Advanced Sea Kayak Club

NEWSLETTER

AN INTERNATIONAL SEA CANOEING
CLUB OPEN TO ALL INTERESTED IN THIS ASPECT
OF CANOEING.

AIMS

1. Promotion of sea canoeing
2. Communication between sea canoeists
3. Organisationsof events and conferences
4. Safety and coaching

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ADVANCED SEA KAYAK CLUB

NEWSLETTER No 51

AUGUST 1985

John J.Ramwell
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EDITORIAL

What! Another newsletter so soon.
As you can see from the head of this page, this is not due out 'till August. I shall be in Alaska, among the whales of Prince William Sound during this month and so I'm sending you our newsletter now. I'm sure no-one is going to mind and it gives you plenty of time to write in with those expedition reports of yours ready for the November edition of this newsletter.

I've published that correspondence I have received to date on various matters. Please do consider sending me your views for inclusion. I'll always do my best to publish - and people really do want to hear what you have to say - which is really why this Club exists in the first place.

Although the closing date for our A.S.K.C. weekend on Anglesey is not untill 1st October, it would be helpful, once you have made up your mind to come along, to let me have your application as early as possible. I have to consider whether it is worth throwing the weekend up to none ASKC members in order to give us a full house.

You will remember the recent publication, "The Little Kayak Book" by John Brand. I have mentioned it in previous newsletters. John mentioned the oldest known Eskimo kayak in captivity. It is kept, and lovingly kept at that, at Trinity House in Hull. I have to visit Hull in the course of my work from time to time and I used one of these occasions to pay Trinity House a visit and see this kayak for myself. It certainly lived up to expectations. Brought from Greenland to this country in 1632, complete with Eskimo paddler. Unfortunately the Eskimo never quite made it, but the kayak did. It hangs from the ceiling of a large room in Trinity House along with two other kayaks for company. Much shorter in length than these other two kayaks, it is obviously very, very old. Though intact it sags and bulges in places. You will find all the details regarding this kayak and many other old kayaks in John's book. I heartily recommend it to you.
My curiousity is now well satisfied. Although I was well received once I arrived at Trinity House, getting permission in the first place proved difficult. Disappointingly I was not allowed to take any pictures. Fortunately John Brand's book does it full justice.

Dave Greet now has some cloth badges for the A.S.K.C. for sale. I have published a notice about this in the body of this newsletter.

Incidentely, I have a supply of John Brand's book for sale as well as a supply of Geoff. Hunter's book, "Angmaggsalik Around Britain". John's book is £ 7.50 and Geoff's is £3.00

Good paddling

Nanuk.

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A.S.K.C. SHOP

ALL PRICES INCLUSIVE OF POST AND PACKAGE.

Ties @ £2.50 each
Stickers @ 30 pence each
Letterheaded notepaper @ 50 pence per ten sheets
4th National Sea Kayaking Symposium Report @ 75 pence each
5th International Sea Kayaking Symposium Report @ £2.50 each
T shirts - small/medium/large/X large - yellow or black @ £3.50 each
Sweat shirts - small/medium/large/X large - yellow or black @ £6.50 each
Information Sheet on Tides & Buoyage @ 75 pence each
H.M.Coastguard Paper on Safety @ 75 pence each
Expedition Report on Circumnavigation Nunivak Island, Alaska @ 75 pence each
American style T shirts (new) @ £ 6.00 each. All sizes, as above.

ON MAKING A BEACH SAUNA

Making a beach sauna is one of those wonderful activities, providing more benefits that the work required to build it. All that's really needed is a cover, a frame to hold it, fire heated rocks and cold water.

Large plastic sheets, rain flys, ground cloths, or even plastic garbage bags taped together serve well for the cover. The frame might already be carried by the overnight kayaker in the form of the metal supports of a dome tent.

It's also easy to build the supporting frame from beach materials. Two forked sticks planted into the beach with a "roof-beam" layed across the top is adequate. The size of the plastic and the number of people to be accommodated determine the size of the frame.

Build the rock heating fire close to the sauna site, or vica versa, to avoid having to move the hot rocks very far. Before starting the evening fire, roll several roundish rocks along the edge ..... bowling ball size is great. Round rocks hold the heat better than flat ones. Two or three rocks that size should be enough for one sauna for one person. The hotter the rock the better. When they start glowing, the sweet suana sweat is'nt far off.

While waiting for the rocks to heat, or taking care of other camp chores, roll a log, to be used as a chair, into place between the forked sticks. Cover it with an ensolite pad for a more comfortable cushion. A smaller log in front creates a comfortable place to rest bare feet and keeps them off the cool rocks or floor.

Since any heat loss lessens the desirable sauna effects be sure the plastic has no holes in it. Also make the bottom as air tight as possible. Cover the edges of the plastic with sand.

Use some beach scrounging and ingenuity to improve the sauna quality. A washed-up sheet of plywood, for example, makes a great floor. A metal holder for the heated rocks provides a way of retaining hot water and thus adds heat.

When all is set, simply place the rocks into place in front of the ensolite covered sitting log, put a couple of buckets of cold water nearby, doff the duds, pull the plastic over the top, and slowly drop small amounts of water onto the rocks. The excelsior of cleansing steam cleans and refreshes all the moving parts of the 'kayak engine'.

by Scott Foster

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The following is from Alan Kimber, 58, Drumfada Terrace, Corpach, Fort William.

Dear John,

I am trying to get together all the current information on waterproof cameras in order to produce a paper for canoeists who are keen to record their endeavours on film. At present it appears that there are three handy sized 35mm cameras - Hanimax Amphibian - Fujica HD-S (not many available at present) and various models of the Nikonos. Also, some 110 format cameras exist which are generally of less interest to the serious photographer. Some canoeists prefer to use made-to-measure housings for their SLRs, whilst some will take a chance with home-made housings or rely on the good old poly bag and luck!!!

I will be trying to pull all ideas together with examples of the available equipment to be shown at the next ASKC/BCU Symposium. I would like to hear from any members who take pictures from their canoes, whatever the type of equipment, good or bad results, personal innovations or different cameras from those mentioned above.

Alan Kimber

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From Daniel Summers, 14, Neva Rd., Bitterne Park, Southampton, SO2 4FJ

Dear Nanok,

I need help - I've had to put up with my friends being very swank with their new 'C-Trim' rudders - so I've decided to join them; trouble is I don't know any one who owns an Icefloe (as I do) fitted with this rudder - any information from your readers concerning modifications would be gratefully received.

* Daniel Summers.

THE KAYAK NAVIGATOR'S TRICK PLAY by David Burch.

Kayak navigation is essentially no-instrument navigation. Besides the fundamentals of chart, compass and watch, other standard aids to navigation are rarely useable from the seat of a kayak. We have no electronics - no knotmeter, log or depth sounder. Sextants are not practical. Even such basic plotting tools as parallel rulers and dividers are not really practical.

Fortunately, though, we don't go very fast in a kayak, so we have plenty of time to figure out where we are.

We usually paddle in clear weather and navigate by what is called piloting, keeping track of our position relative to charted landmarks. There are several ways of piloting using what we've got in a kayak. One way, perhaps the most common, is to paddle point to point, and just mark off the spot on the chart when we get there. Along shore, we decide we are there when we can touch it.

But there is not much real navigation involved in this common method. It won't help crossing a large open area, for example, or when paddling some distance from a shore with a few prominent features. The bigger challenge is to figure out where we are from what we can see, without having to actually be there.

The best way to do this, if circumstances permit, is to note the alignment of two charted landmarks from your vantage point and then draw that line on the chart. You must be somewhere on that line for the objects to appear in line. In navigation jargon, you have established a 'line of position' from a 'natural range'. Find another natural range and you have found your position at the intersection of the two.

A natural range requires special circumstances. Without these, or at night, you can use your compass to read magnetic bearings to several landmarks or lights and then find your position from the intersection of these bearing lines plotted on the chart. This procedure is more generally possible, but note that it also requires at least two charted landmarks - one landmark per line, two lines for a fix.

The true mark of a navigator is versatillity. How then shall we find out where we are if we can only see one landmark? The compass gives us a bearing line to the object, but does'nt tell us where we are along that bearing line. We need to know how far away it is. With distance off and a bearing, we have a fix.

Again, there are several ways to find distance off a landmark. One is to use an optical gadget (range finder) that you sight through and focus on the object. The distance off is then read from a dial. Frankly, though, of the several models I have tried, none worked very well.

Another method is called 'distance off by vertical sextant angle'. This method, with some tricks and variations, is the subject at hand. It adapts nicely to kayak use and you don't need a sextant to do it. You do, though, need to know the height of the landmark above the water. Heights of shoreline features, lighthouses, towers, tanks and so on are given on nautical charts.

The procedure is to measure the angular height of the object from your vantage point using an improvised 'sextant' (which we will come to in a momemt) and then figure your distance off from a simple formula. Adequate estimates can be done in your head, or with a pencil on the edge of the chart, you don't need a calculater for this.

The device is made from a six-inch, clear plastic ruler that is marked off in centimetres (a common schoolroom ruler). Drill two holes, rig a bridle, and tie a length of string to it as shown in the figure. The dimensions are not critical. just make it roughly to the scale shown. What is critical is the length of the string once attached to the bridle. Tie a knot in the string at a distance of 22.6 inches (57cm) from the ruler when the string and bridle are stretched tight.

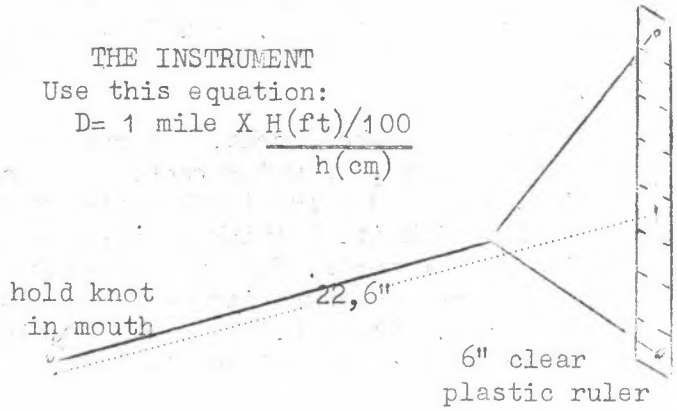
To measure a vertical angle, hold the knot in your teeth and the ruler vertical in your hand with arm outstretched. Align the top edge of the ruler with the object sighted and adjust your thumb so it aligns with the shoreline directly below the object. The 'angular height' we want is then the number of centimetres from your thumb to the top of the ruler - the string length was chosen to make

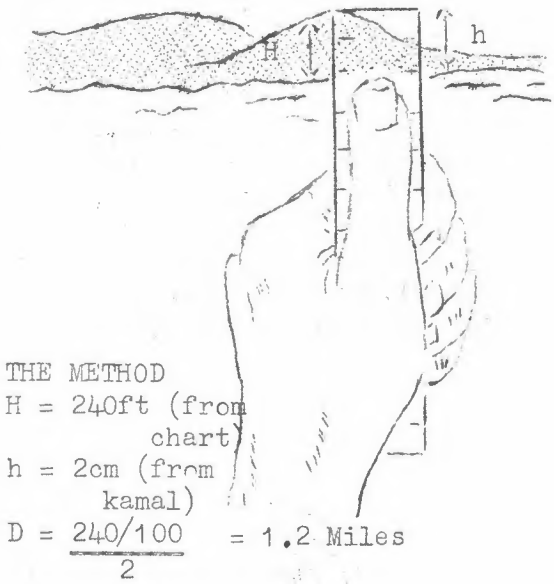
one centimetre correspond to one degree. The bridle keeps the ruler perpendicular to the string.

The small angles (less than 10° or so) that we care about in this application can be measured with this makeshift device to within a few tenths of a degree. This will give us a distance-off accuracy of some 10 or 20% which is plenty accurate enough for most needs.

After some practice you may want to adjust the length of the string to make the device more accurate. The 22.5 inches, though, should be pretty close. A good way to test the length (and your usage) is to measure the angular distance between stars. You can use the two stars on the cup end of the Big Dipper, the ones that point to Polaris. The distance between these stars is 5.4° so your kamal (the name of our device) should give you 5.4 centimetres. You can double check the callibration with the corresponding two stars on the Little Dipper. The distance between these should be 3.2 centimetres.

If the star distances you measure are too small, your string is too long. Try shortening it by half an inch and recheck. Note these calibration numbers are easy to remember from the sequence of 5.4, 3.2





I have called this thing a KAMAL after an ancient Arabic device of similar design used for dhow navigation in Arabian and East African waters. My only contribution was the simple calculation of the string length for a centimetre ruler and the application of a trig approximation and some units juggling to the distance-off formula. The value of this gadget for finding emergency latitude at sea is hidden in another publication.

Once you have the object height in centimetres (call it 'h'), find your distance off in nautical miles (D) by dividing the objects true height in hundreds of feet (H/100) by the objects height in centimetres (h). As a formula it would be D=(H/100)/h. Or, remembering to express H in hundreds of feet, you can simply remember D = H/h.

Here's an example: The top of a hill is 3.2cm high according to the kamal, and the chart tells me the peak is 470 feet high. My distance off the peak is D = (470/100)3.2 = 4.7/3.2, which is somewhere between 1 and 2 miles, probably about 1.5 miles (I picked a hard one to do in my head), or I could divide it out to find I was close enough. D = 1.47.

The only restriction on the overall procedure is on the final distance you get. It should be less than 3 or 4 miles or so. This restriction comes about because the principles and approximations require that you see the true shoreline below the object from a kayak, the curvature of the earth cuts off the true shoreline at some 2 miles off. We can push this out to 3 or 4 miles without losing much accuracy, but if your answer comes out much larger than that, keep in mind that it won't be too accurate until you get closer.

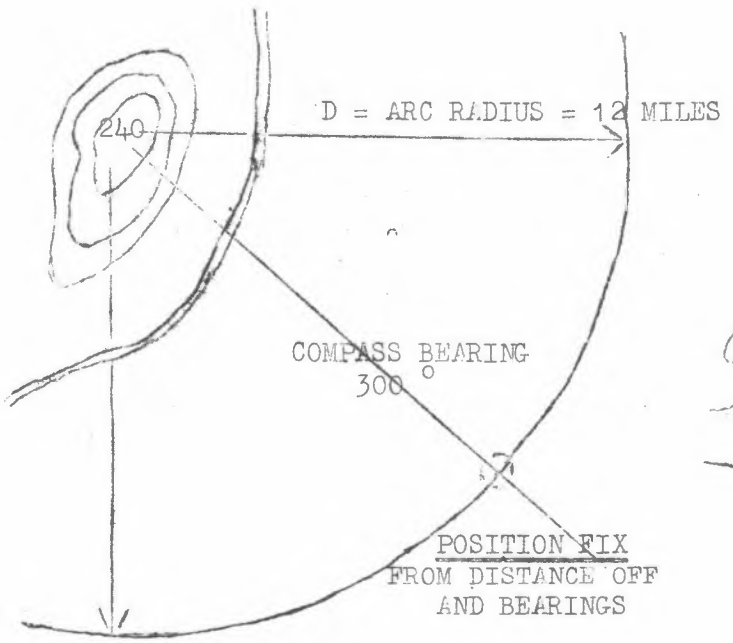
Remember also that you are finding here your distance off the object or peak, not the shoreline, even if the peak is well inland. If you find you are 1.3 miles off a peak that is .5 miles inland, you are 0.8 miles off shore.

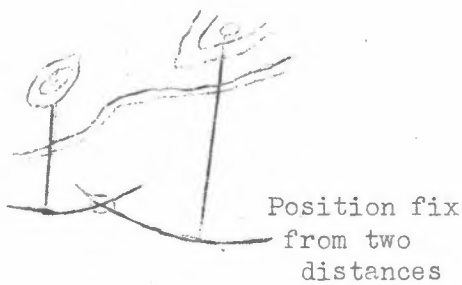
The kamal can also be used horizontally by measuring the horizontal angle between close landmarks. Common applications include finding distance off an island or bay entrance. The 'height' H in this application is the width of the island or bay entrance in hundreds of feet. If the island is not round, or you are looking at a bay from an angle, you should use the width that appears from your perspective. Sometimes this requires that you take a magnetic bearing to the object so you can tell from the chart how wide the object appears from your vantage point. The formula for distance is the same: D = H/h.

The kamal is just as valuable in this horizontal use as it is vertically. In some cases it can be used more often this way because you can always figure the width of an object from the chart even if it's height is not given. Also, since you are not using the shoreline, the useful-range limit of 3 miles or so for the vertical application does not apply to horizontal measurements. A 12-mile measurement is just as accurate as a 2-mile measurement, so long as you are looking at the width used in the formula.

Example: An Island is 6.0 cm across according to the kamal. From the chart I find that the width of the island from my vantage point is 0.7 nautical miles. Since one mile is about 6,000 feet, 0.7 miles is 4,200 feet, or H = 42. My distance off the island is D = 42/6.0 = 7.0 miles.

Let me stress that this gadget is no gimmick. This method works, and can be a valuable aid to your navigation. It takes up no space, is waterproof, is nearly indestructable and costs essentially nothing. You need a small ruler anyway to plot lines on your chart. Make a kamal and play with it. I think you'll like it. Many friends have tested them in kayaks with good reports. Try finding your distance off a window on the other side of the room (measure its height H with a ruler). For this it helps to remember that 1 naut. mile = 6,000 feet. Multiply the small D you get by 6,000 to get your distance from the window in feet.





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From Deborah Nicely, 3552 NE 182nd St, Seattle, WA, 98155

REQUEST TO JOIN A GROUP THIS SUMMER

Dear John,

I am coming to Scotland and Northern England this summer and would very much like to join a group for a week or so for some sea canoeing on the west coast among the islands.

I am a strong paddler but not as expert as one who has extensive river skills. I can handle waves and winds in the 25 knot range. Dates 13th July to

WHY MAPS ARE TAKING THE HIGH-TECH ROUTE TO THE FUTURE

Taken from the 'Times' 23.4.85

Maps made of paper may be on the way out.
Twenty years from now we could be finding our way with pocket computers that tell us where we are, or moving maps in the corner of the car windscreen, perhaps operated by a new generation of satellites of by small versions of the inertial navigation systems carried in nuclear submarines.

The Government has at last approved the comprehensive conversion of the Ordnance Survey's large-scale plans to digital form, to numbers stored in a computer. These plans of which the general public is scarcely aware, are essential for the professional architects, conveyancers, engineers, estate agents, lawyers, planners and surveyors who design, control and record the constant changes in our landscape. These include new houses, factories, walls, fences, forests and hedges grown or cut down; and underground services like water mains, sewers and electric and telephone cables.

The creation of a single data bank to replace or supplement the 240,000 large scale plans will make it possible to record all these changes and to produce (on paper or on a television-type screen)a plan centred on a house or factory, instead of it being at the corners of four different sheets. It will be possible to change its scale instantaneously for a closer or wider look, to carry its content for the user's needs, and to keep it up to date.

At smaller scales it will be possible to create three-dimensional models and perspective views, for walking or scientific or engineering studies; and to include information obtained from satellites. Some of these are already in orbit, scanning the earth every 18 days and transmitting images to special receiving stations from which paper copies or computer tapes can be purchased.

Recording on both the visible and infra-red wavelengths, these satellites can distinguish different types of soil and land use, show the state of crops or the snow cover, and define areas polluted by smoke or effluet. Such images, covering large areas in a single picture, have already been used not only for forecast the weather but to show sea ice cover and to correct Admiralty charts in remote areas.

For the motorist and yachtsman, the present atlases and charts may soon be replaced by moving displays of the kind already used in military aircraft and ships, in which their positions are shown automatically. At a recent conference on survey and mapping organised by the Royal Institute of Chartered Surveyors at Reading University, American and Japanese prototypes of such displays costing only a few hundred pounds were described.

One major problem of the coming map revolution discussed by the conference was how to standardise the transfer systems and data banks in order to co-ordinate the products of different manufacturers. Another was how best to convert a line map, of which 95 per cent is blank paper, into digits. Two alternatives are scanning with a television-type camera, which is wasteful in data storage, or employing someone to follow each line by hand with a cursor, which is slow, expensive, and boring. One suggestion was to employ housewives for a few hours a day as a change from housework. Another was to follow each line with an oscillating laser beam - expensive to buy but much faster working. Major advances in surveying which were described at the conference also depend on the conversion of information into numbers. Electronic computers measuring devices and data loggers can help in rapid surveys for engineering projects - of the ground or of large structures; and in analysing large numbers of measurements to detect small distortions in a dam or bridge under load or moving dangerously on its foundations.

When information is transformed into binary digits, it can be expressed by electrical charges and be handled in vast quantities at very high speeds by microscopic electronic devices - the silicon chips we hear so much about. It is a long way from the mechanical calculaters and trigonometric tables of a few years ago and the logarithms of previous decades.

* *

The following is chapter 22 from "THE FIRST CROSSING OF GREENLAND" by FRIDJOF NANSEN.

FIRST LESSONS IN THE KAYAK

The Eskimo kayaks were, of course, a great attraction to us strangers, and as soon as possible I possessed myself of one. The necessary balance in this narrow, crank little craft is very difficult for a beginner to acquire. One feels as if he were swinging on a knife edge, and it is very necessary, so as to speak, to keep your hair parted well in the middle. Yet when one sees the Eskimo dancing like sea birds on the crests of the waves the whole performance seems simply child's play.

As soon as my kayak was ready I took it down to the shore. I found it no easy matter to force my legs and as much of me as was necessary through the narrow opening into the place where I was to sit. This done, I was carefully pushed out onto the water, but the feeling that seized me just as I left dry land was one of unspeakable insecurity. The little craft rocked first to one side and then to the other, and every moment promised an immediate capsize. It seemed to me a simple impossibility that I should ever learn to sit it, and I looked with despairing envy at the Eskimos, who were of course, out to enjoy the sight of Nalagak in a kayak, and were darting hither and thither over the water, and throwing their little spears about with as much ease and indifference as if they were sitting safe on the floor at home.

But practice has a wonderful effect, and after one or two outings I began to feel tolerably comfortable. I got on better still when I had a pair of outriggers or supports made to help me. These are miniature 'kayaks' about two feet long, and are fastened one on each side of the canoe, just behind the seat. They make things considerably easier for the unitiated of course, but the Eskimo themselves rarely use them, and I myself abandoned them after a while.

After I had been some time practising and the others saw that I got on tolerably well, some of them felt inclined to try too. Sverdrup was the first to get himself a kayak and he soon became proficient. Balto had begun to express his eagerness to try as soon as he arrived at Godthaab, and had asked me whether I thought it was difficult. The Danes of the place meanwhile, none of whom understood the art, represented to him the danger of it, and told him how many had lost their lives over it.

Balto, at no time distinguished for his courage, had given up the idea, and quietly looked on while I was out on the water. But now Sverdrup had begun too, the temptation became too strong.

Both Sverdrup and I told him that it was not the easiest thing in the world to sit a kayak, and that he would have to mind what he was about. But Balto was just now in a state of elation and said he was sure he could manage it, as he was used to driving a Lapp reindeer sledge. Sverdrup pointed out to him that the two processes were not exactly identical, but Balto stood his ground and determined to make the experiment. Sverdrup's canoe was carried down; there were a number of spectators gathered round to watch, and I paddled about a little way from shore ready to fish him out.

Balto placed himself in the kayak, made himself comfortable, and tucked his great pelisse round him. He made all his preperations with the most confident air, and evidently intended to show us what a Lapp really could do when he tried. When he was ready he eagerly seized the paddle in both hands, and boldly gave orders to push off.

But no sooner did the canoe touch the water than its steadiness began very perceptibly to diminish, and Balto's expression grew less confident. Yet he was determined to carry it off well, and even helped to push the canoe along. At last it was so far out that only the point was left. resting upon the shore. Balto's valour now gave place to the most absolute terror, while at the same time the kayak slid out into the water and began to rock uncomfortably. Then came some desperate flourishes with the paddle in the air, which were apparantly preparatory to strokes in the water; his face was one picture of horror and despair; he made frantic efforts at some unholy ejaculation, but no further than the first letter, "D- D -D -," could he get.

His mouth and the whole concern went under together, and his emotion vanished in a simple gurgle. All we could do was watch the bottom of the canoe and his great square cap floating on the surface of the water.

I paddled up, but luckily the water was so shallow that Balto could touch the bottom with his hands, and the kayak was so near the shore that the spectators could pull it and its occupant out. Balto was greeted with a pitiless shout of laughter from the bystanders, especially the girls. Then he got out of the canoe, and he stood there on the rocks, throwing his arms and legs about, while the water poured out of his voluminous garments, which now hung close and lank about his body; he looked for all the world like an ordinary scarecrow.

The first thing he said was, "Well, I'm almost wet now." Then he reflected for a moment, and added with all the fervour of conviction, "And I will say that the kayak is a very devil of a boat!"

It was some time before Balto tried the kayak again. Soon after this Dietrichson had one made and was not long in learning to use it. His success induced Kristiansen to try his luck, and even brought Balto to the point once more.

Both of them set to work to build their own vessels. The Greenlanders helped them with the frames, and they were then covered with skin, as usual by the Eskimo women. As soon as they were ready both the beginners set about practising vigorously. Balto's experience had, however, made him cautious, and he had the outriggers put on at once. Kristainsen was more reckless, and frightened us all by starting without these supports and going right out to sea. But, for the first time, he got on surprisingly well.

Towards the end of the winter all the members of our party except old Ravna, were often to be seen out in their kayaks after sea birds.

There are not many seal about in the winter, so it does not pay to go after them for mere amusement. We found the birds better worth our attention, and the flight-shooting of the eider duck was especially attractive. In the earlier part of the winter this generally goes on in the evenings when the duck come flying in large or small flocks along the shore on their way into the fjords. The kayaks are drawn up in line, especially just off the promontories. It was quite exciting work to lie there in wait for the duck, and reminded me of the flight-shooting at home when the woodcock come back in the spring. One's eyes are turned southwards, whence the duck should come. Suddenly you see the man in the furthest canoe stoop forward and paddle away as hard as he can go, while the rest of the line meanwhile dress up to him. Then he stops, there is a moment's waiting, and then come a flash and a report, which is taken up by the next, and so follow down the line. You see a dark mass in the south of you silently skimming the water. You bring you canoe up a bit to get better in range; you put your paddle in under its strap and get your gun ready. By this time you can distinguish every bird. Just as they sweep by you, you let fly into the thickest part of the flock, and if you are lucky you get a couple or more a shot. Then you load again, gather up your birds and wait for the next flight. So you go on till it is dark, the line of kayaks shifting backwards and forwards just as the duck happens to fly close to or further from the shore.
This shooting requires a considerable amount of skill, for the duck fly strongly, and a good command of your canoe is necessary if you are to keep within range and shoot tolerably straight. Many of the natives are amazingly good hands at it. The quickness with wiich they bring the canoe up to the point, secure the paddle, and get the gun to the shoulder, as well as the accuracy of their aim, even if they have only one bird to cover, is enough to secure the admiration of the best shots, especially as the little boats in which they sit are the whole time bobbing up and down upon the waves.

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WOMAN OVERBOARD

by

Laura Deschner (Laura is a resident of Seattle, Washington and has spent many years kayaking)

A strong wind hit the bow of Diana's kayak, turning it broadside to the waves. Diana was sure she would tip over and felt horrible about it. She struggled to bring her kayak about.

Twice, Dennis, another member of the party, saw Diana almost go over. "Lean into the waves, Diana, not away from them", he yelled. With this advice, Diana was determined. Maybe she could get the hang of staying upright in rough water yet, she told herself.

At the time, Diana Claason, an ebullient fourth year medical student from Montana, had had no opportunity to put to sea in a kayak before. Nor had her brief, busy medical externship at Seattle's Harborview Hospital allowed any time to develop proficiency in this popular sport of the west coastal area of Canada and of Puget Sound.

Although most saltwater kayakers of these areas skip winter paddling, Diana had joined, for an overnight trip in the middle of February, some of the intrepid few who are hooked on the sport the year round. These were Dr. Dennis Hansen, his wife Ingrid, Dr. Robert Livingstone and Mary Soncrant. Also in the party was Dr. Tom Hamilton. Like Diana, this was his first saltwater paddle.

Only one of their kayaks, paddled by Tom, was of a popular design in the Northwest. The others were of two British designs. The Hansen's kayaks, in particular, were sleek, narrow, long and shallow. The other three were similar, but being deeper, had more volume and also had larger cockpits. Many Northwest kayakers, not too familiar with these British designs, consider them more for flatwater cruising than for saltwater paddling. However, these kayaks are popular for sea cruising in Britain. They are faster but much more tippy that the common, shorter, beamier saltwater cruising kayaks.

When the group launched their kayaks from Orcas Island in Puget Sound, the weather was fair, the sea calm. Diana felt the lure of the sport in her borrowed kayak. All of them enjoyed the paddle the first day and ended up on Matia, a speck of an island about 5 km northeast of Orcas.

The next morning they awoke to find a strong wind lashing the sea into whitecaps. This was the day to return home. With the wind blowing out of the southeast, a direct crossing to Orcas meant each paddler would need to quarter his/her kayak into the waves and pull hard on the right to keep from broaching - an invitation to tip over. It would be a difficult crossing.

They concurred to postpone their departure - atleast for a while to see if the wind slackened. It did'nt. By 11 o'clock they decided to head homeward anyway and shoved off.

In the wind and waves, there was immediate trouble. Mary, who is model thin, was short on power to prevent broaching. Diana and Tom were short of experience to correct for the same problem. All were long in apprehension of making the crossing safety. Their common sense dictated they return to Matia. This they did.

Four-thirty was the latest they figured they could leave the island and make it to Orcas before dark. When the time approached, the storm had lessened a bit and they pushed off again into the agitated sea. They soon realised one of their problems would be to keep from going downwind and missing Orcas. Tom, worried about this and broaching, decided to paddle directly into the waves. He exerted enough energy to pull ahead of the others and was soon out of their sight among the waves and swells.

The Hansens and Diana also pulled ahead of Robert and Mary without realising the ever-widening space between them. For in such weather, it is not easy to tend to paddling and look backwards.

Diana, although lacking experience, had power as she is athletic and well built - about the same height as Ingred and Mary but weighing perhaps 14 kg more than they. Diana's strength gave her some advantage in coping with the turbulance

Mary was not faring too well in her struggle to cope with the wind. In order to keep her kayak on course, Robert kept nudging her kayak bow back in the right direction. Had either of them carried a tow line, Robert could have fastened it to Mary's kayak, and with her still paddling, they might have solved the problem. But, alas, no tow line.

The distance between them and the others widened.

About halfway across Diana again broached. The gusting wind and a wave caught her. She leaned away from the wave. Her kayak flipped. Diana gasped in the cold water. It took her breath away. Diana regained her breath and called out. Quickly, Dennis and Ingrid were beside her.

The normal procedure in a tip-over is to right the kayak - that is sssuming the kayak has flotation or a water-tight bulkhead as most saltwater kayaks have. DIANA'S KAYAK HAD NEITHER. It was the only one of the six that did'nt. To turn it upright without flotation or a bulkhead would surely mean a sunken boat - especially in the turbulent water.

Fear coursed through them. Although Diana was wearing a life jacket, the frightening thought went through Dennis's mind that he and Ingrid might have to witness a drowning Diana. Diana, too, figured she had finally done it - put herself beyond the reach of anyone's help. But they did not panic.

Dennis saw Diana's paddle float away. He would have retrieved it as they had no spare paddle, but he had already decided it was useless to try to right the overturned kayak.

As a medical doctor, Dennis knew only too well what a short time Diana could survive in the cold water. Dennis also knew that Diana was aware of her slim chances of survival even though outwardly she appeared calm. They would need help. If only the others were there. Tom or Robert could go for help, Dennis thought. But they were not there. Only Ingrid, his petite and pretty wife. She would have to go for help alone. Ingrid was a good paddler, but alone in this storm? As Ingrid paddled away, none of the three knew if they would see each other alive again.

With Ingrid's departure, the party of six was now split into four positions.

Diana could not last the time even if rescue boats met them. Somehow he had to get her out of the water. Already, five to ten minutes had elapsed since she tipped over.

Dennis brought his kayak parallel and downwind to the overturned one. This manoeuvre alone helped stabilise the boats somewhat. Dennis made a decision even though he felt there was a good possibility that he, too, might tip over. He directed Diana to very carefully climb onto the stern of his kayak. Diana did exactly as she was told. Slowly, she inched her way on her stomach onto Dennis' kayak. With a kayak so tippy, one awkward movement and they would both be in the cold water. At last, Diana reached Dennis' waist and clasped her arms around him while sprawled on his kayak. She rested her left leg on her overturned kayak as Dennis kept the kayak alongside by leaning his left arm on it.

Diana's body temperature continued to go down. Even though she was out of the water, she was still lashed with waves. Dennis' kayak, normally low in the water anyway, rested still lower with Diana's weight. Not only that, Dennis' spray cover kept coming loose from the cockpit where Diana rubbed against it. Water splashed into his boat. It settled even lower in the water. There was danger of it swamping. But all they could do was hope and wait for help Ingrid would send.

Ingrid had voiced no fear for herself as she left Dennis and Diana. She was tempted to paddle harder and faster than she ever had before. Ingrid is a lawyer and her better judgement told her not to, but to paddle steadily and with caution. She thought she could make it safely .....she must ..... but in time?

Back beyond Dennis and Diana, Robert was still helping Mary keep her kayak pointed in the right direction. Their progress was slow. Too slow, Robert thought, to make the crossing before dark. He decided the group must get back together somehow and return to Matia. He MUST catch up with them. Leaving Mary behind temporarily, a strong paddler, quickly pulled ahead. Within a few minutes he

glimpsed two kayaks - one upside down. Fueled with adrenalin, he hurriedly came alongside. "Oh, my God! Are you all right, Diana? And you, Dennis? Where's Ingrid? And Tom?

I have'nt seen Tom since right after we left." Dennis answered and explained that he had sent Ingrid for help.

"Can she make it alone", Robert asked.
"I think so .... God, I hope so".
"Diana, are you all right? How long ago did you tip over?"
"Twenty, maybe twentyfive minutes ago. I'm OK. A bit cold. I'm not so sure about Dennis, though. I'm about to sink his kayak." What Diana did'nt say was that there was little motor control left in her body.

Robert knew that Diana was not okay. She sounded weary. Help would need to come soon. "Hang on a little longer while I go back for Mary," Robert said and paddled quickly to get her.

Robert returned with Mary. They rafted the four kayaks together and had Diana crawl onto the decks and stretch out. They managed to get at a sleeping bag and threw it over her. She warmed up somewhat. But the sleeping bag soon became water logged from the slapping waves. Dennis thought it was remarkable that Diana never complained.

A Nighttime Rescue Mission

Ingrid steadily made her way to shore. Once there, she quickly found a house. The man who answered her summons wanted to round up some people with power boats to make the rescue. Ingrid insisted on calling the Coastguard. When she left the house, darkness had blotted out visibility. How could anyone find the drifting boats in the dark, she wondered.

The Coastguard dispatched a patrol boat from Bellingham and another from Anacortes. Also, they had the Navy dispatch a helicopter from Port Angeles and one from Whidbey Island. In one of the patrol boats, a Coastguard recalled that in his two years on duty in the area that in seven previous missions to save a person in trouble in the water, they had'nt found any of them alive. He hoped it would be different this time.

The drifters at sea were aware of Diana's diminishing chances of survival. They knew they had to do something else. Robert had a plan. Perhaps his cockpit was large enough to also accommodate Diana. Cautiously, they helped her crawl into the cockpit. She sat on Robert's outstretched legs. They pulled another sleeping bag and a tent from their kayaks and put them over Diana. These, along with Roberts body heat, gradually began to absorb the chill from Diana.

Now, all they had to do was to bob about at sea and wait and wonder if Ingrid would make it to shore safely and if Tom were safe.

No, that was not all they had to worry about. Soon it would be dark - molasses dark - because of the overcast, moonless sky. How could any rescue boat find them then?

They figured if they were to be saved that night they had better have a light. Dennis had a flashlight somewhere in his kayak. But where? One of the nice features of his kayak was that it had easy access to the bulkheads through a hatchcover on top deck both fore and aft. But it was'nt easy to retrieve anything from the compartments while at sea. They spent about five minutes looking for the flashlight. They could'nt find it.

The next best things, they thought, was the lantern. This they found. But to light it in the wind and wet? In all the fumbling to light the lantern, a wrong knob got turned on. One after another their 31 matches were spent - to no avail.

Without light, would they have to wait until morning to be rescued? Now, in the darkness, they reckoned they would. Ten to twelve hours sitting in a kayak would not be easy - especially for Diana and Robert.

One thing in their favour was that they were'nt being swept much off course now because the wind was from one direction and the tide, now flowing from the opposite direction, counteracted each other.

Then at last they saw a searchlight way off in the distance. Dennis, in particular, felt a surge of relief race through him. He knew Ingrid was safe .... or would Tom have alerted a search party?

Ingrid paced the beach. She heard someone offshore calling, "Robert? Dennis?" The voice came nearer and Ingrid called back, knowing it was Tom. He had ended up 3 to 5 km south of the put-in. He had no idea what had happened to the others. Now he was paddling along shore in the darkness looking for them.

A sheriff had come onto the scene. Through his two-way radio, Ingrid and Tom listened to the reports of the search. Ingrid spent her time alternatively pacing the beach and listening to the radio.

At sea, the drifting kayakers saw the second searchlight. Both lights were searching so far away. An hour passed and the four resigned themselves to spending the night adrift.

Finally they could see the searchlights coming closer. With luck, they thought, maybe they would'nt have to bob around all night after all. Almost another hour passed. And then, the light beamed down on them! The helicopter crew dropped flares for the patrol boats and sent a message to shore.

For Ingrid and Tom the ordeal was not over. Tom heard the message come in over the sheriffs radio. With heavy heart he sought Ingrid on the beach to tell her that they had found four kayaks but ONLY two people. Ingrid's heart pounded. A chill of apprehension shook her body. Was it Dennis and Diana or Robert and Mary?

She hurried back to the sheriffs car. By now, the patrol boats had sped to the rescue. A new message came over the radio - all four had been rescued!

Afterwards, Diana says, "My rescue depended on everyone doing the right thing and luck ..... Yes, it entered my heaf briefly that I might drown. The water is unforgiving. But I had a gut feeling I would get out of it because I'm a survivor ....And, no, it did'nt turn me off kayaking. I really like it."

* *

SAFETY SAFETY SAFETY for info.:-Tom Cronk,PO Box 1574, Victoria
THE ""THERMOFLOAT SEA-SEAT" taken from 'Oceanletter' newsletter of the Ocean Kayaking Association of British Columbia.

Some of you who have been around water sports for a while may know of the Sea-Seat. Those of you who do not know of it should make its acquaintance as soon as possible. This item was designed by Dr. John Hayward of the University of Victoria, and is one of several items designed for protection against hypothermia for those who go down to the sea etc. It had been off the market for a few years, but I am pleased to advise that, thanks to the efforts of one of our members, it is once again in production.

Described as a "pocket sized, orally inflated raft capable of supporting a sitting adult," it is manufactured of tough coated nylon, and folds into a convenient pocket size. A new valve gives a faster inflation time and more secure closing than previous models.

For the kayaker this is a valuable emergency tool, and is possibly more useful than even a life vest. It is definitely something that you should seriously consider as part of your safety equipment. In the event of a 'dump' it is ideal as a platform for easy re-entry. It also gives a stable platform for bailing, repairs, photography and it probably has enough flotation to enable one to grab a boat over one's knees. I have found that re-entry is quite simple with the Sea-Seat only partially inflated.

If you should happen to be one of those unlucky people whose boat has floated away (or sunk) whilst you are getting organised, you have a life raft that will keep all your body out of the water, except your feet and lower legs. This greatly reduces the chances of hypothermia and enhances your chance of survival.

Of course, like all such equipment, it should be on your person at all times. Some life vests have a pocket that the Sea-Seat fits very nicely, but you can always improvise something. Just like your life vest, the Sea-Seat can't help you if it is inside your boat - or has floated away.

* *

THE ZIP CLUB WASH CROSSING MAY 5th, 1985

Contributed by Trevor Riches, Kings Lynn.

As you know, on Sunday May 5th, 39 sea paddlers made the crossing of the Wash from Hunstanton to Skegness and back in a sponsored effort to raise funds towards buying a Gamma Camera for Papworth Hospital Heart Unit.

Being a local lad I had taken on the job of getting people together in a sufficiently disciplined way to satisfy the local Coastguards that sea kayakists know what they are doing, and to satisfy myself that we could manage to get a large number of people not necessarily used to paddling together there and back safely and enjoyably.

When John Brand, who is the local Zip Club fund raiser (all Zip Club members have a vested interest in Papworth Hospital; it being from that institution that they received the zip marks on their chests and a new lease of life for themselves) proposed the idea, it was suggested that the local windsurfers should attempt the double as well - an idea which roused competitive instincts in me. We will show those fancy sailors a clean pair of heels I thought - or something like it! It was agreed from the start that windsurfers need escort boats as a safety measure, but that a PROFICIENT GROUP OF PADDLERS PROPERLY EXPERIENCED AND EQUIPPED AND GROUPED, WOULD BE SELF-SUFFICIENT, AND WOULD ONLY TROUBLE THE RESCUE SERVICES IN A GENUINE EMERGENCY. I've emphasised that statement since it seems to me absolutely central to our philosophy as sea paddlers, and underpinned my own committment to get us together for the trip.

So on Saturday evening the majority of us got together for a briefing at the conclusion of the B.C.U. Sea Touring Committee meeting - at which we said cheerio to Mick O'Connell and John Ramwell, having more pressing things like work to do!

I had obtained two weather forcasts, and Colin Tomlinson, our local sector Coastguard was there with a third. Pity they were all different! The one thing they had in common was that strong winds were not expected. There were two low pressure systems to the north which were putting the squeeze on each other, and it was by no means certain which one would affect us. We took comfort from the wide gaps between the isobars and arranged to meet on the prom at 8.30 for a 9.00 am (or shortly after) launch. Colin Tomlinson, by the way, told the assembled audience that his statistics indicate that the only sea port whose safety record has gone on improving over the years is - you've guessed it - us. Is'nt that nice?

Sunday morning dawned dull, cool, dry, with not much wind. I got another forcast at 0630 which gave us force 2 to 3 south-easterly, backing northwesterly in the evening and increasing 4 to 5. That did sound good, too good to be true, so I did'nt believe it (which was just as well). If it proved correct we were to be blown across and then blown back. Chance is a fine thing, so they say!

Our beach launching was in the helpful hands of Alf Fulcher, the dad of a local lass (Heather) doing the trip one way with me. Each group had to book out with Alf before going on to the water. Surprise, surprise - my two sons were nearly over the horizon before remembering that they had not booked out! I blame it on maternal heredity - not holding with all this nurture nonsense!!

It was'nt easy keeping paddlers on shore for the local press photographers, and some got away so did'nt get their pics in Lynn News Advertiser (cuttings enclosed). Serve them right!

Everyone was on the way shortly after nine. Calm sea. Haze restricted visibility to less than a mile so it was compass work all the way. A good spring ebb under us helped the fastest group over in less than two and a half hours, which was an excellent time for this trip. We were all ashore by 12.30 pm, to be met by Alf Fulcher booking us on to make sure no one was lost. We were also met on the Skegness side by Liz McBean who had brought a car and trailer round;Paul Winterbone and Ian Dew who had also brought a car round. These three helpers from West Norfolk Canoe Club drove many miles that day and gave up their time for us - and I forgot to thank them at the presentation - so I'm thanking them now. It's the unsung heroes in the background at these events who do so much to make it work smoothly. Talking of which, the Zip Club promised us refreshments and hot tea etc. to meet

us - I must remember to ask Jock what happened to it! We had to go into Skegby for a cuppa.

We were ready to launch for the return at quarter to two, just after low water. The Skegness Coastgaurd had given us a forcast for S.E. force 4 gusting 5. The weather had turned distinctly chilly, and we were all ready to go, most having launched, when George Lewczenko shouted that the Coastguard had his hands full with wind surfers in trouble and could give us no safety cover. So we went. The sooner starting, the sooner finsihing. We left one guy, John Chambers, at Skegness to come back with Liz It was John's first trip out of sight of land and he wisely decided that one way was enough. Rose Haddon was paddling Heather's boat so we were 38 on the water, heading into a short choppy irritating sea and a cool force 4 in our faces.

It was on the return trip that the temptation to some paddlers to sprint home proved too great, and a number of groups split up because of it. Among the results of this were two boats needing pumping out, having to ask passing paddlers from other groups for a brace up. I have to say that anyone paddling nowadays without a foot pump needs a group very badly. Excellent pumps as they are, rear deck mounted chimp pumps are NOT suitable for solo paddlers - not unless they've got some kind of stabilising outrigger system.

And saggy PU spraycovers, if they are ill-fitting and leaky, are bad news. At the back of the fleet was Dave Mitchell escorting a tired paddler. Where were his group? We were teamed up, and I got in some towing practice with Rose for the last few miles.

All in all, a head down pull hard slog - wet and windy. We were all ashore after six pm, with Tim Riches and Martin Wilford having clocked up the fastest return in three hours. All's well that ends well and I don't want to deflate our achievement. I hope I have'nt painted it as an epic bacause it was'nt. But when Colin Tomlinson congratulated us on a well organised and safety conscious crossing I did'nt blow up like a pouter pigeon with pride. I had reservations. Little did he know how our excellent group system had in some cases broken down, though not in the majority of cases. Think on this - had the wind piped up to force 5, we would have needed our groups intact. If all of the fast paddlers had buggered off, what price the safe return of the slow, the tired, the tenosynovitis sufferer?

At eight pm we had Nigel Olney of heart transplant fame, to present trophies to us all (there are still one or two to be posted on) and to thank us for our fund raising efforts. At a conservative guess we should have raised a thousand pounds I will let you know the final figure when all the money is in John.

On Monday the Eastern Daily Press published an article critical of the windsurfers who apparantly went out to Woolpack Buoy, were becalmed and had only one escort boat between twenty of them. I did think of writing the same Daily News a letter to try to balance that report by giving the good news about kayak safety - but decided against it.

To conclude this ramble across the Wash and back, several people have said it would make a good A.S.K.C. annual event. Run as a social get-together trip; it is an attractive idea. Anyone considering a time trial across the Wash ought, I think, to drop the idea. Too many great open spaces out there. If it should appeal to our readers, maybe they'd like to write in with comments, particularly positive and constructive responses to my moans about group discipline.

Any repeat double Wash crossing should
(1) not repeat poor group performances of this year. There is nowt wrong with incredibly fast times, so long as the group is chosen with the express intention of a fast crossing and the group STAYING TOGETHER.
(2) not clash with Frank Goodman's Nordkapp Owners Meet on Anglesey and
(3) not clash with Isle of Wight Time Trial

Best month would be June, what to you think?

Despite my moans, we had an extremely agreeable trip. I'd like to thank everyone who took part, both on the water (important) and on the shore (very important) and hope to paddle with you again some time.

Trevor Riches.

The following is taken from the American White Water Magazine "The River Runner" of May, 1985

BEHIND THE BOOM: A MODERN HISTORY OF SEA KAYAKING

by Tom Derrer

It is doubtful that the Aleutian Islanders, Greenland Eskimos or even early white explorers of the North Pacific would have predicted the popularity of the modern sea kayak. Todays sea kayaker has the Eskimo to thank for providing a rich heritage of design and a great source of pleasure.

But what of the 'modern' sea kayak?

How did these once ancient and rather mystical tools of survival become objects of pleasure and recreation for modern man? This article will examine some of the history surrounding the growth of sea canoeing in America.

ORIGINS OF THE NORTHWEST STYLE

While Pacific Northwest sea kayaking was alive and well as early as the mid 1940s, it was certainly not in the public eye. The Washington Kayak Club formed about 1947, and its members were a new breed of kayaker pioneer. Led by Wolf and Harriet Bauer, the San Juan Islands and Vancouver Island and Puget Sound were explored all over again from a kayaker's point of view. Back in those days boats were scarce. Some were imported from Europe, such as the Klepper and Folbot.

Some early Northwest boat builders also developed fibreglass copies of Eskimo skin kayaks. Ted Houk, a doctor and member of the Washington Kayak Club began to experiment with boat designs and he made some kayaks that soon became popular within the club. But Ted was not in the boat building business, so club members had to build their own boats from available moulds.

Finally, in the late 1950s, Lincoln Hales developed several boats and began a family business building these kayaks. Hales could produce about 200 boats in a good season and he had plenty of business.

But sea kayaking was still unrecognised. Whitewater kayaking seemed to get all the attention from a media that was interested in action. After its debut at the 1972 Olympics in Munich, Germany, whitewater kayaking finally got the public excited.

I think the attention focused on whitewater further delayed the growth of sea kayaking. Whitewater boating was publicised as an adventure sport with thrills and spills, which it is. But this "thrills and spills" stuff became the public image of what ALL KAYAKING was about and it may have turned a lot of people off.

When I first found whitewater kayaking I loved it. Back than I felt that the generally older crowd that went sea kayaking were 'namby-pamby'. But that was before I had paddled on the open sea. Today it is ironic that one of the reasons for sea kayaking's exceptional growth is the ease with which one can learn the sport.

Sea kayaks are easy to paddle, no great skill is needed to start, and with careful planning even families can get involved. But there is yet a bigger difference. For many, the sea kayak is a symbol of freedom. It is a vehicle for exploration and getting away; a mode of exercise and relaxation.

During hours of rhythmic, aerobic and almost hypnotic paddling through a soft sea swell, as much internal exploration takes place as does external. And everyone would agree that the open sea offers adventure, as much as anyone would want. Even protected waters are far from tame.

EXPLAINING THE EXPLOSION

Understanding that its growth may have been inhibited by the wild water image, why is sea kayaking growing so fast now? Many factors have contributed, and there is no one right answer.

Still, we have some explanations of sea kayaking's recent rapid growth. First, books have been published. Author Kenneth Brower has intrigued many with

his lyrical descriptions of sea kayaking in his book 'The Starship and the Canoe". Numerous 'how-to' books have also appeared and the media is getting interested. Small sport shops are spreading the word. Plus, more and more outfitters are offering kayak tours. The potential market may also prove to be huge. Some industry source speculate that while five percent of the public is interested in whitewater, as much as 75 percent could be interested in sea kayaking and touring.

Another possible slow-growth factor has been the name "sea kayaking". Many feel sea kayaking is an activity only for the open ocean. In reality, the minority of sea kayakers actually paddle in the open sea; protected waters offer suitable adventure for most. Lakes, rivers, bays and estuaries are prime paddling spots for bird lovers, fishermen and campers.

Few areas possess such a varied water world as the Pacific Northwest and this explains why it is the heart of American sea kayak development. In the Pacific Northwest's maritime climate, even winter paddling can be a pleasure.

But my own theory as to sea kayaking's present growth rate, which is estimated at 50 to 100 percent annually, is one of critical mass. For example, when enough people begin to talk about a positive activity enough, its growth becomes self-perpetuating, particularly when it has industry support. This industry has been alive for many years, just waiting for a chance to explode.

Now that the growth is happening, bigger businesses are getting involved. More money is being pumped into a relatively poor industry. Major whitewater kayak companies are developing sea kayaks. This will bring down the price of entry level kayaks and make the sport more affordable for the average person. Accessory development is also increasing. There is talk of officially certifying instructors, which is a heated on-going controversy at the moment. Last year, an international organisation called the 'Trade Association of Sea Kayaking' (TASK) was formed in Seattle, Vancouver, B.C. area.

As the president of TASK, I see it as an unusuall phenomenon: members of a competitive industry working together in a friendly way to promote their sport AND keep it safe. This will undoubtedly benefit the industry at large, especially in the long run. If the ultralight airplane industry had had such an organisation, they might be much better off now.

THE FUTURE

Today, sea kayaking's safety record is not unblemished, but it is good. Tomorrow, who knows. Hopefully, with co-operation between manufacturers, outfitters, retail stores and kayakers themselves, we can preserve the safe image that sea kayaking has today.

We know, just as the Eskimos did, that it can be done safely, and with great pleasure. The Eskimos gave us a rich and ancient heritage well worth preserving.

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NB Tom Derrer is a freelance writer and the owner-founder of Eddyline Kayak Works. Derrer is also the president of the Trade Association of Sea Kayakers (TASK) and has been involved in the industry over 20 years.

* *

From David Rushfirth, Staining, Nr. Blackpool.

Dear John,

In your much valued and appreciated June Newsletter you invite comments on the B.C.U. Coaching Scheme.

I think the name, "coaching" is more appropriate to certain aspects of the training for the competitive branches of canoeing. For sea kayaking I would prefer the name, "Information and Instruction Service".

This service would provide and distribute information and, where reguired, give instruction, There would be less emphasis on "tests" administered by "testers". The service would provide standards against which kayakers could do the measuring themselves and thus be assisted in forming an idea of their own capabilities.

I would stamp with the utmost ferocity on any idea that tests should in some way be made compulsory. One does not have to observe the media for long to know that every nook and cranny is infiltrated be people who want to impose their ideas and will on others. Such people DO exist in canoeing. They must be resisted. It appears to me that the idea of compulsory tests and the beaurocracy implied is a conception likely to be hated by the true sea canoeist.

I must say, dear John, that I don't like your suggestion that people don't go in for tests because they are frightened of failing. This, for a start, is a rather unworthy argument to use, but in any case, those who will face the hazards of sea canoeing are not likely to fear a test. The fact is that many adult and independant people do not wish to submit themselves to the judgement of another who may be a doubtful quantity.

The idea that possession of a B.C.U. certificate of some sort can be taken as an indication of suitability to join some trip or expedition is a myth. There is no substitute for knowing people. A good man for a rough job needs qualities in addition to those required to pack a boat. In any case, if he can't do that on his own initiative, he is'nt worth having along.

You state that sea kayaking has grown along with the B.C.U. Coaching Scheme. This is misleading. Sea kayaking was going on around our coasts long before the Scheme started. The safety record was just as good, if not better, than it is now.

When the going gets tough, courage and the gift for handling a boat are important factors. Those who are not strong on these points but who, because they have passed tests, are encouraged to adventure beyond their capabilities may find themselves in trouble.

There are some who treat the passing of tests as a sport or pastime in itself. There is little harm in this as long as these enthusiasts don't try to impose their game on others.

Again there are some for whom the passing of tests and the obtaining of certificates is a part of their professional career. All power to them provided they don't try to use the adult club canoeist as cannon fodder.

It should be remembered that the B.C.U. does not include all canoeists by any means. Membership of the B.C.U. is not compulsory, neither is participation in the Coaching Scheme. All who join are volunteers. Sea kayaking is about volunteering, not about conscription.

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LOCAL NEWS OF OUR COAST.

You will most likely be hearing more of our coast in the near future. The reasons are regretable but are yet an inspiring example of self sacrifice and courage. December the 9th, 1986 will be the centenery of the Mexico Disaster in the Ribble Estuary, when both the St. Annes and the Southport Lifeboat Crews perished in attempting to rescue the crew of the German barque, 'Mexico', aground in raging seas on the sandbanks of the estuary. This is still the greatest single disaster in the history of the R.N.L.I. The monument to the St. Annes crew stands on the promenade, (I was first taken to see it whilst still in my pram!). The Lifeboatman on top gazes out to sea wearing sou-wester and the traditional kapok lifejacket. People with the same names as those listed on the monument are still

active in connection with the sea in the district and with the Lytham St. Annes Lifeboat.

You may know that Preston Dock has been closed for some time and that the navigation channel is no longer dredged and the training walls have been left to decay. Big changes are already taking place. At and around low water there is now a dry sandbank right across the seaward end of the trained channel. A new natural channel has broken through the South Wall and is roughly in the same position as the old South Gut Channel. This leaves the trained channel about opposite Peets Light. Charts are thus out of date.

An official engineering report has predicted that the channels will go back to the state of wandering about the wide funnel shaped estuary as was the case before the formation of the Preston Navigation Channel. This was, of cource, the situation at the time of the Mexico disaster. The history of the Estuary is very interesting, but that must be a story for another day.

Lytham Lifeboat House is at present being extended to provide an observation room and better facilities for the crew. Fairly recently we got a brand new Coastguard Station at St. Annes, and another at Knott End on the Wyre Estuary. Lytham St. Annes has recently acquired a replacement Lifeboat, "The Robert", and this craft was dedicated at a ceremony at Lytham Dock on June 2nd. 1985.

All best wishes, David Rushfirth.

* *

From Alan Byde, Middleton in Teesdale, Co. Durham.

Dear John,

You asked for comments on the idea of qualifications. I have been 'up against' this one since I started canoeing in 1957. Maybe it would be helpful to illustrate the general case with which I was affected....'twas thus:

In 1957-58-59 a number of enthusiastic but fairly ignorant canoeists in the North East had joined the B.C.U. and we then asked for advice, mainly on technical skills in kayaks. The low telemark was a high spot in our advance towards a certificate. We did'nt set off with bits of paper in mind, just a yearning for someone to introduce us to the joys of handling a paddle effectively. After a while, as our pleas to those who lived south of Bedford remained unheeded, we said "blow it", or words to that effect, "we'll form the North East Canoeing Association, declare U.D.I. and do it our way".

This political move had the desired effect. John Dudderidge and Oliver Cock, in relays or together, came north on Friday nights, arriving midnightish from Radlett. They stayed usually with Joan and me at our terraced house in Durham. We felt honoured and they looked tired. That was before the M1 or the A1(M). That was when the long trek through Lincolnshire was on single carriageway with many turns and many huge lorries as big as ten tons; convoys of slow moving (20 mph) traffic. For two years or more they plodded north and showed us how. If ever the skills of a vast area depended upon two men, it was then. Then there were three people known to have rolled a kayak in the north. Now every school has it's team of rollers.

What we did'nt know at that time was that in the two years 57-58-59, 45 people had died in canoe related accidents. The numbers canoeing now in Britain must be many times what it was then, say ten times the number. Imagine if we had 450 deaths in two years now, instead of the 4 that did occur in 1984. What Oliver and John knew was that if the sporting body did'nt do something seriously about the death rate then someone else would. A network of instructional cadres was needed who could pass on the skills which allow paddlers to avoid accident. My first lifejacket was an inflatable sausage which had been issued to the 'D' Day forces on their beach landings. It tied around the neck and shoulders.

There was no doubt that these two dedicated men could not for ever come labouriously up the old A1 late on Friday mights to return happy but weary on a late Sunday evening through the Sunday afternoon drivers. Those were the days when you polished your car on the Sunday morning, a sort of devotional offering.

It had a chassis then and would do 65 flat out with the wind behind. In the afternoons you pottered about watching others watching you, and had a picnic at the side of the main road off the lid of the boot. Some cars had boots in those days. I digress.

So a small and enthusiastic group of 'instructors' was formed. John Robson from South Shields, Jack Levison from Peterlee, Chris Hare - Hartlepool, Ron Miller - Gateshead, Ernie from Wallsend, Don Howe - Sunderland and others I cannot remember now. The only qualifications we had was a series of visits from John Dudderidge and Oliver Cock. The only book on canoeing that I had was Oliver's "You and Your Canoe". There were three "Clarence" films on various skills which we hired two or three times a year.

In order to inform people of what was going on I sent out newsletters mainly because correspondence came through me because we were on the old A1 at Durham and it was the handiest place for the weary northbound traveller to stop. I could type 'skins' for duplication because a few years earlier an Army W/O had set me in front of a typewriter and ordered me to copy that list. Chance, is what that was. So, because I held a sort of pivotal position in Durham I was made the second Senior Coach, the first being John Dudderidge. I suppose a few responsible people got together down in London and decided that someone had to stand at the head. I was 'it' in the North. That was in 1960. By 1962 I decided that it was time that I actually acquired the certificates that Senior Coaches were supposed to have - which was all of them. The first was the RLSA Award of Merit. It certainly saved my life four years later at Blackrock in 1966. The awareness it gave me may have helped me to avoid situations which might have put me and others in jeopardy. At least I had some idea of what was going on. The chap who took me for my Advanced Canadian was Geoff Blackford. I had qualified him about two years earlier. Incestious old business in those days.

The last time I qualified anyone was four years ago, an inland proficiency certificate, and then only under great pressure. The last time I dealt with squads of candidates was in Oxford before 1973. I must have had my eye on as many as any.

One attempt on a senior instructor cert. was by Ian Rabjohns at Shugborough Park around 1967. It was on a smooth slow moving canal section. His group of young lads were immaculately turned out. They did everyhting I asked him to demonstrate. I failed him. He was dressed in casual clothing, shoes, slacks, sweater and no lifejacket. If he had been compelled to 'go in' to save someone there may have been a hesitation and he too may have been at risk. I did most of my instructional work in just that way, trotting about on the river bank in clothing I would rather not get wet. He was ahead of my time. I'm sorry Ian!

He might well have said, "Stuff you certificates, framed preferably". Those with the certificates have the 'power'. If having a piece of that power is important, then do what they ask you to do, jump through the hoop and get your slice of the action. If insurance companies are in it for profit, then that is their first consideration. Educational authorities must be seen to act as responsible bodies and one of those responsibilities is to ensure that they are fully insured. Insurers will not pay out on bad risks and a bad risk is one who has not taken the trouble to be fully qualified. He may be a great instructor but he has no piece of paper. It is the paper that is under scrutiny, not so much the person.

If on the other hand, you are one of the 'free' who have been made free by the long weary northward-southward plods of John and Oliver, aware of the problems that were not so obvious 30 years ago, witness the death rate, then BE free. Don't knock it, but do your own thing. Some great men worked hard to help you to be aware. Beware you do not rubbish it.

Alan Byde. 30.5.85.

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REMEMBER - CLOSING DATE FOR THE A.S.K.C. WEEKEND IS 1st OCTOBER 1985

DETAILS OF THIS WEEKEND AND APPLICATION FORM ARE TO BE FOUND IN ASKC NEWSLETTER NUMBER 50. DON'T DELAY - APPLY TODAY!

"IF THE CAP FITS" by John Chamberlin.

Thanks for the latest newsletter: I can confirm and support all of Derek's comments regarding the Wash Crossing, it was most rewarding. In fact, I write now in an attempt to purge myself of the remorse which followed the trip.

At the presentation on the Sunday evening, following the crossing, Trevor (Riches) did his good news/bad news bit, commenting first on his pleasure that the trip had been successful and second on his concern that group discipline on the water had been found wanting. Trevor had indicated to me that he would welcome open discussion on the subject so, as a member of a group that did not finish together, I was moved to consider why we had become so fragmented. I know Trev also had been dwelling on it since, and would welcome the views of others on the basis that we all might learn something, if only about ourselves!

In order to address the problem, one may need to examine the reasons for making the trip at all. From the 'blurb' it seems that local paddlers do the crossing quite regularly, so they were perhaps just putting their efforts to better use. For those who travelled further afield I would suggest that the prime mover was as advertised - raising money for Papworth Hospital. Other secondary reasons though, may have a bearing on the problem; i.e. the simple aspect of a new trip, the challenge of the double crossing itself, the opportunity to see some old friends and the possibility of making some new ones.

This mixture of motives obtained in our own case as, shortly after Robin Rhodes and I had arrived, it was a pleasant surprise to meet Derek (Hutchinson) on the caravan site. This was enhanced after the briefing when Hutch' introduced us to Martin Meling, Brod Beech and Dave Evans (Calshot) and invited us to join their group on the water the next day. Brod had two companions, so this made eight initially, and he informed us in the bar of his hope to have some pictures taken half way across of him opening and consuming some self-heating soup; his intention being to then sell sell the negatives to the manufacturer - I'm not sure whether this was Crosse & Blackwell or Paines-Wessex!!

In the event, Brod & co. were somewhat late the next morning so the five of us set off, assuming that they would join another group. After about half an hour we were joined by a sixth paddler - from London - Nick Hodson, who remained with us.

The outward trip continued quite well, with all the "crack" one would expect from a group of adequately acquainted drinkers. Our adopted technique was to check that the distant and barely visible group in front was paddling on the course we had agreed and then simply follow them. It took exactly three hours, giving a noon arrival near Skegness and a welcome lunch break in reasonable weather.

Now, in my 39 years I have never been to Skegness before and my visit that day only serves to confirm my good fortune. It did about as much for me as Cyril Smith does for hang-gliding. However the lunch time stroll resulted two days later in my children saying that did'nt want to go there either, because the rock tasted salty. I can't imagine how that happened!

The published 'gen' sheet gave a return "launch window" of 1430 to 1500, but cool winds and the prospect of deteriorating weather prompted the whole party to set off quite a bit earlier at 1350. Whereas on the outward leg the partys had set off at random, every few minutes, this 'Le Mans-style' start was about as helpful towards group identity as the Charge of the Light Brigaee was to army recruiting. On an excursion such as this with some paddlers who had done the trip before but plenty who had'nt, it was reasonable to expect variations in course plans for the return leg. Some of these would also have been influenced by the incidence of drying banks on the way over and the desire to avoid them on the trip back.

Our own provisional plans resulted in us being on the seaward fringe of the famous forty, with Martin and myself furthest out on the left of the group. However, the gravitational pull of this multi-coloured conglomerate resulted in us veering further in and still being much a part of the mass as we passed to seaward of the Skegness South Buoy.

A little after I became aware that Martin and I were a bit ahead of the rest of

our six, just identifiable on the east flank of the flotilla, but we were still readily in touch. Some minutes later Robin paddled up to us and suggested we slow down a bit to allow the others to catch up, at least one had paused to make clothing adjustments. It's about here where the rot set in, because we did not actually stop and wait (which would have been reasonable because we had been going about an hour and I am normally an advocate of short regular breaks) and I'm not sure that we slowed down much, or for very long either. At the time it did'nt seem that necessary but, unintentionally, the gap was beginning to widen.

The worsening weather began to play it's part in the second hour, with the head-wind becoming more definite, and strengthening to 4 -5.

The scene I recall is of the two of us being happy to be a little ahead, as we were hoping to sight the Lynn Knock Buoy to seaward and check our course accordingly, obviously to the benefit of our group. I also remember being happy to paddle with a new acquaintance, someone unknown to me prior to the weekend and whom I found interesting to talk to.

Wrongly, the combination of concentration on looking for, sighting and monitoring progress past the distant buoy, our own thoughts and conversation, and head-down paddling into the wind allowed the gap to widen further, such that we really became irrevocably seperated from and ahead of our other four companions. The assumption that they were still together was in itself unreasonable, although it did'nt seem so at the time, and also incorrect. Hindsight, however, is 20:20!

My guess is that one of our failings here was not to actively discuss whether or not to wait. As often occurs in situations of this kind, things happen implicitly, and we continued. For one of us to have decided unnilaterally to wait would have meant not only a long, lonely, possibly nauseous holding exercise, but also abandoning the other to paddle on alone. Either individual would have then been automatically at greater risk. Again, we should have waited together, but we did'nt. In brief chats about the wind I can remember Martin saying, "You've just got to keep hammering away at it!" We did.

We assumed, also implicitly, that our friends were hammering away at it similarly, not too far behind; possibly using us to follow. We were wrong. They were not entirely together, at least one having been involved in helping another struggling paddler to empty out.

Although the visibility was relatively better on the return trip, the coast of Hunstanton also seemed to be on a holding exercise during the third hour. These conditions only served to concentrate one's mind on steady, forward progress. As Derek wrote, we seemed to be standing still. We were getting wet. So what? It's a wet sport! Thoughts of, "Will we make it?", or "Will I make it?", come to mind. One forgets that there are ladies also in the group, further back. No intended disrespect there either, but one is alone with one's thoughts. In fact to quote Brod Beech later to one lady, on dry land, "You've done bloody well! If anyone tells you it was a doddle, they're lying!" I agree. I also thought I did bloody well; after all I'm only a little lad.

Into the fourth hour the detail on the coast ahead was barely improving. By this time we just kept going. No chat; no rests; paddling side by side, formation changes dictated by the sea, accomodated by us. As the detail became clear we were able to identify a target stretch and aim for it. During thelast mile or so I pulled ahead of Martin, not intentionally, although surprisingly because he was a bigger and stronger bloke than me, but just lost in my own obsession for landing. He was probably more relaxed than me.

After three hours and 50 minutes without a break I landed at Hunstanton. Ten seconds later so did Dave Evans. Now I thought he was with the others! He looked at me and said, "You look knackered!" I agreed. I knew I was knackered. Ten minutes later Derek landed, thanking Martin for his company - in the true cynical spirit of old friends. Twenty minutes later Robin landed, saying how he had been unable to lower his new retractable rudder. The seeds of guilt were sown. He was my mate and I had not stayed with him. I have every confidence in his ability, more than my own, but that is'nt enough in a risk sport in which there are such real external factors. Consideration for others is of paramount importance. We had been asked to form groups, and stay in them. We had failed! Not the fault of the organisers but of the organised. I was reprimanded - the cap fitted.