

# Sea Trek

The Long  
Reach of  
the Past

www.vskc.org.au

Winter 2016



Issue 86



## 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

Photo: Ben Flora (*Red Eye, 23 July 2016, adapted for Sea Trek*)

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### Photo Stories

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## Editorial



Two pictures? One sinking, one rising editor? Dear Sea Trek readers please welcome Ben Flora as contributing editor of this Sea Trek issue and, hopefully of

many future issues. Many of you know Ben already as an avid Red Eye paddler, photographer and author of Sea Trek stories but you will get used to him chasing you for stories as well ...

Now, let's get this Winter edition out, warts and all (I claim responsibility for all typos and formatting flaws). A big thank you to our all our authors, the reliable ones, the prolific ones (a massive 7 page article on the Nordkapp!), the first-timers (Kate and

Joe Alberico with 2 articles!, Andrew Bronsvoort / Sasha Innes!, Evelyn Feller and Penny Byron), and the many photographic contributions from the Fergies.

Work on Sea Trek won't stop here. Ben and I will be starting working right away on the next edition which is to appear in November just before the AGM. As always suggestions and contributions welcome!

Ed.



## President's Podcast



Winter for many water sport enthusiasts is sometimes a time of hibernation as temperatures drop and daylight hours shorten. Even so, there are others like myself who really enjoy paddling during the cooler months. Of course dressing for immersion is necessary, but with the right gear there is great delight in getting on the water. While I've enjoyed a number of Bay side pad-

dles this winter, I've also relished the occasional paddle out from Cape Paterson (where, incidentally, this years Paddle Fest and AGM will again be held early November).

There is something really special about quietly cruising along in our long skinny boats, being absorbed into the mesmerising ocean grandeur of intersecting tide, swell, wind and waves. Seeing close up the rich marine wildlife, including the occasional whale, not to mention the magnificent scenery of our Victorian Coastline, is forever fresh and fascinating I find. Early August was a case in point when a number of us who were involved in the terrific Wilderness First Aid course, got out for

a 10km paddle down to Eagles Nest on the Saturday afternoon. The conditions were perfect with barely a breath of wind, a gentle swell and oily-glass-like water. Many thanks to Brandon for coordinating this and to Fiona for providing excellent first aid instruction over the two days I should add.

Similarly the club's monthly Canadian Bay paddles organised by Robin and Richard continue to provide terrific opportunities to enjoy a mixture of paddling, training and socialising. Early on Saturday mornings, the Red Eye Ricketts crew led by Andrew Campbell and Peter Costello, maintain the iconic pre-sunrise Saturday morning Bay paddles fol-

lowed by coffee and breakfast at the local sea side cafe.

In these and many other club activities, we are indeed fortunate to experience the wonder of our stunning maritime playground. Its all part of being members of a terrific club as this issue of Sea Trek further demonstrates. Again, many thanks to Helmut and Ben for putting it together and to all those who have contributed their unique stories as well. I trust that all VSKC members will enjoy the read as much as I have.

Cheers  
Bob Fergie (VSKC President)



**Helmut Heinze**

## Warped Lineages

Marvel at the infinitely complex, sculpted shape of a contemporary high-end paddle blade. Form follows function. A shape that exudes beauty and tells of unconditional obedience to the physics of fluid dynamics. The material is space-age carbon fibre, a dark twill weave below a glass-hard shiny surface. The blade is less than a millimetre thick at the edge. — Marvel at the beautiful grain of the cedar wood of the hand-crafted Greenland paddle, the varnish, the organic shape, the warm touch. One paddle is produced in high-end factories, using the latest of technologies that are only available in an industrial setting such as ovens to cure the epoxy resin at a precise temperature. The other is hand-carved from carefully selected pieces of wood, guided by the critical eye and touch of the maker, based on experience, not unlike the work of a luthier. One has its origins in competitive racing, the other in the re-enactment of traditional craftsmanship received through (popular) ethnology. Superficially both paddles can't be more different. They belong to different worlds. Yet paddlers use both paddles side-by-side, with very little separating them — the occasional ribbing between spoon and stick paddlers notwithstanding. In competitive racing everyone is using the wing blade; yet for our way of sea kayaking the choice of paddle seems to be a matter of personal preference, not of necessity.

Same goes for the kayak itself. Composite layups and plastic boats dominate but skin-on-frame constructions, wooden constructions or even folding boats are being used as well.

How come that there's seemingly so little difference between ancient and contemporary high-tech designs? Is it because the ancient designs happened to be already (almost) perfect?

I would like to offer just a few

thoughts on the evolution of kayak design, on how history shapes shapes, as it were.

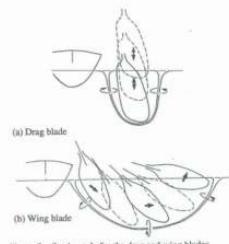


Figure 3. Stroke style for the drag and wing blades

whole vortex in the normal plane - presumably the quicker the vortex is formed (the faster the blade stroke) the less this rearward component need be. It is also presupposed that the vortex wake is the one which creates the resistance. The wake of the blade must also be viscous wakes which will further degrade the efficiency. (The Reynolds number of the blades is around  $5 \times 10^5$ ).

### 4. BLADE FORCE MEASUREMENTS

#### 4.1 Fixed stroke angle

The theory presented above is helpful in estimating the propulsive efficiency and the relative importance of the various parameters which affect it, but it offers little help in regarding the optimum blade shape or stroke angle. This is

*Ethnological exhibit #1: A typical Western practice of shaping things — Sample from: Jackson et al. The Hydrodynamics of Paddle Propulsion*

### A word on evolution — good enough will do

First. A common misunderstanding of the forces of evolution is the assumption that they keep optimising the adaption of whatever it may be (organisms, technical solutions) to the environment. The often quoted Darwinian formula "survival of the fittest" is not quite correct, it should read: the survival of those fit enough. Mating behaviour can be competitive and actually lead to the selection of the fittest (with respect to whatever relevant attribute) but other behavioural treads can emerge which as such have nothing to do with adaption to environmental conditions (think of infanticide among lions — male lions killing offsprings that are not their own, and by doing so reinforcing genetically this behaviour; this is not a feature that is directly related to the survival of the fittest in the simple sense). As far as the adaption to the environmental pressures is concerned: good enough will do. This

applies to any evolution; the cultural evolution of tools is governed by the principle of "good enough" for the purpose (unless there is a separate additional pressure driving some arms race between competing parties).

Second. If good enough is good enough then there can be many solutions to the same problem. With respect to the designs of Greenland kayaks it has been noted that there is a great number of differing hull shapes and construction details. Some may be attributed to different sea conditions in different regions, but most differences would appear to be just random — variants that emerge and stabilise without any obvious cause. One sticks to whatever works, the odd improvement in building technique notwithstanding. In tribal societies without written records all cultural knowledge has to be handed down oral narration and lived practice. Any deviation in design poses the threat of irreversible disruption. This in itself is a strong cultural force that discourages change, and with impedes variation and selection of superior variants.

Third. Evolution often finds the same solution for the same problem multiple times. The same materials, the same type of society, the same environmental features — the same solution in principle (but possible with random variations in detail). The kayak and the North American canoe are both minimalist solutions to getting hunters on the water, giving them a reasonably fast vehicle. The design is simple and surprisingly efficient in terms of technology and materials required.

### Cultural origins of modern sea kayaks

Kayaks are man-made crafts, not organisms. Kayaks do not mate and propagate (pity!). We tend to see a

straight lineage that connects our sea kayaks to Inuit boats, but the evolution of the modern sea kayak cannot be told as a simple story of variation and selection of variants. The traits of modern kayaks have not (!) evolved from Greenland kayaks in a straight line.

Something else is at work: a the history in our back, the horizon of our own culture. We are oblivious to it because it constitutes our own world. It forms our horizon that encompasses our world. We are captives of this world. Any questions arising within this horizon cannot transcend it. Our knowledge of and interest in the Inuit culture and their boating skills emerged within our own cultural horizon. Ancient kayaking culture for us is a product of our ethnography. And we mostly will have forgotten that modern ethnography harks back to intersection of the Romantic Movement of the 19th century with the emerging research in the Humanities.

What I mean, terribly simplified: our modern sea kayak has its cultural origin in the 1800s. How is that?

Life after the Napoleonic Wars in North Europe became in a sense ‘modern’. There is an emergent class of small town citizens. The social form of the modern core family becomes more prevalent. Political upheavals notwithstanding, small town life became increasingly settled, secure ... and to some extent boring. It is the period of a secluded private life in one’s home, the period of Hausmusik (music performed at home in a close circle of family members), a period of an increased educated readership devouring novels and poetry.

It is also in the early 19th Century that the mainly small town middle class started seeing nature no longer as a place of looming threat, of doom, but as a place of yearning, of enchantment, of magic. A keen interest in the life of peasants emerged. Authors collected folk songs and fairy tales (famously the Grimm brothers) — the beginnings of domestic ethnography. The arts were celebrating enchanted

nature and simple life in painting, poetry and music (the ‘song’ emerged as a new artistic form). And seeping through all forms of art there is the motif of infinity, the dissolution of boundaries, the yearning to leave, the idea of the eternal migrant.

One can argue that this Romantic Movement in the 1st half of the 19th Century is an early response to a perception of a not-well understood, creeping modernisation of life in Northern Europe.

Fast forward to the end of the 19th Century. By now the world appears patently modern. Industrialisation has spread throughout North Europe. A dense network of rail connections links the cities all over Europe. Steam ships provide safe and predictable ocean travel. News travel fast through telegraph lines. There are daily newspapers, illustrated magazines, easily accessible books — at least for the urban middle class. Trams start rattling through the big cities. The natural sciences are flourishing; the late 19th Century is the period of rapid advances in engineering, chemistry and medicine.

But the yearning remains, and if anything it has become even stronger. Young people dream of running away, going to sea. Youth literature is full of adventurous descriptions about the life of ‘primitive people’ (‘primitive’ in the sense of not tainted by civilisation). Away, Away! is the new catchcry. A new youth culture emerges — hiking, breaking out, at least for a day or two, leaving the cities, seeking nature, celebrating the simple life, doing away with etiquette, being on the move. Equipped with a guitar (remember the Romantic song culture) and maybe a tent or just a blanket to sleep on a haystack or slip into a barn — this movement was known in Germany as Wandervogel (migratory bird, or more precisely: rambling bird).

This Wandervogel culture did not stop at the water’s edge. Wandervogel is a dominant force behind the success of the modern folding kayak. The folding kayak is the transforma-

tion of the Wandervogel tent into a water craft. In 1907, Johann Klepper, a tailor turned entrepreneur for outdoor clothing and tents, bought the intellectual rights for a boat design and developed it into a standardised high-end product for the wannabe adventurer with a well-filled wallet.

Building boats from scrap material had emerged as a past time of young adults with access to rivers; sometimes organised in clubs, sometimes just by individuals, sometimes just as matter of child play at the water edge.



A DIY rag cruiser made from scrap material pre-WWI — Source: Ringer, Faltboot.



Rag cruiser? Tent turned boat? Traditional kayak? — A well-attired Johann Klepper testing an early prototype in 1907 — Source: <http://www.klepper.com/en/history.html>



*Wanderlust: the well-heeled middle class travels by train with folding boats (1920s, Rosenheim in South Germany, the home of Klepper) — Source: Ringer, Faltboot*



*Warped lineages: a Klepper next to a rag cruiser and a Greenland-inspired design design (early 1950?) — from an early advertisement*

Back to the question of what shaped the shape of the modern kayak. There are probably three factors at work:

- Knowledge of traditional canoes and kayaks, as exhibited in the ethnological collections in the big cities (Berlin, Munich).
- A culture mainly among the working class of improvising “rag cruisers” from scrap material (wooden planks, fruit boxes, hessian sack material waterproofed with pitch or tallow).
- Production techniques and materials from tent fabrication.

Superficially the Klepper may look very much like a kayak, but at closer

inspection of the very early design the lineage is less clear. It's basically a good enough solution for those weekend ramblers with deep pockets and the urge to venture onto the water, paddling down the river along a railway line and coming home with the disassembled boat stowed in the baggage car.

#### **Folding boat meets Inuit kayak**

It was only in the late 1950s when Ken Taylor travelled to Greenland with a specific interest in the kayak design and practice of the Inuit.

He brought back a skin-on-frame built for him, which started a line of modern sea kayaks, the Valley Anas Acuta being a translation of the original shape into a composite construction, and the Valley Nordkapp being a technical optimisation, doing away with the hard chines that have become an optional feature in a frameless construction. — Yes, that is where the idea of a clean lineage from ancient Inuit boats to modern sea kayaks comes from. There is no dispute. But the folding boat preceded it. And when Taylor was travelling to Greenland he took along a (Scottish) folding boat — a craft with its own cultural heritage rooted in the youth movement of the 1900s and in European Romanticism of the 1800s.



*Taylor's folding boat in Greenland — Source: Taylor Kayakhunting*

In this sense the modern folding boat precedes (!) the ancient Inuit

kayak (and North American canoe). Not chronologically in the books of world history or archeology, but in terms of their appearance within the horizon of Western society.

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#### **Away, Away!**

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We struggle to understand our own history. Wherever we turn — it's in our back. Wherever we look — we are captives within its horizon. The cultural history of the modern sea kayak is yet to be written. And when we feel the pull of the sea, the urge to venture out, spellbound by misty horizons and unknown shores we keep living the Romantic dream of 19th Century.

Maybe this is what unifies us, (talking about the kayaking-crazy ones) — and explains why the difference between an Inuit paddle or a racing-optimised paddle seems of little importance.

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Bloomfield, Hoffmeister and Caffyn kayaks at the Queenscliff Maritime Museum — Photo: BF

### Bob Fergie

## The Past is never where you think you left it! — Reflections of the 40th anniversary of the Valley Nordkapp fortification

If you've enjoyed a visit to the Queen-scliff Maritime Museum (QMM), like me you will have marveled at the VSKC-initiated exhibit of three very famous sea kayaks, two of which are from the legendary Nordkapp stable. Hung between them is the Epic sea kayak Freya Hoffmeister paddled in

the second successful circumnavigation of Australia in 2009 where she became the first woman to complete the circumnavigation. Unlike the two Nordkapps, her Epic is a modern Swede-form boat designed for speed with a much longer waterline and minimal rocker.

For the purpose of this article, however, my focus centers on the Nordkapps. This is not simply because of their classic West Greenland form or their enduring and unsurpassed fame as the expedition kayak chosen for many of the most extreme expeditions of modern history. It is

because in its most recent 40th anniversary incarnation (the Nordkapp fortii), Valley has returned to the hull shape of the original 1975 Nordkapp. As one who has owned two post-2000 Nordkapps the question in my mind is, is this a case of mushy ‘good old days’ nostalgia, or, is it an unusual case of the ‘old (hull) being ahead of its time’?

In attempting to find a credible answer to this, let me return for a moment to the amazing kayak display at the QMM, and to some basic observations about the two Nordkapps in particular.

The Nordkapp at the top is a very early UK-produced version probably built in 1977 or 1978 I think. It was designated a Nordkapp HM (H refers to fitted ‘hatches’ and M to a ‘modified’ built in skeg hull). This boat was paddled by founding VSKC President Earl Bloomfield when he completed the first circumnavigation of Tasmania by sea kayak in 1979. It has a built-in skeg to better manage the weather cocking tendencies of the original standard hull. It also sports a rather awkward rear deck bilge pump. Of greater significance, it incorporates perhaps the first hull-adjustment Valley made to the original hull shape designed and built in 1975 by Frank Goodman for a major expedition (the built-in skeg was added to reduce weather-cocking). That epic 500-mile expedition to Nordkapp in Scandinavia was followed by a 1977 expedition around Cape Horn—both firsts for sea kayaks, and the reason why the Nordkapp became the boat of choice for many serious expeditioners.

The bottom Nordkapp is similar to Bloomfield’s HM, yet different again. It is Paul Caffyn’s ‘Lalaguli’ Sisson Nordkapp (built in New Zealand by Graeme Sisson using an imported Goodman ‘standard’ and therefore skeg-less Nordkapp hull mold). It was in this boat that Caffyn completed the first successful circumnavigation of Australia in 1981/2. Interestingly, it has been retrofitted with a rudder built in Tasmania. It also has the

unique Sisson-designed cockpit and built in seat, and hatches made of rubber rather than the original and less effective metal Henderson hatches of the earliest Nordkapps (as on Bloomfield’s HM).

Yes, both boats bear the name Nordkapp, but they are quite different boats. In fact since the production of the first Nordkapp (HS) in 1975 there have been many many variations such that some would say that the most recent incarnations (certainly those produced post-2000) bear little resemblance in shape and handling to the original configurations. I have long wondered about this given that I have owned two post-2000 models.

My first Nordkapp was purchased third hand in early 2009. This rather heavy boat (all 36kg of a pre-vacuum-pressed expedition lay-up) was designated the Nordkapp Jubilee for the USA market and the Nordkapp H2O for the UK market. Mine has two oval hatches (hence the H2O designation), a glassed-in hanging seat, pinched and up-swept bow and stern and a slightly higher and more rounded rear deck. It took me some time to feel comfortable in it given that I was a very raw newbie to sea kayaking in 2009. Its classic lines and reputation for nuanced performance as a thoroughbred captivated me. It’s hardly a beginners boat as I soon discovered and it very quickly exposed my inexperience and novice skills. As my earliest paddling mentors, Peter Costello and Andrew Campbell said to me when I first started paddling the Jubilee, ‘it may feel tippy at first, but if you persist, the boat will fast track your paddling skills expeditiously’. They were right, and with time I came to enjoy it more and more increasingly challenging sea states.

In 2013, I bought a second almost-new Nordkapp that is very similar to the Jubilee except that it is much lighter (23kg) and has a plastic adjustable seat. The cockpit combing is of lighter construction and a slightly different shape as well. As best as I can tell, it performs much the same as my older Jubilee though.



*Author's Jubilee Nordkapp — Photo: DF*

While I have thoroughly enjoyed both of these boats, I kept hearing that these post-2000 Nordkapps were very different to the original HS Nordkapp and I wanted to know why. Obviously, being able to visually compare my boats with the Bloomfield and Caffyn boats at the QMM was helpful to a point. I noticed, for example, the QMM Nordkapp’s fuller bows and sterns and different deck set-ups. However, I could only speculate as to how these may have changed the on-water performance relative to the later Nordkapps I have owned. What I really wanted was to be able to compare the respective ‘old versus new’ boat hulls on the water. Realistically that was not likely to happen any time soon given the quarantined heritage status of Bloomfield and Caffyn’s boats, and the fact that I didn’t know anyone else with a pre-2000 Nordkapp sporting the original hull shape.

Much to my delight, however, in early 2015 I heard by the cyberspace grapevine that Valley was on the verge of releasing a special 40th anniversary Nordkapp based on the original 1975 Frank Goodman hull shape. I also heard that Expedition Kayaks (EK) in Sydney was planning to import three into Australia late 2015. At my request Rob Mercer of EK agreed to bring one down to the VSKC Blue Water Paddle Fest early November 2015. After all we had already invited him to be one of our keynote speakers for that event. With this arranged, all I hoped for was a chance

to have few paddles in the fortí so as to get an idea of how it looked and performed relative to my two post-2000 Nordkapps.

That wish certainly came to fruition, but surprise, surprise, and, after paddling the fortí on three separate occasions during the Paddle Fest weekend, I began to think it might be worth actually owning one of these ‘back-to-the-future’ boats. This of course was a dangerous thought, given that my wonderful long-suffering wife was of the opinion that we had more than enough kayaks already... I think we were ‘down’ to seven at the time! But, as all true paddlers’ know, you can’t have too many boats! So, with a good deal of trepidation I bravely broached the subject with my dearly beloved on the last day of our Paddle Fest. In what can only be described as a ‘weak moment’ she agreed to an addition to the Fergie Nordkapp fleet (needless to say my faith in miracles went up a notch or two at that moment).

So, Nordkapp #3 was in the bag, so to speak. More than that, it was the very first Nordkapp fortí to hit Australian waters no less. Since then I have taken every opportunity to get to know my fortí on-the-water (Cape Paterson, Kilcunda, out through the Sydney Heads, Broulee on the NSW South Coast and so on). While early days still, I have had good opportunity to mull over the perplexing comparative questions raised earlier (and to make a few customizations as well).

What follows below are some of my initial ‘boat survey’ observations regarding the shape and performance of the new Nordkapp fortí relative to my post-2000 Jubilee and H2O models. However, before I get into that, it may be helpful to provide a brief historical time line of the evolution of the Nordkapp.



*Author in his newly acquired Nordkapp fortí just inside Sydney Harbour Heads early 2016 — Photo Rob Mercer*

#### **Pre-design influences on the Nordkapp**

It is important to understand that the original designer of the Nordkapp, Frank Goodman, did not set out to create a radical ‘new’ shape when designing and building the first Nordkapps in 1974/5. His ‘new’ boat was unashamedly very much in the tradition of West Greenland skin-on-frame kayaks, particularly one built in 1959 in Greenland for anthropologist Kenneth Taylor. Taylor brought this boat back to the UK and almost immediately it attracted much interest. In 1964, Duncan Winning surveyed Taylor’s boat. This lead to the building of a stitch and glue plywood replica by Geoff Blackford which in turn was reproduced in glass-fiber for commercial sale by Frank Goodman of Valley Kayaks by 1972. This boat was called the Anas Acuta and remains a magnificent example of a low volume, hard chinned boat of the West Greenland ilk.

However, the Anas Acuta was not without limitations. In particular, it did not have the volume necessary for expedition sea kayaking (after all, the original West Greenland boats designed by Inuits’ were for relatively short, stealth hunting sorties rather than long expeditions). It was this issue that resulted in Goodman being asked by expeditioner Colin Mortlock

to produce a similar but higher volume boat for a serious 500 mile, load-carrying expedition in 1975 to Nordkapp (the northern-most cape of Europe through the Arctic fiords of Norway). Nordkapp was the destination and Goodman’s Nordkapp (as it was aptly named) was the modified high volume West Greenland boat purpose-designed for the job.



*The Anas Acuta — Source: Valley Brochure*

Since then well over thirty variations of the original Nordkapp have been produced for serious sea kayakers all over the world, continuing to this day— a remarkable fact in itself. In rather simplistic summary form, let me outline the main developmental bookmarks of the Nordkapp with reference primarily to hull shape.

#### **Valley Nordkapp 1975–2000**

During this 25-year period the Nordkapp hull remained basically the same in three variants: the standard hull (with no built-in skeg or rudder); a modified hull (incorporating a built-in skeg) and; a standard hull with retractable skeg.



*A very early Nordkapp with a standard hull but no hatches — Source unknown)*



*Upper: Nordkapp Jubilee with modified hull configuration; lower: Nordkapp H2O with standard hull configuration — Source: Valley brochure*

These basic variants were developed to help the boat track better than it originally did. However, as new moulds were made to replace older worn-out ones, subtle and unintended changes to the hull resulted as well. Even so, the basic shape of the hull remained much the same as demonstrated by the Bloomfield and Caffyn's expedition boats displayed at the QMM.

#### Nordkapps 2000–2014

In 2000 Valley decided to introduce a 25-year Jubilee anniversary version of the Nordkapp that became the standard hull shape used ever since. In the UK, this new boat was designated the H2O (with two oval hatches fore and aft) while in the USA it was branded the 'Jubilee'. While similar to the early hull shape, to the educated eye it also manifested significant differences, particularly in the much more pinched shape of the bow and the stern and the introduction of a good deal more rocker (and a little more width). My first two Nordkapps are from this 'Jubilee' / H2O stable.



*Nordkapp fortí — Source Valley brochure*

While adorned with a more contemporary deck set up, the hull shape of a 1975 boat was used. While not out of the original plug (no one seems to know what happened to it except that it wore out given the high demand for Nordkapps from its inception), Valley was able to create a new plug from a surviving original boat.

#### How does the Nordkapp fortí compare?

Now that I have dealt with this brief excursion into the historical development of the Nordkapp in all of its variations, I now turn to some comparative comments addressing the overall cockpit, deck lay-out, hull shape and one-water performance of the Nordkapp fortí (yellow deck in subsequent photos), relative to the Jubilee/H2O boats (grey deck in subsequent photos) that I have owned. Except otherwise noted, the accompanying photos below were taken by the author

#### Cockpit combing shape and position



*Fortí (yellow deck) vs Jubilee (grey deck) — Photo: BF*

The convex side-on shape of the fortí allows for higher thigh braces and flatter, less inverted V-shaped foredeck.

This may reduce the water pooling effect on the skirt and the potential for a spray deck to implode when subject to the force of dumping waves.

#### Seat type, height and positioning



The forti has the same Valley plastic seat, suspended from the deck as the H2O. In its standard form the seat is chocked-up from the floor by c.80mm (between the front seat lip and the hull floor). The seat can be positioned further forward or back to suit paddler size and preferred boat trim.

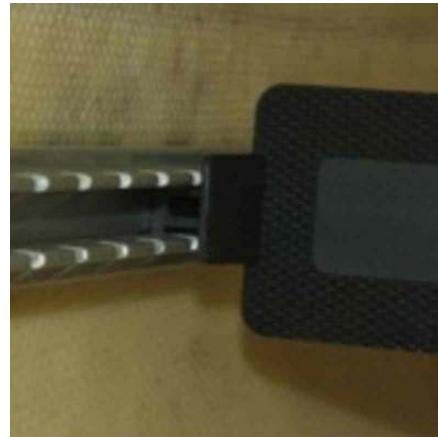
The seat can also be lowered a centimeter or two to improve the centre-of-gravity 'twitch' dynamic. I made this customized modification to my forti by removing the seat and shaving back the closed cell foam glued to the underneath base of the seat and adding spacers. In the case of my Jubilee, I cut out the original glassed-in seat and replacing it with a customized, closed-cell foam seat that was much lower and closer to the floor of the hull.



#### Thigh braces

In the forti, the thigh braces are slightly higher allowing for good knee connection with legs in a straighter, more central position. This is conducive to positive leg thrust with forward paddling strokes and it still feels secure when rolling (this was not the case with my Jubilee I should add, as I often experienced my knees slipping out when trying to 'hip-flick').

#### Foot rests



My forti came fitted with adjustable Yakima aluminum toe pegs rather than a 4cm dry cell foam block against the forward bulkhead used in my H2O. I personally prefer the dry cell block because it allows a great variety of foot positioning and control when driving the boat around. On the other hand, the Yakima footrests allow space for the fitting of a manual foot pump fixed to the bulkhead whereas the foam block doesn't. In the end, a compromise is required one way or the other depending on one's preference.

#### Fore deck shape

Given the more convex side-on shape of the forti cockpit, the forward deck is much flatter than the H2O at the cockpit peak. This allows for the very accessible and space-efficient 'glove box' compartment and a bit more room for thighs between the thigh braces and the gunwales.

#### Hatches

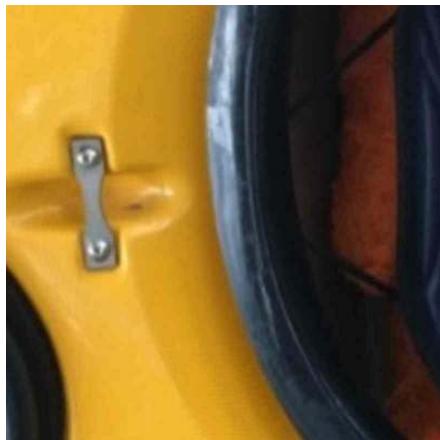
The forti has the same exceptional Valley hatches and a very similar deck configuration (fore and aft oval hatches and smaller day hatch) to that of the Jubilee/H2O. However, as with many contemporary designs, it also comes with an additional fourth 'glove box' hatch immediately forward of the cockpit. This is a very convenient and watertight compartment with reasonable space for nibbles, camera, flares and the like. It is also much more easily accessible on the water than the slightly awkward off centre rear day hatch.

#### Skeg-slide housing

The forti has a new and longer skeg slot housing that is positioned slightly more to the stern on the left side. This new arrangement makes the skeg housing box much more accessible for servicing and repair than the glassed in mounting of the Jubilee and H2O models.



#### Aft deck shape and fittings



The fortí deck shape is a little lower and flatter than the Jubilee/H2O models with some variation to deck lines as well (minimalistic but still adequate for housing a spare split paddle). The fortí cockpit is positioned slightly more forward (5-6cm) changing the balance of the boat quite a bit, especially given a more fuller hull at both ends.

The fortí also has a recessed security bar just behind the cockpit in the middle. This can also be used as a tow point when on the water. Carrying toggles are neatly held topside by bungee clips and are identical to the Jubilee/H2O models.

#### **Bow and stern up-sweep**

Both bow and stern ends, as with the original Nordkapps, are a little less up-swept in the fortí giving the boat a side-on flatter appearance than the H2O.

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#### **Stern and bow fullness**

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While the extreme end of the stern is very pinched in the fortí (similar to the Jubilee/H2O models) the inner fullness extends a good 6-7cm more towards the stern.

This, together with the slightly more forward positioning of the cockpit means that the boat is less likely to sink into and therefore slip off small wind waves from the stern given the extra buoyancy.

As with the stern, the bow of the fortí is a good deal fuller than that of the more pinched Jubilee/H2O.

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#### **Skeg placement**

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Given the fuller extension of the hull towards the stern in the fortí, there is greater internal room for the skeg box to be positioned almost 10cm further astern than is the case in the Jubilee/H2O. In addition to increasing storage space and accessibility (a real plus relative to the Jubilee/H2O) this positioning also anchors the stern a little more in pitching seas.

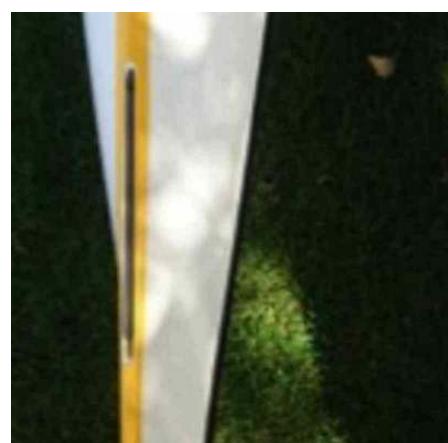



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#### **Mid-section shape**

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While the H2O has a fairly shallow V shape hull with soft chines, the fortí has an even slighter V shape in the mid section. The degree to which this mirrors the first Goodman Nordkapp I'm not sure. It certainly is similar to many of newer sea kayak designs where almost flat midsections are becoming more of the norm. The chines on both the fortí and the Jubilee/H2O are soft and close to vertical by the time they join the gunwale.



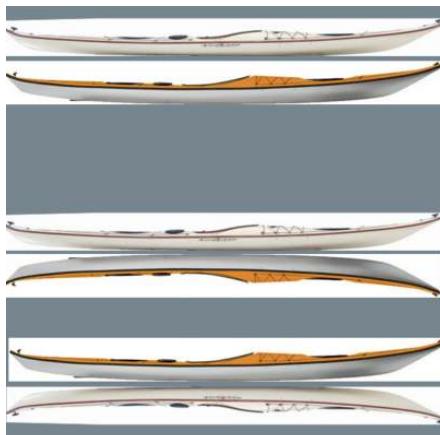
*Fortí*



Jubilee

### Rocker

The Jubilee/H2O has more rocker than the fortis, yet the fortis remains a very nimble and predictable boat maintaining a nuanced maneuverability capacity synonymous with Nordkapps generally.



Post-2000 Nordkapp Jubilee/H2O vs Nordkapp fortis, 2015

### Performance comparisons — Speed

(Nordkapp fortis relative to the Jubilee and H2O Nordkapps)

The fortis seems every bit as quick as the Jubilee/H2O into the wind (indeed, all of my Nordkapps, are ahead of the pack into the wind). However, it is in a following sea that I have found the Jubilee/H2O boats struggling to match many other boats,

especially staying on smaller wind waves from the stern.

I have always assumed this reflected my own skill-inadequacy rather than some inherent problem with the boat. However, in this case it seems that I was not necessarily my short-comings. In following seas catching and staying on wind waves in the fortis is so much easier I've discovered. Relative to the Jubilee and H2O there clearly is a notably positive improvement in the fortis, something other diehard Nordkapp paddlers have commented on as well (link to Rob Mercer's review).

I suspect that this improvement has much to do with two factors alluded to earlier:

- First, the fortis is fuller in the stern (as well as the bow),
- Second, the cockpit is positioned a little further forward, further enhancing more balanced trim.

The net effect of these two adjustments is that the fortis's stern does not sink and slip off waves in the way the Jubilee and H2O are prone to do.

### Stability

Primary and secondary stability is much the same in the fortis and the Jubilee/H2O boats, although relative to other boats many would argue that the Nordkapp feels a lot tippier when you first paddle one. This is true to a degree, but like most expedition boats, stability improves when the boats are loaded. The greater the load the more stable they feel is the general rule of thumb. The original Nordkapps were designed to carry a good 90kg in addition to the weight of the paddler, so when unloaded it's not surprising that many have found them a bit tippy. Adding some ballast can significantly help for day trips when you're not carrying a boat full of expedition gear. However, that's not the only solution I have discovered. The height of the seat above the hull floor impacts stability as well.

The Valley seat in the H2O and the fortis is the same, and for me by

far the most comfortable 'commercial' seat that I have used. However, not unlike many off-the-shelf boats, the seat hangs an inch or so off the floor with a layer of closed cell foam packed between the bottom of the seat and the hull floor to give some support. This arrangement may be fine if your body shape is shorter and lighter than my 6'2", 120kg frame. Us big blokes have a disproportionately higher mass above the cockpit coaming than below it and this negatively impacts our centre of gravity. Ladies, you should celebrate the fact that the feminine shape enhances your stability because your centre of gravity is a good deal lower than we mere 'top-heavy' males. Actually, I've noticed in a number of Nordkapp reviews over the years that Nordkapps tend to have higher seat pans than some other boats and that others, like me, have lowered them to negate excessive tippy-ness (the Nordkapp's soft chines and narrowness of hull play a part in this as well it is fair to say).

To my new fortis I added 1cm hardwood spacers to the side-hanging brackets with this adjustment making a very significant centre-of-gravity improvement for me, especially in lumpy re-bound conditions. Unfortunately, the side bolt-in hanging plastic joints of the Valley seat remain prone to fracture over a relatively short time (<12 months in the case of my H2O) especially if the paddler is into rolling a lot as I am. The plastic bracket joint is the one serious weakness in what otherwise is an excellent seat.

Nordkapps by and large are renowned for their rough water handling, and it's true as many experienced expedition paddlers of Nordkapps have noted, that the rougher it gets the better Nordkapps perform. While this has more to do with the boat's soft chines that allow water to slip under rather than catch, lowering seat height (in any boat for that matter) certainly helps with greater primary stability. Customization, consistent with the peculiar shape, weight and height of individual paddlers is an inevitable part of the fine-tuning

fun of sea kayaking as one strives to optimize the lowest centre of gravity (and longitudinal trim) position possible.

### **Tracking**

With the skeg up, the fortis very definitely tracks better than the Jubilee and H2O in a quartering sea and to some degree at least is also easier to keep straight in a following sea. Certainly, paddlers with reasonable edging skills will find that they rarely need to use the skeg in most conditions in the fortis. That being said, the deployable skeg provides a very adequate contingency foil for weather cocking tendencies that at some point will see the stern of any boat slip out and slide away from the wind.

### **Rolling ease**

A reasonably competent roller will have no trouble rolling the fortis. Unlike the Jubilee and H2O, its slightly low rear deck allows a paddler to fully lay back when rolling up, whether using a euro blade or a Greenland stick.

Interestingly, a number of paddlers of the pre-Jubilee boats commented negatively about the change made to the Jubilee and H2O models regarding an increased curvature of the back deck and the height as well.

The fortis seems to replicate the earlier boat rear deck configuration making layback rolls even easier to manage.

Forward ending rolls are a little easier too as the flatter and slightly lower fore deck allows the paddler, if they have the 'optimal body shape' (read: slim, young and flexible), to keep their head lower as they draw their sweeping paddle up and across the deck.



### **The past is never where you think you left it!**

I began this article by posing the question, 'is Valley's reversion to the original 1975 Nordkapp hull shape in their 40th anniversary Nordkapp fortis a case of mushy "good old days" nos-

talgia, or, is it an unusual case of the 'old (hull) being ahead of its time'?"

My conclusion: the fortis is a very different boat to the Jubilee/H2O hull type. The fortis's fuller bow and stern together with the further forward positioning of its cockpit significantly improves its performance in following seas, and its slightly reduced rocker improves its tracking capacity as well. Both the fortis's fuller bow and stern and the positioning of the skeg box a little further astern increases load carrying capacity for expeditions. In these respects, the fortis is, I think a better all-round boat than the Jubilee/H2O and it would be fair to conclude therefore, that the original 1975 Frank Goodman hull shape was very definitely an 'ahead of its time' classic. It will be interesting to see if Valley continues to promote the fortis in the years ahead. I certainly hope so.

Finally, for those wanting to delve a little deeper into the evolution of the Nordkapp I would highly recommend the following up-dated article by Mike Buckley. To my knowledge, he provides the most comprehensive overview of the Nordkapp story, including many additional links as well: [http://www.ukseakayakguidebook.co.uk/nordkapp/art\\_nordkapp.htm](http://www.ukseakayakguidebook.co.uk/nordkapp/art_nordkapp.htm)





Photo: PW

**Andrew Bronsvoort**

## Around the Prom with the VSKC Mob

Written down by Sasha Innes.

I love sea kayaking. I still remember the first time I viewed one of these lovely craft, a Pittarak belonging to a friend of mine, and keen fisherman. I was quickly sold on the idea of sea kayaking after he told me, with such passion, about the ability to camp, fish, and the unsinkable nature of kayaks. In all the 17 years I have been kayaking I have only had two friends with sea kayaks, both of whom are time poor, and don't have the passion that I do, this is why I joined the VSKC.

I have been lucky enough to go on other overnight trips prior to this one. I presume many of the members of the club have found getting mates enthusiastic and passionate about this awesome sport impossible, so when I saw the opportunity to jump on board this Wilson's Prom paddle, I was excited about the idea. It is great to be able to join a group of nature loving, like-minded individuals.

This was the plan:

- Saturday (22 Apr) — Paddle to Refuge Cove, thirty odd k's, with the beam wind from the south west, forecast to be light.
- Sunday — Continue to Johnny Souey 25 km, west light southwest

wind forecast.

- Monday — finish at Port Welsh Pool 25 km,, light northeast wind.

There was some swell forecast, luckily not much gets into the Prom. That morning someone checked the wind at the lighthouse, which indicated 21 knots, luckily it never got that strong at sea level. The idea of it did make me a bit nervous.

The Friday night at Tidal River before commencing the trip I didn't sleep well, I was way too excited about this awesome trip. I was glad to squeeze out a poo, knowing I would be on the water for some time. I think it is a very important start to any paddle. I was then meeting all the boys in the daylight and admiring their vessels: three Nadgees, a Maelstrom, and a few other boats I had never seen in the flesh: an Epic 16x, shorter but fast with a plumb bow. A Valley Aquanaut and a RM Nordkapp. All very sexy boats. I wish I could have one of each. A guy recently told me an equation for how many boats you need — the ones you have, plus one. I was in a Raider X.

### Tidal River to Refuge Cove

I heard an early call saying no sails allowed. I soon realised that this was

from one of the only two boats without a sail. Later one guy admitted that he might get a sail for future trips, and the other one said something like "I'll get a sail when I am old or retired".



Start in Tidal River — Photo: PW

After a little talk, Terry emphasised how important it was to stay in a pod. The small two foot wave faces as we paddled out were enough to give you a good wake up. Timed wrong, and you would get a fresh trickle of water down the jacket, or at least a spray to wipe the sleep out of the eyes. We charged off at a cracking pace, I knew these guys meant business.



fused water. I noticed how the loaded kayak seemed to handle well, compared to what I would expect an unloaded boat in these conditions. It would be a dangerous trip to do on your own, even in a plastic boat because of the high rugged coastline, there is nowhere to seek refuge.

Around the tip of the prom, Terry — the trip leader, made us aware of the current flow, on the incoming tide, squeezing between the islands at the tip, thus we hugged the rocks. We were all looking forward to the tail breeze once we past the tip. Imagine how the non sail owners felt when the six other boats opened their sails up. We were not pushing an uncomfortable pace to paddle at, but it must have felt demoralizing after an already long paddle.

As we were paddling around, it was hard not to have thoughts of the Noahs [Aus. slang for sharks – ed.] that patrol these waters. I also tried to memorize every nook and cave that you could get a kayak into for the hopeful future trips around here. The landscape on the east coast differed greatly from the west. It was clear to see that it has more coves and sandy beaches. There are taller trees on the west, which looked like they must cop a beating from the prevailing winds.

We all stayed together, as a close pod, and chatted away merrily. A bit of shit-giving between some members was an indicator of how much they had paddled together before. I hadn't paddled with this mob before, but I was made to feel very welcome.

I surprised the boys at Refuge Cove with a nice cold beer for everyone, which went down a treat after the 35 k's we had just paddled. I must admit I underestimated the effort required for that first day, and there were moments I was regretting carrying eight cans of beer! But the joy on the faces when I revealed my cargo made it all worthwhile.

Being a gear freak, I enjoyed checking out everyone's camping equipment. I am now adding a Helinox chair to my wish list.



Down the east side, passing Mount Oberon, Anser Island in our sights, rough stretches at South Point — Photos HH and TB

Of course the wind turned out to have a bit more south in it than west, which felt like a head breeze during the whole passage along the southwest coast of the Prom. The small swell rebounded off the rocks dipping into the sea, making for some con-

### Refuge Cove to Johnny Souey



Refuge Cove next morning — photo: RR

Being a keen fisherman, I was disappointed having come across a sign indicating that Refuge Cove was a marine park. It wasn't until the morning when we spoke to the ranger that we were told that it was not (or no more). I informed him that he'd better change his sign. I utilized what time I had left and managed to catch four small calamari, which went straight into the cooler bag with the frozen water.

The light south west wind turned out to be a super light north easterly, enough to ruffle our feathers. A beautiful sunny day, a relief after the morning before which had dark skies threatening to rain, but didn't.

We were heading for Johnny Souey — we explored some magnificent coves along the way, choosing to stay closer to the shore for much of the journey, as it was much more interesting. There was not a great deal of wildlife, a few cormorants and a lone seal. Near the end of the day the group decided to split into two, four — including myself — went straight to Johnny Souey, and the others — Helmut, Keith and Peter, led by Richard, explored Rabbit Island, adding an extra five kilometers or so. My excuse to myself for not partaking was a sore neck muscle which had been giving me grief for a few weeks. But I vowed to return and conquer

Rabbit Island another time. As we split up, the wind turned from south east to be in our favour, thus gaining assistance from the sail again, to my delight!

I managed to catch five small Australian salmon at Johnny Souey before getting out of my boat. I was filled with glee to find no other campers at this site. Having arrived before the other half of our group, I was quick to pick out a prime camp site — with some advise from Bill, a forty plus year veteran of this spot. We set up a communal kitchen area, I was looking forward to some camp stories that night.

With the sun shining and the water still not that cold, Kevin and I went in for some Eskimo rolling practice. I had a go with his GearLab Greenland paddle — my first time with a Greenland stick. I found it was as awesome as its reputation and I managed to do an angel roll — my first new roll, very different from the standard one.

I also had a go in Keith's Aquanaut, a sweet ride. Terry called me in. I paddled in sheepishly thinking I might have done something wrong. To my delight he was impressed with my rolling, and suggested Keith and I practice some rescue techniques. We performed an assisted rescue, with a

heel hook entry. I had never seen a heel hook rescue performed before. It crossed my mind it would be harder to rescue someone not as fit, or in rough seas.

That night Bill and I cooked up calamari and salmon to share amongst us. It wasn't a huge feast, but everyone enjoyed a sample. With this and the beers from the day before, I was told, with my fishing prowess and beer carting skills, I would always be welcome on future missions. It was awesome to sit around the Trangias that night, and hear stories of other peoples kayak conquests and dramas. I lived without the Helinox on this occasion, as a driftwood has been arranged into a nice seating area. It is an awesome campsite, I love this place.

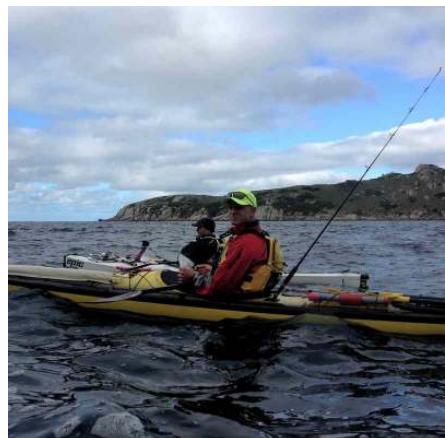
#### **Jonny Souey to Port Welshpool**

The light northerly forecast proved to be very light, so it didn't hassle us very much. The goal was to take the incoming tide to Port Welshpool, as we paddled close to the shore, you could really see how fast we were moving, with the tidal assistance. We had a wonderful experience seeing four sea hawks gathered in one tree. As Richard approached, camera in hand, one flew away from the tree.

I was keen to stay close to the pod as we crossed the entrance to Port Welshpool, after hearing that it was a breeding ground for Great Whites, and hearing Brett's horrific tale of a shark in this location dwarfing their 18 foot fishing boat. All we saw was one lonely seal basking next to a channel marker.

We finished with a scallop pie at the shops — as you do, so I was told —, and ferried back to Tidal River.

I don't think anyone would be overly happy to be back at work after three days in this pristine wilderness.



*The author — photo: TB*

■



Evelyn Feller

## Sea Kayaking in British Columbia

Michael and I were fortunate enough to live in BC for over 30 years and paddle in many of the places mentioned in this little writeup. As with many areas it is best to avoid the key holiday periods, usually July and August. September and May/ June can be good weather wise. As well like many west coast locations worldwide, one can have to deal with fog and heavy deluges every now and then but if you want to travel and experience one of the most scenic places on the planet to paddle, I can strongly recommend 'Beautiful British Columbia'.

As I considered writing this article I realized how relatively easy logically speaking it is for visiting sea kayakers to organize some trips in BC. For the last four years we have done excellent week long trips to a variety of destinations renting boats at our planned put in locations. Some of these trips are possible by bus so one doesn't have to rent a car and roof racks.

### Desolation Sound

Captain Vancouver, a contemporary of Captain Cook, was definitely not impressed by this section of the British Columbian Coast, felt it had little to offer and gave it the name Desolation Sound. As we paddled along in September sunshine enjoying views of the rugged Coast Range still with some glaciers and snowfields, we thought Captain Vancouver was really unlucky with his visit here. Fresh water was abundant, the shorelines were covered with oysters and the sea water was rich in kelp beds and marine life. A major attraction is that the water is really warm here reputedly up to 26° C in one inlet. Desolation Sound is north of Vancouver on the BC mainland. Getting there is part of the enjoyment of the trip as it involves two ferry rides across large inlets where we have seen whales breaching. The trip starts literally at the end of the road along this section of the coast. The last major town is Powell River,

still a pulp mill company town, but rapidly becoming a major recreation centre with sea kayaking, rock climbing diving and some good extended hikes.

The four of us had planned a six day trip into the Desolation Sound area. We chose to do the trip in September when schools are back and summer holidays are over in order to avoid the heavy use of the area by yachts and paddlers. To avoid kayak transport hassles we rented boats from Powell River Sea Kayak which had a convenient base at our put in on Okeover Inlet. We paddled along the narrow inlet to Malaspina Inlet to a lovely camp site at Feather Cove which faced the setting sun. From here the coastline features long fjords like Knight Inlet, many islands and in places is notorious for powerful tidal rapids. Desolation Sound is dominated by the steep Mt. Addenbrooke (1740 metres) on East Redonda Island. Our plans for the next four days were to camp in the Curme Island

group and do day trips across and along Desolation Sound especially to the inlets that were rich in marine life like brightly coloured star fish and sea urchins.



*Rich in marine life ...*



*... and with excellent camp sites*

The area is quite popular for snorkelling. As we crossed to the islands, one of us saw a small bear swimming between the islands. Because the Curme Island campsites were full, we moved onto a great site on Bold Head which had a number of tent platforms, an excellent cooking area that could be easily sheltered and a well maintained out-house. The area is a BC Provincial Marine Park and we found the campsites to be consistently well maintained. The only drawback for kayakers is that beach landings are often on boulders and plastic boats are a wise choice.

We spent the rest of the day exploring Tenedos Inlet which had im-

posing cliffs and a freshwater lake that was readily accessible and pleasant for swimming. Any plans we had the next day for crossing the sound and exploring the other side were prevented by a 15-20 knot wind and very choppy conditions. However these conditions subsided and we spent the afternoon exploring nearby islands and Prideaux Harbour, the moorage area of the Vancouver Yacht Club. The paddle back to camp started in very benign conditions but as we were travelling up a narrow channel we could see distant white caps and were hit with very strong headwinds which were quite a challenge to paddle through and land.

Because the weather forecast indicated that strong winds would continue, we decided to head back to more sheltered waters for the next two days and explore the more protected inlets like Malaspina and Theodosia Inlets. This was a good decision because halfway back to Malaspina Inlet we were again hit by a very sudden squall that required all our concentration to stay upright. The suddenness of these winds was quite a new experience for us- something we had not really experienced in many years of paddling along the BC coast.

We spent the evening at another excellent campsite at Hare Point where we watched seals and a sea lion proudly displaying their salmon catching skills. For the last and return day we spent our time exploring inlets which generally had more settlement like vacation homes and enjoying the rugged grandeur of the area and the rich marine life. There was still much more left to explore in the Desolation Sound area.

### Southern Gulf Islands

A trip around islands like Galiano, Thetis, Saltspring, and Valdez can be very enjoyable and boats can be rented from Galiano Kayaks. Galiano Island can be accessed by ferry and is located between the mainland and Vancouver Island. While being a more settled area with lots of vacation

homes, the area offers some lovely beaches, good campsites, especially a Parks Canada site in an old orchard on Prevost Island, a rugged shoreline on Valdez Island and the added challenge of estimating the slack current to negotiate Porlier Passage. We saw a double kayak capsize and an impressive rescue here!

### God's Pocket

Gods Pocket is an area with a series of islands about four km. off Port Hardy on Northern Vancouver Island. It is renowned for very clear water and very abundant marine life. It is very popular for divers and has some excellent camping and trails to explore on the islands. Unfortunately the kayak rental place that was very conveniently located on the harbour no longer rents so one would need to transport boats from either a rental place in Telegraph Cove or Comox Valley Kayaks and Canoes which generally has an excellent selection of boats.

### Clayoquot Sound

Clayoquot Sound is located on the west coast of Vancouver Island accessible from the town of Tofino — BC's surfing mecca. It is a beautiful area adjacent to the Pacific Rim National Park with many large sandy beaches, lush temperate rainforest covered islands and views of rugged mountains on the centre of Vancouver Island. While one magnet for many people is Hot Springs Cove, there are many other attractions in the area such as waterfalls and again lots of wildlife with even cougars on larger islands like Flores Island. One could easily spend a week in the area either staying in the more protected areas around Tofino or heading out to the Pacific side of Flores and Vargas Islands for challenges in surf conditions. Boat rentals can be organized out of Tofino however in the summer these may be heavily booked. It is possible to rent boats in Port Alberni on route.

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**And more ...**

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The west coast of BC has endless opportunities for sea kayaking adventures for all levels of paddlers. There are protected inlets for new paddlers and a good day's paddle can be experienced on Indian Arm close to Vancouver. Many paddlers focus on the west coast of Vancouver Island with beautiful but cold beaches on the Pacific. Areas such as the Nuchatlitz and Bunsby Islands offer sightings of captivating sea otters and further south the Broken and Deer Groups offer quite dazzling intertidal life with very colourful star fish, sea anemones and frequent whale and sea urchin sightings. For more committing paddling there is the West Coast of Nootka Island, the Brookes Peninsula or the Haida Gwaii Islands further north with their spectacular forests, marine life and totem poles on the world heritage site at Ninstints. Sometimes one will see bears, wolves, deer or cougars on various places along the coast on Vancouver Island. Once I actually had a small bear climb into my boat on the Nuchatlitz ! Of course if one has a couple of spare months and good organization skills one can start paddling at the Alaskan border and head to Vancouver, organizing supply drops at various communities along the way.



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**Further readings**

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There are many websites and resources to help plan sea kayaking in BC.

Two good books are:

- Kayak Routes of the Pacific North West by Peter Gee and John Dowd
- The Wild Coast 3 – Kayaking, Hiking and Recreation Guide for BC's South Coast by John Kitmantis

John Kitmantis has published a number of guidebooks and maps of various parts of the coast which are excellent for locating campsites and other key features.

A useful source of information is the website for the BC Marine Trails Network which does useful advocacy for recreation and conservation along the coast.

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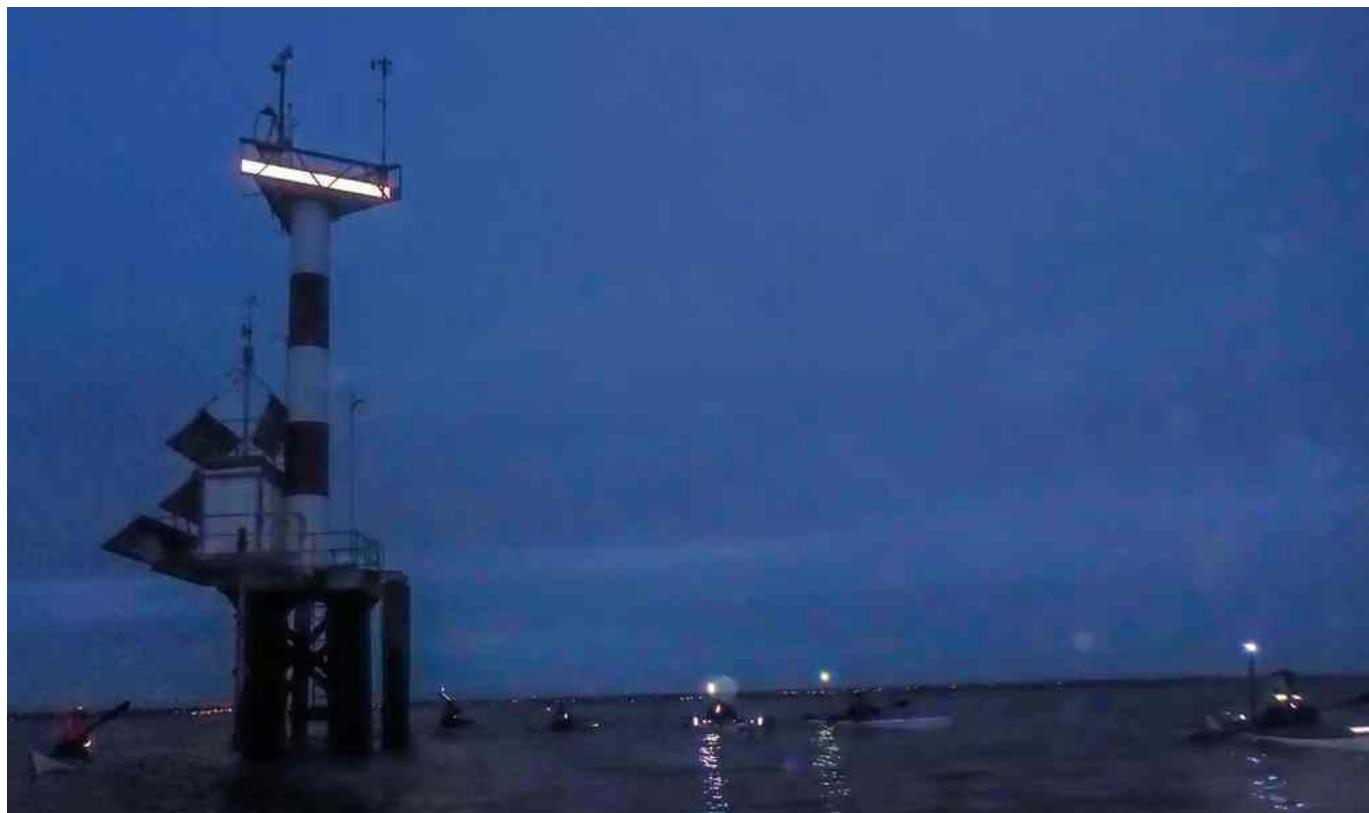
**Organisations and commercial providers**

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There is a well-established sea kayaking community in BC with organizations like the Sea Kayaking Association of BC and the South Island Sea Kayaking Association both with websites.

For paddlers who don't want to have their paddling and camping gear crammed into their luggage and exceeding plane weight restrictions there are quite a number of commercial sea kayaking tours that are offered to the destinations described in this article or to many other places.





Fawkner Beacon — Photo: AC

### Penny Byron

## Seeing The Light

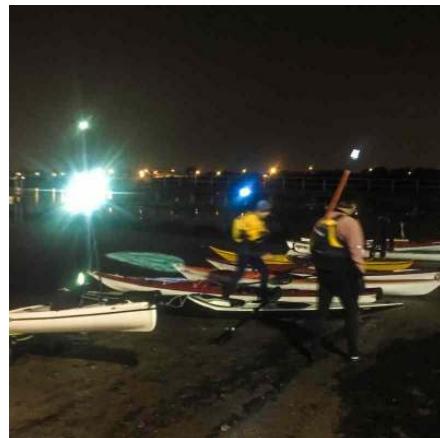
*Red Eye Solstice paddle to Fawkner Beacon  
18 June 2016. Trip leader Andrew C.*

The odd serendipities of life awoke me at 3 am ready but not all together willing to get up and jump into my car to drive an hour to Sandringham.

The reason I was not too willing was not because I wasn't excited but because I had been kept awake all night by the rain pouring through a hole in my gutters and knowing that there was equally as much water flooding into the cockpit of my kayak as there was pouring over my veranda pathways.

It was also my very first Red Eye paddle in the Winter, and hence in the dark. I was well fitted out with lights, reflectors and all of the things to keep me safe but I was secretly beyond nervous and the teeth chattering had more to do with adrenalin than

cold.



*Early start in Sandringham — Photo: BFL*

The group gathered to receive the briefing from the leader then headed into the water near the yacht club. We launched and paddled as a tight pod out into the bay. I was immediately aware of the blackness around us, the

lights on our kayaks did not provide any illumination as to where we were going but simply determined our position in the pod. It was noted by one of the paddling colleagues how closely we paddled together that morning.

I was being flooded by sensory input by not having vision to rely on. The sounds, smells and motions were heightened, and I found myself hyperventilating. A fishing boat came speeding along through the darkness as we travelled closer to the channel markers. The waves washed upon us rhythmically creating an additional awareness that they were coming from a different direction, opposing the gentle rocking waves we had been paddling through.

Finally we reached the beacon and stopped for a short break. The morning light started to peer through the clouds, the breeze dropped and the vision of the city across the bay seemed

surreal with the city lights still on and the smoking stacks belching steam from the factories nearby.



*Finally we reached the beacon — Photo: BFL*

Peter had a play around and through the base supports at the beacon. He asked could we identify where we had to aim for for our return trip, and taught us the importance of finding a focal point on the horizon for our orientation.

So, once the point was identified we headed back, the sun was trying its hardest to peek through, the wind had dropped and water had smoothed to a gentle undulation. Good conversation, opportunities to listen and learn were given freely, as promises of hot coffee and maybe, maybe a few rolls or rescues near the shore, and before we know we were back at the shore, soon to reminisce on a superb morning that was sensory, surreal and worth every second.



*And as a final crowd pleaser a self-rescue in style — Photo: BFL*

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*The Melbourne city skyline rising like a soft silhouette*

### Ben Flora

## A Journey in the West — Altona to Werribee South

*Altona to Werribee South. 24 July. Distance ca 20km. Participants: Ben F (Mirage 530); Helmut H (Epic 16x), James B (Mirage 580); Joe A (Current Designs Sirocco); Kate A (Mirage 530); Keith R (Valley Aquanout) Richard R, trip leader (Taran), Wim B (P&H Cetus). — All photos by author. The author likes to thank James Balnaves for his input to this trip report.*

Ever done a car shuffle? The Altona to Werribee South paddle on the 24<sup>th</sup> July was just that.

It can certainly get a little tricky! Between making sure you take the right cars, to the right location, with

the right gear, and making sure you're not forgetting a paddle or your keys. To sort this out there was a flock of emails flying around the night before the paddle, discussing such details as: which cars were going where based on who was coming, whose car could transport two kayaks, and who had

managed to volunteer a kindly soul to collect them. In the end I had to leave this one to the experts and it all turned out well.

With eight paddlers in attendance the plan would be to take four cars to Werribee South and drive one back to our starting point in Altona. Wim's partner had graciously agreed to meet us at the end of our paddle and complete the necessary logistics to handle all of the Kayaks.

The morning of the paddle dawned clear, calm, and... COLD!! I arrived at Altona to see seven kayakers offloading their boats on the beach at the southern side of Altona, and once all were present and accounted for the car shuffle was executed as planned. Some volunteers stayed with the kayaks (and delegated two of their number to mount an expedition in search of coffee) as the rest of us jumped in our cars and headed to Werribee South.

I always like the sense of adventure when paddling in a new location. During the car shuffle it was evident that this side of the bay was very flat as we drove by what seemed to be many market garden farms. The soil in this area is a remarkable dark red brown and looked very rich and inviting, hopefully just like the upcoming 19km paddle from Altona to Werribee south. About 20 minutes later we were back and getting our kayaks ready for the paddle.

As the forecast for the wind was a NNW wind picking up 15 to 20 knots by 2pm, Richard R moved the paddle forward an hour and be on the water by 9am to increase our chances of avoiding this wind by getting to our destination a little earlier. Though you can never perfectly pick the weather! The NNW also meant that we would be paddling with an offshore wind. So ideally we needed to stick close to the shore as possible to avoid the interesting conditions further out.

The bay was very flat and the wind below 5 knots as we set out on our Journey in the West. I thought to myself this is going to be a nice paddle,

with a gentle breeze pushing us all the way down. Over my left shoulder was the bay with the Melbourne city skyline rising like a soft silhouette. It looked very different from this angle. I also noticed that the shipping lane was much closer to this side of the bay as three large ships were heading to the Port of Melbourne. After about an hour's paddling we pulled up to a beach and took off inland to explore the Point Cook Homestead. This 1860's bluestone cottage used to have a coffee shop in it at one time, however we were sadly informed that this fine establishment had closed its doors. The site and grounds looked a little run down now, but were still worth the look. Curiously, there was a gate standing alone in a garden obviously once flanked with a fence but now standing alone as though not quite knowing what to do with itself.



Landing at the homestead



Sea kayakers in their Sunday Best ...



... trying to blend in on their visit to the homestead

As time was beginning to press, thanks to the forecast rising winds getting closer, we jumped back in our boats and continued along the planned route. It was then that the wind picked up making things much more interesting for the next stage of the paddle. We rounded the point into the Point Cooke Marine Sanctuary and caught sight of the Werribee South ferry point, however due to the conditions we pushed our way closer to shore through a stiff headwind and into the lee. This presented some of our newer paddlers with quite a challenge, which they handled well and overcame with some help and much encouragement from the more experienced members. Continuing along the shoreline we made our way down under the seaplane jetty and into Campbells cove, where we passed about 5 or 6 people fishing



Lonely gate

for yabbies in the shallows. It's quite uncanny how these people look like something else in the distance. Perhaps a buoy or post, or even something more sinister such a large rock.

As we headed towards Werribee South we passed the RAF air base and a series of little fibro holiday houses. This side of the bay is very much less developed when compared to the eastern shores. There is a nest of new houses at the ferry port, which got me wondering "What is this place going to look like in another 10 years?"



*What is this place ...*

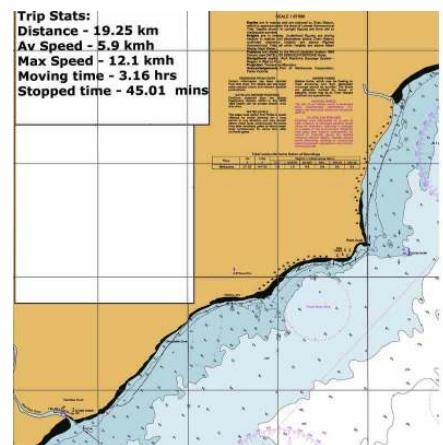


*... going to look in 10 years?*

Nearing our destination, a large catamaran passed us which surprised me but then I realised it was in fact the new ferry that has been in the news recently. It was here when things started to get fun. With a stronger wind behind us we were able to catch the occasional ride and a few "yea has" were heard as our boats slipped forward in the glide.

Then finally we turned the last point and headed for the cars at the car park. All in all it ended up being a paddle with a little bit of everything.

A peaceful start, a mini land adventure, a windy headwind to get back close to the shore and a few following sea downwind glides. Not to mention the enormous Big Breakfast that I had as we finished of the day with a coffee and calories back in Altona. It was all smiles at this point as we looked back on the now-finished Journey.



*Altona to Werribee — plot courtesy of Richard R*



Nooramunga transit

### Richard Rawling

## Nooramunga Marine Park — The Full Monty Paddle

#### Paddlers:

- Richard R — Rockpool Taran (no sails but with wing paddle).
- Steve C — Valley Aquanaut (sails but without wing paddle)

It has long been a goal of mine to paddle the full length of this fantastic paddling location. I have paddled many parts of it over the years including Corner Inlet, Snake Island & surrounds. Upon mentioning this plan to Steve Collins it became clear that he too shared the goal to have a crack at this paddle. So it was on!

Nooramunga Marine Park is a vast area of sand barrier islands, inlets, tidal flows and mangroves some 250 kms east of Melbourne. It is where the VSKC often heads for extended kayak camping trips and it is the gateway to the east coast of Wilsons Prom.

Duck Point in Corner Inlet marks the western end and McLoughlins Beach marks the eastern end. Between these points is some 70 km of fantastic paddling (ie in a 'straight' line).

This paddle requires careful planning because if you get tides and weather wrong then you are potentially facing strong currents, standing waves, sandbanks and a guilt complex from crushing hundreds of small crabs. In the lead up to the paddle we decided on the following planning requirements:

- We would run it as a private paddle because we were not sure what we would be up against and we needed to be confident in our ability to deal with anything thrown at us
- We wanted high tides around the middle of the day so we could get through areas that dry at low tide, and to do so in the middle of each days' paddling
- We knew we could do it in 2 days, but decided to do it over 3 to give us more time to soak up new sights, especially east of Port Albert
- Sails or a fast boat was required, we wanted to average  $> \sim 6$  kmh
- We were prepared to paddle up to 35 kms on Day 1 to find camp
- We were unsure of camping spots east of Port Albert, so we needed time to source these
- We knew that anything over 15 Kts pushing against tidal flows in Corner Inlet would leave us quite exposed given we faced a 20 km open crossing
- We needed a very long car shuffle or assistance with drop off and pick up

We settled on target dates of 2-4 August (HW at Port Welshpool ranged from 11.58 to 14.11 Hrs and ~2.5m). The wind forecast we had for 2 August was poor, pushing 20 Kts SW, but we could see better weather if we started on 3 August. This meant pushing the paddle out by one day, which led to HW at 15.10 on the last day, which was starting to get too late frankly.

Sue C kindly offered to take us down to the starting point at Duck Point, and even more kindly agreed to pick us up at McLoughlins at the end (and straight after her nursing shift finished — thanks Sue!)

We flew across Corner Inlet at nearly 7 kmh on a bearing of 50 M with a 12-14 Kt SW breeze behind us. After 18 kms we hit the start of the Swashway between Snake and Little Snake Island, bang on high tide as planned. We could have gone via Benison and Granite Islands, but that is 7 kms longer and is only warranted if trying to pick your way defensively in gnarly conditions. We had lunch at the Swashway Jetty (22 kms) and then decided to head for the Gulf Camp where we knew we could get a fire going (28.9 kms paddled). It was pretty cold overnight and we faced a reasonable carry of the boats on the morning of Day 2 as the tide came up (which is why we stopped here and did not go further East where the LW carry distances are even greater).

Unbelievably for this time of year, the slow high moving over Victoria spawned an annoying 12 Kt SE head wind on Day 2. We also had to paddle against an incoming tide in what can be a fast flowing area. Oh well, heads down and into it. We headed out to Port Albert entrance on the south side of Sunday and Drum Islands. We checked out the great VSKC Easter camping spot at the end of Snake Island on the way, and then paddled to get the inflow north in the Port Albert channel. We headed down to Horn Is-

land and then into Dog Channel, having lunch at Rescue Island. We had to get through this area on HW because there is extensive drying at LW. So we scuttled past Kate Kearney Entrance (which was narrow). I had a mapping GPS with channels marked, but following the channel markers in situ is your best bet here. Sand banks were appearing before our eyes and we did not want to have to carry the boats too far. So we headed further east trying to spy a reasonable camp spot which we found south of Manns Beach (west of Shoal Inlet Entrance), and out on the barrier island (26.7 kms paddled). This is an area where trolley wheels would be a good thing to have!

After a cold but still night we awoke to lovely sunshine, albeit with sand banks as far as the eye could see. So we went for a walk over the dunes to the remote surf beach for a look. We did not push off from here till late morning, underscoring why having a slightly earlier tide cycle than we did is prudent. We got down to Shoal Inlet Entrance, but not until Steve deviantly kept heading for mud banks out in front. When I caught up he was muttering something about the usefulness of maps and GPS! The entrance was ripping in by the time we got there and we had to work hard before we found a channel going in the direction of the flow. I got up to 13 kmh paddling here. Lesson — do not go near this narrow entrance on a strong out going tide. Once clear of this we made our way towards St Margaret Island, which is huge. There is great paddling in here but tide planning is critical because there are sand banks everywhere. There is an uninspiring Parks campground on this island but we could not find it without clearer location instructions. As we approached McLoughlins Beach we started to experience very strong tidal back flow in the split channel that leads up to the town. Initially

we thought the tide had turned, but realised it was still incoming! Once we turned into the main south-north channel we flew along and landed next to the jetty (13.6 kms paddling). High fives and smiles ended a really great paddle.

There is a nice grassed area next to the pier, fresh running water and picnic tables. Do not arrive here at LW though! We were a tad peckish so a hot drink and snack was most welcome. There are no shops in McLoughlins Beach. After an hour or so Sue kindly picked us up and we headed back to Meeniyian. It was as we drove back that we both realised just how far we had paddled when you drove it on land. The overall paddle was a tad under 70 kms as expected.

So, a few tips for this great paddle:

- Competent Grade 1 paddlers can do the trip provided you are willing to paddle 30+ kms if needed in one session and can sustain > 6 kmh.
- Watch conditions on Corner Inlet as it can get very choppy, and there is potential for significant wind on tide.
- Do it in 2 days if you want, but 3 days is far more enjoyable.
- Allow sufficient time for car shuffling (if you have to do that).
- HW in middle of day is best to avoid dry areas.
- Trolleys and sails highly recommended.
- Be prepared with good marine charts and topo maps, and ideally a mapping GPS.
- Follow channel markers east of Port Albert Channel.
- Take care with outgoing tidal flows at Shoal Inlet Entrance
- Research your camping spots.
- Take fresh water as there is none along the paddle, other than at the Jetty (but it is tank water of unknown purity).





Nooramunga National Park — The Full Monty — By Richard Rawling



*Introductions — Photo: Sea Trek*

**Joe and Kate Alberico**

## Sorrento — Level 1 Assessment Day



*Searching our memory banks ...*

Signing up in early May for VSKC's level 1 assessment day seemed a good idea at the time. However, as 29 May approached, the 15°C Port Phillip Bay water temperature brought to mind the old adage "he/she who bathes in May, will soon lie in clay" The 15–20 knot westerly wind forecast for the 29th also had me wondering whether this newbie sea kayaker would even get his boat off the Canadian Bay beach, let alone demonstrate basic level paddling skills (only speaking for myself here). Fortunately, our organisers kindly shifted the event to

Sorrento's bay beach, another scenic location and nicely sheltered from the westerly wind.

The assessment kicked off with introductions/ briefing from the assessors. A program of stretching exercises was entertainingly led by VSKC's President Bob Fergie. It was pleasing to see some considerably younger paddlers attending and I'm sure they found the stretches refreshing. The twinge in my back reminded me that I should probably do this sort of thing more often.



*... and beyond — Photos: KA*



*Maintaining that brace position — the black art of staying upright, in surf ...*

During the drive to Sorrento, Kate and I swapped a few of the finer points of kayak navigation, red and green channel markers, cardinal marks, keeping to the right of the channel etc., not seriously thinking any of this advanced knowledge would be needed on the day. Sure enough, a wad of quiz questionnaires was circulated, which had us searching our memory banks.

For the on-water skills assessment we were divided into groups amongst instructors Terry B, Robin B and Bob F, assisted by senior club members

Helmut H, Richard R and Peter S. Kate and I joined Terry's group with Helmut providing support and encouragement. Terry's tuition and demonstration of each skill was very helpful to us and made the assessment feel more like an extended coaching session. As an added bonus, Terry had each of us test our low support brace against his 'surf simulator'. Tow lines attached to the bow and stern of the kayak were handed to a team of paddlers standing on shore, who would run up the beach, giving the boat a rapid sideways tow. The only way to stay in the boat was to maintain that brace position, leaning in to the simulated wave.

The rescue exercise and swim

while towing a kayak reminded us why VSKC emphasises "dress for immersion" when advertising club trips. Running the assessment in this cooler time of the year provided a valuable added lesson in what to expect when "bathing" in cooler temperatures.

The Level 1 assessment day gave us a good deal of valuable skills coaching as well as the chance to have some or all of the Level 1 skills signed off. It was an extremely worthwhile event and we would recommend this to all new members. Thank you to the organisers, instructors and assistants, who generously devoted a large chunk of their weekend and likely a good deal of preparation time beforehand, for the benefit of the club and

those of us attending on the day.



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### Kate Alberico

## Snake Island Queen's Birthday Weekend 2016

All photos by Kate and Joe Alberico – Ed.

It was a cold wet windy morning that saw 15 Snake Island expeditioners at 8:30 am, huddled under the awning of the Port Welshpool general store. We could see the forecast gale (it had arrived and was here to stay at

20+ knots all day, with 1.5–2 metre waves in Corner Inlet according to the BOM). Plan A, to paddle from here to the Cattlemen's Huts, leaving now, was under review. To an ungraded paddler, this wasn't good news. However, Steve C offered Plans B and C and the group selected Plan B, adjourn to Port Albert for coffee

and fish and chips and return at one o'clock by which time the wind should have moderated, and then paddle to a closer camp at the Swashway jetty, some 5 km away, for our first night.

By one o'clock everybody was back at Port Welshpool and loading up the boats. Looking at the conditions I wondered if I was committing to more

wave action and wind (25 knots) than I was capable of managing as a novice sea kayaker. Terry B reassured me and Joe that we could make the crossing. Joe and I had been in Terry and Helmut's group for the recent level one training and assessment day, so they had a good understanding of our skills. Once on the water and in my boat at the shore bobbing in the small waves while the rain fell, Richard R quietly told me that I should remember to brace. I thought this was good advice and knew that I did not know how to do it, not quickly enough for it to be of any benefit.

Paddling south with the waves coming over the beam and then east with the waves following I rose and fell in waves bigger than I had been in before. I was not a happy paddler. I was alone in mountainous seas that were threatening to capsize me — or at least that's how it seemed to me. The waves decreased in size as we rounded the east end of Little Snake Island and paddled up towards the Swashway jetty for our first night's camp on the Snake Island side of the channel separating the two islands.

Everyone worked together to lift the loaded boats up onto the small embankment above the high tide level. The small campground was nestled in behind the tea trees, sheltered and perfect for our tents. It rained intermittently and some set up their kitchens under a shelter and others gathered around the campfire that had been built by some of our paddlers.

The next morning getting ready to go, we saw kangaroos on the beach just near our camp site. We were intrigued to see one jump into the water until it could jump no more and then swim across the channel to neighbouring Little Snake Island. The wind had moderated but was still a westerly and so the first leg of the paddle was into a headwind through the Swashway. I fell to the rear of the group. Sarah B advised me to put my paddle in further forward near my toes to get more power and I was summoned by Terry B to the front, to receive a useful refresher in forward

©Victorian Sea Kayak Club – <http://vskc.org.au>

stroke 'right wrist over the left knee, left wrist over the right knee, straight arm coming back'. The paddle along the west shore of Snake Island was very pleasant with views of Wilsons Prom close by. I nearly went over once. Richard R gave me more detailed instruction on bracing. Steve C grinning happily, told me to smile.

We arrived in time for lunch after carrying all our gear in large bags to the Snake Island Cattlemen's huts. What a delightful surprise. A collection of huts, a large room for sleeping, a large room for eating with an open fireplace and a potbelly stove, lovely verandas, comfortable old armchairs and couches, and flushing toilets and running water. Lots of grass to pitch the tents on with views of deer, kangaroos and birds.

That afternoon some of us went for a walk on Snake Island. We saw beautiful sheoaks, banksias, grass trees and eucalypts. Martin and Michael shared their love and knowledge of the plants.



On Snake Island

We returned for cups of tea and some serious dinner eating. The two Nicks made wonderful fires and the food, warmth, conversation, wine and card games made for a convivial evening.



The next morning Terry B, Sarah B and Tony C left early as they continued on to Johnny Souey Cove for an extended paddling trip. The rest of us had a lovely slow morning at the huts enjoying the winter sunshine before leaving around 11am to paddle into the wind across to the Prom and have lunch on sun warmed granite boulders. The open water crossing back towards Port Welshpool had me rattled and Richard R and Bob F kindly paddled nearby. Steve C cunningly arranged for the tide to sweep us back to Port Welshpool in good time. Our return paddle was completed in glorious afternoon sunshine. The water as we pulled up was so calm that I could hardly believe the tempest it had been when we started.

Back on dry land I can say that I enjoyed the trip tremendously and congratulate Steve C on a well-led trip. A big thank-you to all the seasoned paddlers who gave their advice and time, and to everyone for their lovely company.



Snake Islanders — By Ben Flora