

NEWSLETTER of the



Advanced Sea Kayak Club

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



ADVANCED SEA KAYAK CLUB

NEWSLETTER NO.81

SEPTEMBER 1990

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NEWPORT
Isle of Wight
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EDITORIAL

Let me get the bad news out of the way . . . the annual subscription to the ASKC has to rise . . . I have held the cost at £5 per year for almost ten years and our Club is now running at a loss. The increasing cost of paper, ink, etc , and the pending increase in postage stamps means I have to increase the annual sub to £7. The alternative may have been to decrease the number of newsletters, currently six - one every two months - but this is not acceptable by most members I have talked to and the amount of information I have to send out in our newsletters now means I have to exercise my editorial function fairly energetically.

The annual subscription to members living other than in the U.K. will also rise by £2 to become £8.

Now for a little good news. A while ago Dave Patrick of P & H sold some stock through this newsletter at a low low price. He is now doing the same again. He has some Helly Henson waterproof jackets and trousers, all lined. The trousers feature a bib and braces and the jackets a peaked hood and both trousers and jacket have velcro sealed pockets. The trousers are £30 a pair and the jacket is £35. His stock is limited to the following:-

Jacket navy/white	5 medium and 5 large
Trousers grey	19 medium and 6 X-large
Trousers navy	24 medium

Send your order to P & H, Station Road, West Hallam, Derbyshire DE7 6HB or 'phone 0602 320155.

The Coastguards are reminding everyone to 'be prepared' at sea. They say, "In reading the daily casualty reports it seems that many water users appear totally unaware of the effects the elements can have upon their personal safety. Perhaps it is because we live more sheltered lives than our forefathers we live in warm houses we travel in cars well insulated from the outside world. There are not many periods of the ordinary day when people are at risk from the elements. Perhaps it is understandable therefore that some put to sea with no more regard for danger than if they were on their weekly trip to the supermarket and are not only ill prepared but also surprised and indignant when wind, sea and tide turn against them."

More and more sea kayakers are using Marine Hand Held VHF radios. Again the Coastguards are reminding us of the need for good circuit discipline on Channel 16 in order to keep the net clear of "domestic chat".

NEW TRAINING FILM

FIT TO AID is the title of a new video produced by the National Rescue Training Council which demonstrates realistically the appearance and treatment of the sort of injuries that might be sustained during leisure activities.

Aimed at getting first aiders used to the sight of blood and wounds, and instructing them on what to do, the video is obtainable (price £50) from The National Rescue Training Council, The Gate House, Hill Head, Llantwit Major, South Glamorgan CF6 9SF.

Finally let me, through the editorial, congratulate ROBIN CATCHLOVE, who with RICHARD ELLIOTT has won the 1990 Devizes to Westminster Canoe Race in 17 hours and 48 minutes.

A.S.K.C. SHOP

Ties @ £6.00 each
ASKC stickers @ 35 pence each
ASKC letter headed notepaper @ 50 pence per ten sheets
John Dowds' book - SEA CANOEING @ £8.95
6th International Sea Kayaking Symposium Report @ £1.00 each
T-shirts - small/medium/large/X-large @ £5.50 each (in yellow or black)
Sweat shirts - small/medium/large/X-large @ £11.50 each (in yellow or black)
ASKC Ski Hats @ £3.50 each

From: Peter Lyne, The Old Rectory, Llanmadoc, Gower, Swansea SA3 1DE
Tel 0792 386381 21 June

Dear John,

I am writing for two reasons. Firstly, to say how much I have enjoyed the bulletins. As a relative newcomer to sea paddling, I have found the articles a mine of useful information. I appreciate the hard work you obviously put in. I hope that I will be able to make a contribution some time.

Secondly, I am keen to see the development of what, I think, is still very much a minority sport. Sea paddlers can feel somewhat isolated, and I know that many find it difficult to establish contact with kindred spirits to paddle with. The ASKC plays a valuable role in spreading information.

I believe the Sea Touring Committee have discussed the possibility of organising weekends, etc., perhaps on S.C.A. lines. I wonder if A.S.K.C. might play a role in this sort of programme? We have a large garden and could provide a base for a Gower "meet", with plenty of room for free camping. Water access is a few minutes away. There is scenic local paddling plus good surf when Atlantic groundswells are running. In addition we have a minibus with roofrack capacity for up to five sea boats for shuttling people around.

If other members were able to act as hosts for "meets", then it could help spread the load in getting a programme together and providing opportunities for sea paddlers to get together.

The popularity of the Nordkapp meet is an indication of the need so if you felt that there is some mileage in this idea, perhaps it could be jointly promoted with the BCU/WCA.

Yours sincerely,

Peter Pyne (Dr Peter Lyne)

P.S. Two good pubs in this village!

FOREWORD

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

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

A. G. C. Dunn, 1983

Canoe Cruise round Mull to Iona

Immediately on leaving the shelter of the land to make for the Sound of Kerrera, we were exposed to the full force of the Atlantic swell. It was a new and exhilarating sensation to feel oneself whizzing along before the wind, on the top of a great roller 80 or 100 feet long, and the next moment to be down in the trough between the waves so that only the peak of your neighbour's sail could be seen. Danger there is none in a long rolling sea with a canoe except when it blows very hard and the big combers begin to rear their heads above you. We looked in vain for the entrance to Loch Feochan on our right, but were going so fast that Dunolly Castle was seen and the white house of Oban peeped out from behind the rocky point ahead before the chart could be examined for its bearings.

After changing our clothes to be in keeping with the civilisation around, we ran straight into the beach in front of the hotel, having run up from Crinan in about five hours. Oban is much too public for canoeists to spend much time in as the boats are sure to get some rough usage from the crowd of idlers which always gather round them. An hour or two to dine and get rested was all we wanted but before leaving, which we did about 5 o'clock, a fresh stock of provisions was laid in, also a lot of candles for use in the tent at night.

The evening was tranquil and we slipped across the Firth of Lorn with a nice breeze astern to help us along. Half way across to the green isle of Lismore, the Duke of Argyll's steam yacht, "Columba", bore down on us and we could make out his Grace and the Duchess sitting together at the stern. Our colours were nailed to the mast but we dipped our paddles instead in response to their waving of handkerchiefs and hats.

The first land we made on the Mull side was Duart Point with its grim old weather-beaten tower standing out in bold relief against the evening sky, bringing to mind the turbulent times when MacLean of Duart exposed his wife on the "Lady's Rock" and involved the whole of this part of the country in a savage war between his own clan and the MacDonalds. Enough daylight remained for us to manage across to the other side of the bay at Duart where, in a sandy cove behind the point, we pulled our canoes up and got the tent pitched. The midges were fearfully voracious here and in the tent we found immense volumes of tobacco smoke the only cure. Every crevice was closed up and soon sleep overtook us for we had done a heavy day's work - all the way from Crinan.

Next day we struck tent at 5 a.m. by the only watch which was going and packed everything in waterproofs as rain threatened. Monsoon was in a "peck of troubles" for a can of preserved milk had got adrift in his clothes bag and striped them all like Sienna marble. Our luck for fair winds had

also deserted us for it was dead in our teeth and a stiff paddle up the Sound was the forenoon's work. We passed the grey old walls of Ardtornish Castle, made celebrated by Sir Walter Scott in the "Lord of the Isles" and the snug harbour of Loch Aline on our right - Salen and Aros being far away in a deep bay or elbow on the other side. The land-locked harbour of Tobermory was reached about 11.30 and we determined to have breakfast there as a small quantity of biscuits and Liebeg had been our only meal that day. What was our astonishment when we found that instead of the forenoon it was 6 p.m. The watch had played us a fine trick by stopping through the night and we had slept through it all till about mid-day. Tea was ordered instead of breakfast and after it was over we were ready to join in the laugh about our powers of sleeping 13 hours at a stretch.

A council of war was held after our tea to determine our future course. To take steamer round Ardnamurchan to Skye was one way, to sail round Caliach Point to Staffa if possible, or to coast up Loch na Keal and from its head, to cart across to Salen on the Sound of Mull was the other. The weather was settled, the wind nowhere and the moon near the full, so we determined to go round part of the way that same evening, leaving our decision till the morrow. The whole population seemed to have turned out to see us start and all the juveniles in the place escorted us out of the bay as far as the road went, where they gave three rining cheers by way of farewell. It was the loveliest evening imagineable - everything seemed serene and at perfect rest. Close in beside the steep wooded banks we paddled on, the noise of the ripple from our bows and the light dipping of our blades being the only sounds to hear; while, if we looked down on the smooth surface of the water, the vivid reflection of every clump of heather and feathery bracken on the rocks above met the eye, almost like reality.

A mile or two from Tobermory a little white lighthouse built on some jutting out rocks marked the end of civilisation to us for beyond it everything was bare and wild. Not a tree, not even a whinbush or patch of brown heath to be seen, the shortest of short grass seemingly being the only **vegetation** that can exist on these weather-beaten hillsides. Still, as seen by the mellow rays of the setting sun, everything appeared inexpressably beautiful. To the north were the ragged Ardnamurchan hills, their western sides all tinged with a golden glow of light, except where the torrent beds showed like deep dark sears, while their backs were all enveloped in a cold grey shadow. From information received at Tobermory, we were led to believe that 6 miles round there would be found a fine sandy bay where our boats could land safely. Six miles had been gone over and more but instead of sandy bays the great wild precipice seemed to tower higher and higher above our heads, each time we turned inshore to reconnoitre. Suddenly, far above us and back from the sea, could be seen the white walls and pointed turrets of some big castle or other. "They must have a place for beaching boats" we argued, but the only break in the cliffs that could be found was filled with immense boulders against which the heavy Atlantic swell would have smashed our light canoes more than we would like.

After some vain attempts to land, we felt rather nonplussed, but the night was fine, the stars shining brightly and the welcome light of the moon could be seen struggling through the clouds above the hilltops to the south-east. To turn back would never do, so the chart was got out and by the light of wax vestas, we could see that the only break in this iron-bound coast was Loch Cuan, still a long way ahead but safe and well sheltered when reached. Keeping close together, off we started again, turning neither to right nor left, till the mouth of the loch was reached but unluckily just at this time, the moon set, leaving us to grope our way up to the head with nothing but star-light to guide us. The coast was fearfully rough and though the roar of surf kept us clear of broken water, yet it gave one's nerves a decided shock as your boat glided quietly along, to see a great white rock start up

below you like an apparition and disappear as suddenly, making the water around seem doubly black when you looked over the side to see if more were coming. A yacht could never have come in here in the dark for we would have been wrecked a dozen times if the canoes had drawn much water. After a deal of hunting about, a quiet corner was at length found and we pitched our tent by lamplight, thankful to get to bed at all before daylight broke. We did not sleep more than five hours but were early up studying the weather in the morning for a westerly gale might keep us in this loch for a week and compel us in the end to cart the boats overland back to Tobermory - a nasty alternative.

A stiff breeze from the north had sprung up and we managed to sail out easily though the sea had every appearance of rising before long. Calach Point, savage and dangerous looking, lay straight ahead with the waves breaking angrily over the black reefs which run out to the sea beside it and we knew that it would be as much as we could do to get past it with dry jackets, for the flood tide had still three hours to run against the wind. With hatch covers on and everything ready for rough work, we rounded the Point to face the nasty short sea we well knew awaited us. It was a grand sight but when once in the middle of it, with the curling white wave crests roaring all round you and giving the deck an occasional washing, no time was spent in admiration. By keeping in the eddies, we dodged a great deal of the hard work, but the points where the angriest seas were, could not be shirked and it was a case of dashing through the steep crested waves as best we could. Monsoon's sail being too large, had to be doused 'instanter' during one of the squalls but the boats behaved nobly and as we rounded Treshnish Point after three hours of battling with the most perplexing and fatiguing sea it had ever been our lot to face, we felt that nothing short of a regular storm would be too much for them in open water. On the lee side of the Point a halt was called to have lunch and rest till the tide turned in our favour.

When we started again, it was with sails reefed down to show more than a corner, for the wind was much stronger, though the sea seemed longer and more regular. Up past Ulva's Isle to Loch na Keal and then over to Salen was never thought of now as our route, for Staffa lay before us and the wind was fair. What more did we need? On the run down when within a mile of the island, we met the "Pioneer" coming out from behind it en route for Tobermory and Oban with the usual crowd of tourists on board, looking if anything, a little more melancholy than ordinary, for some seemed to be sick. To land on Staffa was our first thought but the only bit of beach on the lee side was very stony and the big rollers dashing in forbade the attempt. So we made the tour of inspection on board ship, going into the "Clam Shell Cave" as far as there was water to float us; then through the passage between the curious island called the "Herdsman" and the shore; and last of all, to see that wonderous temple of nature's own construction which man can look at with admiration but never equal, Fingal's Cave. To get up to the head of it without being smashed by the billows as they came thundering in, required some sharp practice, but it was managed. The noise was tremendous and a ducking was enjoyed while backing out again through the waves as they came fair over the stern. The distance from Staffa to Iona is seven miles but it looks a great deal further so we determined to make tracks for it as quickly as possible. The wind was now blowing half a gale, the waves being very big and plainly increasing in size every minute, so we put on a spurt to get to shelter quickly. Rambler got separated on the way and though only a few hundred yards off, the little flag on top of his mast was all that could be seen of him at times. A small herring was washed aboard the Lark and secured before the next wave took it away again, as it lay spluttering on top of the hatch cover. Working as we had never done since the beginning of the cruise, the canoes fairly flew before the wind and reached the smooth water in

the Sound of Iona in less than 50 minutes from leaving Fingal's Cave. The hospitality of the Ionians was so pressing that it was no use trying to go any further, so the island was made headquarters and the next three or four days were spent in cruising about the Ross of Mull and up Loch Screiden. Greenock was reached on board the "Dunvegan Castle", a secure place for the canoes being inside the ship's lifeboat, and after a turn round the Channel Fleet, the well-known point at Roseneath was rounded, neither ship or captain being any the worse for their rough journey of 400 miles by land, sea and steamer

 THE SEA KAYAK CLASSIC 1990 JULY 28th - 29th. "LARK"
 Race Organiser.
 by Mike Box

The Saturday Events for Junior canoeists aged 11 to 16 years, an over class for 16 years and over and a Sailing Regatta, were held on calm seas with light winds beneath a cloudless blue sky.

The only blemish on the day was the disqualification of Race Organiser, 53 year old Mick Box, for boyish high sprits and finishing backwards.

The 29th dawned cold, wet and windy, gusting 3 to 4, rising to 5 to 6 in the late afternoon. Undeterred, the usual horde of assorted vehicles carrying sea kayaks, doubles and slalom boats jammed into the two Cemaes Bay car parks.

At 11 o'clock Mr. Alan Rees, National Coach to the Corps of Canoe Lifeguards, on board the Race Co-ordinator's boat, The Meridian Express, inspected the course, sea and weather conditions.

After consultation with the Coastguard and all the skippers providing the safety cover, Race Briefing was held at 1 o'clock and the Sea Kayak Classic took place over a slightly altered course. The sea conditions brought out the very best in the paddlers and the many designs of sea kayaks that took part. There were some swimmers, but on the safe return of the finishers, the inevitable tall stories of great deeds of valour over horrendous seas could be heard from the small gatherings of wet, tired canoeists around the car parks.

There was some disquiet among the paddlers with regard to the kayaks paddled by Nottingham Canoe Club. There was no official objection, but the Race Organiser sought the advice and guidance of Alan Rees, Terry Davies, Derek Hutchinson, Nigel Foster, Martin Melling and Howard Jeffs. At a pre-race meeting attended by Richard Horsley, representing the Nottingham Canoe Club, the consensus of opinion of this august and knowledgeable gathering was that the boats were acceptable.

The Race Organiser, Mick Box, said that, although the original intention for a gathering of expedition sea kayaks had somewhat been breached, the spirit of the event remains. The competitive nature of sportsmen brings about rules and their enforcement and it was hoped by the Committee that this would not be necessary and the objectives of the Sea Kayak Classic would not be lost.

We look forward to seeing everyone again next year.

Results			
Winner	Jim Butler - Sea Kayak Shield		
Second	Mike Ellis	Sixth	Robin Everingham
Third	Melvin Swallow.	Seventh	John Squire
Fourth	Richard Horsley	Eighth	Nigel Foster
Fifth	Mark Tidman	1st Veteran	Rodney Stallworthy
		1st Lady	Margaret Blakeborough

Take Leave

by John Kingsley, High Wycombe, Bucks.

My first visit to the Island of Mull was a week in June 1988, with my wife and friends for a walking holiday. The notion to return and kayak around the Island had been on my mind ever since that visit. Early this year I mentioned the idea to one or two friends. Dave Mitchell had been planning to spend the week walking in north-west Scotland. Caroline Pennington was to kayak around the Pembrokeshire coast. Both changed their plans, together with Gerry Knight and myself, we made a small compact party.

We held two detailed planning meetings, checking equipment lists, deciding that we would all be self contained with our own tents, sleeping bags, cookers, food, clothing, water, small first aid, etc. Spread between the party would be one large first aid kit: a large repair kit with C.S.M., resin, hardener, brushes, hacksaw blade, copper wire, pliers, etc.: VHF radio: Chart, tidal stream atlas, tide table and O.S. maps.

We agreed to drive the 500 miles to Oban on Saturday, 26th May, and book accommodation for the Saturday night. Oban tourist office provided a B+B list. Scrutiny of the list and the O.S. map gave me an idea, a 'phone call confirmed my map reading. We could drive up to the front door and launch our fully laden sea kayaks from the bottom of the garden. That was the first piece of good luck, and on a venture of this sort one needs a certain amount of that. Second, came our host Doug and Freda his wife. Doug has sailed across the Atlantic twice, and from our arrival was on our side, making us most welcome. Caroline's husband Dick had helped with the driving and was to spend the week on Mull, camping and walking. Saturday evening before dinner saw kayaks stowed with all gear, and ready at the bottom of the garden.

Sunday, 26th May, 26 Nautical Miles

After an early and wholesome breakfast we were on our way. We planned our first stop on the Island of Insh where we had an early lunch in a hot sheltered cove, our peace shattered by the arrival of two Sub Squa power boats. We were soon on our way crossing the Firth of Lorne to land on Mull, very near Frank Lockwoods Island, where we stopped briefly for refreshment. On our way again we disturbed a small group of Eider.

Crossing the entrance to Lock Buie we encountered a short steep sea, and were getting rather wet, with no cag's on. Instead of continuing to take it head on we moved inshore and had a much drier ride towards Carsaig Bay. We carried on to Malcolms Point, where we rafted up under massive cliffs to have hot drinks from on deck thermos flasks and listened to the 17 50 weather forecast before paddling on to our first nights camp site, a small sandy cove, ideal for getting ashore.

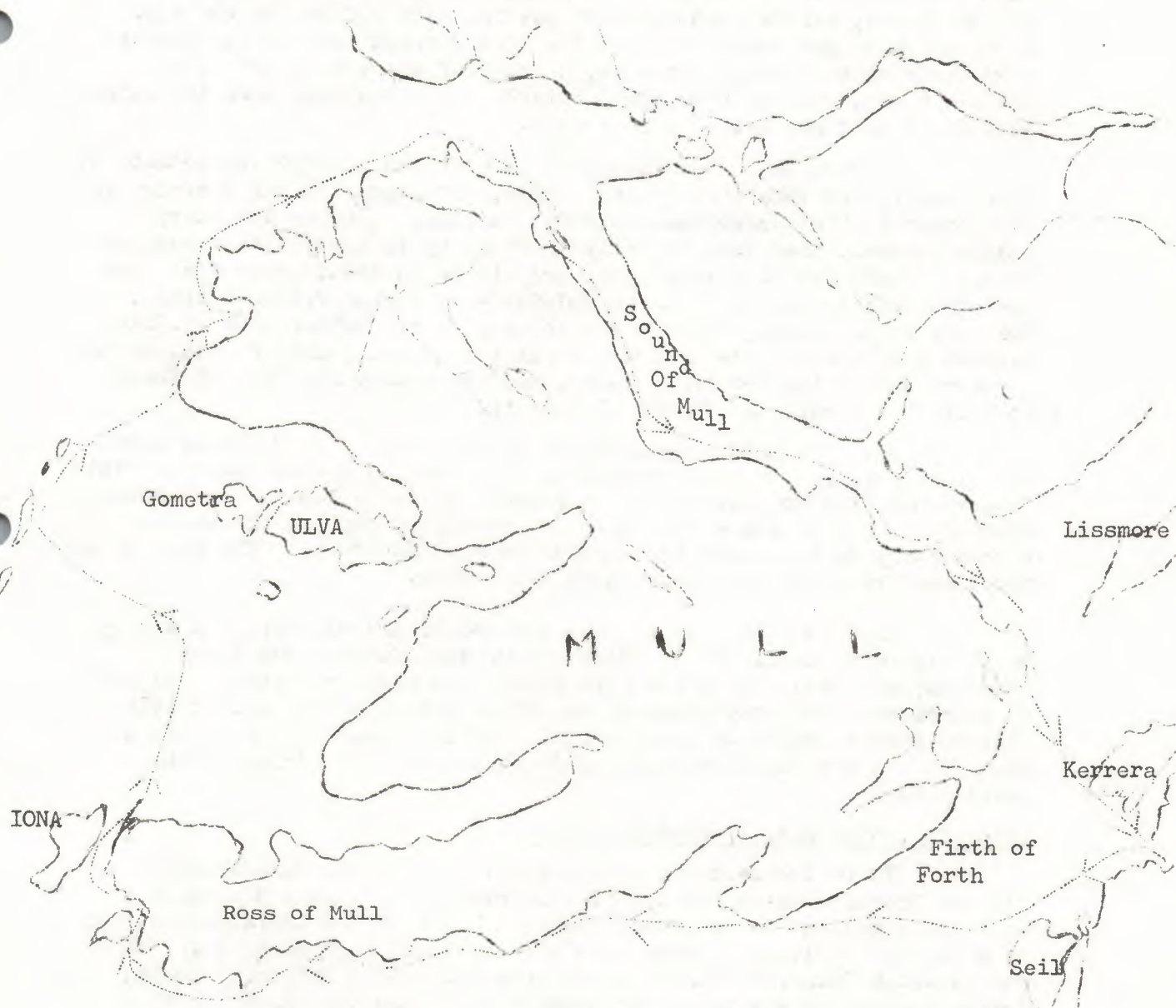
We arrived at 19.00, applied 'Jungle Juice' (Midge Repellant), set up tents and cooked an evening meal. (Camp Site A.)

Exploration found two other kayakers and a small stream to replenish our water supply. We then set about making a camp fire from copious amounts of drift wood, before consuming whisky and mince pies. We could not decide which was more environmentally acceptable, to clean the beach of much blue and orange polypropylene rope by burning it, thus polluting the atmosphere with large clouds of poisonous black smoke, or leaving it in a pile.

Monday, 28th May, 14 Nautical Miles

Awake at 07 00, cooked breakfast, loaded kayaks and away at 09 00 Wind (3) from the south-west, with a swell coming in from the Atlantic Reflected waves (Clapotis) from the rock faces made interesting paddling After the imposing severity of yesterdays' cliffs, the Ross of Mull was becoming more interesting, with rocks to dodge in and out of Quick decisions, can I get through the gap on the top of the wave? Yes. Go for it! Finding a landing place for lunch out of the swell was not easy. Getting ashore on large granite boulders is not kind to laden kayaks. After our midday snack an ebb tide made getting afloat even more testing.

Rafted up on Caroline's Gaybo Atlantic, with rudder to guide us, we held paddles aloft and were blown up the Sound of Iona to an early arrival at Fionnphort, where we spent Monday night, setting up camp in blustery drizzle, which soon turned to rain, so evening meals were cooked inside tents. Unanimous decision to go to the Pub to put "cheer" into a miserable evening. Met four other kayakers, paddling to an even tighter schedule than ours. (Camp Site B.)



Tuesday, 29th May, 18 Nautical Miles

Departed from Fionnphort at 09.30 in very poor visibility (about 300 metres). The day's objective was to paddle to Staffa. Scrutiny of the chart showed that we had to paddle a course of 020Mag., which would take us slightly to the east of the Island. After an hour the fog began to thicken, ahead Staffa appeared capped with low cloud, while on our starboard bow a fantastic spectacle was to be seen. Sea birds feeding on a shoal of small fish. A mele of diving birds. Gannets, Guillemots, Razorbills, Terns, Kittiwakes, Herring Gulls, etc., and we were able to get so close to the action we could smell the birds, rather like a fish factory!

After 1 hour 40 minutes we were outside Fingals Cave, turning our kayaks around to face the swell, we reversed to the back of the cave one by one adding to the scenery for those sightseers that had arrived by the small ferry. We played about before going ashore for lunch. Passing Fingals Cave for the last time we set course for Lunga, not to be seen ahead, nor the mainland away to starboard. Passing three trawlers, we soon found Lunga coming at us out of the mist with the Dutchmans cap away on our port bow. We landed on Lunga, again a boulder beach, before turning north passing many Puffins on the way. In flight they are comic birds, using their webbed feet as air brakes. From their vantage point above us, a group of Shags took off as we paddled below, some of them spectacularly belly flopping onto the water, just as if they had had to much to eat.

Between Lunga and Fladda we came across a lagoon surrounded by rocky islets and inhabited by many seals, who signalled our presence to each other with a mysterious, mournful wailing. One or two sharp paddle strokes, head low, silectly drifting up to unsuspecting redolent bodies, SPLASH and they were gone, only to be so inquisitive they were surfacing all around us. Large doleful eyes and sniffing nostrils. The only thing missing was the sun shining on the golden sand visible beneath our kayaks. We left the seals behind us, passed Fladda, at the northern end of the Treshnish Isles, and set course for Rubh a' Choal on Mull, the occasional Fulmer gliding by.

Mull gradually appeared out of the mist. At first we were not quite sure of our exact position. We paddled up the coast and into Calgary Bay, the fog lifting as we found a place to land on the southern side of the bay (Camp Site C.) We partially emptied the kayaks before carrying them over the seaweed covered boulders. The four of us moved each kayak in turn above high water mark.

Same routine: tents, washing bodies and clothing (in a very small stream!), meal, etc. After a very damp day our Boy Scout ingenuity was needed to get a fire going from damp driftwood. We had to sacrifice a few copy pages of the tidal stream atlas, and whittle slivers from a length of Douglas fir. After a short while we had a good fire to dry washed thermals and sit around while drinking our evening tot.

Wednesday, 30th May, 17 Nautical Miles

To be the best day of the week. Sunshine, Wind Westerly 2. All the Treshish Isles set out clearly behind us. Away on our left Coll and Tiree and as we rounded Caliach Point on the north west corner of Mull, the Cuillins of Skye were clearly visible ahead of us. We made Quinish Point, finding a sandy cove for a long leisurely lunch, drying clothes on hot rocks and sunbathing. Our afternoon jaunt was completely shattered by two jet fighters that took us by surprise from behind, flying directly overhead, very low and very fast, whilst we were admiring Glengorm Castle, set in the hills of Northern Mull.

We arrived in Tobermory at low water Dick had found a water tap on the quay-side from which we topped up Around low water mark, numerous old glass bottles all broken, had us puzzled. The 17:50 shipping forecast set alarm bells ringing and we left Tobermory at 18:00 paddled a further two miles down the Sound of Mull to find a camp site (D) facing north, giving us good shelter from the south east.

Last evening at Calgary, camping on short exposed grass there had been few midges. This evening they were very bad indeed until the repellent started to take effect. Another good meal followed by a big fire, whisky and a long debate on the merits of midges. (What do they eat when we're not here!!)

Thursday, 31st May, 19 Nautical Miles

Listening to the 06.00 shipping forecast confirmed our worst fears. South-East Force 5. Our camp site was very sheltered, giving a false impression of what was to come. We were on the water at 09:00 and paddled against the wind for the next 12 hours, the direct route of 12 miles to Craignure became a shore hugging 16 miles, taking advantage of every nook and cranny. My fully laden Sea Kayak, very low in the water was able to prove how stable it is. So much better than a bouncy day on the Solent with a light Kayak riding high on the water.

The wind, funneling between the mountains, blowing the tops of the waves is indescribable. So strong that we were not always able to paddle against it, even so my little poly refuse bag remained firmly under my paddle elastics on the rear deck.

We passed one group of six kayakers who had taken shelter. They had started the day ahead of us and finished 12 miles behind us, having abandoned their days paddle.

We found shelter, got out cookers and prepared a good hot lunch, we felt we would need it. We were not prepared to give up. Progress was being made. We disturbed a pair of Red-Breasted Mergansers, that would take off, fly a short way and alight, only to repeat the process as we approached. A short while later we passed a pair of nesting Mute Swans. It must have been 18:30 when we arrived in Craignure, tired and hungry but there was nowhere to eat. We stopped briefly at a camp site for water before pressing on in the gathering gloom. The wind had moderated as we paddled past Duart Castle, around Duart point into the Firth of Lorne and to Grass Point (E) where we landed in pouring rain at 21:00, very tired indeed but with a sense of achievement. We were still on schedule. Again team work. Kayaks up above high water, an easy carry. Tents up, while the rain fell like stair rods. Kayak across the back of my tent for additional protection, strip off and into the tent. Aquasac - Which One? dry clothing, Magic. Trangia alight. Soup, followed by hot meal, so dark had to use head torch. Tidy up and into sleeping bag. Time 23:15. Deep sleep - well earned.

Friday, 1st June, 9 Nautical Miles

David awake at 05:30, wind had dropped. Lets go for it! Double helping of pre-mixed muesli with hot water. Into dry thermals, damp trousers and cagoul, pack kayak, afloat by 07:00. Force 4 and moderating, across the Firth of Lorne, passing between Kerrera and Bach Island onto the mainland for a brew up, while waiting for the tide to flood and take us to our destination. Being neaps we did not quite

make it to the back gate, and while waiting for the tide to rise further totally relaxed, off guard, I nodded off. The only time I came near to a capsize, at the end of a creek, in 50 centimetres of water!!! We had to resort to dragging our kayaks over the mud for the last 100 metres. Doug and Freda were waiting for us at midday, exactly on schedule, thus ensuring that we would be back in Marlow for the Marathon to be held on Sunday, 3rd June.

Kayaks on the lawn, tea on a tray, wet gear strewn everywhere as we dried tents, sleeping bags, etc., followed by hot baths.

Into Oban, after a week's solitude to be confronted by so many humans. UGH!!!!!!

Returning to our hotel, kayaks on cars and then our evening meal which turned into quite a celebration. Doug and Freda partook of our wine while with our coffee we drank Doug's Bunnahabhain, in crystal dram glasses - an excellent memento - given to each of us by Dick.

Thanks Dick, also sincere thanks to Doug and Freda.

My thanks to Caroline, David and Gerry for coming with me....

TAKE PHOTOGRAPHS - LEAVE FOOTPRINTS. WE DID JUST THAT.

(Not my slogan, but well worth repeating.)

From Didier Plouhinec, Rue des Langoustiens, Lescoff, 29770 PLOGOFF, France.
Dear Sir,

I belong to the French Kayak Association, "Kayak du Ponant" and I would be glad if we could make contacts with your Advanced Sea Kayak Club.

To be a member of our Association, the kayaker must be 30 years old and must produce three 'referees' who can certify that he is a good kayaker. The referees themselves must have been members of the Association for two years. Every member has his own kayak.

Over the last two months we have obtained special authorisation to go out a maximum of five nautical miles from the coast. For us it is great because usually kayakers cannot go more than one mile off shore.

All year round we organise kayak trips, mostly toward the Islands of Brittany. All these Islands are called "Iles du Ponant". We are only 20 members, and 10 of them are really very often on the sea.

I will be pleased to receive contacts because we can exchange ideas about our favourite sport and possibly receive some help when we come to England as we will help those who come to France.

We would like to know more about your kayak activities, about your programme, instruction, safety and rescue techniques.

Frank Goodman and Stan Chladek were paddling with me last September at Pointe du Raz where I live, and a few days later I was again paddling with a member of your Club.

I have enclosed the list of our members (I have this available in return for a SAE, Ed) and so if any of your Club members wants to meet up with French paddlers this is possible,

In August 3 or 4 of us are going to paddle from Plymouth to the Scillies, perhaps we may meet some A.S.K.C. paddlers.

Yours sincerely,

Didier Plouhinec.

SENSE AND NONSENSE ON THE WATER AND IN THE ANTIPODES

by Frank Goodman

The continuing development of canoeing results from the combination of ideas and experience from all aspects of the sport ... the recreational paddler, the competitor, members of the B.C.U. coaching scheme and even people who come fresh to the sport and say "Why don't you do this?".

Luckily, our sport is still small enough to allow canoeists who are so inclined, to devote themselves full-time to their hobby and become a combination of paddler/designer/manufacturer, and a glance at the commercial side of canoeing confirms that most businesses are run by people who were, or still are, enthusiastic paddlers. Even so, most of the research and development in canoeing is, in the end, the result of manufacturers' efforts, not because they sit down to find an area to exploit, but because they've spent a deal of time on the water and have become aware of a particular problem that needs solving. Graham MacCreth of Pyranha springs to mind as a man who virtually singlehandedly put British slalom kayak designs ahead of the world. Not only are professional designers manufacturers and paddlers as well, but they can devote more time to solving a problem than most amateurs have at their disposal; they have workshops for development work and a continuing testing programme conducted by their customers ... if they live to tell the tale!

When I turned 'commercial' in 1970 after six years as an amateur I was very depressed after my first visit to the Crystal Palace Exhibition, because I became aware of the huge gap that existed between the skills of the amateur and the professional. I was a 'good' amateur builder with at least 30 boats under my belt (in fact just a couple of months output for a professional) and when I saw the abysmal standard of my work at the show compared with the full-timers, I went away saddened, but determined to return in the following year with a standard of workmanship that would bear inspection. I hadn't realised how bad I was!

Of course the boot is just occasionally on the other foot ... when members of the Nordkapp expedition asked me to design a kayak for them back in 1974, I didn't realise that my experience as a designer coupled with their huge combined experience of the sea would result in anything special - we just tried lots of solutions to various problems and stuck to the ones that seemed to answer. Eventually these ideas became available to the sea paddler generally. It was over ten years later that the National Maritime Museum came along and told me that we'd made a significant contribution to kayak design and they would like to put a Nordkapp kayak on permanent display at Greenwich.

There are two distinct phases in the process that leads to a new product, first the idea and then the development. The idea is easy it either comes to you or it does not. Most people have dozens of good ideas a week, but they are never acted upon, and disappear from memory almost as quickly as they arrive. The development of those ideas into a finished product is a different story. Hundreds or thousands of hours of careful work are required if an elegant solution is to be achieved. For example, the development of the V.C.P. oval hatch was well under way by Christmas 1988, but I worked every day and most evenings, from Boxing Day until the day before Crystal Palace (the third weekend in February) with just one Sunday off, in order to get it to the pre-production stage.

Of course the professional doesn't always get it right, doesn't always have the stamina to finish off a design properly, or maybe the original idea wasn't really capable of being fully developed. But what is very apparent to anyone who starts to develop his own designs or build his own canoe, is the enormous amount of time that goes into it. To do it well, it takes years.

This time factor alone means that very few part-timers remain in the canoe manufacturing world. They soon discover that a part-time schedule does not allow them to really get to grips with problems, and they have to make a decision either to stay as an amateur, and concentrate on their chosen sport, or to 'go for it'.

Few people are of the calibre to successfully balance the tight-rope of the part-timer ... and of those who try, a minority get themselves into deep waters. A little knowledge is a dangerous thing, and if the part-timer is only capable of getting hold of half the story, problems are quick to surface. They usually show in a lack of sales, as customers fight shy of designs that have not been worked through properly, although the part-timer seldom sees this as the reason. He's produced just one design that he thinks is destined to change the world, but it hasn't because he's only sold half a dozen. How can that be? He finds it inconceivable that there is any problem with the basic design or the quality of manufacture. How is it that the world is not beating a path to the door of the inventor of a better mouse-trap? Ah yes! it is 'The trade ... the establishment ... them out there ... the people who DID turn professional ...' the people who he hadn't the guts to follow who are to blame. They must be frightened that he is affecting their sales (all six boats) and they are mounting a secret campaign to discredit him. Rather than set about putting his house in order, he wastes even more time trying to explain away his half-baked ideas by trotting out pseudo-scientific nonsense which he thinks will convince the canoeing world. While all this is less the result of dishonesty than of self-deception, it is even more dangerous as it will carry with it the weight of genuine conviction!

I first came across this approach back in 1983 when I had to site and listen to an excruciating lecture about the design of sea-canoes which had a thinly disguised attack on professional canoe builders generally, and on the two of us sitting in the audience in particular. The ploy was to assume that old is best, and that the nineteenth century designers were the only ones that knew their stuff, so a whole series of dimensions was produced to show that modern designers hadn't even got the basic sizes right. Sadly, the majority of these had been taken from the designs of William Rushton, the famous American designer of open canoes built of lap-strake cedar who had never designed a kayak in his life! The organiser of the lecture was so appalled that he offered me thirty minutes afterwards to reply. I refused his offer ... who'd want to follow an act like that, and anyway, it's generally considered to be more painful if you don't rub it in.

When I opened the July 1990 edition of the ASKC Newsletter, I realised that we had another joker on our hands when I read an article all the way from Australia entitled "Sea Kayaks: Trends in Safe Design" by Peter Carter. A closer look at the article soon revealed how half a tail (tale, sorry ...) of half-truths from half-way round the world can begin to wag the dog.

The article begins proposing two safety rules for the solo paddler, but quickly goes on to state that it has been clearly demonstrated that cockpit pods are superior to bulkheaded boats. This

is his opinion, which he is entitled to, but his next statement shows a lack of understanding of very basic hydrodynamics that is quite staggering. His last sentence of paragraph six says "Water moving out of phase actually enhances stability and the principle is used in larger vessels". Well, there are not many canoeists who do specific experiments, and even fewer who use parentheses to name and date them in the style of a learned thesis, but most of us have paddled in conditions that very quickly give us the feel of these things. In any swell, we paddle in waves that are 'in phase' - there's a nice rhythm about things, even if they are big, and there is no problem of stability. If these swells run onto a cliff face however, they are reflected and the random nature of the rocks means that the resulting waves are out of phase with the original swell. These waves are called 'clepotis' and as this onomatopoeic name suggests, it is hardly a millpond!

The end of the sentence shows an even greater lack of understanding than the beginning. The special quality of the kayak is that when the paddler is aboard, the centre of gravity is higher than the deck of the boat. In "larger vessels", where stability systems depend on the period of roll of the particular craft, the centre of gravity is invariably contained within the vessel. Anyone using one system to prove the other shows a complete lack of understanding of the basic principles.

Now the next few paragraphs tell me something that I didn't know before. I now learn that the report on the Anglesey Incident was in fact written by Padwick and Atkinson. I searched this document myself to discover the author, but it wasn't given. The footnote "from Sea Tiger" contained within the report, suggested that someone other than Sea Tiger had written it, but I see I was mistaken. Padwick is the proprietor of Sea Tiger.

I'm told by Peter Carter that the kayak in question was taking water through an area damaged by osmosis. Well, if you believe that you can believe anything. This myth was dispelled by the British Association of Canoe Trades Safety Committee some time ago (Goodman, Patrick and Agar 1989). This was in response to an anonymous article that appeared in 'Canoeist' magazine, which later turned out to have been written by? Well you've guessed haven't you?

After an unfounded statement about the merits of the pod, and some nonsense about pumps and self rescues we come to the exciting idea that the only boat in Australia to give you all these goodies is the Voyager ... on the market since 1985. Now I'll add a piece of information that is generally unknown. The Voyager is a boat that was stolen from my Weekender design in 1985. Allow me to emphasise that last remark. **PETER CARTER STOLE THE DESIGN OF THE VOYAGER FROM FRANK GOODMAN IN 1985.** Now that is a bold statement to make ... how can I be so certain? Simple! Peter Carter not only stole the design but had the unmitigated gall to write to me and tell me what he'd done. Here is a quote from his signed letter of 18th August 1985. "I must confess that I've rather taken the law into my own hands by pinching the WEEKENDER ... the hull is superb".

Well, the Weekender was designed as a compromise boat that was able to tackle seas as well as general river touring and it was designed in the seventies. Peter Carter thinks that this is the sort of sea kayak that we can expect to see more of in the future. What a dishonest man this fellow is! The whole article was a con to make it look as though he was an impartial amateur searching for a good kayak, when in fact he was merely advertising his own product that he hadn't even the skill to design himself. He stole it.

I wondered when I started to read the article why the underlying tone was so obtuse. I don't worry too much when people say silly things, everybody does at times, but I do worry when people, dubbing themselves experts, give out specious information that is potentially dangerous and detrimental to safe thinking within canoeing. I suppose I should be happy to think that Peter Carter believes that the boat I designed in the seventies is the boat that will push forward new frontiers in the nineties, but I'm not. I don't think anyone of integrity would give a XXXX for his opinion on anything.

Well what IS the boat for the nineties? It certainly isn't the cockpit pod, which has been around since Kirton Kayaks showed it on their stand at the 1978 Crystal Palace Exhibition. Since then several versions have been tried by various manufacturers, and while there is no doubt that the pod offers an advantage - a small amount of water in the cockpit if your spraydeck comes off, without the addition of bulkheads, a podded boat has too much free surface if water gains ingress to the hull space. It seems O.K. when the water is horizontal, but at sea the surface has a habit of forming into waves that are anything but. Of course this is true of any boat that does not have some system for restraining water within the hull, and the recent B.C.U. tests (Winning 1990) show that restraining water within the hull is the best way to general stability. The Puffin in America has a pod, and sensibly a bulkhead as well, but the real problem of the pod is the problem of sealing it satisfactorily to the boat, and, at the same time making the whole thing cost effective. (Peter Carter is the only builder I know who thinks it's easier to fit a pod than to put in a bulkhead.)

Dave Green of Kirton Kayaks had realised the problems with the pod and therefore agreed not to challenge A. W. Byde's patent taken out some time later. I was asked by a French company to do some design work on a kayak for them in 1985, and I took out a provisional patent on the idea of an adjustable pod, but didn't bother to develop it as it was obvious that it wasn't viable.

The truth of the matter is that the days of the pod have been and gone. It was the sort of thing that an amateur builder in glass fibre could tinker with for fun, but it never had potential in the market place. When death came to the amateur building of kayaks in the late seventies, the pod died too. In fact it was stillborn. The professionals recognised this, but were accused of resisting progress by a small group of part-timers who had never faced up to the realities of the professional design and manufacture of kayaks, but somehow expected other kayak builders to jump at the idea ... for a fee. Had it been a good idea, no doubt a fee would have been acceptable, but no-one would have paid a fee for a defunct patent anyway. Apparently, only the likes of Peter Carter get taken in by the hype.

If you want to go down the road of the pod, and there's no reason why you shouldn't, then Toni Prijon ... probably the best designer of the post war period, shows the way with his 'YUKON' which is only a play boat, but has the correct basic idea ... a normal general purpose kayak hull with a very deeply formed cockpit recess, thus making it a ski rather than a kayak. He then puts a deck over the cockpit afterwards and turns it into a kayak with a normal spraydeck. This is the sensible way to do things as it is very easy indeed to make as a roto or blow moulded boat. He'll need to add bulkheads before he has a boat fit for the ocean though.

As a member of the B.S.I. Committee that will be helping to re-draft their Standard for Kayak Construction (B.S. MA 91) this autumn,

I know that B.A.C.T. has already unanimously approved of the idea that sea kayaks must incorporate features that prevent water swilling from end to end of the boat, and if podded boats have this feature, then they will meet a reasonable safety standard. Before Peter Carter says that there is now no question that a swamped cockpit in a podded boat is safely controllable, he should first write to Kevin Mansell in the Channel Islands and ask for his report of his epic rescue when a podded boat did, in fact, have a swamped cockpit. He might also find out a little more about the 'Anglesey Incident' by making enquiries from people who were there rather than believing reports from people who were not.

Well, I've never cared much for Australian lager, but the taste it leaves in the mouth is like nectar of the gods compared with the flavour of the month left behind by Mr Carter.

Frank Goodman, July 1990

From: Peter Midwood, Tal-y-Waen, Craig-y-Pandy, Tregarth, Bangor,
Gwynedd LL57 4RA

Dear John,

I wonder if any members of the ASKC could help me complete my set of ASKC newsletters. I find that I am missing Numbers 1-6, 13 and 31.

Does anyone out there have any of these as spare copies which they would be happy to part with? If so, please get in touch.

Keep up the good work John! The newsletter is just great - as always!

All the best,

Peter Midwood

P.P.S. I am also interested in getting my hands on any early copies of "Canoeing in Britain" pre-1971.

FOR SALE

P & H Expedition Fjord Sea Kayak (white with a blue stripe)

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The following is taken from Frank Spencer Chapman's
book 'LIVING DANGEROUSLY' written in 1947

THE ART OF KAYAKING

Of the various skills that I have picked up in the course of a fairly adventurous life, the achievement of which I am most proud is that of learning to manage an Eskimo kayak. And by manage I include not only the art of keeping the craft the right way up, and learning how to hunt and harpoon seals, but the ability to roll the kayak upright again after it has capsized, which may all too easily happen in a rough sea and in the excitement of seal hunting. One cannot survive long in that icy water.

The kayak is used by the Eskimo in most parts of the Arctic, but the Angmagssalik Eskimo, who live sufficiently far south and near the open sea to be able to use the kayak in almost every month of the year, are probably the most accomplished 'kayakers' in the world. And as a member of Gino Watkins' two expeditions to the east coast of Greenland from 1930 to 1933, I was given an ideal opportunity to learn the art of kayaking from its greatest exponents.

That as many of us as possible should learn to hunt seals from the kayak was part of Watkins' deliberate plan. In this way we could support ourselves on coastal survey journeys, without the necessity of carrying large quantities of food. In the summer, when seals are most plentiful, they sink as soon as shot, and the only way to recover them is to harpoon them before they have time to sink, or better still to rely entirely on the harpoon as the Eskimo did in the old days before the firearm came to frighten away ten times as many seals as it accounted for.

The Angmagssalik kayak is a work of art. It consists of a light framework of driftwood about eighteen feet long, only twenty inches wide, and little more than six inches high. The five longitudinal laths and fifteen or sixteen ribs are held together by complicated splices and wooden pegs. There is no keel, because if an area of thin ice is encountered, or if the sea is actually freezing over, the kayak must be run out on top of the ice and the kayaker must push himself along the surface with his hands. The boat is covered with sealskins which are put on wet and stretched tight before being sewn on with two parallel rows of sinew stitching. The skins dry as tight as a drum, and when they are treated with seal-oil the kayak is completely waterproof as the stitches are so cunningly sewn that the needle is never allowed to pierce right through the skin. A wooden ring, which will just fit over the hips, is let into the skins in the middle of the deck, and through this manhole you must force your way in and out of the kayak. A sealskin belt or apron about eighteen inches deep is worn, and the base of this fits tightly over the wooden ring, so that, as you sit in the kayak with your legs straight out and your feet turned outwards - the only way they can fit in - waves can wash right over the deck of the kayak and not a drop will get inside.

The kayak, with its long tapering bows and stern, is marvellously streamlined, and can be propelled at considerable speed with very little effort by the aid of a narrow double-edged paddle. Learning to paddle the kayak is just like learning to ride a bicycle; the kayak does not stay upright of its own accord and has to be continually balanced. As with a bicycle, this soon becomes automatic; but a sudden turn of the head, a clumsy stroke with the paddle or the least rough water will immediately start a wobble which may send you over.

Getting in and out is the worst part, and at first we had to force our way in on land and then take to the water in our kayaks. As soon as we could paddle along safely in reasonably rough water and get in and out of the kayak from a low rock or ice-floe - the latter is much easier because it rises and

falls with the water - we set about learning to 'roll' the kayak. It was obviously not safe to go out alone or to start hunting seals until we had mastered this art, a thing which no one other than an Eskimo had ever before achieved.

When you go kayaking in a rough sea you wear a hooded sealskin coat which ties tightly round your face and over the wrists of your kayaking gloves. This coat terminates in a sliding cord which fits tightly over the bevelled outer edge of the wooden ring, so that, even when you are right upside-down in the kayak, no water can get inside, and only your face will get wet.

For the Angmagssalik Eskimo, rolling the kayak is not only a necessary accomplishment but has developed all the elaborations of a national sport. The standard method of rolling the kayak is to hold one end of the paddle close to the deck and to make first a sweeping and then a downward movement with the other arm, so that the paddle forces the kayak half way up and then completely upright again. But there are now at least thirty different methods of rolling - to the left and right, and with the business end of the paddle out in front or behind; with the paddle held behind the small of the back, against the nape of the neck and even right underneath you, across the keel of the kayak. Then you can roll the kayak with the throw-stick - the short flat piece of wood with which the harpoon is hurled - and even with the gloved hand alone. This has its practical application, for it is quite possible that the hunter may drop his paddle and be without his throw-stick.

I found learning to roll quite terrifying. It felt so strange to see my kayak silhouetted in the green water above me, yet still beneath my seat, that all instructions were forgotten and after cutting the stroke I had been told to make so slowly and carefully, I dropped the paddle in a panic and frantically waved my hands beside the bottom of the kayak for help. I soon saw the ghost of another kayak draw alongside my own, and by grasping its bows was able to pull myself upright again. In the end I learnt to roll the kayak to left or right not only with the harpoon throw-stick but with my hand alone; but there are various stunt methods which I am sure I could never master, however long I tried.

Having learnt to go along in the kayak, and to right it after a capsize, we could now get down to the serious business of hunting seals. There are many different kinds of seal, from the great bearded seal whose skin is used for covering kayaks and making harpoon lines, and the bladder-nosed seal who attacks the kayak when wounded and tries to turn it over to get at its occupant, to the fjord seal who is small and harmless; and the good hunter can recognise a seal when he comes up to breathe and will be able to judge how long he will stay under and where he will reappear. He may be just feeding or he may be on migration. The hunter then paddles swiftly to where he expects the seal to surface, and waits crouching behind the white screen on the bows of his kayak. When the seal's head appears, the hunter will swing the kayak round so that it is pointing at the seal. He then tucks one end of the paddle beneath some pieces of sealskin line which are stretched across the kayak deck; this not only leaves his hands free but gives the kayak a certain stability. Then he slides his shotgun or rifle out of the sealskin case in which it lies on the deck, and shoots - but he must not shoot too far from the way the kayak is pointing or over he will go.

In the summer, as I have said, seals sink as soon as they are dead; a shotgun or 0.22 rifle is therefore used to stun the seal, and the hunter must then rush up and harpoon it before it either sinks or recovers. If the seal has not observed the hunter, the harpoon can be used in the first instance. The best hunters prefer to kill their seals in this way, though it means getting within a few yards of the quarry; for the harpoon cannot be thrown very far from a sitting position, even with the use of a throw-stick, which acts as a

continuation of the arm and remains in the hand as the harpoon flies through the air. The barbed head of the harpoon remains in the seal, but the shaft floats clear and is recovered later. Attached to the harpoon head is a forty-foot sealskin line which is normally coiled up in a tray on the kayak deck. The other end of the line is fixed to a large float, consisting of the complete skin of a small seal: it rests on the deck behind the hunter.

The moment the harpoon head finds its mark the hunter must throw the float clear, otherwise he will be capsized. The seal is thus attached to the float so that it cannot sink or escape, and when it next comes up to breathe the hunter can dispatch it with one of the two lances he carries for this purpose on the back of the kayak. If the seal is a small one it is carried home on the kayak deck behind the hunter; if it is large, any wounds are blocked up with wooden pegs and some air is forced in between the skin and blubber so that the carcass floats high out of the water and can more easily be towed home behind the kayak.

One day I was out hunting with four Eskimos when we were lucky enough to kill a narwhal. This small whale is hunted not only for its ivory tusk, used for making harpoon heads, etc., but is much prized also for its skin, which when eaten raw has a sweet nutty flavour.

We were out in the open sea some six miles from the coast and as there was not much pack-ice about, there was a long heavy swell. Suddenly a large, pale coloured body broke the surface, arched slowly over and disappeared. It was a narwhal. The Eskimos swung their kayaks around excitedly and set off in pursuit. Soon the narwhal appeared to one side, came up three times, and sounded again. We changed course and continued the chase, sliding our paddles from side to side through our hands to increase the force of every stroke. After an hour we were still level with him; I was only able to keep up because, being some yards behind, I could cut the corner every time there was a change of direction.

At last one of the hunters was just behind the narwhal as he came up. As he broke surface for the third time, the Eskimo had so manoeuvred his kayak that the target was just in the right position - about ten feet from the bows of his kayak and thirty degrees out to the right. The hunter raised his right arm, hurled the harpoon and then threw the float overboard. The narwhal disappeared with a mighty splash that nearly capsized the kayak, and dragged the float down after him. At last the float bobbed up again. The hunters rushed to the place and spread out. Soon the narwhal appeared beside the float, and another harpoon found its mark. This time both floats were dragged down, but not for long; the second harpoon had found a vital part and the great blunt-nosed animal soon lay thrashing on the surface. The carcass was blown up in the usual way, harnessed to four kayaks, and dragged back to the settlement in triumph, while the Eskimos sang traditional hunting songs and kept on hurling their harpoons in sheer delight.

At the beginning of his second Greenland expedition, Gino Watkins was tragically drowned while out hunting alone in his kayak. He had climbed out on to a floating ice-floe so that, standing on top of it, he could more easily see any seals there might be in the fjord. Nearby was an active glacier. Suddenly an unusually large iceberg broke away from the glacier and the wave produced upset the floe, and both Watkins and his kayak were thrown into the icy water. He clambered back on to the ice and then, seeing his kayak floating away, took off his clothes and swam out to recover it. After that, as far as we can tell, he succumbed to cramp. We never found the body of our leader, but we found his kayak, half full of water, and his wet clothes on the ice-floe. We now understood why the Eskimos had warned us never to go out hunting alone.

Towards the end of this second expedition I accompanied an Eskimo family on their migration southward, from their winter quarters near our base at Lake Fjord to Cape Dan, the outermost point of the Angmagssalik group of islands. The wives and children travelled in the slower umiak, or women's boat, while the hunters followed in their kayaks. One day we set off as usual at dawn, but during the morning the wind rose and the sea became too rough to land. We could have turned aside to the shelter of a fjord but the leader of the party was anxious to pass a dangerous glacier snout before the weather got any worse. Thus we went on right through the night. I was twenty-four hours in my kayak without getting out of it, and when I did my legs were so stiff and numb that I could hardly crawl, much less stand up.

The whole journey took us a week, and by the end of it my confidence as a kayaker had increased to such an extent that I rashly agreed to accompany two young Eskimos across the sixteen miles of open sea from Cape Dan to Angmagssalik harbour. On the day that we crossed, a Norwegian fishing vessel of one hundred tons put in to a bay near Cape Dan for shelter - though I did not hear of this until afterwards.

The seas were tremendous and the north-easterly gale so strong that the tops of the waves were swept away; I had to paddle all the time on one side of the kayak to keep the bows in the right direction. The waves would swirl over me breast high, so that my kayak was almost submerged. Though I was frequently half over, only once did I find myself right upside-down, and luckily I kept my head and came up again in the way I had so often practised. While I was struggling for my very life my two Eskimo friends were quite unperturbed, laughing and shouting to encourage me; indeed, one of them actually killed a Little Auk with his bird dart, right out in the open water where the seas were so great that sometimes my companions would be completely hidden in the hollows of the waves.

I realised at that moment that however proficient a kayaker I might become, I could never hope to compete with these Angmagssalik Eskimo, whose first toy is a model kayak, who learn to roll in their teens, and whose very existence depends on their skill with harpoon and paddle.

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1-800-243-0495 (in Connecticut 1-800-962-0973)

VOYAGES OF THE SEA AND THE HUMAN SPIRIT
FOR THE ADVENTURER IN US ALL

"Long ago I began to feel I wasn't using a kayak, but wearing my boat. And in time even that intimacy grew into feeling the kayak as a prolongation of the lower half of my body, like a merman. Now even the paddle isn't used; the blades are merely elongations of my arms. The rudder is my feet, determining direction as in walking. The difference between my body and these extensions have faded; I'm unconscious of kayak or paddle, or rudder; I'm just experiencing the bay, conscious only of being at sea."

Paul Kaufmann, from Paddling the Gate

Settling into the seat of a kayak is like entering a world of new horizons, close and yet so far away, unfamiliar and yet so alluring. What bonds the kayaker to the sea is more than the boat that becomes an extension of his body. It is the common past and common spirit, which have driven so many men for so many centuries to venture into new territory and to challenge personal boundaries.

In SEEKERS OF THE HORIZON: Sea-kayaking Voyages from Around the World, edited by Will Nordby (published by The Glove Pequot Press, Chester, CT 06412, \$22.95) eleven real life stories reveal the unique character of sea kayaking and explore the timeless quest for adventure that is part of the human spirit.

*In The Canoe, Audrey Sutherland's exhilarating battle with the elements and her own terror contrasts with the magnificent splendour of Hawaii's remote mountains and bays

*In Seven Tales for Seven Lives, Frank Goodman takes you from the tension of uncertain comradeship in the British Isles to the prosaic drama of a troubled adolescent's first voyage to nature's hidden tranquility amidst the raging seas off Cape Horn.

*In An Impossible Voyage, Hannes Lindemann delivers a blow-by-blow, gripping account of his solo navigation of the Atlantic in a folding boat.

Comprised of finely written and carefully selected essays, this anthology is a major contribution to sea voyaging literature, and a welcome addition to the rapidly growing array of sea kayaking books. Even if you have never seen or paddled a kayak, you will experience, with the same pleasure and curiosity, "paddling that frees the senses as well as the intellect to explore one's surroundings in detail".

ABOUT THE EDITOR

Will Nordby, videotape editor and cameraman for KRON-TV in San Francisco, has written countless articles on his sea kayaking experiences. Blessed with a life long affinity for the sea, Nordby also serves as the safety chairman for the Bay Area kayakers Club.

SEEKERS OF THE HORIZON - Sea Kayaking Voyages from Around the World.

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