

Newsletter



of the



An international sea canoeing association open to all interested in this aspect of canoeing.

Aims:

Promotion of sea canoeing • Communication • Organisation of events and conferences • Safety and Coaching

INTERNATIONAL SEA KAYAKING ASSOCIATION

NEWSLETTER # 11

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EDITORIAL

I have been rather busy showing off the I.S.K.A. Exhibition Stand just lately. Of course there was the Canoe Exhibition at the NEC, Birmingham and then since there was the **Festival of the Sea** down at Bristol a few weeks ago and this was followed by the Exhibition at Pewsey near Winchester. These are always an opportunity to meet a few members and take on a few new ones; but most of all, a chance to explain our sport to many who are interested.

It is clear from where I am that sea kayaking is growing in popularity world wide, as it has done for many years. Keeping up with developments can be quite a challenge, particularly when I have so much else to occupy me. Consequently I am always grateful for any news or information that, you the reader out there among it all can provide for this newsletter.

Following Lyme Bay we now see the advent of the New Outdoor Activity Licensing Scheme.

Lord Henly, Education and Employment Minister. has announced the scheme and that it will be applied by a privately run company called **Tourism Quality Services Ltd.** This company will contract a team of inspectors (when I wrote for information I was told that they had had so many application that they were not going to process any more!!) who are experts in the range of activities, and to suit the various geographical and climatic conditions throughout Great Britain.

The list of activities covered will be kept under constant review. The scheme as a whole will be reviewed after three years. I will keep you up-dated.

Menai Strait - on the strait and narrow to national protection.

After the devastating affect of the **Sea Empress** oil spill on the Welsh coastline, it was a relief to hear some good news with the announcement that the Menai Straits, a popular area with sea kayakers in North Wales is to be come the U.K.s fourth national Marine Nature Reserve. The area will cover 9,3000 hectares extending to Mean High Water on both shores of the Strait. The Menai Straits is well known for its diverse benthic habitats and the exceptional abundance of some species such as sponges. Over 1,000 species have been recorded in the area and many species of birds use the area as a feeding, resting and breeding site.

It has further been announced that a Welsh Coastal Forum is to be established to encourage all those with an interest in the Welsh coast to discuss future management issues. This is the first step to a more integrated approach to managing marine and

coastal environments in Wales. It is hoped that similar initiatives will follow in Scotland.

From Tom Smith, Burra Isle, Shetland.

Dear John,

I hope you can use the enclosed information on our Papa Stour Meet in the next ISKA newsletter. You will see that Dave Gardner has dropped out this year so I am now the contact.

We would of course be delighted to see you back here some time. Keep up the good work with the newsletter. We really appreciate the focus on sea paddling here, also the fact that content still counts for more than style and adverts!.

From John Chamberlin, Castle Donnington, Derby.

Dear John,

Just a quick note - article to follow. Last Friday/Saturday (prior to 17/6/96) I completed my third crossing of the Irish Sea, this time from Holyhead to Dun Laoghaire, in 16 1/4 hours. I know 'crossings' aren't everyone's cup of tea (and I think I may hand up my hat now!), but I am interested to know if anyone else has completed all three crossings - i.e. south, north and middle - unescorted. Do you know? For the record the weather conditions were ideal and the navigation spot on.

From Mike Mineter, Edinburgh.

Dear John,

I enclose a leaflet about outdoor opportunities for young people following your remarks in a recent newsletter. (Venture Scotland, Bonnington Mill, 72, Newhaven Rd., Edinburgh, EH6 5QG).

My concern about the new legislation is that under 18s will end up with fewer opportunities - any fee charging organisation taking under 18s on the hills or on the water will need licensing .. some will reorganise to become members only, others will take over 18s and a small number, the more affluent centres, will get licensed.

Irish Sea Kayaking Symposium.

Scheduled for the 26/27th October at Castletownbere, West Cork (Tel 027 70692). I will be going if any one is interested in sharing transport.

HMS SULTAN recreate a piece of Wartime History.

When HMS Sultan, the Royal Navy's Marine and Air Engineering School heard that a museum in France were trying to locate a **Cockle Mark II** as part of a Marine Commando exhibition they offered to construct a replica. The 2 man kayak or folboat was used by the Cockle Shell Heroes on their historic raid on Bordeaux in #december 1942. The boat was presented to Corp. Bill Sparks, the only living survivor of the raid at the recent Festival of the Sea in Bristol. (see above).

Folboats were used by the Special Boat Service, a section of 8th Commando Brigade. Its brief was to land small parties behind enemy lines. The two man crews would reconnoitre enemy held territory and blow up targets such as bridges and railways lines. It was called a folboat because when in its collapsed position it is virtually flat for easy transportation by submarine. The kayak, as well as forming a part of an exhibit about the Marine Commando, will also be a tribute to Colonel Haslar, the leader

of the Cockle Shell Hero raid.

New Product.

The **Speedtech**, available from 10413 Deerfoot Drive, Great Falls, Virginia 22066, USA is a knotmeter which is very much like the speedometer/distance recorder available for cycles. It is being advertised in the canoe press- this is just to alert you to it. Apparently it requires no thru-hull fitting or 12 volt battery and is available at \$90.

NEW MEMBERS

David Corbin, Southampton. "I am a teacher and married with 2 offspring. I started paddling about 15 years ago at the same time as I gave up smoking. Most of my paddling has been in and around the Solent and I have, in the past, had some quite close links with Calshot Activities Centre. The Isle of Wight has been rounded a couple of times and y most adventurous trip to date has been the Western Isles.

I have returned to the fold after a break of some 5/6 years and am now determined to broaden my skills. I have just bought a new Orion and am off to Orkney at the end of May with Calshot."

Len Devey, Preston. "48, Teacher (PE and French). Interests Inland & Sea Kayaking, Sailing, Windsurfing, Mountaineering (Clubs Ribble) Wildlife, Travel, Sport.Tel 01772 727086"

Frank Conroy, Castlebere, Co. Cork. "Beara Kayaks is a commercial enterprise formed 3 years ago. Operating on the beautiful Beara Peninsula in the SW corner of Ireland. We promote sea kayaking through teaching school children & tourists. The sea conditions offered on the Beara Pen., which juts out into the Atlantic Ocean at the most westerly point of Europe would be hard to equal. We are located at the entrance to Bantry Bay, one of the largest natural harbours in the world, Tel 027 70692"

From Christian Gabard, Paris-Kayak International.

Dear John, Last night I dreamt I was an Inuit and was unhappy to hear the European sea kayaker calling me 'Eskimo'. On waking I wrote the following few lines hoping you will agree to include in your next newsletter.

"**INUITOLOGY.** At present, no kayaker deserving this name would call 'Eskimos' the people who invented the kayak. As a matter of fact, everybody knows that this name, meaning 'Crude Meat Eater' is not very appreciated by the inhabitants of the Arctic area who consider it disdainful. These people call themselves the INUIT. Hence I deem it logical and fair to replace the deriving words of the former designation such as 'eskimo roll' and 'eskimo rolling' by equivalent neologisms; i.e. TO 'INUIT ROLL' AND 'INUIT ROLLING'

To let you know that I have had a post card from Jan Festing from Norway to say that he is setting off fro Vatnajorkull for the Faroe Islands. He will let us know how he fares.

OBITUARY J h Busby.

Joan died last February, 1996. I only heard recently when her family phoned to say she had left me her library of canoeing books.

I visited her home in Liverpool to collect them and it was as I imagined it would be - full of wonderful memories of her very full life. Photographs, slides, artifacts and memorabilia from around the world showing her exploits and those of her many friends in the mountains or on the sea and rivers.

Joans' first love, without doubt, was mountains and this closely followed by Alaska. She would scrimp and save all year round so that she could spend each summer with her friends kayaking and climbing in Alaska.

It was through my own attraction to this wild and beautiful land that I met Joan Busby. she gave me some contacts when I first visited back in the early '80s who have now become good friends of mine.

They and many others will miss the energetic, lively and bubbly personality who was Joan. Tough, resilient, yet warm, good natured and friendly, she was the ideal expedition companion.

Nothing seemed to over concern her but she was certainly not foolhardy and as an experienced and aware outdoor person she was also an ideal expedition leader.

Joan was a teacher before she retired and I know she kept in touch with many of her students as they made their own way through life. She remained a friend and an inspiration to them.

In the late '70s I invited Joan to address one of our Sea Kayaking Symposiums and we all warmed to her as she described her canoeing and climbing exploits around the world. I know I will be among many who will remember her.

I.S.K.A. SHOP

ASKC ties @.....£6.50
ISKA stickers @.....£ .60
ISKA Tee shirts; large/X large/yellow/black....£6.00
ISKA Sweat Shirts; large/X large/yellow/black...£12.00
ISKA baseball caps (new) @.....£4.50
ISKA ski hats (woollen)@.....£3.50
"Over and Out", the video by Gordon Brown @....£14.99
ASKC stickers @.....£ .25
Polo Shirts (new- limited offer only).....£6.50
Long sleeved Tee shirts (New, limited offer)...£6.50
ISKA Paper No. 1 Expedition Planning @.....£4.00
ISKA Paper No. 2 Expedition Medicine @.....£4.00
ISKA Paper No. 3 The Sea @.....£4.00
ISKA Paper No. 4 Navigation @.....£4.00
ISKA Paper No 3 & 4 bound together.....£6.75
ISKA Paper No. 5 History of Sea Kayaking @...£4.00
(The above ISKA Papers are extracts from my book, "A Manual on Sea Kayaking")

From Mike North, District Controller, H.M.Coastguard, Liverpool.

PERSONAL LOCATOR BEACON - ASAMAT

The system is designed to trigger an alarm or alarm plus homing capability on the vessel from which the person has fallen overboard. This is a quite different concept from their claims that the PLB7 will alert the Coastguard by its signal being received by either a high flying aircraft or the COSPAS/SARSAT Satellites. Though the PLB7 has a tiny output, just 25 mw, I believe there may be instances where the satellites have received such a weak signal. Basically its concept of use has been broadened from a very localised alarm system to the status of a full distress beacon, which it is not.

The claim of 10 to 80 minutes to get a response seems pretty optimistic, even providing an aircraft or satellite did receive its very weak signal.

As for the trials in the Solent - the lifeboat was launched to "home" in on the transmission - but how were the Coastguard alerted in order to launch the lifeboat? Similarly with the helicopter.

It is a man overboard alerting system for use with the mother craft, not a stand alone distress beacon. Though I acknowledge it may trigger a satellite "strike" given more good luck than technical specification.

I guess you've caught my drift that in my opinion this product is being promoted outside the purpose for which it is designed.

Tim Franklin, Secretary of the British Canoe Union Sea Touring Committee writes to I.S.K.A. as follows:

Dear John,
ASAMAT Personal Locator Beacon

The BCU Sea Touring committee recently discussed some feedback from the Coastguard on the usage of the ASAMAT personal Locator Beacon which is being marketed in the U.K. for use by sea kayakers. The Coastguard had been asked to comment by the BCU Publications and Information Officer.

Mike North's letter is reproduced above. The STC felt the feedback from the Coastguard should be made available to all paddlers so that the limitations of the equipment were firmly understood.

The STC would also like to make the point that sea kayakers should not regard general electronic (e.g. VHF radios and GPS) as a substitute for sound decision making and good judgement.

The STC would be grateful if you would make the Coastguards views and those of the STC known through the publications under your control. A similar letter will also be sent to the publishers of other canoeing material.

BOOK REVIEW

Title - The Sea Runners; Author - Ivan Doig; Published - Penguin Books, 1982; ISBN - 0 14 00.6780 9; Reviewed by - Stephen Counsell.

The 'Sea Runners' has a seemingly impossible escape plan to kick off an exciting story that is based on truth, and the more the reader gets into it, the better it becomes. Set in Alaska and the coast of British Columbia in the year 1853, 'Sea Runners' tells of the adventures of a group of escapees from the Russian colony of New Archangel as they attempt to paddle an open Indian Canoe the length of the treacherous Pacific coast from Alaska to Oregon.

They fight hunger, fear, fatigue, Indians and the moods of the sea, all of the while propelled forward by the dream of freedom.

Ivan Doig uses a clipped writing style that keeps us on our toes. The story moves with zest that won't quit. It is hard to put down once started. Doig is a wordsmith that makes his choice of words almost as pleasing as the story they unfold. His style is quite refreshing. Somehow the writing style itself helps to transport the reader back to the time in which the tale is set.

This is not a 'we went her, then did this' account of an epic trip. It is the story of the struggle between the main characters with each other as they are thrown together, and of their survival struggle. The characters developed cleverly throughout the book. Just when one wonders why a character might be reacting this way to a situation, Ivan Doig slips in an episode from their past that has shaped their response.

The characters are not so known to the reader that they become boring though.

This short book is a great read about adventures few people could expect in their lives. It is hard to remember it is a novel as you read it, and its basis in truth helps make it real. Don't pass the opportunity to read this one.

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From Kevin Mansell, St. Brelade, Jersey, Channel Isles.

Dear John,

I see that you have heard that I am planning to launch a magazine devoted to all aspects of sea paddling. The idea arose whilst sitting on a flight back from Canada and thinking about the variety of magazines that I have read whilst in North America and I realised that there was nothing which compared to them either in Great Britain or most European countries.

Hopefully, by providing good quality articles by respected paddlers, I am hoping that it will prove popular with the paddling community. In the first issue there are articles by Duncan Winning on 19th century paddling in Scotland; Howard Jeffs on Night Paddling; Kevin Danforth on Forward Paddling; Scott Cunningham on the eastern shore of Nova Scotia; Phil Harriskine on the Inner Hebrides and John Searson from the Jersey Met Office on Swell Forecasting. In addition there are several smaller sections including a regular coaching section, reviews, forthcoming events, etc.

The magazine will be published quarterly - February, May, August and November and will be approximately 40 pages in length. Cover price is £2.25 with subscriptions @ £9 in the U.K.; £11 for Europe and £13 for the rest of the world. For those people who subscribe early their names will be entered into a free draw for paddling equipment - the exact details will be in the first issue.

(I have sent off a years subscription and am looking forward to receiving my first edition. Meanwhile, I have written to Kevin to say how delighted I am to hear about his venture and to wish him well for its' success).

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FOR SALE

From Simon Morgan, 7, Palace Rd; Llandaff; Cardiff; CF5 2AF.
Phone; evenings/weekends 01222 552628/work 01222 238239,ext 248.

Nordkapp HS kayak; the basic details are as follows:
Nordkapp HS kayak (red)/Fully extended rigged (Cape Horn deck layout) -retracting skeg/Black compass panel/Silva compass fitted/Extra hatch and bulkhead fitted (rear seat)/Backstrap (double)/Compac 50 front deck pump/Diolen hull/Towing system/Bulkhead footrest.

This is a beautiful boat in beautiful condition and which has only been used on two occasions since it was constructed on my behalf by Valley Canoe Products in 1992. I am looking for £600 o.n.o. and am prepared to haggle - up to a point. I also have a Nordkapp Lendal carbon shaft sea paddle @ £45, o.n.o.

EVENT

From Phil Eccles on 01766 762623
Coventry Education Authority's Sea Kayak Expedition -
25th May to 1st June, 1996
West coast of Scotland - possibly Isle of Mull. Day trips to suit group and weather. Possible bivvy on Treshnish Isles. Suitable for 2/3 Star and above. Proficiency testing possible. Training on all aspects of sea kayaking. All equipment provided if required. £225, all inclusive. Phone Phil as above.

From new I.S.K.A. members.

Brian Hunt from Shotton, Clwyd, writes: "I started paddling as a 6 year old using a sand spade in an aircraft fuel drop-tank. As a Sea Cadet I paddled a metal three section Commando canoe around Birkenhead docks. On joining the Royal Navy I was introduced to slalom canoes at the start of a competition and promptly fell out before the start gate. I then shared a Tyne folder and paddled around Loch Lomond and Lake Lucern. Once, while nearly capsizing a slalom canoe in the Forth Harbour at Rhyll, I hung on to a yacht and became an 'instant yachtie' (currently have a restored wooden Drascombe lugger). But I have always been drawn back to canoes and early last year bought my first sea kayak; a beautifully made Sea King. I then joined the RAF Sealand Canoe Club and am still learning the basic strokes and rolls in the pool. During the glorious October of '95 I began venturing onto the tidal Welsh River Dee at Cannahs' Quay to enjoy spectacular sunsets, though still a nervous 56 year old novice".

Ian Stevens from Glasgow sent me the following: "I have been a keen mountaineer for many years and I was really interested in 'branching out' away from the increasingly crowded hills and changeable scottish weather. Reading "Blazing Paddles" and paddling with Brian Wilson in ideal conditions around Harris has made me more than enthusiastic! My ambitions are to do some sea mountaineering, meet up with some like minded people and enjoy myself".

Mark Tozer from Applecross, Ross-shire says, " Having recently become a qualified outdoor activities teacher from Bangor University, I have just commenced work at Fairbridge Drakes Centre at Applecross. I look forward to extending my sea paddling experiences in this area, and further afield around the Scottish coastline. Are there any club members in this area?".

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Correspondence from Laurie Atkins, Victoria, Australia.

Dear John,

I write with two thoughts in mind.

First, like many other correspondents to the Newsletter, I'd like to express my appreciation of the job you do on it. (Thanks, I appreciate your comments, Ed), It is clear to see that sea kayakers share many attitudes and characteristics in common despite being spread around the globe. Thankyou.

Secondly, I would like to publicise my interest in sea kayaking in the hope of making contact with similarly interested people from amongst the Newsletter readership. Apart from paddling itself, I have a strong interest in natural resource and recreation management and planning. In particular I am interested in how land (and sea!) management agencies have regulated seas kayaking and how sea kayakers have sought to influence such regulations.

Perhaps there is a third issue an apology for including any consideration of the bureaucracy in the same discussion as sea kayaking.

THE ASSESSMENT AND SELECTION OF SEA KAYAKING GROUP LEADERS

FRONTISPIECE

(The following is an extract from 'Argonauts of the Western Isles' by Robin Lloyd-Jones).

"All night our tents had heaved and panted, their edges cracking like machine-gun fire. And now, in the morning, the sea was white-flecked with southward speeding waves. We were on Garbh Eileach, the largest island in the Garvellach chain. Easdale, our destination on the mainland, lay seven miles to the north-east.

Should we attempt the crossing or not? Lofty, the leader of our six-person expedition, was undecided.

"The shipping forecast is force seven, gusting to eight," he said.

We didn't need to be told that anything above eight was a gale-force wind.

"We've both got to be back at work tomorrow," Ken and Joe reminded him.

We sized up the situation. Overconfidence and male pride figured large in our reckoning. The previous day the six of us had paddled our kayaks eighteen miles from Mull to Garbh Eileach through mountainous swell and winds of force six or seven. We had coped with it well. We were the best, we told ourselves. We were the greatest. Besides, none of us was going to be the first to back down - not with Heather in the group. The fact that she was probably the best woman sea-canoeist in Britain weighed less with us than the fact that she was female and only nineteen. Then there were members of the British Girls' Exploration Society (Senior Branch) who were occupying a bothy on the island. "I don't think you should go," one of them said. That decided it.

Half an hour out from the Garvellachs I knew we had made a serious mistake. This was no force seven gusting to eight. We were paddling straight into a full force nine gale. Tons of solid grey sea, curling at the top, swept towards me. Up rose my kayak, up to where the shrieking wind would have torn the paddle from my grasp had I not clung to it with all my strength, up to where the spume was driven blindingly into my face. Then the downward plunge and the next wave looming over me, blotting out the 300-foot-high hills of the Garvellachs.

There could be no question of turning back. Running with the waves, particularly when they roll up behind you and overtake you, is far more difficult than heading into them. We were committed to our decision.

In calm weather, the seven-mile crossing would have taken about an hour. That day, in the first hour of hard paddling, I moved forward twenty yards. The group was scattered over an area of about a square mile. Occasionally someone would rise into sight only to disappear again, leaving me alone on the empty tossing expanse.

Another advancing wall of water; and another; never-ending ranks of waves, each one threatening to break over me, drenching me, disorientating me, hurling me sideways. Down into a deep grey gulf, bracing myself for the next oncoming crest.

After the second hour of paddling the same white house on the shore was still opposite my starboard bow. This couldn't be happening to me. It couldn't. Keep going, keep going! To rest for even a minute would be to lose every hard-earned inch. The sea slapped my face. The dream-bubble burst as the painful, sharp-edged truth of my predicament pierced my mind and twisted inside my gut. If I made a mistake and capsized, death was only minutes away. There was no possibility of rolling my kayak up again in these conditions. If I paddled until exhaustion claimed me, my life expectancy was a few hours at the most. No profound thoughts about death visited me, only a dull ache of regret. Above everything else I was possessed by a fierce, animal instinct for survival and an acute desire to avert the actual moment of dying, the agony of drawing the cold ocean into my lungs.

The enemy was not the sea. The enemy was fear, cold, fatigue and loneliness. And the greatest of these is loneliness. If I saw one of my companions capsize I was going to leave him to his fate. Our rescue drills would be useless in seas as steep as this. Each of the others would have made the same decision. I could expect no help. Yet my heart lifted whenever I saw I was not alone in this inhospitable place and that another human being shared my travail. Every muscle in my body whimpered, 'I'm tired, I'm so tired. I can't go on!' But when your life depends on it you do go on.

In those third and fourth hours I entered uncharted mental states, plunging from crests of pure joy into troughs of terror and despair. Screaming with rage at my kayak I hammered it with my fists and hurled vile abuse at it for not keeping a straight course, threatening to chop it into little pieces and burn it. And the next instant I was singing at the top of my voice with sheer exhilaration at the power, the splendour, the magnificence of this mighty ocean. Surely this was the closest Man could ever come to the elemental forces. And then, for a thousand different reasons, the salt of my tears mingled with that of the sea.

Some of this emotional sea-sawing was caused, I knew, by the onset of hypothermia. Recognising and understanding the symptoms helped me to hold it at bay. But my stamina was ebbing away. My hands had lost all feeling, cramp was beginning to grip my forearms and stomach. My coordination was falling apart. I tried to paddle and completely missed the water. I can't go on! This time, I really can't! I stared stupidly at the wooden implement in my hands. What was it? Oh, yes, a paddle. But what you did with it I could not think. An extra large chunk of water struck me beam on and sent me skidding down its steep reverse side. Instinctively I reacted, made the correct stroke and was paddling again with energy drawn from some secret well deep inside me.

Hugh's yellow kayak appeared on my right.
"How are you doing?" I shouted.
"Bloody glad to see you!"

His face was ashen, tense, etched with fatigue. Hugh's need of me kept me going. As long as he could see me paddling beside him he wouldn't give up. Suddenly Heather was there too, on an adjacent wave. "The tide's turning!" she yelled above the din. "If you can hold your own, the tide will carry you home! Just one more hour!" Heather's message of hope, the white house at last beginning to shift, encouraging Hugh: these things brought me into Easdale harbour.

I made landfall. Ken sat on the beach, his head in his hands. Joe lay face down, groaning. Heather nodded to me and smiled. I was too numb, both physically and mentally, to respond. I discovered later that she had found each one of us in that storm and given us hope. Lofty, who was already in the car park above the harbour, opened his car door. The wind wrenched it off its hinges and sent it scudding across the tarmac like a leaf until it crumpled against a wall. Nobody said anything. The only sounds were the wind, the sea and someone close by quietly sobbing.

All six of us had survived five hours in a force nine gale, but none of us would ever again claim to be the greatest. That title we reserve for the sea." (1)

INTRODUCTION

There comes a point in many paddling ventures when the thin red line is crossed - that thin red line between paddling just beneath one's limits and capability and that area wherein one is paddling, perhaps literally, for one's life. Most reflections after such events deal only with the content of the second area - rarely is any analysis carried out to identify where the line lay, what instant it was crossed, and why. Even less frequently is any analysis carried out to examine where, or if, a failure of leadership training or assessment has occurred, resulting in the exposure of a group to serious danger.

AIMS AND LIMITATIONS

The principal aim of this paper is to examine the factors involved in successful leadership of sea kayaking ventures. A secondary aim is to assess whether the current BCU system of tests and awards meets the requirement of selecting competent and safe group leaders. The paper is limited to the case where a person is formally required to provide leadership of a party, and is thereby responsible for its actions and fortunes. The mutually agreed, mutually supporting, leadership style of 'peer group paddling' is not considered.

FACTORS

There are two groups of factors which either in isolation or combination could lead to the extremes of paddle or die - the objective factors which are amenable to pass/fail testing and the subjective factors which are more difficult to assess and require a perhaps more intuitive approach.

OBJECTIVE FACTORS

The objective factors in sea kayaking include the following:

a. Weather. The ability of a paddler to understand meteorological weather conditions and their effects on paddling conditions is critical to safety at sea. This leads to a requirement to understand such matters as forecasting and the effects of wind and waves and thereby the ability of the paddler to forecast the limits of safety for various levels of competence. The assessment of a paddler's ability to carry this out lends itself neatly to progressive measures of ability viz:

- i. Where is the wind going to coming from? (Easy).
- ii. What sort of front produces what sort of weather? (More difficult).
- iii. Interpret the accompanying synoptic chart and provide a forecast for the next 24hrs. (Advanced).

b. The movement of water. Another critical area is that of understanding the movement of water in all respects eg tides, currents, the effects of obstacles on water flow and so on. Not only is the assessor seeking to confirm that the paddler has a reasonable level of knowledge per se but also that the paddler understands the consequences and effects on paddling. Again, this subject is amenable to graduated testing and assessment.

c. Paddling and rescue techniques. The area of personal skills - specifically those of boat handling and rescue techniques - are perhaps less suitable subjects for graduated tests. It is a point of discussion as to whether the criteria should be 'can do/can't do' (i.e. forward paddle effectively and efficiently; turn the boat both whilst stationery and on the move; carry out an efficient and effective rescue, both solo and as a member of a group of equally competent paddlers) or whether it is possible (in the phraseology of the star tests) to 'demonstrate satisfactory beginnings of'. (2)

d. Trip planning. The ability to interpret data from various sources such as charts, pilots and maps and turn this into the sound basis for a plan for a trip is a fundamental factor in successful and safe sea paddling. This ability can again be tested in a graduated manner with, thereby, awards of levels of competence reflecting levels of ability.

In all of these objective factors it is possible to set tests of an aspirant leader in order to identify whether or not they have the necessary level of theoretical and technical competence to lead a trip. It should be noted however that despite being effective, an objective assessment can suffer from a perceptual problem:

'In the objective approach, the assessor ticks off the candidate's score against a detailed list of tasks and questions during the assessment. At the end of the course, if the candidate has reached a minimum pass score he/she passes. If not, then the result is a fail. This extremely objective style ensures that all candidates are treated equally, but it makes for a rather formal and often authoritarian atmosphere, which is not popular with candidates'. (3)

Nevertheless, it is possible to identify the subjects and necessary objectives for training and testing and, having done that, to design and implement training and testing syllabi and schemes. These could be of different levels and therefore the sifting of the candidate by testing and ability would lead to an assessment of the ability of the individual and their technical competence to lead a sea trip (however that may be defined).

SUBJECTIVE FACTORS

The subjective factors are those which involve assessments both by and of the individual. As a result they are both highly individualistic and difficult to define in a manner leading to easily classified testing and assessment procedures. They include the following:

a. The individual's self-assessment of their own capability.

There are numerous examples of paddlers who are by any assessment technically poor in that they have poor strokes and poor sea judgement - yet the same person may perceive no problem and indeed often see themselves to be an above average paddler (in much the same way that car drivers in many surveys always perceive the 'other driver' as being the one who displays poor skills or judgement). Similarly, there are examples of highly competent but timid paddlers who are capable of high degrees of technical skill but endeavour to ensure that they never get in a position to need to use the full range of their skills.

b. The potential leaders's assessment of the group's ability.

Outwith highly structured groups, many paddling trips take place with a composition arrived at by chance and fate. This results in the proposed leader needing to assess the group's overall ability as well as that of the component individuals - do the corporate strengths of the group outweigh or offset any technical weaknesses of one or two members of the group? - are there common strengths or weaknesses in the experience and background of the group members? If there are any such significant weaknesses (and how does one define 'significant'?) does the leader have to change the trip plan and if they do, will that change the composition of the group? How do you measure the leader's ability to carry out such assessments - and therefore how do you design testing and training schemes?

c. The fear of failure. Many epics result from a reluctance to admit either that conditions are unsuitable for the group or that the group could not cope with the conditions. Group leaders often sink too much of their persona into the aim of the trip and are therefore reluctant to abort trips (either before or after starting). Paradoxically those who have survived one epic are less likely to volunteer for another! Perhaps a part of the training process should therefore be a 'controlled epic' to familiarize potential leaders with their limits and to accustom themselves to the thought that to accept that completing a trip is not necessarily the 'be all and end all'. However, the logical end of this line of arguing is to accept that only 'advanced' paddlers are capable of leading any other than extremely simple trips.

d. The fear of 'loss of face'. Allied to the previous factor is that of not wishing to lose face in front of members of the group. There is a fine line between confident leadership which has correctly assessed the conditions and that of a person who is determined not to see the true conditions which surround them - because to do so would logically result in an unemotional assessment confirming their fear that, for them, the conditions cannot be safely paddled.

e. The personality of the potential leader. There is a well known spectrum of personalities which has, as an equally well known offshoot, a range of leadership styles. These vary from the intensely introvert to the wildly extrovert; from the committed group activist to the lone wolf. All of these personalities and leadership styles have something to offer in the overall spectrum of 'acceptable paddling leadership' - and yet the assessment of what is 'good' or 'bad' very often revolves around whether or not the candidate's style is compatible with that of the assessor. How can one test, with less subjectivity, the suitability of a candidate and their style of leadership for the task of safely leading groups at sea? May there indeed be a role for psychometric testing in the assessment of leadership candidates?

All of these factors lead, by various routes, to a subjective assessment of the capabilities of the potential leader. However, what is to be looked for, and how, and why?

'The subjective style often means a minimum of note-taking, and the assessor forms an overall judgement, based on long experience, which tells him/her who is up to standard and who is not. The danger with the extreme form of this method is that at the end of the course the assessor might be unable to provide a failed candidate with specific details of his/her weaknesses.' (3)

Or, indeed, the candidate may be deferred or failed on somewhat specious grounds because the assessor feels 'something is not right' but cannot cogently express the problem.

CLASSIFICATION

If a system were to be introduced (or already existed) which looked at:

a. The personal ability of an individual both in the hard skills of performance and in the assessment of their safe level of seamanship.

b. An assessment of an individual's leadership ability (however subjective, intuitive and fraught that may be!)

it would be possible to arrive at a graduated spectrum of paddlers and potential trip leaders - from the individual who is weak in both areas to those who are strong in both, and all variations between.

Having carried out a full assessment in both areas, where should the 'acceptable level' lie? The greatest problem for an assessor is perhaps the individual who is personally highly competent but apparently unable to recognise a potentially dangerous situation - or indeed one that they themselves are capable of dealing with but which their group is not.

THE BCU SYSTEM

Having looked in theoretical terms at the selection and assessment of trip leaders, does the BCU system currently in operation meet the requirement to produce safe, competent paddlers and leaders?

The assessment of an individual's personal capability is currently made via the Star Test system and Proficiency/Advanced Proficiency tests. There is inevitably some overlap and duplication between the two methods and indeed, at the higher levels of assessment, sometimes considerable discussion as to the relationship between 4/5 Star Tests and the Advanced Proficiency award. This is shortly to be addressed and thereafter the technical assessment of performance should be clearer.

There is however currently no form of purely leader award made by the BCU. It has been suggested by some sea paddlers that a stand-alone 'Leader' qualification is needed (4). This, it is proposed, would be an award without the teaching and personal skills aspects of the Senior Instructor assessment. However, being presented as a requirement for groups in which no teaching is carried out, that same ground is within the remit of the Advanced Proficiency award - and it would therefore be a duplication. Furthermore, if the personal skills application was removed, the award would only consist of a test of the ability to plan proficiency level expeditions - an award of limited usefulness.

The leadership aspects of sea kayaking are currently assessed within the BCU by relying on an overlap in the assessments of both subjective and objective factors. At the lower levels of the Coaching Scheme, (i.e. at and below Instructor), there is little or no assessment of leadership - teaching and technical skills being the principal criteria for assessment. However at the next stage, Senior Instructor, leadership is looked for and reliance is placed on the practical leadership displayed in the gaining of the appropriate Proficiency Certificate which is a pre-requisite to assessment. This style of assessment and classification leads to statements such as:

'The minimally experienced Senior Instructor (Sea) will have been assessed as competent to lead proficiency level expeditions (as defined elsewhere]. As his or her experience increases, more exposed situations may be tackled. The Advanced Proficiency Certificate is a useful endorsement for this purpose.' (5)

There seems an inherent lack of logic in an individual holding any 'Senior' title whereas he/she is actually unqualified and unable to lead anything other than simple trips. Similarly there is a lack of clarity in the description of the Advanced Proficiency award, implying as it does that there is no remit for any form of teaching or coaching. A person at this level of operation will inevitably coach others in their performance (but perhaps not in a formal setting).

The move to NVQs will decrease the problems with the terminology - clearly defining the difference between Level 3 Coaches (Senior Instructor) and Level 4 Coaches (Senior Instructor with Advanced Proficiency).

It is reasonable to conclude that (in current terminology) the combination of Senior Instructor with Advanced Proficiency is the desirable (minimum?) level. The individual with this combination of awards is the result of the successful broad spectrum of assessment in

both objective and subjective leadership factors. None of the current BCU awards assessments is of sufficient duration on its own to allow a full and thorough assessment of an individual's leadership capabilities. (It is worth noting that the Mountain Leader Training Board assessment courses are of 5 days duration - the minimum considered necessary to judge accurately the leadership ability of a candidate. Such assessments are both practical and theoretical and take place in both contrived and naturally arising circumstances. They would seem to represent an ideal framework for future Level 4 Coach assessments!).

Because the BCU has so far eschewed the philosophy of leader awards, the answer to the question posed at the start of this section can only be a qualified 'yes'. The personal tests of proficiency undoubtedly identify competent paddlers, and, by virtue of the tests of seamanship inherent in the Proficiency and Advanced Proficiency awards, those who are safe. It is however only those who are trained and then assessed at the higher levels in both personal and group aspects (i.e. proficiency scheme and Coaching Scheme) who can truly be adjudged competent leaders. Overall the BCU system does achieve the aim of producing paddlers who are less likely to go over their own red line inadvertently and furthermore, are better trained to approach it in safety.

It seems not, however, to have fully addressed the problems for those who need a formal leadership qualification and requires those individuals to progress down two quite disparate avenues of approach.

A PROPOSAL

The move to NVQs and their associated terminology is perhaps an opportune moment to consider an alternative approach to the current BCU system, and one in line with the earlier discussion. Why not pilot a course of 7-8 days duration assessing the following (in current terminology):

- a. Personal skills and knowledge to Advanced Proficiency award level.
- b. Coaching skills to minimal Senior Instructor level.
- c. Leadership ability as required by an individual formally leading Proficiency level paddlers on advanced trips.

leading direct to Level 4 Coach status?

The last aspect is the reason for the duration of the course; the candidates would be expected to lead a number of trips in 'real' conditions.

As the content and style of the first two aspects reflect those of awards already extant in the BCU system, only the ethos behind the last aspect requires exploration. Yardsticks an assessor might use could include the following:

- a. Is the paddler sufficiently competent to have spare capacity to look after others in advanced conditions?

- b. Can the candidate recognise potentially dangerous areas and take appropriate steps?
- c. Can the candidate identify, and take steps to minimise the groups exposure to, actual danger?
- d. Is the candidate alert to potential weaknesses within the group and do they take appropriate measures and decisions?
- e. What is the candidate's reaction to stress and pressure in an advanced situation? Can they cope and still think clearly?
- f. Were I not here, would the candidate bring the group back alive?

Clearly there are many other key questions which could be posed but those above are sufficient to point the direction an assessment could take. One critical aspect of the course would be its staffing by highly capable and experienced sea paddlers - with a sufficient personality spread to minimise the risk of 'selection by cloning'!

CONCLUSION

Safe and sound leadership of groups at sea relies upon having capable paddlers with proven leadership skills. The current amalgam of BCU awards does not fully meet the remit of a leader qualification and yet the requirement for one perhaps exists. The changes to the Coaching Scheme provide an opportunity to either fill the gap by a better combination of awards or trial a pilot course if the will exists.

Sources:

1. Argonauts of the Western Isles. Robin Lloyd-Jones. Diadem Books. 1989. ISBN 0-906371-03-1
2. BCU Publication CT.401/90. Kayak Star Tests. Grades 1-3.
3. BCU Publication CA.463/90. Senior Instructor Assessment. Notes for Guidance of Examiners.
4. Considerable correspondence, primarily SKGUK/BCU. Letters in Canoeist, SKGUK 'Tidal Bore' and ASKC/ISKA Newsletter.
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Sailing by Eye

J D Sleightholme
Cruising
 first published 1963

Originally published as Pocket Cruising, J D Sleightholme's book is now titled simply Cruising, and is already in the second printing of its third edition. He introduces the following extract with these words: 'I have always believed that to con a boat by eye alone has great merit in that one assembles a sort of mental chart and a "feeling of position" on it. The headlands, buoys, marks and landmarks wheel around you as you pass by, offering a constant mental plot of changing position.

'I think I would add one important point to the following extract; con by eye for all you are worth, but from time to time, as positions on the chart present themselves, mark them as such with the time and the heading. If you are running the log, note that also. Then if suddenly your eyebrows go up and your confidence goes down - if you are momentarily lost or caught out by failing visibility - you have a last known position from which to plot.'

There is nothing frighteningly technical about the sort of navigation, or coastal pilotage to give it a more exact name, required for small cruisers. The simpler it can be made the better. Without the big chart-table and steadier working surface on bigger craft, the small boat man will get on better by sticking to a very few rules than by trying to work to fine limits.

The ancient Norse pilots worked by studying headlands. They had no instruments, but they had a keen eye for the shape of the land. The pocket-cruiser man has the advantages of charts, compasses and tide-tables, but he is attempting much the same type of navigation.

Above all things he must be a map reader. This is no heresy, and it does not mean that he should use a map in lieu of a chart. But he will have very little time in which to practise chart work at sea, and map-reading from a one-inch Ordnance Survey before he goes will teach him to look at the flat sheet and visualise it as a landscape or coastline which has height and depth.

Most navigational trouble arises from losing one's sense of orientation. One can get lost while in full view of a clearly recognisable stretch of coastline, merely because one has failed to 'look' at the coast in the bustle of laying courses, reading logs and taking innumerable bearings on buoys. It needs but one or two of these fixes to go wrong and one begins to get anxious. So the first thing to do in a small coasting cruiser is to keep a constant watch on the coastline as it unfolds, at the same time studying the chart.

Plotting is often a labour in a bit of a sea. Watching the coast calls for no instruments, and fixes upon buoys and shore-marks are only for confirmation. The compass course may be used when there is risk of suddenly losing visibility or it may be a simple matter of convenience for steering straight. At other times it is really only important if there are offlying dangers athwart the course, which have to be given a known safe berth, or in verifying a transit when there is doubt about the identification of one of the objects.

It is possible to navigate clear along a coastline without looking at the instruments, simply by noting the natural transits provided by headlands, piers, rocks and so on. By laying a ruler on the chart, for instance, the yachtsman may notice a headland which, at a certain point, becomes obscured behind a bulge in the coast. By watching for it he gets a position line which is indisputable and, if at the same time, a glance ashore shows a small bay or group of rocks coming abeam he has his second line – rough, of course, but a succession of such transit fixes takes him safely down the coast without him once becoming involved in the complexity of chart work which seems to be considered so vital.

I mention this habit of studying the coast first for an important reason. There are times when a man has his hands far too full sailing the boat to indulge in lengthy sessions on the chart. If he can 'see' his way along it will

stand him in good stead. But first he must learn to see the coast as a chart and the chart as a coast. This chapter deals with pilotage by eye and the look of the land from seaward. In the next chapter the use of compass, calculation of tidal effect, laying a course offshore and so on will be dealt with stage by stage.

Looking at the Land

Each coastal region has its own typical features. The East Coast man is often terrified of West Coast rockiness and the deep-water man, accustomed to rock-fringed coasts, is nervous of navigating among the shallows of the Thames Estuary. Nowadays the owner of a small cruiser may trail it from one coast to the other in the course of a day, and so he must be a versatile navigator.

The low-lying coastline is particularly difficult to identify. The shape of the sea-bed usually continues the run of the flat shore, and it is therefore shallow for a long way out to sea. This means that the cruiser is forced to stay well out, and details on shore become harder to identify. The absence

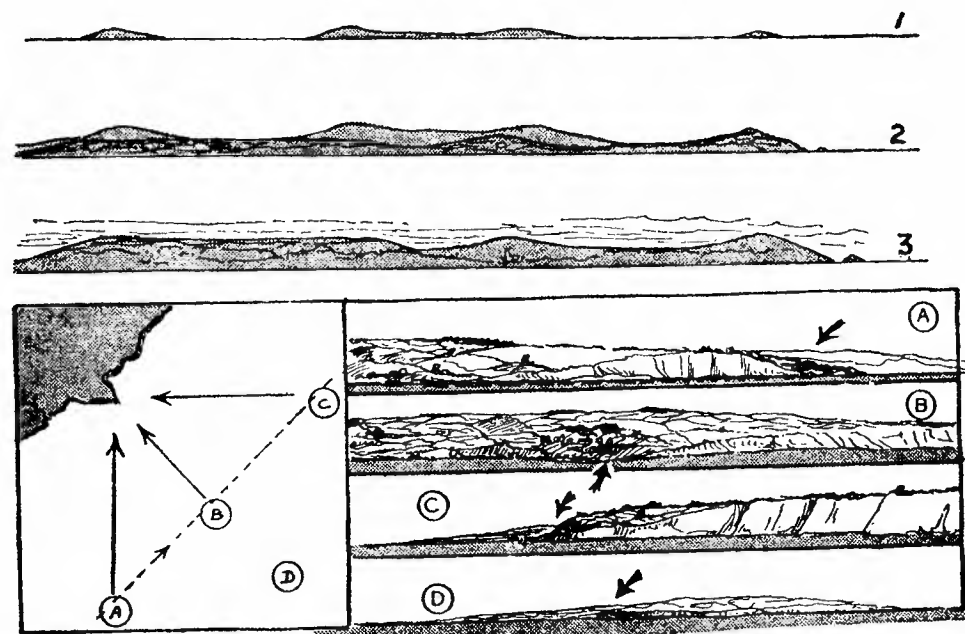


Fig. 36 Approaching the coast in clear visibility, distant hills may be seen in a row of islands (1). Nearer inshore (2) the foreground is still overshadowed by the inland contour, but close inshore the inland hills are hidden and the skyline shape of the coast is quite changed (3). The small headland seen from positions A, B and C may be hard to distinguish against the rest of the coastline although from the chart it would promise to be easily identified. At position D, well offshore, only a slight sharpening of detail indicates its position.

of pronounced headlands, cliffs, distinctive bays and rocky projections. It complicates things further. Headlands run out to sea so gradually that the exact point where the land finishes and sea begins is hard to decide. On this kind of coast the navigator becomes a buoy-hopper. He concentrates entirely on buoys and ignores the land, and he can easily lose his sense of position if he makes a mistake in a compass course between buoys.

The low coastline rises and falls in hazy undulations and it's difficult to decide whether a gradual fading away into the sea is due to the height of the land diminishing or the coastline receding. The only clues are such objects as houses, trees and people ashore. Compare them constantly through the binoculars and note their relative sizes at different spots along the coastline.

The direction of natural light must be reckoned with. If the sun is low and behind the land there will be a featureless monotony of bluish shadow in which a block of flats may look no different from a church-tower, or a clump of trees may masquerade as a prominent spur of ground shown on the chart. On the other hand the sunlight shining full onshore can pick out a strip of wet road and make it appear to be a white tower, while the actual tower is muted by the shadow of a cloud. You must therefore never accept the obvious without due thought.

A hilly coast is far easier to correlate to the chart. The yacht is usually close inshore and bays and headlands are more distinct, also villages and small towns do not straggle, each is contained more compactly in its valley. There is only the risk of one headland looking much like another, especially with the effect of sunshine and cloud shadow to alter the apparent contours.

Seen from far at sea the contours of a coastline can be very deceptive if there are ranges of inland hills. The switchback effect of more distant hills may be quite different from the actual coastline profile, and only as the yacht gets closer are the background hills hidden by the coastline. It must

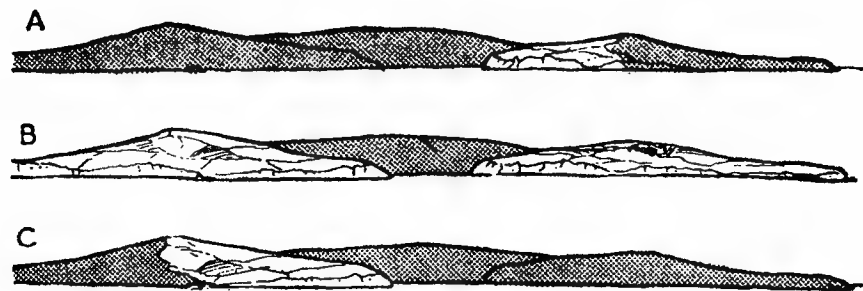


Fig. 37 Sunlight striking a hilly coast can alter the importance of prominent features. 'A' highlights the right-hand headland, but 'B' gives an impression of a deep inlet, while 'C' from a distance might cause the right-hand headland to look like a receding coastline.

be rendered subject to error. The distance between the headlands may be shortened. Often it is only low-slanting sunlight, casting shadow, which reveals the position of a headland at all. The navigator may sail straight past it only to find it, as he thinks, some miles further on when a lesser headland is exaggerated by tricks of light (Fig. 37).

It is easy to con a cruiser by identifying prominent features as they come into line ashore once you have mastered the symbols on the chart and learnt to match land and paper in this way. In tricky waters, infested with rocks or sand-bars, it is no substitute for careful plotting with compass and parallel rules, but it dispenses with 80 per cent of it in straightforward waters, while the safe transit method of keeping an offing from inshore dangers is better than any mechanical plot.

Many transits (objects in line) are marked on the chart for the guidance of the navigator approaching a river or passage between dangers, and most of these are man-made beacons, towers and so forth. The coastline furnishes many, many more which are there for the finding.

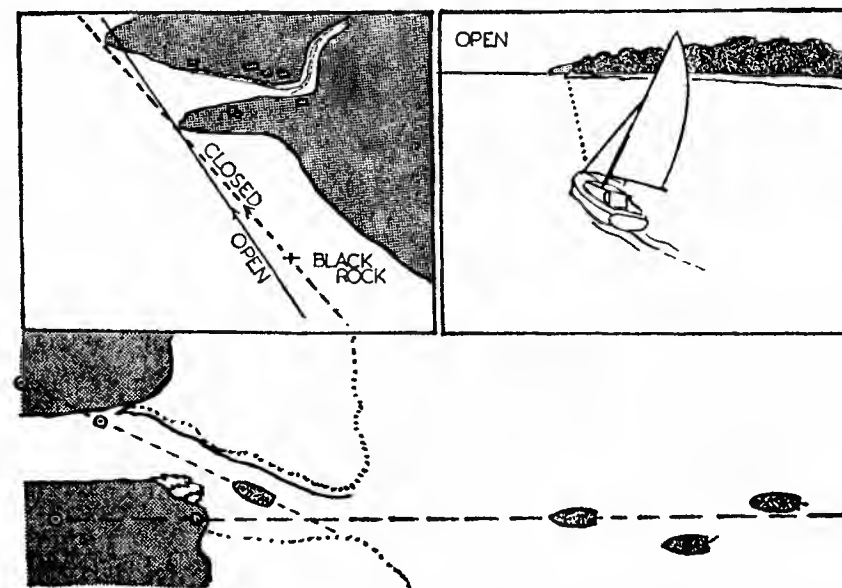


Fig. 38 Leading marks and transits. Plan shows the difference between the headlands 'closed', or the nearer one covering the more distant headland, and 'open', when the distant headland can be seen projecting beyond the nearer one. In this case the headlands are being kept open as an indication that the cruiser is clearing Black Rock which lies on the transit of the headlands. Leading marks (bottom) may be man-made beacons for entering a river, the vessel steering to keep the back mark in line with the front one. In this case there are two sets of leaders, an inner pair guiding the vessel into the river. The leaders may be lit by night.

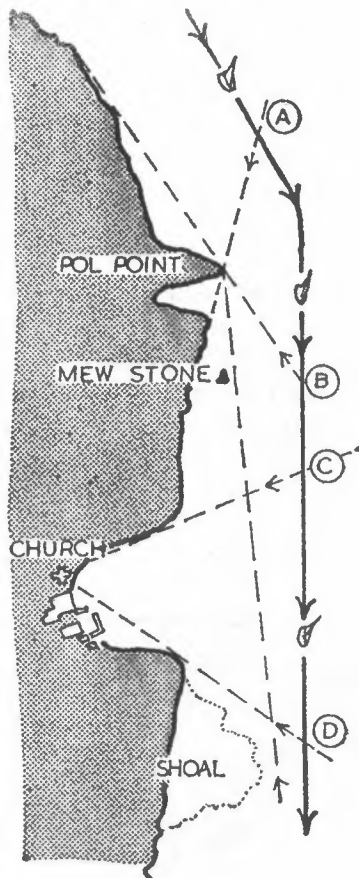


Fig. 39

In Fig. 39 the cruiser is coasting offshore along the unbroken arrowed line. At 'A' headlands are in transit, and at 'B' a headland hides the bulge in the coastline astern. Yet another transit of sorts comes up as the bay opens up from 'C', and at 'D' the navigator finds a safe transit to see him past the shoal. By glancing at the church-tower he knows that he will not be in the danger area until it is lost to view behind the land, while by keeping the Mew Stone astern *inside* Pol point he can stay outside the danger area.

There will be buoys to aid him, naturally, but it isn't always so easy for the inexperienced navigator to be certain of the identity of a buoy until he is close. The buoy which appears where he would *like* to see it may not be the one he is hoping to find, and, of course, there is no excuse for not checking the compass bearings between buoys as they are passed. Many of them form useful transits in their own right, but it must be borne in mind that at close hand the swinging room of a moored buoy upsets the angles a

lot, especially if it should be a little out of position. Both buoys and lightships rarely get out of position, but occasionally they do so and they ought not to be relied upon implicitly.

The chart usually gives a picture of compactness with the buoys in cosy proximity to each other. In reality the details are unexpectedly distant, and the whole picture greatly extended. An observer takes in the whole chart-coast at a glance, but the land is seen as a mass which tapers in perspective on either hand. The buoys marked on the chart would need to be engraved as pin-pricks to approximate to their correct scale, and it is important to think of them as pin-pricks. At a distance of three miles a really large buoy

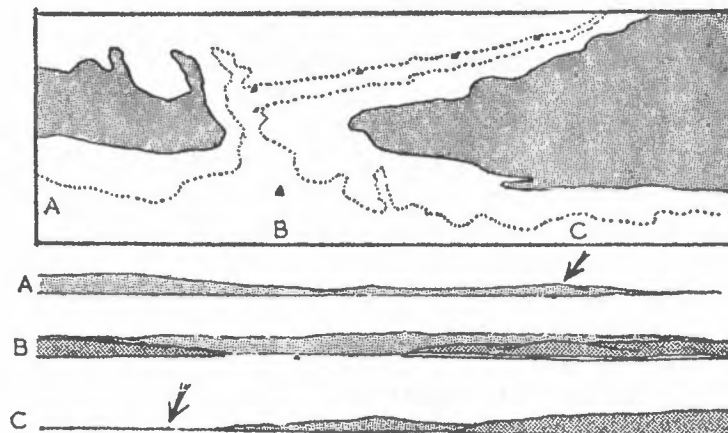


Fig. 40 The chart indicates that the buoy will be found close inshore, but from positions A and C it may be missed, since it will appear to be lost against the background in the one case and further offshore in the other. At B it becomes plain to find if the yacht has made a proper approach.

can just about be seen, though probably not identified, and the smaller buoys without topmarks are not visible until within one and a half miles. The navigator studying his chart may expect to see half a dozen buoys all within a small area and he may get worried because they don't show up. In coasting, it is a common mistake to look too close inshore for an expected buoy probably marking an offlying spit. In fact, it may be visible as a tiny black peppercorn apparently far out to sea. But once you reach it, the coastline behind it appears close again due to the effect of foreshortening. Practice with the ordinary Ordnance Survey map ashore helps a lot by giving you a feeling of distance away from land. Coasting and keeping a safe distance offshore are largely a matter of judgement. The navigator may cover his chart with fixes, but when the shore is featureless and barren of seamarks it is judgement which counts.

Distance by Eye

It is deceptive to attempt to judge distance through binoculars. Distance blurs detail even though the object may be visible for a long way. A large tree at between one and a half and two miles can be seen in crisp detail in a good light, but if a pencil is held at arm's length, the tree will be no taller than the lead. At four miles the tree is seen with rounded outlines, and shadows are blue, with the foliage masses appearing to have been dabbed on roughly, though the shapes of trees are still quite individual. At eight miles trees are simply blue humps and can easily be confused with, say, a water tower or a row of houses.

A small building with a white or pale facing wall becomes blurred and loses sharp edges at a mile and a half although darker windows and doors are still recognisable. At four miles these details have gone and the shape is almost lost. At six miles it has become a dab of colour without shape. Caravan parks at five miles are scattered chips of white, cars can be seen if they are moving and hedgerows are about the size of a pencil line.

The effect of lighting is again very important. A coastline under the full blaze of early morning sunshine is crisp in detail and appears closer than it does with the detail lost in shadow. At dusk, with the light behind the land making it a flat silhouette and the reflection of high ground extending across the water, it is often hard to form any true estimate. This is especially true at night and many a cruiser has navigated inshore to find an anchorage, and finally anchored at what seems to be a perilously close distance from the shore; but daylight finds her stuck out in the open a mile from land. The black land mass and its reflection seem to loom far higher than it really is.

Weather also affects one's judgement of distance. The vivid clarity which often comes in advance of rain and wind can mess up the estimates; the pearly haze of a hot day, which so often accompanies easterly weather, or the refraction which seems to jack up the whole coastline, must all be reckoned with. Refraction, extending the height of shore buildings to a grotesque proportion, can fool the navigator into thinking that a row of particularly nasty bungalows are actually oil storage tanks. The beach also becomes a prominent feature, to be searched for anxiously on the chart, though it is really just a narrow strip of shingle.

The effect of the earth's curvature when one is looking for shoremarks also comes into the picture when visibility is very clear. A harbour wall, sole clue to a small port perhaps, may be 'dipped' just below the horizon when the town behind it is vividly seen in detail, and at night whole rows of shore lights can be seen jauntily nipping up and down with a disturbing ripple effect.

The Look of the Water

Without a certain knowledge of position, a passage down the coast becomes rather frightening. Every wind ripple or tidal swirl becomes, in the imagination, an 'uncharted' rock. The look of the water is a necessary study.

In rocky coastal districts the colour of the water is significant. Blue-black for the deeps, paler blue and then green for shoal patches, with black shadows marking underwater rocks covered with weed – in sunshine the pilot can get plenty of warning of shoaling water. On the east coast of England, however, it is rare to find clear water, and a two-foot patch is often the same colour as a ten-fathom channel. In fact the swirl of a fast tide may bring sand to the surface and imitate a shoal where none exists. The movement of the water is another matter altogether.

In Fig. 41 some of the many faces of the sea are shown. At 'A' unbalanced breaking crests give warning of rocks beneath. This is familiar deep-water rocky coast stuff and there may be ample water above the rocks, but they must still be avoided. The sheen on the water above a sandbank 'B' is often imitated by a 'hole' in the wind on a quiet day, but with the least breeze there will be a subtle change in the surface of the water which is unmistakable. 'C' shows how a tidal overfall may look very similar to a shoal or reef. At 'D' a calm sea allows the tidal stream running through the deeper water of the channel to reveal its whereabouts by a rippling of the surface. Note how the awash shoal by the beacon is barely distinguishable from the water around it. The same channel in a light breeze 'E' may be marked by a slick of smooth water if the stream is flowing, with the wind, fast enough to prevent the formation of wavelets. At 'F', however, wind against tide has raised a steep sea in the deep water, while the regular wave-formation indicates shallower water where the fast tide is not felt. 'G' shows the same channel when the stream is running with the wind and the higher waves are seen over the shallower water. Open-sea waves of a trochoidal type of swell (H) may be left-overs from a distant storm, they may be high but they are usually harmless. In shoaling water the crests may spill forward, and again not necessarily be troublesome. The cycloidal wind-driven wave, which increases in size according to 'fetch' or distance unimpeded by land, frequently becomes a plunger in shoal water and must be avoided. The shallow bar 'I' seen from seaward is deceptive because only the backs of the breaking waves are seen. Overfalls are often caused by an abrupt rise in the sea-bed 'J' which forces the tidal current on the surface, but an isolated rocky outcrop may also be the cause. It is dangerous to venture close to any overfall unless the exact depth of water is known. To skirt it in order to stay on a making tack, for instance, is risky since the actual water disturbance takes place at various distances from the rock itself. A fast tide in deep water creates 'smooths' or slicks which may be frightening, suggesting as they do some unseen rock 'K'. The yacht may

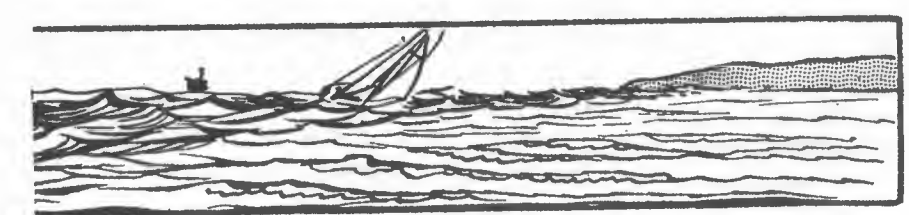
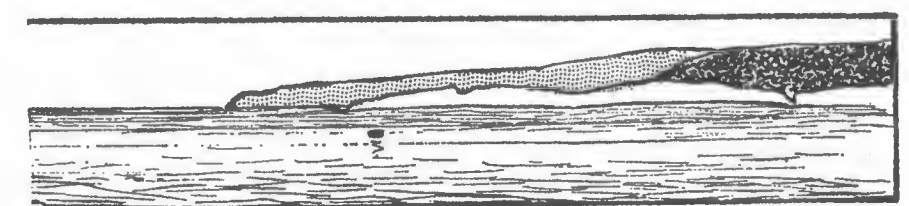
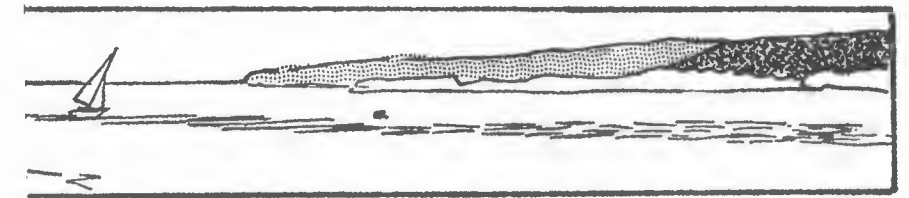
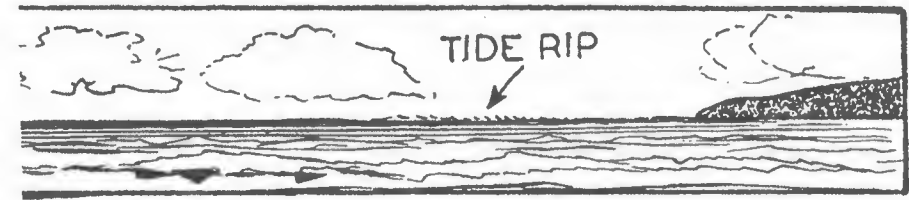
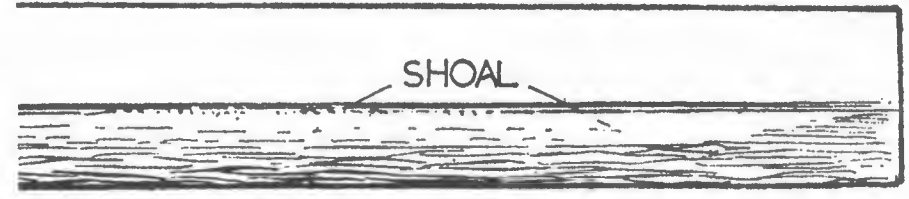
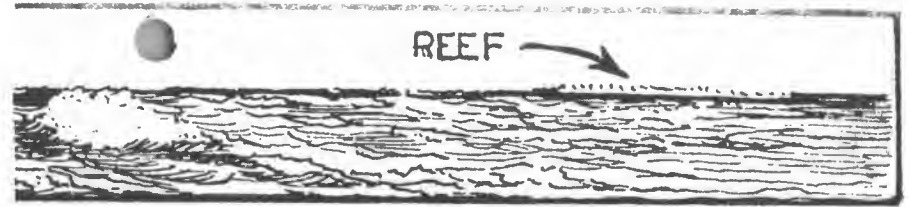
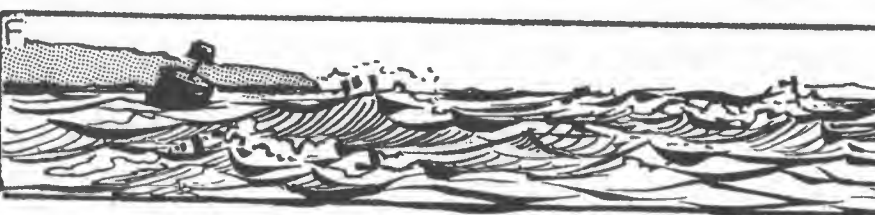
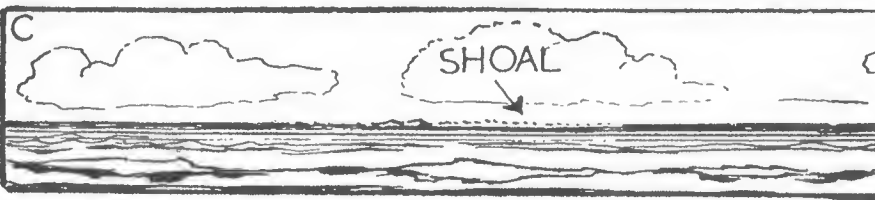
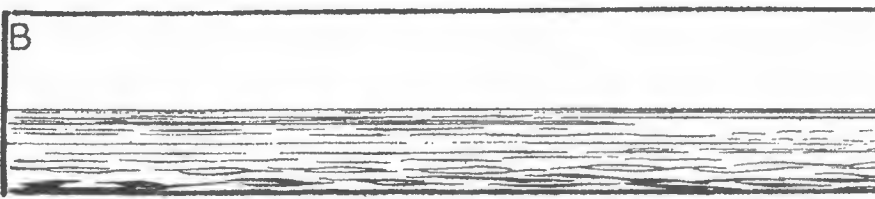
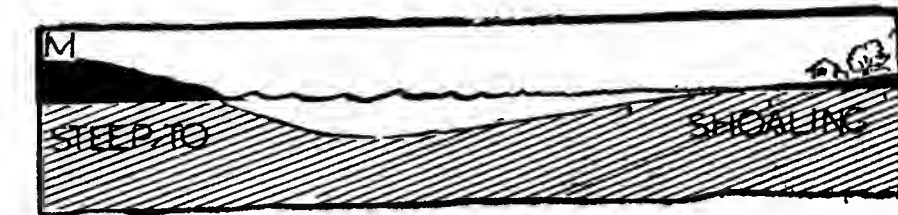
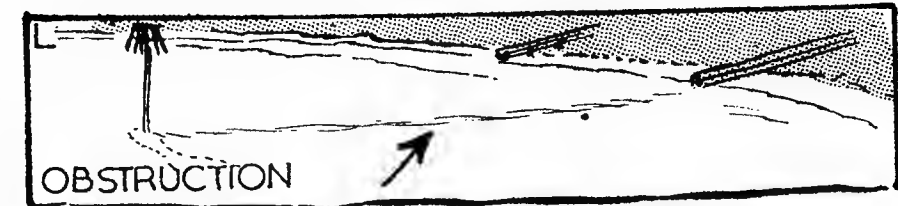
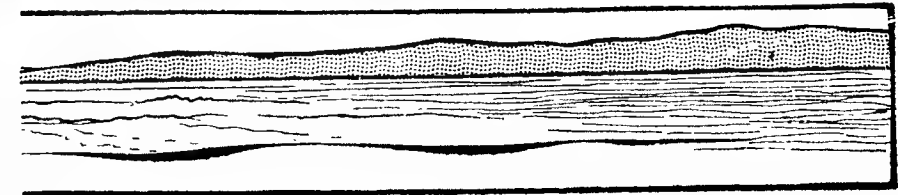
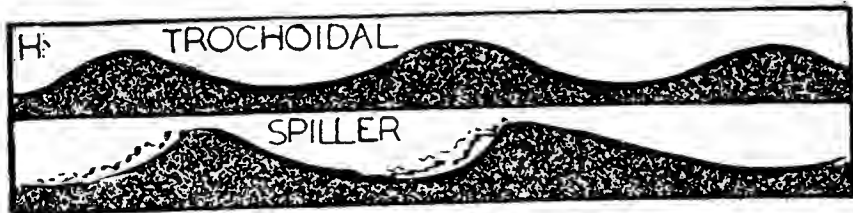
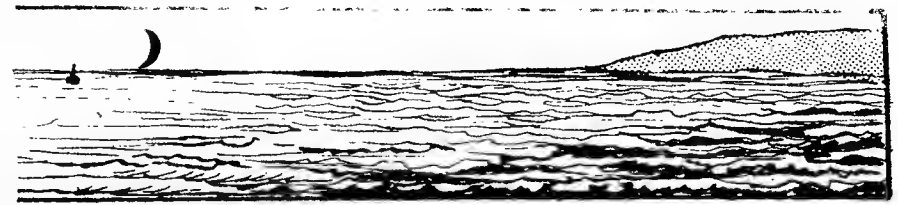
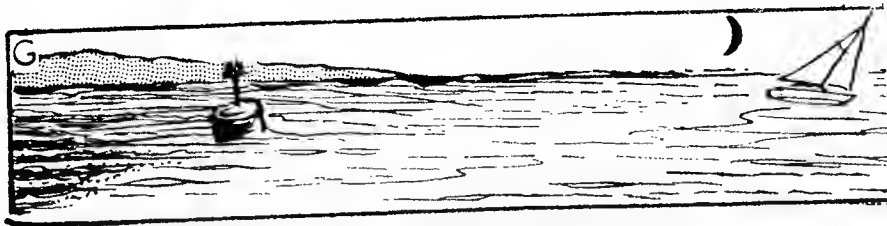


Fig. 41



be spun completely around in a slick, but the real danger comes if there is a sea running, when a 'race' may develop which can overpower a small boat. The ripple above an underwater obstruction 'L' is a good guide close inshore when the outer mark may have passed unnoticed further out to

seaward. At 'M' is a section of shore showing the difference between steep and shoal coasts. Note how the diminishing size of wave in shallow water, due to the slacker tidal stream, is a guide to the nature of the bottom.

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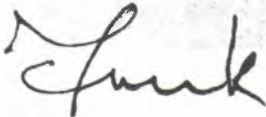
Dear John,

I've had a considerable number of phone calls about Derek's letter in Sea Kayaker about his invention of hatches, and bulkheads, and as Chris Cunningham was writing to me anyway on another matter, I sent him the letter below as a reply. Since then I've received a fax of yet another letter from Derek that was published in your ISKA Magazine.

You might like to publish it to put the matter straight.

All best wishes,

Best,



Frank.

Letters: Sea Kayaker.

DEEP WATER - DEEP TROUBLE.

The gentle tempo of my twilight years was shattered last week by five phone calls, all from paddling acquaintances. They were all apoplectic, and I discovered they were all upset that Derek Hutchinson was claiming kayak deck hatches and fitted bulkheads as his own. While it is certainly not true that Derek invented them, I had to disappoint my callers, because I didn't invent them either! The truth is actually more interesting, here it is:

In the early seventies a guy called Colin Mortlock was assembling a group of top class paddlers for his expedition to the Nordkapp from Bodø in Norway. He chose five chaps; Colin Litten, Sam Cook, Jon Anderson, Nigel Matthews and Pete Davis. The first three fellows on the list decided to look at basic equipment, and they began to look for a suitable kayak. The nearest to their requirements was the Anas Acuta, and I was approached to see if I would modify it to meet their special needs. I refused, on the grounds that altering existing kayaks is not the way to get a good coherent design, but I did promise that I would produce a completely new kayak for them as long as it wasn't so way out that it could only be paddled by men of their calibre. In other words I wanted to be able to sell more than six boats for the expedition members.

While I was contemplating the new design, Colin, Sam and Jon decided to look at current deep-water rescue techniques and found to their horror that a laden and swamped sea kayak, even as small as an Anas Acuta could not be rescued AT ALL because they were not strong enough to lift it. They realised that the idea of emptying water from a floating boat by actually lifting it from the water, even with the help of levers in the form of other kayaks, was a pretty silly thing to try to do. Obviously it would be more sensible to keep the boat in the paddling position, in the water and then push the paddler back into the cockpit thus displacing a considerable amount of

water and then get rid of the rest - by baler, sponge, pump - who knows?

They tried this out and found that rafting up to a swamped, but horizontally floating kayak was easy. Remember that waves are undulations passing through stationary water, and even in big waves kayaks could be held together. Only when the waves have breaking tops do things liven up, and even then, the swamped boat, lying low in the water allows broken crests to pass over without too many broken thumbs!

After many patient hours they developed deck hatches of their own design and put bulkheads in the boat to limit the ingress of water to the cockpit area. A pump on the back deck allowed a rescuer to lean over and pump out the swamped boat. This meant that at no stage was any weight of water lifted, or any boat for that matter.

The advantages were obvious:

1. No kayak to lift.
2. The swamped boat lay low in the water allowing easy re-entry for a swimming paddler, and presented a small target for breaking wave-crests.
3. The paddler's lower body pushed out a lot of water immediately.
4. The spraydeck could be replaced at once, with water still inside the cockpit area.
5. As the kayak was pumped out it stabilised and rose to its normal displacement level in a matter of a minute or two and the group could move off.

There were a couple of points to watch out for:

1. The pumps used were handling up to 8 gallons a minute (35 litres) and a minute seemed a long time when pumping.
2. If the spraydeck was a good fit it was necessary to pull the body tube of the spraydeck away from the paddler sitting in the boat to allow air to re-enter the cockpit as the water was pumped out.

Of course there were many developments. Strum boxes to make sure the last drop of water was pumped away. Long hoses on the pump to feed into other boats to pump them dry. Bigger pumps. Electric pumps. Pumps on the fore deck. Foot pumps.

And so on... but it must be made quite clear that the research and development that led to the deck hatch, bulkhead, pump combination was the hard graft of Colin, Jon and Sam.

I was so impressed with their efforts that I incorporated them into the Nordkapp design and with some modification to the back of the cockpit - again at the trio's recommendation the Nordkapp kayak was ready for sea trials.

The original hatch designs were not 100% satisfactory, and better commercial ones were fitted until I finally developed a really water and air-tight hatch in 1980 which is the ubiquitous VCP hatch still in use today.

The sustained test of the Nordkapp expedition itself showed that the kayak was weather-cocking slightly, and the 'modified hull' version was developed soon afterwards and was used on the Cape Horn expedition two years later.

I think Derek's memory is faulty for several reasons:

1. Members of the Nordkapp Expedition remember their efforts and the events of the early seventies detailed above, exactly as I do.
2. Men still working at Valley corroborate this.
3. Many paddling friends agree.
4. The Nordkapp was the first kayak to incorporate these features and offer them as standard to potential customers.
5. In 1986, the National Maritime Museum placed a Nordkapp on permanent display in Greenwich as an archetypal kayak that was pivotal to the modern development of the craft. (One nutter actually said I hadn't designed the Nordkapp, and that anyway, it wasn't the first kayak to be paddled around Great Britain, as Nigel Dennis and Paul Caffyn hadn't paddled round Rockall as well! Needless to say, after considerable research, they did not change a word of the original caption they put on the exhibit.)

But what is particularly interesting to me is the final part of Derek's letter where he talks about deep-water rescue in general.

Colin, Jon and Sam's work almost twenty five years ago now, showed that even with bulkheads and hatches fitted, a fully laden sea kayak is virtually impossible to rescue by any of the present-day 'lifting' methods. (I hung my Nordkapp on a spring-balance prior to our Cape Horn trip and it weighed 203lbs. laden, but without me; sadly even then, an extra 190lbs!

Had Derek done his homework he would have spared himself the embarrassment of being politically incorrect, because he'd have known that not only could "the weaker sex' not handle deep-water rescues with a fully laden kayak, but NOBODY could!

The time scale of all this is significant, as for twenty-five years the stupidity of current deep-water kayak rescues hasn't yet dawned on sea paddlers. Why?

I'm sorry to say I believe it is the dark side of coaching schemes and formal instruction generally. I believe that the basis of all paddling skills is the forward paddling stroke (which can include the Eskimo roll, which is only a forward paddling stroke performed from up-side down - semi-joke.) and this is boring for everyone, and doesn't fit into nice packages. It is very easy for an instructor to say, "This afternoon we are to learn about deep-water rescues"... and they are so difficult to do that they take ALL AFTERNOON, and everyone is tired out and there's no time left for boring old forward paddling. I confess - I've done it myself, and worse, I've done it at symposiums all over the world... Oh! the shame of it.

But seriously, there is a debit side to instruction, because it stops people thinking for themselves. At its worst it can become a vehicle for self-aggrandisement for the instructor and insecurity for the instructed. Of course it is equally dangerous to learn entirely by trial and error.

The sea is indifferent to trials and unforgiving of errors.

All best wishes,



Frank Goodman.