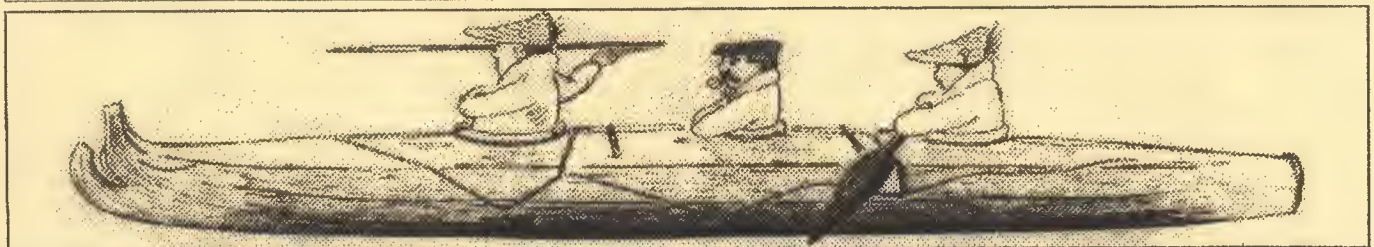
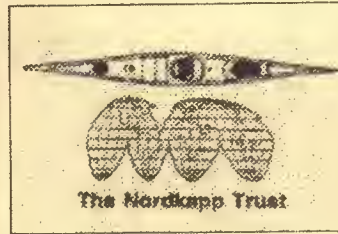


OCEAN KAYAKER

NEWSLETTER OF THE INTERNATIONAL SEA KAYAKING ASSOCIATION,
THE NORDKAPP TRUST & PADDLERS INTERNATIONAL



Ocean Kayaker

iska

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

Aims: Promotion of sea canoeing + Communications Promotion of events and conferences Safety and Coaching

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Whether you sea kayak regularly or hardly ever I know you can write. I also guess you have something to say. A point of view, an experience, a piece of gear that you like (or hate). SO LET ME HAVE SOMETHING FOR YOUR NEWSLETTER.

editorial

by John Ramwell

hi!

For some time I have been concerned about the proliferation of British Canoe Union (BCU) Coaching Awards beyond the shore of the United Kingdom. Over the past year I have been in correspondence over this issue with the British Canoe Union, the International Canoe Federation and others.

Recently I took up an invitation to present my concerns to the BCU U.K. Coaching Committee directly. Here is what I said:—

‘Before explaining myself I really want to emphasise that I am not on a crusade. I am here today to represent my personal views only and I certainly do not want it to seem that I am on some sort of ‘soapbox’. I hope you will accept that this is the case.

The British Canoe Union Coaching Scheme - Is It Just For Britain?

There is no doubt, at least in my mind, that the British Canoe Union (BCU) Coaching Scheme is the most sophisticated and the most respected scheme in the world.

The evidence can be found in the canoeing press where we find outdoor centres around the world, i.e. other than here in the United Kingdom (UK), asking for recruits to coach and/or lead groups on the water to have BCU qualifications. I know of several foreign nationals who have spent much time and hard cash on training and assessment for BCU coaching awards at outdoor centres in the U.K. Sea Kayaking Symposiums around the world want BCU qualified personnel to contribute to their programme.

Your initial reaction might well be, “So what, I agree that the BCU Coaching Scheme is a good one and why should not other nationals make use of it?”

Continued on p3

Contents

Editorial 2

Destinations

Scotland

The Garvellachs . . . 6

Norwegian

International

Sea Kayak

Adventure 8

Reviews 12

Peter Bray—

Newfoundland to

Iceland 13

Obituary 13

Lost at Sea 14

Letters 21

editor, ISKA
John
Ramwell

design
Graham
Edwards

Continued from p2

So what is the problem? Maybe, just maybe, there is not one and we should let the current emphasis on BCU awards around the world continue. After all, it is revenue for the BCU and continues to high-light the success of their coaching scheme.

More prestigious

Most canoeing governing bodies around the world have established their own coaching scheme, often modelled on that of the BCU scheme. I have been privileged over the years to have assisted one or two other governing bodies around the world to establish their own scheme. Even where there is a locally established scheme in other parts of the world which has sound foundations, some local paddlers still insist on coming over here to the U.K. and by spending time and money, work hard to chase BCU awards in the sure knowledge that they will find more opportunities when they return home to work in the outdoor industry because the perception prevails that the BCU award are more prestigious.

Now I know that this Committee has discussed this issue at length. There have been concerns that there were those among the British who were using their BCU status abroad in inappropriate ways. There are concerns about the BCU coaching scheme being applied incorrectly. Are the standards at the correct level, are all the prerequisite criteria being insisted upon? Then there are the administrative details. Issuing awards in the form of certificates is only part of the procedure. Can the BCU be sure that once the certificate is awarded, the holder is using it at the correct level. What about the processes that are readily applied to our own subjects such as revalidation. I know that these issues can be satisfactorily addressed if there is the effort, will and agreement by all those involved.

What the BCU must avoid is being involved in a serious incident abroad when part of the defence of those thought to be responsible is that they hold BCU qualifications. In most

circumstances I suspect the BCU can support the defendant but then what if they feel less than comfortable with this prospect. One might even have concerns about BCU involvement in the first instance. All very well here in the U.K. where standards and the procedures are well enforced.

Then there is the position of the governing body abroad. What is the point in working at promoting their own scheme when their own nationals insist on chasing BCU qualifications. There is also the interests of the individual who resides elsewhere than in Britain. Take one who wants to make a career within the outdoor industry. There are many who own their own outdoor centre. It is their business, their livelihood. Are they to ignore what is available from their own governing body and chase BCU awards just because they are perceived as having more credibility? I know of several individuals who are currently doing just that. It is not an easy process when the applicant is a U.K. resident and it is even more difficult when living beyond our shores. Of course they pursue our Awards because the BCU Coaching Scheme remains the best in the world. I am not asking you to agree with this. It may or may not be the best. What I can say is that it is certainly perceived as being the standard to aim for and the award to have most places world wide.

Sound backbone

History has been on the side of the BCU Coaching Scheme in that the British Canoe Union was virtually founded back in the 1930's on the back of a recreational canoeing instructional process which aimed to standardise the curriculum, teaching methods and resulting awards. It had an emphasis in safety, sound leadership and group control and there is no doubt that the founding fathers of the BCU (some of whom are still very much with us) provided us with a sound backbone to the sport which accounts for the continuing high popularity of the sport with all age groups.

Then along came sea kayaking in the early 1960's. Very soon the BCU founded the Sea Touring Committee.

The Committee's brief was simple enough - to look after the interests of sea kayakers. If they were to undertake this they would need a coaching programme so that they could be sure that those coming into sea kayaking had the opportunity to learn about safety as well as technique from the onset. This was not a big issue at the time as those taking up sea kayaking were mostly already committed paddlers on inland waters. None the less the Committee did not have to look far, The BCU already had a coaching syllabus well mapped out. So long as there was representation from the Sea Touring Committee on the BCU Coaching Committee to ensure that the BCU awards scheme remained appropriate to the needs of sea paddlers, all was well. This arrangement persists to this day and continues to work well.

Worth having

I believe that it is the universal popularity and growth of sea kayaking world wide that has helped to bring about the current perception that only BCU coaching awards are worth having.

So where does all this lead us? We could agree that there is nothing much wrong with the current trend. If this be the case, then should not the UK Coaching Committee make this clear and then go ahead to ensure the scheme was adequately administered around the rest of the world. I strongly suspect that this would be no mean undertaking. I also wonder about the reaction of other canoeing national governing bodies.

Perhaps there is a school of thought that sees the use of BCU awards abroad as being somewhat arrogant. Perhaps the coaching scheme is not always going to be appropriate to local needs in other countries. If there were to be any modifications, would they be overseen by this Committee. So there would be difficulties.

On the other hand you may believe that each national governing body should impose it's own award scheme and object to those of it's nationals to chase BCU awards. This may be the ideal but is it realistic?

The alternative may be to put together a generic coaching scheme which would be appropriate to canoeing at all levels universally and would be universally acceptable.

So is the BCU Coaching Scheme just for Britain?

I would like to refer to Coaching UK "GUIDANCE NOTES FOR B.C.U. COACHES OPERATING ABROAD" (BCU Paper # CG Overseas 001/2000)

These notes appear to answer many of my concerns but I have to admit to having some disquiet regarding the application of these 'Guidelines' if not in whole, then at least in part.

It seems to me that the BCU is seeking control of the use of their coaching scheme abroad and at first consideration this should be no bad thing. But control on its' own is not enough. There has to be good reason for control and the application of it must be seen to be fair and open.

Standards

Of course the rationale for such control is obvious. If the BCU Scheme is to be employed abroad then it must be done correctly so that standards are maintained as they are in the UK where the control is exercised by the Coaching UK Committee.

So, according to the Guidance Notes For B.C.U. Coaches Operating Abroad, the UK Director of Coaching will be the key player in authorising any courses to be run abroad. He will act as the Regional Coaching Officer for all courses overseas. I have to ask in what circumstances would a refusal to authorise a course be given. Is this a 'rubber stamp' approval in that all the BCU is doing is checking that all criteria and conditions have been met before issuing authorisation? In which case why is authorisation necessary? Why not simply spell out the conditions and make it clear they need fulfilling prior to any course being run abroad? Under the Guidance Notes arrangements where would an applicant refused authorisation go to appeal? Is the UK Coaching Committee part of this control with

powers of arbitration?

The issue of the Contracted Course Providers status confuses me. I have this status myself and see its' application to courses being run abroad by BCU members for British residents. Though I note such status is not available for non British coaches and instead they must sign 'an overseas provider accreditation' form in which the first paragraph lays out the condition, "In order to deliver any BCU coaching qualifications course or specialist course overseas, the Course Provider must be a UK Contracted Course Provider. Authorisations to deliver overseas courses will terminate immediately if the course Provider loses Course Provider or Assessor status for any reason."

Refused

Given that a foreign national did sign an Accreditation application, in what circumstances could it be refused?

Looking to Appendix 1 which is a summary of the guidelines (are they rules?) for obtaining BCU qualifications by foreign nationals. Is there a procedure for informing the ICF affiliated national body of the country concerned? Has there been any reaction to any such approach? Where does this 'intrusion' of BCU courses in a foreign country fit in with existing local canoeing governing bodies own coaching scheme?

Referring to paragraph 2.5, "That the monitoring of assessors/examiners domiciled overseas is carried out in such a manner and at such frequency, by a person appointed to this task, and as deemed necessary from time to time by the BCU Director of Coaching". Paragraph 4 goes on to say, "a BCU level 5 coach/es nominated by the BCU Director of Coaching must be invited annually, at cost to a forum of assessors in order to confirm and monitor the quality of provision". I wonder just how realistic this condition is going to be in practice. The cost will be high and should there not be such a forum convened for what ever reason where does this leave the BCU qualified foreign national in the longer term? I also have to ask whether the

opportunity to be appointed by the BCU to undertake this task of travelling abroad to attend these monitoring forums is to be made through fair and open competition to all relevant BCU personnel. I would like this particular concern allayed.

I come now to the central registration of Form CB575/98, particularly in N. America. There can be little doubt that such registration would result in a data base of some considerable use to anyone commercially involved in canoe sport. This information should only be available to an independent governing body.

Finally, can anyone persuade me that Appendix 2 to the Guidance Notes does not amount to a series of hurdles and difficulties to be overcome before any authorisation may be granted by the U.K. Director of Coaching. If the BCU is going to allow use of its' awards abroad should not the scheme itself be made more comprehensible and the procedures surrounding it be made more user friendly.

Relevant syllabus

Just for a moment, put yourself in the place of a competent paddler in any country other than Britain. He or she wishes to run canoeing courses either commercially or as a service to others. He or she would require a scheme which ensures the relevant syllabus is covered (technique / safety / leadership / group control / etc.etc) and ideally be able to recognise competent students by issuing them with proficiency awards. Not a lot to ask. The wheel has been invented by the Brits. Surely they would be right to expect that their own governing body of canoe sport would be able to provide them with all they need. In some cases they would actually find such a scheme available to them. The American Canoe Association and the Canadian Canoe Association as well as some European countries do have an established coaching scheme. Unfortunately they would soon discover that there is a universal insistence on and recognition of British Canoe Union awards. Understandably, as things currently are, they would opt for the BCU awards. But then their problems would start as they wrestled

with the difficulties and bureaucracy and enormous expense involved with obtaining these elusive BCU qualifications.

A consequence

As a consequence of this situation there are many competent paddlers around the world who instruct and lead others on the water but who would for ever be unable to persuade any enquiry following an incident that they had taken any approved course or sought any qualification.

So what are the options?

1. Do 'nowt'. leave things the way they are.
2. Encourage a universally acceptable coaching scheme. Who might undertake this onerous task? The International Canoe Federation? I know that they have no current interest but it would be simple enough to set up a working party to look into the possibilities. Maybe the Royal Society of Arts, maybe the G/NVQ route or maybe the British Canoe Union itself. Maybe a European route. You may know of the 'European Guides Commission' who have already undertaken to oversee a standard for Mountain Guides. There is also the possibility of equalisation of awards.
3. Encourage other National Governing Bodies to make their own awards more meaningful to their own nationals. If this is to an option, then I submit the BCU would need to close it's doors to any aspiring coach who did not live in the U.K. or who was not a British subject. This might be very difficult to achieve.

I am sure that this short list does not exhaust the options, but it may encourage further consideration. 9

I was well received and there followed a discussion and some questions from the delegates.

My own interpretation of these discussion - I have not asked to see the minutes - tells me that the UK Coaching Committee, having deliberated on this issue some two years ago, wish to continue with their

original decision to embrace foreign nationals who wish to achieve BCU coaching awards.

The "Guidance Notes For B.C.U. Coaches Operating Abroad," stem from this decision taken some two years ago and I have, as you know, raised my own concerns regarding these Guidance Notes.

I was given the impression that the UK Coaching Committee agreed that the Guidelines do indeed require reviewing of foreign nationals are to have similar access as that of our own countrymen and women whilst also ensuring that the coaching scheme members, both home and abroad, remain confident that standards, monitoring and revalidation is fairly and equitably applied across the world.

I was informed at the meeting last Saturday by Director of Coaching of the BCU that the BCU has already become involved with the United States of American paddlers and that there are three major symposiums scheduled for later this year in the US of A. to be staged with BCU involvement. One of the objectives being to improve access of the BCU Coaching Scheme to American paddlers.

I asked about any formal involvement of or with the American Canoe Association (ACA) and was assured that this involvement was already taking place and that several ACA officials had visited the UK to agree and plan appropriate arrangements with the BCU officials.

So there we have it. I still have reservations about BCU awards being delivered to other than UK nationals (does not British means British!!) but I guess we must now be beyond the point of no return; the BCU now having a commitment to foreign nationals who are BCU members and have or aspire to have BCU awards.

The way forward will hopefully include a successful review of the Guidance Notes for Coaches Operating Abroad. I wish the UK Coaching Committee well with this task as it will not be easy and will require resources in terms of both capital and BCU time.

9feet.com

Hi John

Many thanks for thinking of us. We would be very happy to offer all your club members a discount of 10% for individual orders (they get a voucher code to enter when purchasing).

If the club was prepared to amalgamate the individual orders into one large order, then we could offer a discount of 15% on orders over £500.

Obviously the larger the order the greater the discount. Either we can talk pro rata on larger orders or simply send me an equipment list and we can quote on it. If people are flexible on kit this can sometimes work out much better for you financially.

Thanks again and if I can be of any further assistance please do not hesitate to contact me.
With best wishes
Jerry

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Destinations . . .

Scotland - The Garvellachs

THE
ISLES OF
THE SEA

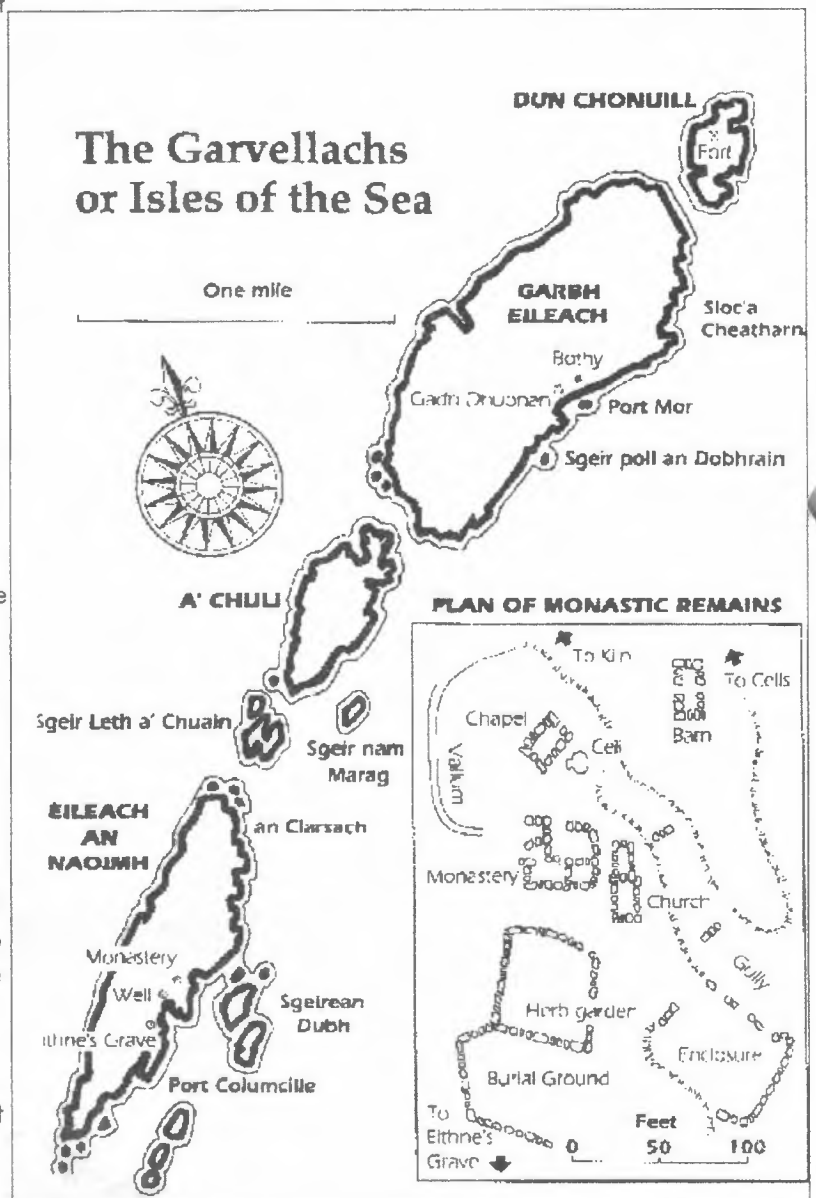
THIS REMOTE and frequently inaccessible group of rugged little islands lies about four miles west of Luig and are among the most interesting and beautiful of all the isles of the western sea.

otherwise insignificant string of tiny islands is now thought to contain some of the most important ecclesiastical antiquities in the

The name Garvellach is derived from "garbh", meaning "rough", and the now obsolete old Gaelic word "aileach", meaning "rock" — not to be confused with the more commonly used "eilean", meaning "island", hence the meaning of garvellach is quite literally, "rough rock", a description exactly fitting the physical features of the group.

A far older name for the Garvellachs was Na h'In Ba, which in the most ancient form of Gaelic means **Isle of the Sea**. This, plus other evidence culled from the writings of early historians, has led to the belief that here lay the legendary Hinba - pronounced "Eenba" — the sacred disart, or retreat, of Saint Columba himself. Consequently these

The name Garvellach is derived from "rough" and the now obsolete Gaelic word meaning "aileach".



whole of Britain — situated upon the site of the ancient pre-Columbian foundation in the most southerly island of Eileach an Naoimh.

Typographically all the islands present, a uniformly forbidding western aspect of steep inaccessible cliffs, which rise sheer from the sea to heights of around two hundred feet. By contrast their eastern approaches are considerably gentler and more inviting, being indented with tiny craggy coves and green grassy inlets which from time immemorial have served as traditional landing places.

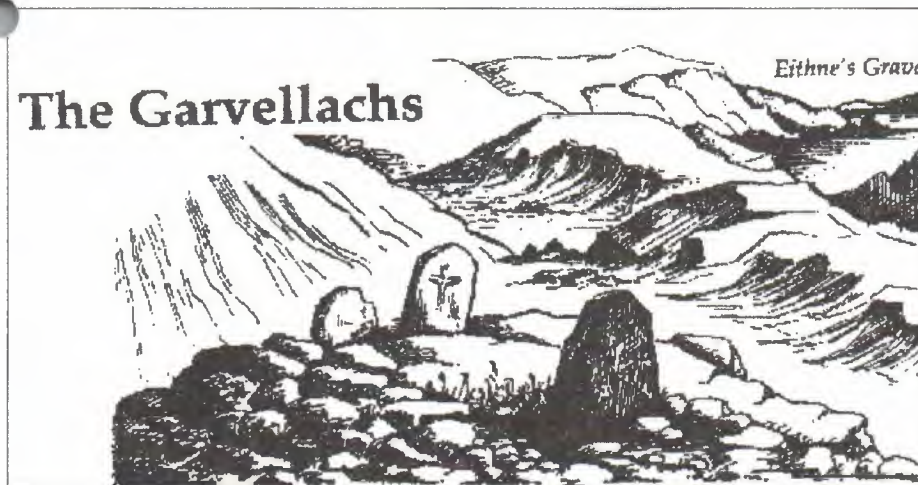
The most northerly of this beautiful little

arrival of strangers to the island.

At the most southerly end of the chain is Eileach an Naoimh, the Rock of the Saints or Holy Isle, with its famous early ecclesiastical remains which predate even those of Iona. They lie just above the tiny landing-place of Port Columcille, a narrow inlet at the south-east of the island sheltered by the low barren islets of the Sgeirean Dubh, or Dark Skerries.

Slightly above the tide-line of this little inlet lies Tobar Chaluirn Chille, or Columba's Well, a small natural spring issuing from a dark fern-fringed crevice in rocks to cascade

down into a roughly-carved stone basin. From here a shallow gully leads north to a walled enclosure, or "vallum", in which lie the ruins of an ancient chapel together with others thought to be those of



archipelago is **Dun Chonnail**, the Fortress of Conal, a precipitous sea-girt crag crowned with the remains of an early castle, said to be that of Conal, a king of ancient Dalriada and kinsman of St Columba.

Next to dun Chonnail lies **Garbh Eileach** itself, the largest island of all and the one from which the group takes its name. This was the last to be permanently inhabited, its one remaining family quitting the little cottage above the old stone slipway of Port Mor about fifty years ago.

South of Garbh Eileach is tiny **a'Chuli Bhreanain**, or St Brendan's Retreat, believed at one time to have contained a small hermit's cell used by the saint for periods of solitary meditation and prayer. According to local tradition a'Chuli is haunted by the Bodach Glas, the unquiet spirit of an old smuggler murdered here during the nineteenth century, whose ghost whistle is still frequently heard warning of the

later monastic buildings.

So dearly did Columba love this remote little island that tradition says he brought the body of his mother, Eithne, here for burial, and her grave is reputed to lie about fifty yards south-west of the old burial ground on an elevated ridge overlooking Port Columcille.

And it is here, on this hallowed spot, surrounded by the vast unsullied grandeur of the sea and sky, that we finally reach the end of this journey through the legendary and beautiful Islands of Nether Lorn.

The "Beannachadh Cuain"

Garbh Eileach . . . was the last to be inhabited, the last family quitting fifty years ago

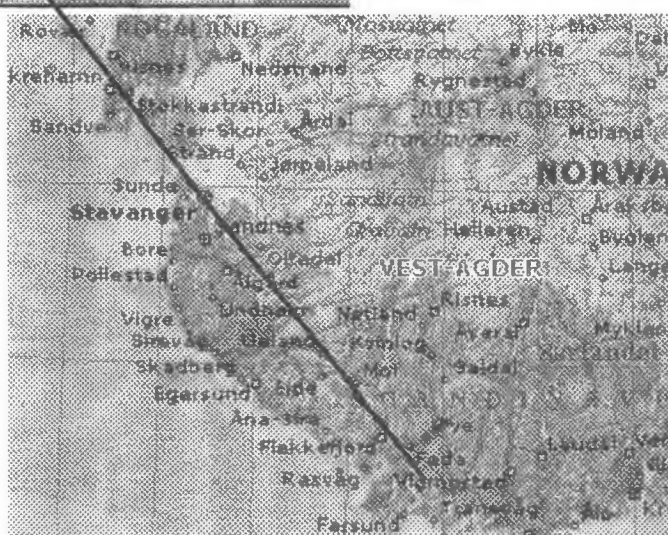
Norwegian International Sea Kayak Adventure 1999

by
HARRY &
CHRIS
SIMPSON

Sat 31st July

Arrived Kristiansand and in convoy with Guy and Roger made the 10 minute journey to Kristiansand Kayak club. A visit to a coffee

shop and last minute shopping was called for. Slowly the group assembled. We ended up with 16 people in the group, two from Scotland, two from England, one from Holland, five from France, one from Belgium and five from Germany.



Jurgen, Dieter and Barbara arrived with kayaks loaded on trolleys which they used to take them on and off the ferry.

We took the cars away to a parking place behind a car workshop and got away about 4.30. Not a problem as it did not get dark

until 10.30. The paddle was only about 12km to the island of Kjamso. The sun was very hot and most people were paddling with only a short sleeved thermal on. There was a pleasant bounce in the waves and we were off to a very good start. It didn't take us long to get there and we soon got all the boats up on the rocks and then started to look for a place to pitch the tents. Grass was almost non existent and a flat area was almost as bad. We ended up on a sloping rock ledge. As soon as we tried to get into our sleeping bags the nylon outer just slid down the thermarest mattresses and we ended up at the end of the tent. A number of people simply found a comfortable hollow in a rock and slept on that. We were all spread out so the usual communal cooking and chat was missing. The island like many in the area did however have a toilet that simplified the basics.

Sunday August 1

After a less than restful night holding on to the end of the bed We were up at 7.30 and on the water for 10. We now headed for the open sea and round the outer side of the islands and open crossings of a few kilometres a few kms offshore. A major aid to navigation was the large number of lighthouses that were usually identified by style on the chart. On the contrary was the GPS which turned out to be useless. There was nothing wrong with the GPS itself but the maps used a non standard grid reference. It said on the charts that readings should be moved 0.0538 minutes South and 0.3923 East to

agree with the chart which is less than helpful when you are trying to figure out where you are! Maybe if I study the manual I can put in a user defined grid, but I didn't bring the manual.

The sea was wonderful and the sun was scorching. We settled into a leisurely pace and moved around the group talking with old friends and meeting some new ones. The Italians were missing which was good as the group really was just right at 16. We threaded our way through the islands and found a good camp site on Vass, with grass, and a huge rock area that we used to sit on while preparing the evening meal. Our



Harry Simpson

French colleagues had been fishing and we all enjoyed mackerel and needlefish.

Monday Aug 2nd

The plan for today was to stop at Mandal for water and provisions.

We worked our way along the inner islands and into the long river which runs through the town. Shopping, water and lunch were the priorities

After a long stop we were off again threading our way through the islands and after a final decision we made our way into official campsite with a toilet and gently sloping grass. After dinner Jacques entertained us with his culinary skills cooking crepes flavoured with Rum or Whisky. This was reinforced by Chris's special recipe fruit cake. We decided that it was too late in the evening when we stopped and that we should try to be off the water by 6.00 if possible, so that we could get more eating and drinking.

Tuesday 3rd

It was up and out to the outer islands with a leisurely lunch looking out over the sea. The weather was scorching, the sea gently bouncy. We headed on to Lindesness lighthouse and after a good bounce went in to the bay for another extended lunch. We then had a lovely paddle through the islands

until we found a good campsite. It was an official site with a toilet in a little harbour with a gently sloping field.

Wednesday 4th August

We declared Wednesday a rest day and stayed on the superb site. Small groups planned their activities. We started by climbing to the highest point on the islands and seeing the compass carved on the rock. It is supposed to date from 1700. We also managed to collect bilberries that supplemented our evening meal. After lunch we set off for a beach just a kilometre or so away to practise rolling and rescue skills in the warm water. The only problem was the jelly fish. Christine actually put her hand on one getting out. The local Norwegians with their speedboats were entertained as they watched from the jetty and beach especially when Jacques tried to tip Muriel in the water and she screamed the place down.

We got back to the village after closing time (supermarket) but managed to fill up on water. A few minutes and we were back at the campsite.

After dinner Jurgen had arranged a Viking evening complete with pictures and Dieter translating Norwegian folk lore from the region accompanied by Norwegian ale.

Thursday 5th

The plan was to head off and find an early campsite and then for different groups to set off on different trips. When we found the place where we decided to stay Karel amused us all when he had dropped his charts off his deck, capsized and attempted to surface dive with his buoyancy aid on!

We relaxed in the afternoon and Chris and I had a short paddle round the nearest lighthouse. The evening and sunset were beautiful with the clear blue sky with its high wispy clouds in the shape of a St Andrews cross changing to red and pink.

Friday 6th

The weather was stable but the wind had swung round to the west and strengthened. We decided we would paddle a few kilometres to view the lighthouse that many of had visited yesterday but this time into the wind and waves. It was probably gusting up

the sunset was beautiful with the high wispy clouds in the shape of a St. Andrews cross changing to red and pink.

to 5. It took us about an hour to get there compared to the hour for the round trip the day before. We landed on the lighthouse and had another lunch break on the sunny sheltered side. After lunch the decision was obvious, we headed into the shelter of the islands. We stopped at a small town Farsum and were interviewed by a local journalist and photographed as we set off. The wind was even stronger and we ended up about 1 km from the town in a big meadow.

Saturday 7th

The wind appears to have slackened but we now start our journey back to Kristiansand. First stop is the town. Water, washing and some shopping were the priorities. Roger dropped his chart and decided he wanted it back so stripped off on the jetty and in he went, much to our and the assembled locals amusement. The paddle was leisurely as we were protected by paddling through the islands. A short lunch and then a bit more of a blow on an exposed stretch. We soon got back to the small town that we had stopped at the night before and after a bit of indecision found a lovely campsite up from the beach.

Sunday 8th

Decision time. Do we go round Lindesness or not. Apparently when it is rough you do not ask the lighthouse keeper how high the waves were but how many fish he caught in his garden. The weather will decide. Plan B is to go inland with a 1 km portage like the vikings used to do. We got up at 7.00 and it was calm and warm. We decided that Lindesness was the way to go. We paddled into a slight wind as we headed towards the headland and a calm sea. The closer we got to the lighthouse the bigger the sea state got until it was a full force 5 and very confused round the point. We paddled for a few kilometres until we were able to shelter in Lillehavn harbour and lunch was the order of the day. After lunch there was only a 5 or 6 km to an official campsite or less if we found a suitable wild one. The group stayed at the entrance to the Spangereid bay while Deiter, Barbara and I went in to look for a suitable site, which I duly found. I checked with a nearby house and they said it would be ok. We brought the group in and everyone agreed it was

probably the best site we had had but we should have a rest day and there was nothing to do at the site. Democratically we agreed that we should go a couple of kilometres round the headland to the campsite although not everyone agreed. We paddled slowly round the headland and were all disappointed to find that the campsite had moved to the bay we had just come from. Even more slowly we all returned round the headland. Chris and I decided that we would take the wild campsite I had found and left the group. We were probably less than a kilometre apart. Karel and Barbara also decided to join us.

Monday 9th

We had a long lie and Chris had a swim, without any jellyfish stings and a leisurely breakfast. Barbara kayaked over to the village shop while we decided to walk. We had just left the tents when the local nature warden (policeman) said that we were on a nature reserve and we should move. Fortunately a compromise of a few hundred metres took us to another site outside the reserve boundary. We went into the shop and to try to find the viking portage route. It was surprisingly short between the fiord and the sea and a kayak portage would have been possible.

Tuesday 10th

We got up sharp and over to the campsite to join the others to find that the plan had been changed to have another rest day. That went down like a lead balloon. I guess reluctantly we agreed to stay but we had a super day climbing the nearby hill and being rewarded with a magnificent view of where we had been and likely to go. Others in the group fished and made kayak trips including 2 that did the Viking portage into the fiord about 1 km away.

The hot shower was very welcome and we all sat on the beach eating, talking and watching the sunset.

Wednesday 11th

Leisurely departure and a day meandering through the islands. We stopped for about an hour to watch the eclipse of the sun. It was only partial from where we were but it definitely got darker and a lot cooler. We

When it is rough you do not ask the lighthouse keeper how high the wave were but how many fish he caught in his garden

went through a narrow gap in the islands to see other writing on the rock face "Fuk Mamamouchi" Actually it had been Jacques and Guy the day before making impolite comments about one of our group. Early evening saw us camping on a lovely spread out site with a toilet but as we later discovered a sign saying no camping. We decided to take our chances and plead ignorance as there were no signs on the water side. Our tent was pitched about 25metres from a Stone Age burial site. It was very quiet. Another unbelievably glorious day. As I went to bed I had a dizzy head which has always been the prelude to one of my hospitalisation episodes to recover from dehydration. I immediately took a Diarolyte solution and went to bed.

Thursday 12th.

I awoke and could lift my head. This was a good sign and then proceeded to drink copious quantities of orange juice, water milk, coffee etc. The wind had turned to the west and was about force 4+ in the exposed parts. We consciously decided to keep to the inner islands as we had 25km to do today and also decided not to visit Mandal as it took at least 2 hours which we could not spare. We had two short stops instead of one long one. This was better as we had fairly long slogs against the wind. The last few kilometres were pretty lumpy but gradually eased off as we made our campsite about 6.30. It was the same campsite that we had used on the second night out. Tomorrow we planned to paddle back to Kristiansand. It was another 25 km day and probably against the wind.

Friday 13th August

It was another superb day. We set off East and after 10km on a very flat sea we stopped for a break that turned into lunch. We were on a lovely grassy slope in a little bay in the islands. Leisurely we set off on the last 15 km to Kristiansand heading to where we had made our first encampment. We then turned North East into the channel between the islands leading to Kristiansand. The wind had got up a little but was following us and paddling was fairly effortless. All too quickly we were at the campsite. We had to cross a boom of plastic poles that protected the swimming

area at the edge of the site. Jacques and Jurgen tried the brutal approach, head on and see-sawed on the middle of their kayaks. We found a length of chain at the end that made an easier crossing, even if a little judgement was required with the waves. As soon as we landed everyone safely we went through the ritual of throwing everyone in the water. Childish but what the hell! The day/trip was beautifully finished off with all of us sat on the grass eating and drinking. When we were almost stuffed the pizzas we had ordered arrived. It was a good night. The decision for next year is Corsica.

Saturday 14th

The day was much colder and a very strong wind blowing. We were lucky not having to paddle back today. Oliver, Muriel and Karel were the first to go to catch their ferry with Theo and Gabby going off to Sweden on their drive back to Germany. Theo had a video camera with him and recorded a large part of the trip.

The rest of us had a day in town doing some last minute shopping. In the evening everyone that was left except Chris and I opted for a meal in town with a couple of pubs later. We had barely finished our dinner when the heavens opened. This was the first rain we had seen and it lasted all night with thunder and lightning thrown in for good measure.

Sunday 15th

The sun started to come out as we got up and another warm day if a little bit windy. It was noticeable the change in colour of the trees. Autumn was on it's way. Roger and Guy had staggered in after 3.00 soaking wet and decided to sleep in their Volvo. Slowly the group left the campsite heading for their respective ferries. Roger, Guy, Chris and I were the last to go.

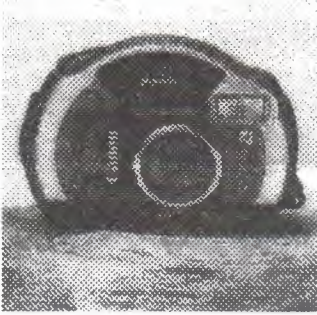
We had covered over 200 kms as the crow flies and had several rest days

In summary it was a well matched group, but most of all we were really lucky with the weather which made the two week trip possible. I never wore my overtrousers once.

The day trip was beautifully finished off with all of us sat on the grass eating and drinking.

Canon IXUS X-1

Waterproof



by
PETER
HATT

Now, this is one little beauty designed for those who enjoy living on the edge. It's stylish with a beautiful metallic finish, robust and water resistant to a depth of 5m. Float's in salt water is compact enough to use one handed and will slip easily into your pocket.

It uses the APS advanced photo system. To load just simply drop the film in the holder and the electronic wizardry takes over. It offers three frame formats from panorama to standard. All the controls are chunky and easy to handle. There is the facility to change film mid role however on this camera you cannot recover the frames you have not shot. It can be used with slide film though these are more expensive than equivalent 35mm film though you do get a few more exposures.

It's full of gizmos such as title date and time printing these are way beyond my needs and comprehension but they should appeal to techy freaks.

The camera must be kept clinically clean and should not be opened in the field. The slightest bit of sand or dust on the O ring seal will allow water in that will attack the electronic gremlins that are housed within. The O seal must be inspected regularly and changed religiously every three years irrespective of use.

Generally, I work two cameras in the field a waterproof one for water-borne shots and the

other for all the camp and land shots. I have found that currently in 2001, APS film does not give the versatility or clarity of 35mm film, though I do feel where you have your film developed, will certainly have a bearing on the finished quality.

All in all this camera looks the biz and is the biz currently it costs around £130 sterling. There are bargains to be had I bought mine for £110

Dances with Waves*

**Around Ireland
by Kayak
By Brian Wilson**

This book is one of those special adventure stories. That you can snuggle down with in the warmth of your bed, having just read a chapter before drifting away into adventure.

It's an account of Brian Wilson's epic solo journey round the 1200 miles of Ireland's coastline, the people he meets on the way, the friendships and adventures. This is a book so well written you cannot wait to turn the page ready for his next encounter with man, beast or the sea. This book will not only appeal to those versed in sea kayaking it will also appeal to armchair adventurer's.

Written in very easy language it flows from page to page.

"What kinda boat is it?"

"What does this bit do?"

"Will it hold my weight and his too?"

"Which is the front?"

"Where does the petrol go?"

"Where do you sleep?"

"Do you want to sleep at my house? Sure I'll ask me Ma"

These kids were great. There was absolutely no question of them stealing or breaking anything. Just by landing at their village I had become their property. They were determined to look after Sola my kayak and me. The book is full of such encounters it's the people you meet along the way that make adventures such as these so memorable.

Often you can't help wondering why people such as Brian take on these epics. Salt water boils, raw skin, several near drowning's and always a deadline to meet for the sponsors and film crew. Maybe it's just better sometimes to slip away unseen. What one does realise is the stories his memory must hold. The tales he can tell and isn't it wonderful that there are adventurer's such as Brian who can push those boundaries just that little further. His encounter with Fungie the dolphin, beautifully caught on camera, it's a bonding of man and beast. Its encounters such as these that make these journey's and hardships so worthwhile. Once you pick this book up you will find it hard to put down until the journey's end is reached.

Newfoundland to Ireland

From Peter Bray who is about to fly to Newfoundland, Canada from where he will kayak to Ireland. We all wish him well on this, his second attempt.

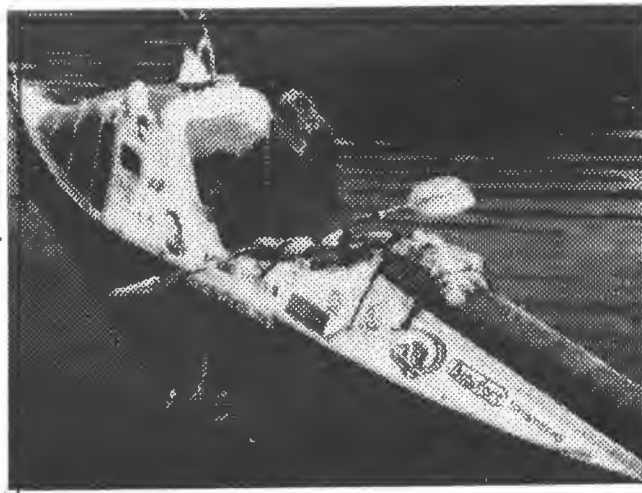
Just to let you know how things are going...

We took the kayak from Kirton Kayaks (Crediton) over to Lowestoft for the cameras to be fitted which took a few days. From there then we went over to Nigel Dennis' centre in Anglesey, where I gave a presentation regarding the challenge. Whilst there I managed to spend a few days living on the kayak in Holyhead harbour, this was achieved by being tied off the stern of the Boston Hornet (an old fishing vessel). Yet again, the RNLI were kind enough to assist us with the trials and helped test the kayak's self-righting capabilities with it fully laden, as it would be for the challenge. Without the keel system (as we had previously), this kayak rolls very quickly with me in the cockpit in comparison. We even practised the worst case scenario of me being in the cabin with the spraydeck off the cockpit, despite this, the kayak successfully roiled up (just a little slower). We had to wait for over a week for a bad period of weather. Nigel called us to say there was a force 5 blowing and we took advantage of this opportunity to test the kayak under these conditions. As we drove to the launch spot we noticed the sea breaking over the harbour wall, I was towed to the mouth of the harbour where I then paddled off. I tested the kayak in every possible predicament and it seemed the worse the conditions were, the

more stable the kayak became. Although we still do not have a financial sponsor, the kayak left for Liverpool where it goes by sea freight on the 26th May. Jim and I will stay for a week or so, in the hope that we will be able to raise

sponsorship and name the kayak. A very big thank-you to everyone who has supported the challenge throughout its duration, especially to John Ramwell. Once Jim returns to the UK he will update on the departure.

hello John
thought that you
might like this pic-
ture. He is doing
quite well despite
the raging storms
that seem to crop
up every other
day. Best regards
Jim



OBITUARY

Peter Clark



Peter is at last at peace.

He left us at 11.25 pm on Monday 9th July 2001 in his own bed surrounded by family and friends.

His full life was celebrated at his funeral service which was held at 1.00 pm on Friday 20th July 2001 at St Andrews Church, 222 High Street, Hornchurch, Essex. Peter and his family owe deep

thanks for all the care and support received from St Francis Hospice, Havering-atte-Bower. If you would prefer to give a donation rather than flowers we would be delighted. Any cheques should be made out to St Francis Hospice and sent to 8 Wiltshire Avenue, Hornchurch RMI 1 3DX.

RSVP 01708 450596

Lost at Sea . . .

by

CARLO
SCHAGEN

translated
from German
by Jutta Gibb

(Although this article has been taken from SEA KAYAKER, June, 2001, I have known about this story since it first occurred. Subsequently it produced a lot of correspondence and some of this I have tagged on to the end.)

When Reimer Siemen left the small north German seaport of Schilltseel in his kayak at noon on August 6, 1998, he had planned to vacation for two days in the north Frisian island world between the Halligs (small islands) of Oland-Langeness and Hooge. Nothing indicated that this trip would cast a shadow over the history of ocean kayaking off the north German coast and drag it in front of millions of TV viewers.

The north Frisian shoals and mud flats (Wattenmeer) between the island of Sylt and the peninsula of Eiderstedt in the north of Germany is arguably one of the most beautiful sea-kayaking regions in the world. It is a magic water-world of islands, ranging from those with exclusive international tourism to those of quiet bucolic solitude. There are sandbars that spread like endless deserts across the mud flats, sometimes appearing blindingly white on the horizon at low tide, close yet unreachable.

When the ocean has retreated in the rhythm of the tides, one can almost conquer this surreal world on foot, up to 25 kilometres into the endless maritime space, but streams and channels that never dry out and are sometimes up to four kilometres wide are natural barriers that crisscross the exposed mud. A sea kayak has no problem in the waterways and on quiet, sunny days, can advance deep into this mysterious and spacious maritime world with the seeming safety of a comfortable river trip. In spite of

environmental and no-trespassing laws, there are many tempting beaches and salt meadows for landing and camping. This was the beloved world of teacher and sea kayaker Reimer Siemen, 55, from Heide, Germany.

This idyllic world, however, is full of dangers. Within minutes, a change in the weather can



transform the water into a stormy maelstrom. In this area of crisscrossing currents, shallows, and sudden abysses, and especially with strong winds against the tides, steep waves of up to five metres are not uncommon. Reimer, however, felt as safe and at home in this paradise of islands and beaches as he did in his garden in Heide.

There had been a forecast of winds of up to Beaufort Force 4 to 5, which would create choppy seas. However, Reimer was an experienced sea kayaker and familiar with

A sea kayak has no problem in waterways and can advance deep into this spacious maritime world with seeming safety

such weather. He was probably taken by surprise by the inconsistency of the predicted storm. Again and again there were gusts of up to Force 7, blowing against the ebb tide and creating dangerously steep waves. He had never seen the sea like this. To add to this, he was trying out a new paddle on this day, a wing paddle that he had yet to grow accustomed to.

It is likely that he capsized near the shipping lane of Schluttsiel. His Eskimo roll was not strong, so there was only his paddle float to help him recover from the capsize and subsequent wet exit. He may have attempted to get back aboard his boat but, ultimately, he was unable to get back in. His options would have been few. He could abandon the kayak and swim to the shores of Oland-Langeness or Groede-Appelland, nearby islands. The distance, however, might have been as much as two to three kilometres, with waves of up to 2.5 meters and gusts of up to Force 7. The submerged sandbars would reappear only in the late afternoon as life-saving islands. He was left with the most basic safety measure: hanging onto his overturned kayak, hoping to be able to attract the attention of a fishing boat or one of the ferries on their regular runs.

Reimer was not wearing a wetsuit but, in spite of his light clothing (life vest, light weight paddling jacket, neoprene kidney belt, shorts and beach sandals), it would have been possible for him to survive for hours in the relatively warm (approx. 17°C/63°F) North Sea waters. The buoyancy of the kayak and life vest would help him get partially out of the water and conserve energy. There might have been a chance that the moderate ebb tide of two to three knots would carry him close to the safety of shore or a sandbank.

He must have been drifting for hours, growing more and more discouraged and afraid, when suddenly he had reason for hope: A ferry appeared on its daily route between the peninsula of Nordstrand and the island of Sylt, carrying its passengers at high speed through the north Frisian islands. With a maximum speed of 30 knots, the ferry nearing Reimer was one of the fastest passenger ships in the world. After leaving

Hallig Hooge at approximately 7:00 p.m., the ferry reached a navigational buoy (Schl4/Langeness 5) only approximately 300 metres from the drifting kayak. Out on the ferry's afterdeck, several passengers were enjoying the evening.

Even though he didn't carry flares, Reimer saw his chance. Hanging onto his upside-down boat, he lifted his paddle over his head. In spite of the rough seas, he waved it back and forth and, for a minute, he seemed to be succeeding. There was some action on the afterdeck—yes, he had been seen. Some passengers had aimed their binoculars at Reimer in the mountainous waves. One of the passengers, Sigrun F., thought that the situation looked threatening. She could see the constantly waving paddle and Reimer's upper body barely showing above the huge waves. Although she didn't realize that Reimer's overturned kayak was drifting next to him, Sigrun decided to take action. She ran below decks and found the ferry's first mate standing next to a concession stand. Without too much agitation, she explained the situation to him. The first mate immediately phoned the captain on the bridge. After approximately three or four minutes, the first mate joined the passengers on the afterdeck while the ferry continued at its fast speed. They excitedly pointed toward the overturned boat and the paddler clinging to it. Several passengers had seen the situation quite clearly, since the ferry passed Reimer within approximately 100 metres. When the first mate acknowledged what they had told him, the agitated passengers assumed that the crew of the ship had recognized the emergency and was acting on it. A small airplane later seen presumed to be circling above the spot reinforced this assumption.

After his visit on the afterdeck, the first mate phoned the captain again. The captain, in turn, sent a crew member to the uppermost deck to have her scan the ocean with binoculars. In the meantime, with undiminished speed, the ship left the capsized kayak at least three to four kilometres behind. At its average speed of 20 knots, the ferry would have been travelling 610 metres per minute and, in spite of careful observation, the crew

She could see the constantly waving paddle and Reimer's upper body barely showing above the huge waves

member could not see anything in the steep waves. When she reported to the captain after her search, he took no action and maintained the ferry's speed. At about 7:40 p.m., the ferry landed at the Nordstrand peninsula. The incident seemed to be forgotten. The passengers who had seen Reimer left the ferry without concern.

Two days later, on the evening of August 8, Sigrun R and a friend were listening to the local radio station. On the 9:00 p.m. news there was the first mention of a kayaker found dead and drifting the morning of August 8, close to the island of Langeness. Sigrun watched the next television newscast with terrible premonition. She then realized that the victim must have been the person observed in the water two days earlier.

Sigrun contacted a nearby police station and reported her observations of August 6. The district attorney of Flensburg initiated proceedings against the captain of the ship. A private TV station broadcast the story on their evening news to millions of viewers. A capsized kayaker drifting helplessly in the sea, signalling his distress, was seen by ferry passengers, who alerted the crew. The ferry did not stop to rescue him. The public was incensed. The captain of the ferry received anonymous death threats.

The inquiries of the prosecutor turned out to be slow and difficult. They concentrated on the following questions: How much knowledge did the captain have of the accident? How long could the victim, Reimer, have lasted before rescue? The questioning of witnesses and experts went on for almost two years, and a clearer picture of the facts eventually emerged. The captain had indeed received a report of a kayaker signalling with his paddle in rough seas. He

could have returned the ferry to the site and taken the drifting kayaker on board. It would even have been sufficient for the captain to alert the closest rescue station via radio. A search-and-rescue helicopter or coast guard rescue boat could have reached the capsized kayaker within 30 to 45 minutes.

Would Reimer have been alive after drifting for hours in the North Sea without immersion clothing? The experts testified that he would have, and cited long windows of survival in this relatively mild section of the North Sea. Reimer was in excellent physical condition, in spite of his age. Because of his



life vest and the support of his capsized kayak, he would not have expended energy staying afloat. The maritime doctor Ulrich van Laak estimated that with a water temperature of 17°C, he should have survived six, probably 12, and possibly even up to 24 hours in the water. Even if he had been drifting in the water three to four hours by the time he was noticed by the ferry passengers, he would have had enough time to wait the 45 minutes a rescue crew would have taken to reach him. On the grounds of these findings, the prosecutor filed charges against the captain. The charge was accidental homicide through neglect, for failing to provide timely assistance after being informed of the kayaker in distress.

A capsized kayaker drifting helplessly in the sea, signalling his distress, was seen by passengers, who alerted the crew . . .

The captain and his attorneys fought this accusation vigorously, saying that he had not himself seen the predicament of the capsized kayaker, but had only had third-hand information passed on by his first mate. In his defence, the captain said that kayakers paddling among the islands often wave at his ferry and, in spite of the crew member's searching for a long time with binoculars, the kayaker could not be seen, raising the possibility that the kayaker could have paddled away from where he had been spotted.

During the investigation, it was not possible to prove that the captain had seen the capsized kayak or even that he had received a clear message about the situation. Didn't this make the responsibility and guilt of the accused captain questionable?

According to the German regulations pertaining to rescue at sea, the crew in charge of a vessel must help when a maritime emergency is reported, but does a report about a strangely waving paddler in rough seas signal an emergency? Clarification of this question was at the center of the trial of the accused captain, which took place on November 23, 2000, in the district court of Niebuell.

After two years, the testimony of the passengers and witnesses once again brought back the details of the events surrounding the incident. The burden of responsibility shifted more and more to the first mate. Several witnesses testified that they had clearly informed him that the kayaker had capsized and was adrift in the North Sea, and they had all believed that a rescue would soon be initiated. The first mate testified that he had phoned the captain and subsequently spoken again with the passengers on the afterdeck but, after two years, he was unable to recall exactly what was said. Early on in the proceedings, the widow of the victim requested to have the first mate included in the accusation. The Office of the District Attorney, however, had not responded to this request.

It was concluded that the captain had received a report of a kayaker in the water

waving his paddle. This was not a common occurrence, and should have signaled an emergency, especially when taking the weather and rough seas into account. The captain neglected to further interview the passengers. He should also have realized that a small kayak would be hard to see in the steep waves and by the rapidly growing distance between it and the ferry. His action was deemed not in accordance with the strict application of his maritime experience and responsibility. He let it be known that he regretted the tragic accident, and sent his apologies to the family of the victim.

Since it was quite possible that proof of his guilt might be harder to establish than expected, his lawyers, the prosecutor and the court agreed to a compromise and to seek only punishment for dereliction of duty. The captain was fined DM 25,000 and court costs for himself and Reimer's widow. After this decision, any further proceedings against the captain were quashed without a conviction or guilty verdict. The court directed that a large portion of the fine be donated to the German sea-rescue society (DGzRS).

Carlo Schagen lives in Hamburg, and is very active in sea kayaking in Germany. He is an attorney; he represented Mrs. Siemen in the trial.

Afterword

There is a long-standing tradition of rendering assistance to anyone in distress on the sea. In most cases, other vessels—even large commercial ships—aware of someone in distress will quickly come to assist. In Puget Sound, Washington, ferry crews have rescued a number of kayakers. Reimer, in spite of the outcome of his accident, was extremely lucky that he was spotted by passengers on the ferry. Unfortunately, his only means of signalling for help—waving his paddle—was ambiguous enough that the significance of his signal was lost by the time the report of the sighting reached the captain.

Waving is an instinctive, but often inadequate distress signal. Anyone travelling on the water needs to carry signals that are not likely to be misinterpreted and ignored.

The court agreed a compromise—to seek only punishment for dereliction of duty.

Flares, smoke signals, strobe lights, signal mirrors and flashlights are all compact enough to carry in PFD pockets. In Reirner's case, a few compact flares tucked into his PFD could have saved his life. He owned a flare pistol, but had left it behind in his garage.

CORRESPONDENCE ARISING FROM THE ABOVE

From: "Il Kayak da Mare" <ikdm@libero.it>

Subject: SAR in Italy.

Dear John,

I have been reading the letter by Tony Ford about a paddler who died in the Wattenmeer as a result of a ship's captain not going to the rescue, where it is stated that in Italy the military Rescue Services will not assist a paddler in distress.

To put things into perspective, this statement is wrong. Usually a SAR (at sea) is started by the Coast Guard (with cutters, helicopters or whatever), but in some cases the Police forces (or the military) take part in, or carry out the SAR if the CG is not available. Some years ago I worked in a country hospital where we had not advanced facilities for acutely injured patients. We were obliged to transfer them to bigger hospitals if they couldn't stay on our life support machines. Due to the fact that we were an hour's drive from the other hospitals, in real emergency we asked for a helo to the Flight Control Center in charge of our area. Usually a Police helo was dispatched, but several times the military volunteered when the others had trouble coming, and since they had pilots certified for night flight they would take charge of the emergency also during night hours. I mostly flew with military crews. I'll tell you more. I clearly remember a Sunday when I had to rise a helo for two patients. FLC cleared them both (it's a matter of insurance liability), but when the helo landed I had three patients to transfer (a major car crash). When I explained the situation to the captain of the crew, he said he wouldn't let us down, and he took his chances with FLC flying on his own responsibility with this third guy on board. He was sure FLC would have understood. As it may be, I've never ever heard of someone at sea in Italy in need of assistance and neglected on technical grounds.

All the best, Sergio Cadoni

From: "Il Kayak da Mare" <ikdm@libero.it>
Subject: SAR in Italy, again.

Dear John,

Thanks for sending me a copy of Tony Ford e-mail. I don't know for the military and NATO personnel, but I know for the civilians. In my opinion there's

nothing strange in denial of assistance from military helo crews for NATO personnel going out at sea for pleasure, and not for military training: you take your chances and rely on normal SAR procedure. I live in Sardinia, I know about the local winds. Usually weather forecasts cover large areas, and don't have much detail for local weather patterns. But that is gathered easily by locals (Coast Guard personnel included).

As for civilians, a SAR at sea is started by the Operations Headquarters of the Coast Guard which has supervision above the relevant area (I hope my English is clear enough) with cutters. The same HQ can summon other help, if need arises (Police patrols at sea, Carabinieri cutters and so on). Also helos are called when necessary, either crewed by the CG, Police, Carabinieri (less often), military and, to my knowledge, Finanza, some sort of border check police force.

Of course all this guys won't stand on the toes of their feet if you file a float plan: it's not used in Italy. But if you need help all you have to do it's to call, by VHF, cell phone, normal phone, whatever you have at hand (guess also flares would do). Believe me, they will come and pull you out of hell, if necessary. But here it's not used as in England to file a float plan on a regular basis and to count every time on a helo. Cutters are more common. Anyway, help is at hand, and this is what matters. Furthermore since three years a toll free number is available (#1530) with which is possible to contact the Call Center of the CG to ask help or denounce hazards or pollution. The call center relays the call directly to the local CG operations in charge. In the end your SAR system is probably more advanced and may work better, or plainly differently, I wouldn't know. If you need more explanation, let me know.

All the best, Sergio Cadoni

Hi Sergio, many thanks for this information. I am copying to Tony Ford. I have kept all the correspondence and will go through it to put together an article which explains the situation. It may be best to do this after the legal situation in Germany is clear. I am not sure whether they are going to prosecute the Captain of the German vessel which declined to assist the kayaker.

With best wishes John

From Prof. Udo Beier, Germany

Dear friends of sea kayaking, langfärds kajak, havkajak, kayak da mare & Küstenkanuwandern,

I received the letter as published below from Michel Waller, President of CK/mer. He describes the situation of sea kayaking in France and asks some questions about the regulations in your country. I would be glad if you could answer him.

In Germany there are no special legal regulations for seakayaking:—

(a) no regulations for the sea kayak (only: your kayak must (?) have a name),

If you need help they will come and pull you out of hell if necessary

- (b) no regulations for the equipment (you are not obliged to carry with you for example a life vest or distress signals, but there are regulations for building life vests and distress signals respectively to carry/use distress signals),
- (c) no regulations for the kayaker (you are not obliged to be a certified sea kayaker)
- (d) and no regulations for tours alongside the coast (you can paddle where you want, but you have accept for example the German Collision Regulations and the different regulations of the local nature reserves, and it is not allowed to paddle during the night, because you are not able normally to equip your kayak with an approved light).

But there are some official recommendations (from 1999) of the German Authority of Shipping and Hydrography ("Bundesamt für Seeschifffahrt und Hydrographie"):

1. Be prepared where you paddle.
2. Accept all regulations of nature reserve and shipping/navigation.
3. Hear the weather forecast.
4. Get information about tide and current, shallows and surf, local wind, temperature of air and water.
5. Be an advanced and trained kayaker with good condition, who knows to paddle in choppy sea and to apply rescued techniques after going upside down.
6. Avoid to paddle alone.
7. Be well-dressed and paddle with a seakayak which is equipped for example with spray deck, spare paddle, life vest, distress signals (optical, acoustical).
8. Contact for further information and different training-programmes the "Deutscher Kanu-Verband" (DKV) and the "Salzwasserunion e.V."

Furthermore the DKV and the "Salzwasserunion e.V." have published recommendations about the necessary equipment of sea kayaks, see for example:—

www.kanu.de/spezial/kuestenpaddeln/index.html and click: "Tipps zum Seekajak-Kauf".

I would be glad to get a copy of your answer to Michel Waller, because I am interested to compile an international survey for YOU which lists all national regulations important for sea kayakers.

Best wishes from Hamburg/Germany:

Udo Beier

(Speaker of the German sea kayakers (DKV))

From Michel Waller, President of CK/mer.

Hello paddling gentlemen,
I should be very grateful to receive comments on the following questions. Since June 2000 the sea kayak is legally and clearly included in the French pleasure sailing regulation under the "

Embarcations légères de plaisance" item, increasing the standard sailing limits up to 2 nautical miles, quite a progress compared with the previous derogation of 1 mile. We still have a special arrangement for a 5 miles in Brittany, subject to added safety rules.

However, we have now a new technical constraint, the boat should float totally full of water with a 15 KG ballast, imposing an extra volume of closed cell foam of about 35 litres. This is causing a big protest among our old members who considered this legal obligation as an unacceptable injury to their paddling freedom. One argument against this constraint was that outside France, kayak practice is totally free. Is it true? I should be very grateful if you can precise the situation in your country on any rules from the Authorities, various control organisation, builders specifications, etc.. Being in contact with the french Ministry of Transport, sub/sub division of Bureau de la Plaisance, I rose the question of foreign guests paddlers in the french waters in their "non conform" kayaks! I just receive a written clear answer. As long as the foreign paddler can justify that his boat is registered under his own country rules the french Affaires Maritimes cannot object to free sailing under international sea rules. What kind of registration can you show? A national recognised sport federation would be accepted. Showing the national flag is not enough, obviously, even dangerous, bearing in mind the long standing historical naval rivalry in the French sailors memory!

Hoping to see you again in French waters, (don't forget your registration papers),

Bien amicalement
Michel Waller

From Peter Carter, Australia.

Udo, et al,

I received the letter of Michel Waller, President of CK/mer. He describes the situation of sea kayaking in France and asks some questions about the regulations in your country.

The regulations in Australia vary from state to state. In South Australia they're very simple:

'For canoes, kayaks, sailboards and similar small, unpowered boats the requirement is:

- * For each occupant a PFD that complies with Australian Standards must be worn at all times
- * A suitable bailer (unless the hull is permanently enclosed); and
- * A waterproof torch or lantern while being operated during the hours of darkness.'

Recreational Boating Safety Handbook, Fifth Edition

That's all: no anchor, no flares, no EPIRB, no fire extinguisher, no minimum scantling rules..., and no restrictions on where we may operate apart from normal traffic rules. Mind you, serious paddlers do carry carry other gear, with a number of us now

Serious paddlers do carry other gear, with a number of us with VHF radio

with VHF radio (Ship Station Licence Class B).

On the other hand, the Australian Canoeing 'design rules' are much more stringent, and based on a philosophy very different from that in vogue elsewhere: see
<www.canoesa.asn.au/ed/seekayak.html>.

Hope this sheds some light...

Cheers, Peter

From Peter Unold - Int. Contacts - Danish Seakayakers/Havkajakroerne

Hi kayakers

Following the lead of Peter Carter, I'm also doing a 'reply all'.

As for Denmark, there are no special regulations for kayaks. Kayaks are considered as any other vessel at sea. The international rules at sea apply to us.

Best regards,
Peter Unold

From Germany: Udo Beier (German Canoe Federation (DKV) - Speaker of Sea Kayakers)

This list is not necessarily complete and correct, it reflects what I know and how I understand it. The rules for seakayaking in Nova Scotia and other Canadian Atlantic provinces are set by DOT (Department of Transportation) and the Canadian Coast Guard (CCG). Manual powered boats up to a certain length, such as all kinds of kayaks and canoes, have to carry the following equipment on all waters under CCG jurisdiction. -one pfd (personal floatation device -life vest-) for each person on board. The pfd needs to have a proper fit and needs to be DOT or CCG approved. Note: pfd needs to be handy, but not worn while on the water. Approval by US Coast guard is not sufficient. Fine \$200.

-Sound signaling device, like whistle or air horn - 1.5m of floating heaving line (throw bag) -manual bailer (pump, scoop etc.) -in the dark or with limited visibility a white light source (i.e. waterproof flash light). -manual propelling device (paddle or oars), here people vary in their interpretations since paddlers already carry a manual propelling device anyway. Some believe you need to carry a spare one, others don't think so (so do I, but I carry a spare paddle anyway).

Apart from these CCG requirements the "normal rules of the road" apply to kayakers, and there are no further restrictions like how far you can paddle out etc.

Flares/signal rockets etc. Almost everywhere available, no licence or permits required.

VHF radios: "Restricted operators licence" required. Issued after a 5 hr class and exam for a 40\$ fee. Valid for life.

Private property should be respected, but landing is legal up to 10 feet above highest waterline.

However, camping is not legal everywhere, and some beaches in National parks are off limit during parts of the season.

Ulli Hoeger

Dept. Physiology and Biophysics
Dalhousie University, Halifax, B3H4H7,
Nova Scotia, Canada

From Wolfgang Bisle. Germany

Dear friends,
as being informed by Udo Beier let me just add a comment:

It is true, in Germany there are really no official restrictions to go on sea with something looking like a kayak - it must only carry the boats name and the owners complete address inside. And you are not allowed to paddle at night on ship routes as you can't carry the white light with certain characteristics being mandatory by law.

But if you want to carry some helpful safety equipment like flares (professional ones, not the tiny toys, which burn only seconds in less then 80m height) you run into some trouble. You have to have a license to own, to carry and to operate these flares. No problem you think, it is always helpful to be educated.

But it was not intended to do this education and licensing for kayak people, as they can't store the flares permanently in a safe manner (against theft) on their boat (if being absent) - weapon laws in Europe and especially in Germany are very strict in some fields (in others not) and this hits us. It took a long discussion with authorities and still not everywhere in Germany you can get now the license as a kayaker to buy, own and use this very necessary safety equipment. In case you can get it, it is a massive effort to invest.

The same difficulty arises in the field of radio communication. O.K. the situation has become better as coastal regions are widely covered by cellular phone. But for instance with buying affordable ERPIB you can still come in conflict with the law, as some popular equipment is not approved by German/European authorities. And if you want to take part in VHF / UHF marine/air communication you can only do this legally by having an amateur radio license, otherwise you can get no license to carry a marine band VHF handheld radio (except you own a sailboat and have a radio license for your sailboat)
It is always the same a kayak is not intended to be equipped with permanent fixings for the equipment: so you are out of the game.

Would be interesting how this (radio, flares, etc.) is handled in your countries, especially if a foreign kayaker enters your country.

Kind regards

Wolfgang Bisle

www.kvu.der-norden.de &
<http://home.knuut.de/wolfgang.bisle>

How about your next trip? How will the group make decisions? Will there be a facilitator?



Letters . . .

Letters to be addressed to: **5, Osprey Ave., Westhoughton, Bolton, Lancs, BL5 2SL** and I can be reached on **01942 842204**.

Write to us about all things paddling and any bee in your bonnet you want to air. Ask other readers about trips you plan or kit you might buy—ed

Hello John,

I suspect standing by may be raised to called in to help if you allow it to! Receiving the latest ISKA reminds me, I have moved and my current address is now: 19 Crompton St, Chemsford, Essex, CM1 3BW. Previously I was 56 Arklands Drive, Chelmsford CM1 7SP.

Interesting articles on attitudes to risk in the magazine - I think you may have tapped into an undercurrent on this one. I suspect attitudes within the kayak fraternity may be more considered than those outside assumed risk sports, but I do agree with you. Of course we all want adventure without risk, just as career without drudge, love without hurt etc, but life's not built that way. If you recognise this, it gets easier!

*Regards,
Richard Atkinson*

Hello John,

Thank you for printing my letter. I look forward to seeing the article on the Thurso Seakayaking course and the close encounter with the minke whale. I'm just back from a 600 mile solo kayaking trip in which I paddled from Aberdeen, down the E. coast, past Fife through the newly reopened Forth -Clyde canal down the Clyde portaging at Tarbert to the Sound of Jura, up North again past Oban and Fort William, through the Caledonian Canal and back home via the Moray Coast. I camped all the way without any support of sponsorship, arriving home on Sun. 1st July to a hero's welcome from friends and family after the last leg from Peterhead. It was an unforgettable experience.

*Best Wishes
David Allan*

Hello John,

It has been a strange year for the Menai Challenge as it has been, I suppose, for other things. Perhaps I started to organise it too early and became complacent but I blame the foot and mouth disease. Anyway, I forgot to advertise it early enough to get anyone else to join me in what turned out to be an exciting paddle but it still looks to have raised about £300 for the RNLI - not all spent on rescuing me!

It was not a good year for training, what with various winter infections, a pulled back muscle in the Autumn followed by access limitations on my favourite rivers - the Severn and Dee. The only real session I enjoyed was on the Trent at Nottingham on a blustery day. Unfortunately, a sudden squall and a wobble resulted in a ruptured long head of biceps, not on the side of the support stroke - biomechanics are interesting. Thinking positively, I reckoned that all these setbacks would make it more of a challenge. Thus fortified, the event was planned for the ideal weekend - late spring so not too hot but calm, near spring tide ebbing at a civilised hour, should be a doddle.

Come the 6th May, I woke to find the wind had blown hard from the N.E. much of the night and was still force 5+ resulting in a steep choppy sea at the north end of the straits - not the conditions for dropping off a yacht at Puffin Island as I had planned for a new venture. Instead I launched as before, south of Penmon and paddled up to the point in an ever-steepening sea with added clapotis. Turning slowly with waves abeam about 100 yards from shore in an overgrown plastic weathervane (pace my Wavehopper, Circe) was not easy. I did wonder if I was mad as I wove my way back down the straits alternately surfing shorewards or broaching towards the channel. Not easy

but then the Lifeboatmen don't chose to go out merely in good conditions. If you don't have a little risk in life, it's not worth living.

The worst of the confused water was met just north of Beaumaris where the sea reflects off the sea wall round the swimming pool but I survived. I had planned a jolly wave to the lifeboat station as I passed the pier but that depended on a low level of fear. Instead, an accelerating tide and a strong wind on the aft port quarter required concentration while negotiating the buoys and moored boats. A loud bang was somewhat unnerving. Had I hit something, broken the paddle or exploded? No, the lifeboat was soon away but not for me - yet. I gave them a half wave because I couldn't release my manic grip on the paddle. A welcome break at Gallows Point for fluid replacement and restoration of mental control enabled the pulse to settle before the excitement of an ever increasing current made for a speedy paddle to Menai bridge and a romp through the swellies that was over before it was enjoyed. Another rest at HMS Indefatigable allowed me to stiffen up. The worst problem was upper thigh cramp - an interesting thing is biomechanics, must write an article on it some day. From there it was an easy paddle past Port Dinorwic having been sheltered from the wind from Bangor pier onwards but the wind came back as Caernarvon appeared and it must have been force 6 by the time I reached Belan point. Luckily, the main channel was relatively calm compared to the surf on the sandbanks to the west but it was still pretty rough. Paddling back to the car parked near the nature reserve south of Caernarvon was not easy especially when a boatload of mindless fishermen passed at speed, dumping poor old Circe on the shingle. It was a good run but very tiring despite the

strong tide and wind in the right direction. It must have been the weaving route and continual need for bracing the knees hard that made it so. The total paddling time was 3 hours 5 minutes for the 20 miles. I didn't notice a lot of bird life on the trip, just gulls and shelduck, but I had been concentrating on other things. The next day, sailing round to Holyhead there was an interesting collection of terns, guillemots, mergansers, oystercatchers and great northern divers off the south coast but that was another journey.

Regards

Paul (Mad-doc) Schur.

Hello John,

I will make a report in french for PARIS-KAYAK International. I will try to translate it for you, but my english is not so good and it will be probably necessary for you to rewrite my text.

I was very busy this last months creating a new french sea kayaking federation specialized in non competitive paddling. The existing French Federation of Canoe-Kayak is only interested by competition and had let maritime authorities to create in 2000 a new rule for sea kayaks. This is a big problem for us because it is a limit for the ratio between length and width of kayaks which can exceed 10, excluding wonderful kayaks like Nordkapp. There are also rules for the floatation of kayaks obliging to put a lot of foam in them reducing loading place. I know that european rules for navigation are in discussion. It will probably be good to create an european group to help not making the same error as France in european rules. I think that only Spain, Italy and France have great restrictions for paddling (1 or 2 nautical miles max). It is important to be organized to discuss.

What do you think about?

Best Wishes

Philippe LASNIER

Hello John,

Something I wanted to share with you all. I have just rcvd a very important letter from the Int.Canoe Fed in Madrid. After ten years hard work they have

accepted our application as provisional members of the ICF, (yes Julian we can race in all ICF intl events) we will become ratified as full members in 2002. To be honest when I read the letter I was close to tears, it was so hard & took so long, but we got there. We're playing with the big boys now! Olympics / World Champs.. etc the whole 9 yards!

Regards

**Craig Wightman,
Malata Canoe Club**

Hello John,

" A man who is not afraid of the sea will soon be drowned because he will go out when he shouldn't . We are afraid of the sea, and we are only drowned now and then . "—Hebridean fisherman .

Those words are the key to the magic of the sea . She is a wonderful lover, but . she is a witch who serves Poseidon - the God of Storms . Never forget for one moment that the sea can kill you or, like the three weird sisters of Macbeth, her promises will be betrayed and you will find yourself fighting for your life .

Every time you put a boat on the sea you take your life in your hands . The smaller the boat the clearer this truth becomes . When the sea is vast and your boat is a sea-going kayak only 18ft long and 18 inches wide it is difficult to imagine how you could ever forget it . Nevertheless her witchcraft is such that sometimes you do forget it . These are the times her magic overwhelms you and makes it all worthwhile .

Your kayak becomes a living part of your body, the wateryour element, yourmovements those of the otter, the seal, the whale . In the water - not just on it - with part of your body actually lower than the surface, with only the spray deck to keep you dry, the sea reveals herself as a living thing .

Yes, I know she is only water and salt, but her breast rises and falls like a great sleeping cat, as the swell surges in from the Atlantic . She races round headlands, drawn hither and thither by her Goddess the moon . She dances with the wind, tosses you about on her waves and drenches you with spray as she and her partner intimately embrace . No wonder I love her and delight in trusting my life to her over and over again .

Never venture on the sea alone is the strict rule of canoe instructors . Less than three must never be . One to stay with the victim of any accident, the other to go for help . This advice only applies to those who are so afraid to die that they are too afraid to live . If you always follow it you will never fall under the spell of the sea or feel her magic . Nonsense! First get to know her ways and perfect your skills, then start to court her in some quiet bay, where - if she turns on you in sudden anger - you can flee back to the placid, sleeping land . Next time she may lead you into her secret places to meet her children, the creatures who live in and on her . Remember all life on earth began in the sea so she was your mother too when she was young, and they are your brothers . Yes, once you are sure you can handle your boat in rough water, go out alone . She may tumble you about a bit, as any lover would, but you'll have her to yourself . A man would never take his sweetheart to bed and get a couple of his mates to sleep either side of him in case she got nasty, would he?

You will soon come to enjoy the big waves, the tide races, the breakers, the surf, all her many moods . Never forget to treat your new lover with the respect she deserves . Check the shipping forecast, the barometer, the sky, the wind, the map, the tide tables, the tidal atlas, the compass, the GPS, radio, rockets and flares, life jacket and safety gear . Check you have everything you need to survive in a wild inaccessible spot if she turns moody and you are stormbound for a few days . Then point your boat towards that fairytale island waiting out there on the misty horizon . Tell the sea I sent you . She has so much to give she will share it all with you like she has done with me .

Geoffrey W Wood .