 42 BC, Maxim 143)