

# NEWSLETTER

of the



## INTERNATIONAL SEA KAYAKING ASSOCIATION

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.



THE INTERNATIONAL SEA KAYAKING ASSOCIATION.  
NEWSLETTER No 1  
JANUARY, 1995.

John J. Ramwell  
5, Osprey Ave.,  
Westhoughton,  
Bolton,  
Lancs,  
BL5 2SL

### Editorial

History in the making - the first newsletter of 1995, the first under the new title ...**The International Sea Kayaking Association**; and a fresh start with a number 1 issue.....surely a collectors item!

The new logo, based very much on the old one is courtesy of Prof. Udo Beier from Hamburg. His accompanying letter reads:  
"The main idea of my suggestion is, not to differ too much from the old ASKC logo. Therefore I copy the basic motive of the ASKC logo.

The second idea is, to express that ISKA is not an assembly of solo sea kayakers but an association of sea kayakers who likes to paddle together. Therefore I portray two sea kayakers on the logo. Though I think it would be better to show three sea kayakers on the logo to demonstrate the sea kayak rule that 'less than three there should never be' but I am not able to realize this on the logo".

So many thanks to you Udo...I am very grateful.

Di Smith, a near neighbour, gave a presentation at the Scottish Sea Kayaking Symposium at the beginning of October, 1994 and apparently the event was a great success. Di spoke about the whole issue of 'women in sea kayaking' and I shall be asking her for a synopsis of her presentation for inclusion within this newsletter.

The B.C.U. Sea Touring Symposium is scheduled for 15/16th October, 1994 at the Calshot Activities Centre and the promotion material is enticing. It is unfortunate that I am unable to attend as I would particularly liked to have heard Trevor Potts' present his "**In the wake of Shackleton**" expedition account. My school-boy hero was Ernest Shackleton and his open boat journey in 1916 from Elephant Island to South Georgia remains one of the most remarkable feats of endurance, nerve and tenacity. Vicky Brown, Robert Egelstaff and Chris Smith joined Trevor on this replica voyage in a boat built as a replica of the original boat used by Shackleton (the James Caird) which they named 'Sir Ernest Shackleton'.

I look forward to publishing an account of the Calshot Symposium. I note that the Irish Sea Kayaking Symposium falls over the weekend of 12/13th November, 1994. If I can receive an account of this one I may combine the three accounts in a separate '**symposia special**'. If you are one of the organisers or, indeed, have made a presentation at any of these three symposia or simply attended and would like to contribute to this **Symposia Special**, then I'd love to hear from you before the end of January, 1995.

### **MEMBERSHIP RENEWAL**

I simply inserted a renewal form with the last newsletter and



over 50% of you have renewed at this time of writing (10/10/94). Many of you renew at the forthcoming Canoe Exhibition in February and this is fine. I have again included a renewal/joining form for ISKA and ask that if you have already renewed for 1995, then pass the form on to a friend and if not then do please renew promptly. I am expecting an upsurge in interest in the 'club' now that it is an association with a readily understandable title. Already the feedback about the name change has been most positive.

I have just laid out over £1,000 for a new stock of tee and sweat shirts bearing the new ISKA logo..still in the original colours - yellow and black. I'd like to stock a wider variety of colours but the expense of this would be higher still. I have also ordered baseball caps, all in black, bearing the new logo at £4.50. I shall sell off the few remaining ASKC sweat and tee shirts at the Canoe Exhibition. In case you want to send off, I've only got small and medium size left.

I am pleased with the interest in my little booklet (combined with that of John Brand) on the history and development of sea kayaking. I am trying to get round to incorporating corrections as sent in by Messrs Duncan Winning, Oliver Cock and John Dudderidge. My next venture is to take another chapter from my (as yet unpublished) book, this time on the subject of sea kayaking expeditions, and make this available in a similar home produced format...watch this space for details.

\* \* \* \* \*

**LETTERS**

From Dick Foyster, 115, Norwich Rd;Wymondham; Norfolk;NR18 0SJ  
Dear John,

I feel I must write to say how much I support your name change of our association. There are quite a few sea paddlers in Norfolk who, although sporting the ASKC sticker on their boat and windscreen, agree that the name is misleading. I myself was of the opinion that I would have to attain Senior Instructor Sea to be able to qualify to join. However, I did join, long before I got my SIS.

International Sea Kayaking Association sounds much better as we all agree that it describes the body perfectly. Goof luck with that one.

Referring back to the July issues, I must say that I think another award for leadership on the sea is not on. If there are those that want to do this then I feel they should do nothing less than achieve the Senior Instructor Sea Training and assessment. As far as I am concerned, anyone leading a group on the sea is a fool not to be properly qualified and if the group are not very experienced, then even more reason to be an 'SIS'. The 'special kind of freedom' must be kept in perspective.

Best wishes, Dick Foyster; Norfolk Sea Canoeing Group.

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Wanted.....VHF radio and waterproof case....Dave Ross on 03552 21275 or work # 041 445 4551.

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From Charles Evans, Carregwen; Llanbadarn Rd; Aberystwyth; Dyfed;SY23 1EY.

Dear John,

**For sale** North Shore Shoreline sea kayak, expedition specification but no pump...orange deck and hull, black seam tape. New in 1992, truly excellent condition...offers around £400. Tel 0970 615386.

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From Brian Woodward, 16, First Ave;Bath;Avon;BA2 3NW

Dear John,

About two years ago I bought a Klepper Arius double folding kayak which I have been very pleased with. At the time I found it very difficult to get any information on folding boats in this country and the choice of the Klepper was simply due to the fact that I saw a very good second-hand one at a good price...not the best way to go about things but it worked out well for me.

The reason for mentioning this is that I've just come back from a trip to the west coast of Canada where folding boats are more common - Klepper, Folbot, Nautiraid and Feathercraft, etc., and I was pleased to come across a book, 'Complete Folding Kayaker' (ISBN # 0 07 016734 6) by Ralph Diaz, published by Rugged Mountain Press/McGraw-Hill, Camden, Maine. This really is quite a useful book for anyone considering a folding kayak as it compares the various types, and compares them with hardshell boats, plus lots of other information. It was published in 1994 so is really up to date and I wish I had a copy of it before I parted with my money. Having said this, I still think the Klepper takes some beating.

I have no links with the author/publisher but if you mention the book in the next newsletter it might be of use to other members who may be thinking of crossing the Atlantic in a kayak of just want something that will fit on the car.

Best wishes, Brian.

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From Eric Totty, 9, Undercliff Rd; Kendal; Cumbria; LA9 4PS.

Dear John,

'Trip' - 'Trippers'.

I would dislike being called a 'tripper', which to my mind is evocative of noisy parties of mindless people out for a good time - or what they consider to be a good time.

The word 'trip' usually refers to a land journey from a certain point and back again to the same place. Consequently I aim to avoid the word 'trip' in connection with canoe touring. I prefer to speak of a journey by canoe or kayak. Or, for a more extended sea journey, 'voyage' would be an appropriate description.

Expedition by canoe or kayak is another acceptable description in the relevant circumstances. 'Expedition' has been defined as 'sending or setting forth for some definite purpose'.

Even 'Odyssey' might be used on occasion to describe a long and protracted sea journey extending over several months or even years such as Paul Caffyns' epic circumnavigation of Australia and his other notable journeys by kayak.

What do other members of I.S.K.A. think about this? Do they agree or do they consider I am being too pedantic? I would welcome any response.

Yours sincerely, Eric.

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From Peter Salisbury, 'Catalina Cottage'; Aultivullin; Strathy Point; Sutherland; Scotland; KW14 7RY

Dear John,

I had hoped to contact you sooner - but confirmation of some bad news means that **PADDLERS INTERNATIONAL** is ceasing due to continuing bad health as a result of migraine.

So that all the information and contacts can continue I've been in touch with Peter Clark of 8, Wiltshire Ave; Hornchurch; Essex; RM11 3DX - Tel; 0708 450596, who I believe has the same outlook as myself and I feel will make **Paddlers World** flourish. I am in the process of contacting all members of P.I. to tell them what has happened, although I have now heard that Canoeist Magazine have pre-empted me by somehow collating various titbits from individuals which I would rather not have happened until I had contacted each member on a personal basis.

Any member who is owed subs by me will be reimbursed from here.

It's been nice knowing you John over these years, I hope we'll keep in touch, but it will be people like you that will keep **Paddlers World** alive through Peter Clark.

Sincerely,

Peter Salisbury.

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WANTED URGENTLY

KLEPPER Aerius I or similar folding kayak. Preferably good condition.

Please telephone 0603 891777 (home)  
0603 788455 (work)

Matthew Lake  
Bloemendaal,  
Grange Road,  
Hainford,  
Norwich, NR10 3BJ  
Great Britain.

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From Tony Young; 22, Church Str; Llangollen; Clwyd; LL20  
Tel. 0978 861110

Dear Sir,  
May I draw your attention to a new guesthouse opening in Llangollen, North Wales which may be of interest to your members. We are offering introductory prices of £11 Bed & Breakfast and £16 with every meal. The rate not detract from the level of accommodation; emphasis is on good food and comfortable quiet rooms. The house close to the river and town centre. Perhaps you would pass on this information to your members.

Best Wishes,  
Tony Young.

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## ALL OUT SEARCH FOR CANOEIST

Shetland and Orkney Coastguards took part in a full-scale air, sea and coastal search when a French canoeist failed to complete a journey from Orkney to Shetland which cost him his life.

The 57-year-old experienced canoeist had all the correct equipment and had made Pentland Coastguard aware of his journey, estimating it would take him 10 hours. One hour after the canoeist was due to arrive, Shetland Coastguard started making preliminary enquiries on Fair Isle and a search of the likely landing places revealed no trace of the canoe or the canoeist.

A few hours later when there was still no sign of him, Shetland Coastguard

search and rescue helicopter at Sumburgh was alerted along with the RNLi Lerwick and Kerwick lifeboats, various Auxiliary Coastguards on Shetland and Orkney and some ships which had responded to radio broadcasts. A Nimrod aircraft from Kinloss was also scrambled for the search.

When a kite was found four miles south east of Fair Isle the search was concentrated upwind. By this time the RNLi Aith lifeboat and RAF Sea King from Lossiemouth had joined the search party.

It was this Sea King which spotted the canoe with the Frenchman's body attached to it by a safety rope. His body was then recovered and flown to Scotland.



**MY FAVOURITE PADDLE  
THE MOUTH OF THE SOLWAY FIRTH**

I've done this trip (sorry Eric - 'journey') a couple of times, - a nice open water crossing of about 14 naut. miles without lots of shipping to worry about.

I have gone from Workington on the Cumbria coast. You can camp overnight by the harbour on a piece of land by the yacht club - but there are no facilities and you would need permission - unless you camped late evening and were away early next morning. Alternatively you can use a caravan site - they allow small tents - on the outskirts of Cockermouth which is twenty minutes along the A66 from Workington. I rather took to Cockermouth where the high street has some excellent pubs which nearly all serve good food.

Leaving from the harbour at Workington the Scottish coast is clearly visible on a good day. The tides are over three knots on Springs so some time spent on navigation is worth the effort.

You should aim to come in on Balcary Point. To the east is a large bay and an island - Heston Island. It is not clearly seen as an island until close up. It appears as part of the mainland, though of course the chart/map identifies it as an island.

The Galloway Hills make a scenic backdrop as you paddle towards the Kirkcudbright coast. As you get near you will make out Ross Island to the west which is at the mouth of the River Dee and to the east is the village of Kipford.

Once close to Balcary Point keep to the west side of the bay, that is, just to the east of the Point itself - suddenly you will see a disused Life Boat Station (built in 1884 and in an excellent state of repair). Egress is possible by the slipway - or -better at low tide - just a few yards further on beyond a small headland of rocks.

There is sufficient flat ground for a couple of small tents up by the old boat station.

Just above the boat station, a scramble of a few yards, is a path that will take you to the **Balcary Hotel**, - an upmarket hotel so you will not be welcome dripping sea water or dressed in 'smelly Hellys'!! - but they serve beer and do bar meals. Apart from a few farm buildings there is little else for some considerable distance.

Returning the next day - or whenever, as there is some good coastal kayaking and walking to be had in the area, - then it is a case of looking out for the chimneys at Workington as you approach the Cumbria coast. The harbour, particularly at low water, is somewhat difficult to identify and it pays, when actually leaving to note the position in relation to the large factory buildings on the coast itself as Workington itself is inland a little and not on the coast itself.

Finally, it is not a good idea to leave your car around the harbour whilst away; a local told us it was likely to be vandalised. Try the British Steel factory close by the harbour where they have a manned car park for their employees.

Have a good trip.

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Have you a **favourite paddle**? How about sending me an account of it on a page of A4. Provide essential info so others can follow.



The Summer Isles  
by Eric Totty

The world abounds with islands and we have a fair share off our own coasts.

Just off the north west coast of Scotland, in the Minch, not far from Ullapool, lie the Summer Isles, so named because of the micro-climate they enjoy, benefitting from the north west drift across the Atlantic and from warm waters around Florida. Rain clouds often pass right over them before discharging on the mainland. Their very name is evocative of romance and gentle adventure.

They will not appeal to the long distance kayaker, except as part of a longer and more extended voyage or expedition; but to those who like to loiter and have time to spare to enjoy them in a relaxed kind of way they can be very rewarding.

I canoed among these islands and camped on many of them in the days of folding canoes in my Klepper T6 with its distinctive blue deck, around 40 years ago, when they were all completely uninhabited. My companions varied on each occasion according to availability but to each one of us it was an introduction to sea canoeing.

As detailed information is unavailable elsewhere I will try to fill in a few gaps, especially as to the most suitable landing places for sea kayaks as these are scarce and not easily discernable, particularly on the more interesting of the islands.

The Isles can be approached from Gruinard Bay of Loch Ewe for a more extended voyage, or in bad weather, the short crossing from Dornie or Achiltibuie could be used. I have mentioned them in no particular order as the sequence will depend on weather and sea conditions and the inclination and ability of those visiting them.

Tanera More is the largest (804 acres and rising to 405 feet) and it enjoys the shortest crossing from the mainland. Far and away the best landing here is at the old quay in the magnificent west facing bay known as the 'Anchorage'. There is also a bay on the more remote side to the north of the island but this is not so attractive and is heavy with sea-weed.

The next island to the west is Eilean Fada More whose narrow waist has a coral beach. The coral consists of sea shells ground to small fragments by the action of the waves to pure calcium, but it is a form of coral nevertheless. This beach makes a very pleasant landing place for lunch or snack.

Westwards is Tanera Beg where we camped on the cliff top on close cropped springy turf above the North Bay, a bay which provided good fishing for pollack in the evening near the shadow of the cliff - some good sized fish being caught. A bay to the south-west of the island was piled high with drift wood including mahogany and teak. The highest point of this island is 262 feet, just beyond the lochan which proved us with fresh water - a



pleasant walk from the camp. Water can be obtained on any of the lochans which are to be found on the principal islands (see 1" O.S. map) but as they are frequented by sea birds it is better boiled!! It is peat water which makes excellent tea; it also brings out the flavour of whisky!

It is little more than a mile to the north west across the sparkling sea to Glas Leac Mor - a delectable island with a perfect camp site of closely nibbled grass at the head of the beach where a south facing bay on the east coast provides a good landing place at high tide. At low tide however, it is a minefield of large slippery-smooth boulders covered in sea-weed! A stroll from the camp over to the north west of the island will be rewarded by an invigorating walk along the precipitous cliff tops where the pounding of the waves down below has opened up crevices and caves worthy of further exploration from the sea on the following day.

A reef, almost submerged at high tide and in full view of our tents attracted a colony of seals whose mournful, ululating and haunting chant enticed us to paddle quietly out and climb on the other side of the reef to observe them at close quarters without disturbing them.

I have a colour slide showing a landing of one of our number in this bay on an earlier occasion, amidst a shower of phosphorescence from his paddle as he prepares to land.

Priest Island, or Eilean O'Cleirich, to give it its correct name, lies four miles to the west of Gailleach Head, an open crossing best made via Bottle Island. It is the island that holds the most interest and it needs two or three days to observe much of what it has to offer. It has no sandy beaches or pebbly beaches and landing places are few and far between and not very obvious, but two small short inlets near the north east corner of the Isles are perhaps the most suitable for the purpose. They are only a few yards wide and consist of rounded stone or boulders, completely bare and clean of sea weed. Three of us camped on this occasion at the head of one of these inlets near a fresh water lochan which not only provided us with fresh water but where a spell of quiet watching was rewarded by the sight of two otters disporting themselves until something disturbed them - a rare sight indeed, to us at any rate. They are very easily disturbed but patience can be rewarded.

Bad weather kept us on the Isle for three days which gave us time to explore it in some detail. Each day an R.A.F. plane came over to observe us - no doubt to see whether we were showing any distress signal. The island has eight lochans so we were never short of fresh water.

The island is effectively divided in half by a central ridge with precipitous slopes covered by heather, crowberry and low-lying willow. I set out to cross it wearing only my shorts, tee shirt and sandals, but had to give up the attempt until I had changed into more suitable things. There is no noticeable way across the ridge and it was often necessary to retrace my steps and try a different route. Once on the ridge, which is the haven



of ravens and peregrine falcons - magnificent to watch - it was well worth while, although the descent on the other side had similar problems. This ridge is 252 feet high and a steep climb from any direction. There is an extensive view westwards across the Minch to the Shianti Isles and the hills of Harris in the Outer Hebrides beyond. On the mainland to the east, Guinag, Suilven and Stac Polly and the magnificent range of An Teallach form a striking backcloth to the scene, with some of the lesser Isles of our group inbetween.

Back in the kayaks we explored the cliffs, caves and inlets of the six mile coastline. At the N W corner one cave tunnels through the cliffs for 200 yards and emerges in the sea beyond. There is also a great cave on the east coast. Those who wish to explore the south part of the island without having to cross the ridge will find a bay on the south coast, though rather exposed to the southerly winds.

On the west coast there is a possible landing place with a burn of fresh water. It was here that the hermit priest lived for some time to give the island its name.

Perhaps the secret of living on an island is to simplify ones' needs. It gives extra time to do things you most want to do, whether exploration, bird watching, botany, painting or photography. We saw cormorants, shags, eider duck, a storm petrel and colonies of various other species on the cliffs. We observed fulmars and gulls making use of the updraught of the thermals to rise and glide with effortless ease.

Returning to our camp with freshly caught pollack we felt like castaways, Robinson Crusoes, though happy and voluntary ones. We were rich, as our camp site was fragrant, clean and undefiled, and we could leave it as we found it. Then, a little later, we were lulled to sleep by the ceaseless rhythm of the sea.

On the third day we left very early while the seas were reasonably calm. We paddled by Bottle Island and Eilean Dubh to the mainland to Achiltibuie to replenish our stores before returning to the islands.

On another occasion a small party of us set out for Priest Island, but we encountered heavy seas around Bottle Island which necessitated a retreat to Carn Deas where we camped for the night, hoping for better weather the next day. There was no fresh water on this isle, other than by digging in the peat soil in a green hollow and waiting overnight for a little water to percolate and settle in the hollow. As the sea looked clear and clean out there we eked this out with a little sea water for our porridge, but it turned out to be far too salty.

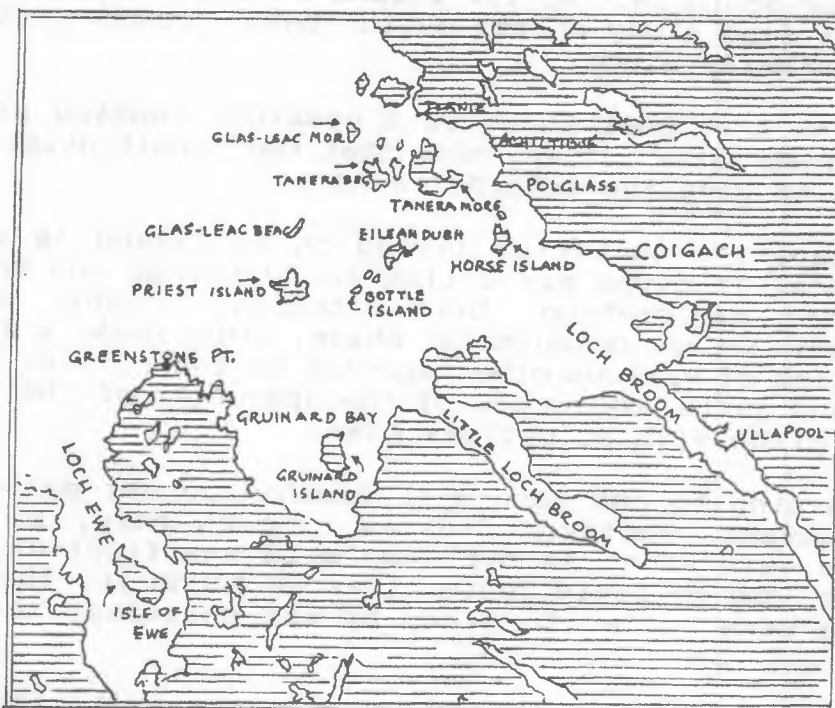
One memorable day of good weather took us from Priest Island to Glas Leac Beag, little more than a mile to the north, but an exposed crossing. It is perhaps the least accessible of the Summer Isles and the only good landing place seemed to be a rock which shelves into the sea. You wait for a wave and run in with it. One moment you are afloat and the next high and dry on the

rock trying to get out of your kayak before the next wave draws you back again! It is a considerable advantage, and a kindly act, if someone else goes in first and stands ready to help the rest of the party!

Any of the remaining isles are within reasonable paddling distance, enabling the paddler to choose his route according to the conditions prevailing at the time.

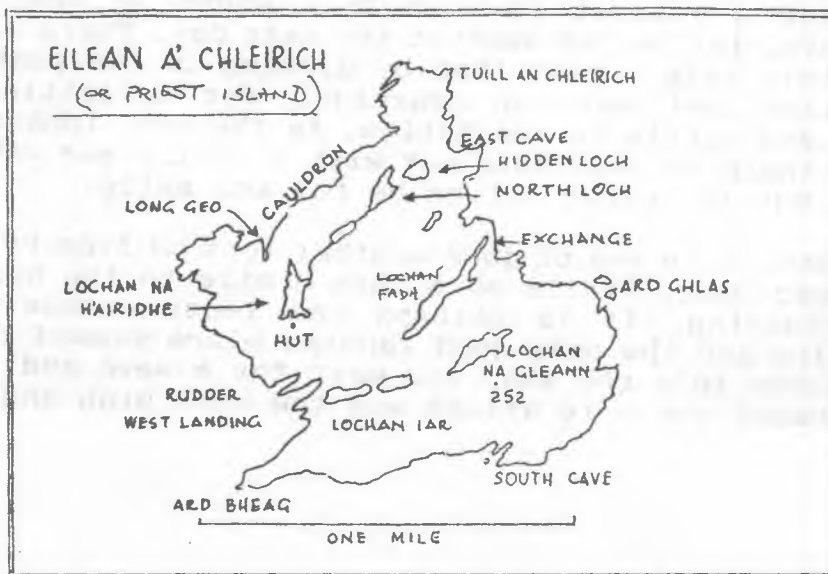
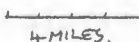
Chart 2501 covers most of the area. Tidal ranges:- Sps 14ft, Nps 10 and half ft. No exceptional tide rips except at Greenstone Point., Tides are 4 hrs. 21 mins Dover.

Eric Totty.



SUTHERLAND - SCOTLAND

SCALE:- QUARTER INCH = ONE MILE.





# AN ARMY MARCHES (PADDLES) ON ITS STOMACH

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Garnock Academy Trip 26/6/94 to 2/7/94

The Team-George, Bob, Dave, Ian, Shona, Pauline, Angela, Willie, Eddie, Fiona, Alan, Alex, Neil, Dave, Davie, Elizabeth, Adam, Andrew, Jimmy.

Objectives- Explore part of Skye; enhance the teams sea paddling; engender self reliance and cooperation and TO HAVE FUN! WEATHER dictated PLAN B(ish)so, on Sunday morning we set off after a well organised load-up (!) for another sardine trip in a minibus pursued by a rocket launcher. Once over the Kyles we camped below Breakish graveyard (permission required) and slept soundly despite loud thunder.

MONDAY dawned reasonably clear and we set off for Broadford. The Birlinn (copy of Somerled - Lord of the Isles' galley) was there though well wrapped up. Peep! Can you use a wheik to whistle? Peep! Shut up you'll wake the tourists. Peep peep!

ON up past Loch Ailort and over to good camping at Balmeanach Bay in interesting conditions. On the way we were mistaken for a herd of cows crossing the narrows! 15 minutes of golf (clearing sheep \* with paddles) then we settled to another of the hundred boil-in-the-bag-an-army-marches-on-its-stomach-says-George-Kerr-meals. MORE THUNDER, poor weather and a late dash over to Raasay. Stocks of chocolate replenished, we camped at the harbour and used Raasay House's facilities. A wee dram in the evening, a midnight ceilidh in the 'fort', pancakes in the dark - all in the p..ing rain!

THE THUNDER turned out to be 95% Bob, but next days weather wasn't any better for finding that out. We walked and planned and explored. Gastroenteritis set in about now and the next day or two saw several pale faces and pebble-dashed spraydecks.

THURSDAY- the weather gods got bored and forgot to plaster us with rain. We struck up the west coast of Raasay in a following force 3 occasionally catching a wee ride then explored parts of Rona before making camp in the lovely bay near the lodge. Apparently, an environmentally friendly Norwegian woman has bought the island and wants to keep its character (well half of us have Viking blood anyway!) so thats all to the good. The bay is well sheltered and we shared the calm evening with several yachts. The midges we kept to ourselves.

THE NEXT PALE DAWN saw several matching faces haunt the campsite. BIG G had taken its toll and a few of us still looked like ghosts. 'G' or not, George (boil-in-the-bag-Kerr) drove us onto the water and off once more.

PAST OUR ONE NIGHT NEIGHBOURS and out to peer through the mist towards the fossil rocks below the Old Man of Storr. The weather was good - calm and lazy. In the water we saw odd looking leach like worms! Red ones, orange ones... I asked the local experts later what they were Oh! - those are red and orange things!!

ON THE SHORE at Holm Island we ate and chatted with an older guy and his son who were painting a small boat (in three or four years the weight of paint will sink it) About this time we slowed up a little - round the next corner lay Portree and the end of the trip - but we were enjoying life and had no driving ambition to rush off. Inevitably though, Portree hove into view. Its harbour, scattered houses, boats and...chippy! Our paddling rate



increased as the saliva began to flow. Gastro whatever or not, chippy here we come!

ON SHORE AGAIN we lazed, ate fish and chips and some of us went to the local pool to scrape the barnacles off. We paddled round the local area then hauled the boats out at the slip. At the campsite, our neighbours (a million cans of lager and a £20 tent) were eventually moved across the road before the rest of the site massacred them.

THEN IT WAS SATURDAY MORNING and up to stack our slender steeds into the trailer for the journey home.

#### CONCLUSIONS:

It was a good trip, even with the earlier weather and the later stomach problems. The Raasay area has a lot to offer and I'm sure we will return to explore its eastern shores.

George Kerr - 110% for keeping us going and boil-in-the-bag food! The team - a right good bunch with better than expected skills. Raasay and Skye - lovely - rain, wind, midges and all!

Dave Ross, Garnock Canoe Club.

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To: John Ramwell, ASKC  
From: Dave Powell

Dear John, I enclose an article for the ASKC newsletter about a paddle around Cape Wrath I did recently with Richard Bryant.

**Cape Wrath is undoubtably Britain's finest headland. This stretch of coast also sports a number of entertaining rock climbs on sea stacks, details are in the SMC guidebook Northern Highlands Vol. 2**

Oldshoremore, near Kinlochbervie - perfect conditions, set off about 9.30. First stop at Am Buachaille, a magnificent 65m sandstone stack at south end of Sandwood Bay. Landing was OK in the calm conditions, and the situation is superb. The climb takes the line of least resistance up the landward face, over sandstone bulges with characteristic flat holds and poor protection. The 2nd pitch had a hard start, which Richard couldn't follow, so we had to abseil off. Disappointed not to have reached the top, we headed off across Sandwood Bay, calm, slight swell. I felt zonked, due to lack of sleep, and we stopped for a break at a beautiful beach with a waterfall. Brewed some tea, and I felt better after brushing my teeth in the stream. Onwards to a striking small stack, A'Chailleach. Landing from the kayaks was problematic, so we left it for another day. We climbed its easier neighbour, Am Bodach, instead. Onwards around Cape Wrath, a dramatic headland with a spectacular arch. We paddled through and suddenly found ourselves battling against a powerful rapid surging through it. This arch can be seen for miles to the east of Cape Wrath. Paddled on to Kearvaig beach and discovered the excellent MBA bothy in the dark. Drank soup and beer and tea late into the night.

Kearvaig bothy - bacon and eggs for breakfast, then we set off passed some serious stacks, Stac Clo Kearvaig. Weather was calm, but there was a fair swell here and landing from a canoe would have been desperate. Onwards passed the soaring cliffs of Clo Mor, probably the most impressive mainland cliffs in the UK and a very atmospheric place indeed with seals howling like wolves. Paddled straight across the Kyle of Durness to Far out Head, encountering some porpoises out in the bay. Looked at Smoo Cave, pulled out at Durness. Convenient bus at 15.15 back to Kinlochbervie for the car.



## **MORECAMBE BAY, RIVER KENT AND THE ARNSIDE BORE**

Having led several meets in the Morecambe Bay area and built up a good deal of know how, I thought that I should make a permanent record so that paddlers could enjoy this canoeing experience in the future.

I should first draw your attention to the superb area for camping and walking, as well as canoeing, around Arnside and Silverdale. This little known area, usually by-passed by campers heading for the "Lakes", is usually revisited by those who have "found" it. There are several campsites. Bottoms Farm, my preference, is quiet and fairly primitive, but you can have that welcome hot shower when you return from your capsizes.

### **Morecambe Bay the easy way**

The easiest crossing of Morecambe Bay, and the one I would recommend for your first trip if you are canoeing without the company of a canoeist who knows that area, is from Grange to Morecambe. On a suitably calm day, starting at high water this 10½ mile crossing of open water is so easy that with an experienced escort it can be accomplished by relative beginners. Indeed, an annual swimming race is held, and the swimmers can cross in 3½ hours.

With the exception of this trip Morecambe Bay is no place for beginners or even intermediate paddlers unless they are led by experienced sea canoeists.

### **A more difficult trip**

To do the above trip in the reverse direction, Morecambe to Grange, is a different "ball-game". Tidal assistance is required in both directions; the Bay is very shallow and so the tides flow fast. To start at Morecambe one has to start near low water, and at that time there is very little water; in fact the scene from the promenade looks something like the Sahara Desert. However, a narrow, river-like channel flows close in and past the Stone Jetty, and further to the east there is a long wooden walkway which gives access to it (near the Town Hall). Launching here on the early flood one has to paddle west towards the open sea, heading towards a large beacon until the sand bank on the right can be rounded. A turn can then be made to head in the general direction of Grange-over-Sands. It is wise to keep heading away from the shore, rather than straight up the Bay, to keep in the deep channel and be well clear of a long pier which sticks out into the Bay for almost a mile. This cross-current paddling does make this crossing into a long hard paddle, and looking back, the sand bank that you rounded is now not only covered but looking rough, while you are still paddling in the calm!

Having reached Grange it is an easy paddle to carry on up to Arnside without fear of brushing with the bore, which will have gone long before you get there. On one occasion we did this trip with a strong party, had a brief lunch at

Arnside and, since the tide was already ebbing, set off urgently to paddle hard back to Morecambe. If we had left it any later or paddled leisurely we would have been stranded without water. We arrived back at the wooden ramp, now much shorter, carried the canoes up to the cars which were parked on the promenade, loaded up, turned to look at the sea and it had gone - nothing but sand!

### **To go where only the wading birds go**

Two runs over the same stretch of water and entirely different; and here is a third. Launching at Arnside 3 hours before low water you can follow the deep channels surrounded by sand banks for miles, right out into the middle of the Bay, where only hundreds of wading birds go. Out there the sand banks have edges like small cliffs, created by fast water in the deep channels, but it is possible to climb up and hoist the canoes up onto the flat top for a lunch stop. The feeling of utter remoteness is impressive. Of course you will have timed your lunch stop for low water (L.W. Liverpool minus 15 mins). When the tide starts to flood it does so with a rush. Soon the deep channel you arrived by becomes a fast flowing river back to Arnside. Great lumps of sand are washed from the sand cliffs, and your picnic spot is rapidly getting too near to the edge; furthermore the canoes are in danger of being washed away and have to be moved. Those who haven't finished eating are losing interest in food, everyone is now on their feet watching the changing scene with a more than just a casual interest. There is a choice, either to get a fast ride back the way you came, or to take the less turbulent channel on the other side of your sand bank, but alas the channel winds round a corner and comes to a dead end. There is nothing for it but to sit and wait until the tide brings something to float on, but it is not long in coming, and away you go, only to be stopped again. Should you have gone the other way, by now you would have been having fun riding the bore, but this way is fascinating, and soon you break through into open water and a speedy run back.

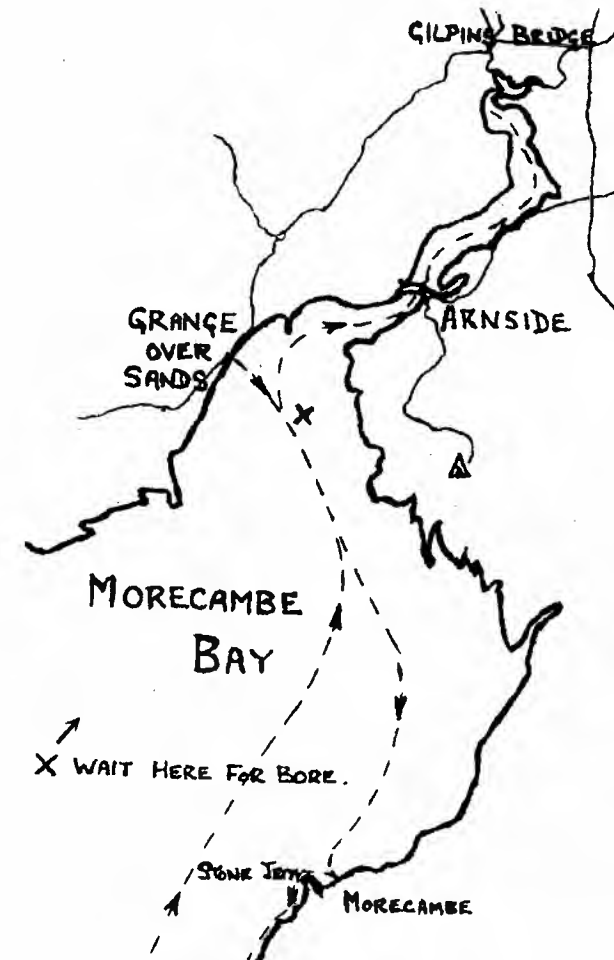
### **Running the Arnside Bore**

Maybe you only came to the area to run the bore. If so you will have chosen the highest spring tide available. Launching at H.W. Liverpool minus 2 hours and 45 minutes, or earlier (no room here for canoeists who are not ready on time), you paddle down the ebbing deep channel from Arnside, which is the outflow from the River Kent, past the point and out into the widening Bay and shallowing water. The channel winds a little, but you follow it as well as you can in order to float your canoe, but you may have to get out and use your painter. Of course, if you are using a slalom canoe you may have to drag with the toggle, but not usually very far, before you are in deeper water and making steady progress. Keep paddling with the cliff-edged sand bank on your right,

and one eye looking for an early bore. The situation here is a little unpredictable: the sand banks are continually on the move, and the time of arrival of the bore can vary. When you have passed 500 yards or so of the sand bank on your right, stop, keep well away from the sand bank and wait - apprehensively!

Now for a few words of advice for when the bore arrives. It will probably be only about 12 inches high, but it will be travelling FAST. To turn around to run with it is certain disaster. I know: I've tried it. In two seconds flat I was broached and capsized. Did I roll? No way. You can't roll when you are laid on your paddle, and your face is being ground into the sand. No: when the bore comes paddle forward strongly, punch into the wave and keep going forward until you feel that you can turn safely. Turn to the left, away from the sand bank, which is a potential danger area, and the current could well be pushing you that way. Everyone should turn this way, or complete chaos will soon reign. You can now follow the front wave and edge closer to it. If you keep well back there is no danger or difficulty, but riding on the front wave is for the expert in a slalom canoe. In a Sea Kayak I don't like to get closer than 12 feet, and the sensation of speed in this position is quite amazing. You are rushing at breakneck speed towards a vast stretch of sand, but there is this permanent 12 feet of water in front of you. If you push your luck too much you will broach, and if you are skilled enough not to capsize you are likely to be carried hundreds of yards broadside on and bumping on the bottom.

The wave will eventually peter out, and you get the disappointed feeling that "that was it". Elsewhere, however, some of the group are going well; you paddle quickly over there and away you go again. All good things come to an end, and soon you're nearing Arnside again, paddling lazily, but moving at good speed up the River Kent's channel. There are patches of strange currents as you approach your launching spot and your parked cars. We could stop here after only two hours on the water, but there is plenty of excellent canoeing ahead, and anyone who slept in and missed the tide can now launch and join the group. The whole area now narrows to a bottle-neck under the railway bridge. The incoming sea cannot get through the bridge fast enough, and can build up to being six feet higher than the river above the bridge, creating a heavy rapid. Canoeists not too familiar with white water canoeing should get through as soon as possible. Those who are familiar are jumping for joy, and struggle to get back through the bridge against the current for another run through. We usually play here for 20 minutes or so, then turn and paddle up river. The River Kent Estuary is very pleasant, and the current urges you on. Gilpins Bridge can be reached, but you will be ready for a well-earned lunch before you reach it. A lunch break of over one hour is in order, to allow the tide to turn and help you back to your cars at Arnside.



### Tidal Details Summary

Working from H.W. Liverpool, don't forget to add 1 hour for G.M.T., if appropriate. The bore will arrive at Arnside  $1\frac{1}{4}$  hours earlier. At Arnside the flood lasts  $2\frac{1}{2}$  hours, the ebb  $9\frac{1}{2}$  hours.

H.W. Arnside is H.W. Liverpool plus  $1\frac{1}{4}$  hours.

To run the bore launch at Arnside at H.W. Liverpool minus 2 hours and 45 minutes, or earlier, returning 2 hours later.

Grange or Arnside to Morecambe, launch at H.W. A later start, particularly from Arnside, runs a risk of being stranded on sand in the Bay.

Morecambe to Grange or Arnside: launch at Morecambe, 3 hours before H.W. Liverpool, and expect to take  $3\frac{1}{2}$  hours for the  $13\frac{1}{2}$  miles to Arnside. ~H0 ~G0;

Dennis G. 201