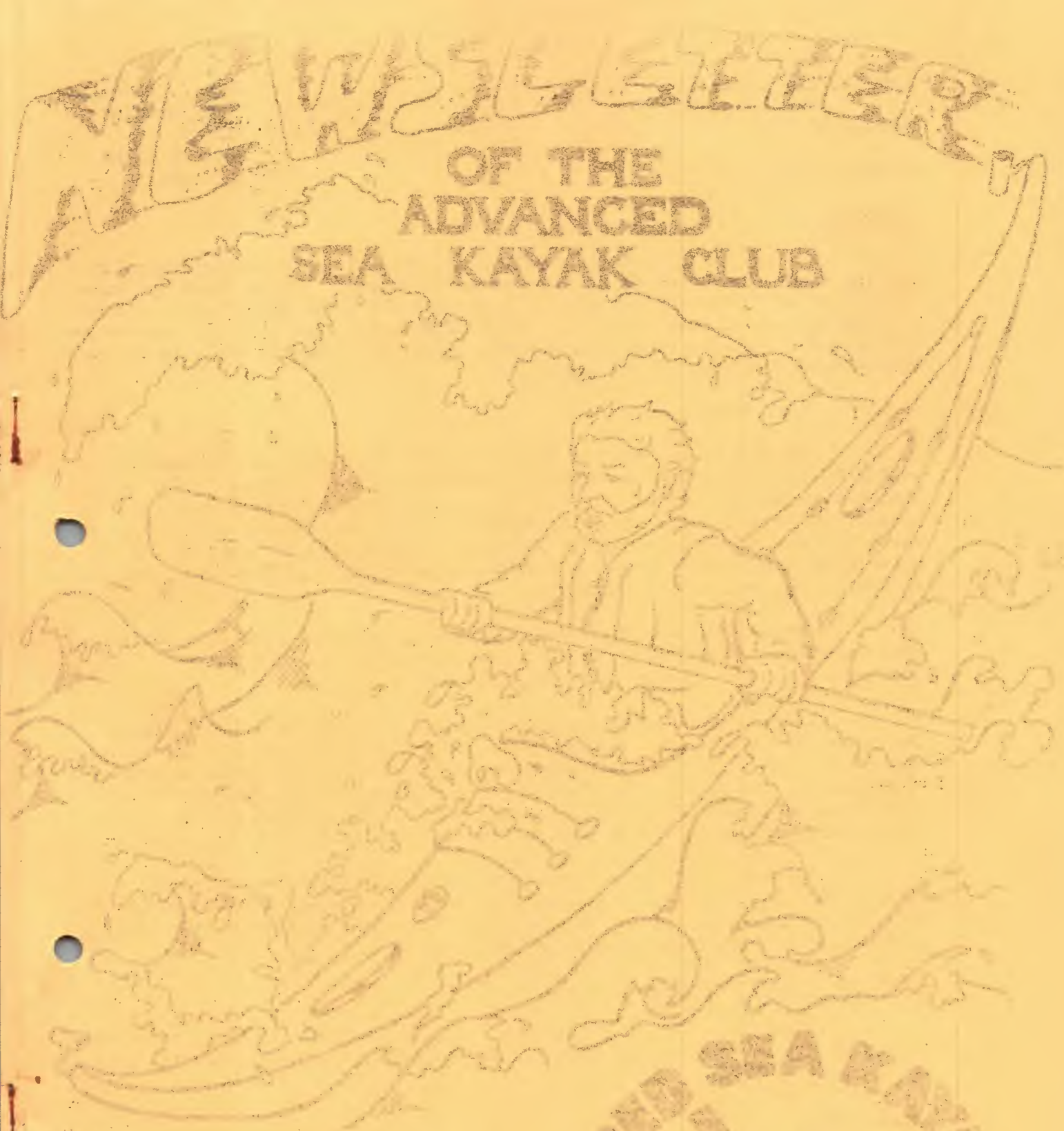
NEWSLETTER OF THE ADVANCED SEA KAYAK CLUB



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

ADVANCED SEA KAYAK CLUB

NEWSLETTER NO.64

NOVEMBER 1987

John J. Ramwell
7 Miller Close
NEWPORT
Isle of Wight
PO30 5PS

EDITORIAL

We are on the eve of the 6th International Sea Kayaking Symposium and the signs are we are in for an excellent weekend. First class speakers and a host of fellow sea kayakers at a comfortable venue bodes well and I am looking forward to this event A brief report will appear in the next newsletter and a full and comprehensive report will be available early in the New Year - details in the canoe press.

Last month .....

The B.C.U. Sea Touring Committee held its A.G.M. at the Anglesey School of Sea Canoeing, Trearrdur Bay, courtesy of Nigel Dennis. In contrast to the weather we've had since, we had mixed but relatively good weather and we all (25 of us) completed trips on both Saturday and Sunday which included the Stacks and the Skerries. The A.G.M. was held on the Saturday evening before a good and enthusiastic crowd. I have published the Chairman's Report in this Newsletter.

The highlight of this weekend was the celebration of Eric Totty's 80th birthday. This was a fun event and clearly we all enjoyed it. Good Luck Eric and here's to next year and your 81st.

1988 - I am staging two ASKC 'events' here on the Isle of Wight. The first is scheduled for May 28/29/30, Saturday, Sunday and Monday. This three day event is to be a theory/practical "course" on sea kayaking expedition planning and is open to those with a good level of kayaking skills and want to go on to undertake serious expeditions. The maximum number on this course must be 10 - so let me know you're interested and I'll send details.

The other ASKC event is scheduled for October 1st through to October 8th. This one week sea kayaking holiday replaces the ASKC week previously held in Scotland. Details will appear in this newsletter early in the New Year, but make a note in your diary now.

RENEWALS TO ASKC 1988

These are due. I am including a renewal form with every newsletter. I mention this as many of you have already renewed. Either ignore the renewal form or pass it on to a friend.

QAJAQ BOOK

Many of you are waiting for your copy. Juneau Museum returned my order making it clear they no longer supply. Consequently I have re-ordered from the publishers in Washington and all this takes time - so those of you waiting, please continue to be patient.

This is the last newsletter of this year and so it remains for me to WISH YOU A MERRY CHRISTMAS AND A CONTENTED NEW YEAR.

BRITISH CANOE UNION

SEA TOURING

Chairman's Report to the 1987 STC AGM

It is with pleasure that I welcome you all to the 11th A.G.M. of the B.C.U. Sea Touring Committee. I trust that those of you enjoying the whole weekend here at Treardur Bay go along with our policy of combining our STC meetings with active sea kayaking meets.

Our last committee meeting was convened at the Farne Islands in July of this year. This policy has the attraction of not only providing an opportunity for a collective paddle but also of encouraging paddlers who are not members of the STC to join us so providing a fresh outlook on STC business.

As Chairman I am always happy to welcome non-STC members who are able to join us at our meetings - clearly in a non-voting capacity.

Now to report on the business of the Sea Touring Committee over the past twelve months.

Since our inception 11 years ago we have been responsible for influencing to a greater or lesser extent the growth of sea kayaking in this country. Today we see this aspect of canoeing continue to grow, not only in this country but world wide where ever there are people with resources and where ever there is large expanses of water.

Britain has always been at the forefront, setting the standards and leading the way for other countries to follow. We laid on the first sea kayaking symposium in Britain way back in 1974. We staged it in Birmingham and it was a pioneering and risky undertaking from which we have never looked back. This year we are staging the 6th International Sea Kayaking Symposium in Cumbria. Sea kayaking symposiums are now a feature of the kayaking scene in Europe, Australia and North America.

We continue to promote sea kayaking by many different means. The evidence for our success in this endeavour lies in the number of paddlers and the number of sea kayaking expedition reports appearing in print, as well as in the array of equipment now currently available.

The Canoe Exhibition at Crystal Palace is one forum we use extensively to promote sea paddling. We stage and manage the STC stand there every year. This year was no exception and our thanks are due to Mick O'Connell and his family for so ably manning this stand over the whole weekend.

Whilst I mention Mick's name it is timely to explain that, due to a variety of reasons, he had to resign from this Committee and therefore from his position as secretary. This was indeed a blow as an active and efficient secretary is vital to the success of any committee, no less ours, and Mick was both active and efficient. Certainly our thanks go to him for the years of work he so unstintingly provided prior to his resignation.

Fortunately all was not lost as Martin Meling came forward to fill the breach and I must say it is as though Mick never left.

Our most important consideration as a Committee is that of rules, regulations and restrictions that are being threatened by such bodies as the

RSPB; the MNR; SSSI and the Military. Huge chunks of our coastline and off lying islands are arbitrarily being made off limits to small boat users in order to allow the interests of these bodies to supervene. We will not tolerate this state of affairs. Our coastline, like our countryside, is our heritage, and the thought of only being able to peer through binoculars at these restricted areas whilst not being allowed to explore them ourselves, is totally unacceptable. What is acceptable is working compromises. Your Committee agrees that to actively and consciously damage the natural environment, flora and fauna is also unacceptable. Once we know, for example that by kayaking too close to certain areas will disturb the nesting and breeding of certain birds at certain times of the year (we would want to see evidence of this) then we would encourage paddlers to comply with restrictions. If we know that an area of coastline is being bombarded by rockets and big guns by the Military - well, I for one are not going to argue. I'll leave these areas to our access representatives!! The guarding of pristine wilderness may on occasions be necessary like, for example, guarding the Osprey whilst it nests, but the over enthusiastic guarding which selfishly provides gratification for the few and restricts others is something which occupies the minds of this Committee, particularly our access officers, Paul, Nick and Nigel.

Frequently we receive enquiries and requests for help from individuals either direct or via the BCU. We do our best to provide this. On top we produce Fact Sheets. We are currently up-dating these and soon we hope to make available sheets on FLARES, CHOOSING A SEA KAYAK, SAFETY, TIDES AND BUOYAGE, ETC., ETC.

The STC is represented, of course, on BCU Council and at ACRMA (Access, Coaching and Recreation Management Committee) as well as on the Expeditions sub-committee. We consider sea kayaking interests are maintained on these committee, particularly on the Expedition Committee which doles out approval and finance to bona fide expeditions by canoe/kayak. We are keen to update and upgrade the Coastal Advisory Service and to this end we are trawling for volunteers to complete this service.

We concern ourselves closely with safety and coaching. Thanks to Dick Richards, Regional Controller with H.M. Coastguards we continually monitor, and if necessary provide 'expert' opinion/advice on all sea kayaking incidents occurring off our shores. We are grateful to H.M. Coastguards for allowing, and indeed, fostering, this liaison. As for coaching, we maintain a watching brief over the business of the National Coaching Committee as it relates to the coaching of sea kayaking and the standards of relevant coaching awards.

For the record I suspect it might be worthwhile yet again, the role of the ASKC which is often confused with that of the STC. Briefly the ASKC is a separate and privately run organisation which has several aims similar to that of the STC in terms of promoting sea paddling. The STC is the official committee, being very much part of and answerable to the British Canoe Union. The ASKC sets out, in the main, to promulgate information through its newsletter, information that is considered of general interest to sea kayakers. Occasionally the ASKC and the STC link together to make an event happen. I have in mind the forthcoming Symposium; but essentially the ASKC is a privately run affair.

Finally I would like to thank my fellow committee members for their continual support and effort. I would like to thank Nigel Dennis for allowing us the use of his School of Sea Canoeing and thanks to you all for supporting this AGM.

I ask that this Report be accepted by this meeting.

BRABANT ISLAND SEASONS

CHRIS FURSE REPORTS ON A YEAR ON AN ANTARCTIC ISLAND

It started as a normal breakfast - normal that is for men who had got used to living in tents through the Antarctic winter on Brabant Island. Nick Evans and François de Gerlache were lying in their sleeping bags in the big orange pyramid tent, with the stove and a litter of basecamp kit between them. The noise of the tent was deafening in a hurrican force wind.

With a great bang the tent just vanished. Ruchsacks and mittens hurtled away leaving the men in a maelstrom of spindrift. They tumbled into heavy boots and hastily buried their sleeping bags in the snow. Shouting outside the other five tents they roused us out to help. We found their tent half a kilometre downwind, lodged by chance in rocks about the beach, completely undamaged; the wind had simply ripped the snow off the valence. Nick and François received no sympathy, only cheerful laughter.

It was July 1984. Seven months earlier I had landed at Metchnikoff Point to start work with half my First Summer Party, while the other half travelled in open boats from Palmer Base, a 200-kilometre journey taking three weeks. This was a three-phase expedition - two three-month summer phases and one nine-month winter phase. Altogether 35 men took part, a mix of Army, RN, RM and RAF with three civilians. My plans were based on very light mobile parties and wintering in tents. No-one had spent a whole winter in tents in Antarctica before, but there were real advantages.

Brabant Island had been discovered in 1898 by de Gerlache, grandfather of our François. Since then there had been only six brief landings, leaving a gap in scientific maps of the region. However a 1:250,000 map from aerial photographs defined the topography and explained the neglect. The 64 km long island was dominated by a spinal ridge soaring to 2500 metres above the west coast, with subsidiary ranges at 900-1800 m stepping through glaciers to the extremities. The coastal icecliffs were interrupted by only a few snow-free points. Our task was to explore the island for the first time, with 64 scientific projects, including geological surveys, collections of invertebrates and studies of seals. To achieve this we had to move between the scattered snow-free areas, over the mountains with pulk (small Norwegian-style) sledges and around the coasts by boat.

Using tents provided a unique opportunity for research on acclimatization. Man evolved in the tropics, where exposure (hypothermia) was a real danger, but frost-bite was not. To protect against hypothermia, our physiology evolved to conserve heat in the body's core in reaction to cold, reducing the flow of blood to the extremities, thus actually making frost-bite more likely. Our reactions include restriction and bypasses near the skin in response to peripheral cold, and thickening of the blood by dehydration in response to central cold. Abolition of the initial reaction to central cold had never been recorded.

Our physiologist, Howard Oakley, arrived with the Winter Party. That week we undertook the first monthly 'fluid balance' day, recording all fluid intake, bottling all our urine and giving blood samples. Three of us had just spent four weeks climbing Harvey Heights: with temperatures 16°C lower at 2400 m and high winds, we had met windchill effective temperatures down to -60°C. It surprised me to find that our blood was still normal (mean Packed Cell Volume = 43 per cent). Howard said that the summer had been too warm to trigger the dehydration response.

Howard's first 'morphometric day' showed a mean weight loss of 9 per cent; I was staggered at my own loss, of nearly 25 per cent. Our low weights continued until a gradual fattening up began in June. Most of the initial loss was probably due to substantial shifts in body fluid levels.

In April eight of us set off for Duclaux Point, an impressive knife-edge of volcanic rock, which Mike Ringe thought had been a feeder for the flat-topped basalt bluffs on the northwest coast. The days were rapidly shortening and heavy snow made sledging terribly slow, so once again we returned on short rations. On the tenth day Nick suddenly broke through on an innocent snow-slope, the heavy pulk sledge upended like a torpedoed ship and disappeared with him. Jerked off his feet, Jon Beattie fought to hold the fall, finally digging in near the lip of the crevasse, with the full weight of Nick and his pulk suspended some 15 m below. Two hours later Nick finally climbed out, exhausted and showing signs of hypothermia. Putting him in a sleeping bag the others furiously dug a snowhole nearby and soon all five were inside, cold and wet, but alive. It took three more hungry days to complete the recovery and return to base camp. During the expedition ten of us had fairly serious crevasse falls, luckily without injury - until the last month.

Back at basecamp Howard's next fluid balance day showed a dramatic dehydration, with mean blood PCVs of nearly 50 per cent. Hard sledging increases dehydration, as one cannot replenish sweat loss during the day, then one urinates excessively when cold at night, however much one drinks.

In May our strongest six used skidoos to put out caches ready for next spring. By now everyone had numb thumbs, fingers and toes from mild frost-bite, and skidoo driving was desperately cold. In winter the depression tracks moved south of Brabant Island, so most winter storms were south-westerly, with depressions blocked by the 2000 m rampart of the Antarctic Peninsula, forming a partial dam in the shallow trophosphere. Sometimes, as in summer, winds travelling clockwise around depressions in Drake Passage brought moister air. Lister Glacier, in a horseshoe of mountains facing northeast, became notorious for cloud and heavy snowfalls. Trapped there for six days the skidoo party moved into igloos for comfort. Twenty minutes after leaving, a big slab avalanche swept past them carrying snow-blocks to the igloos' tunnel doors.

At basecamp the first of many winter avalanches (12 m of snow fell during the winter) made me worry for the skidoo party, now three weeks out of contact. However they arrived back at the end of May, having had to leave a loaded sledge down a crevasse the night before.

After a fluid balance day in June, Howard emerged with cries of 'Eureka'. We had rehydrated our blood to normal levels - the first scientific evidence of acclimatization to central cold.

In midwinter we were still wearing the same clothes by day as in summers At night most of us now added a second Karrimat, duvet bootees, inner mittens, a balaclava and often a 'holofil' jacket. We were adapting to cold by behaviour, developing little habits to maintain comfort, like using peebottles in the tent to avoid going out in a storm Our bodies helped, delaying major acts of nature for three days in foul weather: we learnt to seize any good opportunity for this function.

To check that our physiological rehydration was not just a result of behavioural adaptations, we took turns carrying a chart recorder around in a rucksack for 24 hours, with 24 thermocouples taped to our bodies and in our clothes. Our turns came around about once a month. The rectal probe made it a dreaded day, but its temperatures (sometimes below 35°C overnight) confirmed that we were still cold.

On Midwinter's Day the sun rose at 10.50, crept along the northern horizon and set at 3.30 p.m. The days would slowly lengthen now, but the cold would increase until September, because the high albedo or reflectance

of snow wastes 90 per cent of incident sunshine. I had feared that July and August would prove frustrating, producing friction and even animosities. To help prevent this, we had changed tent partners regularly throughout the expedition and always when parties rejoined after weeks apart. In practice the team as a whole maintained a remarkable cohesion mainly because we were always busy.

Each man had his specific task such as photography, or a science. These all continued throughout the winter including weeks of geology at nearby points, and two weeks out snow-holing to recover the sledge. For me the number and variety of birds was an unexpected bonus: especially welcome in winter were the staccato calls of Antarctic terns passing over the darkened tents to roost. Everyone also shared general work, digging out stores, mending tents, making clothes, repairing skis and so on, while the skidoo drivers worked to put food and fuel on the hill. There was no question of inactivity or boredom.

In September we headed south in three parties. It proved a foul month of high winds. When we all met at Astrolabe Point in October, our own difficulties with storms and buried tents paled by comparison with those of the first pulk party. They had taken 29 days to complete the 33 km journey. In the last 22 days they had eaten only 14 days' rations (of 4500 Kcals per manday).

Shortfalls in energy intake are normally made up first from glycogen stored in the muscles and liver, then from subcutaneous fat, before starting to break down muscle protein and visceral fat. Now they were exhausted: they had apparently started to break down muscle protein BEFORE using subcutaneous fat; due to an independent reaction to cold their bodies were storing the subcutaneous fat. Starvation weakens people more quickly in the cold.

October brought glorious weather. On the 29th, after two weeks of portering food and fuel, John Kimbrey led the team to the first ascent of Mount Parry, at 2500 m the island's highest peak, the crown among 55 first ascents by the expedition. Six weeks later we re-gathered at base-camp, where the Chinstrap Penguins redounded off my year on Brabant by hatching at Christmas, just before the Second Summer party arrived.

In two months Clive Waghorn's boat party circumnavigated the island in inflatable boats and Nordkapp kayaks. Apart from the first real canoeing in Antarctica and travelling over 1000 kms in the inflatables they made scientific collections around the coast. One discover was the only two existing species of Antarctic flowering plants in unexpected profusion; these were found at site with special local conditions created by the islands topography.

Brabant Island had been explored, but never 'conquered'. There was a sting in the tail. In March, skiing south above Cushing Cot, Clive Waghorn fell 25 m into a crevasse and broke his leg. Within one-and-a-half hours his party had hauled him out and snugged him into a dome tent out of the spindrift. Next morning Kerry Gill stayed with Clive, while the other two skied back to basecamp to radio for help. For five days the world media focussed on Clive's plight while HMS Endurance and RFA Olna sailed southward. Their helicopters were frustrated by cloud and katabatic winds for two days, but finally winched the two to safety, completing an unbelievably speedy rescue. The expedition was over, the scientific analysis now began.

The Smithsonian institution publish E. W. Nelson's comprehensive work, The Eskimo About Bering Strait, in 1899. It included information about the Norton Sound Eskimo. In the same year Dr H. M. W. Edmonds submitted to the U.S. Coast and Geodetic Survey a detailed report on the Norton Sound area This was not published until 1966, when the University of Alaska Press brought it out in a version edited by Dorothy Jean Ray. Edmonds's material concerning Norton Sound kayaks is far more extensive than Nelson's or, for that matter, anyone else's. Because of this and the fact that the University of Alaska publication is not widely available, I will quote Edmonds at length.

ST MICHAELS KAYAK

His description of the Norton Sound Kayak is centered around those built and used in St Michaels (Ray, 1966). I consider the St Michaels kayak to be the archetype for the Norton Sound type.

In the variety of kayak most commonly seen at St Michael and over this whole region, the lines of the boat are fine, the general effect is that of swiftness, with moderate stability and carrying power. The sheer line is straight, except where broken by the coaming of the cockpit, which projects from one to two inches above the body of the boat. The prow has a narrow opening and is shaped as shown. The stern line is vertical and cut into at the upper part by the grip ... (p.56)

To keep the skin canoe in good condition, it must be hauled out of the water occasionally and never left in more than a couple of days. Generallym it is hauled up several times a day partly or completely, otherwise the skin becomes soggy. It must be kept well oiled to prevent its becoming soaked by water or rain. To patch it, small pieces of sealskin are used, and sometimes, if the hole is over a rib or pole, a temporary plug of wood is used. Sinew and seal thongs should be used in the seams and edges. As a seat, a bit of matting or some clothing, or a wooden slat matting specially made for the purpose, is used (p.57).

When in actual use by an Eskimo, it is seldom that a kayak turns over Cases of capsizing do occur, however, and in consequence the occupant is often drowned. It requires some practice to get into a canoe easily and it is still more difficult to do so while the canoe is upside down. Few of the Eskimos are good swimmers and so the chances are not favourable for an ordinary Eskimo in an upset kayak away from companions. Two persons often go out in the same kayak, both sitting up in the one cockpit, back to back. The front man, of course, does the paddling. In case of great emergency, as many as four have been known to be carried in a single one-holed kayak. Two of them lie down, stowed well fore and aft, while two sit up back to back in the cockpit. It is not so dangerous as it appears for the men stowed away where, in the event of an upset, they could not possibly get out; for the weight being so low down in the boat, it would be a difficult matter to overturn it. Considerable freight can be carried in a kayak, such as flour, fish, seal oil, etc. These are stored fore and aft in the interior. Even on top considerable weight and bulk may be carried in safety, as, for instance, a light sled or a pile of wood, even when it is so rough that the waves break over the prow (p.57-58).

The ethnographer E. W. Nelson, in his 1899 publication, described another way that Norton Sound kayakers hauled freight and combined it with sailing.

In journeying on rivers or along the coast, the Eskimo frequently fasten two kayaks side by side by lashing cross-sticks against the front and

rear of the manholes with rawhide cord. A kind of platform of sticks is also made across the deck, on which small loads of goods are placed. These are fixed usually behind the manhole, although at times a load is carried both before and behind the occupant.

On one occasion, near St Michael, I saw two kayaks lashed together in this way, with a man in each, and just behind them was placed a small pile of household goods, consisting mainly of bedding, upon which sat a woman. In front a small mast, held in position by guys, had been raised on a crosspiece lashed on the decks near the front crosscords, and a small sail, made from parchment-like gut skin, was raised. This odd looking vessel was making very good time on a small stream before the wind. In rough weather at sea hunters frequently lash their kayaks together in pairs in order to rest or to prevent accidents (p.224).

KAYAK USE

Edmonds describes the methods for entering a kayak and some kayak uses and skills.

The safest way to enter the canoe is to have it alongside a rock or at the beach. The paddle blade is rested on the rock or beach and the handle held firmly across the front edge of the cockpit. By stepping in carefully with the weight thrown slightly to the side of the paddle, an amateur may, with a few violent scares, become settled in the cockpit. The native does this rapidly and easily, being careful before stepping in to scrape off the mud and water from the soles of his boots. More carelessly he may step up to the canoe at the edge of the water and throwing his weight slightly on his paddle stuck in the ground, slide down into the seat. Sometimes, as the prow rests on the beach, he steps lightly upon the upper part of the kayak, wipes off his shoes carefully and in a step or two along the body of the kayak, is in position in an instant. A slight lifting movement of the body with the paddle pressed into the beach releases the canoe from the sand and sends it out onto the water.

Very few evidences of great skill in the use of the kayak are nowadays observed. Sometimes a canoe gets adrift and a native may either tow it back with another kayak or catch the stern of the castaway in a loop of thong at the prow of his own kayak and push the derelict ahead of him with considerable skill over the waves or crosswise to a current. In rapid water and in eddies near the bank and under overhanging trees, unusual care must be taken. Racing is sometimes indulged in, in pursuit of game. Very quick journeys are made over long distances, the Eskimos apparently using little effort in traversing a distance of twenty five miles or more. Such feats as turning over in the water and righting the canoe again are uncommon and seldom performed, save by exceptionally skilled persons, for money (some things never change) and there are very few white men who have ever seen it done.

The sitting posture, with legs outstretched, is almost altogether assumed by the paddler. Sometimes, on account of a bulky load in the cockpit not easily carried elsewhere, the native kneels. I have never seen one stand up alone in a single hole kayak out on the open water, unless it were heavily loaded, though he often raises himself part way up to look around. During ordinary seasons, there is very little need of any particular skill in canoeing. The water is too shallow at the beach for very bad surf and the Eskimos remain on shore during stormy weather. When the ice is moving about, there is the most need of quick work in handling the canoe and in getting in and out of the kayak and hauling it over the tilting ice blocks. A novice may then have all the excitement he wants in following an Eskimo put over and amongst the ice floes to open water (pp.58-59).

PADDLES AND PADDLING TECHNIQUE

Few early explorers and writers tell us much about Eskimo paddling techniques. Edmonds is an exception.

The paddle used is from three to four and a half feet long and has a medium sized blade about four or five inches wide, flat on one side and with a single medium ridge and two side grooves on the other. The handle ends in a cross stick about three inches long, against which the upper hand strikes every time the paddle is changed over from one side to the other. These Eskimo always shift the paddle from side to side, never paddling continuously on one side unless it be in crossing a rapid stream to keep the canoe headed in the right direction. In quiet waters, two strokes are usually taken on one side and then two on the other side. Winds or waves or tide may compel more strokes on one side than on the other. Turning is accomplished by giving a wide sweep outwards with the paddle or by backing water or trailing the paddle but not by the skilful twist of the paddle as practised by S.E. Alaskan Indians.

By holding the paddle in one hand with the handle resting against the outside of the arm to above the elbow, the canoe, in close quarters, may be quickly manoeuvres with much dexterity. With paddle-blade resting on the water and the handly held firmly at the front edge of the cockpit, it serves as an outrigger and keeps the canoe steady while lying to for any purpose in a rough sea. In such cases, neither the double nor the single paddle is passed through the loops of seal thong on the kayak.

Besides the single paddle, the double paddle is also used but not so commonly, and nearly always a single paddle is also carried along in the same kayak. The double bladed paddle is very long and slender, with blades that look ridiculously small. It is used for rapid work on long stretches and is put aside immediately on approaching shallow water or the destination, and the single paddle used to complete the trip. In case the paddles are lost, any light stick or spear will serve to get home with. Poling is seldom practised. In very shallow water, when making a crosscut over mudflats, the native may shove the kayak along with the paddle, the lifting motion connected therewith enabling the canoe to get over at most bare places. But he never carries along poling sticks like those used on the rivers by birchbark canoeists. There are fewer differences in paddles than in the kayaks.

GUERNSEY CANOE CLUB

EXPED' 86 - NORWAY

WHO

Steve Dorrity (This report is by me)
Trevor Pinchemain
Adrian Bowditch

WHERE

A self-contained kayak expedition in Norway from Bergen to Maloy and including Sognefjord. A total distance of 220 miles.

WHY

For myself there were two main reasons for going to Norway this year. The first was the obvious one of wanting to visit a very beautiful and inspiring country. The second was to try out ideas and equipment for a more ambitious trip to Iceland next year.

HOW - INITIAL PLANNING

After much pouring over maps, guides, timetables, etc., the basic plan was drawn up. Adrian and I would travel surface via C.I. ferries to Portsmouth and then drive up to Newcastle in Trevor's car towing a trailer with the kayaks and equipment. There we would meet up with Trevor who had flown up. Apart from me putting a small dent in Trevor's car by running into the back of another car this worked reasonably successfully. From Bergen we would head north until we rane out of time and then catch a ferry back to Bergen and then on home.

Bergen lived up to its reputation of being the wettest city in Europe when we arrived and we wasted no time in finding somewhere to stay. "Somewhere" turned out to be a very expensive youth hostel; fortunately it was only for one night! The following day dawned bright and cheerful and we set off in high spirits to buy a few bits and pieces and sort out the boats which we had left at the docks.

After we had sorted things and had five or six attempts at packing the boats it was time to see if they would still float. Fortunately they did and we started to get on the water. At this point Adrian decided to set the standards for the trip by sliding gracefully into the water - minus his kayak and so took the first, and we hoped the last, swim of the trip.

The rest of this account is basically edited extracts from my log which I kept whilst on the trip.

Monday, 18 August, dist 23

Finally on the water at 12.30, heading north towards Narvik. The weather is idyllic and paddling conditions good, the wind picked up towards the end of the afternoon but fortunately our route took us through a narrow channel and we were sheltered. Started looking for a campsite at 17.30 and finally found one at about 19.30 on the island of Luroy. As we settled down to eat our meal I noticed a shoe floating in the water - on closer inspection it turned out to be one of Trevor's, which had gently lifted on the rising tide. Much cursing and threats of recriminations followed as he paddled after it accompanied by roars of laughter from Adrian and I.

Tuesday, 19 August, dist 10, total 33

Fresh Force 5 headwinds caused problems today, a short crossing to Njoten, three miles, took over 1 hour 30 minutes of hard paddling. At Njoten we had lunch and then set off again into the wind. After a total of 4 hours 30 minutes we made a distance of only 10 miles and, as there was a good campsite on one of the islands we decided to finish for the day. Trevor and Adrian set off to cadge water whilst I sorted out campsites.

Wednesday, 20 August, dist 12, total 45

Headwinds again caused problems today; there can be few things as soul destroying as slogging into a headwind. We all felt the strain a bit, though Trevor seemed to fare worst and got a little left behind. After a break of about an hour, during which Trevor and I had an impromptu game of baseball using a broken oar we found and some stones, we again set forth into the teeth of the wind. After another six miles we stopped again, this time we decided to call it a day, exhausted and a little demoralised. To finish what had been an arduous day it started to rain and the campsite turned into a bog but we were too tired to do anything about it.

Thursday, 21 August, dist 26, total 71

Awoke to find the campsite more or less flooded and several billion midges waiting to ambush us. Covering all exposed flesh with midge repellant and doing our cags up to keep out the midges we packed up and left in record time. Fortunately the wind had dropped (hence the midges) and we made good time. The scenery was starting to get very spectacular as we headed for our lunch spot, a nice sunny rock where we dried out tents and sleeping bags. Soon after lunch we turned into Sognefjord and headed for Beken a small village. Beken turned out to be smaller than we imagined - in fact we missed it altogether and ended up going to Lavik instead!

The campsite was a few miles outside town and, as it was by then quite late, we decided to take one of the camping rooms (sort of cabins) for the night. What luxury! For supper we tried the "Mutton Hotpot" and resolved to dump the next batch into the fjord!

Friday, 22 August, dist 15, total 86

Everyone is feeling the strain today. Adrian now has his wrist strapped up - right up past his elbow! and both Trevor and I need to use tubigrip to support our elbows. Conditions P.I. Positively Idyllic; even so we a are going to make a fairly easy day of it as we are all a bit bushed. Found a good campsite, after a day in which we paddled through scenery so spectacular that we ran out of superlatives to describe it. In the end we decided to have "E" grades of excellence! Tonight's meal was exceptionally good 'though I say to myself a "spag bog" made with savoury mince, fresh tomatoes, peppers, dried onion and mushroom and some other bits and pieces. A glorious sunset finished the day off nicely.

Saturday, 23 August, dist 18, total 104

A disaster has struck. During the night three of the sections that make up the hooped poles of the tents, snapped. What makes this even more ominous is that it happened in light winds. Apart from this poor start, the day went rather well and we made good time across the fjord.. As the time approached for us to start looking for a campsite we spotted a derelict sawmill and decided to investigate. It turned out to be a bit rickety but not too unsafe and we decided to give the tents a rest and spend the night on the floor of the mill. Although most of the mill was in pretty bad shape, some parts

were still in working order and it was possible to see the huge water wheel that drove the buzz saws.

Sunday, 24 August, dist 7, total 111

Arrived at our first objective at last, Balestrand. Balestrand, it turns out, is a very picturesque village at the crossroads of the fjords. As we arrived a German came over and took an interest in the kayaks and what we were up to. The German, Roland, was touring Norway with his girlfriend Kirsten and had a kayak with him although he was only using his for a spot of fishing and gentle paddles around the fjords. We spent a very pleasant evening drinking our coffee and his whisky; well it seemed fair to us!

Monday, 25 August

Rest day. Showered, ate, slept and wrote postcards.

Tuesday, 26 August

Day trip, 19M, total 130

Day trip to Vangsnes to visit Fridjof the Valiant or at least a 20 ft. high statue of him and then on to Vik (as in Vikings?). In VIK ("VIK" means "cove") we visited a stave church; these churches are very old, this one was built in 1130 and are made of huge logs used vertically. Very impressive as Trevor would say.

Wednesday, 27 August, dist 7, total 137

Set out for the inner fjords into fresh headwinds, irritating but not too bad. Unfortunately after half an hour or so the wind picked up and was quickly blowing an estimate Force 8. We struggled into Vangsnes and in view of the state of the tents, we had lost another two poles, decided to take a cabin.

Thursday, 28 August

Today my log contains one word, STUCK!

Friday, 29 August, dist 10, total 147

Time is starting to catch up and, after a discussion of the various options we decided to catch the ferry out to the mouth of the fjord and head north towards Maloy. We made a short trip to see some of the other fjords and then caught the ferry to Rysejedalsvika.

Saturday, 30 August, dist 10, total 157

Arrived at 1.30 and as there wasn't a lot else going on put the boats straight into the water to get some miles in. As we got started we found that there was a lot of phosphorescence in the water and at times the boats were aglow with it. After a "photo call" we settled down to a steady rhythm heading for a lone navigation light. Suddenly the air was torn by an ear-piercing scream which set my heart racing (gripping stuff this, eh?) and shortened my life by at least 10 years. Adrian had disturbed a sleeping fish which promptly took to the air, flapped along his deck and smacked him in the shoulder before splashing into the water.

Stopped on an island for the night (day?) and just in time too as the wind did one of its magical appearing acts and started blowing a gale. We saw our first seals during breakfast and I think they were fjord seals but I'm no expert; they were certainly more timid than their Scottish cousins. The wind

reached such a pitch that we though we were in danger of losing the tent so an emergency move was undertaken to a more sheltered spot. Unfortunately before we could move we lost two more poles.

Sunday, 31 August, dist 15, total 172

Awoke to find clouds of midges (the winds died down!). The seals came back for a nose but disappeared as soon as a fishing boat appeared. We paddled through some very narrow passages to an island called Atloy and, after clearing a few boulders settled down for the night, thankful that we had got the tent up before the downpour.

Monday, 1 September, dist 15, total 187

This particular morning I awoke to find I was in a puddle of water 4" deep (thank God for Quolofill sleeping bags!) our "campsite" turned out to be a part-time stream!

The paddling was very good today, though Adrian had a few problems with the crosswinds. There was an Atlantic swell of 5-7 feet (I later found out about Hurricane Charlie and I think these waves must have been an effect). We stopped for the night at Floro and, as we had landed right next to a cabin site we took one for the night. This one turned out to be the most luxurious yet, with showers and heating.

Tuesday, 2 September, dist 18, total 205

Started the day off with a walk into Floro to get some money for the "rent lady", very trusting these Norwegians. Whilst there, we found a place that sold cheap cheeseburgers and so we had two each! We also found a short cut; Floro appears to be an island separated from the mainland by a narrow channel. Finally on the water at 3.30, our best yet!

Paddling through heavy showers we made good time north, it is amazing how quickly the showers descend upon us - it was possible to see them approaching from miles away with quite a defined line and then suddenly as they hit visibility drops quite considerably until they pass usually after quite a short time.

The wind can also rise dramatically. Today, for instance, at the entrance to Froysjoen the wind rose from Force 2 to about Force 5 in only five minutes. Later we toyed with the idea of paddling non-stop to Maloy, but fortunately commonsense prevailed, but even so we did not stop until late, and in fact didn't eat until 11.15.

Wednesday, 3 September, dist 14, total 219

After wringing out my sleeping bag and then running the gauntlet of midges, we set off on the last leg. This section proved that Norway wasn't finished with us yet. The scenery was some of the best we had seen with 2000 ft waterfalls and towering cliffs. After lunching under a huge boulder slide in blazing sunshine we rounded the headland straight into headwinds and rain! Later as we approached Maloy we noticed a strong smell of fish; this we put down to the fishing boats nearby. Unfortunately the smell grew stronger as we drew nearer to Maloy until, at last the truth dawned, Maloy was a fish processing town. After a quick turn around the town trying to find somewhere to stay someone dejectedly said "I wonder when the next ferry leaves?" - a look at the timetable revealed that it was in 50 minutes time. We sprinted back to the boats, launched in super quick time and raced across to catch the ferry with five minutes to spare. We left Maloy 1 hour 30 minutes after arriving.

Bergen

Bergen lived once again up to its well earned reputation and we spent the three days left eating, sleeping and shopping with the odd museum and cheeseburger thrown in. The return trip was pretty boring as we were all a bit subdued; it's a strange feeling at the end of an expedition. One is simultaneously relieved and saddened, all very confusing. Unfortunately someone had decided to have a go at the trailer while we were away and we lost the lights, straps and padding, irritating but not too disastrous.

The drive down to Portsmouth went without any more prangs, quite boring, I thought, but Trevor seemed relieved! Our last campsite was interesting. Adrian and I pitched the tent between the car and trailer on the harbour car park at Portsmouth and, of course, a pole snapped! Not the most comfortable site, but then again certainly not the least.

EQUIPMENT

Sleeping bags - Everyone took his own depending on taste and pocket, although we all had Dracon of some description and all had warm nights even when sleeping in puddles! Mine was an Adjungilac made in Norway and marketed in Britain by Karrimor; I can certainly vouch for the model I used, the Polaris, I found it extremely warm and comfortable.

Stoves - We used two of the Optimus 00L primus stoves which as usual behaved impeccably, needing only to have the lead gaskets tightened as they were both new. The fuel was stored in plastic petrol containers, kept behind cockpit seats. The paraffin was then decanted into Sigg fuel bottles for daily use 5 litres would seem to be adequate for up to a month, this was without being too careful; most days we had one stove going throughout the meal for extra brews, etc.

Tents - As you will have gathered the tents were not what we had hoped for. They were Caravan Nomads. I supported the idea of tunnel tents because of the ease of pitching and the amount of room they offered. Apart from a few problems with poor finishing they were fine up until the poles started breaking. The problem seems to be that the poles are not up to the amount of tension they are subjected to. A possible remedy would be to use fibreglass. This would have resulted in slightly more weight but, I'm sure, would have been more reliable.

Food - We took all the food to Norway with us from Guernsey to reduce cost. The food we took was catering packs of dehydrated main courses with rice in various flavours and instant mash, etc. The main course packs were found to give about six main meals per pack. We had none of the difficulties usually reported with dehydrated food and I think this was due to the method of preparation. On the trip we took two large food flasks and would boil up extra water every morning. This was used to soak the evening meal, which was then stored in the food flasks. This meant that the food was soaking for six or seven hours and needed only to be warmed up, saving time, fuel and upset stomachs! To add flavour and interest, I also took along a BDH containing herbs, tomato puree, pepper, etc. Lunches consisted of dried fruit, peanuts and flapjack - which seemed to be adequate. We also found that "treats" cheered everyone up, and were well worth the space.

To finish this account I would like to state that in most respects the trip was very successful and very enjoyable; we dealt with any problems as they arose and everyone remained healthy and fit-ish. For the most part we remained friends! with surprisingly few upsets and we attained our main objectives. Even in respect of the tents it was not a complete disaster, we found the main problems with the tents and devised ways of overcoming them and of course one of the objectives was to test gear which we did thoroughly.

WHY RESCUE CAN BE THE MOST DANGEROUS MOMENT
by JIM ALLAWAY

Tragedy at sea always gets big coverage in the Press - and the disaster at Zeebrugge was no exception. Unfortunately much of it - then as always - is woefully ill-informed on the medical aspects of survival in the cold and wet.

Hypothermia automatically springs to mind, but it is only part of the problem. And the blame for making it the buzz word it is today probably rests with the Royal Navy.

In the Second World War about two-thirds of all naval fatality cases at sea managed to survive the action that sank the ship - but died later, either while still in the water or after being picked up.

Post-war analysis showed that while we had provided much equipment to stop people drowning, to help them keep their heads above water and so on, we had failed to pay proper attention to the fact that body temperature would drop as a result of immersion - and that they would then lose consciousness and drown or eventually just die of the cold.

There was a lot of research work which resulted in inflatable life-rafts, better life-jackets and "once only" survival suits. And then, in the late 1960s, came an enormously successful film "Cold Can Kill".

This won a host of prizes and was translated into many languages. Even the Russians have used it - minus the HM ship sequences, so making it ostensibly a Soviet-made training film.

It reached an audience far outside the naval environment and fostered an acute awareness of hypothermia as a threat to life in cold weather - and it makes the Fleet Medical Officer cringe every time he sees it.

"It has become clear to me now that we have over-emphasised hypothermia," says Surgeon Capt. Frank Golden, who is himself one of the leading authorities on survival at sea.

"In latter years, having investigated a lot of merchant shipping sinkings and drowning incidents around the country, it seems to me to be just one aspect of an overall problem.

"When someone falls into cold water, his difficulties come in four stages. The first two or three minutes we call 'cold shock'. This produced a very rapid heartbeat and breathing and high blood pressure - which could well produce a heart attack in a middle-aged or elderly person. Even a young man can have a blackout.

"Then, if you're in turbulent water next to a ship's side, say, and you can't control your breathing then you're going to take in water.

"Those are short-term problems. If you overcome them you're into the medium term of 15 minutes or so, which is where we've found that usually competent swimmers discover they can only manage short distances before they get into trouble.

"We've been looking at this for a number of years and from watching tests with volunteers on video it is clear it has to do with synchronising your breathing to your stroke. We see people starting off with a smooth, steady breaststroke - which collapses after a few seconds into a lot of

frantic paddling. They start to sink and try to lift their heads out of the water - and that only increases the sinking force more and they get into a panic.

"It is a question of being used to the cold. Those people who break the ice on Boxing Day are swimming all year round and their reflexes are attuned to the change of temperature. Even so, every year you get [illegible] stories about children who worked up to being good swimmers at the end of the previous summer getting into difficulties when they try to perform the same feats at the very start of the new one.

"The third stage is up to 30 minutes and varying periods thereafter which is where hypothermia comes in. You lose heat in water much faster than you would in air of the same temperature. Once you lose a couple of degrees, your consciousness becomes impaired. Lose four or five and you start drifting away - and when you've lost ten you die. The time it takes varies, depending on your weight, type of clothes you're wearing, how active you are ..."

There is a fourth phase to the survival timetable - one of the most dangerous. And, strangely, it occurs after the victim has been brought out of the water.

Both RAF and Luftwaffe pilots drowned in the North Sea and the Channel benefited from an excellent air-sea rescue service. But it was noticed that men spotted in the water who appeared to be in reasonable condition - able to wave to their rescuers and so on - often collapsed and died after being taken on board the rescue craft.

Nazi doctors said this was due to a phenomenon called "after drop" in temperature - even if you take someone out of cold water and put him into warm, the body temperature continues to fall before it starts to rise again.

Everyone believed the technical explanation advanced but about ten years ago Capt. Golden had other ideas - which are only now coming to be accepted. For one thing, he thought the continued drop in body temperature was due to a simple time-lag in conduction rather than to anything to do with blood flow.

"If I gave you a melon which was being cooled in cold water with a thermometer stuck through the middle and you dumped it straight into warm water the mercury would carry on falling until the warmth came through from the outside to revive it.

"What I think happens is that when you take someone out of the water, you are removing the hydrostatic pressure of the water from around the body. This hydrostatic pressure increases the rate of blood being pumped in and out of the heart by about 30 per cent - so if you take the person out of the water it drops by 30 per cent too.

"Under normal circumstances that wouldn't matter because your body's reflexes would detect the alteration and compensate accordingly. Unfortunately those reflexes are very temperature sensitive and if they have been knocked out by the cold then the heart pump will fail just when it needs to keep going to help you climb a rescue ladder and overcome the chill.

"In the past it has been explained away as fatigue when people manage to climb halfway up a ship's side and then fall back into the water - whereas it is more likely they've fainted because of the sudden reduction in blood returning to the heart."

Capt. Golden's idea has been accepted as a hypothesis, but the proof is lacking. There are plenty of stories, however, relayed to him from hospitals where survivors say they can remember the helicopter crewman hanging the strop around them - and then nothing until waking up in the aircraft or in the hospital some time later.

With this in mind, the Navy is looking at ways of picking up survivors in a double strop or a basket to alleviate the problem of the blood rushing to the feet.

Meanwhile, Capt. Golden's advice to swimmers looking forward to summer is clear: "Get used to the water slowly and don't start by swimming out of your depth. And if you're sailing and fall overboard, just float a while and get control of your breathing before swimming any distance.

"Better still - make sure you have a good lifejacket that you don't have to blow up yourself, either an automatically inflating one or a partially inflated one.

"When it comes to rescue, survivors who have been in cold water for some time should be lifted out as near the horizontal as possible."

This is an account of a number of errors and circumstances which could have easily led to a death. Observations during and after this event may well be useful to others tempted to place themselves in a similar situation. March, the end of a long, very cold spell of weather, no canoeing for about two months as the rivers have been frozen or low water levels due to frozen ground. The sea very cold from the prolonged cold weather and bitter easterly winds.

FRIDAY NIGHT

Forecast quite good, light south westerly winds (onshore) high tide tomorrow 08-56. If the weather holds I'll go for a paddle. Who can I ring? Mike's working, Nick doesn't feel up to it, Alan's away for the weekend. Still, not to worry, I'll stay inshore, I can roll O.K., I'll go alone. (1)

SATURDAY

Up at 06-45, no wind, not a bad day, yes I'll go. My lad can come with me and stay in the car. What shall I wear? Wet suit? Fibre pile suit? The wet suit's a bit uncomfortable, I'm not going to get wet. I'll wear fibre pile and water proofs. (2)

08-00. The waves are a bit bigger than I expected considering the conditions, not too bad though, I can pick my way through the breakers, following the river's rip on the way out. Everything's O.K.

08-55. Arrived at the harbour at the top of the tide as planned, saw another canoeist further out in the channel on his own! Bloody fool! The sea is a bit too choppy to land even in the harbour, I'll sit tight until the tide turns then make my way back to the car, nice day, I'm enjoying this.

09-15. Look at those breakers over on the cliffs, could be a bit difficult landing. I'll manage though. Everything's O.K.

Capsize!! Bloody hell!! Water's really cold. Steady, push your paddle up - feel for the surface, good, now roll. No good, come on try again, feel for the surface, angle right, good - go!! - no good - no air -

panic - get out. Struggling to breathe - so cold - steady - hang on to the paddle, clip on to the boat - breathing steady, calm down.

Now this is what you're trained for, lets see you do it. R and R, re-entry and roll, be careful - only one chance, can't get in properly, the buoyancy aid is keeping me up, give it a try, no good!! Must get out of this water quick, pump out then climb on. Good, boat's empty - keep thinking - can't get in, the boat's tippy, fibre pile water logged, hands going numb. Quick, flare while you still can - very difficult, can only just manage, pull the ring, good, nothing!! Only one flare! (3)

Now you're in real trouble boy - think - move quickly - use your polybag as a signal on the paddle, can't get the top off the B.D.H. - too cold. Shall I swim for the shore?

From this point on I believe I did everything right in order to survive. Thinking was beginning to get difficult due to the body shutting down. I was aware that if I lost consciousness I would die of cold or drown face down in the water. If I swam I would circulate cold water around me, if I left the boat any rescue services would have difficulty in finding me. This thinking process I believe was a direct result of a lot of training, not only in canoeing but in life saving and first aid, the temptation to swim for it was considerable.

This could be it, if you don't sort yourself out you're dead. Stick the paddle down the buoyancy aid so it sticks up without holding it.

Link arms through the deck lines with head resting on the upturned bow, to keep your face out of the water. Bunch up small, don't move - keep any warmth in. Shout. whistle, the tidal drift has taken me closer. I can see a fisherman, shout - he looks - shout, he moves as if to get help, he walks back, changes his mind. SHOUT!! He starts to run ... Maroons, one, two, thank God!! Going out, fight it, please hurry up. Here they come, can't fight it, hold the paddle up, here they are, won't let go of the paddle, can't, talking - noise - pain - can't think, rushing ceilings - blankets holding the cold in, questions, can't think - gone - !!

Brief waking, hurting - bright lights, legs purple and white, gone again. More bright lights, pain, shivering - made it - I've made it! Blood pressure, temperature, X-ray - I'm going to be O.K. Rectal temperature 28° - much too close for comfort but I've made it!

THOUGHTS

The mistakes made prior to and during this trip are obvious to any experienced canoeist. We all assume it happens to other people, and it does, most of the time. The basic rules of canoeing obviously hold good and generally help prevent situations becoming serious. This doesn't prevent people taking a calculated risk and extending themselves. Whether this is right or wrong is not the purpose of this report.

In order to get the most out of any sport risks have to be taken and it is accepted that these risks must be kept to a minimum. Sea canoeists place great store in self rescue and in the party of canoeists being able to look after themselves.

Unfortunately, a lot of the published work on rescue and rescue techniques is based on theory and practice in fair conditions. When an experienced party is afloat they can generally cope with bad conditions. If the conditions are bad enough that experienced people are out of their boats one might say they shouldn't be afloat.

These conditions can occur whilst afloat, however, and we need to have an idea before the event of what is likely to happen and what steps to take. If conditions deteriorate sufficiently to make experienced canoeists come out of their boats it is unlikely that other canoeists will be able to get cose enough to help and aided rescue could easily result in injuries and badly damaged boats.

Flares must always be considered suspect, the very fact that they have to be accessible means they must get wet regularly and even if they do work it cannot be relied upon that they will be seen, low cloud base means they often go off unsee .

In bad conditions, therefore, self rescue means just that, you cannot rely on other canoeists, flares, rescue services, etc., for your salvation.

My intentions for the future are to test a number of sea boats, fittings and gadgets, which will aid re-entry into the canoe in bad conditions, to experiment with the placing of emergency equipment, whether fixed to the boat or on one's person. Over the next few months, with the aid of some experienced friends I intend to provide a (hopefully) foolproof solution to re-entry into canoes, quickly and efficiently in poor conditions, and to report on the results of these tests and findings.

ROLLING TECHNIQUES

The best form of self rescue is the Eskimo Roll, of which these are two main types; the Screw Roll and the Steyn, or Reverse Screw Roll.

A tight-fitting cockpit is essential, in order to prevent slipping during rolling and this can be achieved by protective rubber wear, such as a wet suit, although care must be taken not to get sand caught between the rubber and skin, as the extreme movements involved in the act of rolling can make it very painful. Hip flicks contribute much of the movement whilst rolling in any of the positions, and strokes used need to be long, wide and sweeping, if the maximum potential of the roll is to be achieved.

The placing of the hands on the shaft can vary according to individuals, although best results are usually achieved by maintaining a firm hold in the paddling position, some people find that sliding their hands up and down the shaft during the roll produces a satisfactory result.

Most people start by learning the Extended Screw Roll or Pawlata, but with perseverance and a change of grip on the shaft, coupled with shorter strokes and a greater degree of confidence, a faster and more satisfactory roll is achieved. The longer, slower screw roll results in a more laid back approach, and is a better technique altogether.

A good or satisfactory roll is one which enables the paddler to bring him or herself up in any conditions, and only comes with practice. Dry land practice can be very useful, and whilst some do it on the river bank, it is more comfortable on the lounge floor, or even on the bed. In order to protect furnishings it may be preferable to use a broom stick handle for indoor practice.

Variations on the Screw Roll are the Storm Roll, which is used in stiff breezes and other windy conditions which produce a big swell, and the Put Across Roll, an extension of the slap support.

When attempting a re-entry and roll, either front or rear entry is possible, but insertion is painful if it has not been established, prior to starting, which one is to be used.

The Reverse Screw Roll is one which is more suited to surf, as the rising wave assists the paddler to bring himself up. It should be noted that popping out whilst rolling in the surf is very painful, and it is better to wait until fuller immersed again before making another attempt.

With all rolls perfect timing is essential if there is to be a satisfactory performance.

However, it is not possible to roll every time, and if the worst comes to the worst, there is always the breast stroke to fall back on.

THE SEA NEEDS YOU NOW MORE THAN EVER

Your support for the Marine Conservation Society has been invaluable. Together we have already achieved much, but there is much, much more to be done. The Society is fighting a number of campaigns right now to save our seas from major threats. We trust the concern you have already shown will continue.

THE SLAUGHTER OF OUR GENTLE GIANTS

Britain's basking sharks are under serious threat. Harpooned at sea, their liver is cut out, their finns hacked off and the carcass thrown back.

The liver oil is used in the making of cosmetics and as a lubricant for high-flying aircraft. The fins are exported to the far east to make shark fin soup. Virtually nothing is known of the ecology of these docile plankton eaters. The Marive Conservation Society's campaign aims to get the fishing banned and then a research programme started. Only then will it be possible to draw up guidelines for the protection of basking sharks, the second largest fish in the world. We believe that if the fishing continues, the species in areas around Britain could be wiped out altogether. We need your support to make sure that never happens.

THE CONCRETING OF OUR COASTLINE

Every week, a few more miles of our coastline are built on, reclaimed, or dredged. Often some valuable habitat for our marine wildlife is lost along with many of the small creatures fundamental to the basis of the ocean's food chains. The impact of development on the marine environment is rarely considered. Planning permission for harbour dredging, marine building and oil drilling seems all too freely given. The Marine Conservation Society is activating survey work to help minimise the damage done. Their recent environmental survey on the proposed port development in the River Dart will enable recommendations to be made about the areas to dredge, pile and build in order to conserve marine creatures and their habitat. The Society is doing the same for the building of the channel tunnel. We need your support for this essential work.

THE POLLUTION OF OUR BEACHES

Britain's beaches are now some of the most polluted in Europe. More alarming is the amount of money the government is spending to bring our bathing waters up to the health standards required under EEC law - it is woefully inadequate. The Marine Conservation Society fears that the dumping of sewage and other waste in the wrong places will continue unabated unless we act as watchdog and pressure group. The occurrence of infections to bathers is on the increase, often simply due to unawareness of the danger. We need your help to circulate advice to holidaymakers, and to make sure Britain's seas become the healthy and enjoyable waters they once were.

THE POISONING OF MARINE WILDLIFE

Recently, an oyster farm in Devon was completely destroyed due to the effect of an antifouling paint which contains Tributyl Tin. TBT is one of the most toxic substances the Ministry for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food has ever tested. They confirm that marine organisms are harmed when only one teaspoon of TBT is placed in one million gallons of water. Yet the use of this poison is still allowed. In the waters of our harbours and estuaries, where small craft are moored, often in their thousands, marine life is being wiped out at an alarming rate. The French have already realised how TBT is poisoning the sea and have banned it. Our government seems unconcerned about the threat. We need your help to pressure tham into action. We also need your support to convince paint manufacturers that an alternative is needed - and soon!

From: Alan Byde, 5 Masterman Place, Middleton-in-Teesdale, Co. Durham,
DL12 0ST
27 July 1987

Dear John,

Just read the newsletter. Thank you for publishing the item on the pod, although it is now inaccurate in some details as I think you know. The sentiments expressed remain.

Does anyone have information on Fraulein Fridel Meyer (Free-dell My-er) a 23 year old German? In 1932 she paddled her Folbot (now Granta) all the way from her home in Bavaria to London, including the North Sea as distinct from the channel. In 1934 she completed a solo circumnavigation of the mainland of Britain.

Did she go through the Caledonian Canal or did she wound Cape Wrath and experience the paddling pleasures of the Pentland Firth and Duncansby Head? Received wisdom states she took the short cut. Her own records show that she did it the hard way. Reliable evidence either way is requested. Someone out there knows about her voyage, surely?

I know about John (Jack) Nolan, but I don't know what happened to him after he withdrew from the "race" at Aberdeen. Information on his subsequent history would be welcome.

What news is there of the German who made the circumnavigation of the mainland of Britain earlier than 1933? Who, when and what remains a mystery to me so far, but I ask for information on that item too. The BCU history, several books and nineteen newspaper cuttings dated 1933 do not reveal the details of that circumnavigation.

The "Canoeist's Paddle for Freedom" at Derby on the Derwent and Trent was well attended last Sunday, 26th July. There were some very well known sea paddlers there, with unique achievements to their credit. I had the profound pleasure of standing beside and by my humble presence seriously irritating a very senior angling committee man. We were both on the public highway at the time, watching the kayaks go by on the reiver adjacent. The point is identifiable, a ripe sewer outfall was right under where the anglers stood. A nearby cast iron plate in the style of railway notices stated the authority of the Derbyshire Anglers Association in firm terms. One looked for permission to breathe.

My coracle paddle, camera, wet suit and plimsolls rather gave the game away. The required wear is a smart flat cap, expensive dark green jacket with pockets, dark green trousers and black wellies. A hip flask to offer to the attendant constable is useful too. I must brush up on the social niceties. I am told that filthy looks, often repeated, are free. If looks could kill! Aaarrgghh! Perhaps it is a good thing that sea paddlers have problems other than personal antipathy to engage their attentions. On second thoughts, perhaps I should revise that?

Is it something about me, I shyly ask? Or was it the wrinkled wet suit? I am convinced that some of us have the ability, it sort of radiates, without speaking to provoke others to immoderate language and actions. Did you see "Deliverance" with Burt Reynolds on the box t'other night? Now that really did give dramatic effect to the absence of law on the river banks. I watched it mainly for the ace music at the start. Morbid fascination and a certain fellow feeling caused me to continue right through to the end.

Alan