NEWSLETTER of the

Advanced Sea Kayak Club

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

ADVANCED SEA KAYAK CLUB

AIMS Promotion of sea canoeing · Communication · Organisation of events and conferences · Safety and coaching

ADVANCED SEA KAYAK CLUB

NEWSLETTER NO.63

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EDITORIAL

Here we are again! The more astute of you will have noticed that this newsletter is dated September rather than August - a month late. The main reason is due to me having been most of last month in Norway and only now finding the opportunity to prepare this letter. Whilst in Norway (where I was recceing for a kayak expedition in 1989) I visited the "FRAM" in Oslo. Those of you interested in polar exploration will know this boat as the one used by Nansen to the Arctic and Amundsun to the Antarctic during the early part of this century. Norway is a fantastic kayaking country. Sea, lakes, fjiords and some tremendous white water rivers stretching for mile after mile. I visited the Norwegian kayaking headquarters also in Oslo where I was made most welcome and learnt of their embryonic but rapidly growing interest in sea kayaking.

QAJAQ books (as mentioned in July's editorial) have sold out and I have re-ordered from Nuneau Museum. Those of you waiting for your copy are going to have to wait a while longer whilst I arrange cash transfer to effect the order They will be sent surface mail which takes for ever, but we'll get there.

6TH INTERNATIONAL SEA KAYAKING SYMPOSIUM continues to attract interest. There are still places available at £38.00 for the full weekend of 6/7/8 November 1987 at the YMCA Centre, Cumbria. Application to me with £15.00 deposit as soon as possible.

BCU SEA TOURING AGM 3RD OCTOBER 1987 is being held at Anglesey School of Sea Canoeing, Trearrdur Bay, Anglesey, North Wales. We're making a weekend "event" out of it and if you want to join this it will cost you £25.00 for full board. Send £10 deposit with your notice of attendance - all very welcome. (Of course the AGM is free.)

It is at this stage I introduce some of the features in the newsletter. One of them is a book review on David Burch's book "Fundamentals of Kayak Navigation". You'll note how much I enjoyed it. It is available from P. & H. Fibreglass. At the time of going to print the price is uncertain. Give P. & H. a ring as they'll have the price by the time you are ready to order.

As for the remainder of the newsletter - I hope you like it. If not let me know - better still contribute an article.

FINALLY. Some bad and good news. The bad news is I'm having to put the ASKC membership fee up. The good news - it is only going up by £1. I try to run the Club on a no-profit basis but with the increase in materials and the secretarial expenses involved because I'm personally unable to undertake all the work on the newsletter, I have the choice of either increasing membership fee or decreasing the number of newsletters. I opted for the former - I hope you agree.

I am taking membership renewals for 1988 hence the renewal forms enclosed with this newsletter.

IF SURFERS DO IT STANDING UP
WHICH WAY DO CANOEISTS DO IT?!!

Thanks for the note left on my bike seat on Monday morning. I hope this will answer the question for you.

Ever since early man there had been canoes, the first was simply a log on which man sat and used his pole for propulsion. He soon realised that doing it on a log was not practical; first it was unstable so most of the time his pole was in the water to stabilise himself and also he found that he had to do it with his legs wide apart and wrapped round the log, this of course caused strain and fatigue. He then got wise, he hollowed out the log, this meant he could now do it sitting down with no strain on his legs· however, he still had to use his pole for stability and propulsion, not an ideal situation. In some parts of the world, outriggers were put on these hollowed out logs, this gave more scope to do it, it could now be done sitting down or standing up (the early surfer???) and stability was no longer a problem.

The American Indian soon got fed up with his log, it was far too heavy, and he used up so much energy carrying the canoe that he had no strength left to do it, so he designed an open canoe made of wood and skins which became known as the 'Canadian Canoe'. As this type was stable and roomy, doing it became easier; he then put a seat in the canoe as doing it on his knees made them sore. We now therefore, have the ability to do it standing, kneeling, sitting or even laying down due to the space in this type of canoe.

The Eskimo produced a deck canoe and called it a kayak. This craft was fully closed in and the paddler did it sitting down. Because of the icy Arctic waters, he could not afford to capsize, and only did it when the sea was flat calm as any violent movement meant death in the cold water, so, to minimise the chance of capsize, he decided that rubbing noses was better and safer.

Modern man progressed and produced a canoe constructed on the lines of the Indian canoe; it was made of wood and covered in canvas. However, in Europe this canoe was closed in, so you could once again only do it sitting down and care was needed as doing it with too much ferocity could puncture the skin and sink the boat, so a slow, gentle movement was needed.

Then came fibreglass, and all types of canoes were soon constructed in this new strong material. Now we could do it standing, sitting, kneeling or laying down as before, but, because of the strength of the new material, the movement could be increased as no matter how many times you had a bang whilst doing it, the canoe was strong enough to take it. The only drawback was whilst doing it on a beach, after a bang, sand got in the hole and it was found that doing it the next time was very sore.

So in this modern day and age, with so many types of canoe or kayak on the market, there are also so many ways to do it, and as it is so easy to turn over in a canoe, the scope is increased.

There is also a "specialist" canoe on the market used by the "Corps of Canoe Lifeguards". As it is a "reserve canoe" its design makes it very stable and it has a flat deck at the rear. This, of course, means that not only can it be done laying down, but the kiss of life can also be done in safety on a stable surface whilst doing it. This, plus the ability to roll over makes the "rescue canoe" an ideal craft for doing it in, and of course, with this craft, all other ways of doing it are also possible due to

the stability, i.e., sitting, standing, or kneeling. If you are going to do it a lot therefore, and want variety, this is the canoe to use.

Apart from when in an open Canadian canoe, the big advantage of a canoe over a surfboard, is the fact that without a break in the rhythm of doing it, the canoeist can very easily roll over and do it again!!

Well, I hope this answers the question of quote "If surfers do it standing up, which way do canoeists do it?" unquote, and, if you feel as a surfer you would like to widen your scope and do it other ways, please feel free to come along to the Port of Plymouth Canoeing Association on the Barbican where instruction is given to beginners on how to do it and new faces are always welcome.

During the decent weather canoeists at the above are doing it every night of the week, and also do it all weekend, so hope to see you sometime.

All the best, take care whilst doing it,

Dave Greet

SEABIRD COLONY ON SOUTH STACK CLIFFS

Last year we were in correspondence with the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds, concerning the activities of sea canoeists near the important seabird colony of South Stack Cliff Reserve. Our attention was drawn to the sensitivities of the Guillemots and Razorbills at their nest sites. Following a number of worrying, though isolated, incidents in the early part of last year, the BCU supported a voluntary code of conduct, whereby kayaks would keep well away from the breeding ledges during the period 1 February to 31 July. Since that time, many sea canoeists have shown their concern and given of their support and advice. In particular the RSPB are now aware that some sea canoeists derive specific enjoyment from the observation of seabirds and other wildlife. It is not the wish of the Society to interfere with anyone's enjoyment of wild birds provided that it does not involve disturbance. They now recognise, following the assurances of several experienced canoeists, that it is possible, with care, to observe wildlife at close quarters from kayaks.

Nonetheless, at breeding colonies, it is possible to cause a great loss of eggs and chicks by careless movement. With care, it is easy to see when the birds are starting to get uneasy or alarmed, and gentle retreat to sea will preserve the peace. If it is not the specific intention to watch birds, then the RSPB urge that kayaks continue to keep well clear of the colony in the manner outlined last year. The Society will continue to monitor the situation and will keep us informed of progress. If you would like further information about the seabird colony or the reserve then please contact the Warden, Paul Fisher, at Swn y Mor, South Stack, Holyhead, Anglesey. Also Ellin's Tower, their information centre and viewing place, is open daily 11 a.m. - 5 p.m. from April to September and they would be delighted to see you there.

FOREWORD

The following transcript was made from cuttings pasted into a battered old pocket notebook which in the mid-1940s stood for many years on a book-shelf in Clyde Canoe Club room. The only alterations which have been made are to typographical errors and spelling where in doubt.

Knowing well most of the waters covered by these intrepid adventurers, it is amazing how much they accomplished so early in the history of canoeing.

A. G. C. Dunn, 1983

A canoe cruise on Loch Lomond

"The Scotsman" - 24th June 1874

One of the pleasantest short cruises regularly undertaken by Clyde canoeists when the days are long and the nights warm, is what is familiarly known as the Loch Lomond round - from Roseneath up Loch Long to Arrochar, then by cart to Tarbet and down Loch Lomond and the river Leven to the Clyde again.

We had often done it before but the scenery is so varied and lovely and the facilities so many for those whose time is limited, that quite as a matter of course the Hermit and Lark were put in commission to go over the old track again. On Friday evening the last steamer brought us down to Holy Loch but before provisions were got aboard, oil put into the lamp and the lost tent pins found, it was nearly 10 o'clock - rather a late hour for a start Still, with plenty of daylight and a fine north-west wind behind us, we scudded down Holy Loch at a great pace, only lowering our sails when the calm water to leeward of Stone Hill was reached. Then our course was steered north for up Loch Long; but before we got past Blairmore, it was dark and we were enveloped in the shadow of the big hills to the westward. A light shone ahead at Ardentinny but it vanished as we got nearer, a sure sign that everyone had gone to bed, as example which we felt inclined to follow. So our boats were paddled across to the gravelly beach on the other side of the bay and we pitched tent by lamplight in a field of what looked like grass at midnight but which turned out afterwards to be corn. Beds were easily made, as a waterproof sheet below, with two or three rugs and Highland cloaks above, satisfied us. One advantage of sleeping under canvas is that you always manage to wake very early next morning, but we slept soundly and only got afloat again about 6 a.m. A fine breeze was blowing up the loch and we glided quickly before it past Dornoch and the wild entrance to Loch Goil at its junction with Loch Long where experience warned us to keep a bright lookout for squalls. It was as well that we knew to be on our guard, for before long the gusts came down on us from the rocky peaks above in a way that almost lifted our boats out of the water. Once past Loch Goil, we were in calm water again, giving us a chance to land for breakfast. Hermit was cook and had just got the water for coffee boiling over a wood fire, when two other canoes, named the Dolphin and the Monsoon, rounded the point and as is usual among canoeists, their owners without much ceremony, joined us at breakfast. They knew that we were to be in Loch Long and had sailed from the Club-house at Roseneath to join us.

Thus reinforced, we ran up to Arrochar before a wind which was now much stronger than we cared for. Only one cart could be got to take us across to Tarbet, but we were in no hurry and managed the portage easily enough; the only difficulty being that the canoes always inclined to slide

either over the horse or over the stern of the cart when we were going up and down hills.

Although a stiff breeze was blowing at Arrochar, Loch Lomond at Tarbet was undisturbed by a ripple so sails were put out of sight and pipes lighted before starting to paddle down the loch to Rowardennan which was reached in time for dinner. The evening was clear and bright and we had a most enjoyable sail among the islands on our way to the camping place for Sunday. Profiting by former experience, a breezy headland was selected as the midges hereabouts are quite unequalled for savagery anywhere.

Next morning we were awakened by the noise of heavy rain pelting against the canvas and wisely lay where we were till breakfast was ready in the other tent. A look out on the loch showed a very uninviting prospect - nothing but mist and rain, without a breath of wind. At 11 o'clock waterproofs were put on and we walked back to Rowardennan church but found out there that a service was only held once a month in this happy locality. Sunshine followed the rain and we had a pleasant ramble among the hills before returning to camp. Tents were struck at daybreak next morning and a straight run made past Inch Murrin to Balloch where the River Leven escapes from the loch. Here our masts and sails were put under deck, rudders unshipped and everything made secure for the run down stream. Then, with the strong current helping us along in a deep channel, we passed Balloch: a bit further down shot a rapid, and narrowly escaped running into a mill lade. In other shallow places our keels grated hard on the gravel and stones, a position requiring some management to keep from getting broadside on, which means a capsize; till finally, after traversing many a bend and twist of the river, we were in sight of the historic rock of Dumbarton. The lovely and picturesque Leven here changes in character completely, becoming decidedly useful and commonplace-looking, besides giving forth odours which are scarcely inviting. Hermit, Monacon and Dolphin decided to go straight down the Clyde to headquarters at Roseneath, a distance of 10 or 12 miles; but here till she is required for another cruise we will leave the

LARK

From: James Vermillion, Chuciak, Alaska

SIGNAL HEIGHT VS. RECEPTION RANGE AND AREA (assuming searcher's or rescuer's eye-level is 20' above water, and hand held signals are held or launched from 3' above water.

Rescue Units is an evaluation index developed by Jim Vermillion of Alaskan Kayaks to indicate the relative probability of an emergency signal being received by some rescuer, assuming proper weather conditions and deployment for signal chosen, equal distribution of potential rescuers, etc. It is an indicator of general value, showing the relative merit of each generic type of signal when used under the conditions for which it is intended.

Signal Type	Range (NM)	Area (NM^2)	=Duration (Sec)	Rescue Units (Avg Area * Duration) / 1000
Orange Distress Signal Flag	8	201	60	12.1
Hand-held Signal (Strobe, Electric Signal, Flare, Smoke	7	153	60	9.2
Smoke (15 min. calm day, 20' high smoke cloud	10	314	60	18.8
Pencil meteor flare	16	804	5	2.7
12 ga. meteor flare	18	1018	6	5.1
25mm. meteor flare	24	1809	8	10.1
25mm. parachute flare	41	5280	21	19.8
Rocket parachute flare	44	6082	40	162.9
EPIRB or ELT	180	101×10^3	60	6107.1

The preceeding table may be used several ways to evaluate emergency signals. The first derivative of the table may be a direct comparison of the Rescue Units of each signal category, given that you consider the type of condition under which the signal is effective, e.g., a signal flag will have a Rescue Unit of 0 if used at night, while a parachute flare may be used day or night. The second derivative is a per signal evaluation. By dividing one rating by another a comparison may be achieved which shows how many of the lesser rated signals must be carried to achieve the same probability of attracting a rescuers attention, e.g , 25mm Meteors divided by Pencil Meteors equals 3 7, therefore it is imputed that one must carry 3.7 pencil meteors to equal the value of one 25mm Meteor, or 60 pencil meteors to equal the rescue units value of just one rocket parachute flare. A third derivative allows price comparison between the various devices. Divide the cost of the signal by its Rescue Units to determine its value in dollars per unit of rescue value., e.g., Pencil Meteors at $12.95 per three pack is $4.31 each. $4.31 divided by a rescue value of 2.7 equals a cost of $1.60 per rescue unit. Rocket parachute flares at $45.00 each yield a cost effective value at only 28c per rescue unit.

SOLO ROUND SCOTLAND

I smiled as the kayak's bow parted the current of the Solway Firth beneath an overcast sky in Scotland's far south west. This was the beginning of a unique personal adventure, a marathon journey of almost 2,000 miles of open sea kayaking around the Scottish coast and Hebridean islands. Four months of planning, preparation, research and training faded behind me. Ahead ... well, who could tell? The Scottish coastline is three thousand miles of bewildering variety in seascape, wildlife and human tradition; within its compass fall some of the wildest of unspoiled beaches, the grandest of cliff-scapes and the most notorious of sea passages in all Europe.

Carrying food and camping equipment through waters often unsuitable for any other craft, the paddle was my ticket to isolated seal colonies, bird islands and remote coastal communities. This journey was to be a personal exercise in freedom and adventure but was certainly no foolhardy jaunt; I had researched very mile of hazardous water, plotted chart information and trained intensively. I also carried distress flares and an emergency radio beacon and had practised deep water self-rescue techniques for I was to be entirely independent of any support, self-sufficient for four months.

Late spring gales and strong Solway tides conspired to produce difficult sea conditions, limiting initial daily distances to 15 miles average. Exposed headlands and wide-bay crossings became problematic and as yet solo canoeing was new and strange to me. Lonely nights in the tent followed long, hard days at sea and there was no-one to discuss the planning with, no-one else to blame when it went wrong and no-one to divide the attentions of the infamous Scottish midge!

The first serious obstacle was the Mull of Galloway where several tidal streams meet in a confused area of overfalls intercepted by an exposed cliff buttress. Despite local fishermen who took bets to the contrary, I was able to handle the turbulence, hydraulic waves so close together that sliding down the face of one brought me within the shadows of the next, already curling high above me, feeling the elastic buoyancy of the loaded kayak and emerging from this trial with an appetite for more. There would be numerous hazards to face, increasing in severity as I progressed round the coast.

I became stronger and fitter, attuning myself to the rhythm of the tides and increasing daily distances to 25 miles despite worsening weather. Even backlooping on a steep-sided swell in a force 8 gale did little to dampen morale! Everything else, however, was dampened and, as the foul weather continued, it became impossible to dry off wet gear. Each morning meant the misery of cold, wet longjohns and hours in damp conditions. I developed a nasty rash on my back and groin and my feet became permanently soggy, white and wrinkled, in fact, not like feet at all, but the challenge was to become as obstinate as the weather and to keep going.

To reach Oban at the end of the first month meant tackling the main tidal channel of south west Scotland, the Dorus Mor (or 'great door') where the tide rushes at 8 knots, causing watery chaos between the mainland and some small offshore islands, forging onward until it enters the cast whirlpool at the Gulf of Corryvreckan. According to an ancient 'Rutter' this is 'the most dangerous streame knowing in all Europe - a depe hole-poole quairin if shippis do enter there is no refuge but death onlie'.

By any standards it was an exhilarating paddle. I was spat through the channel, passing within a few feet of the main race which charged by like a herd of buffalo!

Beyond Oban and the Sound of Mull lies the peninsula of Ardnamurchan ('headland of sea nymphs') where, on rounding the lighthouse point, one is at last truly adrift on western seas and the Hebridean isles lie in breathtaking panorama across cobalt Atlantic waters. The weather took a change for the better and I enjoyed idyllic days paddling among those mysterious Celtic outposts, the isles of Rhum, Eigg and Muck.

Jagged mountain ridges, spectacular geos and sculptured rock pinnacles are just part of the 300 mile coastal heritage of the Island of Skye, an eloquent retort to the unrelenting wrath of its western sea.

Paddling the Hebridean swell was like riding surf, each surge being followed by a swamping as the old wave passed and the next one lifted the stern high. Keeping speed with the passing waves and leaning forward, balance became the crucial point between exhilaration and capsize but the speeds reached were phenomenal.

Gentle Hebridean sunsets often rewarded progress hard-won on the western seaboard but when the weather closed in this was no place to be in a 17ft. kayak. Sea conditions could change dramatically in a matter of hours. The articulated procession of rollers would become a tumbling, white confusion and to fight such turmoil required every minute of pre-expedition training. One must know one's limitations utterly and get off the water before reaching them for fatigue and hypothermia can take the lone canoeist by surprise and there is never a time when it is safe to approach that narrow boundary between luck and strength.

Beyond the Isle of Skye, across the stormy Minch, on a clear day you may see the outer Hebridean islands. These barren blue shadows on the Atlantic horizon are in fact a series of surf-blanched, white sand beaches, punctuated by towering cliff headlands, beaten endlessly by the full force of the Atlantic. To visit these remote bastions was an integral part of my expedition, leading me now into some of the wildest passages of the entire trip and inviting new breakthroughs in personal achievement.

Landing upon untrodden deserted beaches, one soon appreciates the unique opportunities provided by the wandering sea kayak. Here fertile machair plains, decked with the myriad flora of early summer, add an extra dimension to spectacular campsites and, while collecting wild rhubarb and driftwood, nudity became the final element of paradise but paradise is transitory in these parts and when the islands become a wind-blown wilderness the beaches become battlegrounds. Far out to sea I watched the rollers form in orderly ranks, 15ft. high and lead grey with white spume snarling from their shoulders. Each was a gradual, terrible piling up of force before the crest curled over and the whole ridge came roaring down in total collapse, enough to destroy a boat many times my size and yet each day's beginning meant breaking out through that surf, often using the best part of an hour to reach unbroken water. Once beyond the surf one experienced the most incredible swell. Off the headlands the swell breaks and becomes confused as it hits shallower water or submerged reefs, often churning and tumbling back on itself in a mass of angry white froth that will easily engulf an off-guard canoeist. Towards the north west the coastline becomes very inhospitable and, with few landing places, one finds oneself committed to 20 mile bursts in technically extreme conditions. With mountainous clapotis in the areas of wave-reflection beneath cliffs, vast areas of grey, heaving water were my opponents for up to six hours each day with the thunder of the sea in my ears and nowhere to come ashore. Progress was slow with much effort channelled into support and recovery strokes and there was always that Hawaiian-scale surf to be met at the day's end.

At the Butt of Lewis, the most northerly point of the Hebridean islands, the Atlantic meets the Minch, surging around a mighty headland,

producing fearsome currents and constant turbulence. Concentration and adrenalin brought me through this unscathed but the highlight of the day was a close encounter with an energetic, 30ft Orca gladiator, a killer whale! I fought the current as the whale launched into backflips, showering me with spray and displaying the yellow-white underparts and tall, sabre fin. Probably the fiercest animal in the seas of the world, the killer whale may devour 15 porpoises and 15 seals at one meal and might not be averse to the occasional kayak but this one was in a playful mood and it took more than mere turbulence to tear me away from the sight. I headed for Stornoway, my spirit lightened through contact with such elemental power and beauty, the embodiment of all the force of the ocean. Gale force winds arose again and I elected to take the ferry across the 30 miles to Ullapool on the Scottish mainland.

Feeling vulnerable and insignificant beneath the imposing 1,000ft. cliffs of Cape Wrath, I struggled for three hours in a heavy, tumbling swell until the great buttresses issued eastwards upon a unique exhibition of finger peninsulas, Scotland's northern coast. So, the first half of my journey was over and I felt all the conquering awe of the first seafarers to challenge these grim northern seas.

The north coast of Scotland is no easy option. Around each of its massive peninsulas runs a dangerous tide race, formed as the Pentland current meets changes in depth close inshore, forcing water back upon itself in massive standing waves.

These become progressively more severe as you progress eastward, issuing eventually into the most feared single sea passage in Europe, the Pentland Firth. This was the ultimate challenge of the expedition. Ten pages of detailed hazard notes and an entire tidal stream atlas covered this 15 mile stretch, warning of tidal streams exceeding 10 knots sweeping into restricted passages to produce severe eddies, overfalls and races. The Inner Sound is described as 'navigable with extreme caution' and my caution was nothing short of extreme as I struck out towards Dunnet Head and the entrance to the Pentland Firth. With careful timing and settled weather and the backing of a 10 knot tide, the Firth resembled little more than a grade 3 river rapid. I was through it before I had time to become nervous and the sun shone in congratulation upon the great headland of Duncansby, Scotland's north east corner.

One of the major hazards on the east coast was the famous North Sea haar, a dense fog caused by the rapid condensation of continental air masses as they pass across the North Sea. Unlikely to show up on a radar screen and well beyond the visibility range of larger vessels, in a busy shipping area the canoeist becomes vulnerable. I paddled gingerly, wearing a hi-glo helmet, and carried white collision flares in my buoyancy aid pocket. Judging the speeds and directions of distant hull shapes became a fine art.

On the wide firths of the east coast I elected for long crossings of over 30 miles on the open sea, enjoying the rhythmic discipline of a six hour paddling session, the strict adherence to a compass bearing and that very special feeling of being far beyond any sight or sound of land. With the barriers of routine sense experience broken down, a well-planned, open sea crossing is another of those special kayak adventures.

The tumbling gait of passing porpoises often cheered the weary slog and Arctic skuas gave dazzling displays of aerobatic piracy as they forced the smaller terns to release their catches. One day I collected a passenger; a storm-weary fulmar hitched a lift 15 miles southwards, perching happily on deck as I paddled on. These fleeting encounters will decorate the memories of the expedition for years to come.

Beyond the Buchan coast the north east ports bulged with supply vessels for the oil industry. The lights of offshore platforms sparkled on the horizon and the gas terminal at St Fergus blossomed on a spectacular sunset evening.

Southward again, I was racing the calendar to complete the circumnavigation almost four months from the launch date. The Bass Rock stood sentinel to the Berwick shore and the gannets soared and dived in an ebbing tide. Riding that last wave onto the beach, a weary kayak surrendered the freedom of solo travel and faced the crowds once more but there will be other trips, other adventures, and perhaps already the plans are hatching...

Brian Wilson was sponsored by many small firms and his major backers were Fox's biscuits of Yorkshire. In turn, he was collecting funds for Intermediate Technology who provide aid for rural development in Third World countries. In an article last March he explained how he portaged his kayak to and from the water without having to unload it each time.

NATURE - AUSTIN HATTON - SEA FOOD

With the turn of the tide there comes a slight breeze. Also, the murmuring of the surf becomes a little higher, sounding a fresh note of eagerness. But as the breakers gather strength, the breeze dies.

On a windless day such as this the fog begins again to thicken, seemingly indifferent to the mystery of where that elusive puff of wind came from just as the tide was turning.

But the wildfowl, far out with the seals on the sand-banks, felt it, or else they, too, recognised a different note in the melody of the surf. On whirring wings the ducks come flying in, chuckling contentedly in family parties. With them appear the golden plover, whistling overhead before they land on the surf's edge to twitter as they alone twitter when it is feeding time.

A desolate shore, and miles of sand slowly vanishing under an encroaching and fog-covered sea, seem to offer little for them to eat. Yet instantly the rummagers are busy in the flotsam and jetsam of the tide.

Somewhere in the long, ribbon-like streamers of the sea-tangle, or in that bundle of olive brown fronds of serrated wrack, or in the oar weeds that cling to the valve of a horse-mussel they find an abundance, no matter whether it is animal or vegetable.

In the daily retreat and advance of the North Sea, so much minuscule life is squandered and in the end ground to atoms on a tideline that every inch of sand seemingly offers something edible for them and their constant companions, the slightly larger sanderlings.

Even when there is that nip in the air that brings the wild geese out of the cold northern fjords the desolate-looking shore still has its clouds of miniature black flies, dancing in swarms around the empty whelk eggs and other debris.

No beach is, indeed, ever quite as barren as it looks.

FUJI HD-M

Compact, robust and immersible

Background

Nobody will be more pleased about the Fuji HD-M than our insurers, no less than three of our previous cameras having met watery ends. Now we have available a high quality all-weather 35mm camera with many features built in as standard on a camera smaller than some non-waterproof models.

Design and use

The only obviously unusual feature is a large clamp at one end of the camera body with a locking wheel on the outside, the clamp acting as a useful grip although there is a tripod mounting point on the bottom if required. Warnings about not getting any sand on the seal are repeated prominently and it must be assumed that failure to observe them will prove expensive.

The built-in motor drive takes over as soon as film is loaded, a very simple operation. The shutter release is controlled by a lock button and the only setting usually required is the focus, other settings being automatic. Unfortunately there is no visual focussing arrangement, distances having to be estimated and the distance ring adjusted accordingly. Film speeds of 100 to 1,600 ISO can be handled. If light conditions are tooo poor then a red light shows at the bottom of the viewfinder and it is necessary to use the built-in flash unit.

At the end of the film, rewinding is undertaken automatically, a process that can be commenced part-way through a film if so desired.

At the front end the lens cap is attached on a stalk, something I appreciate as a regular lens cap loser. The lens is a Fujinon 1;2.8 38mm lens and can be fitted with a lens hood to hold filters. Unfortunately it is not possible to interchange the lens with longer lenses but when that stages comes then we will see standard cameras made obsolete as far as canoeists are concerned.

Flicking a switch on top allows self portraits to be taken, a red light on the front showing for 7 seconds and flashing for 3 before the shutter trips, allowing you to join in the group photo on your paddle.

Photographs can be taken underwater to 2m which should suit all canoeists' requirements. There are three strap mounting points so that the camera can be carried horizontally or vertically down the inside of a buoyancy aid, for example. Under reasonable conditions I found it could be worn outside the buoyancy aid with the waist tie passed outside the camera straps above the camera. On rough water I preferred not to have an extra strap round my neck and kept the camera below the deck except when being used.

The HD stands for Heavy Duty and indeed the camera did not need any special feather bedding although it was possible to knock the various control levers on if things got too rough. Accessories include a floating/protective bag, chest harness and spare film case. Supplied with the camera is a comprehensive and clear manual in English, German, French and Spanish with a fold-out illustration section and an excellent fault guide.

North Shore have taken on the agency for the canoeing world and are offering this excellent camera which is likely to make a significan improvement to the number of canoeing pictures we see taken on canoe trips, especially those taken from the canoe.

THE ANAS ACUTA STORY by GEOFF BLACKFORD

About three years ago at the British Canoe Union Conference I looked around all the exhibitors displays. I must have been feeling off colour, because I began to feel that there just was not anything there to interest me. I looked at this slalom canoe and that one and thought that if I took half an inch off this one and added it to that one I would have the same boat. And so from here I went to look at the White water racers, there was a little more variation here but a quick look told me that most of these were very good for what they were designed to do, but that was not "Sea Canoeing". At this stage I get decided to go and see Chris Hares film and talk on his Eskimo Expedition, this slightly relieved my feelings and I went away thinking.

After much thought and a good look through the book "The Bark Canoes and Skin Boats of North America" it was obvious to me that the Eskimo was no fool when it came to designing craft for the sea. More than half the kayaks were chine built, and of these threequarters were hard chine.

I now had a real problem, the only reason to build a chine boat is because the material you are using won't go into the shape you want, and the best material for canoe construction, at the moment, is glass reinforced plastic which if you have enough skill and time can be made into the perfect shape. So where di I go from here? Well I like wood, it is a beautiful material to work with, it floats and if I am going to build a chine boat then there will not be the difficulties that there would be with another shape, so wood it is.

How am I going to build the boat? The Kayel construction (plywood bonded at the keel and chines with glass fibre tape and resin)? This is a good system if you know the exact shape of the panels, but I didn't, so that was out. Go back to more traditional methods! Build a wooden frame and cover it with plywood, with this system I could see what it was going to look like even before I started to cover it. Well that was it, I would do it like that. Now I only had one problem, which was the best design to use? My thoughts went back to that exhibition, there just wasn't anything oustanding or unusual, to the untrained eye they might easily all have come out of the same mould. So let's be different. Let's settle down and think what I want, what must it do? What are the important things in life at sea in a kayak, these are questions I asked myself.

The sea kayak must first of all be comfortable, you must be able to enjoy being in it for six or seven hours without discomfort. From this point of view it must be a good fit but not too tight so that you have no movement, and yet you must have a positive fit. Having got the living accommodation sorted out what else is there? I like to keep dry (I don't know why I canoe then), and therefore the kayak must be able to cleave through the water, a fairly high bow and a deep 'V' at that. But it's no use cutting through the water if there is no lift, and so a cleaving bow with a fairly good lift. If I go on a long sea voyage then I want to make it as effortless as possible therefore I must have a fast boat, speed means long and thin, if its too thin it will be unstable, if its too long I cannot turn it. Chine built will give more stability than the same width in a round bilge, 23" is alright in the latter and so if I knock an inch off either side and have it chined this might be alright. But what about length, if its too long I shall have to have a rudder. Now rudders are mechanical, things mechanical go wrong when you least expect them to and always at the most embarrassing time, therefore no rudder. The eventual dimensions were to be 17" approx. by 21" beam. I liked the look of the Eskimo kayaks with the upturned tails and yet a fairly low deck line would not catch the wind. The nearest I could find to this was the Igolorssuit Kayak, Duncan Winning had let me have drawings that Ken Taylor had made from an actual kayak. The main thing that was wrong with this was the

living accommodation being far too little room for me, but very nice lines, and so it was from here that I set out to design Anas Acuta. Where did I get that name? Well I hoped that I was going to have a classic design and so why not go to the Latin name of the pintail duck.

The boat took many hours of work, starting by building the hull in the upside-down position on a jig. The frames were cut out of 3mm marine ply and the stringers were of clean parana pine, with a deck support that I laminated from $\frac{1}{8}$" veneers, all this was covered with 3mm ply. At this stage the whole lot was taken up into the attic through a small window in the end of the house, and there all the excess wood on the stringers was removed to keep the weight down as much as possible and to give as smooth an inside as possible The interior was then varnished with two coats of thinned oil bound varnish (not poly-eurethene) taking care not to coat any joints that were going to have to be made in fixing the deck on at a later stage.

The next big problem was the shaping of the fore deck, the rear deck only had a very small pitch - in fact $\frac{1}{2}$" just behind the cockpit. The fore deck had a fair sheer and was also curved in the beam thus giving a two dimentionak curve, and, although the wood was only going to be $7\frac{1}{2}$mm ply there was still going to be some very difficult cutting to get a smooth effect. The method used was to join three of the 4' x 4' sheets with a scarf joint, but after much bending and stretching it was obvious that this wasn't going to work and so a piece was cut out of the centre from about four feet forward of the cockpit back to the cockpit and then replaced with a tapering piece which worked fairly well. If I had to do the same job again I would make three separate pieces the whole length of the foredeck and shape them in as I went along, thus getting a much smoother line.

The cockpit hole was the next thing to design, I had completely decked the whole boat except for a small hole and now I had to cut out a size that would take most sizes and yet not be too big and require a large spray cover. I must also be able to lean back for some of the modern type rolls. I sat down with bits of cardboard around me and cut a bit out here, tried it on and cut another but out there, then looked at the whole shape from an artistic point of view, fined down the shape and cut it out of the deck. Then it was a case of building up the edge to make the coaming and the final layer of that to be larger to make a reasonable rim for the spray cover to fit over. Then came the job of shaping the inside to make it smooth and comfortable no matter how I moved around in the cockpit.

The varnishing of the inside of the decks was quite difficult getting a brush into a small cockpit hole without dripping all the stuff off and getting right into the ends, this was achieved with the aid of several bamboo sticks tied with hairy string and the brush on the end of all that.

The outside finishing was much more simple, although I wanted the best appearance possible I had an idea that if the boat was as good as I hoped I might get someone to make it in glass-fibre and therefore I did not put on a capping piece where the gunnel joined the deck so as not to spoil the lines.

Eventually the launching day arrived, she looked very sleek and I began to wonder if I had in fact made her too narrow. I got into her in the usual way of entry into an Eskimo by sitting on the stern deck and lowering myself into the cockpit, first impression was that stability was a little tender, I soon realised that it was many a year since I had paddled a chine boat and soon settled down to enjoying the feeling of cutting effortlessly through the water. The next thing was to look for some waves and see if she would cut through and lift over, and at this stage I realised just what I had been missing all my canoeing career a really true thoroughbred that took to the sea like the proverbial duck. I paddled it around for that season, but

was very reluctant to get the beautiful wood scratched. It was at this stage that Carel Quaife came to me and asked which was the best sea kayak on the market, I said that mine was but it wasn't om the market, yet (not at that time ever thinking that it might go into commercial production). Carel asked if he could take a fibre-glass mould off it, I said yes if you will give me the first one off. At this stage I don't think that Carel and his wife Ann knew what they had bitten off, in fact I think that it was almost Carel without a wife, the problems of moulding a long thin boat with fine turned up ends were terrific Eventually it was decided to mould two opposite sides and join them top and bottom unlike the majority of other production canoes, joined around the gunnels Well so as not to steal a long chapter out of Carels memoirs, when he writes them, my boat was produced in natural colour and I collected it. It was quite a few pounds lighter than the original wooden one and this was a big advantage. (This is only a very short and brief section and does not really do credit to the work Carel and Ann put into the boat.)

This glass Anas Acuta was much more the type of boat you could take out and paddle around, somehow there isn't quite the same feeling scratching a glass-fibre boat as there is with a wooden one, or was it that I hadn't put in the same number of hours in getting the later one and easy come easy go, I don't know. Well the next chapter started one Saturday afternoon when Alan Byde, who is renowned for his repartee on canoeing subjects, was camping on the Spit at Calshot when I returned from the Isle of Wight with a group of students. I offered him the use of my boat to go across to the River Hamble, he jumped at the opportunity, and when he returned was making all sorts of appreciative sounds, about how he must get one of these for himself. This reaction along with that of many of my own students who tried out the boat made us (Carel, Alan and me) think of the chances of commercial firms being interested in producing these for the market. One or two firms were approached and were a bit slow off the mark in taking up the design, and Alan decided that he would like to perfect the original mould which was taken directly off my wooden boat and had a few imperfections. He also thought that the joining system was not the best as there would be a join continually under water and this was a potential weakness. Here again I think that I can not do credit to the work that Alan has put into the boat, both in work and hours. But to cut a long story short the ANAS ACUTA has now been taken up by Valley Canoe Products who will produce it under licence from the three of us, they will have the sole commercial rights.

I have now clocked up over 350 miles in my glass Anas Acuta, most of which has been expeditions carrying all the necessary, and some in addition, kit for a five day camps, I have circumnavigated the Isle of Wight three times, and been out to the Needles on quite a few times, and in all conditions I have always had complete confidence that the boat is so well behaved that I shall not get caught out, just so long as I don't stick my neck out too far!

To recap on my original thoughts of what characteristics a sea going kayak should have:-

(1) It must be comfortable.

(2) It must be fitted to each individual.

(3) It should be as dry as possible, cleave through the water and lift well, also shed the water from the deck.

(4) It should have good touring speed but not necessarily high flat out speed.

(5) It should have sufficient inherent stability for the paddler to relax without having to support himself on the paddle.

(6) There must be sufficient directional stability not to require a rudder. This is achieved by underwater shape and also freeboard design.

(7) A small cockpit is necessary.

(8) Internal fitments are personal but should have a "safe" footrest, knee grips or bars according to choice, and the most important thing of all is a non-restricting seat. Thigh grips should be there but not too tight and very carefully designed.

(9) Deck fittings, optional, but I think there should be provision for towing and being towed. For towing there must be an attachment just behind the cockpit otherwise you can only go directly away from whatever you are towing. For being towed a toggle, a loop or gromet.

(10) Not essential, but it helps if the kayak has eye-appeal, if it looks good it probably is good.

We are very grateful to John Kuyser from Calshot Activities Centre for interviewing Geoff Blackford for us. Here is the transcript of that interview:-

Q1. Geoff, although recently retired, you are still considered one of the big names in sea kayak design - do you consider sea kayak designs have made much progress since you designed the ANUS ACUTA?

A1. Yes, it would be a poor outlook for canoeing if they hadn't progressed. Load carrying capacities have greatly increased. The ANUS is still the best sports sea kayak and the Nordkapp is the best bulk carrier.

Q2. There is some discussion about the origins of the Nordkapp shape. Do you have any views on that?

A2. When Colin Mortlock and Company were planning the Nordkapp Expedition they studied the Anus Acuta which was based on Eskimo kayak lines and I think that Colin liked the handling of the Anua but not its load carrying capacity for extended expeditions in remote areas Frank (Goodman), Colin and team set out to design the craft that became the NORDKAPP.

Q3. To me the Nordkapp has little in common with the Anua Acuta shape but was the Nordkapp an enlarged Anus as has been suggested?

A3. The Anus Acuta is a traditional hard chine design Eskimo kayak with the advantage that it was narrower for better paddling without losing stability. The hard chine gives a better steering effect from leaning the kayak which alleviates the necessity for a mechanical rudder which, if it is going to fail, does so at the least convenient time. The Nordkapp is round bilged and quite a bit longer, but does have a raised bow to give a dry ride and a cocked stern for coming ashore stern first - (standard hull model). There the similarity ends.

Q4. Do you recall when you first came across deck pumps on sea kayaks?

A4. Pumps! I first saw them on long distance racing kayaks in the late '50s. They were foot operated. I am not really certain of the advantages of the complicated equipment now being used. It can so often fail and then cause worse problems.

Q5. Would you agree that the Nordkapp was the first sea kayak to introduce the concept of bulkheads and hatches?

A5 Bulkheads! In the early days of surf rescue, Norman Brown and Miles Eckersley produced a rescue craft which was filled with foam except for the cockpit which of course made the kayak unsinkable but had no load carrying capacity. The next stage was a bulkhead fixed with elastic bungee. I'm not sure where it developed. This was only partially successful. Then other water user's methods of sealing compartments were looked at and as far as I know the first commercially designed and fitted hatches were those on the Nordkapp. I used the Anus without bulkheads and hatches preferring the ease of loading and the ability to trim weight fore and aft for weather cocking or when going down wind.

Q6. One of the features of sea kayaking that I enjoy is the rich diversity of opinion and equipment. Do you think it helps the sport to have such acrimonious discussions in the canoeing press between well respected sea kayaking personalities?

A6. Diversity and discussion of canoeing matters must be good for the sport providing that it is based on good information or sound practical personal experience. Some years ago when I bought the latest White Water Racing kayak - the first of its type in the country, a young lad said to me that it wasn't any good. I asked him if he had tried it? He said no, but that the firm had never built a good canoe! I asked him whether he had tried all their others? No, he said, but a friend of his had told him so! Has he tried them then? No, but he knows what he's talking about!! As an unbiased person I can tell you that the Anus Acuta is the best kayak that I have ever tried. You cannot agree or disagree with this until you have tried them all and formed your own personal opinion over a period of time and in varying conditions. Only then will your opinion be valid.

Book review by John J. Ramwell

FUNDAMENTALS OF KAYAK NAVIGATION BY DAVID BURCH
ISBN 0-931397-06-5 Number of pages 283
Published by Pacific Search Press, Seattle, Washington
Available from P & H Fibreglass Limited, Station Road,
West Hallam, Ilkeston, Derby
Retailing at £ including post and package

I have been anxiously awaiting my copy of David's book "Fundamentals of Kayak Navigation" ever since I first heard he was to write it. Now having read it cover to cover I am not disappointed.

In short it is a first class book which is fully informative and very well written and from which even the most experienced sea kayaker will benefit.

Here is a comprehensive account of the art and science of navigation, written by a professional navigator (David Burch is Director of Starpath School of Navigation in Seattle, Washington, who in 1985 received the Institute of Navigation's Superior Achievement Award for outstanding performance as a practising navigator) and an experienced sea kayaker.

As a sea kayaker of many years with a particular interest in navigation (though I have been known to add 180° to gain a reciprocal course on a previous compass course of 220° and then look for 400° on the compass!! - and I've never been allowed to forget it!), I feel absolutely justified in describing David's book as the 'last word' on the subject of kayak navigation.

Bound up in this excellently written volume is information, tips and advice that has taken me years of actual experience to gain, and then there is more. I have gained myself from reading this book; many were the times I said to myself "is that a fact" or "now I understand".

There is an excellent and detailed account, for example, on how to compensate for wind and tide and how to make the best estimate of your average speed. There are a variety of useful methods of particular use to us as sea kayakers. How, by winking, it is possible to find your distance off (I have trouble with this method as I can only wink one eye!!) By using some of David's detailed methods of off shore navigating you will bring a new dimension to your paddling enjoyment. It is always re-assuring to have more than just an idea of where you are and with a reliable watch and compass and good use of charts, pilots, topographical maps, etc., etc., David shows how these, combined with other navigational aids and aids to navigation (the difference is explained) can add so much to all your sea kayaking experience.

Apart from an excellent text there are many very good supporting diagrams, the whole all going to make this an informative book that is fun to read.

Sea kayaking is a fairly new pursuit that has slowly gained much credibility over the years by the generally proficient way we have all sought to pursue it, that is, by safe and common sense methods. David Burch's book now adds to this credibility in a way that seems to stamp the final seal of approval. In other words such a fine book must be about an equally fine activity, navigating a kayak on the sea.

John J. Ramwell
British Canoe Union Coach
Member Royal Institute of Navigation
Manager of the Advanced Sea Kayak Club

31st August 1987

BRITISH CANOE UNION, Flexel House, 45/47 High Street, Addlestone, Weybridge,
Surrey, KT15 1JV. Telephone Weybridge (0932) 41341

John J. Ramwell
7 Miller Close
Parkhurst
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PO30 5PS

Canoe Focus
British Canoe Union

Attention of P. Ingram, Esq.

15th July 1987

Dear Peter,

COASTAL ADVISORY SERVICE

The Sea Touring Committee of the B.C.U. previously oversaw a COASTAL ADVISORY SERVICE and it was decided at our last meeting to resurrect this service to B.C.U. members.

This being the case we now need some publicity to get this re-started.

May we have an article along the following lines.

COASTAL ADVISORY SERVICE FOR SEA KAYAKERS

The Sea Touring Committee wish to operate a Coastal Advisory Service for the general use of sea paddlers. We therefore require volunteers to act as Coastal Advisors The duties are unlikely to be at all onerous, consisting of sending out specific information to enquirers who must send along a stamped and addressed envelope.

Each Coastal Advisor will nominate the particular stretch of coast-line he feels familiar with for which he/she will act as advisor. Once the Sea Touring Committee is in possession of this information together with the name and address of each advisor we can compile the list for publication and circulation.

Please send this information to the Chairman of the Sea Touring Committee:-

John J. Ramwell,
7 Miller Close,
Parkhurst,
Newport,
Isle of Wight,
PO30 5PS

With thanks and best wishes.

(Sgd.) John

c.c. Martin Meling, Sec. S.I.C.

SEA TRIP EXPEDITION RECORDS AND NOTES
BY ROBERT O'REGAN

FOUR DAY EXPEDITION

1. June 11th 1987.

Start Fishguard
Penrhyn 157 SM 984382

2. After being invited to take part in this four day trip I was looking forward to it. This was because I would now be able to have a chance at many things I had not experienced before.

Thursday, 11th June, John Gaze and I set out from Coventry to meet the two men from Midland Canoe Club at Fishguard. Once in the area, John G and I first went to Goodwick to explore the possibilities of launching and return transport for the beginning and end of the trip. After deciding on a launch at SM 948380 we set off to the camp site. Here I was introduced to John Chamberlin and Robin Rhodes, the two Midland members.

Later on, the tides and day's paddle were worked on for the first day.

THE FIRST DAY

From Penrhyn, Fishguard to Porth Gain SM 815326. The approximate distance would be 14 miles with only a few landing points. Before setting off I found a call box and telephoned the Coastguard on Dale 218. Our day's intention was given with approximate times of departure and arrival.

With the fog just starting to clear we set off out of Goodwick harbour, taking notice of a map displaying restricted areas within the harbour. Once around the breakwater the four of us followed the coast towards Strumble Head. With Strumble approaching we all attached our paddle leads ready for the "overfall". This only lasted two minutes but it had very large and confused waves which made for some very thoughtful paddling. After Strumble, the one and only seal of the four days was sighted. Paddling with the tide made easier paddling and not much time was spent looking around.

Passing Abercastle the last landing point before Porth Cain, we had three miles to go. Once at our destination we pitched the tents on the local green where prior agreement with the local pub had already been made. Having landed at approximately 3 p.m., two hours early, John C telephoned the Coastguard of our safe landing and told him we would let him know of the next day's paddle tomorrow.

Later on in the pub, after eating (we cooked and carried all our own food and equipment) we discussed the next day's progress as this was, if conditions allowed, to be the longest and most open paddle.

THE SECOND DAY

This again was to be with tidal assistance for most of the trip. From Porth Cain around St David's Head, down Ramsey Sound and straight across St Brides Bay, a nine mile open crossing with no possible landing or escape route, on across St Brides Bay, past Midland Island, down "Jacks Sound" and past Gate Holm Island to West Dale Bay where we would camp.

Leaving Porth Cain, the first part of the day I had already done on previous trips. This was to St David's Head and Ramsey Sound. From Abereiddy, with no landing until Whitesands Bay, we expected to pass through large over falls at St David's Head but this did not occur so we had a relatively easy time to the lifeboat station "down the Sound" where we stopped for lunch.

Continuing to the south end of Ramsey, we encountered rough conditions with the end of the tidal race of Ramsey Island. Also at this point I experienced whirlpools for the first time. A strange feeling of not being able to control my boat made for some hard work requiring some skill.

Now an open crossing of St Brides Bay was to be made - about nine miles, with little tidal assistance and no turning back. With only a 165° magnetic bearing to go on, no transits could be made initially so it became a case of just keep on paddling, keeping upright and watching the compass. Occasionally a navigation buoy was spotted on which our progress could be estimated.

For the last mile of St Brides Bay there was large swells and waves at 45° to the direction we were going. This meant that either you skeged up, zigzagged and surfed, or skeged down and just plodded on through the surf requiring quite some effort Being less proficient at surfing, I found it hard work with my skeg down.

Now across St Brides Bay we crept around the mainlands headland at Jacks Sound This was to avoid getting sucked into the tide which was travelling at approximately 3-4 knots. Once through the Sound, the coast was followed past Gateholm Island, Hooper Point and on to West Dale Bay where we camped off the cliff. Here we had to make sure the kayaks, after being unloaded, were placed and tied up, well up the beach as this night would be the highest tide of the month and we did not want to lose them.

After pitching the tents and eating, we walked into Dale. Here the local Yacht Club was pumped for the next day's tidal info. They obliged with photo copies of tidal flow and times for Milford Haven estuary. On the way back to the tents we noticed some local canoeists on the water in the dark with lights doing some night navigation.

THE THIRD DAY

After being woken in the middle of the night by John G to tell us of an electrical storm, we finally woke up at 7 a.m. and packed up to get on the water one hour before slack water. This was so St Ann's Head was reached at slack water and Milford Haven could be crossed at slack water towards Sheep Island.

From Sheep Island we hugged the coast right the way to Linney Head. Some terrific rock formations could be seen on this stretch of the expedition.

Just after Linney Head we stopped for lunch for about an hour and a half and due to this some progress had to be made if we did not want to lose any tidal assistance left. This day's paddle seemed to take the least amount of effort and was just as well with the masses of strata and rock formations to look at. It's a pity schools do not go canoeing for practical geography experience.

With St Govan's Head the most southerly point we would pass, only one mile would be left to Bosherton. The actual Bay at which we would land was Broad Haven where we pitched for the night in the sand dunes. With a long carry of the kayaks here, all found out how well their trolleys for wheeling the boats on soft sand would work. I found mine worked very well.

Being the last night's camping the others went for a meal at the local pub but true to form I put up with my dehydrated food as usual and walked to the pub later on. Again the pub proved to be the venue for the next day's planning. This ended up as being an early start and paddle against the tide all trip, hoping for little wind.

THE FOURTH DAY

Very pleasant day with lots of sunshine and we all ended up taking off our cags. With the suntan cream applied, we set off. Within a mile we came to a headland called Stackpole. Here the conditions were very calm and photographs were taken of us through the arches of natural rock. Now paddling through the arches we went straight into a tidal race which was one of the biggest I had been in. It was six to eight waves with reflected waves causing confusion. Being, in my opinion, a fight for survival it seemed to last forever but actually only lasted about eight minutes. This was enough. Thankfully no-one went in, which could have been quite an epic in rescuing someone.

Now having calmed down we set about hopping from headland to headland until reaching Manorbier SS 060974, stopping here for lunch. An excellent view of the castle made some nice photos. Leaving after 20 minutes we went to Castle Head from which we could now see Caldey Island (only three miles from Tenby). From here on we had one or two rain showers but with the end in sight no one cared.

As Robin had to go to work the next day we had no time to go around Caldey Island, which would add another five miles and one and a half hours to the day's paddle.

Through Caldey Sound and rounding Gittar Point, Tenby could be seen. Many tourists boats to Caldey were seen and these we followed to the beach where we landed. At the base of St Catherine's Island off Tenby, literally millions of star fish were clinging on as the tide fell.

Now off the water, the final telephone call to the Coastguard was made and we prepared for going home. Robin and I stayed with the kayaks whilst the two Johns went to get their cars - this they did by taxi taking three hours.

3. Within the four days many new experiences for me occurred without any mishaps. From a learning point I have found more attention to amounts of food required will have to be taken. Finally from this expedition I found my library of maps and charts was greatly lacking.

4. Having a three day weather report from the Cardiff Met Office on Thursday, the conditions were quite varied but never got too bad. Wind from 0 - Force 4. Some rain but more sunshine. Swell and waves varied from open water to around headlands - 0' to 10'.

5. Participants:

Robert O'Regan
John Gaze
John Chamberlin
Robin Rhodes