

Newsletter

of the
**INTERNATIONAL
SEA KAYAKING
ASSOCIATION**



**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 No. 16

JULY 1997

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EDITORIAL

I was particularly interested in a recent Royal National Lifeboat Institute (RNLI) survey that showed one in five small boat users do not bother checking the weather forecast before going off on the sea. With our ever changing weather patterns I find this unbelievable. Further more the survey went on to show that 25% of small boaters ignore chart and tidal information. For the record the survey also said that there were 6,300 call outs last year and that there were 1,300 people saved. This information raises - at least it does for me - the question of better control over those that use the sea for recreation. We have to undertake a driving test before being let loose on the roads and yet the sea is simply open to any casual user with no experience what so ever. No wonder the rescue services are kept so busy. There is also the question about who should foot the bill for these rescues when ignorance or foolishness is the cause of them. *What do you think?*

I took a small group of paddlers off the Anglesey coast a couple of weekends ago. They were relative beginners and visibility was not good as we crossed the bay which was less than a mile across. None of us had compasses and so I kept a close eye on the sea mist and was ready to head in at the first sign of closing visibility. I asked the group to close their eyes for one minute and then, with eyes still closed, point to the headland we were aiming for. No one got it right. A lesson learnt. You don't need to be any distance off the coast to be caught out in a sea mist with no way of being certain which way is the shore and safety. On our way back I asked where they thought our departure point was. The coast was rocky and indistinct. Again they got it wrong. Two simple lessons which it does well to remember. Never go off, even a few hundred yards without a compass (and be able to use it) and always turn around when leaving the shore and ensure you can clearly identify departure point - particularly if you intend returning there. Some years ago a couple of friends and I set off at 2 in the morning to paddle to the Isle of Man from St Bees Head. We had to turn back due to difficult conditions and had a dickens of a job to find the bay where we had left the car!!

I had a great 'bonus' this last weekend. I was able to briefly visit the Scottish Sea Kayak Symposium on the Cumbria. Jenny and I had been to a friends wedding in Scotland and on the way back

stayed with friends at Beith who suggested we take a ride over to Largs from where it was only a brief ferry crossing to the Island and to the Symposium. It was great to see how successful the event was. It is a long time since I have seen so many sea kayaks drawn up on the beach. The atmosphere was fantastic and clearly everyone was enjoying the event. Mind you the scottish weather was on its' best behaviour which helps. Jenny and I were made so welcome and even asked to stay on with food and bed being made available. If only.....but now that I am retired from work I shall be at the next one in two years time. The event next year will be held on the Channel Isles at Jersey and I intend (Jenny willing!!) to be there also. Despite our brief visit to the Scottish Symposium Tony Ford managed to sell me a couple of books. One, **INUIT - A glimpse of an Arctic past** I have found fascinating. It is by David Morrison (ISBN No 0-660-14038-1). Beautifully illustrated and well written, I recommend it to those with an interest in the origins of sea kayaks and how they were part of the Inuit culture.

Now that the price has come way down I have invested in a Magellan 2000 Global Position System and have used it only in the hills so far. I bought a small 'Ortleib' bag to keep it dry for use from the kayak. It is an amazing piece of equipment. The accuracy is spot on. It is easy to use, and given you keep the batteries in good order (it has a 17 hour span with one set of four AA size batteries) it is very reliable. It puts a whole new slant on navigation from a sea kayak. It does raise the old debate on whether it is right to rely on such devices. Personally I prefer to keep my hand in on the old fashioned methods of coastal navigation using charts and tide tables and have the GPS to confirm my course, etc. *What do you think?*



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For Immediate Release
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10th Annual Inland Sea Symposium

Bayfield—The 10th Annual Inland Sea Symposium at Red Cliff Tribal Grounds and Bayfield on June 19-22, 1997, is offering an exciting opportunity to paddle alongside world famous kayakers on the waters of Lake Superior.

The father of modern kayaking, Derek Hutchinson, is among the guests that will lecture at the symposium this year. Hutchinson has long been accepted as an international authority on sea kayaking and has led several major expeditions worldwide. He is the author of several kayaking books, most recently, *The Complete Book of Sea Kayaking*. He will lead several on-water workshops and entertain participants with tales of his North Sea crossing in an evening of British humor and sea kayaking lore.

Hutchinson's workshops will include a three-hour session, called "Paddling with the Master," which will evaluate participants' paddling strengths and weaknesses. This course is designed for kayakers with intermediate abilities and will aid in isolating technical paddling problems and learning how to fix them. Hutchinson will also share his broad knowledge of kayak design in his "Assessment of Kayak Design" workshop. In this workshop, Hutchinson will explain the history and evolution of various kayak designs and provide the participants with a better understanding of how a kayak's hull form affects its function. Hutchinson will also offer a British Canoe Union Instructor Certification workshop the two days following the symposium

Wayne Horodowich, an expert sea kayaker from the University of California at Santa Barbara, will share his vast kayaking expertise in numerous workshops. Horodowich has been the Adventure Program Director at the university since 1980 and captain of the U.S. Kayak Surf Team during his three-year world championship reign. One of his highlighted workshops is "Paddling the Surf Zone." In this workshop, Horodowich will share his knowledge with participants by teaching them to use the power of crashing waves to surf the froth. He will also give a lecture to new paddlers, covering a wide range of topics, from types of kayaks to planning expeditions. Finally, you can learn how the dynamics of wind, water currents, and tides affect you as a kayaker in Horodowich's "Seamanship" workshop.

When not polishing your kayaking skills, take a short trip around the world with sea kayaking legend Olaf Malver when he presents his international kayaking travels in "Sea Kayaking on the Edge of the Earth" on the Big Top Chautauqua stage.

OFFSHORE WINDS by Paul Caffyn

(abridged version NSW Sea Kayaker Issue 26 March 1996)

Wind is the curse of sea kayakers. It generates the bulk of problems that arise, choppy seas, capsizes, wind chill, weather tide effects, surf and so on.

There is however an exception; a following breeze, or one quartering from astern, can be a real boon in aiding progress through surfing rides. A breeze on the beam requires continuous corrections for drift and more concentration on balancing the boat. a breeze on the nose, or quartering from the bow, generates soul destroying, tiring, very wet slogs.

The most deceptive and horrible wind blows offshore. deceptive in that conditions may appear flat calm against shore with a light breeze wafting offshore, but with increasing distance offshore wind strength increases dramatically. cliffed coastlines or those with marked topographic relief such as dune ridges, or swathes of forest, are particularly deceptive. Lurking sea kayaker traps are wherever those continuous cliffs or dune ridges are broken by gorges, fiords, steep sided valleys and narrow entrance bays.

Yours truly was caught during the Australian trip a long way offshore immediately south of Jervis Bay by a sudden, dramatic wind shift, that left me with such a struggle against an offshore wind that I felt like throwing in the towel and abandoning the trip. Limping into the lee of St Georges Head I coined the phrase, 'Wind was definitely the curse of the canoeing class.'

Wind Strength

Above an altitude of 500 to 600m, wind has an unobstructed flow over the sea while below that height, there is increasing frictional drag effect between the air and the surface over which the wind is blowing, resulting in a diminishing of wind speed as the ground or sea is approached. The amount of wind strength reduction depends on the nature of the surface; over forested hilly terrain the air flow will be less than that over open sea because of greater frictional drag.

Approximate values have been determined for frictional drag: over open sea a wind 500m above the sea reduces by about 33% at sea level, while over land the reduction is 66%. Thus a 30 knot wind at 500m will produce a 20 knot wind over sea and 10 knots over land.

There is where the 'deceptive' description for offshore wind applies, for a factor of 50% can be applied to wind when it blows from land out to sea. A gentle breeze of 6 knots inland becomes a moderate wind of 12 knots offshore and a 15 knot wind inland becomes a near gale of 30 knots at sea.

The height and nature of a coastline govern the zone width of calm, sheltered water in offshore wind conditions:

a a long beach with a low sand dune ridge providing minimum relief, dictates a minimum width with the offshore wind felt at the water's edge.

b a continuous line of vertical cliffs will provide a maximum width of calm, sheltered water, naturally depending on the height of the cliffs which govern where the offshore wind hits the sea.

The obvious problem with offshore winds is being blown offshore. Where there is no off-lying shelter, such as a reef or island, and the next continent is thousands of miles away, the chances of survival without a radio or batphone are zilch. I maintain that once a wind rises over 30 knots, paddling progress into the wind grinds to a halt.

Any misadventure such as a dropped paddle or capsize, both occurred with two paddlers off Jervis Bay, resulting in instant seawards drift and a greater distance to reach shore after recovering from the misadventure.

By way of example to those who have yet to experience such conditions, I struck diabolical offshore conditions during my first day in the Bering Sea, on the northern side of Alaska Peninsula with a gale force wind blowing offshore over a low dune ridge and flat tundra inland. The sea was flat calm, a low surge against a gravel beach, wind ripples close inshore and an increasing density of whitecaps with distance out from the beach. Deceptively good paddling conditions, but bear in mind the 50% increase in wind strength from land to sea, and conditions more than 10m offshore were well beyond my limit to reach the beach. I spent many hours crabbing my way along the beach, the kayak at a 45° angle to the line of the beach to check offshore wind drift, the bow rising and falling against the beach with each surge. I was fully aware of the risk, realising the next stop offshore was the ice pack and unbearable polar bear country.

At the base of a long continuous line of cliffs, excellent shelter is afforded in strong offshore winds. Steep hillsides close the coast, continuous dune ridges and tall forests also offer shelter close to a beach.

But wherever that continuous line of shelter is broken abruptly, for instance by a narrow fiord, narrow bay or harbour entrance, gorge, river or stream valley. the offshore wind is funnelled through that break with unbridled force, causing williwaws and violent gusts or bullets of wind. And it is the violence of the turbulence that can cause the loss of a paddle or a capsize.

Many sheltered bays and harbours have narrow entrances which open back into broad areas of calm water. Jervis Bay in NSW is a classic sheltered bay, which has a narrow entrance with tall cliffed headlands on both sides and we have many such examples in New Zealand. Offshore winds funnel through such narrow entrances with double or triple the wind strength of that inland. Also where a continuous line of cliffs of steep coastline is broken by a headland or cape projecting seawards, increasing wind strength must be expected often accompanied by williwaws and strong gusts or bullets of wind.

Prof. Dr. Udo Beier
Stresemannallee 19a
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Germany

21 April 1997

Dear Dr. Beier:

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the development of universal visual signals for sea kayakers. I believe this is a useful and important undertaking. As you noted, Randel Washburne published in his book "The Coastal Kayaker's Manual" a contribution in this direction in 1989. Our global objective must be to achieve a globally recognized minimal sign language that is roughly understood by ALL boaters (power, sail, river, Coast Guard etc.). This will not be achieved without public discussion so that all sea kayakers have the opportunity to understand the rationale behind the selected signals.

1. Waving both arms simultaneously up and down (as flying) is an international "MAYDAY" signal which we must retain.
2. Your signals #2 (arm raised) and #4 (paddle vertical) both mean "COME TO ME". Context answers the question "WHY?". Washburne suggests waving it as an emergency signal. In White water language it means "Come ahead". In all cases a vertical hand or paddle means "COME to ME". In all cases and languages Vertical Arm or paddle should mean "COME to ME".
3. Your signal #3, "Horizontal Paddle" means "Wait for me". An exchange of #2 and #3 on open water constitutes a an effective dialog in all circumstances. Knowing WHY is a matter of context. Team work demands that the messages be acted upon. Thus, "COME TO ME", response "Wait for me // I am coming to you". The seriousness of the situation will become clear as paddlers approach one another.
4. Signal #6 is also extremely important. There must be an unambiguous signal that expresses "DO NOT COME TO ME", as would be essential for surf landing. A scout on a beach must be able to clearly tell others to find a different spot. " ALTERNATE Left/Right, up and down" is such a message. Plus, pointing left or right instructs where a safer route may be found. Again, this is consistent with white water language.

MANY WHITE WATER PADDLERS ARE ALSO SEA KAYAKERS. There should be no important change in visual signal language.

SOUND SIGNALS:

Sound signals should also be retained parallel with visual signals. ONE BLAST; Attention, as noted by yourself and Washburne. We must also publish that a single horn blast from a ship means "I am

underway". We live in the marine environment. We will not change their language. If you are behind a docked ferry boat in NEW YORK Harbor, one horn blast means the ferry is coming out immediately. Your survival as a paddler is instantly in doubt.

TWO HORN BLASTS; gather up, Washburne. This should be retained as it is unambiguous for sea kayakers. It means the same as your signal #2.

THREE HORN BLASTS; Boat over, emergency, Washburne. This should be retained. Among all boaters, multiple horn blasts are an emergency signal. We should not try to distinguish degrees of emergency.

General Discussion:

Your presentation requires additional context. As presented, it implies that the sea is relatively smooth and those requesting or requiring assistance are able to control their boats well enough to turn toward the trip leaders. I have led trips for some 15 years and participated in some "Context" situations. (1) in a high wind, about 10 paddlers left the shelter of a point of land to travel down wind. One paddler in the rear of the group was seen to be heading out to sea nearly beam to the wind. Some distance was involved and horn signals were not useful. The paddler at risk was busy and intimidated by the situation. No hand, arm or paddle signals were going to be given. One or more strong paddlers in sweep position went after the departing novice. Lead paddlers stopped the group to await resolution of the situation. Leaders did their respective jobs without exchange of signals. Visual understanding was sufficient. (2) Same situation, different venue. Wind taking a novice away and strong sweep paddler observed by other paddlers to be taking situation in hand. (3) Going to an island out to sea, we had 1 foot waves and moderate breeze. Returning 1.5 miles in the afternoon we now had 6 foot waves that obscured all boats. (We sometimes equip our boats with bicycle flags on tall wands to facilitate visibility in waves). One paddler was seriously intimidated by the high beam seas that we had to deal with. The best he could have done in that circumstance would have been to raise one hand on the crest of a wave and hope to be seen by one of the group leaders. Under no circumstance was he free to look around or remove his paddle from contact with the water. There was immediate danger of the wind catching any raised paddle. Trip leaders observed the inability of the individual to stay with the group and went, as in the previous cases, to his aid. They were able to calm the paddler and talk him through the diagonal transit to shore and shelter.

My point is this. In real situations those in difficulty will not take their eyes off the nearest waves regardless of prior rhetoric.

They will not take their paddles out of the water either. They will not cast an eye around to locate the leaders. Their intent is to retain sufficient control to stay upright. Trip leaders must have the background experience to correctly interpret what they see.

Additional signals should be ones agreed upon by specific paddling partners. MAYDAY signals should be ONLY those agreed upon by traditional marine experience. These include simultaneous waving arms, smoke, dye, flare, repeated horn, orange flag with a dot, radio MAYDAY. In a MAYDAY situation, the likelihood that we are signalling to other paddlers for help is vanishingly small.

I have spent many years writing and studying sea kayaking accidents of all kinds. Most of the time in the most serious cases, flares or no flares, no one was around to get the MAYDAY message. When flares were used, they were sometimes only effective when fired directly at the wheel house of the rescue craft. Hand signals would have accomplished nothing. We must insist that paddlers be properly equipped to launch effective, internationally understood MAYDAY messages when required. New hand signals are not an acceptable substitute.

Thanks again for the opportunity to contribute to this important project. My remarks will be published in the next issue of ANorAK along with your 11 April '97 presentation.

Best Regards,

Charles A. Sutherland

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17 APRIL 1997



SAFETY SIGNALS FOR USE BY SEA KAYAKERS, ETC

Thank you for including the article prepared by Udo Beier on Safety Signals for Sea Kayakers in the May 97 edition of the Newsletter. I was disappointed that you did not give an introduction to the item - it may be that I did not give you the letter I had prepared on the subject, which I thought had been enclosed with copies prepared for ISKA, BCU Sea Touring Committee, and the BCU Lifeguards. In the event I did not, then the text is repeated below:

“At the annual gathering of sea kayaking guides of the Salzwasser Union, a German based sea touring Association, there was discussion over a set of signals for use by sea kayakers, which I believe was first proposed by Didier Plouhinec. Didier’s concept was looked at in some detail and a number of his signals were not thought to be relevant. However the idea of an international set of signals was welcomed, and Udo Beier agreed to take the matter a step further. Enclosed is his draft, which I have worked upon, and pass on to you for further comment. Perhaps you would look at these proposals and pass your comment either direct to Udo Beier, or through me. The Salzwasser Union is currently working on a revision of its Handbook and hopes to have the final draft for the autumn. It would be appreciated, therefore, if replies could be sent within the next few weeks. Udo Beier’s address is:

Stresemannallee 19a
D-22529 Hamburg
Germany”

Without an introduction to the article, some of the background to the proposals is missing - this is a pity, as my name was included by Udo, as I had been consulted, and asked to get further comment on what is really just a working document. I do not necessarily agree with all that Udo has written, and felt that a number of UK agencies might like to comment. If you feel there is merit, then you may wish to write a couple of words in the next Newsletter asking for comment...this would go some way to meeting Udo’s proposals.

I read Karin’s letter about kit. Here are one or two additional comments on kit: Buoyancy aids worn, paddles at the ready, and a flare in the other hand give confidence to those who have a dread of coming too close to a bear - Canada, Alaska, and elsewhere. With the

groups which I have led over the last 10 years or so, I stipulate these three items should be ready at hand and ready for use should a bear wander into camp. Having said this, we were caught out two years ago when a wolf took a liking to Roland and myself as we walked along the rocky shore line of Warren Island - we thought an island so far away from any other island, and with a strong tidal stream between islands would be enough. I am told the flares do work - a friend was approached a little too closely and fearing for his safety set off a flare - the bear made a rapid exit from the beach! But then again, as bear's behaviour can not be predicted, the score could have ended up: Bear 1, Paddler Nil.

An empty can - "Penelope" - taken into the tent at night works wonders if caught short at night. I find it does need some preparatory positioning to save getting a wet sleeping bag - but it is better than stumbling in the dark and in the rain - just one of those comforts of camp life. Such a device is useful, for males at least, on longer crossings.

Safety equipment as a seat, or pillow. Hmm. Not quite what it is intended for, and could possibly be found to be punctured when you come to use it for what it is intended. I do not know the current thinking on paddle floats, however, a first time roll seems to me like a safer bet. Just what DO other paddlers think of paddle floats - are they a useful and effective device, or have we gone gadget mad?

Cooking gear - one pot - to serve also as a mug; a filleting knife and a spoon; together with a small cast iron frying pan and a roll of aluminium foil serve as my main kitchen tools. Oh, I almost forgot to mention the pot holder. This last item is a most essential individual item - I recall one trip where between six of us, there were only two pot holders - the search and scramble to lift pots away from the fire when about to boil over was nerve racking; not to mention frayed tempers. Why just these items - the pot serves to hold almost all food when cooking and serves as a drinking vessel too. The frying pan is for making pancakes, frying fish, or fish cakes, etc; the aluminium foil for wrapping around fish placed in the embers. I did see a program recently on German TV about Roman cooking and what the Romans cooked in earthenware pots - two pots, or one pot with a lid, was used for making bread - something I shall try in Alaska this year. In order to spread the load carrying boats to and from the water, I carry two 8ft climbing slings; these are passed beneath the boat and with one person either side, fore and aft, boats are lifted with the strap passing over the upper bones of the wrist. In this way, the arms take the load and not the wrist joints, which take enough punishment through paddling. Should there be more than four paddlers in the group either one goes to bow or stern to reduce the strain, or one person either side of the cockpit. At the start of month long trips, loaded kayaks are a six man lift - I insist on using as many people as are available for boat lifts to save wear and tear on both the paddlers and the kayaks.

Another essential in the temperate rain forest of South East Alaska is a lightweight awning. This is pegged at the sides, or along one side to make a lean to, and kept aloft with two paddles, using a specially made "glove" which fits over the end of the paddle blade, This "glove" has a spike which fits into one of the eyelets along the side of the awning, and to keep the "glove" in place, the spike extends downwards and a cord is passed around the paddle where the shaft joins the loom. These "paddle-gloves" were manufactured and retailed in Germany; however, they do not appear in the company's 96/97 catalogue so may no longer be produced.

I have used a camcorder for four or five years, and one of the difficulties has been in getting sufficient power. I have a Sony TR75 with a waterproof housing. The batteries are the NiCad 6v rechargeable type. I also have an adapter which takes 6 AA batteries for emergencies. With

solar panels coming on the market, for marine use, the idea of recharging the NiCad batteries was tried out. According to the manufacturers, 3 panels measuring about 2ft x 1ft were required, together with a 12/6v converter. This system was quite bulky, and there were problems keeping salt water away from the cables and connectors, as the three panels had to be connected to a junction box. AA batteries were fine, except that one batch of 6 batteries lasted no more than 6 minutes; hence a lot of batteries had to be carried. Now, solar powered battery recharging units, quite small in size, are appearing on the market. Among other specifications, these will recharge two AA type batteries in two hours. This may be the answer - two different models will be tried in Alaska this year. I will send in a report on how these battery recharging units cope with Alaskan weather.

HCKA had a good show at the NEC. We have recruited about 10 new members this year, which is quite pleasing; book sales went extremely well, but what I feel was of greatest importance, was that we were seen by the canoeing public to be active. What is more, there is quite a lot of interest in the history of the sport.

Finally, I shall be at the Scottish Sea Symposium, and may see you there - if so, think of my request for the loan of some of your books and documents. The more information I have at hand, the easier my task becomes.

Prof. Dr. Udo Beier
Stresemannallee 19a
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9 May 1997

Dear Dr. Beier:

Thank you for your recent update on signals for paddlers.

Signals (27 April '97) #1, #2, #3 and # 5 are clear and understandable.

Any time a horn signal is indicated, the parallel message as perceived by shipping traffic must be stated. Paddlers must understand both messages, whether one horn signal is used or three different signals are agreed upon within a paddling group. You must state the parallel meaning in your table.

#5 that would be "see-saw"

#6 continues the likelihood of confusion with #4. #6 will not be understood outside paddling groups. It is undersireable because it encourages paddlers to believe that signals other than standard distress signals will be helpful. They will not be understood by nonpaddlers who are the very ones needed to accomplish the rescue.

#4 continues to have problems that are unacceptable. The vertical paddle is necessary and appropriate and would likely be understood by any boater.

Horizontal paddle compromises the clarity of #3. It assumes that the paddler giving the signal can control his boat well enough to turn to face another paddler- he/they often can not do this. They are often operating on the edge of control in the emergency situation. If this important message can only be delivered this way- the signal is not on the table, the paddlers in trouble will not be able to use it.

You did not address the matter of being seen over waves. Put it this way- If a paddler in distress raises a hand, it must be seen as a distress signal from all angles of viewing (please review my previous letter).

You do not need to distinguish between trip leader and participants with signal #2 and #4. A participant that raises a hand for no reason can be disciplined, thrown off the trip, prohibited from future trips, remove the offending arm and mount on the rear deck of the trip leader. The top priority for an emergency signal is clarity and simplicity of delivery ! Without this- it is useless.

Best Regards,
Dr. Charles A. Sutherland, 2210 Finland Rd. Green Lane, PA 18054

Charles Sutherland

YOU MAKE YOUR OWN LUCK by John Chamberlin Part Two.

One puzzling phenomenon was that to the south it was pitch black. I felt I could touch it, the eeriness suggesting that if I stuck my left arm out my hand would disappear. To the north, in contrast, it never become completely dark, not exactly Borealis, but Aurora nonetheless - the goddess of the dawn stayed with us through the night.

The cold was never really a problem to Tim. to use his own words he has @plenty of lard@ to keep him warm. But I did feel it, so the salopants and fleece top didn't come off all night.

Just before 0400 hrs in the emerging dawn, dolphins appeared ahead right -they, or some of their friends, staying with us for the rest of the trip. By 0500 hours the sun cleared the horizon and we had dipped to the lowest point on the sinusoidal curve of tidal drift, about six miles south of the bee-line course.

The still unbelievably flat sea, its surface dappled slightly by an imperceptible breeze, stretched in every direction for as far as we could see. The two torches and three cycle lamps between us could now be switched off. Wales had gone and well behind us, Ireland no where to be seen.

The next six hours, climbing back up that hill of drift, were probably going to be the longest. But it was also the stretch to enjoy, as the conditions attained quintessential perfection. even the dappling disappeared to be replaced by diamond ground smoothness. One careless paddle stroke and it would shatter like a windscreen; it felt like cheating. No complaints. No one to complain to, Tim and I often a few hundred yards apart. This was my wildest dream, total relaxation, basking in the solitude, remoteness and scale, the inconsequentiality of our craft against the vastness of the sea. Not half way there yet.

0555 hrs, 'Variable, becoming easterly, mainly 3 or 4; fair, good'.

No problem. what could be better? Nothing, and we recorded it at 0634, eight hours out, with a couple of photos to mark what we thought was 'bang in the middle'. Conversations had lulled and the radio Tim had bought now seemed to get every station but the one we wanted.

Ships appeared in the distance but never close to, just tiny shapes, 'Monopoly' counters. Ferries didn't appear at all, surprisingly, since we could see for miles. dolphins again too, still never too close, and frustratingly never long enough for a phot. I began to get tired, so did Tim, unbeknown to me.

Two more hours. At 0817 we made what we thought was our first hazy sighting of land and within the next two hours what we thought was a 'buoy' at Kish Bank, but equally way in the distance. Our spirits heightened by mental calculations of how soon the buoy would be reached, we paddled on, now with a reference point with which to observe also our accelerating northerly drift, midway through the flood.

As usual, misguided elation and a misread chart photocopy combined to produce misinformation. There are buoys at Kish Bank but the one we were interminably peering at and willing to get nearer was actually a lighthouse!

At the same time we slowly realised the north-easterly flowing flood tide in the area 10 to 15 miles east of Dublin Bay and Bray Head was all but negating our forward speed. The realisation slowly dawned that this was the reason for our depressingly slow closing on the 'buoy' ahead.

Earlier optimism on our good progress had indicated a possible ETA of mid to late lunchtime, but that dissipated along with our energy as we fought the glassy conveyer belt attempting to push us back towards Wales.

A Stenaline ferry appeared off the starboard bow, sliding by to the north on the still mirror like sea, and the land gradually clarifying as I at last managed one snatched photograph of a surfacing dolphin way off the port bow, Irish hills in the background.

Yet again I recalled Martin Melling's comment as we battled our way back across The Wash in 1985, "You've just got to keep plugging away at it!" Plug away we did and, arm-achingly slowly, Kish Bank light grew to its full 22m, sunlit in the red and white splendour. About half a mile short we passed through a strange area of glassy smooth and perfectly formed standing waves, as the diminishing flood tide felt the sand beneath. Tim was the first to tuck in behind the ten foot high black base, just after 12 noon, the sea beginning to show surface flurries from a now increasing easterly breeze.

Half an hours rest and refreshment enabled us to check out the navigational plan for the final leg into Dublin Bay. with the ebb tide now increasing, we agreed transits via North Kish and south Burford buoys (they really were this time!) and set off at 1237 hrs, arriving at South Burford by 1333hrs.

The weather was glorious and the area full of normal nautical activity, but of course none of those who saw us had any idea where we had come from, assuming most probably we were just local paddlers out for the day and enjoying the sunshine. By now I was extremely tired and this final two hours required all the energy I could possibly summon to maintain the opted course, Tim, who had admitted to some tiredness whilst battling at Kish Bank, was now bright again, encouraging me on.

Regular changes of transits, ending with two churches above Dun Laoghaire itself, slowly guided us in to a small stony beach just off the seaward wall of the towns' huge harbour and ferry terminal. The freshening easterly wind probably reached the forecasted '4', pushing us in as our energy reserves decreased, just as though someone was pushing us from behind, willing us to ensure we made it.

I had no complaints. The waves were going in our direction and I took regular advantage of the surfing opportunities presented,

finally following tim in and easing my way through the rocks to land at 1433 hrs; over 16 hours after setting out. We were both very pleased and whilst obviously tired, in noticeably better condition than when we reached the Scillies in '93.

After a few photographs and getting changed I rang the Coastguards who agreed to pass on news of our safe arrival to Holyhead. what happened after that is another story and definitely for another time.

Two hours later we'd lugged the painfully heavy kayaks round and into the ferry terminal for a free ride back (the kayaks- not us) and once aboard we sat down for a couple of pints of Guinness. why didn't we stay? At least for that night, B & B, a meal and a few beers? For a number of reasons it would have been better if we had but its a question we've asked ourselves a number of times since and not answered satisfactorily, Ninety minutes later we were back in Holyhead.

The kayaks

Clearly these were not tested in rough sea conditions, but they were never going to be on this trip. This has been done before and since. they were selected for stability and speed and they [preformed with the excellence for which P & H sea kayaks have become long renowned. The Capella has firmly placed itself in the ranks of true sea kayaks and because of this is now available in GRP also.

The Outlander is a different issue. To my mind a most under-rated kayak. It is superbly stable, very manoeuvrable yet easily holds its own for pace. for example, Tim is much younger, stronger and arguably fitter than me and was in the faster boat, yet well into the night had commented on how well I was keeping up with him. Tim and I extend our thanks to Dave and Julian, Peter and the rest of the P & H team.

.....to be continued. There is an Irish Sea '96 Postscript.

DTp is sued over canoeing disaster

LL-18-4-97

THE UK government is being sued in a potentially massive damages claim over the 1993 Lyme Regis canoeing disaster in which four children were drowned.

A writ issued against the Department of Transport, in its role as being responsible for the coastguards, claims that the children who died would have survived but for negligence by the coastguards, and that the survivors, their friends and teachers, would not have been as injured as they were.

The action has been launched by organiser of the canoeing trip, OLL Ltd of

By Roger Pearson

Cheltenham. It is seeking an indemnity in respect of compensation it has paid to the families of those who died and to the survivors.

The writ claims that UK Coastguard Portland failed to convey any sense of urgency to Royal Navy helicopters, misinterpreted weather conditions, and directed search helicopters to the wrong area.

It also failed to operate an effective chain of command.

Dear John

Please send information on outings in early September or suggested with whom we might correspond. We are hoping to do some kayaking in your region on our trip the first two weeks of September.

Any ISKA member to
reply please

Ivy Prescott-Dwyer
D'Arcy G. MacMahon
852 Tucker Rd.
No. Dartmouth, MA. 02747
USA

From: tim.riley@virgin.net
To: jramwell@provider.co.uk
Subject: iska
Date: 19 April 1997 22:42

Hi John

we have just got the latest newsletter from you , thanks for your hard work putting it together - I know what it takes as I do a similar one for Brathay.

I just thought that you will probably get people emailing you so here is my address. Sorry to see Des Lauriers article obviously it has been on his mind for some time - a great shame it didnt work out for him.

You should shortly be able to see a picture of a looping sea kayak on the Wyedean web site just as soon as we have got it sorted out - can't you spend a lot of time messing around with these computer things! See you on the water sometime. I will let you have the address when I know it.

All the best

Tim Riley

From: Neil Shave <nds@btinternet.com>
To: John Ramwell <jramwell@provider.co.uk>
Subject: Welcome to the Technical Age
Date: 18 April 1997 16:11

Hello John

Am pleased to see you on Email - it is so much easier to communicate.

As regards Iceland, you only seem to have Ari Benediktsson registered now, and he is no longer at the address you have.

It should be "Laugarteigur 22, 105 Reykjavik"

If you ever get any enquiries about Iceland, I will be happy for you to pass them onto me. I know k-most of the paddlers on the island and can always put somebody in touch with somebody as appropriate. I am not intimately familiar with all the coastline, but I usually know somebody who is!

There are five clubs there now, in Reykjavik, Isafjordur, Akureyri, Neskaupstadur and Sellfoss. The second and fourth named are exclusively sea-going, albeit that they are quite small. Reykjavik - the largest club in the island - has a growing sea-going interest. It has an interesting web site on: <http://www.centrum.is/kayak>

I have avoided using Icelandic characters in the town names as some Email systems do not accept them.

Hope all is well with you

Neil Shave
nds@btinternet.com

242 Island Ave.
Peaks Island
ME 04108
U.S.A.
March 25, 1997

Dear John,

Please find enclosed my subs; Apologies for the late response but I have only just returned from my winter job down in the Caribbean. I hope you don't object to payment in \$\$\$\$. I imagine as an international jet setter you'll find a use for them !

Firstly, big thanks for all the work involved keeping the I.S. K. A. 'afloat' and despatching it to sundry points around the globe.

I'm a Brit. who now resides in U.S.A. and I find it a welcome and nostalgic reminder of paddling on the West coast of the U.K, which, in my humble opinion, is as good as anywhere in the world. I work almost year round as a sea kayak 'guide' and I still learn more from an issue of I.S.K.A. than I do from the more glossy magazines here.

If you are ever passing through Maine, there's a boat here for you. I would like updated Membership list with the next issue if you have any available..

You may be interested to know that working guides in Maine are forming an 'Association of Sea Kayak Guides and Instructors' at long last. Maine has a long tradition of huntin', fishin' 'n' raftin' guides (Just add a guttural throat rumbling and you'll soon get the accent !) and only recently has there been a specialised State assesement for sea kayak guide licenses. It's administered by the Dept. of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife whose expertise lies elsewhere. Prior to that the examining panel asked such questions as "...you're out huntin' in the woods and one of your clients gets lost...what should you do ?" or..."demonstrate a canoe cross bow rudder" whilst sitting in a chair at the interview. Not exactly pushing the boundaries of sea kayak lore especially since there's no 'on the water' assesement.

It's a step forward but the standards issue has not yet been addressed and is still too low bearing in mind that the advisors to the State often represent the larger outfitters in the area who have their own commercial axe to grind. In an ideal world aspirations towards the highest standards should prevail. One of the great strengths of the B.C.U. is that it's enthusiast led and not subservient to business interests.

A few of us have been in touch with the State to offer assistance on the examining panels but no positive response as yet.

At a recent membership pole (54 member so far) a number of issues were prioritised. 'Standards' came out in the lead with Island Access closely behind which does show our hearts are in the right place. All we have to do is agree on what 'Standards' are and how to achieve them ! I get the feeling that the real issues of all round excellence as elucidated by Ken Fink of Poseidon Kayaks when he itemises the cornerstones of guiding as ..judgement, skill, knowledge and experience ...will be watered down by the lack of the above as currently held by some of the membership. Its a start and could give years of active psuedo- paddling long after the will to get out in a boat has gone ! Aagh yes...a future as the venerable committee member.....

One good thing has already come out of it however. A lobster industry sponsored State representative recently brought up a clause to be considered stating that.....'Sea kayaks should display a red pennant similar to those used by cyclists so as to be more visible to lobster boats'. Can you imagine the effect on a kayak's performance having a 6' whip ariel with a flag on sticking out of the deck. Good luck with your roll ! Luckily the association got wind of it and attended the committee meeting to see the clause shot down, thankfully.

I speak as one, whilst out with a group, had an uncomfortably close meeting with a lobster boat heading for home at full throttle, relying solely on radar in the poorest of visibility. I certainly carry a fog horn but much depends on how efficient and where the exhaust pipe of the boat is situated, typically next to the left ear of the skipper. I've had various bits of advice such as aiming a white flare at the wheel house; the likely reaction to that would be an introduction to shotgun diplomacy !

I would suggest that a little less arrogance on the part of the fishing boats plus more awareness and better use of the marine radio by kayakers in areas of heavy traffic would bring about a better relationship. Apart from Ch.16 and Channel 9, the U.S.A coastguards' recommended recreational hailing channel, inquiries of the local fishermen will let you which one of the public channels they use. The fog is an ever present fact of life here although I have grown to appreciate it as it keeps one's piloting up to scratch and always adds 'atmopsphere' to one's journey. Sea Kayaking is comparatively new here and the proliferation of the sport already has an impact on Island usage especially during the peak months of July and August. The majority of the Islands of

Maine are privately owned and access is not a right. I include the published statement of the Maine Island Trail Association, the body most concerned with island usage. For those wishing to paddle in Maine they are an invaluable resource providing detailed information.

The Maine Island Trail is a 325 mile long waterway extending from Casco Bay on the West to Machias Bay on the East. The trail winds its way along the coast over protected salt water rivers and quiet bays, around magnificent and exposed capes and among islands large and small. Along the route, state owned and private islands are available to members or the public for overnight stopovers where one can camp or picnic in a wilderness setting. M. I. T. A. is a non-profit organisation, whose goal is to establish a model of thoughtful use and volunteer stewardship for the Maine islands that will assure their conservation in a natural state while providing an exceptional recreational asset that is maintained and cared for by the people who use it. This goal is achieved by encouraging a philosophy of low impact use and environmental awareness among MITA's members and island visitors.

Sea Paddlers thinking of spending some time out here should check it out at MITAONLINE@aol.com or write to MITA P.O. Box C Rockland Maine 04841-3416. U.S.A. Unlike the U.K, there are enough outfitters who will rent out kayaks although you may end up with a plastic boat.

A little illustration may be in order... a couple of years ago early on in June I had the dubious pleasure of playing 'Uncle Seaweed' to a summer camp group of teenagers out for a couple of nights on a sweet little island in Casco Bay called Crow Is. There were 3 paddlers from Colorado in residence on their first night intending to 'do' the whole journey up to Machias. Their reaction, as would have been any of us was, on seeing my group land was a resigned but strained politeness. I could sense their disquiet and imagined fears of the over populated islands ahead. A month later I bumped into them way up the coast (or Down East as it's known here from the sailing days of...Down wind heading East back to Europe) and they had not seen another paddler since. Maine is not the wilds of Alaska or Patagonia with the cities of the Eastern Seaboard within a days drive but as we know, Wilderness starts when you push off from the shore.

Folks interested in paddling the area are welcome to contact me at :-

242 Island Ave,
Peaks Island
Maine.
ME 04108
U.S.A

1-207-766 4421.

This only started off as a note to pay my subs ! Must have time on my hands.

Phil Daligan

150 Summerleas Road,
Fern Tree,
Tasmania,
Australia 7054
5/05/97

Dear John,

I am as disorganised as ever. Please find attached a cheque for my ISKA subscription, and also for the Tas Sea Canoe Club's subscription, to go to PO box 599F, Hobart, Tas., Australia 7001. My apologies for the delay.

Thanks for your card last Christmas.

The sea-kayaking scene in here is changing very fast. Several retailers are now stocking boats, commercial tour companies and boat hirers are proliferating. Some are very friendly, open to discussion and advice; others show no interest in us and are also the ones with the least experience themselves. I fear that we will have far more commercial interference in our sport than we have in the past. Against that, we have had a big influx of active young members, and they have built themselves more than thirty boats in the last 18 months. We had trips programmed right through the winter last year, they were well attended, and that's never happened before. Three 5½ metre kayaks have been built as break-down boats, three pieces each, to be bolted together for ease of air transport. One paddled up the Queensland coast last year (its owner is now in the Antarctic for 10 months, wishing he had it with him); the other two spent about 2 months in New Guinea. Those three boats are being watched with envy. I think there will be a rash of them built in the coming summer.

We had one long weekend on Swan Island in the Bass Strait, together with a northern Tasmanian group we discovered who have been building their own wooden kayaks, to their own designs, in complete isolation from the rest of the sea-kayaking fraternity. They had never been in the open sea, restricted themselves to open estuaries, had no knowledge of what we regard as standard rescue techniques; their background was in dinghy sailing. So we invited them on their first open crossing, encountered some currents that forced us to retreat, had a very interesting time. And wood is a beautiful medium!

Otherwise, we have had a few day trips, and a three day trip in which we used the kayaks to gain access to a highland walk. We haven't done much paddling this year. But I'm planning to retire early - at the end of this year - and I hope that next year will be a different story.

Regards,

Mike Emery

I.S.K.A. Newsletter

LETTERS

From Adrian Pol,
Buenos Aires.

We are ISKA members 1454. We would like to take the opportunity to begin friendships with other interested in sea kayaking.

At the present time the winter time is starting and our kayaking is for exercise thinking ahead to different races when the season comes.

Near our city we have a paddling trail. at a small lagoon nearby the local mayor have provided a canoeing school facility.

We have been in touch with Prof. Udo Beir who wrote to us about signals for sea paddlers. We were pleased to be involved in this discussion.

When we are in touch with other sea paddlers world wide we feel that is very special. We have received catalogues from America, letters from Japan, U.S.A., Australia and now Germany,

We have also made contact with other paddlers in the south of our own country - the Patagonia territory..

"Contacting in order to know each other and inviting to share the waters of *friendship*"

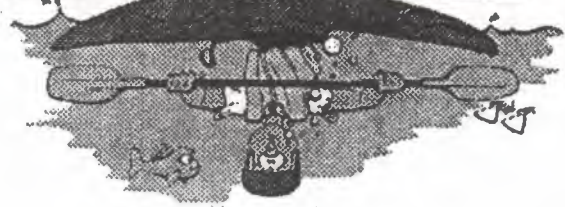
From Dr. Paul Schur,
Nantwich, Cheshire.

I wrote to you last February about my proposed paddle from Shrewsbury to Bridgenorth in aid of the RNLI (Royal National Lifeboat Institution) on Easter Monday. It was a fine day, warm, and the water was calm with a gentle breeze which slowly changed round to become a head wind which strengthened but despite that I managed to complete the trip of 31.25 miles in 5hrs 13 mins in the company of Mr R. Owen for the 21 miles from Atcham. I didn't see any other kayakers, they were presumably all at sea. There was plenty of interesting waterside life to be seen on the journey including dippers, kingfishers and oyster catchers - so it wasn't all blisters and back ache. I hope to do a repeat next year, perhaps before the slalom season - perhaps even a longer challenge. It is 60 miles from weir to weir. Beaumaris to Caernavon might be a suitable maritime alternative, or Puffin Island to Newborough! If there are any other paddlers interested in this prospect I would be happy to hear from them.

I managed to raise about £200 for the RNLI.

For sale
Nordkapp HM, red hull, good condition,

MASTER OF THE HALF ESKIMO ROLL



From Tim Bar, Guildford. A new member, "I'm 39 years of age. After many years away from kayaking I decided some three years ago to try a sea trip and give mountaineering a rest for a while. I'm not sure I'll go back. The joy of rolling up on a remote shore in the Hebrides and listening to the pure silence is addictive. (I'm sure there are other areas which are as enjoyable and I would like to explore them too.

A sea kayak gives you an intimate quiet experience of the sea and the coast. I always find it difficult returning to the unnecessarily noisy over busy atmosphere of everyday life."

From R.A. Bryant,
Aberdeenshire.

approximately four years old. Two bulkheads, oval rear hatch, round forward hatch, good deck lines and elastics, padded back rest, forward mounted pump on starboard side. Sound watertight hull with reduced depth to extended keel to increase manoeuvrability.

Tel 13398 86046
