NEWSLETTER

OF

THE

Advanced Sea Kayak Club

AIMS:

1. PROMOTION OF SEA KAYAKING
2. COMMUNICATION
3. ORGANISATION OF EVENTS
4. SAFETY & COACHING

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ADVANCED SEA KAYAK CLUB

NEWSLETTER No. 46

DECEMBER 1984

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EDITORIAL

Here's wishing you and yours a VERY HAPPY CHRISTMAS AND A GREAT NEW YEAR.

No doubt many of you will have your sea canoeing expeditions planned and arranged for 1985 by now, whilst others of you will be considering your options. I shall be assisting with a B.S.E.S. Expedition again, this time to the Copper River area, 300 miles east of Anchorage, Alaska. I shall be going with Keith Maslen and Noel Smith, both members of the A.S.K.C. - though I have to admit that we shall not be involved in any sea canoeing on this exped.

I find the dark winter evenings an ideal opportunity to pour over maps and charts, to draw up equipment lists, to research as much as possible on the proposed country and area of operation. It is always so much easier from the comfort of an armchair - at least there is no foul weather and flying sharks (midges) to put up with!!

Courtesy of Geoff Good and the members of the recent Coaching Conference at Lilleshall I arranged for the draw to take place for the A.S.K.C. raffle, the prize of which was a new sea kayak of the winners choice. Sylvia Lunn drew the winning ticket out of the box ..... 177. The owner of this ticket is: BRUCE KITNEY, 300, Strathmore Drive, Syracuse, New York, 13207, U.S.A. The original plan was for the winner to collect his/her kayak from the B.C.U. Canoe Exhibition next February. Now I shall have to paddle it across the Atlantic instead!

Renewals for the Club membership for 1985 have been coming in steadily since I sent out the renewal forms with the October Newsletter. I have included another such form with this letter - obviously you must ignore it if you have already renewed. It is really meant as a reminder to those of you yet to renew.

The A.S.K.C. is now 500 members strong and growing. I have resisted the temptation to accept advertising. Many of you have said you prefer the newsletter as it is - no frills - and so you can rest assured that I shall be leaving the present format as it is - a fully independant and 'intimate' home produced newsletter. BUT, it's continueing success and general acceptance by many would soon plummet without good copy. So, when drawing up your 'critical path analysis' for your trips, remember to add on at the end of your list, "an expedition report to the A.S.K.C.".

RESTRICTIONS imposed or threatened on the activities of sea canoeists by such bodies as the Nature Concervancy Council and the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds must be taken seriously, - and this the Sea Touring Committee of the B.C.U. most certainly do.
No doubt many of you have differing views on these restrictions. For the record, here are mine, which, as Chairman of the S.T.C., I'm unable to voice at our meetings, but I feel able to spell out here.

Briefly, I belive we must learn to live with certain restrictions. We should search out the reasons for their imposition and ensure, as far as it is possible, that they are good and valid. Then as a body, we should agree to comply. Here as an extract from the recent edition of Sea Kayaker from an excellent article on the killer whales, 'Orcinus Orca'
"The reserve's eastern shoreline is particularly sensitive because the whales regularly come close to shore to rub on the pebbly beaches. This behaviour has been observed nowhere else in the world, and we believe it represent an important recreational activity for Johnstone Strait whales.
Despite notices distributed to boaters and signs posted at the reserve boundaries suggesting that people stay 300 metres away from the whales, few seem willing to observe the restrictions. Kayakers continue to camp in Robson Bight and follow the whales as they enter the reserve. The rubbing beaches are of most concern."
Coming closer to home, it is known that human activity is often detrimental to certain flora and fauna unlsss some form of control is observed. We, as canoeists, must ensure all our compromises are valid. WHAT DO YOU THINK?

THE NARWHAL HUNTERS OF GRELNLAND

Five sixths of Greenland, the world's largest island, is buried under ice as much as 3 kilometres (two miles) thick - the ice cap. Only along the coast does one find a thin strip of ice-free land, a mountainous country slashed by countless fjords.

In Greenlands northwestern corner, known as the Thule region, the great Inglefield Fjord and its bordering straits spilt the coast like a giant axe blow reaching 80 kilometres (50 miles) inland.

Along this icy fjord lie a few tiny villages, the homes of some 430 of the total 700 Polar Eskimos. These people live farther north than any others on our planet and maintain a frugal existance as hunters.

The Polar Eskimos call Inglefield Fjord KANGERLUSSUAQ - "great fjord". Farther inland it widens into an almost circular basin surrounded by enormous sandstone and granite mountains. The mountains plummet steeply into the sea, and with them five glaciers, two more than ten kilometres wide.

Here during the short arctic summer the runoff from the melting ice is tremendous. Cataracts seethe and waterfalls thunder, carrying large amounts of minerals to the fjord. The minerals produce an explosion of plankton, a thick soup on which masses of Greenland halibut feed. These large flat fish hide in the mud banks below the glaciers and they are the favourite repast of the elusive narwhal.

Already at the end of June, while the fjord is still covered by winter ice, thousands of narwhals - small, tusked members of the whale family - appear off the coast. Restlessly they move along the edge of the ice and wait for it to break up so that they can catch the feeding grounds at the head of the fjords. The hunters know this, and along the way they pursue the whales in age-old fashion, with kayaks and harpoons.

In the midst of this enormous larder, low ice-scraped granite islands flank QEQERTAT, smallest of the Polar Eskimo villages. Like almosy all Eskimo place names, Qeqertat is a descriptive term, meaning the "islands". It is not a place one would just happen on to, most of the year the village is barely populated.

I had not visited the village in several years and was eager to see my friends again. Qeqertat was silent, the windows and doors of its eleven houses sealed shut. The village appeared deserted - a ghost town in the midst of a pallid sea fog. Where was everybody,had they too left; it was, after all, several years since my last visit. My thoughts were interupted by the sound of a wood plane that seemed to rasp shavings from the very silence. A sign of life, at least. Ducking under the guy wires that braced a house against the winter storms, I came to the source of the sound. An atheletic young man stood over the wooden frame of a new kayak laid across two sawhorses. The man looked up with the sharp eyes of a hunter in his Mongol face, burned bluish brown by the midnight sun. His hawklike gaze softened into a boyish smile. Now I recognised him; Qajoranguaq, whome I remembered years before as a shy youth clever at whittling toy spears. The boy had become a man now, a master carpenter putting the finishing touches on the world's most elegant craft - a sleek, lethal, six metre long hunting platform known as a Greenland Kayak.

"Someone said that you were collecting tern eggs up the fjord" I said. "That's true", he said, "But it was mostly to check on the ice. How I long for those narwhals and for muktuk (whale skin and a layer of blubber, an Eskimo delicacy). The glaciers in there are pushing hard, so it won't be long before the ice breaks up."

It was a pleasure to watch this 25 year old man at work, to see him adjust the long side planks, follow the lines of the ribs, and join the frame into one elastic whole that would later be covered in seal skin. A kayak should be joined without nails. It has to work with the sea, not stubbornly try to fight the forces of nature.

I was able to tell my young friend that four narwhals had already been taken along the edge of the ice. "Did they have tusks", he wanted to know. "Yes, all four of them", I answered, knowing the importance of my reply. The tusk of a narwhal, a feature of the male, rarely found on a female, is a vital source of income to the Polar Eskimo. It has become even more important since the price of sealskins plunged - a result of the conservationist campaign against large scale sealing off Newfoundland.

The hunt for warwhals has become very important in so much as it pays the installments on the village houses and boats, pays for heating oil, gasoline, ammunition, radios, cloth for anoraks, and other items that sweeten the life in these icy polar wastes.

Adult narwhals weigh as much as 1.6 tons, more than 3,000 pounds. On a full grown narwhal there are about 200 to 300 pounds of the tough, delicious muktuk, which is rich in vitamins. The concentration of Vit C alone is sufficient to prevent scurvey despite a primary diet of meat.

Both male and female narwhals are born with two teeth pointing forward in the upper jaw. The left tooth of the male, however, grows through the upper lip like a bow-sprit. It spirals counterclockwise towards the tip and can reach a length of three metres and weigh as much as 20 pounds. A large, perfectly pointed tusk is a coveted trophy and sells for at least $800 on the world market. On rare ocassions hunters find narwhals with twin tusks, a bonanza that Qajoranguaq constantly dreams of.

Northern Greenland has no wood except drift wood, seldom in generous supply, and until well into this century the Polar Eskimo used narwhal tusks as harpoon shafts and tent poles.

But what does the narwhal itself use the tusk for? Qajoranguaq rules out the theory of a weapon. He believes the tusk is much too brittle for such purposes, even though some hunters claim to have seen panic-stricken narwhals stab attacking killer whales with their tusks. He thinks the narwhal uses its tusk to root up food from the bottom. The worn tip seems to bear this out, though recent scientific literature dismisses the tusk as no more than a secondary sexual characteristic, like the lion's mane. But our knowledge of this very timid whale is extremely limited for when the narwhal lifts its fan-shaped tail and dives to the bottom into the dark depths, it takes all its secrets with it.

Following my meeting with Qajoranguaq, the days flowed together, unbroken in the perpetual midnight sun. Gradually Qeqertat came to life. Women left their houses accompanied by small children. They trudged down to the fjord to get fresh water ice chunks of glaciers stranded near the village. From Qajoranguaq's house his father, Angutikavsak, stepped out with his mug of coffee and a sealskin to sit on. A short, sinewy man of 55 with the most over-patched bearskin pants I have ever seen, he surveyed his son's kayak frame with approval, then sat down on a hillock with a half finsihed kayak paddle and began to shape it with a flensing knife.

Now and then other doors among the village houses opened quietly. Several young men regarded the still frozen fjord with a fatalistic air, yawned, and drifted down towards the harbour. I followed, and we met beside a scaffold with seven kayaks stored upside down on it, ready for the hunt.

It was low tide. The ice floes jostled, scoured and sighed against the cliffs on the beach. In the distance the mournful cry of the male eider duck sounded. I joined the group who were all gathered around the row of sleek craft, checking and rechecking the hunting equipment that had been long ready for use.

One by one the harpoon heads were taken out, all traditionally fashioned of walrus tusk. The huntere carressed the stream-lined forms, admiring the clear shine of the steel edging around the heads, soon to be rose-coloured by whales blood. The harpoon head, which disengages from the shaft as the narwhal is struck, is fastened to a 25 mtr long nylon line coiled on the foredeck of the kayak. The line leads around the right side of the paddler to the back, where it is tied to the hunting bladder. This is an inflated sealskin, complete with flippers, which acts as a float to prevent the harpooned narwhal from sinking once it has been killed.

In addition to his harpoon, every narwhal hunter carries a rifle aboard his kayak. This must be examined before the hunt for rust in the barrel or on the finely sharpened sights. Inside the kayak the sitting skins of seal and polar bear must be arranged and the akuilisaq inspected. The latter is a short skirt of water-tight sealskin drawn around the kayak cokkpit, reaching up to the hunter's armpits. This is to keep the water out of the craft at sea.

Each hunter carries a lance strapped behind him on the kayak, and on the foredeck a pointed copper pipe and a knife. The pipe is used to inflate a harpooned whale's

abdominal cavity so that it floats; the knife is an all purpose instrument at sea. If something should go wrong, if the harpooned narwhal entangles the line with the kayak, then even the most skilled hunter will be turned over and pulled down unless he instantly cuts the line.

It is a rigid rule that one never goes on a kayak hunt alone. A man can save a capsized friend by making an outrigger of his spear and hunting bladder so that his friend can hang on and be pulled aboard by his trouser bottoms.

As the young men talked beside the upturned kayaks, one of them fished an emery stone from his anarak pocket. He passed it around and the harpoon heads once more received an unnecessary sharpening. At length conversation ebbed and somewhere a loon shrieked out its lonliness in the silence.

A day or so later the village seemed transformed. Nature too, had woken from its slumber. One July afternoon fishhook shaped clouds appeared high in the sky, riding a strong east wind. They let the fresh gusts rumple their hair and scatter sleep from their minds. The ice floes began to drift past the village, faster and faster, outward bound.

And the next day the fjord was clear. The ice bergs freed from the shackles of the winter ice, let themselves be seized by the current and the wind and sailed majestically back and forth. The black heads of the harp seals bobbed up everywhere. From the icebergs stately height, kittiwakes threw themselves down at the large schools of polar cod. And on the islands and islets indignant terns screamed and dived at children gathering eggs.

That same evening the wind stilled. Mirror-like the fjord rested. And then the whales came. Carried along by the incoming tide, with the water splashing against their domed brows and with heavy whistling snorts, the narwhals took possession of the fjord.

Qajoranguaq harpooned the village's first whale, way out. Soon afterwards the catch - a young male narwhal - lay at the water's edge in the harbour. The entire village turned out. The proud hunter made the first cut. Instantly the midnight sun flashed against long flensing knives, against the womens chopping blades, and even pocket knives.

Blood splashed. Everyone cut in, chewed muktuk so that their cheeks shone with blubber. The first narwhal of the year was a feast in Qeqertat. Qajoranguaq stored the entire tail piece in a stone-lined chamber in the ground. Next Christmas, covered with ice crystals, it would be dragged into the living room, chopped into frozen shavings with sharp axes, and eaten.

After,the hunt proceeded, whale by whale while motorboats with kayaks balanced on their gunwales poured into Qeqertat from the entire Thule region, some from more than 320 kilometres (200 miles) away. The motorboats may come only this far, for the law forbids the use of engines in the actual hunt.

There were usually one or two narwhals rolling among the waves in the bay to the north of the village, waiting to be cut up at low tide.

All the village houses were in use. Relatives and friends moved in and Qeqertat echoed to the sounds of busy women and happy children. Big pots of meat bubbled outdoors and coffee kettles sang. Colourful summer tents bloomed everywhere like flowers. The meat storage holes were once again filled and covered. Narwhal intestines hung drying like red garlands on frames already loaded with meat.

During the hunting season Qeqertat's social gathering place - and here neither the store or the church can compete - is the lookout, called Nasiffik. Nasiffik is a cliff rising in easy stages about eight metres above the village's northernmost row of houses. Lichens atop the cliff have been worn off by generations of bearskin trousers worn by hunters seated there. Day and night, rain wind or shine, binocular lenses glint, panning back and forth across the fjord below.

If there are narwhals in sight, only women sit on the cliff. Alert and silent they follow their men way out, where they wait motionless among the icebergs. Suddenly one woman will utter a quiet, hopeful "Paarhileqihooq! - he is paddling!"

At once all binoculars turn on that kayak. From that moment the world is reduced to one whale, one man. All the women lean forward, holding their breath. If the

hunter has to give up - and this happens most of the time, for the whales are extremely shy and fast - then there is a chorus of disappointed sighs.

But if the kayaker succeeds in planting the harpoon in the whales back and the hunting bladder dances across the water, then a shout of triumph goes up: "Nauleeq-ihooq! - he has harpooned one!"

The shout takes hold of the whole village to be echoed by old and young. The boys throw down their cartoon books or toy harpoons and climb up to the lookout, wanting with all their hearts to be in the lucky man's place

The sun was breaking through the blue-grey roof of clouds as we motored by long-boat toward the inner fjord, towing a dinghy and six kayaks behind. My own kayak was one of them. It had been made for me years before by a friend in Qaanaaq.

As we rounded Nuussuaq, the "great cape", we reached the invisible line beyond which the Eskimo's own laws forbid hunting by motorboat. From here on we rowed the longboat in turns. Angutikavsak sat in the stern in an old patched sweater, steering with a kayak paddle in a slalom course among the icebergs and growlers.

For hours we prowled the narwhal's feeding grounds in the inner fjord. This area has its own harsh beauty: purple landmasses and nunataks - low hills surrounded by ice sheets - together with mighty glaciers and icefalls, none of them ever still. The waters are filled with ice, both chunks and bergs. In places the latter float shoulder-to-shoulder: nature's own Manhattan skyline of crystal towers. Beautiful, but fragile and perilous for him who ventures here.

Among the icebergs we settled down to wait. We kept watch through the binoculars and munched stale hardtack. We had very few supplies, for, as the Eskimo saying goes, "The hungry man hunts best." Small waves gurgled against the hull and I was lulled to sleep. Suddenly I was awoken. "The whales are coming - many!" Aleqatsiaq whispered, "Not a sound now." His words had the same effect as an ice cube being slid down my bearskin trousers. We slid, cat like, into our kayaks. Around me small pieces of ice sparkled like foam from hundreds of bottles of champagne. The mid-night sun poured red gold over long swells that rolled to meet us from calving glaciers, lifting me up and down with a slight pull in my stomach.

Before us we heard long whistling and roaring sounds, like a winter storm raging through a pine forest. It grew as we approached, combining heavy whistling snorts and thunderous grunts. The next moment tall spouts of vapour shot into the air ahead. Dark, shining backs broke the surface, rocked a little, then rolled forward and slid down. Other backs followed - many of them. We stopped paddling and waited in line abreast, leaning forwards with foreheads on the deck. We remained motionless, so the whales would think us harmless ice. Everyone knows that a fleeing whale is impossible to catch. The hunters have a chance to strike with the harpoon only by sneaking up on a dozing whale or when an animal swims up alongside from the stern.

I quivered with excitement, gazing down into the blue-green water. Up toward me a narwhal rose like a pale silent spirit with a wide open mouth as if it were going to swallow me. I almost capsized out of fear and the kayak's vibration was enough to scare the monster. Quietly it faded away again in the depths. I lifted my head in time to see Qajoranguaq grow suddenly tense. A narwhal was crossing his path. He shot forward, his paddles moving like the arms of a windmill. Then his harpoon whistled through the air, and the steel-edged ivory head embedded itself in the whale's back.

The creature's tail whipped the air, drenching us as he threw the hunting bladder from the rear deck of the kayak. Then he released the drifting anchor, a sealskin panel attached to the line to create drag. In a froth the bladder and anchor were pulled under water, and at the same moment all the other whales vanished as if by magic. Qajoranguaq's call echoed among the ice bergs:"Iik, iik - come, come." We answered with excitement and hurried to join him. But where would the whale now surface? We paddled in the probable direction while we twisted our heads and we shot in among the icebergs.

Inukitsoq got there first and threw his harpoon. It found its mark. Now the whale had two bladders and two sea anchors to drag. The next time the whale broke the surface Qitlugtoq streaked forward, but missed. The throw was short. Pride stung, he coiled the line on the foredeck and wished that he had paddled one more stroke

before hurling his harpoon.

Now the whale quickly grew tired and sought the surface. Lances whistled through the air. Soon the whale rolled on its side, struggled briefly, and was still.

Meanwhile Angutikavsak had sped away. He had discovered a new herd of whales. Six hours after the hunt had begun, the hunters got out of their kayaks and climbed into the longboat. I had to be helped up, my legs paralyzed after sitting in the same position for so long. Two inflated whales, the second one harpooned by Angutikavsak, floated between the dinghy and the longboat. The row to a butchering place could begin.

A tough and bloody job awaited us. The whales had to be divided according to time honoured rules in the order that the men had "touched" them. Nauligtoq, a term meaning "first harpoon", receives the most. The thing is, everyone gets something. Sheets of muktuk were strung on a rope and thrown into the water to keep fresh until the hunters could reach Qaanaaq and sell it.

We left the meat in holes that we dug in the ground and lined with stone at the butchering site. We covered the chambers carefully with more stones against the foxes and ravens. In winter Angutikavsak or one of his sons would return by dogsled to retrieve the frozen meat.

On the afternoon of August 16 I stood against the wheelhouse of a chartered motor boat, looking back toward Qeqertat. The boat was bound for Qaanaaq where I could catch a flight south to my own family.

By then it appeared that the narwhal catch for the season would be a little above the average of 150 animals. That was comforting, but how would the future affect the Polar Eskimo's life-style - one of the oldest cultures on our planet? Like the worsening weather, thoughts of Qeqertat's declining population and of the dangers posed by the modern world collected heavy clouds around my soul.

Early autumn snow had powdered the mountain's dark walls halfway to the water. Showers of sleet drove in through the fjord, screening two distant kayakers who were headed toward a small herd of narwhals. By the shape and colour of one kayak, I recognized Qajoranguaq. Perhaps on this day a whale with twin tusks, his constant dream, awaited him. Immaqa - perhaps.

The engine throbbed steadily onward. When the sleet shower had drifted away, the kayakers were gone. And slowly, silectly, Qeqertat sank into the blue-grey sea.

* *

THE JOYS OF SLEEPING OUT WITHOUT A TENT

The wind murmered softly across the moor as I stirred from my slumbers. I was comfortably warm in my sleeping bag and bivvy bag, and all was dark save for a chink of light showihg through the gap I'd left in the opening for ventilation. Not quite the spread-out spaciousness of a tent, but comfortable nevertheless, and undeniably an excellent shelter for the night.

Something moved outside. Silly to say "outside", I suppose. The concept of inside and out must surely draw the line at tents - I was outside! I heard the rustling noise again. Having wrestled with the drawstring around the hood of the sleeping bag, I fumbled for the zip to undo the Gore-tex bivvy bag. The velcro weather flap tore apart with an ear-splitting rip, and there I was, peering up at the impassive face of a sheep. I wondered whether it was really concerned about this Gore-tex clad intruder.

There's something very free and easy about bivvying - without a tent, you don't have the same constraints. It takes no time at all to set up camp after a long days paddle. Sunsets are appreciated more because you tend to canoe on a bit longer. Once you are off the water, unless it is warm weather, you often need to be in your sleeping bag quickly. Taking into consideration the weight and bulk in the rucsac, it's hardly surprising that this form of shelter is popular with the military.

Some current survival bags are of a fairly light gauge plastic, and can be bought vacuum packed. They are, however, really only intended for emergency use. Whilst they have no doubt saved lives, they are unsuitable for planned use - to my mind the plastic is too thin and when wet there is a real danger of the bag smothering the occupant. The orange heavy duty bags available from Karimor are prime examples of survival bags suitable for extended use, although condensation is still very much a problem

GORE-TEX BAGS

Gore-tex has made bivvying almost as comfortable as camping with a tent. The smaller enclosed space means that the material can more easily build up the moisture differential required to make it work properly. The Gore-tex bivvy bag fits generously over a skepping bag, and a large hood takes care of equipment storage. Most have a zipped entrance across the bag, at about shoulder height, with a velcros fastened weather flap to keep the weather from penetrating the zip. Not having that ghastly condensation problem makes things much more tolerable. Your sleeping bag performs as it should, and you're not reduced to putting all your belongings in plastic bags to keep them dry.

You can get Gore-tex bivvy bags from quite a number of manufacturers now, and you'll find that apart from minor details, they're pretty much the same. The vast majority are available in olive green, with blue offered as an alternative by one manufacturer.

Around £50 to £70 should buy you one with the tape sealed seams (most important). Don't be tempted to buy ones with a PU nylon base. The condensation you'll pick will make you wonder whether you might not have had a better bargain with a plastic bag! Apart from it's prime use, a bivvy bag is a very good means of uprating a sleeping bag for use in a tent in colder weather. Used like this, it should extend the range of your bag by around 10°C.

You might think that you need an up-rated sleeping bag for bivvying. You are'nt in any less shelter than you would be in a tent, and in fact you are likely to be warmer. The only way you could be worse off would be if the weather was pounding you so hard, you might lose a certain amount of loft in your sleeping bag. Your low profile and choice of sheltered spot should avoid this.. So, basically the rule of thumb as regards sleeping bags is to use what you would normally for any particular season. If you use a down bag, you'd do well to keep the sleeping bag in-situ, packing the whole lot into a waterproof stuff sac.

Any clothing which gets wet, transferring from kayak to bivvy bag will dry it out fairly quickly once inside. It's just about possible to change clothes inside your bivvy bag, and the writhing contortions of someone else in his brown or green Gore-tex caterpillar can be a great joy to watch.

* *

KAYAK SAFETY by Brod Beech

USE OF MARINE BAND VHF RADIO

Recently I wrote an article entitled "Radio Communications for the Kayakists", which you may or may not have read. The information contained in that article was fairly basic, and I have been making further investigations to clarify the position. The information that I have managed to unearth does simplify the situation considerably, and puts a new perspective on the costs involved. Hand held VHF Marine Transceivers are now within our grasp (no pun intended).

Whilst writing the first article, and ploughing through the information I had to hand at that time, it appeared to me that the most suitable licence for our use was a Ship Licence, obtained by first passing the Radiotelephone Operator (Restricted) Certificate Examination. The cost of this examination is a rather confusing area. Information received from British Telecom International indicates that the current price of the examination is £50 (as at Sept. 1983). The Home Office, on the other hand (as at January 1984) indicates that the cost for the examination is £35. Obviously, depending on the source of your information, you either pay £15 more or less. The cost of the subsequent licence being £25. The total cost appeared to me to be rather steep, and the examination a little over the top for our unique needs. My recent enquiries have provided an easier, more direct path, and moreover, a cheaper one.

The Department of Trade and Industry wrote to me and furnished me with fuller details than those originally received from British Telecom Int. There are several licences available, and varying fees accordingly:-

a) VHF only, plus restricted equipment £15 per annum
b) MF & HF £25 per annum
c) Transportable Licence. (Permits ONE equipment to be operated on any vessel) £15 per annum
d) Emergency only. £15 for five years.
e) Receiving only. (From coast stations, ship stations, radio navigation stations) £14 per annum.

With regard to the VHF Only Certificate which will enable the holder to obtain a VHF Only Licence, the Royal Yachting Association, Victoria Way, Woking, Surrey, GU21 1EQ, are the people to contact. They organise the examinations, which cost £13. The RYA have certain documents available that will explain the syllabus and examination arrangements, and VHF Radiotelephony for Yachtsmen. A letter requesting documents:-

a) RYA General G22/83
b) RYA Training G26/83

and enclosing a cheque for £3 to cover the cost of the booklets and postage, will bring you up to date information that enables us to dispense with the procedure of sifting through mountains of paperwork. It really is all contained within the pages of these excellent publications; and if you are interested in pursueing the path to safety by radio communications, then my advice is to invest in £3 and find out all about it

Additional information may be obtained from:-

Mrs J. Cresswell, R2 Division, Department of Trade & Industry,
Waterloo Bridge House, Waterloo Rd., London, SE1 8UA

The information sheets thus obtained outlines the procedures for us to adopt, and further clarifies the situation. Well worth the cost of a stamp. In addition, a letter to the Licensing Branch of the Department of Trade and Ind. enquiring abour currently approved equipment will bring you essential advice. Apparantly, equipment manufactured outside the UK is often designed for frequency and channel spacings not used here, and cannot be adapted to Dept. of Trade and Ind. standards. It is therefore essential to obtain this information if you considering purchasing equipment to ensure that your hard earned cash is not wasted.

Suitable equipment, bearing in mind our moist environment, is available, even if we need to protect the unit in our usual waterproof containers. However, a firm in Southampton are marketing a purpose built VHF Transceiver called the SMC Mariner. It is supplied equipped with Channels 16, 06 and 08, with a capability for three further channels of your choice. In addition a glass fibre waterproof housing has been developed, and this has been tested to depths of one metre.

A distinct advantage of this unit is that when fitted into the housing, the unit will float. The unit is easily seen being bright orange in colour, and there is a range of accessories available - the most important, bearing in mind our unique needs, being an extension microphone that doubles as a speaker. This allows normal use even when the unit is fitted inside it's waterproof housing. Further information regarding this particular unit can be obtained from:-

South Midlands Communications Ltd.,
SM House,
Osborne Rd., Totton,
Southampton, SO4 4DN

I hope that this article has clarrified the position somewhat and therefore encourages sea kayakists to consider the advantages that two-way radio communications can have in our pursuit.

ooOOoo

To complement the above article from Brod Beech, I now incluse a copy of a letter sent by Dick Richards, Regional Controller, H.M. Coastguards, in reply to an enquirer on the subject of marine radios

Dear *****

Many thanks for your letter etc. regarding the purchase of a portable VHF.

You should be aware that, useful as it is, a VHF has, by and large, a visual range and therefore from a canoe such range, depending upon the height of the aerial to which you are transmitting, may be quite short. However communications are the name of the game and, responsibly used, VHF radio is a decided asset.

Selection of Channels for a twelve channel set is somewhat awkward and will depend to a large extent upon your touring area. A very useful booklet is the British Telecom 'Maritime Radio Services for Yachts and other small craft', obtainable free from :- British Telecom International, Maritime Radio Services, Room 212, Landsec House, 23, New Fetter Lane, London, EC4A 1AE. I am copying a couple of extracts from this booklet for you as it will indicate the working channels of British Telecom Coast Radio Stations should you wish to work them commercially or wish to listen to their weather broadcasts etc.

Coastguards cover most of the inshore waters listening on Channel 16 for distress and urgency traffic and having Channel 67 on which to broadcast safety and weather information. Public Marinas generally use 37 and Harbour and Port Authorities 12 or 14 in the main. Channels 06 and 10 are useful 'inter-ship' channels.

All Coastguards MRCC/SC's maintain continuous watch on Channel 16 in order to respond to distress calls and safety enquiries from both aerials at the MRCC/SC Operations Room and also through strategically sited remote aerials, e.g. MRCC Swansea has aerials at Mumbles Head, Rhoose Airport and on the Severn Bridge Towers, so providing cover over the whole of the Bristol Channel, whilst MRSC Milford Haven have aerials at Monkstone Point Tenby, St. Annes Head Milford and on Dinas Mountain near Fishguard. Similar coverage from all MRCC/SC's is provided.

* *

From Derek Hairon, W. Croydon.
Dear John,

Just returned from three weeks paddling around the Faeroes. They really are a superb area with lots of 1,000' cliffs, places where there is no landing for 6 to 8 miles and fast tides. Puffins as common as sparrows. Tim de Feu and Paccy Stronach were my companions on the expedition with George Hartwig joining us for one week. He'd been on the islands for about five weeks of solo paddling in what are very demanding waters.

Also met Rob Livingstone and party from Northern Ireland just after we landed. They had just finished paddling the northern islands.

We managed to get down to the southern islands and visit most of the northern islands including Mykines which we did'nt expect conditions would allow us to reach.

A small expedition report is being printed with the help of Pete Salisbury of the International Long River Canoeists Club to cost about £1.

If you like cliffs and caves - we found a cave 150 metre long - fantastic.

* *

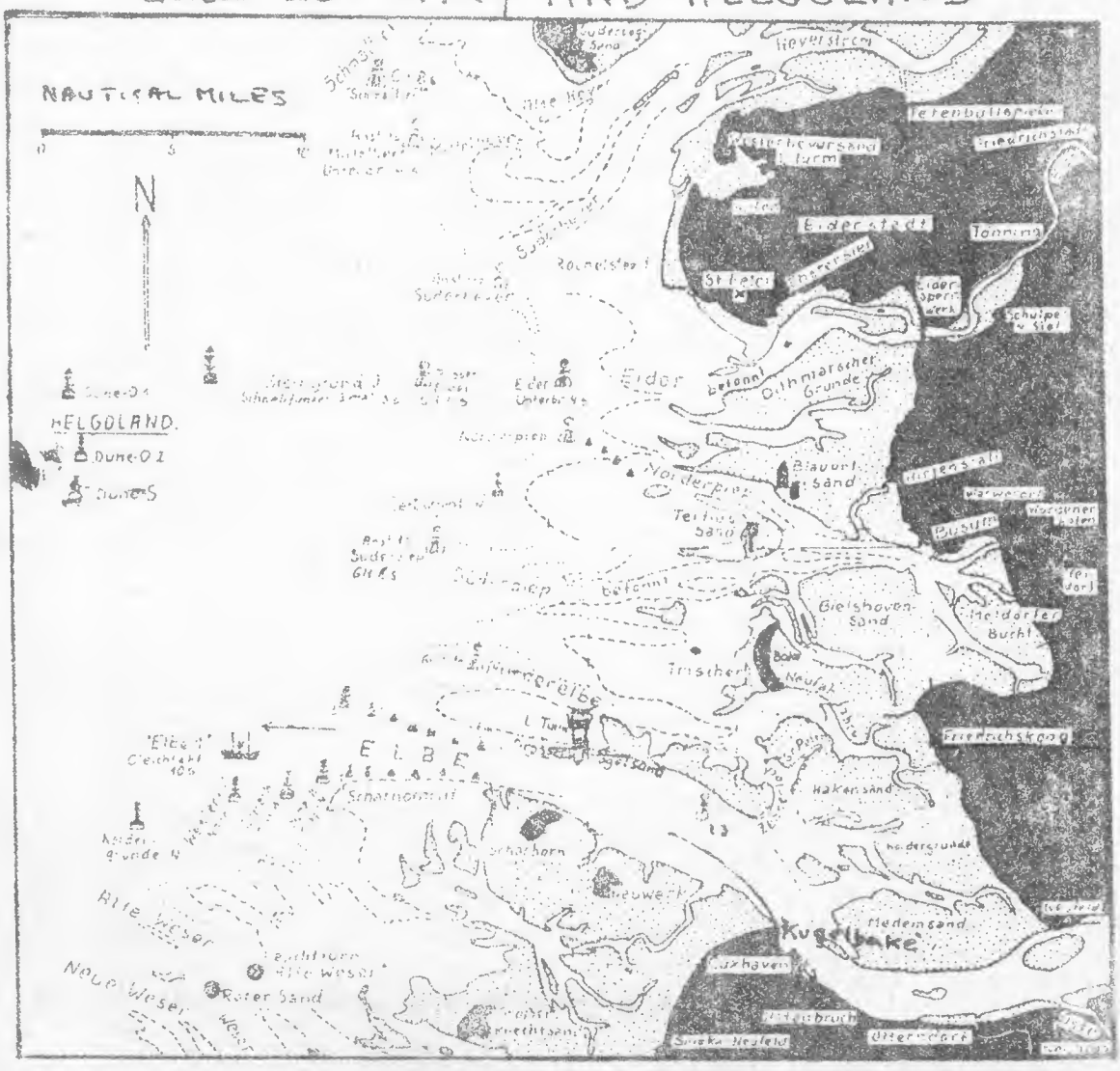
A HELGOLAND ROSE

The phone rang, "Hello - how do you fancy a trip to Helgoland?" It was Jochen Leppert the "Old Sea Dog" who lives in the nearby town of Lueneburg, here in West Germany.

The idea of paddling to Helgoland from the German mainland goes back to the time when Mick O'Connell was also stationed in West Germany. That trip had to be called off when, over the 4 or 5 days available to us, weather deteriorated in the German Bight. We just didn't fancy the idea of the forecast 9 and 10 winds of September 1979. Since then, having a fascination for the Frisian Island group, I had paddled on a number of occasions with Jochen. Jochen, for his part, spends most of his Summers among the Scotttish islands.

Helgoland is a red sandstone outcrop which lies in the German Bight, 25 nautical miles from the nearest point on the German mainland. In 1807, the island was taken by the British from the Danes, and the British later exchanged it with the Germans for Zanzibar. The island was strongly fortified during both world wars and the was used as a bombing range up to 1947 when all the defences were destroyed. Nowadays, the quarter square mile island is a "duty free Woolworths" relying on day trippers from the mainland buying up their quota of butter, cheese, alcohol, cigarettes, cameras, and binoculars. The 3000 islanders who were allowed to return when the island was no longer needed as a range, rebuilt the town since no building had been left standing by the Allies.

ELBE ESTUARY AND HELGOLAND



the small work harbour of Kugelbake. Canoes were loaded onthe beach; two "Nordkapps, a Lettman "Atlantik" and a TM."Express." After a leisurely look at the bathing beauties nearby, we set off westwards an hour before HW, skirting the Leitdamm sea wall which runs alongside the Elbe shipping lane and followed the Elbe channel out to sea towards the island of Neuwerk.

About an hour after setting off, the crew of a launch sent out by an alarmist who had called up the rescue services when he had learned of our intended destination ordered us to halt. "What, paddle that far," we replied, "No, we're off to Neuwerk just a couple of miles away. Only a bunch of fools would dream of paddling to Helgoland." We were left to continue our trip.

When level with Neuwerk, it was time to think of crossing the busy shipping lane to the North and used the Grosser Vogelsand lighthouse as our next navigation marker. The Grosser Vogelsand sight and buoys mark the limits of a dangerous sandbank, the grave of hundreds of ships through the ages. Once across shipping lane, our westerly passage continued to 2 Reede buoy where we set a compass course of 340 degrees to take us close to our destination. It was now two hours after HW and the ebb was helping us trim down journey time. A watchful eye was kept on our sterns as numerous yachts were also travelling the same course.

Some seven and a half hours after setting out from Cuxhaven, we reached the red sandstone island and set up camp on a small triangle of sand in the corner of the outer harbour. It was now dusk. A dream of four years had been fulfilled.

As 1030pm drew near, Werner, clutching a Glenfiddich whisky container gathered us together and we made a beeline for the town to sample the local brew, or so I thought. We flitted from hotel to hotel, waking guests from their slumbers in search of Jochen who had left for the town some time before the remainder of our party. Eventually, we relaxed in the Swan Hotel with Jochen and his mother who had flown over from the mainland to celebrate her 70th birthday with other members of her family. In true Tommy Cooper style, Werner produced his constant companion the Glenfiddich container, and withdrew from it a red rose which he had brought from Hamburg. The rose he then presented to Jochen's mother as his birthday gift. As a 'Brit' among Germans, I smiled and wondered whether Jochen and Werner had heard of Inerflora.....

On the Friday, after a leisurely start we spent the morning walking the cliffs before getting into our kayaks again to circumnavigate the island and inspect at close quarters the colonies of sea birds which nest among the cliffs. We also visited the nearby island of Dune (not to be confused with the town with a similar name, near Cuxhaven, where we started our trip). Dune, true to its name, consists of shifting sands anchored by marram grass and defensive walls. The island has much wildlife (just how did rabbits and moorhens reach this remote island) but like its neighbour, has lost much of its charm due to the endeavours of man, with its airport, laid out campsite and other unsightly and quite unnecessary trappings of the twentieth century.

We still had two days left before returning to our respective jobs and planned to return by way of the sands of Tertius, Blauort and Trischen. Our initial plan was to paddle to Suderpiep but a strong southerly wind pushed us 10 degrees off course and after four hours we found ourselves alongside the West-Tertius-Sand buoy.

We left the protection of Helgoland harbour at the same time as a large flotilla of sailing boats which, like us, wished to make the most of the flood stream. We soon found ourselves alone, however, as the majority returned the way they had come; along the Elbe shipping channel. Visibility was poor when we set out but the forecast gave us no cause for alarm.....

The rumblings of thunder and heavy black clouds rolling towards us some three hours after leaving port, combined with increased windspeed, prompted us to group together closely as visibility decreased even further. It was at this time the Detlef was having trouble with the rudder on his "Atlantik". The rivet holding the adjustable blade had sheared; to be replaced after 10 minutes of acrobatics by one of the two bolts which secured his footrest. So much for rudders.....
Soon, we could see no more than 200 metres as the heavens opened. All around us there

were flashes of lightning whilst above, black clouds with edges of gold and silver and rumbled overhead. Our world was reduced to the bows of our own boats and the sihouettes of three kayaks alongside, floating on a cloud of dancing rain and hail as it rebounded off the surface of the sea. The range of colour was reduced to silvers, greys and blue greys - a wondrous sight for the half hour or so the storm lasted.

Once the storm had passed, visibility increased, but the landfall buoy at Suderpiep could still not be seen. We then changed our course to 140 degrees in the direction of Blauort and Busum on the mainland and continued along this course until, finally we landed on the beach after nine hours in our boats, and, after having experienced a second thunderstorm of even greater ferocity. Our only sight of terra firma during eight of these hours had been an isolated sandbank left dry by the now receding tide.

The following day the winds had increased to 4/5 SE which we knew would give us very uncomfortable conditions should an attempt be made to cross the two major Elbe Channels on a rising tide. Should we take the "coffee and cake" run to Friedrichskoog where we could connect with some of our transport, or should we commit ourselves to a trip which offered no alternative refuge should conditions be found to be beyond our capabilities?

We sat about drinking tea until 3 hours before HW when we set off South, still in our minds, having by this time been joined by Klaus Todt, the brother of Peter Todt the warden of the bird sanctuary island of Trischen where some 2000 pairs of sandwich terns nest each year. Peter a paddler himself, we learned was soon to set off on a solo trip around Jutland in one of the first Lettman Atlantiks to be built. Peter has been a sea canoeist for a number of years, usually paddling solo and with over 40,000 kilometers and the Maelstrom to his credit. Klaus wanted to accompany us as far as Friedrichskoog in his 20 year old folding Pioneer should we be going that way.

As we set off, a check of the winds showed that they had increased and were now gusting 5. Still we left our options open and it was not until level with the Southernmost tip of Trischen, when the wind had decreased, intentions were declared and we committed ourselves to the bumpy ride to Cuxhaven. Klaus decided to come along too, and we were treated to an exhibition of his 'old school' skill in a high profile craft.

Conditions were fair as the warm SE wind slowed down our progress when we crossed the sands which lay in our path and it was not until exposed to the influence of the flood along the Norderelbe channel that we were given a taste of what was to come with wind against tide. There was no choice of turning back so having now identified the Kugelbake tower continued S up to the edge of the main shipping lane of the Elbe. Here, the flood was a good 5 knots and we could see a number of sailing boats, a small passenger boat and a tug being tossed about in the confused seas ahead. Spray covered their decks as they punched forward. It was each man for himself as we handled the seas which came from every direction and appeared even bigger the closer we came to the Kugelbake, where waves were being deflected off the sea wall. All too soon we were through these troubled waters and paddling over a millpond as the final approach to the work harbour four days and 85NM later after setting off was made.

There must well be easier ways of delivering roses to Helgoland, but none are likely to give quite the same measure of satisfaction.

MARINE NATURE RESERVES by the Nature Conservancy Council

MILLIONS OF PEOPLE HAVE SEEN BRIGHTLY COLOURED FISH SWIMMING AMONG BRANCHED CORALS IN TROPICAL SEAS - ON THE TELEVISION SCREEN. BUT, UNLESS YOU ARE A DIVER, YOU MAY BE SURPRISED TO LEARN THAT THE FAUNA AND FLORA OF THE SHALLOW SEAS AROUND GREAT BRITAIN ARE ALSO OF GREAT INTEREST, VARIETY AND BEAUTY AND THAT THEY ARE INCREASINGLY AT RISK FROM HUMAN ACTIVITIES.

The Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 makes it possible for the first time to establish statutory Marine Nature Reserves over areas "Covered (continuously or intermittently) by tidal waters or parts of the sea in or adjacent to Gt. Britain up to the seaward limits of territorial waters". A major purpose of these reserves will be to protect representative areas with specially interesting marine flora and fauna or other features, but they will also be important for education and research.

The Nature Conservancy Council proposes to establish the first statutory reserves around our coasts in colloboration with other interested parties.

INTRODUCTION

Among the principal functions of the N.C.C., the body set up to promote the conservation of Britain's wild plants and animals and geological and physiographical features of special interest, is the selection, establishment and management of nature reserves.

The N.C.C.'s terms of reference have hitherto only permitted it to set up reserves "in Great Britain", which has been interpreted as meaning down to low water mark, but all of our heritage of wildlife habitats none is richer or more extensive than those around our coasts and it is illogical that the safeguarding of this heritage should end at low water mark. The time has come to identify and conserve specially important samples of the wide range of marine habitats which still survive around our coasts but are being increasingly affected by human influence.

The nine marine nature reserves so far established are non-statutory and are managed by a group of enthusiasts. Many other countries already have statutory protected marine reserves, and the U.K. has been in danger of lagging behind and even failing to fulfil the committments of international conventions on the conservation of wildlife and its habitats which the Government intend to ratify as soon as it is possible to do so. The increasing impact on the marine environment of oil and gas exploration, shipping accidents and oil spills, land reclamation, construction of marinas and other coastal and offshore structures, marine dredging for minerals, effluent discharge, modern fishing practices and the selective collection of marine species by scuba divers, educational classes and bait diggers makes it essential it identify and safeguard outstanding sites before it is too late.

In October, 1979, the N.C.C. and the Natural Environment Research Council published the report of a joint working party, NATURE CONSERVATION IN THE MARINE ENVIRONMENT. Among other things it recommened that the N.C.C. should consider "obtaining legislation to permit the establishment and management of conservation areas below the present low water limit of its powers". The opportunity for such legislation arose during the passage of the Government's Wildlife and Countryside Bill through Parliament, and the N.C.C. is delighted that, after long and detailed discussion, a formula was eventually worked out for the setting up and management of statutory Marine Nature Reserves.

The following paragraphs explain the Act's provisions and the way in which the N.C.C. intends to use them to establish reserves to safeguard pre-eminent examples of marine wildlife habitats and physical features and to meet edicational and research requirements, while recognising the many other legitinate uses of our coastline and shallow seas.

ESTABLISHMENT AND MANAGEMENT OF MARINE NATURE RESERVES

Under the Act the appropriate Sec. of State is able, if so requested by the N.C.C. to make an order designating as a Marine Nature Reserve (M.N.R.) any part of the sea within the territorial waters adjacent to Great Britain, or any area in Great Britain between high and low water levels, or a combination of the two. The N.C.C. will be responsible for the management of such a reserve, in order to conserve marine flora and fauna, features of geological or physiographic

or to provide opportunities for their study under suitable condition and control, or for any combination of such purposes. The N.C.C.'s powers include the right to in- stall markers to indicate the existance and extent of a reserve.

BYELAWS

Any application that the N.C.C. makes to the Sec. of State for designating an area as a M.N.R. will have to be accompanied by a copy of any byelaws that it proposes to make, together with any other byelaws already made or proposed to be made for the protection of the area by any other responsible authority.

N.C.C. byelaws may prohibit or restrict entry into or movement within the reserve (with exceptions outlined below); killing, taking, destroying or disturbing the reserves fish, other animals or plants (or their eggs, seeds, spores or immatute stages); doing anything that will interfere with the sea bed or damage or disturb any object in the reserve; or depositing rubbish there. They may be do made as to apply either generally or selectively to particular parts of the reserve or times of the year, and they may provide for the issue of permits authorising entry or anything else normally prohibited by the byelaws.

The N.C.C. byelaws will not restrict normal rights of passage by vessels, but in the case of pleasure boats it will be possible to make restrictions applying to particular parts of the reserve and/or particular times of the year. (Vessels and pleasure boats are defined as including hovercraft and aircraft capable of landing on water). Nor will they be able to restrict safety or rescue operations, discharges from vessels, or any activity more than 30 metres below the sea bed (e.g. mining) though these may be controlled by statute or other bodies' byelaws. Neither N.C.C. byelaws nor any other provision relating to M.N.R.s will interfere with the functions of local authorities and others having statutory responsibilies or with anyones rights (whenever vested)

PROCEDURE IN CONNECTION WITH ORDERS MADE BY THE SEC. OF STATE.

Before making any order designating an area as a M.N.R., the Sec. of State will give notice of his intentions in the London or Edinburgh Gazette, in an appropraate local newspaper, by serving the notice on the relevent individuals and bodies, and by displaying copies at local authority offices and in other public places, providing at least 28 days for inspecyion of the draft order and related byelaws and for representations or objections. If there is objection the Sec of State must cause a local inquiry to be held before deciding to make the order with or without modifications. Any modifications affecting additional areas or involving additional byelaws will require notice and opportunity as described above.

THE N.C.C. PLANS FOR MARINE NATURE RESERVES

The N.C.C. has developed a strategy for the selection of key sites for nature conservation on land, which involves two main stages - the identification and recording of physical and biological characteristics of sites, and the comparitive assessment of sites, on the basis of several criteria, within the framework of a classification of habitat types. It intends to adopt a similar procedure for assessing potential Marine Nature Reserves, in order to select a national series of specially important samples of the varicus types of marine habitats.

Extensive surveys carried out over the last few years have led to the preliminary identification of a number of sites around the coasts of Great Britain which are considered worthy of conservation. These include marine areas around small islands such as some of the Isle of Scilly, Lundy, the Monachs, St. Kilda, Bardey and Skomer; mainland coastal areas with rocks and sand, for example around Start Point in Devon, the Bembridge Ledges off the Isle of Wight and stretches off St. Abbs Head and Arisaig in Scotland and off the Marloes and Lleyn Peninsulas in Wales; low tide sand-flats such as the extensive ones around Tresco and St. Martins in the Isle of Scilly; sea lochs in the Outer Hebrides; tidal rapids such as those between Linne Mhuirich and Loch Sween and in the Menia Strait; inlets such as the Helford and Percuil Rivers in Cornwall; and even flooded coastal quarries. Some of these areas are already non-statutory marine reserves or adjacent to National Nature Reserves on land.

Establishment of statutory M.N.R.s will not be a rapid process since extensive consultations with other interested parties at local and national levels will be required. The N.C.C. proposes to consult all those concerned BEFORE submitting any formal proposals for a M.N.R. to the Sec. of State.

It will only request such byelaws as are required to complement existing byelaws such as those of Sea Fisheries Committees and it has no intention of trying to stop all current activities in the areas concerned. As with National Nature Reserves on land, its policy will be to permit activities that are compatible with the primary objectives of conserving the flora, fauna and other features of special interest.

Though selection of the first few N.N.R.s will be possible on the basis of existing knowledge, further detailed survey will be required to establish the best boundaries for some areas known to be of special interest, to verify the importance of others, and to compare sites in order to select the best examples of particular habitat types.

The N.C.C. will manage N.N.R.s to conserve their wildlife and other features and for research and education and enjoyment whereever they are compatible with conserrvation. Unlike wildlife habitats on land, which often require human control and interferences as well as protection to maintain their special interest, marine habitats, being in a more natural condition, rarely require "estate management". Wardening will be mainly concerned with controlling potentially harmful of conflicting activities and with providing facilities, rather than with manipulating wildlife populations. Interpretative facilities may include explanatory literature, posters and wallcharts, notice boards, displays and lectures.

The emphasis will be on encouraging co-operation in safeguarding N.N.R.s through understanding, and the help of enthusiasts (such as scuba divers) in wardening, surveying and guiding will be welcomed. Marine Nature Reserves should be for the benefit of all.

The Great Britain headquarters of the Nature Conservancy Council are at:
19/20 Belgrave Square,
London, SW1X 8PY

* *

Dick Richards, Regional Controller, H.M. Coastguards and member of the British Canoe Union Sea Touring Committee has been in correspondence with the Welsh Nature Conservancy Council. Here follows an extract from some of this correspondence:

FROM the N.C.C. (Wales)
Dear Richards,

In this part of the world (N. Wales) a good deal of canoeing is undertaken by the various outdoor pursuit centres. Relationships between these centres and ourselves is very good. If ever anything goes wrong a quick 'phone call is all that is needed to put things right again. Communications are much more difficult with parties of canoeists (or of climbers, birdwatchers or what have you) who organise their own expeditions to the area. They may arrive and depart at any time and since we have no prior notice of their coming nor of any contact address, it is impossible to warm them of any restrictions that may be in force, or to tell them afterwards if they have transgressed.. This is just one area where the B.C.U. could play a vital role, by publicising the presence of N.N.R. and explaining what N.C.C. is attempting to achieve with them.

A specific example of the kind of problem that arises with canoeists unfamiliar with the area occurs at our coastal National Nature Reserve at Newborough Ynys Llanddwyn, Anglesey. There is a cluster of insignificant looking rocky islets just offshore between which the tides swirl and eddy. Canoeists enjoy shooting ing the rapids here and sometimes even land on one or other of the outcrops. Unfortunately, the islets are also one of the most important breeding locations in North Wales for Cormorants and Shags. There have been several incidents (at least one a year) when canoeists have shot the rapids during the height of the nesting season. The birds take off in panic and kick eggs and nestlings into the sea, and marauding gulls come in to raid the unprotected nests.

This just does not happen with the professionals from the outdoor pursuits centres who know when to keep away. It is those ignorant of the situation who (inadvertantly) cause problems. On the other hand, there may be occasions when we may unwittingly cause problems to canoeists. The answer is, in a word, communciations.

I look forward to a long and happy relationship between N.C.C. and the B.C.U., with both organisations working towards common ideals.

* *

From the 'Daily Telegraph' September 24th. 1984

GIANT WATER SPOUT SINKS THREE BOATS

A giant water spout which sank three boats, including a 20 ft cabin cruiser, and damaged three others when it swept through the harbour at Barmouth on Saturday evening, is thought to have been the worst to hit the mid-Wales coast for at least 50 years.
People ran to safety as the swirling mass of water swept into the Mawddach estuary from the northern part of Cardigan Bay at what one eye witness called "express train speed".

Water spouts generally occur in conditions of low cloud when swirling air currents begin to pick up water from the surface of the sea. Yesterday sea fronts throughout North Wales were pounded by high seas and a number of small boats were torn from their moorings

* *

From Chris Pendlebury, Ware, Hertfordshire.
Dear John,

With reference to newsletter 45 and the report on the B.C.U. Sea Touring Committee 'Sea Touring Map' section. I view with suspiscion the production of such a map with info on coast/beach/access/campsites/etc., -one of the joys of sea touring is planning the trip, working out landing sites from map evidence and generally taking responsibility for the trip both on and off the water. Providing maps and guides removes much of this responsibility (or, rather, perhaps, transfers it to the guide/map producers.) It's no good saying, "Well, you don't have to use them if you don't want to". It's rather like providing fixed ropes on mountains - once they are there, the responsible mountaineer cannot avoid using them; in fact, the finger of blame would be pointed at him if such aids were not used and an accident occurred. Similarly, tidal atlases and charts are available - so we must use them - but isn't it much more satisfying to do a trip keeping such aids to the minimum available? I also worry that the provision of such guides will help turn sea canoeing into just another outdoor activity. In a similar vien I feel that the day the A.S.K.C. Newsletter drops through my letter box as a 'glossy', will be the day I review my membership of the A.S.K.C.! I prefer it as it is, typing errors and all!

Chris Pendlebury.

ooOOoo ooOOoo

Ed. What are your views? Not only are the Sea Touring Committee interested but so will many of our readers. Please let me be hearing from you on this, as well as any other issue.

* *

From Dennis Philpott, Hullbridge, Essex.

Dear John,

I am sending you a piece of 'pro's' I wrote on a trip five of us did last August (see below).

We paddled clockwise round the Isle of Arran, crossed over to Kintyre and back and climbed a few peaks on the Island for good measure. A really superb ten days in excellent weather and company.

Tidal streams are more or less none existant and with plenty of places to land and camp, it's a canoeists dream.

The main danger seems to be during June and July according to the locals, when anything up to 70(!!) basking sharks can be seen coming down Killrannan Sound (between Kintyre and Arran) in length up to 35 feet, and they love to rub their backs on the bottoms of boats!

If anyone would like details, etc., of the area I would be pleased to pass on any information required.

Dennis Philpott,
"Rueval",
The Walk,
Hullbridge, Essex. SS5 6LW

SEA KAYAKS TO ARRAN by Dennis Philpott

O grant me my freedom,
To look in admiration upon all Arrans beauty,
Of shore and mountain high.

To paddle in my kayak, and watch for seal and otter,
To scan the sky's above me and behold the sea birds fly.

To peer down in the waters of Killrannan and the Clyde,
Along 60 miles of coastline; and look, in exaltation
Through the clearness at the seaweed and gaze at all
The beauty and coldness of the day.

To find each night upon these shores, a have,
For tent and fire, to eat and drink and rest one's bones -
And sleep, a grand sleep.

To rise at six and stretch and ache! To leave the tent
And the kayak amid the bracken and the boulders, to walk
And walk and climb and climb, endless miles; until at
Last, you reach the clouds at the summit of Goat Fell.

To see below you all Arran's grandeur.
To hear the wind and feel the chill, and sit and think,
In peace and sunlight, is God's blessing.

To climb back down thro' bog and heather and jump
Or wade each burn in turn.
To reach one's tent amid the bracken, in sweat and
Midge bites, to eat and rest before the next day,
To taste a 'wee dram', then to slumber - and to dream
Of all this beauty.

* *

COASTAL THREAT

'Enterprise Neptune', a campaign by the National Trust to preserve our coastline for future generations, is to be re-launched next year.

The campaign, first launched back in 1965 by the Duke of Edinburgh, has been a great success to date and raised millions of pounds to buy miles of unspoilt coastline and protect them from development. The Trust's aim has been to acquire land under threat from building, badly sited industry and the spread of static caravan sites.

Through 'Neptune', the Trust have been able to adopt management policies and undertake restoration work they could not previously afford. Since 1965, the Trust have acquired over 270 miles of coastline spread across some 20 counties. But more is still threatened by development and, by re-launching the Neptune campaign next spring, it is hoped public interest can be rekindled.

* *

From Tony Ford
Dear John,

a bit late, I know, but I have a Blacks "Good Companion" "Minor" - no longer in production, with nylon fabric - self sewn in ground sheet, and a cotton flysheet. The tent is now over 20 years old and still going strong; and provided it is erected with the doorway away from the prevailing wind, will stand up to most conditions. It's one failing is that in high winds (6 and over) in exposed places, the wind gets under the fly and lifts the pegs out. I've thought of changing the tent for one with a flysheet that reaches the ground, possibly a dome, but I am now toying with the idea of having a new, larger, flysheet made that will completely enclose the existing tent.

* *

HAD YOUR COPY OF THE 5TH. INTERNATIONAL SEA KAYAKING SYMPOSIUM REPORT YET?

It's contents are as imposing as it's title! Send £2.00 to 4, Wavell Garth.

From John Brand, Bramble Tye, Stanway Green, Colchester.

Dear John,

I am delighted to see skegs and rudders being discussed in the newsletter with reference to Eskimo kayaks. I would like to out-grow the romantic notions imparted at primary school; some West Greenland kayaks had skegs but their size should set alarm bells ringing long ago. The first detail illustration in DEN GRØNLANDSKE KAJAK OG DENS REDSKABER by P. Scavenius Jensen is 440 mm long by 105 mm deep. To me, this means that skegs had to be fitted to the least sea worthy Greenland kayaks; the conditions around our coasts are, I suggest, worse than the usual seal-hunting conditions around Greenland, so kayaks with skegs are poor models for us. Surely we want what is technically correct in the first place. No jiggery pokery.

I must admit I have never thought of skegs as aids to maintain balance when casting a harpoon or discharging a shotgun; I thought Eskimos usually put out a paddle in those circumstances, either holding it in one hand or tucking under the deck straps. Similarly, I had always believed that a skeg, fin or rudder had little effect on a boat's performance until the boat had way on. I have built several semi-replicas of West Greenland kayaks and found that the combination of deep fore foot and 'floating' back end reduced control dangerously in any wave worthy of the name. However, I am sure Greenlanders were well aware of the technical limitations of their design and guess that skegs became more common as temperatures rose 80 years ago. British Eskimos would have probably become extinct if they had persisted with a crude expedient like the skeg. It is interesting to find that the Cambridge University Museum's Z15360 (Disko Bay area), kayak shows a subtle deepening of the 'aft-foot' but I have not felt that Greenland kayaks are natural sea canoes for many years now.

No doubt we will continue to admire the beauty of Greenland kayaks, putting them in context at the same time, but we must rid ourselves of sentiment if we are to evolve suitable sea canoes for our conditions. If kayaks and rudders are going to be researched usefully, should not attention be turned to the WEST Eskimo areas of South West Alaska and the Aleutians? In February 1964 Charles Ranshaw and I discovered, not one, but two rudders inside the British Museum's Aleut N/N, the small rudder presumably used for easier trips. Subsequent reading indicated that rudders were probably common on Aleutian baidarkas from c. 1840 until the islands were evacuated in the well-founded fear of a Japanese invasion just before the second World War, (it's what that little fold of skin was used for at the stern), and the records of the sea otter hunting era remind us that the Aleutians went far and fast, south as far as Mexico on one hand and out pacing sailing boats on the other. If we want to learn from the makers of skin boats then I reckon we could do worse than research the Aleutian and Pacific Ekimo baidarkas, - they were the natural sea-canoes of their day and operated in conditions that were often wet and windy. Does that sound familiar?

All the best and long life to the newsletter.

Yours sincerely,
John Brand.

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From Duncan Winning, Largs, Ayrshire, Scotland.

Dear John,

the article in Newsletter 44 by Brod Beech titled "The Big Decision", and in particular his reference to "purist attitudes", set me thinking, yet again, about some of the myths many modern sea canoeists seem to have about sea canoeing in the past and the Eskimo's craft, kayak, baidarka or umiak.

While I cannot claim the depth of knowledge on Eskimo boats possessed by John Brand, David W. Zimmerly, John D. Heath, etc., I have been interested in them for some time and, while my own canoes for over 20 years have been based on a West Greenland kayak, I can only agree with John Brand when he laments that most sea canoeists in the U.K. can only picture the Greenland kayak when discussing Eskimo craft when these are probably more diverse in size and shape than modern recreational kayaks, e.g. singles varying in length from under 9'-0"" to over 25'-0".

To take another example, I am reliably informed (!?) that the Eskimos used only narrow double bladed paddles because they could not obtain suitable material to make broad blades. However, some Eskimos used the single blade and some did use wide blades. Also, David W. Zimmerly has stated that the Eskimo had both the skills and the glues (yes, glues) to make wide blades if they wanted to. Twenty-five years ago the Greenlanders of Igdlorssuit delighted in borrowing Ken Taylor's 'broad' blades and going off at great speed. However, these same lads would not let Ken's P.B.K. anywhere near the head of the seal hunt because his 'broad' paddles were too noisy and would scare the seals.

I have recently received a beautiful set of drawings from David Zimmerly of a beautiful Aleut kayak 16'-8½" long by 20½" beam, with a fine example of a bifid bow. This type of bow represents to me simply one method of building flare into the bow of a skin or fabric-covered craft, and to good effect according to John Brand. However, I have heard it stated authoritatively that you cannot build a skin covered craft with a flared bow; pity nobody told the Aleuts! This 20½" wide kayak also carries a mast and a sail, the sail being 32" high between top and bottom yards (yes, this kayak was a square rigger!). The top yard is about 19" long and the bottom yard is nearly 3'-0" long. But worse is to come: there is a rudder! This appendage looks like it was made from an animal's shoulder blade and is controlled by two lines attached to a wooden or bone dowel driven through the top of the blade. There are no details of how the forward ends of the lines were controlled. Still, having used a rudder on all my sea canoes for the last 30 years and having been told that it was not the done thing for a sea canoe, that bit of Aleut fashioned bone has brought a grin to my face.

I seem to have read recently, on more than one occasions that the Eskimos did not use their craft in as rough conditions as modern canoeists and, as a consequence, their craft did not require to be so seaworthy. This does not tie in with Derek Hutchinson's account of the conditions in the Aleutian chain or the Ekimo technique of capsizing in front of a breaking wave to avoid a broken back, of Nanson's descriptions of fishing for 300 lb halibut off East Greenland in kayaks, out of sight of land, and being blown before offshore gales for two or three days, then having to paddle back; that's rough! In a more modern context, with very few exceptions, present day sea canoeists have not been able to visit anywhere on the Scottish coast that has not already been visited by the canvass covered or wooden canoes of previous generations and we could speculate about the source of the "sealmen" legends of the Shetlands or how an Eskimo arrow got embedded in the roof of a cave in Jura, but that's another vast subject!

Turning to Alan Byde's letter in Newsletter 45, my reference in a previous letter to the Anas Acuta being based on Ken Taylor's Greenland kayak was not from my imagination but from "The Anas Acuta Story" published in "Canoeing" and written by Geoff Blackford himself; he should know! Previously, I had sent Geoff a copy of my lines drawing of the kayak Ken brought back from Greenland. Geoff also mentions in his article the work Alan put into improving the Anas Acuta mould before production was taken up by Frank Goodman. Some day I would like to see Alan's slides of Ken Tatlor's visit to Igdlorssuit. It is 24 years since I saw Ken's show and a repeat viewing would be well worth while.

Back to Alan's letter again, this time the reference to Eskimos using skegs. I had a look at my pictures of the Igdlorssuit kayak and the skeg is not all that large in this example, for instance I doubt if it amounts to a third of the area of the skeg built into the Nordkap "M" hull. There is certainly insufficient area to prevent a capsize if a harpoon or gun is fired near "broad-side". However, the skeg is to prevent capsize, although not in the manner suggested. According to Ken Taylor the Igdlorssuit Greenlanders explained the use of the skeg something like the following:

Consider a West Greenland kayak without a skeg. The hunter is approaching a seal ready to strike, with harpoon or gun, his last paddle stroke turns the bow slightly away from the target thus giving a better "aim". Now, if the hunter hesitates for some reason, the kayak continues to turn (this kayak model has quite a large rocker) and if he waits too long he will have to throw or fire nearly broadside and will very likely capsize. Consider now the same kayak fitted with a skeg, after the last paddle stroke turning the bow slightly away from the target the kayak will run straight allowing the hunter more time to take aim

without fear of the turn continueing into a capsize situation. The Greenlanders said the skeg was the latest development in the hunting kayak having only been in use for about a century!

Skegs were only fitted during the hunt and removed for general paddling.

I could go on, the use of doubles, big cockpits, carrying passengers on deck, etc., etc. but I think I have rattled on enough for just now.

Should anyone wish a copy of the line drawing of the Igdlorssuit kayak, I would be happy to supply them one for the cost of printing and postage.

Yours sincerely,

Duncan Winning

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From Krista Nicholson, Byfleet, Surrey.

Dear John,

Sorry I have'nt written sooner, but in the confusion of leaving England I forgot to take your address. At the moment we are on a ferry bound for Seattle, so as soon as I can get to a kayak shop I will get your address and post this letter to you.

As soon as we have a written report we will send it to you but meanwhile here are a few of our tales!

We finally paddled out of Vancouver 14th April, having packed two sea kayaks for the first time in our lives. We quickly learnt that cramming six weeks food and gear into our boats needed lots of control and patience! We also found out how heavy the boats had become and took to dragging them up and down beaches and boulders!

We cooked on open fires and fished all the way. The seas here are crawling with fish and we caught cod, sole, halibut and salmon.

The British Columbian and S.E. Alaskan coasts are spectacular dense lush rain forests and clear blue waters. We also had a chance to visit Queen Charlotte Islands for two weeks and had our first hot springs there!

Weather was wet as expected, but the tent and our tarpaulin kept us dry and the fires would soon warm any dampness away.

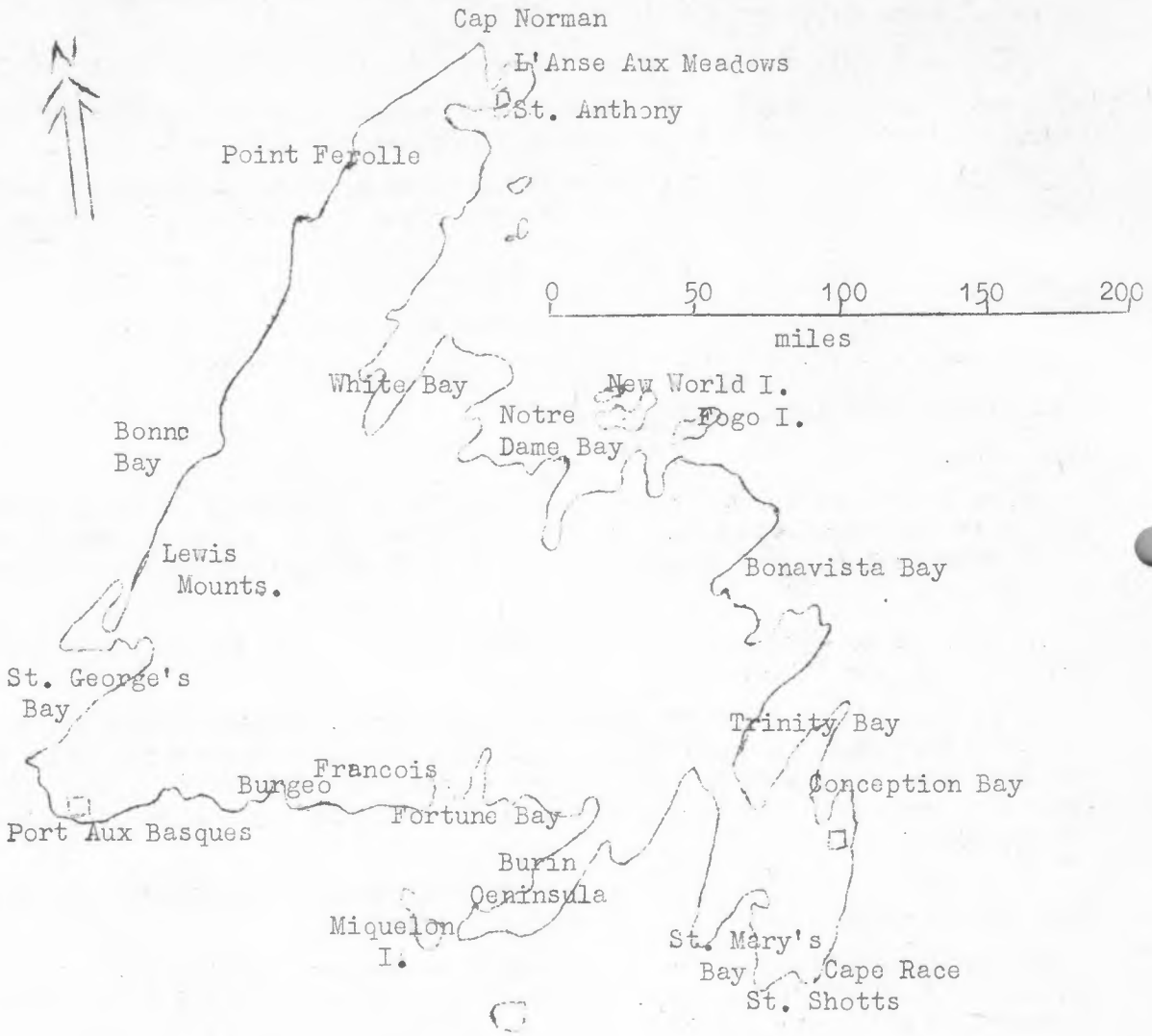
The people all along our route were very friendly and all had an interesting tale to tell! Fishing boats would stop and sometimes throw us a salmon or a much welcomed can of beer!

The abundance of wildlife has been amazing, eagles, humming birds, whales, bears, porpoises, sealions, etc. I had a grey whale surface a foot from my boat and his big old grey eye took a good look at us, but they are gentle and perceptive creatures and he slipped gently under my boat. We have seen four types of whales and seen killers and humpbacks break and jump clear of the water. One night were all snug and warm in our sleeping bags when we heard a deep low roar. We froze imagining it to be a bear. We finally plucked up enough courage and looked out of the tent to find a humpback whale asleep in the shallows by our tent - snoring!

A few incidents with bears, but none of them threatening. One night we went back to our tent and it had been flattened - a nosey bear must have been about. Once, again while we were away from our tent, a Black Bear dragged everything out and chewed a few things, and a couple of times, bears invited themselves to dinner - but grizzlies are too big, especially with a cub in tow, so we banged pans and frightened them off to a safer distance whilst we threw everything into our boats and paddled off into the darkness!

We decided not to go to Yalcutat, although it's quite possible to paddle there, but there are no roads or ferry services, so it would have been an expensive an inconvenient place to get out of. We spent 3 weeks in Glacier Bay and visited 11 tide water glaciers and we even bumped into Joan Busby there! We then kayaked to Juneau where we sold one boat, we hope to sell the other one in Seattle which should give us enough dollars to get home with. Bye for now, Krista.

BY KAYAK AROUND NEWFOUNDLAND by Andrew Fleck.



The idea for the circumnavigation arose after I had paddled around Ireland. I was looking for another similar project but somewhere a little further away. I contemplated Iceland and the Faroe Islands before settling for Newfoundland.

The planning took a lot of time; I read everything I could find about the Island, scoured maps and peppered the Canadian High Commission with awkward questions. Finanace was another major factor and C. Shippam Ltd. kindly agreed to make a contribution to the project. After about eight months I had all my gear assembled, my flight booked, passport up to date and done the hundred (maybe thousand) and one little things that two months earlier had been notes on a pad. On the 18th. May I boarded the plane for Halifax, Nova Scotia.

I chose to fly Halifax as that was where my kayak was being shipped to. Cunard Steamship Co. had agreed to do this. I collected it from the docks in Halifax, changed into paddling gear on the quay and paddled away, a group of amazed dock-workers gave me a noisy sendoff.

The first 250 miles along the East Coast of Nova Scotia were meant to be a "shake down cruise". How many people have said that and found it to be the worst part, I am another to swell their ramks! The first four days were foggy, wet and windy. I was lonely, the kayak handled like a picnic table because it was so heavy, above all, I was unfit despite training. After four days I had made 110 miles and pulled in for my fourth night in a tent at Indian Harbour. In fact I walked into a major party and emerged two days later still exhausted but refreshed with the relazed and beery atmosphere I had enjoyed. I was sad to leave but aware of the 1500 miles I had before me and I wanted to press on. Once more the fog came down as I "hopped" along the coast doing between 25 and 30 miles each day. The scenery was probably spectacular but I saw little of it, most of the time visibility was 200 yards. By the time I reached the port of North Sydney I had 'shaken down' quite

well but was tired and had picked up the 'flu. It was with some relief that I caught the ferry to Newfoundland and the start of the trip in earnest

Port-aux-Basques is in the south west corner of Newfoundland. When I arrived it was cold, foggy and windy, - another rdpetition of Nova Scotia. Pat McLeod, a school friend of my mother, met me and gave me a day off in Port-aux-Basques. She lives in Bonne Bay, 300 miles north, and I was to meet her again ten days later. The following morning, the 2nd. of June, I started off.

Not surprisingly I was nervous and in fact felt sick the first morning but this receded as the day went on and I camped in the village of Codroy. The second day I passed 34 miles of continuous cliffs. I passed them just in time because an hour after I landed I was sheltering in a fisherman's cabin whilst gale force winds plucked at my kayak which was tied down to a fishing dory. The storm continued the next day and I became more depressed as I contemplated nine more weeks of this weather. Morning brought an improvement and I made 31 miles as the storm slowly eased, - from then on I raced to catch up the lost day. The next two days brought mileages of 34 and 28, but the 'flu was getting worse. Passing under the Lewis Hills, the highest in Newfoundland, I was struck repeatedly by 'Williewaws'. These are violent gusts of wind descending vertically, lifting the water and scooping it up in walls of white spray. I looked like confetti but did not feel like it! Some fishermen put me up that night after I had staggered up their slipway exhausted, frightened and fedup with the whole idea. Morning brought little improvement in morale and the fog was back after an absence of three days. That day my head lolled as I paddled along the coast. I really wondered how I was going to complete the next 1200 miles. When I reached Bonne Bay the following morning, things began to look up. Pat dunked me in a hot bath, fed me and I forgot about the worries of the trip.

After two great days I was sad to leave, but as I noted in my diary, "the show must go on".

And so on it went. At first the weather improved then it deteriorated rapidly. The next 300 miles were uninspiring scenically but I made good time due to following winds. These give their problems as I found out when I was nearly blown on to Ferolle Point on my fourth day out of Bonne Bay. It was wet all the time and very cold. As I went north I found ice and snow in my boat in the mornings - and this was mid-June! Local people often helped me in the evenings; I never asked, but a lone kayak and the wet occupant was something which intrigued the fishermen and I spent several nights in their houses.

Cape Norman, the most northern tip, was my goal at this stage. I reached it on the 20th June in misreable weather. Thomas Laskin put me up and gave me a wonderful time during the evening I was there. The day after was a short day to L'anse-aux-Meadows where the first vikings arrived in about A.D. 1000.

As I turned south down the Northern Peninsula, the weather finally smiled. I stopped at the Grenfell Mission in St. Anthony where they told me I could do nothing about my right wrist which was by now very sore. I paddled southwards past spectacular cliffs where Eagles climbed into the skies and waterfalls fell vertically for 400 ft. I saw no-one for three days and relished the solitude. At the south end of the Peninsula lies White Bay. This was my first big bay crossing of the trip and the 18 mile crossing took five hours. I did 36 miles that day to Paquet, another one of the small cod-fishing communities that litter the coast. I rested here for a day before pushing on to New World Island and my half-way point. The three days that it took me to get there were a mixed bunch. I had fits of enthusiasm and terrible depression, particularly on the one occasion that I felt seasick. The mosquitos were coming out now which did not help either, and by the time I reached New World Island I was very tired again. Three weeks seemed to be my limit without a good rest. On the bright side - my boat was much lighter and I was a lot fitter, so,life was not too bad after all.

I certainly was not whilst I stayed with Mr. Mrs Watkins, who pampered me mercilessly. I have to admit that I loved it! I could repair my gear and again relax. So often I was in debt to these fantastic people who I met and who opened up their homes to me. I owe them much gratitude.

When I left the Watkins I was in tears. Once again the distance to go seemed so

great and I felt so small, but with fair winds and a good tide I was assisted to cover the 70 miles in two days. I met people who had met Nigel Foster and Tim Franklin, two English paddlers who toured the area five years before. Bonavista Bay was the next landmark, 32 miles of open water. I left in fog and did not see the opposite headland for nine and half hours, when it loomed up a quarter of a mile away.

Newfoundland fog is not like that we get back home. By comparison it is smog-like in density. On occasions I could see just 100 yards and could feel the moisture as I breathed. From now until the end of the trip, 29 days later, I had just six fog free days. In the three days after crossing Bonavista Bay I also crossed Conception and Trinity Bays, 22 and 24 miles respectively. I was now seeing whales every day despite the fog. However, the Icebergs which had been so prevelent further north had disappeared. After 41 days of paddling I arrived in St. John's, capital of Newfoundland. Ross and Marcie Traverse run a garden centre there and they provided me with a roof over my head. I had met Marcie earlier in the year in Wales. Even the weeding seemed a rest and I sampled a Newfoundland wedding and the delights (and dives) of down town St. John's.

All good things come to an end and this was no exception. On the 16th July I left the Traverse's and St. John's. There is a saying that every cloud has a silver lining, well, this one has got lost! Over the next three days I had thick fog, headwinds and heavy rain; it was cold and I missed the easy going life in St. John's. Frustration would boil over into screaming fits at the wind, whilst at night I sat and brooded. This was undoubtedly the lowest point in my morale during the whole trip. Things always change eventually and this time Cape Race, the south east tip of the Island, provided the turning point. The fog remained but the headwinds disappeared. At the end of four days paddlibg I pulled into the tiny boulder strewn harbour of St. Shott's.

Never have I been surrounded by so many smiling faces, foremost amongst these was Cyril Martin who became my host for the next two nights. The community turned out almost en-masse to see my kayak and I in turn visited half the people who lived there.

At this point I must mention the seal fishery - a subject that was raised frequently throughout my journey. The seal fishery is to Newfoundland what cod fishing is to others. Who complains when a cod fish drowns in a gill net? Furthermore, the seals have become very fast breeders due to the cull and are now reproducing as fast as ever; consequently they eat vast amounts of food. What is their food? - cod. The Newfoundlanders livelihood and our food source is the cod. Whilst the method of clubbing white coats (baby seals) looks brutal and is emotive, it is, in fact, very clean and painless. Finally the seal fishery is a large percentage of many Newfoundlanders income and by depriving them of the market we deprive them of this income and endanger their cod fishery. I hope I have put across their point accurately, I feel that it is the very least I can do for them.

Now back to my travels. From St. Shott's I crossed St. Mary's Bay, hazardous due to the strong and irregular tides within it, and after 22 miles "by guess and by God" I arrived in Point Lance. Once more I enjoyed wonderful hospitality, but I had to press on. Placentia Bay was too wide to cross in a day so I paddled around it, staying in the light house on Marticot Island at the head of the bay.

The following five days took me around the Burson Peninsula, a long toe of land sticking out of the 'bottom' of Newfoundland. By now I was pressing for home and with fine weather, made good speed.

The last 150 miles along the south coast took just five days. I passed many deserted settlements - just lonely headstones from graves remaining. The ironic message on one, "Gone but not forgotten", stuck in my mind as I passed these remnants of the era of schooners and sail power. I called in at Francois, a community served exclusively by boat, not a vehicle to be seen. Other communities like Grey River and Grand Bruit were similar but I passed them by in my haste to finish. Once again I saw no-one for three days whilst I passed the granite cliffs so prevelent here.

Finally on 4th August I returned tp Port-aux-Basques. Pat McLeod was there to greet me again. The beach looked similar as I pulled in to it, the fog was still there but it was not so cold. And so completed a trip of highs and lows of which the memories will long remain.

Andy Fleck.

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