

# OCEAN KAYAKER



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



**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**



**JUNE 2002**

**ISSUE # 46**

# Ocean Kayaker

## Contents

Editorial . . . . . 2

French Legislation 3

Trials of an armchair  
seakayaker . . . . . 4

Survival Chances 7

Rhoscolyn Rescue . 8

Greenland Style . .12

Book Review . . . . .14

Skegs . . . . .15

Lepe the Needle 16

Waterproof? . . . . .18

Compass Point? ..19

Letters . . . . .21

address for copy  
of this magazine  
is:

5, Osprey Ave.,  
Westhoughton,  
Bolton, Lancs,  
BL5 2SL and I can  
be reached on  
01942 842204.

*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*

### EVENTS . . .

Please note that we are NOT including an events guide in the newsletter—as we only produce the letter six times a year we believe events are best kept up-to-date on the ISKA web site at:

[www.seakayak.co.uk](http://www.seakayak.co.uk).

So keep Chris Bolton informed of events (planned, changed or cancelled) by e-mail at:

[seakayak@btinternet.com](mailto:seakayak@btinternet.com)

All events, wherever they are staged around the world, should be included.

Ensure details include what, where, when and who. As much notice as possible is a good idea. Include contact details such as telephone, e-mail and/or postal address.

By letter send to Ed. at 5 Osprey Ave., Westhoughton, Bolton, Lancs, BL5 2SL

### editorial by John Ramwell

## hi!

Had a great time in Chile with Raleigh International. I spent January and February with them, most of the time paddling with a group of young and enthusiastic people (venturers) around the islands and fjords of the Patagonian coast. The weather was fantastic and I am still acclimatising to our weather here at home in the U.K. Raleigh are contemplating running introduction weekends for potential sea kayak leaders here in the U.K. I will keep you informed re: details as they come available.

I returned from Chile just in time to get to the International Canoe Exhibition at the National Exhibition Centre, Birmingham. It was good to see so many of you and also to meet up with some new to sea kayaking and prepared to join ISKA. Membership keeps growing so we must be doing something right!

Apparently there is much discussion about the future of the Canoe Exhibition. This year between 6000 and 8000 attended. Getting accurate figures is not possible due to the Exhibition being attached to the final weekend of the Leisure and Boating Exhibition. The options seem to be:

◆ move to the London Boat Show as they move to Excel in 2004. This will give a show devoted to the complete boating world from punts to grand yachts. This is a two week show and doubts exist as to whether many of us in the canoeing world can support this lengthy period.

◆ the Canoe Exhibition will be held at the National Exhibition centre in Birmingham next year, 2003, as this has already been agreed as part of the 2002 arrangements. Seemingly it will be held in March (14th to 16th) rather than in the usual month of February.

◆ amalgamation with the Outdoors Show described as "The first ever show for walkers, climbers and all outdoor enthusiasts, packed full of ideas, advice, stuff to do and things to buy". This show was held over the w/end of March 15/17th at the National Exhibition Centre in Birmingham.

So watch this space for further information as it becomes available.

**editor, ISKA**  
**John**  
**Ramwell**

**design**  
**Graham**  
**Edwards**

## Be very careful . . .

# A cautionary tale of French Legislation

—by John Wild

Living in the Southern French Alps (don't laugh, the Mediterranean is only an hour and a half away) I have followed with considerable interest the correspondence on the fairly recent change in French legislation concerning sea kayaks and sea kayaking. The views and comments expressed I have found interesting since I was one of the first sea kayakers in France to have submitted my kayak — a Plasmor Belouga - to the appropriate new tests for Category 6 ; category navigation and to have satisfactorily fulfilled them. The tests were carried out by the FFCK at Montpellier on 26 August 2000 and the certificate confirming the Decision d'Approbation was issued by FFCK on 10 October 2000.

### British and not French

For me that proved to be the only easy bit. Due, I am sure, to my being British and not French, certain unexpected difficulties followed which were salutary! The Decision d'Approbation of FFCK is not, in itself, sufficient. One must then seek a Carte d'Homologation from the Affaires Maritimes in France and without which the Decision d'Approbation is not, in itself, validated. Whilst two other French sea kayakers living close to me had their kayaks issued with a Decision d'Approbation at one and the same time as myself they received their Cartes d'Homologation within a few days of submitting their Decisions d'Approbation to the same office of the Affaires Maritimes as myself and

without any problem whatever. I was shocked to find that one year after my submission had been correctly made by registered post (twice!), and despite the complete support of FFCK and the very many phone calls made, I still had not received even an acknowledgment (other than for receipt of the letters) let alone a Certificate d'Homologation. I would add that I do hold a Carte de Sejour to live in France and I also speak the language fluently.

### An avocat

With considerable reluctance I sought the advice of an avocat (French lawyer). Like your correspondent Derek Hairon in Jersey I believed that, perhaps, not being French I could overcome the problem I was facing by maintaining that I was British and, though living in France, my sea kayak would need only to meet the standards required of my own country. My avocat disagreed totally with this submission advising that the French legislation clearly required that if I was navigating in French waters then my craft and my activities in it would have to either meet the text of the legislation or I would need to restrict those activities. He further confirmed that the Decision d'Approbation which I held would not, in itself, be sufficient to justify my not doing so. In addition he emphasised that in the case of an accident occurring whilst pursuing Category 6 approved activities without a Certificate d'Homologation then my kayak would be viewed as

being illegal and I would be in breach of this new legislation - after it becomes effective, of course.

### Be prepared

British or other nationality sea kayakers need to be very careful if they intend to pursue activities in French waters. Furthermore, they may well need to be prepared for difficulties in dealing with the French administration authorities of Affaires Maritimes if they wish to seek homologation of their kayaks and even after their craft have safely passed the necessary tests. In my case the story had a happy ending. Following my consultation with him my avocat took over my file, wrote on my behalf to Affaires Maritimes, and obtained a Carte d'Homologation for my kayak within a delay of only one week! But then he is French and a lawyer! The certificate for my kayak is dated 27 August 2001.

On the wider issues involved I am grateful to Derek Hairon for publishing through the pages of Sea Kayaker the chronology of the politics of the governing bodies in France, some of which was new to me. None the less he is correct when he writes that in France the culture is very different to that in Britain. Apart from alpinism (mountaineering) there are few sports remaining here in France where a spirit of adventure is still possible and where risk (I do not mean foolhardiness!) can be calculated and experienced. All one hears now are the words "control of activities" rather than freedom to pursue one's activities in an independent but prudent way. This is contrary to the British culture and our spirit of discovery and adventure.

### Eventually follow

But, like Derek Hairon, I believe Britain will eventually follow the same path. Litigation, I suspect, will ensure it.

# The trials of an armchair sea kayaker

by

TONY  
DOUGAN

*As a novice I undertook a sea kayak expedition with Dallam Outdoor Education: a branch of Dallam School Milnthorpe Lancs. Under their expert tutelage I signed up for five days paddling the SW coast of Skye. It was a brilliant experience .*

Often the designation "armchair" is prefixed to the description paddler, mountaineer or the more generic explorer with an intention of scorn on the part of the writer; it is written with the corner of the mouth curling in derision.

Personally I like armchairs. They are often very comfortable to sit in, are usually situated in warm comfortable environments and, in my experience, it is very difficult to be drowned, avalanched, or even to get lost while sitting in one. And I have never heard of one capsizing, which is probably just as well as I think they would be very difficult to roll back up! I have been proud to be an armchair sea kayaker for some years now and I have comfortably and safely paddled the wild waters of Alaska down to the Sea of Cortez in my imagination as well as circumnavigation's of the Scottish Isles and Ireland in the company of the esteemed Brian Wilson. An added bonus on these epic adventures has been the possibility of consuming large quantities of food and beer while, as it were, underway. It was therefore with some surprise that I found myself one fine day writing a cheque for a sea kayak expedition organised by my local outdoor education centre to paddle and wild camp for six days off the west coast of Scotland.



Now back in the comfort and safety of my armchair that adventure seems implausible and remote. The sea appears to have cast a certain insubstantiality to my memories which fade with each passing day, with the ebbing of each tide. This is how it was. Fear curdling in the pit of my stomach as the day approaches, fear laced with a liberal dose of excitement.

## A valuable lesson

I am 44. My hair recedes relentlessly. I am the manager of a large cancer charity, possibly labouring under the illusion that I am important, pivotal, valuable, even, dare I say it, indispensable! I am about to learn a valuable lesson. My paunch extends downwards over my trousers defeating my earnest efforts to restrain it, augmented as it is by that very same force that stirs the restless tides to action. The tides that I shall soon make acquaintance with.

Though I try to run and cycle the odd time I am often frustrated by the fact that work seems to get in the way of any planned training program. Work and of course the needs of two young sons aged 7 and 11. The result is a sedentary lifestyle, and a lack of relationship with my body that I am about to be reintroduced to in a very powerful way. Many had thought that the opening of the Skye bridge would spell the death knell for Lochalsh but it seems a thriving little town. A good place to stock up on provisions or grab a relaxing beer before or after an expedition on the islands. In addition the town possesses one of the grandest and friendliest loo's to be found anywhere.

Indeed, a plaque proudly proclaims that these very facilities have won the Loo of the Year Award for two years running. A local scout hut provided a camping barn experience for the first night and in the morning we strolled down to the harbour to practice some wet exiting and rescues. I was shocked to feel how tippy the kayak seemed whilst being assured that the plastic valley avocet was actually quite stable among sea kayaks. Here for the first time I noticed that I seemed to be sitting in the kayak whereas those with the requisite skill seem to wear their boats like a well made suit responding to an esoteric mix of foot, hip, paddle stroke and the all important trunk rotation.

### Tension

The price of tippiness is tension and it is impossible to handle a kayak well in a state of tension. Indeed it is difficult to do anything well in a state of tension. Pulling our kayaks out of the water after the practice session I was hustled urgently by an American woman on a coach trip from Miami. "You came over the sea in that?" she exclaimed looking at me with a mix of incomprehension, admiration and yes...awe. I liked it and readily agreed to the requisite photo opportunity. Little did she know. The packing of a sea kayak for several days afloat is in itself a mysterious art. Fortunately I had invested in some sealine dry bags for which I was regularly to feel grateful for over the next few days. We loaded the semi-packed boats onto the trailer and headed out for our point of departure at Elgol on the South West coast of Skye.

Paddling out from Elgol into a strong headwind and a force 5 chop was a revelation. I was terrified and passing the bay of Camas Fhionnairigh the waves came abeam rocking the boat perilously and causing me to grip the paddle with white knuckles. "Are you ok?" shouted one of the instructors. I nodded but stared at the incoming waves with wide eyed terror. Your mouth is telling me you're ok but your eyes are saying something different! he shouted back.

The entrance to Loch Coruisk was a smooth as milk but after a paddle of only 3 km I was trashed and the perfection of the Cuillin ridge painted against a blood red sky was somewhat lost on me. The ridge itself has

long beckoned me and was to be a constant presence throughout the trip. In the lovely bay at Coruisk a yacht bobbed at anchor. The next day dawned cold and after a restless cold night and snatched dreams of death by drowning I emerged from my tent scared, tired and intent on withdrawal from



the expedition. One of the group leaders approached me to ask if I was ok and I felt I should be sincere and honest so told him no I was not ok. My fitness level was clearly below everyone else's. I had never sat in a sea kayak before and if I had known what was involved I would never have signed up. No I did not want to continue and would he please leave me here and pick me up on the way back? He was clearly taken aback and his comment that no they would not be returning this way so I could not be abandoned left me with the sick acknowledgement that I was to continue this torture for another day. I paddled out to sea feeling surprisingly comfortable.

### Soay Island

Soay Island lay to windward a mild force 2 or 3 aided the journey and the short crossing led us to the impressive sea cliffs of Soay and a delightful circumnavigation of this fascinating place. Soay is the place where Gavin Maxwell and the improbable Tex Geddes set up a whaling station that hunted out the last of the great basking sharks in the area. We pulled up well beyond the houses for a lunch stop and I was hooked. Still a little scared but this is no bad thing in anyone who ventures out to sea.

Some skerries lay at the northern end of Soay and we paddled from there across the break into Loch na h-Airde where we hit a strong beam wind and once again it was head down and battle into the waves that crashed over the deck, paddles low but this

*One of the group leaders approached me to ask if I was ok and I felt I should be sincere and honest so told him no, was not ok.*

*Secret beaches of golden sand delight the eye and the paddler repeatedly is thinking "I'll come back one day and look at that again."*

time a little more relaxed a little less scared. One of the delights of sea time is landfall. Delightful coves beckon, hidden caves, secret beaches and the Scottish islands are replete with such magical places. I tucked into my dried veggie curry staring over to the beckoning outline of Rum and I thought how magical a world we can find ourselves in by paddling a boat a few miles.

### **Loch Brittle**

In the morning there was little time to sit and admire the view and soon we were packed and heading across Loch Brittle and up the coast. Extraordinary sea caves and eroded columns of rock sculpted by the waves into fantastic shapes line the entire coastline here. If you are lucky you might see a sea eagle flying low over the waves or otters bickering among the seaweed strewn shore. And you might paddle a couple of hundred metres into rock passageways that open out into great granite cathedrals where gulliemots squabble and caw. Secret beaches of golden sand delight the eye and the paddler repeatedly is thinking "I'll come back one day and look at that again." Something in our nature makes us want to share such beauty with those we love. Across the mouth of Loch Eynort where again a beam wind breathed upon us we paddled in to Sgeir Bheag a beautiful cove of white stone almost like bone in the sunlight. Once the boats were secure we struggled up a rock passageway to emerge on a grassy plateau with views of the Hebrides emerging ghostlike out of the distance. Inaccessible by road, surrounded by mountains with the Cuillin Ridge to the east it was without a doubt the best campsite in the world.

### **Magnificent coastline**

The final following day we travelled further up this magnificent coastline investigating countless caves and passageways and paddling madly through the famous arch of Stac a Mheadais which acted as a kind of wind tunnel. Lunch was had in the perfect horseshoe of Talisker Bay and as we paddled into the bay's calm I sat panting in the boat feeling completely trashed. Talisker Bay is beautiful and I welcomed the feel of land where we ate our usual lunch of squeezey cheese, malt loaf and sticks of

salami. I was by this time heartily sick of dried food and dreaming of the simple things in life like a bacon buttie. Ever onwards we paddled out of the glassy calm of Talisker bay into the most awful confused sea with waves coming from all directions in a kind of boiling froth. This is called clapotis and results from a mix of sea bed coastline and weather conditions and all beginners can do is paddle like hell through it.

About five kilometres further up the coastline veers gently to the east and in our case that meant into a headwind as we headed for Ardtreck Point lighthouse and the last leg of our trip. A small chop with some white horses was visible from the point which would be hitting us abeam as we paddled into Loch Beag so I geared up mentally for another determined paddle. Off across the stretch of water the wind hits with surprising ferocity. I grip the paddle and brace reflexively and then without thinking too much about it the skill of paddle and wave starts to come together and I am no longer simply stopping from capsizing but am in control. Against all instinct I am sticking my paddle in to the wave, leaning into it with my hips and the boat automatically stabilises with the paddle acting as a kind of outrigger. The size of wave doesn't really matter because the skilled paddler uses the wave itself as energy. For the first time I am not in the boat I am the boat. As we paddle into the gentle harbour at Loch Beag I am filled with many emotions. Grateful as all sea venturers must be at



landfall yet wanting this new world to continue, to continue paddling coastlines for ever. To live on the land simply and in contact with true reality and not what passes for such in the other world. But I am also dreaming of hot showers and fish and chips and pubs. It will take me months I realise, to integrate the experience. Some weeks after the trip I was walking past a church billboard and noticed the quote written there with a wry chuckle. "A ship is safe in harbour but that is not what a ship is for." **Quite so!**

# Survival Chances by Cold-Water-Immersion

by  
**UDO BEIER**  
 (DKV-Speaker of  
 Sea Kayakers)

1998 a German sea kayaker died after a capsize in the German Bight (see Sea Kayaker, June 2001). As a captain of a German ferry did not stop to rescue him a German court had to decide if the captain was guilty for his death by hypothermia. That's why the court ordered a medical certificate by Dr. med. U.v.Laak (German marine institut for shipping medicine) to hear something about the survival times of a sea kayaker after going upside down without reentry. In the following I discuss some important findings and complete them with other experiences.

## Facts about survival times

**Tab. 1: After how many hours of immersion you have only a 50%-rate of survival?**

water temperature	minimum	maximum
+05° Celsius / 41° F	1,0 hours.	2,2 hours
+10° C / 50° F	2,0 hours	3,6 hours
+15° C / 59° F	4,8 hours	7,7 hours

**Tab. 2: After how many hours of immersion it is very probable to die by hypothermia?**

water temperature	minimum	maximum
+05° Celsius / 41° F	0,9 hours	2,3 hours
+10° C / 50° F	2,5 hours	4,0 hours
+15° C / 59° F	3,0 hours	9,0 hours

**Tab. 3: Predicted survival times for lightly clothed, nonexercising humans in cold water**

water temperature	fast coolers	slow coolers
+05° C / 41° F	1:00 till 1:50 hours	1:50 till 3:00 hours
+10° C / 50° F	1:45 till 2:50 hours	2:50 till 5:40 hours
+15° C / 59° F	2:50 till 4:40 hours	4:40 till more than 12 hours

**Tab. 4: Average survival times expectancy by different clothes**

water temperature	dry suit	wet Suit	other clothes
+5° C / 41° F	3 hours	1 hours	1/2 hours
+10° C / 50° F	6 hours	2 hours	1 hours
+15° C / 59° F	more than 6 hours	4 hours	2 hours

**Tab. 5: Actual facts about survival times by a 50%-rate of survival**

water temperature	without PFD	with PFD	increase (%)
+05° C / 41° F	3 hours	17 hours	467%
+10° C / 50° F	6 hours	more than 24 hours	more than 300%
+15° C / 59° F	12 hours	more than 24 hours	more than 100%

**Tab. 6: Survival expectancy by different immersion times**

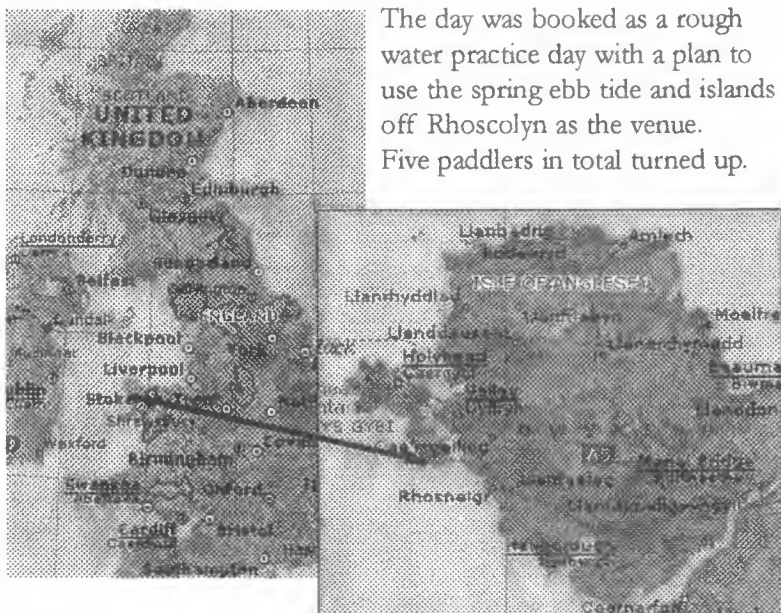
water temperature approximately survival probability depending of immersion time				
+15° C / 59° F				
with PFD	90% by 5 hours	85% by 10 hours	80% by 15 hours	70% by 25 hours
without PFD	65% by 5 hours	60% by 10 hours	45% by 16 hours	35% by 25 hours

The following incident report is taken from the *CANOEIST*. Some interesting and relevant lessons for all of us, hence the re-print here

# Rhoscolyn Bay Rescue

by

NICK  
TARGETT



The day was booked as a rough water practice day with a plan to use the spring ebb tide and islands off Rhoscolyn as the venue. Five paddlers in total turned up.

Day/night flare. Strobe. Foil emergency bag. Emergency deck cover, nylon. Whistle. Knife. I pair spare paddles. In boat. Hand pump. First aid. Emergency shelter. Tape. Slings.

## Equipment held between other members

1 VHF radio, listening in on channel 72.  
1 para flare. 1 smoke flare  
1 pair spare paddles  
2 hand pumps

The coastguards were advised by VHF radio of our intentions and that there may be cap-sizes.

We were all wearing buoyancy aids. Three were wearing dry suits and layered fleece; one was wearing wetsuit and layers of fleece and waterproof cag and overtrousers. All had fleece hats on. All paddles were on leashes. It was decided not to take the river type tow-lines as it was thought they were too short. The weather was rain showers, overcast, wind force 4/5 WNW, air temp 10° C, sea temp not known; the open sea state was moderate but rough near cliffs and rocks with waves up to 8 ft out of the bay. There was a swell of 6-9 inches in the confines of the bay. The spring tide wasebbing from 10.30.

We launched at approx 11.00, warmed up in the bay and made our way to the narrowest entrance of the bay facing SSW.

We discussed the sea state and decided to paddle straight out into the waves, turn and come back in immediately. The waves and wind were both in the same direction, south-

One then decided to surf elsewhere. All of the paddlers were members of the Snowdonia Canoe Club and all were competent paddlers but only one was experienced in very rough water on the sea. Four were male and one female; all were in the age group 46 - 56 years. They were Fran Targett, Male Charlesworth, Andrew Potter and me. The group decided, with the advice of the most experienced, that the conditions were not suitable to go far from the shelter in the bay but that it was suitable to paddle in the bay and to venture out using the edge of the rough conditions.

## **The safety equipment carried by the leader was**

### On deck or person

Deck towline, 20m VHF handheld radio on channel 72



westerly, with a varying height, peak to trough, of approximately 8- 10 ft with occasional small breakers at the very peak. I decided that we would only go about 75 metres out before telling the group to turn. This was completed successfully.

I regrouped in the lee of the large island in the bay. I asked the group for their feelings so far. All said that they felt that the conditions they had just been in were as much as they wanted to be in but they were happy to carry on in less exacting seas.

Although I felt happy in the conditions I felt that they were at the limit for the group and decided to move to the other entrance, facing SSE, to see what the waves were like; they had looked smaller earlier. I made the lee of the island our rendezvous in case of trouble or just as a meeting point for the day.

I asked if they wanted to try the other entrance with the proviso that if I or they thought the waves were too big we would turn back. This was agreed. I asked the group to stay in a tight group of two pairs and we set off SE across the entrance of the bay.

I considered the waves to be less active with a height of 4 -7 ft with same SW direction. This was what I had anticipated with the offshore and the inshore islands giving some protection from the swell.

We paddled about 50 - 60m off the coast for about 200m where I decided that the conditions were going to increase. I asked the

group to take long turn into the waves and head back to the inshore island. At that time the waves were about 6-8 ft and a wind of about force 4/5.

We had all turned and were just paddling off when Fran encountered a larger wave that was just starting to break at the very top. This wave capsized her. I shouted a warning to the other two and told them to come closer. I then rescued Fran. As I released Fran from the raft and before she could use a paddle for support she capsized again. I then rescued Fran for a second time. It took some time to put the deck back and waves were breaking into the cockpit. We were by then within 20m of the rocks where the waves were rearing up to 10-12 ft. I decided to tow her off as the rocks were extremely dangerous. Almost immediately a wave capsized her. By this time we were very close to the rocks.

I shouted another warning and again told them to come closer. I took the decision to tow her, with her in the water holding onto her own kayak. This I considered to be the safest and quickest. The other two paddlers gradually came close to support Fran.

By this time I considered the waves were increasing in height with the occasional sets being 10 ft +. I later put this down to the tide's dropping and thus the swells were rearing up more as they reached the reefs.

I continued to tow with the others in attendance. I considered that the best option would have been a rafted tow with Fran in her kayak but that the other two were not experienced enough in the conditions.

After some time I had nearly reached a point where I could turn in to the calmer bay.

However, Fran was finding difficulty holding her head clear of the water and the other two considered that she should be supported across the decks of their boats. I tied Fran's kayak to a small buoy about 60m off. This was to enable me to use the towline to tow the others. However, during the rescue it had tangled with the kayak and would take too



long and be too dangerous to retrieve. I abandoned it.

On my return to Fran and the others it was decided to call a Mayday on the VHF. I did this. The coastguards answered on the second call. They asked what assistance we wanted. I asked for a helicopter as I knew that it was only a mile away at RAF Valley and that the lifeboat would have taken longer.

The coastguards replied that the RAF was scrambling and would be there shortly. In fact it was 12 minutes, the longest 12 minutes ever. During this time I was pushing the raft of kayaks off the rocks with my boat. This I did until the rescue was over. As I was pushing I asked the other paddler to take the smoke flare from its container and be ready to ignite it on my command. I knew from training with Nigel Dennis that the pilot needed this for wind direction and it also

identified us as the casualty.

As Fran was winched up, the supporting paddler. Male, capsized. He had been supporting Fran and was being supported on Andrew's rear deck. I rescued him put him back in his kayak and tried to put his deck on. By this time he and I were about 10m from the rocks with very large pounding surf. I decided that the safest option was to stay rafted up and to paddle us both to a safer position before trying to pump his cockpit out and put his deck on again. The helicopter was standing off after I indicated that we were not out of danger yet. After a short while I decided that the safest course was to have Male winched up and signalled for this. This was done swiftly. I then abandoned the other kayak, having retrieved the deck equipment and paddle, and rejoined Andrew and paddled to the safety of the rendezvous point.

After talking to the mobile coastguard unit on the foreshore we rescued Fran's kayak and then made our way to Ysbyty Gwynedd to collect our colleagues, who had recovered enough to come back with us. I reported Male's abandoned kayak to the Holyhead coastguard and to the police.

The abandoned kayak was picked up by me the next day from a beach about a mile away after it had been reported as found to the ASSC. There was no damage to it at all. I reported the find to the Holyhead coastguard. We lost a hand pump and towline bag. Tuesday morning I was contacted by the Holyhead coastguard to debrief about the weak radio signal experienced by the coastguard and the conduct of the rescue. Both the coastguard and the RAF pilot commented that the rescue was well conducted and that the group had appropriate clothing and equipment. The pilot commented that the use of the smoke flare assisted him in the rescue.

### **Lessons learned at Rhoscolyn**

#### **Towlines**

Towlines should be carried on every kayak or person. This would have given more options to carry out different rescues, such as using one person as an anchor while the others carry out a rescue. This would have helped in our case as the main danger was being driven onto the rocks and not being overwhelmed by the waves.

The type of towline, ie waist or boat mount-

ed, does not matter; it is the fact that they are available that is vital.

The length of the line is important. The rope used at 22m was too long because communication with the rescue party was almost impossible owing to the noise of the wind and water. 12 - 15m would have been better. A short river type of towline could have been used as the anchor but would have been too short for the main tow.

Spare lines would have not been much use during the rescue except when in calmer water. This would be the only time lowing systems could have been safely changed.

#### **Skills/experience ratio**

The experience of the group must be a more important factor in the choices taken.

Although gaining experience was the reason for being there.

The ratio of skilled to less skilled paddlers also needs to be considered. 1:3 in these conditions was obviously not enough. 1:2 or even 1:1 would have been better. In extreme conditions, however, there should be at least 2 skilled paddlers in any group.

#### **Rafted tows**

The likelihood of a successful rescue will be increased if the group is able to carry out a rafted tow. This will ensure that an unstable member can be towed in the kayak and not in the I water. One of the aims of the day had been to show how to do a rafted tow in difficult conditions and show how stable it can be for the rescuer and casualty.

#### **Communication**

Voices are drowned out by white noise as well as the sound of the wind and waves.

Hand signals are not easy to see or perform as one often needs both hands on the paddle to look after one's own safety.

Using the VHP to speak to the coastguard with them asking very important questions affecting the outcome of the rescue, when one is staying upright, carrying on towing, looking out for incoming waves, watching out for the rest of the party and keeping the panic at bay is very precarious. It is very difficult to be short and succinct in explaining a complex situation to the coastguards.

Because not many people have actually had to use the radio in these situations we need to train with VHP in more realistic situations

***The experience of the group must be a more important factor in the choices taken.***

and will need considerable imagination to make it real.

The reply to the Mayday by the coastguard was 'Which service do you need?' There is a need to be aware that you will be asked to make this decision. We need to be aware that the coastguards have only the information given to them on the Mayday and are otherwise ignorant of the position and of the situation. The person calling the Mayday has to be clear, concise and able to be decisive.

### VHF reception

The duty officer in Holyhead was concerned that the VHF was very faint and he could not hear me at times. This was due to the cliffs and being in the trough of the waves. The handheld radio only produces 5 watts of power and is directional in a cone radiating from the aerial. If the radio is held off the vertical the radio waves will be ineffective. It is vital to hold the radio as vertical and as high as possible, not forgetting to speak very close to the microphone and as clearly as possible.

### VHF usage

If the VHF radio is attached to the deck lines make sure that the tether stretches as far as your mouth when sitting upright.

### Deck lines

The deck lines of all the party must be in good condition and capable of being used as designed. Worn out lines on one boat limited the ability to use equipment as it had been wrapped in the stretched lines to secure it, rendering the equipment almost useless when needed quickly.

### Pumps

The hand pump was ineffective in the conditions, both in larger waves and close to the rocks. The deck cannot be sealed when using a hand pump. A fixed pump is essential. Because of the need for speed and stability an electric pump would have been the most effective as pumping could have been commenced and continued throughout the rescue. This would have improved the stability of the rescued kayak.

### Buoyancy aids v lifejackets

As paddlers we have chosen to compromise the head support of the lifejacket for the

convenience and protection of the buoyancy aid. This will still be a matter for debate.

Keeping your head above the water in these conditions is extremely draining and consideration should be given to the use of lifejackets.

### Practice

There is the Catch 22 situation of needing to practice in rough water but the very same water is the danger. We must practice as much as we can, in all situations, for all eventualities, with as many different people as possible and learn from them. If you do get into difficulties you will feel responsible, embarrassed and all the emotions of which you can think. I hope that I will have learnt from all of this. Time will tell. We all learned something on that day.

Nick Targett.

### **The lengths to which some people will go for a free ride in a helicopter!**

I have no doubt that I made the initial error in deciding to go out in conditions in which I clearly, with hindsight, could not manage. Having put that to one side I have no doubt that the rest of the party did all the right things at the time and with the equipment available.

The coastguard, RAF crew and the casualty department were fantastic but mostly thank you to Andrew, Male and Nick.

The incident arose as an attempt to learn to cope with more difficult conditions and inevitably, we have to put ourselves into conditions beyond those normally paddled. Nick is an experience and highly competent and strong paddler with experience in difficult conditions.

He holds a coach Level 3 (sea and inland) and 4 \* awards (amongst others). He has been on 5 \* training on a number of occasions. We have paddled for 15 years mainly on the N Wales coast and the west coast of Scotland. I have paddled many miles but am normally more choosy about the conditions in which I set out and avoid difficult conditions by planning and timing.

Fran Targett

*There is the Catch 22 situation of needing to practice in rough water but the very same water is the danger.*

**Traditional . . .**

# GREENLAND STYLE . . .

**by**

ANDY

BIEN

*The following was originally written for the newsletter of Bromley canoe club in the UK, by way of offering an explanation for my antics with strange bits of wood at the weekly swimming pool sessions. It is submitted here in the hope of providing a brief overview of Greenland paddling to complement previous contributions on the subject.*

The traditional kayaking of the Greenland Inuit arose from a former lifestyle based on hunting sea-mammals. Many techniques were rescued from oblivion in the 1980s, by an awakening interest on the part of Greenlanders in their kayaking heritage.



Manasse Mathaeussen was a prominent figure in this revival; still the best kayaker in Greenland when he reached his seventies, he was able to pass on his skills by teaching and performing the extensive repertoire of manoeuvres.

Kayaks were widely used in the Arctic, in Siberia, Alaska and Canada, but in Greenland a particularly high level of expertise was reached in rolling. This seems likely to have been due to a combination of the type of kayaks, local conditions, and hunting practises. Bailing out after a capsize in Northern latitudes wasn't an option, owing to the nippy nature of the water. Given the technology available, an excursion by kayak into the hostile environment of the sea was on a par with an astronaut taking a space-walk. Greenlanders built narrow, relatively unstable kayaks. Glaciers calving icebergs (school geography?) could cause massive waves, and in addition an effective but risky method of hunting was employed. Not unique to Greenland, this involved a harpoon thrown with the aid of a throwing stick for extra leverage and power.

The detachable harpoon head was attached by a long line to a float, which was to tire the prey and stop it sinking. The hazards of hunting by kayak were serious - in the early 20th century, before the activity began to decline dramatically, some 20% of all deaths in South Greenland were attributed to kayaking accidents. Undesirable scenarios included becoming entangled in the line, suffering a broken back from the force of a fleeing animal or being attacked by a retaliating one.

The reliable and efficient standard Greenland roll is similar to the Pawlata. As stated in the BCU handbook, (the old one anyway) the first European credited with a roll was the Austrian of that name in 1927. He had worked out a method after reading reports from explorers and anthropologists who had visited Greenland. British members of the air route expeditions to East Greenland in the early 1930s learnt rolling and "eskimo" rescues directly from the locals, though the leader, Henry George (Gino) Watkins, disappeared while seal hunting alone. His abandoned kayak was recovered, and is now kept at the Royal Geographical Society in London; it was on loan to the National Maritime Museum last year. The popular reverse sweep roll helps keep water out of the cockpit when the kayaker is wearing the Greenland equivalent of a spraydeck, as opposed to a full kayak jacket sealed around the face and wrists.\* This uses a low brace sweep, unlike the Steyr. A favourite of accomplished rollers is the "storm" roll, equivalent to the screw roll, with a forward-leaning recovery and the paddle levered against the boat. There is a crossed-arm variant of this which is trickier, not surprisingly. Many of the rolls developed were useful in the event of entanglement or injury, and some of the more contorted varieties, e.g. with the paddle behind the back along the spine, are good practise for the basic rolls as they encourage correct use of the upper body. On a personal note, I am happy to report that so far nothing anatomically important has come adrift. The general principle is the same as for other types of paddling, i.e. to use torso rotation rather than extend the arms backwards into a dislocation position.

### Lost paddle

In the event of a lost paddle, other items kept on the deck could be used to regain an upright position, such as the float or the throwingstick. Rolls without such equipment were also known. Various types of hand rolls are performed at the annual kayaking competition in Greenland, using the same actions as the throwing stick rolls. For the competitively inclined, thirty capsize manoeuvres are included in the championship. Sculling on the side, on the chest, and the standard roll each gain two points

per side, while the "straight-jacket" no-hands roll earns eleven a side. Not all the known rolls etc. are tested in the competition. The "balance" brace, the paddler lying back in the water, allows for rest on a journey when coming ashore is not practicable. Trying this in a pool session enables one to relax into a prolonged state of therapeutic meditation while clogging up the deep end and annoying everybody else.

### Recoveries

Traditional skin-on-frame Greenland boats have a low decks behind the cockpit and also in front of it (the paddler sits with straight legs). This facilitates both backward- and forward-leaning recoveries. Especially low volume boats are made for the rolling events. Back in West Wickham, the pool rotobats work fairly well, except for their nasty habit of attacking my paddle with sticking-out boltheads. The "throwing stick" is a simplified replica only and is almost completely harmless.

So why the funny paddle? The narrow blade reduced the sound of water dripping from the paddle when sneaking up on seals. Being also unfeathered and buoyant, it can be readily used as a stabilizing outrigger for a Greenland kayak by sliding one end under the deck straps. There are more general advantages. The paddle can be gripped comfortably anywhere along its length making extended strokes easy and secure.

Orientating the blade for rolling when under water is straightforward and rolls on either side are exactly the same. It doesn't present a large and high surface area for a side wind to catch, and there isn't the potential for tenosynovitis that can accompany the usual modern instrument. I find a Greenland paddle easier on the old musculo-skeletal system generally.

"Storm" paddles with very short looms were used in areas prone to high winds (and they're also handy for the swimming pool). This design has a minimum of upper blade exposed to the air when the lower one is fully immersed, and requires the use of a sliding stroke where the top hand moves up to hold the blade rather than the loom. Standard length paddles are typically held with the thumbs and forefingers round the loom, other fingers on the roots of the blades.

*Various types of hand rolls are performed at the annual kayaking competition in Greenland, using the same actions as the throwing stick rolls.*

In forward paddling, some of the techniques needed to use Greenland paddles to best advantage conflict with conventional wisdom and may appear to defy the laws of physics. For example trunk rotation is less obvious and the stroke is a long one, accelerating towards the exit which is well behind the hip. A canted blade where the top edge is slightly forward of the lower improves the grip on the water, and a boat with a low foredeck helps the abdominal muscles to be put to work. Speed is comparable with that achieved using conventional paddles. Unlike their contemporary counterparts, Greenland paddles - and the various ways of using them - evolved over a considerable period of time. I would suggest that they have their applications today and are certainly worth considering by the sea paddler.

As far as a suitable boat, the closer the approximation to a traditional Greenland type the better, on the whole, but a Greenland-style kayak certainly isn't essential. This is just as well in my case, since objections have been raised to a very reasonable plan to build one in the living room. Sources of further information are the U.S. "Sea Kayaker" magazine - see the back issues section - and the Greenland Kayak Association website at <http://www.qajaqusa.org>

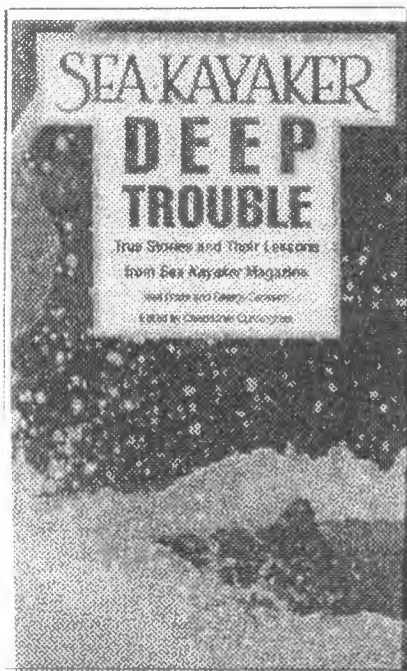
\* The British Museum currently (March) has a website tour of Greenland kayaking clothing, start at <http://www.thebritishmuseum.ac.uk/compass>

*Andrew Bien*

with acknowledgements to John Heath and Greg Stamer

## Book Review by Pat Diamond

# Sea Kayaker - Deep Trouble



True Stories and Their Lessons from Sea Kayaker Magazine  
by Matt Broze and George Gronseth  
Edited by Christopher Cunningham  
Published by Ragged Mountain Press, Camden, Maine, USA. ISBN0 07 009499 8

Don't be put off by the title; this is an excellent, easy and probably essential read for serious kayakers.

The book contains detailed analysis of a wide range of incidents, fatal and near misses. Although all of the

incidents occurred in the Seattle/Vancouver area, the water conditions are similar to Irish and there is much to be learned - except, probably, the dangers of icebergs. What is particularly valuable is that each incident also contains a section dealing with preventative tips and hints. What is amazing about most of the

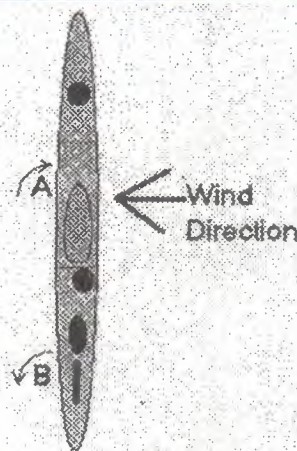
stories is that the vast majority happened close to shore and could have been easily prevented. It is clear that we need to pay attention to the 3 P's-it's hard to take the consultant out of me -Practice, Planning and Protection.

The book makes clear that practising skills is essential -on a frequent basis and in controlled realistic conditions. An incredible number of the incidents involved no or minimal planning, for example, getting a one day forecast for a multi-day trip. Ignorance of the effects of wind, in particular, fetch, with often disastrous consequences. Many of the problems were caused by inadequate protection -no cags, no wetsuits in cold water, buoyancy aids being used as back rests and getting lost in a capsized. In general there was a lack of understanding of the ease with which hypothermia can occur - either in the boat or after a capsized - and its disastrous consequences.

We all invest a lot of time in training - this book makes clear why it is invaluable -and a special thanks to those who take the time to provide it.

# A Word About Skegs . . .

*With thanks to the Portsmouth Canoe Club Newsletter*



Most sea-kayaks have them and yet so often they are used in a binary fashion, either fully in or out of the water but so rarely in-between. What is this magic device that is fitted to all "new" sea-kayaks? Why does my kayak STILL not straight though it's fully in the water? If only it did not jam so often! The answers are all simple to explain when you look at the design of your kayak and what effects your skeg has. However, it is worth going "back to basics." Leaning slightly into wind, paddling with a wider stroke on the windward side or adjusting your grip on the shaft are the "old ways" of combating wind on the side of a kayak. A skeg simple allows you to "just paddle" instead of lots of frustration.

Simply, the skeg moves the turning point of your kayak to the back of the kayak the more you have it in the water.

## Natural

WHAT does that actually mean? As we are sometimes only too aware kayakers have a "natural" tendency to face into wind. This is thanks to the design and the way they feel comfortable to paddle. The turn point is about the centre of the kayak (Point A in the drawing) and often actually just where your knees lie. Because your body is behind this point and it is high up in the air [relative to the kayak] you act like a weathervane and cause the stern of the kayak to be pushed backwards, allowing the kayak to face into wind. (Please note that is a very basic explanation!) The skeg can be lowered to counteract the effect of your body turning the kayak. If you allow just a small amount

of the skeg into the water it will only effect the kayak slightly and move the turning point aft. If the kayak is still turning into wind drop more of the skeg into the water.

Eventually you will go too far. The skeg will be fully in the water and the turning point will be where the skeg is fitted (Point B in the drawing). Since there is now plenty of kayak in front of the turn point it will have the effect of making the kayak turn away from the wind. Not what you wanted probably. Try it out next time you are on the water.

The other problem with having the skeg in the water is that this can cause a slight reduction in speed. Ever tried paddling backwards with the skeg down? As has already been explained the kayak will turn about the skeg. This now means it will turn about the "front" and may feel very peculiar. The skeg is usually fitted in a small "box-channel" at the rear of the kayak. They jam (or do not work) for usually just two reasons, there is something blocking the skeg from dropping or the movement assembly is restricted in some way.

- The first problem is usually caused by small stones getting between the skeg and the box it is in. So look for a skeg that allows others to grip the blade whilst you are at sea so they can pull it down. Another suggestion (though not often seen) is to drill a small hole in the blade very close to the end where the skeg can just be reached by a tool made up in an L shape. This can then be used (again by your fellow passengers on your cruise) to reach the skeg and yank it down. Some paddlers, knowing

they have a problem skeg, carry a screwdriver to allow someone to probe for the stones. Once the skeg is out any other stones tend to drop free.

- The second problem can be difficult to fix as some of it comes from the design of the skeg and release mechanism itself. The first skeg designs used a rope that runs over the deck of the kayak and relies on a piece of elastic to lower or raise it. Let the rope go and the elastic pulls the skeg down. Problems here can be in the form or simple solutions such as making sure the cord on the deck is not jammed between deck fittings, split paddles or other items that may be found on the rear deck.

## Marking the cord

If you find yourself not knowing if the skeg is up or down try marking the cord with a marker pen. Lines at 1cm intervals can go a long way to making life with your skeg a happier one. The elastic itself can also wear over time leading to further problems. The other common method to drop the skeg is a cable. This is usually fitted in a similar way to a break-cable, where both ends of an outer cable are fixed, one end at the skeg the other at a handle or similar. This system usually has the cable through the bulkhead where there is a potential for leakage.

Another area that can cause problems is each end of the outer cable. If this becomes disconnected at either end the skeg will not be able to be lowered.

- If the control is behind you then it is much more difficult to see if the skeg is supposed to be up or down. There may be a way of moving it forward or to a point where it can be seen more easily. Some designs have a cord that runs past the cockpit area. Remember that this may interfere if you wish to get out of the kayak in a hurry. Next time you are out in your kayak look at other peoples skegs. Ask them some questions, see if you can have a go in 'their kayak and maybe try out your own skeg a little more. There is more to having a skeg than just dropping it in the water!

## South East Sea Kayakers . . .

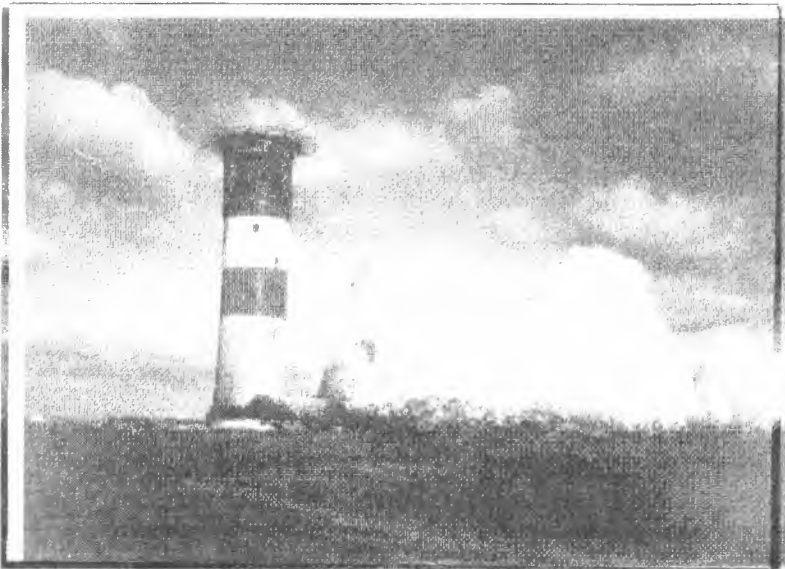
# Lepe through the Needle

by

MIKE  
FITTER

August 28th/29th 2001.

The sun was extremely hot, even at 8.30am on this Saturday morning. As the 9 of us got packed on Lepe beach there was very little other traffic on the Solent. Main problem this weekend was not going to be wind, rain or waves but the temperature -forecast at 31C.



Leaving the beach a little later than hoped we headed out to the middle of the Solent. We needed to be through the Hurst Race by 11.00am or we would have to work really hard. In this temperature, hard work was not really considered necessary.

### Good progress

Once in out on the sea, there was a respite from the heat. Not really a breeze but certainly cooler than expected. Keeping to the middle and buoy hopping we made fairly good progress and passed the Hurst just as

it started to turn. You could see the Race starting to build as we hugged the sea wall by Fort Albert.

### Not really

Now we could slip in closer to the coast and start to take a proper look at the Island scenery. The beaches were relatively busy as you would expect at this time of year but the colours of the cliffs and wooded headlands still shone out in the perfect weather. Lunch was taken briefly in Colwell Bay before pushing on to the Needles and beyond.

Plan? Not really, through the Needles, see how far we got before turning round and back to Fort Victoria beach for the night. Rounding Hatherwood Point was a bit of a shock to me. Alum Bay has become a parking lot for yacht and gin palaces. Luckily we could still see the coloured cliffs and creep up under the chalk cliffs that house the Needles Battery and out to the Needles. Compared to our last visit this was a different place, then paddle-snatching winds had ruled out passing through the gap. A nice play wave forming through the gap and there was flat water to investigate the lighthouse and all the other rock formations.

Two other Kayakers then appeared. Peter and his son had, despite Peter having a bad back, managed to join up with us. Peter lives on the Island and had helped with the tide planning for this trip so it was disappointing that he was unable to make the whole day. We now drifted down the back coast to Freshwater Bay for our next break. There are no other take-outs on this stretch.



From Alum Bay to Freshwater it is about 7km. So beware if there is a strong SW blowing if you make this part of the trip.

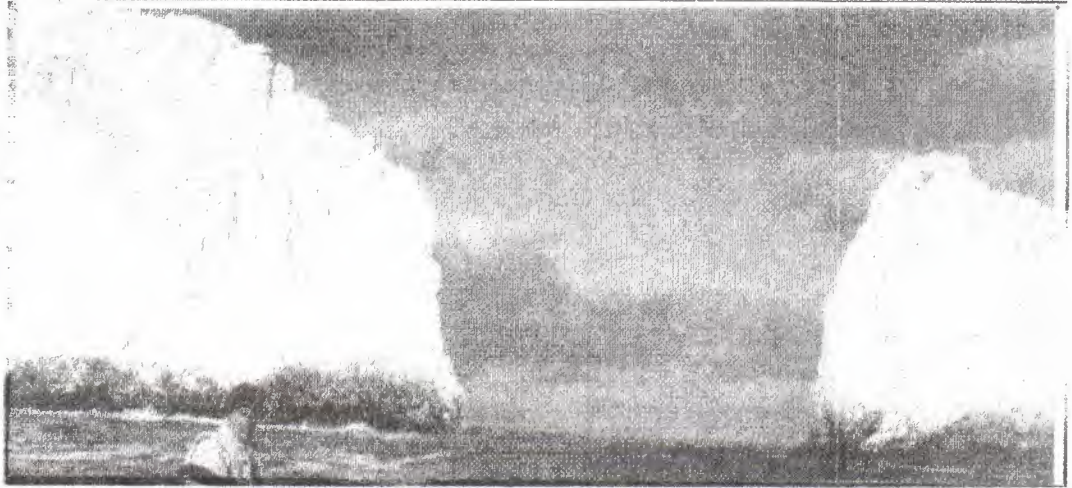
Packing onto Freshwater beach we swapped stories and ideas whilst enjoying the sun. Peter and his son had to leave us here as we headed back to Fort Victoria.

### **Wilderness ???**

The paddle back was gentle and relaxed as we cut straight across the bays to make headway before the tide turned again.

Fort Victoria has most things you want from a wilderness camp - good clean sand, bushes to dry your kit on, 24 hr loos and a café! OK not at a true wilderness camp but well worth using. Watching the sunset over Hurst castle, the gentle lapping of the waves and the occasional bell ringing of the buoy just off shore and we had a lovely evening. Most of the other holidaymakers had wandered off by about 9.30 so we did have the beach to ourselves. Only

1 tent as the rest of us had decided to bivvi for the night. Paul did find a park bench preferable to the sand but that may be a result of a misspent youth! Grand planning by SESK meant we had a serenade of bagpipes in the Fort grounds and firework displays on the mainland to watch as the evening wound down. It had been a long day, an early start and 42km paddling but well worth it.



quietens down. We followed the river Yar to the end, barely a mile from Freshwater. With a good trolley or a friend on the Isle you could circumnavigate this end of the Island in a day.

The Solent was a lot busier today (but it always will be on a summer Sunday) there was a slightly fresher breeze today but we picked a course straight through the middle of the yachts and headed home. Once across, most of us stayed inshore but a couple hung further out trying to catch some extra tidal push but without much success really.

Lepe beach arrived and we were all there safe and sound after a really brilliant week-ends paddling. Excellent weather had certainly helped but so had the scenery and the company of those who came along.

Just a couple of notes - Parking overnight at Lepe is allowed but with prior permission of the Park wardens and you need to pay for each day you are there. The beach at Fort

Victoria is an unofficial campsite but I expect gets used quite frequently. If you stop there please be sensible and don't spoil it for others in the future.

***Paddlers this weekend: Nigel Williams, Paul Frost. Peter Venters, Maggie Taylor, Joe Brown, Tony Brown, Gareth Moss, Harry (?) and Terry Hutchins. Peter Whitlock and his son for Saturday afternoon.***

My thanks to you all for joining in this great weekend.

### **Tesco's car park**

Sunday was always going to be a lazy start as we waited for the tide. It became even lazier when we realised the café didn't open till 9.30. The breakfast comes highly recommended - £4.25 for a huge fry up, toast and tea!! Even Paul had to abandon his healthy eating in the light of such a bargain.

Eventually we drifted off and hugged the coast to Yarmouth. Not being in any real hurry we wandered into Yarmouth harbour. A bit like Tesco's car park on a Sunday morning but once under the road bridge it

# What does "Waterproof" mean, anyway?

We inevitably run into problems when we use absolute terms like waterproof, or undefined terms like splashproof. This is especially true when describing foul weather gear or electronics.

Customers buy foul weather gear because they don't want to get wet, period. But what if they sweat or fall into the water? Is it reasonable to expect the gear to keep you dry under these circumstances? Buyers of marine electronics are no different. Customers expect the products they buy to meet some criteria for exposure so that they won't be throwing money away, and so the product will work when needed. There are at least three types of water exposure ratings in common use:

## The Laboratory Method

This generally requires a number of folks in white lab coats who spray water under precise conditions at a defenseless radio or depth sounder. They're trying to determine whether the product can withstand a certain amount of water from a certain angle. Various agencies quantify waterproofness using different standards: Underwriters Labs, JIS, or the US Coast Guard for example. When Raytheon and Apeico began to promote their product's waterproofness a few years back, they used the Coast Guard definition in CFR 46, Subpart 110.20. This defines a "waterproof machine" as one which will withstand a 65 gallon per minute stream of water, from a one inch nozzle, for five minutes, from all directions, without leaking. The problem, of course, is that it is darned difficult to relate this test to normal use on a boat, where electronic

products may be left out in the rain, submerged for short periods of time, or just operated with wet hands. In fact, we find this to be true with most laboratory standards. While the standard may be repeatable at different labs, it may not be transferable to the real-world conditions in which we operate boats. While we may be able to converse on the facts regarding the test procedure, we can be totally in the dark as to whether our use is harsher or gentler than the specification. So we ask: "What good is a standard the average boater cannot relate to real life conditions?" NOTE: Following Raytheon's lead, other vendors have also used CFR 46 to compare the waterproofness of their products. We'd prefer that everyone use something more practical.

## Manufacturer's Warranty

Electronics manufacturers commonly warrant that their products will be repaired or replaced even if due to water damage for a period of one to three years. This is both a statement of their confidence in their products, and a marketing tool to sell more of them. Of course, the cost of replacing damaged products is built into their product cost, and the consumer pays for this protection in the purchase price. The problem is that many vendors don't actually make waterproof products, yet the warranty suggests the products are waterproof. At least the consumer's investment is protected. To illustrate this point, one handheld VHF radio vendor recently altered its warranty on a popular model from not including water damage to including

water damage. The product did not change: only the warranty. The return rate on this radio have shot up as a result (from about 1% of sales to 4.7%). In other words, consumers are now able to return water damaged radios, and they're doing just that. But who wins in this process? Certainly not the owner who wishes that his radio worked when he needed it.

## The Practical Method

Will the product withstand my type of boating conditions so that it will work when I need it? In particular, can I rely on a radio to transmit an emergency message or my GPS to find my harbor in the fog? While difficult to measure, this is what really counts in product performance. Generally, marine electronics encounter water in one of three ways: humidity, splashes/rain, and immersion.

Products in a boating environment must be capable of withstanding the constant humidity that forces its way inside the case. Many products from the automotive market (like stereos) have a very short life-span due to internal corrosion that occurs whether or not the product is exposed to the elements.

Splashes and rain are tougher, as the water tends to find gaps in gaskets, around shafts, and through external connectors like speaker jacks. Most makers have figured out how to build products that will withstand drizzle and rain using a variety of seals and case designs. Immersion is the tough one. Only a very few products can handle being immersed in water for more than a few seconds. While most of us would never consciously drop a GPS into a bucket of water, it can happen. If product costs are to be kept in line, consumers need to be reasonable in their expectations. If you have a "waterproof" handheld VHF radio, and you drop it in 20' of water for a couple of days, is it reasonable to expect the manufacturer to repair it for free? We don't think so. But if it fails in a heavy rain, or when it falls into the dinghy bilge, we think you're entitled to a repair or replacement at no charge.

# Just where does my compass point?

by  
RON  
BEAN

(Taken, with appreciation, from the Journal of the North Atlantic Kayakers)

Centuries ago, man was convinced a massive magnetic mountain attracted their compasses. Believing this, they feared traveling too far toward the uncharted lands pointed to by the compass. If that mountain could tug at their compass from thousands of miles away, there was little doubt what it would do to a ship with too much curiosity. Today, in the age of satellite navigation, not only do we take the magnetic poles for granted, but we assume they are stable fixtures, ready to serve us; just as GPS does.

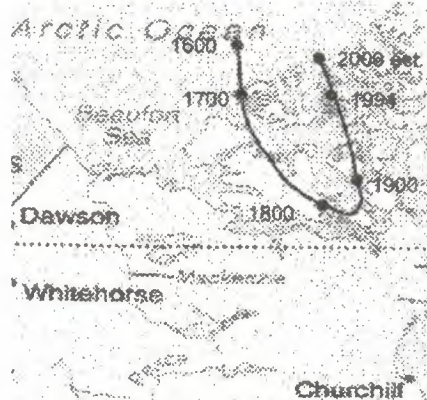
## Some mystery

Where is the magnetic pole associated with the Northern, geographic pole? The magnetic pole still retains some mystery, and one mystery is where the pole actually exists. For reasons explained later, simply following the compass needle will get us within a few hundred miles, but no closer. Scientists describe the pole position by three methods:

- By direct survey - For us amateurs this is the easiest to understand. However, it is the hardest to accomplish. Aside from the harshness of the geography, the pole lacks stability; requiring numerous surveys and measurements to establish the pole position. The last comprehensive survey was carried out in 1994 and found the pole to be located on the Noice Peninsula on the southwest of Canada's Ellesmere Island (78.3°

N, 104.0° W).

- By computer model — Because of the complexity involved in the direct survey, the international community relies on a computer model. This is known as the "International



Geomagnetic Reference Field (IGRF)". By this model, the magnetic pole has migrated a little north-west of Ellef Ringnes Island. By the IGRF, the pole is situated at 79.0° N, 105.1° W. If you own a globe or world map, this is where they would mark the magnetic pole.

- Geomagnetic Dipole - The earth's magnetism is often modeled like a bar magnet, lurking deep in the earth's interior. If a line were drawn through the magnet, along its axis, the intersection of the line and the earth's surface is known as the Geomagnetic dipole. This is currently located at 79.3° N, 71.5° W.

## Magnetism.

Where is the North magnetic pole? No, this is not a repeat of the

previous question. First, a short science lesson. Remember back in school when we learned about magnetism. That like poles repel and opposites attract. And when we hung a bar magnet on a string, the end that pointed North was the North Pole of that bar magnet. Well, if opposites attract, and the end of the compass needle that points north is magnetized as a North Pole, then the magnetic field associated with the geographic North must be a South Pole. In fact, Earth's magnetic North Pole is located in the Antarctic. To avoid confusion, scientists like to refer to the magnetic pole as the, "North seeking Pole".

## Stable reference

If navigators have been using the magnetic field for years, it must be a reliable and stable reference.

On a daily, an annual, and a geographic scale of time the magnetic pole is very unstable.

- On a daily basis the magnetic pole wanders in a roughly elliptical path. The size of the ellipse varies from day to day, but frequently the pole may be 80 Km from its average position.

- Each year the average position of the Pole moves. Early in the twentieth century, the pole was drifting about 10 Km a year. Recently, however, the pole has picked up the pace and is migrating about 15 Km per year. The chart below demonstrates

the nomadic tendencies of the pole.

• Finally, scientists have confirmed that the poles occasionally flip-flop. About every 200,000 years the North Pole and the South Pole swap positions. Estimates show that it has been about 780,000 years since the last event. So like California, we are way overdue for the "Big" one. If the Poles were to swap, what would the implications be (besides having to change all the signs on 1-95)? The biggest impact would be to migratory birds, radio communications, and, of course, everyone's compass.

### Poles reversed?

What would happen as the Poles reversed? The common theory is that the present Poles would decline in strength and would temporarily be replaced by other poles about the earth (Waco Texas?). Ultimately, the Poles would re-establish themselves, but with reversed polarity. The duration of the reversal is still being debated, some say the Poles' reversal will span a thousand years, and others believe it will be very quick. It is curious to note that the present Poles are indeed decaying in strength. It is estimated that at the current rate, the Poles will fully decay in about 1,300 years. Perhaps this is the start of the reversal.

So my compass needle points toward the magnetic Pole?

### Magnetic flux

No. The Earth's magnetic field is described by lines of magnetic flux. This flux squirts out of the Poles and bends sharply along the surface of the earth until captured by the opposite Pole. (Think back to your school days once again. Remember placing a sheet of paper over a magnet and sprinkling iron filings on the paper. The filings formed organized lines from Pole to Pole as they were captured by the lines of magnetic flux.) As the flux moves over the Earth, it is influenced by magnetic anomalies along its path (e.g., large ore

deposits). The compass roses printed on nautical charts account for these local variations.

What happens to my compass at the magnetic Pole? The compass works by aligning itself with the lines of horizontal flux along most of the Earth's surface. However, the flux squirting out of the earth at the Pole is near vertical. This compass needle is simply pulled toward the Earth's surface and rendered useless.

How does this impact my kayaking? There are three things that the kayaker should be aware of :

- 1) The Magnetic Variation listed on older charts is probably wrong. Most compass roses do offer an estimate on annual change, but remember that in recent years the pace of the pole drift has quickened. This would place the annual estimate in jeopardy.
- 2) If planning a trip through the Northwest passage, consult a geomagnetic survey map. This will detail where the compass will be inaccurate.
- 3) If out paddling with a group of friends and everyone's compass suddenly flips 180 degrees. You can casually announce to your panicked friends, "Oh yeah, I've been waiting for that to happen."

*Ron Bean is an American Canoe Association Certified Coastal Kayak Instructor*

Reprinted from Bay Currents, a publication of BASK-The San Francisco Bay Area Sea Kayakers

## AVOIDING COLLISIONS

—By John Lull

Picture this: You're paddling across the shipping lane in SF Bay. Off to your left, you spot a large ship about a mile or two away heading across your course. To use the bow angle method, quickly point your paddle at the ship and notice the angle between

the paddle shaft and your bow. Then continue paddling forward, maintaining course and speed. After about 1 minute (or less), point the paddle at the ship and again check the angle. Note whether the angle has increased, decreased, or remained the same.

Let's say the angle has decreased (the paddle is pointing more toward the bow than on the previous check). As you maintain course and speed, continue to check the angle to verify that it is indeed decreasing. As long as the angle continues to decrease, the ship will pass in front of you. If the bow angle has been increasing (the paddle is pointing more and more off the side), the ship will pass behind you. Here's the important one: If the angle remains the same each time you check (i.e. the angle between paddle shaft and bow stays at 45 degrees), you are on a collision course with the ship. You must alter course and/or speed, until you see a change in the bow angle and determine that the ship will pass by either in front of you or behind you.

### Simple method

This simple method really works well, but it requires two things: that you maintain course and speed and keep checking until the other vessel is clearly going to pass harmlessly by. If you keep checking, you will catch any course changes by the other vessel before it is too late.

**Editors note:** For some people, using the clock method of measuring angles works well. Assume the bow of your kayak is 12:00 O'clock and the stern is 6:00 O'clock. Directly off to your right side would be 3:00 O'clock and perpendicular to your left side would be 9:00. You can estimate where 1:00 or 1:30 O'clock, for example, might be quite easily.

*John Lull is a Tsunami Ranger and an American Canoe Association Instructor Trainer Educator.*



# 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,**

Thanks for the January 2002 issue of Ocean Kayaker. As usual a very good read. I thought the article "An issue of Leadership" particularly thought provoking and welcome as the BCU Five Star award places an emphasis on "Leadership" in addition to the technical skills. Maybe I have not read CoDe diligently enough but I have found it difficult to locate books or articles on sea kayak leadership. I hope Mary's contribution prompts articles and other feedback from which we can all learn. In the mean time if you know of any publication then I would be grateful. I think this is one of the key safety issues for sea kayaking and not just "common sense" as some have suggested.

Regards,  
*Mick Fitter*

## **Hello, John,**

would be grateful if you could make the following details available to your members or any persons you feel may be interested.

Sea Wolf is a kayak of medium-large size especially designed for the sea. The efforts of the designers have been concentrated on the shape of the hull where the innovation and the tradition live together.

The sharp edges, present in many eskimo kayaks, together with the round profile of the final part of the keel allow, to this new boat, a very surprising maneuverability as well as a very good course holding.

Sea Wolf is therefore a sea-kayak very stable and fast; the considerable loading capacity, mainly due to the presence of two oval peaks, doesn't penalise at all its excellent water sliding and consequently good cruising speed.

Sea Wolf is finally a sea-kayak suitable for challenging expeditions with load on board.

Many thanks.

*Martin*  
resinetro@libero.it

## **Hello, John,**

Hi paddler, if you want to know around "paddling in northern california", make contact with: pike@garlic.com (Charlie Pike)

*Cheers Mike*

## **Hello, John,**

For the new french sea kayaking federation, named "PAGAYEURS MARINS, Fédération de la Plaisance en Kayak de Mer", we are trying to establish a list of great expeditions realised in sea kayaks in the world. We hope that will help french authorities to understand that a sea kayak is a real sea-safe boat and must not be forbidden at more than 300 meters from the coast. Can you help us to establish this list?

Thank you for your help.

Best wishes.

*Philippe LASNIER*  
PAGAYEURS MARINS President.

## **Hello, John,**

I am writing in response to Guy Ogez's letter, which you published in the November 2001 edition of "Ocean Kayaker". This concerns the law in France, regulating the length-to-width ratio of kayaks.

Dear Guy,  
I am a Nordkapp owner and may,

some day, wish to paddle my boat off the coast of France.

Hence my interest in your letter. If you wish to campaign for a change in the French law, then I hope the following information may be of use to you.

The "Suffren" Class destroyer, used by the French Navy, has a length-to-width ratio of 10.16:1

and should therefore be classed as a beach toy under the law that you describe.

Our own Royal Navy also uses vessels that have a length-to-width ratio greater than 10. The Type 22 Frigate has a ratio of 10.02:1. The "Vanguard" Class nuclear-powered ballistic missile carrying submarine has a ratio of 11.71:1. Clearly neither of these vessels should ever be allowed to venture more than 300 metres from the beach. The source of all the above data is "Jane's Fighting Ships".

Are the French authorities actively enforcing this law? I thought it was only we British who insisted on obeying silly rules.

Yours sincerely,  
*Alan Green*

*From Frank Goodman in response to Guy Ogez'*

Dear Guy,

I must apologise for my very tardy reply to your letter about the problems you are having with Nordkapps in France because of their length/width ratio. In fact my wife and I have had a difficult summer, as she developed cancer in the spring. However, after operations, radio therapy etc. etc. I'm glad to say that she is now clear of the disease and is once again in robust health.

I am appaled at the rule you outlined, especially as the FFCK has ratified it. My only suggestion is that you ask them "what is the scientific basis for this formula?" As far as I am aware; it has no validity, since a boat of a given cross-section, will be more stable the longer it is. In other words... suppose you took a boat of, say 4.5 metres length and .5 metres width, which passes the FFCK test, and added a metre to the centre. The boat would be more stable than before, but would now fail the test.

Normally, any stability test is designated by the WATERLINE length and beam. I think if you apply the formula to the Nordkapp using the waterline length, you will get a figure less than ten

There are several block coefficients used by boat designers, but the simplistic formula you tell me about is just nonsense. The traditional block coefficients generally use the cross-section of the boat rather than the width, and even then they tell us very little about the characteristics of any kayak, where the centre of buoyancy is (remarkably) always above the deck of the craft - unheard of in the world of larger vessels!

I hope this is some help for you and that you can attack this nonsense successfully. I do hope you can also get a French section of the Nordkapp Trust under way. I wish you all success and luck for that venture as well.

It was nice to hear from you after all this time. I'm afraid that advancing years had taken their toll, and after tearing tendons away from my shoulder-bones I've had to give up paddling. So at seventy one now, I've had to take retirement seriously now that I cannot seriously canoe!

All best wishes,  
*Frank Goodman*

### **Hello, John,**

After seven years I got round to changing the skeg control on my Buccaneer from right hand to left hand. It has always bugged me that I had to let go with my right hand to adjust it or reach over with my left hand. Needless to say you don't need the skeg when it's

calm. The first mould I made for the channel for the skeg control to slide in stuck solid as I did not have the right release wax. However the second one using the right wax was fine.

After the initial disaster everything else was straightforward. I have a two-foot tubular heater (120 watts) that spent the night in the cockpit making sure the resin set. I left the channel in on the right side and just filled the holes. I made little u-shaped clips from 1mm stainless steel sheet that Christine had left over from one of her mosaic projects. These hold the nylon tubing that the cable runs in and again were glassed down the left side of the boat. The most difficult part was the nylon cable out from where it came through the deck but a little persuasion with a screwdriver solved that problem.

I see that quite a few boats now come with skeg controls on the left.

As I had the T-cut out for finishing off the skeg channel, I gave the scratches on the deck and gunwhales a quick polish. It looks like a new boat and I can't wait to get out in it.

I have a new spray deck and sea cag that I will write about once I have had a chance to try them out.

Take care,  
*Harry and Chris Simpson*

### **Hello, John,**

*Fran Franco Ferrero*

New British Canoe Union Handbook  
The new edition of the 'BCU Canoe and Kayak Handbook' will be launched at the International Canoe Exhibition on February the 23rd.

- The complete paddlesport reference book

- Completely rewritten 3rd edition

- Now in full colour

Written by enthusiastic and current BCU coaches and practitioners, this book is an invaluable source of information for both novice and expert alike.

For the newcomer it will provide a firm foundation in their chosen aspect of the sport.

The coach or experienced paddler will find it invaluable as:

- an update to current theory and practice

- an introduction to new aspects of the sport
- a pointer to other sources of information such as relevant books and websites

### Technical Details

Size: 170x240mm

Printed Pages: 352 pages four process colour throughout

Illustrations: Numerous colour photos and drawings

Price: £15-95p

ISBN: 0-9531956-5-1

Publisher: Pesda Press

Franco Ferrero

Pesda Press

Visit our Web site for information, reviews and coming releases at <http://www.pesdapress.com> nd 1812

### **Hello, John,**

As a keen sea paddler, you might be interested to know that a sea kayaking message board has just been set up on the net. It's at the Guidebook website (link below) where the general message board is already the most heavily used paddling board in the UK.

Have a look and decide for yourself whether it'll be any use for spreading info about trips, equipment, ideas and events. If you have any suggestions for it, let me know.

You need to visit the link below and click on 'Community'.

Hope this finds you all well.

Best Wishes,  
*Mark Rainsley*

The UK Rivers Guidebook  
<http://www.ukriversguidebook.co.uk>

To keep up with events see ISKA web site at [www.seakayak.co.uk](http://www.seakayak.co.uk)

To keep fellow paddlers up-to-date send details of all your events to Chris Bolton at [seakayak@btinternet.com](mailto:seakayak@btinternet.com).

All events, wherever they are staged around the world, should be included.