

# OCEAN KAYAKER



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



INUIT STRATEGY TO CAPTURE A SEAL



**An international & independent sea  
canoeing association open to all  
interested in this aspect of canoeing  
with the objective of promoting safe  
sea kayaking for everyone**



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# Ocean Kayaker

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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*

**£10** Reluctantly I  
am having to put the  
cost of the ISKA annu-  
al subscription up to  
£10. Cost of paper,  
ink, etc., have risen  
over the years and, as  
most of you are  
aware, I have not  
increased our subs for  
over ten years.

**editorial**  
**by John Ramwell**

## hi!

First ISKA and the whole sea kayaking fraternity offer Peter Bray very many congratulations on completing his second attempt at kayaking across the Atlantic. You will find further information about this remarkable adventure in this issue of Ocean Kayaker.

I have often 'banged on' in this space about the lack of opportunities for young people. Here is an extract from "THE MIRROR", Monday, July 30, 2001

TEACHERS will decide this week whether to scrap school trips for children.

Many believe the risks, planning and paperwork involved have become too great.

The move follows a series of tragedies involving youngsters on school outings.

Last night teacher Simon Smith said: "Teachers are always the scapegoats. They are increasingly saying It's not worth the risk."

Earlier this month 11-year-old Bunmi Shagaya, from Hillmead Primary School, in Brixton, South London, drowned on a visit to a France. Lambeth Council has since announced an Independent Inquiry.

The Professional Association of Teachers will debate the future of school trips at its conference in Cardiff starting tomorrow. Mr Smith, of Swayne Park School, in Rayleigh, Essex, will urge delegates to opt out of school trips - a move already adopted by some teachers' unions.

NASUWT deputy chief Chris Yeates said: "We believe it is probably safer for teachers to avoid legal action by not taking trips."



Although this magazine will be published some time after the terrible events in New York we would like, on behalf of the members of ISKA, to extend our condolences to the many caught up in this tragedy

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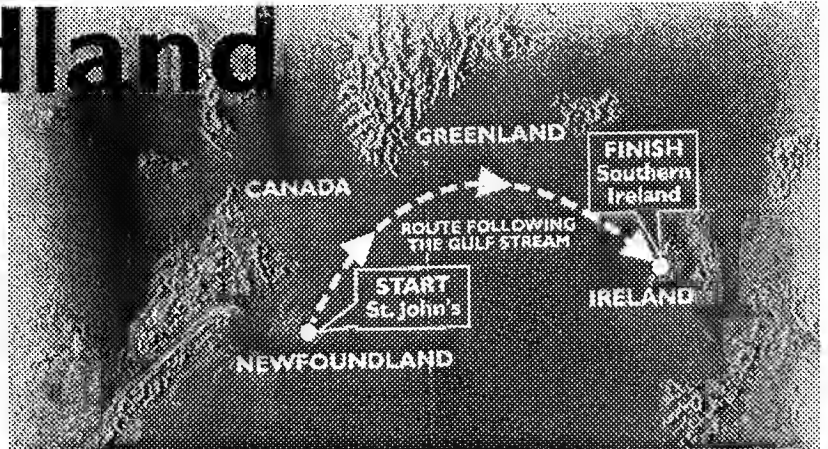
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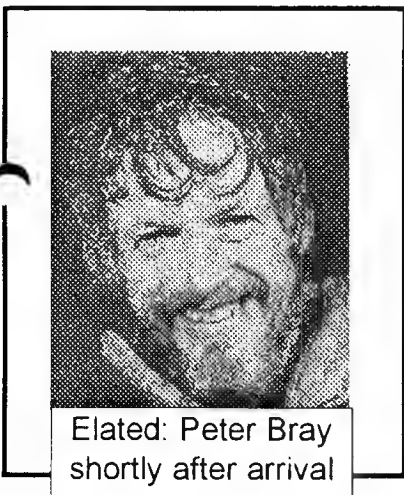
# Newfoundland to Ireland

Kayak paddler hits land  
after 75 days



**A 44-YEAR-OLD lecturer last night became the first man to paddle across the Atlantic in a kayak.**

Peter Bray, of Pencoed, near Bridgend, had spent 75 days at sea in his 24ft craft battling against atlantic swell and storms before arriving on the west coast of Ireland.



Elated: Peter Bray shortly after arrival

He made landfall at Porturlin, Co Mayo - while his support team waited miles up the coast at Killybegs, Co Donegal.

Peter ended up on the otherside of Donegal Bay after losing radio contact with his shore-based team on Tuesday evening. A helicopter started searching for him off the Donegal coast

earlier in the evening, but Mr Bray was finally spotted by a fishing boat off Co Mayo.

The skipper of the Sinead said: "He was offered a tow but he refused and said he'd get on shore in a couple of hours."

The search helicopter was contacted by coastguards and then took him to Killybegs for medical check-ups. One of the team, Rob Feloy, said: "I'm just so very happy he's made it. It's an extremely risky undertaking to cross the Atlantic in such a small craft. I But I was always confident that he would."

Peter emerged from the helicopter clutching a half-eaten sandwich, said he was "elated".

**Copy of my letter to Peter  
"10th. September, 2001**

*Dear Peter,  
To both you and Jim I offer my warmest congratulations on your recent Atlantic crossing.*

*Without doubt it ranks as a wonderful achievement that required skill, determination, mental and physical endurance and much courage.*

*I was sorry not to be able to be in Ireland to greet you on arrival but, despite being very keen to be one of your 'official observers' and see you in, I had a prior committment at the time you were due to land and just could not make the trip. Perhaps next time!!*

*Yours in Canoe Sport  
John Ramwell*



**Destinations . . .**

# St Kilda or Hirta Island, Outer Hebrides

**by**  
JOHN  
BAXTER,HEAD OF MARINE SECTION,  
SCOTTISH NATURAL HERITAGE

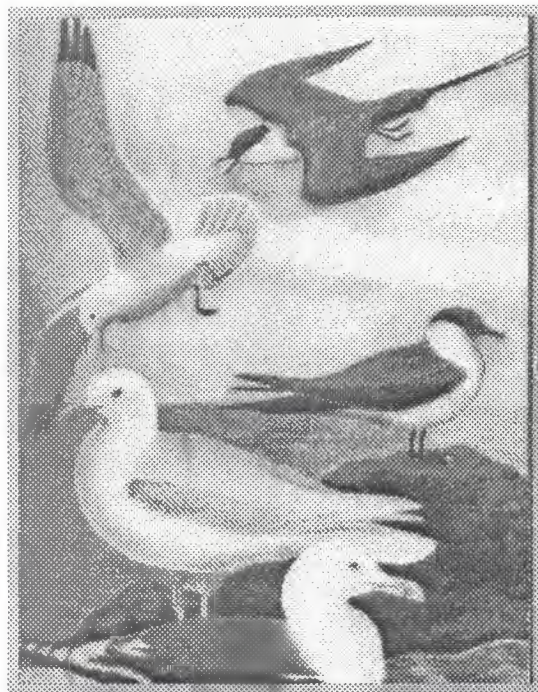
A small group of rocks, the remnants of the caldera of a long extinct volcano, 65 km to the west of the Outer Hebrides, St Kilda is a treasure trove that cannot fail to capture the heart of anyone fortunate enough to have the opportunity to visit it. The archipelago is made up of five islands: Hirta, Dun, Soay, Boreray and Levenish, together with numerous stacks, the most impressive being Stac Lee and Stac an Armin, and many other smaller rocks and skerries.

Towering cliffs reach up defiantly into the sky, the tallest being Conachair at over 400m. During the summer months they are alive with a multitude of nesting seabirds including, gannets, puffins, guillemots and razorbills. Village Bay in the south east corner of Hirta, the largest of the group of islands, is where visiting boats seek shelter and an anchorage, and from here the remnants of the long deserted village is a reminder of the time when the islands were populated.. Now it is only possible to wonder at and respect the fortitude of the St Kildans and take inspiration from their memory to ensure that this wonderful place on the edge of the world, together with all its wildlife, is conserved and protected for future generations.

*The long deserted village is a reminder of the time when the islands were populated.*

St Kilda has a rich and well documented natural history with the Soay sheep, and its own subspecies of field mouse and wren. The true magnitude of the underwater marine life that thrives in the clean clear oceanic waters that surround the islands has only recently been fully appreciated. For a

long time the wonderful underwater life was a well kept secret of those few hardy divers who had ventured out to these remote islands. In 1997, Scottish Natural Heritage undertook the most comprehensive survey yet of the intertidal and inshore subtidal habitats and communities. This has



subsequently been followed by a smaller complementary survey commissioned by Greenpeace and there are plans for a further wider survey of the area later this year to be undertaken jointly by Scottish Natural Heritage and the Marine Laboratory, Aberdeen.

The towering cliffs that make one feel so utterly insignificant when bobbing around in a small inflatable at their base plunge

almost vertically in many places below the sea for a further 50-80 metres. Elsewhere the cliffs give way to scree, comprising massive angular boulders. Everywhere marine life flourishes. Dense forests of kelp cover the rocks, constantly moving back and forth with the ever present Atlantic swell. The stipes of the kelp plants are festooned with filigrees of hydroids, bryozoans, various red algae and a wide variety of grazing animals. On the rock surfaces no space is left unoccupied with sponges, anemones, sea squirts and larger more mobile species such as starfish, sea urchins and crabs all jostling for space.

As with elsewhere around the coast, with increasing depth the kelp forest eventually thins out to a park, but exceptionally at St Kilda this kelp park extends to depths in excess of 45 metres as compared to maybe 10m depth on the east coast and 20-25m on parts of the west coast. Beneath the photic zone animals take over and the rock surfaces are carpeted in sheets of jewel anemones, sponges, dead mans fingers, cushion stars and Ross coral creating a wonderful array of colours and forms.

Visitors to St Kilda are never alone, and in addition to the seabirds that maintain a constant aerial display and simply cannot be ignored, there are grey seals that exploit the plentiful shoals of fish around the islands, hauling up on the boulder beaches at the back of the many caves that punctuate the cliffs. Larger visitors are also seen including minke whales and dolphins and occasionally other large whales together with basking shark.

The remarkable marine life of St Kilda is now receiving the recognition it so richly deserves and the waters around the islands have recently been proposed for designation as a marine Special Area of Conservation under the EC Habitats Directive. This designation seeks to ensure that a network of sites throughout the European Union are established to help conserve biodiversity through the protection of a range of habitats and species whilst at the same time taking account of the social, economic and cultural requirements of the area. As further

recognition of the importance of the natural heritage of St Kilda and the perceived threat to the islands' seabirds and marine life from oil exploration activities, an extension to the World Heritage Site boundary is being considered. The survey planned for later this year which will deploy a range of equipment to map the seabed communities, including acoustic ground discrimination systems, swathe bathymetry, side scan sonar, both towed sledge and remote operated video, together with grab sampling is an integral part of the ongoing process. With this information it will be possible to develop a balanced management scheme for the area aimed at providing long term protection for this jewel in the crown of Scotland's natural heritage.

**Scottish Natural Heritage website:**  
<http://snh.gov.uk>



St Kilda or Hirta, island, Outer Hebrides, north-western Scotland, located 65 km (40 mi) west of North Uist, covering an area of 4.5 sq km (1.7 sq mi), and surrounded by smaller islands, the whole collective also being known as St Kilda. Remoteness has dictated these islands' history. From prehistoric times a self-sufficient community, racially augmented by Celtic and Viking invasions, it was administered by the St Kilda Parliament. Its survival was traditionally based on bird-hunting, often done with great skill on the high cliffs. St Kilda houses the world's biggest gannet population as well as being an important breeding-ground for many other seabirds. From the 14th century until 1930 St Kilda was held by MacLeods, a representative of whom would visit annually. Following John MacDonald's 1822 visit, the community became the target of missionaries and later, of tourism, which brought economic dependence and irresistible diseases. The islands rapidly depopulated, especially in the 1920s, and were evacuated in 1930, whereupon their community dispersed. There are now only a few dozen research scientists living there.

# The Narrow Blade Paddle

by  
DAVID E.  
SHERMAN

(Taken from the Journal of the North Atlantic Kayakers)

Recently, I had the opportunity to participate in a "traditional skills" clinic offered by KATABASIS, LLC. For those holding an ACA instructor certification, an optional examination on day two of the clinic led to an ACA "traditional skills" endorsement. The clinic offered a great opportunity to collaborate with other narrow-blade paddlers, refine existing skills and gain new ones. Armed with a handful of narrow-blade paddles, I arrived with a willingness to get wet and a desire to learn.

Previously, I had learned to make my own traditional narrow blade paddles. For those who have paddled only with store bought paddles, using one made with one's own two hands feels wonderful, like riding a bike with wheels you have laced yourself or a sailing a canoe with a sail you have sewn yourself. Aahhhhh..... simple pleasures. Over time, mostly on my own, a basic proficiency in the use of the narrow blade paddle had emerged, but I was ready for improvement!

KATABASIS did not disappoint, nor did mother nature... we were blessed with good weather and two energetic and enthusiastic instructors. I learned some new rolls, improved upon existing rolls, sculling braces and the sometimes elusive balance brace, in which the boat is held fully on edge with

an outstretched arm holding a perfectly still paddle on the surface of the water. I also developed a good understanding of how to present these skills to aspiring traditional paddlers.

Taking part in a clinic such as this also reinforces the idea that the same skill taught by different people always yields a different insight. Everyone, it seems, had some nuance or teaching technique to share with the group; this kind of exchange reinforces the value in taking part in clinics such as this.

I also gained a deeper appreciation of the ingenuity, resourcefulness and adaptability of the various native peoples to whom credit for development of this wonderful paddle is due. It is, at least to me, fascinating that these techniques developed over hundreds, if not thousands, of years, to ensure that the hunter stayed in and with his craft and returned to the family with prey. That these native peoples constructed, without the benefit of all the machinery and materials we have today, elegant vessels capable of human-powered travel upon the open sea in awful conditions is truly astounding.

The narrow blade, after one has used it for a while, becomes nothing short of magical in its adaptability to varied conditions. Use one long enough and begins to feel like a fine instrument in

one's hands. During and after the clinic, I rethought how the narrow blade paddle can be creatively used today where the emphasis is upon escape and recreation, not hunting and survival.

There are, of course, general rules for use of the narrow-blade, such as use of good torso rotation and placement of the hands low and close to the deck, but after that it's whatever is best suited to the moment. The sliding stroke is an example. I had always confined use of the sliding stroke to the "storm paddle", a shorter paddle used generally, as the name suggests, in stormy conditions. The shorter paddle length, when used with the sliding stroke method, projects much less upper blade to the wind during the recovery phase. But then I considered, why not use a sliding stroke with a full-length paddle? One can do this without sliding the hand as far as one normally does with a storm paddle; by choking up slightly on a larger paddle, you introduce more of the blade deeper in the water and develop somewhat more leverage. You may have already seen this "choked-up" position used in the forward sweep stroke using the narrow blade paddle. Often, I will use this "compromised" sliding stroke in forward travel. Sometimes I will use this stroke two or more times in a row on the same side of the

boat before switching, and it's a nice way to cover ground.

Look more closely at the history of the native peoples who developed paddling prowess, and you will learn that some native kayakers used single-bladed paddles exclusively. You can try, as an exercise, paddling on one side of the boat with your full-length or storm paddle and play with leans, boat edging, foot peg pressures, various sliding hand positions, and degree of blade lift. Just for fun, throw in a bow draw at the beginning of your forward stroke and end with a nice little stern correction.... see how long you can maintain a straight course. Deploy the skeg (if you are so equipped) and see how varying the amount of skeg immersed in the water affects your progress.

Weathercocking is another scenario which calls for creative use of the narrow blade. I find that use of a sliding stroke (or a "compromised" sliding stroke) on the windward side of the boat only, coupled with a slight sweep of the blade and good edging of the hull, produces a nice correction to keep the craft tracking in the desired direction.

I have also started to fiddle with blade angle on both ordinary forward strokes and also sliding strokes. In forward paddling with the narrow blade, two traditional methods predominate: the "drag" and the "lift". The "drag" method involves immersing the blade at an angle of 90 degrees to the surface of the water; the "lift" method involves immersing the paddle at an angle of less than 90 degrees to the surface of the water and pulling it further behind the hip at the end of each stroke. The amount of lift can be modulated, that is to say that the narrow blade paddler is not locked into a rigid 90 degree drag method or a fully-angled lift method. In between is a nice stroke as well, capable of

being used with a ordinary forward stroke or even with a partial sliding stroke (using either a storm or full-length paddle). Try covering a fixed distance with different lift angles and hand positions and learn which combinations move the boat efficiently.

I also find that while paddling into a headwind some degree of lift in forward paddling technique feels nice. It feels as if the upper blade recovers more easily against a headwind as compared to the drag method. Paddlers can spend time moving about with a narrow blade paddle using:

- variety of fixed hand positions
- variety of sliding hand positions
- differing blade angles, both on

ordinary strokes and sliding hand strokes

- successive strokes of various types on one side of the boat.

You will make your own discoveries and attain higher levels of proficiency and enjoyment in the use of your narrow blade paddles. Our use of this extraordinary paddle somehow connects us to the past and reaffirms, in small measure, the historical and practical significance of these time honed traditional paddling skills. Experiment. Be creative and perpetuate, in the process, further understanding and refinement of this ingenious means of propelling our little craft along the waters which we inhabit.

## Sea Kayak Cooking Equipment

by Ian Mill, Malpass, Cornwall

The beginner to sea kayaking camp craft often takes with him a bowl, knife, fork and spoon, plate, etc., along with the kitchen sink. But the wilderness has a knack of trimming down these extras. After years of 'wittling down' my kit, this is what I carry:-

For eating, a **spoon** of a cutlery clip has small brass knob on it that stops it sliding into your pot (tape up the handle),

A **wooden spoon**. This does not get hot and is warm to touch in freezing weather.

A **big plastic bowl** (lexlan lastic) and a plastic insulated **mug**. A hot drink brings warmth and comfort.

A number 9 '**Opeinel knife**' that is sturdy and has a wooden handle that does not slip.

The lot is placed in a small stuff sack so that it is easily taken from out of your hatch and does not get lost in transit.

As for the cooking stove; there are two models I favour, the first being the 'Trangia'. Let's face it, it is the most durable and ingenious form of cooker on the market. The disadvantages (no simmering feature and it's size) are nowhere as near as the advantages (no parts to break) and it is a pleasure to cook on. Methylated Spirits is the fuel and this is found around the world.

The second stove is the MSR 'Whisperlight', it is fast, compact, easily field maintained and quick to deploy. The fuel bottle fits up in my bow of my Nordkapp. I use a small (.5L) MSR pan that also houses and protects my Trangia kettle, that trusty piece of kit that travels everywhere with me. No self respecting sea kayaker should be without one. when camp is set it is permanently glowing! The trick is that there is a place for everything and everything is in it's place.

For washing up, a scouring pad and a bar mat is the best combination. Just remember never to wash the carbon (black stuff) off the outside of your cooking pot as it conducts heat and speeds up cooking time.

My favourite food when kayaking is Oat Porridge and I keep it packed up in individual portions, honey included, in seal bags ready to open and use (think - cold finger and night paddles), making life simple.

I also keep matches and lighter in a 'nalgere waterproof container'. Keep a spare in your sleeping bag liner. If I expect to use an open fire I carry a wire cooking rack to rest my pots on. Beats balancing on rocks and it weighs next to nothing.

Happy kayaking and eat well.

**Ian Mill**

(Aspirant Level 3 Coach)

## Canoeing with the Malta Canoe Union:

# Round Malta tour . . .

by

DR JULIAN

MAMO

It was a Saturday in August when a group of seasoned canoeists from the Malta Canoe Union set off on a round Malta attempt, a first try for one and all. The motivations for this ambitious (?) feat were several - could this be done in prevailing conditions in one



day? What would the difficulties be? Could this be a trial on which to base a future official charity event by the Union. It was hoped that these answers would be obtained at the end of what would surely be a long and exhaustive day, which kicked off with the 7 enterprising members meeting at 4.30am. The rendezvous was at Tigne point after 2 groups had launched from the Nautical school and Tigne point respectively. By 5.35 am all the canoeists were prepared and on the water in the pre-dawn darkness with much gear stacked in hatches on the 6 canoes, one double and 6 singles. The gear included 3.5 to 5 litres of fluid each, assort-

ed food items, sponges, mobilephones (found to be less useful than anticipated) and of course the inevitable sunblock creams, paddles, spray decks, caps, spare clothing and buoyancy aids. There were also some odd items - towlines and flares, some medical emergency kit as well as lights for progress in pre-dawn and post-sunset. In addition were the inevitable odd map and compass. Gloves were preferred by some of the party.

The starting pace was good, as were the prevailing meteorological conditions with a light breeze and mostly calm seas accompanying the group in the first hour. During this first stretch, a rather unpleasant one in terms of seawater quality and fumes, Craig, one of the veteran canoeists, suffered a first ailment - a strained left (?) wrist that was to hamper the rest of his progress.

By this point, the group had reached the Jerma Palace Hotel, a real landmark in that 'corner' of Malta's mainland. This clockwise route adopted from the exit off Marsamxett creek was later to be questioned as possibly a less than wise choice.

After a brief stop for a photographic capture of a splendid dawn, the group decided to make all haste for Wied iz-Zurriq, a first stop and stock-take.

The going was good for the remaining 3 hours and 20 minutes it took to reach the shelter of this tiny, south-western valley port, but by then the group had other worries - a sizeable swell and lots of chop visible off most of Malta's westerly coast. This was rebounding of Benighjsa Cliffs, a 10Km stretch with few escape routes. In addition to



this, a first casualty of the trip was Vince who was severely affected by seasickness, caused by the rebounding chop, who was towed the last 1/2Km into Wied iz-Zurrieq by the Craig and Jenny in the double. In what was a slightly longer break than anticipated - a full 25 minutes, and suitably refreshed with some breakfast the group prepared for the trials ahead. In so doing, it confirmed its first loss, Vince had not recovered in time to proceed any further.

News from the fishermen in Zurrieq was also not good - they warned that the swell was considerable further north and we should proceed with the utmost of caution. Indeed the next 3 and-a-half hours would be considered the worst part of the trail and the group experienced substantial difficulty in keeping their stability and in making sufficient progress. The next set of high cliffs, Dingli were a real 10Km with no escape routes and 400me up to 800me, straight into a deep drop off. The hostile shoreline meant that no opportunity was open for brief 'rest-room' breaks while the strong opposing sea currents and moderate swell meant that even short respites for drinking on the water were hazardous.

Indeed, it was a tired and rather disheartened group that finally made it to the calm welcome of Fomm-ir-Rih bay at about 2pm on that day.

It must be stated that possibly only one of the 6 remaining canoeists had ever paddled for so long at a stretch and despite the fairly mild August, the temperatures were certainly higher than what would be considered ideal for the endurance of this heat-generating activity.

The stop at Fomm-ir-Rih came as a source of great relief to the tired group and at this point, the hours of non-stop canoeing took their toll on the reserves of strength and stamina. 4 more members of the group felt that they had reached their limit. Craig, Steve, Jenny and Peter took a longer respite before venturing round the bay to nearby Gnejna from where the canoes could be shuttled back home. A punctured wheel would even hamper their progress on land! The two remaining canoeists set their targets on completing the full 73km course and planned 2 further brief stops en route. However, when they left Fomm ir-Rih it was to be a further uphill struggle to face the

opposing winds and currents, which were now felt at their full force all the way until Cirkewwa point.

Here the Alex Rizzo and Julian Mamo took a further brief respite for 15 minutes, with some anxiety as to the rate of progress over that last leg - a full 90 minutes for what looked like a brief stretch, but which was actually worked out later as measuring 10 kilometres.

However, Cirkewwa proved a turning point in many ways and while the sea would never again be calm for the remaining route, the currents were now in the same direction as the canoeists' progress. Although a further stop was planned for Qawra point, the pair could not find an easy shelter point on getting there and, feeling exhaustion setting in, did not wish to extend their remaining voyage unnecessarily with a long deviation into Salina Bay. The decision was taken to proceed until a favourable docking area presented itself in the Bahar ic-Caghaq area. However, by this point, although the two were extremely tired, morale was high as it was felt that the end was within reach.

The final break for a 15 minute swim, when it arrived in Bahar ic-Caghaq, to stretch the tiring muscles served as a useful deep breathe before the final leg. During this long straight stretch the pair became unusually silent but confident. Some family members visible and identifiable from 500metres offshore at Fond Ghadir and Qui-si-sana served as the final morale boost.

It was a tired but contented twosome that entered Marsamxett harbour from the North and who docked near the Nautical school at Haywharf at 2005 hours, a full 14 hours and 30 minutes of arm-aching exercise later. To the best of our knowledge, this was the first unsupported circumnavigation around Malta in one day in a kayak. The group was totally reliant on its own resources and skills without a support boat. It must be warned that these were reasonably seasoned canoeists who had the human resources of 2 doctors in the team. We have been careful not to wantonly encourage the untrained to venture into stretches such as the Wied iz-Zurrieq or Fomm ir-Rih unsupported. In this area, mobile phones had no reception at all. It is estimated that the 14 and-a-half hour journey involved the lifting an equivalent load of 54,810 Kilograms each!

*... the hours of non-stop canoeing took their toll on the reserves of strength and stamina.*

# A profile on Percy Blandford

Thanks to  
Percy for  
allowing me  
to use the  
article as  
written for  
CANOEIST,  
March, 1997  
- ED.

There can be few people in canoeing who have not heard the initials PBK but how many people know the story behind them, the history behind the world's most successful range of canoe designs?

It was as a 17 year old Scout attending the 1929 World Jamboree in Birkenhead that Percy Blandford first became seriously acquainted with kayaks. The Hungarian contingent had brought over some canvas models. Percy was not the only person to be impressed, A British Scout Kayak design quickly appeared and Percy built one. It was a colossal barge, however, so he made another to his own design. The following year he launched into his professional writing career, selling his first article for 25p. It was to be another five years before his first American article hit, since then, he has never looked back.

1938 saw him move from Bristol to Wembley, returning home a few months later to marry Ivy, They spent their honeymoon making the trip to London with a kayak journey down the Thames from Lechlade to Fulham.

The war was looming, however, and, being a small boat enthusiast, he volunteered for the Royal Navy. Inevitably, he was drafted into the Royal Air Force in 1940. In the last few weeks waiting for his call up, he spent the evenings in a bomb shelter in Wembley, writing his first book, a text on making nets. Once in the RAF he was surprised to find that it was the standard work for manufacturing camouflage

netting and it remains in print to this day.

Peace returned Percy to his bombed house. It was a time of shortages and rationing, timber, canvas, waterproof glue and plywood all being hard to come by. His first design, the PBK11, was only 3.4m long in order to use pieces of salvaged timber and its ends were rudimentary in order that the window blind he was using to cover the kayak could be folded round the ends without having to make cuts which would have needed glue. He wrote an article on the design for *Canoe & Small Boat* and was met by an overwhelming demand for plans, getting into trouble with the GPO for blocking up the local postbox.

As marine ply, longer wood and better covering material became available, he produced the more attractive PBK 10 which he published in the *Boy's Own Paper*, again with a dramatic response. In the couple of years after the war he sold about a thousand plans for canoes. About 90% of the paddlers in the post war years



were using his designs and he had a market share never achieved by anyone else in the history of canoeing.

In 1947 he ran a Scout cruise with all kit carried in the kayaks, not being ferried

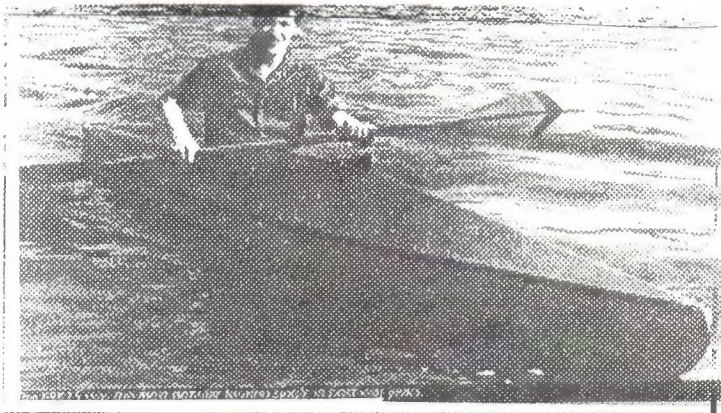
*The most important contributor to British canoeing this century.*

between base camps for them as it might be today. It was intended to celebrate the end of the war but he ended up running it for 18 years, the largest drawing 140 participants to the River Severn. As recently as post war years there were no river access problems. The cruises came to an end with the advent of glassfibre and growing interest in competitive canoeing.

Although the range of designs use the PBK initials for Percy Blandford Kayak, he was shouted down by some of the authorities of the day, particularly in Richmond Canoe Club, on what he called his craft and was obliged to use the term 'canoe' which he has done ever since to describe all his canoes and kayaks. It was this dispute which has resulted in the British idiosyncrasy of confusing canoes and kayaks and confusing Americans.

While running Sea Scouts in Wembley, Percy became involved in a bet with Rover Scouts in Devizes which resulted in their paddling to Westminster over Easter 1948 to claim the prize of a kayak.

Chippenham Scouts lowered the time from 90 hours to under 77 at Whitsun. The following Easter, twenty crews gathered at Devizes to compete for a £1.75 trophy which is still the main prize in the Devizes - Westminster Race as it approaches its 50th anniversary this Easter on a canal which the race has kept open. In 1948, Richmond lowered the time to under 50 hours but Alperston Sea Scouts



pulled out when one of their party was taken ill. Percy was to represent the Scouts on the race committee for two decades.

1948 was also the year of the London

Olympic Games with the canoe sprint regatta held on the Thames at Henley. Percy was a timekeeper, a far cry from today's electronic wizardry. There was not a single racing KI built in Britain at the time, imported Swedish kayaks being used, so Percy designed the PBKRI with jicwoods making up to a dozen for use in training.

BBC radio was the alternative to newspapers in 1950 and Percy was approached to make five quarter hour programmes. These described a canoe camping trip on the Ure and Ouse. At least, it began as a camping trip but after a couple of nights under canvas the BBC had had enough and took them off to comfortable hotels for the remaining nights. The programmes were scheduled opposite The Archers so audience figures were probably not too high.

As vice president of the Canoe-Camping Club, Percy regrets that there is a lot of canoeing taking place in baths by people who think that is the end if it.

After the war he went back to teaching but he was making more money from writing and selling plans and it was not to be too long before he dropped the teaching. In 1951 he moved to Newbold-on-Stour where he had the river at the end of the lane, a large office and a garage sized workshop. The latter has been used to build over a hundred prototypes of kayaks, canoes and other craft right up to a cruiser which was wide enough to

require Percy to make his own short handled screwdrivers to be able to work between its sides and the walls of the workshop. What is now the art shop on the other side of the main road was his printing works. To date he has sold over 170,000 plans for all types of boat, half of them kayaks, some designs running to over 10,000 copies. Kayak

plans still sell 300 - 400 copies per year, mostly to the USA although about 100 per year are sold in this country. Percy thought that glassfibre would end the business but he was wrong and steady interest continues. There are still a lot of

***Nobody in the world has sold more plans than Percy and, quite simply, nobody has made a more important contribution to British canoeing this century.***

PBK catalogues around and his designs made Ottersports, who prepared kits to build his designs. The attractive lines of some of his kayaks still compare very well with anything available in modern materials and are actually designed for going somewhere.

Meanwhile, he was running Sea Scouts in Warwickshire and taking courses for novices at centres such as Longridge. Mostly, however, he was writing. His prolific output runs to over 4,000 articles and 110 books, predominantly in the USA, including 40

for one publisher. While many are on boating, he has also covered furniture, travel and, particularly, wood and metalwork. His book on blacksmithing is still the standard American text. He and Ivy have spent a total of some three years on visits to the USA and have visited 48 of the 50 states. Around the world, a library leaves a bit to be desired if it cannot produce any of Percy's titles.

Nobody in the world has sold more plans than Percy and, quite simply, nobody has made a more important contribution to British canoeing this century.

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## **PBK Moves West** **by** **Percy Blandford**

*After five years of war service in the RAF I came back to rationing and shortages, as well as a desire to get afloat*

In issue no. 39 Alan Byde, who was a friend of mine in those days, describes how he started canoeing by building a PBK20, which he says was a barge. It was, but that was what was wanted in those days. Canoeing meant touring, mostly on rivers and canals in kayaks that were stable and able to carry camping kit, some of it not very lightweight, and with a preference for two-seaters. However, I heard of more than one PBK20 making the double crossing of the English Channel. One pair actually lit a Primus stove and made tea in Mid-Channel.

I built my first kayak in 1930. After five years of war service in the RAF I came back to rationing and shortages, as well as a desire to get afloat. There was a paper shortage and no new magazines were allowed, but if a title had ceased because of the war it could be revived. That happened with 'Canoe & Small Boat', which was restarted by some men with middle-European names, who filled it with obscure political articles and a smattering of canoeing. It did not survive many issues, but in 1946 I had a piece on kayak building in one of them.

### **Canvassed covered**

Because of rationing and shortages, the ordinary person could not get long pieces of wood, waterproof plywood, brass screws and copper tacks, waterproof glue for wood or canvas, or much encouragement to make things. I designed a canvas-covered 11-foot kayak to use what was available and called it PBK11 (the first time I used these initials). This was published and readers had to write to me

for full-size drawings of the frames. The response was terrific. I got into trouble with the Post Office for stuffing a pillar box with plans.

### **Snowballed worldwide**

As supplies eased I re-designed it as PBK10 and followed with other more shapely kayak designs, mostly simple lath and canvas construction. Some were published in magazines, firms started making kits and the whole thing snowballed worldwide.

I produced designs for other craft as well. With the coming of glassfibre and other plastics I thought that would be the end of PBK, but plan sales have kept going until today. We now reckon a total 165000 plan sales, about one-quarter kayaks, must be a world record. Bill Harrison, who has been dealing with the business for the past 20 years, found plan sales failing off in Britain and we decided, after more than 50 years, to call it a day, then Clark Craft, an American agent who has been selling mostly kayak plans, asked if they could take over the whole thing. We worked out a deal. They now have everything and are in production with plans. PBK has finished on this side of the Atlantic.

Incidentally, I never liked the word 'canoe' for what the rest of the world calls a 'kayak', but I had to go along with the crowd. After all, 'BKU' does not flow as easily off the tongue as 'ECU'.

# Night-time Paddling

## —Bio-Luminescence

by

NINJA

(Taken from SEA TREK, the newsletter of the Victorian Sea Kayak Club)

Some of my most memorable paddles have been at night-time in winter. This is not - as might be suggested - because cold, wet and miserable nights are unforgettable. In fact you only occasionally get nights like that. No - it is the complete change in the environment that creates the indelible impression. Night-time paddling is DIFFERENT and last night's paddle was better than most.

Each Tuesday night for more than a year now, a small group of dedicated sea-paddlers have launched from Sandringham. Last night, the group comprised Mike Young (Pittarak), Peter Costello (Icefloe), Les Bogner and Ian Dunn (Raider X).

### Conditions ideal

The water was calm and the conditions were ideal to head straight out to the Fawkner Beacon. It is about 6 km off-shore and marks the closer edge of the shipping channel in Port Phillip Bay. We use deck-lights to keep track of one another and also to alert any other vessels of our presence. The day had been sunny and warm, and it was still about 17 C when we set off. Surprisingly for such gentle conditions, there were almost no other boats around. We had the sea to ourselves.

We chatted lightly to each other as we cruised out to the flashing marker. We had been here

many times in the past, but on this night the sea was so unusually calm that we decided we could safely leave the comfort of our cockpits and climb the ladder to the beacon's platform to get an unusual view of the surrounding bay-lights.

Now it might be expected that being able to climb the beacon - a 'first' for each of us - would have been the highlight of the paddle, but on this occasion the climb played second fiddle to the display of luminous sea life we were treated to on our return. On the way out we had seen some reasonable patches but on our return the sea really turned on a show. It was alive with bio-luminescence!

In places, we were spell-bound with the bright display. Each paddle-stroke was aglow with an electric-blue light, and our bow-waves showed elegant bluish streaks. When a hand was dangled into the water it became alive with blue-coloured 'sparks' dancing vigorously about it. It was like viewing a galaxy of bright - yet transient - stars. As the Ancient Mariner said "It was a wondrous thing".

Entranced, we came to a complete stop. A penguin called, then swam up beside us - not so cautious as in daylight. As we soaked it all in - the darkness, the beauty, and the quiet - we began to hear a soft 'crackling sound' and concluded we were hearing the very munching of the

sea creatures around us.

(Somewhere in the dim recesses, I recall this sound as being attributed to the snapping of prawn's claws).

### Luminous discharges

We collected some of the sea-water in a water-bottle, and even as we decanted it later on shore we could still see luminous discharges. At home I smeared some onto a microscope slide and viewed it under moderate power. Naturally a few interesting 'critters' could be seen but at present I cannot say which ones were associated with the light emission.

From what I have since read, the most likely source of this phosphorescence are the dinoflagellates which are single-cell algae. These sometimes number many hundreds per litre and are not at all uncommon. One of the best-known displays of them occurs in the northwest Caribbean Sea (Vieques Island, Puerto Rico) where densities of almost 200,000 per litre are known. Bio-luminescence can be triggered by even slight disturbance of the organisms.

For those who may want to know more about this fascinating subject, I suggest a web-search for "bioluminescence" or "dinoflagellates" should reveal some interesting material.

*Ninja. 18 April 2001*

**Destinations . . .****SWEDEN**

**by**  
 KARIN  
 MENTZING

*Are you out for a challenge? Some really committing and tricky sea kayaking that puts your skills and judgements on test? Then forget about Sweden.*

You MIGHT be able to find a bit of rough seas, particularly on the west coast of the country. But you might as well find a millpond. Much of our coast consist of archipelagos, littered with thousands of little islands and skerries. We have no tides here. There are easy landings just about anywhere or at least just around the corner. The weather seldom offer any surprises; If It's bad today, it's probably gonna be bad tomorrow as well. And if it's sunny today...guess what tomorrow will bring?

Novices renting kayaks and going out on their own is not a rare sight here, something that might make a Brit shiver and call for BCU; "Never less than three!"

And best of all: Sweden has finally become a reasonably cheap country for west Europeans

**Smooth warm rock**

Thousands of years ago, the ice slowly moved across Sweden and ground the granite rocks round and smooth. Red, pink, beige, grey granite heaving its body out of the sea, like the rounded backs of gigantic whales, The sea gently breathing up and down the low bodies and your kayak following on paddle length from the rock. Slowly rocking up and down, in and out. At close quarters you'll be amazed by the amount and variety of little

***Sweden has finally become a reasonable cheap country for west Europeans***



grasses, flowers and mosses that find a way to live on the rock and in the tiny cracks.

It's easy to get carried away by small details and you will soon be lost among the masses of little skerries, but it doesn't matter too

much really. You will not be in danger and sooner or later you'll meet somebody to ask where you are. Not a single thought of direction or strength of currents. No worries about ebb or flood or needing to be in a certain place at a certain time, unless you're dying for an ice cream and need to be at the kiosk before it closes for the day. For kayaking in Swedish archipelago, I recommend the dog leg course along land. That's where you get to see all the interesting things.

Crossings is for when you need to get from one island group to another, and any crossing should be kept as short as possible because they are quite boring.

When you have had enough for the day, you simply step ashore, pull your kayak out of the water and pitch your tent beside it. Just make sure you are not along a boat lead where a wave can soak your gear.

Hopefully the sun has done a good job with warming up the rocks during the day, and then you will have a warm and smooth seat for your bare legs. Now a small whisky is called for and after a while of relaxing you will feel strong enough to set up camp and cook dinner.

## When?

Weather is something totally unpredictable, we get summers with ten weeks of 25-30 degrees C in the air & 20-25 in the water, almost no wind, and sun roaring down. - And we get summers with lots of rain & wind and no more than 10 degrees anywhere. But the weather is mostly stable for a long period of time. If they get a big strong high over northern Russia, that will keep the lows from the North Sea at bay and we will get a good summer. Its said that if you want to make a weather forecast for tomorrow, the greatest chance to get it right is to say it's gonna be like today. Mid June to mid August is normally the warmest and most stable period but parts of the archipelagos can be crowded by 'boaties' and other holiday makers (crowded by Swedish standards). May can be beautiful, everything is fresh, archipelagos are deserted by man and the bird concerts are deafening. But the water is still ice cold and nights can bring frost and even snow. Mid

August to end of September can also be beautiful. Both air and water can be very warm and again the archipelagos arc left by most of the holiday makers.

## Where?

I'd definitely recommend the archipelagos,



*West coast - "rough" sea*



*West coast beach camping*



*West coast beach camping*

that's what is special with kayaking in Sweden.

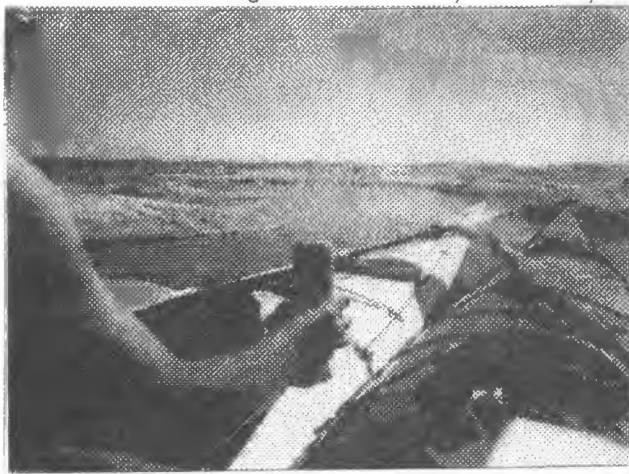
Archipelagos stretches from the Norwegian border and down to Goteborg, that part of Sweden is called Bohuslan. Then along the east coast, there is unbroken archipelago from about Vastervik and up to past Stockholm. Between Stockholm and Turku in Finland, there is another big area with archipelago called Aland, but that area need its own article, so I'll leave that to somebody else.

It's normally no problem to find a parking place for your car, that can be a little harbour, a public camp ground, a village or even a kayak centre. At some places you might have to pay a small fee, others are free.

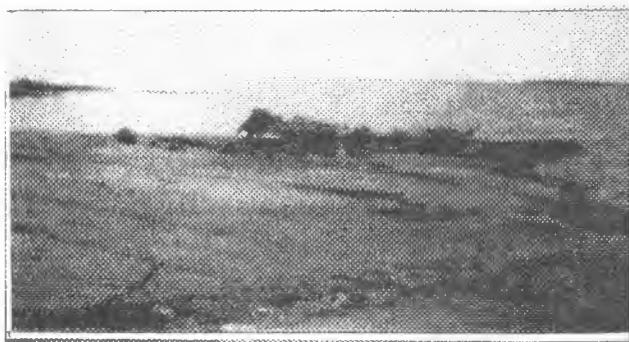
### How?

There are some things that differs a lot from kayaking in the U.K., Germany, Holland etc. Wet suit is definitely not standard equipment for kayaking in Sweden. The risk for a capsize is so small that its not worth the smell & discomfort of a wet suit.

Another thing that we normally don't carry



*East coast smooth rocks*



here is flares. You can never count on a rescue if you shoot a flare because nobody might see it and if they do, they might just think it's somebody's birthday. Accidents are simply so rare. As for camping, its a bit different depending on if you are on the east or the west coast. In Bohuslan you look for a shallow beach with a piece of grass on top of it. So any tent and mat will do. On the east coast, beaches are almost non existent, so we prefer to camp straight on the rock, rather than to carry everything up

to the forest just to get it invaded by ants. In the outer archipelago, there might not even be a forest to camp in, the rocks are bare. So you need a good, thick mat and a self supporting tent. If your tent needs to be pegged down only in the ends, you can just tie a piece of string around a few stones or/and kayaks.

### Water

Sea water along the west coast is salt, but no where near as salt as in the North Sea. I use it for cooking potatoes, carrots etc., but find it too salty for rice, pasta and likely, so I then mix it with fresh water. Sea water in the Baltic is near fresh, saltier further south and fresher the further north you get. In the area Vastervik to Stockholm it's fresh enough to cook rice, pasta etc., but not fresh enough to drink.

Fresh water is something you can't find in the free, you have to go to a tap, but it's seldom more than a few hours paddling to the nearest tap.

### Beasts

We have three kind of snakes in Sweden, two harmless and one biting. The biting one is not much more dangerous than a wasp. No, the really nasty beast here is ticks. They often carry different kind of virus of which the TBE is the worst. TBE is most common in and around the Stockholm area, but is now spreading along the east coast. The risk to get it is still rather small, but go get yourself a vaccination against it anyway. It's a cheap life insurance. Then avoid grassy areas and check off your body every evening. If you get it away within 24 hours, you will considerably reduce the risk of being infected. Use your nails or a pair of tweezers and get hold of the tick as close to your skin as possible. Then pull slow and carefully straight out, don't twist it. Check that no part of the tick is left in your flesh.

### Economy

For the past ten years or so, we have gravely neglected our economy in Sweden. Now the schools and education is run down. Hospitals and medical care is run down,



and so is most kind of social service and safety for the citizens. But taxes are still the highest in the world. We are rather quickly becoming a very poor country and with increasing class distinctions. However, this finally make us a good tourist country for the richer west Europeans. When I first was in the U.K. in 1971, the £ cost us some 5-6 kroner. Today it cost us more than 15 kroner.

### More expensive

But there are some things that are more expensive here, than in most other European countries.

Dehydrated bag food is one of those things. Beer and most other alcohol drinks is another.

Range and variety of dehydrated bag food and tinned food is also smaller here than elsewhere.

So bring from home what you want, but never tell a Swede I said this or I'll be hanged!!

Maps are also very expensive here, so buy everything you can get at home. It might be difficult to find the "Green maps" (Corona Kartan) anywhere outside Sweden though, and that is the best one for kayaking. It's scale 1:50.000, detailed enough, and it tells you what land looks like plus where there are boat leads, bird sanction areas, roads, houses etc. Another thing that is very expensive here, is camping in public camp sites, to put up a tent for the night cost some 90-120 kroner and in addition to this, you will need a special camping card that cost up to 150 kronor for a year. But we have the "allemansratt" (right of common) which allows anyone to camp almost everywhere out of sight from houses. And we have quite a lot of space here. In a country almost twice the size of Great Britain but holding only about one eighth of the population - less people than in London—you will have no problem to find a spot for your camp. The rule is simple: "leave nothing but footprints. Bring nothing but memories. Kill nothing but time." You might have heard it before? When you need to go to the toilet, you just dig a hole out of the way from paths etc. and when you're finished you cover it properly so not even a badger can

dig it up and spread it. And never make a fire anywhere near forest during summer!

### Habits

Its been said that Swedes have the habit of walking around naked most of the time. Well, its not quite that good, but out of sight from public places, we don't care too much about being impractical in case the weather is warm. First time I went kayaking outside Sweden, was in May 1995 and west coast of Scotland. There were some 25 sea kayakers from France, Germany, 1 Holland, Britain and four of us from Sweden. One of the Swedes was named Olof and he soon got the nick name All Off because of his habit to walk out of the tent every morning, dressed only in a Tilly hat and Teva sandals, carrying towel, soap and tooth brush and heading for the nearest stream. Another

*Never make a fire anywhere near forest during summer!*



Outer east coast archipelago camp site

rather strange habit, is that of the 'boaties'. In the evening they pack themselves together like sardines in a tin along a rock, and then they all start their BBQ:s, so stay away from the popular natural harbours, i.e. places close to the boat leads that have deep water all the way up to the rock.

Just before 10 o'clock they will all turn on the radio and listen to the evening devotion, after which next days sea weather will be forecasted.

Some more of our habits might appear to be a bit strange, but I will leave them for yourself to discover, and actually most of us do speak English, which might contribute to excuse a lot of our strange behaviour.

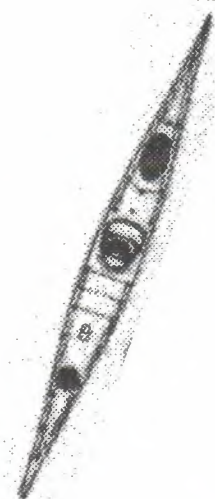
**Enjoy Sweden!**

# Messing about in a kayak . . .

by

DAVID

ALLEN



Hi, there! I'm David and a keen sea kayaker. Having built our house on the bank of the river Don Estuary in Aberdeen 10 years ago, it was seven years before I got a kayak to explore first the river, then Aberdeen bay and then join Aberdeen Kayak Club. There I learned to roll and go on numerous trips on Scottish rivers.

It didn't take long to find the sea most interesting and surfing became a priority. It was possible to launch the kayak (an acro. 270) virtually from the house, paddle less than 1km and be in the waves, with a deserted 3km beach break to choose from.

The next challenge was board surfing, which I still prefer when it's really big. The final indulgence was getting a Sirius sea kayak for relatively calm days, when there was no surf. Having found that the 'vee' hull gave the acro 270 good directional stability, especially when charging out through waves, I went for the same type of hull profile in the Sirius and have found it amazingly fast and stable when under way.

This was in June, 2000 and the acquisition of this boat has opened up a whole new world. The wild and open but very beautiful coastline of the N.E. of Scotland came within reach. It is wonderful to be part of the wildlife among seabirds, dolphins and porpoises in the silence that accompanies paddling on the sea. Within a couple of months I had explored the Aberdeen coast within a radius of 30 miles.

Soon, there were dreams of going even further afield and lightweight camping gear was saved up for and bought. However,

there was one nagging doubt. Although I had been out in big seas, had covered hundreds of miles and felt fit and relatively competent, there were sure to be weaknesses and I began looking about for a suitable course to learn things formally.

It was the advanced sea kayaker's course run from Glenmore lodge that was the final choice. This had been under subscribed for September and a mixed course, with kayak surfing was an option. Settling for this, I booked the course and on a beautiful Sunday afternoon set off on the scenic trip from Aberdeen to Glenmore.

There the participants met and had a friendly discussion with our instructors, Ian Sherrington and Doug Cooper. This was followed by selection of some boats and equipment from the well-stocked store. After a meal, (included in the course fee) we set off on the long trip to Thurso, where accommodation was to be provided.

Having arrived there, we immediately declared our interests, two were principally interested in kayak surfing and two (including myself) went for the sea kayaking option. After a discussion on what our expectations were and a brief description of what was on offer, the instructors retired for the night while we students nipped off to the pub to get further acquainted.

On Monday morning we were entertained to a full breakfast and set off for Torrisdale Bay, just W. of Bettyhill, where there was small surf and an attractive view over the extensive sands to the beautiful islands of Neave and Eilean Nan Ron. Leaving the other group to

*The final indulgence was getting a Sirius sea kayak for relatively calm days, when there was no surf.*

surf, Doug, the instructor, my fellow student and myself set off at a gentle pace towards Neave where we had a review of our basic techniques followed by a landing on the shell beach for our packed lunch. Eilean Nan Ron beckoned in the near distance and some navigation techniques were discussed and used to get there. We got very close to this deserted isle and followed the cliffs on the way back through a moderate sea. My kayak was a Capella, which I found more forgiving, but not as fast as the Sirius.

Back at the beach the surf had risen nicely and a couple of boardies were surfing nicely among our kayakers. As we changed back from our kayaking gear the verdict was unanimous. This had been a great introduction.

Tuesday, day 2, dawned clear and calm. Doug proposed a trip from Strathy, Eastward to Sandside Bay, near Dounreay. Strathy is well depicted on the cover of O.S. Landranger map No 10. Having parked at the graveyard it was quite a long carry down through the dunes to the beach where the surf was looking promising. Joined by local expert sea and surf kayaker Ken Nichol in his Nordcap we set off through breaks in the 4 foot clean surf.

Experience saw me out safely but my fellow student had major problems and in spite of Doug's valiant attempts to tow him out, he decided to stay at the surfing break and have a go at surfing on a sit-on kayak. The day looked promising and was clearing nicely as Doug, Ken and I set off for Strathy Point where a moderate sea was breaking. This was what it was all about! It was great looking across at the beautiful kayaks gliding efficiently alongside, a new experience for me, up till then a solo sea paddler. At the point itself a tidal race was heading S. and we cut inside the rock stack just off the point through some bouncy white water against quite a strong tide.

Some walkers, backlit by the sun looked down on us from the rugged cliffs near the lighthouse. A huge cave where the crying of the seabirds was drowned by the breaking of the waves proved worth exploring before we set off for Sandside Bay, the following sea sparkling in the bright sun. On we pressed, still full of energy. This was what we had come for.

Then came what for me was the highlight of the day. "Minke at 9 o'clock" was the cry. Looking to my L. I was just in time to see the big triangular fin approach and then the huge body, eyes and white markings clearly visible through the oceanic blue water as it passed only feet beneath my boat. No kidding, I could have touched it with my paddle!

Onwards we pressed and the dark overhanging cliff in the distance got imperceptibly closer and the spherical main building of Dounreay and the associated surrounding structures just to the E. became more distinct. The big ground swell was foaming over a reef as we came round to the harbour at Sandside and our long boats surfed gently into the sheltered haven.

Having lifted our kayaks up to where the minibus and the surf kayakers waited we changed into cosy 'land 'gear and exchanged our respective experiences. The surfing had been great, too!

Every evening we had lectures in navigation and related subjects which were later put into practice and day 3 was no exception. It was planned to do 'The Men of Mey'.

This trip was backed up by thorough research into tides, expected weather and coastal topography. W. winds of at least force 6 were expected, but the sea and tide would be following.

It was dull and relatively calm as we entered the sea at Ham, just W. of Dunnet Head. Within half an hour the wind had risen as forecast, and a fair sea had risen as we passed Scarfskerry Point. This was as big as I had seen it and the following sea became surfable. The other two kayaks with Doug and Ken looked impressive as they plunged and rose. This was exciting and I was glad of the experienced company. Far to the S. was the maelstrom of the notorious 'Men of Mey' and the kayak was happily bucking its way through the big seas towards the Skerry marker just S of the island of Stroma. Already the sea had moderated and we made for the harbour at the S. End of this now deserted island. I was proud as a schoolboy at Doug's "Well done!"

After a packed lunch we agreed on a walk to the lighthouse at the N. of the island, it was good to stretch our legs. The now

*As we changed back from our gear the verdict was unanimous—this had been a great introduction*

intense blue sky was reflected in the full flow of the Swilkie tidal race - steep white-capped waves extending far to the E. Back at the harbour, we kitted up for a further adventure- a trip up the E. side of the island. The going was easy as we made our way close to the rocky shore, accompanied by hundreds of grey seals, diving and plunging on either side, ahead and behind us. The few that weren't in the water lined the slippery rocks, their haunting 'singing' like a ghostly choir. Quite a few in the water were 'bottling' or asleep as we passed them, their pointed noses like strange upright brown traffic cones.

After a short stop at the Geo of Netherton, we again put navigation into practice and set off against the strong current that had brought us there. In places we had to really go for it round some headlands and dive for shelter in the nearest cove. This was a little like river paddling in reverse! As we passed Scarton Point, the tide began to ease and we followed the predetermined course for John o'Groats across a moderate, white capped but predictable sea to the tiny ferry terminal where the 'Pentland Venture' was waiting for its next trip to Orkney.

As we carried our boats up the slipway towards Ken's immaculate trailer, there was a cry from the ferry skipper. "Quite a crossing you had there, lads! Fancy a cup of tea?" This was gratefully accepted in the cosy galley. I dosed in the car on the now familiar way back to Thurso.

The others had had a good day and after tea we decided on a trip to see the Men of Mey from the landward side while it was still light. The wind had freshened again as we made our way to the end of St. John's Point, where far beneath, the sea was huge, surging in the fading sunset. Far to the N. a container ship made its way W. against the weather and even further we could make out the flares at Flotta. It was hard to believe that we had passed this way earlier. Just as well we had stayed well to the N.!

The chill made for a unanimous vote to stop at the Dunnet Hotel for a pint or two... Back at the hostel we enjoyed the surfer's daily video, showing their improving skills.

On Thursday, day 4, good surf was expected and the van and trailer headed for Farr Bay, a neat and sheltered spot with

promising surf. Meanwhile, Doug showed me self rescue practice in the river at Bettyhill. This involved getting wet repeatedly as we did rolls, rescue drills, re-entry and rolls. Definitely very useful for future practice and having warmed up and eaten our packed lunches, we went round the corner to watch the surfers.

The offshore wind had encouraged classic clean big surf and they were all looking good. Ian's smile said it all as he made his way out on the convenient rip at the W. side of the bay. Some excellent video footage was taken that day. It was interesting that the surf had got bigger as the week progressed—an ideal learning situation.

Each night as we watched the surfer's play back, I had made my comments. As Doug said "You've talked the talk, tomorrow you walk the walk!" I hadn't surfed in a kayak for a year since being caught inside on Thurso East when it was over 12 feet!

Next day, Friday dawned clear and sunny. Thurso E. was blown out but the reef to the W. was overhead. Fitting into an 'Infrared' I paddled out with some trepidation and caught some broken waves before going for the green waves. Although the infra was harder to paddle out than my acro. 270, itsedges made it a great little plastic surfer. Much to my relief, it was quite easy to roll! It's a pity that Aberdeen waves aren't as a rule quite as good as this...

Then it was time to have lunch, pack and set off on the long road for Glenmore Lodge again. Back at the lodge we handed in our gear then a welcome cake and tea set us up well for our respective journeys home after a fantastic week. This was a great course.

That was in September and while I've not got round to practicing the self rescue techniques learned - the water temperature right now is 5 degrees! I've been out on most days when there hasn't been surf and got to know the local dolphins at relatively close quarters. Warmer weather will definitely see me practising. The next project is to make a lightweight folding trolley which I'll need for a projected trip this year.

From David Allan,  
Bridge Of Don, Aberdeen

***"Quite a crossing you had there, lads! Fancy a cup of tea?"—this was gratefully accepted . . .***



# 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 have built a coastal rowing boat, which is, at present, in storage near Oban in the west of Scotland. It is of modern design and construction, similar to a large sea kayak, 7m. long, 1.2m. wide, with a draught of about 15cm. It is designed for a crew of 3, two rowers (or rather skullers to be more accurate) and a tillerperson(!)/ navigator. It is suited to long distance camping trips. I would like to form a group of interested people, who would like to use the boat. If you like this idea, please contact me for more information.

**Alan Read**, telephone number 01483-224495,  
Email[alan\_read8178@hotmail.com]

## *Hello John,*

Great stuff your ISKA. Just the sort of informative material that is needed without all the glossy bullshit and sales people. Keep it up.

Great 'Members Directory' but this is the second time I have noticed that when dealing with folding kayaks you miss out the Feathercraft 'Expedition'. The Khatsalano is a sort of weekend vessel whilst if you really want to disappear off into the wilderness for a month the 'Expedition' is the bees knees. It takes 5 weeks food. OK it costs an arm and a leg but it can live in the boot of the car and go with you when you fly international. What better way to do a trip in the Chilean channels than to fly your boat down with you and bring it back too, so you can paddle the next weekend. I've never had to pay X's baggage either.

Thanks for the article on Roy Willy Johansen, I met him in Pangnirtung wandering around on crutches with frostbite last summer and later went to visit him in Iqualuit hospital. A great

guy and BIG. He told me a couple of points that may be of interest to people paddling in that region.

His real problem was that he needed closed cell foam insulation between the back of his feet and the hull, and therefore cold water, of his boat. He also needed to keep the inside of his boat dry which he was unable to do. The result was days of cold wet feet which ultimately led to loss of circulation in the back of his heels and to his rescue.

He also had an interesting technique for getting onto ice floes. Chose a place where the ice was low to the surface then paddle like hell at it and get as much boat as possible on it. Remember he was in a double. He then had 2 ice daggers and he was able to lean right forward and pull himself fully onto the floe. Then you are safe. He also remarked that in retrospect he would have flown over Davis straight first had he had the money. He had not fully appreciated the problems he would have with the icestream or how much ice is there.

**Best Wishes**  
**Mike Sharp**

## *Hello John,*

I have now fully entered the electronic age and have the e-mail at home, when I can get on it and it can find the server, which seems to be a haphazard thing, a bit like tennis in the dark. As a result, I hope this gets to you but in what condition, I know not. If there are any engineers or biomechanists out there who can help me, I am trying to find out about the biomechanics of the freely-held paddle blade in boat propulsion. I think I have worked out what happens to dislocate the shoulders of paddlers but I'm not sure if it is correct. I am also trying to get infor-

mation on the incidence of injuries in different paddling disciplines so if anyone in a position of authority would like to help me to distribute my questionnaire, I'd like to hear from them. Keep up the good work with ISKA.

**Yours sincerely,**  
**Dr. Paul Schur.**

<http://www.doctors.net.uk> by doctors, for doctors

## *Hello John,*

I've always been struck by how different paddles feel from each other: a "nice" paddle is much "nicer" than a not-nice paddle. Also, different aspects of canoeing use different paddles. I'd like to understand the engineering and hydrodynamics a bit better: maybe even write an article about it. Do you know of anything which has been published about how paddles work?

**Robert Craig**

## *Hello John,*

Thanks for the latest mag. After reading your editorial, then 'A Close Encounter - with the largest bear', from Steve Byers, and 'Why are we afraid for our children' by Dr Frank Furedi, I was moved to look out an article from many years ago in the MCC Newsletter. Entitled, 'Consider Risk Exercise', I offer it (attached) for your consideration also. On the face of it, it may seem a little dated, but the subject matter and thesis are, I suggest, just as if not more relevant in today's society - or, as Angus Deayton might comment, "No change there then." Having said that, I'm not sure we all want to take it as far as being reminded of our place in the 'food chain' - my fortnightly skirmish with Tesco is risky enough!

In deep water, ...

**John C**

**Hello John,**

I stumbled across the ISKA site on the net when I was looking for a kayak compass, and enclose my £8-00 to join.

I've been a somewhat solitary sea-kayaker for about 35 years, beginning with a Wessex Sea Rapier in the mid 60s, and now with 15 year old P & H Eskimo, which I think was built for export and not sold in the UK. I bought it last year from P & H for not very much - it was languishing in the back of their container of used kayaks. Now in my late 50s, getting fat, not fit, and not nearly as skilled as I ought to be after all these years, I still relish coastal and estuary jaunts at a very gentle pace and usually with the current and/or tide!

Rotting in my garden is a Kayel Angmassalik. I was never good enough to manage it! If anyone wants it they are welcome. But it does need some TLC and may not be worth saving? Let me know if you hear of any hero who wants to a/ rescue the beast and b/ paddle it!

**All Good Wisbes,  
Simon Godfrey**

**From GuyOGEZ, 10 pare de la  
Berengere, 92310 Saint-Cloud**

**Hello John,**

The British have invented the sea kayak, the French the rules!!!

A decision of June 28, 2000, which affects the kayak, issued by the Department dealing with sea affairs, precise the following:

"boats whose ratio (length divided by width) is superior to 10 will not be authorised to go beyond the distance of 300 metres from a shelter".

The Nordkapp with its dimensions of 5,47 m and 0,525 m (if I am not mistaken) has thus a ratio of 10,41 and is classified as a beach toy.

It is very difficult to go against this law which has received the agreement of the FFCK (French Federation of Canoe-Kayak), the equivalent in France of the B.C.U.

Would you have an idea of what could be done? We would like to create a

French section of the Nordkapp Trust with the owners of nordkapps who should number several dozens. Do you have their addresses?

Thank you for your help.

**Sincerely yours  
GuyOgez**

P.S. I myself own two nordkapps.

**Marathon World  
Championships, 1-2 September  
2001.**

**Hello John,**

Years ago when Margaret Thatcher took this country by its scruffy neck and shook it, a TV item showed her, up North, walking on a patch of rough tarmac infested with weeds as far as one could see. She marched aggressively to and fro claiming "Here there will be a university!". I gave that a cynical eye and said, "Believe it when I see it." I've just seen it.

The University of Durham, Stockton Campus is new, unfinished, but very nearly complete. Today it was seething with tall men and women, bursting with energy, carrying beautiful paddles and Kevlar-Carbon fibre kayaks. They came from all over Europe and places far beyond, I guess, but I couldn't question all of them so questioned none. The sun shone, a stiff breeze blew, the water was alive with a short chop, and in it somewhere a body was found. The start of the K2 event was delayed.

That is why Joan and I decided to go, having attended a presentation of certificates. Victoria Brown organised the meeting, Alan Laws presided, Albert Woods assisting. These people from the NorthEast (in alphabetical order) received handsome certificates:

Alan Bye,

Dave Grier,

Ray Hudspeth,

Don Raspin,

Len Smith,

Colin Stegeman,

George Thompson,

Peter Turnbull,

Lofty Wright.

Their names will join many others from all over Britain on the BCU Roll of Honour at Holme Pierrpoint. They have been awarded the Millenium Paddler Certificate.

I met several old friends, men and women I haven't seen for years. I reflected, briefly, on the vast experience they have, collectively, and no-one will ever know what that means.

John Dudderidge 'phoned a couple of nights before to say he would like to be present, but faced with driving up the A1 from Cambridge, which I regard as the Highway to Hell, I guess he didn't make it. Age 95, I doubt if I would even think about it not to mention do it.

John Ramwell asked me to send him a brief report, so yur 'tis.

As for me, Joan and I are about to leave for New Zealand, where the rest of my life, a quarter if I live to be 96, will be spent enjoying great New Zealand wine. Petrol, 34p a litre, diesel, 24p litre, cars half the price here, houses 2/3. Our pensions here are approx. half the average weekly wage; over there they will be worth about twice that provided the rate of exchange holds. There the sun shines.

I hope to write to John in the future about canoeing in NZ, via e-mail. I told our son in law in Christchurch that I will be looking for a job. He told me, don't! There's one looking for you!

**Alan Bye,**

**cirp.wes.army.mil:8080**



This site provides tide predictions for thousands of places around the world; you just type in the location. Its very useful especially in areas with narrow bodies of water where you need to know the tidal flow.