

Advanced Sea Kayak Club

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

NEWSLETTER

AIMS

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



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NEWSLETTER NO. 55

APRIL 1986

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EDITORIAL

At last I have moved house and MY NEW ADDRESS is as above. I would be grateful if you would make a note of it. We intend it shall be our permanent address; we have moved around enough, and there is plenty of sea in close proximity which of course suits me fine.

I hope to include short reports on my pending visits to New York and Alaska where I shall be attending Sea Kayaking Symposiums.

On the subject of Sea Kayaking Symposium - the one scheduled for later this month at Nigel Dennis's School of Sea Canoeing will not now occur and plans are being laid to arrange one at a later date. Watch this space for further details.

Details are now coming available for our Sea Canoeing Holiday Week (previously known as the "Gatehouse Week") to be held at BALLACHULISH in SCOTLAND from 2nd August to 8th August. Just send to me for these details and application form. Closing date must be 14th July.

The third annual West Coast Sea Kayaking Symposium will be held at Fort Worden State Park on September 6, 7, 8, 1986. The symposium gives participants a chance to meet and exchange ideas with leading expedition paddlers, designers, manufacturers, authors and other experts. They also can try the latest in equipment and clothing and choose from dozens of seminars on all aspects of sea kayaking. New this year will be an exchange of used boats and gear. Symposium sponsor is the Trade Association of Sea Kayaking.

For more information write to TASK, P.O. Box 84144, Seattle, Washington 98124.

I.O.W. TIME TRIAL - Closer to my new home, don't forget the Isle of Wight Time Trial on the 28th June. It's a one day circumnavigation of the Island, distance approx. 50 miles. If you fancy a long paddle with back up provided contact Mary Austin, 22 Coronation Road, Cowes, Isle of Wight, or phone (0983) 291673.

WANTED - an UMNAK SEA KAYAK (not Ice Floe - the small one). Tel. 0676-34332.

Ray Potter of 12, Abberton Way, Loughborough, Leics. LE11 ONX makes the following request:

"I wonder if any of our members might help me with the planning of a trip to the Outer Hebrides. I am especially interested in details of the coasts of the Mists and Benbecula. I have the pilot but would be very grateful for some local knowledge particularly regarding camp sites and summer water conditions".

As most people will know by now I was lucky enough to be asked along as a leader of a venture scout unit's expedition to Iceland in August. Here is a short report about it.

32 people in all, 7 leaders and 25 venture scouts, average age 18. Split into three parts, canoeing (which I was involved in), walking across Iceland South/North, about 250 miles, and the Icecap party who crossed the Vatnajökull, the largest ice cap in Europe. The canoeists paddled about 70 miles in all from Arnes to Holmavik in the North-west peninsula. Nigel Foster, who circumnavigated Iceland in 1977 was the 1 leader.

We arrived in Iceland on 2nd August, spent 3 days at Porsmork waiting for the Land-rover to arrive - it had broken down. It had all our food and equipment aboard. Fortunately, being at a recognised camp site we were able to purchase food, even though it was at exorbitant prices. When the Land-rover arrived the Icecap party went off to play on a glacier while the walkers and the canoeists did a four day hike to Porsvatn, a large lake (about the size of Guernsey). The walk proved very demanding, the interior of Iceland is a larval desert, black volcanic sand which seems to get everywhere; numerous rivers to cross which were freezing cold as they had originated from glaciers.

The first day was really hot, but the temperature soon dropped and next day we were caught in a snow storm. After three days we arrived at Landmannerlauger, or place of hot springs. We bathed in the springs until midnight as it was light until about 11 pm.

At Porsvatn we regrouped and sorted out the gear for the main part of the expedition. One of the Icecap party, Ria, had broken her thumb, while on the glacier; it was planned that she would now come with the canoeists in the Landrover. We split once again. It took us three days to reach Arnes where we were to start paddling. The roads are what we would call farm tracks, so a four wheeled vehicle is essential. Once we reached the coast road on the way to Arnes we found places that the road had been washed away by violent rainfall, we only just managed to squeeze vehicle and trailer through. We did 8 days of paddling in all. We would have had longer but for the travelling. Sharon, Nigel Foster's wife, did all the driving whilst we paddled, meeting us at pre-arranged camp sites each evening.

The first day was the roughest, about six foot swell was running, but when in the fjords it was flat calm. Wildlife was abundant, Arctic Terns, Fulmars, Shags, Eiders and of course the Seagulls, two of which we caught and eat - very nice roasted. One day we paddled through a colony of seals - very curious animals which came closer to get a better look at us. The longest day was 14 miles, which, considering we were in slalom boats, wasn't too bad.

The locals were very friendly - anyone driving along the coast road would stop and wave to us. We were invited to several peoples homes for 'kaffi'. On one occasion we were given a dozen fresh trout for breakfast. We stopped at Gjogur, a small fishing village where everyone turned out to see us. They recognised Nigel from the time he went round Iceland with Geoff Hunter in 1977. Everywhere we went we were shown much kindness. Nothing was too much trouble for them, they would do anything to help.

During the paddling I was being tested for my Sea Proficiency. Rather than test me on one day Nigel decided to do it over several days in a variety of conditions. I did every stroke possible except the stern rudder so he had me do it on the last day. I goofed it first time out but got it right and thankfully I passed in the end.

Once the canoeing had finished we drove to Akureyri where we would again meet up with the others. The walkers had had really bad conditions - rain most days which made the walking very strenuous. The Icecap party had seven days of 'white out' when they were unable to see anything at all. They had to ski on a compass bearing the whole time. It became very worrying - never knowing for sure that they were going the right way. At the campsite we spent a couple of days resting, swapping stories and visiting the local coffee shops where 35kr (70 pence) would buy as much coffee as you wanted.

We left Akureyri for Lake Myvatn, another very large lake. This one formed, as it was, by many volcanoes around the Lake - we actually had lunch in one. The wildlife again was very abundant. I only wish that I had taken a pair of binoculars. We visited an area of steam vents - about 20 holes in the ground from which poured out steam. You had

ICELAND'85 (continued)

to be careful where you trod as underneath was boiling mud, and if you fell through the crust you would'nt last very long. We spent a couple of days looking around before making our way back to Reykjavik. Some were going to go by coach, a couple flew back and several hitch-hiked. Dan Atherton and myself teamed up to try and hitch the 400 miles back to the main city - we had two days to do it in. The first day took us only 60 miles to Akureyri, though the second was more eventful as we managed ten lifts in all to complete the journey. It was a very enjoyable way to see the country and of course one meets such a lot of people this way. Someone even drove 60 miles out of their way to help us.

Once in Reykjavik we sorted out our remaining gear ready for the flight back home. I don't think that really anyone wanted to go home. We had a celebration dinner and walking back to the camp site the sky was lit up by the Northern Lights. A really beautiful display which lasted about an hour - a magic way to end an expedition.

* * * * *

CERTIFICATION - INSTRUCTOR AWARDS FOR KAYAKING

The issue of certification rumbles on in the United States of America. There are those for it and those against it and those who could'nt care less as long as it does not interfere with them. I have published a lot of different views, including my own, in recent editions of this newsletter.

Matt Broze, a well respected figure in the kayaking world in the States, recently wrote to Chuck Sutherland in one of the kayaking magazines. I repeat his final paragraph here.

"I also am hearing that the American Canoe Association is going to start instructor certification of sea kayakers. I oppose any certification but have heard especially bad things about the A.C.A. as a controlling body. I fear that certified instructors are inevitable since anybody can set up a certifying organisation and insurance companies looking to spread around and limit their liability will soon require that instructional programmes use certified instructors or lose their insurance coverage. To combat this I suggest that we all recommend that novices find good instructors that refuse to be certified and learn from them. Certified instructors are incompetent wimps by definition. (I've been called all sorts of things in my time, an incompetent wimp is certainly one that I must now add to my list, - Ed.) Anyone worth his or her salt would object to having their competence certified by any supposed authority. Certification is for boy scouts seeking another merit badge. To combat the threat from the A.C.A. or others, John Dowd and I and a few others were offered the power to choose instructors to be certified through the Red Cross by someone who had seen the bad effects of certification in the cross-country skiing and river paddling arenas and did'nt care to see it happen again in such a rigid controlling manner in sea kayaking, and had the power but not the knowledge to feel capable as a certifier. In effect asking us to become the monster we feared to head off a worse threat. I'm proud to say we refused, at least until some certifying body begins to damage our sport to the point where some competition in certification organisations might loosen it up again, a choice I hope I never have to make.

Boycott certified instructors and keep sea kayaking free and open."

Matt C. Broze.

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This newsletter is read by a fair few in the States and I'm sure they would be interested in your views. How about getting involved and letting me have them for publication. You can rely on me being totally unbiased and I will publish those for and those against.

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THE 6TH BRITISH SEA KAYAKING SYMPOSIUM IS SCHEDULED FOR 4th AND 5th OCTOBER 1986. Venue and cost has yet to be decided - but watch this space and the canoeing press for further details. If you wish to contribute please let me hear from you a.s.a.p.

From Jan van Doren, Heerenveen, Holland

Paddling the Shallows

We would have made quite a group, if everybody had come, but for all sorts of reasons only the two of us turned up at the fishing harbour of Lauwersoog that Saturday morning.

Friday evening the forecast had said there might be some rain later on the Saturday and a S.W. wind force 6, as a low was approaching. On Saturday morning they made it a possible 7 in the afternoon but by that time we would be on Simonszand, according to our plans that said: Start from Lauwersoog at 10.00, eastern tip of Schiermonnikoog, around 12.30, Simonszand before 15.00, camping there and return to Lauwersoog around the back of Simonszand on the Sunday. In case of a strong westerly we had a convenient escape route, viz Noordpolderzijk.

At low tide the Shallows, especially the eastern half, are one vast landscape of white drying sands and grey silty mudflats with big and small channels cutting through. Six hours later it is all sea, apart from a chain of sandy islands and some smaller dry places, called plates. The islands are inhabited and a lot of hard work is done to keep them more or less in their places, all the rest is forever changing and shifting, getting higher or lower, wandering east or west.

Simonszand is such a plate, and we have occasionally camped on it for years. Last year it was clearly getting smaller, this year neither of us had been there yet, but our information was it had moved to the west and there were some small dunes even.

A little past ten we were on the water. The sun was out, but dark skies loomed in the west. At once we were in the middle of a group of sailing boats awaiting the start of some race. Though we stayed prudently out of their paths, we got shouted at by some nervous people.

After that we were all alone, had a nice trip on the outgoing tide and made good headway, for we stopped at the eastern end of Schiermonnikoog before 12.30, in time for the newest weather report. It promised S.W. 7, later 8 and rain.

After sandwiches and coffee and a walk over the sands we got going again, hoping we would be there before the force 8. Soon it started to rain and visibility was getting poor. And a sandplate just a bit higher than all the other plates around isn't easy to find anyway, but there is a channel just north of Simonszand with some buoys to help us poor paddlers.

The first of these buoys we couldn't find, until we discovered that what we saw lying on the sand to our right was no resting seal, but "our" buoy. We had been pushed into the wrong channel by the tide, because the other, the buoyed channel was as good as dry. There was nothing for it but to carry our kayaks across to what water there was left and more wading and walking than paddling we reached the west side of Simonszand. No sign of any dunes here and no driftwood or rubbish either. The whole place had been under with the last tide. No recommended camp site that was.

Our wading, paddling, walking exercise was repeated at the middle and at the east end of Simonszand, making it very clear that any campers would be wet at the next high tide.

What options were left to us? The easiest was crossing the S.E. Lauwers before the wind (some 3-4 miles) and camp on Rottumerplaat, which is absolutely dry, but just as absolutely forbidden, and the question was could we get back the next day against the wind? The other was, going on to Noordpolderzijk, another 6 miles or so. Noordpolderzijk is the only tidal harbour on our coast and is much longer dry than navigable. Anyway, this looked our safest choice. It was 4 o'clock by now and theoretically just past low tide, so we slogged southward towards the first buoy, ZOL 6. When we got there we saw why it had taken so long. The S.W. wind was still pushing the water out to sea and especially there, where two big channels joined we had to paddle hard to make any headway at all. We went for a dry sandbank and had some more coffee and sandwiches but it was cold there and it was raining. In the kayaks we were more comfortable, so....

After three more buoys we could see the current going with us and when the channel made a nice turn to the east we got some advantage of the wind as well. The wind, by the way, didn't reach force 8, we estimated it a good 6.

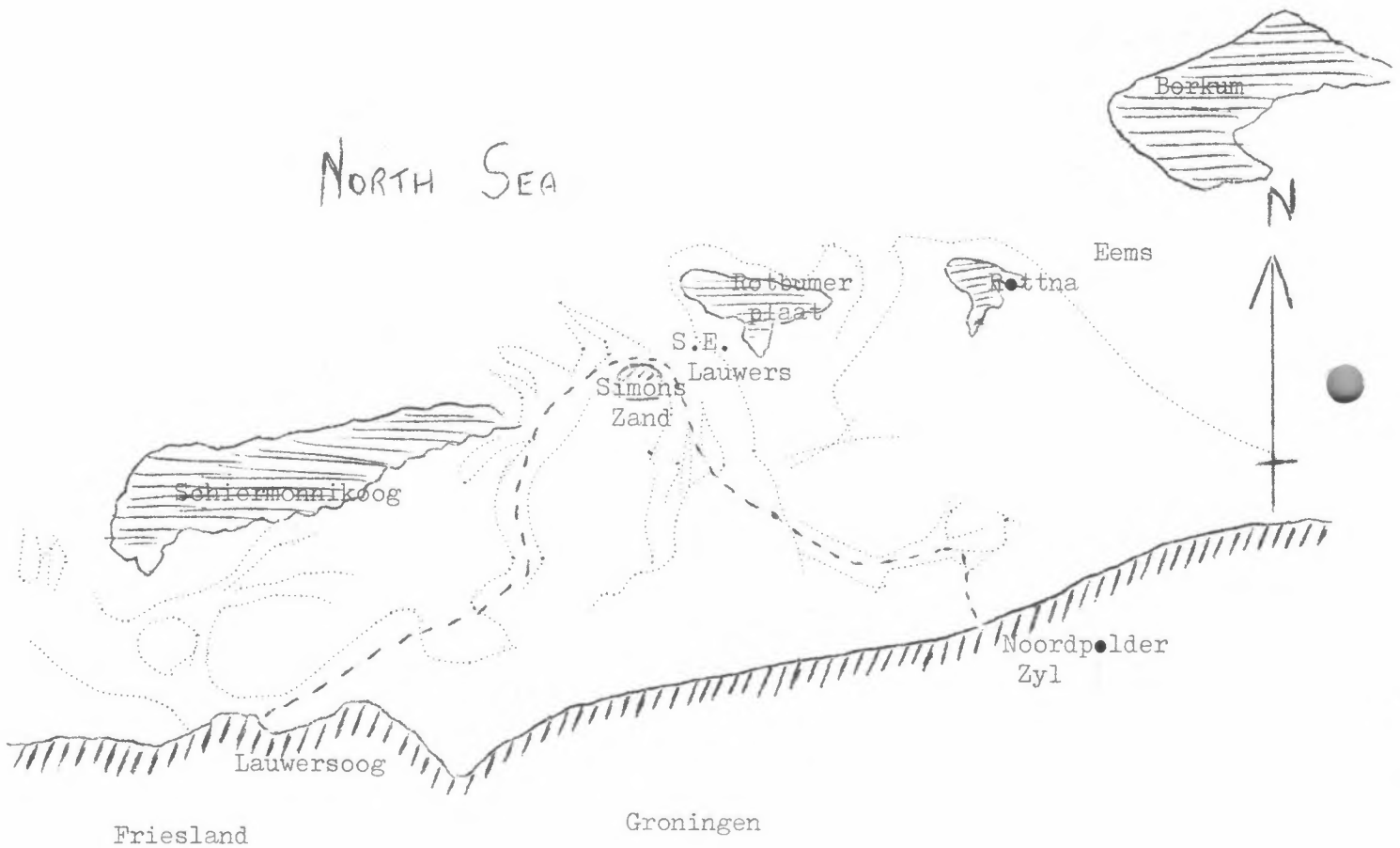
By 1830 we found the stakes that mark the entrance to the little harbour; we had a mile and a half to go, but there was no water to keep us afloat. It didn't rain any more and it was getting dark. Walking would be out of the question there; so close to the

dyke it's all very soft and oozy, silty mudflat, full of birds. We saw and heard avocets, curlews, oystercatchers, shelduck etc. Sitting there, waiting in the falling dusk was quite an event. It took us till 9 o'clock to reach the quay.

Behind the dyke there is a pub and we were allowed to pitch our tents on the grass outside. Later we told our story to the barman and the four customers over a cuppa, and the barman agreed to take us to Lauwersoog on Sunday morning, as we had paddled enough for the weekend in one day and the forecast said west 7.

Sunday morning we were early. We had finished breakfast just after eight, when the landlord stopped his car next to our tents. He invited us in, made us coffee and we talked, for we were in no hurry. The barman would call for us at 10, but we were about ready to go. So we wondered aloud could the landlord ask him to come a little earlier? The barman didn't answer the phone and then the landlord mumbled something about needing two kilos of scaled shrimp and the fishshop at Lauwersoog being open on Sundays and could we go and buy them for him? He gave us the keys of his car and £25 and off we were to Lauwersoog and back with two cars and two kilos of shrimps on a very windy Sunday morning, in the knowledge that there are very nice landlords in the north of Groningen.

Jan van Doren.



----- our route

An Alaskan in Hawaii by Jennifer Jessup

The Last Frontier - a place for the rugged, the hardy, the individual. Let's face it, maintaining this image is hard work. We all need a break sometimes. Enjoying Alaskan winters is a skill that, supposedly, can only be mastered by the Tough and the Insane. But appreciating a Hawaiian season, any season, lies more within our nature. Give your image a vacation.

Hawaii is a refreshingly inexpensive place to travel, especially for those of us who have supported innumerable bush pilots and their families. It costs less, for instance, to make a round trip from Anchorage to Honolulu than from Anchorage to Koyuk. If I lived in Anchorage, the choice would be simple. Taking a kayak adds a little more to your fare: \$50 each way on the longest part of the journey, and (for my sectional kayak, which is two oversize duffels) \$20 for each hop between islands. The standard fee is \$10 per oversize piece on most of the interisland flights, depending upon available space and the charity of the person who checks you in. In the Honolulu airport, storage was more of a problem. Not an impossibility, but it's difficult to convince the bag clerks that the two huge, oddly shaped bundles you propose to check (kyack? how do you spell that?) are worth the space of five or six suitcases at the same rate.

I had read an article by Audrey Sutherland which recommended the use of inflatable kayaks for Hawaiian waters. My response, as a purist and a skeptic, was to lug my streamlined and beautiful, but cumbersome, sectional kayak to the islands. In many ways, it was worth it. For speed and efficiency (using all the energy of each stroke to go forward, rather than to snowplow in the water) a rigid boat is the best choice. After a week or so in Hawaii, though, both priorities and purism were somehow diluted. For one, I found myself seriously thinking about rudders and their advantages in waters with following currents. For another, my need for speed was considerably diminished. Maybe something in the warming of the blood... The grace of a faster rigid boat is infinitely more appealing than the sluggish, side-to-side motion of most inflatables. But on land, unless you have friends with pickups or kayak racks (both considerably rarer in the islands than here at home), movement is far short of graceful. Considering a second trip to Hawaii now, I'm thinking more favourably of the inflatable alternative.

While you're there, take an extra day or two to try the Hawaiian racing kayak. Very light and very fast, these are more of a shell than anything else. No cockpits and no place for storing anything except perhaps a lunch, but the speed is quite a thrill. Surf-yakking is still another experience, very close to surfing except for the added security of a sitting position and a paddle in your hands.

Speaking of surf... this is where your rough-and-tough Alaskan image will not pull you through. Unless you have some innate ability to keep a straight line to shore when curling waves are forcing you parallel to it, take some extra practice days!!! Start with an empty boat in some gentler surf, and work up gradually to your upper limits. Crash landings in salt water can be severely damaging to your camera.

From the beach side of a wave, it's easy to see the best route and the timing of each set. From the other side, it's quite another world view. Timing, strategy and some degree of foolhardiness take time to develop. Typically, landing in a high surf area, I would spend about fifteen or twenty minutes scouting the shore break. Back and forth I'd cruise, feeling the rhythm of the waves and expertly judging by the sound of each unseen crash just where and when I should go for it. Inevitably the place I chose would be the one with the longest and highest waves. The timing would put me just behind the wave I wanted to catch, in the trough of another monster wave I had failed to predict. This situation offers no remote chance of a successful landing. Eskimo rolls cannot save you. So I determined in some places that it was safer to eject before I reached the breakers, give the boat a push and swim in. This method requires an efficient bailing device and an indestructible kayak. In other places, I decided to forego shore exploration altogether because of irregular wave patterns (rips) or menacing rocks (the Fear Factor, or is it conservatism?)

Launching in big surf can be just as difficult, especially without a support crew to heave you forward at just the right moment. By the time you have your spray skirt in place, you have to get out and start all over because the waves have turned you sideways. I usually made a dash for it without fastening my spray skirt - this worked, but I'd spend the next half hour in a dangerously tippy kayak, up to my waist in water, trying to estimate how many hundred more dipperfuls I'd have to empty from my cockpit. It would be definitely worth your while to invest in some kind of sea anchor. This would allow you to swim ashore in places where it is too dangerous (or you are too scared) to land with your kayak.

There are some special considerations to aid acclimatization for fair-skinned Alaskans such as myself to the heat of the tropics. Learn from my mistakes - and welcome to them - and maybe you'll avoid the ravages of sunburn. First, take some loose-fitting clothing to wear, all the time, while you're out on the water. Sunscreen is not enough. I wore a long-sleeved shirt to paddle in, and covered my legs with a towel when my spray skirt wasn't on. Take a wide-brimmed hat, and wear it! Bring some lip protection. Finally, be kind to your hands. I ended up with a couple of days' forced rest to nurse swollen, sun-blistered hands. Bring nylon pogies. They're not fashionable in Hawaii, not yet - but who knows, you may start a fad. Remember your Alaskan image as an individual. Dare to be different.

Salt intake is another special concern for us northerners. According to Dr Andrew Embick, people who have lived in colder climes tend to lose more salt in perspiration, simply because we generally spend less time perspiring than those who live in warmer areas. Unless your body has enough sense to make a quick alteration on its own, you might be wise to take along a little extra salt (not necessarily salt tablets, but enough to add to your food). Of course you will need to be sure to drink lots of water, too.

We in the Land of the Midnight Sun are spoiled by endless daylight in the summertime. Remember that in Hawaii the sun sets early in the evening. Plan to reach your destination soon enough to set up camp or do some exploring. I spent a very long night on the water once, having lingered too long at sunset and then being unable to see a landing spot. Fortunately, a long night in Hawaii is quite a bit kinder than most nights, even short ones, in Alaska.

One of the great differences in packing for a paddling trip to Hawaii is the comparatively small pile of gear you need to bring. Clothing is minimal (in fact, optional in many places) - forget the extra socks and quantities of Polarguard. I brought no sleeping bag or tent, and used my kayak duffel for both (very comfortable night add). I had brought a stove, but never used it. I lived on my limited supply of matzoh and peanut butter, heavily supplemented by local fruits and fish. Raw fish was much easier to like than I had imagined; in fact, I grew to prefer it that way. There are several campsites where you'll be able to build a fire to cook on, though wood can be scarce. I used a wood fire to cook taro leaves - which, by the way, are delicious when they are done right. If you do try these (or the roots of the same plant), be certain that you have the right information on how to prepare them. Unless taro is cooked long enough and hard enough, its acid remains poisonous enough to give one an extremely uncomfortable constricting feeling in the throat. (Another of my famous mistakes to learn from).

In one way I was disappointed. I never did see one of the big, ugly centipedes everyone warned me about. I did see a couple of very small scorpions, who seemed just as anxious to stay out of my territory as I was to keep clear of theirs.

Spear-fishing is an appealing diversion for some. However, I'm told that unless your aim and patience are exceptional, you can expect some meager meals while you are learning. I opted instead to snorkel, as an observer rather than a predator, and I think the fish appreciated this. They seemed to enjoy showing off by nibbling at my knees, something I know they wouldn't have done for an arrogant spear-thrower. And I did manage to eat well, accepting the fruits of the labours of others. (Never look a gift fish in the mouth). The local people I met were incredibly generous with food and advice.

Most of Hawaii is not the remote wilderness that we've sometimes taken for granted here in Alaska. You won't be able, in most areas, to paddle all day without seeing another human being. The people are part of the adventure, though. Learn to appreciate humans as you have learned to appreciate wildlife, and you will observe a fascinating variety of endemic as well as alien life forms. Go humbly, just as you wish all visitors to Alaska would behave. You'll find people, in general, very hospitable. After all, a kayak hardly carries the impact of a Winnebago.

Destinations

The Kona Coast on the big island of Hawaii is one of the best places to start. The water is gentle, with easy landings and none of the terror of the big surf. Volcanic eruptions of long ago have left beautiful black sand beaches. These are very hot to bare feet! Be sure to wear some old sneakers or a pair of reef-walking shoes. Sometimes the coastline looks like a contorted rock forest, with strange figures watching as you paddle by. There are small towns and villages along the way, each with its own beach or harbour and its own storytellers. Travel from north to south. Paddling back the other way, against the trade winds, is possible but frustrating. Take out near a road where you can hitch a ride. This is another time that you may wish you had an inflatable kayak. You may need to get a ride to a place where you can rent a car, then drive back to pick up your boat.

The Na Pali Coast on Kauai is steep, spectacular, and quite a bit more challenging. Surf can come up very high. I spent three extra days waiting for small enough waves to launch into, stranded on an idyllic beach with nothing to eat but the native oranges, guavas, tomatoes, taro, papayas and bananas. Be prepared for this possibility - a delightful prospect at worst. You will need camping permits for the nights you plan to spend on the Na Pali Coast. Do reserve in advance by mail, especially if you stay at Kalalau Beach, which is at the end of the 12-mile Kalalau Trail. Do purify the water. I met some sick people who wished they had. There are lava tubes along the coast which have created sea caves. Some of these are safe to paddle into. It's well worth the \$50-\$75 day trip on a Zodiac charter (Captain Zodiac, Hanalei) to find out where these caves are and to make an advance judgement on which ones you should attempt.

There is only one practical direction of travel on this coast, from east to west. Afternoons bring wind. It may be well to plan to cover most of the day's distance in the morning hours before 11:00, and to spend afternoons hiking or snorkeling. There is a fairly strong current which will do most of the work for you. Don't try to paddle back against the wind and the current. It's exhausting, heartbreaking work to use all your strength just to keep the same position along the shoreline. Take out is Polihale, or you can pay a Zodiac boat to take your (compactible) kayak back to Hanalei while you hike out on the Kalalau Trail. The trail is rugged and beautiful, close to the high, eroded cliffs of the coast.

For much more authoritative and probably more accurate information, read Audrey Sutherland's article, "Paddling Hawaii", in Volume 3 of Sea Kayaker magazine. And for a delightful read, pick up Paddling My Own Canoe, a story of this rugged, hardy individual (she ought to have been an Alaskan) and her pursuit of lonely happiness swimming and paddling the remoter island shores. (University of Hawaii Press, 1978, by Audrey Sutherland).

I found Audrey in the phone book when I returned from my island adventures. I called thinking to say, "Um, you don't know me, but I feel as if I know you and I'd like to take you to lunch..." The woman who answered the phone told me that she had left that morning to paddle in Alaska.

From George Lewis

Boater Missing

This was the headline in the Vancouver Island North Island Gazette July 17, 1985. It

was not a kayaker! "A local man, Clive Scott, is missing and presumed drowned and two other men Ken Stone 17 and Jason Lavoie 17 were rescued from an island.... Visiting American kayakers spotted the two men about 10 am Monday and contacted the rescue and co-ordination centre."

This brief news item does not begin to tell the story of the rescue of two Canadian men from a small island off the west coast of Vancouver Island. The two men had swam and were washed ashore on the rocks the night before when their skiff had swamped in heavy seas. Their 21 year old captain couldn't swim and had vanished. It was their first day on the job. And they had spent a miserable night on the remote island. When we spotted them they were in a state of shock and approaching hypothermia.

The day had started calm enough. We were camped on a small island just north of Kwakiutl Point on the north west coast of Vancouver Island. The seas had calmed down enough for us to do a day paddle around the point for some beach combing. Just short of Lawn Point we spotted these two figures waving frantically. They were on one of two isolated islands that protrude out into the Pacific where underwater reefs are abundant. As we beached the kayaks one man was in tears and the other was shivering uncontrollably. One was dressed only in a muscle shirt, jeans and had no shoes. They told us their story about the boat sinking and the loss of the other man and their miserable night on the beach.

Kayakers are amazingly well equipped even for a day paddle. Clothes were stripped off them and warm clothes put on. Soup and sandwiches were produced after a fire was started. But the one piece of equipment we really needed, we did not have, a radio transmitter! How are we going to evacuate these men? We were miles from any civilization. And it would take at least another day for help to arrive once we went for it.

There was a small fishing fleet off the coast but our feeble efforts to signal it with a life jacket on the end of a paddle were hopelessly lost in the spray and waves. George Lewis made a valiant attempt to intercept a fishing boat coming up the coast but George's small kayak was lost in the white capping waves. But luck was with George. A sail boat came from nowhere and George made for it. By now the seas had turned nasty with wind and white capping waves. George managed to flag it down by waving his life jacket on the end of his paddle. But George paid a price, his life jacket blew away in the foam and has never been seen again.

A radio signal from the sail boat brought the Canadian Coast Guard in a Chinook Helicopter and our two men were on their way inland to a hospital. A second helicopter landed looking for the wrecked boat and blew one of our kayaks end over end down the beach. We thought we were through with helicopters when a third helicopter appeared and followed us back to our camp. Then the RCMP landed on our beach. They were after details, names, places, etc. Then after we fed them tea and cookies they departed and we were alone on our remote little island. No noise except for the crashing of the waves on the rocks that had claimed the life of one man and nearly claimed two others.

George Lewis.

I really wouldn't want to embarrass George Lewis by claiming he did anything heroic. Besides he really looks like an oversized dissipated beach bum when he is on a kayak trip. But if ever this club gives out medals in the future for outstanding effort (valiant effort is really the words), I think that George should be first in line for his effort in flagging down that sail boat. And I would also say that two Canadian lads are alive today just because some American kayakers just happened to have picked Winter Harbour and a trip south to the Brooks peninsula as their two week kayaking trip.

T.D.

From Jorma Holmstrom, Finland

Dear Advanced Sea Kayak Club,

A Helsinki-based canoe club called Merimelojat is going to organize a canoe excursion from Stockholm to Helsinki via Turka. The details can be found below.

We hope that you will be able to publish this information for your canoeists as soon as possible, because we believe that the safari will interest especially English canoeists.

Thank you very much in advance,

Yours sincerely, Jorma Holmstrom.

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THE CANOE SAFARI OF THE BALTIC

Stockholm - Helsinki 5.7. - 28.7.1986. Part I Stockholm-Turku 430 km, part II Turku-Helsinki 320 km, Stockholm-Helsinki 750 km. An international sea tour for experienced canoeist. You can paddle part I or part II, or both.

Skill and ability to paddle continuous stretches of 40 km (21 M) with a speed of 7 km/h (4 knots) in rigorous circumstances is required. Equip yourself with the usual sea touring gear, accommodation is in tents. Each participant should have food and drinking water for five days. Only canoes suitable for sea use are accepted. As there will be no escort craft, each participant should have a knowledge of rescue methods. Full details and bookings: Merimelojat Ry,

Jorma Holmstrom
Merenkulkijank. 7 B 32
002320 ESPOO
FINLAND

* * * * *

From Dick Richards, DOT, Swansea

Dear John

Many thanks for the newsletter, as always of considerable interest.

I'd like if I may to reply to Oliver Cock's letter regarding helicopter lifts of canoeists. I am surprised that Oliver should think that I advocate dumping injured or sick patients into the water. I would have hoped that any serious canoeist would have sufficient commonsense to avoid making any situation worse. What I said was that a helicopter winchman prefers to lift a person from the sea, and that is a fact.

The important point is that, whether one has been involved in exercises or not, in a distress situation the SAR Unit on scene will dictate the drill, and that will be appropriate entirely to the circumstances as seen by that unit at the time. There is tremendous value in exercises of all sorts but rarely if ever are things just the same when the crunch comes.

How close are you to moving to your South coast island ?

All the best, Dick

* * * * *

From John Kuyser, Calshot Activities Centre

Dear John,

A.S.K.C. Newsletter item please

Calshot Activities is offering a few places on the Sea Kayaking fortnight based at St. Agnes campsite, Scilly.

The group travel from Calshot to Penzance and take the Scillonian to the islands.

There is a possibility of a Kayak crossing to or from the Islands and Mainland, subject to favourable weather and the experience and expertise of expedition members. Cost £200.

Contact John Kuyser for details of this trip or other Canoeing Courses at
Calshot Activities Centre,
Calshot Spit, Fawley,
Southampton SO4 1BR.
Fawley (0303 892077)

Yours sincerely, John.

* * * * *

From Hugh Collings, Sweden

Dear John,

..... Right now my canoeing takes the form of armchair reading. The ice on the sea is at least half a metre thick - perfect for driving on with a large truck. One would have to walk quite a few miles (perhaps towing a Kayak on a little sledge like the Bering Sea Eskimos!) to find open water.

Some tips for those who contemplate canoeing in Stockholm's archipelago and don't want the bother of taking a sea-kayak with them. ERLING BENGTSSON of SVIMA SPORT, Stockholm offers an excellent service. Canoe and camping gear can be hired out at reasonable prices, eg. for an English sea kayak he charges about 100 swedish kronor per 24 hrs or 340 sw. kronor for 7 days. Swedish sea kayaks (with large racing cockpit + rudder), doubles and Canadians are also available. Erling provides transport to suitable start points and his centre is a mecca of information for sea-canoeists. Local know-how saves time and money when embarking on a trip. He recommends booking in advance to avoid disappointment. The centre opens around the beginning of April and the address is:

EUGENIAVAGEN 5,
113 43 STOCKHOLM,
Tel. 08-338165

Otherwise he can be reached at his office all the year:

SLAGGBACKEN 1,
17157 SOLNA
Tel. 08-96 9770, 27 69 92

English is of course no problem (Money: 11 sw. kronor = £1.)

Hope this might be of some help to those wanting to paddle in the archipelago. There are over 7000 islands and "everyman's right" exists which means one has the right to camp anywhere as long as nothing is destroyed or litter left behind - this counts for Sweden and not Finland.

Yours sincerely, Hugh Collings.

* * * * *

From "COASTGUARD" - Jan-Mar. 86 issue

Out in the Wash with a chimp

Hunstanton sector officer, Colin Tomlinson, was able to provide one of three weather forecasts when 39 sea paddlers crossed the Wash from Hunstanton to Skegness and back to raise money for Papworth hospital. Unfortunately, writes Trevor Riches, they were all different.

Skeggy cuppa

For my sins I had taken on the task of showing the Coastguard that sea-kayakists could behave in a suitably disciplined, way and not be an emergency looking for somewhere to happen. We insisted, therefore, that each group of paddlers had to book out before going out on the water; much to the disgust of my two sons who were nearly over the horizon before they realised that they had forgotten to book out. We also managed to find some agreement in the weather forecasts: no strong winds were expected.

At 0630 am the day of the event, the forecast was force two to three south-westerly, backing northwesterly in the evening and increasing four to five. If so, we would be blown there and back. It sounded too good to be true; it was. Everyone was away shortly after nine, but haze was restricting visibility, so it was compass work all the way. A good spring ebb helped the fastest group over in two and a half hours, and we were all over for a cuppa in Skeggy by 12.30.

Pumping Out

Skegness Coastguard gave us a return forecast of SE force 4 gusting 5, and the weather was turning chilly. Sadly the group discipline wavered a little on the way back when the temptation to sprint home proved too much for some people. This meant two boats needed pumping out, with passing paddlers from other groups being asked for a brace up. In my view a footpump is essential if group discipline is not strict. Rear deck mounted chimp pumps are not suitable for solo paddlers, unless they have got a stabilising outrigger system.

contd...

The trip back turned into something of a wet and windy, head down slog, but we all made it by six o'clock. Colin Tomlinson was able to congratulate us on our organisation, in contrast to some boardsailers with similar good intentions, who had gone out with only one support boat amongst 20, and had become becalmed. Thanks Colin, and we'll watch that group discipline next time.

* * * * *

From John Ross-Mackenzie, Weymouth

Dear John,

I don't think that I'm a part-time paddler as I go out once a week in the winter, twice or more in the summer. Primarily I go out to enjoy myself paddling on the sea, and to get away from people. That sounds awful doesn't it?

Secondly I go out to keep fit. Two paddles of ten miles a week keeps me fit enough to do longer paddles of 25-30 miles a day over a weekend. Second day usually with a hangover; always camp near a pub!

Thirdly I go out for free food; mackerel in abundance in the summer and winkles all the year round.

Some reports leave me standing in awe, and my imagination of the situation leaves me wondering what I would do if I just happened to find myself in a 10 metre swell. 2-3 metres (6-9ft) I think I could cope with. If anybody going to the Exhibition would like to sit on the floor where the NONDKAAPS are stood on end, look up, then put the height of one boat on top of the other. Imagine that swell at sea.

I will try to make the Exhibition, if not, might see somebody between Portland and Swanage.

P.S. HARDLY USED ISLANDER FOR SALE (Second Boat) HATCHES
BULKHEADS ETC. £260.00.

Yours sincerely,
John Ross-Mackenzie.

* * * * *

From Andy Upjohn, Leverett, Massachusetts.

Dear Sirs,

I am interested in taking an extended trip this summer, either along some of your shores or perhaps Norway. I wonder if you all would have any ideas for advertising for partners in your country for a trip such as this.

I understand that you have a newsletter - do you have a classified ad. section? Is there any particular person that you know that may have suggestions as to how to advertize or even may know who may be interested in a trip? Any ideas you may have would certainly be welcome.

I also wonder if I could subscribe to your newsletter - how may I go about doing this?

Sincerely, Andy Upjohn.

* * * * *

From Maggie Tookey, NV, Keighley, W.Yorks.

Dear Mr. Romwell,

Would it be possible to include in the next convenient newsletter, a small note concerning the possibility of hiring a sea canoe for a two week trip in the middle/end of August '86, after a fatal accident to an Icefloe, Kayak! Purchasing of second hand Kayak could also be the answer if anyone can help.

Contact Maggie Tookey
1 Mary Street,
Farnhill,
Keighley, W. Yorks.

Many thanks. Maggie T.

* * * * *

ORKNEY 1984

"Because of the very strong tidal streams, the eddies and races to which these give rise and the extraordinarily violent and confused seas which occur at times, particularly in some of the races, navigation in the Pentland Firth is attended by special problems."

(Admiralty Pilot)

Apprehension. The dominant feeling as we looked out across the Pentland Firth from the lighthouse on Duncansby Head. The race below the lighthouse was working strongly with the east going stream, white caps covering the sea as the ebb tide pushed around this NE most corner of Britain. The sky was cloudy with a N 3-4 blowing. We had another couple of hours to go before the tide would suit us for the first part of the crossing. We planned to use the slack to cross to Stroma and bivvi there for the night, completing the crossing on Sunday, the following day. The crossing was to be done in two stretches, partly because of the tide times, and partly because we wanted to be fully rested before attempting the major part of the crossing. A long Easter term followed by a 16 hour overnight drive of 700+ miles was not the best preparation for what promised to be a major crossing.

We had a quick look round the tourist trap of John O'Groats and then set off for Shuna, a couple of miles to the west, our proposed starting point. While we were packing a local fisherman arrived and showed a great deal of interest in our trip. We were rather surprised that he offered no criticism but rather some helpful advice, including an offer to look after our minibus if we would care to park it at his home just down the road. We were later to find the people of Orkney just as interested, helpful and courteous in our encounters with them. He also advised us to ring Mr Simpson on the island of Stroma as he didn't like campers!

We had understood Stroma to be uninhabited, despite the large number of houses on the island, the inhabitants having left in the late 1950's. However a phone call provided the necessary permission with no problems.

We finally left at 4.05 pm for the short crossing, reaching the south end of Stroma half an hour later, a good time considering that we were paddling into the teeth of a N4. We worked our way up the east side of the island and landed by the pier in the north east corner. With the bivvi quickly erected we set off in search of water, eventually getting some from the friendly lighthouse keeper.

There we also had a close look at the Swilkie, the tidal race at the north end of the island. We thought it looked horrendous, but the keeper said that it was calm at the moment. When it was wind against tide, waves 30-40 feet high would develop in an hour..... We resolved to keep well clear on the morrow.

While Martin cooked the supper, Steve and I went to find our host. We eventually tracked down the manse in which he lived and were hospitably received. Mr Simpson is the owner of Stroma, which he uses as sheep pasture, only visiting the island occasionally and more frequently at lambing time, his home being a farm on the mainland. His aversion to campers dates from the previous year, when a group which visited the island broke into a number of houses (which he uses as store places) and stole several items. Any canoeists visiting the place would probably be made welcome and a preliminary phone call (Stroma 315) is worth making.

Sunday dawned grey with a N2-3. The weather forecast promised little change, so we could carry on with our plan. Taking the last of the flood (east going) we set out to clear the Swilkie, allowing the tide to take us eastwards as we made northing towards Scapa Flow. The sea was fairly calm, though we crossed several sinister boily bits and some curious streams of rapidly moving water between banks of calm. The flood stream was noticeable immediately we entered it - the flare of the oil refinery of Flotta was a good backlight against the foresight of Swona's skyline. Even though this was the end of a neap flood, the flare appeared to race along Swona's skyline eastwards, until finally it disappeared behind the island as we got closer to it. After about 2 hours we reached South Ronaldsay. By our calculations the flood should have finished, but we still had to cross a small south-going race off Barth Head. Perhaps the north wind was prolonging the flood. We entered Scapa Flow beneath the gun emplacements on Hoxa Head, thinking that if we'd done this 40 years before we would have been blown out of the water! Paddling steadily we made good progress despite the persistent northerly, arriving at an excellent campsite at Deepdale by 3.15 pm, 33km in about 6 hours.

Our bivvi site turned out to be a good choice: flat, grassy with stream and firewood to hand. Masses of primroses covered the bank which sheltered us while marsh marigolds lined the stream. As we landed the cloud cleared away and the sun came out. We felt on holiday at last! Martin constructed a brazier which provided cooking power for the next two days, while we erected the bivvis and drinks bar stocked with gin, tonic and whisky. The final touch to this home from home was provided by the portable stereo and speakers.

The following day was designated a cultural event. We walked the 7 kilometres into Kirkwall, and after shopping and looking around we hired a car for 24 hours. For the student of history Orkney has a lot to offer - we tried to see as much as possible, including standing stones, neolithic tombs, the Stone Age village of Skara Brae and more recent relics such as the 'Italian Chapel'. This is a Nissen Hut converted into a replica Italian style church by the prisoners-of-war who built the Churchill causeways. These also are of interest as they were constructed after the sinking of the Royal Oak at anchor in Scapa in 1939, by a U-boat which had sneaked in by a supposedly unnavigable channel. The barriers erected between the islands of Lamb Holm, Glas Holm Burray and South Ronaldsay to prevent the recurrence of such an event, have also acted as routeways in this part of Orkney, helping the area to maintain its population while that of more remote islands has declined.

After our whirlwind tour we parked the car at the end of the track near our bivvi site and strolled back for a pleasant evening meal. This was followed by beach games (sinking a floating oil drum!). The game had a serious purpose, as the loser had to drive the car back to Kirkwall prior to our departure and walk back to the campsite. Steve was the unlucky loser.

In fact, he managed to hitch a lift back and so we left the following morning as planned at 10 a.m. Glorious weather - cool, but clear and sunny. We paid our respects to the buoy marking the grave of the Royal Oak and the men who went down in her as we crossed Scapa Bay. The low lying cliffs of the south coast of Mainland slipped by, broken by wide, shallow bays. We spotted porpoise off Houton Head as well as the occasional seal. A break for lunch by Middle Skerry in Burra Sound, and then a push onwards round the northern tip of Hoy and down the west coast. The cliffs here were spectacular, viewed from a gently rolling Atlantic swell. The red sandstone rises sheer up to a height of over 1000 feet. Sea birds thronged the ledges and pinnacles, oblivious of the sea fretting away the foundations of their colonies. The very names of the rock features lent an air of Norse romance - Slett of the Head, Geo of the Light and Tuaks of the Boy. The highlight of the coastline is, of course, the Old Man of Hoy. As we drifted past, taking the inevitable photographs, we could just make out a climber reaching the summit. Paddling onwards, we reached Rackwick beach at 5p.m. after a seven hour, 25 mile paddle. That evening we strolled over to the cliff top opposite the Old Man, which lay beautifully silhouetted by the westerling sun.

Wednesday we had decided would be a rest day - from canoeing, that is. We set off early for the summit of Ward Hill, Hoy's highest point at 479m; a false start on my part as I had to return to the bivvi for a fresh film. This resulted in the unpleasant experience of being divebombed by a pair of Arctic Skuas on the south-west slopes as I hurried to rejoin the rest of the group.

Though a relatively low eminence, the panorama from the summit was wide; the isles of Orkney lay spread before us, below a cloud-cloaked sky, rent in patches by sunrays. We pushed on to the intriguingly named Dwarfie Stane, a Megalithic rock-cut tomb. By the time we returned to base the wind from the west was freshening and the weather forecast not particularly promising. Rackwick Bay faces south-west and a strong west wind would make the leaving of it difficult and the journey down the west coast more hazardous than we would wish. Some rest day - we left at 4:30 the same afternoon, in a rising westerly swell.

The coastline continued interesting, with an increasing amount of surf and spray breaking on the rocks. Just south of Sneuk Head we spotted a seal apparently diving in and around the breakers for sport, oblivious of the Atlantic rollers. We rounded Tor Ness about 6p.m. and then had a 2 mile paddle over a series of standing waves and choppy bits where at a later stage of the tide the race known as the Merry Men of Mey would be running. The time of our passage was supposedly slack water though in fact there was a strong east going stream - so strong that it created a substantial west going eddy at the entrance to Aith Hope, almost creating a stopper at the boundary of the two. Paddling this part of the Firth was no less nervy than crossing it had been a few days earlier.

We found a bivvi site by the causeway which links South Walls to Hoy. Not the best of sites - no water - but this gave a legitimate excuse to visit the nearest pub at South Ness, where we spent a pleasant evening in conversation with a local lobster fisherman.

The wind backed to the south-east overnight, remaining fresh with the forecast of stronger winds to come, with fog patches. On this day we hoped to recross the Firth, using the east going flood to sweep us down towards Duncansby Head, the west going ebb then taking us back to a landing somewhere around Huna. A call to the Coastguard at Kirkwall put us in no uncertain mind as to what he thought of the idea - 'You must be bloody mad'. After further discussion we agreed with him and carried the boats over the causeway for a short paddle to the Point of Hackness and a bivvi site in the shelter of the walled garden of an abandoned farmhouse.

On a foray to the nearest dwelling for water we had the great good fortune to meet Willy Groot, a direct descendant of the original Jan de Groot after whom John O'Groats is named. Jan de Groot was a Dutch seaman employed by William III in the seventeenth century to pilot ships through the Firth - William did not apparently trust the local Jacobites much! Jan's descendant had had the more prosaic occupation of banker though now retired. He still had an affinity for the sea however, sailing his own dinghy and restoring other boats. Moreover Willy had instituted and operated the 'floating bank' of Orkney which operated in the 1960's, touring the islands on a regular run before air communication removed the need for this particular service. Willy had a fund of interesting stories and showed a lot of interest in our canoes. I returned to his house that evening to be entertained with great hospitality by him and his wife.

Our last day's paddling in Orkney provided yet another weather contrast - breezy with fog. We headed north for Stromness in order to catch the ferry to Scrabster on the following day. We had a sheltered run up the east coast of Hoy through Gutter and Rysa Sounds and then a strenuous pull across the Bring Deeps, over the resting ground of the Imperial German Fleet, scuttled in 1919. The wind was an easterly 4-5 which called for concentration on the last few miles when it was directly behind us. It made for a fast passage of 13 miles in under 3 hours.

Orkney had given us great variety of scenery and weather - sandy beaches and cliffs, blue skies and fog, calm and strong winds. As impressive as any of these was the friendliness and hospitality shown by the people. A place well worth a visit.



ORKNEY, WHIT, 1984

The group:
Steve Briggs
Trevor Brown
Phil Drayton
Martin Fowles
Chris Pendlebury

H M COASTGUARD

INCIDENTS INVOLVING CANOEISTS AT SEA

1985

1	13 Mar	Anglesey	NW4	Smooth sea Slight swell	Tel report of two persons stranded on Starvation Rocks lighting fire. H/C investigated and found two 15 yo boys who had canoed out to the rocks at low water wandered away from their craft and become cut off by the tide. Lifted back to their canoes and made their own way ashore.
2	31 Mar	N Withernsea	SW5	Slight sea and swell	999 call reporting canoeist in difficulty. CG L/R and ILB proc'd and recovered canoeist not in immediate danger but thankful for assistance in worsening conditions.
3	5 Apr	Woclacombe	S4	Slight sea and swell	CG reported two canoeists capsized near rocks, one scrambled to safety second swept seawards. H/C proc'd on arrival reported both ashore assisted by CG through surf.
4	13 Apr	Sunderland	SW3	Smooth sea	Harbour Authority reptd double canoe in difficulty at harbour entrance - dredger standing by awaiting pilot cutter to assist. Both landed by cutter one taken to hospital for attention.
5	24 Apr	Lowestoft	NNW2	Smooth sea	999 rept of canoeist in difficulty with a second unable to assist. CG L/R and local craft proc'd. 15 yo local boy landed and taken to hospital suffering slight hypothermia.
6	25 Apr	Morecambe	SW3	Smooth sea	999 rept of person shouting for help from small craft moored offshore. Local boat proc'd and brought ashore a youth suffering from hypothermia who had capsized, lost his canoe but managed to reach moored boat.
7	30 Apr	Paignton	WNW3	Smooth sea	999 rept capsized canoe offshore second craft assisting. CG L/R and local boat proc'd. Canoeist brought ashore by colleague. Both taken to hospital suffering hypothermia.
8	15 May	Menai Strait	SW5	Slight sea and swell	999 rept of canoeist capsized and brought ashore by colleague but in need of medical aid. H/C proc'd and lifted to hospital suffering hypothermia and considerable intake of water.
9	25 May	Sunderland	SxE4	Smooth sea	999 rept of capsized canoeist off Roker Pier. ILB proc'd and recovered canoeist and canoe.
10	25 May	Criccieth	S4	Slight sea	Yacht reptd by VHF two canoeists in difficulty Mochras Estuary being taken seawards on strong ebb. CG L/R, ILB proc'd H/C diverted. ILB recovered both, one lifted by H/C to hospital suffering hypothermia.
11	31 May	Calshot	NNE4	Smooth sea	999 call reptg two persons in difficulty just offshore from capsized canoe, one child in serious trouble. CG L/R and H/C proc'd. H/C lifted 9 yo boy to hospital but found to be dead on arrival. Second boy brought ashore by nearby boat. No L/Jkts.
12	31 May	Appledore	E3	Smooth sea	ILB launched to person in difficulty in a dory having recovered a young lady from a capsized canoe. Both recovered and landed.
13	1 June	New Quay (Dyfed)	E2	Smooth sea	Passing yacht recovered a canoeist in difficulty offshore New Quay. Canoe swamped and holed and had pump failure. Well equipped and with buoyancy aid.
14	2 June	Canvey Island	NNE5	Slight sea	999 rept capsized double canoe two persons in water. ILB proc'd and recovered both.
15	2 June	Ramsgate	NE3	Smooth sea	ILB launched to party of canoeists apparently in difficulties and exhausted - on arrival the situation proved less fraught than expected but ILB remained to escort the canoes to Margate.

- 16 2 June Ardglass NE3 Slight sea CG observed canoeist in difficulty following capsized - local F/V's advised by VHF and one proc'd and recovered youth. No buoyancy aid, protective clothing etc.
- 17 22 June N Anglesey SW4 Slight sea Two canoeists reported overdue from local trip between Cemaes Bay and Middle Mouse (2 mls). Extensive search by H/C's, L/B's CRC's that evening and the following day all negative. No subsequent trace of canoes nor occupants. Despite being described, initially at least, as experienced neither canoeist wore more than tee-shirt and shorts and had neither spray decks nor buoyancy aids. Canoes were home built Snipes reported as having no built in buoyancy. The trip was undertaken against an ebbing Spring tide and although the proposed route was within half a mile of the coast, once clear of the land a considerable 'wind against tide' situation would have been experienced. Neither was enrolled in either the BCU or WCA.
- 18 23 June Whitstable SW3 Smooth sea 999 rept of capsized canoeist in difficulty. ILB and CG L/R proc'd. Canoeist assisted by swimmer and landed by ILB to ambulance and thence hospital suffering shock and excessive intake of water.
- 19 26 June Harlyn Bay WNW5 Slight sea Local IRB proc'd to canoeist being washed onto rocks and recovered him to shore.
- 20 11 July Red Bay N Ireland SW5 Slight sea 999 rept of boy swept seawards on sailboard. LB and local boat proc'd. 14 yo boy recovered from canoe and landed to hospital suffering shock.
- 21 11 July Bognor Regis WSW5 Slight sea 999 rept capsized canoe with person in difficulty. CG L/R and ILB proc'd. CG assisted 15 yo boy ashore together with his father who had entered the sea to help the boy and got into difficulties himself.
- 22 22 July Deal SW8 Mod sea 999 rept capsized canoe occupant in sea considerable time. CG L/R and ILB proc'd. ILB recovered canoeist ashore to ambulance and thence hospital. 14 yo scout wearing full wet-suit.
- 23 27 July Eastney SSE3 Smooth sea 999 rept two canoeists in difficulties and shouting for help. CG L/R and H/C proc'd but boys recovered by passing speedboat, one from sea, and landed.
- 24 30 July Islay WNW4 Slight sea Rept via CB network of a craft in difficulties off Port Ellen. Investigation by L/B, local Fishing Vsls and CG's disclosed two canoeists stranded on Texa Island. Recovered by F/V and brought ashore.
- 25 5 Aug Arran NW5 Slight sea Rept of two canoeists capsized and in difficulties off Ferry Terminal Lochranza. CG proc'd and used local boat to recover both. Both middle aged holidaymakers, one a non-swimmer no buoyancy aids nor protective clothing.
- 26 19 Aug Studland Bay IOW WxS6 Slight sea 999 rept man and child blown seawards in small sailing canoe. ILB proc'd, m/cruiser responded to CG b'cast and took 4yo boy aboard. ILB towed canoe and father ashore.
- 27 25 Aug Weymouth W5 Mod Sea 999 rept two canoeists in difficulty. CG L/R proc'd and confirmed both close inshore and being assisted by a sailboarder.
- 28 31 Aug St Albans Hd SW5 Slight sea CG observed party of canoeists in adverse conditions off Winspit - RNXS vessel nearby advised and stood by subsequently taking them aboard.
- 29 5 Sept Portland WNW6 Slight sea fshg vsl reptd picking up canoeist and reported another last seen heading shorewards. Man recovered was OK but cold wet and exhausted. CG L/R and local Police launch checked for second canoeist and found him safe with party of Army canoeists which had apparently become split. Initial casualty was inexperienced in the adverse conditions and apparently inadequately clothed.
- 30 6 Sept Arisaig NW4 Mod sea Canoeist reported herself ashore but three remaining members experiencing adverse conditions between Elgg and Arisaig, several capsizes and one weak. Search by L/B, CRC and H/C located group ashore Rhu Pt and safe. Needs tended.

31	6 Sept	R Tees	WNW4 Slight sea	Pilots rept two canoeists in difficulties off South Gare. Pilot boat and ILB proc'd. Both recovered, one to hospital suffering hypothermia.
32	14 Sept	Appledore	W5 Mod sea	ILB launched to canoeist who collided with L/B moorings and had boarded the L/B. Canoe and occupant disentangled and landed.
33	15 Sept	Hope Cove	W5 Slight sea	999 rept party of fifteen canoeists trapped in small cove and unable to get out due onshore wind. All fifteen and their canoes recovered by CRC to clifftop.
34	6 Oct	Poole	S6 Mod sea	Rept of two canoeists in difficulties off Yacht Club. CG L/R proc'd and two boats responded to CG b'cast. Both recovered safely from swamped canoes.
35	12 Oct	Heysham	Calm	Concern expressed for sailing canoe with man and child aboard apparently ill-equipped and being taken seawards with ebb tide. CG L/R proc'd and confirmed occupants unaware of their situation, ILB proc'd and recovered somewhat reluctant holidaymakers.
36	15 Nov	Poole	NNW4 Mod sea	999 rept canoeist apparently adrift and calling for help. CG B'cast located nearby vsl which located and towed in canoe and 13 yo occupant.
37	13 Dec	Aberystwyth	S2 Slight sea	999 rept canoeist swept seawards having capsized with a second standing by. CG L/R and ILB proc'd. Both recovered and landed by ILB.

In addition to the above we had twenty three reports of canoeists in difficulty which, upon subsequent investigation, proved to be false alarms with good intent or where the subjects safely made the shore without assistance.

In two further cases unidentified canoes were found ashore and demanded search action in case their occupants were in difficulties but both terminated with negative results. In another case two holidaymakers were loaned canoes and equipment and failed to return, in this case the negative result of the search probably indicated that those concerned were happily away with loaded roof-racks.

Two incidents involved other craft assisted by canoeists - one inflatable became holed by its own paddle and it and its two occupants were towed ashore by a canoeist and during November four members of Stornoway Canoe Club on a coastal paddle came across an eighteen foot angling boat which had broken down and towed it into harbour.

Statistical comparison with previous years is somewhat meaningless, overall there is an increase in the total number of incidents but (a) many more persons are sea-canoeing (b) general weather conditions during the summer vary the number involved and (c) the number of incidents where assistance was not, in the event, actually required were previously included but, more realistically, are now separated.

Overall the sea-canoeing fraternity has reason to be proud of its record of safety-consciousness. Almost without exception those who got into real difficulty and were lost or came close to it were inexperienced, ill-equipped and ignorant of the dangers and conditions. All of us will continue to have the task of preaching common-sense and good seamanship to those who wish to go to sea for pleasure.

Abbreviations :- CG - Coastguard;

L/R - Land Rover; CRC - Coastguard Rescue Company;
L/B - Lifeboat; ILB - Inshore Lifeboat; H/C - Helicopter;
b'cast - CG radio call to vessels in the vicinity.



S R Richards - H M Coastguard MREC Swansea
SCU/SIC Liaison Officer 12/2/86

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

Dear John,

Enclosed is an item which has been engaging my interest with growing power for a year now. The ASKC helped me to refine the ideas. Delving into the Bible for the measurements of the Ark led me on to a wider interest in that Book. I have no religion, and regard all priesthoods with profound suspicion.

Did you ever think how religions exert their undoubted power? The putative Priest takes common knowledge, and dresses it up as a mystery. He has the power of literacy, and writes down unintelligible symbols which are mysterious to the illiterate. He then demands his tythe, as only he can interpret the symbols, and only he can bring them good fortune. Some of that is evil and some is good. That is how the story of the Ark comes to be a mystery instead of a fairly accurate description of a series of trans-Atlantic voyages by canoe.

I would be fascinated to receive the opinions of fellow paddlers. I cannot see that anything but opinions can be expressed. I am working on a paper to submit to the Nat Maritime Museum in due course.

Allan.

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The Ark was 160 Trans-Atlantic Canoes

Sea canoeing has a very ancient history. Chapter six, verse fifteen, the Book of Genesis describes the Ark, and its dimensions. Length overall, 450 feet; beam, 75 feet, depth 45 feet. If you work out the proportions, they are those of a modern Canadian canoe.

Accepting that the Ark was a fact as described, if it took 35 feet of water, leaving a freeboard of 10 feet, assuming a prismatic co-efficient of 0.85 suitable for a barge-like load carrier, then it displaced 28,000 tons. It had a crew of at least eight human beings assuming one wife per man. It is certain that they did not have any engines to move it. Sails and oars are supposed to be fairly recent inventions, but paddles have been carbon dated to 7,500 BC. With a freeboard of ten feet, paddles of a length of fifteen feet would be necessary. Genesis 6/4 states 'There were giants in those days' ... They would need to be to handle paddles that long.

It is supposed that a man using a paddle can exert about 1/3 of a horsepower continually within limits of the average working day. A man with an oar might manage half a horsepower. In general terms something like the Queen Mary needed one horse power per ton. The Ark had between 2½ to 3 horse power for 28,000 tons, and would have been underpowered. It must have drifted at the mercy of wind and tide and flood.

As to the question of engines as prime movers, it may be a bit dogmatic to state that they did not have engines. The Book of Ezekiel describes the landing of an extra-terrestrial space ship in fair detail. An American space engineer has developed a patent on the wheels that are described in that book: they not only rotate, they can move the whole wheel sideways by rotating the barrel shaped rim sections.

It is an awesome thought that a modern, current as I write, American patent can be based on what has been written in the Bible for all these years. I should have thought that prior publication problems would have prevented a valid claim. Maybe they did have engines long ago. Considering the probable load of manure that the Ark produced each day, then gas powered motors might have been feasible.

If anyone thinks I am not serious, well yes and no. Read on.

It seems to me to be a much more sensible suggestion that the Bible story was written by a monk, and he had heard of old verbal histories, passed on in song and story, of old voyages. If ever a writer craved mercy in the time of the first printing presses, Job 19/23 expresses it. Handwritten books must have been a severe pain, month after month copying out the same old story, copy after copy.

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It is human nature to exaggerate. The Ark, at 300 cubits long (Cubit, lat. = elbow = 18 inches) might once have been 30 cubits long, or 45 feet. Its beam at 50 cubits might have been 5 cubits or 7ft 6inches. Its depth at 30 cubits might have been 3 cubits or 4ft 6inches. Those dimensions are not very different from those of the Brigg dug-out canoe which was dug up in 1880 something. It weighed around 2½ tons and could have carried 30 men and women and their children and animals. It could have been a mini-Ark.

Consider the inhabitants of what we now call North America. Thousands of years ago they were hunter-gatherers, not farmers, and not tied to one piece of land. They roved about, whole tribes or extended families taking to their huge dug-out canoes to go coasting in search of pastures new.

It would of course happen that occasionally one of those coasting canoes would have been blown offshore, and then it was downhill all the way to Europe. They were hardly people. Some would survive that journey on exposed wildernesses of water. Probably the weather would be breezy enough to get them over the Atlantic fast enough to avoid dying of starvation, yet not so fast that the seas kicked up and swamped the canoe.

Assume a drift rate of 2 mph. Assume 25 hours in the day. That is 50 miles a day, or 2,000 miles in forty days and nights. That is the width of the Atlantic. Very Biblical that 40 D&N. It is also a fact, and our editor could confirm it, that a man on hunger strike might last 40 days and nights without great harm, and be pulled back from serious physical harm if food is taken with 40 D&N. Over that time very careful medical care is needed for recovery.

Suppose one canoe carrying 20 people who survived, crossed the Atlantic every fifty years in the 8,000 years BC. That is 160 trans-Atlantic Arks, and 3,200 people who survived to live and breed in Europe. From these some songs and stories might have been expected. Enough of a verbal history for a monk to write it up into Hebrew, then for it to be translated into Latin and German and English, and printed by printers who made errors, and these were compounded by others.....

Byde's theory of the Ark is that it was an American canoe, that it came across in numbers in the millenia BC, that not only dug outs but frame and skin boats came too, and that the Irish curach finds its origins in the Umiak. The "Americans" discovered Europe long before the "Europeans" knew there was land north of the Mediterranean.

The Chief Archaeologist at the National Maritime Museum states that he has not heard of that theory before, and would be interested to see how it can be tied into the origins of the Irish curach. So would I.

Doubtless micro-biologists will have genetic evidence for or against the theory. Archaeologists may have decided views one way or another. Tim Severin proved beyond doubt that the very poetic 'Navigatio' by St Brendan was an account of an actual "uphill" trans-Atlantic voyage. It described icebergs and volcanic eruptions.

Because frame and skin craft are so impermanent, it is very unlikely that any examples of skin boats like the Umiak exist from more than a hundred years ago, which is 1% of the time in question. Columbia's curach on the beach at Iona although described has been searched for and found to be absent. It must have rotted before the Normans came to Hastings. Nonetheless, dug outs are still to be found. The dug out could hardly be said to be in the same league as the curach.

It is an unprovable theory and of necessity tendentious. None the less it is great fun to think about, and to mull over the physical problems that Genesis 6/15 suggests. For example, if the Ark drew only 10 feet of water why make such a whopper of a boat in the first place? The windage must have been enormous. Consider the assembling together of the necessary gopher wood tree trunks; dragging thousands of tons of timber to one place from places miles away - shaping and fitting it together - supporting the growing mass on a suitable building bed. Four men did all that! Be interested to hear from anyone else about the sea canoeists' point of view on this.

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