

# NEWSLETTER

## OF THE ADVANCED SEA KAYAK CLUB



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

ADVANCED SEA KAYAK CLUB

NEWSLETTER NO.77

JANUARY 1990

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EDITORIAL

Here comes the Newsletter to kick off the New Year and to wish you all a good paddling - may all your epics be safe ones!!

This Newsletter carries a series of articles on group paddling which was first generated by Frank Goodman in an American newsletter.

At last I have got down to re-writing my book 'SEA TOURING' which has been out of print for some years. If you have any particularly interesting pictures on any aspect of sea kayaking then perhaps you would let me consider them for inclusion.

A quick look at the diary for 1990:-

- (1) CANOE EXHIBITION, London, 17th and 18th February 1990.
- (2) SEA KAYAKING EXPEDITION PLANNING, Isle of Wight, 26th, 27th, and 28th May 1990
- (3) ILE de RE, South of France, 2nd to 10th June 1990.
- (4) SEA KAYAKING EXPEDITION PLANNING, Kingsbridge, South Devon, 29th and 30th September 1990

BCU Sea Touring Committee news . . .

Martin Meling has stood down as Secretary, his place being taken by Nick Hodson, 57 Tredegar Square, Bow, London, E3 5AE. I intend standing down as Chairman next year after too many years and it is an earnest hope that Martin will stand for election in my place. Otherwise the Committee continues to monitor and protect the interests of sea paddlers in this country. As always the issues surround any access restrictions emanating from such bodies as the N.C.C., R.S.P.C. and military; safety (we work closely with H.M. Coastguards); standards (we contribute to deliberations by the National Coaching Committee) and events such as the Canoe Exhibition and Symposia. Your Region has a representative so do ask at your next Coaching Panel or Regional Meet.

A.S.K.C. renewals have come in thick and fast which is gratifying. If you have renewed then either ignore the enclosed renewal form (I am sending them out in every Newsletter) or pass it on to a friend.

With the next (March) Newsletter will come the A.S.K.C. membership list. Let me know if you do not wish to be included. This list is much used by members. Hopefully you too will make good use of it. I know of members who have used it to make contacts, particularly abroad, or who have used it to seek travelling companions or just to ask for information

So it remains only to wish you all a Happy New Year, indeed a Happy New Decade To those of you coming to the Canoe Exhibition, see you there

SAUNDERSFOOT TO LYDSTEP HAVEN - AN EVENTFUL CLUB TRIP  
by GLYN STICKLER

Five members of Croesyceiliog Canoe Club, set out on Sunday, 9th April 1989 from Coppetts Hall Beach, Saundersfoot to paddle to Lydstep Haven. This was the second short coastal trip this year, and Alan Baker, John Roberts and myself decided to take the opportunity to use our Sea Kayaks (John and Alan Nordkapps and I paddled an Umnak). Paul Roberts used his Tiger (not Sea Tiger) and Justin Bunn his plastic Mirage.

After the usual car shuttle our group launched at 11.30 a.m., half an hour behind schedule. High Tide was at 10.00 a.m. The wind was south/south east approximately Force 3 with moderate sea conditions. Good time was made with the following spring tide. Lunch was taken in Tenby Harbour.

We continued past The Burroughs and Giltar Point and followed the steep coastline along Caldy Sound.

Nearing Lydstep Haven the group halted for a short while. Alan and John were rafted together, beam onto the sea, approximately 100 yards from the cliffs with Justin nearby. Paul and I were closer inshore where the sea swell was higher, staying outside of the line of breakers and facing out to sea.

For no apparent reason an extraordinarily large wave peaked much further out and broke over John and Alan, apparently taking them unawares and capsizing them both. I immediately paddled hard towards them, but the force of the wave looped me backwards, my kayak colliding with Paul. I came up bracing onto the wave and over my shoulder caught sight of the cliffs rapidly approaching.

Caught in front of the roller and afraid of the weight of my kayak on top of me if I hit any rocks, I immediately exited holding onto my paddles. As the wave hit the cliffs and rebounded I lost my paddles and was helplessly thrown about in the turbulent water and broke surface only having received a blow on the stump of my right leg (I have an above knee amputation). I noticed my Umnak in a narrow slot between some large rocks and a shoulder of the cliff face and swam to it.

By chance Paul, hanging onto his canoe and paddle was washed into the same cliff gully. He looked worse for wear having had a nasty crack on the nose and forehead from my kayak. There was no sight of the others.

Waiting for a lull between sets we emptied the kayaks, Paul dragged his onto a rock shelf well above water level and I sat in mine hoping that with his paddles I could paddle out to find the others but my way was barred by a rock at the front of the slot which the waves now only just splashed over. Paul then spotted my paddles and in trying to retrieve them was knocked into the water again and had to withstand a buffeting from the next set of waves before being able to climb out.

I helped Paul as much as I could to drag my kayak onto the lower lying rocks and eventually onto the foremost rock, facing the open sea. It was decided that I should paddle out to find the others and summon help since Paul was reluctant to leave me behind alone.

Unfortunately the seal launch was mistimed and I dropped into the hole left by a receding wave, and capsized. My attempted roll was not good enough and I again had to take a swim. I hung onto the kayak as

another set arrived, but was soon parted from it in the very rough water. These were definitely my worst moments, but I finally got near enough for Paul to drag me out.

Recovering on the rock we saw items of spare clothing floating in the water; I assumed that my hatch had come off, but when my Umnak appeared there was about 2ft missing from the stern. My kayak took a continuous battering and last seen was in three pieces. The decision was taken to send off a parachute flare, this was done successfully (although we found out later it was not noticed). We considered our options - swimming was definitely out of the question, and yet we were reluctant to sit and wait where it was unsafe assuming help would come. Hence, we chose to climb and Paul went to reconnoitre the best route while I was left to ponder how the hell I'd got myself into this mess. On his return Paul fished out my wallet and a £10 note which had appeared floating on the surface close in.

The easiest route up was from the other side of the next cliff gully which necessitated a short swim, but the sea seemed to have subsided and this was no problem.

Paul chose a route up a relatively smooth sloping section of the cliff face and climbed up still clutching my Kobers. (Bless him.) He hesitated only once and continued on up reaching the top. I started up a much rougher climb with plenty of hand and foot holds and got as far as I could until a large outcrop stopped my progress, by which time Paul had come down to within 15/20 feet above my head. I carried a Green Slime throw rope and using this Paul took my weight and pulled me up a foot or so to the next reachable hand hold and I dragged myself up to him. The remainder of the climb was much easier and we finally reached the grassy cliff top.

As we made our way across the cliff top we saw the inshore lifeboat from Tenby and signalled to them. They replied and went on in the direction of Lydstep to find the other members of our group.

In the meantime, John and Alan had been having their own problems. After being knocked over by the wave John had managed to roll up but was knocked over by the next wave, both men had to swim and hung onto their kayaks as they were surfed towards the shore. Unfortunately, John's decklines parted and his Nordkapp was washed onto rocks where it was badly damaged - a 3ft. section of the stern was broken off. Alan hung onto his kayak as long as possible having to let go at the last moment in the dumping surf. Both men swam ashore onto a narrow beach which the low tide had uncovered and where their kayaks had been washed ashore.

Justin (the most inexperienced member), having been able to paddle over the initial large wave had managed to paddle ashore and was trying to rescue John and Alan's kayaks from further damage. Alan and John eventually joined him.

They were obviously very concerned as to what had happened to Paul and myself and a course of action was decided upon while sharing Alan's flask of hot chocolate. John paddled out in Justin's Mirage to investigate and caught sight of us sitting on the rock at the base of the cliff, but being unable to help us he returned to the beach to report.

Urgent repairs were made to the damaged Nordkapps - the stern sections of John's kayak was stuffed with B.D.H. containers and the two halves roped together with decklines cut from Justin's canoe. A large

hole in the bow of Alan's Nordkapp was plugged and taped. However, the repairs to John's Nordkapp did not hold together and after only a short distance in the water he had to return to shore and in the end his kayak had to be abandoned.

It was decided that Alan and Justin should paddle into Lydstep Haven to contact the Coastguard, which they did. Alan having to handle his Nordkapp with the low compartment full of water.

In the final event Paul and I were joined on the cliff top by members of the Coastguard. A Sea King helicopter from R.A.F. Brawdy airlifted John off the shore and then transported all three of us onto Lydstep Beach to join a very much relieved Alan and Justin.

We thanked the helicopter crew and gave an account to the Coastguard who were very understanding. We were very grateful to all the rescue services involved.

This incident, we believe, arose as a consequence of a sudden change in sea conditions occurring on or about the turn of the spring tide at low water. Had we, perhaps, been too relaxed at this particular moment knowing our destination was only half an hour's paddle away? No doubt our experiences will be the subject of much further discussion.

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From: D. R. Winning, 22 Brisbane Glen Road, Largs, Ayrshire KA30 8QX  
21 November 1989

Thanks for Newsletter 76, the usual good balance between trips, information, equipment ideas and ecology.

I particularly appreciated the article from Dick Faulder. The fact that canoeists at sea come under the maritime regulations like any other mariner and this carries certain responsibilities is not apparent to every practitioner in our branch of the sport.

However, I do disagree with one of Dick's beliefs and that is that kayaks are "Power Vessels". I have heard before the reasoning that a "Vessel under oars" must be considered a "Power Driven Vessel" as an oar is a lever and a lever constitutes a machine. This has an obvious logic but it is contrary to the spirit of the "Collision Rules".

Let me explain my logic. If we consider say, a modern diesel driven tug, whether a conventional screw driven deep sea vessel or a relatively recent cycloidal propeller, harbour water tractor it is obviously a vessel propelled by machinery.

Under the International Regulations for Preventing Collisions at Sea, depending on its current activity this tug could be a "Power-driven vessel underway" or a "Power-driven vessel towing" or a "Power-driven vessel pushing" or a "Vessel restricted in its ability to manoeuvre" or a "Vessel at anchor" or a "Vessel aground". There may be more, but note only in the first three cases of the examples given do the "Collision Rules" consider this obviously machinery driven tug to be a "Power-driven vessel".

In each of the above situations the tug has to display appropriate lights or shapes (daytime signals) to make its activity clear to other vessels. In other words it is not what the vessel is that is important but the vessel's ability to manoeuvre in compliance with the rules. When

that ability is impaired, through breakdown, the vessels activity or its location, the situation is indicated by the appropriate lights or shapes

Let us now apply the above principle to the kayak Rule 25 applies to "Sailing vessels underway and vessels under oars" I think we can safely assume that a vessel under oars is the rule definition which applies to kayaks This rule defines the lights to be shown between sunset and sunrise and at other times in restricted visibility.

Obviously a vessel under oars, during the hours of darkness, displaying the appropriate lights will be treated exactly the same as and must behave the same as, a sailing vessel as the observer cannot detect any difference, i.e., the lights are the same. It would, in my view, be ridiculous to suggest that the same vessel operating in the same way during the hours of daylight should be treated differently. That would only invite confusion!

Consider, for the moment, the following situation if a "vessel under oars" was to be considered a "power-driven vessel" during the hours of daylight. It is just after sunset and the vessel has displayed its lights under Rule 25. It is still twilight and the observer cannot see the lights all that well although he can still see the vessel clearly. Will he not be tempted to treat her as a power-driven vessel instead of a sailing vessel as she certainly should be after sunset? Far to confusing! A similar situation would exist in bad visability during daylight hours!

So, in my book a kayak is not a power-driven vessel within the spirit of the Collision Rules.

Having said all that, in practical terms, a kayak is a very small vessel, not easily seen especially with any size of sea running It is also transparent to radar All things considered, it is usually far better for the canoeist to adopt the attitude that "if it is bigger keep out of its way!"

I thought it would be a good idea to check out my opinions, so I 'phoned the local Coastguard Maritime Rescue Co-ordination Centre The Coastguard agreed with me but suggested that I talk to the Nautical College for a definitive answer.

Thus I spoke to a gentleman at the College who expressed interest but admitted he was not an expert on the Collision Rules. However, he said he would pass the enquiry on to someone more appropriate and I should expect a call back next day.

This did come to pass and I learned that the first gentleman I spoke to, who was not an expert, was a junior member of staff even though he was a fully qualified Master Mariner! It turned out that my enquiry had sparked off a lively debate among the senior, more expert, members of staff. One opinion was that a vessel under oars had the "ability to manoeuvre" and therefore should be treated as a power-driven vessel during daylight. Note, no reference to machinery only ability to manoeuvre! Another view was that a vessel under oars was much more susceptible to the weather conditions and could indeed be just holding its own and not be in a position to manoeuvre! Moreover, this may not be obvious from a comfortable heated wheelhouse on a large ship, well above the waves and out of the wind. However, we did all agree that the best course of action for a canoe was, as I have suggested, to keep out of the way of large vessels, i.e., "Might is Right" in this case.

My adviser was not quite so sure about the practical situation with vessels nearer the size of a kayak, e.g., yachts, motor boats, etc. I explained that I assumed a very small number of the people in charge of such vessels had even heard of the Collision Rules and it was best to give them a wide berth. We again found ourselves in agreement! He, and his colleagues had enjoyed debating the point raised and would be pleased to comment on any other nautical points which I felt I needed advice on.

Of passing interest, the cyclodial propeller referred to earlier is the type of mechanical propulsion closest to the paddle, that I have seen. It has a number of vertical blades which scribe a circular path in the water, as the blade moves in the direction of travel of the vessel it is feathered and when it is moving on the other side of the circular path it is square on and "pushing". By altering the control mechanism the thrust can be directed anywhere through 360° in the horizontal plane.

One final item. While gathering information recently a sea kayaker who owns a modern glassfibre kayak of a well known design, sleek and fast, told me that some time ago he had been on a day paddle with a paddler twenty years older than himself paddling a thirty year old canvas canoe, home designed and home built, complete with rudder. In a quartering sea my correspondence could not keep up with the older paddler! As a student of sea canoeing history that appeals to me!

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From: David Mason, 2350 St Elias Drive, Anchorage, AK 99517  
4th November 1989

Dear Fellow Sea Kayaker,

I am currently researching common sicknesses and infections sea kayakers encounter in their travels.

I would appreciate any information you would be willing to share with me on this topic. Please feel free to include experiences with sicknesses and/or infections that you have had - on any trip while sea-kayaking - and what you did to treat them.

I am trying to establish what the average kayaker might encounter from water borne-viruses, infection due to trauma. and from more specific rare infections: Hepatitis A, Hepatitis B, Hepatitis non-A, non-B, etc.

Please include what kind of infection you had, your symptoms, the time of year, the treatment, the area kayaking in, and what problems it caused you or your group. Did it necessitate ending the trip? Did it reoccur? Please add the length of your trip as well.

I am hoping to get a large response, as it seems not much information is available on this topic. I would be willing to share also the results of the research, if there is interest, and also letters that I receive from other paddlers.

Sincerely, David Mason

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GROUP DYNAMICS by FRANK GOODMAN, NOTTINGHAM

And Lo! in the land of the three countries called the United Kingdom there lived a Master Paddler, and he made great journeys by kayak on wide waters. In the fullness of time he grew greatly in strength and knowledge, and it came to pass that he must visit the land of the Gauls that lies beyond the waters of the English Channel that are known to the Gauls as La Manche. And he made a vow that he would cross the waters with his kayak and that he would share his secrets with those of his neophytes who wished to accompany him.

And for many hours he consulted with the oracles which are called TIDE TABLES and he made study of the ancient manuscripts of his forefathers which are known as ADMIRALTY CHARTS, until he had unlocked the secrets of the movement of the waters, and he saw that it was good.

Then he made a great shout, and it was announced throughout the land that a great voyage would be made, and that the Master Paddler would journey by kayak to the land of the Gauls, and that he would take with him those who wished to learn of the mysteries of the sea.

When the appointed day arrived, the Master Paddler came to the shore, and behold, there before him was a multitude, and they rose up and greeted him and cried, "Oh Master, we wish to follow you across the water to the land of the Gauls, and learn as you have learned of the mysteries of the seas."

But the Master spoke to the multitude, and said, "Verily, there are those amongst you who are not practised in the arts of paddling. The way is long and beset by dangers. I must speak with each person individually to discover if he has the power to make the journey." And he spoke to them, each in their turn, and he separated them, yes verily, even as the sheep are separated from the goats, and the lesser ones were sent back to the resting place of vehicles. And great was the lamentation and gnashing of teeth, because they were not fit to paddle with the Master.

The the selected ones fell on their knees and thanked the Master for his munificence in accepting them for the journey, and they made a great oath, saying they would obey him in all things and steer true to the far shore with him. And he raised them up, and they entered their kayaks and set forth to paddle on the waters, and great was the beat of paddles upon the waters, and great were the waves in the wakes as they moved from the shore.

But the lesser ones had been left behind on the shore, and they were distressed and talked amongst themselves. And they cried, "We have travelled a great distance to reach this launch point. Great is the expense to paddle La Manche, and buggered if we are going to return to our homes and families without visiting the land of the Gauls".

So they rose up also and girded themselves with spraydecks and PFDs, and took to the waters. But they could not catch up with the Master and the selected ones, as their arms were weak and their skills were poor.

After many hours the Master and his flock were upon the middle waters of La Manche, and he saw that it was good. But the selected ones were hungry, and they called on the Master to feed them. But the Master had only a small piece of bread and a tin of sardines. Then the selected ones cried out again that they had no food, yet they were hungry. But they lied, for each of them had food tucked into his kayak, and to protect their lie, they ate their own food and then cried, "A miracle, the Master



has provided for us all, even though he had but one tin of sardines." And to prove it they cast their scraps upon the water, and many were the gulls that swooped to enjoy the bounty of the selected ones.

And again they moved forward till they could see the cliffs that bounded the land of the Gauls, but the lactic acid in their muscles would not go away, and they became exceedingly tired. Then they did cry out against the Master, and they falsely accused him. They recalled how they had seen him consorting with the lesser ones, and thus they talked, "Maybe he is not our Master after all. Maybe we must follow our own noses instead of his." And they did split up and paddled to many and various places among the Gallic cliffs. And some came close to the place of Gris Nez (which is known also as the Grey Nose, so they foolishly thought that this was the nose they had to follow), and others came to the region of Wissant, so that the Master, when he came at last to the landing place of Calais, had but twelve of the selected ones with him

Then a great cloud fell upon them, and the cloud was called 'fear' and the lining was not of silver but of heaviest lead that is called 'depression'

So they hurried to the cliff-tops and scanned the waters, and lo! they saw kayaks approaching. But when the kayaks reached shore they saw that they were the kayaks of the lesser ones, and many of the selected ones were indeed missing. And then the Master's knees did shake and he was cast down.

Then messengers were sent forth to all parts of the land, yes, even to that most dismal part of Gaul that is known as Boulogne and behold, all the selected ones were found. And so the Master gave a great shout of joy and cried thus: "Behold the selected ones were lost and they are found. Let us therefore kill the fatted calf and have a rave-up." And they feasted mightily, and great was the rejoicing, and even the lesser ones were allowed to join in.

But in the dark places of the Master's heart there was a still small voice that said "Silly bastards, they might have drowned". And then he said, "Nay, it is thou who are the silliest bastard of them all, for it was thyself that took them to the places where thou did's't not have control over them. Thou art indeed fortunate that a pestilence did not descend upon them, and only navigation errors blighted their passage."

And thus out of suffering came forth awareness, and out of ignorance came forth wisdom. And it was good.

Then, after the feasting, they conspired to tell it not in Gaul, nor publish it in the streets of the United Kingdom, lest the white-water canoeists should laugh and the people of the Coastguard condemn. But instead they told white lies and invented stories of great deeds that would inspire others to make great journeys and that would make good copy for the canoeing magazines. And it was so yet the greatest stories of all were told, not by the selected ones, nor yet even by the lesser ones, but by a timid journalist who, eschewed a kayak completely, crossed to the Gallic shore by hovercraft and ate and drank with the kayakers without ever opening his purse to buy a round.

And thus it must be remembered that all that thou readest in the canoe magazine is not gospel, but as often as not it is known to be codswallop.

This cautionary tale came from a time when sea-kayaking in Britain was young! But there is little doubt that similar scenarios are commonplace.

There are two important lessons to be learnt:

(1) The over-confident leader, however skilful his own paddling, is usually the most dangerous member of the group.

(2) The real leader of the pack is the weakest paddler.

If you are in a group, maybe the most important item on your agenda should be to assess how over-confident the leader is, how weak the weakest paddler is, and how these relate to the difficulty of the trip.

NOT EASY!!

I remember some years ago when a well qualified leader's behaviour gave rise to grave concern, nothing specific, just a feeling. "One day that guy will drown somebody," we muttered amongst ourselves. Sadley, some years later, he did

Any leader who says, "Don't worry, just follow me, I'll keep you safe," is as suspect as is the newcomer who says, "Can I have a look at your car?"

One very real problem is that paddlers have often travelled many miles to reach the launch point for a trip, and even if they don't feel too happy about the general set-up, they will be reluctant to take a firm stand and say, "I'm not going" and thereby screw up a whole weekend.

A second problem is the rapid change of the elements. Kayaking is a very safe sport - until conditions deteriorate to a point where paddling skills are inadequate.

Thirdly, people's personalities may change dramatically when they are under stress. There are dozens of examples of strange behaviour caused by stress in every kayaker's fund of stories, and there are hundreds more that are never told because they are too embarrassing.

A final, and almost intractable problem is that we literally paddle our own canoe (kayak) and there is little real protection that paddlers can give each other. Even in a group, you are relying on your own resources, and your companions can only help you AFTER an accident has occurred or a dangerous situation has arisen

It is not difficult to make a list of all the things that need to be attended to before embarking on a sea trip. In any case every book and magazine on the subject has endless advice to give. Where did the authors of these chapters get their information? From other books or from experience?

Learning yourself, from contact with the elements must surely be the most exciting and satisfying way to learn. This is how the pioneers of the sport did it, and it beats instruction every time. But when you're a beginner you need some help to make sure your experience isn't so intense that it ends in a fatality! Maybe just a friend of similar kayaking experience will be sufficient to help you learn safely. Two heads are better than one, and personal experience slowly gained over a period of years is stored in the mind more soundly than secondhand experience gleaned from clinics or books, however well presented.

Back to the group! As with most things, sound judgment is the answer to safe kayaking and sound judgment depends on knowledge. This doesn't mean rote learning of the rule book and then slavish adherence to

it. Remember that the rule book is a set of guidelines that covers only general situations and most eventualities. But accidents have a nasty habit of revealing unique situations. There are numerous examples of lives being saved because the rule book was ignored. Before anyone reaches for his pen, I am not saying that rules should not be learnt or that they should be ignored. I'm saying, **know the rules**, remember they are generalisations drawn up by fallible people and then use your judgment to make sure they apply to your unique situation.

Now let's look at some common situations where you are a member of a group.

If you are a novice, by definition you will have limited knowledge of equipment and sea conditions and low paddling skills. Even if you join an outfitter's trip with a paid instructor you will have few touch-stones of experience that will enable you to determine the qualities of the leader. Sadly there is no way of knowing until you're in trouble!

But why shouldn't experience and your own group of novice friends be your best instructor? There is a strange belief among certain expert sea kayakers that all novice paddlers are somehow basically stupid. Of course this is nonsense, and it would seem very reasonable for novice groups to develop their skills quickly and pleasurably. After all, the basic safety rules of sea kayaking are hardly a taxing intellectual challenge. Forget about the arm-length lists of safety equipment that you're supposed to need. Just remember that your own physical condition and mental state are the biggest safety assets you have. Plan easy trips for a start, shorten it by a half just to be on the safe side, and you'll be all right.

If you are joining a novice group who are not known to you, don't be afraid to state your case openly. Talk about where you want to go. Tell your acquaintances that you've only paddled three miles in your life before. Admit you know little about weather conditions. When you've had a pleasant discussion - learning a bit here and a bit there, and maybe clarifying a few doubts for others - you will be ready to make a decision on where to go and how far. Choose a trip that has a suitable stopping place about half the distance you intend to go, so that unfit people can get off the water easily. With modern weather bulletins, good maps and a bit of commonsense you'll come to no harm. But do tell someone on shore your plans and estimated time of return, and when you get back don't forget to let them know you've made it!

O.K. so you didn't take enough woollies and you were very cold when the sun went in.

You hadn't a very good paddle brace so you dumped in the small surf on the beach . . . .

You forgot to put your sandwiches in a waterproof bag and they were uneatable . . . . .

Hard luck! But you're learning - fast!

Not only that, you're making friends, you're a real member of the group, and moreover you're sharing a worthwhile experience. And if you're the only one with edible sandwiches you will be really popular too! All you need is a bit of commonsense and you will become an experienced paddler without too much discomfort.

With intermediate groups things are a little more tricky. At

worst there will probably be people there whose main aim in life is to conceal the fact that they are inadequate! They will be consummate liars and skilled in making a little knowledge sound encyclopaedic. If there isn't a recognised leader, who are you to vote yourself into the position? You'll bring out the worst in the others if you do! Yet you may well feel uneasy about the trip.

I've been in one or two situations where I felt I needed to discover the strength of a group without giving offence. The way I've done it is to discover that I've forgotten an item of equipment. "Curses! I've left my tow-line back in the garage. Has anyone got two? Could I borrow one?" It soon becomes apparent what equipment is being carried by the group. Another way is to say, "I'm not sure where we're going to land. Would someone show me on the chart?" Before long some idea of the experience of the group is made clear. Of course I do genuinely forget things (too often for my liking) but I do try to make up for it by carrying extra items so I can lend a P.F.D. when someone has just gone white on remembering that his is still on the kitchen table!

It is rare that you will have to cry off a trip altogether, but if you are in any way worried make a mental note that you will keep an eye out for the least able. Maybe only a few words as you paddle along will give a paddler the confidence he needs to keep up his strength.

In fact it's a good idea to play a little game with yourself. Just pretend you're leader of the trip. Don't tell anyone. Imagine that you have the ultimate responsibility for the group and let it be your secret! You'll be keeping an eye on stragglers, watching for signs of fatigue and noting the changing conditions much more closely than when you're just an ordinary member of the group. When the trip is over you can give up your leadership gracefully, and no one will ever know that you guided the group through the raging elements and saved a damsel in distress as well! If the strain of leadership is too difficult for you to sustain throughout the trip, pretend to be the leader for just an hour! The trip will be the safer for it.

It would be nice to think that experts in sea kayaking have learnt something more than their paddling skills, and that their knowledge of the wind and the waves has helped them to become mature personalities! Sad to tell, this is not so! Many an expert is just fine at showing less expert paddlers how to develop their skills, but put him with other kayakers of quality and he may well feel threatened to a point where his whole personality crumbles.

I remember one occasion when I was invited as a somewhat inexperienced paddler to join a group of "experts" in Scotland. Luckily I was so low in the pecking order that I was ignored, but the others fought and intrigued for ten days until I was heartily sick of the lot of them. The trip finished with one expert paddling all day at a constant distance of half a mile from the rest of the group. I never did discover the reason.

Human nature is always with us. Some people will tell you that they paddle on the sea for exercise, or to see wild life, to take photographs or to get to remote camp sites. Few will tell you that they paddle to show-off, to gain power over others or to prove to themselves they're not the wimps they really feel.

I don't think I paddle for any of these reasons. I paddle to feel the spray on my face, to feel the hull of my kayak responding to the surge beneath it. I want to get close to those primeval forces of wind

and water that can manifest themselves in a beautiful calm dawn as well as in turbulent surf. I like to be with a group because all these experiences can be lived over again in the telling round the camp fire.

Very often the flood of adrenalin as you brace through a set of breaking waves when wind blows against tide is the highlight of the day's paddle. Overpowering the elements, maybe for just a few minutes, can weld a group together. Sadly, prolonged stress, or just too much of it, can have the opposite effect.

Very often, in fact, really dangerous situations will bring out the worst, not the best, in people and when rational behaviour disappears the dangers are compounded. An experienced paddler will seldom feel frightened by the elements because he has savoured difficult conditions before and has overcome them. Maybe the waves are only a couple of feet high but this may be quite terrifying for a novice paddler. It is the perceived danger, not the actual danger that is important, and unless this is understood by the group it may leave the weaker members very vulnerable. Remember that apart from the 'flight' and 'fight' response there is the 'freeze' which can be very dangerous indeed. There are several instances of people just stopping paddling, often miles from shore and saying - "I can't go on." It is seldom fatigue that is the cause: usually it is fear. Nine times out of ten quiet companionship could have saved the situation.

Sometimes there are very serious problems that cannot be side-stepped. I remember standing on a beach, an off-shore wind gusting Force 11, no waves nearby but with the horizon obscured by off-shore spray lifting from the surface, sea and air temperature just above freezing.

A young paddler was sitting in his boat ready to launch, because one of the so-called leaders of the party had told him, in spite of my remonstrations, that it was safe to paddle. I knew that he was going to certain death, and that in all probability the group would be wiped out if it tried to rescue him in those conditions.

I remember the dreadful sinking feeling in my stomach as I raised my paddle over my head and threatened to knock him unconscious if he tried to get on the water. He didn't launch! But the situation was terrible. The leader's loss of face was total, and it meant the ruination of the trip. However this was a small price to pay for a life saved. Luckily it seldom gets to this stage, but it is well to remember that people's motives and life-scripts seldom change when they go paddling.

If all this sounds somewhat serious, remember that we need to be careful of the occasional difficult situation... the happy times look after themselves. Sea kayaking is a risk sport, and a group can magnify or diminish that risk by its own dynamics. Sea kayaking offers us a special kind of freedom, yet we are told that the price of freedom is eternal vigilance. This may be coming on a little strong, but it pays to keep a wary eye out for the rogue elephant masquerading as a cuddly seal!

We need to keep a careful perspective between safety and risk. There are almost no serious accidents in sea kayaking that are the result of one mistake or one danger. Rather they occur when quite small errors or difficulties are in juxtaposition. It is necessary to learn to spot these small aberrations and deal with them, just in case they are the first in a series that are tilting fate against us. They may be unimportant, but you cannot tell, so try to deal with all of them - an almost impossible task of course, but as Eeyore said, "Funny things accidents...."

With a little practice it is possible to let our sub-conscious take over this trouble-shooting function and we can then relax and enjoy ourselves. When there are danger signals, our sixth-sense will pick them up and bring them to our awareness. Once the conscious mind is alerted, it's possible to do something about it before any harm is done.

The challenge from wind and waves is often matched by the challenge from within ourselves and from within the group. The piquancy of all this helps to make sea paddling the dynamic sport it is. It's worth some effort to make it first-rate, and really it's not too difficult, because we know that generally speaking, sea kayakers are on the side of good!

### GROUP PADDLING

by Stan Chladek, Bloomfield Hills, MI

Most sea kayakers paddle in groups. There are of course, paddlers who paddle solo, either because of necessity or because they simply prefer to be alone in their pursuits. Common sense would dictate that a solo paddler should be an experienced kayaker, able to judge conditions correctly, capable of making reasonable decisions, and able to take care of himself. While the idea of paddling alone is very appealing to many people, it seems to be more risky than paddling in groups.

However, the last statement may not be necessarily true all the time. If for instance the paddling conditions are close to the upper limits for the group the members of the group may have to act more or less as the individuals. Under extreme conditions it is difficult to keep contact with your fellow kayakers. If a mishap occurs and somebody flips even while being in visual contact with other paddlers, rough conditions may make a group rescue a real problem, perhaps even impossible.

During one of our more adventurous trips we were able to perform a three boat rescue in large irregular waves, strong wind and bitter cold, but this was perhaps close to the limit for group rescues. Under more difficult conditions with stronger winds (we were lucky that the rather slow rescue was performed during a temporary lull in the gale) our operation might not have been successful at all, and we could have been blown onto the cliffs.

I remain convinced that on difficult seas the only practical alternative for rescue is an Eskimo roll. It is quick and almost effortless: thus the victim does not expend a considerable amount of energy swimming around, climbing into a boat, pumping, etc. Also, most of the time the rolling on the sea is much easier than rolling on the river. Obviously, the proper execution of Eskimo roll depends in large measure on the type of kayak being used, but that is another matter. Not all sea kayaks are designed to roll easily, even though I believe they should. If a sea kayak is not designed for Eskimo rolling, I would simply never use this boat for any serious kayaking.

One of the most important aspects of group paddling is staying together. As I see it, the most frequent reason for group separation is the partners' incompatibility. Problems often arise in large ad-hoc groups which are formed on the beach from people who barely know each other. In bad weather it is very easy to lose track of each other and this is an invitation for disaster. Thus, I consider it necessary to know my partners before we go on the extended trips, and to know them well.

This of course, somehow limits availability of partners and the size of the group (as it should) and perhaps contributes to the formation of rather close, "elitist" groups. Compatibility of paddling philosophies, styles and boats is important too - it is difficult to form a group composed from Kleppers and Nordkapps! It is conceivable that beginners like to paddle with more experienced paddlers, because they want to learn or because they feel "safer". This is fine, as long as the experienced paddlers:

(i) are willing to adjust their speed to the slowest member of the group, and

(ii) limit their paddling to the conditions which a weakest member of group can safely negotiate.

(iii) Constantly watch for the weaker members of the group.

Unfortunately, it often does not work this way, because people tend to go in their own ways even without realising it. It is an illusion that a beginner is safer with a group of experts, particularly, if conditions deteriorate. Perhaps experts can rescue him better but he should not have been in this situation in the first place! Experienced paddlers cannot pull a beginner through a bad situation in a storm and cannot help him to stay upright! On the river it is different. Kayakers can scout from land and experienced paddlers can show the way to negotiate certain rapids, how to sneak or portage

Problems may arise during long open water crossing in bad weather even for experienced groups. Of course, one may question the sanity of crossing under difficult conditions, but here judgment may be rather complex, with various factors involved such as changing weather, time pressure, etc

I recall one recent example when our group of three accomplished the 14 mile crossing of the stormy strait from Michipicoten Island to the North Shore of Lake Superior. We had been paddling into 25-30 miles/hour winds, and large breaking waves which had built up during the second half of crossing. Under these conditions it was difficult to stay together and we had constant problems seeing each other between huge waves, even though we tried really hard to adjust our individual speed. Paddler compatibility was most important. It would have been very difficult to wait for a slower paddler, drifting back, or being blown-off and perhaps never gaining the mainland shore. It seems to me that in situations like this (perhaps not too frequent), the group has to accomplish the crossing as fast as possible, perhaps without any breaks, and obviously stay together as much as possible. If waves prevent a constant visual contact, there is no choice but to stick to the proper compass reading and aim for the predetermined point and hope for the best. Don't forget to look around from the top of waves. You may see your buddy again! Before the crossing is initiated, make an emergency plan and be prepared to establish a radio contact with the rest of the group if necessary. Needless to say, good physical shape and paddling skills and training are just about everything. Exhaustion, towing, rescues, etc., are probably prescriptions for disaster. Never trust that outside help will arrive in time. This would be sheer luck and one should never count on it.

Thus we have to think really hard about with whom we will paddle and under what conditions. Perhaps the key to paddler's compatibility is group training. Groups which often paddle together and kayakers who know each other well are likely to be the most competent. On one of our most recent trips our group of four, who often paddle together, had no problem

staying together for two full days of stormy weather, with poor visibility, paddling over large waves and in strong gale winds. And it was so much fun that we even surfed on a shoal in the middle of Lake Superior with fully loaded kayaks and it never occurred to us that we were exposed to any risk. In fact we were not!

Train often together and go on frequent trips; know each other and you will see - it works! Good luck in paddling!

#### GROUP PADDLING by JOHN RAMWELL

I enjoyed Frank Goodman's Group Dynamics article in the August issue of ANorAK. There has not been that much written on this subject and perhaps I can help redress this by producing a few words of my own.

The British Canoe Union Coaching Scheme has always put much emphasis on the safe control of groups on the water by the instructor or leader and we have a safety record in canoeing in this country that is the result. My interest lies in the leadership and responsibilities involved in sea kayaking trips and over the years I have had several experiences of my own. Perhaps by relating some of these I might highlight some of the issues.

For example, one expedition, maybe the one that Frank Goodman was alluding to in his article, was across the English Channel from Dover to France. I had agreed to lead a small group of paddlers from my area and we placed this event on our calendar. The BCU published our calendar nation-wide and I was inundated with applications to join us from around the country. We are talking of the late 1960's when crossing the English Channel was seen as a big deal. As we drove to Dover my two paddling friends and fellow leaders kept pressing me as to how many we should expect on this crossing. As I wasn't sure I was somewhat evasive and muttered under my breath. In the event 32 paddlers turned up!! Immediately there were murmurings of discontent, especially from my co-leaders. Here were over 30 paddlers, most totally unknown to us, all dressed up in wet suits (popular in those days), life jackets and crash hats.

My confidence really plummeted when the Coastguard vessel hove to as we paddled out of the harbour and demanded to know who was in charge of this armada. Visibility was poor, I remember. "This is the busiest shipping lane in the world" yelled the Coastguard. "Suggest you return to shore and think again." All eyes fixed on me. I decided to brash my way out. "No law against it; we all know what we're doing (lies, lies) and we're going for it." So we went. The crossing was not without incident. Almost being run down by passing Hovercraft; rough seas off the French coast. This is not the place to go into detail; I wish to refer only to the leadership aspect.

Clearly I had put myself and my two friends into an invidious position. We had made ourselves responsible for leading this large, relatively in-experienced and largely unknown group across the Channel. We got away with it; the seas and the weather were on our side and all except one (he had to be towed the last five miles) managed to complete the crossing. What if things had gone wrong? I would have had a lot of explaining to do, particularly as the Coastguard had tried to prevent the trip.

Though I realised we were lucky on this occasion, I was forced to seriously consider the implications. What would I say to the coroner, to



next of kin, to the Coastguards if there had been a major incident? I thought of the legal and the moral implications of being in charge of a group of this size in what is a relatively advance trip. It is one heck of a responsibility and one that I know most of us take very seriously

BUT there is a problem with taking this responsibility too seriously; you just would not take it on. This is what happened in the sphere of education. Over the past several years there have been quite a few major incidents whilst teachers were leading groups of school children. There was loss of life involved in most cases and criticism was heaped on the teachers in the ensuing enquiry. Only recently has there been some encouragement to persuade teachers to take groups away on adventure training.

On considering the problem after the English Channel crossing I concluded that so long as I felt sure I had covered all reasonable angles and taken all reasonable precautions, I would not be deterred from coaching or leading groups on the water. I always enjoyed paddling, particularly with other paddlers and I would continue to do so in whatever capacity. I was mindful of those who had taken me on my first sea expeditions; without their readiness to take on responsibility I would not have found opportunities so easily.

I have gone on to lead several advanced expeditions, around the world, in many different circumstances and though I am aware of the noose I am putting around my neck, each time I set forth I think, "What the hell, so long as I've taken all proper steps." Here really lies the key, the awareness of the situation and the taking of "proper steps" For example (and this might sound blase) I always insist that if anyone on my group wants to drown, they do so whilst wearing their buoyancy jacket. In other words, I must be able to show that, should an incident occur, all precautions had been taken and this incident was a genuine accident.

This awareness does not come easily. It is basic knowledge, plus experience, plus the development of a sixth sense. At the risk of sounding clever it is this sixth sense that is all-important. Suddenly you feel the wind change, the maps show no easy egress ahead, the surf is beginning to dump on the beaches, one of your group is feeling exhausted. A scenario is rapidly developing that could rapidly get out of control. A constant eye on the fitness and ability of your group, the need to be aware of contingencies and a "weather eye" on prevailing conditions.

In the incidents I have been involved with over the years I have been able to look back over each one and identify a point in time as the one of "no return". If (the biggest word in the dictionary) we had done this and not that the incident would never have occurred. Now I try and recognise those points of no return as they loom up. In so doing it is possible to become hyper-cautious and to remove any adventure element from your sea kayaking trips, thus people may find your expeditions rather devoid of exhilaration.

Last September I ran a coaching week in Holland, as I have done for many years. Last September was particularly windy and we were rather restricted in what we could do. On the final day I agreed to take a small group of more able paddlers who were suffering from frustration on a "serious paddle". It was madness. Fortunately four of the twelve never made it through the surf and the remaining eight of us did manage to paddle 15 kilometres to an out-lying island. We had an horrendous trip. I was picked up several times and hurtled 20 or 30 metres by breaking surf waves. My rolling "in anger" has never been good but it was taxed to the limit on this occasion. What of group leadership and responsibilities on a trip

like this? No one took a swim, but had they done so, effecting a rescue was something I was not at all happy to contemplate.

Whilst reminiscing I recall taking a large group to paddle the Farne Islands off the northeast coast of England. The conditions were too rough to launch and I decided we would adjourn to the nearest Public House. A couple of paddlers decided to go despite my warnings and I was too hot-headed to let them go without me so three of us paddled right around the Farnes. I can still remember every detail of this trip. It was wild and the decision to go was distinctly crazy but we survived and I look back on it as an experience I would not want to have missed. Again responsibility for each other was not put to the test. Here I am particularly referring to a moral responsibility. Once you agree to paddle with someone I believe there is an overriding responsibility to look after each other (which is why I always try and paddle with big strong paddlers!!)

In summary I am agreeing that once you are on the water with a group where you are clearly in charge or whether with a peer group just enjoying a paddle you take on a responsibility to some extent or another. I am saying that, given that all proper steps have been taken, there is no point in letting this responsibility become a burden. Enjoy the water, the wind, the companionship of others but make sure you do it right.

#### RADIO - THE VITAL LINK

Taken from H.M. Coastguard Magazine of October 1989

"If I bought a boat tomorrow, the first thing I'd get for it would be a radio," says Ken Arden, "and the second would be a liferaft.

"It's no good sitting on a nice new raft if no-one knows where you are."

Ken, Assistant Staff Officer Communications at the Technical Support Unit at Highcliffe, considers a radio essential equipment.

"You should include a radio in the initial cost of a boat," he insists.

Because it is an expensive piece of equipment added to an already costly craft, many people put off purchasing a radio, and that hesitation could mean the difference between life and death.

"Your flares could go unseen, either because there's a fog or because no-one happens to be looking in your direction. But you can guarantee that Coastguards will be listening on Channel 16 24 hours a day, whatever the weather, however crowded or empty the waters.

"A radio will also give you access to vital information such as weather reports."

The Coastguard VHF radio system is based on 109 remote radio stations round the coast, which in theory provide complete coverage of inshore waters out to 30 miles. In practice the range may be greater if the transmitting vessel has a tall aerial. There are a few places on the convoluted west coast of Scotland where, because VHF signals rely on "line of sight" transmission, reception is limited.

A system of British Telecom landlines, the rental of which costs

about half a million pounds, links VHF stations and Coastguard MRCC and MRSC base radio sets.

### The Sets

The base sets are of two types - fixed frequency sets, which receive and transmit channels 16 and 0 only and are heavily filtered to give extra clarity of reception, and switchable sets, which can receive and transmit on channels 0, 6, 10, 16, 67 and 73.

Coastguards have three different types of transportable radios. The first, fitted in its land vehicles, is a crystallised 25 watt transmitter. New vehicles are being fitted with state-of-the-art synthesized transceivers.

The older, crystallised sets are fitted with a crystal for each operating frequency. Newer synthesized sets tune the frequencies electronically, making them more versatile

Scanning sets will continually scan across the operating frequencies, from channel to channel, and lock onto any incoming signal, releasing it again when the transmission finishes. They can be programmed by the operator to transmit and receive specific channels or groups of channels

The new 25 watt synthesized radios just fitted on Coastguard boats cover the complete marine band. They've got to operate under extreme conditions, so are designed to be waterproof to one metre, have a separate loudspeaker and are connected to headsets and boom microphones.

The other radio type is the hand portable. Older one watt hand portables are being phased out in favour of more powerful sets with four watts output. They are supplied with waterproof bags and tune to the six standard Coastguard channels.

Ken considers that almost all radios currently on the market, most of them synthesized and costing a few hundred pounds, will answer to the needs of the amateur sailor.

"Dual-watch, where the radio scans between channel 16 and the channel in use, giving priority to channel 16 should a message come through, is almost a standard feature on sets these days."

### Airways discipline

"I think that the ability to switch from 25 watts to one watt output for short range talking boat to boat is important, because it leaves space on that channel for other, perhaps more urgent, long-range messages."

Many people forget that to use a VHF transmitter a boat needs two licences, one licensing the vessel to be fitted with a radio and another for the operator

There are many operators around who do not have licences, which means that they will not have been through a training and testing stage. The ease with which a radio may be bought off the chandlers' shelf may be one of the reasons why there is sometimes a lack of discipline on the airways these days

"People will natter away for hours on channel 6, for instance, effectively blocking it for other users," says Ken. There's also the temptation to use the radio as a toy, with the proud owner being desperate to talk to someone . . . anyone. This is especially unfortunate when

channel 16 is cluttered up with empty chatter.

"Radios aren't like telephones. You should only make a call if you've a very good reason."

Every radio user, mindful of the fact that to be a good radio operator requires skills that have to be learned, should make sure first that there is no-one else transmitting on the channel, should know how to make a call, know the right thing to say and when to say it.

Ken thinks that taking a hand portable to sea, assuming it to be a cheaper alternative to a mobile set, is a false economy.

Their limited output, four or five watts at the most, cuts down their range considerably, they cannot be recharged at sea, and some are not very water resistant

Some people are worried about security, but most mobile sets are now removable and can be kept ashore

#### Life-saving tips

"You should have a spare aerial if you're on a sailing vessel. If, as often happens, your mast breaks, then your aerial probably ends up under the water, and an inexpensive stand-by aerial could be vitally important

"Don't forget, either, that while you're using your radio, even on stand-by, you are depleting your battery, which will need regular re-charging."

While talking of radios, Ken mentions EPIRBs, devices which transmit messages should a vessel founder.

"They're not necessary if you're just pottering along the coast, but if you are sailing across the North Sea they should be seriously considered."

Floating free from the vessel in trouble, EPIRBs transmit a signal which contains information which can include the identification of the craft, its position and the nature of the emergency.

This signal is picked up by a satellite and transmitted to various ground stations. They can give positions accurate to within three miles.

ELTs, which broadcast a beacon signal on aircraft frequencies, enabling them to home in on stricken craft, are more limited as they merely transmit a bleep.

Both are expensive, but probably worthwhile if you are considering long distance passage-making

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#### Early Navigation by Rob Webb, I.O.W.C.C.

The art of navigation in days of yore is a vast and sometimes so controversial subject. Many have sought answers to the clues left behind in ancient scriptures, artefacts and hearsay as navigation transgressed from calculated guesswork based on careful observation, good memory and luck to a precise art based on mathematics and science.

It is true that the likes of Vasco de Gama, Columbus, Cabot, Vespucci, Magellan and Cook did much in the advance of modern navigation, but what legacies did earlier masters of the sea leave us, and why.

Well humans being human are naturally inquisitive and adventurous and ventured further afield in their curiosity, search for food, a better life, and later trade.

Upon their return home, their escapades and findings were passed on verbally. I draw attention to the 'House of Sacred Learning' in Polynesia where tribal elders cross examined these adventurers and details of the voyage were incorporated in the sacred traditions. Thereon this information was 'recorded' on charts constructed from palm twigs and cowrie shells, where long straight twigs represented courses to and from islands depicted by cowrie shells. Shorter twigs were arranged so as to indicate current and wave directions predominant in the area.

This information together with their highly tuned senses such as sight, smell and hearing took them back to odd haunts.

In the Hawaiiin chain an item known as the 'Sacred Calabash' was found. This being a gourd or upturned cup with holes drilled halfway from rim to bottom. A large hole above these was bored and a notch in the rim opposite was also cut. It was thought that when filled with water to the holes the pole star sighted between notch and the larger hole indicated the latitude of Hawaii. Unfortunately this Calabash is not found elsewhere in Polynesia and it has been suggested by adamant sources that those items were in fact to hold the Chief's Feathers

However looking at other early masters of navigation the Arabs and Vikings we see that in the case of the Arabs they used an item called the 'Al Kemal Plate' (translated to 'consummation' or guiding line)

This was a parallelogram of horn with a length of string from the centre. Along this string knots were tied, the knot was held on the tip of the nose and the plate lined up with the horizon, when the pole star was in line with the opposite edge a particular place of interest latitude was reached.

As for the Vikings, they used a shadow disc, a round wooden disc with a stick through the centre. When floated in water contained in a cask the sun cast a shadow at noon (Suns Meridinal Passage) again as a guide to latitude. The stick came in varying lengths according to season.

These principles are used today with the sextant in determining noon latitudes and latitude by Polaris to but touch on the subject.

These methods thus appear to give credence to the Polynesians Calabash, well it is not unknown for the simple matelot to extend an open hand and determine a heavenly body's attitude by assuming a finger spacing of fifteen degrees.

As for the Eskimos, well their senses are uncanny and observing their surroundings assisted them in their navigation. A report of long-standing originated when the Master of a Danish vessel investigating magnetism off Greenland invited two Inuits to accompany him.

Alas the wind rose and the fog came down and he was unable to return them. They insisted that they should be allowed to leave as if their wives should think them dead they would remarry. So the Master with heavy heart agreed to drop them (in kayaks) into the water. This he did and watched them paddle off into the murk.

Next season the Master returned to find them welcoming him from the beach. On being asked how they managed to reach land they couldn't explain - "It was just so".

A sign to us all venturing forth on the oggin, to trust one's instinct.

From: Graham Arthur, "Rose Cottage", 54 Town Street, Guiseley, Leeds  
LS20 9DT Tel. Guiseley (0943) 77397 October 11 1989

### A Lesser-known Hazard of Sea Kayaking?

Earlier this year Steve Watt was out paddling his new home made Sea King about half a mile off Stonehaven. He was accompanied by several members of the local canoe club and the purpose of the outing was mainly to practise rescue techniques. The conditions were a moderate wind with two to three foot waves.

I first saw Steve in this boat at the New Year. We went for a trip along the same bit of rocky coast on one of those fine January days which, at the time, seemed as if they were going to be the "summer of '89". He had not been in a kayak for about 20 years, concentrating instead on mountaineering, rock climbing, work and family raising - so he must have been pretty good before. With new enthusiasm, he became a regular paddler.

Before starting the rescue practice in earnest, he decided to do a roll or two. He had done many rolls before, and was equally proficient on both sides. We are talking about the screw roll here, nothing fancy involving contortions and peculiar wind up positions.

On his first attempt, his shoulder dislocated. This sounds terrifying to me sitting here, but, although it was awkward, he says that he was able to exit from the cockpit without undue difficulty. If he had not been so able, one can envisage the problems of communication with his companions: banging the hull with one hand only, paddle floating away, Eskimo or side rescue presented but unable to be used ....

Re-insertion of the casualty into his boat was not easy, I hear, and it was useful to have at least two rescuers for the tow back to shore. Under a general anaesthetic, the offending joint was popped back into place, and now, months later, is almost back to normal. This was the first time in his life he had ever experienced a dislocation, which came without any warning, and happened to an active sportsman who is also a physician specialising in environmental medicine.

Steve's comment: "It certainly made me think twice about solo paddling".

A week later, two keen members of the Stonehaven Canoe Club were observed to spend the whole evening practising deep water rescues of a one-armed patient.

I have checked out some references:

"Eskimo Rolling for Survival" by DCH - No mention of the problem.

"Sea Canoeing" by DCH - Dislocated shoulder mentioned only as a problem he has encountered, p 47.

"A Practical Guide to Sea Canoeing" by H. Jeffs - Again under First Aid, p.36, ... "usually caused by a snatching of the paddle above the head, e.g., high brace. It is a common complaint with some people and they usually know how to put the shoulder back! If it is the first time then it can be very painful.

"BCU Canoeing Handbook" - The High Brace, p.135: "Care should be exercised as dislocations are not infrequent, because of the weak position of the shoulder joint".