

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. 284

NOVEMBER, 1998

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EDITORIAL

Well, the 'hot news' is that I have resigned as editor to 'Ocean Paddler' Magazine. The publisher is finding another editor and intends to continue publication and, though I have resigned, I wish him and his associates every success.

This means that I am able to focus entirely on our Association, The International Sea Kayaking Association, and I hope to do this by improving design and production of this newsletter and by promoting the Association. Apart from having a stand at the International Canoe Exhibition at the N.E.C., Birmingham, every year I have relied on word of mouth to encourage new members to the Association. I shall be doing more in the future and would welcome ideas from yourselves.

I shall be sending out renewal forms for 1999 to each of you separately and I will enclose an additional subscription form in the hope you will encourage a fellow sea kayaker to join up.

In our July ISKA Newsletter I advocated the establishment of an international canoeing and kayaking coaching scheme that would allow the rest of the canoeing world access to a scheme similar to that provided by the British Canoe Union Coaching Committee. I know that there are those among our readers who feel that such a global scheme is unwarranted but it is my experience and my understanding that there is sufficient evidence that a world wide coaching system of awards is required to improve skill, knowledge and consequently, safety. It would allow for an internationally acceptable centre approval scheme which I know is sought by many authorities around the world.

Anyway, right or wrong, I wrote to the International Canoeing Federation (ICF). I had to write a couple of times but I am happy to say my persistence paid off and I have duplicated their letter on the following page.

From The Secretary General
International Canoe Federation,
Budapest. 27 August 1998

Dear Sir

I acknowledge with thanks the receipt of your letter dated 12th August and that of the 25th May, 1998.

I inform you that the International Canoe Federation will hold early September numerous meetings: Executive Committee, Board of Directors meeting and also the Ordinary Congress. I will submit your proposal to the members of the Executive Committee and of the Board. After discussion of this matter I shall revert to the question and inform you Mid-September on our decision.

I am asking for your kind patience in the meantime.

Yours sincerely

Otto Bonn
ICF Secretary General

I have included a letter from Duncan Winning which he wrote following my July editorial and before the ICF wrote to me. I have also included my response to Duncan. I would be grateful if some of you out there would enter into this debate. Let me know how YOU feel about an international coaching scheme. Should other countries simply form their own scheme as we Brits have done? Do you believe it would be as easy as this? Should the ICF play a role in overseeing a coaching scheme for all of us?

EVENTS PAGE

Remember to let me have notice of any Sea Kayaking event you are planning. I will see it gets included. The more notice I get the better. Sea Kayaking is a rapidly growing sport and the new comers in particular want to know what is available.

I.S.K.A. SHOP

ISKA Stickers.....	.60	pence
ISKA T Shirts; L, XL, yellow or black.....	6.00	
ISKA Sweat Shirts; L, XL, yellow or black....	12.00	All prices
ISKA Woollen ski Hats in yellow.....	3.50	UK Sterling
ISKA Base Ball Caps @.....	4.50	& include
"Over & Out" the video by Gordon Brown @.....	14.99	Post/Pack.
ISKA Polo Shirts.....	6.50	
ISKA long sleeved T Shirts.....	6.50	
Bound 'stand alone chapters from my forthcoming book		
"SEA TOURING - A Manual on Sea Kayaking"		
No 1 Expedition Planning @.....	2.00	
No 2 Expedition Medicine @.....	2.00	
No 3 & 4 The Sea/Navigation.....	4.00	
No 5 History of Sea Kayaking.....	2.00	

From Duncan Winning, OBE
22, Brisbane Glen Road
Largs Ayrshire, KA30 8QX

Thursday 6th August, 1998

Dear John

ISKA - Newsletter No.22

Some comments on the above newsletter.

An International Coaching Award Scheme, as suggested in your editorial, seems a good idea. However, perhaps it is not quite as straightforward as it may first appear.

To have a standard which can be applied across the globe will require very careful consideration, work, goodwill, co-operation and last but not least, time. I did try, some years ago, as a Scottish Canoe Association official, to get information on the International Canoe Federation, through the British Canoe Union, without success. so my knowledge of the body is rather basic. However, I have the impression, perhaps wrongly, that it is mainly concerned with the competitive elements of our sport and may not have, at present, an appropriate section to implement your suggestion even if in agreement with it.

Although the BCU scheme is highly regarded in some areas out with the UK, it is not necessarily universally acceptable. At last years Norwegian Sea Kayak Symposium, at which there were presentations about both the British and the Swedish systems, the consensus from the participants was that the BCU one was far too complicated for their needs. I don't know if this reflects the opinion across Norway, but one thing is certain, it's up to the Norwegians what scheme, if any, they adopt.

Your comment that "even if the BCU would rather confine these awards to within the British coastline" surely misses the point and fails to understand their position. Even if it is quite acceptable for individuals from out the UK to gain BCU Coaching awards as an indication of their personal ability to coach others in the absence of a suitable scheme within their own land and I have no problem with that, the Union as a governing body of sport and a member of the ICF, surely cannot organise a coaching scheme out with its area of authority.

To seek to operate within the confines of another governing bodies jurisdiction, without its invitation, would in my opinion be arrogant, unacceptable to the ICF and quite possibly be in breach of the Unions own Articles of Association.

If other governing bodies of canoe sport wish to set up systems based on the BCU model I am sure that the Union would be delighted to advise and assist.

Perhaps rather than embark on the undoubtedly long and torturous path of establishing an international standard the most practical and effective course would be for interested paddlers in countries without coaching schemes to lobby their governing bodies to set up such systems with, if necessary, assistance from those with established programmes. I am told that this is already happening and it seems to me to have a far higher chance of success than via the ICF i.e. from the grass routes up by popular support.

Then again, I understand, there are countries where the teaching and leadership qualification systems are run by the instructors professional organisations not the governing body of canoeing as recognised by the ICF.

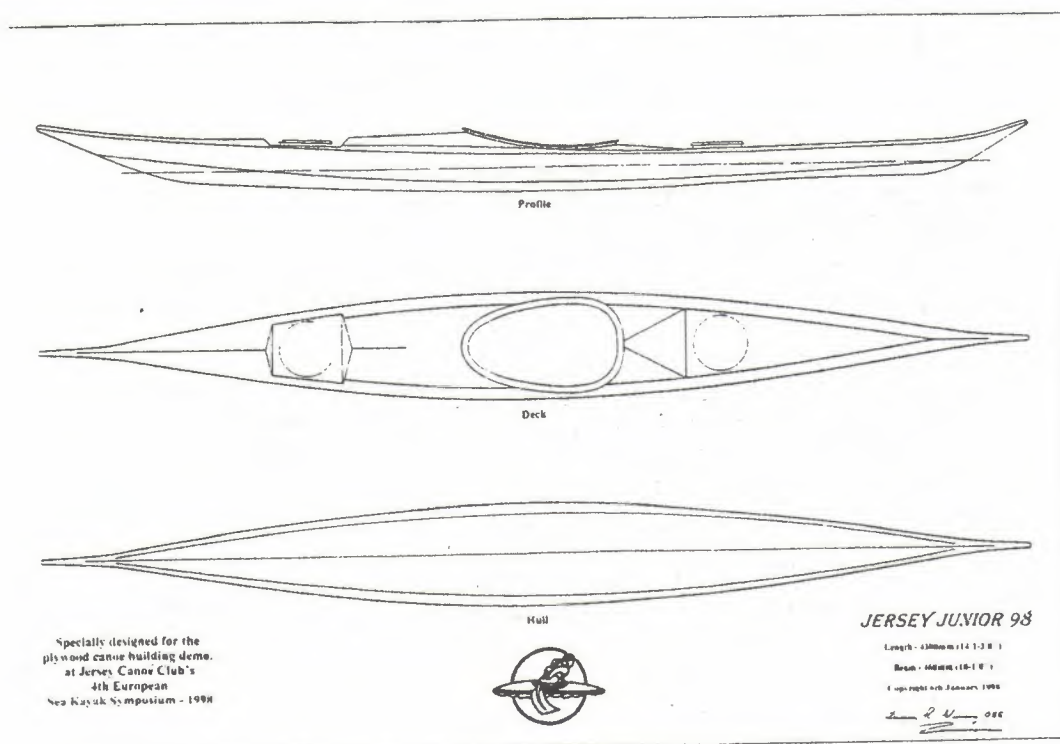
Your reference to federalisation and its effect on the coaching scheme puzzles me. They are quite separate issues and should be kept so. It is a fact that the present federal agreements within British canoeing are not working as intended. That has brought about the need for a more representative and hopefully simpler system (your grass roots again). This vital process need not and should not have any effect on coaching standards. It may effect the administration of the scheme but the organisation has not been centralised at Nottingham for some time now in any case.

Enough of politics, back to canoeing. Martin Spurling's letter on plywood kayaks rings sympathetic bells with me. I have been building sea canoes to my own designs for forty five years now and currently own fabric covered, plywood, glass-fibre and polyethylene models and no, I didn't design or build the poly one.

Nova sea paddlers never cease to be amazed at how light fabric covered and plywood kayaks can be. Occasionally they need convincing that some of the plywood boats are not actually GRP, but that is due to the finish attainable as well as the shapes which it is possible to produce.

Of course such craft will not stand the same abuse as GRP and Polyethylene. But who wants to abuse their kayak, they may have to rely on it some day. Among their advantages are that most people find them easier to fit out to their personal needs and any basic design can be built in proportion, with relative ease, to suit larger or smaller paddlers. I have yet to see an infinitely variable geometry mould for a reinforced plastic kayak.

This year, as part of the Jersey Canoe Club's Sea Kayak Symposium there was a demonstration of kayak building. Howard Jeffs produced a polo boat to illustrate the GRP process and I built a specially designed junior sea kayak called the "Jersey Junior 98". This 14 foot by 18 inch kayak was completely fitted out with bulkheads, hatches, deck lines etc., just like her big sisters and demonstrated the flexibility of plywood construction

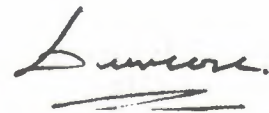


I have seen the plans for the kiddies kayak referred to by Martin and it looks good. It will certainly be lighter than the Jersey boat, it weighed 21 pounds, a quarter of which was down to the safety items i.e., bulkheads, hatches, deck fittings etc.

Locally, one of our active young members of the coaching scheme has built a 22 foot by 26 inch twin cockpit plywood double sea kayak based on a 1960's design for a 19 foot boat. The modern version has four bulkheads and hatches and does not look that dated. Maybe that has something to do with the hull which is based on a kayak from Igdlorssuit in West Greenland, as all my sea kayak designs have been since the early 60's and the Inuit hull shapes never seem to date even after thousands of years.

Finally a question, Having read Rick Freeman's report, in Newsletter 23, on the 1st Officially Registered Solo Circumnavigation of the Whole of the British Isles by Sea Kayak, I am bound to ask what makes it "Officially Registered" and with whom? More power to Rick's paddle, I wish him well in his venture, but will it matter what official registers it where?

Regards,



Dear Duncan

Many thanks for your letter of the 6th August.

I have no quarrel with any of your comments, the difficulties you mention are real.

First let me reiterate the need - as I see it - for an international coaching scheme. Attempts continue to be made to 'export' BCU Awards and the problems are manifest. There are the questions about standards, ongoing monitoring, use/abuse, fees and relevance to varying sea conditions (mainly concerned with sea temperature differences).

Both individuals and centres (including outfitters, outdoor education centres, rental companies, organised courses, etc.) are clamouring for some sort of accreditation. They are looking for business and want to show they are worthy. Some official type bodies like Tourist Depts. who advertise kayaking courses, schools, trips and the like in their brochures are wanting some sort of accreditation, if only to cover their own backs.

There is no doubt that what we have here in the UK, though not perfect, makes us the envy of the canoeing world. Currently just about anyone can, and does, start a sea kayaking school, act as a guide or as an outfitter and there are those who would wish to know that this is being done to agreed standards of efficiency and safety.

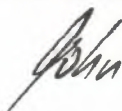
Second, if you do agree that there is a need we then have to determine how we go about fulfilling it. You are quite right to point out the problems. These point up the reason why other countries have not yet put something in place akin to the BCU - with exceptions such as The Netherlands. I firmly believe that if local politics are to be overcome then only the I.C.F. can take the lead. So far my attempts to get them to become involved has been like dragging a bull to slaughter. I shall persevere.

I agree that it is not for the BCU to attempt to establish a scheme beyond its own territory, though to a point this is already happening by default and I've heard that some authorities in certain parts of the world are demanding that those coaching others have a BCU Award.

I am not sure that federal issues can be divorced from coaching issues. Again we come to one of the reasons why other countries have not adopted their own scheme - the difficulties in getting common agreement about inclusion and standards.

I will publish your letter in full in next issue of ISKA newsletter, together with this response. This is just the sort of letter that makes the newsletter worth while; many thanks for it. And many thanks for all your support. Work on the magazine has not been easy but it is people like you that have made it possible.

Best Wishes
Sincerely



(AAMWELL)

A Deluxe Hand Pump

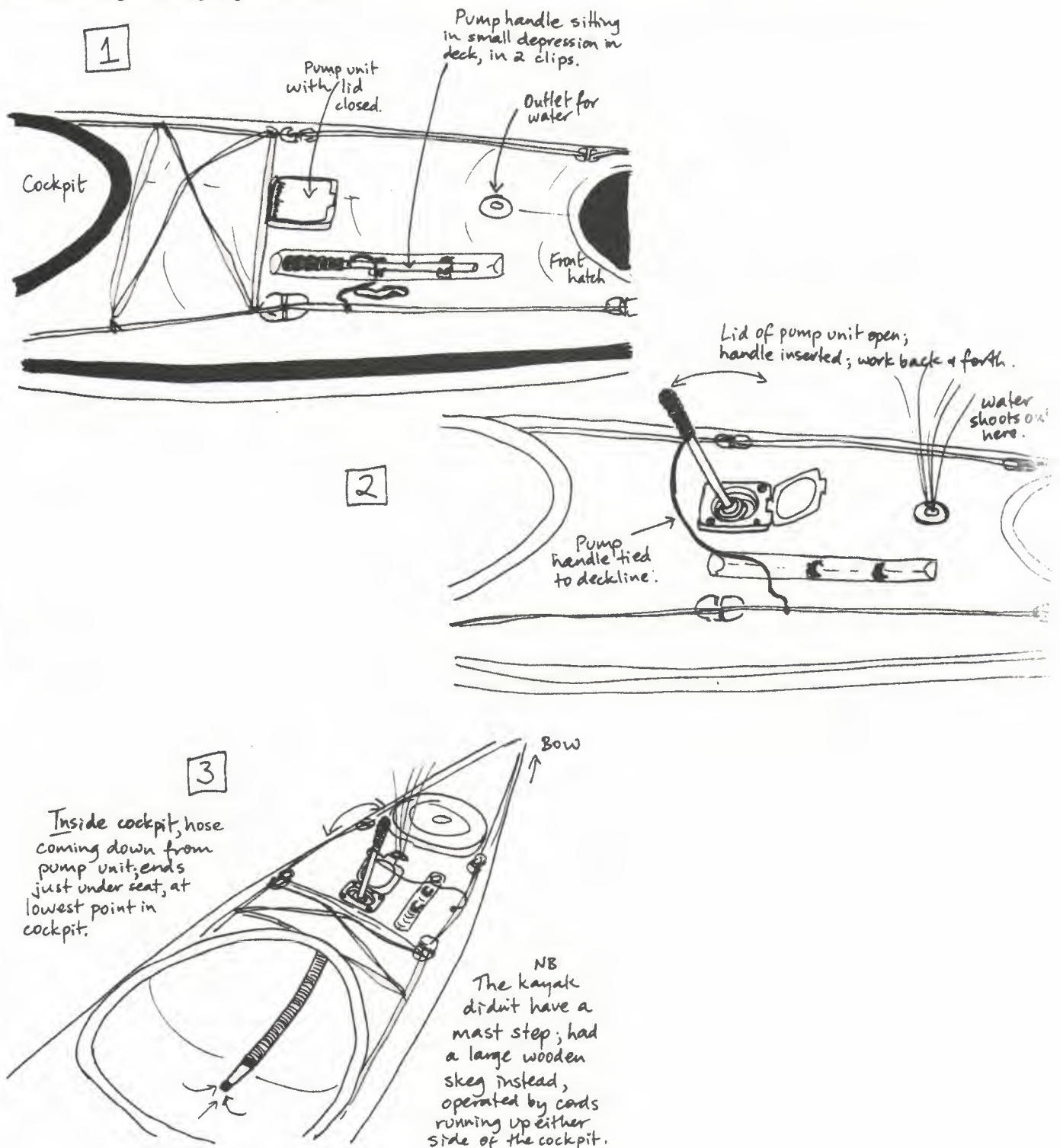
Taken from 'SEA CANOEING', the Tasmanian sea canoeing club newsletter

Jenny Scott

I saw this hand pump system on a European sea kayak in the Falkland Islands last summer. The pump brand name was Henderson, which Mike says is British. It looked to me like a really neat compromise between a portable hand pump (which needs both hands to operate, plus removal of at least part of the sprayskirt) and an electric pump (which has its unreliability problems).

The pump unit had a plastic lid which closed down flat when not in use, and a removable handle which was stored in a recess set into the fibreglass deck (the handle was held in by two plastic clips, and tied to the deckline with a long cord). A wide plastic hose connected the pump unit with the lowest part of the cockpit (just in front of the seat). You could easily fit the handle to the pump, and operate the pump, without removing the sprayskirt; although you still had to use one hand, which means that you couldn't use your paddle.

I didn't have occasion to use the pump, but did use the kayak, and the pump hose was not in the way at all. The friends I was staying with had bought the two kayaks from a French expedition which they met in the Beagle Channel during a sailing trip; the French had just returned from a successful paddling trip to Cape Horn. So, I guess the pumps do work



Coastal Surf Kayaking - Notes for Instructors and Leaders.

from 'SEA CANOEING' the Tasmanian sea canoeing club newsletter

Brian Wattachow

Many sea kayakers develop excellent touring skills and knowledge of the ocean, but spend little time developing similar abilities in the surf. Most sea kayakers are more difficult to control in the surf than river boats. They are heavier, have a keeled hull, are difficult to turn quickly and sometimes are hard to brace in. If sea kayakers want to paddle in anything but the most sheltered of waters they will eventually encounter significant surf, either in crossing shore breaks or on the open ocean where weather can produce sea conditions with waves spilling their crests. Sea kayakers should develop surf skills from the outset and practice regularly in the surf.

This set of notes is intended as a checklist for paddling activities involving coastal surf zones. It is not meant to be comprehensive - but rather to initiate thinking and discussion (and to give which is, after all, the forerunner to good group leadership. The perspective of the instructor and the leader (for coastal touring) is taken to analyse and experience the activity in the following areas:

- (1) Choosing a safe venue and reading the surf zone.
- (2) Equipment related issues.
- (3) Adaptation of river paddling skills to surf zones.
- (4) Readiness skill levels of paddlers for surfing.
- (5) Teaching progressions for introducing paddlers to the surf.
- (6) Surfing session safety and group management issues.

* Managing a complex surf launch or landing with a whole sea kayaking group is not covered here. That might be an article in its own right.

Choosing a safe venue and reading the surf zone,

Factors which contribute to a good 'introductory' surf zone.

1. ACCESS - Close to the vehicle and boat trailer. Initial approach is from the beach not across water.
2. SANDY BOTTOM/SHALLOW BEACH - This will result in spilling surf where the energy generated by the collapsing wave is spread over a large area rather than a steep faced plunging wave which collapses onto a steep beach (this is dangerous surf for most kayakers). Beware of isolated rocks and wave cut platforms below the surface in surf zones - these often occur off of headlands which suggest rock strata more resistant to erosion by wave action.
3. WATER DEPTH - Waves begin to break at a depth approximately 1.3 times that of their height. Hip depth water across a sandy bottom (with a 0.8 to 1.0 metre spilling wave) is ideal and quite safe for novices so that swimmers can stand after a capsizing. It greatly speeds up rescue and self rescue procedures.
4. WATER TEMPERATURE (and wind chill factor) - Exposed skin loses body heat 25 times faster to water than to air. Assume that paddlers will have multiple swims and structure the session accordingly.
5. REFRACTED SURF RATHER THAN OPEN OCEAN SURF - Surf that is partially sheltered by a headland or an outer reef usually results in a more consistent and predictable wave. This makes the waves easier to catch and the group easier to control. Open ocean surf has considerable dangers for the beginner (or any group paddling situation) - powerful rips, longshore drift and so called 'rogue waves' (in fact, a wave 1.86 times the normal wave height can be expected every thousand waves) make rescues and group control very marginal and should be avoided.
6. PADDLING OUT - A surf zone which lets kayakers paddle back out behind the surf to the waiting zone over calm water off to the side of the break is much better and safer than one where the paddler has to punch their way back out through the surf.
7. A RANGE OF WAVES - small shore break and one of two breaking wave zones will enable you to use a progression of difficulty and split paddlers up into smaller groups.
8. TIDE - Most surfing sessions can easily last a couple of hours. The best and most predictable conditions usually occur either side of the high tide. Outside this timeslot of a few hours the wave conditions can vary dramatically as the surf 'moves around' (in response to changing depths and variations in the sea-floor).
9. OTHER WAVE USERS - Kayakers and other surf users (swimmers, board riders, fisherpersons) don't mix. Once the kayak goes into a broach on the broken wave even the highly skilled paddler has marginal control. Imagine a side-on sea kayak, not to mention a double cleaning up swimmers and board riders!

** Know the break well before you try to instruct on it. Know some nearby locations in case your first choice is too big, too small or unavailable. Know the state of the tide.

Equipment related issues,

In addition to the standard equipment required for river kayaking the following should be considered for surf sessions.

1. **SOFT KAYAKS** - Kayaks with rounded edges, bows and sterns (Dancers, polo bats, most of the new short boats) are much safer in a collision than sharp edged boats. Plastic is softer than fibreglass. Avoid at all costs any of the older glass boats with extremely sharp bows (Hydro, Sun Kosi, Commodore etc). Any sharp projections like rudders, sails, shackles etc have the potential to do considerable damage.
2. **BRACING** - Kayaks need to be a secure fit for surfing. Even fleet or borrowed boats can be personalised fairly easily with closed cell foam, duct tape and a little imagination. Footpeg tracking racks need to be shifted forward if the paddler can not place the balls of their feet on the pegs and have knees slightly bent with thighs firm under the cockpit coaming.
3. **FLOTATION** - Fit boats with additional flotation. Foam blocks, air bags, dry bags, blow up pillows, wine casks etc - anything that will keep water out and air in will greatly speed up any rescues and save paddlers backs when emptying out water.
4. **DOUBLE CHECK** that spray decks have a firm fit and accessible, bright coloured and secure release tags - and, of course, that all paddlers are practised in the capsize drill.
5. **BUOYANCY VESTS** - Buoyancy vests should not ride up the body when floating in the surf - they need good secure fittings. Some vests even come with a crutch strap to make this impossible. A poorly fitting vest can be a hazard in surf as they provide only minimal flotation and greatly impede swimming ability.
6. **BRIGHT COLOURS** - White gear and white water don't mix and there can be a lot of white water in a surf zone. The main dangers here are the difficulty in spotting white helmeted paddlers swimming in the surf and losing white bladed paddles when a swimmer and equipment become separated during a rescue.
7. **TOGGLES** - All kayaks should be fitted with a toggle through the stern hand loop for towing a swimmer or general boat handling. Fingers can be crushed and even amputated by the cinching action of the end loop if the boat spins in the face of a wave.
8. **THE NO ROPES RULE !** - Ropes and surf do not mix. Sea kayakers who use a paddle leash at sea should have a way of detaching and securing these. Any decklines should be absolutely secure. Towing systems must not unravel in the general thrashing that is likely in surf.
9. **HELMETS** - Sea kayakers usually do not wear helmets offshore but definitely **SHOULD** wear them in surf zones and have a way off storing them when not needed.
10. **SPONGE** - A sponge can save a long paddle to the beach. It should be carried on the person (tucked under the spray deck) **NOT** secured with a cord inside the boat as this may become entangled around the ankle when paddler and boat part company (usually with a degree of urgency).

Readiness skill levels of paddlers for surfing,

The old adage of 'The right people, in the right place, with the right equipment, at the right time!' definitely applies here. Readiness for introduction to surf may be assessed by the following:

1. **FLAT WATER TECHNIQUE** - The paddler needs to be able to maintain a straight line with powerful forward strokes, needs to be able to perform a stern rudder and should have sufficient low and powerface braces.
2. **AWARENESS OF OTHERS** - The paddler should have progressed from the stage where they mainly concentrate on their own boat. Games and activities can be used on flat water which involve being constantly aware of the position of others.
3. **SWIMMING ABILITY** - Surfing should be introduced on a fairly benign break. If any surfing (or crossing larger surf zones is planned by seakayakers) then participants should have the necessary swimming ability and surf understanding. Don't try to surf in an area that you would be unhappy to swim.
4. **ROLLING** - The ability to roll saves a lot of time swimming to shore and emptying out boats. But it is not absolutely necessary. Surf is a great time to progress from set up flat water rolls to live rolls. All of the qualities which make live rolling a big step for novice paddlers are there in the surf zone (capsizing in awkward positions when low on air, poor underwater visibility, aerated water) but there are no objective hazards like rocks or river beds.
5. **MOVING WATER TECHNIQUE** - It is not necessary that the participant has moving water skills but it obviously helps. The main emphasis here is on support strokes and being able to brace well in your boat - being able to paddle the kayak 'on the lean' is also a desirable skill.

Adaptation of paddling skills to surf zones.

Surf provides some particular challenges to paddling technique.

1. **TAKE OFF**-Paddlers usually wait about ten to fifteen metres 'out the back' of the surf zone with their kayak parallel with the swells (although sea kayaks are slower to turn and will need to be pointing towards the beach at about 45 degrees). As a wave is selected a powerful sweep stroke both turns the paddler towards the shore and gives forward momentum. Heavier sea kayaks take longer to 'get going'. The paddler then keeps an eye on the swell as it steepens and he/she accelerates forwards not by looking backwards over the shoulder so much as looking along the swell to the side. As the swell hits shallow water it steepens quickly and the paddler has to learn to be on the wave with forward speed and now perpendicular to the wave face – the kayaker becomes a surfer as the boat begins to track.
2. **TRACKING** – The paddler is now sliding down the face of the wave and has no need to forward paddle. But the kayak will want to turn off the wave to either the right or the left. The **STERN RUDDER** stroke is used to keep the boat on the wave. If the boat starts to turn left a rudder on the right can correct this, and visa versa. Often the paddler is changing from right to left sided rudders and can also use a rudder to pull off of the wave. Novice surfers often turn off of the wave because they have not used the stern rudder soon enough. I will leave the experience of mechanical rudders open to experimentation.
3. **THE SWITCH** – Eventually the wave will steepen to the point where the crest topples over. When this happens the boat is usually swung (often powerfully) broadside into a **BROACH**. Paddlers learn to anticipate this and prepare for it by switching
 - (a) their **LEAN**, which now needs to be onto the broken wave or 'out to sea' and,
 - (b) from the rudder into a **BRACE** onto, or into, the broken wave.
4. **THE BRACE** - The low brace can be used on waves up to shoulder height and is very effective. The kayaker using a powerface brace in broken waves higher than the shoulder should **NEVER** reach for the top off the wave (this can lead to shoulder strains and even dislocations not to mention capsize) but should reach **INTO** the wave at shoulder height. The paddler on a wave this size basically leans their entire body into the wave face, holds their breath and hangs on for the 'washing machine ride' as they **BONGO SLIDE** towards the beach. Eventually the paddler will feel the wave loose energy and supports back to the upright position. Many novices actually capsize at this stage as the wave ceases to support.
5. **STEEP WAVES** or taking off on waves 'late' (close to the point where they begin to collapse) needs an additional element of technique. In this case the tendency will be for the bow of the kayak to bury at the base of the wave and may result in a front somersault (a loop). To avoid this the paddler gives a powerful stroke onto the wave and then leans back as hard as possible until basically standing vertical on the footpegs or footbar. With a 'bit of luck' the bow will not bury and the paddler will surf out onto a less steep part of the wave's face where he/she can lean forwards into a normal paddling position. Good luck!
6. **SWIMMING AND RESCUE** – Swimming, self-rescues and other rescue scenarios are paddling related skills which need to be taught and practised. Doing any of these things in a surf zone should be a progressive step from doing them on flat and/or moving water. I cover them in the section on safety.

Teaching progressions for introducing paddlers to the surf.

Introducing paddlers to surf environments requires good instruction skills as well as group management skills. Surf is a very dynamic environment and surf sessions need to be controlled experiences. The 'go for it' mentality (especially in groups of mixed ability) might be appropriate in informal surfing sessions but needs to be harnessed in structured sessions. For this reason all paddlers should consider following the basic progression outlined below (even if it is only as a warm-up for more competent paddlers).

1. **WARM-UP** – On the beach. It is particularly important to warm-up torso and abdominal muscle groups, shoulders, necks and all arm muscle groups including tendons across the wrists. A good paddling warm-up should be introduced and taught and it brings the group together as a cohesive unit prior to moving onto the water.
2. **SWIM ACCLIMATISATION** – If paddlers have never swum in surf in paddling attire then a presurf swim might be in order. This can also serve to test how well buoyancy vests fit, the depth of the water and the nature of the sea bed.
3. **CATCHING SMALL WAVES** – In an area where they don't break if possible. These areas can often be found inside shallow sandbars or off to the side of where a break is working across a sandbar. Practice learning to 'run' on the wave and use the rudder to keep the boat straight. Then introduce using the rudder to pull off the wave and switch into the low brace as the wave passes beneath the kayak. This stage allows the group leader to introduce the **ONE BOAT PER WAVE** approach.

4. **LEARNING TO BRACE and BONGO SLIDE** – This is often best taught by waiting in a stationary position sideways to small broken waves (approximately 30 cm on height) and bracing onto the wave as it approaches. This teaches the paddler to lean onto the wave, to trust their brace and to hold the brace position as the boat is pushed shorewards by the wave. Participants can work in pairs if space allows with one standing in the water TO THE SIDE of the paddler to avoid collision, but close enough to rescue a capsized paddler. Obviously, use of a spotter depends on the conditions – water needs to be quite shallow. In many surf zones waves will reform after breaking further out across a sandbar (the main surfing zone) and give a small shore break. This can provide an ideal learning progression.

5. **PUTTING IT ALL TOGETHER** – The paddler can now ride the entire wave (starting with smaller waves initially). Self-rescue and group rescues can be taught in smaller surf prior to moving to larger waves.

6. **MIXED ABILITY GROUPS** – Even if you don't start the session with a group of mixed ability, differing rates of skill acquisition of participants will mean this rapidly becomes a reality. Depending on the total group size and the availability of instructors the group may be split so that smaller sub-groups (four to six) can paddle in areas suitable to their skill level. If this is not an option, rotating beach time (where participants can act as observers and lend assistance with emptying boats etc) is better than losing or only having marginal control.

Surfing Session Safety and Group Management Issues.

As with most paddling learning situations, safe practice is generally the result of careful planning, choice of venue, appropriate learning progressions (so that the paddler develops CONTROL at each stage), good group management (to AVOID potentially dangerous situations) and teaching the group how to respond in what are, mostly predictable, rescue events. It is important to realise that the structured group session is very different to the informal surfing session. A code of behaviour (surf etiquette) needs to be established that ensures group safety and equal surfing time for all participants.

1. **COLLISIONS** – The greatest hazard in surfing is each other. Too many paddlers in a concentrated surf zone is a recipe for collisions. Even the briefest loss of consciousness in water will probably result in a drowning. Collisions vary in severity and occur in the following ways:

(a) **Two kayaks on the one wave** – Adopt a one boat per wave practice, the closest boat to the peak of the wave (where it first begins to break) has the right of way but generally waves are taken in turn. Competent paddlers can take the same wave and steer away from each other or the wave may be breaking in two different places not too far apart providing options for smaller groups. Avoid waves where two, or more, paddlers can catch the same wave well apart without realising it. Murphy's Law suggests that these boats will end up on top of each other.

(b) **Surfing boat with outgoing boat** – Paddling back out should be well to the side of the break, over 'green' water not white (aerated) water which shows the surf zone. If the surf is a shore break then a 'paddling back out lane' needs to be designated with a prominent marker on the beach. If this system breaks down, in the event of an imminent collision both paddlers should deliberately capsize with the outgoing paddler capsizing towards the shore so that his/her kayak hull provides some protection.

(c) **Surfing boat with stationary boat (usually after a capsize and roll) or swimmer** – Paddlers should not catch a wave until they are sure that a paddler on a previous wave is clear. Waves with a short wavelength (distance between wave crests) can make this difficult. Again if the system breaks down the deliberate capsize strategy can be used.

2. **SIGNALS** – The use of signals is generally not needed in surfing sessions but may be required in larger surf or by sea kayakers attempting to manage a group across (in or out) a surf zone. River signals can be adapted here:

Vertical paddle = safe for next paddler to proceed.

(A vertical paddle is also used in choppy seas offshore to signal a capsize – another reason for avoiding white paddle blades).

Horizontal paddle = stop or wait.

Fist on helmet = are you OK. Fist on helmet to reply = yes, I'm OK.

3. DEALING WITH A SWIMMER

Strategy One: Self-rescue by pushing the boat (NOT TOWING) it to shore. Stay on the seaward side of the kayak.

Strategy Two: Self-rescue by swim/towing the boat by the toggle out to the side of the surf zone. Let go of the kayak and swim clear (to the side or out to sea) if a breaking wave (or a wave about to break) approaches. Another paddler can then perform an X-rescue.

Strategy Three: Another paddler tows the swimmer clear (whilst the swimmer hangs onto their boat and paddle – hands on toggles only, no through loops) and completes an x-rescue. Timing is critical here – the swimmer should only be approached during a lull in waves as the potential for collision is high as soon as boat rescues are attempted.

Strategy Four: Highly proficient paddlers may attempt an X-rescue in the surf zone if they are very familiar with the pattern of wave sets and lulls and if the surf is reasonably benign.

Equipment and Swimmer Separated: Priority is always to ensure the well being of the person. Paddles are fairly easy to collect and boats will usually float to the beach quite quickly (especially if they are fitted with adequate flotation). However, kayaks with minimal flotation are much more susceptible to the action of rips and drift.

NO TOW ROPES should be used in surf – not even quick release tow systems. The potential for entanglement, back injury and dangerous collision is too high.

SEA KAYAK RESCUES – Sea kayak rescues in surf zones can rapidly turn into dangerous epics. Most often the best strategy is to head for shore. Long swims through surf on open beaches, where rips and longshore drift are powerful, can be shortened and made much safer if the sea kayaker carries a pair of FLIPPERS easily accessible (often under some fixed straps in the cockpit).

I hope that these notes have given you some helpful pointers about getting out into the surf and either participating in, or organising a safe club surfing session. Remember the paddlers credo – from the master boater – "Nothing is as much fun as messing about in boats" (Mole, in Wind in the Willows).

PS – But, just quietly, I don't know if Mole was much of a surfer.

NEWS

Canoe club pack them in



Snaking in the wind: 53 canoes broke the Guernsey rafting record at Grandes Rocques Bay on Saturday.

(Picture by Chris George. 1549/20)

AN OPEN day by groups involved with on the water activities drew crowds down to Grandes Rocques beach on Saturday afternoon – ending the day with the Guernsey record being broken for the biggest canoe raft.

Tents and stands from the Boys' Brigade, the Guides, Sea Cadets, Sea Scouts and Scouts were set up at the back of the beach and the car park while the Canoe Club ran free sessions on the water and a canoe polo demonstration.

More than a hundred people tried canoeing during the afternoon, giving a

donation for the pleasure to the RNLI and Channel Islands Air Search.

'It's a good day and we give them a start – and if they like it they can start it up,' Rick Martin of the Canoe Club said. 'I just hope they enjoyed themselves.'

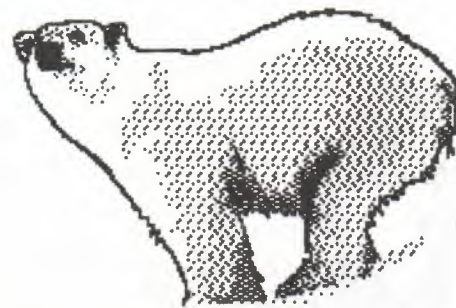
The record attempt was made at 4.30pm. The wind had picked up a little and was blowing from the north. However, the safety aspect was fully covered with qualified instructors out among the less experienced canoers.

Starting at the north end of the bay and gradually drifting to the southern end with the wind, 53 canoes, according to Mr Martin, manoeuvred together and

held the formation for a few minutes, giving a rousing cheer to the spectators on the shore at the end.

'It went surprisingly well – we were twisting a bit with the wind but it did go well. There were some smaller kids and it was difficult to hold it together,' Mr Martin says.

BYLOT ISLAND EXPEDITION



DEAR JOHN

THE CANADIAN ARCTIC HAS OFTEN BEEN REFERRED TO AS THE MAGNETIC NORTH AND THERE IS NO DOUBT THAT IT HAS A UNIQUE ATTRACTION. A VISIT ALWAYS SEEMS TO LEAVE A LIFELONG IMPRESSION WHICH CAN DRAW YOU BACK TIME AFTER TIME. THE WINTERS ARE LONG AND DARK AND THE LATE SPRING IS ALMOST RELUCTANT TO ARRIVE BUT GRADUALLY, AS THE DAYS GET LONGER AND WARMER, THE LAND BEGINS TO STIR AND THEN SEEMS TO SUDDENLY BURST INTO LIFE. BY EARLY MAY THERE IS ALMOST TWENTY FOUR HOURS OF DAYLIGHT AND THE BIRDS, LAND ANIMALS, PLANTS AND SEA-MAMMALS APPEAR, AS IF FROM NOWHERE, IN GREAT ABUNDANCE. THE FACT THAT THIS FRAGILE, SEEMINGLY HOSTILE ECOSYSTEM IS THROINGING WITH LIFE WOULD BE EASY TO OVERLOOK AT OTHER TIMES OF THE YEAR BUT BY LATE JULY, WHEN THE ICE NO LONGER CLINGS TO THE SHORELINE, NATURE IS IN A FRENZY OF ACTIVITY. MIGRATORY BIRDS, SUCH AS THE SNOW GOOSE, NEST IN THEIR HUNDREDS OF THOUSANDS ON THE TUNDRA. POLAR BEARS LEAVE THEIR DENS WITH THEIR NEW OFFSPRING AND ROAM THE FLOE EDGE IN SEARCH OF THEIR PRINCIPAL PREY THE HARP SEAL. WALRUS HAUL OUT TO BREED AND THE BATTLES OF THE BEACH MASTERS BEGIN. BELUGA AND BOWHEAD WHALES MOVE IN LARGE PODS TO THEIR BREEDING GROUNDS AND THE ALMOST MYTHICAL MARWHAL, THE 'UNICORN OF THE SEA', WITH THEIR SINGLE SPIRAL THREE METRE TUSKS, ARE AN AWESOME SIGHT, PARTICULARLY IF YOU ARE KAYAKING AMONGST THEM. ALL THIS IN THE FEW, SHORT PRECIOUS MONTHS OF THE ARCTIC SUMMER.

THE INUIT, THE NATIVES OF THIS WILD, INTRACTABLE REGION, SEEM EVEN CLOSER TO THE LAND THAN OTHER INDIGENOUS HUNTER GATHERERS IN WARMER PARTS OF THE WORLD. THEIR INSTINCTIVE TRACKING AND HUNTING SKILLS, ADAPTED TO THE MIGRATORY MOVEMENTS OF LAND AND SEA MAMMALS, BIRDS AND FISH, TAKE FULL ADVANTAGE OF THE SHORT SUMMER TO RE-FURBISH THEIR DEPLETED WINTER FOOD STOCKS. THEY MOVE ACROSS THE TUNDRA WITH AN EFFICIENCY THAT WASTES NO TIME OR ENERGY. WHEN THEY HUNT THE CARIBOU, THEY BECOME THE CARIBOU. THESE HARDIEST OF PEOPLE, WHOSE SURVIVAL INSTINCTS HAVE BEEN TEMPERED BY THOUSANDS OF YEARS OF BITTERLY COLD ARCTIC WINTERS, LIVE COMFORTABLY IN A LAND THAT REPULSES ALL OTHER HUMAN INTRUSION. THEIR SOUL AND THE LAND ARE INEXTRICABLY ENTWINED.

USING MODERN TWO PERSON SEA-KAYAKS, THE TEAM, WHICH WILL INCLUDE AN INUIT HUNTER FROM NUNIQ, WILL EXPLORE THE COASTLINE OF BYLOT ISLAND, WHICH IS SITUATED TO THE NORTH OF BAFFIN ISLAND ON THE EASTERN ENTRANCE TO THE NORTH-WEST PASSAGE, AND IS IN THE VERY HEART OF THE CANADIAN ARCTIC. THIS VAST ISLAND WILDERNESS, GUARDED BY ROCK BASTIONS THAT RISE DRAMATICALLY FOR THOUSANDS OF FEET, IS CLEAVED BY GLACIERS WHICH FLOW DIRECTLY INTO THE SEA. MOST OF ITS MOUNTAINS ARE STILL UNNAMED. FEW WHITE PEOPLE HAVE TOUCHED THESE SHORES AND THE MONTH-LONG JOURNEY AROUND ITS COAST WILL BE A SORTIE INTO THE REALMS OF TRUE ADVENTURE AND VERY REAL EXPLORATION.

FOR FURTHER DETAILS VISIT THE EXPEDITION WEB SITE:

<http://www.canada-outdoors.com/che/arckayak.htm>

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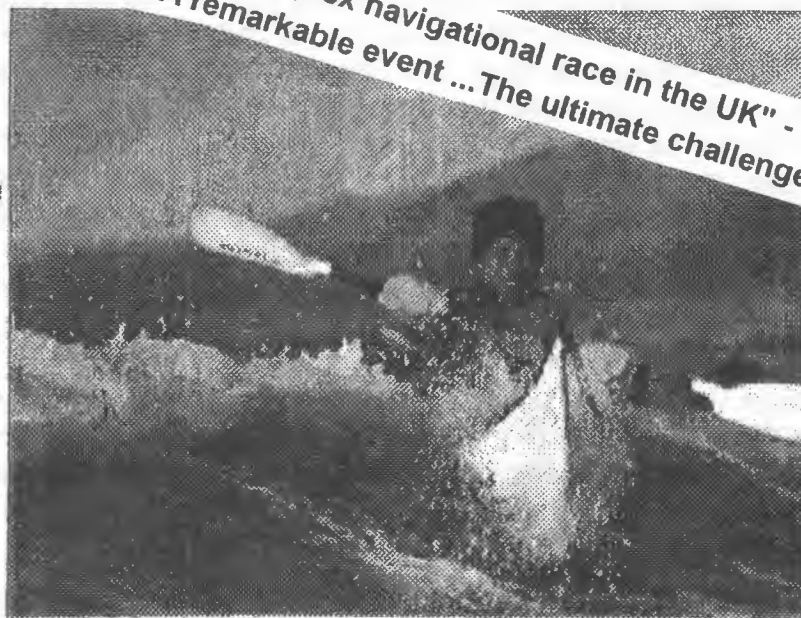
Western Isles CHALLENGE

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MAY 5 - 7 1999

entries are now being taken

THE WESTERN ISLES CHALLENGE.....is scheduled for 5 - 7 May, 1999
 And a team of four must include a female. Three fell runners are looking for a female who can kayak to join them. If you are interested or know of someone who might be, then contact Mark Blythe on 01865 858383 or "Old Whoot, Shillingford, Oxon, OX10 7EW"

Wayne Fearn on Bolton (01204) 573149 is looking to sell the following:
 Fanatic 335 Board/Fanatic 5.5 m sail/2 piece mast/holdall to fit all pieces/pro mesh wetsuit/gold titanium vest/2 shorses/pair dungarees/2 pairs size 8 boots. He is looking for £1000
