

Sea Trek

Learning /
Practice /
Training

www.vskc.org.au

Autumn 2014



Issue 80





The VSKC

The Victorian Sea Kayak Club was formed in 1979, aimed at bringing together sea kayakers in our part of the world, creating opportunities to meet and organise trips, and to promote the interests of sea kayakers. Club members have done some marvellous and sometimes very challenging trips by sea kayak around our nearby coasts of Victoria and Tasmania and further afield. Our founding members made the first sea kayak circumnavigation of Tasmania and the first south to north crossing of Bass Strait. Members regularly paddle across

Bass Strait, and take their kayaks to remote and interesting areas. Equally, we all love relaxing short trips in our local waters, with plenty of time to socialise. We welcome new members and encourage a culture in which members help each other with skills, gear, safety, trip information and organisation. The club runs training courses and has a grading system, although training is not aimed at absolute novices. New members are expected know something of sea kayaking, have access to a kayak, and be ready to explore the marvellous opportunities which sea kayaking offers. The club gets together once a year for

its annual general meeting held as part of a weekend of activities on and off the water, with informative training sessions and presentations from interesting speakers. We run a range of club trips throughout the year for all levels of ability, helping members to improve their proficiency and take part in trip leadership. We keep in touch through this website, email news, and our club magazine Sea Trek. For more information read go to the Docs and Downloads link from the Web page, and download our Operating Principles and Membership application, or contact our Membership Officer.





Cover

From top to bottom: Werner Shuna paddle, Tahe Seaspirit, Craig Horne. Special thanks to Craig for his appearance as SeaTrek cover model – Photo taken during Red Eye on 12 April 2014 by editor

Sigla

BF: Bob Fergie • FC: Fiona Coates • GS: Greg Skoronsky • GV: George Vartabedian • HH: Helmut Heinze • NM: Nick Mulvany • PC: Peter Costello • RB: Robin Boundy • RR: Richard Rawlings • SC: Steve Collins • SM: Sue Mountford • TB: Terry Barry • XH: Xufang Heinze.

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Letters

Find here a selection of comments, observations, additions, corrections and suggestions that are of general interest to the readers.

Please feel welcome to send your comments to: seatrek@vskc.org.au

[Good reading]

Bob Fergie
<bobfergie@ozemail.com.au>
2 Feb 2014

G'day fellas. G. passed this link onto me the other day. It's one of the best cases for learning greenland rolling that I've come across. Could

be worth getting permission to publish in Sea Trek: <http://qajaqrolls.com/2014/01/greenland-kayak-rolling-features-for-queue.html>

[Seatrek 79 – Forum Workshops]

Maggie McPherson
<maggieumcp@gmail.com>
4 Mar 2014

The most fantastic (but not mentioned) workshop at the AGM — was the "Help — I am upside down, I'm OK" by Mick Shankie.

I thought this lesson was amazingly logical and has made a 100% difference to my rolling. Now I am able to stop and think and not panic, as the essence

of rolling is in the mind, not the technique as I had thought. Mick showed us how we can actually ~~float on our backs~~ ~~float on our backs~~ a long time under water which gave us time to get the technique clear in our mind instead of panicking and pulling on the deck without waiting and allowing time to get ourselves into a good set-up position.

I hope we have MORE OF THESE LESSONS, everyone would benefit.

Thanks to Mick and his logic."

(Please add those pics you took of me upside down and up again if you like, but only if you think it is a good idea.)



... and back up again



Maggie upside down ...



Editorial



The issue of training, learning and teaching skills has been bubbling along in the background for a while. Kayaking skills and knowledge feature quite prominently in the Mission Statement of the new Draft Con-

stitution for our club. Club members have voiced opinions and expectations as to what training they would like; instructors have been mulling over the best ways of delivering training in a way that does justice to all members with widely diverging interests and expectations.

I myself have become a bit more interested in training as an issue worth some consideration, having recently put in a bit of effort to graduate from my longstanding L-plate to an P-plater/Level 1 existence (as

a few others of my fellow paddlers). If nothing else, at least my photo has become a bit more seaworthy.

Learning the finer skills of sea kayaking is difficult business, and the sea is unforgiving, salty, and, in these days, increasingly cold. Going over the edge (literally) despite our best efforts makes us learners very unhappy. The teachers are no good! Conversely, instructors console themselves by pointing to lack of aptitude or willingness of the student. It's an old game. It makes per-

fect sense. Yet, it does not help and does not exactly spread happiness. The issue of training has been around in the Club for a long time. Just have a look at old Sea Trek Issues. Yet it may be worth throw some old and new questions into the discussion. No need for quick answers.

In the meantime enjoy the contributions of talented new author, and look out for each other on the water, no matter what skill levels, expectations and aspirations. Even our president, his kayaking gen-

eral proficiency and hand-rolling expertise notwithstanding, may be grateful for the odd gentle reminder to take along a paddle.

SeaTrek Topics – Call for Suggestions

Dear readers, what would you like to see covered in one of the next SeaTrek issues? I think we have many members in the Club with a wealth knowledge that is worth sharing. Personally

I would like to know more about how people deal with the trivia of kayaking, such as

- carrying a phone on the water, taking or placing calls with wet hands in bumpy conditions (I still have to come across the ideal phone that works in normal live and on the water equally well);
- keeping warm and in winter, what hat or beanie works best (and best to clean and dry the gear after

paddling);

- best way to carry water on extended trips (I tend to loose bottles under bungees but don't want to carry a heavy water bladder in my PFD for safety reasons). Let me know either in person or send an email to seatrek@vskc.org.au.

SeaTrek Authors – Call for Contributions

Do you have an idea for a SeaTrek article? Would

you like to write something? We are lucky to have contributions by new talented authors in the current edition, and I am confident that there are many more out there. Let me know if you have something, if you want to bounce an idea – have a chat on the water or contact me via <mailto:seatrek@vskc.org.au>. And by the way, photo contributions are welcome too.

■

President's Podcast



Many of you will remember a Bob Dylan album from yester-year called 'Slow Train Coming'. Getting this edition of Sea Trek out parallels this sentiment in many ways I think. However, and as Helmut mentions in his Editor's column, the delay has had more to do with sorting out time consuming web-set-up programming protocols for our magazine. Once sorted we can reasonably expect the publishing of future Sea Trek issues to be much easier and faster both in downloadable magazine format and in web-configured on-line readable format.

That being understood, this 'slow train coming' that

you are now perusing is, I'm sure you will agree, well worth the wait. It certainly reflects much of the action VSKC members have been out on the water enjoying over the past six months or so. Apart from one most embarrassing experience of 'being caught up the river without a paddle' (see Peter Costello's reflections) I have cause to be very proud of how things have been tracking from the perspective of our club management committee. Many folk have been putting in big-time-committee, instructors and trip leaders, all motivated by a deep desire to see our club prosper and develop.

In the pages that follow, there is a wonderfully broad exposure to some of the on-water offerings of the past six months or so, including a number of articles focusing on training and new member orientation. Feedback of the developing inter-state 'summit' networking with other State sea kayaking clubs is

covered as well, demonstrating the value of our club's participation as contributors and beneficiaries beyond our own borders. There are a number of first-time contributors in this issue highlighting not only the growth and membership diversity of our club, but also the willingness of many to be contributors rather than simply consumers.

While on that 'contributor' theme, let me remind you all that following many months of careful drafting and consultation, a **Special General Meeting is to be convened at 8 pm, Thursday 17 July 2014, at the Mordialloc Sailing Club**. The single purpose is to vote in a new set of VSKC Rules that will effectively serve the specific purposes of the VSKC consistent with government legislative requirements. You will have received in the mail a full set of papers including the draft Rules, proxy forms and meeting details. Even

if you are unable to physically attend the meeting I would urge you to register your vote by proxy. In addition, our VSKC web site provides similar information. VSKC Committee members will also be actively available to help you participate.

Finally, and speaking of the committee, I want to thank them all for their service 'above and beyond the call of duty' so far this year. With one person down at present (David Gollightly being overseas), the club has been wonderfully served by Sue Mountford (Secretary), Greg Gleeson (Treasurer), Robin Boundy (Training and Trips Coordinator), Richard Rawling (Membership Coordinator), Vojin Maladinov (Communications Coordinator), and last but far from least, Helmut Heinze (Publications Coordinator). It continues to be my real pleasure to serve with them a club President.

I trust that you will en-

joy this issue of Sea Trek as much as I have, and I look forward to paddling

with you all in the months ahead. I especially look forward to seeing you at the

Special General Meeting on the 17th July.
Cheers

Bob Fergie
(VSKC President)



VSKC News and Press Releases

VSKC, 19 June
2014

THE FIRST UN-SUPPORTED AND CONTINUOUS CIRCUMNAVIGATION OF THE AUSTRALIAN MAINLAND AND TASMANIA IN A SEA KAYAK NEARS THE FINISH LINE

Jason Beachcroft left Rose Bay Sydney in his five metre Sea Kayak on Saturday 12th of January 2013 in an attempt to become the first person to circumnavigate the Australian mainland and Tasmania.

On the



28th June 2014, just over 17 months later, Jason expects to paddle back into Sydney Harbour having successfully completed this extraordinary expedition.

He will have paddled 17,000 km over big surf and swell, high winds, strong currents and dangerous reefs. He will have encountered magnificent whales, aggressive sharks, stalking crocodiles

and huge water buffalo. He will have endured extreme weather conditions including cyclones and storms and negotiated three massive cliffs sections of 180-200 km (each requiring multi day/night paddling without landing), not to mention two Bass Strait crossings around Tasmania in some of the most tempestuous and challenging waters in the world.

While there have been three other amazing sea kayak circumnavigations of the Australian mainland in the past, Jason Beachcroft's journey is unique in that he will be the first to have included Tasmania and the first to have done it all completely solo and unsupported.



To find out more of Jason's amazing adventure go to his website at www.jasonbeachcroft.com

To contact him before his arrival in Sydney on the 28th June for up-dates on his ETA at Rose Bay, either email him (jasonbeachcroft@yahoo.com.au), or phone him (normally in the evening as he will be paddling during the day) on 0438 457 382.



Bob Fergie

Reflections of the NSWSKC Rock'n Roll

*Batesman's Bay, March 2014.
An abridged version of an article published in the NSWSKC magazine, 'Salt'*

For some years now I have wanted to attend a Rock n Roll weekend given the terrific reports I'd heard from various sea kayaking friends. So, when it was decided that the second Australian Sea Kayak Clubs Summit (ASKCS) was to be held immediately following the NSWSKC's RnR weekend at Bateman's Bay my latent hopes were all-but realized. In my role of VSKC President this year, and together with Robin Boundy our VSKC Training Coordinator, we were to represent the VSKC at the ASKC Summit, and by implication the NSWSKC RnR as well. I should add that we were not the only foreigners from Victoria attending the RnR. Five other VSKC mates (John and Tina Evertze, Gerard O'Reily, Mick and Lynn MacRobb) enjoyed the many offerings of the weekend as well. All together there were 160 people in attendance (including visitors from a number of other State clubs as well).

Robin and I enjoyed the very generous and warm welcome to the RnR weekend and it was terrific to be able to meet new and old friends with a similar obsession for paddling long skinny boats along our fabulous Australian coastline. Robin and I especially appreciated the opportunity to relax as ordinary participants rather than organisers. My hats off to David Linco and his team of helpers and to Campbell Tiley (NSWSKC President) and his committee for the huge effort put into planning and running this event. Brilliant!



Me — Photo: Mark Sundin of Expedition Kayaks



Robin surfing on the Clyde River Bar — Photo: BF

Robin and I enjoyed the opportunity to be involved in a level 3 surf training session on Saturday morning with NSWSKC instructors Fernando Chanis and Nick Gill at Tomakin (about 20km south of Bateman's Bay). As VSKC instructors we really valued the chance to observe our NSWSKC counterparts in action and to learn much from the experience. On Sunday morning Robin and I enjoyed a leisurely bit of rock gardening around Snapper Island followed by some surfing fun on the Clyde River Bar with Mark Sundin, Mick MacRobb and Claus Bessler.

We all enjoyed the various afternoon and evening offerings too, in-

cluding a couple of sessions on kayak sailing by our own Mick MacRobb and some fascinating insights and practical clues about serious expeditioning by Stuart Trueman (I was able to pick up a copy of his book about his solo and un-supported paddle around Australia a couple of years back—a terrific read I hasten to add). The more formal meal at the Catalina Club on Saturday evening was great with a most interesting after-dinner talk by two fellows from South Australia who in recent years have completed a couple of remarkable open sea expeditions from New Caledonia to Australia and from Darwin to East Timor. The video competition on Sunday evening was not only a lot of fun, it showcased an impressive quality and breadth across the various entries. Wouldn't it be great to produce an Australian version of a Justine Curgenven-type DVD series with the collation of similar quality material from other sea kayak clubs as well, me thinks!

Overall, the RnR program was excellent with plenty of space between activities and an atmosphere that was very friendly and inclusive throughout. Indeed, the one thing that sticks in my mind (as with our VSKC annual Paddle Fest/AGMs also) was that it was lots of fun, enjoyed with many new and old friends. Paddling these long skinny boats of ours is fantastic for sure, but the thing I value most is the opportunity these boats spawn through events like the RnR to mutually build and enjoy friendships. Long live the 'rock n roll' in all of its interstate variations I say! I expect that I'll be back for more of the same in the years ahead.

As in the spirit of reciprocity, I have issued a warm invitation to members of the NSWSKC to join us down at the Gippsland Lakes for our early November Paddle Fest as well. This would be a terrific 'ripple-effect' follow-on from the NSW RnR I think.





Bob Fergie

The Second National Sea Kayak Summit

Hosted by the NSWSKC at Bateman's Bay, NSW, 10th March 2014

As many VSKCers will recall, it was an initiative of Terry Barry in 2013, during the last year of his presidency that saw the concept of a National Sea Kayak Summit come to fruition. Following an excellent weekend of meetings in exile on Snake Island early 2013, very good networks were established amongst the various leaders of Australian State sea kayaking clubs. A result of the 2013 Summit was the enthusiastic agreement to hold a second one in 2014, this time hosted by the NSWSKC immediately following their annual 'Rock n Roll' weekend at Bateman's Bay.

Robin Boundy, and I were appointed as the VSKC representatives this year (Terry and Raia Wall were the representatives last year). Robin and I travelled up in my van arriving at 6.30pm on Friday evening, just in time to set up our tents and join in a pizza and drinks evening provided by

Expedition Kayaks (the main sponsor of the Rock n Roll event). Consistent with our 2013 initiative, all our Rock n Roll registration and camping fees were kindly covered by the NSWSKC while the VSKC covered fuel expenses for Robin and me.

Representatives from SA (for the first time), Tasmania, NSW, Qld and Victoria attended. Unfortunately there was no WA representation again this year as they were running their own annual symposium during the same week as the Summit. Hopefully this clash will be avoided in future years as I understand the WA club is keen to be involved in future Summits. Originally this year's Summit was intended to be a full day affair, however formal meetings were limited to three hours in the morning given that the Qld delegation had to leave by 11am to catch their plane home. This was a real pity I felt and I would hope in future that a full day at least be given to Summit discussions.

In addition to brief up-dates from each club, there was very valuable input from Michael Steinfeld, a lawyer

and member of the NSWSKC, with respect to implications of the Civil Liabilities Act for clubs like ours. A representative from Australian Canoeing, Mark Thurgood (ACAS Coordinator) also joined us providing some helpful input for broader discussion around AC's formal and/or informal linkages to Australian sea kayaking clubs, particularly with respect to training awards and standards.

See the table for a brief summary of these and a couple of other issues of mutual concern (Appendix, Table 1).

Looking back, I think it was clear that a whole day would have been useful for our meeting and even after the Qld delegation left at 11am valuable informal discussions over lunch and into the early afternoon continued. We all agreed that we ought to hold a third Summit in 2015 and there was general agreement that the Tasmania club be asked to host it. Finally, it was an honor for Robin and I to represent the VSKC this year. We both felt it was a worthwhile time to-

wards the strengthening of network- kayak clubs. Terry Barry's legacy lives on!
 ing relationships with other State sea ■

	Issues	VSKC Implications	Necessary action
Civil Liabilities ACT	<p>Trip leadership negligence liability criteria</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Obvious risk (water/drowning etc) • Inherent risk (levels of risk less obvious to novice paddlers, eg sea state, reefs, weather etc) • Risk warning (of specific risks on a particular trip, eg reefs, tides, channels, other users etc) • Waivers (not taken too seriously by the judiciary because too general) 	<p>Trip leaders and Instructors need to give careful attention to 'risk warnings', especially with Grade 0 and 1 in paddle briefings (before and during paddles).</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explanation /protocol documentation needs to be drafted, distributed, explained and supervised for level 3 and Instructor grades particularly (to equivalent AC standards) • Training for level 0 and 1 must begin sooner rather than later in a paddlers club involvement
Australian Canoeing	<p>The NSW hosts initiated this agenda item, inviting Mark Thurgood (also member of QSKC) to attend. The following issues were addressed</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How AC relates to clubs and sea kayaking • How clubs view links with AC • Is their value in establishing a sea kayaking experts committee in AC (and/or linking in to ASKSC Summits)? 	<p>While VSKC (and TSCC) are not members of AC, it is important to ensure our standards are equivalent to AC. Their standards are accessible via the AC website</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Levels 0-3 are in sync already (cf. Terry Barry's chart prepared for 2013 Summit) • Instructor grades have not yet been calibrated, but should be asap • It is recommended that AC liaise with all Australian Sea Kayak clubs when considering the broader needs of sea kayaking, and that that be through annual Summit meetings at the very least

Overseas visiting experts	<p>Following the aborted Phil Clegg visit the following questions were discussed:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are State clubs still interested in hosting these visitors in association with Geoff Murray in Tasmania, given the recent experience with Phil Clegg? • What is the positions of the clubs with respect to the ethics of paying overseas experts on visitor visas? 	<p>Good value for club members and instructors, but huge effort involved. Qld folk reluctant to participate unless correct visas are used by visitors</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are we happy to continue to join in these initiatives? • Is there a danger of 'over-saturation' if run annually? • Should we also be looking at using Australian/NZ experts as well—perhaps alternatively?
Kayak roof rack overhang	<p>While the Vic regulations appear to be more reasonable than other states (ie. overhang of 1.2m beyond the rear end of vehicle), John Dawson's conversations with a Federal government expert in the matter remains ambiguous.</p>	<p>The Vic Roads document appears to cover our Victorian users reasonably satisfactorily.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Encourage VSKC members to carry copy of Vic Roads diagram • Ensure flag (daytime) and light (night time) are affixed to vehicles



Craig H practising ... — Photo: HH

Robin Boundy

It's all about Practice!

Don't ...

... think that hours upon hours of Instructor training from training days and other coaching events is required, to improve a sea kayakers paddling skills. Nothing could be further from the truth. Nearly all the clubs Level 3 paddlers obtained their skills from a small number of organised training events, but their skills were honed in by getting out on the water, paddling with more experienced paddlers and practice, practice, practice!

Sea kayaking requires a range of skills, some can be mastered relatively quickly and others can take weeks, months and even years. Whilst instructor-based training is of great benefit in teaching the myriad of techniques and skills required, the real re-

sults come from getting out and practising those skills.

This is best achieved by participating in as many club paddles as possible, where you can practice your newly acquired skills in real time conditions under the guidance of more advanced paddlers, who on most occasions are able and willing to assist you in anyway.

Take the basic low brace support stroke, this only requires in most cases a few minutes of teaching from an Instructor, followed up by hours of practice on the water. There is no benefit in having a dozen 3 minute lessons over a year on the support stroke without getting out there and practising the skill.

Do ...

... practise! To get the most out of your paddling development, attend

the training days when offered but follow them up by getting on the water, as every paddle is a training paddle. By participating in club paddles, watching and learning from others in the pod, it will not be long before you are the one offering assistance and advice to other new members in the club.

There are also a number of great sea kayak instructional books available on the market as well as You Tube and the internet, all excellent sources of information.

And ...

... remember as Bruce Lee once said, "I don't fear the man who practised a thousand kicks once, but the man (or woman) who practised one kick a thousand times!"

■

Helmut Heinze

Somewhat Dry – Observations on Learning

Disclaimer: The following observations are purely from the viewpoint of an observer sitting on the fence and watching the to and fro of a debate about how the Club best meet expectations about training. As a kayaker I would be partisan to the debate (although often not sure on which side of the argument I would stand), but here I am writing as a sociologist or historian. This accounts for the dry reading. Sorry.

Sketches by the author.

Training? Are we doing Olympics? This is a club of sociable sea kayakers who paddle together. Does sea kayaking need training? Of course, paddling a pointy, narrow boat in choppy water does not come naturally like, say, walking. But it's not outrageously difficult either, leaving aside some unnatural acts such as Eskimo rolling or hurtling down waves.

Yet a new member of the Victorian Sea Kayaking Club is welcomed with a pack of documents, many of which are dealing with an elaborate grading system, with regulations concerning assessments and assessors, book-keeping, tracking of progress, record-keeping of achievements and so on. The emphasis is on proficiency, not on sportive performance.

A look at how the club describes itself confirms the importance of learning. The Draft Rules for the proposed new Club Constitution state as the purpose of the club:

To provide a forum for club members to pursue sea kayaking by facilitating sea kayaking-related activities

To develop the skills, standards and competencies of its members

To advance, promote and enhance standards for the selec-

tion and use of kayaks and equipment

(Purpose of Club – Draft Rules, Rule 2)

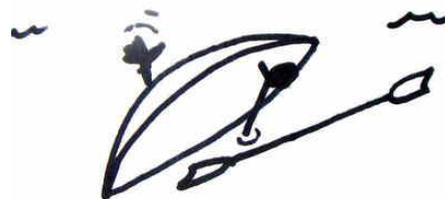
We seem to be facing an awful lot of developing and advancing our skills and knowledge when we just wanted to go about enjoying the adventure of sea kayaking.

Why? One might point to the inherent risks of sea kayaking. Staying upright and moving forward under challenging conditions obviously requires some skills that do not come naturally. Avoiding dangerous situations, making the right decisions, choosing the right craft, appropriate clothing etc goes a long way mitigating risks. But one could also point out that, for some members at least, the mastery of difficult strokes or difficult navigation challenges carries its rewards in itself. Some want or need to learn the Eskimo roll as a means to get themselves out of a tight spot, others enjoy rolling as skillful play in its own right, a reason to go out for a paddle.

How to go about developing and improving skills and knowledge? There is no simple answer available other than: it depends! It depends on what and how members want to learn; it depends on their willingness and ability to dedicate time and effort to the task of learning, it depends on their aspirations, their limitations, their current skill and knowledge level. And last not least, not every member wants the same.

Instead of providing answers, which I don't have as a relative newcomer to both kayaking and the club, I would like to offer questions. I do this from the viewpoint of an observer, someone sitting on the fence watching and describing.

Skills refer to the ability to perform certain tasks adequately right here and now. Adequately means: efficiently, safely, achieving the purpose. Skills can be observed directly. Rolling a kayak is a skill. No doubt. We can easily watch and judge: did the kayaker come back up or not. Propelling the kayak forward with paddle strokes is also a skill. A simple one. We see the kayak moving forward, not sideways. Doing it efficiently, though, is not trivial at all. Turning a kayak with a rudder is also a skill. It does not come naturally. Turning a kayak without a rudder is a skill too, assisting the turn through edging requires a combination of skills. And so on. But also the following is true: Leading a group is a skill, making the right decision while under pressure is a skill, reading a map and navigating is a skill when it matters to make decisions on the spot.



Skill (developing)

Knowledge, in contrast, is something we cannot observe directly. Knowledge comes to the fore in decisions, in choices, in visible actions in specific situations. Knowledge is something that underpins skills but all we can observe directly are skills.. Luckily we can communicate and test knowledge by asking questions: what would you do if ..., how do you do ...?

Some skills may be blind, automatic reflexes, not driven by knowl-

Skills and Knowledge

edge we can communicate. Other skills are based on and evolve out of knowledge.

To make things more confusing: We do not just have skills and knowledge side by side, but also knowledge of skills and, possibly, skill development. Many non-trivial skills are only acquired because we do know what to do and what not, what to look out for, what matters and what doesn't. Or at least we think so (occasionally there may be a disconnect: we do the right thing for the wrong reason, or we are not able to translate knowledge into the successful execution). And finally, sometimes we just do the wrong thing, our knowledge is deficient, and we are not aware of either and still happily bumbling on ...).

Skills and knowledge together constitute a competency or proficiency to perform adequately in specific situations. What level of proficiency is required to paddle in a small group in open waters is not a question of individual choice but a matter of best practice. What level of proficiency a club member wishes to achieve is, in contrast, a matter of choice for the individual.



Knowledge (useful)

Learning and Teaching

If we observe a change in behaviour that seems to be consistent and better fitting than the previously observed behaviour, and if we cannot attribute this behaviour to any other cause, then we say: **someone has learned.**

Acquiring a skill means learning the skill. You cannot buy it. You cannot decree it. Same goes for knowledge. We have learn, by studying, trying to understand, clarifying, sorting out, committing to our mind and / or muscle memory.

How do we we learn skills? There are many ways: Learning by doing. Learning from experience. Learning by trial and error. Learning through guidance from instruction or teaching. Learning from each other.

Learning a skill is anything but trivial. It requires developing a behaviour that was not there in the first place, or transforming a pre-existing behaviour into a different one. Some skills may emerge out of frequent blind practice. We may instinctively pat the paddle on the water to stop a tipping motion. We may pull the paddle a little harder once in a while to correct the kayak from veering off course. Other skills need some knowledge and focus: edging the kayak to the right in order to facilitate a left turn is at first counter-intuitive. Knowledge must overrule natural instinct. And finally, the successful execution of complex, difficult skills does not only require knowledge but critical attention to the actual execution of each of the subcomponents of a particular skill..



Experience

This is where instruction comes into play. Let's not talk about teachers and students as people but just about the activity of learning and teaching.

Teaching and learning forms a

loop. The instructor watches the learner and feeds back the observation about the execution of an action to the learner, thus steering the learning process by reinforcing changes into the right direction and discouraging changes into the wrong direction.

Instructor and learner are typically thought of as different persons. The expert instructor on the one side, the novice learner on the other. Yet any learner who wants to succeed has to take over the role of an instructor, has to watch himself or herself with the eyes of an instructor while working on a skill as a learner.

One of the secrets of mastering a difficult skill is the ability to self-observe, self-asses and self-instruct, incrementally adjusting the execution of an action towards its optimal form. Any acquisition of an advanced skill requires a degree of self-teaching.



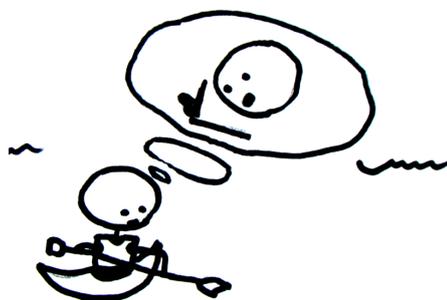
Instruction

The teacher, in reverse, has to able to step into the shoes of the learner and observe how the learner observes his or her own action, point to blind spots and correct misunderstandings. The instructor observes the learner observing his/her learning. The ability of an instructor to do so, to get it right, to pay attention to the right indicators is a highly complex skill (!). Strange loops, indeed!

What does this mean for us club paddlers? Choices are to be made. On the one end of the scale we may just prefer to go out on trips and somehow, over the years, gain expe-

rience by responding to various challenges and picking up skills without much thinking. On the other end of the scale some might want to dedicate time and effort to a highly focussed development and optimisation of skills, repeating difficult movements over and over, establishing a tight loop between setting a task, executing it, assessing the actual execution and, depending on the findings, repeating, refining, and, maybe, breaking down the task in even smaller steps that may be then polished separately.

Not everything can be learned just by doing. It is unlikely to pick up rolling just by being out on the water a lot. Just paddling forward, in contrast, does not need much focussed development – one picks up the skill over time. Or perhaps not? As so often, there may be not a straight answer but just this one: It depends on what you want. Do strokes need to be technically perfect? Again: It depends on what you want (or need).



Self-instruction

Organising Learning

How do we go about learning and improving skills as a group? This is not a question how we are able to 'reprogram' our mind and body to become able to do something we haven't been able to do before (=learning). This is a question of how this reprogramming can be achieved **as a social process, that is a process that relies on interaction and communication with other humans.**

Do we learn individually, do we want to learn in groups? Who provides instructions and feed-back?

A cultural historian or sociologist who studies the various forms of social organisation of learning would be intrigued to have a closer look at the Victorian Sea Kayak Club (or other clubs for that matter). The sociologist would recognise many ancient and modern forms of organised learning, often side by side. Let's name a few.

First there is the seemingly **non-organised, traditional, 'natural'** way of organising learning by just running with the mob, be it the family, be it a peer group. The youngsters follow the elders, the elders occasionally intervene, show how to do this or that, and the youngsters follow. This model employs some sort of 'natural' organisation where people just fit in their 'natural' place and follow the authority of those who seem to have 'natural' authority. Hierarchies emerge informally; charismatic leaders rise and fall away. Followers follow the example, emulate, copy, some more, some less successful. This is, as it were, non-organised organisation of learning. It is typical for small clubs at an early stage of their history (and, occasionally, you might find it still within families, kinship groups, clans – see Bob Fergie's contribution). In such settings there are no formal learner or instructor roles.

Second there is the **formally organised relationship between instructors and learners.** The simplest of them is following the medieval (!) model of master and apprentice (which itself emulates the relation between family head and children in the pre-modern family). This social form of learning is nowadays often called **mentoring.** The mentored learner follows the mentor in a similar way as the apprentice follows the master. The authority of the mentor is the authority of the traditional *pater familias*. But it is a formalised, organised relationship with well-defined entry and exit points. The mentored learner matures under the tutelage and is fi-

nally released from the authority of the mentor.



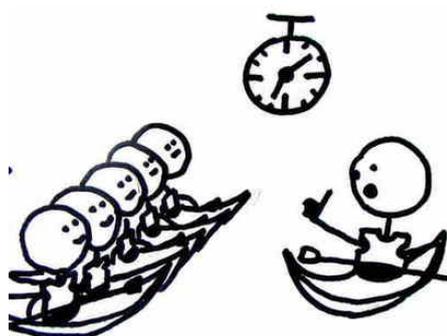
Mentoring

Third and finally, there is what I call the **school model of formally organised learning.** This model drops the link to traditional forms of perceived natural authority and replaces it with a system of formally defined roles, set goals, methods, measures of success and failure.

Dedicated instructors teach a group of students at a set time on a set topic. In the history of cultural evolution, the school model solved a couple of resource problems. Specialised instructors who have both the subject knowledge and the skill of teaching are scarce. The school model of learning solves the scarcity problem through allocating **few instructors to many learners.** Economy of scale. But it comes at a price. Learners have to share the teacher, and the teacher cannot tend to each individual learner. The instructor does not teach the individual but a class. The class model operates under the premise that learners are equal and can be guided uniformly in their learning process. The school model implies that group of learners advances as group. Doing so the group advances from lower grades to higher grades. To ensure sufficient equality at the entry and exit points of the learning process there are formal assessments: has the learner made the grade (or not)? The only response is: Pass or Fail.

The origins of the school model

of organised learning are ancient. But it has only become prevalent in modern society. Modern society celebrates the individual. Yet the school model reduces the individual to a member of a class. This is a major source of discontent. In the context of class-based learning, the only difference that matters is the degree to which learners have advanced. Individuality is reduced to the comparison of better or worse. This hurts a lot.



Schooling

Yet the school model is so powerful that even a sea kayak club such as the VSKC employs it. It does not surprise the cultural historian at all, that the VSKC has the concept of grades, organised learning on training days, and assessments. It does not come with the territory of kayaking, but it comes with the powerful social model of schooling. Most of us are not too fond of anything that reeks like school – and yet, nilly-willy, as you look closer, you will find all the hallmarks of a modern education system.

Every member joining the Club receives a daunting booklet that describes the educational pathway from paddling novice to expert. Club members are organised in grades not just for the purpose of forming suitable learning groups but governing their options of paddling. Our club distinguishes formally three grades: Grade 0 (ungraded, beginner), Grade 1 (intermediate), Grade 2 (advanced), Grade 3 (trip leader). The booklet spells out the requirements for each

grade in great detail, thus enshrining a standard and, at the same time, laying out a syllabus for the learning process.

The grading system replaces the vagaries of ad-hoc groups with ad-hoc leaders with a complex but transparent social order. This order is a means to a higher end: Safe pursuit of the adventure of sea kayaking. To quote from the booklet:

The VSKC internal grading systems is designed to allow trip participants & trip leaders to assess their own ability and competency to participate in club paddles.
(VSKC Paddler Grading System, 5)

What are our choices as members of the club? Who do we want to organise learning — if we want to learn at all? It would be nice if we all had a personal mentor with all the expertise in kayaking and the expertise in teaching us (making us learn) skills.

Unfortunately there are more learners than potential mentors. Unless we rely on picking up skills by running with the mob (which may well work for some) we have to settle for the school model of learning – learning in groups despite some personal misgivings. The only choices to made is finding an acceptable balance between a formal, rigid but highly efficient and economical type of learning on the one end of the scale and a pleasant, informal, pleasant but potentially inefficient and unsustainable type of learning at the other end. Or do both and let people choose – as long as they are fine with the outcome of their choice.

Practice / Training

We tend to forget. Knowing something once is not knowing it forever. Doing a difficult stroke once does not guarantee that we are still able to do from now on forever. Use it or lose it. And who says you can't do better?

Most learning has to be driven and guided through focussed practice.

Just paddling along on a trip may not throw the right type of challenges at the learner. We have to reinforce and refine our skills by actively choosing to execute them for the very purpose. We have to rehearse movements, we have to practise. We may apply a stern rudder not because conditions force us to do so i but because we wish to reassure ourselves that we are able to do this stroke, do it well now and in future when it matters.

When we practise we don't apply skills business-like as a response to conditions and requirements. We choose to do it for the their own sake. Practising means switching into learning mode with its peculiar tight loop between intent to perform a movement, executing it and assessing the quality of the execution – and all at the same time.

If a whole session, a whole outing on the water, a whole kayaking day is dedicated to nothing but practice then we are dealing with training. The VSKC has regular training events that clearly bear their purpose in their name: Training Days. This is when learning and practising is on the agenda, clear to everyone. Same goes for Rolling Nights.

It is left to the initiative of the individual member to take the opportunity to practice. To some extent there is an established culture to do a bit of practising at the end of club paddles (in particular at the regular events such as the Thursday Night paddle in Westernport Bay, the Saturday morning Red Eye at Ricketts Point, or the Frankston Tricks'n Sticks group).

As members of the club we have chose how we balance formal training events with informal opportunities for practice. Overcoming tiredness, stiffness and the always looming fear of a wet exit at the end of a trip and engage in some highly focussed practice does not come easy to everyone. A general culture that encourages such activities might help to sway the one or the other. But often the choice between getting out of the water, stretching the legs, changing into warm and dry clothes wins over

the best intents of throwing in some practice — understandably.

One can think of other social forms of organising practice. One can team up informally with peers and practice together. One can buddy up with someone else and practise together. Or one joins small informal, fluctuating groups whose members encourage each other. There are many possibilities – but they rely by and large on the initiative of individuals.

Final Questions

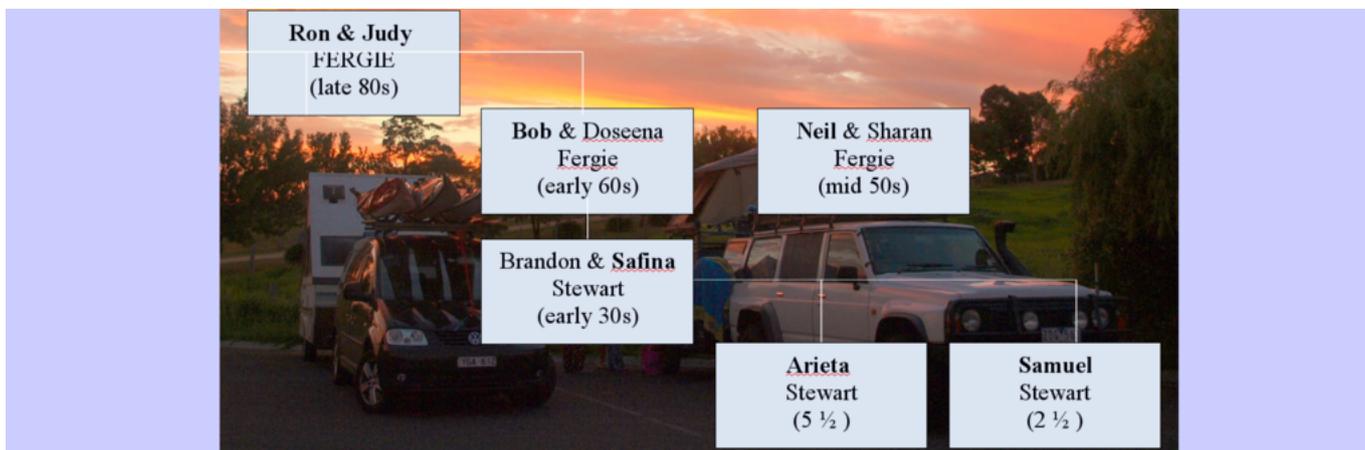
We are not training for the Olympics. Yet we do learn, practice, train, are graded. We cannot escape the necessity doing so if we want to pursue the adventure of sea kayaking safely.

As individuals we have choices as to what we aspire to. As a club we have to make (collectively) choices as to how we organise learning (informal, mentoring, school-like). As learners we have some choice about our preferred way of learning (more

hands-on, more theoretical, learning by doing, focussed learning).

The question to every ordinary club member is: What do you want and what do you expect from the club? — The question to the leadership team is: what do you think members want and what can the club offer? What works, what does not work, according to your experience?

And we all have to ask ourselves: are we willing to contribute to a culture of learning and training, that meets our expectations?



The Fergie clan

Bob Fergie

Intergenerational Family Sea Kayaking



Last Christmas our family tem-

porarily migrated to the NSW South Coast for a seven-day camping/kayaking holiday with four generations of the Fergie clan. Our camping spot was right on the Moruya River, adjacent the township of Moruya, and about 7 km upstream of Moruya Heads.

Our reason for holidaying there was to ‘hit a few birds with one stone’ as they say. First, there was the opportunity to catch up with my parents who in their late 80s have retired to Broulee. Second, there was also the opportunity to catch up with my

younger brother Neil, who with his wife Sharan was also down from Canberra for a national sky diving meet at the Moruya airport. Doseena and I had introduced them to sea kayaking about four years ago, selling them two of our first kayaks and a couple of ‘sticks’.

As it turned out, this provided the opportunity to enjoy some sea kayaking fun across four generations of the Fergie/Stewart clans. On a number of occasions, all of our Victorian-based tribe joined with Neil and Sharan for some flatwater skill development

paddling adjacent to the Moruya airport. In between their parachuting activities (with about 120 other parachutists from all over Australia no less) we were able to give them some rolling and assisted rescue practice. We had five kayaks between us (two Nordkapps, two Prion Milleniums and another plastic Prion).



Safina, Doseena and Arieta enjoyed a number of relaxed paddles during our week away and it was great to see them developing their skills and enjoying the boats on such pristine waters. They have become quite adept at paddling with Greenland 'sticks'. Unlike us boys though, the two mums don't normally have the same opportunities to get out on the water that often. However, being on a holiday together as families meant that we boys could look after the kids so that the girls could get into the boats too. Needless to say they had a ball.



... longer and more challenging paddles in our Nordkapps ...

Even with our 'heavy' baby-sitting duties, Brandon and I enjoyed some longer and more challenging paddles in our Nordkapps in the surf at Moruya Heads, and on another day, a longer ocean paddle north of Broulee. On that occasion we joined up with Chris, a friend from the NSW SKC who is also actively involved in shark protection. Perhaps not surprisingly, one of his finned friends (a 3 m hammer head shark) accompanied us for one part of the journey on a glassy sea with minimal swell! That really was a thrill!

On another occasion my 89½ year old dad (Ron) insisted on joining in the paddling fun as well. As an experienced river paddler and sailor in earlier years he was well accustomed to water sports. However, at 89, with serious diabetes, debilitating vascu-

lar dementia and a prosthetic leg, the women of the clan were not so sure of the wisdom of a return from retirement.

Knowing how keen he was however, I managed to persuade the ladies with an assurance that I'd stick very close to him to assure a safe return. As you can see in the photo, it was not a case of my supervision alone. Arieta (5½), dad's great grand daughter was right in there supervising me. We settled Ron into Doseena's Prion Millennium and then I accompanied him on a short little paddle up Candlagen Creek from Mossy Point. Not only did he stay up-right, he surprised me with how well he was able to paddle and control the boat. All of his experience and skill from earlier years seemed to return very naturally, and needless to say he had a ball in the process. His comment to me the next day made it clear that he remembered with clarity the fun he'd had. However, it was also clear that he was somewhat indignant that he'd been under such close supervision.



Spanning four generations

With a twinkle in his eye he said, 'next time I want to go for a real paddle up the creek'. As it turned out, following the NSW SKC Rock n Roll weekend late March I was able to take him on a 2.6 km paddle up the same creek with him paddling really well all the way. Not bad at all I reckon!

Obviously paddling with my dad was fantastic, but there was more thrill, but this time involving the

youngest of the Fergie clan generation. Our 5½ year old granddaughter Arieta has for some time demonstrated a love for water and long skinny boats. I think it was when Cheri Perry and Turner Wilson visited the club two years back that Arieta became particularly interested not only in paddling but in learning to roll as well.



Ronald Fergie Sr., stable at 89 years old

Since then Brandon, her dad has taught her various beach rolling drills, so that she has developed a very good understanding of rolling body me-

chanics and so on. Unfortunately, all our boats are way too big for her young frame making any in-boat, on-the-water practice impossible, or so we thought. Arieta, however, had other plans and by putting a belt around the spray skirt tunnel, we were able to make her reasonably water tight in the cockpit of my Nordkapp.



Arieta's balanced brace training with Grandpa

Using an inflatable kids bouncing ball with a handle, we were able to

replicate the traditional Inuit 'avataq' to help her practice a balanced brace. With minimal instruction she was very quickly and confidently holding my 5.4 m Nordkapp on it's edge with almost perfect balanced-brace form (head back, shoulders square, water leg applying pressure on the thigh brace, arms back and so on). At first I gave her a little support by holding onto the deck lines but it wasn't long before she was able to slip on and off the back deck with gay abandon, and with no assistance from me.

At one point in her enthusiasm to throw herself over into the water the boat followed over on top of her putting her completely up-side-down for the few seconds. When I finally got to her and rolled the boat back up, she was laughing so loud it was infectious.

What a fantastic week of camping and paddling, and what a wonderful experience seeing four generations of my clan enjoying all sorts of interesting learning challenges in long skinny boats together.

More of it, I say!



Sue Mountford, Fiona Coates and Helmut Heinze

Getting Wet – Recent Training Events

Find here a short wrap-up of recent dedicated training events (that is events where you would not go unless you are prepared to spend more time in and under water than you would care on other occasions)

Rolling at Barwon Heads (18 January 2014)

A West Coast event, run by Tina and John Evertze and Wim Buelens.

Three instructors and three students. Normally this might not be the

most efficient way of teaching skills but in the case of the ever evasive roll, the dread and nemesis of all beginner kayakers, it was ideal. At least we students thought so.

After some theory and practice of rolling our kayaks in the soft sand (not as easy as it sounds) next to bridge we ventured to the other side of the famous bridge in search for a nice spot for the wet phase (less pleasant as the sandy phase) of the day.

We trainees enjoyed a long session of one-on-one instruction and practice by Tina and John Evertze and Wim Buelens who, braving the not exactly warm waters, patiently pulled us

up every time when we lost our battle with gravity.

A great day, finished off at the local cafe.

Rescue Training Weekend at Barwon Heads (8 & 9 February 2014)

A full-on two-day training event, meticulously prepared and conducted by John Evertze and Wim Buelens.

Saturday was dedicated to the review and practice of assisted rescue and towing techniques. John and Wim first demonstrated the proper execution of various rescues, including very advanced ones. Then we

teamed up in pairs to practice the standard hook rescue and give the scoop technique a try (much harder than it looks). This was followed by various towing exercises, an on-the-spot inspection of safety equipment and many discussions. Thanks to the hot weather it was (almost) a pleasure to dive into the water as a destined victim. All in all we got a lot of practice in basic rescues and towing under pleasant conditions.



John and Wim demonstrating — Photo: HH

This changed on Sunday. The hot Northerly has increased over night and was blasting with 20 to 25kn, with a Cool change expected at some stage later in the day. Sunday was about simulation of emergencies and decision-making. The day started with a briefing by Wim on the basics of leading a group. We learned about principles such as CLAP (communicate, line-of-sight, avoid, position). Then the group ventured out into aptly choppy waters and gusting winds, taking turns in leading the group and dealing with incidents, lovingly staged and executed mischievously by John and Wim. I myself (HH) can only report a full fail, joining the victim in the water not once but twice.

Yet it was a great event, I have learned a thing or two (don't rush to 'rescue' a splashing and screaming John E., or be mindful how you rise the paddle to signal for assistance in gusting 25+kn wind). When I finally scraped my kayak onto the beach Tina remarked: "You look buggered". I

was. But it was worth it.

San Remo – VSKC Training Forum (22 & 23 February 2014)

On Saturday VSKC trainers met to discuss training techniques and plan the year's training activities for members. Initially this weekend was scheduled to have an international trainer lead the training workshops. Instead the training workshops were provided by VSKC trainers on Sunday at short notice; they were well organised and had the added benefit of close tuition with two trainers for each on water group of four to six paddlers.

About twenty paddlers attended for morning and afternoon tuition sessions with Raia, Tina, Bob, Terry, John and Robin. Options included Level One and Level Two stroke assessments, rolling, brace and support strokes, stern rudder and controlling your kayak in surf, tows and rescues and ferry gliding from bridge pylon to pylon on a reasonably fast flowing ebb tide, which involved a range of skills including edging, breaking in and out of eddies and general boat control.

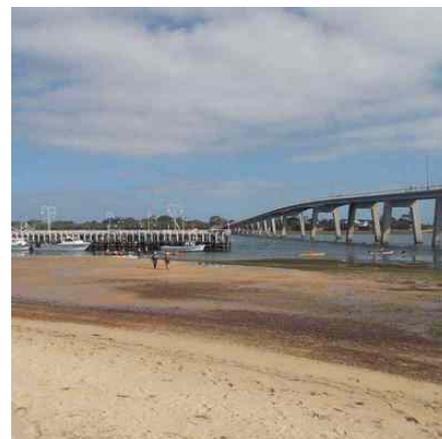


Sea rescue with bystanders: Wim Buelens rising to the challenge — Photo: HH

Lunch was a welcome break for all, especially for those who'd been paddling and rescuing (or being rescued) in the surf, to dry off and grab something to eat. Lunch ended on a humorous note with Wim attempting to demonstrate how to rescue an unconscious paddler who is out of their kayak with a very mischievous and

super sized rescuee (aka Bob). Wim did succeed in floating Bob into his kayak not withstanding unexpected water spouts in his face at critical moments during the rescue.

After lunch the group split into three different groups with Robin and John taking those who wanted to do some surfing, Neil and Tina leading those who wanted to do edging and forward paddling, and Bob and Terry providing Eskimo rolling training to round off the day. Trainee paddlers came away with some sound learnings; many left exhausted yet very satisfied with the day's offerings.



Heading off into the tidal race, Cleland Bight — Photo: FC

Mentone Rolling Nights ...

... run by Peter Costello at Mentone pool is another regular VSKC event, followed by a pizza at La Porchetta's afterwards. Peter takes it step by step, starting from getting used to being upside down in the water if that's a worry, then gaining a feel for getting upright using a paddle float and finally on to the full bottle. Beginners and experienced paddlers share the pool so there are plenty of people on hand to help out and provide their own perspectives. Looking back over some of the old issues of Sea Trek, Peter has been doing this for many years. Highly recommended if spending Friday night with a bunch of mostly bearded people, upside down, in kayaks, in a pool, appeals.

■



Wilderness First Aid Weekend — Collage by Bob Fergie



Bill Kennedy

Tiderace Pace 17 – A Review

I have been asked, or shall I say: pressured, to write about my new kayak, a Tiderace Pace 17. Currently there are only two kayaks of this type in the Club. So, how did I end up buying this one?

It is my first boat I own. Previously I kept hiring kayaks. But I felt that going out once a week for a Red Eye and the odd other Club paddle was not enough for me. I wanted my own kayak to be able to go out whenever I felt like it.



Left: my Pace 17 and I after crossing the Bay in December 2013 — Photo HH

The secret driver behind all is – I know I should not say this as someone relatively new to sea kayaking – a Bass Strait crossing. It will take a while to develop the necessary

skills and the experience, but this is the ultimate goal and many considerations behind the choice of craft are informed (or misinformed?) by this goal.

I had two selection criteria for my own boat: (1) sufficient load-carrying capacity for an eventual Tasmania trip, and (2) high speed – speed matters when you have to cover greater distances; it might get you out of potential trouble faster and saves energy.

So far I have been familiar with the kayaks I was hiring, mainly a Tahe Marine Seaspirit, a Mirage 530 and a Mirage 580. While they may be good kayaks, I was not perfectly happy with them. I did not consider the Tahe Marine at all. The Mirage 580 certainly has the capacity and speed but it feels way to big for me. The Mirage 530 was a better size, but again, I neither felt comfortable with the rudder pedals (they are mounted on a fixed bar – one of the selling points of the Mirage but it does not work for me) nor did the tight braces fit me well.

Reading a lot of reviews I got attracted to the new type of sea kayak design with a plump bow, a vertical stern without any overhang and a small rudder for tracking. The Rockpool Taran embodies this kind of new high-speed design with a long waterline in the most radical way. Knowing

that the Taran 18 would be too long I set my eyes on the shorter Taran 16 ... and bought the Tiderace Pace 17. Why?



Square stern with rudder assembly — Photo HH

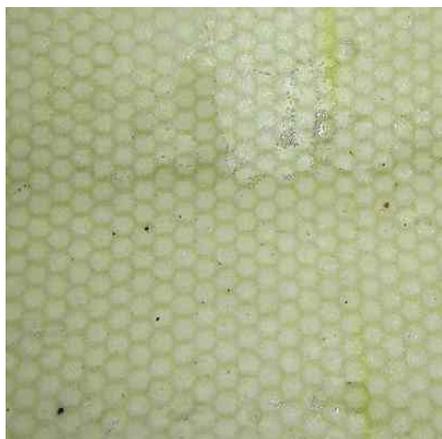
Being on a work assignment in Sydney, I arranged with Expedition Kayaks for a test paddle of the Rockpool Taran 16. The Tiderace Pace 17 served as a reference for comparison. I very much liked the looks of the Taran and just wanted the confirmation that this was the right choice. It was a rough day with high, choppy seas. To my disappointment, the handling of the Taran was quirky in these conditions, while I immediately felt comfortable in the Tiderace. The difference was so stark that, although

I did not want to like the Tiderace, it turned out to be the vastly better kayak (for me).

Design and Material

Tiderace kayaks are not handmade but built in a high-tech factory. It's a matter of taste what you prefer. They may lack individuality, there are no customisations available to the buyer. Every boat is exactly like the other. What you get, though, is a high-precision design with very, very tight tolerances. Based on some discussions and observations with Helmut who is in the market for a kayak himself, I would like to point out a couple of things:

The hull is a lightweight design but very stiff with a honeycomb spacer between the outer and the inner layer. The honeycomb spacer is clearly visible from the inside, where glass layers are almost completely translucent.



Honeycomb spacer shining through glass layers — Photo HH

The construction of the bulkheads

is curious. The bulk head behind the seat is curved and seems to be made from some material containing carbon (darker colour), the other bulkheads are flat but stiffened a honeycomb spacer, like the hull. The bulkheads seem to be glued in with some rubbery material (maybe Sikaflex or something similar) with an additional very thin, almost invisible glass layer on top.

The hull feels very stiff, the walls do not flex if you press on them. The foredeck is very high (compared, for example, to the Mirage), with a nice glovebox-like compartment.



Glovebox hatch on foredeck — Photo HH

Likes, Dislikes and Modifications

As mentioned, handling is easy. The Pace 17 feels fast and is easy to control. I keep the rudder always down for tracking. I had a sail fitted (by Eastcoastkayaking). With a good 15kn wind pushing, the kayak is just racing down the waves, even overtaking them. Everything works just fine

for me – with one exception: the original seat.

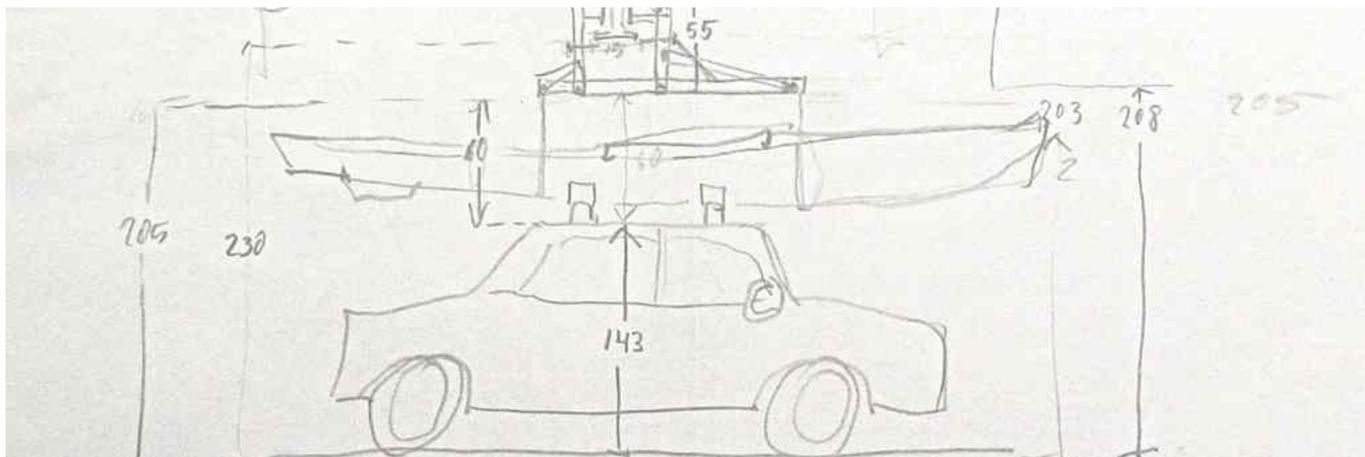
First of all, the seat seemed to be too far back for me, causing the bow to lift up and shortening the waterline. Secondly, the seat was uncomfortable on longer trips. The solution was to remove the original seat and replace it with a customisable foam seat and to fit a new back band. Without any modification, the foam seat is higher than the original one, giving the kayak a slightly more tippy feel but allowing me to put more power into my strokes. So I leave it for the time being the way it is.



Custom foam seat, tight braces and moulded-in glovebox compartment — Photo HH

There is a mould for a standard compass on the deck but I have not fitted one – yet. Same goes for an electrical bilge pump, some hydration system, a park for spare paddles or any solar-electrical charging system. This all can wait a little until the time is right – crossing the Bass Strait won't happen that soon anyway.

■



Will it fit? ... the blueprint

Helmut Heinze

Yak Rack Mark 1

How do you store your kayak? There are many ways in general, but only few may be suitable under specific circumstances. Ideally, any solution minimises the amount of lifting and utilises the space available in the most efficient manner.

Sometimes it is simply impossible to find a solution at all. Or so it seems.



Fitting the the rack to the I-beam (below the clutch pads the tensioning bolts)

We are living in a high rise building in the centre of the city. We have no storage, just an allocated underground car space. It seemed that the only way of storing a kayak was folding it up, stuffing it into a huge

(huge!) golf bag and parking it in a corner in the apartment. Until I someone pointed me to the ceiling of the underground car park.

After some wrong starts I came up with a design for a kayak rack that might be of interest to others as well.



Kayak suspended over car park — Photo: HH

In our case a big I-shaped structural steel profile is crossing our car space at a fairly low height. The profile is off-centre which makes it impossible to suspend the kayak using a simple rope and trolley solution (which would require not one but two mount points anyway).

This is the solution: build a light steel frame consisting of two parallel profiles of 1 meter length (readily available from DIY suppliers) with a rod of 60 cm length at each end. Make this simple frame hover about 15 cm above the kayak sitting on the roof rack on the car.

In our case, I built a strong clutch mechanism that attaches the frame to the profile under the ceiling, suspending the whole assembly by about 60 cm.

The kayak is attached to the frame looping the tie-downs straps over the rods. No moving parts, the tie-downs act as a 1:2 pulley. Fully attached the kayak is just floating 10 to 15 cms above the roof rack.

This is a very simple solution that requires a single attachment point to the ceiling that may be off-centre.

The current solution has been built just with a hack saw, a file and a drill and a lot of sweat, costing about 150 Dollars. A Mark two design is now on the way, improving some mechanical aspects such as reducing the swing and, possibly, incorporating a simple lever mechanism for lifting and lowering the kayak.

Watch the space.





Victorian Sea Kayakers Crossing Lake Connewarre — Photo: GV

Sue Mountford

Geelong to Barwon Heads

Barwon River paddle. Geelong Breakwater to Barwon Heads Bridge. 2 Feb 2014. Trip leaders Tina Rowley and John Evertze. 22km.

Paddling the Barwon River seemed like a perfect way to spend a thirty six degrees day. I set off early Sunday morning with plenty of time to spare having set my Garmin GPS to Breakwater Road. Turning off Princes Highway onto Breakwater Road I found myself driving over the river I hoped to paddle, with no prospect of a launch site to be seen. I was pleased to have my Melways to work through possible routes which enabled me to arrive about ten minutes late.

In short, for those wishing to do this paddle I recommend you check out Google maps, and you will find there are two Breakwater Roads; the new one you turn onto off Settlement Road/Princes Highway, and a second one (the old Breakwater Road), which is accessed by turning right off Breakwater Road on to Tucker Street, and then at the first set of lights turn right onto Gundog Lane (old Breakwater Road). Drive under the rail bridge and you will find car parks on both sides of the road.



Passing under the crumbling Sewer Aquaeduct – Photo: archive HH

Tina Rowley and John Evertze our trip leaders scouted out the best launching place, which was on the southern side of the road. After we'd completed our car shuffle down at Barwon Heads, it was time to try our launch spot which was almost under the rail bridge. It was reedy but not muddy, and about a meter deep off the edge of the river bank. The easiest kayak entry option was to drop them in off the bank then get into them on the water.

Paddling down the river was relaxed and scenic. The scenery changed from bushland to farmland

with sightings of some grand estates over looking the river's edge. We encountered a water skiing club based on the river taking its members through their slalom routines. There was even a sighting of an eagle once we'd left the frenzy of the water skiers behind.

By 11.30am we'd reached the Breakwater dam blocking the river, so John scouted around to find the least severe mud bank and set of rocks to portage our kayaks around to the other side of the river. At this time of the day the heat of the day was starting to cut in. A quick opinion poll unanimously determined to have an early lunch to avoid a second portage and take advantage of the shade of one of the few large trees by the river's edge. We were not yet half way through our river trip.



dled onwards, and shortly reached Lake Connewarre. This is the point in the trip where your navigation skills or GPS map needs to operate, as it seemed to me all directions appeared to be possible routes to the river's mouth. We paddled eastwards across the lake. Well didn't paddle all the way across as it was low tide, so we walked our kayaks through the shallows for about twenty minutes until we found deeper water to paddle in. Most of us took the opportunity to have a dip in the water to cool off.

lined river leading to the sea; mercifully a cool head wind came up for the last ten kilometre stretch of our paddle from the lake. The sea looked very inviting as we rounded the last bend in the river and paddled towards it. We picked our way carefully through swimmers as we headed under the bridge to land in front of the car park on the other side of the bridge.

We loaded our kayaks onto our cars, and headed for a very welcome lemon squash at the hotel before heading home.

After a forty minute break we pad-

We paddled on into the mangrove



Terry toughing it out — Photo: HH

Fiona Coates

Foggy Flinders

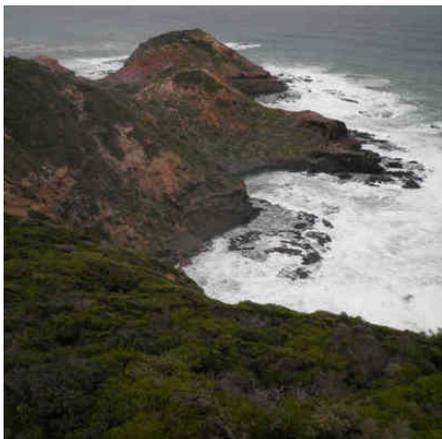
Flinders Ocean Paddle, 2-Feb-2014, 10:30am to 4 pm — Distance ca 20km — Tip leader: Terry B; participants: Fiona C, Bruce D, Helmut H, Ron H, Bill K, Paul M, Greg M, Rolland S, Ian S, Bronwyn S, Greg S, Tamsin V — Forecast: High tide 2:30pm, air temp 22-31C, morning fog, wind

S/E to 10kn turning S/W, ocean swell <0.8m

Photos are by the author unless otherwise indicated

On many occasions, I have stood on top of the cliffs at Cape Schanck and wondered what it would be like to be down there in the sea. Until recently, it never occurred to me that it would be possible in a sea kayak but

on February 2nd 2014, there was the opportunity to do just that. It was almost 212 years to the day after Acting Lieutenant John Murray sailed a nuggety 60 ton brig, the *Lady Nelson*, past Cape Schanck and into Western Port, on January 31st 1802.



Cape Schanck



Cape Schanck from Phillip Island, painted by John Black Henderson, ca 1860. State Library of Victoria collection

The *Lady Nelson* had been deployed to chart the northern coastline of Bass Strait. By late January 1802, it was her third visit to Western Port. A few weeks earlier on the way to Port Phillip Bay, Murray had anchored at Elizabeth Cove, near Ventnor on Phillip Island. Rather than attempting to enter Port Phillip Bay in the prevailing bad weather, he decided to head south into Bass Strait and chart the east coast of King Island until conditions improved. On return from King Island, Murray planned to make for Cape Otway, then sail east to Port Phillip Bay, but in even in more bad weather was again unable to get through the Heads and instead sought refuge in Western Port.

Governor King had ordered Murray not to mess around and finish off

the work of navigating the southern Victorian coast, which remained uncharted, although navigation of Western Port itself was complete. Presumably, any further delay was frustrating and Murray was keen to make a start. The ship dropped anchor at 5pm at Elizabeth Cove. Even so, Murray had the whip out at 4 o'clock the next morning and sent First Mate Mr Bowen to lead a group of six men west in a launch to explore the entrance to Port Phillip Bay. They returned in a week but it wasn't until two weeks later that the weather was kind enough for the *Lady Nelson* to round Cape Schanck and sail on through the Heads on February 15th, 1802 on an ebb tide.

The protected waters of Elizabeth Cove had been discovered on the *Lady Nelson's* first visit to Western Port in early 1801, under command of James Grant. Grant, who was good friends with Captain John Schanck, designer of the *Lady Nelson's* three sliding keels which made her more suitable for navigating shallow waters, had led the first exploration of Western Port after George Bass stumbled across its eastern entrance in 1798. It seems that Grant's description of Western Port was, at least in my view, grimly prophetic:

"Western Port is capable of containing several hundred sail of ships with perfect security from storms, and will admit of being fortified".

In spite of detailed instructions to chart the northern Bass Strait coastline, Grant never finished the job, apparently owing to bad weather. He became rather preoccupied though, with Churchill Island. There he cut down a few trees, planted wheat and corn, vegetables and fruit trees and even built a small hut, declaring an enormous fondness for the place. It's no wonder he never managed to complete the survey and who knows what the rest of the crew were supposed to be doing while he was messing around on Victoria's first hobby farm. He resigned his commission soon af-

ter his return to Port Jackson and eventually retired to France.

George Bass, surgeon and adventurer, is often described as charismatic and gregarious and it was probably for this reason, and a few family connections, that he got to hang around with the cream of the crop of navigators, Bligh and Flinders.

Bass managed to get hold of a whaleboat in 1798, after exploring the southern New South Wales coast with Flinders and servant William Martin a couple of years earlier in a rowboat. In January, with six companions, he rowed down the east coast from Port Jackson, around Wilsons Promontory where the boat came close to sinking, and into Western Port, the first Europeans to do so. Just like that. In a whaleboat. However, the existence of Bass Strait remained unconfirmed until late 1798 with the circumnavigation of Tasmania, led by Matthew Flinders in the Norfolk.

Today, on February 4th, 2014, paddling buddy Ron picks me up at 7.45 am and we head off down the freeway to Flinders. Both of us are worried about getting forty lashes for being late but Peninsula Link delivers and we're actually early. There are patches of fog on the way, which only get heavier and by the time we reach Balnarring Road turnoff, it's pea soup. I have decided to make a start toward becoming a graded paddler. One of the requirements is a weather report, which I rehearse in the car on the way down. Ron snorts. There was nothing about fog on the BoM-site.

On January 30th, 1802 off Cape Schanck, Murray recorded in the *Lady Nelson's* log book: "We had a very heavy swell and perceived the surf about Seal Islands breaking in a fearful manner; sounded every hour. The very bad weather has again prevented me at this time from overhauling this Cape or tracing the adjoining coast." The next day, he observed "the long range of breakers on the western side of the Port: several of them had shifted their berths nearer to mid channel....The whole of them for sev-

eral miles broke incessantly and remarkable lofty — we passed within 2 miles of them. The reefs on the eastern side also broke much further out”.

By February 5th the weather was hot and sultry and the air was smoky. “Native fires” could be seen along the coast but these soon disappeared after the arrival of the Europeans. Murray is “apt to think that summer does not begin in this part till January”. Thunderstorms and a cool change did not clear the “hot sickly weather and thick fiery haze” until a week later, when Murray was finally able to sail the *Lady Nelson* past Cape Schanck at 4 am on a Monday morning.



Light north-easterly and fog. Lots of fog.



The fog comes and goes

On February 2nd 2014, while Melbourne also roasts in “hot and sickly” 41°C heat, at Flinders we can expect 31°C, partly cloudy with variable light winds tending south to

south-easterly and freshening by the evening. What in fact happens is a light north-easterly and fog. Lots of fog. Low tide was at 8 am. The swell is supposed to be WSW, Terry says it’s NW. I start to feel a little anxious about this grading. The Met Bureau really needs to do something about those typos.

As the fog starts to lift at Flinders Ocean Beach, a line of breakers comes into focus a few hundred metres offshore. All of a sudden everyone’s in the water. This is always a source of perplexity to me, how is it that one minute everyone is fiddling around, making endless adjustments, organising the never ending array of detail and gadgetry that seem to go with sea kayaking, then suddenly like a shot out of a gun they’re halfway to Tasmania?

There are a few surfers and paddle boarders at the outer break, which we circumnavigate and head south around the edge of Mushroom Reef. It’s all a bit of an act of faith since the fog is still concealing the headlands and cliffs along the coast, although occasionally the sun breaks through.

Once we reach deeper water, the colour of the sea deepens to turquoise-emerald although occasionally dark shadows of reef and bright sandy patches still appear. Strands of dull yellow kelp ripped away from the sea floor are suspended by their air bladders, just below the surface. The plan is to do some rock gardening and explore the sea caves along the coast. Terry recommends a helmet for this, which is good because he’s paddling right along in that snappy yellow fold-up.

As we paddle past the layered basalt cliffs, headlands fade in and out of sight as the fog comes and goes. The word “eerie” is mentioned more than a few times. At some stage we pass the Blowhole. We must also have passed a couple of other paddlers since a couple of days later, I read a blog post about a return trip from Cape Schanck that Sunday morning. Creepy. The closer we get to Cape Schanck, still miles off, the more

the swell starts to pick up. Breakers crash-land against the shore platforms at the base of the cliffs. The group weaves around the really white water then back a little closer to the coastline.

Rounding the vague outline of the Arch, just before Bushrangers Bay, it all gets a little more serious. Pity about that fog. The swell is around a metre but seems a lot bigger and it’s not a good time for photos. But the pitch and fall of the sea is exciting and lives up to Terry’s promise of blue water paddling. Once through the most turbulent section, in the distance the swell starts to increase and it looks like we will have to turn back. Tamsin and Terry have a quick conference and decide that all things considered, it’s time for lunch.

In February 1802, Murray found an abundance of edible wildlife on Phillip Island and up the Bass River. Fish, swans, parrots and ducks all graced the ship’s table. Pigeons were salted down. The supply of oysters and mussels was such that “a company of 6 or 8 men would not run any hazard of being starved here for several months from the vast quantity of shellfish to be found”. Interestingly, there is no mention of kangaroo or other terrestrial fauna. Water was more difficult to come by but a spring found at Elizabeth Cove on the earlier visit to the island under Grant’s command, provided plenty of good, fresh water for the ship’s barrels.





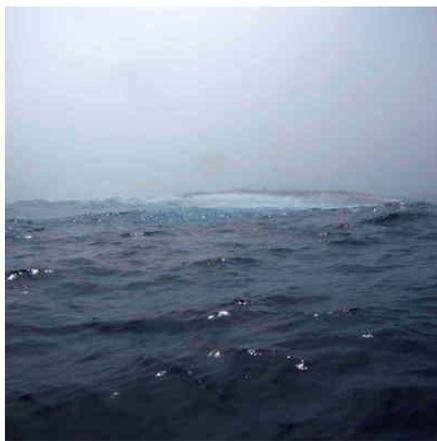
Lunchtime — Photo: GS

A few kilometres back toward Flinders and one gentle surf landing later, it's lunchtime on the only bit of beach where it's possible to put in. So far, we've come about 13 km and although the sea has been a bit all over the place, there's been very little wind. It's been a great opportunity to concentrate on technique and for getting a feel for some real sea.

On the way back, I need to demonstrate a few things for the Grade 1 thing. But to be honest, by this time I'm starting to flag a little and really can't raise the energy. Plus, a couple of times I stop to take a few photos then find I've fallen behind and have to paddle like mad to catch up, plagued by the fear of capsizing unseen and unnoticed and being consumed by something swimming around in the depths below. I grew up at Hastings and I know about this stuff. I do a little half-hearted edging and a couple of sweep strokes but it's all a bit tedious in the waves. Terry asks if I can do a bow rudder. A what? I wave my paddle around in the general direction of the front of the boat but, somewhat energetically, he tells me this is no time for a les-

son. Pulling the rudder up, I hope that this will earn me a few points, and almost manage to resist the temptation to surreptitiously drop it back down.

The fog's still with us on the way back to Flinders. Photo-wise, it makes for continued drama and once West Head comes into view there's a clear sense of where we are. Sort of disappointing now after all the fog, which has become kind of Zen in its own way. Once the beach comes into view, a few people peel off for a surf in one of the offshore breaks while a couple of us do some more grading tests. Swimming a kayak for 50 metres and the like. Two hundred more likely. Nice in the water though. The beach has filled up with people by the time we get back and the March flies are out in force. Then comes the moment of truth. I hand my book over and get a few things signed off, as well as a stern look. The fog's still parked around a couple of the headlands in the distance. We didn't get into the sea caves or quite as far as Cape Schanck but that was because the sea and the sky colluded to throw up something different, in a day of the unexpected. A second, or even third attempt would be welcome.



Fog still lingers around a couple of headlands at mid-afternoon

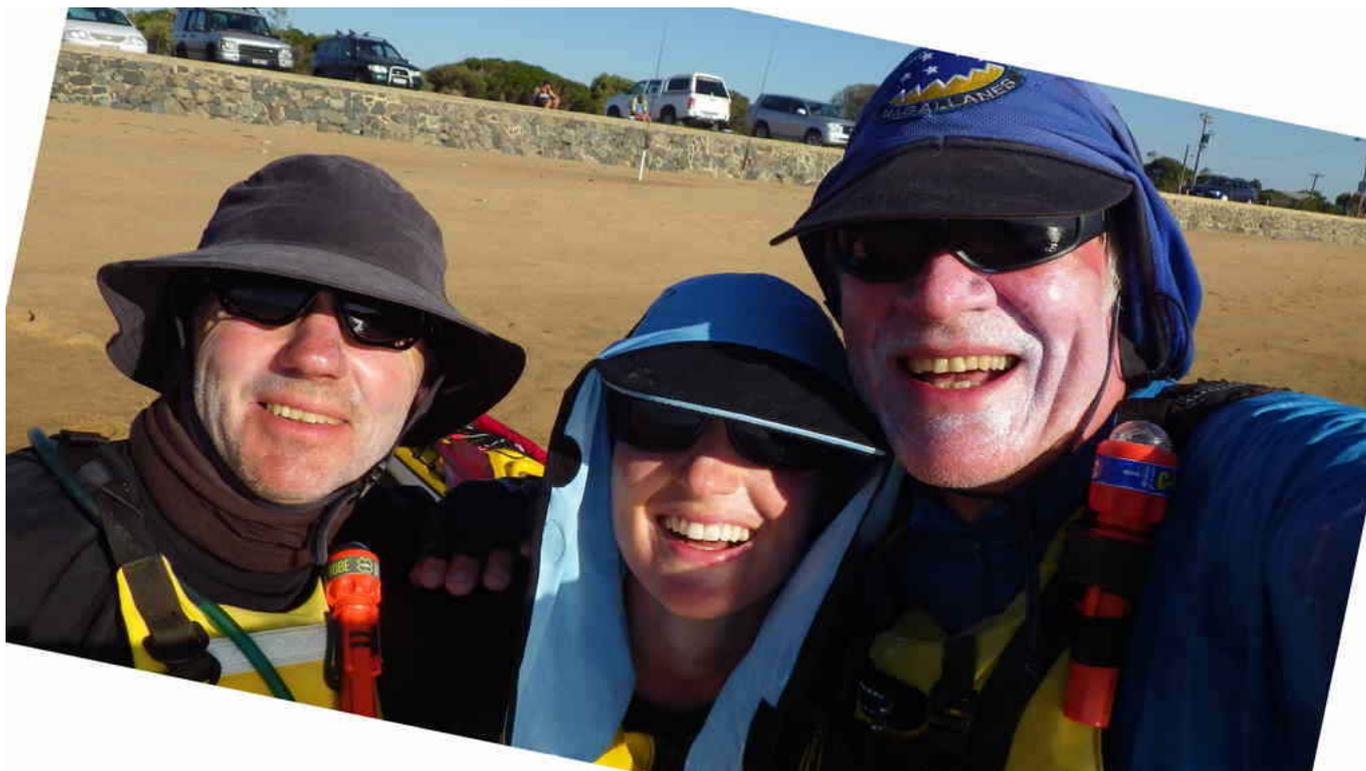
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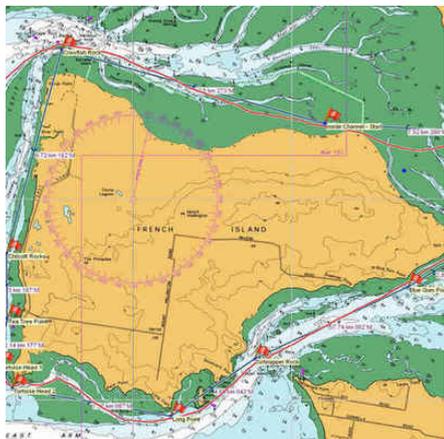
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Les pagayeurs ...

Richard Rawling

Autour de l'Île Française de trois pagayeurs



French Island, actual route — RR

I know, wrong country but on a 70 km circumnavigation around French Island, three paddlers can be forgiven if their minds wander to the streets of Paris! Such a paddle is a mental challenge as much as it is physical. Myself (trip leader), Greg M. and Jeanine S. stumped up to have a crack at this, on what turned out to be a per-

fect weather window on the Labour Day weekend. The day was warm, the winds variable and the tide patterns perfect. The days either side of our paddle were much windier and far from ideal for the direction of this paddle. This is not a technically difficult paddle in terms of likely sea state (pending winds of course), but it demands good tide planning and preparation. Get that wrong and you have a long tiring paddle in shallow waters or nasty wind on tide effects to contend with.

We left from the site of the old Lang Lang Jetty (at the end of Jetty Road near the campground; 38° 18.348S, 145° 31.158E). High water was around 8.00am here and our aim was to get across to French Island as the tide starting running out. We headed off in a westerly direction, which meant we had opted for an anti-clockwise circuit. This crossing is 7.5km to the start of Inside Chan-

nel (260° M). We chose to do this first for two reasons. The prevailing winds here typically require paddling cross-wind. On this day the risk of strong northerlies later in the day was real and I wanted to avoid unpleasantness when were tired at the end. Equally, this is a tad dispiriting at the end of a long day and does not offer any easy 'get off the water' options. Of course a strong westerly breeze would be equally annoying first thing (or an easterly at the end of the day if paddling clockwise). The tide flow was weak because we started at HW, but the GPS trace was interesting to observe because there was a clear vector pushing us south which led us to follow a curved track.

Once we hit the Inside Channel we tried to stay out wide to avoid shallow water (which you can easily tell by the turbidity in it). I was surprised by the low hills on French Island at this point, having not seen it

before. As we approached Crawfish Rock, Greg and I delighted in testing Jeannine's embryonic knowledge of cardinal and like navigation markers. The water was spitting, boiling and fizzing as we shot past Crawfish Rock, clocking 12 km/h without even trying. It is tempting to head down Middle Channel after this point, but we paddled out wide, opting for the main channel on a bearing of 180° M. The channel line was clear with so many fishing boats moored along the edge. We flew down the channel and were collectively pleased at our average speed and the desire to just keep cranking along. As we approached Tortoise Head, the buildings at Stoney Point just seemed to take forever to pass, a sign we were flagging a little I thought. Jeannine was keen to cut across what from a distance looked like a channel north of Tortoise Head, but alas I had to inform her it was just low lying land and unless she had a trolley we kept paddling! We rounded Tortoise Head and landed at a beach for a lunch break at 12.45 pm after just under 5 hours paddling for an average speed of about 7.5 km/h.

Greg and I were suitably impressed at the array of goodies Jeannine dragged out of her hatch. It made my miserable avocado with salmon look a bit lame! Naturally she offered, and we accepted, the challenge of lightening her load. Fresh grapes never tasted so good. We were about half way and timing was perfect as we watched the incoming tide starting to rev up. So we were off again. It was about here that Greg canvassed the idea of some day doing a circuit of both French and Phillip Islands (in one day). I quickly did the maths on this in terms of distance, etc and just as quickly concluded that I would not be keen to join him on such a venture!

We headed along the inner part of East Arm up to Long Point (about 7.5 km), and then headed on a bearing of

40° M, past Elizabeth Island (very dry indeed) and Red Bluff (good camping area) to Schnapper Rock. This feature is similar to Crawfish Rock and the water was also fizzing as we shot past. You need to stay to the south of this rock given shallows to the north. We pretty well kept on this bearing for 10 km or so up past Blue Gum Point to Spit Point. This was a bit of a slog because the tide patterns here are such that the inflow up East Arm and the channel coming up from San Remo tend to impact each other and slow down (unlike the clearer flow in the main channel to the west of French Island). It is also critical here to not arrive too early if coming up on an incoming tide as we were. We were paddling the north side of the channel as we approached Spit Point and it was getting quite shallow. The was a little gap in front of the clean sand spit that we thought we could get through but were not sure. We then hit upon the idea of sending Jeannine in her Mirage 530 first, thinking that the plough attachment on her rudder would clear enough sand for Greg and I to sneak through! It worked.

Spit Point is a most pleasant stop with deep water in close and nice clean sand. But as Greg noted if you linger too long here you might find it hard to get going again! Before we got to the point we were guessing how far to go back to the start. Greg somewhat pessimistically suggested that it was 15 km or so. But I knew from my chart that it was just under 6 kms. Naturally, as a good trip leader I held this motivational point back until just the right moment! So, within site of our start point and after a nice little stretch of our rubbery legs we shot off, pretty well straight-lining on a bearing of 350° M.

You would not want to land too early at Lang Lang boat ramp because there is a lot of sticky mud, but we timed it well and were able to pull in as a tight group right next to the

boat ramp. We did a group high five and snapped a group selfie (the smiles say it all). Boy, our legs were rubbery as we slid out of our boats! The second leg took us 4.5 hrs for an overall distance of 69.5 kms, and average paddling speed of 7.3km/h which is not too shabby really (it was dragged down by the slower second half of the paddle). We all really enjoyed the paddle – me as I had not done it before, Greg because he wanted to blow some cobwebs out (and had done it several times before) and Jeannine who saw it as a good challenge as she steps up her paddling capabilities.

This is a great paddle for testing one's paddling endurance without having to contend with the additional risk factors that big blue water paddles can involve. But if you are going to have crack at it then bear in mind the following:

- Polish your forward stroke technique; keep up body rotation
- Make sure your boat is well set up from a postural point of view (padding and the like)
- Take great care with sun protection on hot days (and keep fluids up)
- Have regular snacks to keep blood sugars up
- You can start at different locations (eg Stoney Point) and go clockwise or anti-clockwise, but make sure the tide patterns work in your favour (I reckon where we started is best nevertheless, noting that HW at Lang Lang Boat Ramp is about 1 hour later than the tide station at Stoney Point)
- Risk manage the longer exposed legs, pending wind forecasts, but also sequence the paddle knowing that as you tire shorter distances to marks will be welcome
- A small group is better (say < 5). The bigger the group, the more fiddling and the slower the day will progress; and
- Active conversation passes the time, so keep it going!

■



Heading off from Port Welshpool — Photo: RR

Hilde Mailen Domaas and Fiona Coates

Easter at Snake Island

Day 1...

Richard's final email a few days before... "Well, let's have a go. Wind is not great but we have a tide and weather window that will allow us to get to the camp ok on Friday. If we do not go on Friday then we do not go at all because Saturday is not good for the paddle out from Port Welshpool" (in other words, get here on time).

So, after a briefing on the beach, fifteen paddlers head off. Clouds start to thicken in the sky and the wind picks up. At first it's not too bad, since we are paddling with a north-westerly tail wind and making good progress, in spite of the incoming tide.

Suddenly, blue-grey storm clouds are just behind us as the front moves in not all that far off Port Welshpool. The boats are lashed by wind and we need to raft up and sit it

out, waves breaking over the kayaks. But only ten minutes later, the group heads east toward Snaggy Island after toughing out a quartering sea for the next 10km. After a fair bit of cursing, lunch is about 7 km short of the campsite.

Boats are pulled up onto the dunes, unloaded and tents and tarps erected. The stuff that comes out of the hatches is unbelievable – Easter eggs, a bow saw, the odd bottle of wine... One group heads off to have a look at Bass Strait and have a stretch. Soon there's a little plume of smoke curling up through the tea trees – Richard has a fire going, dinners are cooking, wet clothing is hanging out to dry.



From left, Kerrie, Graeme, Mark, Bill, Glen, Eric, Nick, Stuart, Sarah, Hilde Mailen, Greg — Photo: RR



Mark and Sarah at the campsite, having a nice time by the fire — Photo: FC

Day 2 ...

“I have talked this through with Bill Zombor who also knows these waters very well. The geography in the area is such that once we get past the area known as the Gulf we will get shelter along the edge of the channel... there is a very sheltered mangrove area which is worth checking out”.

So, Saturday afternoon, most people paddle off toward Drum and Sunday Islands, crossing the main channel that connects the park with Bass Strait via the Port Albert Entrance. This is where it gets interesting for a few of us. As it turns out, it's a bit rougher than expected. Waves come beam-on. Someone keeps yelling out the same word, over and over. The word is “brace”. Some of us learn on the job. Seems to work though since everyone makes it to the other side, with the experienced paddlers criss-crossing the channel and rounding the rest up. Closer to shore, the sea quietsens.

The paddle back after lunch on Sunday Island couldn't be more different, winding through a maze of mangroves along its south coast, gently nudged by the incoming tide. Swans and seabirds, startled, explode out of glasswort meadows. It's more than a little meditative. That is, before we turn the last corner and see the chop ahead and get ready to tackle the headwind. Once back in

the channel it's game on again, but with a higher tide not as much swell. It all makes for a good night's sleep.



Through the mangrove maze — Photo: Kerrie

Day 3 ...

Fish and chip day. Or a tea party and dolphin watching from the dunes. While some were toughing it out along the Bass Strait coastline...



Walking on the wild side — Photo: FC

... the café club was shamelessly indulging itself...



The get fat club — Glen, Nick, Graeme, Kerrie and Bill — Photo: RR

... in spite of the concern of their colleagues.



Graeme, Mark, Sarah and Hilde Mailen looking for the paddlers — are they running late or? — Photo: FC

Sooner or later though, they swanned back to camp, with chips gratefully received and heated up à la Trangia.

That evening, the talk turns to club culture, gender balance and participation. It seems these subjects crop up from time to time, informally, or more recently in the VSKC survey. The idea of a Facebook page to arrange paddles is raised. This works well in Norway but there's clearly room for more discussion, and maybe some creative thinking, especially around what work is needed to make it happen in a way that works for everyone. All good.

Day 4 . . .

Time to go home, and a beautiful start to the day. Calm and clear conditions.



A beautiful morning with sunrise — Photo: Kerrie

But the sea is a really long way away and seems to retreat each time someone moves their kayak closer to the water's edge. Gear is ferried down to the shoreline and crammed back into hatches. Once on the water, it's calm with only a light onshore breeze.



Where's the water? — Photo: Kerrie

But it's still an ebb tide and turns just a little too late to get through the Swashway and back to Port Welshpool around the south side of Little Snake Island and Corner Inlet. So we end up retracing our day 1 route. Nice views of the Prom though — Mts Singapore, Hunter and Margaret.



Paddling past the Prom — Photo: Kerrie

The group spreads out a bit, everyone seems to be soaking up the last couple of kilometres in their own

way. Soon though, Port Welshpool takes shape, a steely grey harbour in the mid-afternoon light. Fishing boats are moored at the jetty, and another cold front is on its way. The pod weaves through the deeper sections of the channel, then hulls hit the sand and we're back again.

In Norwegian the word "lommekjent" means someone who has knowledge about a certain place or area. Richard truly was a lommekjent trip leader, leading the group safely through the tides and finding the best routes, with first class back up from other experienced paddlers. Brilliant organisation, great bunch of people, new paddling buddies and a good mix of conditions for everyone. Hope to see you on water soon.

But, Hilde Mailen asks, what is this sitting on a kayak in the water eating lunch business? Where was the coffee? Where was the nice spot to sit down and chat? No matpahke (lunch boxes) either. . .



So-called lunch, Day 4 — Photo: FC





Werribee Creek

Peter Costello

Up Sh*** Werribee Creek without a Paddle Or: More than Seven Degrees of Separation

24 May, 2014

Participants and Craft –

Peter C. (trip leader) / Valley Aquanaut; Rohan K./EPIC 18X; Andrew C. / Arctic

Raider ; Bill K. / Tiderace ; Helmut H. / Trak 1600 foldable; Craig H. / Tahe Marine

Bay Spirit; Bob F. / Valley Nordcapp; Grant S. / stripper Guillemot Night Heron.

Photos by Peter Costello

The Portarlington mid-year Bay Crossing was modified a couple of days prior to be a similar length journey starting from Werribee River. Putting in from the bend in K-Road next to the Golf Course below the Open Range Zoo, to include around 6km of scenic river paddling before crossing the Bay once the mouth of Werribee River was reached – another 29km.

A complex car shuffle was planned to include one extra driver travelling to the drop-off at Werribee River to bring Billy's car back, so when he arrived at Sandringham he could drive home and we didn't need to go back to the starting spot.

After the rolling night at Mentone Grammar outdoor pool on the Friday night, final arrangements were discussed and finalised at La Porchetta in Mentone over pizza, cool drinks, some laughter and funny stories.

We met in the car park at Sandringham at 0630 to load any additional kayaks onto the trailer on the back of Roh's ute. With our extra driver short we resigned ourselves to having to collect one vehicle after the paddle.



Pre-dawn saddle-up

First stop Hampton Street for coffee and croissants then on to Werribee. Helmut made a small diversion via home to collect his wife Xufang, one of the return drivers. We were

pleasantly surprised with how fast the journey was and were soon unloading gear and kayaks, only to be interrupted by Bob letting us know that both Grant and his paddles were still in his car back in Sandringham.

Laughter and many useful and smart comments followed, including 'I took five paddles out of the back of the ute just before we drove over'; 'my spare paddle is at Sandringham in my car', 'my spare paddle is at home near my front door'; 'is there a kayak shop in Werribee that will be open to hire one?', and a slightly more humble 'would anyone mind towing us across?' We had one slit spare paddle between us, however the decision was made that the boys drive Billy's car back to Sandringham then paddle out to meet us mid-way.

It was around 350 metres from the cars to the water and we were soon down the one metre bank and in our boats, ready to head off. A very picturesque location with glassy water and great reflections of the red earth cliffs. A slight green tinge to the water didn't stop Craig putting in a roll as we cut our way toward the river mouth. Some discussion about Super Phosphates and modern farming ensued, as we took in lots of bird life and the occasional local fisherman along the way.

Upon reaching the river-mouth, we had a short stop, trip briefing and two-way radio check to make sure we were all hearing Channel 77 clearly. Then off we went with a gentle breeze from the west following us and gorgeous autumn sunshine above. A couple of sails went up, more to look pretty than for any real assistance. The opposite side of the bay was cloaked in grey cloud down to water level, we decided to aim at one of the moored tankers giving us a visual bearing before the lift tower at Cheltenham would eventually appear as our guide.

It wasn't long before our first seal sighting, the first of around eight for the journey. Only one surfacing around us several times as we kept cruising across. We realised that

there must be this many seals all the time, however without flat seas, you just don't see them. Plenty of short squeaks were from penguins, with some hundred or so popping up within viewing range and disappearing as soon as we got too close.

Nearing the channel, we passed by two large ships and were careful to keep a little distance as we could not see a yellow Q flag (Quarantine) and were not sure if they had been through customs yet or not. At our next hourly rest stop, we decided it was time to check in with Bob and Grant to gain an idea of how they were travelling and more importantly, how to make our paths cross. Only a voicemail could be left, so we assumed their phones were either in a black spot temporarily, or were Optus and in a permanent black spot. We were not having any mobile connection issues, excitedly following Billy's texts to and from Michelle (Craig's wife) who was bidding at an auction. Michelle kept us all hanging on the result and didn't give away whether she had won the auction or not, just asking us what time we thought we would arrive back at Sandy.

We decided to change our bearing about 20 degrees north to Fawkner Beacon as it would be an easy spot to meet with Bob and Grant, and some of the guys had not been there before. We conveyed this in voice message and text to Bob and Grant with no response, concluding that they may well have gone home and were sitting having a nice cup of tea by this stage.

A large freighter was heading out from Port Melbourne as we approached the Beacon and some discussion was held as to whether we should wait or go. 20 minutes prior, an incoming ship had passed behind us with some 500m to spare, so there was potentially no comfort in sitting where we were, it was really a question whether they would maintain their slow speed –giving us plenty of time, or if they may decide to speed up – which could get a lot more exciting! We decided continuing was the right thing with a little more zest in

our stroke. We all were well in the safety zone when it passed, as they had maintained a steady slow speed.



Some traffic



Team photo (the ones with paddles)

One last fuel up on food and liquid, then the last leg to the beach. A team photo off the concrete wall along with a very vocal 'Happy Birthday to Roh' for Sunday. To be met by Linda and Sharee, however no sign of Grant or Bob, with no reply to messages. This was a mystery – especially for Billy whose car they had driven off in and also for Helmut who like Billy had all his dry clothes and other gear in the car.

We warmed up with coffees (thanks Roh!) and awaited the arrival of Michelle to tell us about the auction, whilst Billy and Helmut scoured the local car parks and streets to try to find his car and hope that the keys may be on a tyre as they were not left

at the café next to The Kayak Shop. Nope, no luck! However Michelle arrived and they had bought the house.

Bob's car had been found next to Billy's in a side street and we knew they must be paddling still, just as we were searching the horizon to the west they came into view heading toward the harbour. Soon we were reunited, the stories followed and it turned out that Bob and Grant had headed to Fawkner Beacon and kept paddling for another hour on that bearing. Amazing with how flat it was out there (Fawkner Beacon showing zero wind for much of the day) and yet we must have passed within a few kilometres and were invisible to each other.

All is well that ends well as they say, and I assured Bob that we would equip them with two way marine radios next time and whilst it may not fix the memory, it would make catching up on the water a whole lot easier. We all concluded that the river was a really interesting starting location for this paddle and a very pleasurable 35 kilometre journey that would have to be done again.



Almost home — Fawkner Beacon

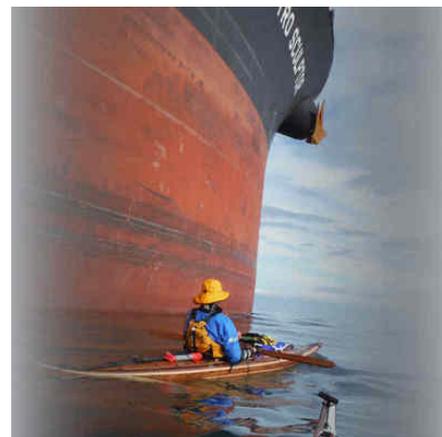
Bob Fergie

Up Sh*** . . . – In Bob and Grant's Defence

Yes, I (Bob) forgot our paddles, but the most embarrassing thing was performing this 'senior momentary lapse' on THAT particular trip with THOSE particular mates. Enough said PC, AC *et al.*!

However, the important lesson for all of us relates more to our revised plan to meet up half way between Werribee and Sandringham. What we didn't do was confirm compass bearings and by implication back bearings

so that we effectively travelled on the same line, albeit from opposite directions.



As it turned out, the Werribee pod did not follow a straight line track back to Sandringham, heading a good deal south before turning North East to Fawkner Beacon by 20° as Peter notes above. Grant and I, on the other hand, followed a bearing almost true West from Sandringham to Werribee (via Fawkner Beacon) Assuming that the Werribee pod would take a true East bearing, we lay in wait for a surprise attack behind a large tanker anchored about 16km due East of Sandringham. If they were to deviate from this straight line home, we assumed that it would be north towards the closest shore. As it turned out they came in from the south and we missed each other, if only by a couple of kilometers.

Once Grant and I arrived back at Sandringham, having covered a good 33km ourselves, we were relieved to find that the other pod had arrived back safely.

Some lessons we learned:



When revising trip plans, make sure you understand the planned route bearings of each pod. Make sure that you have adequate communication tools on hand to cover for unexpected changes. Recognise that even in very calm seas, it is difficult to see other sea kayakers as close as 2-3 km away.





The Cape — Photo NM

Nick Mulvany

My Kaskazi Skua and I . . .

I had been kayaking on and off for a number of years since about 2007, usually hiring kayaks with friends for excursions on the Yarra and Port Phillip Bay, or joining guided tours in Corner Inlet. Subconsciously during this time, I think I had been planning on buying my own kayak and gear, the funds, however, either never seemed to eventuate, or when they did, other things seemed to pop-up and soak them away. The original sea kayaking seed was planted on a short expedition in the Gippsland Lakes in my final year of high school. This seed, however, lay dormant for almost a decade before I decided to reacquaint myself with skirts, paddles and blistered hands.

It was a work opportunity which lead me to Cape Town, South Africa, in 2010 that presented several catalysts and the subconscious thought rapidly shifted to a conscious want.

The “Cape” is a magical place for kayaking, surfing, diving and general

‘beachiness’. *Kaapstadt*, Cape Town in Afrikaans, *oriKapa* in Xhosa, the predominant indigenous language of the broader Cape region, is a city perched within a geologically magnificent mountainous cape. The Cape spears out south into the Atlantic, joined to the continent of Africa by the sandy scrubby wetland plains of the ‘Cape Flats’. Measuring fifty-two kilometers in length, the Cape extends from Table Bay, at the foot of Table Mountain in the north, to Cape Point, a sharp jagged thin wedge falling into the ocean to the south. To the west are the open waters of the Southern Atlantic, the continuous vastness unending until Brazil. To the east, the Cape forms the horse-shoe enclosure of False Bay, offering sheltered waters exposed to Southern swells only.

The Cape’s beauty lies in its mountains, which rise steeply from the sea edge to over 1,000m. These abrupt obstacles cause strong winds carrying

moist sea air to rise rapidly, condensing and shrouding the Cape’s peaks in cloud. This event provides a most amazing spectacle as the winds tumble back down to continue their ocean path. Like the vapor pouring from dry ice, they turbulently dance down the mountain faces, fading and vanishing at lower levels.

Similar turbulence occurs out of sight under the sea surface around the Cape where the Indian Ocean meets the Atlantic Ocean, however the technical confluence of the main currents occurs further east of the Cape. West of the Cape the waters are bitterly cold year round thanks to the Benguela Current moving from cold Antarctic waters up along the west coast of Africa and deep upwelling caused by strong seasonal winds. Conversely, the Agulhas Current moves downwards from East Africa, bringing warmer waters to East of the Cape and False Bay. The result is nutrient-rich waters and a

unique regional marine environment teaming with sea life. Immense kelp forests have formed around the Cape providing habitat for endemic species of shark and other fish, and numerous seal and penguin colonies are located within False Bay. The ubiquitous image of a breaching Great White shark in pursuit of a seal, so popularized by South African tourism organisations, will most likely be taken within False Bay.

It was the stunning kayaking opportunities of the Cape that largely catalyzed the conscious want however, this was assisted by the availability of locally designed and manufactured sea kayaks. In Australia, roto moulded plastic boats pumped out of Chinese factories at rates much quicker than I can inhale dumplings at an inner-city dumpling house, generally produce imported low-cost alternatives to their glassed cousins. I noticed that it was the opposite in South Africa. The labor-intensive process of laying-up fiberglass kayaks is made much more economical by low labor costs, depressed by an absurd unemployment rate and sadly, wide-spread poverty. This unfortunate situation produces favorably priced “ZA” fiberglass kayaks compared to plastic alternatives imported more than a world away from The East. For international purchasers, this combined with a depressed local currency results in value-for-money kayaks, though positively provides much needed employment.

In my case, the economic utopia of somehow contributing to local employment was severed by the second-hand market. My Kaskazi Skua was purchased second hand from a South African chap who had decided that he had too many boys’ toys and needed to jettison this kayak at any price. Using the excuse of “*I bought it for my wife, she used it once*”, which I interpreted as man-code for “*Ag man, ja I don’t really have the skills ja, and those Great Whites make me want to kak my pants. If you take it now now, it really would be lekker*”. I took this relatively unused product of South Africa off his

hands for a sum of rands, unfortunately adding nothing to the country’s GDP.

Used frequently in the waters around the Cape, this boat provided me with memories that won’t be listed by Lonely Planet. Seldom was there a trip that didn’t involve interactions with the abundant marine life. A surprise encounter with a bloody big sunfish (which at the instant of sighting was a very large waxy light-grey mass below me) off the coast in Atlantic waters, still mildly haunts me as there was a nanosecond of this nature experience I thought my life was no longer in my hands. Shouting words that end in “k” really do express emotions more effectively than others. Had I known the same word in each of South Africa’s eleven official languages, I would have used them all, repeatedly.



My Kaskazi Skua, my daughter and I — Photo NM

Filling the kayak with our belongings at the end of our incredible time in South Africa, it was shipped back to Oz and now plies the waters of coastal Victoria. I should mention, though, it cost me more to get it from the docks in Melbourne to Brighton than what it cost to get crated, transported and shipped from Cape Town to Melbourne (via Singapore). I must admit I hadn’t thought through it quite well and it does distort the economics!

The Skua, manufactured by Kaskazi Kayaks in Cape Town (“kaskazi” is a Swahili word for

the north-easterly trade winds along the East African coast) is a 5.3m/58cm/23kg fiberglass sit-in sea kayak, although a sit-on-top and “hybrid” variants are also available. I describe it as a “big boned entry level” kayak. Having quite a distinctive nose, being relatively high-volume with a cockpit to match, lacking a day hatch and having old school hatch covers, it probably doesn’t suit the more experienced and performance paddler.

The patched-in fiberglass seat didn’t last long once the rolling started, being replaced with the common variant foam block with an IR backrest. The Skua rolls well, but the high rear deck and my back regularly have disagreements. The standard fitout gear is seaworthy, however on joining the Club I realised that it’s the small things that count and replaced most of it, on the advice of some old seadogs. Thicker deck lines (for future Peter Costello red-eye rescues in the dark), a butchered surfboard kick-pad to the front deck (100% my idea... purely pimping my kayak), bungee hatch straps to replace the buckle clips, and toggles replacing “wrist busting” hand straps (a Dave Winkworth observation at the AGM 2012) were all upgrades from the standard offering. I have no idea of the hydrostatics, but crucially for a sea kayak, it floats. This makes my Mum, fiancé and one year old daughter very happy.

It has, and continues, to serve me well on the trips that I have done with the Club, and provides a good base to build my skills upon. In my opinion, the Kaskazi Skua is an excellent kayak for those beginners wanting a stable boat for use (generally) within calmer enclosed waters for short day trips. I haven’t checked retail prices in Australia, but would suggest that it offers a lower cost alternative compared to other imported fiberglass kayaks (this is of course after they have reviewed the wide range of high-quality Australian made kayaks!).

■



From left to right: Graeme Thompson, Elle Millsteed, Ian Lugton, Kerrie Vogel, David Winkworth, Terry Barry and Tony Chick



Beautiful Mallacoota — Photo: SC

Steve Collins

Winky's at Mallacoota 14-16 Feb

With smoke billowing out of Morwell's open-cut and parts of East Gippsland still burning it was a smoky trip down to Mallacoota for this year's Winky Weekend. This was the fifth time that this popular annual event had been put on by club stalwart Dave Winkworth. As first timers our expectations were high, we were not to leave disappointed. Some had been at Mallacoota for a day or two, enjoying an extended break, others drifted in throughout the afternoon into the early evening, other hardy souls like Denis and May Chew, and Andrew and Lynda Campbell drove through the night to arrive in the early hours of the morning.

By the time we assembled on Saturday morning to begin the day's activities there were around forty five

kayakers hailing from anywhere between Torquay to Sydney. I felt that this was part of the magic of this weekend, an overlapping of Victorian and New South Wales sea kayaking communities. New friendships were made, email and phone numbers exchanged so as to catch up for a paddle when next on the south coast of NSW. Over a beer or two at the pub on Friday night we met Dirk and Vicki from Woolongong, Jo, Wendy and Ann from Tura beach, Graeme and Kerrie from Eden, and a fellow from Sydney called Larry Gray. "Larry Gray?, aren't you famous" said Jo." Is he, thought I", still relatively new to sea kayaking.

Now I can tell you, that if you have spent the last thirty years living in a cave, or a Jesuit Monastery fulfilling a

vow of silence, or milking cows seven days a week, and bother to google your name then don't be surprised if you find a big blank nothing. However, if you google Larry Gray, then you are going to learn plenty about Australia's sea kayaking history and be impressed with his many expeditions, undertaken in a boat that he designed and built himself, the Pittarak.

Saturday saw the running of the Navigation Challenge. Held for the first time last year, using GPS equipment, the event was taken out by Neil and Raia. This year gps's were dispensed with and it was back to basics using a map and grid references. There were fifteen points to be found over a twenty kilometre course. Now this was not an exact science as the yellow laminated sheets

of A4 on which were printed two general knowledge questions were taped to tree trunks that were well back from the water and not quite where you expected them to be. A kind of grownups game of hide and seek, only with no one to tell you that you were getting hotter or colder.

It was great fun, a good way to explore the Lake, and practise navigational skills that we usually use when kayaking. Dave put a good deal of effort into setting this activity up and it was a great success. He got it just right, as every point was found, but nobody found every point. This year's winners were Elle Millstead and Ian Lugton from South Coast NSW, members of SCARP'ers (south coast amateur and recreation paddlers). Second were Kerrie Vogel and Graeme Thompson (VSKC members based in Eden).

Third place went to Terry Barry and Tony Chick. If, after spending hours finding all of the points and

answering all of the questions you should decide to hoist your sail for an easy ride back to the finish line, then Terry suggests that you make sure that your paper work is well secured to your boat. It may save you from having to explain to your partner how you managed to lose all of your hard won answers .



Somewhere in there is a clue ... — Photo: SC

Whilst we were out having fun on the water Dave was busy baking damper for afternoon tea and brewing up delicious casseroles for what was later an enjoyable social evening.

Strong wind warnings put paid to a planned trip out to Gabo Island on Sunday. Not to be deterred a hardy group paddled off up into the wilds of one arm of the lake finishing at the base of a large gum sporting a magnificent sea eagles nest in its upper branches. Thank you Dave for putting on a great weekend.





David Steward

Thursday Night just Went Submarine ...

We thought Westernport Thursday night paddles have had it all — dolphins, stingrays, lightning, rain, wind, mud and unexploded bombs. We thought we couldn't be surprised — until last Thursday night. Including some of our regulars, a pod of six seafarers set forth on a high tide trip around Sandstone Island. As part of the intended route we cut in close to a Westernport landmark (or is that seamarke?) HMAS Otama, an Oberon Class Submarine moored off Golden Beach near Crib Point. As we paddled past a voice from the hatch yelled to us 'Want to have a look?'

Need we be asked again? So it was

off to the stern and on to the hydrofoils which were nicely covered in algae and provided a scratch free environment for the kayaks. We tethered the kayaks with tow ropes and clambered aboard. The hatch looked a tad small but we were informed that even Joe Hockey had squeezed in through this hatch.

The Oberon Association were showing three members around the Otama submarine and the two guides, both ex submariners from the HMAS Otama who told us many stories of the exploits of the Sub and its workings. The submarine is just as it was left after the key was turned off, minus the weapons and classified equip-

ment. We were informed that it was a spy ship that was very good at being quiet, a very useful skill when sitting under a Russian ship or blowing up the pride of the USA fleet in war games. We spent at least an hour looking over the Sub to 'oohs and aahs' all round. Given the extraordinarily cramped conditions we were thankful that the full complement of unwashed crew of 60 plus were not on board! 12 of us felt like a good crowd.

As we paddled back to shore in the dwindling daylight the consensus was that we will have trouble beating that paddle!

We would like to thank the Oberon

Association and invite any who are interested to join the Association. You too could be given your own guided tour.

If only one of us had had a camera.

<http://www.maritimecentre.com.au/>





Newbies Day — Collage by Bob Fergie



And where are you? Canadian Bay Welcome Day 30 March 2014 — Photo: XF

Keith Russel

A Warm and Tranquil Welcome

My first acquaintance with the VSKC was on a laptop in the Netherlands while virtually exploring Melbourne, my new home to be. I had picked up sea kayaking in the Netherlands several years earlier. My father in law had donated his old large expedition sea kayak to me and it was lying in our small garden annoying my wife. So I found a local sea kayaking club and became addicted, moving from small local rivers to the very broad flowing rivers, the short chop on inland lakes, to the slightly larger waves and chilly waters of the North Sea.

I arrived in Melbourne with one suitcase of clothes including very minimal kayaking clothes. I emailed the VSKC and was invited along to the new members trip. Fortunately Richard Rawlings was so kind to lend me a kayak, the necessary gear and even offer me a ride. The weather was brilliant sunny and warm and there was a huge show of over 40 paddlers. The bay was beautifully calm and clear and the water so lovely and warm, very comfortable after the Dutch cooler waters.

Arriving at Mornington there was

even a sossie sizzle set up. And on returning at Mount Eliza there was a chance to try out some classic Ozzie boats I had never seen before like the Nadgee and the Mirage. All in all it was a very friendly welcoming event meeting a great crowd. I had not even dreamt that I would be able to manage so much sea kayaking from just a small suitcase. I am looking forward to many enjoyable paddles with the VSKC in the future.

■

Fiona Coates and Helmut Heinze

On, and off, the Beach

There have been a number of short paddles and training sessions aimed at new club members and aspirational grade zeroes over the last few months. Here's a wrap of some of the highlights, from the perspective of two relatively recent recruits and one longer standing member. . For anyone who has just joined

the VSKC or is contemplating joining, get out there, see Victoria's fantastic coastline from the other side, and get wet.

Canadian Bay ...

... pitched as the scene where many of the VSCK stalwarts cut their teeth. Canadian Bay Club, established in

1957, was also a location for the film "On the Beach", the film of the Neville Shute novel of the same name. It starred Gregory Peck, Ava Gardiner and Fred Astaire. More significantly, at least from Bill Robinson's point of view, the club provided an unofficial headquarters for the VSKC for many years. It proved to be a fine place to kick off a welcome to new members in April this year.



Canadian Bay new members day — Photo: BF

Canadian Bay was blessed with gorgeous sunny weather and thirty five paddlers turned up for the day. These included twelve members who had signed up just before or since the AGM, and four others interested in getting a feel for the VSKC. After a few words of welcome from Bob Fergie, Robin Boundy and Greg Gleason, everyone split into three groups led by Robin, Richard Rawling and Terry Barry and headed off to Mornington.

From the water, the view included some of the most secluded beaches on Port Phillip Bay, rocky red bluffs protruding along the coastline and rows of bathing boxes scattered along the coast all the way to Mothers' Beach for a sausage sizzle.



... a massive thanks to the Boundy family cooks — Photo: BF

There was a good spread of designs, brands and styles available for

a squiz and a test drive and the opportunity to meet and cross examine their owners. An occasion to at least make a start on getting your head around the technical jargon, the right boat, the wrong boat, or even just knowing what's available. For others contemplating extended kayaking trips, there were boats set up for camping and longer expeditions, with their owners able to explain the pros and cons of various fit outs.



Talking gear — Photo: BF

There was also the chance to paddle some of the "left of centre kayaks" – Richard's blokey Taran vs Bob's sexy Nordkapp, amongst others. Ay yi yi



Bob's Nordkapp — Photo FC

Sticks,n Ticks . . .

. . . run by Bob Fergie, held around Frankston, infamous for lots of things,

including Bob's "Sticks'n Tricks" sessions on the occasional Thursday afternoon just off Oliver's Hill. The format is pretty relaxed, and there seems to be an ongoing cinematic theme, sometimes slapstick. . . .



Setting a bad example — Photo: TB

. . . .sometimes historical. This month, it was "Gallipoli".



Gallipoli film set at Canadian Bay — Photo: BF

It's seriously good fun wagging work and heading off to Frankston for the afternoon, feeling like a teenager, having a few laughs and seeing Frankston under water. Nice combination for newcomers to improve strokes, rolling and rescues as well as a very comfortable paddle to Mt Eliza. Can be combined as a package deal by scooting over to Western Port afterwards during daylight saving hours.



“About to become a new member if he wants his own paddle back”. Ken putting the final touches on a roll — Photo: BF



Heading back to Frankston — Photo: BF

Red Eye . . .

. . . the infamous Saturday morning paddle, 6am to 8am, year in, year out, in summer, in winter, off Rickets Point, close to Beaumarais. Run jointly by Peter Costello and Andrew Campbell. The regulars enjoy it as a sociable fitness paddle with the obligatory practice interludes thrown in. Beautiful in summer, going out when the town is still asleep and only the birds are busy; sometimes dreadful in winter when heading into the blackness and awaiting yearningly the first light. On some mornings the sunrises are beautiful, on other days the sky remains as grey as the sea.

The wind dictates the direction, usually it’s either ‘Sandy’ or ‘Mordi’,

a brisk stint of about 60 minutes or more upwind, a short break and then an easy downwind run back to the starting point.

As someone who shall remain unnamed once remarked, mentally stable people can well do without the Red Eye paddles. But they may miss out on something.



A Red Eye sunrise on Port Phillip Bay — Photo: HH

Mt Martha to Safety Beach

It was blowing a hooley at **Mt Martha** on Saturday in mid-March. The wind got up too at **Balnarring** the week before. Strangely, Mick Shankie, Grant Kelly, Dave Stewart, Bill Zombor, Rob Campbell and Lawrie Brown were involved at one time or another.

As it turned out, Mt Martha to Safety Beach was about learning to paddle into a head wind, against the tide — with some light relief in the form of a sea cave along the way — then paddling with a following sea on the return trip. In other words, conditions that new paddlers tend to avoid, since it’s hard to know how much wind is going to be too much and it can all seem pretty daunting. It’s also easy to get spooked by the random push and pull of a following sea, skimming the crest of a wave one minute, then being clawed back into the trough the next. How to use your rudder or skeg, how to relax and stop worrying about going over even though it feels weird, and accepting

that it’s just not going to be lovely and sunny and calm every time, but that’s when it gets most interesting.



Grant, Mick and George in the sea cave, Mt Martha to Safety Beach — Photo: FC



Mick Shankie with back up from Dave Stewart, Lawrie Brown and Rob Campbell, explaining some of the basics to new paddlers on Somers Beach. Photo: FC

Back at Balnarring Beach, there was wet exit, assisted and self-rescue practice, with a couple of dolphins looking on, before pies and coffee at Balnarring store. Nice one.



Heading back for a pie and coffee at Balnarring store — Photo: FC

Sandridge to Williamstown

In mid-September, Neil Brenton posted a paddle from Sandridge to Williamstown for a close-up of some of the tall ships anchored in Hobsons Bay.

This was my first paddle with the VSKC and, being the new girl (FC), I was a bit nervous and unsure of what to expect. One of the things that struck me was how far away Williamstown looked in the distance.

I found it amazing how quickly the pod approached the western shore of Hobsons Bay.

At anchor, was the Oosterschelde, the Lord Nelson and a couple of others. The kayaks weaved in and out of yachts and then edged close to the hulls of the tall ships. Day visitors peered at us over the side, while crew climbed high up the rigging, balanced and sure-footed. The paddle circumnavigated the Williamstown docks, then headed back across the shipping channel to Port Melbourne for morning tea, finishing at Sandridge. Hardly Bass Strait but as a new paddler, just right.



Thursday Night Mud Fun, Woolleys Beach, Crib Point

Lastly, Thursday nights at **Woolleys Beach**, Crib Point. At first glance, the beach looks sandy enough and it occurs that rumours of mud that closes in around your legs like quicksand in a Tarzan movie, are exaggerated. However, the sand is a flimsy veneer and with the slightest pressure becomes an anaerobic wallow. There are a lot of sandals down there.

Spruiked as an opportunity to “learn about Western Port’s little tricks from the locals”, Thursday nights raise the bar a little for a new paddler, in more ways than one. The regulars include instructors Julian Smith and Mick Shankie, and half a dozen grade 2 and 3 paddlers, so there is always the com-

forting thought that if there’s an unscheduled swim ... quote ... “don’t worry, we’ll just toss you back in your boat”. Strong currents; wind; both; both in opposite directions; following seas; beam seas; quartering seas; wacky aluminium kayaks; a submarine; rumours of unexploded bombs; a very, very deep channel; ferry gliding from French Island at sunset; paddling back to the beach under a rising full moon.

What mud?



Off Tankerton, heading back to Woolleys — Photo: FC



Bad moon on the rise, trouble on the way — Photo: FC



OK there is a bit of mud, sometimes —
Photo: FC



Snake Islanders

Terry Barry

The Essence of the VSKC

Photos by Bob Fergie and Terry Barry.

Saturday 7th June saw a pod of 18 paddlers turn up to celebrate the Queens Birthday long weekend with a trip to the Cattleman's Huts at Snake Island. The pod included a wide range of paddlers made up of instructors, grade 1, 2 & 3 and as yet ungraded members. For some it was their first sea kayak expedition and first time camping from a sea kayak (albeit with the luxury of the facilities of the cattlemen's huts!) For others it

was a welcome return to a very familiar area.

The forecast for the first day had winds of up to 18knots with the remaining two days backing off from between 5-15kn SE. Enough to make for a bit of texture on the water. Add in a little bit of swell and tidal influence and we had the making of some fun paddling.

Now a few years ago a pod of this size would have seen group spread way into the distance and far and wide. Not so this weekend! All members of the pod stayed within commu-

nication of each other at ALL times kept out of the boating channels and regularly re-grouped along the way. It was a pleasure to paddle with (and be responsible for) such a group. I attribute this to the excellent club culture of the VSKC brought about by our own training scheme. The regular club paddles such as the Red Eye and Canadian Bay, along with others have reinforced good paddle etiquette thanks to the hard work of many and is paying off.



VSKC role models



Group spread?

The pod made good time paddling to our first stop at Bidy's Cove, helped by the swiftly flowing outgoing tide. From there it was a short hop to Snake Island and camp. In all a relatively short day of around 13 kilometers.

At camp we met up with four other club members who had been in the area for a few days exploring the east coast of the prom. They had thoughtfully already gathered a good supply of fire wood for the evening, though we felt we still may need a bit more and set about collecting a few extra logs.

Later in the afternoon about half the group went for a walk to Cox's swamp in search of hog deer. The rest of us feeling lazy hung around camp. That evening happy hour kicked off along with tall tales and true around the fire, helped along with all manner of liquid refreshments.



The night with tales tall and true

Sunday morning saw the arrival of Steve who set off early from Port Welshpool to join us. We split into two groups for the day. One intrepid group headed off the Rabbit Island and return. The other opted for a more relaxed paddle along the eastern shore line of Wilsons Prom. Greg M decided he would take up an 'easier option' of a 37km run along the beach (!), and a couple of others decided on a relaxing walk (ended up 20km and we discovered a way of keeping Neil quiet- bugger him out!). The four who met us at the huts departed later in the morning for home.

The group that paddled the east coast of the prom had a great little paddle as far as Hunter Point. This involved a small surf landing which was a first for some. Along with a bit of play in the swell along the way it set a challenge for some and resulted in a few swims and rescues

The Rabbit Island crew had a great day also, and were aided in their return by the SE winds and came back with tales of exploring some of the sea caves on the eastern side of Rabbit Island,

Derek and Judy joined us at the huts later in the day after setting out from Port Welshpool mid-morning.

That night was a repeat of the previous with everyone enjoying the fire, making new acquaintances and telling tales. We were joined with two cattlemen and their families at the huts- unexpected guests who were 'delivering' a new fridge to add to the hut facilities.

Last day we departed the huts by 9.30. The departure was made easy by the way everyone seemed to not only organise their own affairs but contribute to the group effort in cleaning up the camp and making sure all was left in tip top condition- as we had found it or better.

We now had a pod of 20 kayaks and headed off across to Bidy's Cove then around to near Tin Mine Cove in Corner Inlet for lunch. Once again the behaviour of the pod was fantastic. The less experienced in the group were chaperoned by the more experienced and the improvement in paddle skills was evident. After lunch we headed for Port Welshpool and made good time. Once ashore everyone helped each other carrying the kayaks off the beach (as was the case all weekend) and we all headed for home.

A great 3 days away in a beautiful area. The trip for me was the essence of the VSKC – friendship, cooperation, mentoring, sharing and a common enjoyment of sea kayaking and appreciation of the coastal environment. Exactly why many of us belong to the club.

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