

NEWSLETTER of the



Advanced Sea Kayak Club

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



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

MAY 1993

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Editorial

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The Canoe Exhibition last February has been and gone. This year at Ponds Forge, Sheffield and an excellent venue which would have been improved had the car parking been better. The ASKC stand attracted its' customary interest. From what you tell me it is our stand that attracts several of you to the Exhibition which is very encouraging. Next year, 1994, we are back at Crystal Palace, London. See you there. Before then we are again erecting our stand, this time at Pewsey Sports Centre when Stonehenge Canoe Club stage CANOE '93 over the week-end of the 19th/20th June, 1993. I've enclosed a flier about this event. Do your best to support it.

You may recall that in the Editorial of the January '93 Newsletter (No 95) I announced a straw poll to sound out your views on the use of buoyancy jackets, flares and on solo paddling. 27 of you responded and the results go like this:

A = 18	Y = 17	1 = 13
B = 2	Z = 8	2 = 11
C = 7	X = 2	3 = 3

A/B/C was about buoyancy jackets.

A = wear it all the time

B = wear it only in rough conditions, otherwise stow on deck

C = as 'B' but also when coaching

D = very rarely wear it.

X/Y/Z was about flares

X = never rely on them, don't even carry them

Y = always carry them

Z = carry only when conditions warrant

1/2/3 was about solo paddling

1 = solo paddle but generally advise against it

2 = see absolutely no harm in it

3 = against in principle on grounds it is irresponsible

THE BRAER OIL SPILL

There goes another 85,000 tonnes of crude oil. But then, so what? In terms of the actual product, it's a drop in an oil ocean. As for the real ocean, wait a little while - the birds will come back and the people will calm down.

It's the new slant on spillage. In the year of the EXON VALDEZ it was the power of public relations that was supposed to compensate for the shortfall in shipping safety. Nowadays, the industry doesn't even seem to bother with that - unless, of course, it was public relations when, in the aftermath of the Shetland disaster, the oil companies agreed a voluntary ban on tanker traffic near some vulnerable British coasts. That was certainly the least they could have done, and a lot cheaper than ditching their ageing equipment, flags of convenience, and resistance to the problem's best solution - the mid-deck tanker. Oil is too valuable and too dangerous for its transport to be left to pure economics and the industry's self-regulation. In spite of the voluntary ban already in effect the Minch is used by two or three tankers a day!

A S K C SHOP (All prices include postage)

ASKC ties @ £6.50 each

ASKC stickers @ 50 pence each

ASKC letter headed note paper (A4) @ 50 pence per ten sheets

T shirts - small/medium/large/X large @ £6.00 each in yellow or black

Sweat shirts - small/medium/large/X large @ £12.00 each in yellow or black

ASKC ski hats @ £3.50 each

QAJAQ - the book by Davis Zimmerely @ £12.50 each

SEA KAYAKING by Nigel Foster @ £9.95 each.

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Small privately owned Activities Centre in Orkney has a summer vacancy for an instructor experienced in Sea Canoeing, Windsurfing and Rock Climbing.

Sea Canoeing qualifications and driving licence essential.

Apply in writing please to:

The Eviedale Centre, Evie, Orkney, Scotland, KW17 2PJ

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FOR SALE

Skerray Sea Kayak, mettalic green deck, white hull, two bulkheads, round front hatch, large rear oval hatch.

Fitted with forward deck pump, skeg, fishing reel and line, deck lines and a comfortable rubber seat.

This is a stable expedition sea kayak in good condition.

Price only £400.00 Phone Henry, 0708 438994.

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SANCTUARY SAVED (Sunday Telegraph 21.3.93)

The island wildlife sanctuary of Flat Holm in the Bristol Channel has been reprieved as a conservation project after South Glamorgan Council withdrew five of six redundancy notices.

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Fishermen and yachtsmen have long depended on being able to ring up their local coastguard for a quick Met Office forecast before they go to sea.

No longer. They must now ring the "Marine Call Service" on an 0898 number, which can prove costly, since the forecasts ramble on for several minutes. The reason for this is to make money for the Met Office, which has copyright in its forecasts - and "since we became an agency" they explain, "we have to pay our way".

But the fishermen can still call up the coastguard for a forecast, so long as they use VHF from out at sea. So they began taking their boats just outside the harbour and calling from there.

Now they have been outwitted again. Even if they immediately return to port, the fisheries inspectors have taken to clocking up the ten-minute outing as a full "day at sea" off the fishermen's precious yearly quota.

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SPRING PADDLING IN THE N.E. OF SCOTLAND
by RICHARD BRYANT (Ellon Canoe Club)

With winter winds not yet behind us, and snow showers still a likely occurrence, finding the combination of time and good weather to do a sea paddle in these early spring days remains a problem. The weekends I look forward to as possible paddling days have been frequently blown out with wintry showers and other unpleasant weather variations. Living in the North East of Scotland, just West of Aberdeen means I have long sections of coastline within a reasonable distance. Over the last few weeks I have paddled short sections of this coast and found there to be an amazing variety of scenery, quantity and variety of wildlife and endless opportunities for the sea paddler.

On the North coast an interesting section is from Cullen to Macduff. As you paddle East from Cullen past Findlater Castle, you reach the small village of Sandend. The village lies adjacent to a fine crescent surfing beach. A section of rocky coastline and low headlands typifies the section to Portsoy. The rocks stand knife-like out from small headlands, often only just visible. Seabirds sweep in low to examine you, or dive in surprise at being disturbed. Seals appear but are not as common here as other places along the coast. Porpoise schools can be seen further out in the Moray Firth if you are lucky.

Portsoy has an incredibly old looking harbour with converted warehouses producing fine polished marble. A sandy beach and slipway provide safe landing points within the inner harbour. The section to Macduff and Banff is of a similar rocky nature, the cliffs are not high but the small rocky inlets can be hazardous as the waves tend to surge up them with some force.

Whitehills is a small fishing village West of Macduff. There is a narrow passageway between the rocks, ending in a slipway at the campsite to the East of the main harbour. Whereas this section of the Moray Firth coastal scenery tends to be lower cliffs and jutting rocky ledges, the East coast is - on the whole - much more imposing, and has to be experienced.

There are few - if any - committed crossings and weaker tidal streams than the West coast, however there are exposed sections with few landing points and a wealth of natural variety and beauty. Catterling lies some 5½ miles South of Stonehaven and is a small clifftop village with a nice pub (The Creel Inn). A road runs down to the harbour, and facing the harbour are some small rocky islands, home to a large colony of seals. The older larger seals sit and watch you with disdain and then suddenly lumber forward to dive in the sea below their resting place.

To the North 2-3 miles away is Crawsand bay. This small village has a shelving stony beach which is not easy to land on if a swell is running up the beach. The coastline consists of cliffs undercut into caves which resonate when waves enter and disappear into the back.

From Crawsand to Stonehaven is an impressive 5 mile paddle with the large nesting site of Dunie Point just North of Crawsand - one of the largest bird reserves on the East coast. At Dunotter Castle just South of Stonehaven the sea nearly surrounds a rocky promontory on which are the castle ruins. This impressive site - used in films - once held the crown jewels of Scotland during the civil war. The section from Stonehaven to Aberdeen is about 10 miles of exposed coastline with few landing points until Nigg Bay. Stacks, arches and caves are numerous over the whole section.

Paddling North out of Cruden Bay with a following South Easterly swell was one of the finest short paddles I have experienced. A series of small rocks offshore provide an inside passage to paddlers if the conditions are rough, while deep channels into the cliffs and narrow rock passages provide an exciting playground to the sea canoeist. Heading North the cliffs become alive with seabirds. Razorbills and guillemots panic and sweep off the cliffs passing you in their hundreds just a few feet overhead with their feet trailing behind like the ends of a ski jumper's skis. Groups of these birds assemble on the water until they

panic and scoot over the surface trying to take to the air. Which they succeed in after several long sprints. Striking black and white eider duck swim with their dull brown mates until they dive, only to reappear some distance away. People can be seen walking the cliffs looking out to sea, while you have the freedom to see all below.

The jewel in the crown is undoubtedly the natural formation known as the Bullers of Buchan, 3 miles North of Cruden Bay. A large arch in the cliff through which you can paddle leads into a natural amphitheatre with cliffs on all sides over 200 feet high. Seabirds nest high up and above this a narrow path leads around the knife-like edge. The word 'Bullers' comes from the scottish word for 'boilers'. The path is definately not for those scared of heights. The entrance can be difficult if not impossible in some conditions and in general paddling too close to these cliffs is not a good idea and provides some risk to the paddler. Reflected waves form clapotis, interference with the incoming swell causing explosions of surf and irregular wave shapes.

This region provides a varied coastline different in character from the West coast, perhaps not as dramatic, but still outstanding in its beauty and natural wonders which is what sea canoeing is all about.

A further point of safety is that this region is better covered by coastguard and helicopters than nearly anywhere else. North Sea shuttle flights cross overhead very regularly in all but very bad conditions. Coastguard H.Q. is in Stonehaven and at Lossiemouth the RAF have S.A.R. helicopters.

HAPPY PADDLING

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NEARLY AN EPIC

By: Tom Smith, Burra Isle, Shetland.

Sunday August 15 was a fine sunny day with not much wind, and seven of us decided to go south to Sumburgh with two alternative plans in mind. If conditions were favourable we would go surfing, but if the sea was calm we would paddle round Fitful Head. As it happened our preferred beach near the airport was devoid of surf, so we went round to Quendale and transferred two vehicles to Spiggie, our intended landfall after rounding Fitful. To our surprise we found four or five feet of surf rolling in to Quendale beach from the southwest, and, with the benefit of hindsight we should surely have taken that as our cue to revert to Plan A. However we were already committed, in our thinking at least, to the trip, so we duly set off.

We had some difficulty leaving the beach through the breaking surf, but as we crossed the expanse of Quendale Bay it seemed altogether gentler. We gave the first headland, Garths Ness, a wide berth as we could see a large break inshore. We then turned west toward Fitful itself, and conditions quickly worsened. For 15 or 20 minutes we made very little progress, while from the crests we could see an expanse of whitecaps stretching from the cliffs on our right to as far as we could see on our left.

Ray and I held a quick conversation, the gist of which was that, although conditions might well ease once we were round Fitful, we were making no real progress and at least two members of the group were struggling. We decided to turn round and go back. However conditions now seemed to deteriorate further. The seas were short and steep and fairly irregular, reaching fifteen feet with regularly breaking crests. One break in particular took me unawares and almost broached me. Mhairi, who was nearest to me on my right, was less fortunate, capsizing and exiting her boat. Mavis, paddling just behind her, and Ray, just ahead, were both alongside quickly. I shouted to the remaining three to carry on back towards Quendale, and stood by while Mavis and Ray got Mhairi back in her boat. The problem now was that Mhairi was unnerved and the conditions were clearly too difficult for her. After a quick discussion it was decided that Mavis would raft with Mhairi, Ray would tow them both, and I would stand by to share or take over the tow as necessary.

We kept this up for perhaps ten minutes, but we seemed to have made no appreciable distance in any direction. Mavis was finding it difficult to hold the two canoes together, so I took over from her while she attached a second, shorter rope to assist with the tow. Almost immediately we were hit by perhaps the biggest breaking sea we had yet seen, and both Mavis and Ray capsized. Mavis was able to pull herself up on the bow of Mhairi's canoe, but Ray failed to roll and we were faced with another rescue. This we achieved with some difficulty, and were "resting" in the raft contemplating our next move, when we were startled to find the other three coming back to us. They brought the unwelcome news that conditions around Garths Ness had deteriorated to the point where they felt a return by that route was an even poorer proposition than continuing north. In fact they had had two capsizees with successful Eskimo rescues.

Ray and I looked at each other in some dismay and I think we both felt for the first time that we might have a serious situation on our hands. However there was nothing to be gained by hanging about. We again sent Ralph, Eilish and Colin ahead as a group, while we organised ourselves along our initial lines. Almost at once we realised that things had changed in our favour. The seas had gone down to about ten feet or less, and while we had been engaged in rescuing Ray we had moved some way to the north, effectively passing Fitful Head. The tide had turned at last!

Twenty minutes on it was clear the worst was indeed over, the others were only occasionally visible on the crests ahead of us, and everybody was feeling better except Ray, who was becoming nauseous from the constant jarring of the waist towline on his stomach. We rafted up to transfer the tow to me, but first I suggested to Mhairi that she might now be able to paddle unassisted. From there

on we bowled along for about six miles. Finally we came into Spiggie Bay through a wide clear channel and landed, not much behind the other three, in front of our vehicles and a couple of surprised anglers.

There are several lessons to be drawn from this trip, one of which is obviously not to place too much reliance on the times at which tides are supposed to change. On the other hand if we had started out later I suspect we would never have got out of Quendale Bay. Maybe next time we encounter a 4-5 foot break on the beach at Quendale we'll just go surfing! It was the first time round Fitful Head for all of us and I doubt if anyone will forget it.

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FROM: Sergio Cadoni, Viale Colombo, ITALY and Secretary to Associazione Italiana Kayak Da Mare.

Dear John

With reference to many articles about bilge pumps and wet exits I've read in the newsletters of 1992, I would like to write a few notes and report about our experience with them.

In Italy we do not have a good attitude for electric bilge pumps. They seem to be another piece of equipment prone to possible failure, and of annoying maintenance. But a few of my friends use them, and they swear they are ready to spend money on it again. In general the majority of paddlers are quite satisfied with traditional bilge pumps. From our experience we have found that a Lendall foot pump, certainly not born to be used at sea, and a Henderson hand operated pump form a good and reliable pair. Most people in rough conditions and high seas re-enter and roll on a paddle float, so they have good stability bracing on it while emptying the boat. Both pumps provide a quick drainage, and the critical point at which the boat with the flooded cockpit is satisfactorily stable again is reached in three to four minutes. Some others, myself for example, are at the moment quite happy with the Henderson Compac 50 pump, installed in the boat just in front of the fore deck shock cords. The Compac 50 and the Lendall foot pump can empty my Baidarka Explorer in less than three minutes. The boat reaches a satisfactory stability in more or less 90 seconds. To set the record straight I should add that in order to have more storage room and a smaller cockpit, my boat has no footrest, so I use the fore bulkhead for that purpose, and just after the posterior lid of the cockpit there's a third bulkhead. Actually the boat has a third waterproof compartment with a VCP hatch on the aft deck for access. If I am obliged to a wet exit, the amount of water that fills the cockpit is much less than in a normal boat. And both pumps work quite well.

To maintain good stability while swamped I too rely on a paddle float to brace in very bad seas. But Ive also added to the boat a pair of paddle tubes. I've chosen this additional option just in case I can not brace on a paddle float or I become incapable by any other means. I can always re-enter in the uprighted boat and rest as long as I need, while emptying. Should I get sick or wounded I can even paddle, with slower progress, with the paddle tubes set in position. We have also developed a system to fit the spare paddle in them and then roll, the only thing you have to do then is to turn the spare paddle 90° to achieve stability. And there's no way to capsize the boat, I must admit that the critical moment comes when you have to replace the spare paddle on the front deck, this is the right moment for a new capsize. Some of us rely on the third hatch and the paddle tubes to be on the safe side. Some others prefer the system similar to the paddle tubes, but in this case you must definitely have unfeathered paddles. Finally some others have a strong preference for foor operated Henderson pumps. We mostly use English boats produced by P & H and Valley or similar, so no kayak tiller bar is on the way. We don't use rudders, so fitting a foot pump is not a big problem. These foot pump lovers claim to be in the best of conditions. Simple equipment, low maintainance, high outflow, hands free for bracing in the waves while pumping out. COULD BE!

Two years ago in Italy an association of kayaking enthusiasts was founded. With the aim to promote all activities related to the sport (friendship, navigation, safety at sea, first aid, updated equipment and so on ...) it now has more than 50 members. This year the Associazione Italiana Kayak da Mare (AIKM) has been officially recognized by the Italian canoeing association, the federal body of canoeing activities in Italy. Some of us have been in this sport for 20 Years.

Until now we lacked an organization that could provide a trait d'union among so many lonely paddlers. To create it has been hard work. Still in its early stages the AIKM manages to organise for its subscribers regular meetings, to send a quarterly bulletin and to keep everybody updated on its activities. Not so bad.

The Mediterranean Sea is an ideal place for round-the-year paddling. In Sardinia where I live, the water temperature rarely drops under 14°C in winter. The average temperature is 18°C. During summer it can easily reach 25°C. We don't have tides, so there are no problems whatsoever to take to the sea and to land, wherever you go; the weather is usually fine, a wet exit is seldom a problem.

The island is located across the 40° parallel north, is 220 km x 120 km wide, and it is extremely easy to choose the most suitable conditions of wind and sea according to your needs. Just jump in the car and drive an hour or so to the east or to the west to find a weather or a lee shore. There are plenty of sandy beaches and high cliffs, the water is pristine and, apart from some big tourist resorts most of the coast is uninhabited and still wild. Many of these features are shared by other Italian regions, with a wide range of variation according to local weather, sea bed, prevailing winds, and industrialization. But I would say that it is possible to paddle in the coldest months on a regular basis, finding unspoiled stretches of coast in the most densely populated areas.

We mostly use British canoes, produced by Valley and P & H, with a narrow beam and small cockpit. It is also easy to find Aquaterra Chinook, Sea lion, Seayak by Prijon, foldable Klepper. Italy is not a wide market and there's not a lot to choose from, but there's enough to satisfy different needs. Finding good equipment presents more difficulties, there's not a big choice and prices are quite high. We have started, I would say almost on a regular basis, a sort of "give a little help to your friends" business. That means that anyone going abroad for vacation or work, brings some equipment for himself and for friends scattered all over Italy. In this way we now have a very comprehensive array of the highest quality sea canoeing equipment. We don't lack anything. Would you believe that all over Italy we could not find any retail point, not even a wholesaler, interested in this business! They are mostly busy selling wild water canoes and equipment, and awkward sea kayaks (provided with almost suicidal equipment) you wouldn't paddle in in the worst of your days. We have a long way to go before we will obtain a normal market.

Fortunately some of us are really enthusiastic and have been as far as Holland, Germany and so on to buy their dream kayak or tons of equipment. Sea kayakers are always strange creatures! To set the record straight I should say that finally, principally thanks to the efforts of AIKM, some retailers are becoming more interested and more informed on this sport, so life is going to be easier.

We are trying to meet the same standards of many established foreign sea kayaking organisations, namely the British and French, in our proficiency and advanced courses. We are evaluating other organisation's experiences and regulations, with the aim to extract the best from it and to put up a good association in our country too.

So, next time you plan to land somewhere in Italy, don't forget: you can get good spaghetti, good espresso, tons of sunshine, but also good friends you can go paddle with.

BOOK REVIEW

The Last of the Cockleshell Heroes - by William Sparks with Michael Munn
Leo Cooper, Pen & Sword Books Ltd, London. 147 pages. \$32.50

Launched by Britain in 1942, during some of the grimmest days of the Second World War, Operation Frankton was more a public relations stunt than a serious military mission. William Sparks, the eponymous Last of the Cockleshell Sailors, didn't realize that then, and would doubtless offer to fight you for implying so today. But in this readable little book, Sparks's lack of insight is not an unalloyed liability.

Desperate to create the appearance of a military offensive, and having previously rejected the idea as impracticable, Lord Mountbatten's Combined Operations Headquarters was persuaded into launching an attack against German shipping in Bordeaux by means of placing limpet mines from collapsible kayaks. Even if all six kayaks had succeeded in reaching the harbour, the results would have been militarily insignificant. But the heroism of the mission made Frankton a worthwhile public relations venture regardless of its slim chances for success. The participants were, appropriately, all volunteers.

Sparks was one of the volunteers, and had the good fortune to share his kayak with the mission's leader, Major (later Colonel) "Blondie" Hasler. It was, no doubt, Hasler's ingenuity, initiative, and strength of character that was responsible for Sparks's salvation. For of the forty volunteers, none beside Hasler had experience in small boats. Months of training, failed to teach the men even the rudiments of navigation, and evidently produced only modest results in paddling skills, in spite of Sparks's assertion that they became "expert canoeists." But the volunteers, pared down to twelve, were whipped into extremely good physical condition.

Launching a few miles off the French coast from a submarine, one of the six boats was damaged instantly and did not participate. Two others soon capsized, and their crews were either drowned, or captured and shot. Only two boats ultimately made it the sixty miles upriver to Bordeaux, where five or six ships were mined (the account is unclear); at least four were damaged or sunk, although most were later repaired and returned to service.

After the attack, the crews scuttled their boats and split up for an overland escape through enemy lines. In spite of a ludicrously tenuous escape mechanism, Sparks never draws the conclusion that Combined Operations never expected the men to survive the attack, much less return to England. For weeks at a time, he and Hasler were sheltered by the French Resistance. These were periods of intense boredom for Sparks, who occasionally lashed out at his unflappable superior. Munn, the writer, has not seen fit to supplement Sparks's recollections, and the latter half of the book drags, suffering from its total reliance upon Sparks's limited viewpoint.

But Sparks's viewpoint is, in a sense, the book's strength as well. It is an intensely personal memoir of a fascinating, if minor, episode of the war. The facts behind Operation Frankton are available elsewhere (see *Sea Kayaker*, Winter 1985). What *The Last of the Cockleshell Heroes* uniquely offers is an unadorned window on how the common fighting man views the events around him. It is suffused with the typically garbled mixture of patriotism and self-interest that one might expect from an old veteran reminiscing down at the local pub.

It is far too easy to find fault with this book, with its very modest objectives. Non-historians will wish for more background to place the Frankton operation in perspective, military enthusiasts will desire more detail about weaponry, coastal and harbour defenses, and French Resistance operations, and kayakers will be disappointed by the lack of nuts-and-bolts detail about boats, camping equipment, and paddling techniques. All readers will wish for a better selection of archive photos. As a history, it is a failure, but as *History*, it is absolutely authentic and revealing. With all of its shortcomings, Sparks's voice makes this book a pleasure to read.

HM COAST GUARD - CANOE INCIDENTS 1992 (REVISED)

No	Date	Wind	Wave Ht/Swell	Location and Scenario	Primary Response
1	21 Mar	W7	1-2ft/mod	River Lune, Lancaster - capsize & fatality at Kirby Lonsdale, Female age 37	Police, Valley Helo, 2 x CG teams
2	03 Apr	NE3	1-2ft/mod	St.Davids, W.Wales - missing canoeist. Helo recovered body	Helos, Lifeboats & numerous units
3	25 Apr	SSW5	1-2ft/mod	South Kintyre - 999 call canoeist in difficulties, assisted by other canoeists	Cambeltown CG
4	28 May	E6	4-8ft/mod	Port Ellen, Islay - 12yr old girl canoeist, in adverse conditions	local speedboat assisted
5	28 May	SE6	2-4ft/slight	Loch Broom, Ullapool - canoe party in difficulties in strong winds	CG helo, Lochinver Lifeboat, F/Vs
6	29 May	E5	2-4ft/slight	Gruinard Bay, NW Scotland - 999 Helo recovered 2 exhausted canoeists	CG helo, Loch Ewe CG
7	30 May	E1	0-1ft/slight	Swanage - Father & Daughter assisted by local F/B, exhausted by ebbing tide	local F/B
8	26 Jun	W2	0-1ft/slight	Bangor, N.Ireland - 999 call, 3 canoeists stranded by ebbing tide, no assistance	-
9	09 Jul	NW1	0-1ft/slight	Helens Bay, Co.Down, N.Ireland - 999 capsized canoe, swam ashore	Bangor Lifeboat and CG
10	15 Jul	S2	0-1ft/no swell	Bangor, N.Ireland - report of capsized canoe, made shore, taken to hospital	CG boat, Bangor CG, Ambulance
11	05 Aug	W2	0-1ft/slight	Tobermory, Mull - report of canoeists in difficulties, all well, false alarm	Tobermory Lifeboat, Oban CG boat
12	23 Aug	SW4	2-4ft/slight	Killough, N.Ireland - 999 call, person fallen out of canoe, made shore unaided	Ardglass CG
13	29 Aug	SW7	4-8ft/heavy	St.Davids, W.Wales - white water canoe rodeo, participants experiencing difficulties	22 rescued, Brawdy helo, St.Davids Lifeboat and CG
14	04 Sept	NW5	1-2ft/mod	Sound of Raasay, W.Scotland - 999 call about 7 canoeists overdue. All well	CG helo, Portree Lifeboat, CG team
15	06 Sep	SW7	2-4ft/mod	Loch Carron, W.Scotland - 999 call, canoe party separated, helo located. All well	CG helo, Portree Lifeboat, Kyle CG
16	06 Sep	SE6	13-20ft/slight	Ballymartin, Co.Down, N.Ireland - 999 call, canoeist disappeared in heavy seas. All well	Aldergrove helo, Lifeboats and CGs
17	27 Sep	ENE2	0-1ft/slight	St.Kilda, W.Scotland - concern for canoeist, escorted into St.Kilda. All well	CG helo, Barra Lifeboat, Benbecula CG
18	11 Oct	NW4	2-4ft/heavy	St.Abbs Head, Northumberland - canoe organiser concerned for party of 10. 4 recued by lifeboat, 1 rescued by Helo, 5 self help ashore	Boulmer helo, St.Abbs Lifeboat, Coastguard team
19	12 Dec	NW4	1-2ft/mod	Menai Straits, NW Wales - 999 call concerned for children in canoes, 1 hypo	Valley helo, Beaumaris Lifeboat, Moelfre CG

From Peter Lyne of Swansea

Dear John

I have been meaning to reply to your request for views on flares, solo paddling etc. Please excuse the more longwinded response. The problem is that the responses you are trying to elicit do not fit in with how I and I suspect many other sea paddlers feel on these issues. This is not intended to be negative and I appreciate the excellent work which you put into producing the newsletters. However, I think that your survey oversimplifies matters and also misses the opportunity to tap into the views of sea paddlers on related topics. For example how many are now routinely carrying VHF radios, buoyancy aids versus life jackets.

Anyway, brace yourself. I always carry flares and usually a radio as well. Flares are not the route to salvation, may not work when needed and even if they do may not be seen, but if something does go wrong, I think that I would be rightly criticised for not even taking elementary precautions, and this could also bring sea kayaking in general into disrepute.

I usually wear a Crewfit lifejacket, although sometimes will wear a buoyancy aid. The former is more compact and comfortable, can be rapidly blown up manually and even more rapidly inflated with its CO2 cartridge. There is more freedom to swim when that is the priority, but much more buoyancy for the real crisis, including a better capacity for keeping the head clear of the water. The downside is that in theory you do not have buoyancy if knocked unconscious, unless you have automatic inflation which I feel is not suitable for sea paddling. This is not really an issue as a standard buoyancy aid is unlikely to keep the head of the unconscious individual in a position where he or she can breathe. Sea paddling buoyancy aids are festooned with nice pockets, but the extra weight carried reduces the value of the aid. I use a reversed bum bag which can be quickly ditched if necessary. Buoyancy aids give more warmth, but there are plenty of other ways of achieving that goal. It is possible to wear the life-jacket over the buoyancy aid if you want belt and braces. Finally, it has to be admitted that a buoyancy aid is useful to protect against mechanical shock if you are rock hopping etc.

Solo paddling is a complex issue. I do, and I think that it is perfectly reasonable for an experienced paddler to solo having carefully considered all the factors involved. I certainly would not advise a novice to solo. I do not solo unless the conditions are predictable and well within my capabilities. I find dogmatic rules like "never less than three shall be" rather silly. It concentrates the mind to solo and I would suggest can on occasions be safer. There can be a false sense of security in a group, and when conditions get rough a group rescue may not be feasible. The best way to get through difficult water is usually to "go for it", and one can be endangered by having to hold back to keep together in a group wallowing around in an overfall or whatever. A single well matched companion is often the best bet for tricky paddling. However, I also enjoy paddling in the company of others, whilst recognising that this can complicate situations. Of course, I recognise that I might be in trouble soloing if I was injured or taken ill, but that is a risk which is accepted in many solo activities, be it hang gliding or single handed yachting.

Before we left for British Columbia we were concerned that the Queen Charlotte Islands would be rather crowded. We need not have worried. In 13 days paddling we saw two other parties - 4 kayaks in total. Our only contact with the outside world was through the watchmen at two old Haida villages - indians installed there to ensure visiting boats did no further damage to their heritage.

We flew from Gatwick to Vancouver and on to the Charlotte's airport at the aptly named Sandspit. Our guidebook suggested the normal means of approach to the Haida Gwaii islands was to launch 'from the end of the runway' and paddle down a rather exposed section of the coast to reach the shelter provided by a group of large islands. This we did - learning later that most people start from the much more sheltered Moresby Camp some 20 logging road miles from Sandspit.

We were paddling our Klepper - a collapsible boat with wooden frame and outer skin which we flew to Sandspit within the North American baggage allowance of two pieces of luggage - two parcels for the boat and two rucksacks for camping gear, spare clothes and some basic foods we were more unlikely to find in Sandspit. The split paddles including a spar went as hand luggage.

The first night we camped just outside the airport perimeter, on the edge of the beach. The next morning we made a quick tour of Sandspit for food and fuel and permission to visit the Haida villages (there was not much to see). Half an hour putting the boat together and another hour packing it and we were away - to catch the midday high tide. Even partly loaded the boat was too heavy for us to carry and the skin too fragile to pull over the beach. It had to be packed and unpacked at the water's edge. On one or two occasions we had to unpack in the sea before we could carry the empty boat over boulders.

The books warn visitors to the Charlottes to take their rain-gear. We hardly used ours until the last evening! The only moisture was from a few short showers and one day of drizzle and we had several days of clear blue skies. Most mornings started calm but usually by mid-morning a 3-4 strong breeze was blowing. In all but the more sheltered sections this set up quite a chop - not the place for beginners but usually good fun in the well behaved Klepper. The one exception was a headland on the exposed passage back when the paddling was rather too interesting for comfort.

We soon got into a regular routine - getting up soon after dawn (about 6.30) to breakfast and pack the boat in the calm. Away before 9.00 am (but not much - it took at least two hours depending on the length of carry to the water's edge) and paddling through to 4 or 5 o'clock depending on sites, and the weather. Campsites were not always easy to find and even our usual coffee stops were sometimes spaced at rather more than the standard 1½ hour interval. We began by avoiding camp sites near streams because of the possibility of a visit from bears but it soon became clear that some of the best and most used sites were by running water. We did take the precaution of hoisting our food into a suitable tree each night, and cooked on the beach or under a separate flysheet brought specially for the purpose.

Moresby Island has a mountain backbone about 1000 metres high, most of which is clothed in dark forests - in particular high cedars which were used by the Haida for the totem poles, canoes etc. Wherever settlements have been abandoned they soon return to the forest and logged areas are re-covered in thirty to forty years. Logging is no longer permitted in South Moresby but just south of Sandspit there were rather unsightly areas of clear fell.

The Charlottes are renowned for their wildlife and we spent a considerable time both afloat and in camp watching the birds. The most spectacular were the bald eagles, large numbers of Great Northern divers, a range of auks and very noisy belted kingfishers. Also we were often accompanied by seals. One high spot of the trip was the view - from a safe distance - of a black bear. We had just finished our coffee stop when the bear appeared on the beach about 350 yards

away. It appeared totally unaware of us. We quietly relaunched and paddled rather closer to get a better view. However it was not very long before we were spotted and the bear disappeared back into the woods.

The islands of South Moresby form the Haida Gwaii, the homeland of the warlike Haida tribes - renowned for their totem poles and other carving. The Haida were nearly wiped out by smallpox in the late 19th century and most of the villages were abandoned. Most of their totem poles were removed and the woods took over again as the long houses collapsed and mortuary poles toppled over. Only in the last 10-20 years have the traditions been re-established and care has been taken to preserve what is left.

The Haida undoubtedly contributed to the success of our holiday. So did the weather. In bad conditions a solo boat could have been rather restricted - or rather pushed. There was no way to walk out and it would have been difficult to attract attention if anything had gone wrong. In retrospect we should have taken a marine frequency radio - but we lived to tell the tale and encourage other British paddlers to go to the Queen Charlotte Islands.

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PRESS RELEASE

PENZANCE & HAYLE CANOE CLUBS are combining to inaugurate a sea kayak race nominally twelve miles, to be called the West Cornwall Sea Kayak Experience.

It will be held on Saturday August 28th, 1993, (Bank Holiday Saturday) and will be a circular navigation of Mounts Bay from Albert Pier, Penzance, around St Michaels Mount, with a four mile open sea crossing to St Clements Island, Mousehole and then back close to the coastline to Newlyn and Penzance promenade. Rescue boats will be in attendance and non competitive paddlers are welcome to compete for an endeavour award.

The expected start time is 1.30 pm to coincide with the high tide at 2.45 pm.

The classes will be:

Sea kayak single

Sea kayak Touring & Surf Ski doubles (to include sea kayak)

Surf Ski singles

Racing K.2.'s (subject to weather conditions on the day) and

General Purpose Slalom boats.

There will be a junior race of approximately three miles for boys and girls under 16.

There will be first and second prizes for the main classes with a ladies prize for the sea kayak singles and general purpose boats. All finishers will receive what we hope will be an attractive certificate and it is hoped to categorise finishers according to overall time and separate positions according to boat design.

It is hoped that this will be an annual event alternating between the south and north coasts, i.e. in 1994 approximately the same distance from Hayle estuary to St Ives with an open crossing to Godrevy Island returning through the channel (with a possibility of an over fall) past Gwithian and hopefully through some more surf back to the Hayle.

In future if well supported it could become the West Cornwall Duo with two races held on consecutive Saturday and Sundays on following weekends. For further details when available contact: Richard Uren, Trescrowan Farm, Bone Valley, Heamoor, Penzance, Cornwall. TR20 8VJ. Tel: 0736 51082.

ELECTRIC PUMPS

Mike Emery

I am concerned that members are fitting electric pumps to their kayaks with insufficient attention to essential details, and are not taking sufficient care in recharging batteries. If the pump is to be reliable, it is absolutely essential that it be properly fitted and maintained.

First a resume of the alternatives:

- 1) A large bailing cup or sponge. Very simple, reliable, as long as you don't lose it. If it's tied on, make absolutely sure that the cord can't wrap around your leg in a capsize. Adequate for many situations, but not if you are trying to empty a boat at sea under severe conditions. Every boat should have one as a backup.
- 2) Deck-mounted hand pump. Simple, very reliable, removes water very fast. excellent when operated by a person in another boat which has rafted up with the victim. When fitted with a manifold along the keel-line, it will remove all the water from a cockpit, highly desirable when paddling in colder waters than ours. Awkward to operate by a solo paddler, and impossible to operate if conditions are severe enough that he can't put his paddle down.
- 3) Hand-held tube pump. High capacity, but needs two hands to operate, which restricts its use. Mike and Chris Edwards are using one in their double where it makes much more sense - one can paddle and stabilize while the other pumps. Highly recommended as a spare communal pump on easier trips partly made up of inexperienced paddlers, since it can be used to pump out someone else's boat. It is not a substitute for a built-in pump.
- 4) Foot pump. In principle, it's ideal - it can be used by the occupant without restricting his/her paddling, it is simple, reliable, a permanent fixture in the boat, and like the deck-mounted hand pump can be fitted with a manifold. But in practice, there is not enough space in that part of the cockpit to move your foot sufficiently to get a decent stroke. I have used two, and they were excellent at keeping the inside hull dry in waters near the arctic circle, but they were impracticable for emptying a full cockpit. In a single, you will have to have much smaller feet than I do and a roomier cockpit to be successful. Mike and Chris Edwards have fitted one to their double and are very pleased with it.
- 5) Venturi, as used in sailing dinghies. It sounds ideal, with the motion of the kayak through the water being used to suck water out of the cockpit. In practice, their efficiency drops rapidly with reducing speed through the water, and if you are making slow progress into a stiff headwind, you will have zero extraction just when you are least able to stop and bail. Un-tested in Tasmania, though it has strong exponents in South Australia.
- 6) That leaves the electric pump. It has the enormous advantage that you can simply switch it on, no matter what the circumstances. When launching in dumping surf, you can jump in your boat and go, fit your spray deck after you've passed the surf line and leave the pump to empty the boat. If you fail a roll, you can exit, get your bearings, climb back in upside down and try again, leaving the pump to empty the boat later. But with the convenience comes a serious disadvantage: it must be carefully installed and maintained, otherwise it will fail at a time of its own choosing, and you are left with your sponge again. I cannot emphasize too strongly that the electric pump is worse than useless if it is simply thrown into a boat with a battery without due care and subsequent attention. It will be a shock hazard, and it will not be reliable.

The electric pump also has the disadvantage that the impeller has to be immersed for the pump to operate, so it will never leave the cockpit dry. They are surprisingly tolerant of sand, but will jam on fine gravel. On the 'Rule 400' (used almost universally by our members) the blockage is easily

cleared, but not while you are in the cockpit.

If an electric pump is to be reliable, it is absolutely essential that the following points be taken into account:

- a) The pump contains strong magnets, and must be mounted sufficiently far from the compass not to affect it. If the compass is on the deck just ahead of the cockpit, then the pump must be no closer than behind the seat. (This is with the pump switched off).
- b) Mount the pump outlet where you can see it, on the front deck or near the front of the cockpit. When the pump has emptied the boat and stops ejecting water, it must be switched off. If it is forgotten and left running without water flowing through it, it will overheat and eventually seize.
- c) The switch must be fully waterproof - the only switches that I have found so far that claimed to be 'waterproof' are in fact only drizzle or splash proof. It is an advantage if you can see whether the switch is in the 'on' or 'off' position. While the pump is clearly audible in a quiet workshop, it is inaudible under mildly choppy conditions at sea. Switches are discussed in the appendix.
- d) The battery must be firmly mounted, most people make an appropriate bracket and bolt it to the cockpit side of the rear bulkhead. The position chosen should leave the battery accessible for recharging, and yet the terminals need to be protected from damage when spare clothing, food etc. is stuffed into spare corners near the battery.
- e) The wiring must be completely insulated, with any soldered or other bare terminals well covered with silicon rubber or other appropriate compound. The wiring must be so mounted that it is possible to inspect all joints to confirm that they are thoroughly protected. One pinhole in the silicon rubber is sufficient to ensure that sea water will penetrate and corrode the copper wire or terminals, probably within months.
- f) The wiring must also be insulated to protect against electric shock. A 12 volt battery sounds innocuous enough, but when the victim and the battery are immersed in sea water, it is certainly capable of producing a severe shock. I examined that in some detail and came to the conclusion that it was probably not possible to get a fatal shock, but the margin was not wide enough to be sure.
- g) Some provision must be made for recharging. One way is to simply tear away some of the silicon rubber insulation from the battery terminals, clip on the battery charger, and add more silicon rubber when the charging is complete. I have heard of people using Vaseline instead, as being much easier to remove and replace - but make sure it doesn't get wiped off accidentally. Make absolutely sure that the terminals are completely protected when you finish. A more sophisticated solution is described in the appendix.
- h) Batteries don't last indefinitely, even when they are well looked after. Working from data sheets for the "Exide" sealed rechargeable lead-acid ("maintenance free recombination electrolyte") batteries, the three sizes commonly used in kayaks are the RE12-1.9, the RE12-2.6, and the RE12-6. The first of these will run a "Rule" 400 gallon/hour pump for around 30 minutes when new; when 6 years old, having been kept permanently on a charger, the capacity will be half that. Use it for 5 minutes and don't bother to recharge it, and you are down to 10 minutes capacity. Be a bit careless about recharging during those 6 years and it will be dead flat. The RE12-6 has about five times the capacity which leaves a much larger margin for misuse and makes it much more appropriate for expeditions on which recharging may be difficult, but it weighs 2.4 kg. If you don't keep it charged, it may be dying too, within a year or two.

- i) Batteries lose charge slowly even when they are not being used. Recharge your battery every 3 to 4 months, even if it hasn't been used. If you have used it significantly on a trip, then recharge it on your return. (Nicaid batteries, becoming increasingly popular appliances such as electric drills, torches and calculators, lose capacity if they are charged unnecessarily. That is not true of lead acid batteries, which deteriorate if they are not kept charged).
- j) It is essential that the batteries are recharged within the makers' guide lines. They must not under any circumstances be connected to a car-type battery charger. The RE12-1.9 must not be charged at a rate exceeding 0.5 amps, the RE12-6 has an absolute maximum of 1.5 amps. The smallest battery chargers sold by car firms charge at around 4 amps, and garage chargers are up around 40 amps and higher. In addition, the charger needs to be of a type that senses when the battery has charged to 14.4 volts (in our climate), and then switches itself off. This is not the case with conventional chargers designed for car batteries. A charger of the constant voltage, current limited type specifically designed for these batteries is most strongly recommended. I intend publishing a design for a suitable charger in a future issue of this journal.

APPENDIX

Switches

Two arrangements are popular with members. The first is to cut a hole in the deck, seal the hole with a flexible rubber membrane, mount a switch underneath the rubber so that it can be operated through the membrane (the switch is a rocker type, pushed on at one end and off at the other). A fibreglass box (using a half tennis ball as mould) is placed around the switch and sealed permanently to the underside of the deck. Filling the box with grease provides some added protection against ingress of moisture. You cannot see whether the switch is off, and this makes it easy to forget to switch it off (it is possible to feel through the rubber to check). See fig. 1.

The other switch arrangement is to use a magnetically operated reed switch. This is a sealed glass tube with two flexible iron reeds inside: subjecting them to a magnetic field causes them to attract and contact. One of these can be mounted under the deck with the wires soldered to it, and a small magnet on top of the deck used to operate the switch. It sounds ideal, but there are several traps.

- a) Most reed switches are intended for use in burglar alarms with very small currents, and will not last long when switching a pump. The only switch I have found which has an adequate rating is model DRA200, sold by George Harvey Electrical for about \$2. Other models must not be used unless you have verified they have rating of at least 2 amps on inductive loads.
- b) The glass casing is very easily broken, and if the switch is simply glued to the underdeck, then flexing of the deck will break the switch. Leads must be soldered to the switch terminals, but it is then easy to break the switch by pulling on the wires. I am overcoming this by pre-soldering the two wires to the switch, placing the switch in a piece of aluminium tubing (12 mm outside diameter, about 15 cm long), then completely filling the tube with silicone rubber as in fig. 2. The tube can be attached to the underside of the deck by any convenient means. Note that the wires emerging from the reed switch are iron, and are very much more prone to corrosion than copper. By sealing the switch in a tube before it is mounted in the boat, it is much easier to inspect and ensure that the leads really are thoroughly waterproof.
- c) The small "Eclipse" magnets originally described in my December '84 article appear to now be unavailable. The smallest I can find is from BBC hardware, costs about \$8, and is significantly more powerful. There is no need to use pole pieces with it as described in the original article, but it needs to be somewhat to the rear of the seat if it is not to affect a compass on deck at

the front of the cockpit. The magnet can be attached to the deck and rotated to operate the switch. I dislike controls behind me, so I have a stainless wire link in a nylon tube which moves the magnet from the front deck.

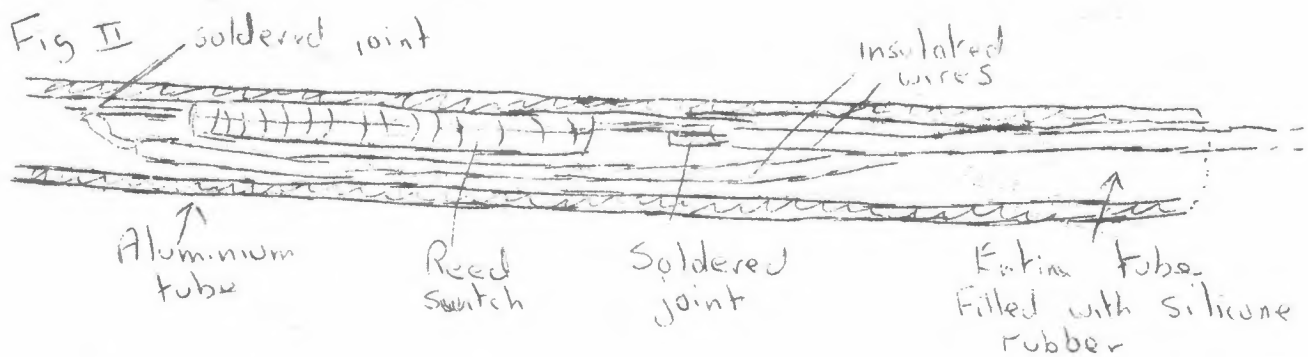
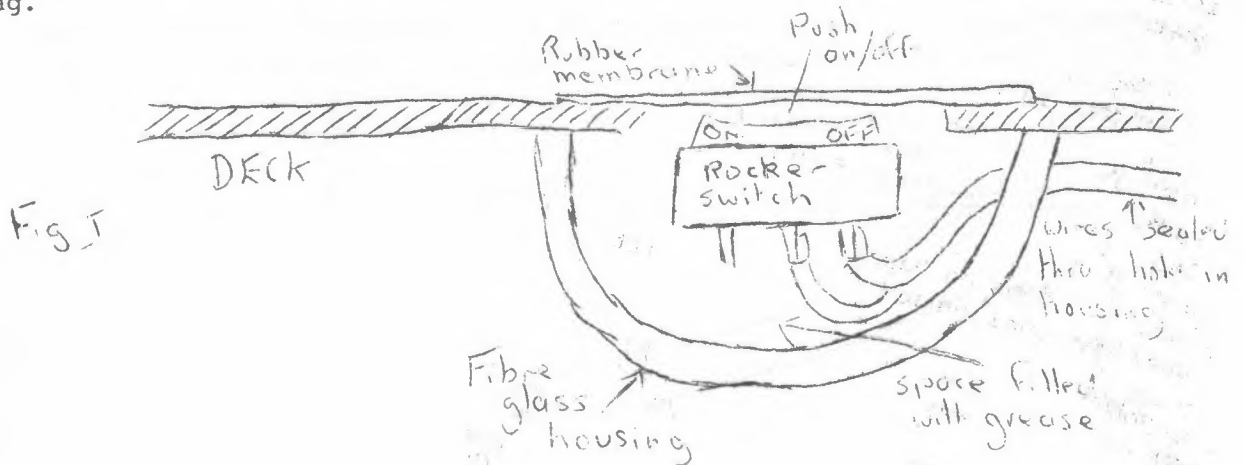
Charging Terminals

Solder the leads to the battery to spade terminals, that are a tight fit on the battery terminals.

Solder a short length (about 2 cm) of stiff (solid, unstranded) copper wire onto the spade that goes to the negative battery terminal. Push that terminal onto the battery, and smother all the metal with silicon rubber, except that the end 5 mm of the stiff wire is left exposed. When recharging, the negative terminal of the charger will be clipped onto this.

Solder the cathode of a 3 amp (or higher rating) diode to the spade that goes onto the positive terminal. Solder a 100 ko resistor in parallel with the diode. Push the spade onto the positive battery terminal. Smother the terminal, the spade, the diode and the resistor in silicon rubber, leaving only the end of the anode terminal of the diode exposed. The positive terminal of the diode will be attached to this.

The diode allows current to flow into the battery, but prevents current flowing out should the battery be immersed. The charger should be set to switch off at 15.0 volts rather than 14.4 to allow for the extra drop across the diode. The resistor is optional, it allows a very small current to flow out, sufficient to permit the use of a digital voltmeter to measure the battery condition. Don't use a conventional needle-on-a-scale voltmeter - it will give an erroneous reading.



Reed switch assembly approx to scale

SHETLAND SEA KAYAK MEET

2nd July 1993

Information Sheet

VENUE:- The island of Papa Stour, which lies off the west coast of the Shetland Mainland. The plan is to stay on Papa Stour from Friday 2nd July until Monday 5th July. For those who wish to extend their stay in Shetland (Probably the majority of visitors), the Clickimin Camp Site in Lerwick has toilet and shower facilities and is next door to a sports complex.

Lerwick is ideally situated for day trips to anywhere in Shetland. Alternatively, there are many islands on which it is possible to camp - wilderness style.

Members of the Shetland Canoe Club should be available to help with transport, etc. and to join in with day trips.

HOW TO GET THERE:- The P & O ferry 'St Clair' or 'St Sunniva' leaves Aberdeen on Thursday 1st July at 1800 hours, arriving at Lerwick at 0800 hours on Friday 2nd July. Myself and others will meet you off the ferry at Lerwick. We will then travel to Melby, Sandness and paddle across Papa Sound to Papa Stour. There are no shops on Papa Stour, so you may want to visit the town of Lerwick and purchase supplies prior to travelling to Melby.

For anyone travelling to Shetland without a car, there should be enough members of our club available to offer you a lift to Melby and back.

You would have to bring your own kayak.

ACCOMMODATION:- There is a choice of B & B with evening meal or camping. If camping, there is the option of self-catering or taking meals at the B & B. (These must be booked in advance). The house and campsite are located at Housa Voe. The sandy beach nearby is ideal for launching from.

Shower and toilet facilities are available for campers.

