

Sea Trek

Have
Travelled,
Will Travel

www.vskc.org.au

Summer 2014/15



Issue 82



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

The cover image was taken in June 2014 by Stuart Cunningham. The location is a coastal campsite close to Back of Keppoch near Arisaig, Scotland.

Sigla

AC: Andrew Campbell • AW: Anne Woolard • BF: Bob Fergie • BR: Bill Robinson • DG: David Golightly • GC: Greg Skowronski • GJ: George John • GK: Grant Kelly • HH: Helmut Heinze • HT: Heather Torbet • JS: Julian Smith • KR: Keith Russel • NM: Nick Mulvaney • PC: Peter Costello • PW: Peter Wilson • RK: Rohan Klopfer • RR: Richard Rawling • RW: Raia Wall • SC: Stuart Cunningham • SM: Sue Mountford • XH: Xufang heinze.

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Editorial



A German saying goes “Wenn einer eine Reise tut, hat er etwas zu erzählen”

(he who travels has a story to tell). — In this spirit Sea Trek presents a selection of travel stories: Travels for the purpose of kayaking, travels with kayaking on the side. Travels in the past. Travels in future. Likely travels and possible, aspirational travels. A big thank you to all authors for writing up their stories for Sea Trek — some spent countless hours polishing their

articles. Have a browse, take your pick and let the travel bug bite you! (being a North European myself and living in Australia by choice and for a reason I would never have thought I might ever consider Scotland . . . until I went over the drafts of the Scottish West coast articles for this edition).

We will continue the travel topic in the coming

edition but focus more on the technical side: transporting kayaks by road, rail and air, by bus and bicycle, backpacking, on a trolley, on a trailer etc. And, of course, we are going to take a look at the Trak 1600 and other folding boats. This as an early warning — Trak folding boat owners you’ll be called to share your experience. ■

President’s Podcast



Greetings to you all, especially those who have recently joined as VSKC members. I trust that you enjoy this issue of Sea Trek as much as you are enjoying participating in various club paddles.

There’s no doubt about it, we’re off to a flying start in 2015 as we navigate the many fantastic VSKC sea-kayaking opportunities. I, like many I expect, have been enjoying many summery club paddles up and down the Victorian Coast and in various

nooks and crannies of our wonderful Port Phillip Bay since Christmas. I know of a number of trips well beyond our state borders too, across to Finders Island, down the East coast of Tasmania to mention just two.

Looking ahead into March I am very excited about the imminent arrival of Nick Cunliffe from the UK. For those familiar with leading lights in the world of serious sea kayaking you will know that in Nick we have access to one of the best of the best. The club committee has been very busy over the past few months preparing for Nick’s visit and you will be well aware of the various opportunities to access Nick’s coaching skill and experience from the club web site. Let me encourage everyone to do your very

best to take advantage of these ‘paddling with Nick’ opportunities.

I’m also very pleased to be able to confirm our ‘Blue Water’ Paddle Fest location for this November. For the first time, we will be exploiting the magnificent Cape Paterson locale to host our annual VSKC gathering. Yes there will be amazing blue water paddles on offer, but don’t be intimidated by this if you are relatively new to sea kayaking. There are a number of relatively sheltered Bays at Cape Paterson from where we’ll be launching, not to mention the very sheltered waters of Anderson Inlet at Inverloch (just 10 minutes drive to the East). This is going to be a fantastic weekend with family-friendly accommodation and facilities catering for everyone. More details will follow in due

course, but for now make sure you keep the weekend of the 6-8th November free. Cape Paterson is about half an hour’s drive past Philip Island and is surprisingly one of less-known jewels of the southeast coast of Victoria.

Finally, and as I’m sure you’ll agree, this issue of Sea Trek is a real ‘beauty’ and I’m sure you join me in thanking Helmut for the splendid effort he continues to make as editor. Enjoy the read but also seriously consider making a contribution to our magazine yourself with words and photos of your next sea kayaking adventure.

I look forward to seeing you soon on the water.

Cheers
Bob Fergie
(VSKC President)

■

VSKC News and Press Releases

4 DECEMBER 2014

VSKC Paddlers Tackle the Murray River Marathon



Bill and Greg after paddling through a thunderstorm

The VSKC's Bill Robinson has just completed his 25th Murray River Marathon, this year Bill paddled in a double kayak with his friend Gregg a radio journalist from the ABC and during the entire event conducted a series of media interviews while tackling the 400 km long course. A passionate believer in the MRM as a 'character former' for anyone who undertakes what is Australia's longest endurance paddling event, Bill intends to significantly increase the VSKC participation numbers in the 2015 race, so 'watch this space' — he knows where you live!

This year Bill had the company of another team of VSKC members led by Rohan Klopfer of Sandringham based East Coast Kayaking. Rohan was backed up by Peter Costello, Raia Wall and Neil Brenton each of whom, along

with Bill Robinson have distinguished themselves in servicing the VSKC over many years and indeed still do. Rohans team paddled a Mirage 730 in the Doubles Relay event and finished second as well as a very credible eight overall, in a race of 43 craft and involving 250 competitors.

Well done the East Coast Kayaking team, first time participants — on the water for 34 hours over a five day endurance event — a fantastic effort for them and also especially for VSKC Life Member — Bill Robinson, who has become an integral part of the YMCA sponsored annual event, we are aware that if it had not been for Bill's direct intervention in finding and persuading a new naming rights sponsor only a few years ago — this iconic event would have not survived till today, so well done Bill.



Team Eastcoastkayaking, from left to right: Raia Wall, Rohan Klopfer, Peter Costello, Neil Brenton

Club members who are interested in finding out more about the event and how to involve themselves in the 2015 Race, should contact our 'Marathon Man'

Bill Robinson by sending him an e-mail booyak@bigpond.com. 'Are you up for a character-forming challenge'?

28 December 2014

Sandy Robson completes Bangladesh Coast

Sandy Robson has completed Bangladesh leg of her journey paddling from Germany to Australia retracing Oskar Speck's epic voyage. She has navigated some spectacular coastline from West Bengal, across the mouths of the Ganges and the south Bengal archipelago, now having reached St Martin Island — the southern-most tip of Bangladesh on the East coast of the bay of Bengal. (GS)



Sandy Robson

VSKC members can follow Sandy via the Expedition Tracker at <http://www.vskc.org.au/ExpedDashboard.asp?ExpedID=21>.

5 March 2015 — Coming up: AN EVENING WITH NICK CUNLIFFE.

PADDLING TO ST KILDA, BRITAIN'S MOST REMOTE ISLAND GROUP.

AN ILLUSTRATED TALK AT MORDIALLOC SAILING CLUB. 5TH MARCH 2015 7 pm.



Nick Cunliffe

One of the UK's most experienced and accomplished sea kayakers coaches will visit Victoria from 3rd 18th March this year as a guest of the Victorian Sea Kayak Club. Nick will address the club at one of our traditional Show and Tell evenings when he will discuss a significant trip he undertook in 2014 from the Scottish mainland to remote St Kilda, a demanding and challenging archipelago located some 70 km to the North-West of The Outer Hebrides.

- Members — \$20
- Non-members — \$30
- Child — \$10

March 2015 — COMING UP: SPECIAL VSKC TRAINING SESSIONS WITH NICK CUNLIFFE (ALL LEVELS)

Nick is one of UK's most experienced and accomplished sea kayak coaches

with BCU level 5 Coach qualifications in white water and sea kayaking. Nick also has a degree in Sport, Health and Physical Education.

Nick will present on water training sessions on a variety of techniques and skills. The training sessions

will be conducted at a variety of locations including Port Phillip, Barwon Heads and San Remo. See below for details and bookings:

- Nick Cunliffe Individual Training Sessions 2 pm & 3 pm 5 March 2015, Mordialloc Sailing Club: One on one training with Nick Cun-

liffe for one hour.

- VSKC Trainers & Nick Cunliffe Joint Session 10am — 12 noon Mon 9 March, San Remo Wharf Bridge: VSKC Trainers will combine with Nick Cunliffe to provide a training session for members on boat control and moving water han-

dling.

- Nick Cunliffe — Sea Kayak Group Training 5, 9, 14, & 15 March 2015, Various Locations: Group sea kayaking training sessions for VSKC members by Nick Cunliffe. Limited to 8 participants per session.

■

Sue Mountford

Scott Donaldson at the VSKC Paddle Fest

Scott Donaldson delivered the keynote address on the opening night of the VSKC Paddle Fest 2014.

The following is based on notes taken during the address along with some additions and reflections.

In July 2014, Scott Donaldson set out in a solo kayak attempt to paddle from Coffs Harbour across the 'Ditch' (the Tasman) to Naki on the West coast of New Zealand. After 84 days at sea with Mount Taranki in sight, and only 70 kilometers to reach land Scott and his team decided to abandon his attempt with a 'once in forty year' storm looming.

The VSKC decided an account of his epic journey was not to be missed. Scott's preparation, psychological management and focus on skilled decision making were equally remarkable and something from which every kayaker could learn.



Scott Donaldson at the Paddle Fest (with VSKC President Bob Fergie) — Photo: RR

Background

Scott's experience as an elite swimmer and triathlete who previously represented New Zealand in the Commonwealth games informed his understanding of the importance of being psychologically prepared for the

physical challenge being undertaking, as much as being physically prepared.

Scott's attempt was four years in the making. He spent time checking out the lessons learnt from other attempts to cross the Tasman made by Andrew Mc Auley and the two rowers Justin James and James Castrission.

Why? Having spent much of his time training endurance athletes, Scott wanted to test his skills on one of the ultimate endurance challenges in the southern hemisphere. In short the **challenge of how to build a plan of action** to achieve an unimaginable goal.

Equipment

The design of Scott's Barracuda kayak for the attempt took a different approach to other kayaks used in attempts by building the cabin in the front to improve its steerage in winds. It was self-righting and weighed 440 kilos. Inside the cabin was a harness so Scott could strap himself in when the seas were too rough to keep paddling.

Scott identified reliable equipment and skilled decision making as the two most critical factors in the making of a successful crossing of the Tasman. To ensure Scott had the best decision making processes to hand, a safety protocol with clear criteria was developed and shared with his land support team; one of whom was an ex bureau of metrology forecaster. The safety protocol had the final decision to abandon the attempt being made only by the land based team, after consultation with Scott.

The unpredictability and strength of currents in the Tasman, Scott explained underscored the importance of focussing on the task in hand without emotion or over investing in the distance achieved each day or finishing. There were days when currents

would push Scott backwards for a number of days.

During Scott's attempt there were equipment failures resulting in him having to call into Lord Howe Island for repairs. When the rudder broke it was unrepairable and initially Scott thought this may be the end of his attempt, yet he found he could edge and steer his kayak without the rudder doing so for the remaining 500 or so kilometers of the trip.

The Human Factor

Keeping nutrition up was important to maintaining a high paddling performance. Scott found once he had to reduce his intake with dwindling supplies as his time taken to cross lengthened from the expected 50–70 days; his performance also fell away. There was nothing for it but to order another food drop. Scott maintained his leg strength by doing swats in his kayak.

Paying high attention to maintaining the condition of his skin was also a priority during his attempt. Scott washed salt water off his body each day and changed where possible into dry gear. Taking anti-inflammatories and antibiotics for 5 days on then five days off when needed were some of the other elements to Scott's strategy to maintain his physical well being.

There were moments during the crossing when Scott spent two and a half days strapped in his harness whilst his kayak was being tossed and battered in storm waters.

Scott managed to paddle through a shoulder injury and a wrist lesion through to the tendon.

Decision

When Scott's kayak started to leak and his battery and his communication system were at risk of failing in combination with a lost rudder; the

assessment was made that it would be too dangerous for Scott to continue with such compromised equipment given the severe storm looming. Scott's team determined that the decision to abandon the attempt needed to be made two days out before the storm hit, as it would take that period of time to get the rescue helicopter to him. Scott agreed the risks were too high and supported the decision to abandon.

Consistent with marine protocols requiring the scuttling of abandoned craft at sea, Scott left the kayak's door partially open, whilst hoping he may

see it again. As luck would have it, his kayak washed up on the shores of Taranki some three months later where he would have landed had he completed the last 70 kilometers.

Testimony to Scott's fitness regime was his ability to walk from the helicopter to his land transport after his rescue. Scott unhesitatingly says it was right decision to abandon his attempt to cross the Tasman. He is satisfied that he was able to demonstrate to himself, first and foremost, that his psychological and physical preparation enabled him to sustain his endurance over a lengthy period with-

out excessive physical damage. Scott accomplished his goal.

Postscript I

Scott's parting advice to VSKC members was to warm up before you paddle.

Postscript II

Scott plans to make another attempt to cross the Ditch in 2016.



Anne Woollard

Mystery Dry Bag Challenge

A Mystery Dry Bag Challenge was again part of this years AGM and was hotly contested. Annie Woollard, Annie Sharp and Dos Fergie were lucky to be asked to judge the competition this year but it was TOUGH! Dos declared a conflict of interest and declined to vote for Team TASA. We even had Pratt Meston (Helen Doyle) complete with cravat wandering amongst the contestants providing critical feedback and encouragement. The contestants were required to provide their own cooking and plating up equipment, they selected one mystery dry bag with 12 base ingredients and had an open pantry.

Each team prepared and cooked an entrée, a main and a dessert. Criteria used in judging included taste, difficulty, teamwork, creativity and presentation. Judges decision was final however bribery could be considered.

Each bag contained one of the following: dried mince beef, dried mince chicken, dried mince lamb, canned fish, eggplant.

The bag also contained mushrooms, onion, tomato,, capsicum, zucchini, UHT cream, tomato paste, Deb potato, egg, dried apricots, dried

apple, raisins.

The pantry contained things you would have in your kit bag when on an extended trip, pasta, rice, kidney beans, oil, flour, herbs and seasoning.

Team Barry — Deb and Terry Barry

Team Barry were hot contenders, producing three excellent dishes, Marinated Mushrooms, Moroccan Chicken and Stir Fried Veggies with Moroccan Rice and Apricot Dumpling and Cream. They demonstrated excellent teamwork and trangia cooking skills, Terry has had a lot of practice, and Deb must be complimented on her great knife skills.



Team Barry



Moracan Chicken, Vegies and Rice

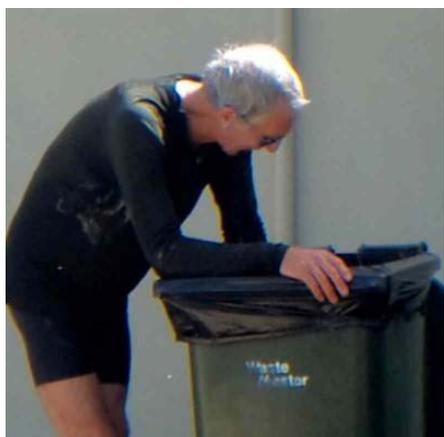
Team Two Beaut — Tina Evertze and Bill Robinson.



Team Two Beaut



The master at work



Looking for something? — His excuse was he had thrown out his beloved crockery with his disposable dishes.

Innovation with names of dishes and plate garnish had the Two Beauts up there in the competition however we were a bit worried about some of the ingredients as Bill had been spotted scavenging in the wheelie bin! He had an excuse but we didn't accept it. Native grasses and flowers were used as decoration for Scrambled Eggs, Bloody Miracle (main) and Mount Feathertop Special (dessert). The team was also hampered by a serious nappy change interruption. But Tina sprinted back to the kitchen to continue the challenge!



Bloody Miracle



Mount Feathertop Surprise

Team Chewie Chewie — Denis and May Chew

Denis and May were very efficient in producing well cooked imaginative dishes. Denis quietly worked away

with May making all the noise and organising things . . . including the judges!



Veg Croquettes

Vegetable Croquettes, very tasty Vegetarian Pasta and delicious Apple Delight with Coconut Cream were their dishes. Yum Yum.



Vegetarian Pasta



Apple Delight and Coconut Cream

Team TASA — Tom, Alex, Samuel and Arieta (ages ranging from 3 to 12 years, supervised by Safina)



Team TASA ...



Concentration! ... (Team TASA continued)

These youngsters were truly an inspiration! They demonstrated decision making, teamwork, time management and delegation to create amazing food with artistic presentation. Look out if they are in the competition next year!

Their menu consisted of Salmon Croquettes, Pasta and Meat Balls, and Apricot Rice Pudding. All dishes were

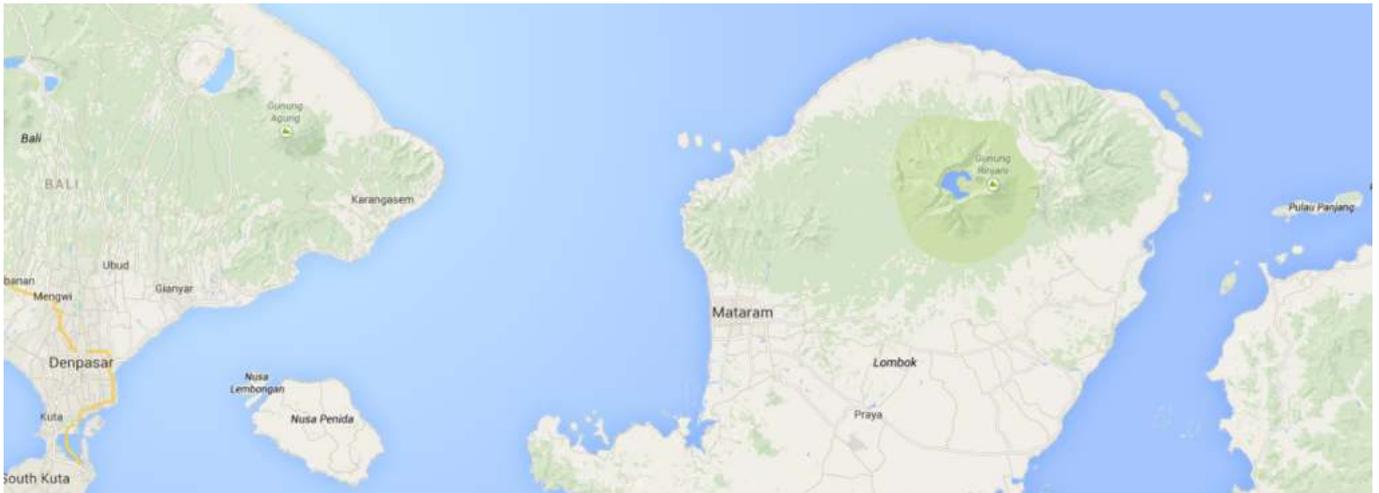
artistically and colourfully presented with edible garnish. Three year old Samuel prepared the dessert almost single handed. His diligence was great to watch.

Judgment

After lengthy deliberation the judges awarded Team Chew Chew as this years winners and Team Barry runners up. Both received on-line gift vouchers from Rohan Klopfer East Coast Kayaking (<http://www.kayakshopaustralia.com.au/>). Team TASA received a cash prize as special commendation, although Samuel wanted real money instead of a note!

The judges would again like to thank Neil Brenton for organising the challenge, the contestants for competing and producing some amazing dishes. May believes she has won the right to judge next years challenge!





Lombok Island, East of Bali — Source: Google Earth

Grant Kelly

A Slow Paddle in Lombok, Indonesia

In 2009, I celebrated my 50th birthday by purchasing a folding kayak and undertaking a long overdue trip to Mauritius — a place I had always wanted to visit.

The poor quality and high cost of rental kayaks in Mauritius — \$50 a day for a sit on top kayak — certainly convinced me that a folding kayak was the way to go.

Having enjoyed Mauritius, I started looking for other places to go — day dreaming of paddling some exotic location in Papua New Guinea, Vanuatu or Indonesia.

And armchair exploration is easy with the internet. That's how I first came across the AdventureLombok website.

At the end of a paddle from Woolley's Beach in mid-2010, I happened to mention an idea about paddling in Lombok, which attracted an immediate response from Mick S., who had been there previously and was eager to go back. Later on, Brian R. joined the crew, although he was also committed to a paddle of Bass Strait in early 2011.

Planning started in earnest and Rob Smith from AdventureLombok helped with the initial questions of what, when and how. He referred us to his business partner in Lombok,

Man, who provided expert advice on locations and accommodation, and later was great value with logistics on the ground. It's hard to get tide charts for Indonesia, so we relied on Bali tide charts, available through surfing websites, which were reasonably accurate.

Lombok Island is only a short flight from Bali and it offers plenty of paddling options for sea kayaking. Being close to the equator, it's wet, hot and steamy. So dehydration is a real issue, but bottled water is cheap and readily available.

By late May we were ready to go. On 28 May 2011, Mick, Brian and I flew to Lombok — via Bali — to spend 10 days paddling and snorkelling our way around the northern Gili islands and down south amongst the remote islands of Sekotong Bay.

While I had my duct tape confiscated by an enthusiastic security guard at Tullamarine, and Mick wasn't allowed to board with a hydraulic jack in his carry-on bag, we still managed to navigate our way through airport security in both Australia and Indonesia.

We finally arrived that night at the Maskot Cottages in Senggigi, the main tourist town in Lombok, and quickly set about acclimatising to the

hot spicy food and cold beer.

Early next morning we assembled our boats, much to the amusement and amazement of the hotel staff, and left mid-morning to paddle the 20 kms to Gili Meno. We followed the coastline north, and were soon hot and sweaty, paddling past towering cliffs and small bays. Along the way, we were looking for a place to have lunch, but the resorts soon gave way to jungle and the occasional village.

We constantly saw fish leaping out of the water, skimming the surface for several hundred metres before disappearing once again into the deep blue sea. In all directions, the sea was calm and the water a deep aqua colour — a most inviting sight on a hot day.

After a couple of hours, we decided to land in a wide bay with some buildings set amongst the palm trees — hoping to find lunch. As we got closer, we found the black sandy beach to be crowded with locals enjoying the sunshine, heaps of kids playing soccer or swimming, and a number of fishing boats pulled up on the beach.

Talk about being out of place — three hungry Aussie paddlers standing on a beach in rural Lombok. After providing the entertainment with our strange boats and clothing, we

consumed our chilli peanuts, potato chips, cokes, had a quick swim, and then paddled on towards the anticipated paradise of Gili Meno.

On reaching Gili Meno, we immediately staggered straight to the nearest beach café to order beers and Nasi Goreng. Once sated, we paddled the remaining 500 metres to our beachfront digs. Chill out, don't worry!

The next couple of days were spent cruising the three Gili islands — Meno, Air and Trawangan — living in basic bungalows — some better than others. We strolled around the islands, paddled and swam in crystal clear waters. While the sea was full of many different types of fish, the coral was often damaged and not as good as that found on the GBR. With no apparent predators, the chooks and cats wandered freely.

The Gili islands abound with places to eat, drink, sleep and be merry. And lots of people were making merry till the early hours on Gili T, with an abundance of magic mushrooms and other substances readily available.

After three days roaming the islands, we reluctantly left Gili T to paddle back to Senggigi, stopping along the way on a deserted, steep beach to have lunch. Travelling in the north, we often saw fishing boats, buildings and people only from a distance.

Arriving back at Senggigi, we approached the beach over what looked to be a becalmed reef break, but suddenly we heard the roar of surf coming from behind, and then also from the ocean side. Although we were paddling line abreast, we all managed to brace and surf the converging waves, safely crossing the shallow reef to the beach. Phew!

After this episode, we often saw at different places along the way, a single wave appear out of an otherwise flat sea, break and disappear, only to

reappear again minutes later.

The next morning we took our sampan ride down south — to Sekotong Bay. The local boats have narrow hulls supported by bamboo outriggers, powered by well used outboards. However, we managed to pile all our kayaks, gear and selves aboard. Brian sat atop the petrol tank while Mick and I sat forward.

We motored our way past the ugly, industrial parts of Lombok towards the islands in the haze. At sea, we passed many fishing boats sailing this way and that. After about 90 minutes, the islands started to reveal themselves and we soon arrived at Gili Gede, and the forgettable Secret Island Resort.

Following a late lunch, we paddled around the island, passing villages and pearl farms, responding to the friendly waves of local fishermen, taking a pleasant two hours to enjoy the serenity of the area. We arrived back in time to hear the melodic, dutiful call to prayers — a ritual of daily life at dawn, midday and dusk, all over Indonesia.

The contrast between the two areas was stark: the Gili islands are vibrant and teeming with tourists; while Sekotong Bay — dotted with 12 small islands — was remote, beautiful and infrequently visited by tourists, let alone paddlers. But this too will slowly change, with high expectations that the new international airport will increase tourism, and allow Lombok to finally compete with Bali.

Following a good night's sleep, playing with the sea water shower and toilet, the usual breakfast of banana pancakes and a cup of tea, we left Gili Gede for Gili Nanggu. Along the way, we stopped on a beautiful little island called Gili, deserted except for a family collecting wood, where we snorkelled, had lunch, and then paddled away.

It was getting pretty hot by the

time we reached Gili Nanggu, about 15 kms from Gili Gede. And we weren't sure we had the right island (the maps aren't that good, but, hey, it's an adventure), until the moored boats and the beach bungalows came into view.

God, it was hot! But this was heaven — bungalows right on the beach, with verandas to store our kayaks under. And we were the only guests staying on Gili Nanggu at the time; all the other tourists were day trippers from the nearby mainland resorts, who disappeared in the late afternoon. So we had the dining area pretty much to ourselves.



A slow paddle ...

So that was Lombok. Yes, I would certainly do it again, but I would spend more time down south. The people were friendly, there were no security issues, and we had a ball paddling, swimming and feasting. But, then, again what about Vanuatu, Sabah or Papua New Guinea?

Addendum Dec 2014

By the way, Bill Z. and I are going to Thailand in February 2015 to paddle. So the paddling wanderlust continues.





Crystal clear waters on the inside of the reef

Rohan Klopfer

Ningaloo Reef, West Australia

Edited reprint. Source: R Klopfer. Trip Report — Ningaloo Reef. The Kayak Shop Blog. Posted 26 Oct 2014. <http://blog.kayakshopaustralia.com.au/2014/10/trip-report-sea-kayak-ningaloo-reef.html>. Accessed 18 Jan 2015. All photos by East Coast Kayaking.

It all started with a random comment over a quiet drink: “how about we paddle Ningaloo this Easter expedition?”

Over the last few years we had been heading off on paddling reconnaissance trips around the world at this time, with the intention of developing a list of 5 to 10 great paddling destinations, which we would then bring to the public. Jervis Bay, Indonesia, Alaska, Vancouver and South West Tasmania had all been ticked. Ningaloo Reef, in Western Australia, was next on our list.

The response from the team was an agreeable nod, although no-one really knew where it was, how to get there, how much it would cost or any-

thing else about the place. Some research was necessary.

How good is Google? Damn good! A couple of quick searches, some detailed study of Google Earth (about 2 minutes), a phone call to mate who works somewhere in WA and we were in business. It was distinctly possible. In fact, better than possible, it was a goer.

The tipping point was booking flights — to get to Exmouth, the launching place for Ningaloo Reef, you have to fly via Perth, and then to Learmonth airport, which is actually a RAAF base. Our plan was to go before WA School Holidays, which, thankfully, start a week after Victorian holidays. This would allow some advance booking on flights and some good connections at a fairly decent price. The good old flying Kangaroo was still flying, despite its Scottish leaders attempts to cut out all unnecessary luxuries (food, water, fuel, pilots). So, we made the commitment and booked flights. Respective partners agreed that 1 week would be

enough to do and see all we had to — 2 days of travel left 5 days of paddling. Perfect.

It was at this stage that I twigged to the fact we would need some boats to paddle. “Roh — what about kayaks, won’t we need to get some for a paddling trip?”. Of course, Roh had it sorted — “Traks Byrnesy, Traks, all under control”.

There is no capacity to hire sea kayaks at Exmouth, and there is very limited commercial tours operating in the area. You really have to bring your own sea kayak (stay tuned, as East-CoastKayaking are in discussions with a number of kayak providers in order to avoid the need to pack your own boat!). The TRAK was built (well, we did the assembling) for this type of adventure.

It was at this stage that our travelling party went from 3 to 2...yep, the Sage had to pull out due to family reasons. How would we cope without his wisdom? Who would sort out the plan, liaise with the grey nomads and ensure we were in bed a reasonable

hour? We were worried, but decided to go ahead without him.

A few planning meetings later we had worked out the basics: accommodation in Exmouth in order to buy supplies and get organized, a hire car to get us to the Reef and some permits for camping along the way.

Ningaloo Reef is actually a Marine Park and the land abutting it is the Cape Range National Park. Only some campsites can be booked, and it is quite a complicated system, with limited numbers and permits required. Free camping is not permitted.

Departure date loomed like a Metro train out of the City Loop, in a whirlwind of air and noise, and we had the Traks packed, excess luggage booked, camp gear stowed and were on City Link before you could say "I've spotted a whale shark".



Departing — all packed up!

The flight into Learmonth airport gave us a good view of Exmouth Gulf, the area we were NOT paddling. Thanks Qantas (although it did look interesting ... 2015 maybe?). Our extensive research didn't let us down and the temperature was an expected warm 32 degrees, but thankfully without too much humidity. The drive into Exmouth from the airport, approximately 30 minutes, had Cape Range on our left hand side. We had yet to sight Ningaloo Reef and our paddling destination.

We had the afternoon to get organised; buy food, camping fuel, wa-

ter and other necessary supplies for 5 days. Exmouth, a town of about 2200, was able to cater to our needs and we were ready. Well sort of. The kayaks were not out of the bags yet and we still hadn't sighted the infamous Reef.

The next morning we were off; heading north out of Exmouth and around the tip of the Gulf, stopping at the first opportunity, to walk up the sand dunes and sight the clear, aqua blue waters of the Indian Ocean and Ningaloo Reef. We were not disappointed. The water looked amazing; we could see the waves breaking on the reef, about 1km off shore, and the colours of the water closer to shore were simply stunning. It was a taste of what would come over the next few days.

Our plan was to make water drops off at the various camp sites along the way. One of the many logistical challenges when paddling Ningaloo and Cape Range is access to fresh water. There is no water in the park at all, and whilst the TRAKs could hold a reasonable amount of gear, they would not be able to hold enough water for an extended journey in the hot conditions.

Ningaloo Reef is tailor-made for sea kayaking. If you were to sit down with pen and paper, and pretend you were back in Year 7 Geography making sketch maps, you could not devise a better place for paddling than what mother nature has dished up. Our 'put in' point was Yardie Creek, the southern most point of the Park accessible by conventional vehicle. The prevailing winds and currents would help us on our way North to our eventual pull out point at Tantabiddi boat ramp. That was the plan anyway.

The good people at Yardie Homestead caravan park dropped us off, with our unfolded kayaks, our water and other supplies. As the car drove off an eerie silence descended, broken only by the waves pounding the reef in the distance. We looked at each other and laughed. It was finally happening.

Trak assembly took a little longer

than usual in the midday heat, but they were soon assembled and ready for a trial run up Yardie Creek, an impressive gorge of red ochre coloured cliffs, with some sheer faces and pebble beaches. The 2 km paddle was quite spectacular, with sea eagles and kangaroos being spotted along the way.



Magnificent coloured cliffs at Yardie Creek



Setting out into Ningaloo Lagoon

We then loaded the Traks at the ocean's edge and pushed off, into the Ningaloo Lagoon.

Ningaloo Reef is a fringing reef stretching over 250 kilometres along the WA coast. It is the longest fringing reef in the world, and we were paddling a small section (about 50kms). Various sections of the reef are quite close to shore, whilst other areas can be a couple of kilometres from the coast. We were effectively paddling Ningaloo Lagoon, a water

way protected from the Indian Ocean by the coral reef. Having heard stories of tiger sharks, manta rays, turtles and other marine life we were excited by the possibility of spotting some. We didn't have long to wait.

"Mate — is that a shark?" Yep, zipping through the water under the bow of my kayak was a little bronze whaler shark (about 3 feet long). We had been on the water for 10 minutes! He stayed with us for the next kilometer or so, following along and occasionally coming up close for a better look. We paddled a bit closer to shore.



Turquoise Beach

Sections of Ningaloo Marine Park are sanctuary zones, where no fishing is allowed. It was in these zones, unsurprisingly, we saw the most marine life: too many turtles to count, some as big as dinner tables, numerous reef sharks, sting rays, a small pod of dolphins and a wide variety of reef fish. Bait fish were constantly leaping in front of us, scared of being consumed by the great white and yellow TRAK.

After a wonderful 20 kilometres of paddling we made our camp site, extremely pleased with our first day on the Reef. After setting up the tent and picking up our water from the Camp Site Host, we settled down to watch

the wonderful sunset over the Indian Ocean. It had been an amazing day.



Ningaloo sunset

The next few days of paddling proved to be some of the best sea kayaking both Rohan and I have ever completed. As our food stocks dwindled we supplemented it with fish easily caught, either by trolling while paddling or with bait from shore. When the wind got up and we decided against pushing into it, we beached the kayaks and donned snorkeling gear, completing some epic snorkels out to the breaking waves over some amazing coral. The diversity of the reef fish constantly surprised us, from the tiny clown fish to the enormous groper, they were spotted with equal amounts of excitement. The cool nights under the clear skies, with a full moon, proved to be the perfect time to reflect on the day's encounters.

The paddle leg was over far too soon, but we needed one more day for our bonus activity: swimming with Whale Sharks. The Whale Shark is not a mammal, but a fish and is considered the biggest fish in the ocean. They are a protected species in Australia and migrate to Ningaloo Reef to feed on the krill-rich waters off

the coast. Each year their numbers are increasing in this area, with no one really knowing why. Perhaps, as Roh said, "it is because they are loved here".

Predominantly plankton feeders, they are harmless to humans and spend a lot of time near the surface. Initially sceptical of the numerous tourist operators claiming 100% success rates, we booked with the highly recommended Kings Tours. Again, Ningaloo did not disappoint and we had a most memorable day with Captain Bill and his crew.

The first time we 'dropped' into the water no-one really knew what to expect. Floating around in the deep blue of the Indian Ocean, with our guide waving her arms and saying "put your face in the water" it was all a little surreal. Compliantly, and with a knowing smile that I wouldn't see anything I lowered my facemask and peered into the distance. And there it was! It was MASSIVE and coming straight at me. It really was like a spaceship on Star Trek; gliding effortlessly through the water, with its mouth open and one eye on the side of its head staring at me in a strangely trusting yet vulnerable way. I just hung there, in awe at this magnificent creature which graciously allowed us mere mortals to briefly share its natural environment.

We spent the next 3 hours 'dropping' into the ocean and swimming with numerous Whale Sharks. I was no longer skeptical of both the operators and the process, as they followed strict guidelines to ensure we didn't upset the shark. To conclude our day we came back inside the reef, anchoring off a coral bommie and doing some more wonderful snorkeling. It was the perfect way to conclude an outstanding week of sea kayaking.

■



Our last kayak camping tour of Scotland's west?

David Golightly & Stuart Cunningham

Arisaig to Loch Nevis, Scotland's West Coast

Story and pictures by David Golightly (Victorian Sea Kayak Club, Melbourne) and Stuart Cunningham (Claytons Sea Kayak Club, Brisbane).

We were indeed fortunate when 2014 loomed as another opportunity to again explore the west coast of Scotland using the two Northshore Atlantic sea kayaks we store near Loch Lomond.



Using the two Northshore Atlantic sea kayaks

Previous trips we have undertaken in recent years included an attempt to paddle the coast of Mull, as well as more successful trips on Skye and The Outer Hebrides.

Following our aborted and disappointing experience a couple of years earlier when we inadvertently locked ourselves into a single week in an otherwise busy holiday in Europe, only to find ourselves weather-bound on the south coast of Mull as numerous Atlantic low pressure systems chased each other eastwards towards the exposed coast of Scotland — we were determined not to be caught out again!

This time our respective travel programmes showed a sensible month long period of flexibility which we both agreed would be kept free to allow a quick decision when a suitable weather window was found and it came earlier than anticipated, albeit not an entirely ideal one as was later to be shown.

A word of caution

Habitually we undertake a great deal

of planning before we leave Australia, Stuart in particular has in recent years taken over this role, so by now and in addition to our kayaks, paddles, mobile electric bilge pump, PFD's and spray skirts, we have a fair bit of gear already stored in the UK. This includes wetsuits, kayak trolley, Trangia etc etc. Tents, eating kit and sleeping gear are either owned or borrowed from adventurous relatives.

A word of caution to VSKC adventurers accustomed to reliance on methylated spirits as a cooking fuel – its both hard to come by and expensive in Scotland. We have converted to gas and believe it to be more economical for sea kayak camping in Scottish waters.

To date we aren't entirely self-sufficient over there so it does create a packing conundrum when undertaking trips to Europe with its competing space and weight requirements limited by airline rules. Various bits of thermal gear, Cags, safety gear etc take up space after all.

Fortunately Scotland's west coast does have plenty of options for food

and drink so apart from making up the usual menu's and buying most of the consumables in major supermarkets before we set off from our respective bases in Scotland, we always have the top-up options available in almost every highland village.

A major change however since our 1960's adventure days has been the suitability of local mountain burns (creeks) for fresh water, this practice is no longer recommended as safe by the health authorities.

On the subject of personal health, the explosion in wild deer numbers in Scotland has brought with it a significant risk of picking up a tick and with it a risk of contracting Lyme's disease. As a result an essential piece of kit is a special tick removal tool, they are available in outdoor shops.

In choosing this region for your overseas paddle, one great advantage you have is the popularity and the development of sea kayaking that has taken place since the late 1960's. The result is an extensive array of on-line resources and personal blogs from which much information can be gleaned. In addition a huge quantity of specialist books by noted coaches such as Gordon Brown as well as the 'The Scottish Sea Kayak Trail', a book penned by well known paddler Simon Willis are now available. Dr Douglas Wilcox and his paddling blog is another fantastic source of information useful to anyone planning to paddle in these waters.

Sea kayakers planning to explore these waters enjoy the quality of British Ordnance Survey Maps they are really excellent. Both 1:50,000 and 1:25,000 are readily available both in hard copy and in digital format (the later being somewhat pricy however). It is generally thought that a map is more useful than a Marine Chart unless one is paddling significant tidal race areas and need special stream flow velocity data. Hard copy maps (at least of the local area) can be purchased even in tiny Post Office and general store shops in remote areas, although if you are seeking a wider selection you will need to shop

in larger towns.

The good guys won

Before leaving the subject of general planning, mention should also be made to what in Scotland has been a major breakthrough for paddlers, thanks to a man called Clive Freshwater who runs a water sports business near Aviemore called Lochinsh Canoeing and Sailing School. In the formative years of his business some forty years ago, Clive was threatened by a legal writ seeking to bar him and all paddlers from the salmon rivers prevalent in Scotland – Clive chose to fight and after a four year battle which went all the way to the House of Lords. The good guys won the fight!

The result, after much legislative iteration over the years, is that in Scotland at least, access to waterways is enshrined in legislation referred to as The Scottish Outdoor Access Code, anyone planning a sea kayak trip should make themselves aware of where visitors can or can't access.

So once more we had a paddling plan, our target in the northern summer of 2014 was the Arisaig region on Scotland's west facing and rugged coast. Arisaig is located north of Britain's most westerly land – Ardnurchan Point and is a popular choice for paddlers in the UK.

Glenug Inn

Anyone who reads the British Sea Kayaking Magazine Ocean Paddler will have no doubt come across the name of Glenug Inn, a well known hostelry facing north across the Sound of Arisaig with fantastic access to west coast paddling routes, so after much deliberation over other options we decided this suited our needs best.

Unexpectedly a possible weather window popped up in June and nervous of delaying until July we elected to go. Stuart picked David up at his home base and quickly headed north

to the selected launch site. Our plan was to stay the night and use the facilities to sort out our gear and prepare for a launch the next day into the Sound of Arisaig.

It's a long but lovely 400 km drive through often wild countryside to get from Edinburgh to Arisaig and we took full advantage of sight-seeing en-route, particularly as we traversed Glen Coe, an area we had often climbed in as relative youngsters. Although Stuart in his capacity of mountain trekker still manages to get up numerous peaks while he is in Scotland, or indeed the Himalaya! David on the other hand — well that's another story.

Five or six hours after setting off we arrived at Glenug Inn, we parked the car and set out on foot to explore the loch side looking for a launch site that suited our needs. Firstly we looked at an easy site on a sandy beach to the west of the Inn however eventually we elected to use the rather rough grassy, rocky and muddy site almost directly across from Glenug (it would be better at high tide!). Our decision was based on convenience and that fact that we had with us Mark 1 of the Stuart Cunningham designed stainless steel collapsible and totally encapsulated trolley!



Rather rough grassy, rocky and muddy

We had agreed a 'stretch target' plan involving getting out to the offshore islands of Rhum and Eigg if not also Muck as well, which along with

Canna are collectively known in Scotland as “The Sma Isles”. A return to these islands would take us both back to a sea kayak trip we completed in our early twenties — shouldn’t be a problem really!

In reality we knew that to get the weather we needed to venture off-shore would not just be lucky, it would be extraordinary, as whilst not involving big distances the journey would often be quite exposed to the open Atlantic coast.

Firstly however we focused on the initial plan which was making our way north through the collection of lochs which branch off the Sound of Arisaig, so after a successful launch and following a very comfortable night at Glenuig Inn we firstly headed east into Lochailort in an attempt to again get familiar with our boats and with the local waters.

After we were comfortable we returned into the Sound and contoured the coast in a generally northern direction aiming to cross the entrance to Loch Nam Uamh. Many of the Lochs in this region have either full Gaelic names or at least names derived from the Gaelic and somewhat anglicised over the years.

Arriving due west of the Ardnish Peninsula we struck out for the northern shore of the loch and the Borrodale Islands where we landed for a break. After relaunching and heading west we knew we were both back into territory we had paddled in 1968 and we had targeted a particularly lovely sandy cove for a campsite that night. Unfortunately in the confused masses of islands and outcrops we stopped too soon and missed a revisit to where we had been weatherbound for two days and nights over forty years earlier,

Nevertheless we found another great site on Rubh Arisaig where we quickly set up our tents, tarp etc and settled down to prepare for dinner.



Another great site on Rubh Arisaig

Weather forecast and communications

The weather on the West Coast of Scotland changes rapidly, so being able to access good weather forecasts is essential for safe paddling. After our experiences on Mull, where we could not get mobile reception, and hence forecast, we put a lot of thought into how we could best access forecasts, this time around. After looking at the coverage maps of service providers, for 2G and 3G, and we decided that the EE group provided some cover in the areas we hoped to visit. We decided on a two-pronged attack, one using a mobile phone with remote signal access ability, which had an RF jack to take an external antenna.

The phone we chose was an unlocked ZTE T96, which connected to a 9dbi magnetic based antenna. The external antenna increased the signal by two bars. With this phone we were able to contact family down south and get the latest weather forecast, when a signal was available.

Of course the use of the Internet has revolutionised the way we can view weather forecasts. We sought out the best websites and they looked superb for our needs, but how to get access to them in the wild? We came up with an iPad2 linked to an unlocked Huawei E5332 mobile hub, with an EE SIM card. The hub could take an external antenna and worked

much as a mobile phone but generated a Wi-Fi signal, which allowed the iPad to access the Internet. This system worked very well, although for some reason the external antenna did not work with the hub. We were fortunate in Arisaig as there was a mobile phone tower on the hills within eyesight of our camp. We charged all our devices using a 12V battery and if necessary a solar panel.

The chief benefit of the iPad is that you can take an image of the screen and so keep the forecasts for later viewing. This proved a real advantage when we paddled into really remote areas where there was no signal. The other advantage is that you can photograph any printed weather forecasts available locally.

Using these systems we were able to plan daily to suit the weather conditions, whether it was to wait and have a lay day, or go for it if the later weather forecast was poorer.

The websites we used included:

- windfinder.com;
- theweatheroutlook.com;
- netweather.tv;
- metoffice.gov.uk;
- bbc.com;
- myweather2.com;
- weatheronline.co.uk.

The website, windfinder, is particularly useful to paddlers in that it shows likely wind strengths over time in map form.

Nothing but sea fog

Careful study of the weather fronts identified what we thought would be a possible opportunity the next day to achieve our ambition of a trip out to the ‘Sma Isles’ however it would not be until later in the day that the weather may be suitable so we agreed to wait until after lunch to set off.

This we did and by late afternoon we were at the outer extremity of the Sound of Arisaig only to be disappointed when we looked west out towards the offshore islands — we could see nothing except a sea fog or mist which obliterated everything, the fog also brought a chill breeze with it

and this along with the exposure at the headland made the decision easy – we agreed not to risk it and quickly adopted Plan B.

Almost immediately we missed the semi-hidden narrow entrance into Loch Nan Ceall via the South Channel and found ourselves too far north. Realising our error we quickly backtracked and began an exploration of these obstacle-strewn waterways, there are islets and sandbanks everywhere, some of which are below high tide level and therefore unsuitable for camping. We then spent quite some time in vain trying to locate a landing site and camp location only to be left wondering why the local paddlers don't seem to have any difficulty camping in this area.

Giving up in frustration we determined to head further north towards some commercial campsite options that Stuart had identified in his planning, so we set course for the North Channel of Loch Nan Ceall and an escape back into more open waters. By now it was early evening it was overcast and getting cooler.

Low tide unfortunately prevented us to take the shorter and less exposed route around the island of Eilean Ighe, rounding the point to the west of the island was a bit lumpy and bumpy but soon we were again heading east towards the mainland and hopefully a campsite and warm clothing.

Soon we spotted the small entrance to a bay where we could see caravans parked high above the beach so Stuart landed and headed for a cottage to seek permission to camp. As it turned out it took some time to locate the owner and by the time Stuart returned David found himself to be quite chilled so the pair lost no time in following the caretakers directions around yet another headland and into a bay which was also part of the same campsite.

Camp was quickly set up and hot showers taken followed by some medicinal wine to accompany dinner. Despite aborting our plan to get out to Rhum and Eigg neither of us were

overly disappointed. We had enjoyed our day on the water, found it exciting and challenging and we were after all safe and snug in camp – what more could one want?

Going for Loch Nevis

After the travails of the previous day we agreed to declare a day in camp, we needed an opportunity to settle down and get prepared for plan B. So we had a lovely relaxing day during which we had an opportunity to chat to three other paddlers who only met annually in Scotland for a paddling trip (they were English). They decided to spend the day going on the inland route into Loch Nam Uamh for a planned lunch in the Arisaig pub.



Good weather the following day encouraged us ...

Interestingly this area has a strong connection with Bonnie Prince Charlie and the failed Jacobite Rebellion of 1745. Arisaig marks to spot where not only young Prince arrived from exile in France to call highlanders to arms in Rebellion, he also left from the same spot a year later after suffering a heavy defeat at Culloden. Thereafter began the forced exodus of highland clansmen to the new world countries of Canada and America. In a timeline comparison to our part of the world in Australia, some quarter of a century was yet to pass before Captain Cook's lookout sighted what became known as Point Hicks.

Good weather the following day encouraged us to explore the beautiful coast between our location and the major shipping port of Mallaig. So off we went again into relatively familiar waters as this was part of not only our 1968 route but also our 1971 tour when we had introduced a dozen young Venture Scouts to Sea kayaking. That said neither of us could really remember much of the journey after all more than forty years had passed so pleasingly it was very much like new territory to both of us.

As a day paddle this has to be one of the best, beautiful beaches, lots of islands and skerries, fantastic views to the west and to Skye in the north, plus the entrance to Loch Morar, which statistically in fact is the deepest loch in Scotland not Loch Ness as is popularly the belief.



... to explore the beautiful coast between our location and the major shipping port of Mallaig

We meandered our way to Mallaig, a port we were familiar with and which during the 1960's was credited with being the busiest herring fishing harbour in all of Europe. An interesting point to make here is also the opportunity for visitors to this area to travel by train from Glasgow on what is known as 'The West Highland Line', a 270 km journey through scenery so grand that the train journey in 2009 was voted as the most scenic in the world, ahead of much better known and longer journeys.

We landed in the inner harbour

and without changing into dry clothes (it was a glorious day) we marched up the ramp into the nearest restaurant for a treat of lunch. Replete from a feed of local fare we climbed back into our kayaks and continued our journey into Loch Nevis a loch which extends eastwards deep into the Knoydart region; quite possibly one of the most remote areas of Britain.

Progress was rapid and soon we turned east into the wide entrance to Loch Nevis a name it shares with Britain's highest mountain the nearby Ben Nevis — for good reason, as translated into English it means Loch of Heaven.

Its no coincidence that the next loch to the north is Loch Hourn or Loch of Hell — we weren't going there this time but we both recalled paddling deep into that particular loch in 1968 while en-route to Ratagan Youth Hostel.

Not long after commencing our eastwards journey into Loch Nevis we had our first encounter with on water paddlers, a group of visitors from the south who were themselves enjoying their first visit to this beautiful area. Continuing on we kept to the southern shore as we paddled deeper and deeper into the long loch. Soon after rounding Ardentigh Point we branched off into Tarbet Bay, which we had marked as an alternative possible campsite. It's a lovely wee bay but we elected to continue on, we were both keen to explore right to the end of the loch.

Sense of isolation

Continuing on presented the next obstacle, a narrowed entrance with an outgoing tide forcing us to battle for a while until the loch again widened, the vista to the east was constantly changing and the surrounding peaks loomed higher as we travelled deeper and deeper into Knoydart, the sense of isolation increased as soon the end of the loch appeared blocked by mountains.

Sure enough the loch petered out to a river mouth emptying into the

loch and we prepared to follow the advice we had been given about locating a campsite amongst all this water! We quickly realised that the advice had related to high tide conditions and we were experiencing the opposite effect. There was nothing for it, we decided to get out and wade up the shallow burn hauling our loaded kayaks behind us.

Soon enough we found a suitable site that we were confident would be above high tide level so we lost no time in setting up camp.

The feeling of isolation was amazing, the only sign of any other human habitation was a mountain bothy on the other side of the burn about two hundred metres from our camp. The surrounding mountains formed all but a complete ring except to the west where the loch stretched away into the distance.

Herd of sheep and deer grazed all around seeking nourishment in the intertidal zone as they followed the receding tide — a peaceful evening was assured.



A peaceful evening was assured

Launching the following day was a much easier task as we had an incoming tide to help us so it wasn't long before we were out of the burn and heading west back up the loch with a lunchtime destination of Inverie, a wee village on the north shore of the loch which was serviced by ferry from Mallaig. Fortunately the clement weather continued albeit it was a bit chilly as we battled against

the incoming tide through the constricted waters at the narrows.

We knew we were in for a big day as we were also planning to make camp close to the mouth of the loch, a location we really didn't know well at all. Free of the adverse tide we pushed on steadily and a few hours later we rounded the last headland blocking views of Inverie, soon we were ashore and seeking a treat for lunch to celebrate being back in 'civilisation'.

After finding the pub closed we settled for a lovely coffee shop on the lochside and soon we were enjoying a bowl of home made Scotch Broth — just what we needed. After lunch we wandered through the village while we watched with interest as the Mallaig ferry disgorged some tourists, there were quite a few serious walkers amongst them and after getting a bearing they quickly set-off for whatever target they had in mind for the day. We were not envious at all — it's much easier to carry camping gear in a kayak!

Back on the water and with the weather improving we continued our journey west around a large headland with an intriguing statue high above the loch — we never did find out what its significance was, we still had a way to go and access from kayak to the rock face was to say the least 'challenging'.

After some time we started to search in vain for a suitable campsite but every time we found a nice sandy bay we also found an established residence and not being inclined to seek permission to camp we pushed on until 'eureka' — a lovely little, deserted beach appeared with what looked like suitable camping areas behind. By now it was getting late and it was cooling down so we quickly set ourselves up for what was our final night under canvas.

Tonight or tomorrow we had a route finding decision to make, would we just get ourselves to Mallaig then catch the train and bus back to Glenuig to collect the car or ... ?

Happy-baccy

But to return to the beach, to our surprise our solitude was interrupted by the swish swish of what soon emerged as a young man swinging his machete as he made his way through the ferns and bush to the beach. Ignoring us completely he made for a huge dead tree and started hacking at it with his machete. It later transpired that he planned to make a fire on which we would cook dinner.

Recognising his difficulty we offered to share our already prepared but as yet unlit fire, he accepted gratefully and so began an interesting evenings discussion on all matters between two aging paddlers and this y-Gen youth from Leipzig in what our age group knew as East Germany.

The young man who oozed confidence regaled us with his vision of what he was going to do to right the worlds wrongs, when finally & in his view deservedly, he was voted into the Bundestag or German Parliament — we both struggled to maintain a serious face when following this discourse on his clean country ambitions courtesy his favourite interest — Greenpeace; when turning to us he calmly sought our approval to smoke some ‘happy-baccy’. We were so surprised at the polite request that neither of us replied and so began the only occasion after more than forty-five years of paddling where we knowingly shared the allegedly intoxicating smoky haze as it drifted towards us in the pristine environment of a highland loch side.

Interesting and impressively this young Leipzig man was close to completing a solo trek from Perthshire in central Scotland to the west coast while ignoring roads en-route, making his journey even more challenging was the fact that he was surviving on nothing but porridge which he cooked on a open fire — provided he could light one in the often damp con-

ditions, in fact he was amazed at how easily we managed to get an impressive blaze going so easily — clearly firefighters were not part of his meagre kit!

There was no sign of our young budding politician when we breakfasted and loaded our kayaks but he soon appeared in time to take the only picture we have of both of us on the trip. We wished him well as we said goodbye.

If it was good enough for Ewan who can argue

The forecast was good, the day dawned fine so the decision was made — we were going for ‘The Full Monty’, there was to be no shortcut to a train station for us, we were paddling all the way back to Genuig, we had a big day ahead of us!

What a day we had — one of the best we have ever experienced on Scotland’s west coast, the benign seas sparkled as we continued south constantly glancing westwards to Skye, Rhum, Eigg and Muck while marveling at the evolving views.

The writer Simon Willis notes in his book on the Scottish Sea Kayak Trial, that the actor Ewan McGregor when once asked what his favourite place in the world was — responded with ‘Camas an Daraich beach near Arisaig’, if it was good enough for Ewan who can argue.

Mallaig was quickly left astern as we retraced our steps back to the Sound of Arisaig, which after a final rest in the sun at Port nam Murrach beach the scene of our weathered-bound campsite in 1968, we headed straight across the wide Sound for Genuig. A few hours and thirty-five kilometres later, two weary old paddlers stepped ashore in the same bay at Genuig Inn we had departed from.

Our trip stats showed that we had been consistent with our usual expedition velocity of 5 km/hr over our

135 km journey; pleasingly our advancing years hadn’t slowed us down yet! Individually each day’s statistics were:

- Genuig to Rhu – 20km in 4 hrs.
- Rhu to Arisaig – 19.5km in 4 hrs.
- Arisaig to Loch Nevis – 36 km in 7 hrs.
- Loch Nevis to Sandaig – 23 km in 5 hrs.
- Sandaig to Genuig – 35 km in 7 hrs.

Would this be our last kayak camping tour of Scotland’s west — who knows, tomorrow is another day!



Route paddled (red line) — Illustration by SC



Area of paddle in context — Source: Google Earth



... you need to get out there!

David Golightly & Heather Torbet

Mull and Iona, Scotland's West Coast

All photos by the authors. Kayaks used: Northshore Atlantic.

Living on the vast continent of Australia makes an explanation difficult — believe it or not, it's a long way from Edinburgh where we had based ourselves in the northern summer of 2014, to Mull on Scotland's west coast, at least a half-day journey!

The bonus however is the scenic drive involved to get there, just imagine after Edinburgh, crossing the Firth of Forth and glancing East to the iconic Forth Rail Bridge, continuing onwards through historic Stirling and its links with Wallace and the Battle of Bannockburn. Then entering the gateway to the highlands by driving northwest to Crianlarich the scene of many 1960's climbing exploits!

Shortly after Crianlarich we branched left, resisting the drawcard of the longer but more scenic drive via Glen Coe to Oban our mainland ferry port destination. Instead

we swung west onto the A85 to pass Loch Awe and then Loch Etive which at low tide pours into the sea at that expert paddlers delight – “The Falls Of Lora”, a venue featured often by Justine Curgenvin in her “This is the Sea” DVD's which feature a number of recognised sea kayak coaches who have visited the VSKC to teach paddling techniques. One of those is the 2015 visiting sea kayak coach Nick Cunliffe.

It's not far from the mouth of Loch Etive and its junction with Loch Linnhe, to Oban a major seaport on Scotland's west coast. Oban is also a favourite jumping off point for many sea kayak options in this part of the world. Today however we were heading for the island of Mull which involved a short one hour ferry voyage to Craighure in the Sound of Mull.

Shortly after disembarking we headed south-east to another ferry port called Fionnphort which services ferry crossings to the Island of Iona the site of the famous Iona Abbey, the original home of St Columba the Irish

man who crossed to Scotland in the 6th Century to begin the Christian period in this part of Britain. Iona is the destination of choice for many pilgrims and historians interested in St Columba.



Visit to Iona Abbey

‘Tis a beautiful land, the land of the machair

We were headed for one of our favourite coastal campsites – Fid-

den Farm which is just a short distance south of Fionnphort and blessed with direct access to wonderful sandy beaches and views to the west. Generally campsites alongside beaches on Scotland's west coast have also another great advantage – its called 'machair' a combination of native grasses and wildflowers which bind tightly together to form a wonderfully soft carpet atop a free-draining sand & sea-shell underlayer, all resulting in a huge advantage for paddling campers in the often wet weather for which the Scottish West coast is renowned.



Camp site at Fidden Farm, note the 'machair'

John MacCodrum attempted to capture the wonder of this unique ground cover in his 18th Century Gaelic poem entitled 'Smeorach Chlann Domhnaill':

*'Tis a beautiful land, the land
of the machair,
the land of the smiling
coloured flowers,
the land of mares and stal-
lions and kine,
the land of good fortune which
shall never be blighted.*

It's wasn't long before we were setting up our beachside camp on such machair and immediately enjoying the vista over the skerries and islands to the west. Apart for our tent we erected a 'flysheet/tarp' system designed by paddling mate, Stuart Cunningham who applied all his hard-earned engineering design knowledge

to come up with something we were confident would withstand the winds of the west coast. Australian sea kayak campers consider a 'tarp' as an essential piece of kit but it's generally not a priority among our British colleagues, perhaps because of the failure to get one to remain in place for long!



At Fidden farm, sheltering in the 'engineering' tarp

Standard 'dress' for campers on the west coast is of course that great British footwear invention — 'Wellies'!

Essential kit along with warm gear and a waterproof. However the most important piece of kit is —yes, a 'midge-net', never leave home without one.

Our paddling plan involved a series of day outings around this area as well as land and sea exploration of Mull which with a coastline of nearly 500 km is Scotland's second largest island after Skye its neighbour to the north. The next day we were fortunate, as we were to be for most of the time we spent on Mull, to experience reasonable weather.

A gentle beginning

A gentle beginning in our Scottish based kayaks was the plan for day one, so after a successful launch from our nearby sandy beach and with Heather using her brand new "This-tle" themed greenland 'stick' paddle for the first time, we threaded our

way north towards Fionnphort and the coastline beyond.

With the great interest in Inuit related paddling within the VSKC, Heather had been introduced to this traditional style by club President Bob Fergie. Very soon David had been 'persuaded' to carve a 'stick' for the first time. The new paddle was then taken to Scotland with the intent of leaving it there for future use.

It was a beautiful day and it was really great to be back in a kayak in Scottish waters, our views to the west were of Iona. Soon after leaving Fionnphort behind us we found ourselves in the strangely named anchorage called the 'Bull Hole' where a number of cruising yachts were taking advantage of the sheltered position. We stayed around a while exploring the area before continuing north then east into the entrance to Loch Scridain and were rewarded with views over to Ben More which at just under 1000 metres is Mulls highest mountain and Scotland's only island located 'Munro'!

However with no suitable landing place in sight we backtracked to a small island and landed on a nice beach for lunch. Our views here were to the south and as we relaxed over lunch we contemplated the few days ahead in this picturesque area, indeed we felt most fortunate.

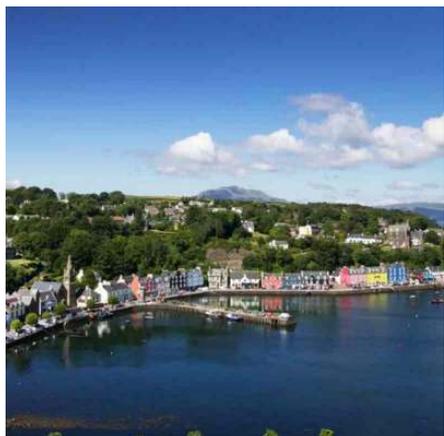


The 'Mull Race Fleet' at anchor in Bunessan

Back in camp that night we heard of the already underway round Mull Yacht Race and its overnight stop at

nearby Buinessan. Thinking that the 'fleet' would make a great sight as it lay at anchor we decided that this was not to be missed and indeed it did look good. We also discovered that a tradition of competing in the race was to attend the local dance in the village hall so off we went to join the sailors – unfortunately by this time the evening had wore on and the sailors began to make their way back to their various boats leaving us as the only visitors to the dance or 'Ceilidh' as its known in the Gaelic language. Not to be outdone we just joined in and enjoyed a very different evening among the local populace.

Famed for the legend of the 16th Century Spanish galleon



Tobermory, 'capital' of Mull

The anticipated inclement weather the next day forced a landward exploration of Mull, an island Heather hadn't really seen much of. So we headed for the island capital, Tobermory, the route to which traversed some great coastline and offered superb views. It's a long way on the round trip and we were both a bit weary when we finally arrived back at camp that day but we had really enjoyed our day, particularly colourful Tobermory famed for the legend of the 16th Century Spanish galleon reputed to be stuck in the deep mud in the harbour along with its cargo of gold bullion — numerous searches however have never found any trace –

akin to our own mahogany ship near Warrnambool perhaps?

Our elected destination the next day was a southward journey aimed at exploring the nearby island of Erraid.

A delightful paddle through the offshore islets and rock grottos, which are a constant feature of this area eventually brought us to the most lovely sheltered haven for cruising yachts imaginable, two of which had already moored for the night in the crystal clear (but very chilly) waters. Circling the yachts we continued anti-clockwise around the island until we were finally tracking east again and around the headlands and enclosed beaches along this exposed southerly facing coast.

Our journey would not be possible (for us anyway!) in anything but the benign conditions we had today, this allowed us to venture into cove after cove before choosing one to land and enjoy lunch while gazing south towards the outlying islands of Colonsay, Jura and Islay (of malt whisky distilling fame).



Jura visible on the horizon to the south

This was our first experience of views in this particular direction and we were not disappointed, with The Paps of Jura clearly visible across a blue sea; a total contrast to two years before this when David accompanied his old friend Stuart Cunningham, in an attempt to paddle as much of the coast of Mull as feasible were only to be thwarted by poor weather result-

ing in a hurried escape to Skye.

Today we were rewarded however and we had the place to ourselves, in fact during our entire time on Mull we only met one other sea kayak group, a delightful family from North Wales the husband of which still holds the sea kayaking record for the fastest trip around the Scottish Coast.



Lunch stop, south coast of Mull

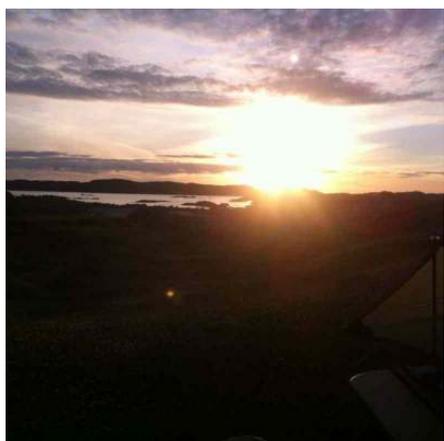


Exploring the cliff coast

After lunch we meandered back to our campsite via a diversion on the north coast of Erraid to try and find an explanation for what seemed to us strange goings-on that we had witnessed earlier. The mystery was solved later when we realised that the isolated village on the island had a direct link to the Iona Abbey Community working to support the Abbey. It is a popular destination for visitors seeking peace and solitude for a short period, while donating their time and

talents to maintaining the extensive properties under the control of this charitable trust.

In summer on Scotland's west coast, the sun doesn't set until approx. 10.30 pm! That makes for wonderful long sunny days and of course spectacular sunsets. So it was no surprise that long after dinner, campers sought out advantage points on the rocky high ground to maximise their opportunities to photograph the setting sun behind the island of Iona. Naturally we were planning to join them so armed with our wee chairs off we went in a scramble across the rocks to our selected spot, again more rewards which backed up the old adage 'if you want to experience extraordinary things, you need to get out there'!



Sunset from the campsite

Hebridean Overture

The following day we took the opportunity to travel north from Fionnphort by tour boat to the rocky basaltic island of Staffa which without doubt would make a fantastic destination for sea kayakers but we knew we were not up for it in current conditions and without more support.

Staffa, along with Giants Causeway in Ireland enjoys that unusual geological feature of hexagonal columnar basalt formation some of which can also be seen in Tasmania en-route to Port Arthur.

On Staffa the result of geology and the ravages of the sea have carved out

huge caverns including one named Fingal's Cave, which inspired German composer Felix Mendelssohn in 1830 to create the celebrated and popular 'Hebridean Overture', which he dedicated to the Crown Prince of Prussia.



Fingal's Cave



Sheltering Puffin on Staffa

All of this and more was explained to us by the boatman while en-route and soon we were on final approach to Staffa. The skipper nursed the craft into the narrow entrance to the sea cave, where high above the deck, we could clearly see the narrow path we were expected to negotiate later to enter the cave. Soon we swung east to round the rocky island and land at the jetty. Once ashore, we all headed off to experience not only Fingal's Cave, (which is a challenge to those with any vertigo inducing condition) but also to clamber along the cliff tops to enjoy the thrill of having native

Puffins land at our feet, in an effort to hide and shelter from marauding seagulls.

All too soon our time ashore was drawing to a close; we weren't leaving however without taking in the views to the west where over the closer Treshnish Isles, the larger islands of Coll and Tiree were clearly visible. Out to the north lay the islands of Gometra and Ulva both scenes of earlier journeys by sea kayak undertaken by David and Stuart in 2009.

Ulva of course features in Australian history as the birthplace of Lachlan Macquarrie the first Governor of New South Wales who earned the title 'Father of the Nation'.

Governor Macquarrie is interred alongside his wife and other members of his family in a custom designed crypt on mainland Mull. The crypt can be visited and indeed is partly cared for by the NSW National Trust. Unfortunately however the way to the crypt is made as difficult and uninviting as is possible; by a rather unfriendly neighbour who's property appears to interfere with the access path!

Back on board we headed south back to the ferry terminal at Fionnphort and a visit to the local pub – the only place we could find with any hope of access to Wi-Fi! Freshened by a local brew we wandered back to our car and Fidden Farm.

With its myriad of celtic crosses

The following day, our final day 'on-the-water', we again launched off our lovely beach which was all of ten metres away from the doorway of our engineered 'tarp' and soon we were threading our way through the near-shore skerries before striking north-west to the closest point on Iona.

The crossing safely completed we relaxed in the shelter of the eastern shore of Iona knowing that our planned destination of edging around the northern tip of the small island and onto the exposed west coast may not be possible in the expected conditions. Nevertheless we continued and

soon the ferry appeared as it made its way from Fionnphort with its boatload of visitors to the famous Iona Abbey. A sharp 'toot' from the skipper served as a reminder to keep out of the way as the ferry docked at the tiny jetty and soon after we landed on the beach for a short break.



Iona Abbey on the horizon

Two sea kayakers appeared and we soon realised it was the father and teenage son from the family we had met at our campsite. Later they explained that they had crept past our tent in the pre-dawn light to set out on the ambitious journey to Staffa and back and this was them on the way home after successfully getting not only to Staffa but also to paddle into the depths of Fingal's Cave, needless to say we were very envious indeed.

After a restart we continued north up the coast of Iona while keeping a weather eye on the increasing wind velocity; which by now was whipping

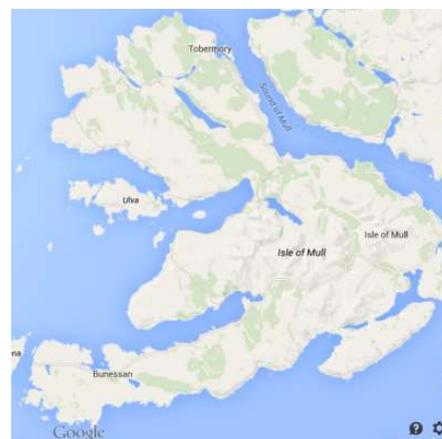
up the whitecaps on the Sound between Mull and our current position. Anyway, whilst knowing that eventually we were going to have to cross that very waterway to get back to camp, we edged our way to the top of the island with wonderful close-up views of the Abbey and its myriad of Celtic Crosses to our left. The decision not to go around the top to the Atlantic shore was not difficult – we had to be conservative in our situation, so we altered course to the east, squeezing between Iona and the offshore island of Eilean Annraundh before making for mainland Mull.

Fortunately without much difficulty we made shelter and landed once more for a break and a bite to eat. This part of the coast was indented with rocky gullies and formations so it proved an interesting place to contour by kayak.

Our route back to our camp again crossed the ferry track but this time it was in port and we soon slid past without incident. The best part of the day was still to come however as the rest of the journey involved a varied track in and out of bays and around skerries and other natural obstacles. We really enjoyed our times in locations such as these with plenty of marine life to keep it interesting as well as the constantly changing scenery as we made our way south.

We had indeed been fortunate with our time on Mull, little rain and generally nice summer weather, albeit we never ventured into the sea for a swim the entire time we were there!

The Isle of Mull is an international destination suitable for any VSKC paddler who wishes to experience paddling on the Scottish west coast, we highly recommend it.



Isle of Mull — Source: Google Earth



Isle of Mull on Scotland's West Coast (marked) — Source: Google Earth





A significant swath of coastline — Photo: NM

Nick Mulvaney

Have, Will Travel ... The Pemba Archipelago, Mozambique

It was only about two weeks after arriving in Cape Town in 2010 that I realised the African continent is big, actually bloody big. Although you'd think this would be apparent from general geography; you don't really need to look for it very hard. For us it was the flight time from Cape Town to Johannesburg, the hub of everything in sub-Saharan Africa. A casual 2hr flight time. Melbourne to Brissy. However on a map of Africa, it gets you relatively NO WHERE.

On top of this, a small-talk conversation with a new work colleague enlightened me to the distortion of the size of Africa on most maps due to the "Mercator projection". Not to bore you with the technical details (no offence to any of the VSKC's numerous cartographers ... ?) but basically the common map of Africa (and all other countries for that matter) is distorted due to the representation of a spherical surface onto a flat plane. The result is a relative underrepresentation

of the actual size of Africa due to its latitudinal expanse.

So here I was, having just empirically deduced all by myself that Africa is actually bloody big, when my work colleague drops the bombshell that it is actually BLOODY MASSIVE!! At first I thought my colleague was vying to migrate as a Bayside real estate agent, but it's apparently true (check out a great article in the Economist; <http://www.economist.com/blogs/dailychart/2010/11/cartography>). I was devastated.

During the prior planning of our working holiday, it was easy to get caught in the hyperactive whirlwind of travel planning that can only come from the mind's chemical imbalance as it processes the new reality of not having a job and no fixed address (both of these on my terms for a change!!). Some see this as the human body's mask for a panic attack occurring deep in our subconscious. Never mind that we were planning

on living at the very, very bottom of Africa (note — the very, very bottom is surprisingly still the very, very bottom regardless of the Mercator projection), this fact was conveniently overlooked with thoughts of endless trip possibilities through the continent; drinking coffee in Addis Ababa, soaking up high-life music in Accra, relaxing at a luxury bush resort fringing the Ngorongorong Crater, sloth spotting on Madagascar, horse back trekking in Lesotho ... a truly endless list.

Of course this is all possible with an endless stack of cash, which we really didn't have. More surprising was that we didn't have a whole stack of time either. What I also empirically deduced was that a holiday is somewhat different from a working holiday. Evidence collated at the two-week mark (around the time of the aforementioned bombshell) indicated that a working holiday as a professional at 30 is different to a working

holiday at 20; a causal link between sobriety, better clothes and much less actual free time to travel was observed.

So we decided to draft up the travel version of a float plan. We worked out the travel we could realistically do with the funds and time available (actually, nothing like a float plan, but just go with it). We were both adverse to the idea of enduring 13hr flights across the continent for a couple of days of holiday. For a coffee in Ethiopia? Scratched. High-life music in Ghana? This white man can't dance. Scratched. We settled on what we could do in Southern Africa. And it went from there.

Mozambique isn't a country that most Australians probably think of travelling to, if at all. For those that are at least aware of Mozambique as a country and not a cocktail, it's most likely remembered for the thirty-odd years civil war occurring on the back-end of almost four centuries of Portuguese colonial rule. Those not that interested in the geopolitical anarchy of a post-colonial Africa in the twentieth century may find it more interesting that the peri-peri sauce of the now ubiquitous Nando's restaurants is of Mozambican origins (put that one away for pub trivia!). This basically summed up my knowledge of the country.

Casual lunchtime web searches expanded this knowledge somewhat. A country of twenty four million people, neighbours South Africa, Swaziland, Zimbabwe, Malawi, Zambia and Tanzania, tropical climate, a significant swath of coastline adjacent the Mozambican Channel separating Madagascar from mainland Africa, and economically resource-based, with large offshore discoveries of natural gas. Its development stats are pretty depressing. Although high rates of growth have been achieved recently, it is still one of the poorest and most underdeveloped countries in the world.

Once on the ground in Cape Town, Mozambique started to have quite intriguing appeal. Although colonial-

ism clearly has its downsides, there was something sassy and enchanting about the fusion of Portuguese culture and Africa in this far-flung corner of the world. "Republica de Mocambique", now how can it not be cool? I put this appeal down to my naïve assumption that all Portuguese colonies resembled Carnival in Brazil, permanently. I soon learned that Mozambique had quite the appeal to vacationing South Africans, many of whom confirmed to me that it wasn't Carnival in perpetuity, far from it.

As we Melbournians take pride in overloading our cars and 4WDs with cheap outdoor gear and consciously choosing to battle our way hundreds of kilometers to the southern coast of NSW with screaming children AND/OR moody adolescents, South Africans do so to the beaches and islands of Mozambique. (Sadly, however, the Victorian journey lacks a militaristic border crossing where khaki clad officials are flanked by equally clad security personnel brandishing very used AK-47s and none-too-friendly demeanors. Imagine an African version of Che Guevara in Marxist guerilla get-up stamping passports, that's kinda what it's like. Could we not use one on the South Australian border I ask myself?).

However it was a stunning front cover to a local South African travel mag sighted as we passed through the checkout at our local supermarket on a bleak winter evening in Cape Town that shot Mozambique to the top of the travel "float plan", in the process blasting away the warm and fuzziness of the "intriguing appeal" mumbo jumbo.

It was a man. On a kayak. On the most stunning azure water flanked by white sand (not even an Aussie could turn his nose up at) and gently leaning palms rimming lush green foliage. I wouldn't let my deeply ingrained prejudice against plastic sit-on-top kayaks ruin this moment... against the unbelievably cold waters of the Atlantic lapping the Cape... this image looked like heaven (or the divine location of your chosen religion). It

was "Ilhas Quirimbas"... the Quirimbas Archipelago of Northern Mozambique.

Republica de Mocambique, I had to go.

The Quirimbas Archipelago consists of just over thirty islands of varying size scattered over 200kms, and are a short dhow (a traditional East African sail boat) journey off the coast of the Northern Mozambique province of Cabo Delgado, adjacent to the Tanzanian border. The region is remote as Africa goes and is very much off the beaten track for tourism. This remoteness has reigned its development to only a limited number of small luxury island beach lodges scattered throughout the larger islands. It is said that this stretch of coastline is the last remaining throughout East Africa that remains ecologically pristine.



Traditional African sailing boat — Photo: NM

The islands originally supported sparse fishing settlements, however the island's populations increased with the arrival of Arab traders in the 10th century. Fortified trading posts were built to ship slaves, gold and ivory back to the Arab world. It wasn't until the 16th century that the Portuguese arrived and established their own trading centers. Conflict ensued and the main trading post of the region shifted from the Arab Quirimbas Island to the Portuguese Ibo Island. Ibo became the main center of the archipelago, with the Por-

tuguese building three forts as the slave trade to French Mauritius & Reunion, and Brazil, became significant. Grand buildings were built to support the other activities necessary of a burgeoning colonial outpost. Activity continued on Ibo until the early 20th century, however a shift of the administration activities of the region from the island to the mainland signaled the slow demise of Ibo and its total abandonment as a trading center. As a result of the prosperity of Ibo, the island has a number of fine examples of Portuguese 19th and 20th century architecture. Although some have been restored to quaint guesthouses, the pastel colored buildings and fortes are slowly crumbling with time. With recent increase in tourism, the island is now known for its fine silversmiths.

Although not a listed UNESCO World Heritage Site, Ibo Island and the southern tract of the Quirimbas Archipelago are protected within the Quirimbas National Park, spanning some 7,500 square kilometers.

So the unfinished business of Africa and me is that our travels didn't extend as far as the Quirimbas Archipelago. We did make it to Mozambique and had a fantastic time. Our long extent of absurdly overloaded mini-bus trips took us from the capital Maputo north to the beach towns of Tofo and Vilanculos, less than a third of the way to Northern Mozambique. My fix of Portuguese-African fusion was satisfied by the capital city, Maputo; a large maze of crumbling colonial and socialist-inspired buildings, European-esque side walk cafes and the best coffee I had in Africa, within the intense hustle, bustle and organized chaos of a big African city.

Although not reaching it, the Quir-

imbas Archipelago is forever burned in my memory. Its remoteness and pristine condition would make an incredible canvas for an extended kayaking expedition.

Although geographically closer to Dar es Salam, a major East African city on the Tanzanian coast and one well served by international air links and shipping, transporting kayaks and associated gear down from Dar to a starting point in the Quirimbas may be problematic. The remoteness of Northern Mozambique would likely make for ill-equipped border posts (if any) with Tanzania, poor roads and infrequent transport options suitable for an expedition with substantial cargo. Further research may prove me wrong.

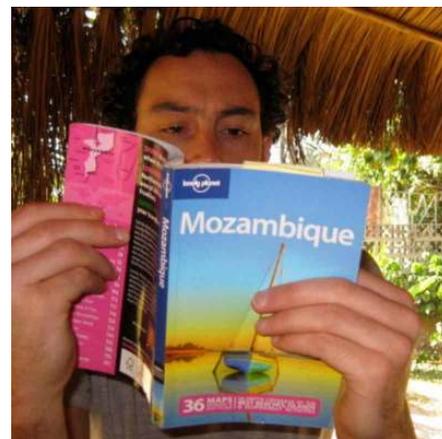
A much less adventurous, yet more likely option, is the reliable transit of paddlers and gear to Johannesburg, then a relatively short overland transit to Maputo (all up with the Che & friends border crossing, probably only a full day). Maputo would offer the advantage of many transit options to Cabo Delgado. The overloaded mini-bus trips referenced above are a reality of travel in Africa. After watching the stress that two American surfers went through in transporting their beloved sticks to Tofo on this form of transport, it wouldn't be an option for kayakers. The most likely option would be to source a driver and truck to transport the crated gear northwards. This option has the luxury of frequent flights from Maputo to Pemba for paddlers and limited gear, which is a preferable option (from a time perspective) compared to 2000kms of overland travel.

Pemba is the main access point to the Quirimbas. Although remote, it's likely that suitable transport options exist to transit further north to

a starting point deeper into the Quirimbas. This would provide for a one-way southerly expedition through the islands. Starting at Pemba, however, the expedition would likely involve a circuit through the islands with northern and southerly passages.

In terms of the Quirimbas climate, conditions similar to Far North Queensland can be expected, hot and humid throughout most of the year. Daytime average maximum temperatures don't shift measurably from the high 20's to the low 30's. It's seasonally characterised by a rainy season from November to March. The South East trade winds blow February to June, while North East winds prevail from July to January. However, tropical paddling has tropical issues. Northern Mozambique semi-regularly finds its way in the path of intense tropical cyclones, with the last significant event occurring early in 2012.

In a world where unique expeditions and travel experiences are becoming harder and harder to find, the Quirimbas Archipelago would offer an unparalleled paddling experience.



I had to go — NM





Cockpit fit out detail: hand pump and water bladder — Photo: RR

Richard Rawling

Sea Kayak Fit Out Considerations

Notes from a presentation on the VSKC AGM Paddler Fest November 2014.

Most boats purchased ‘as is’ require some level of fine-tuning to render them fully useful (and be compliant with VSKC requirements). The following notes cover the key points.

Personal paddling or expedition gear is not covered.

One important overall principle is workmanship. Anything you put onto the boat or modify must be as good as if it was factory fitted (ideally).

Stem & front deck

- If no bow grab handle or toggle then fit one.
- Avoid a toggle connected by a loop of line because of risk of finger damage if loaded boat twists in harsh conditions.

- Consider fitting a stretch line to retain toggle.

- Also consider attaching the deck line to the stem by use of an adjustable strap – to enable tension in deck lines to be adjusted.

- All deck lines to be at least 6 mm diameter and with fluoro flecks if possible (deck line to be affixed at least every 750 mm).

- Any pulley required for a sail will need to be fitted here as well; may also be the case that front deck has to be reinforced to take sail mount.

- Any attachment points for sail are best done with plastic deck buttons OR through deck spectra lines – avoid hard fittings (eg SS saddles) (<http://pnpa.com.au/products/all.php>).

- Double check hatch for leaks and make sure retaining line is fitted.



Through deck Spectra — Photo: RR

Stern

- As above relating to grab handle (note that the rear of kayaks will be heavier than front under expedition load, so handle must be sturdy and of large enough diameter to avoid crushing hand when lifting).

- Pay attention to rudder if fitted. Recessed rudders are great, but require a deck form to enable it. Rudders that only retract to vertical position are not suitable for surf work.
- If rudder blade is too short then fit longer blade; rudders take a lot of abuse so make sure yours is up for it (do regular maintenance). 2 mm spectra is a perfectly fine replacement for stainless steel, but keep it maintained well. Spectra is easier to sort out in the field if required.

Foredeck (area in front of cockpit)



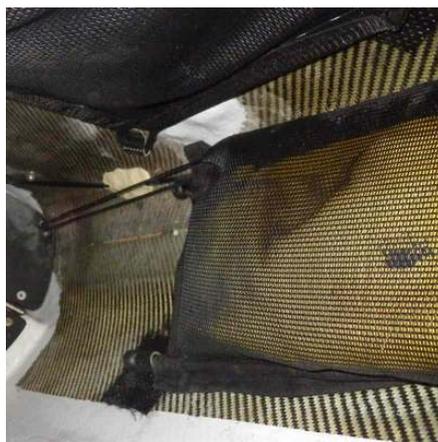
Deck bag with tow lines — Photo: RR

- If deck compass is fitted make sure deck joint is waterproof.
- Consider fitting red LED to compass for night paddling. See for example <http://gnarlydognews.blogspot.com.au/2009/11/compass-for-sea-kayak.html>.
- Make sure retaining shock cord and deck netting is neat and will retain items you want to stow there.
- Give consideration to installing (making) a purpose built deck bag with built in towing line pouch.
- If using a reed switch operated pump then slider control for that is best mounted here within easy reach.
- Sail line cleats will also need to be mounted here (ie two off).
- With sails, give consideration to a completely demountable system.

Reardeck

- Check all hatches for leaking.
- Any deck fittings must not interfere with rescue techniques.
- Spare paddle will usually be parked here – options include paddle bag, deck ties/holders or purpose built retaining clips.
- Pump battery and potentially storage battery needs to be fitted in day hatch, along with relay and other wiring. Place all of this in easily demountable waterproof box (eg carbon fibre bracket).
- Make sure that all cable or tubing joints into and out of day hatch are well waterproofed, especially those going into wet areas. Sikaflex 291 is best bet for waterproofing (but is very messy to use so mask off work area carefully!).
- Towing points will be fitting behind cockpit or mid-ships – make sure that they are robust and that towing system can be easily deployed (give consideration to a throw tow set as well — see for example <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AABoGuCPMS4>
- Fit short tow (2-3 m) for easy access beside cockpit — leave on boat.

Cockpit



Cockpit stowage (paddle float) — Photo: RR

- Adjustable footrests are often factory fitted, which can be fine. But they require paddlers to splay their legs which is not the best posture for forward stroke making. If at all pos-

sible convert to a foot plate or fixed bulkhead style.

- Electric pump will be fitted in here on front or rear bulkhead, depending on space. Using CRG or CF bracket to affix. Protect all wiring with split corrugated tubing.
- Keep sponges in a mesh bag to prevent floating away.
- If foot pedal pump fitted as well to front bulkhead, then maintain carefully and check that foot pad is shaped to suit repeated pumping action.
- Consider fitting under deck stow bag, as well as demountable side pockets (keep paddle float in one of these as well as spare thermals in vacuum sealed bag!) Also keep flares kit, spare lines, duct tape etc in this bag..
- Hand pump best stowed in cockpit alongside so that it can be quickly reached (better than on deck where it can get lost).
- Backrests can be disasters – if you hate yours after trying it out (for prolonged period) then replace it. Immersion Research brand adjustable band is close to best practice – make sure anchor points are sound.
- Seats can also be disasters, but hasten slowly (see comment below).
- Padding for thigh and knee bracing is a vexed issue, there are two options: (1) Loose fit out that maintains buttock twist and loose knees (refer to Rob Mercer article – Ocean Paddler Issue 43, page 60); (2) Tight fit out that locks boat connection points.
- Some looseness is desirable so do not pad out to the nth degree.
- Make sure that rolling grip points (knee area) have sufficient ‘grippiness’.

Advanced Fit Out

- Give consideration to on-board drinking holder – better than carrying on back or loose water bottle on deck. Mount behind seat or on floor in front of seat (make sure entry/exit not impeded). Give consideration to positive pressure systems. Bring drinking tube out through deck using conduit nipple (<http://www.outdoorgearlab.com>

com/Hydration-Bladder-Reviews/Geigerrig-Hydration-Engine).

- If no day hatch fitted then give consideration to fitting one (but that is a major job so get help if you are not confident).
- Pumping systems – mentioned above, but best to position switch actuator at point convenient to you, so wire this back to battery/relay box (in day hatch typically).
- Energy management systems – can comprise on board or on shore solar panels, storage battery (or not) and charge controller – refer to my presentation pack on VSKC website download ([http://www.vskc.org.au/uploads/docs/VSKC%20Solar%](http://www.vskc.org.au/uploads/docs/VSKC%20Solar%20Panel%20Presentation%20R.pdf)

20Panel%20Presentation%20R.pdf).

- Rudder – get rid of flat plate style rudders and fit CF or FRG shaped section rudder (less drag upon turning).
- Skeg – give consideration if no rudder and boat prone to weathercocking (and/or if heaps of sailing contemplated, but no rudder).
- Keel – give consideration to fitting rubbing strip (Keel Easy)
- On board trolley – involves fitting tube at rear of rear bulkhead (ie just behind balance point), then making up wheel set and stow bag (commercially available, but can be successfully made from scratch).
- Sail – check out Mick MacRobb's

Flat Earth Sails Website (<http://www.flatearthkayaksails.com/>).

- Consider fitting demountable night lights for paddling at night – must be white light visible for 360°.

Final note

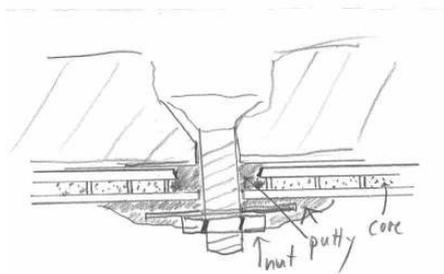
The above list of stuff would be my 'hit list'. All of these things may not be required, but many are. So make a list for your boat, prioritise it and then progressively work through each item

Beware, you can kill many hours mucking around in kayak fit out – balance this with getting onto the water!



Helmut Heinze

Drilling Holes into Cored Kayak Decks



Schema of solution using epoxy putty

Some lightweight kayaks such as the Tiderace Pace series or the Epic X series now have cored decks. A cored layup consists of a tough outer glass (and gelcoat) layers, followed by soft core mat with a honeycomb structure, and a tough inner glass / carbon / kevlar layer. The core mat keeps the outer and the inner layer 1 to 1.5mm apart, thus creating an overall layup that is very stiff, light and strong ... as long as it stays intact.

This is no longer the case when we drill a hole in to the deck and put a

bolt through to fit, say, a cleat for a tow line. Just adding a bit of reinforce under deck won't do. There are three problems:

- First: we will compress the soft core and potentially crush the outer or inner skin locally.
- Second: depending on the type of load (pull, push, shear) the load is spread unevenly between to two layers.
- Third: water may seep into the core locally.



Preparation for a tow point: carefully widening top and core layer — Photo XH



Close-up: prepared hole, ready to be filled with epoxy putty — Photo: XH

The first problem must be addressed under all circumstances. Best practice is drilling a hole much bigger than required for the bolt, filling it with an Epoxy filler, thus creating a solid plug, smoothing it, and then re-drilling it with the desired diameter. Lots of work!

My quick-and-dirty — literally! — variant consists of drilling first a hole with the desired small diameter through the top, core and bottom layer (eg 4mm), then enlarging the

top hole to 7 or 8mm carefully by hand and scraping out the foam bits from the core mat as much as possible. Then I press epoxy putty into the crater and mount the (greased!) bolt while the putty is still soft, but only tighten it lightly. The space taken by the bolt displaces the still soft putty into the hollowed out areas of the core mat. Let the putty harden over night and tightening the bolt more firmly.

For improved load spreading one

can embed a large penny washer under deck into a flat lump of additional putty.

The second issue depends on what is mounted. For anchor points that may take high forces laterally we probably want to reinforce both layers, top and bottom for best distribution. For points that handle predominantly upwards pull, for example additional anchor points for a paddle park or a sail stay a reinforcement under the deck will do.

The third issue may not apply to the type of core materials used in vacuum-bagged kayaks (you would find the problem mainly discussed for cored yachts, eg http://www.yachtsurvey.com/hardware_attachments.htm), although some local delamination may be a concern.

Lots of headaches for the owners of high-tech kayaks.

■



The prototype: (1) 12V Rule 500 pump, (2) food container for battery, here with 10 AA cells, (3) Waterwatch FET sensor, (4) reed switch for arming/disarming unit, (5) Ikea ABS box with cut-outs for hose (right) and Epic seat rail (bottom) — Photo: HH

Helmut Heinze

Self-contained Bilge Pump with Water Sensor

The VSKC requires for Level 2 and up in addition to the hand pump a second pump that is not hand-operated, ie either a foot pump or an electrical pump.

A standard solution consists of a 12V Rule 500 bilge pump in the cock-

pit, usually behind the seat, a sealed lead acid battery in a Pelican box in one of the hatches close to the pump, and a magnetic reed switch that drives a relay strong enough to switch the pump. Switching the pump on and off is done by shifting a mag-

net along a bungee cord on the deck to and away from a reed switch (a pair of metal blades enclosed in a glass vial that close in the presence of a magnetic field) mounted underneath the deck.

There is nothing wrong with this

solution. It has emerged over the years a reliable standard. With the advent of new lightweight kayaks though and the availability of new battery technology — just think of the widespread use of Lithium ion cells in laptops and mobile phones — it may be worth revisiting the approach and look for improvements in terms of weight, ease of operation and maybe even reliability.

In the following I am going to present a prototype of a fully self-contained automatic bilge pump and discuss a couple of design decisions.

Reducing weight

A 12V 2.5AH lead acid battery alone weighs 1 kg, a smaller 1.3 AH battery is still 0.57, the Pelican case adds about 200g, the Rule 500 pump is about 240g. This is about 1.1 to 1.5kg just for the power source and the pump.

It may not matter if a kayak already weighs 26 or 27 kg but you feel the additional 1.5kg when lifting a light-weight kayak such as the Epic 16x or 18x.

The main contributor to the overall weight is the power source. If we could replace the sealed lead acid battery with a more modern power source we may save some weight and space twice, once for the battery itself and once for the battery case.

Technically the best replacement for the lead acid battery would be rechargeable lithium cells. Lithium batteries are nowadays much more affordable and easier to source than even a few years ago. In particular lithium batteries used by hobbyists to power model planes would deliver the right amount of energy. Unfortunately the voltage of common lithium Ion cells poses a problem: 3.7 to 4.2V, depending on the charge level. 3 depleted cells would deliver less than 11V under load — too little for the pump to work efficiently. A battery consisting of 4 full cells would overload the pump with more than 16V, risking burning out the motor. A voltage regulator would make the whole setup

more complex and waste precious energy. No joy here

There are lithium cells with a different chemistry that would fit perfectly: lithium iron phosphate cells (LiFePO₄) which have a nominal voltage of 3.4V. A battery of four cells delivers very much the same voltage as a 12V lead acid battery. Unfortunately, LiFePO batteries are currently very difficult to source in Australia. If you can get hold of them, they are the way to go.

Another option are rechargeable NiMH cells. These type of cells are widely used and the easiest to source. Typically they come in AA and AAA sized cells. Until the recent few years their biggest disadvantage was the high rate of self-discharge. These cells were fine when being used and recharged in short intervals. In the kayak, however, we need a low maintenance solution — recharging should only be required once or twice a year.



Comparison: Battery of 10 AA Cells 2.6AH, 335g (left), block of 4 LiFePO cells 1.5AH, 175g (right) — Photo: HH

Fortunately there is a new type of NiMH cells available that have a very low self-discharge rate. One of the better known brands are the Panasonic Eneloops. A high-performance variant (black Eneloop Pro) has even a capacity of 2.5 AH (the white standard cells are about 2 AH). A cell has a nominal voltage of 1.2V. A battery of 10 cells would deliver the right voltage for the pump. These cells keep 85% of their charge over a year

(Eneloop Pro) — more than enough. A battery of 10 cells with electronic fuse and connector weighs just 335g.

While the LiFePO technology is superior with an even better capacity to weight ratio, modern, low-discharge NiMH cells are at least a stop-gap solution for the time being. The author is currently testing both: Eneloop Pros with a capacity of 2.5Ah and LiFePO₄ batteries with a capacity of 1.5Ah (made available by a fellow VSKC paddler) which weigh a mere 175g.

Simplifying installation, maintenance

The established solution is concerned with four different locations:

- The location of the pump: has to be at the lowest point in the cockpit, either behind the seat or in front of the feet. There are no other choices, this location is simply dictated by the purpose of the bilge pump. Access behind the seat is of course easier than in the footwell.
- The outlet for the bilge pump. Again there is not much choice. For best performance keep the hose from the pump to the outlet short and straight. The outlet must not weaken the deck structurally. The exact location is more or less dictated by the specifics of each kayak.
- The location of the power source: The case with battery goes into the hatch in close proximity to the pump, with the power cables going through the bulkhead. This keeps the battery dry but also renders access to the battery case a bit awkward. The Pelican boxes are not absolutely sealed. Moisture and temperature changes in the dry hatch sometimes seem to create their own 'weather' within the Pelican box. I have seen the odd condensation there. It pays off to open the box and remove the battery when the kayak is not in daily use to prevent corrosion on battery connectors and cabling.
- The location of the magnetic reed switch. It has to be in a location under deck underneath a bungee line on the

deck where the sliding magnet can be reached by the operator without too much contortions. The foredeck is a nice location but it's often crowded stuff strapped under bungees, sailing lines etc. The other location is on the back deck somewhere behind the seat. This often makes for easier cabling but for less convenient operation.

Spreading the bilge pump installation over many location requires running wires all over the place that must be protected against accidental damage by fixing them to the hull or deck permanently.

This all makes maintenance and troubleshooting and repairs difficult once electrical gremlins have taken hold.

Therefore the design goal for a better setup should be:

- Keep pump, power source and switch in a single assembly in one place (and close to the outlet).
- Make the whole assembly removable for off-site maintenance (after detaching the hose from the pump). This means keeping the power source close to the pump at the bottom of the cockpit. It also means that the pump cannot be controlled with a magnetic reed switch. Which brings us to the next point.



Main switch, here in open position (reed element just behind red top of pump) — Photo: HH

Simplifying operation with an automatic switch

If the cockpit of the kayak is filled with water we want the bilge pump to empty it. Sliding a magnet to control the pump sounds pretty straightforward but is not foolproof, particularly if the switch is mounted behind the seat and has to be operated blindly. In rough, noisy conditions there is the additional risk of accidental activation of the pump without realising. In the best case the pump runs dry and just drains the battery, in the worst case the pump burns out.

Klunky mechanical float switches that rely on a big swimmer arm to close an electrical contact are not suitable for kayaks. There are automatic bilge pumps such as the Rule 25S that cycle every 2 $\frac{1}{2}$ minutes to test for the presence of water. Not good either. Firstly they would drain the battery too fast with their testing, and secondly a delay of more than two minutes is too long when the kayaker actually needs to pump.

A third option is a fully electronic water sensor that relies on a FET transistor to detect the presence of water and do the switching. The Waterwitch is a marine-grade replacement for mechanical float switches with a very low power requirements for the sensor itself. It is available at marine shops such as Withworth's at a cost of about \$80.

The Waterwitch has an ON-delay of about 8 seconds, and an OFF-delay of about 16 seconds, thus preventing a stuttering of the pump. This makes it ideal for a kayak rolling and listing with some residual water at the bottom of the cockpit.



The Waterwitch FET sensor at the bottom of the unit — Photo: HH

Putting it all together

For the pump I stick with the popular Rule 500. No alternatives here. The weaker Rule 350 offers no advantages in terms of power consumption.

For the power supply I go for a battery of 10 NiMH cells with a capacity of 2.5AH, with the option to replace it with a smaller LiFePO4 battery. The smaller size and the low weight allows housing the battery in a small food container.

The power cable goes through a cable gland that is screwed with a rubber O-ring into the side wall of the box. The power cable is in addition sealed in the gland with hot melt glue (Sikaflex might have been the better choice). Inside the food container is a simple but tough power connector.

The food container is soft and flexible, I selected one with an extremely soft lid and bought a few extra boxes in case the lid needs to be replaced (Daiso, \$2.80 for a pack of two boxes!). The box is mounted in a way so that the lid can be sealed with some electrical tape in addition.

There is a main switch that enables or disables the electronic switch. Instead of placing the main switch directly into the high-current power line I just disrupt the power for the sensor circuit by placing a magnet-controlled reed switch into its minus-to-ground connection. This is definitely non-standard but it works. There is no

measurable power consumption at all if the minus line of the *Waterwitch* is disconnected. When connected, it the sensor draws 6.2mA in the absence of water, and 70mA in the presence. These loads can easily be handled by a reed switch.

Everything is mounted on the bottom of a cut-down Ikea storage box made of ABS. ABS is extremely tough, flexible, virtually impossible to break and yet very easy to drill and cut, even with a hand saw. Its only disadvantage is its weight: about 200g.

The reed switch and the magnet is an encased, wired version as used for alarm systems, the lever is actually a slider for wardrobe doors.

The Rule 500 pump is screwed at the bottom to what was the side wall of the Ikea box; there are 4 mounting holes in the blue, detachable bottom of the pump.

I use 4mm Nylon screws and nuts throughout. No metal at all!

The food box for the battery is screwed flush to the bottom of the Ikea box; the screws are secured and sealed with special plastic glue in addition that is suitable for Polypropylene and Nylon.

All electrical connections are carefully soldered, sealed with Sikaflex and protected with shrink hose.



Double-lock Velcro fasteners (back and bottom of unit), breakthrough for water hose (side wall of unit) — Photo: HH



Self-contained unit behind the seat of an Epic 16x — Photo: HH

Whereto from here?

Does it work? All the dry- and wet-testing has been successful. How

this solution holds up in practice remains to be seen. It certainly light (800g with a LiFePO4 1.5Ah battery), fully detachable without tools. I hope the fact that the assembly can be removed after pulling the hose off the pump will at least make cleaning, troubleshooting, repairs and improvements easier.

How the *Waterwitch* sensor behaves under typical kayaking conditions remains to be seen. The same goes for the manual part of the work flow: Either you have to enable the bilge pump system at the start of the trip, reaching the lever behind the seat and turning the lever with the magnet into ON-position (and later remember disabling it before leaving the kayak unused for a week) or enabling the system before re-entering the kayak in an emergency, or at least before fitting the the spray deck.

Can the setup be improved? Certainly. Neither the heavy ABS base box is ideal nor is the food box for the battery. But that is up to someone with access to better tools and materials. — I had to work with what I have: an electrical drill, a hand saw, files, screw drivers, pliers and a soldering iron. But I am waiting for someone to pick up the basic idea and come up with a more final version, more compact and even lighter. I think 650g are possible when using a carbon fiber frame. This would be about as much for *everything* as the weight of a 1.3Ah lead acid battery alone.

■



Bill Robinson

The YMCA Massive Murray Paddle

The Murray Marathon has been in existence since 1969 and at 400 km is the longest paddling event in the Southern Hemisphere. The course has remained the same for all that time and starts at Yarrawonga and finishes at Swan Hill.

I am lucky enough to have paddled the full distance for the past 25 years, and it is more enjoyable every year that I do it. This year, it was in my opinion the best ever, in our new time slot of the last week in November, as the new fire regulations, a result of the Bushfire Royal Commission, have made it impossible to continue in the traditional Christmas–New Year time slot.

Why was it so good this year? — The weather was mild and pleasant, the YMCA did an amazing job presenting and organising the event, there was no problem finding accommodation. The good will both on and off the water was truly fantastic. Also there were virtually no power boats or

jet skis, so we able to enjoy the river to its full extent.

I firmly believe that almost every sea kayaker should do some brown water paddling as well as on the sea. Our craft are the ideal kayaks to do the event in and I am delighted that Mirage Sea Kayaks has come on board as major sponsor.

I have always enjoyed paddling the full distance, but there are many other options such as Half Marathon, One Day Paddle and the very popular Relay option.

A double such as the Mirage Double is the ideal craft for relays, and this year a team of about 60 Police and Indigenous young people paddled in a fleet of Mirages. Another popular relay option for sea kayakers is to do a relay in a single boat with 2–4 paddlers, which has the advantage of not requiring a land crew.

I firmly believe that completing a Marathon in a relay is within the capabilities of most VSKC members and forewarn all of you, that we will be

promoting the event at all the Red Eye and Canadian Bay paddles.. It is important to plan ahead now and get a calendar and mark off the last week of November 2015, 23/11/2015 to 27/11/2015. Get in now and secure your leave.

I also intend to arrange a weekend workshop on the Goulburn from our property at Nagambie after Christmas for those who are interested. Participating (you do not have to race — most people cruise) in a Marathon is a very positive and life changing thing to do. I recommend it to all VSKC members

Links

<http://www.massivemurraypaddle.org.au/>

<https://www.flickr.com/photos/99276760@N07/>

<http://blog.kayakshopaustralia.com.au/2014/12/trip-report-team-east-co.html>



Raia Wall

Team East Coast Kayaking at the Massive Murray Paddle — 24–28 Nov 2014

Edited reprint. Source: Trip Report — Team East Coast Kayaking at the Massive Murray Paddle — 24–28 November 2014. The Kayak Shop Blog. Posted 2 Dec 2014. <http://blog.kayakshopaustralia.com.au/2014/12/trip-report-team-east-coast-kayaking-at-murray-paddle/>. Accessed 18 Jan 2015. All photos by East Coast Kayaking.

It started with a phone call “Hey would you do the Murray Marathon?” I said “Yes, sure, . . . what the whole thing?” The promo posters arrived and an email – the Murray Marathon had been rebadged as Massive Murray Paddle and moved to the end of November. A quick “Who wants to join us?” post on Facebook and a couple of chats and the team was born.



The team in Yarrawonga — getting ready!

After a few weeks and not much training, we had a relay team of four booked in with various stages of preparedness. Peter was the only one to have done this before and we suddenly found another side of Pete we hadn't suspected – Competitive Pete was going to crack the whip and exhort us to paddle faster – this was a little bit scary as the rest of us thought we were going for a nice recreational

paddle down the river! Pete got hold of the Mirage 730 and spent the week prior to the event polishing and lightening it.

The logistics proved fairly simple: camping accommodation was plentiful at this time of year, we had group gear and food organised. The team set off — Neil & Peter left early to get set up and secure our race number; Rohan and I after work, arriving at 10pm. The Yarrawonga Holiday Park was still active with paddlers arriving and getting organised for the morning.

Day 1 – Yarrawonga to Tocumwal

We started in the third group — OPEN RKL2 (as we were a motley bunch of genders and age groups). Most of the other Mirage 730's started in the earlier groups — did they know something we didn't as to how long this would take?

Pete and Rohan arrived at the first checkpoint. At an average speed of nearly 12km/h possibly the fastest 25km of Rohan's life! Neil and I can't quite match those speeds but coming into the last stage the average speed was over 11km/h.

The headwinds were picking up and a big ominous, dark cloud loomed behind the trees and we approached the last few kilometres – never mind our race times, I wanted to be on land before that hit us. Just on 4pm the storm arrived as we were about 200m from the finish, with a huge gust of wind. Neil's hat was gone and we just had to put our heads down and grunt through the gusts. A big branch crashed down in the car park. Lightning crackled and the gusts of wind and spray were blowing down the down the river bend. The K4

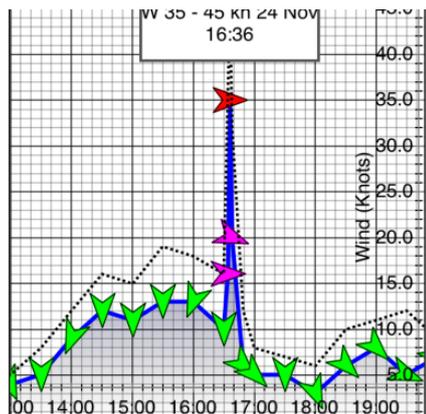
in front of us was being spun around just short of the boat ramp. We picked a gap and went for it. Where was the team? Another kind paddler helped us out of our kayak and we staggered up the ramp in the pouring rain.

We found them huddling in Pete's car – then they locked the doors! We made them come out so they could reluctantly share in the exhilaration of the elements!

The power shortly went off in the town – fortunately we already bought beer (priorities!), so we drank beer and roasted lamb and potatoes on the caravanpark\0T1\textquoterights backup gas BBQ!



The last 200m — Source: YMCA Massive Murray Paddle, Facebook site



Winds gusted over 40knots



Storm front on the radar



After the deluge ...

Day 2 — Yarrawonga to Tocumwal again!

The storm dropped over 25mm of rain so the tracks downstream of

Tocumwal were closed – we would repeat the previous day’s course. The pairs were reshuffled and I took the first leg with Pete. Another steady day of paddling with almost the same times as the previous day. We were perfecting the art of tailing the stern of faster boats to ease our passage.



A sunny finish in Tocumwal this time

We drove on to PicnicPoint to camp in a peaceful bush camping ground. Peter rescued a tortoise as it tried to cross the road — it was very smelly! Glad I’m not sharing his car!



Why did the tortoise cross the road?

Day 3 — Picnic Point to Echuca

The day started well with bacon, egg and baked bean wraps.

We swapped the pairs again. The first leg was the scenic one through the Narrows and past the Moira Lakes — the biggest stage of the MMP at

28km. I could provide a bit of commentary but basically that was the fastest 28km I’ve ever paddled — under 2.5 hours. We hit maximum speeds of over 15km/h (briefly).

Peter and Neil were next — this was a sprint leg of 12km. We allowed an hour and only just got to the next checkpoint with the cars before they came in. Peter had worked Neil hard and they had had some good interactions with their fellow paddlers inspiring them to go faster.

The next leg of 18km was where I hit the wall — with only an hour’s break. I probably hadn’t eaten or drunk enough ... With 5km to go my muscles were starting to cramp and we couldn’t keep up with the kayakers in our group. Neil didn’t look any better at the end of the last stage as they had run down numerous fast boats and everyone was feeling pretty tired (even Pete was hurting) when we arrived at our campsite in Moama.

We had worked hard though — we were 4th fastest boat on the water for the day and 10th overall.

We passed the Moama RSL on the way there – that looked pretty easy for dinner – even better when we found there was a free courtesy bus pickup and 10% of main meals with our camping ground key – bargain (true kayaker style)! After cooling down, rehydrating and relaxing for a while we were collected by the bus and hoovered down bread rolls, garlic bread, calamari and some rather good 300g steaks (the body craves protein!), before taking an early night.



Breakfast feast!



Relaxing at the finish, Torrumbarry

Packing up quickly, we headed down to the river to watch the earlier starts and were rewarded by a view of the tranquil river with mist drifting over the surface.

The day's paddling was fast, with an unexpectedly strong current and also the competitive spirit kicking in. Everyone was feeling energetic and paddled strongly. Approaching the finish we were one of the earlier boats to come in and we benefited from Mad Mick's (Team DILLIGAF) advice as the river narrowed and the currents swirled coming into Swan Hill. We finished 4th fastest boat overall, over the full distance for the day and 8th fastest for the 5 days — total time 34 hours (34:00:50) including the changeovers.



Spider found in my tent during pack-up!

We all paddled strongly and were 7th fastest boat today, in 8th place overall. We tried to run down the Tathra Surf Boat but they came through with a big surge a few kilometres from the finish. We relaxed at the finish while they loaded the surf boat onto their trailer, with our feet up on the deck, listening to "Girls Just Wanna Have Fun". A great day's paddling!

After sampling the Gunbower Lion's Club steak sandwiches (more protein!) we drove up to Murrabit where the next stage is to start. The local footy club has hosted the Murray Marathon for many years and they opened their club for drinks and catered dinner.



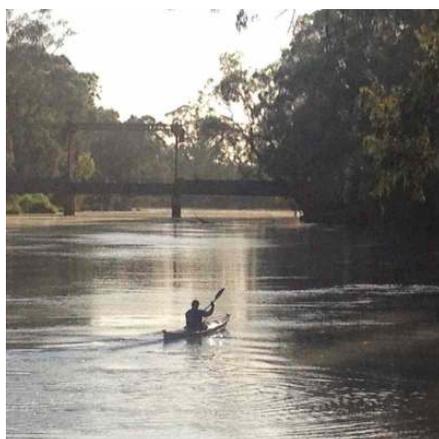
At the finish — Swan Hill

Day 5 — Murrabit to Swan Hill

Sadly our commitments precluded us staying in Swan Hill for the celebrations and presentations — we soon headed back to Melbourne — a thoroughly enjoyable experience — we are already making plans for next year!

Day 4 — Echuca to Torrumbarry

This was a day of shorter stages — 15km for both pairs, then two 16km stages. We kept the same pairs and everyone felt refreshed after a good night sleep. With estimated travel times of just over an hour the car shuffles would need to be efficient — don't get lost! Rohan and I decided to forgo second breakfast at the bakery — a big sacrifice.



A lone paddler warming up before the start at Murrabit



So quiet and yet so close to Melbourne: French Island — Photo: KR

Keith Russell

My First Overnighter

Wooleys Beach to French Island, 13-14 December 2014. Trip leader Grant K (Nadgee Solo); participants Julian S (NDK Explorer), Helmut H (Epic 16x), Keith R (Point65 XP18).

One of the things I had not yet tried and was very interested in having a crack at was an overnight camping trip using a kayak. The overnighter planned to French Island and back was an ideal relaxed opportunity to gain some experience without having to reserve a whole weekend. I had lightweight camping gear and was very used to camping very light and compact.

So we met up at Woolleys beach at Western Port at 3pm. Only after having put in all my gear I realised I have a huge kayak and could have carried at least three times as much stuff.

We had a leisurely paddle over a very calm Western Port to French Island, on a glorious warm afternoon, the kind of afternoon you have a roll for fun and to cool down. And if you are not carrying all the weight on your shoulders it is so much more relaxed.

On the way over Julian asked me if I had seen the ray, I thought he was pulling my leg, but sure enough, all

of a sudden a shadow on the seabed shifted rapidly from left to right between the kayaks and then shot off. To top my Ozzie wildlife experience a pod of dolphins crossed in front of our kayaks not very far away.

We arrived on the beach at French Island with not a soul in sight. So quiet and yet so close to Melbourne. The camp ground was great, really basic but excellent for the job. This gave us a chance to try out each other's boats (especially Julian's new Explorer) and have some fun rolling and mucking around. And to close it off there was a beautiful sunset.



... and trying out boats — Photo JS



Mucking around ... — Photo: JS



Sunset — Photo: JS

Dinner was very relaxed, I should have brought more food to share, no need to only carry lightweight dehydrated food, a kayak can hold so much more. There were mozzies, but nowhere near as many as expected, however the sandflies did leave a pretty pattern on my feet for the next few days.

As there was no chance of rain I left off the fly and stargazed, the morning sun woke me early, as there were no showers I simply had to go for a swim. The paddle back was also very relaxed and we even detoured ever so slightly to paddle around the HMAS Otama, which is quite impressive so close to.

We landed in good enough time to load up the cars and I made it home in time to watch my son play cricket.

All in all I found it was a very relaxed great way to gain experience in camping with a kayak. What I learnt specifically:

- A kayak is really big and can hold quite some weight and volume. Next time I will bring more including a loo roll (was not necessary) and food to share
- A number of different coloured not too large dry bags are great for organ-

ising your stuff. (although improvised stuff bags and plastic bags worked fine)

- A large IKEA shopper bag is really useful for carrying lots of stuff to your kayak in one go, rather than walking back and forth 10 times as I ended up doing. I have now splashed out and bought one for 1 dollar. . .

- And if you are wondering what you would need to bring:<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZiDOYNKJ91I> is great video giving you some ideas. would definitely recommend giving an overnight camping trip a try.



Kayak camping ... — Photo: JS



Great, really basic, but excellent for the job — Photo: KR



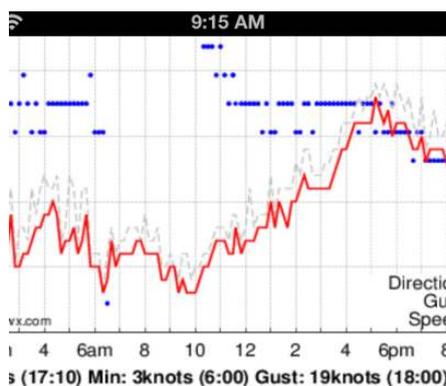
Back at Sandringham at last — Photo: XH

Andrew Campbell

Sandringham to Port Arlington Return

Saturday, 28 Dec 2014. Sandringham to Port Arlington return, distance ca 75km. Participants (full distance): Andrew C (Arctic Raider), Craig H (Point 65 XP18), Helmut H (Epic 16x), Paul M (Epic 18x), Peter C (trip leader, Valley Aquanaut), Richard R (Nadgee Solo); one-way to Port Arlington: Andrew M (Prijon Marlin), Peter H (Dagger RM); one-way from Port Arlington: Greg S (North Shore Atlantic), Derek W (Nadgee Solo). Wind, southerly <5kn (morning) to 10–15kn (afternoon) peaking at 19kn at 6 pm; seas from almost flat (morning) to about 1m (afternoon). Push-off from Sandringham: 6:30 am, arrival at Port Arlington 1:40; push-off from Port Arlington 2:30, arrival at Sandringham about 8pm.

scribed as doing six Red Eye paddles end-to-end — about the same length of time as it takes to play three rounds of golf. That doesn't sound hard!



Wind speeds 27 Dec — Source: <http://www.baywx.com/fbeacon> (Archive)

The Saturday started much like any other, up early and on the water by 6 am.

The weather, as usual, would determine what we could. Fortunately, our plan could proceed.

For those of you who done the Red Eye paddle, our plan could be best de-

We set out filled with some trepidation about the unknown as often, it is the small things that matter, and so it was on this paddle: the uncom-

fortable seat, the old sport injury, that slow leak in the kayak that you were going to fix, or if you were unlucky, all of those things. This time around, although we didn't see any dolphins or seals, fish were so plentiful, you could scoop them up with your bare hands (proof attached)!



Fish so plentiful — Photo: PC

Although we had planned to aver-

age about 6 km per hour, our speed dropped as we approached midday to about $4\frac{1}{2}$ km per hour. At this rate, we would not get back to Sandringham before dark!

Deciding to tow one of the slower paddlers (whose seat was uncomfortable and who had a leak in his kayak) we were able to increase our speed to about $7\frac{1}{2}$ km per hour! Hopefully it would be enough.



Half time: Port Arlington. From left to right: Helmut H, Craig H, Paul M, Andrew C, Andrew M, Peter H; behind the camera: Peter C

It wasn't long before we could see Port Arlington in the distance, and before we knew it, we had arrived. It was time now for some paddlers to finish with a cold shower and a change into clean cloths, whilst for others (the car shuffle brigade), it was

time to exchange positions and get prepared for the return trip, but not before a stop at the Portarlington Bakery for a hot steak pie! It was standing room only.

So far the weather had been kind, but a change was predicted for the afternoon. After what seemed to be a very short rest in the parkland near the Port Arlington Pier, we set out refreshed with the winds initially variable then tending Southerly and strengthening to about 15 knots. This would hopefully help make up for lost time.

As navigation was not much of a problem, as we could see the opposite shore in the distance, the first half of the return trip seemed to take forever, with the shore line remaining largely unchanged.

After what seemed to be a slow return journey, we reached the main shipping channel and by this time, we were enjoying the wind assistance and we knew there was only about an hour to go. Then, with only about 2 kilometers to go, someone decided to do half a kayak roll with his sail up, not an ideal scenario in the 15 knot southerly. He said later "he needed a bit of practice". I think this was a reference to the paddle not the rescue?

After 13 long hours in the kayak, it was relief to find my land legs still working, and even better, Bronwyn had brought along a hot cup of tea for everyone. I have never had such

a good cup of tea!



Sore, wet, cold, tired, hungry, sea sick ...



... after 13 hours, the fleet returns in the last sun rays — Photo: AC

Greg Skowronski

Across the Bay in a Day (One Way)

Greg participated in the crossing of the Bay on 28 December 2014, return leg from Port Arlington to Sandringham. For a general report see Andrew Campbell's contribution in this Sea Trek edition. — (Ed.)

"It will be kinda fun and interesting to watch people in a crisis" — I told Bronwyn, my wife on Saturday morn-

ing before I left on this paddle.

I am still a kayaking grasshopper. I don't even know what I don't know yet. The MetEye forecast on Saturday morning showed sections of S-SE 15-20kts wind so it was never going to be a flat water paddle. I

I knew we'd be going across around 1m sea for 5+ hours. This could either mean some surfing fun

or trouble. Either way I was going to learn something that day.

I have done numerous endurance type events in the past so this one was right up my alley. However I signed up for this one not for the usual reason I would do an endurance type of event. The main reason I did it was to learn about myself and the people I paddle with.

When a VSKC member (Neil B.) lent me his copy of "Sea Kayaker's Deep Trouble: True Stories and Their Lessons from Sea Kayaker Magazine" he jokingly told me that I may not want to ever paddle again. Well, if anything reading this book made me more keen to paddle because after reading that book I realised even more how dangerous paddling can be. That element of danger and planning for it makes it appealing for me.

Things I learnt on this paddle

- Getting food and water had to be a one handed operation — If you have to reach your water or food, your

setup is inefficient. While your fiddling with water or food and not holding your paddle for balance, you are asking for trouble. It only takes 1 rogue wave and you're in the water. By the way it didn't actually happen to me but I can totally see this possibility.

Things that have been re-affirmed

- Choose wisely who you paddle with, they might be ones saving your life: I would never ever go on a tricky paddle such as this with selfish paddlers. One must leave their narcissism and ego on the shore.
- No one is infallible: Your prior experience, credentials are not sure fire

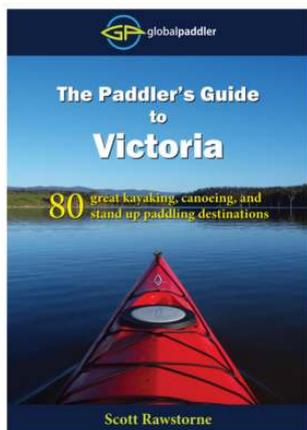
predictors of your performance on a given day.

- Efficient paddling technique can make or break your paddling career: If you're not using your core muscles and have the lightest paddle you can afford you are only making it too hard for yourself. Your back and joints will thank you for looking after them. You have to be using your core and swivel your your butt on the seat to be an efficient long distance paddler.
- Know your limits> Don't let your mind write cheques your body can't cash. This only puts your fellow paddlers in danger because they have to look after you and you become a liability.

Review by George John

Scott Rawstorne, *The Paddlers Guide to Victoria*

Scott Rawstorne. *The Paddlers Guide to Victoria*. Ballina, NSW Global Paddler, 2014. — *The Paddlers Guide to Victoria* can be viewed and purchased from <http://globalpaddler.com.au/>



Cover — Source: <http://global.paddler.com>

The style and presentation immediately made me think of “a Lonely Planet version of paddling” – the book contains 295 pages that ooze ideas for the enjoyment of paddlers, be that on a stand up board, a canoe or kayaks of various styles.

The book starts with an introduction whereby Scott introduces himself and relays his passion for all things paddling. He sensibly notes that the book is a “guide only” and that individual responsibility and awareness is required at all times.

The sections on equipment and preparation are user friendly to suit a range of readers – the book is not aimed at sea kayaking geeks!

The main purpose of the book is to suggest a range of paddle ideas – 80 in total, in four geographic sections:

- **Central / Melbourne** — 23 trips, ranging from different stages of the River Yarra, Port Phillip Bay, Geelong, and a bit further afield at Ballarat and Phillip Island.
- **Gippsland** — 19 trips, ranging from Tarwin Lower and the Prom in South Gippsland all the way to the border at Mallacoota in Far East Gippsland
- **Northern District** — 22 trips, including trips near Bendigo, Seymour and Mansfield and 13 ideas on the Murray.
- **Western District** — 16 trips, ranging from the Gunbower Forest and Nyah in the far north west of Victoria to Cape Otway, the Great Ocean Road and Glenelg in the far south west of Victoria.

I found the style of the book quite engaging, it provides an overview of local history, geology, environment, birdlife and quirky quotes along the way.

The book invites you to check out a paddle and you get a summary of each trip that includes:

- Map
- Distance
- Paddle time
- Start
- GPS

- Finish
- Parking
- Toilet
- Conditions

After each trip there are suggestions of a place to eat, drink and sleep.

A couple of weeks ago, I was in the Geelong area and decided to do a paddle mentioned in the book — on the Barwon River at Fyansford. I am old school and don’t have a GPS, I had an old version of the Melways, so it took me four attempts to find the boat ramp — that’s fine.

The time on the water was very pleasant, until I had to my return to dry land. The ramp and jetty are perfectly accessible to anyone with moderate flexibility. The jetty was too high for me to negotiate and the water over the ramp was too deep for me to get out gracefully, so my time on the water ended with a pleasant dip in the water. As the author states, the book is a guide only and users need make their own assessment of each trip and individual capability.

In my view the guide will make a great little xmas stocking filler and help get a greater number of people on the water.

The only fault I could see was a sloppy cut and paste job on page 37 of the guide that refers to the NSW rather than Victorian contacts; the author has acknowledged responsibility for the error.



Peter Wilson

A Red Eyed Christmas . . .

Christmas Red Eye, Saturday 20 Dec, Rickets Point to Halfmoon Bay and return; 6:30am to 8:30.. Trip leaders Andrew Campbell and Peter Costello; altogether 20 paddlers. Wind SW <10kn, seas <0.5m.

The final Red Eye for the year featured Santa hats, reindeer antlers, plenty of egg'n bacon booties and a battered old warhorse brought out for a run.

Having only recently joined the club and discovered the joys of dragging myself out of a warm bed at 4.30 in the morning, this was my first ever Red Eye Christmas special.

The usual "6am on the water" call put out by Peter Costello and Andrew Campbell was met by 20 paddlers in 19 boats of all shapes and sizes. The Christmas fleet included numerous Nadgees, a Mirage 730, Bob Fergies's low slung hand crafted skin on frame and what I think was a black Tahe Greenland, though it was so stealthy it was hard to make out. Peter C dusted the cobwebs off his first ever kayak (an *IceFloe*) and though looking a little worse for wear in a motley patchwork of yellow and brown sun burnt resin it later proved as nimble as ever under his skilful paddle.

With the summer sun thankfully already up and a gentle breeze from

the west, we had a quick trip briefing (included the promise of a hot brekky on our return) and set off north at a slightly more leisurely pace than usual. The outbound trip was uneventful until we reached the Half Moon Bay reef where Helmut, who had been darting about as usual, took an unexpected dip before popping back up with a sheepish grin having just completed his first combat roll and recovery to dodge a looming rock.

To celebrate the event and the lovely summer morning we shot down the Cerberus gauntlet and continued steadily on with Andrew C under sail covering all the angles with camera at the ready.

At one point we were joined by some of the local wildlife but without my glasses I unfortunately missed it. It wasn't the dolphins that have been joining our Canadian Bay paddles but apparently a lone seal. Not long after that and without ever having really reached anywhere in particular we re grouped, turned tail and made a much more energetic run back toward the waiting BBQ and hot coffee. As always there was lots of boat, trip and gear discussion along the way but not the usual extended play and practice as we reached the beach.

I did manage to bale up Bob F to help me with my attempts to roll and

gained some great tips and advice.

If you're a novice and ungraded like myself, the opportunity to spend time like this with experienced paddlers, to watch, learn and if you're lucky get some helpful tips and pointers, is invaluable and definitely makes that early wake up well worth it. On the handful of times I've managed to make the paddle in the last few months since joining, the Red Eye regulars Andrew C and Peter C have always been incredibly generous with their time, knowledge and encouraging words to help me learn and improve my skills. I'd encourage any new members to give the Red Eye a try, particularly during the summer months when a 6am start doesn't involve torch light and launching in darkness.

The BBQ breakfast was great, with the chance to put a few more names to faces and start some plans for potential christmas holiday paddles. While chatting with a coffee and nice juicy bacon and egg sandwich in hand, I also learned that PC & AC have actually been running the red eye for over a decade! Three cheers to that and here's to many more bleary eyed early morning paddles to come.

A big thanks to all involved in organising the morning.

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How to Make Your Kayak Fly — By Julian Smith