

# NEWSLETTER

## OF THE ADVANCED SEA KAYAK CLUB



### AIMS:

- Promotion of sea canoeing
- Communication
- Organisation of events and conferences
- Safety and coaching

### SECRETARY:

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PO30 5PS



AN INTERNATIONAL SEA KAYAKING CLUB

OPEN TO ALL INTERESTED IN THIS ASPECT OF CANOEING

ADVANCED SEA KAYAK CLUB

NEWSLETTER NO.75

SEPTEMBER 1989

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NEWPORT  
Isle of Wight  
PO30 5PS

EDITORIAL

Trust you have enjoyed your sea kayaking excursions, those of you, that is, who have undertaken such. Doubtless many of you will be looking at getting away later in the year. September and October can be very good months to paddle forth. Talking to a group (account to be found within these pages) who paddled the Orkneys, they encountered fairly strong winds and had to modify original plans. Certainly the BSES expedition to Arctic Norway, which before I left them had successfully paddled from deep in Lyngenfjord to Hammerfest (160 miles), had been exposed to fairly high winds and rain for most of the three weeks. I return to join them in a few days and will produce a report on our return in late August.

To remind you of forthcoming attractions.

THE SEA KAYAKING SYMPOSIUM is to be staged at Plas y Brenin, October 6/7/8th 1989 - details from Geoff Good at BCU H.Q.

THE ILE DE RE trip is gathering interest. Scheduled for 2nd-10th June 1990 - deposit of £10 to me in return for further details and a place in the minibus.

EXPEDITION PLANNING FOR SEA KAYAKERS, scheduled for May 25/26/27/28th 1990 here on Isle of Wight. Further details from me, J. Ramwell.

The BCU Coaching Handbook has been rewritten and is available from BCU H.Q. at £12.95 (including postage and packing).

Finally do please let me have your expedition/trip reports. From correspondence I know how much these are enjoyed by readers. We would also like reports and opinions on gear, on kayaks, on clothing and equipment. Your comments are appreciated by fellow kayakers and in particular to the newcomers to our sport. Let's be hearing from you.

A.S.K.C. Shop

Ties @ £6.00 each  
ASKC stickers @ 35 pence each  
ASKC letter headed notepaper @ 50 pence per 10 sheets  
4th National Sea Kayaking Symposium Report @ 50 pence each  
6th International Sea Kayaking Symposium Report @ £1.00 each  
T-shirts - small/medium/large/X large @ £4.50 each (in yellow or black)  
Sweat-shirts - small/medium/large/X large @ £8.00 each (in yellow or black)  
Paper on basic sea kayaking navigation @ 50 pence  
ASKC Ski hats @ £3.50 each  
John Dowds' book - SEA CANOEING @ £8.95

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From: Donald S. Thomson, Mill of Fachel Cottage, Barthol Chapel, Inverurie,  
AB5 8TH

The landowners on Jura have asked that canoeists who wish to camp in the area of Lowlandmans Bay or Small Isles Bay, check with the local ghillie prior to camping. Permission is unlikely to be denied but they have had some problems in the past (not with canoeists) and like to see people first. The ghillies cottage is on the roadside to the north of the cattle grid at GR 536706 OS 1-50000 Sheet 61

The scandal of our polluted beaches

Golden sands littered with rubbish, sewage washed in on every tide and rock pools smothered in oil - these are just three examples of the desecration of Britain's coastline. They're all unsightly and unpleasant for us, but for wildlife they're potentially lethal.

Around 400 million gallons of sewage - much of it untreated - is discharged into our coastal waters every day. As a result, one in three of our beaches still fails to meet European standards.

Each year six million tonnes of garbage is dumped into the sea by ships. Washed ashore, it creates a foul mess on our beaches - and worldwide claims an annual death toll of two million sea birds and 100,000 marine mammals.

Five million tonnes of oil is released into the sea every year. Whether it happens by accident or by design, the result is the same - oiled birds and contaminated beaches by the mile.

Beaches used as dump sites for solid waste are ruined.

The recent passion for building marinas, barrages and other concrete complexes has meant that more and more of our natural coastline is threatened with disappearing completely - where it hasn't already done so.

What needs to be done

The Marine Conservation Society has done much to bring the plight of Britain's seaside to the attention of the public and the authorities. But there is still much to be done to ensure that we have cleaner beaches and seas.

Proper treatment of all discharges to the marine environment, with all our beaches brought up to at least the minimum EC standards.

Adoption of the precautionary approach to the dumping of hazardous wastes at sea.

Effective implementation of the international convention (MARPOL) to prevent the dumping of garbage from ships.

Creation of more protected areas and marine nature reserves around our coast. Better planning and management of our coast and seas.

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From: M. J. Coward, Acorn Cottage, 14 Bugdens Lane, Verwood, Dorset BH21 6EY  
Tel. Verwood 826233

Poole Harbour Circuit Race - 24th September 1989

Start (approx.) 11 a.m. at Rockley Point, Rockley Sands, Hamworthy.

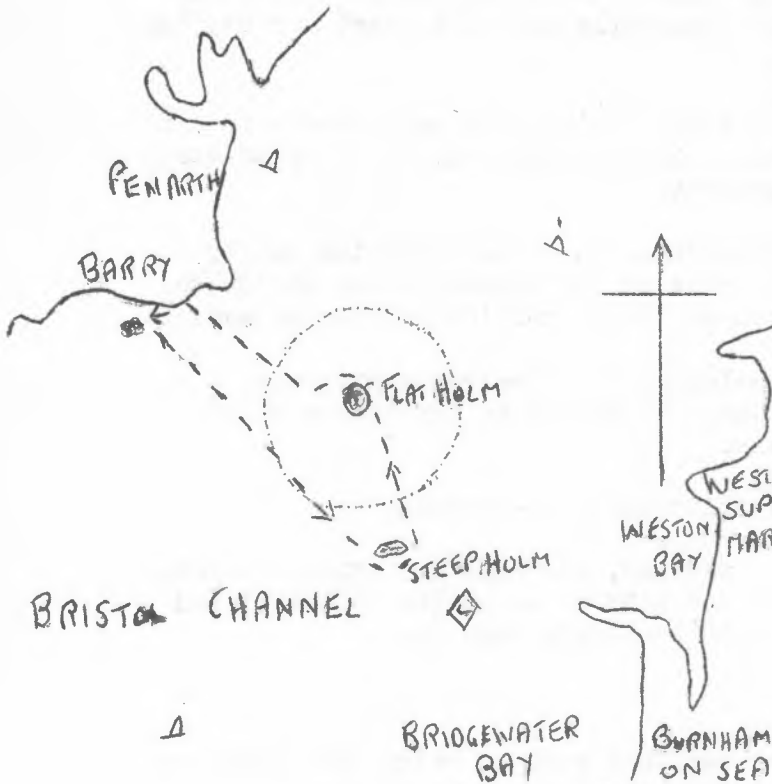
A 15-mile marathon within Poole Harbour including a circumnavigation of Brownsea Island - a very scenic paddle!

This is our third year of running this race and we have been very encouraged by the response in the last two years. It is ranking event for K1's, K2's and Canadians, and an open event for sea kayaks. Light refreshments are included in the entry fee, and prizes are numerous.

Further details and entry forms from: Rose Purkiss, 24 Green Road, Poole, Dorset BH15 1QW.

BRISTOL CHANNEL - SUNDAY 16TH JULY 1989 by JOHN KINGSLEY

Peter and I left Marlow at 8 a.m. arriving at Sully Island at 10.15. Preparation of sea kayaks was soon complete and we were afloat at 10.45 wearing only suntan lotion, sun specs and sun hats! As had happened the previous weekend, we disturbed a number of basking sea trout in the warm water close to shore.



Our five mile paddle to Steep Holm was uneventful. We passed South of Flat Holm, where the lighthouse kept flashing, as though keeping a beady eye upon us. We briefly put on our spray decks to keep out the wash of a passing coaster, and when crossing two minor tide races. We circled the nature reserve of Steep Holm, looking up at fortifications going back to 1867, a legacy of the Franco-Prussian War. On a shingle bank at the northern end of the Island we passed three canoeists from Penarth.

When the Devil dug Cheddar Gorge, he tossed two rocks into the Bristol Channel. We had just left the first and were now on our way to the second, Flat Holm (both Islands named by the Vikings). We skirted another tide rip and went ashore for lunch. We were politely told that the Island is an

Environmental Study Centre and if we wished to go further we should pay £1 each. This we shall do next time.

The Penarth paddlers joined us on Flat Holm, Peter asking why they were using general purpose slalom kayaks. To be told (in a nutshell) the story of five kayakers near Caldey Island (we assume very close to the rocky shoreline) taking photographs, a rogue wave arrived unannounced, capsized four sea kayakers, which were all damaged beyond repair or lost. The sea state changed rapidly and the party became split up, and the rescue involved climbing a cliff by a disabled paddler (only one leg), plus helicopter and RNLI inshore rescue boat!!

The tide had turned before we left Flat Holm and we thought it prudent to don our buoyancy aids.

We had a hard hours paddle as we ferry glided across the incoming tide, knowing that we had to keep south of the overfalls on Lavernock Point.

We could not afford to stop paddling against the tide, so we went ashore for a well earned drink - it had been extremely hot and we had both consumed 1½ litres each in five hours - before paddling the last half mile along the coast to Sully Island.

An interesting 12 mile paddle. We were home by 6.30 p.m.

Next time we shall go from Penarth, thereby making better use of the ebb tide out and flood tide for the return.

'Mud, Mud, Glorious Mud' by John Kingsley

Eight hippopotami - that's what we felt like at the end - gathered at Brockweir, just upstream from Tintern on Saturday, 8th July, for a days paddle down the Wye, Severne Estuary, Bristol Channel and up the Avon to Bristol docks. After moving cars from Brockweir to Bristol and returning (27 miles each way), we slid into the water by various means at 12.45, and assisted by the ebb tide moved swiftly down the 10 miles of the River Wye past Tintern Abbey and Chepstow Castle to its confluence with the River Severn.

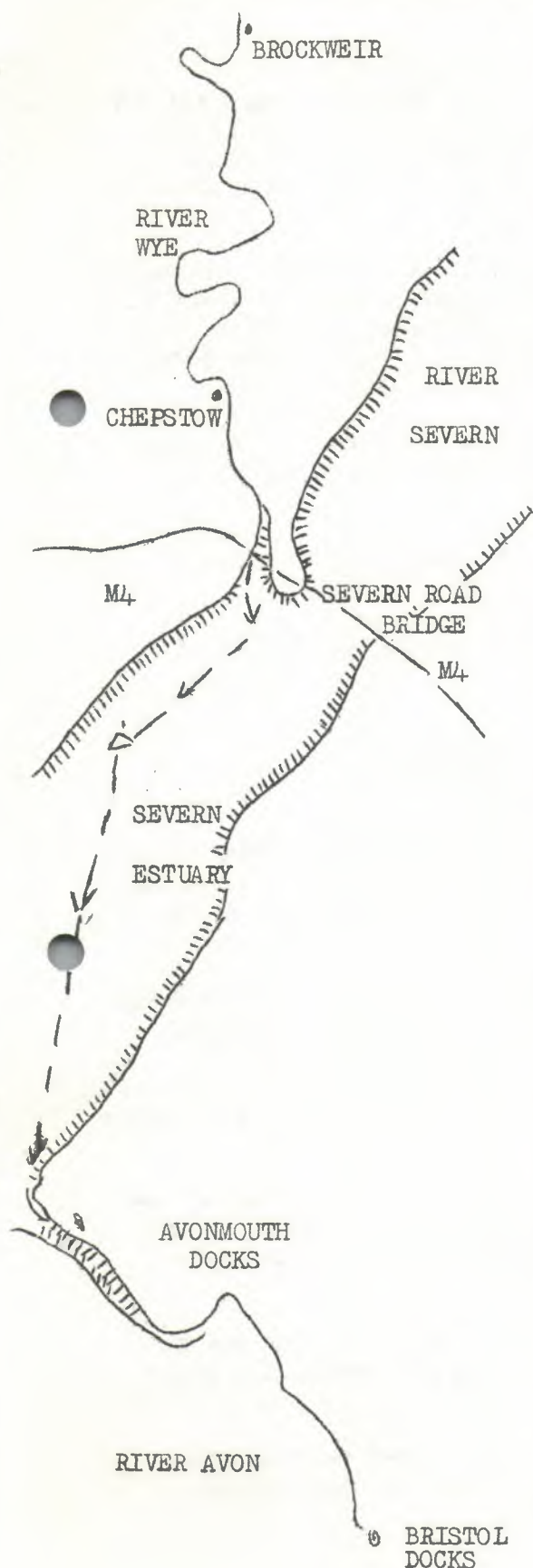
The funnel shape of the Bristol Channel produces the rapid rise and fall of the tide in all three rivers we were to use. Seaweed stranded in the trees 15' (5m) above us, was ample evidence of the tidal range.

Once we had left Brockweir, we were committed to a long paddle. It was not possible to return against the current. Having had early breakfasts we were all very hungry, and stopped for a late lunch on Chapel Rock, just down stream of the Severn Bridge. We were in no hurry and lazed in the sunshine for an hour, during which time the tide had dropped another five feet. Picking our way between slippery mud and slippery seaweed we were back in our kayaks and on our way. The tide rapidly carried us the two miles to Charston Rock.

In case of poor visibility we had planned to paddle on a course of 200<sup>0</sup>M to take us down through 'The Shoots' (a narrow passage of fast moving water). Long before we could discern any disturbance to the water, we could hear it. The outgoing tide rushing over the 'Gruggy' sand bank and hitting still water on the other side was interesting. (The almanac gives ample warning to yachtsmen about proceeding through the shoots on an ebb tide against any wind from the south-west above Force 4.) The turbulence of the water keeps the fine mud in suspension, and it was just like canoeing on a vast lake of drinking chocolate.

We had an easy seven mile paddle to Avonmouth in very calm conditions, arriving ahead of schedule at about 16.15. Turning into the mouth of the River Avon, we were admonished from the pier masters' tower because we had not advised them of our passage. Five minutes hard paddle against the current and we were able to get ashore on a small stretch of rocks and shingle, without getting muddy.

We got our refreshments out of the kayaks and settled down to await the turn of the tide, then found ourselves being hailed from the top of the sea wall by a policeman. We suspect that he expected a bunch of rowdies, but was met by the eloquent partnership of Fisher and Williams.



"Do you know you are trespassing on Dock property?"

"No"

"Name and address please?"

"Do you wish us to move below the high water line?"

"No Sir, that won't be necessary"

Although not yet low water, we were anxious to be on our way, and got back onto the water too soon. The paddle upstream was hard, especially for John Mercer in his Europa. We became well stretched out with Bob Rive and Simon Lawrence well out in front. There was no way out, we were surrounded by high black mud banks, acres of it.

My almanac showed low water at Avonmouth at 18.00. It was fortunate that we had not been called upon to do any hard, sustained paddling earlier in the day for it was over an hour before the tide, now flooding, caught up with us. Those in front were paddling against the last of the previous ebb tide, while members at the back of the group enjoyed the start of the new tide.

We arrived at Bristol dock gates at 20.00, to be surrounded by high stone walls, high dock gates, gaunt wharves and still more gooy muddy river bank.

We were tired, hungry and fractious, and the cars were so close. By various means, some more muddy than others, we got ashore at 20.40.

Twenty four miles covered, thanks to Ken for having such an idea!

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AN EXPEDITION TO THE ORKNEYS - OUR WAY!  
by ROB WEBB FROM ISLE OF WIGHT

Our original plans were to paddle the Pentland Firth from Hura passing east of Stroma and then making landfall at Tor Ness before continuing clockwise around the Islands. However, like all best laid plans they went out of the window upon our arrival.

Whilst the rest of the country was basking in tropical conditions the Orkney's were a world apart; overcast, showers and gusty north-westerlies.

After due consideration we decided to take the ferry from John O'Groats to Burwick on South Ronaldsay, and with a bit of humping loaded our three kayaks aboard.

Hoping the wind would shift or decrease we opted for paddling up the inside of Scapa Flow to St Mary's enabling us to either nip through Hoy Sound and continue our original plans or portage the Churchill Barriers and proceed anticlockwise around the Islands.

By the time we reached St Mary's the wind was whistling off the mainland a Force 6, and where the woes of me and my Anas begun. Basically due to the bow seeking the wind in anything but a breeze.

St Mary's itself offers few sheltered campsites, the best we found being next to a boat shed. However up the road the Commodore Bar offered respite from the rain as we reworked a plan of action.

Next day the weather was grim leaving us to cross the Blockships and proceed northwards to Skaill on the east coast of Deerness. Even with mountaineering equipment shifting loaded sea kayaks over the Blocks would be impossible, however small beaches at either end allow access up to the road and over the other side.

Off Copinsay and Skaill Skerries we saw our first seal colonies and despite recent press reports look to be in excellent health, the locals reporting only two deaths.

At Skaill (Sandside Bay) there is what at first appears to be a quiet and pleasant campsite in the dunes. However when we poked our heads out in the morning squadrons of flies homed in on our porridge. Needless to say that morning was the fastest pack up and underway in history.

In our original plans we had sent a week's food care of the Post Office in Kirkwall in order to save on weight and space. But in view of the weather and consequent change of plans it was decided to pick it up next port therefore enabling us to do as we wanted or rather weather allowed.

Ironically the wind that day was negligible though still overcast and we made a speedy passage to the Bay of Carnoss just north of Kirkwall. Mull Head was well worth a stopover for a Mars Bar where nesting seabirds complete with young watched us warily as we quietly drifted past.

Due to our revised plans the tides were favourable in the afternoons for most of the trip and this gave us a morning in Kirkwall to pick up the nosh and make a visit to the Coastguard.

That afternoon, near submerged with stores, we set forth for somewhere on the north-east tip of Shapinsay, on the way pausing to explore the caves and gulleys along with their inhabitants around South Skerry on the south-east corner of Shapinsay. This is what we had come for and soon our spirits picked up as we meandered in and out of every nook and cranny. Needless to say the Anas was great for this.

On reaching the Ness of Ork we were again greeted by inquisitive seals though always just out of camera shot.

After paddling back and forward between Quholm and Noust of Erraby in search of a campsite we eventually settled on the latter after being verbally ejected by an English drop out at the former. By now the wind was again strengthening from the north-west and our daily tea intake was reaching critical levels.

As it happens the landowner where we camped was an expatriot from Claygate in Surrey where one of our number hailed from. Having made his day we ended ours with vegburgers and copious quantities of tea.

Again decision time; we wanted to proceed north to Rousay and then on to Westray but the north-westerlies looked permanent and we decided to make for the Sands of Evie after looking at the Spring tide outflow to the west of Eyshallow Sound.

The next morning the wind had shifted a few points to the south and we timed the crossing between the Galt and Gairsay for the turn of the tide; even so, the bubble off the Galt was interesting and wet work and I think sheer adrenalin shot us across in marathon speeds.

At our regular Mars Bar stop this time off Sweys Holm the seals looked rather indignant as we sheltered from the wind on their waterfront!

As we continued through Gairsay Sound and Eyshallow Sound the tide picked up and we were soon roaring along having to break out off Aiker Ness to avoid missing the Sands of Evie and being swept into the overfalls near Eyshallow, no place for mere mortals in a Spring tide, we estimated them at being six feet high and dumping.

We soon secured a good campsite in a field next to the public convenience which was just as well as the mist soon came down and we had yet another wet night.

The next day we set off on the turn of the tide to avoid the overfalls, not that we could see anything for the mist had stayed with us as we eerily picked our way westwards, the wind generator on Burgar Hill humming away.

Off Casta Head the visibility started to clear to reveal yet more impressive cliffs trailing fauna and foliage to near the high water mark. Unfortunately as the mist cleared the wind increased yet again, this time from the south-east and once around Brough Head it left us another slog to Marwick Head.

We did have thoughts of camping in Marwick Bay but as we approached it was readily apparent it was no-go. So we decided to push on to the Bay of Skail.

Some sneaky offshore breaks caught us out at Outshore Point that set the adrenalin surging again as we practised the art of bongo riding and vertical take offs.

Once into the Bay of Skail we pushed head on into by now a south-east Force 7 being funnelled down the valley and true to form the rain came again.

After pitching our tent in the dunes and getting changed the lady cleaning the public convenience befriended us and offered her caravan to us. That night as we lay in our sleeping bags the rain thundered on the caravan and I suspect there was a couple of thankful sighs of relief. Well have you ever slept in a Pea Pod during a Monsoon?

The next morning the weather was Yuk, the wind blew but the rain soon cleared and we decided to play the 'grockle' taking in the local, tea house and Skara Brae, a 5000 year old settlement in pristine condition.

Just inland of us a JCB stumbled on coffins and remains dating back to the 15th century which had boffins from the mainland rushing to the Orkneys complete with buckets and spades.

That night the wind dropped right off to nothing and the tide was due to turn at 22 30 hours so we made yet another snap decision and packed up for the off.

Our host was there to see us off complete with camera for posterity as we powered off into the rapidly approaching but short lived night.

To say we flew was an understatement. Cheeky little Zephyrs off the land saw to that. As we approached Breck Ness we saw what appeared to be lights on the horizon where there shouldn't have been appearing and disappearing as we rode the swell. But to our horror they turned out to be another offshore break. So with our hearts in our mouths we picked our way Indian file through the rocks we couldn't see.



We dipped out that night as it was the last night of Shopping Week in Stromness celebrated by much drinking and jollity and dancing on the pier which we were oblivious to as we cursed and fumbled through the rocks. At one in the morning we popped our heads over the sea wall to the campsite and proceeded to disembark with some attempted stealth that would have had the S.B.S. in stitches.

Come what may we were determined to have a day in Stromness and what do you know, the sun shined and we had a heatwave!! And much to some Orcadians amazement there were no 'Ootshots' (Overfalls) in Hoy Sound. We had an ear-bashing of hiss for two hours!

Stromness Museum was well worth a visit for the nautically minded, having displays connected with the sinking of the German fleet in the Flow, the Mutiny on the Bounty and the Hudson Bay connection with the Islands including the Inuits, as well as other artefacts.

The weather next morning had us thinking that perhaps our day off was a rash decision. Nevertheless we were determined to take in the west coast of Hoy and go for an attempt at the Firth crossing.

Again we timed the crossing of Hoy Sound for the turn of the tide and rode a large swell as opposed to 'Ootshots'! Despite precipitous cliffs we were somewhat disappointed with Hoy west coast though the Old Man warranted a good inspection but received no takers for an ascent.

A lengthy portage at Rackwick saw us camped in the dunes and in a wind tunnel to the south of the Bay. Later inspection of the Bay turned up a bothy for all and sundry to use. However, getting the kayaks there would have been gruesome.

That night we listened to the weather forecast hoping to make a push to Tor Ness and await a window in the weather for the crossing, but a trough was due pushing to the east and bringing south-westerlies. We were tempted to do another night paddle to beat the worst of the wind which was now south  $4/5$  but a lack of knowledge of the coastline and finding a haven in the dark along with the imminent increase had us sloping off to our tents.

The next day we groaned as the wind had arrived. So we deposited ourselves in the bothy with tea making apparatus for a long wait. Upon further discussion we decided that any further southing was slim so we decided there and then, another one of our by now famous snap decisions, to ride the wind back to Stromness and cut inside Scapa Flow to Burwick and the ferry.

Hoping for protection around Rora Head from the wind was a joke. The wind after leaving the top of the cliffs plummeted down right on top of us and whistled through every gully and crevasse going; at times we were bracing near horizontal to stay upright! letting the wind push us in the right direction.

For me in the Anas crossing from Muckle Head to the Point of Oxan on Graemsay and then on to the Ness of Skerry was debortury having to dogleg into the wind and then run with it to meet up with the others steering a straight course in Knoord Kapps.

In Stromness three brassed off kayakists over a pint and haggis and chips decided to forego the slog to Burwick and take the Stromness ferry instead and save the Pentland crossing until next year.

We found the locals incredibly friendly and helpful without exception and any kayaker is sure of a warm welcome though one should be wary of immigrants!

Water is available at most stops and the locals are more than willing to assist in any way provided you can spare half an hour for a chat, a small price to pay for their hospitality. Local men of the sea are invaluable free with their knowledge and are well worth heeding.

We also received excellent service and help from Kirkwall Meteorology and the Coastguard. The Coastguard are grateful for knowledge of your presence and departure and will fall over backwards to assist you in any way.

For those intending to visit the Orkneys the art of instant decisions is well worth practising; next time we intend touring the Isles by Landrover, hitting the high spots by kayak, and doing a bit of walking and climbing when the weather is naff. For the wildlife freaks you won't be able to contain yourselves!

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#### ST KILDA - BY CANOE: DAVID HAYTER'S OWN STORY

Lone canoeist David Hayter spoke at the weekend of the moment when his epic trip to St Kilda almost ended in disaster.

Relaxing in the warm sunshine with his wife Kate and three year old daughter Emily, outside their cottage home near Lunga, David recalled his marathon battle with the elements in his successful bid to become the first canoeist to make a solo crossing to St Kilda.

Stormbound and injured in an accident, the Ardfern building contractor at one point found himself faced with the possibility of having to abandon the attempt.

Conditions were bright and sunny when David, backed by Sea Tiger Canoes, Four Bells Rum and A. and B. Marine (Scotland), paddled out of Lochmaddy North Uist at 10 a.m. on June 1 on the first leg of his trip. But the wind, though light at Force 4, was coming from a northerly direction and slowed him up 'something rotten' as he fought his way round into the Sound of Harris.

His luck was not to improve. Pitching his tent on the Island of Berneray, he was to find himself stormbound and forced to spend two nights there. 'There was no way I could move,' recalled David.

The next day, with conditions near perfect and a strong easterly speeding him along, South African born David headed for the Island of Haskeir which was to be his final jumping off point for St Kilda, completing the 20 miles in four hours.

There his luck began to change, almost ending in disaster.

With the wind now veering to the north, conditions at Haskeir were turbulent, making for a difficult landing on the island's treacherous coastline. Using climbing equipment, he was inching the canoe up a steep rock shelf when the rope parted, plunging both David and his craft 25 feet into the sea where the canoe was caught in the undertow and swept under an overhang, damaging much of its vital equipment, including the navigator. Inflating his lifejacket David managed to keep himself afloat and though hurt and exhausted, was eventually able to man-handle the canoe clear of the waterline. Once securely ashore, he took stock of his position and soon realised that he had pulled the ligaments in his right shoulder which had very little movement in it. Equally seriously, he had lost nearly half of his precious water supply.

Anti-inflammatory tablets helped to ease his aching shoulder but with the north westerly winds now gusting to Force 7, he was to find himself marooned on Haskeir for four days and as his water supply dwindled the canoeist's plight became more hazardous by the hour. Soon David began to fear that the whole project would have to be abandoned.

Luckily his radio signals were heard by local fishing boats, one of which, the Achieve, was able to get four litres of water ashore to him, despite the stormy conditions.

Using a transistor radio to monitor weather forecasts, David by June 7, had detected a window in the weather which he thought would allow him to risk the final 36-mile crossing to St Kilda.

Manoeuvring his canoe into the water by means of ropes, he left Haskeir at 12.45 p.m. heading out into the Atlantic where he encountered good weather conditions. 'There was a 20 foot swell but no sea running across it and although the wind was variable, it never rose above Force 3', said David. With his radio now dead there was no way he could signal his approach to St Kilda, but the canoeist had been spotted well out to sea and there was already a small crowd gathered on the pier to welcome him alongside the jetty at 10 p.m. They included crew from the Oban based charter yacht, Jean de la Lune, and members of the National Trust. David lingered on the pier to watch 'one of the most glorious sunsets I have ever seen', before joining an island barbecue as the guest of the Station Commander on St Kilda, Captain Ball.

He was to spend a week on St Kilda, exploring the coastline though gale force winds prevented him from circumnavigating the island. He returned to Stornoway on Wednesday of last week on board the Ocean Bounty, which is under charter to the Nature Conservancy Council.

The following day he continued his homeward journey by ferry and bus, arriving back in Oban by mid-afternoon.

Summing up his adventure, David said: 'It was not the toughest trip I have ever made but I think it was certainly the most dangerous. I am glad I did it, it was something of a personal challenge, but I wouldn't do it again. There are just too many things that can go wrong.'

He believes that his Sea Tiger canoe, which was specially designed for such conditions, is the only type of craft which could have survived the Haskeir incident.

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DAVE TAYLOR'S STAG PADDLE SUBMITTED BY  
BARRY HOWELL FROM GRANGE OVER SANDS, CUMBRIA

Don't ask for 'Bright and Early' tea at midnight in the Hamilton Service cafeteria - the system can't cope. Settle instead for a large caffeine injection and get on with the drive. The good thing about driving in the early hours of the morning is the absence of traffic and the fact that you can get from south Cumbria to Crinan in five hours. The bad thing about driving in the early hours is that you end up going to bed when really it is time to get up if you're going to catch the tide through the Gulf of Corryvreckan.

Four hours sleep is never enough, but it's wonderful how rejuvenating more coffee and the thought of a giant whirlpool can be. What does it say in the west coast pilot? Something like ".... under certain conditions a passage through the Gulf of Corryvreckan would be unthinkable." So don't think about it, and carry on with the business of loading a weekend's gear into the kayak.

On a 'stag paddle' you carry more than the usual amount of kit, but the great thing about the Aleut Sea Double is the vast amount of space available, and the huge hatches make packing a stress free exercise, which is just as well, because I've got all the stress I can handle thinking about what's to come,

Keith's in the front of my boat and Dave and Martin are paired up in the other Aleut. James is paddling his Vynek, but then he's always been weird. The tide is with us and we shoot out past Garbh Reisa and Craignish Point before I've looked up from the map. Reisa and t-Struith flashes past, and there's the Gulf dead ahead, tucked in between the north end of Jura and the looming bulk of Scarba. All looks fairly placid from this distance of a couple of miles, until we stop paddling and listen, and sure enough there's a noise like surf breaking on a distant beach and I can just make out the odd bit of white water. It's surprising how quickly you can don your buoyancy aid at a time like that.

And suddenly we're in the thick of it and it's like being in a big spate river, only the river's a mile wide and it's going at eight knots and there's three metre waves coming at you one after another, curling over and breaking on the top third, and I look over to see Martin and Dave punching out through the top of a big one, with over half the kayak out of the water. The Aleut feels stable and responsive in water like this, which is just as well because Keith's kite washes out from under the foredeck lines and with an expletive deleted he turns to watch it float away behind us just as the next monster rears up in front trying to back loop us which wouldn't be funny at all. We break out into the back eddy and chase his kite, and sit and watch the fun that the others are having. Martin and Dave have bent the rudder blade into a right angle, and James is trying to stand up in his Vyneck while surfing so that he can get a better slide. But then he's always been a little strange.

Gradually the stream drops away and we head out for the Garvellachs. They look close enough to reach out and touch, but it takes an hour to get to them. Mull looms in the background, heavy black cloud hiding Ben More, and the conversation centres around the chances of escaping the rain that seems certain to overtake us. We opt for a landing on the southern most island of the chain, Eileach an Naoimh, and find a delightful inlet a stone's throw from the seventh century chapel. It's a boulder beach and a tricky landing, but you can't have everything, and anyway, the clouds have disappeared, the sun's come out and the midges must have better things to do. Tents up, rehydration programme under way, and an exploration of the monastic ruins before dinner.

Watching Martin Clark swing into action over a couple of primus stoves is one of life's great pleasures. This man has to be the greatest expedition cook in the northern hemisphere, and it's only fair to repay his talents by dressing correctly. Keith and I don dinner jackets and bow ties (James and Dave still have a lot to learn) and settle back over an aperitif. Life's wonderful and the food and drink keeps on coming. It is a "stag paddle" after all, and you have to make it memorable, but a trifle might just be a bit over the top.

No rush the next morning because we have to wait for the tide, which is just as well because no-one feels like rushing anywhere. It's red hot, not a cloud in the sky and the sea mirror calm. A yacht motors into the inlet, drops anchor, and the tender heads our way. It's only common courtesy to extend the hand of friendship to fellow seafarers, and a "wee snifter" is probably in order, but they do look a little surprised that the waiter is wearing a black jacket and bow tie.

We push off about 2 p.m. and wander up the Garvellach Chain, then down by Eilean Dubh Mor and Lunga to the Grey Dog tide race. It's looking a bit

quiet, so we pull in and stretch the legs until the race perks up, and then we shoot through into the Sound of Luing, running south with the stream down the east side of Scarba. We've no real plans other than to camp for the final night somewhere handy for the vehicles at Crinan. The islands around the northern end of the Sound of Jura beckon from all directions, and we play in overfalls and races, creep up on unsuspecting seals basking in the sun and finally decide to camp on Garbh Reisa. To say that it's idyllic would be doing it an injustice; white sandy beach, Wimbledon standard turf, and enough driftwood to supplement the barbecue charcoal. Martin swings into action again, while James cools off the champagne by suspending the bottles from a couple of handy fishing floats. Dave has brought enough meat in his cooler box to feed the population of the Western Isles, and I feel obliged to barbecue all of it. As Martin and I prepare the garnish I look up to see James attempting to retrieve the champagne which by now has floated away in the tide. He has to swim for it, but then he's always been a good swimmer.

The meal lasts for about three hours and the sky is turning red and orange and gold, and we're still wearing shorts at 10 p.m., and James is actually filtering coffee, and Keith is reading aloud from Services "The Nostomaniac", and I'm thinking that if married life can make Dave as happy as this, then he'll be O.K. Good Luck.

Please help me fill this  
Newsletter.

From: Vince Smith, Ground Floor Flat, 3 Rossall Road, Ansdell, Lytham St Annes,  
Lancs FY8 4ES 21st July 1989

I do enjoy the Newsletter every time it comes, but you seem to be a little short on articles at times. Perhaps some questions might trigger off someone else to reply? Has anyone tried the Skerray? What about Frank's new elliptical hatches? How are these plastic sea kayaks?

Also in reply to stoves article by Clive Tully, do the MSR stoves give simmering facilities. I have heard that they, especially the X-GK were designed for high altitude expeditions where they melted snow very efficiently, but can they be controlled for more normal activities (like frying bacon without making it a burnt offering?). I am especially interested in the Whisperlite International. Does anyone else know that the Coleman multi-fuel stove has a separate generator for paraffin so that if you are going to change from unleaded petrol to paraffin then you must carry both generators and disassemble the stove to change over?

Finally, we have tried out Howard Jeff's new Sea Aleut II double sea kayak. It is great when on the water and paddles really well, the space inside is capacious. Howard has gone through several design changes and trials on the prototype we were paddling. Many of the features that he had included were well thought out: the webbing tape glassed in at each end and in the middle to aid carrying; the knee tube; the removable handled Chimp deck pumps for each cockpit and the large hatches. I had some trouble catching my thumb knuckles on the kayak but I was using an ordinary length paddle; when I changed to a sea length paddle I had no problem. The only think that we had difficulty with was the transport on land, via my car (a VW Polo!!) I was lucky not to be stopped by the Police. Do you know the law on carrying items on top of a vehicle?

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From: Bernard Charles, Epworth Cottage, 2 Old Market Avenue, Chichester PO19 1SW  
Tel (0243) 781246 29th June 1989

I would be most grateful if the following advertisement could be included in the next Newsletter.

FOR SALE - ISLANDER EXPEDITION: almost new, specially built in two sections for ease of transport and average garage stowage. Longest section approximately 12'. Extras include spray deck, stowable purpose built trolley, hatches, knee tube, deck lines, etc. £395.

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From: Franco Ferrero, 3 Tan-y-Bwiche, Mynydd Llandegal, Nr. Bethesda, Gwynedd,  
N. Wales. Tel. Bethesda (0248) 602287

Letter about North Sea Crossing

Dear John,

I am writing to you to inform you that I am obliged to resign from the Shallow Water Kayakers Association. This is because Kevin Danforth and I recently completed the first crossing of the North Sea in a double sea kayak. We left Landguard Point near Felixstowe at 7 p.m. on Wednesday 17 May and arrived at Zeebrugge at 10.10 p.m. the following evening. I am told that our time of 27 hours 10 minutes is faster than the times set by previous groups using singles.

Our reasons for doing this trip were two-fold:-

(1) This is the longest open crossing either of us had ever undertaken and therefore plainly and simply a great personal challenge.

(2) A desire to promote the use of double sea kayaks in the U.K. We believe that double sea kayaks are neglected in this country because the designs commercially available in this country do not measure up to the standards we have become used to in terms of handling in rough water, such as surf, overfalls or rough seas. Howard Jeffs' Aleut 2 impressed us as being a radical step forward in double design. So, after various trials as different as the D.W., surfing the overfalls at Penrhyn Mawr and rolling we decided that Howards double lived up to the high standards we expected of any sea kayak, double or single.

The journey itself took place in calm seas with a slight headwind except for the last three hours when a stiff offshore breeze and overfalls over the sandbanks outside Zeebrugge provided a testing sting in the tail. Avoiding shipping proved less of a problem than we thought. Our biggest problem was dehydration and at times, staying awake. At one stage we both nodded off at the same time and woke up with a start to find that we had both done a low brace support stroke in our sleep; talk about paddling in synch! I remember reading Derek Hutchinson's account of his crossing with Tom Caskey and others in which he mentioned seeing amongst other things a block of flats in the middle of the sea. I would just like to let him know that they are still there along with a couple of semis and several garage walls, optical illusions which were caused by a combination of mist/haze and refracted sunlight reflecting off the insides of our sunglasses into tired eyes. Taking the shades off got rid of the problem.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank the following:-

New Wave Paddles; Wild Water; Pure Perfection Custom; our wives (one each), family and friends; the second officer and crew of the P. & O. ferry; and a marvellous Belgian customs officer who smoothed things out with the harbour police as it would appear that Zeebrugge harbour is off limits to non commercial shipping.

Franco Ferrero and Kevin Danforth are both B.C.U. coaches who runs their own outdoor pursuits business.

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#### MY VIEWS ON MY WIFE'S BOAT by AMOS BEWICK

Since the spring of 1988 my wife has been the proud owner of a SEA TIGER. This little bit is my views on that boat. I own a beat up old boat that is similar to an ANAS but isn't quite the same. I believe that Bridget's boat is the Mark II of the Tiger. It is a secondhand boat, red in colour and has the silly little front hatch that was replaced in the Mark III. (The person we bought the boat from went and bought a Mark III Tiger .... when buying secondhand it's always wise to ask why it's being sold.)

Getting the boat to and from the water, an often neglected part of boat reviews. It must be said that the boat is heavy, very heavy. This is due to its construction and the pod. It is certainly a solid boat, but it is easier to carry alone than my boat which seems much longer and unwieldy. A little aside to this is a tale of a quick trip across the Solent to the Needles in which I used Bridget's Sea Tiger. Amos the great voyager returns to the beach from which he'd departed some hours earlier. To impress all the old ladies wallowing along what the Council laughingly call a beach, Amos paddles ashore ashore strongly nips out of the Tiger without getting wet (with the aid of a pair of wellies) and then proceeds to crumple when he picks up the boat. How does a boat travel? Another point not considered that often. The Sea Tiger is a dream on top of a car. Put upside down it has great flat areas perfect for use on a roof rack. It can be tightened easily and fits ideally so that there is no need to worry when stopping quickly. This is in complete

contrast to my sea boat and other GRP boats I've used. Not only is it a frightening experience hearing your beloved boat crack as you tighten the straps but you need various bits of string to prevent the boat sliding forwards during the inevitable emergency stop.

At last the boat is beside the water and all you have to do is pack those little bits you brought for the journey. The splits on the back deck are still handy. The pod has elastics that hold equipment just above and between the knees. This is the only area inside the cockpit that things can be kept. I keep the flares here, this keeps the flares dry but they are handy. To get to them has less risk than going inside the cockpit of a conventional boat, i.e., one without a pod, because water splashing into the cockpit doesn't effect the boat that much. The rest of the stuff must be kept either inside the boat proper or on the front deck.

Now most boats don't present too much trouble on a day trip. The joy of a Sea Tiger is that everything put in the back hatch is accessible from the cockpit whilst at sea. The back hatch is a VCP hatch put off centre and angled slightly forwards. This enables large BDH containers to go easily into and out of the boat. My boat has the back hatch just within reach and pointing straight up so I daren't reach it at sea and can't get a large BDH bottle into the boat. This means that sandwiches lie behind me in the cockpit and are still difficult to fetch out while on the sea. But the bloke who designed the Sea Tiger back hatch really gave it some thought. With the Tiger I keep my cag, spare jumper and food close to hand and in the relative dry. And I can get to each whilst at sea. I go solo quite a lot, but even in a group I like to be totally independent.

Camping isn't that difficult. Both front and back compartments are enormous. Weekend trips are quite easy. The back compartment easily takes large items such as the Trangia, sleeping bag, tent/bivi, large BDHs, karrimat, food for the day and liquids. The front hatch is very silly but has been improved. It is very small so I put in a waterproof bag and fill it from the outside with small items of clothing. This hatch also welcomes most tins, Sigg bottles and anything small. Weekend trips appear to present a lot less hassle with a Tiger than any of my friends boats. This includes boats with hatches on the deck and within the cockpit. I can't emphasis how impressed I am with this back hatch.

I can't claim to be well versed in long trips in any sea boat. The Tiger certainly has a lot of volume spare during a weekend trip.

Well the boat is packed and on the water. It is a wide, stable boat that is very short for a sea boat. It appears a lot bulkier in the water though actually is only a few centimetres higher than usual but the volume is almost uniform throughout. This doesn't make for a very photogenic craft. No sweeping bow that looks so good in those sunset snaps.

The boat is fitted with a retractable skeg which takes a bit of getting used to.

Basically if its down then the boat is difficult to turn and if up it is easier. If the wind is head on I find the front of the boat swings round and is then difficult to get on course if the skeg is down. With a following wind it goes very well with the skeg down. In between winds and the skeg ought to be in between . . . but that takes trial and error and again I'm not an expert. The skeg makes pottering along rocks very enjoyable. When the skeg is up the boat turns from a standing start a lot easier than most boats I can mention. The boat is so much shorter it can go in caves and turn round where other boats can only watch enviously. Then the faster sections between caves, etc., can be accomplished with the skeg down. The skeg is operated by a bit of string that



can be kept in a cleat or fully released. Occasionally the skeg has got jammed. This has been due to nasties getting stuck in the skeg box or the bit of string getting jammed under the split paddles. A little care and this wouldn't happen, but to be honest it isn't the end of the world as I can still paddle without going off course.

A notable feature is the POD. From what I can gather it seems quite a controversial feature ..... could this be due to how certain people go on about it? Well I've got no axe to grind though I must admit I have paddled a couple of times with Nick Padwick (he is quite pro the pod!). It is the most comfortable boat I've sat in, the previous owners did modify the cheek bits and so they've got a lot to answer for. There is no need or possibilities to fit a back rest but as I've never used one I don't miss it. The pod seems to fit snugly but is roomy enough to allow me to paddle with my legs crossed over and to move freely. My knees have never slipped whilst rolling, skulling, etc. The entrance is parge (not like some boats which have minute openings requiring the paddler to get very wet when limboing out of the said boat). This enables me to hop in and out of the boat freely and to keep me and the inside of the boat relatively dry.

The pod has such a small volume in comparison with conventional cockpit-pits that flooding doesn't matter. I've done "all in" rescues where I slid into the boat as it lay on its side, flipped it up with a normal recovery stroke, rescued the other boats and then put on my spray deck. I was wet but surprisingly the boat wasn't noticeably more unstable, it just felt slightly heavier. Rescuing unladen sea boats I don't find that difficult but heavily laden!!! Maybe the pod is the answer?

Now to the problems. It makes the boat very heavy, the pod is a substantial structure. Repairs must be done on the outside of the boat. Holes under the paddler (where they are most likely to occur) go undetected and water just floods the compartments where all your goodies are. Another problem is that not many boats have pods fitted at the factory, if they are put in later then it could wreck your boat especially if you do it yourself.

So basically that's my views on my wife's boat. It is purely my opinion and very subjective. I hope this article doesn't cause a flood of letters from interested persons that have axes to grind.

The following is extracted from Tristan Jones' book, "ICE".

In this book Tristan tells of his epic attempts to beat Nansen's furthest north (see Nansen's book by this title) by sailing his small craft solo with his three legged, one eyed dog, into the Arctic ice-pack between Greenland and Svalbard over the winter of 1960/61.

Whilst making his first attempt, Tristan was assisted by East Greenland Eskimos. This extract explains his discoveries on how they built and used kayaks and umiaks.

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The Eskimo boats, the umiak and the kayak, are not just vessels made to float and move through the water. They are highly efficient machines. They belong to the same family of membrane and frame vessels as did the ancient Irish curragh and the British coracle, which themselves were highly efficient, ocean-worthy vessels.

The curragh had more or less the same lines and appearance as the Iroquois bark canoe, but the umiak has the characteristics of the dory, one of the most seaworthy of all vessels. Therefore it follows that as the dory is more efficient than the bark canoe, especially in any kind of rough sea, then the Eskimo umiak must be more seaworthy than the ancient curragh.

Like the dory, the umiak is double-ended. The keel is carved out flat from a piece of driftwood and so are the pieces of wood lashed from fore to aft along the gunwale which keep the frames in position. The Eskimos told me that some of the umiak lashings are of long strips of whalebone, but the one I was in had rawhide lashings, very well served and tied.

I noticed that the men did not paddle the boat, but only steered or handled the sails. I later found that the Eskimos consider paddling to be women's work, and they even call the umiaks "the women's boats". The kayaks, smaller, more fragile, and much harder to handle, were known as "the men's boats", though I did occasionally see women handling kayaks at Syd Kap.

At Syd Kap I watched how the skin boats are made. When a seal is caught and killed, the skin and blubber is removed. The Eskimos put the skins into tubs until the hair rots away on one side and most of the blubber on the other. When the boatbuilder guesses that the rotting is enough, he scrapes the hair from one side and the blubber from the other. The skins are sewn together while still wet, the seams overlapping, and the stitching very fine indeed. The thread used is seal sinew, which swells when wet.

Then the pliable, wet skins are stretched over the frame of the boat. When a kayak is sewn together, the two sides must be held while the last seam is sewn. This is because the kayak is an enclosed vessel, about as wide as a coffin and twice as long. The wet sealskin cover is sewn up reasonably tight, and when it dries becomes as taut and resonant as a drumhead. Umiaks may be built of large sealskins, walrus or white whale hides, and it is a tough job to stretch these hard skins tight enough. This is done by pulling the skins over the gunwale of the frame and overlapping it back onto its own part, then sewing one part to the other.

Before the Eskimo launches his skin boat, he leaves it out in the rain or snow for a while, to dampen it. After that it is as tight as a drum and no water will leak in. Because the sinews, with which the skins are sewn, rot after three or four days in fresh water, the skin boat is dragged onshore to dry out, turned upside down and placed on stones to allow ventilation. Overnight the sinews are restored, and the boat is good for another three or four days. When

the boats are not in use, they are taken ashore and stood on their sides as extra protection from the wind. In salt sea water the umiak or the kayak stitching will last for ten days before having to be completely redried.

The Eskimos told me that the umiaks made of walrus skin are not as good as those made of white whal hide. The walrus skin rots faster and is much harder to stitch. The average life of an umiak is about three years in fresh water, but longer in sea water. The kayaks last a shorter time, but this is probably because they are used more often.

The umiaks I saw at Syd Kap carried an amazing cargo load, sometimes as much as four tons. The thirty-five footers carried up to twenty passengers. This is because of their high sides. They could come right in-shore because of their flat bommot and could be dragged up on the ice because of their light weight when unloaded; no more than half a ton. I realised that in choosing Cresswell for the Arctic cruise I had unwittingly followed the path of the umiak, for Cresswell, too, had all these attributes, with the exception of the light weight - being constructed of wood, she was heavier.

On the way to Syd Kap the umiak was forced by piled up pack ice to take a detour down a lead quite close to the shore. She grazed a sharp rock which put a gash into her starboard bow. I was amazed to see one of the women get out a sewing needle made of whalebone, some sinew from a seal, a small sealskin patch, lean over the bow, and sew a patch on!

The sail used was a square sail, and I wondered if the Eskimos had learned of that from the Norsemen, or whether they had figured it out before the arrival of the Scandinavians. The Eskimos told me that they had tried out fore-and-aft sails, but that with an umiak they were dangerous in the swift gusts of the fiords, and that some fore-and-aft-rigged boats had been lost, but hardly any square-riggers.

I learned later that when the Eskimos take the umiaks up the rivers, if they come to a shallow part, they half unload the umiak, with its four-inch draft, then they get out into the water and lift the boat over the shallows! When they haul against the current, they secure the towing line half-way up the mast at one end, then to a dog team or some men at the other.

When we came out into the open, wide waters of the Halls Bredning Fiord, where there was quite a sea, the women inflated eight sealskin bags and tied them to the hull outside the boat, four a little aft of the bows and four a little forward of the stern. This was to prevent the boat from being swamped. With so little wood in the frame, if she were swamped she'd go down like a brick unless she had buoyancy. The sealskin bags gave her an added 250 pounds of buoyancy each. I watched carefully, storing all these ideas at the back of my mind. As the roughness of the sea increased, a sealskin flap, which had been hanging down all round the inside of the freeboard, was raised and tied to the wooden rail fixed round the boat above the gunwale. They had even thought of the weathercloth! The dodger!

Once up, the weathercloth flaps were held in place by sticks jammed between the gunwale and the rail. All very seamanlike and simple.

But the most original thing about the skin boats is that if someone is stranded in one, or wrecked on one of the many rocks or ice floes, he need not starve. He can eat the uncured hide of which the boat is made! There's enough food in an umiak to last ten men for a month! True, it would be tough and taste like old rope, but hunger knows no taste.

FROM ISLE OF WIGHT WEEKLY POST - NOVEMBER 1988

New warning on coastguard cuts by Gavin Foster

Island yachtsmen may be sailing into danger - faced with a new peril that distress calls may pass unnoticed because of Government cutbacks in the emergency service.

Bitterly opposed streamlining of the service now means a distress call from a small yacht could go unheard if a stronger signal is sent out at the same time

The grim warning comes from Mr Frank Johnston, the coastguard union's representative for the area including The Solent - already the country's busiest area - who will now be responsible for monitoring calls from even further afield.

This is because the Department of Transport is to close coastguard posts in North Devon, the Isle of Man and Scotland.

Mr Johnston explained: "This will have a knock-on effect on us - increasing our own workload at a time when we are already an extremely thin blue line. Morale among coastguards is currently rock bottom and these cutbacks will make things far worse.

No time

"At no time has any coastguard representative been asked for views on the new technology aimed at distress call monitoring. We are not opposed to such new technology, but if it is to be introduced there must be certain safeguards. At present there aren't any and that puts people's lives at risk."

Coastguards are particularly angered at new aerial technology designed to monitor calls in place of stations such as those scheduled for closure.

Mr Johnston is worried that, if a number of distress calls come in simultaneously, the weaker signals could be cut out by the stronger one. And he feels the worth of those responsible for co-ordinating rescue operations is being under-valued by the Government.

"It is a similar situation to that of a parent sat in his/her living room, listening for a baby alarm with a record player, television, radio and tape recorder all on at the same time.

"The more stations we have operating to receive and monitor distress calls the better. So far as we know, we have not yet missed a distress call because of this, but that is the danger," he said.

"This should not be treated as a parochial issue just because the Solent station itself is not threatened. It is the busiest area in the whole of the UK and we are stretched nearly at breaking point as it is, without the extra calls to monitor.

"The National Union of Civil and Public Servants is not a militant one, but lives are being put at risk in the present state and we do not want a situation to arise when we have to say 'we told you so'..."

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An Account of Corrievreken on Scottish West Coast  
by Andy McDowell

The Corrievrekan was running a full six knots when we struggled through the previous day against the current. But by using back-eddies along Scarba's southern shore, catching the helpful side of whirlpool flows and some strong paddling, it was just possible to escape to the west side of Jura to Glengarrisdale Bay two miles south of the Gulf, where a comfortable bothy awaited.

A return trip after a refreshing night's sleep with the tide behind us should have been an easier passage than the outgoing trip, but during the night a Force 4 westerly breeze had sprung up and a fairly lumpy tide-confused sea was the end result. We stayed too close inshore on the way back to the Gulf and were obliged to move half a mile out where conditions were less unpredictable due to the scend coming from the leeward shore. It was a relief finally, on drawing level with Eilean Mor, to change course downwind by letting some skeg down and paddling strongly for the gap between the island and Jura's northern end. A very fast sprint decanted us into Bagh Gleann Nam Muck and it was obvious that a very confused sea was rushing through the Gulf. Discretion dictated a quick landing in the relatively calm Bagh Nam Muck and a walk to the headland to inspect the passage between Eillan Beag and Jura enabled us to assess our course and choose where we would encounter the least hazardous conditions. This decided, we launched and paddled upwind (entailing lifting the skeg) into the relatively slack water in the lee of Eilean Mor.

At this point some time had elapsed since our reconnoitre and it appeared as though conditions had altered, but things have a habit of looking different from sea level. So the expedition leader started paddling for the white water, calling back over his shoulder as he made rapidly accelerating progress, that I should "lower my skeg".

This was done forthwith, and that was where my problems began! The immediate effect of lowering the skeg fully in the very strong current was that the stern was swept round down-current and I found myself going in reverse very quickly towards the rough water. Attempts to paddle against the current, back into the slack, were practically futile probably only serving to slow the rate at which I was being drawn into the gap between shore and island but at the same time displacing me from the chosen course. Meanwhile the other kayak had disappeared down-current. After the unsuccessful attempts to escape the grip of the current my next efforts were directed into turning the kayak in the direction it was travelling in, by paddling as strongly as possible on the port side. This proved only partly successful and when the kayak went into the millrace sideways on, the inevitable result was ready to happen. As soon as we hit a standing breaking wave - yes capsize. The overturning was immediate, no gradual lean, no time to make support strokes just an instantaneous inversion. The sky was suddenly underwater and there seemed to be time available to acquaint oneself with the facts.

The facts were, I was upsidedown, couldn't attempt a roll, as I had thrown away the paddle. Quick! pull off the spraycover, grab the handrails and somersault out of the cockpit as I had practised so often before; thank god it all went smoothly and the next priority was to inflate the lifejacket which I had many times cursed, but was so grateful for now. The additional buoyancy provided by the lifejacket was vital in the very turbulent water (at its very worst point it was how I would imagine the inside of a washing machine), I shall never curse my lifejacket again and I will always wear it on the water, without exception.

My craft and I were now rushing along at some speed parallel with the shore, I was holding onto the port handrail of the inverted craft and was easily

able to right it, but with no paddle realised it was pointless to try and re-enter, so I decided to land on the shore. There was no question of leaving the kayak, besides its buoyant presence instilled reassurance, but I did discover that a swimmer holding onto a handrail caused it to invert and in that position it was more stable. As this made no difference to its buoyancy this caused no problem.

I was beginning to settle down and start to make observations and rational decisions; for instance, it appeared as though the current was carrying me offshore and I remember deciding that it might be easier to swim for the Scarba shore a kilometre away rather than the Jura shore which was a mere 100 metres from me. I also found it remarkable that the water did not seem cold. I swam one-handed for Jura's rocky shore and although I was being swept along it my efforts were bringing it perceptibly closer, so I kicked more strongly and started looking for a likely landing spot. I selected a slab of relatively smooth rock dipping into the sea at an angle 45 degrees and some covering of nice cushioning seaweed. There was a swell of two and a half to three metres breaking up the shore and when eyelevel and sealevel are equal this looks more than impressive, but, fending off with one hand and holding the kayak with the other I eventually chose my moment and hung on to the seaweed.

The swell left me clinging to the weed with the weight of the kayak trying to pull me down after the temporarily receding water surface, so with no time to spare I scrabbled up the surface of the rock, sliding the kayak over the wet weed behind me. In no time I was on the grass, high and dry, with a tremendous sensation of relief and elation and surveying the crashing swell from which I had just emerged. Now it was cold! I was shaking violently, and just as disturbing, I had lost my glasses in the melee and myopia made spotting distant detail very difficult, so there was no chance of spotting David. I fished my light coloured sleeping bag out of the forward compartment, which was still bone dry, and wrapping it round me had the dual purpose of keeping me warm and making me conspicuous. Both factors in my eventual rescue by fishing boat about an hour later from that inhospitable shore.

In retrospect there are many lessons to be learned from this near tragic episode. For example wearing a belt harness with a short tow line would allow stronger two-handed swimming without losing contact with the kayak and a spare paddle with a paddle float is equipment I would always carry. A retaining band for spectacles is also essential. Most importantly the Sea Tiger behaved impeccably; I do not think my chances would have been so good with any other kayak. Exiting after capsize was easy and holding on had no difficulties, this, I can speak for, is very important when gathering ones senses and not being panicked into irrational decisions in a difficult environment. The boat's buoyancy creates confidence, this is a vital survival factor. When landing, a swamped craft would have been a liability and a kayak filled with water would not have been landable under these circumstances. Even had such a landing been possible it would be more than likely that the kayak would be damaged and the gear saturated; dry gear is an important survival factor after an immersion in the sea. The skeg fitted to the Sea Tiger is an invaluable handling and navigating aid, but learning to use it in wind conditions and in current and varying combinations of these two influences is absolutely essential. I have often thought that having to interrupt the rhythm of paddling to make alterations to the skeg trim is irksome and slightly unbalancing, entailing as it does, taking one hand off the paddle loom. A possible enhancement might be foot operation of the skeg trim, but this is a minor criticism of superb design and I have continued to use my Sea Tiger with much personal pleasure and gratification.

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