

Sea Trek



Autumn 2017
Issue 89

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Photo: Sarah Black





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Coffee, cakes and
wind to boot





VSKC

Victorian Sea Kayak Club



President's Heads Up *Sea Trek* Autumn 2017

I hope members have made the most of the extended warm weather we had up until just after Easter and paddled, paddled, paddled. I know from the trip calendar and various reports that there have been some great paddles underway, with the Prom featuring strongly. Indeed it was great to hear that our new honorary member, Sandy Robson, led a group of outdoor education students on a ten day trip around the Prom in fabulous weather over Easter. I can tell from the interesting articles and photos in Ben's second issue of *Sea Trek* as Editor, that many members have been out and about. So well done!

In what I think was a real milestone for the club, I had the very great privilege to lead a four-day paddle to East Snake Island over Easter with 24 paddlers. The noteworthy aspect though, was that for the very first time that I can ever recall, the number of female paddlers outnumbered the males. It is so very pleasing to see our emphasis on inclusiveness and diversity expressing itself in this way. Why does this matter some may ask? Well, diversity combines the best qualities we all have as human beings into a recreational and social context that enhances collective experiences. It is

the world we all live in and to not have that reflected in our great sport and our Club is unreal. Continuing to grow an inclusive VSKC culture with its associated emphasis on diversity matters a lot, and it will remain a strong focus for me as President. I welcome all members to join in on this journey, which is well underway.

The Committee, via a representative Training Reference & Review Group has been progressing an important review into the Club's skills grading and development processes. The recently released Training Issues Paper is an important distillation of issues that in some way the Club needs to get to grips with in order to have a sustainable system in place. I encourage all members to engage with the consultative process now in place.

Notwithstanding this review process, it is really great to see many members taking up the challenge and getting graded, especially all our new Grade One's. This is a great way to build confidence and competence as a sea paddler, which opens so many new adventure doors in terms of the trips that can be undertaken.



Photo: Richard Rawling

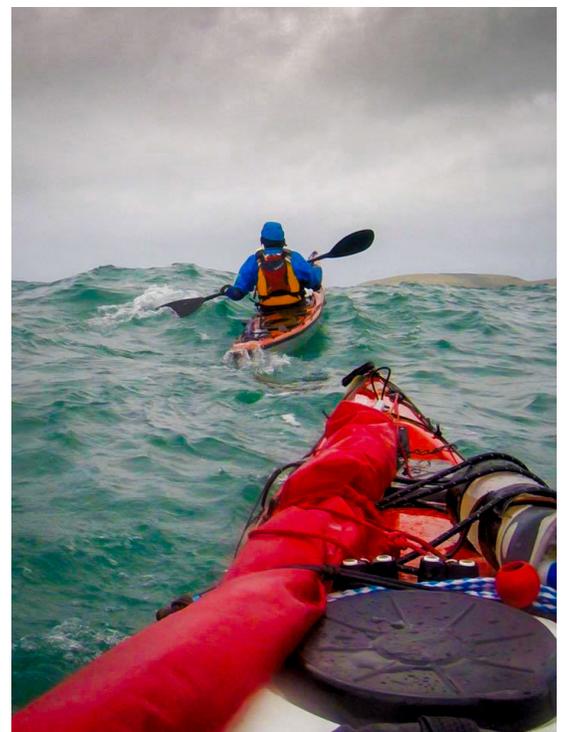
Whilst we are moving into the colder paddling months, I encourage members to get out on the water. It is a great time to be paddling, especially with cold weather kit and the occasional clear blue sky, even on these chilly days. To give you all some incentive, the Committee is starting to plan our Paddle Fest event for November, which includes our AGM. This year we are really excited about holding the event at Barwon Heads and the program being assembled will be a cracker, given the paddling opportunities in that part of the world.

Again, enjoy this issue of Sea Trek as we continue to grow the sea paddling community here in Victoria. Spread the word about what a great pastime sea kayaking is, and I look forward to connecting over a steaming cup of soup on a crisp winter paddle somewhere soon.

Richard Rawling
VSKC President

Cover Photo: Sarah Black

Richard Rawling cresting a swell on the way to Rabbit Island from Johnny Souey.



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Johnny Souey : Wilsons Promontory

Photos: Ben Flora



Editorial Musings

The Autumn edition of Sea Trek is out. How many of us are actually hibernating this time of year? The good news is that the club is still paddling on. This winter in particular has seen more paddles posted than the last. In addition, I have noticed more people attending the Red Eyes even though we have just been through the coldest June in 25 years. Best to dress for immersion.

We are continuing to showcase our photography in this edition and there will be a special prize for the Inaugural Mick McRobb photo competition at this year's AGM. So keep your cameras snapping and be pre-

pared to enter your best picture to have a shot at a wonderful prize. Laureen Knight has joined the Sea Trek team as a sub editor. Thanks for your proof reading and suggestions. I am sure you will see more from her in forthcoming editions.



Safe paddling

Ben Flora

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Photo: Pete Wilson

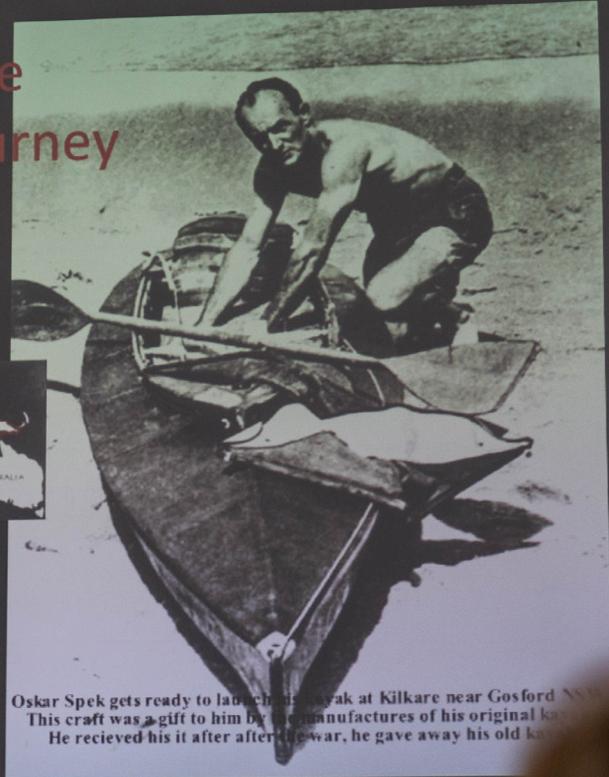
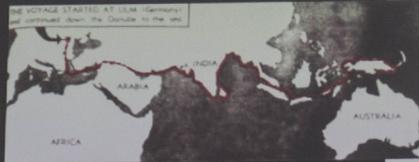
Queenscliff : Tidal Flows

Tidal flows training session, run John Evertz with assistance from Gerard O'Reilly

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Retracing the Oskar Speck Journey Germany to Australia 1932-1939



Oskar Speck gets ready to launch his kayak at Kilkare near Gosford NSW. This craft was a gift to him by the manufacturers of his original kayak. He received his it after after the war, he gave away his old kayak.

AUSTRALIAN
 VSKC CHAMPIONS
VALLOC SAILING
 FOUNDED 1946

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Sandy Robson's Germany to Australia slide show and talk

The VSKC was lucky enough to sponsor Sandy Robson for a slide show and talk about her 28,000 km paddle from Germany to Australia. What a treat it was to see and hear how she discovered and followed Oskar's original trip from the 1930's. We all lapped up her stories and adventures, especially the ones around the Bay of Bengal.

VSKC has been sponsoring events like these for a number of years now and this one was a stand out. It was well attended by members, families and friends.

Thanks Sandy, for your time, wonderful intriguing stories and inspiration.

Photos Nic Faramaz



Interview - Sandy Robson

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Sandy Robson and Ben Flora



Photo: Nic Faramaz

Editor: What is your favourite Victorian paddle?

I have paddled the Victorian coast from Queenscliff to the NSW border, going around the Prom was the most spectacular for me. I also liked Croajingalong Coast because I once hiked that section and Gabo Island was a lot of fun as I met up with other kayakers there

Editor: What paddles have you done with the VSKC in the past?

I have attended a VSKC AGM weekend in the past, and have had VSKC members paddle with me during 2007 when I paddled the east coast of Australia.

Editor: Are there any paddles that you really want to do in this part of the world? If so why?

I'd like to paddle to Tasmania across Bass Strait because I have not yet made that journey.

Editor: Do you have a favourite kayak?

No, I don't believe that having the fanciest kayak on the market is important, just get out there and do it.

Editor: What would you recommend others to do if they want to do extreme long distance paddling like your trip?

There are many great places to paddle in the world, I recommend people reach out to achieve their goals while they are still able, don't wait until you are retired - you might not be able to do it then. I also suggest people go kay-



aking to places where kayaking is developing so that they can share their skills, knowledge & expertise e.g. Indonesia, India and Bangladesh.

Editor: What would you recommend others to do if they want to do extreme long distance paddling like your trip? I guess I am looking for an answer on how does one get physically prepared for such a journey? Is it as simple to plan and do longer and longer trips so that you build up your endurance and stamina and learn about food water and clothing supplies along the way? When did you know you were physically and mentally ready for your trip and why?

I don't usually do a lot of physical preparation for a trip because I usually don't have a lot of time and the time gets eaten up on working to get money for the journey, planning logistics and emailing people so that everything is in place. I usually start off doing shorter distances and then build up to bigger distances and get fit as I proceed. When you are paddling every day you get fit for paddling and it becomes a routine. I work in Outdoor Education and kayaking for my job. I am a member of Sea Kayak Club Western Australia, so I am always going out, doing outdoor activities and preparing for them. I have had quite a bit of practice and preparing for a journey is second nature. I identified any key skills I thought, I needed and trained myself for those skills such as being able to comfortably paddle 60km.

I knew when I departed that I was fit for paddling 40km to 60km in a day, as I had done training trips of that distance and had paddled those kind of distances before. I wasn't pressuring myself to paddle every day on the trip and planned at least one rest day each week where possible. On the journey, how my body was feeling, dictated the rest days as well as the weather conditions.

I went into the journey with contacts organised for each country. Where I did not have contacts, I tried hard to gain them by networking my existing contacts.. These were key people to obtain local information from. I had a good idea of what food to eat on an expedition, what clothing to take and how much water one needed. I just had to adapt this to the place/country that I was in, when you can't get one thing, you try something

new. You have to be adaptable and flexible to paddle in remote places overseas. I stopped for large spaces of planning time in places like Singapore and Jakarta and I made detailed plans of my route, daily stops, resupply points, food drop points, water resupply, communication places etc. I also tried to establish if I would have phone signal in those places I was paddling. My contact people had a copy of my plan so that it would be easier to locate me if there was any problem. I scoured google earth and used my networks to give me information to annotate my charts and contribute to my planning including GPS coordinates of my landing sites. I had goals of where to get to each day and planned emergency pull outs, resupply stops in large towns with adequate supermarkets for shopping, water resupply etc. In Indonesia and PNG I shipped in dehydrated meals from Australia and divided these up between resupply points, receiving them by courier and via contact people.



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Thank you Sandy Robson for some tips on preparing for extreme long distance paddling



Photos: Nic Faramaz





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More pix from Sandy Robson's night

Photos: Ben Flora

*Congratulations to Helmut
Heinze, our latest grade
3 trip leader. Here he is
doing a scull stroke at the
Red Eye paddle. Mar 2017*





2017 April 9 Red Eye Dawn Paddle



Photo: Nic Faramaz

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Red-Eye Autumn goodness



Photo: James Balnaves

Massive Murray Paddle

*Words Roger Greenwood
Images Massive Murray Paddle*

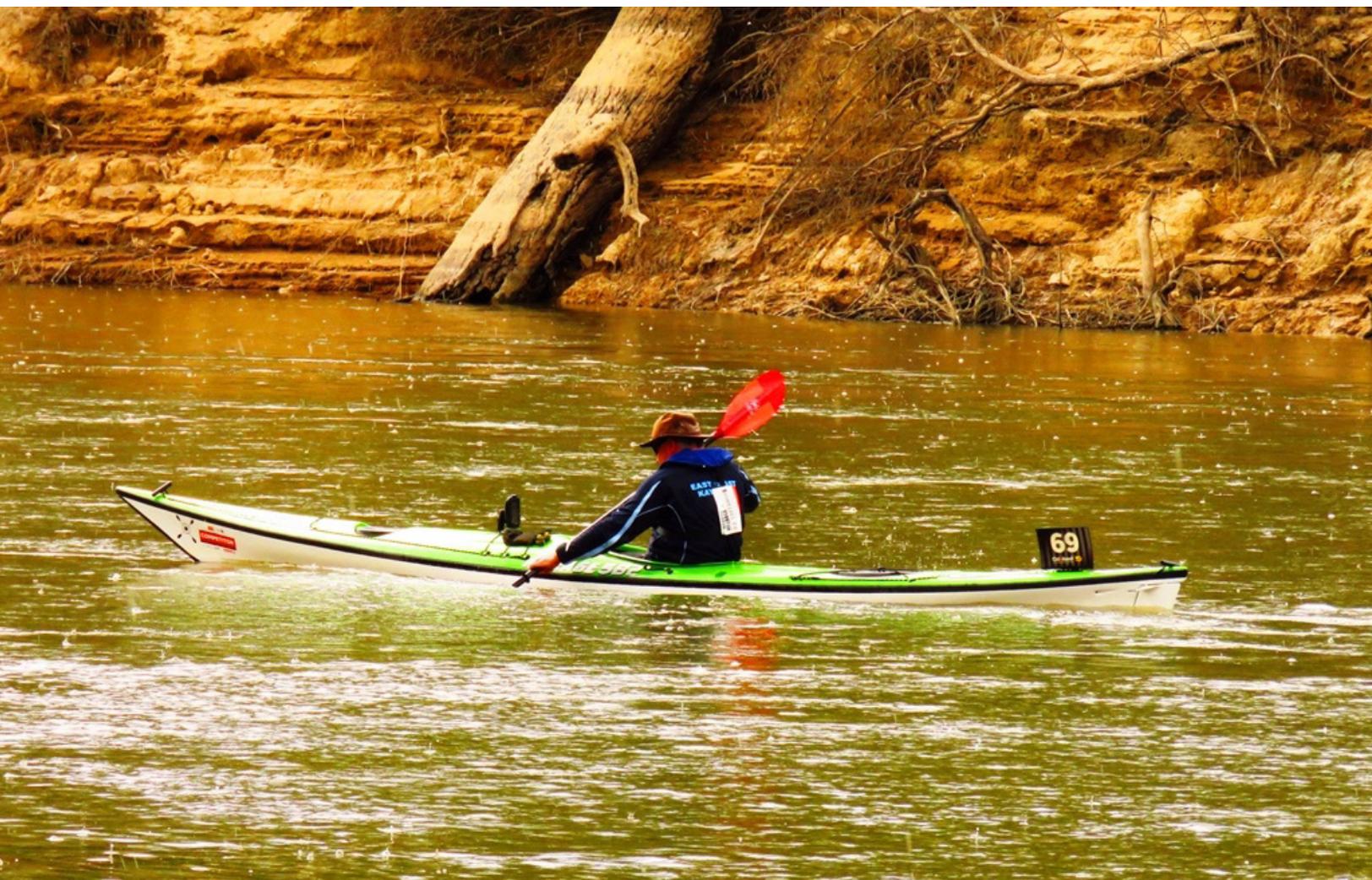


Photo: MMP - VSKC member Roger Greenwood paddling on the Murray

Massive Murray Paddle 2016

Long distance open water paddling is my passion. Completing a Bass Strait crossing via the islands from Wilsons Promontory to Tasmania is my first major goal. The Massive Murray Paddle (MMP) was suggested as an excellent training run for distance paddling, as well as a good way to gauge strength and endurance for a Bass Strait crossing.

The Murray Marathon, as it is now known, has been a legend of inland river paddling ever since I can remember. I have long thought that it would be an excellent event. However, it was not until November, 2016 after I took up sea kayaking that I was in a position to get involved.

I started in kayaking with a sea starter course with East Coast Kayaks in November 2015 and bought a Mirage 582 in February 2016, with the desire to paddle long distances. Finally all the stars aligned and I was ready to take on the MMP.

I joined up with the East Coast Kayak crew and their two boat team for support and food throughout the event. I would like to extend my thanks and appreciation to Raia and Neil for their help, organisation, food and to the rest of the team for their support and encouragement throughout the event. It made a big difference. They took the food preparation and planning tasks off my shoulders. Particular mention to Jacinta for the wound dressings and to Greg for the gloves. I should have taken Raia up on her suggestion of paddling gloves before the event.

Day one

Yarrowonga – Tocumwal: 93km.

Being one of the slower boats in the event, I was assigned to a early start, to avoid being on the river too late in the day. So I was on the water at 7:00am, with a mass of other boats all trying to paddle backwards in the fast flowing current. Trying to stay on the right side of the starting line and to avoid other boats and point in the right direction, when the starter yells “GO” is rather more difficult than it sounds!

The start was chaotic but we all got away without anyone being tipped out. How the MMP folk knew who was in what group was anyone’s guess. I never did sort out a specific time when I was supposed to start, but

this probably reflects more about my failure to pay attention than any lack of organisation.

Once the congestion and wash of 20 or 30 boats settled down it was serious paddling, as the field stretched out. By the third or fourth corner the leaders of our start group were out of sight on all but the longest, straight sections of the river. The only thing that saved me from giving up entirely was knowing that there were even slower people than me further back on the river!

By Check Point A, I had a moving average of 10.1 km/h but this gradually declined over the day to 9.2 km/h. I had estimated that the river flow would give me about 2 – 3 km/h but never having paddled rivers before (the Hawkesbury is tidal over the length of the race course and so does not count) I was not sure just how this would work.

as far as I could tell from the GPS it would seem that the river flow was between 2 and 4km/h, depending on section. Some of the eddies on the back of sharper corners appeared to flow backwards and thus my speed was down to less than 6km/h!

Determining the most effective line around the endless river bends, between the longer and faster line on the outside of the bend, or the shorter and slower lines across the bend, kept me amused for much of the day. I doubt if there is any way of knowing the most effective line. The calculations, likely to be required, to determine the most effective lines are likely to be ferociously complex and way beyond me. My motto became ‘stay out of the eddies’, and follow any faster boat going by, which incidentally was most of the field.

The first day ended at Tocumwal and with the welcome sight of the finish check point. 91.15km had been covered, according to my GPS. It would seem that the course is measured down the centre line of the river and that the actual paddled course is invariably shorter than this.

Feeling very debilitated after almost 11 hours of paddling, even with stops and drinks in 38° heat, I was not feeling confident about finishing the rest of the paddle!



Day two

Yarrawonga – Tocumwal: 93km.

The recent flooding had rendered at least some of the check points inaccessible and so day two was a repeat of day one. After an uncomfortably hot night in Tocumwal, and no with sleep, we headed back to Yarrawonga for a 6:30am start.

Being a bit late, I got on the water at about 7:00am just in time for the start. Once my boat was on the water, and pointed in the right direction, the starter yelled "GO". The usual suspects disappeared out of sight in record time, leaving the rest of us to a more leisurely paddle at the back of the field.

By Check Point B my hands were starting to blister and rub in several places so it was out with the field repair kit to try to head off the looming disaster of multi lacerated hands.

With fresh bandages in place I aimed to make up for some of the time lost because of the first aid session. I soon discovered that the band aids for the blisters were rubbing skin off the next finger. More band aids were applied to fix the secondary problems.

Turning down Raia's suggestion of gloves was not

sounding so good at this point!

As the field spread out and the faster boats had all gone past, "How ya doing", "Yeh, good", "'n you"?, "Yeh, good", it became a long solitary time to settle into a steady rhythm and just keep on keeping on, until the welcome distraction of a check point appeared.

The distance to the next check point became a recurrent topic of conversation among the back-markers who were doing it tough. The school groups seemed to think that they were being tortured!

The final check point appeared after slightly less than 11 hours of paddling, with a moving average of 9.1 km/h over 91.2 km.

Having held up OK over day two, I was feeling better about the rest of the race now, although the state of my hands was of some concern.

It was now time to load up and head for Picnic Point for day three.

Day three

Picnic Point - Echuca: 78km.

After a wet and soggy night when my thirty year old tent leaked like a sieve (I have a sentimental attach-



Early morning as Roger sets off. Photo MMP.

ment), day three started with the usual chaos. Boats trying to maintain position behind the start line, pointing forward and avoiding collisions on a narrow river path of fast flowing water with lots of snags and fallen trees.

With the race underway, it became an entertaining obstacle course as one had to dodge around and over fallen trees for the first two stages. This posed lots of overtaking opportunities for the adventurous paddler. But as usual the down side of being adventurous became apparent when I failed to make it over a deceptively shallow snag that caught the rudder of the 582 and left me contemplating a roll and re-enter as the only way to get free.

Just I was about to fall out of my boat in a desperate attempt to get free, a fellow paddler very kindly offered to lend a hand. With a bit of entertaining maneuvering I was free and back on my way. I must get a shorter Mirage rudder next time!

Having cleared the snag I followed another Mirage 580 for a while. Despite the paddler being at least ten years older than me, holding a very narrow paddle grip, rocking excessively and only half dipping his paddle, I was struggling to keep up! I gave it up after a few kilometres

noting that this guy was even taking a few seconds rest every 100 – 150 metres!

Obviously, I need to lose a few kilograms, get a wing paddle and work on my technique!

With the fast paced start I was hoping for a good time for the day, but then I was introduced to the slow flowing Barmah Choke, so it was back to hard paddling to keep up a reasonable time.

Once clear of the Barmah Choke the pace picked up for the run down to Echuca until a blustery north westerly picked up and slowed us down again. Just when you think that you are about to make some good pace!

Paddling the last 10km or so with an MMP veteran of 22 races was a good way to gain some tips such as, long distance speed comes back to having a fast boat, good paddle technique, strength and just keep paddling!

The appearance of one of the Echuca paddle steamers heralded our arrival at Echuca and the sight of the old wharf and nearby finish line was very welcome.

A total of 75km, covered with a moving average of 9.2km/h for day three.

Day four

Echuca – Torrumbarry: 62km.

The hands were looking and feeling a bit worse for wear and in need of something more than the bandages that I had available. Fortunately Jacinta Williamson and Greg Ippolito (East Coast Kayak crew) were well prepared with an outstanding first aid kit and gloves, that saved my bacon for the rest of the event.

Suitably prepared for the shortest day of the event, I was looking forward to cranking up a good pace for the day. I was doing well until I came upon Mad Mick of Team Dilligaf! There he was, in the water and in need of a tow back to the bank to re-enter his Colour Bond canoe! Having paddled with Mick at Aura Vale Lake a few times I knew that his homemade boat was fast, but it was proving more than a little unstable in the currents and eddies of the river.

Last I heard, Mick had at least a dozen out-of-boat experiences over the race but maybe Colour Bond Special Mark 2 will be more stable!

The bandages and gloves were excellent and I had an almost pain free day. The new foam seat still needs some work to fit me properly and to yield the promised pain free long distance paddle experience.

Having run out of steam for the day, I never got it back and despite good conditions only managed a moving average of 8.2 km/h over 59km.

Day five

Murrabit – Swan Hill; 77km.

Day five started inauspiciously, when I smashed the drivers mirror off my Hilux ute with a very front heavy 582. I had forgotten about the four litre water bladder in the front of the boat that upset my balance calculations and cost me over \$400 to fix. Note to self: always remove all of the gear from the boat at the end of the day, and huge thanks to Swan Hill Toyota for getting it fixed for us the next day.

Determined to make up for the poor performance of day three, I was on the water at 6:30am and paddling out into the rising mists from a still river and a clear and cool morning.

Apparently this is a fast flowing river section and my moving average was up around 11km/h for the first

two check points. Not wishing to lose momentum I resolved to paddle without stopping for as much of the day as possible.

Check Points A and B were by passed. I stopped at Check Point C only long enough to retrieve lunch from the rear hatch. I powered on to the finish at Swan Hill fueled by blue cheese and pastrami sandwiches eaten on the run. Tricky if you are trying not to lose time!

Having finally got a passable paddle technique going consistently, I pulled into the finish at Swan Hill with a moving average of 9.8km/h over 73km. If only the race had gone on for another couple of days I could have really put in some good times!

All I needed now was a cup of tea and a good lie down; for perhaps a week or so!

I had an excellent time and would like to take the opportunity to again thank the organisers for a fabulous and well run event; Neil and Raia for the food and team organisation, Jacinta and Greg for the first aid and gloves, the entire East Coast Kayak crew for waiting at many of the check points to cheer me on and applaud, despite even being way behind the two relay boats. Finally to my partner, Marta Salamon for being there with my Hilux whenever needed.

Many thanks also to Swan Hill Toyota for their help with the busted mirror!

Hopefully, once I have recovered I will be back for the Massive Murray Paddle 2017 with my trusty 582, a wing paddle and a short rudder.

Next:- Bass Strait!

There is still time to enter the MMP for 2017 for those who want to take up the challenge.

Sunrise on the Red Eye

Photo: Andrew Campbell



Entrance Point

Wilsons Promentory





Photo: Richard Rawling

Johnny Souey

Words Ron Morris

Labour day weekend, is a holiday to celebrate the eight hour working day and what better way to celebrate, than to paddle! So it was, on the 11th of March, I found myself heading to Port Welshpool along with other like minded paddlers, Richard, Steve, Sue, Kathryn, Greg and Andrew.

Port Welshpool, being the start point for many exciting past adventures, holds a feeling of awe about it. The knowledge that many great paddlers, have launched from this very spot for Bass Strait crossings, Wilsons Promontory circuits and numerous other historic trips, always provides for a period of reflection during the early morning drive from Melbourne.

As the group arrived at Port Welshpool, introductions



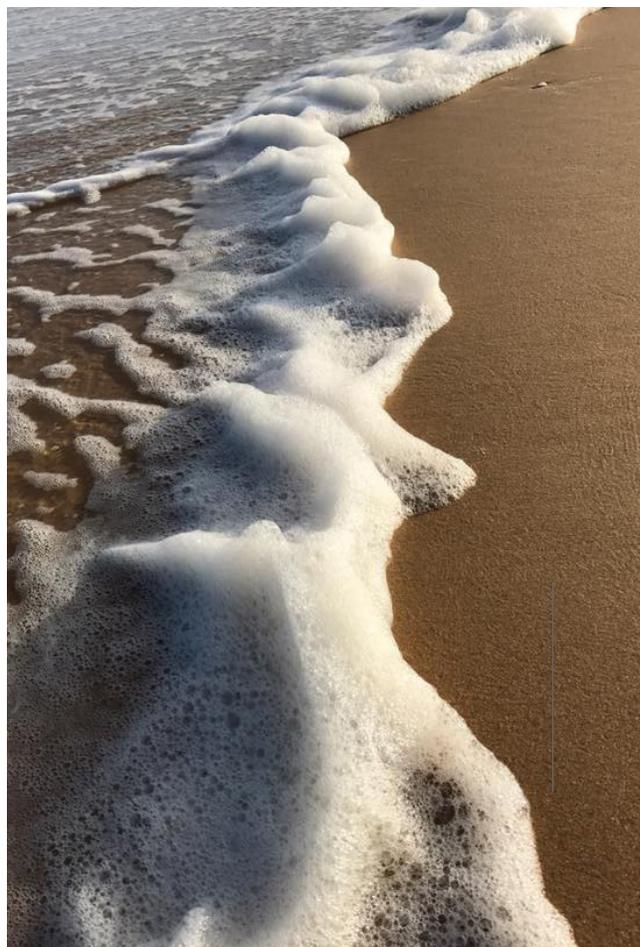
Photo: Richard Rawling



were made as we unloaded our boats and equipment. This phase of the trip I refer to as the 'wish list' phase. It is a phase where the kayaks are loaded with bags of colourful equipment, and a phase where my mind wanders and makes a mental Christmas list. My thoughts usually run along the line of 'that pump set up looks fantastic. That paddle looks much better than what I have. Those colour coded dry bags are such a good idea. I really need a new cag like that. This is the point when my partner prefers I skip, because it often results in a list of more gear which I 'really must have!'

After a detailed briefing, and a staged departure in order to make the most of some photo opportunities, we hit the water and began our paddle south. The weather gods were kind, with barely a light breeze and a glorious sun, it was the type of Autumn day one can only hope for. Our route saw us pass the well known locations of Little Snake Island and Snake Island, before crossing over a stretch of water know as Singapore Deep. The kilometres passed easily, in the ease of good company, and the usual discussion about the local environment, and the possibility of giant killer sharks saw the time fly.

Our next stage saw a pre-planned rendezvous at Entrance Point, where we were to met Sarah, who would



Photos: Sarah Black

be joining us after a solo expedition. The approach to Entrance Point proved to be a thrilling game of 'is that Sarah?' as items on the foreshore came into focus. There were several times I was firmly convinced I had spotted Sarah standing on the beach, only to discover it was an overhanging tree branch as we got closer. It is amazing how many sticks in the shape of a person can be on one small stretch of beach!

After a quick stop, we picked up Sarah, our newest member to the group, then we were on our way to Johnny Souey Cove (JSC). On previous paddles to the area, I have often recalled 3 mile beach seeming a lot further than its namesake. But with great weather and better company, the paddle into JSC seemed to be over in no time at all.

Johnny Souey Cove is a beautiful camp site, with protection from most wild winds, except the worst Easterlies which hit the beach directly. There is a beautiful little creek allowing for some great tent spots.

Out of curiosity, I conducted a quick search on the history of the name, and found it was named after Chinese gold miners, who had come to the Prom in the search of an allusive yellow metal during the gold rush. It is claimed no significant gold was found in the region, and some of the prospectors stayed to fish the beautiful clear waters. I believe they found gold. Not in the form of a shiny yellow metal, but in the form of the natural



Photos: Sarah Black

beauty the area provides.

The next day saw some hefty easterly winds blow straight in to JSC. To some, this weather, causing some breaking swell to hit our beautiful stretch of beach, would seem like a negative start to the day, but not to VSKC paddlers, who took the opportunity to play in the breaking waves. As the weather lessened in the afternoon, a happy group of VSKC paddlers pushed our unloaded boats out of JSC and made a heading for Rabbit Island. The Easterlies were still blowing, sending our little troupe through some significant ocean swell. Some members commented that it was some of the biggest swell they had paddled in, but also some of the most fun. This theme continued as half the group went off on a lap of Rabbit Island, giving up the protection of the lee side of the island. Apparently there were some sea caves on the Eastern side of Rabbit Island, but all I saw were paddlers 2 metres below me, then 2 metres above me, as the swell lifted and lowered our little kayaks between bracing strokes.

All in the group had experienced a great little afternoon paddle, in some challenging conditions, and we were ready to head back to the luxury of our campsite.



The evenings activities of cooking and relaxing turned into bottles of wine, with a port making a guest appearance. Here we entered the most dangerous part of any paddling trip. It's not the wind nor waves that cause danger, but rather the stories of fantastic journeys, including fascinating accounts of Prom circumnavigations and Bass Strait crossings. This becomes the most dangerous aspect of any paddle, where the mind wanders into the realms of bigger and better trips, as the list of those 'must do' paddles grow. This became evident the next morning, when one particular paddler, still elated by thoughts of grandeur, tried almost successfully to convince the group we should take several more days off and continue south.

Monday morning saw perfect conditions yet again. I am convinced that our group leader Richard had ordered a perfect blend of weather conditions. After making the disappointing decision that yes, we do need to return to the world of reality at some stage, we turned our group north and started our return journey to Port Welshpool.

With a short stop at Entrance Point, where a native tent pole tree was located, the last leg of our journey began. With perfectly timed tides and some obliging winds for those equipped with sails, a paddle was barely needed for the trip back through the channel and into Port Welshpool.

And so, with a fabulous group of friends, another perfect weekend came to an end. Highlighted by excellent planning, adventure, personal challenges and flawless execution,. These are the things that I enjoy. They are what we love about this fantastic sport, the sport that is sea kayaking.



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Kilcunda Penguins

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Photo: Heidi Lucas

*Josiah waving goodbye to grandpa (me),
daddy (Graeme) and uncle Jayden*

Words Russell Knoll

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Saturday morning February 13, 2017, found Graeme, Jayden and I at Kilcunda Central Beach ready for a paddle south-east along the Bass Coast to Cape Paterson. Our original intention was to paddle further to Inverloch but our plan to get on the water by 8am was, let's say, 'compromised' by a late arrival. It was 9.15am when our paddles hit the salt. Kilcunda is generally viewed as a rough surf beach with dumping waves and strong undertows, which is true of the old Railway Bridge Beach and beyond towards Wonthaggi. However, there are three beaches in Kilcunda, the most north-westerly being Shelly Beach, then a central beach, accessed beside the caravan park, and the Railway Bridge Surf Beach, which is the most known, and considered unfavourable to launch or land kayaks. The central beach though is quite protected and

I have landed there twice on previous paddles down from San Remo. This time we launched there in very good conditions. The calmer waters are the result of a headland and rocky reef which lies northwest of both the central beach and Shelly Beach breaking up the swell. Also, several rocky outcrops further protect the bay providing good corridors of safe passage right to the sandy edge. A board-walk stairway makes for relatively easy passage from the large car park to the beach. (A lot easier than the Canadian Bay stairs! :)

When the first of us arrived at Kilcunda before 8am there was hardly a breath of wind, but by 9.15am, a breeze of about 10 knots had sprung up from the southwest. While the little bay we were in remained calm, the sea outside became lumpy, not sufficient to

create white caps, just enough to let you know you really were on the ocean. And while the wind did tend to push us in towards the beach, the westerly aspect was aiding us towards our destination.

Unlike the beautiful and spectacular coastline that is the feature of a paddle from San Remo/Phillip Island to Kilcunda, the next stretch southeast is a little boring by comparison as there are 15km of sand dunes to paddle past before rounding the headlands of Cape Paterson. The wind turbines near Wonthaggi do at least provide a prominent landmark that one can measure progress by, and the sea kayaker's view may in fact be as close as you can get to them. Of course, the Desalination Plant is there too, but so well hidden behind sand dunes that there is no evidence whatsoever of its presence. Instead, the feature of that paddle was provided by nature in the form of penguins. As we paddled we became aware of birds making a single, short "cheep" sound. I gazed at the sky around me and saw no evidence of any flying birds close by whatsoever. Then I remembered that I had heard that same

sound before, on a paddle around Phillip Island, along the section from the Nobbies to Pyramid Rock, past the penguin colonies. There, penguins were surfacing all around us and as they came up for a breath of air they give a "cheep" before disappearing underwater. One has to be very quick to see them, and often it's only the sound that gives their presence away. Now on the Bass Coast, we were somewhat further away from their nesting sites but obviously still in their hunting territory, and this unexpected little interaction with nature is what makes sea kayaking such a great experience.

As we approached Cape Paterson we could see the swell breaking over rocky reefs that protrude about half a kilometre out to sea from the headlands. This initiated a change in direction to go out and around them to avoid the peril of large breaking waves and jagged rocks. We cleared the first headland reef without incident, then noted that the next reef went out even further, so again we paddled out. Based on where all previous waves had formed and began breaking, we



Launching from Kilcunda central beach

Photo: Heidi Lucas

thought we were clear when suddenly, an extra large swell began to form up much earlier, right between us and the ocean. We only just had time to square ourselves off to it then go up and over, through a sharp deep trough, then over another smaller wave sitting right behind. With the anxious moment past, we paddled out even further to avoid possible repeats. It is this large extended rocky reef that enables Cape Patterson to have a protected bay and a safe swimming beach as it breaks up the predominant southwest swell. Once around the reef we were free to paddle towards shore aided by the now much smaller broken swell pushing us along, so we arrived beside the boat ramp at Cape Patterson. Jayden has a phone app that records the exact route taken and the distance traveled. Our paddle from Kilcunda to Cape Patterson was 21.5km, which we did in about 3 ½ hours which includ-

ed two raft-up snack-n-chats. We decided not to do the additional 13km into Inverloch. Thought we'd save it for our next paddle so we can enjoy the spectacular cliff and cave coast, and time it so that we get to the Inverloch Inlet on an in-going tide.

Happy Paddles

Russell Knoll

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Graeme and Jayden celebrating with a coffee upon reaching Cape Patterson

Photo: Russell Knoll



10 days of Wilsons Prom

Words, Andrew Paul Bird

Photo: Andrew Paul Bird



Photo: Andrew Paul Bird

Setting out from Port Welshpool on a clear, calm late afternoon with the hope of paddling round to Tidal River, we did not expect just how good the conditions would be for our journey around Wilsons Promontory.

Our group of eight students from La Trobe University, Bendigo, undertook this sea kayaking elective subject to become better kayakers and marine navigators as part of the Bachelor degree of Outdoor Education. Instructing us on this journey was the renowned sea kayaker, Sandy Robson. Our small fleet comprised of five plastic kayaks, while Sandy commandeered the swift fibreglass Nadgee. Our route took us from Port Welshpool to Tidal River via Shelter Cove, Johnny Souey Cove, Sealers Cove, Refuge Cove, and Oberon Bay. This plan was very weather dependent and allowed for intermittent rest days to recover and further explore the Prom.

We each packed enough food to last the trip and collected water once or twice from natural sources along the way. Over the journey we learnt some essential sea kayaking skills such as marine navigation, reading tide charts, various rescue techniques, techniques for rolling, surf landings and exits, as well as how to go to the toilet out on the water. As a group what we found most challenging about the trip was both the overconsumption of Easter eggs, and the 30km leg between Refuge Cove and Oberon Bay. This was made easier



Andrew Paul Bird

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by incredibly good conditions and our spontaneous cheer squad.

From being launched over some hair raising swell, to catching a few glorious little waves in the surf, discovering tasty edible plants near the shore, swimming at the most southerly point of mainland Australia, to hanging out with some great mates; this journey showed us the unique ability of sea kayaking to kindle new friendships, deepen old ones and intimately visit the great outdoors, where few have been before.



Photo: Stacey Cockram



Photo: Kim Diery



Photo: Andrew Paul Bird



Photo: Kim Diery

Just 2kms from the
bottom of mainland
Australia

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VSKC at Snake Island - Easter Magic



Photo: Sarah Black

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Snake Island - Easter Magic

Words, Ray Pilbrow



Ray and Katie having lunch with the rest of the crew Photo: Caroline Durre

Easter Snake Island Paddle

It all started for me eight years ago when I first met my darling wife Katie. I was working in Tokyo. Katie was living in Sydney. We only saw each other for a few days every three or four weeks. Katie has been a keen paddler for some years and on our second meeting I was to undergo a test. Can I paddle a kayak? It was a new experience for me. Luckily for me, the Inner Sydney Harbour was fine and beautiful, sea like glass. We launched at Clontarf crossed to Balmoral, had thermos tea on the point, visited the Grotto Point Lighthouse and returned back to Clontarf. Short, sweet, smooth, enjoyable. I thought “nothing to this” I was hooked.

Katie and I have been kayaking infrequently ever since. The longest trip was a ten day trip around the Whitsunday's with friends from the NSW Sea Kayak Club about four years ago. We were paddling a well known New Zealand made Sea Bear double. We rented out storage space to our friends in singles. The whisky was appreciated!

Katie and I joined the Victorian Sea Kayak Club just a couple of month's ago as we are now living in Melbourne. Our first paddle was the Canadian Bay Sunday trip and we heard from Richard about the East Snake Island Paddle over Easter. We were thrilled to be included with twenty-four other members for what

turned out to be a fantastic Easter Weekend.

We met at 9am in Port Welshpool, spending the next two hours packing a seemingly impossible amount of gear into the limited space available. Thankfully my New Zealand made, Sea Bear Waitoa, has plenty of room. (Sales pitch finished!) Richard then briefed us for the paddle out to the eastern end of Snake Island, near the Port Albert entrance. We were lucky with the weather and the fact we had five or six grade three paddlers in our team. The tides were interesting but no real problem as the wide estuary effect meant that at times, the tide was not working against you as it would in a single channel area.

The launching was easy, however a bit muddy due to the low tide at the time, then we set off on the first leg. We started with 21 kayaks and 22 paddlers. Helmut and Xufang being the exception in their new meccano styled, soft skin, German made double kayak. It took a while to put together and by all accounts the said kayak performed very well. I even saw him, two days later, rolling it by himself from the back seat! We stopped for lunch on a beautiful beach on the south eastern edge of The Gulf then onto our camping area, now one hour away at the eastern end of Snake Island.

Camp was made in the usual sheltered and shaded area; a walk was organised around the island as



others gathered firewood, then the stories started around the campfire. Conversations were varied and a lot conformed to the usual justification of why each person has their particular type of equipment. The merits of each piece of equipment, usually from the owners and the detractors', people wanting the same equipment but not yet owning it. Conversations over kayaks, stools, a lot about camp cookers, white spir- its verses gas and one topic that came up on a reg- ular basis was batteries. Wet cell verses dry, lithium ion, pros and cons, care, safety and pricing. The ideal environment for a competent "outdoor goods" sales person! But, it was into bed early, go to sleep with the sun and awake with the sun, a good nights sleep in

have been to the Strait itself. We turned around and headed for the beautiful surf off the Point. I am told this is usually out of bounds as it is too rough and messy, but we had a ball. I went swimming twice but what a hoot! After lunch on Drum Island we headed back to the camp.

Day 3 we woke up to the Easter Bunny having visited our campsite. He turns up everywhere! Again launch- ing about 10am, we headed 12 kms up to Port Albert for the obligatory fish and chips from the world fa- mous, Port Albert, fish shop. The fish and chips were a pleasant change from tinned salmon and lettuce leaf inside a dry wrap. There was a community gathering across at a park, so off we went to have a look at a few classic cars, a nice coffee and with the help of Sarah, and our President Richard, was even interviewed by a



between. Something I really appreciate about this type of physical camping is being more attuned to nature.

Day 2 kicked off about 10am after the briefing. We broke into two groups. Richard and Steve led our group. We headed out through the southern entrance off Clonmel Banks towards Bass Strait. The closest I



Photos: Caroline Durre

local WIN TV crew.

From here we headed back to camp, en-route, a few of us practiced towing. We broke again into three groups off Drum Island, our group once again led by Richard, headed for the mangroves on the western end of Drum Island. On this leg we came across some really large sting-rays, two with their tails above the water line as we passed and we saw five Hog deer, small animals, on Sunday Island. One group headed back to camp and the really keen ones headed for the surf again. This was a big day, paddling 29 kms.

Day 4, all good things come to an end. At about 8am, we had breakfast, packed up, the tide was low, so we had a long walk to take everything to the waters



edge. We were off by 11am, lunch stop at The Gulf camp area, north eastern end of the Gulf Walking Track on Snake Island then back to Port Welshpool.

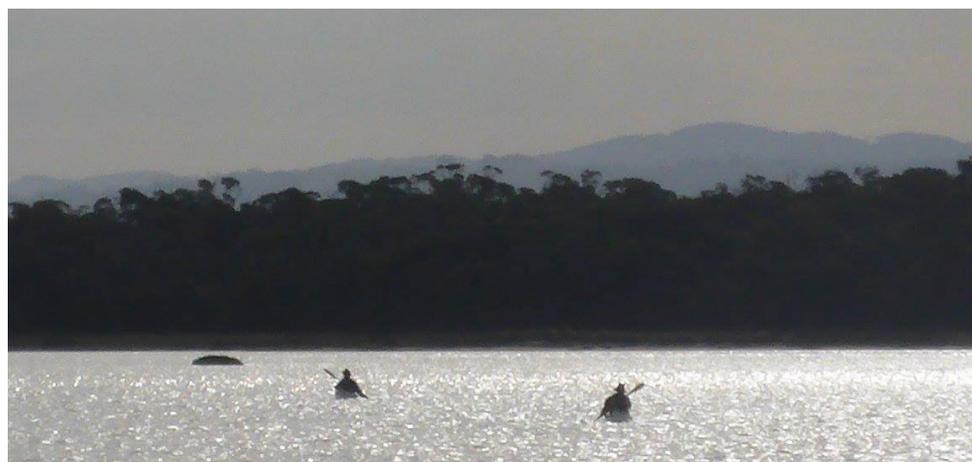
My test for a great paddle is when the finish is in sight and I do not want it to end. This was certainly the case on this fantastic paddle.

Approximately 85 kilometres were paddled over 4 days, a great crew, great camaraderie, wonderful weather, beautiful area, a well organised and run club trip. A big thanks to Richard Rawling, our President, and chief organiser, to Steve Collins, Neil Brenton, Raia Wall, Helmut Heinze and Russell Blamey, our Grade 3 paddlers for their input and guidance.

A wonderful weekend. We are really looking forward to the next trip away with the Club.

Ray Pilbrow.

Photos: Caroline Durre





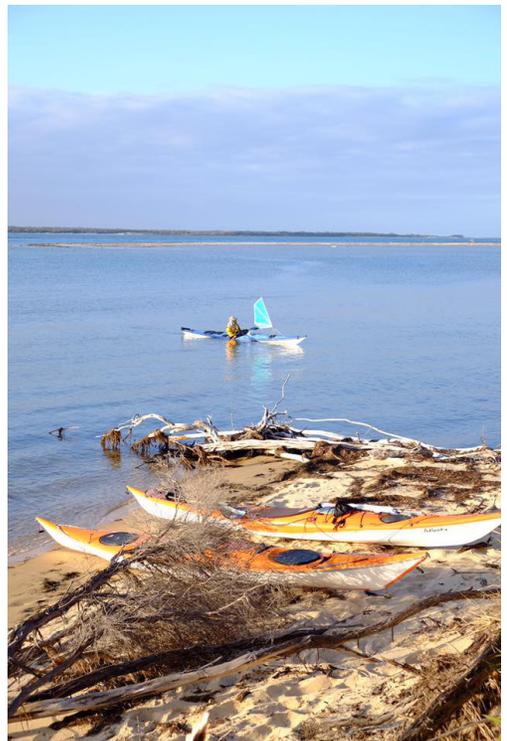
Bird life of the Nooramunga Marine and Coastal Park - Snake Island

Photos: Caroline Durre





Snake Island - Snapparazi



Photos: Sarah Black



Group Paddling

Words Helmut Heinze



Photo: Nic Faramaz

There is nothing simple and clear that cannot be made complicated and murky by putting it through a theory blender. Sometimes, though, doing so helps to explain why seemingly simple things turn out to be so difficult in practice.

"We paddle as a group!" - you have heard it before. Statement of the obvious. Instruction. Plea. Yet, on the water paddlers separate, groups fall apart without any ill will of those involved, but to the great concern and sometimes utter exasperation of trip leaders (see Terry Barry, "A frustrating day out", Sea Trek 85, Summer 2015/2016, 5-6).

Paddling as a group increases safety, other competent paddlers are close by to help sort out problems and render support and encouragement to those who need it. We all are looking out for each other. A group is better visible than a lonely paddler (not to mention a paddler straying away from a group), and can respond collectively to any challenges. There are many benefits for paddling as a group. So let's just do it. Simple! - Simple? Not at all!

A titbit of theory for the intrepid.

What is a group? One (radical) answer is: a group is a

social system, a social system consisting of interactions (cf Luhmann 405ff). Not people but interactions! Such interactions have three requirements: first the physical presence of other humans, second a psychological awareness of their presence, and third a communicative acknowledgement of this awareness. One builds on the other. No acknowledgement without awareness, no awareness without a perceived presence of the other. This acknowledged awareness of another presupposes that the other has the same awareness and may reciprocate the acknowledgement. There is some mind-boggling loopiness in this relation: I expect you to reciprocate my acknowledgement, and I expect you to expect me to reciprocate to your acknowledgement, and so on; I perceive you as present and presume you perceive me in the same way, and so on. My acknowledgement of your presence is contingent on your acknowledgement of my presence, and we would find ourselves in a deadlock if on side would not make a tentative move, risk a word, a nod, a glance. This starts the game of tiny acts of acknowledgement that stabilise to a sustained system of interactions which we call a group. And if these chains of interactions cease to continue – the group is no more.

Obviously there is a physical dimension (proximity of human bodies), a psychological dimension (attention, perception and awareness) and a communicative dimension (verbal or non-verbal acts) which could be explored further. Here we contend with just two ob-

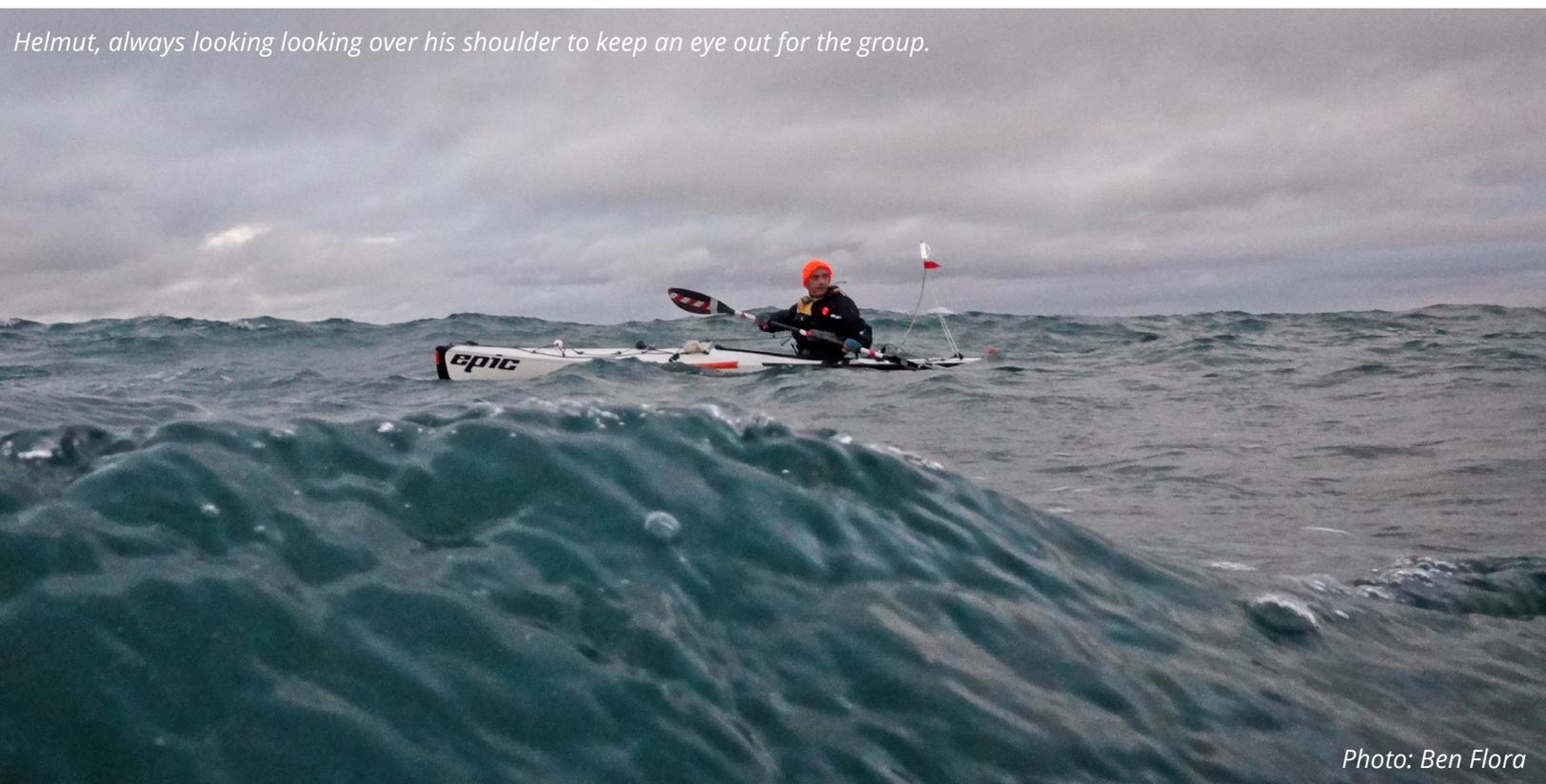
servations: first a group as interaction system needs continuous active input, and second it requires a certain amount of resources such as some attention and some time for the acts of acknowledgement. These requirements compete with the core activity of paddling: moving along, dealing with whatever the sea throws at us.

This little theoretical sketch doesn't delve into finer points of psychology, theory of interaction systems or the sociology of groups and leadership styles etc. However, I hope it gives you some food for thought.

Some things to think about for your next group paddle

1. Paddling as a group needs active input from each paddler. It can't be taken for granted. It needs to be developed and practised in all conditions. It's like driving a car. You need to be aware of what is around you all the time, forwards, backwards, left and right. It becomes instinct with practice. Ideally one should be able to verbally communicate with the paddler next to them.
2. Practice the skill of rotating the body, turning the head, looking sideways and even looking back while moving forward in all sea conditions. Only this way you are able to refresh your awareness of the presence of others and acknowledge them.
3. If there is a technical skill for paddling as a group

Helmut, always looking looking over his shoulder to keep an eye out for the group.



then it's this: the ability of moving forward while looking left and right ... and back! This requires a strong rotation of the upper body and, to prevent a capsize, something what I call a sliding brace or a skimming brace: putting out the paddle and letting the back of the blade lightly skim over the water.

4. Multi-task. Practice to stay aware of your fellow paddlers and be ready to respond to their acknowledgement.

5. Weaker paddlers in challenging conditions may not have the capacity to engage fully in what it takes to keep a group alive as their awareness may be very local. The group should take them in our middle – literally – thus alleviating them, at least temporarily, from actively keeping the group alive.

Sometimes it requires an astonishing amount of `work' to keep the pack close and staying as a supportive group. However, I hope it has become apparent that if we all in the pack strive and learn to watch out for each other at all times the work of a few becomes a second instinct of the many.

Ask yourself this the next time you are on a group paddle. Who is the furthest on the left? Who is the furthest on the right? Who is at the back? If all in the pack are aware of this, we are one step closer to keeping a supportive group dynamic alive and increasing the safety for all who are in it.

Sources

N Luhmann, Social Systems, Stanford 1994.

Photo: Ben Flora - Chinaman's hut, Port Phillip Bay





Photo: David Golightly

Coffee & Cake

Words Helmut Heinze

Sunday, 2 Apr 2017.

Sandridge Beach to St Kilda Pier and return.

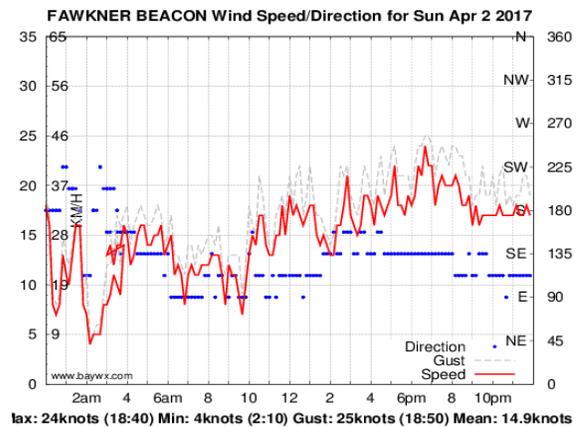
12 paddlers. Paddled distance 15.5km.

Wind SE 12-15kts est, gusts up to 20kts. Seas 0.5-1m, increasing in the early afternoon.

Pushed off at Sandridge Beach after briefing at 9:58. Headed out into the Bay rounding the swing basin at Princess Pier, crossing the channel at lateral markers #76 and #77. Slow progress due to headwinds and

waves up to 1m. One capsized at 11:05am; 2 kayakers uncomfortable in conditions. Recovered into beach just south of Princess pier. Continued journey with reduced group at 11:35.

Encountered strong headwinds, required some towing. Entered St Kilda Marina through under pier from



southern end at 13:00. Started return leg at 2pm in mostly following seas, heading in a straight line back. Arrived at 3:10pm at Sandridge Beach in light 1-2ft surf break. Below the wind graph from Fawkner Beacon.

Note that the conditions encountered close to the coast would have been less. The trip was wrapped into an optional extended paddle starting from City/Southbank, conducted by a group of 2. This group passed Flinders Station at 8:00am and returned at 5:15pm. Paddled distance 39.5km.



Photo: Keith Russel



Johnny Souey
Photos: Ben Flora

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