

Advanced Sea Kayak Club

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

NEWSLETTER

A I M S

1. PROMOTION OF SEA KAYAKING
2. COMMUNICATION BETWEEN SEA KAYAKERS
3. ORGANISATION OF EVENTS & CONFERENCES
4. SAFETY AND COACHING



EDITORIAL

First A HAPPY NEW YEAR and here's to a good paddling year also. It won't be long before we can put those winter fireside dreams into practice. Before this time we have the BRITISH CANOE UNION CANOE EXHIBITION scheduled for 22nd and 23rd February. As usual the A.S.K.C. will have a stand at the Exhibition, though we have been repositioned, which was not too painful as we are still in the lower hall. See you there, I hope.

Turning back to our winter fireside plans. The A.S.K.C. is again organising it's sea kayaking holiday (formally held at Gatehouse). It will be held at BAILACHULISH on the west coast of Scotland from 2nd August to 8th August. Put a note in your diary and watch out for full details appearing in the March edition of this newsletter.

On behalf of the British Canoe Union Sea Touring Committee and the A.S.K.C. I shall be organising the 6th BRITISH SEA KAYAKING SYMPOSIUM over the weekend of the 4th and 5th October. Venue, cost and details to be decided watch the canoeing press.

This year I hope to obtain a word processor system for the A.S.K.C. to help with the production of this newsletter. If any of you out there know of any good deals do let me know please.

Advance notice of A.S.K.C. hand knitted woollen jumpers. I have found a small home based company willing to supply. Details and cost etc. will appear in the March edition of this newsletter..... so start saving now!

RENEWALS.

Subscriptions for 1986 are now due and I have enclosed a renewal form for this purpose. Please renew promptly as I want to prepare the A.S.K.C. Directory in good time. I have heard that this Directory has proved very useful, with some members taking it with them when they go off on business as well as pleasure trips and calling on fellow members when ever the opportunity arises. Anyway, please do renew soon. The price of membership remains the same; £4.00 for U.K. members and £6.00 for others.

Please do not forget those reports on your own expeditions, nor any article of general interest for this old newsletter.

Finally, it is possible that some of you may have heard of my pending move to the Isle of Wight in the deep south of England. Though I have recently started work there my address remains as @ 4, Wavell Garth, Sandal until we can sell up and buy on the Island. When this time comes I will make sure I notify my change of address here in the A.S.K.C. editorial

COASTLINE APPEAL

The National Trust, supported by the Countryside Commission, have announced a new appeal to protect the Welsh coastline - part of the Trust's Enterprise Neptune national appeal, designed to bring areas of coastline under the Trust's protection through ownership.

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I am currently reviewing Derek Hutchinson's new book on sea canoeing. I hope to have it ready for the next edition.

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Batchelors have added two new recipes to their Chinese meals range - Shanghai Beef Noodles and sweet and sour chicken. This increases the range of meals available to four, the two new varieties joining the improved recipe Chop Suey and Chow Mein. All four are available in one or two portion packs costing around 55 pence and £1 respectively, and they take no more than ten minutes to make. The only comment I would make is that in these days of ever greater consciousness about artificial food additives, a glance at the ingredients list for these meals reveals that they contain several. There are any number of canoeists who would prefer to take food which is free of such things and would welcome an initiative from large companies like Batchelors on this front

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From Mark Humphreys, St Peter Port, Guernsey

Dear John

Just thought I'd drop you a line about a recent trip I was on in Iceland. I was one of the leaders of a Venture Scout Expedition there, involved with the canoeing side of things under leadership of Nigel and Sharon Foster.

We paddled about 70 miles of the North-West Peninsula - from Arnes (at 66°2" N) to Holmavick (65°43" N) over about 7 days actual paddling. The 7 venture scouts had done very little on the sea but proved to be competent paddlers at the end of the week. Conditions varied from about 6 ft swell on the first day to flat calm, most days we had a following sea which made for great surfing, the scouts had made large skegs which proved to be very effective - they were complaining about not being able to turn them - (how would they react to a Vyneck?). The people were very, very friendly, we were invited in to their houses for coffee - or I should say "kaffi". We were given dried sharks meat to try - which wasn't bad, and even dried "rock" fish which I couldn't face though Sharon seemed to like it. One day we caught a couple of seagulls and they were nice fried up.

We passed a small fishing village called 'Gjogur' - Nigel stopped and went up to the home - the occupants couldn't believe it - he had stayed there several years back when he and Geoff Hunter circumnavigated Iceland, and they still remember and talk about him.

The wildlife was abundant, fulmars, eiders, arctic terns, skuas and of course seals - on the last day we spotted a couple of porpoises (or was it dolphins).

The other parts of the expedition was enjoyed also - the walkers - despite having many days of rain said it was a fantastic experience and the same was also said of the scouts who crossed the ice-cap. Some of us, as we had to get back to Reijhavik decided to hitch across Iceland, some 400 miles which proved to be exciting and added an extra dimension to an already brilliant trip.

I also gained my sea proficiency over there - the start on the long paddle to gaining my S.I - and hopefully further. I highly recommend Iceland - for any paddler - be it river or sea - its easy to get to - a ferry goes across - I think, once a week during the summer. The place is fantastic, the people the same. Well worth a trip.

Mark Humphreys

From Derek C Hutchinson, SeaTrek Ocean Kayaking Centre, Sausalito, USA

Dear John

Well, well, here it is November at last and the temperatures in the San Francisco Bay area are still in the 70's and 80's. I have already spent a week in Alaska, discussing the stunts and so forth, that I am supposed to be doing for a film all about eskimo life, that is being filmed on location up there. It appears that I am to 'die' for a number of eskimos as well as doing the rolls and the odd bit of stunt work. I am now back once again in California and until I get the call to get my body up to the film location at Toksook Bay I am teaching sea kayaking at SeaTrek Ocean Kayaking Center, here in San Francisco Bay.

One of the most interesting classes so far, has been for the officers and men of the Fish and Game Service. These men are quite different from the British gamekeepers and water bailiffs. They are highly trained law enforcement officers and their job can be dangerous, because of this they are well armed. The belts they wear with their uniforms carries a two way radio, a pair of hand-cuffs, a tear-gas aerosol, a pair of thumb cuffs, a revolver and a holder containing two full cylinders of ammunition for fast loading. Slide inside the belt via the belt buckle, are two self locking plastic ties. These are used if a number of arrests have to be made. A good deal of their work is patrolling the wet flats and sloughs of wilderness areas, during the hours of darkness. They observe suspects through night sights and they need boats which are fast and silent. Of course the sea kayak is the ideal vehicle for this purpose...I wonder - is the collective noun, a posse of Ice Floes!

Over the last few weeks, the Bay Area has been enlivened by the presence of a fully grown

humpback whale, which strayed in under the Golden Gate Bridge. This gentle giant has been exploring the landlocked waterways almost as far up as Sacramento. A whole armada of whale watchers and do-gooders were convinced that Humphrey - as they called him - was lost and needed shepherding back to the open waters of the Pacific Ocean. The result was that one very pissed-off whale was pursued by a flotilla of miscellaneous small craft, full of people banging and clanging on lengths of iron pipe, in an effort to frighten Humphrey back out to sea. Even the sounds of killer whales were used but this had no effect either. The trick that turned the tide however was a whale sound medly engineered by a top producer of film sound effects. Someone roped in a man called Bernie Krouse, a San Francisco based bio-acoustic expert who did the sound effects for "Apocalypse Now" and "Rosemary's Baby". The U.S. Navy supplied a 17,000 dollar speaker device and it was this which transmitted a kind of "Humpback Hits" - Greatest Feeding Sounds. The indifferent whale suddenly became a frisky follower of this electronic Pied Piper, which eventually led the poor deluded creature on under the Golden Gate Bridge and out into the open. I wonder what thoughts went through Humphrey's mind when all these delightful sounds suddenly stopped. It had been my intention to meet Humphrey and accompany him out of the Gate in the kayak, unfortunately the U.S. Coast Guard instituted a no-go area around the whale of one hundred yards. The fine for violating the whales water space was rumored to be in the region of eighty thousand dollars. I think it was about this time that I lost interest.

I recently had the good fortune to lead a trip down the "Lost Coast". The area so romantically named is the stretch of coast-line that forms the western boundary to part of California's mendocino County. The name stems from the fact the area is inaccessible by road. The coast is densely wooded and precipitous and once the launching point at Shelter Cove is left behind any accidents would mean a helicopter. One of my group, called Dave Nagel, was head of the Search and Rescue and on a visit to Britain a couple of years ago, he actually met our own Dick Richards. To continue the story; landings are difficult on this stretch of coast. The beaches are steep and the Pacific swell is such that one does not need to lie about its size. The camp site we had chosen for the night was behind a small beach and I went in first - that was a big mistake. I sat for about fifteen minutes, trying to time the huge swells for something that resembled a lull. When I finally thought that I'd got it right, I moved in closer to the beach and then paddled like someone demented, on the back of what I thought was the last of a giant set of dumping waves. I chased the swill of the wave on its violent climb up the steep slope. Even as my bow touched the beach, the center of the kayak was still over about three feet of water. As one dangling leg tried to find bottom, the receding onrush of water and pebbles swept me back down the beach slope and into the debris filled jaws of the next rather large dumping wave. Just before being sucked into the upsurge of drift-wood, weed and pebbles, I did two things very quickly. I threw the paddle as far away from me as I could and immediately hurled myself backwards out of the fully loaded kayak. The damn thing had spun round sideways on its slide down the shingle. As I went round in the curl, I hoped that I was well clear of the boat. I felt my head hit the sand with a crunch that made me think I'd broken my neck while at the same time sand and grit was forced up my nose and into my ears. Luckily I managed to close my remaining teeth on my palate, before it left my mouth.

John - do you think I'm getting too old for this lark? Come to think of it I don't really want an answer.

I look forward to hearing about your own Alaskan adventures.

Yours sincerely from the colonies.

Derek C Hutchinson

From Udo Weiterer, Bremen

Dear Mr Ramwell

I'm a member of the new German Saltwater Union. I got your address from our saltwater friend Wolfgang Half, by the way best wishes from him. He told me that you are the publisher of the ASKC Newsletter. That's the reason I write to you.

Next year I intend to go from Sicilia to the Lipari Islands in the Mediteranian Sea by Kayak from 22 March to 13 April 1986. The time is including the voyage from Bremen. I

am still looking for companions. It's sure that a saltwater friend from Bremen will accompany me. Three others are not sure if they should come with.

The distances are from 5 to 30 kilometers and it's possible as I know to camp on islands. My friend will go in a Habel kayak or a Nordkapp I in a Habel or a Langeoog (it's still in construction).

I beg you to publish a notice about this tour in your Newsletter.

Thank you very much and best wishes.

Udo Weiterer

From David Rushfirth, Staining, Nr Blackpool

Dear John

As you will be aware you have me down as the ASKC contact for the N.W coast from the Lune to the Ribble estuary. I must admit that this position does not involve me in a great deal of work!

I thought that you would like to know that in the above capacity I took the opportunity of a Coastguard Open Day on Sept 28th to visit the Coastguard Station at St Annes. I was very well received and the officers present were very glad to have my name as a canoeing contact which information they said they would pass on to other stations along the coast. It is noteworthy that to the best of their knowledge they had no other kayaking contact in the area.

They also said that they had seen very little canoeing in the area they cover apart from a few people surfing at Starr Gate at the south end of Blackpool.

One officer showed considerable interest in my Huntsman which I had on top of the car following a paddle at Lytham. Before leaving I was invited to visit the station for a chat at any time I wished. I came away feeling grateful for their friendly welcome and for their positive and encouraging attitude towards sea kayaking.

Best wishes, David

From Trevor Riches, King's Lynn

Dear John

The final tally for our sponsored Wash paddle paid in to the 21P club account was £1208. I should have let you know before. Could you publish it in next Newsletter with warmest thanks from Friends of Papworth Hospital to all concerned.

Cheers and happy paddling, Trevor Riches

From David Rushfirth, Nr Blackpool

Dear John

I am writing to you again to tell you of a recent pleasant encounter which seems to further emphasise the fact that Sea Canoeists are something of a rarity on this coast.

On Saturday Oct. 12th I took advantage of the morning tide and beautiful weather to paddle up river from Lytham. I spoke to several cruising yachts coming down under sail in the light breeze.

Having come ashore about two hours after high water to avoid complications with the mud I changed into "shoregoing clothes" and took my wife to Poulton-le-Fylde to do a bit of shopping and visit a cafe. The Huntsman was still on top of the car.

After this interlude we returned to the nautical atmosphere by driving the further mile or so to Skippool Creek on the Wyre Estuary to look at the cruising boats tied to stageings along the banks.

As we were taking a photograph a gentleman drew up in a car and got out and approached us. "I spoke to you on the river at Lytham this morning", he said, "My boat was the first one you went past, "Legend of Lytham", and I am John Ogden the Hon. Secretary of the Lytham Lifeboat.

We had a pleasant chat during which it was established, probably to his relief, that I am not entirely without experience of the ways of the sea.

It is interesting, however, that he had identified my boat especially as she was on top of the car by the shore of an estuary several miles from where he had seen her in the water a few hours previously!!!

I had for some time been intending to join "Shoreline". This little incident turned my good intentions into rapid action!!

As you may have guessed Mr Ogden, like the Coastguards, remarked on the rarity of canoes on our coastal waters.

All best wishes, David

From Dr Paul Bekher, Chief Coach, Atlantic College Beach Rescue Unit, Glamorgan

Report on helicopter exercise with canoeists at Atlantic College on Thurs. 24th Oct 1985. Purpose of exercise, to determine if a casualty can be lifted by helicopter from a raft of three canoeists. Time - 2.15 pm, Wind - light, Surf - negligible, Draft - westwards, Position - 150 m South of Atlantic College slipway.

A raft of three canoeists was formed with a casualty lying across the bows of the three kayaks. The three canoeists concentrated on holding the raft together as strongly as possible. The helicopter approached from the west with the crew member lowered with his feet in the water to prevent oscillations. The crew member landed on the raft and affixed the strop round the casualty. The casualty was then lifted together with the crew member and winched into the helicopter. Only the legs of the casualty became wet. The three canoeists broke up the raft and paddled into the downdraft area with the helicopter hovering low to see how they could cope with this.

Comments - It is possible for a casualty to be lifted from a raft of canoes and for the casualty to be kept dry and warm. Communication with the crewman was virtually impossible, the noise of the helicopter prevented verbal communication and the fact that the canoeists had to hold the raft together meant that they could not use hand signals. It would thus be difficult to communicate to the crewman what had happened to the canoeist and what he was suffering from. A single canoe could stay upright in the downdraft. It was found to be more stable paddling strongly forward rather than stationary with support strokes. The major difficulty was the paddle blades being 'caught' by the air.

Conclusion - A very worthwhile, useful and informative exercise.

From Dick Richards, Mumbles Coastguard, to Dr Paul Bekher, Atlantic College

HELICOPTER WINCHING EXERCISE FROM RAFTED KAYAKS

Many thanks for your report on the above which is very interesting. Similar trials have been undertaken elsewhere with broadly similar results. You were exercising of course with a Wessex and you should be aware that a Seaking gives considerably more downwash though it can work at a slightly higher level of hover due to its longer winch-wire, but this also introduces problems of its own.

Again you are reporting on a preplanned exercise involving competent paddlers in reasonable conditions; probably a far cry from the circumstances which would obtain if a helicopter were despatched in earnest. Almost inevitably verbal communication will be impossible and, although taking an injured or sick canoeist across a raft assists in immediate care the helicopter winchman would prefer to take a person from the sea, providing obviously that he/she is wearing buoyancy aid/lifejacket. Generally speaking the helicopter crew have more flexibility with the winchman in the water preparing the lift than holding position with him trying to work on a raft. The value of the raft is in keeping the group together and providing immediate safety for the victim as well as giving the SAR unit a larger target on which to home.

Your point about the effect of downwash upon the paddle blade which is out of the water and that, beneath the aircraft, it is better to keep moving forward rather depending upon static support strokes is a useful one and I will take the liberty of copying your report and this reply to John Ramwell of the Advanced Sea Kayak Club for possible publication in the ASKC News.

With best wishes, Dick Richards

From Alan Byde, Co. Durham

Dear John

Several points about the recent n/l.

The madwoman on St Tudwalds. I have been to the islands, but did not meet the woman to whom Phil Eccles refers. I was there on 6th July 1968, my fortieth birthday. On the subject of wild women, I once cycled with some mates to the rough moors near to Cow Green mine. It was then about to become a reservoir at the head of the Tees. We stopped on the moorland track near to a brick and concrete base to take a rest. We walked about twenty feet from the track to where a hut had once stood. An eldritch shriek arose from afar off. The banshees were after us. Approaching, Boadiccea like, was a stoutly built female, at least to judge by the long tweed skirt, wildly flowing grey hair, and bulging ganzie. The walking stick was held at a threatening angle, and in lieu of barking dogs she had keen eyed students trotting along behind. Followed a harangue of some five minutes on tiny plants peculiar to the area. I foolishly asked what plants, and she then showed me many tiny flowering plants chewed close by the many sheep abounding. As her fury at our intrusion into 'her' territory passed into her interest in plants she became very interesting. We parted amicably after much sweet talking by myself. I do seem to have a soothing effect upon some. It is all about territory. It happens on the motorways too. She had large cleated walking boots. By their duds shall ye know them.

Liked the item from Jim Vermillion about old boats. A paddle was found at Star Carr, Yorkshire, carbon dated 7,400 BC. There is a book to be written pulling together these threads to show that canoeing and kayaking have a very ancient provenance. I am unsure what Jim means by the word 'kayak'? Until now I thought it meant, literally, 'The hunters' Boat'. As I am not a hunter and I know of only three Englishmen who have been, I regard the use of the word 'kayak' as wrong for the vast majority of recreational paddlers. But if Jim can give me details of the true meaning of the word, I may have to start using the word 'kayak' again.

As for the rather sad correspondence on using material from "Sea Kayaker", I have seen material from ASKC used in that very good quarterly mag. Also I know John Ramwell, and anyone less likely to be discourteous would be hard to find. Put it down to pressure of work, John, lad. If you were being the detached editor, then you are that, and if you seek testimony to your quality, here's mine.

The item by Bill Baker on the Spirit of the Northern Sea has what I believe to be an inaccuracy in it. The third from last para comments on modern materials and their superiority. Chris Hare when he went to Ubekendt Ejlandt in 1966, Western Greenland, showed his excellent European spade blade paddles to the seal hunters. No good, they id, too noisy. They drip and splash. As for the drum like quality of grp, it is quite useless for seal hunting, as the slightest noise is magnified and startles the quarry. Seal or canvas skinned kayaks are soft and absorb noises and do not warn the seal of the approach of a kayak. Interesting that the spirit grabbed rolls of tape for patching soft skinned boats. I doubt if one tear meant days and days of repair work. I once helped to repair a slit canvas hull on a double, I was i/c weekend group on the Wear, and we had to move on with camping gear. The slit was eight feet long. It took two or three people about an hour to stitch it up at quarter inch intervals and to stick on a canvas sealing strip with Evostik. I still have some old 8mm cine film showing the repair.

Pleased to hear of your exped to Alaska. I fear that I am entering the seventh age of man, the lean and slippered pantaloons. Maybe my dreams will never be more than that, dreams. Young men shall see visions, and old men shall dream dreams. Still dreams need feeding.

Cheerio, Alan

From Robin Ruddock, Causeway Coast Kayak Association, Portrush, Co. Antrim

Dear John

I would be grateful if you could include the following information in the next edition of the ASKC Newsletter.

The association meets monthly on the second Tuesday of each month in Portrush

Countryside Centre, 8 Bath Road, Portrush at 7.30 pm. The aims of the association would be the same as those of the ASKC only in a local context. The monthly theory sessions are open to all those interested in the topics presented. Full membership will be restricted to members of BCU/CANI who hold Sea Proficiency or relevant three star award. A charge of fifty pence will be collected at each monthly meet to go towards covering expenses incurred and the production of a monthly newsletter.

I will keep you informed as to our progress as an association and contact with ASKC members would be welcome. Our first meet on 10 December 1985 will involve a screening of the marine biology film "Portrush Rock" from the Ulster Museum and also a lecture by Frank Maguire on the British Alaskan Kayak Expedition 1981 Circumnavigation of Nunwok Island. At our second meet on 14 January 1986 we hope to have an expedition report on the recent Irish expedition to the Faeroe Islands and also a viewing of some Irish archive film.

I am in the process of completing a "Sea Canoeists Guide to the Causeway Coast", which will be made available to interested parties. On completion of the project I will send you a copy for reference along with details of availability and a price inclusive of post and packing. The Causeway Coastline is a beautiful and classic area for sea kayaking.

Yours sincerely, Robin Ruddock

From Martin Meling, Olavskolen, 5437 Finnas, Norway

Dear John

Thank you for the various publications and newsletters which you sent me. I am now settling in to my new job and new surroundings very well. I am finding more time and more opportunities to paddle on the sea than I did in England. The school where I am living at the moment is a Folkhighschool which places a high emphasis on sea based activities. I am living in a dorm which is a full minutes walk away from where I keep my kayak by the edge of the fiord. I have enclosed a short account of a little trip that I did recently by way of contributing obliquely to the debate on "solo paddling". I also enclose some information about the school which unfortunately is in Norwegian but nevertheless should give you the feel of the place. It also doubles as a "Turistsenter" which is by way of being a Hostel/Hotel by Norwegian standards it is very cheap. It would make an ideal base/launching point for any group contemplating a coastal expedition. If any of our members are interested to know more or just want a general contact in Norway please tell them to contact me at the above address.

Yours sincerely, Martin Meling

A SHORT SOLO PADDLE ON NORWAY S WEST COAST

The first snowfall of the winter came with a Northwesterly gale on the Friday night. On Saturday morning I was awoken by the sun streaming through my window. The sky was clear and the air cold and fresh. Here and there on the surface of the fiord were small patches of thin mush ice as if to herald the arrival of winter. The day however was more springlike in its stillness, a subterfuge, I was later to discover.

I decided there and then that this was the day I would paddle to Espevar. This group of islands off the Southwest Coast of Bomlo has interested me since I was a boy. On one of my many trips round the coast with my father in his fishing boat we called in here on our way home to Melingsneset. He told me then how it had been a big centre for herring fishing, in the days between the wars, when my grandfather had run a big herring fishing boat. It is also reputed to be one of the most beautiful harbours on the west coast.

As I paddled out of the fiord at ten thirty, the water was glass calm and the sun continued to shine from a clear blue sky. I cleared the Kuleseid Kanal and headed Northwest towards Flatholmen. Behind me the majestic granite of Siggo rose stark against the sky, resplendent in her new shawl of snow. The whole scene was breathtaking. I paused to take off my buoyancy aid and stow it on the back deck as I was feeling too warm. As I rounded Vordnes and began paddling towards Hiskosen I settled into that steady rhythm which all seakayakists know so well. At this point, towards the open sea, I could see the swell pounding on Toskebleikjne and sending plumes of spray a hundred

feet into the air. I paddled on oblivious to what should have been a clear early warning signal. Lost in warm and happy thoughts of the recent visit of my family to the Olavskole where I had made my home these last few months, I swept on past Lyklingsholmen. I began to notice now that the sea conditions were changing, the flat calm of the fiord had been replaced with a swell, which while quite big, was long and regular, presenting no problems. A very small diving bird surfaced nearby, it looked a bit like a puffin, but much smaller and not as colourful. My mind was taken back to the many happy hours I have spent paddling around the Farne Islands. I was not allowed to daydream any further however, since the sea now demanded my full attention. As I came out from behind the lee of the twin islands of Nautoy and Geitung the swell and its reflected wave pattern was creating a most uncomfortable sea. I paddled towards Lyngoy aware that I was becoming tense and a little anxious. The swell was enormous now, at least ten metres, and the sea was so turbulent and confused that I was paddling first and foremost to stay upright and only then was I worried about where I was going. I was frightened, so much so that I prayed. My fear was due not only to the difficult sea but also to the fact that I was completely alone, I hadn't even seen a sign of life since speaking to Hans Christian, the headmaster of the Olavskol, before I left. Many thoughts went through my mind but I realised that despite the fear I was enjoying the experience in a perverse sort of way. I now became aware that I was paddling off the edge of my chart and that the information that I needed to tell me where to go next was on the other side (sod's law). Now the last thing I wanted to do right then was to let go of my paddle, to take out the chart from underneath the deck elastics and turn it over. However I couldn't remember if the opening up ahead was a gap between two islands or a dead end. I imagined what a swell like this would be doing at the end of a cul-de-sac and decided that I better have a look at the chart. Tentatively I took my hand off the paddle, grabbed the chart and was stuffing it hurriedly back under the elastics, when the kayak became airborne on top of a clapotis. I prayed again! and to His eternal credit I was still the right way up when I came down. My heart was now dancing around inside my anorak like a rabbit in a poacher's bag. I was very frightened but still in control. I realised that one mistake now, one slip, one quirk of fate, and I was dead. (No friendly coastguards or handy helicopter here). The other side of the chart now revealed that the opening did in fact lead to a way through called Gissoysund. As I passed Pustaren I glanced seawards towards it and saw an emerald green wall of water sliding past it's southern tip almost as high as the fifty feet of the rock itself. After that I concentrated on looking ahead but what I saw there wasn't any better. Paddling into the mouth of Gissoysund I realised that here the swell was hitting the main island travelling the short distance across the sound and bouncing off the small island as well. It created what I can only describe as a boiling mess. I remembered what I had said to John Chamberlain a few months ago when we were crossing the Wash together, "You've just got to bash away at it". Now of course I had no one to keep me company. I put my head down and after twenty minutes hard paddling including several frantic support strokes, I was through the turbulence and into the calm waters of the southern part of the sound. I felt elated and peaceful. Nevertheless, I realised that to return the way I had come, as I had intended, would not be very wise. Although I had been paddling for only just short of three hours I was aware that I was feeling a little tired, probably as much with nervous tension as with fatigue. The problem now how to get back home: I decided that if I could cross the next exposed stretch past Dyrneset lighthouse I would get into the lee of Espevar, round Bomlahuk and up the sheltered east coast back to Olavskolen. Behind me the sky was clouding over and the wind was freshening from the North. Again I was encountering the huge swell and chaotic sea as I moved past Dyrneset lighthouse. Ten minutes later a squall hit me from behind, the wind rising to force 6 and bringing with it a flurry of snow, just to remind me I was in Norway and this was November. I swing the bows of the kayak round and headed back past the lighthouse. The decision to abort the trip was instantaneous. Nature had played one card too many and it was clear to me that the odds were now too high. Forty minutes later I glided into the still and sheltered little haven of Vika. I clambered out of my kayak (the only people I know who can get out of their kayaks easily and gracefully are the drawings in DCH's book) and had a cup of coffee and mused.

M.O.O. Meling

NORWEGIAN SEA

Direction
of swell



From John Cousins, Gwynedd

Dear John

Enclosed is a tiny article which I thought you might like to read. Unfortunately it's not really about "sea mountaineering" and you may not feel it appropriate for the newsletter, no problem. If you do the first little bit is supposed to represent a postcard which we sent from Canna. Please feel free to correct any spelling or grammar.

I must be due to renew my membership if you could let me know how much that would be great. I'd also like a couple of ASKC stickers, so could you let me know how much they are.

Amongst other disreputables I share a house with Andy Halliday and he sends his regards. He's off to New Zealand via Nepal so would you cancel his newsletter. Once he's settled down there he'll send his address and renew his membership.

Sorry I didn't come to the do on Anglesey. Derck Hayes said he enjoyed it. Some of us have to work occasionally.

I wonder if you could tell me how people get to Greenland, ie is it via the States or Canada. Also if I ever found myself on the W coast of Canada and Alaska how hard is it to borrow/hire a sea boat. What did you do?

Everyone enjoys your letters, lots of trips, extracts from old books and little of 'sea kayakers' self analysis. Sea canoeing is fun.

Happy Christmas. John Cousins.

WE'RE GETTING THERE by John Cousins

We got there, thanks for all the help. After our experiences with you the West Coast seems tame. Don't worry, we've a car for the return journey.

Cheers, Ian & J.C.

The Station Master & Staff
Platform 4
Warrington Station
Warrington ENGLAND

So ended one of the more gripping and nerve wracking chapters of my sea canoeing career but I didn't know the Station Master. I hear you say, well any trip begins the minute you leave your house.

Ian and I's planning was minimal, about the fourth sentence of which was "I'll get a stove, you get the tent and I'll see you in the morning". Each thought the other had checked with British Rail about the boats. Our chauffeurs had marginally larger hangovers and were off to climb in Parliament House Cave (less chance of those nasty, bright rays of sun hitting them in there) and dropped us at Bangor at 7.00 am.

I didn't specify what my additional piece of hand luggage was as I paid the extra two quid. There was no one at the gate and in the blinking of a bloodshot eye both Nordkapps were installed in the luggage compartment of the little push-pull train. Well actually the bow was in my compartment and the stern in first class. I felt like the character in Midnight Express whose heartbeat louder and faster as freedom approached. He had the advantage of hiding the contraband under his shirt, had I done this (Iae West would have had a field day, is that a Nordkapp in your pocket or are you just pleased to see me?).

What relief when the driver finally dropped the clutch and we were off. I knew we were safe now, once in the system we could all stand around nodding our heads, those blokes at Bangor haven't got a clue, would be the phrase, and we would be seen as poor victims. Anyway from Warrington it would be an express with one of those cavernous luggage vans and we were getting out at Edinburgh.

The first hitch came when the train stopped on the left, not right side of the platform. The doors are smaller on that side and after ten frantic minutes wrestling with so much inflexible fibreglass we convinced the five impassive railwaymen that the only way was to take the boats out onto the tracks and then through the train. They had to agree and

posted lookouts at either end of the station for trains. In spite of the insulative properties of fibreglass they implored us not to raise the boats from the horizontal, 10,000 volts awaited us overhead.

With the boats on the platform and the crowds diminishing to a steady dozen or so, I retired to the toilets to collect my thoughts.

Our train was bound for Glasgow and Edinburgh, the luggage van we wanted was at the rear. We carelessly tossed its doors open ready to throw our beasts of burden into the depths only to be confronted by a maze of steel partitions. What did I ever do to Jimmy Saville, OK I probably beat him in the marathon but I wasn't the only one. No matter how we tried, the 'elegant upswept bow' in the top back corner of the compartment there was always two feet of 'elegant bloody stern' sticking out of the doors and the days of high speed mail pick ups were over, we were told. "Would you go to Glasgow?" they pleading or suggesting? The Glasgow van was at the head of the train, some sixteen carriages away and we must have looked a sight, Ian and I with the boats and our entourage running with a trolley, four sacs and two paddles. All for nought and after ten more minutes wrestling with Mr Goodman's aesthetic ends we were ordered off the train.

By this time the boys of platform four were rallying to the cause, their challenge for the day. It would have been no surprise to see them produce an adapted roof rack or an axe with which to gut a carriage. As the next train lumbered in everyone was ready, the signal box was on lookout for other trains, the station master had his men marshalled up and down the platform and we stood in the middle. I curse my misspent youth, why hadn't I taken up train spotting, why couldn't I recognise a type 27B luggage van at three hundred paces. When it stopped how gingerly we opened the doors, ready with the wire cutters on my Swiss Army knife.

I knew Jimmy didn't hate me that much, the van was huge and the boats fell in between bicycles, chickens, pot plants, train robbery and Will Haye, all the usual things.

Canoeing? Well we went round Rhum, Canna, Sanday and up the west coast of Skye to Macloed's maidens. We climbed on the Cuillins, paddled in sun and storm, saw eagles, porpoise, seal and shearwater, drank good whisky and ate food cooked on driftwood fires. All by way of relaxation after that first day.

From Colin Lilley, Hemel Hempstead

Dear John

First let me apologize for not being able to attend the ASKC weekend at Anglesey - an event that I had been looking forward to for some weeks. Unfortunately I caught the office bug a few days beforehand and was unavoidably housebound. Also I enclose an article that may or may not interest you for possible inclusion in the next issue of the newsletter.

Yours sincerely, Colin Lilley

SEA CANOEING: ISLE OF JURA. THE FINAL DAY (By Colin Lilley)

(An account of the final day's paddling up the west coast of Jura, part of a week long circumnavigation). Paddlers: Colin J Lilley, Dill South, John Eastgate.

We made an early start leaving Glenpatrick Bay at about 7.15 am to take advantage of the flood tide. It was our intention to reach Scarba and more particularly the Gulf of Corryvreckan 2½ hours after high water at 10.00 am, as we had estimated that the east flowing stream in the gulf would be very weak or at worst would have only just started flowing in a westerly direction. This would enable us to cross without difficulty the western mouth of the Corryvreckan and continue our journey up the west coast of Scarba or so we thought.....

It was difficult leaving the sanctuary of our campsite, the weather was overcast and conditions were not in our favour. We immediately encountered an easterly wind blowing at about force 4/5 whilst crossing Loch Tarbert. Again frequent bow sweeps were necessary to keep control of the boat. John's rudder proved its worth for the second time; it was disconcerting to see him glide away so effortlessly. Rounding the headland of Rubh'an-Sailein the wind changed direction to a north easterly and as we progressed

up the west coast of Jura it increased to a force 5/6. The wind was to remain against us for the remainder of the day becoming increasingly strong until the Sound of Kerrera was reached. In these adverse conditions the effect of the tidal stream flowing north towards Oban was diminished and progress was inevitably slower than it might otherwise have been. The sea was choppy with waves breaking at about 4' and there was little conversation between ourselves in the unpleasant conditions. The rugged, isolated coastline with its few landmarks made navigation difficult. Despite these problems we could still enjoy the superb scenery and marvel at the famous raised beaches and caves. Frequently flocks of seagulls would surround us, the small bays being a natural amphitheatre for their cries and bickerings.

Paddling the west coast of Jura is very much a wilderness experience. The island is wild and the sea vast. The 'fetch' between Jura and America is many thousands of miles. So in a bad sea, when you think waves think big! Capsizing along this stretch of the coastline would put a group of paddlers in a potentially serious situation.

It was in this cautious frame of mind that we arrived at Glentrosdale Bay (just before the Gulf) 5 hours and 19 miles after setting off. Five hours, sitting, without a break, in our kayaks, buffeted by wind and weather had made us tired, hungry and in desperate need of taking the pressure off our backsides! We paddled into a small cove and talked about what we should do. We had yet to negotiate the most difficult stretch of water and the weather had shown signs of deteriorating. A decision had to be made - to cross the Gulf and stay on Scarba that evening or to continue northwards towards Oban? It would be sensible to complete the remaining 23 miles on Friday, but a journey has its own momentum which is hard to deny. I have found this especially true when you are circumnavigating an island and after all, once across the gulf we had made it anyway - hadn't we? The question was catapulted into the air and landed back in our laps.....

The threatening skies hastened our minds to setting off as quickly as possible. We had arrived at the gulf about our estimated time - 3 hours after high water and due to the state of the currents at this time were expecting a relatively trouble free passage. However, it was subsequently calculated that the change in the direction of the tidal stream is considerably later than 3 hours after high water. This was to cause problems as we crossed the western mouth of the gulf. Nevertheless we set off unencumbered by a detailed knowledge of the Corryvreckan but certainly aware of its dangers.

From Glentrosdale Bay we paddled to the west of the island of Eilean Mor. Initially we encountered a small confused chop. It was like riding over a bed of rollers and was unsettling and exciting. On the north shore of Eilean Mor a strong easterly flowing current (about 6 knots) could be seen with a powerful eddy to the west of the island. Water from the west and south of the island was being sucked into this current. We avoided this hazard by paddling seaward around the western end of this flow but nevertheless going through some confused waters. To the east of us we could see some very turbulent water between the islands of Eilean Mor and Eilean Beag. From this point events began to happen rapidly. It was apparent that beyond Eilean Mor the sea was slightly calmer so we paddled hard towards this sanctuary. However the easterly flow of the tidal stream was just too strong, we were being pulled into the centre of the gulf and there was nothing we could do. I remember thinking about an event that took place in the gulf during 1951. A 30' cabin cruiser called the 'Dewey Red' had been returning to Ardlussa when the motor engine ceased and the boat stopped. The vessel drifted into the tidal race which led right into the whirlpool of Corryvreckan. The boat was quickly consumed and not a board of her was ever seen again. Fortunately the men had abandoned boat and had escaped with their lives.

The peculiar movement of the seas began to effect directional and lateral stability and each of us quickly found ourselves on our own struggling to maintain control of the kayaks. An enraged seagull was hovering menacingly a few feet above my head and began to dive at my bow toggle. This assault was repeated several times - its razor sharp beak edging further up the deck. The glint in its eye unnerved me and I was convinced that we had unwittingly disturbed by our passage the Cailleach of Corryvreckan* who had taken on a feathered form. I frantically (and perhaps unwisely given the water conditions) began to wield my blade like a sword. Still the bird swooped uncomfortably close. Another flourish of the paddle saw it on its way perhaps in search of an easier way by which to earn her guardianship of the gulf.

* Legendary Guardian of the Gulf

A backward glance of Eilean Mor confirmed that we had all drifted well into the gulf. Dill and John were ahead and so was the "GREAT RACE" running at about 8 knots in a diagonal flow through the gulf from the S.W. point of Scarba to the N.E. point of Jura and about $\frac{1}{2}$ miles from the Scarba shore. It looked wild and frankly frightening. As I approached the race I could see a large breaking wave. It would have been better to cross the race above this wave so as not to lose too much ground. However, being largely at the mercies of the various currents and eddies I was pulled still further east into the gulf breaking into the race below the wave. Dill was a considerable distance ahead making good use of the eddies to find a route to the safety of the Scarba shore. In the meantime John was in a very unsafe position. I saw him paddling to the west of me also trying to cross the breaking wave to the seaward side. Unable to maintain his position he dropped downstream being drawn into a smooth tongue of water that was eddying back into the wave. John takes up the story:

"..... the water downstream of the wave was smooth, but travelling back into the wave, which I then saw to be a whirlpool about 40' in diameter and 5' deep..... I was taken right into the whirlpool and had no choice but to go around with it."

Forewarned by John's sudden acceleration I stopped paddling trying hard to hold my own position in case he needed help (rescue would have been exceedingly difficult in such a situation). However, I narrowly missed being pulled into the whirlpool as I felt the boat begin to accelerate. By chance I found myself in a small eddy thankfully having avoided a game of dodgems. John's situation was now desperate and he slap supported many times each of which caused me to wince in case he should capsize, but he held his own and began to paddle forwards working his way by inches to the outside of the whirlpool. Sitting in my eddy I felt helpless (Dill was now well on his way to Scarba) and was contemplating what to do should a rescue situation become imminent. It struck me then that if I could not actually help John out of his predicament he would not thank me for not recording the event. Thus, I did my best to take a picture of the drama.

John's technique of paddling forward worked. He reached the edge of the whirlpool and was contemptuously spat out. The two of us were then able to pick up a west flowing eddy which transported us over to the Scarba shore to rejoin Dill. John's only reaction to the whole event was to say: "Um, that was interesting"!

We were now able to see just how quickly the current had been flowing east and how rapidly the sky had darkened. We now decided to use the eddy to paddle up the west coast of Scarba but a little further on, the east flowing race came so close to the shore as to make westerly progress impossible without the danger of being pulled back into the gulf. We had no choice but to turn our boats around and paddle east keeping close to the Scarba shore.

Paddling east up the coast of Scarba we sighted a bothy and made use of its small and natural harbour facilities to beach. An assortment of kayaks minus owners were scattered about and this encouraged us to make our way to the bothy in the hopes of scrounging a cup of tea or at least a chance to take shelter from the inclement weather for a short while. The cold and wet had caused us to lose any inhibitions and we started to poke around what appeared to be a deserted building. However, a yapping dog proved otherwise and presently a really laid back sole occupant appeared nonchalantly at the doorway. "Come in, come in". The voice was unenthusiastic. Silence. John spoke: "You're canoeing around Jura, we've just come through the gulf". We were now through the door and standing on the flagstones of the kitchen. "Ah yes". Understanding nod .. pause. "You would er, like a drink?" Dill, John and myself suddenly became very eloquent to the chagrin of the sole occupant who lit the gas, lit a cigarette and stroked the dog. He spoke: "Are you canoeists?" I swear it, this is what the guy said! Dill's face was a picture. We answered in the affirmative. Tea was served. The sole occupant sat. We stood. In the quaint way of one English stranger to another we discussed the weather. We probed into the life of the sole occupant "Yem, I lived in Malaysia for a while." Pause. "Then I lived in London". A sigh. "Now I'm up here to escape..... can get really boring as well." Even a bloodhound could not have looked more pissed off. A reluctance to leave the warmth of the bothy spurred us on to delve deeper into the sole occupant's agile mind. We discovered that the building was used as an outdoor Pursuits Centre and was run by an ex SAS Serviceman. More tea was followed by more fragmented small talk. The total lack of rapport became too much to bear and we elected to leave voluntarily. Dill patted the dog and looked up through misted lenses with a maniacal grin on his face. The sole occupant became almost eloquent.

"Well, have a splendid trip!" It then became clear that perhaps the tide was out and we were doing all along. We acknowledged his begrudging hospitality and left.

We all felt satisfied at having circumnavigated Jura. It was 2.30 pm and we still had over 20 miles to go. For the next hour or so we made excruciatingly slow progress against the last of the ebb. Lunga seemed to take an age to reach. We crossed the Sound of Luine to the island of the same name hoping to find shelter from the unrelenting wind. By the time we reached Fladda the tide had begun to flood. Unfortunately the easterly wind made the 'Grey Dog' rough and unpredictable. The sea was choppy with increasing 2' to 4' waves breaking over the bows and into our faces. Salt encrusted glasses made vision difficult - at one stage each of us was paddling about $\frac{1}{2}$ mile from the other in unfavourable conditions. In retrospect it would have been safer to have stayed together. We lost John for a while (or he lost us when crossing a bay near Easdale). He had chosen to hug the coastline to escape the worst effects of the wind. Dill and I cut straight across to the next headland. Gradually John disappeared and he had not reappeared by the time we had reached the southern shores of Seil. Due to salt encrusted glasses our vision was diminished and it was difficult for us to see the passage around the eastern side of the island without involving ourselves in a lot of extra paddling. We therefore decided to paddle around the western coast of Seil feeling confident that we would meet John along the way. Visibility was low and so we set our compasses to N.W.E. direction to ensure that we would always be going towards Oban. Just before entering the Sound of Insm, John reappeared to us and we to him. A few words were passed as to who had deserted whom but were soon forgotten in the rolling swell of the Sound. We reached the northern tip of Insm Island having already paddled 30 miles. Another 12 to go! We still felt strong but my armpits were becoming chafed where the salt encrusted Helly Hansens were rubbing against them with the continuous paddling motion. My midriff was also sore for the same reason. After another hour or so certainly I was looking forward to reaching Oban. Dill also looked tired. John appeared as though he was relishing the challenge of our long haul.

About 7 miles from Oban I took off on my own thoroughly enjoying the solitary paddle in conditions that were still rough. The island of Kerrera was my goal as it would effectively mean the end of our circumnavigation. It was a distant object for what seemed a long time but eventually the castle on its southern tip came into view and by degrees I entered the Sound of Kerrera. Suddenly the sea quietened, the wind died and I was paddling a placid waterway. Only a few miles to go!

As I approached the camp site the effort of 12 hours paddling in challenging waters and in adverse conditions began to overwhelm me. My armpits had become sore to the point where it was painful to paddle. To ease the discomfort I adopted a peculiarly high paddling stroke. The beginnings of dehydration accompanied the last few miles and there was no liquid with which to quench my thirst. On several occasions I saw tents and was each time convinced it was our destination. I was deluded many times. My lips were now very dry and the strength that had carried me through a long day had evaporated leaving me feeling weak, but at last the camp site! YE-HAH I had arrived! With that glorious feeling of achievement and that utterly exhausted feeling of effort I beached and sat quietly in the kayak for a few moments contemplating a fascinating trip. I was not alone for long as a small group of children and adults gathered out of curiosity. My efforts were still not over as the laborious tasks of emptying the boat and pitching still had to be done. Blast! The hatches would not unscrew. Cursing the hatch key for still being in Dill's boat I picked up a stone and gave what I hoped would be a hefty whack on the lug of the bow hatch. In fact it was a feeble knock. Nevertheless the lug promptly disintegrated. I think I must have looked pathetically around at the people gathered as two of them helped me to remove the hatches. This was the signal for many more helping hands and soon my kayak and gear had been carried up to the camp site. The hospitality continued, a French couple curious to know about the trip half filled my pint mug with red wine. Dehydrated as I was this soothing balm rapidly disappeared and the mug replenished. Tea was brewed and bread produced (yes, the real McCoy) to go with my two tins of stew. I was living well.

Dill and John arrived about 45 minutes after myself (8.30 pm) and were given the same treatment. When Dill arrived the old lady appeared followed closely by her goat. Was it my imagination or had her beard grown thicker? Certainly the goat looked more deranged than ever. She wasted no time in assessing our suitability to be her guests.

It seemed that she had already forgotten that we had camped here only a few days earlier! We assured the old lady that money would be forthcoming as soon as we had passed.

More wine and more tea from the French couple. Suddenly a rumbling from within. I pushed to the loo and spewed forth the contents. Too much, too soon. We had planned a night out on the town but it was too late and we were just too tired. We crawled into our tents, half the gear still outside.

We all felt tremendously satisfied, but sad. Sad that our trip was over, sad that a shared experience had ended. Above all sad to leave these beautiful islands. A journey had ended but a lifelong association had begun.

End

From Colin J Lilley, 127 Waveney, Grove Hill, Hemel Hempstead, Herts.

Dear John

I am trying to gather information about certain parts of the coastline in Britain as possible future trips. The areas that I am primarily interested in are:

- a) Coastline around the Island of Anglesey
- b) The Hebridean Islands of Coll and Tiree
- c) The Outer Hebrides

If anyone is able to forward me reports of their trips to the above areas I would be most grateful. I am particularly interested in information that is not always available from charts and publications such as camp sites, local water conditions etc. Many thanks.

Yours sincerely, Colin J Lilley

From Steve Devlin, Kent

SHORE '84

Support for Handicapped Operation Raleigh Explorers

'A solo kayak expedition, by river canal and sea through Western Europe, to raise funds for Operation Raleigh's handicapped venturers.'

A few details about Operation Raleigh

Operation Raleigh is a 4 year, round the world expedition organised by members of the Scientific Exploration Society, the Explorers Club and the Institute of Underwater Archaeology. The aim is for 4000 young people of many nations (1500 from the UK) to be involved in a variety of challenging and exciting projects of a scientific and community aid nature. The operation will consist of 16 phases, each of approximately 3 months involving up to 250 young people from all over the world, aged 17 to 24 years, who will be called 'Venturers'. Each phase will consist of 2-3 separate expeditions. The operation will be supported by a motorised flagship. Sailing vessels will probably join for various phases. Each phase will include at least one handicapped venturer.

Aims of SHORE 84

To raise funds for handicapped venturers participating on Operation Raleigh. To promote Operation Raleigh in France and Germany. To reaffirm sporting and cultural connections with Richmond and Hounslows European twin towns, by a single kayak trip.

After many months of preparation the expedition finally began with a car journey to Konstanz on the 12th October 1984. En route I made a reconnaissance of some of the more difficult sections of the expedition route. On our arrival in Konstanz on the Sunday evening, my co driver Jane Henderson and I were entertained by some of the Konstanz Canoe Club members at a local pizza restaurant and later at the clubhouse where we spent the first night.

On Monday morning we were entertained by the Oberbürgermeister, Dr Horst Eickmeyer, at the Rathaus, where I read the Mayor of Richmond's message, and we exchanged gifts. Following a short ceremony at the Canoe Club's jetty, I departed onto Lake Constance, in the company of two club members, Bernd Heves and Hans Frank.

During the next few days, I paddled with members of various canoe clubs, down the Rhine to Basle. After Basle I paddled along the Canal D'Alsace to Niffer, where I crossed the border into France, continuing along the fifteen year old Huningue Canal, which runs through the Harth Forest to Mulhouse. The Rhone au Rhin Canal was completed in 1832 and is in a very dilapidated condition, with the commercial traffic suffering as the result of the neglected canal maintenance. Downstream of the Isle sur le Doubs, the navigation channel moves into the River Doubs, a very beautiful watercourse, with steep sided gorges and tree covered hills. At Besancon, the capital of the Franche-Comte region of France, famed for its cheese, a tunnel passes under the Napoleonic Citadel.

When I eventually reached the end of the canal at St Symphorien on the morning of October 10th, I turned west into the River Saone, which was shrouded in fog, and paddled to St Jean de Losne, the traditional boatmans capital, lying at the crossroads of the Saone and Burgundy canals.

Having managed to get to Dijon before that section of the canal was closed for repairs, I obtained a special permit from the Service de Navigation, which enabled me to traverse the locks ahead, instead of portaging as I had done previously, with a 200 lb kayak. The canal was constructed between 1775 and 1834, and only became fully operational in 1843, which rendered it obsolete before its completion, due to the Paris-Lyons railway being built. Nowadays only the farthest sections, Laroche-Tonnerre and St Jean de Losne are used for trade traffic. The beauty of the countryside I passed through was astounding, with Herons and Kingfishers in profusion along the canal banks.

By early November I had reached Laroche Migennes and entered the River Yonne, which took me swiftly to St Mammes and the River Seine, thence on to Fontainebleau for November 10th and the halfway mark of the trip. Here I was received with warmth by the Fire Brigade (excuse the pun) and civic dignitaries with whom I exchanged gifts and messages from the Mayor of Richmond and the Oberburgermeister of Konstanz. A week later after a swim in the Seine to investigate a submerged car, I reached Issy les Moulinaux, a suburb SW of Paris, and the twin town of Hounslow London Borough. Here I arrived with seconds to spare for a luncheon with the Mayor and representatives of the three other twinned towns. I remained a guest of the town twinning organisation as I had done in Fontainebleau the previous weekend.

The swollen waters of the Seine helped to make up for time lost to Rouen, after a bout of flu had delayed me in Paris. The tidal effect on the Seine, especially after Rouen was quite noticeable, with a rapid change of current at the commencement of each tide. The large sea going vessels were not as dangerous as the commercial traffic I had already encountered, because there was more room to manoeuvre. By the time I reached Le Havre, the weather pattern had changed for the worse, and the stormy gales forecast meant a change of route was necessary. The original plan had been to paddle north along the French coast to Calais. Since I had already paddled across the Channel on several occasions prior to the French Maritime Authorities clampdown, and the fact I had been unable to obtain permission for a Channel crossing on the expedition, I opted for an early ferry crossing to Portsmouth, to save wasting valuable time on the French side.

I took the night ferry from Le Havre, arriving in the early hours of Monday, 3rd Dec, only to be confronted by an angry gale raging on the South coast. During the next three weeks I struggled around the South coast in between the gales. The ICM12 radios kindly loaned by Thanet Electronics Ltd for the expedition proved invaluable for maintaining a close liaison with the Coastguard on the trip round to the Thames Estuary. In fact the co-operation was so good that the Coastguard arranged for the Brighton IRLB crew to have a search practice on one of the night paddles. A new crew was being tested on the Atlantic 21 and my eyes were certainly tested by the parachute flares they put up, although they found me quite easily on the second search pattern, when I switched on my Petzl headlamp and stuck a Calume lightstick in my headband. At about 2100 I said goodbye to the lads as they headed for the Marina, although I very nearly required their services 45 minutes later as I precariously negotiated the entrance to Brighton Marina myself. The harbour walls are designed to protect the Marina from the prevailing SW winds, but the South Easterly gales that had been blowing had produced a heavy swell, and although the windspeed was only about Force 3, the reflected wave pattern made the entrance into the marina a hairy ordeal. The only other hairy section was a night paddle around Beachy Head against the wind, with only my night vision to negotiate the rock strewn channel between the cliff and the lighthouse.

The days waiting for storms to subside were spent either writing letters for jobs or

nipping up to London on the train to interviews. In an afternoon spent at Canterbury Hospital to see the District Physiotherapist, whilst delayed by bad weather in Margate, resulted in my present job at a special school in Broadstairs.

Having shared a beer with Roger Chapman at Operation Raleigh HQ at St Katharines Marina on the Friday night whilst waiting for the tide to turn, I met up with him again at The Riverside Inn in Twickenham opposite Bel Pic Island. My wife Sue and friends and relatives were there to meet me on a very cold Sunday morning, the 23rd of December. The Mayor of Richmond was there to receive the civic messages from Konstanz and Fontainebleau and to treat me to a pint. The meeting with the Mayor of Hounslow had been a brief one at Brentford Dock an hour earlier as he was en route to another engagement, but the Richmond Mayor stayed for a few beers and managed to embarrass me by making a speech about the trip over the PA system. The publican very kindly treated my parents, Sue and I to a Christmas dinner, and then allowed me to do a live interview on Radio London, over the telephone, that had been previously arranged. I think the radio interviews at the start and finish of the trip were the most harrowing situations I had to deal with on the whole expedition, but Radio London kindly donated £25 to the handicapped venturers, so the ordeal was well worth it.

After a cold and wet 1100 miles, over 400 portages and numerous mini epics, it was a pleasure to write so many Christmas cards to newly found friends, spread across Europe. In the main the expedition achieved its aims, in terms of the town twinning link up, and the public relations work for Operation Raleigh. I was however rather disappointed with the results of the fund raising aspect of the expedition, although I was extremely lucky to receive so much support from sponsors for travel and equipment for the expedition, the lack of cash raised for the handicapped venturers was the only let down of the whole trip.

I would like to thank the numerous people who helped with the organisation and execution of the expedition, especially my wife Sue, Jane Henderson, Hedda Lyons, Ron Jault and members on both sides of the Channel involved with the town twinning associations of Richmond, Hounslow, Konstanz, Fontainebleau and Issy les Moulineaux.

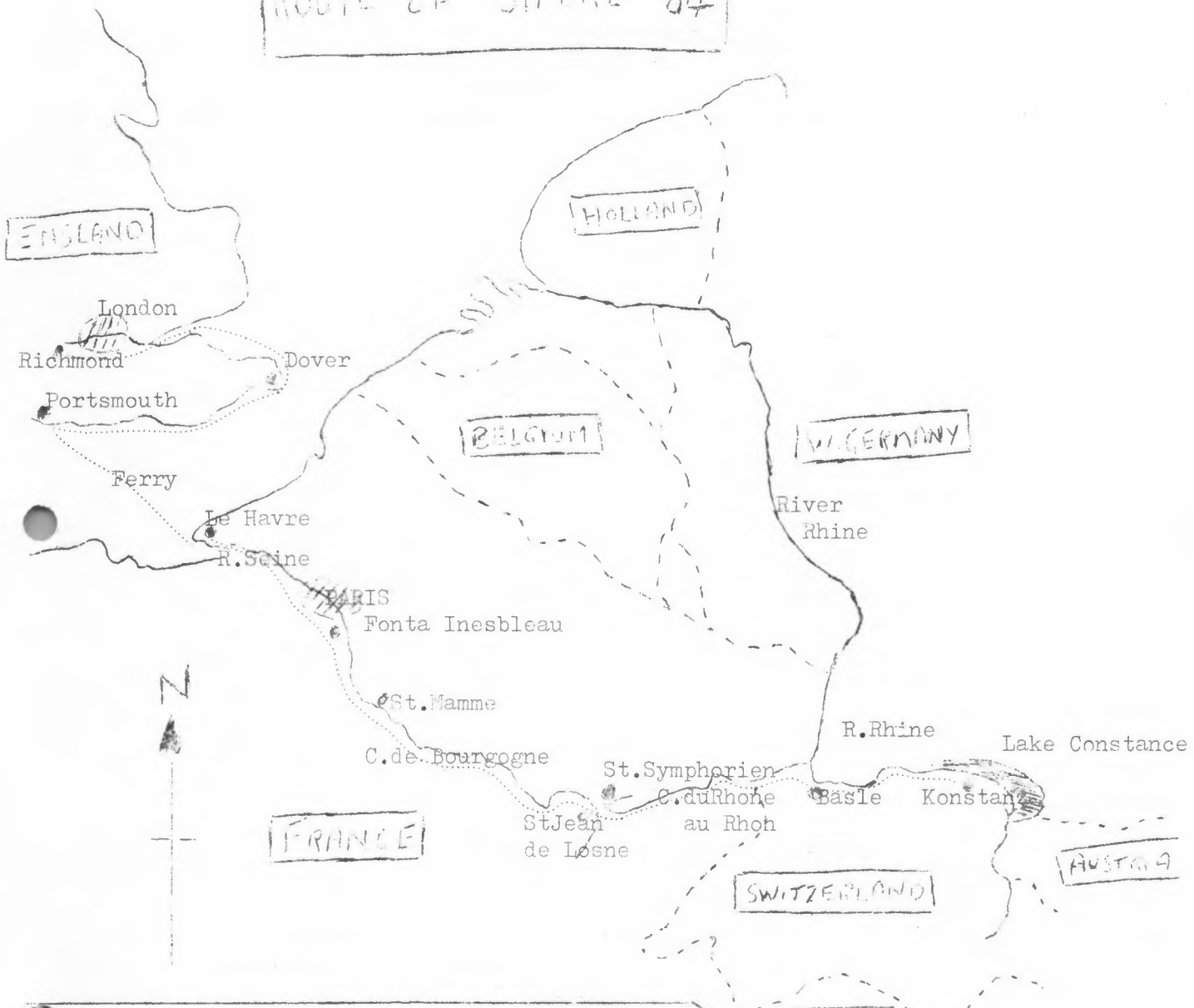
I would also like to mention the following sponsors - Valley Canoe Products, Silva (UK) Splashdown, Andrews, Lifeguard Eqpt Ltd, E H Electronics Ltd, Arfon Boat Supplies, Robert Saunders, Musto & Hyde, Shepperton Whitewater Sports, Thanet Electronics Ltd, Halldane Foods, Harlow Bureau, Imray Charts Ltd, Devon Alternative Surf, Twickenham Travel and Langs of Richmond. Thank you for making the trip possible.

A full expedition report is available, including river information, contacts, diagrams, photographs, and information on access. Please contact me at my new address:-
17 Churchill Avenue, Beltinge, Herne Bay, Kent, CT6 6SG.

A slide show and talk is also available if requested. Copies of the full report will also be available through the ASKC and ELRCC to members at a reduced rate in October.

My next trip is already off of the drawing board and involves a group of able bodied and physically handicapped youngsters on a canoeing and sailing expedition to the Adriatic coast of Yugoslavia next year. I would be grateful if any members who have had experience of the islands of the Kornati group, and the surrounding waters between Split and Rijeka, would get in touch with me as I am building up my research material to plan a route for the trip.

ROUTE OF SHCRE '84



START 15.10.84 - KONSTANZ W GERMANY
 FINISH 28.12.84 - RICHMOND SURREY ENGLAND
 TOTAL DISTANCE PADDLED 1700 kms
 Route :- Towns visited: • Borders: ---

From David Enoch, Nottingham

The Most Northerly Cup of Coffee in Britain

Each year, by being nice to our families for 11½ months, we manage to amass sufficient "Domestic Bonus Points" to spend a week at Spring Bank Holiday away on a sea canoeing expedition. These hard earned Bonus Points have always been spent on trips to the west and north isles of Scotland. In the previous five years we had visited Mull, Jura, the Treshnish Isles, Coll, Tiree, the Southern Outer Hebrides and Orkney. This year, 1985, we had decided to fulfill a long standing ambition of visiting Shetland.

So on the evening of Friday 24th May, Nan Howlings, Fred Hondro and I carried our loaded kayaks onto the P & O ferry "St Clair" at Aberdeen for the 14 hour journey to Lerwick. Ideally, two to three weeks are needed to explore all the coastline of Shetland but our Bonus points would only stretch to nine days. We had decided therefore to concentrate on

the north isles of Yell, Fetlar and Unst. We had contacted Tom Smith of Shetland Canoe Club and he had generously agreed to meet us in Lerwick and arranged to transport us and our kayaks to Toft on the north coast of Mainland.

For a day and a half we had travelled north from Toft up the east coasts of Yell and Unst covering over 40 miles with a force 6 wind on our backs (24-26 mph on the hand held anemometer). We were camped at Nor Wick, the most northerly hamlet in Britain. This was definitely thermal underwear country, further north than Cape Farewell in Greenland and with temperatures to match. The mist had come down and everything was grey and forbidding as we lay in the tent discussing plans for tomorrow.

We hoped to round the north end of Unst and the most northerly inhabited point in Britain - Huckle Flugga lighthouse - before camping in the sheltered waters of Burra Firth. Between us and Huckle Flugga though was the Scaw Roost tiderace described in equally lurid terms by the North Coast of Scotland Pilot and the expedition report from the first circumnavigation of Shetland in 1903. It seemed that H.W. slack would be the best time to be there. So it was up at 5.00 am the next morning to find the mist gone and the sun shining. By 7.00 am we were on the water in a light sea mist, paddling through big choppy and confused seas off Lamba Ness and then a big swell all the way to the Holm of Scar.

With the mist getting thicker all the time we managed to cut inside the Holm of Scaw, never saw the tide race and found almost flat water along the north coast of Unst. As the mist got even thicker it was easy to lose contact with the shore and the cliffs could only be imagined through the murk. By 8.30 am we were getting hungry and managed an unexpected though awkward landing over rocks for a bite to eat. As we sat there the sun slowly burnt through and suddenly there was Out Black and Huckle Flugga in bright sunshine with a blue sky full of nesting gannets. An instant unanimous decision to cross straight to the light. And what a superb crossing - the wind behind, an interesting swell, the sky full of gannets and chasing skuas and in front one of our great sea canoeing goals: Huckle Flugga.

On reaching the light Fred did some fancy acrobatics on the deck of his kayak and we thereby managed a very difficult landing at the steps despite the fierce downdraught. Mind you, we left plenty of pretty yellow and white gel coat all over the rocks. We climbed the 250 steps to the light to be welcomed by the keeper who got one of his assistants to put the kettle on. So I sat in the kitchen, dripping water everywhere, signed the visitors book (we could find no other entries by sea canoeists) and enjoyed the most northerly cup of coffee in Britain.

The keeper gave us a conducted tour of the lighthouse and as we chatted with him at the top of the light with no land to the west, north or east for over 200 miles and no boat landing facilities at the rock it was easy to imagine just how isolated a posting this must have been before the advent of helicopters. With perfect timing the Northern Lights helicopter arrived while we were there to take off one assistant and deliver another one. Since they were out of biscuits, we left the keeper a present of a malt loaf and finally departed at midday leaving yet more gel coat on the rocks.

After circumnavigating Huckle Flugga and Tipta Skerry it was back to Unst against the wind and with the sky filled with even more gannets than before. A long slog up Burra Firth into the wind and with the mist dropping again to land at the head of the Firth. It had not been a long paddle - just 12½ miles from Nor Wick - but we all agreed it had been one of those rare, magic days of sea canoeing that we would be able to recall with clarity for years to come.

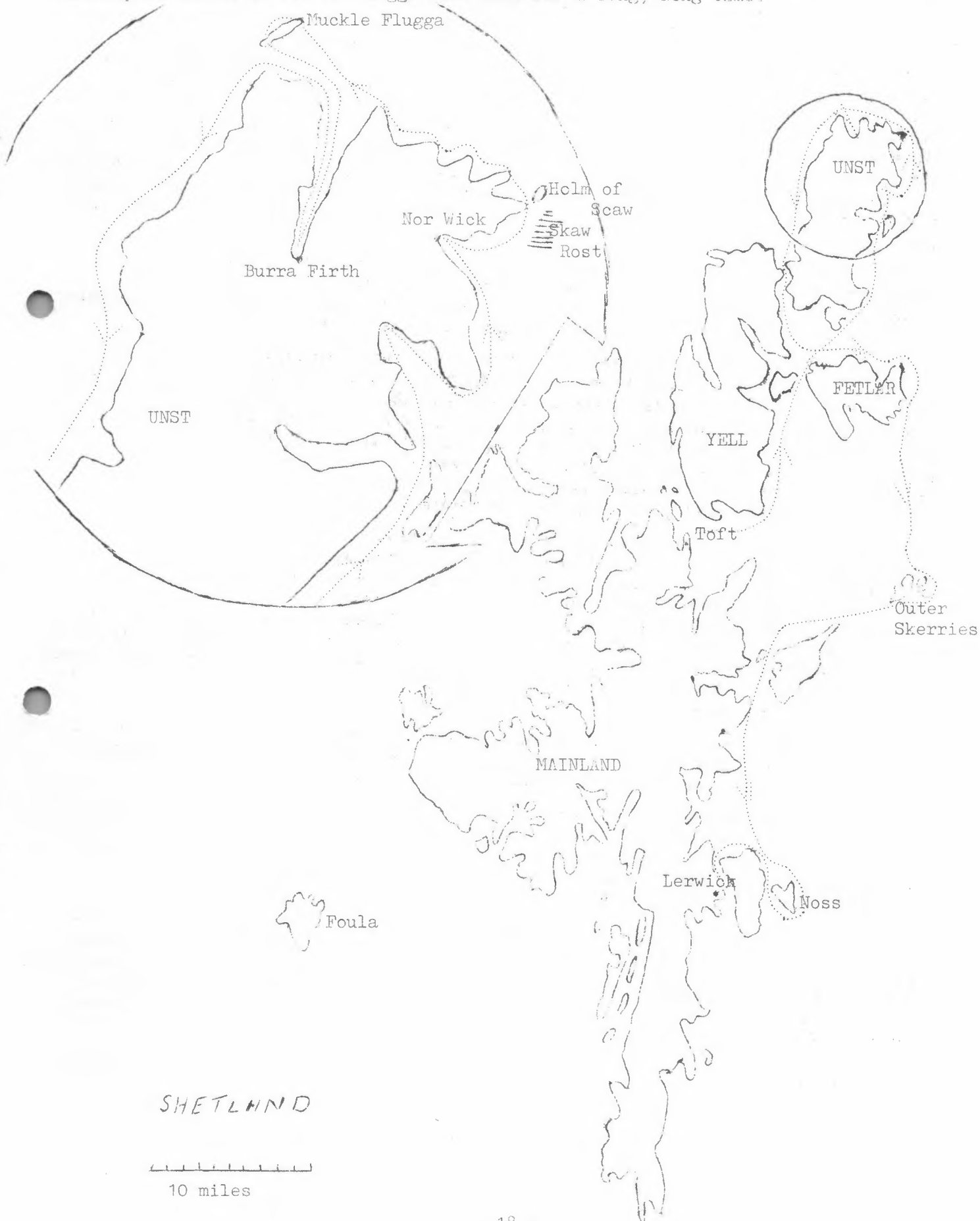
Although we had achieved our main goal, the remainder of the trip was far from being an anticlimax. The paddle down the exposed west coast of Unst in heavy seas and freezing rain was, I think, the most continuously difficult sea canoeing any of us had done.

After that the difficulty eased as the weather steadily improved and we were able to circumnavigate the delightful island of Fetlar with its cliffs and caves, seals, rare flowers and birds. Also to visit the Out Skerries, the most easterly point in Shetland, with its isolated population of 80 people existing entirely on the fishing of three trawlers.

As the week progressed we made our way back south towards Lerwick, finishing with a circumnavigation of one of the most spectacular islands of all - the Isle of Moss. This island is a nature reserve and its 600 ft cliffs are packed with every conceivable type of sea bird in enormous numbers and include a major gannet colony. As we sat beneath

those towering cliffs in the bright sunshine and paddled in and out of the enormous caves, all the while marvelling at the spectacle of the seabirds, we felt very privileged that our sport enabled us to visit such places.

All too soon the trip was over. We said our goodbyes to Tom Smith and to the Coastguards at Lerwick H.R.S.C. before boarding the ferry to Aberdeen and the start of another 11½ months of earning those vital "Domestic Bonus Points". But the memory of that cup of coffee on Muckle Flugga will last for a long, long time.



SEA KAYAK TOUR AROUND THE ISLE OF RÉ

(14 - 22 June 1986)

In order to allow the organizers to get a fairly precise idea of the number of participants for this event and to plan things accordingly, you are requested to inform us as rapidly as possible by returning the form below to:

Christian GABARD
10, Rue Simon Léoile
92 260 Fontenay aux Roses FRANCE
Tel. (1) 46 60 72 12



I intend to participate to the
INTERNATIONAL SEA CANOEING WEEK AT THE ISLE OF RÉ
and wish further information on this event.



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- I possess a sea kayak
- I would like to rent a sea kayak
- I shall be in company of ... persons,
who are not canoeists.