

# Sea Trek

## Port Waters North

[www.vskc.org.au](http://www.vskc.org.au)

Spring 2016



Issue 87



## 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: HH – Front moving over Hobsons Bay; view from Middle Park towards Web Dock and Newport Power Station.

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## Editorial



“Port Waters North” refers to the northern part of Vessel Traffic Services (VTS) of Port Phillip Bay,

covering the northern part of the Bay from the Yarra down Fawkner Beacon and beyond. It roughly describes the playground for us “Bay paddlers”, the poor cousins of the true Blue Water paddlers. Sea Trek has been lucky being able to secure a substantial piece by new Club member Pete Harvey on navigating the busy waters of the northern part of the bay.

Please also welcome the other first-time contribu-

tors: Katheryne Botherway, Brad Mountford and Andrew Mueller.

There was not much to tell about exiting trips. The fickle Spring whether was not very conducive to running trips other than the regular ones, and even they had to be cancelled too often. So the decision was: let’s talk about the paddles that still have to be paddled.

Finally, I am resigning after 3 years of editing Sea

Trek. While I had every reason to doubt the wisdom of putting a mildly dyslexic German with a dubious command of English into this role, I have been humbled by the support and help I have received from so many in the Club putting together yet another edition. This includes Ben Flora who co-edited this edition. Thank you all!

— Ed (Helmut)



## President’s Podcast



This is the last time I will be writing the President’s Podcast. At this years AGM I retire from the position of President after 3 years in the seat. It has been an honour to serve the club in this capacity, although as I am very aware, I have benefited immensely from the dedicated work of a terrific team throughout this period and I sincerely thank them all for their service and collegial support.

One of the things that I am regularly reminded of

is that while we are a very eclectic group, our love for sea kayaking and enjoyment of sharing the experience with others is something we all share in one way or another. Clearly this is something we enjoy when we paddle together.

It is also something that swells our hearts with pride when one of our sea kayaking family achieves something remarkable, as was the case on Wednesday 2nd November 2016 when Sandy Robson completed her amazing five year expedition from Germany to Australia. What an amazing expedition as she replicated Oscar Speck’s journey by kayak in the late 1930’s. Well done Sandy, and well done to the club collectively and individually for the practical support given to Sandy during this period.

And then there are those desperately sad times when as a community we grieve the loss of of a much loved club member. Almost to the minute, as Sandy reached the northern shores of Saibai island, many club members had gathered in Paynesville for the funeral service of Mick MacRobb following a 12 month battle with pancreatic and liver Cancer that took his life on Sunday 30th October, aged 50. Over many years Mick has made a wonderful contribution to our club and we grieve deeply the passing of a true friend. He was a bloke we all loved and were so proud of as a global sea kayaking legend through his brilliant ‘flat earth sea kayak sails’. His was a remarkable life tragically cut short in his prime. Our sincere condolences go to Mick’s partner

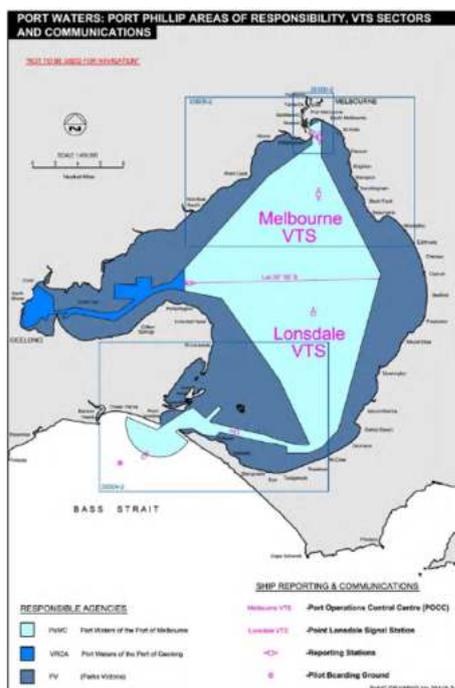
Lyn and to Mick’s mum and dad, Graeme and Jenny.

Yes, we are a family in a real sense and I suspect it is this dynamic in particular that we all greatly value as VSKC members. This issue of Sea Trek is yet another expression of this sense of family. As I close, I particularly want to thank Helmut for his wonderful work as Sea Trek editor for the past three years. I’m sure you’ll all agree that he has done a magnificent job.

Finally, thank you all for your support and encouragement to me during my term as club President. My very best wishes to you all and especially to those who take on VSKC management committee roles into the future.

— Cheers  
Bob





Port Waters — VTS Areas of responsibility

Pete Harvey

## Paddling in Port Waters North

Graphics, images reproduced, where not otherwise indicated, are taken from publications of the Port of Melbourne Corporation with their friendly permission. Schemas of lateral and special marks are reproduced from the Victorian Recreational Boating Safety Handbook. (See text for more detail.) — I also would like to thank Vic Goy, of Marine Training Services, for information on the use of blue lights on cardinal marks. — P. H.

My first club paddle with VSKC was a short loop in the top end of the Bay from Sandridge Beach across the end of Web Dock and then across the Williamstown channel between the No 23 and 22 beacons. From there we paddled along south along the edge of the Williamstown Channel to Breakwater pier before rounding point Gellibrand and heading to Williamstown beach for a shore break. On our return we headed more or less straight across to Kerferd Rd from Point Gellibrand. And then stuck more or less to the coast passing across the end of station Pier before returning to San-

dridge Beach.

This was a new experience for me. Even though part of my job involves operating a commercially registered boat in Port Phillip, kayaking in Hobsons Bay was a completely new experience. The two things I noticed most were firstly, how everything looked so different from the low seating of my kayak and second, how slow I am paddling compared to when I'm operating the work boat.

Being in a small boat, powered only by me, in the waters of Australia's largest car and container port left me feeling more than a little vulnerable. With over 3000 commercial ship visits each year the chances of encountering a big ship in the channels is pretty high. Not surprisingly I spent a bit of time during the paddle wondering what my fellow paddlers, especially the ones who don't normally paddle in that part of the Bay, thought about the meaning of the dozens of different navigation marks, beacons, and buoys that we encountered on our paddle.

On request by *Sea Trek*, I have put together the following introductory notes in the hope that they might help increase safety and take some uncertainty out paddling in Hobsons Bay.

At this point I should make it clear that I don't claim to be an expert or authority on navigation or on the operation of the Port of Melbourne. The information that follows is gathered from government publications and from my own experience. It's not guaranteed to be free from errors or omissions. If you are paddling in the port of Melbourne it's ultimately up to you to ensure you comply with the relevant rules for safe boating and navigation.

### Relevant publications

The main publications I have referred to for this article are:

- **Port of Melbourne Corporation Harbour Master's Directions 2015**, which covers, among other things;

the regulations and practices that govern vessel operations, Vessel Traffic Service (VTS) operations, anchorages, channels and berths, port services and tides, and procedures and requirements for aquatic event activities.

• **Port of Melbourne Corporation Port Information Guide, August 2015**, includes information including a port description of the Port of Melbourne, notifications, documentation and reporting, port safety and security and services provided by the port. Both the Harbourmaster’s directions as and the Port Information Guide are available for download from: <http://www.portofmelbourne.com.au/publications>

• **Victorian Recreational Boating Safety Handbook**. Published by Transport Safety Victoria. While this free booklet is directed mainly at power boats it is still a mine of all sorts of information relevant to the operation of recreational craft in Victoria. It contains information on navigation marks, restricted areas, safety equipment and operating rules to name a few. Search for “Recreational Boating Safety” at: <http://transportsafety.vic.gov.au> I’ll start with an introduction to some of the most frequently encountered navigation marks then go on to the main areas of the port that require caution when paddling and the services provided by the Port of Melbourne to increase safety. After that I’ll try and give an overview of the navigation and other port rules that apply specifically to small vessels (including sea kayaks). Finally I’ll finish up with some suggestions about how we as kayakers can make the best use of use this information to increase safety and confidence when in port waters.

**Common navigation aids**

The most common visible navigation aids in the area are.

- Port and Starboard lateral marks
- Special purpose marks
- Cardinal marks

• Isolated danger marks

While there are many other types in use, a basic knowledge of these will be a good starting point. I’ll provide a brief description of each here. For more information and an explanation of the lights for each type the Victorian Recreational Boating Guide has more detailed information.

**Port and Starboard lateral marks**

These are the ones we will see the most of they are usually used to define the navigable channels. In Australia the green or starboard lateral marks are kept to the right (starboard) as you enter the port and red or port lateral marks are kept to the left (port).

Navigation marks are usually fitted with a ‘top mark’ which assists with identification when low light or some other factor (bird poop for example) obscures the colour of the mark.

Port lateral marks will have a can shaped or rectangular top mark while starboard lateral marks have a cone shaped or triangular top mark with the point directed upwards.

In Hobsons Bay most of the lateral marks are beacons (appropriately coloured piles driven into the seabed with a top mark attached) but buoys are occasionally used as lateral marks too. Buoys used as lateral marks are often the same shape as their top marks. Can shaped for port laterals and cone shaped for starboard laterals. See Figure 1 for examples.

At night or during low visibility port laterals are lit with a flashing red light and starboard laterals are lit with a flashing green light.

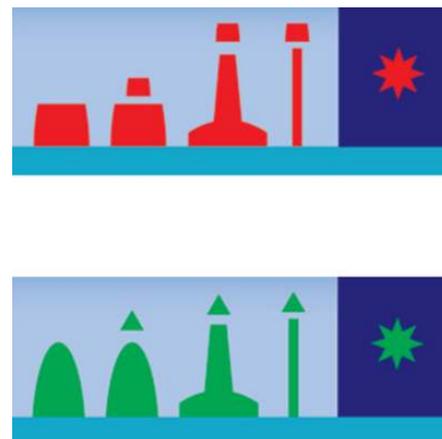


Figure 1: Port hand marks (top), starboard marks (bottom)

**Special marks**

Special marks indicate a special area or feature. They can be used for a variety of purposes such as to indicate an aquaculture lease, or to show where a channel divides.

Special marks are coloured yellow and often have an “X” shaped top mark

At night they are lit with a yellow flashing light

The most notable use of special marks in Hobsons Bay is to delineate the Transit Only Zone (TOZ) around the Port Melbourne Channel. (More details about the TOZ later.) Special marks are also used by nearby yacht clubs to mark the turning points for sailing races. (Examples in Figure 2)

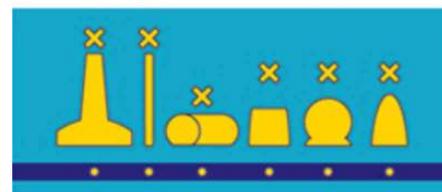


Figure 2: Special marks

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### Cardinal marks

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These allow the use of a compass to mark where to find the deepest water in an area or the safe side on which to pass a danger or a feature in a channel such as a junction or the end of a reef. Cardinal marks are painted with yellow and black bands and are fitted with a pair of cones for a top mark. There are four types of Cardinal mark (one for each of the cardinal points of the compass);

**North Cardinal** — Top mark is two cones both pointing upwards. At night it is lit with a continuously flashing white light.

**East cardinal** — Top mark is two cones with their bases together. At night its white light flashes quickly (or very quickly) 3 times every 5 or 10 seconds.

**South Cardinal** — Top mark is two cones, both pointing upwards. At night it flashes quickly (or very quickly) 6 times followed by one long flash every 10 or 15 seconds.

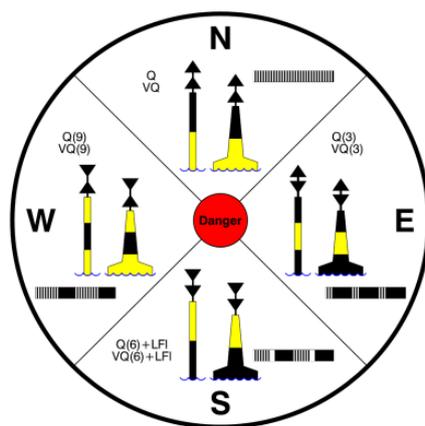
**West Cardinal** — the two cones of the top mark are arranged with their points together. At night it flashes quickly (or very quickly) 9 times every 10 or 15 seconds.

I remember the top marks by knowing that North is always up on a chart to the North Cardinal has both cones pointing up. The west Mark looks a bit like a wine glass and wine begins with “W” The marks for the East Cardinal are sort of egg shaped (if you squint a bit) and so the “E” in egg reminds me of east.

I remember the light patterns for the cardinal marks by thinking of the face of a clock. East is the same as 3 south is 6 and west is 9.

An example in Hobsons Bay is the East Cardinal mark that marks the end of the Gellibrand shoal to the south of the Time Ball Tower at Williamstown. When navigating around cardinal marks remember that the safe water will be in the direction indicated by the mark so in this case the safe water will be to the east of the mark. The Gellibrand shoal cardi-

nal mark's light character can be read from the chart as Q(3) 10s & F. Bu. This means: Quick flashing in groups of 3 every 10 seconds AND also shows a fixed blue light. The presence of the blue light shown from this cardinal mark is relatively unusual. The purpose in this case is to make this important cardinal mark easier to identify against the background of many white lights on shore at Williamstown and point Gellibrand.



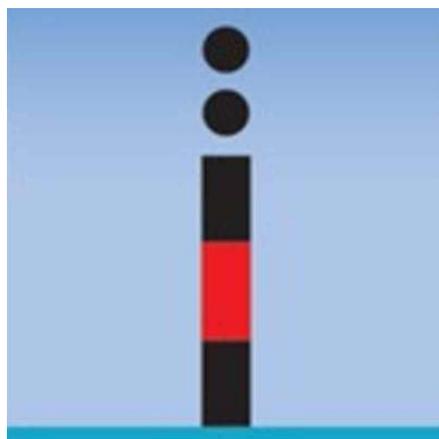
Cardinal marks — Source: Wikimedia commons

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### Isolated danger mark

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These are usually placed on obstacles that have navigable water all around them. Dangers might include things like an isolated reef, a wreck or a rock.



Isolated danger mark

The mark will be black with one or more horizontal red bands and

will have two spheres (one above the other) as a top mark at night it will flash a white light in groups of 2.

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### Port Waters

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Exactly what is the extent of the port waters for the Port of Melbourne?

With an idea of what some of the main navigation marks are we can now move onto some of the features of the port that might present problems to the us as recreational users of the port waters. Fortunately there aren't that many.

Port waters for the Port of Melbourne include all of the waters navigable by commercial shipping within Port Phillip (as well as an area a semi-circular area outside the heads) Waters in Corio bay fall under the jurisdiction of the Port of Geelong authority.

Have a look at the graphics at the top of this article. In my text I am referring mainly to the area shown in the small rectangle marked in blue that takes in Port Melbourne, Williamstown and the River Yarra up to the Bolte Bridge.

Where to take Care? When paddling in the north end of the Bay The main areas that require caution on our part are the shipping channels the marked “Transit Only Zone” and the areas around wharves and docks.

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### Shipping Channels.

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When approaching Melbourne from the south large vessels will follow the shipping fairway north from the Hovell Pile (the Hovell Pile is in the south end of the bay about 3km offshore from the Rosebud Jetty) towards beacons E1 and E2 (port and starboard lateral marks) that mark the entrance to the Port Melbourne Channel about a kilometre to the south of the Fawcner beacon. The Port Melbourne Channel extends north towards Station Pier. The heritage-listed leading light structures provide a visual transit during the day. At night the Port Melbourne Channel is covered by an isophase sectored light situated on

land to the northwest of Station Pier (See Chart AUS 155 for details). A pair of blue leading lights serve as a transit for the centre of the channel and the approach to Station Pier.



Front and rear leads for the Port Melbourne Channel. Both show fixed blue lights at night and when placed in transit guide vessels along the Port Melbourne channel towards Station Pier

Adjacent to Point Gellibrand, just after the No 12 Lateral mark, the channel branches. The western fork becomes the Williamstown Channel and the Port Melbourne Channel narrows and continues north towards Station Pier.

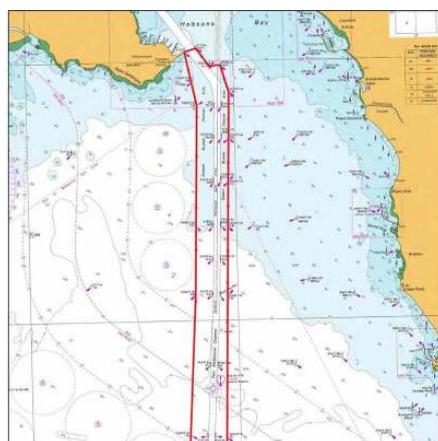
The point where the channel forks is marked with a west cardinal mark (number 15). From here the Channel passes Williamstown and continues to the Yarra River.

### TOZ — Transit only Zone

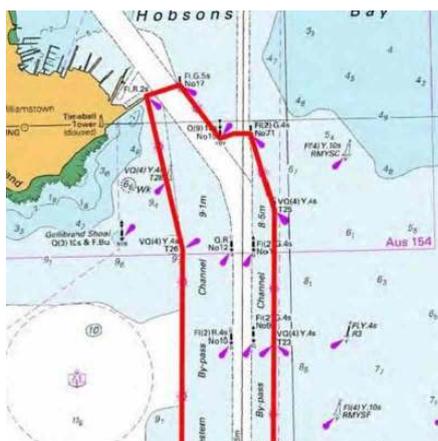
The Port Melbourne Channel is flanked to the east by the one-way Eastern By-Pass Channel and to the west by the two-way Western By-Pass Channel. The western edge of the Western By-pass and the eastern edge of the Eastern By-pass are marked by special beacons (yellow with “X” top marks”) which also delimit an area known as the “Transit Only Zone” (TOZ). The chart below shows the approaches to Port Melbourne and the extent of the TOZ. Charts AUS 154 and 155 provide more detail.

Vessels are prohibited from anchoring or drifting in the Transit only Zone (TOZ).

The TOZ covers the Port Melbourne Channel south of breakwater pier and includes the eastern and western by-pass channels and extends about 3 nautical miles to the south of the Fawkner beacon. The TOZ is clearly marked by yellow beacons (and one buoy) that are identified with numbers preceded with the letter “T”. See image below to the right for examples of the markers used to define the TOZ.



Transit Only Zone and main approaches to Port Melbourne (partial view)



TOZ Detail at Gellibrand

At night the all the marks delimiting the TOZ show a yellow light flashing very quick groups of 4 every 4 Seconds. On the chart this is written as VQ(4) Y. 4s. To make them stand out even more, the lights of all the TOZ

markers have been synchronised to all flash at the same time.



Examples of marks used to delimit the TOZ (note the “T” on the buoy)

### Wharves, docks, swinging basins

Other areas where kayakers should be particularly cautious are the areas around wharves docks and swinging basins where large vessels will need space to manoeuvre as they prepare to go alongside or depart. Some examples include:

- The area of Port Melbourne Channel that widens at its end between station and Princes Pier.
- A short channel to Webb dock branches off the Williamstown Channel at the number 21 channel marker.
- Docks and piers at Williamstown and in the Yarra River.

Be aware that the Harbour Master’s Directions specify minimum approach distances for some of these (see the extract of the Harbour Master’s directions below for details).

It’s wise to stay away from these areas if at all possible but if you must pass or cross through them make sure you keep a good lookout, listen for sound signals and monitor VHF Channel 12 (ships are required to notify Melbourne VTS when they are approaching the or departing their berths). Listening out for these notifications is a good way to keep track of shipping movements around you.

### Rules, and more rules

Apart from the usual rules that apply to all vessel operators, waters in the port of Melbourne are also covered by the rules contained in Harbour Master's Directions. The Harbour Master's Directions cover, among other things, the regulations and practices that govern vessel operations, Vessel Traffic Service (VTS) operations, anchorages, channels and berths, port services and tides, and procedures and requirements for aquatic event advices. Fortunately the majority of the content is directed at operations relating to the use of the Port by large vessels (over 35 m in length) but section 2.18 sets out rules that apply directly to small vessels.

The following is an extract of Section 2.18 of the *Harbourmaster's Directions*:

*The Master of a small vessel must:*

*ensure that the vessel keeps out of the way of:*

*vessels 35 m or more in length (if in doubt, the Master should assume that the other vessel's length is more than 35 m)*

*a tug or lines boat assisting the movement, berthing or unberthing of another vessel*

*comply with waterside restricted zones declared under the Maritime Transport and Offshore Facilities Security Act (Cwlth) (MTOFSA), and ensure the following minimum clear distance is maintained when approaching a ship berthed at:*

*Station Pier, 75 m  
Holden Dock, 75 m  
Gellibrand Pier, 75 m  
Maribyrnong No. 1, 40 m*

*not anchor in a fairway or channel and is strictly prohibited from anchoring or dragging anchor within 0.17 nautical mile (300 m) of the underwater gas pipeline between Mordialloc and Altona, as delineated on chart Aus143 and Aus155*

*when engaged in towing, obtain permission from Melbourne VTS to enter the Port Melbourne Channel, Eastern By-Pass Channel, Williamstown Channel or River Yarra*

*not navigate port waters of the Port of Melbourne while taking part in any regatta, contest, race or other event unless the Harbour Master has been advised of the event taking place*

*not navigate through port waters of the Port of Melbourne to and from any regatta, contest, race or other event held in waters adjacent to the Port of Melbourne unless the Harbour Master has been advised of the event taking place.*

Together, the *Harbour Master's Directions* and the *Port Information Guide* contain just about all the information anyone could need about the port and how it works. The current versions of the Harbour Master's Rules and the Port Information Guide can be found with the link I provided at the start of these notes.

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### Vessel Traffic Service (VTS)

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The Port of Melbourne Vessel Traffic Service (VTS) provides information to help with on-board decision making and a Traffic Organisation Service (TOS) to prevent the development of dangerous maritime traffic situations and support safe and efficient movement of vessel traffic within the VTS area.

The Port of Melbourne VTS area is divided into the Lonsdale VTS — for traffic south of 38°05' S and Melbourne VTS — for traffic north of 38°05' S.

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### Putting it all into practice ...

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What happens after we have read all the rules and familiarised ourselves with the marks and charts and we are finally shoving off from the beach

about to head off into the bay? The plethora of rules navigation marks and restricted areas can all combine to add to a sense of confusion and sometimes rising panic to all but the most experienced commercial seafarers.

But really, all we need to do to navigate the port safely is to stick to a few basic principles:

**Have a Plan** — Before a trip in the port work out where you would like to visit and plan a sensible way to get there. For me this would mean minimising the amount of time spent in marked channels and the TOZ. To do that I would if possible plan my crossings of channels and the TOZ to be at the narrowest points. I try to cross channels starting at one lateral marker and crossing to the one opposite. Put crossing points or the position of the relevant channel markers into your GPS before the trip so that you can find them easily.

**Communicate** — The Harbourmasters Rules recommend that small vessels maintain a listening watch on VHF Channel 12. So have VHS radio and know how to use it. When in port waters remember to listen out on your radio. All large ships are required by the Harbour Master's Rules to report to Melbourne VTS when passing Fawkner Beacon or Breakwater Pier or West Gate Bridge. Those reports can be a good early warning that you may have a large ship heading your way.

Melbourne VTS is your friend! If planning to cross channels or the TOZ or to head up the Yarra for a tour it's OK to contact Melbourne VTS to inform them of your intentions. They will use the information to warn other vessels in the area of your presence and may also provide information on shipping movements that may affect you so that you can plan to avoid them. They are unlikely to answer questions such as "is it safe for me to cross the channel" that call is up to you, Melbourne VTS can only provide information that helps you make the decision for yourself. As a matter of courtesy it's a good idea to make a

brief call to VTS when you are leaving port waters too so they know you are no longer in their area of control.

If you are with a pod, designate one person (preferably someone familiar with radio procedure) as radio contact for the group, rather than have several boats all call for the same purpose. But remember if you are doing this the pod should be kept together when in port waters.

**Listen Out!** — It's useful to be familiar with the basic sound signals used by vessels when manoeuvring. This can be especially helpful when paddling around wharves and berths most useful I find are :

**One short blast** = : Ship is altering course to Starboard

**Two short blasts** = = : Ship is altering course to Port

**Three short blasts** = = = : Ship going astern

**Five short blasts** = = = = = : Ship is unsure of your intentions. And in doubt that you are taking sufficient measures to avoid a collision.

If I heard this and the bow of any ship pointing even slightly in my direction I would be doing all I could to quickly get out of its path and to an area out of the channel.

**One long blast** — : ship approaching a bend in a channel.

**Know where you are at all times** — This should be self explanatory. If you don't know where you are you can't be sure if you are in a channel or some other restricted port area. If you have notified VTS that you are in the port they may call you back to determine your current position (perhaps to warn another vessel of your presence). It's better to be able give your location relative to some known feature such as a channel marker or land feature than to suffer through the awkward silence that will follow when you say you don't know. If you can't see any features nearby you can always read off the Latitude and Longitude from your GPS as a last resort.

**Be properly equipped** — Apart from your usual legislated safety gear, I have already mentioned two pieces of kit that are really must-haves for

kayaking in port waters, namely a GPS and Marine VHF Radio. So for list lovers:

- GPS with relevant waypoints loaded

- VHF Radio dual watching channel 12 and 74 while in port waters.

- A big noise maker. Not just a whistle but a pressure pack horn that has a chance of being heard above the noise of a speeding two stroke outboard motor. While Big ships are a concern to us they are quite predictable in their movements and should be pretty easy to avoid. But the Port is a very busy place at times and is used lots of other smaller and faster boats that are sometimes driven by people with limited skills and experience. The horn is your last resort method of making others aware of your presence. Have it handy with a fully charged cylinder.
- Chart for the area you will be paddling in: AUS 155 or 154 for the approaches to the port. Have it handy just in case the GPS goes for a dive. It's a good idea to try and get familiar with it before you paddle so you don't have to study it when you are under pressure in a wet wobbly kayak.

- An old fashioned compass doesn't rely on batteries like a GPS and is really good for orienting your chart.

- Spare batteries for the VHF and the GPS

- Know the limitations of you and your boat.



A "noisemaker"

Since I began paddling again I have gradually come to realise that not be-

ing able to speed along at 40 knots whenever I want is not always bad thing. Being relatively slow in the kayak doesn't preclude me from being safe in port waters so long as I plan my trips with the feebleness of my boat's engine in mind. To that end I find it's a good idea to allow plenty of time to cross channels and keep in mind headwinds, currents and tides that might increase crossing times. Rather than make a dash across the bows of a 35,000 ton tanker, it's nearly always a better option to hang out quietly by a lateral marker and then cross comfortably after the ship has passed.

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#### And it never ends ...

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There's a lot to know about navigating in the port and anywhere else for that matter. I have tried to show some of the basics to improve safety in port waters and increase understanding of how it all works. Yes there is lots to remember and lots more to learn but that shouldn't stop us getting out on the water and enjoying it. Every paddle is an opportunity to increase experience and gain knowledge so get out and enjoy the sea!

Hope this will help ! if you find errors and omissions let me know and I will try to correct them .

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#### Some final notes on radio use

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If you wish to carry a marine VHF radio you should be qualified to use it. See the information at the link below for details:

<http://acma.gov.au/Citizen/TV-Radio/Radio/Marine-and-Amateur-Radio/australian-waters-qualification>

There's not enough room here to go into all the details of radio operation but hopefully these notes will be a good starting point.

#### Do:

- Wait for a lull in radio traffic before broadcasting

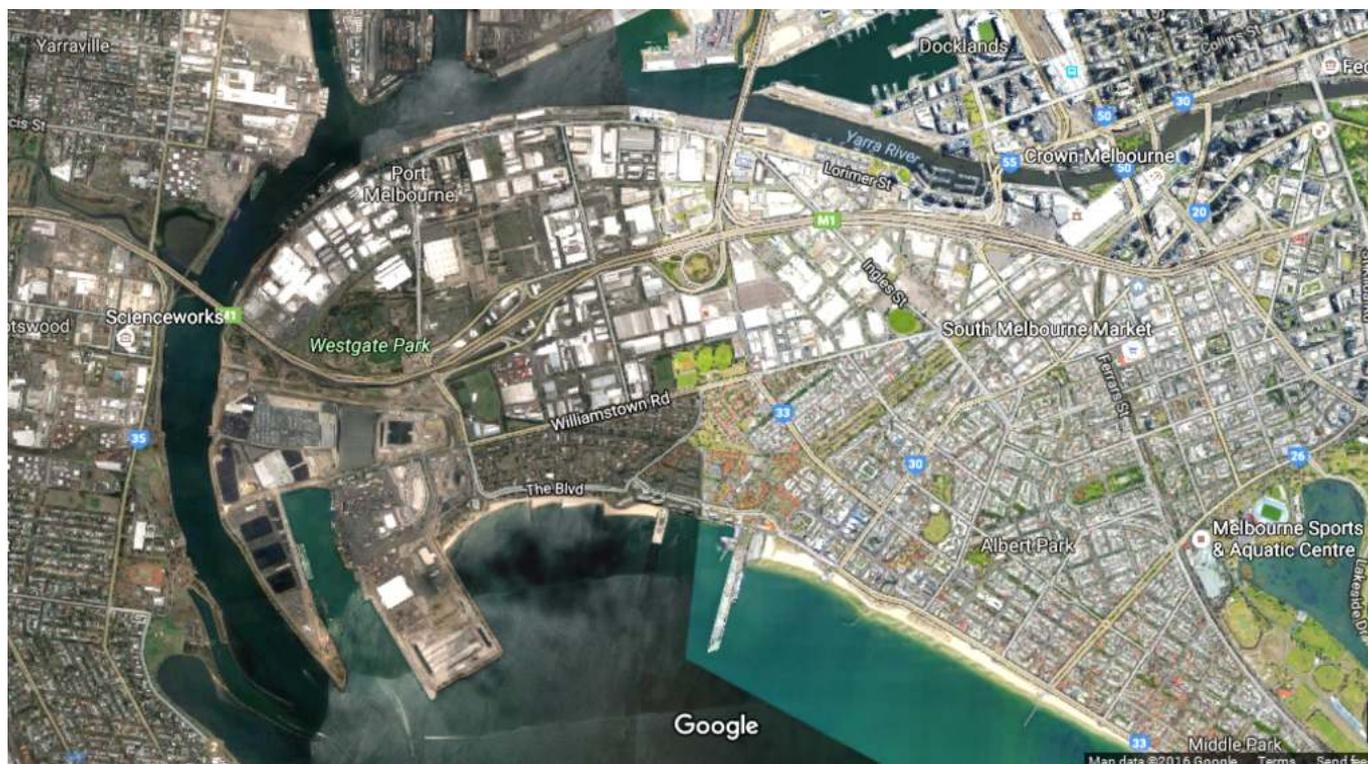
- Plan what you need to say before broadcasting

- Be concise, measured and to the point

- Speak clearly, don't rush or shout your message. It's best to hold the microphone to one side and speak across it rather than directly into it.
- Your transmissions should start with the name of the station you are calling followed by your station's name. eg Melbourne VTS this is (your call sign)
- Don't:**
- Don't swear or cuss
- Don't use commercial working or emergency channels such as 12, 16 or 76 for general communications between kayaks.
- Don't call during the three minute period after the hour and half hour. This is an internationally recognised silence period (especially on emergency channel CH 16 VHF) which is designed to allow distress calls especially from weaker stations to be heard.

How you use your radio says a lot about you to other vessel users so be sure to use it responsibly.

This YouTube video gives some good basics on the correct use of VHF radios: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=F7BUdn\\_9v-Y](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=F7BUdn_9v-Y)



## Helmut Heinze

# The Yarra from Southbank to Sandridge Beach

I happen to have the Yarra in front of my doorstep at Southgate, a mere 500m from the underground car park where I keep my kayak. I also happen to love sea kayaking (ideally blue water), or at least paddling on the Bay (sometimes bluish). It took me some time to overcome my aversion to the caffe latte-coloured water drifting down Southbank and my unease venturing into the industrial parts of

the river to reach the Bay this way.

Since my first forays 3 years ago (by then with my trusty Trak 1600 folding kayak) I have paddled the Yarra from Southbank to Sandridge Beach close to 20 times in both directions. Enough to become familiar and a bit more comfortable, but also enough to have a couple of encounters that took me by surprise despite all care and efforts to stay safe (for I am a naturally timid and sometimes

overly cautious person).

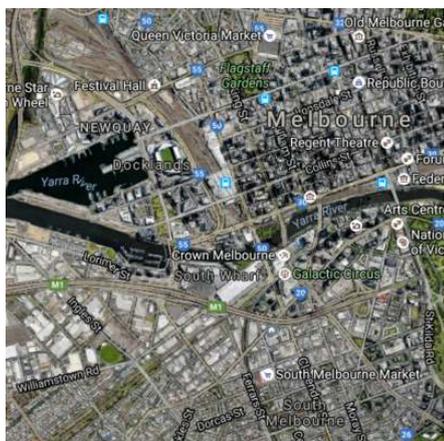
Find below some notes on paddling the lower Yarra. I am going to describe the journey downstream, as this is the more challenging direction.

Starting from the rowing club boat houses just east of Princess Bridge, the journey consists of 3 distinct sections: 1) from the rowing clubs / Southgate to Bolte Bridge; 2) from Bolte Bridge to Westgate Bridge; and

3) from Westgate Bridge to the river entrance and across to Sandridge Beach.

### Southgate to Bolte Bridge

Distance ca 3.5km. Risk level: medium to low. Watch out for river cruises, Williamstown ferries, water taxis swinging around rowing boats. Well protected against wind, low currents. Speed limit 5 kts.



Southgate to Bolte Bridge



Passing Princess Bridge

Launch at the rowing clubs opposite Federation Square, ignore the odd grumpy swan, pose for snap-happy Chinese tourists as required.

This is the easy cafe latte stretch of the journey down the river. The boat traffic can be heavy downstream of Princess Bridge, but the commercial skippers have learnt to mingle with all

sorts of water traffic, including rowing boats turning just in front of their bow. Yet stay clear moored vessels as they can suddenly pull out without much a warning.

While passing under the many bridges be aware about your limited visibility to other traffic. The bridges are very low and cast a deep shadow over anyone passing underneath.

At the Casino and a bit further down at South Wharf there are two helipads moored in the river. A landing or starting chopper not only is frightening noisy but also creates pretty hefty gusts. Keep a distance of at least 2 kayak lengths when passing the helipads. Sometimes the pilots seem to wait a bit starting or landing, sometimes not.

Once past the last pedestrian bridge at South Wharf the river opens up. The silty waters becomes a tiny bit clearer and take a slightly greenish tinge. On the upstream side we pass a marina, on our side we leave behind the last buildings of the Docklands and travel along vast dilapidated areas that are still being reclaimed.

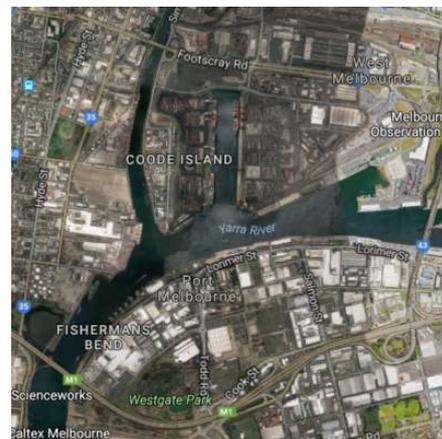
At the final bit of this first section we switch into what I would describe as a deliberate navigation mode, paying attention to the channel markers, construction zones, security restricted zones etc.

We approach the Bolte Bridge from afar by aiming for the right pylon, and when getting closer aiming just to the right of the red buoy next to the pylon. This way we stay just outside the channel but keep away from shallow areas close to the pylon. Once we have reached the buoy the entrance to Victoria Harbour to our right comes into our sights. That's where the troubles start.

### Bolte Bridge to Westgate Bridge

Distance ca 3.6km. Risk level: high. Watch for leisure shipping in an out of Victoria Harbour; monitor cargo ships not just travelling upstream of downstream but pulling possibly out from docks, crossing the river, swinging around, with or without a number

of tugs involved. In windy conditions waves of 0.3–.4 m the open areas, rebound close to the piers. It is essential to travel the shortest line when crossing the swing basin or docks. Know your traffic rules and be very, very alert. Speed limit still 5 kts.



Bolte Bridge to Westgate Bridge

Here we enter right into a large commercial harbour. The downstream stretch from Bolte Bridge to the Westgate is the most difficult part of the trip for three reasons:

At times there is very heavy leisure traffic in and out of Victoria Harbour. We have to cross their uncomfortably wide lane underneath Bolte Bridge.

The north bank of the Yarra is dotted with docks, swing basins and with the entrance of the Maribyrnong River.

To make things even more uncomfortable, the docks form the edge of the shipping channel. The channel markers are on the piers, not in the water. We have no choice but to paddle inside the channel.

Starting from underneath the Bolte Bridge we have to dash across the entrance of Victoria Harbour to the warehouses on the right edge of the river. The distance is 200 to 250m, depending on the angle of attack. At a speed of 5km/h it takes about 3 minutes to cross over. I usually aim at the left edge of the Patrick warehouse as a good compromise, but in dense traffic I prefer take the absolutely shortest route.

Now we skim along the pier until

reaching the edge of Swanson Dock swing basin. Here we have to cut across about 800m of water which will take about 10 minutes at a good speed. It's an area where you don't want to linger in; huge cargo ships can appear upstream and start crossing the middle of the river to turn downstream or to be pushed with tugs into a dock. For the kayaker it's a confusing situation. Shall I cross to the other side to make room? Do I paddle backwards? Do I continue forward? (Usually the latter is the right and only thing to do — continuing in a straight line as fast as possible to get out of the way).

The next, albeit smaller challenge will be Appleton Dock and then passing the tip of Coode Island and paddling across the Maribyrnong entrance. It's not often that a ship moves in our out a dock but when it happens there is little warning. You may hear a long blast and/or three short ones, and within the next couple of seconds a big container ship is pushing into your way. Once out of the dock the ship might start swinging around. From a distance it looks like a very slow movement, but you don't get out of the way as fast as possible.

All the time the strategy is either to hug the piers and to cross the basins taking the shortest line from one to the other end, generally aiming for red lateral mark.

Having crossed the Maribyrnong we can relax a little. There are still quays and docks but no big basins any more. Here the shipping channel starts detaching from bank, allowing us to handrail from one red lateral mark to the next, keeping just a tick to the right outside the shipping channel until we have reached the lateral marks 38B and 38A underneath Westgate Bridge.

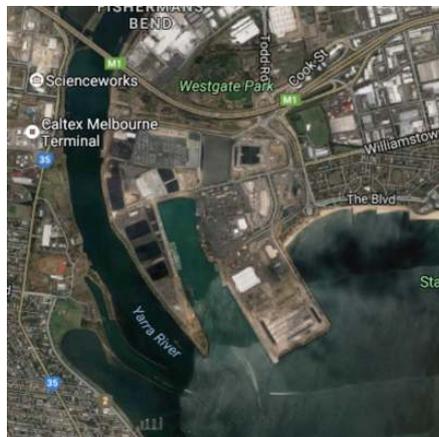
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#### Westgate Bridge to the river entrance

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Distance ca 2.9 km. Risk level: medium. Tidal effects, more agitated water, susceptible to wind waves. Higher speed limit of 10 knots creates

bigger wash from passing boats. Major challenge will be crossing to the east side of the river when heading for Sandridge Beach.



Westgate Bridge to Williamstown and Sandridge Beach

There are still some piers to pass but generally this is now relatively easy water. The Williamstown ferry leave the channel to pull in at the Scienceworks Museum. Otherwise there's little that can trouble us. We handrail along the lateral (red) marks, staying just outside the shipping lane. Boats will be cranking up their speed from 5 to 10 kts and create stronger wakes than further up the river but that is more a problem on the in the shallows on upstream side where the wash can transform into small breakers.

If proceeding to Williamstown just keep going along the markers until reaching No 20 from. From there head into the harbour (keeping an eye on leisure boats and the Williamstown ferries).

If proceeding to Sandridge Beach we should cross the river early where the shipping lane is relatively narrow. A goot spot is red lateral mark No 28 straight across to the green No 27, or if there's no traffic a bit further downstream. There is plenty of space outside the shipping lane on the last kilometre on the eastern (left) side of the Yarra.

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#### River entrance to Sandridge Beach

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Distance ca 1.9 km. Risk level: medium. Often choppy seas, particular in wind-on-tide conditions.

To get to Sandridge Beach, turn left at the end of the spit, make sure to keep enough clearance from sea walls and piers in rougher conditions, head across Webb Dock. Aim somewhere between the green marker No 81 and the edge of the concrete structures. In a stronger SW wind blowing paddle a bit further out to gain a bit a reserve and to avoid the heavy rebound closer to the sea wall. Near the green No 81 turn in towards the western edge of the the dock, now adorned with a viewing platform, and from there head straight into the beach staying. Keep left to the boating exclusion zone marked with yellow piles. Aim slightly left of the surf club buildings.

In a very strong SW wind and high tide you may encounter minor breakers close to the beach, or at least steep waves of 2 that can lift up the kayak and carry it at a high speed towards the beach. Least not for this reason do not land inside the exclusion zone. Swimmers and runaway kayaks don't mix.

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#### Wrapping it up

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Over time I started enjoying paddling the 11km from Federation Square to Sandridge Beach and back. The relative flat waters present a good opportunity to focus on good paddling technique and getting a good workout. It is, however, not a beginners paddle and not a paddle suitable for a larger group. Traversing the basins or crossing the shipping lane requires good timing and good speed. And sometimes quite unexpected things happen that catch out the unsuspecting:

- A blast from the side thrusters of tugs or some cargo ships can leave mighty vortexes that linger up to a minutes or two. Be very wary of lingering swirls or visible eddy lines; they may turn out very powerful. If in doubt wait until the have dissipated.
- Behind a tug or cargo ship one sometimes sees an area for relatively flat water, delineated by an eddy line.

When breaking in our out that calm area be ready for a brace.

- Sometimes the wake of a passing boat can build up to a breaking wave in the shallows outside the channel. This wave may just be a foot high but it is virtually vertical and seems to come out from nowhere, some time after a boat has passed.
- Cargo ships crossing the middle of the river in the swing basins. As a paddler going downstream you are suddenly faced with the bow of a huge ship pointing directly at you.

Or similarly: a cargo ship pulling out backwards from a dock and then swinging around into the channel. There is very little time between the warning and the actual movement.

- Strong wind drift and standing waves in areas of the large basins. When crossing a basin from one edge to the other it's sometimes requires to point the bow further into the wind and ferry-glide. Otherwise you'll be pushed out into the shipping lane. I myself have two specific safety rules while paddling the river: First, I al-

ways wear a neon-bright beanie or hat to be very visible. The yellow of the PFD is not enough. Second, I carry a VHF radio switch on and configured for Channel 12 (Melbourne VTS) / 16 (standard contact and emergency) and keep listening in while in port waters. And from doing so I know: we kayakers are being watched. Once or twice I heard a kayak being mentioned. Only to realise — that was me. So, better behave! ■



Walkerville sunrise

Pete Wilson

## Two Unpaddled Paddles from Walkerville South

When *Sea Trek* contacted me regarding a wish list of unpaddled trips, two instantly came to mind, one open water crossing, the other involving surf landings and fossil hunting. Both launching from Walkerville South but very different paddles.

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### A Waratah Bay crossing

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The first is a Waratah Bay crossing, I've not yet done any open wa-

ter paddling tending to spend most of my time hugging the coast or inner islands and I think this might be a good "first timers" crossing.



It's a decent 23km distance across open exposed water but never more than 7 km offshore. (Most of that shore is fairly inaccessible surf beaches but still, should things go pearshaped, it's not too far away.) This paddle could of course be done in either direction but for me the view approaching the east coast of the

Prom from the sea as the sun rises beyond is too good to pass up.

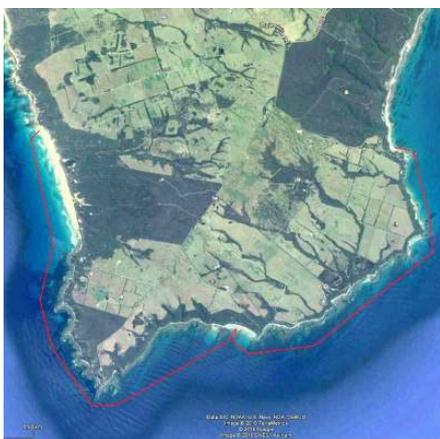
The idea is for a one way trip straight-lining from Walkerville South beach across approx 24 km of open water to tuck in north of Shellback Island and then on another 3.5 km to make a first landing at Fairy Cove at the Prom. After a quick rest and stretch we'd then continue on around Tongue Point and either straight line the next 11 kms across Whisky, Picnic & Leonard bays direct to Tidal River or hug the coast and add another 3-4 km scenic cruising. Alternatively the shortest possible route would be to bear south another couple of degrees and shoot a course between Shellback and Norman islands direct to Pillar Point which would come in around 35km total with no landings. In good conditions the islands are visible from the Walkerville South beach and the dawn sunrise coming over the Prom is spectacular if a little blinding at times. This would be a great long summer day's paddle with day light savings allowing some coastal cruising down to

Tidal River. I'd love to paddle/sail this route so would be looking for gentle/moderate westerly winds (with some Northerly in it but for safeties sake not too much) without considerable swell (typically SW, WSW). Obviously in addition to the normal gear and equipment it'd require full Coastal Offshore safety kit including flares, Epirb/PLB & ideally VHF radio and of course 3-5 paddlers including an adventurous level 3 to lead.

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### Morgan's Beach

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The second paddle involves a hunt for some elusive megafauna trackways (fossilised footprints of giant extinct animals). I was told about these by a local geologist after I spent last summer kayak fossil fossicking around Bell Point. I've never seen these tracks and only have a very scant description of where they are but I'd love to have a hunt for

them. Knowing this, all those who embark on the paddle would have to embrace its wild goose chase nature and be happy to go with the flow of a good adventure.

Starting again from Walkerville South Beach the first 11 km leg of the paddle is to Cape Liptrap, a familiar journey for many VSKC members. After rounding the Cape we'd continue north past the very exposed but spectacular rocky coves and cliffs beyond the Lighthouse for another 4 km to Morgan's Beach.

Morgan's is a very remote and beautiful white sandy surf beach, unfortunately surrounded by private property and farmland. It's essentially inaccessible to the public unless you know the local farmers (I don't), make a mad 5km dash around the rocky cliffs on foot at low tide (I did) or paddle there (I want to).

The southern end of Morgan's has a great reef break for surfing but it's the northern end we'd need to land on. This beach is very exposed running NNE, so a day with little or no swell would be ideal. During big days there's lot of rips which churn up the sand and form shifting banks making it tricky to predict the best spot to land in advance. Near the start of the northern cliffs (where the trackways are apparently located) it appears to be a fairly gentle rising sandy bottom so this is probably the best bet. From here the search begins!

It's approx. 18km each way to this point so potentially a long full day, fair weather return trip or it

could be extended into an overnigher by paddling on a further 3 km north past several stunning rock stacks and secluded sandy coves to 10 Mile Creek or further 7 km up the open beach to 5 Mile Creek where there's an old camp area behind the dunes. Over the course of this paddle we'd pretty much cover all points of the compass, essentially paddling back and forth in a giant "U" shape. Suitable conditions would depend on the paddlers and wind would have to be discussed but probably very light south westerly so the beach break doesn't stand up and it'd give us a push on the way home to Walkerville for a BBQ dinner at my place.



Morgan's Beach

Have a look at both trips on Google Earth and see what you think and perhaps one day we could cross them off the list.



## Andrew Mueller

# 10 Bay and Coastal Trips

Andrew Mueller is a regular on Red Eye and Canadian Bay paddles and has participated in Bay crossings. He has a particular interest in longer distances. On request of Sea Trek he has compiled a list of paddles that could be considered as offers to a larger audience of paddlers who wish to

tackle longer distances and improve their endurance. They are ideas, suggestions, not set recipes, to be taken up and adjusted to conditions and participants — Ed..

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### Trip # 1

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Sandridge (Port Melb.) to Williamstown then 'cross country' to Hampton Beach. Shore break at East Coast Kayaking. Then return

via coast Brighton, Elwood, St Kilda (shore break) then back to start. Total distance around 30 km.

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#### Trip # 2

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Ricketts Point straight to Patterson River. Shore break. Return via coast to Mordialloc. Shore break. then cross straight back to Ricketts Point. Total distance around 27 km.

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#### Trip # 3

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Ricketts Point direct line, as the crow (or seagull) flies, to Frankston. Shore break. Return the same way. Total distance around 38 km.

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#### Trip # 4

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Ricketts Point cross country to Mornington (Shore break) and return the same way. Total distance around 50km.

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#### Trip # 5

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Sandridge, Brighton. Shore break. Point Cook. Shore break. Williamstown then back to Sandridge. Good navigation circuit. Total distance around 41 km.

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#### Trip # 6

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Mornington to Safety Beach return via coast ... nice coastal cruise. Total distance around 26 km.

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#### Trip # 7

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Blairgowrie to Quarantine Station return via coast ... as above. Total distance around 19 km.

This trip can be done all year round especially with southerly wind bias of up to 20 knots given the sheltered nature of the route. The warmer months however are preferable given the social nature of the tour. Parking and access to the beach at the start are very good but can be a little difficult over the summer school holidays especially if the yacht club is running an

event. Start early say 7.00 am to 8.00 am. The yacht club serves light refreshments over the summer for that end of paddle snack attack.

The start point also provides a first class training venue for rolling / rescue drills for those interested at the end of the trip.

Over summer one needs to be aware of the large number of small craft activity in the area as well as larger commercial dolphin spotting and dive boat operators not to mention the car ferry ... they all have the ability to sneak up on you rather quickly.

The trip to the Quarantine Station is very relaxed especially if you take a cafe break along the way in Sorrento. Once reaching the station take time out to discover a little of the history, have a brunch / lunch break soak up some sun rays.

After a well deserved break, start heading back along the coast with possibly another stop along the way.

Allow around 5 to 6 hours round trip depending of stops, group size and weather.

This is ideal for complete novices, more experienced paddlers may find this trip not challenging enough ... but a great opportunity for aspiring trip leaders to gain experience in a very safe environment.

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#### Trip # 8

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Coronet Bay to San Remo return ... but get the tides right. Total distance around 22 km.

This is a great little trip suitable for all levels especially Level 0 paddlers who would like to get a feel for travelling a reasonable distance 'cross country' without the option of a shore break until the half way mark is achieved.

The start at Coronet Bay offers arguably the best parking and beach access, amenities, picnic facilities (for the end of paddle) and general store for last minute supplies or hot coffee etc. In addition this location offers an excellent training venue for post paddle rolling, self rescue etc..

Start time should be around 8.00am to coincide with the last two hours of the outgoing tide. This will give a very relaxed 1.5 to 2.0 hours paddle down to San Remo arriving at low tide. San Remo offers all facilities that one could ask for as well as a very pleasant foreshore area. If you are lucky join the tourists and take in the pelican feeding frenzy and then if you are patient and observant, watch the local Stingrays forage for leftovers.

After a 1-2 hour break (depending on weather) ride the incoming tide back to Coronet Bay using a compass heading as the destination is not easy to visually identify. On the trip down San Remo stands out like a sore thumb from a great distance.

This trip is tolerant of most wind directions up 10 knots, over this you might want to consider lifting the rating to Level 1. Participants should be briefed at the time of signing up so as to avoid disappointment on the day.

Although the trip can be run all year round the warmer months are preferable. San Remo can get very miserable on a cold / rainy winter day when you are waiting for the tide to turn, and all you want to do is get back to base and into a warm dry set of clothes!

On the return trip and given kind weather conditions take time to view the wide spread sea grass meadows as glide over them with the incoming tide.

In summary allow about 5 or 6 hours round trip for great little social paddle with something for everyone.

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#### Trip # 9

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San Remo and Cape Woolamai Headland ... depending on conditions, Total distance between 15km and 25 km ... watch the tides.

Under the right conditions this is a great little trip for introducing people to light duty coastal blue water paddling. For the Level 0 crew a wind direction of West / South West clockwise to West / North West of up 15 knots is ideal, especially if the direction has been steady for say two days.

This takes a lot of energy out of the water allowing close quarters coastal cruising with very little rebound to worry about.

It is important to take provisions along for this trip. Once under way there are no places to stop and take on supplies. Best time to start is around 8.00 am to 9.00 am from San Remo using the last 2 – 3 hours of the outgoing tide. San Remo provides ample parking, easy launch access, amenities, shops (for last minute supplies), Cafes, Restaurants etc for post paddle recovery.

Quarry Beach is a great spot to come ashore for break, take a short walk a discover the history of this patch of Earth. This location can also be used on the return stretch as breather before heading back to base.

Back on the water departing Quarry Beach the coastal scenery and features just keep getting better with every forward stroke, so take time and paddle well under Red Eye Pace ...

As indicated the trip distance can

vary greatly depending on how far one makes it around the headland ... weather conditions ... group composition ... etc ... etc ...

Allow an easy 5 or 6 hours round trip, and I think most people will be more than happy with the outing.

For serious distance pilots an option would be to incorporate Trip # 8. This would potentially provide a circuit of 40–50 km, a serious day out on the water (level 1 plus) but a realistic mission especially over the daylight saving months.

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### Trip # 10

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Hastings to Cowes return ... watch the tides. Total distance around 35 km.

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### Additional Trip Notes

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Ricketts Point has been selected as the starting point for the next three excursions not only because it is the spiritual home of the Red Eye Jedhi's but

also for its ease of location as a navigation point especially on the return legs.

Trip #2, Trip #3 and Trip#4: if these trips are completed in this sequence they can form the perfect training schedule for those who are preparing for the end of year Bay Crossing. In general these trips are best conducted over the daylight savings period with forecast wind strengths of up to 15 knots although up to 10 knots would be preferable ... it really depends on the crew. The advantage that these trips have is that the Plan B option should anything not go well (people, equipment or weather issues) one is only roughly 6 km from shore. For those considering only doing one leg of these trips arranging a shuttle would be a realistic option. In all cases a 6.30/7.00 am start from Ricketts Point would be the way to go. For the longest Trip #4 this would see the group back at base around 6.00/7.00pm depending on the length of shore break and prevailing conditions. ■

## Helmut Heinze

# Intercity Express

This is not the most glamorous or exciting paddle but it belongs into the category of paddles that have to be paddled one day, just because they are there. I live in the centre of Melbourne but work in Geelong, and from the office floor of my workplace I have a beautiful view all over Corio Bay with Cunningham Pier right under my nose, the Shell refinery and the You Yangs in the hazy distance. For years I keep thinking: one day I paddle home.

This is how it would work for a

small group. Meet on a Sunday morning before dawn in Geelong and unload kayaks. Shift cars to the Docklands and return by train from Southern Cross Station to Geelong Station. Walk to the waterfront is just 4 minutes (I can even leave my car in Geelong and drive it back after work next day).

Now we are ready for the Intercity Express between the two largest cities of Victoria. Distance from Geelong Waterfront to Victoria Harbour in the Docklands is a bit over 60km,

almost constantly travelling NE along the coast. Depending on conditions we may have a pit stop at Werribee South, but then we run express across the northern Bay to Williamstown for an 'almost-there' coffee stop in town. Finish off with an hour of lazy river paddling in the late afternoon light.

The distance is a bit a stretch but in the right conditions, on a summer day with good afternoon sea breezes of 10 to 15 knots the kayaks should find their way almost by themselves. ■



Photo: BF

**Kathryn Botherway**

## Pizza at the Prom Weekend, September 2016

I've done a bit of multi-day paddling in rented or borrowed sea kayaks and always wanted my own, so I recently splurged on a second-hand Mirage 530. Used to my wide, stable sit-on-top, this is a different beast altogether and I'm keen to learn to paddle it properly.

My first paddle with the VSKC — Canadian Bay in August complete with dolphins — was great fun. On signing up to the Wilsons Prom trip — my fourth Club adventure and my first out of Port Phillip Bay — joint trip leader Richard R emailed a "Float Plan" — excellent start — it was indeed my plan to float.

I departed work in Melbourne mid-afternoon Friday, after gibes from my colleagues that my tiny car with kayak on top resembled a helicopter, and, "Was I flying to the Prom?"

I arrived at Tidal River (by road!) with enough light to pitch my tent and spot a few wombats before joining the group for dinner under a gazebo larger than my living room, complete with giant gas heater and pizza oven. Best campsite. Ever.

Saturday brought sun, showers and increasing wind. We were on the water at 9:30am and paddled out from Norman Beach around Pillar Point to assess the conditions. It was the roughest sea I'd experienced in my new kayak but I was feeling okay.

Once past Pillar Point we gathered as a group to decide who wanted to return and who wanted to continue, when a rolling swell tipped me out of my kayak. I surfaced and before I had time to ask, "Do sharks like the Prom?", Ben F was alongside me and my boat. Under calm, clear instruction, I was back on board in a few minutes, and thankful to both him and the friend who had loaned me a wetsuit for the weekend.

The capsize took me by surprise, but I knew now that with assistance I could get back in (and it had been the thing I most worried about with my new kayak) so I decided to keep going, not wanting my boat to get the better of me. Some in the group returned to Norman Bay to practise surf skills and the rest of us paddled past Squeaky Beach to a small beach on the southern side of Leonard Point where we stopped for a snack (and a mini capsize in the surf — I was getting good at this).

On the return journey the sea seemed rougher, especially on rounding Pillar Point. Determined not to capsize again, I focused on every paddle stroke feeling a mix of exhilaration and terror, a small part of me wishing I'd turned back with the others. Meanwhile, my experienced paddling buddies casually chatted and took photos along the way — one day

I hope that will be me ... As I got closer to shore the sea calmed a little and I landed without incident, feeling really happy to have completed my first blue water adventure in my new Mirage, albeit a mini one.

In the afternoon people went for walks and relaxed before dinner — an amazing array of pizzas expertly prepared by Neil B, Raia W and Heather B, followed by chocolate cake with giant candles to celebrate Richard R's birthday the following day. The evening was spent huddled around the heater swapping stories — of past voyages, favourite kayaks, and best gear — while warding off marauding wombats.

The next day the wind was stronger so after a hearty cooked breakfast courtesy of Neil and Raia we practised our bracing, edging and draw strokes along Tidal River under the instruction of Terry B, Greg M and Helmut H before breaking camp and heading back to Melbourne.

Huge thanks to Richard and Neil for organising the trip and to all the experienced paddlers who helped us less experienced ones gain in skills and confidence. Thanks too to Raia, Neil and Bruce D for keeping us afloat on dry land by providing the group with exceptional food, shelter and warmth.

■



Pizza at the Prom — By Ben Flora



*Inaugural loop around Sandstone Island*

### Brad Mountford

## Westernport Thursday Night — The First Night

Being new to VSKC I am still learning the ins and outs of what the club offers by way of organized paddles. It turns out the first Thursday after the clocks move forward for Summer also activates the Mornington Peninsular based paddlers into action.

I am keen to make use of any opportunity to get out on the water so after a quick introductory email to trip leader David S introducing myself and my not so impressive paddling credentials — and getting my leave pass stamped by the Home Office, I am good to go.

The meeting place is down the short dirt track on the south side

of the jetty off Woolleys Rd — Crib Point. I was the first to arrive and not knowing the track was there I had parked on the side of the road roughly where I thought I needed to be. Luckily having a kayak strapped to your roof makes you conspicuous so when David drove by and saw a kayak which needed to be parked a little closer to the water, he gave me a shout out to follow him.

The launching spot is a little sandy beach near the end of the track. It turns out the first paddle for the season was being blessed by a high tide. It was commented a couple of times that things can be a little different at low tide. “Can get a little muddy”

is a comment that was said a couple of times with slight smile, and also another comment that there was a kayakers shoe still out there somewhere . . .

I have learned the route or direction with most casual paddles is determined by the wind and this was no different. It was a strong northerly of ~20 knots — so we went north. A little over 2 km north of Crib Point is Sandstone Island, and this was the goal.

The first 100 meters after leaving the beach was a ‘doddle’. The lee of the jetty breakwater having everything to do with that — the next 2 km to the Island with the strong wind on

the nose had me thinking people who buy boats with engines might be onto something. It would be fair to say I am not the most physically strong paddler so full credit to David for sticking nearby to make sure I didn't get into any mischief.

Once into the lee of the Island it was an anticlockwise paddle around to complete a full lap. I was told that in the old days cattle would be left on the island for safe keeping "till their services were required elsewhere". The cattle aren't there any more but there is an unfinished house

on the north side which looked to be in a little disrepair from the water.

The north side of the Island has a stand of mangroves and the more adventurous of the paddlers disappeared in there for a quick explore. I was content to skirt around the edges and eventually pick up the tail wind down the west side of the island. This is where kayakers with sails clearly come into their own and make speed look effortless. Even though I don't have a sail it was still a relatively fast paddle from the Island back to the Crib Point. By the time we were

back at the jetty the hard work against the head wind on the way out and the plans to strap an outboard to the kayak next time had been forgotten.

The paddle was a great intro to what to expect when paddling in Westernport. After just one trip it is clear Westernport is different proposition to Port Phillip by providing strong tides, shallows, sandbars, short chop and mangroves.

Thanks to David and the Westernport regulars for having me on this trip. I hope to come out again.

■



Photo: BF

## Ben Flora

# Rough Stuff

Forward stroke, brace and the deep dive.

I peaked over the wave with a big slap as my kayak hit the water. Yipie ... I was safe until the next wave arrived. It was a rough 20 knot plus spring morning day on the Red Eye. Because the fetch across the bay gives no time for the waves to spread before they hit land there is little reprieve between peaks. The waves being between 1 to 2 meters made it challenging.

Our group pushed out through the waves. Paddling directly into big waves seems and feels much easier,

but be careful of the steep peaks. We can see what is coming and prepare for it with our forward stroke, which most of us are comfortable with. I learnt on this rough day that it is good to slow down the forward stroke and feel the wave in slower motion. This give you more sense of connection and stability. However, in these conditions, there are other less stable directions to point the kayak when the water is rough and the biggest test was still to come. We had to turn around and get back to land.

Just trying to understand how one will stay upright on a big wave when

one's kayak is parallel to the wave face is a daunting. It's here when the new paddler is grateful to be paddling with an expert. I had paddled in similar conditions before where Peter C taught me how to use the brace stroke. With the face of the wave to your left or right one can create a triangle of stability with a good brace stroke, even on a steep face. So now was the perfect time to practise.

What could possibly be worse than being hit by a wave side on one may think? Well try pointing your boat down the face of a wave. This is where the wave lifts your kayak from

the back. It's called a following sea and when the sea is big and steep enough, it can be quite a challenge. It's a whole new game learning to control the kayak in this direction. In my experience when the wave is big enough one starts to rapidly fly down the face of the wave and broach at the bottom and if you are not quick enough you will end up in the drink. This is exactly what happened to me when I paddled through the surf zone for my first time at Tidal River. I had learnt that one braces after a speedy drop and broach. However, easier said than done. Before I knew it I was shooting down the face and uncontrollably broaching to the right with the wave breaking at the same time. I tried to brace but all of a sudden I was in the drink and I knew it was time to eject. I pulled the cord, popped out grabbed a breath, grabbed my boat. I was chest deep in water and had to walk my boat to the shore ... On reflection, I realised that I leant too much and fell into the wave.

So what could I have done differ-

ently so that I didn't end up on the drink here? Well ask an expert of course, and I did.

These are the three things I have learnt that I can practise the next time I am slipping down a steep wave.

Paddle hard before the wave gets steep. You can actually ride the wave in front and not get sucked up into the steep part if you have enough initial speed.

Otherwise, if you know you are going to broach then try to angle the boat in the broaching direction before the wave forces you to do so. This way you can move more sideways along a wave like a surfer and prepare to broach without being suddenly turned sideways.

Finally before you brace, edge the kayak into the wave. You need to edge or sink the side of the kayak that is on the same side that the wave is breaking on. This way the kayak will be 'flatter' to the breaking wave and this will help as the white water will be less likely to roll you over.

So now I have some things to

think about and try out the next time I am in the steep stuff. All the stuff above is good in theory, but a different thing in practise. The only way to get better is to practise, practise and practise. Don't forget there are lots of experienced paddlers at the VSKC. So if in doubt ask ask ask ...



A rough day on the Bay ...



## A Yarn Retold

*A good story has to be told for its own sake, whether it's true or not does not matter if it's a good one. In this case it may be even a true story, but who cares. The only thing we give away is that the narrator is not the same as the main character of the tale. — Ed.*

Tasmania the bottom of Australia.

One trip to the bottom of Australia.

It was a trip one could remember for all the right reasons. Beautiful scenery, fantastic location, amiable weather, great group of friends. Paddling along looking at the gorgeous scenery and cliffs that fell into the water, all of a sudden there was a big crash on the bottom the kayak. A

jolt from the bottom of the sea. It startled the paddler who was looking upwards and lost in the wonderment of the beautiful cliffs the group was exploring at the famous location in Tasmania. In a split-second the demeanour of the paddle changed. The paddler looked down after this thud and saw — a shark swimming off. It was big, about 3 meters and it disappeared rapidly. The group who heard the noise were very vocal asking if the paddler was ok. They quickly paddled to his kayak and formed a pod which is the basic protocol when a group sees a shark. Apparently the theory goes that if a shark sees a larger boat it will leave it alone. The larger the boat the less likely the shark will per-

sist. Makes perfect sense, but not really proven. Later upon reflection the paddler realised that he was on the outside of the pod and the one who was probably at the greatest risk of being attacked again. Not a good place to put a paddler who may possibly be in shock. Ideally a place in the middle would have been better. A bitter sweet irony really. Back on dry land and the team inspected the Maelstrom kayak. What a storm of sorts. There were the marks of shark teeth bites streaking across the bow of his kayak. All in all everyone was safe but jolted and now the story lives on and has become myth, lost in sea yarns of the sea dogs who love to kayak.





*A Red Eye Winter Delight — By Helmut Heinze*