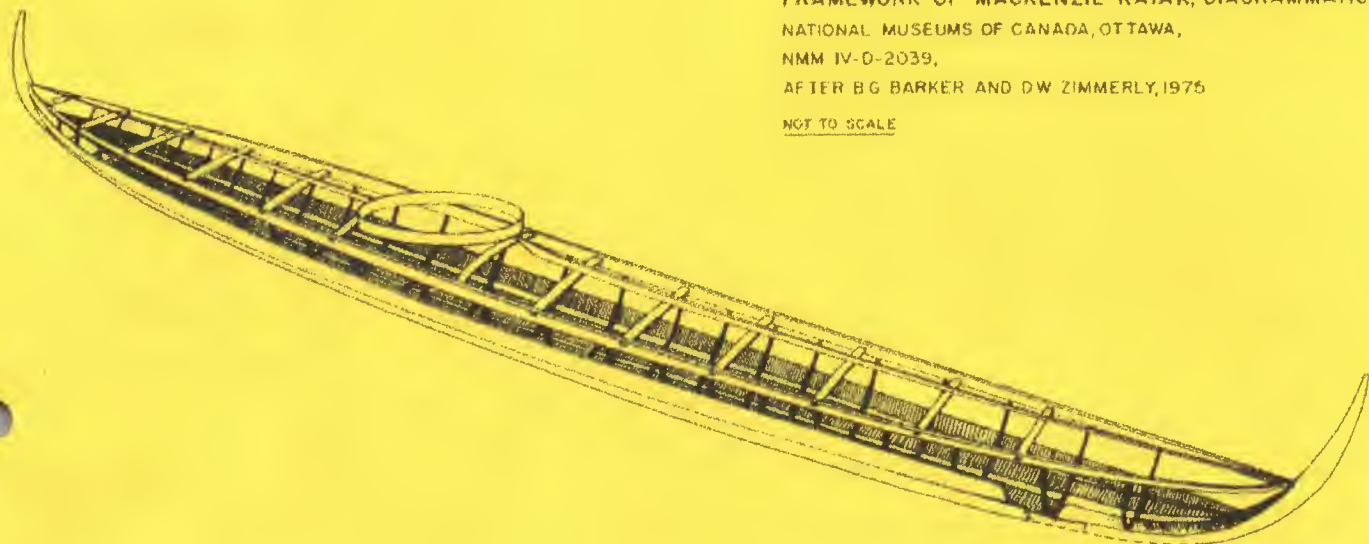


# OCEAN KAYAKER

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



FRAMEWORK OF MACKENZIE KAYAK, DIAGRAMMATIC  
NATIONAL MUSEUMS OF CANADA, OTTAWA,  
NMM IV-D-2039,  
AFTER BG BARKER AND DW ZIMMERLY, 1975  
NOT TO SCALE



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



**AUGUST 2002**

**ISSUE # 47**



# Ocean Kayaker

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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!

In an increasingly litigious society, it pays to know exactly where you stand when it comes to questions of personal responsibility.

BCU director of coaching Mike Devlin sounds a word of warning to anyone taking part in a group trip or event, however casual: "It's no longer acceptable to shake your head and say 'We were just a group of friends out paddling. Nobody was in charge'. At a recent coroner's inquest the person taking part who had the most experience was deemed responsible for the accidental drowning of another participant and, as a result, was sued by the widow of the dead man."

In a second scenario, two qualified coaches running an authorised course, which included a day's trip on the river, were asked by a friend if he could go along. At the board of enquiry set up to look into a serious injury which occurred on the trip. It was the friend rather than the coaches who was deemed responsible, because he happened to have more experience than them.

Adds Mike: "It is essential that every paddler makes sure her or she has adequate insurance cover, not just for what might happen to their equipment or themselves but to cover any liability they might have for what happens to others."

We are not including details of events within the pages of the newsletter. Instead these are to be found on our ISKA web site [www.seakayak.co.uk](http://www.seakayak.co.uk). Thanks to Chris Bolton who keeps this up to date for us. Ensure you send details of your events as early as possible to either myself or Chris.

I was not able to get to Nigel Dennis's May Anglesey Symposium. Mores the pity as I gather it went off very well. Hopefully I will catch up with many of you at this event next year.

So here comes the August edition of Ocean Kayaker. We hope you enjoy it and will consider making material contribution in due course. Thanks, of course, to those who have made contributions already, some of which you will find in this issue.

Good Kayaking,

John Ramwell

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

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

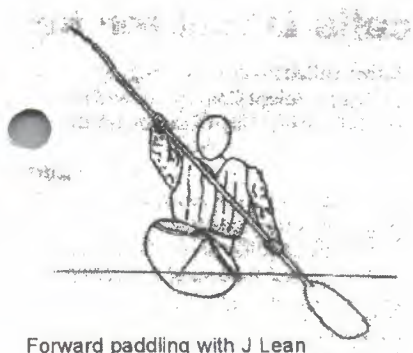


# Recovery from an Imbalance

by

PHIL  
DODRIDGE

*Excerpt from draft of the new Australian Canoeing Sea Skills Award)*



Forward paddling with J Lean

Support strokes are used to regain a balanced paddling position when wind, wave or another factor causes you to begin capsizing. The action should become instinctive with practice. There are two types of support stroke: The high support and the low support. Although the paddle is used, the righting action comes from the hips, often referred to as the "hip flick". The hip flick is the opposing action to the "J" lean but done in an explosive manner to bring the kayak quickly level once on its edge. As in the J lean you must push on the footrests, lift the knees and drive the buttocks into the seat. The paddle is used to halt the capsizing motion.

In the low support stroke the normal grip is used, the elbows are above the paddle shaft, which is held horizontally across the cockpit at deck level. To practice the action you should sit upright and use the J lean to lift the kayak onto its edge

to one side then the other. This will give you the feel of the hip and torso muscles working to control the angle of the kayak. When comfortable hold the paddle in the correct position and J lean the kayak just a little too far so that it passes the point of secondary stability. The back of the blade is then firmly pushed into the water and simultaneously the hip flick is used to right the kayak. The blade should not dive deeply into the



water and should be exited in a vertical position by wrist action.

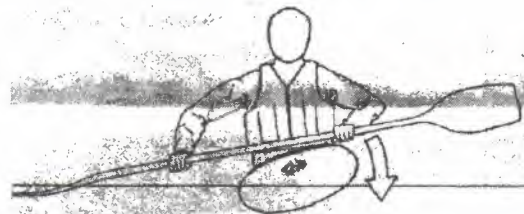
## **The Low Brace Turn**

The low brace turn is used only when the kayak is moving forwards with speed. To turn to the left the torso is rotated so that the left shoulder moves towards the stern of the kayak. The back of the left blade is placed flat on the surface of the water behind the cockpit and on a slight angle to the kayak. The paddle shaft is held on a low angle so that the blade provides lift from the surface of the water. The kayak is edged or leant onto the blade as it skims. Not only does this turn the kayak but give support to the paddler.

This stroke is very useful when running with a wave that is just about to break. The stroke will turn the kayak across the wave and provide support as the kayak broaches before a support stroke is needed.

## **Low Brace in Breaking Waves**

The low brace is an effective means of maintaining stability when riding broken waves. When the wave first lifts the stern and drives the kayak forwards set up as for a low brace turn. As the wave steepens and breaks the kayak will broach; that is turn side on to the direction of travel. It is vital that the kayak is placed on its edge using a J lean into the wave. The shoreward edge must be raised or it will dig in and cause a sharp capsize. The paddle is held at 90 degrees to the kayak



with the back of the blade supporting in the wave. Let your weight be supported by the paddle as the kayak is pushed sideways by the wave. As the wave loses momentum decrease the amount of lean used.

# NEW ZEALAND

## Sea Kayaking Scene

by

ALAN  
BYDE

*From Alan Byde who recently left our shores to take up residence in New Zealand. I asked him to give our readers something on the sea kayaking scene. Here it is:*

### Hi John

Returned from a week in the 'Sounds' These are the drowned valleys at north end of south island. At Christmas time the business of Christchurch is suspended or at least slowed and everyone heads out, a bit like France in August. I met Paul Caffyn briefly, for an hour and a cup of tea. He is off for six weeks on yet another coastal voyage in Thailand.

He has his Nordkapp with him, in excellent trim. It was perched atop a 4x4, to go to the

airport. I looked at the profile, the long raking bow and thought it didn't look very much like a Nordkapp as I remember it but he assures me it is. I expressed the view that the ability to climb on to ice sheets was wasted. That is what the long rise in the bow is for, to allow the Inuit hunter to paddle for his life when the sea ice closes in. The design is pure west Greenland. The closing edges can literally slice through a kayak skin and crush the man within. Aim at the edge of the ice sheet, gain enough momentum to carry the kayak and paddler up onto the ice and be safe as the ice closes.

So far as the average British coastal paddler is concerned, the incidence of sea ice is as frequent as that of rocking horse manure or hen's teeth. All that bow area above the water is a waste of potential speed, (loss of waterline length) plus it offers side area to a beam wind carrying it away bow first. A blunt bow will do much better.

Paul disagreed. He said that he had been up there among the ice, felt it a tad chilly and wanted to put on his dry suit. He aimed for the nearest ice, at speed, glided up on to it, got out of his cockpit, stood up and put on his dry suit. Then he re-entered kayak and sea. He did it for comfort not for very life. Was the Nordkapp designed for only one man? News from others who have actually used the life saving raking bow for its proper purpose will be instructive. as much in its presence as absence. Meanwhile my next home 'designed' and built sea kayak will be of the south Alaskan Norton Sound type. Blunt bow.

What, me design a kayak? Well, I can put lines on paper or even on the computer





screen, and print them out; does that make me a designer? No it makes me a draftsman. If I should claim it as my own original design it makes me a plagiarist. I won't be doing that.

You ask about the kayaking scene in my part of NZ. The land area, lots of it mountainous, is larger than Great Britain, the population is 3.5 million, so the remarkably large number of kayaks on car roofs heading for the sounds yesterday indicates a higher proportion of sea paddlers than in GB.

There are three sorts of kayaks, plastic pigs, wave riders and marathon with rudders. The plastic pigs, which title I recall was given to them decades ago by the Royal Naval Kayaking Association, are, frankly, hideous.

They are beach toys. Let me move on. The stunt craft are about as long as a man, minimal buoyancy, and can be used on surf or white water, or for falling off waterfalls. Although the BAT 5 design has been seen (on SKY TV) plunging off 50 ft waterfalls, I have seen only two of them.

The marathon kayaks are K1 in all but cockpit. The cockpit has a raised foredeck, quite steeply raised, with a small cockpit opening as for a WW craft. It has a stern hung rudder with the attendant problems of vulnerability. Talk to the LD racer of the 1960's in UK, and learn how some competitor set up his kayak in immaculate condition before the event, left it at the start and when the call came to get in and go, found his rudder lines slack or severed. Ho hum. Do it to others before they do it to you. The rudders where used are stern hung without exception. Some day the deficiencies of that equipment will be recognised. The paddles are largely alloy loom with spade blades, feathered. Apart from my own Inuit design blades, made by Collars of Oxford circa 1969, which interested Paul, I have seen no others.

The construction of the plastic pigs is roto mould, as is that of the wave riders. The marathon craft are grp as a rule. I saw several plywood hard chine doubles, which for my money are Duncan Winning's double sea kayak, the name of which escapes me for the moment. At Kai Koura, where the Antarctic deep current rises to the surface bringing with it the foundations for the sea creatures' food chain, whale watching is

offered, from power boat, helicopter, light 'plane or kayak. There are seal and dolphin too.

In short there is a huge amount of enthusiasm for sea kayaking here in my part of NZ, I can't speak for the rest but I am assured it is widespread. In my view some of the subtleties of design and use are yet to be recognised. Peter Lamont's Inuit design paddles have in them some sweet shapes, so subtle that I didn't see them, but when he explained it I then knew why they sit so neatly to the fist. I reckon I know paddles and origins and design, but the Inuit paddle, the original, is that shape for a host of reasons. It takes a keen eye and a long-practiced hand to recognise the reasons why.

An aside, on pomposity. It seems there is no corner in that quality in UK alone. My son in law has a deep keel sailing craft, 17 tons, 45 ft, so he isn't kidding. He sailed last year into a remote cove up on the Sounds and transferred to his 'rubber duck' and motored ashore. He has been going there for nigh on 40 years. A group of sea kayakers cruised around the headland and headed in. Baz started to leave, he values the quiet of the place. As his tiny outboard started up the leader of the pack, hirsute, accosted him and berated him for stealing the peace of the place. Baz was very patient with him and managed to keep his response low key and to one word. You may guess its import from the Army.

Ah! Cockpits. They have all, without exception, bucket seats. I remember when Oliver Cock of immortal fame, fitted a cut-out washing up bowl with sponge rubber padding into the plywood side panels of his Spuhler Mk 5. (Tyne) It improved location for snake-hipped Oliver. That was the very first bucket seat I recall seeing. Move forward to three days ago when I was leafing through a book on English cottage furniture. There was a stool, three legs, with a sturdy seat shaped like a 'U' the open end forward. The side arms accommodated the underside of the thighs while the absence of a middle bit allowed ventilation where the sun never shines. In addition it took less timber to make.

A picture of Roman toilets up on Hadrian's Wall showed a long covered trench with running water under it, with slabs of stone

*the Inuit paddle, the original, is that shape for a host of reasons. It takes a keen eye and a long-practiced hand to recognise the reasons why.*

covering the top, except every yard or so was a 6 inch gap. The gap is for obvious reasons. Each side of the gap was a slightly raised stone, set across the stream flow, to take the underside of the thighs. My own 'improved' kayak cockpit on similar lines was, when I conceived the 'original' notion, such a clever device. It is comfortable and it allows ventilation WTSNS. A study of a scientific explanation for Bible stories shows that such toilet seat were present when Thera blew, circa 3,500 years ago. Nowt's new.

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## Kayaks Anonymous

Hi, my name is J. and I have a kayak problem. Sure, I started like everyone else, sitting in a Chinook for the first time, thinking that paddling might be a fun way to spend a Saturday afternoon. Before I knew it, I was paddling all day every weekend, then every day after work. then

I stopped going to work.

I graduated from plastic to the hard stuff, kevlar and graphite. Pretty soon I realized there were enough boats in my garage to equip a terrorist navy, yet I couldn't bring myself to get rid of any of them. "Hey, it's no problem", I told myself, "I can always give this up and take up mountain biking or something." I started looking for cheap warehouse space in Half Moon Bay.

Then, one day, I had just arrived home with my latest purchase, a used Klepper in bad shape. "I don't have one of these yet," I thought when I bought it. "I'll fix it up and sell it to someone." When I went to put it in the garage, I saw that I already had three Kleppers, each in worse shape than this one. Suddenly I realised that my life, like my garage, had become dysfunctional. I collapsed on a pile of PFDs.

When I awoke I was at a Kayaks

Anonymous meeting. It was a whole room full of lost souls like me. I didn't know whether to laugh or cry. They told me about the signs of Kayak dependency:

\*Do you daydream about what the Arluk VII might be like?

\*When you're at your mother's house and she asks you to put your cold drink on a

coaster, do you exclaim "Great! Let's talk about Coasters!?"

\*Do you find yourself involuntarily doing high and low braces as you drive your car?

\*Do you have a kayak on the mantle in your living room?

\*Do you have an inflatable kayak in your bedroom?

I finally admitted to myself that I was floating upside down on an ebb current to oblivion. KA encouraged me to start on their Twelve Stroke Program, and it has changed my life. I have a new set of mottos:

\*"One bay at a time."

\*"It's OK not to kayak"

\*\*"Recovery is like an Eskimo roll: if you try too hard, you just get water up your nose." I've given all my boats to charity and I've melted down my paddles. I now can watch a bunch of kayakers launching through the surf without even twitching a bicep. Now if I can just do something about all those mountain bikes, I'll be able to get into my garage again.

reprinted with permission in the SKABC (Sea Kayak

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## Controlling the Waters

King Canute thought royalty was enough to hold back the waves, but BW takes a much more pragmatic and active approach. Sluices, weirs and feeders can all be manually controlled to increase or redirect water flow when necessary - and it is usually possible to take pre-emptive action before a situation becomes problematic.

BW staff on the banks keep a constant watch on water levels. They monitor the weather and take appropriate action to ensure that waterways have extra capacity at times of heavy rain.

In addition, in some areas BW waterways are fitted with electronic sensors monitoring water levels.

Once these levels exceed certain thresholds sluice mechanisms are automatically triggered to ease the situation and our staff are alerted to take further action if necessary



# Ocean winds set to bring summer downpours

by

JONATHAN  
LAKE

BRITAIN and Europe could be facing one of the wettest and most unpredictable summers in a decade because of dramatic changes in ocean currents on the other side of the world.

## Wind-bursts

Meteorologists have spotted a series of wind-bursts across the Pacific Ocean. The phenomenon can result in the reversal of the trade winds — the easterly winds that normally blow along the equator — for several days. In the past such switches have been linked with changes in global weather patterns.

The wind-bursts may also be a sign that the surface of the Pacific is warming. The effect could spill into the Atlantic, bringing changes in currents associated with extreme weather patterns around the world.

"This phenomenon releases vast amounts of energy into the atmosphere. We don't understand all the impacts but we do know that it changes the weather systems and ocean currents in the Atlantic," said Louise Born, a researcher at the University of East Anglia who has studied such phenomena.

The evidence of warming comes from a network of research buoys around the Pacific that measure wind and temperature changes and transmit the data back for analysis.

It is thought the energy released from the warmer Pacific could sub-

due or even reverse the easterly trade winds.

Such winds carry heat and moisture released from the ocean away from South America towards Asia. When they are suppressed there is a corresponding shift in high-altitude jet-stream winds. The energy that causes weather changes is then pushed into the Atlantic. This means more water is likely to evaporate from the ocean accompanied by stronger winds to carry it away and drop it elsewhere as rain.

Michael Davey, the Met Office's seasonal prediction manager, said he would be releasing a full forecast for the summer later this month. He said: "These kinds of changes do affect the global atmospheric circulation. It can cause droughts and floods in equatorial regions. Europe gets less of an effect but they tend to make our weather much wetter and less settled."

European weather patterns often have been linked to those of the Pacific, despite the huge distances between them.

## The floods

The floods that hit Britain in December 2000 were partially linked to a warming event in the Pacific. The same month was also among the warmest Decembers recorded.

Rob Allan, a researcher at the Met Office's Hadley Centre that looks at long-term weather patterns, said meteorologists were watching the

changes closely. "If the Pacific ocean warms up much more the effect will spill over into the Atlantic," he said. "This kind of change can affect the weather in Europe quite strongly. It is also linked to droughts in the southern part of America and India." The Pacific is the world's biggest and deepest ocean and stores vast amounts of energy. Even the smallest change in the currents can release enough energy to wreak havoc on global weather systems.

World climate change is expected to exacerbate such effects. The extra heat could cause increased evaporation from the oceans and stronger winds. Many meteorologists have predicted a global increase in storms and hurricanes.

## In Britain

In Britain, rain has increased by as much as 40% in the past century. Meanwhile cold winters, defined by heavy snow, are disappearing, currently occurring only once a decade and predicted to disappear in southern England by 2080.

If the current changes turn out to be on a large scale, the world could see extreme weather conditions similar to the winds, floods and landslides known as El Niflo that contributed to 20,000 deaths and £20 billion of damage to property in 1997.

In recent weeks, several leading meteorological institutions have said the odds are shortening for such a recurrence.

**Destinations . . .****Kayaking heaven . . .**

well, New Foundland actually

**by**MICHAEL  
DALY

Imagine kayaking in a place where you see no other kayakers, no powerboats, no jet skis, no snakes, no raccoons or skunks. A place where you do see whales, bald eagles, icebergs and bergy bits, soaring rock cliffs, sea stacks and sea caves. Notre Dame Bay in Newfoundland fits the bill.

Amie and I were fussing over a vacation spot. We finally settled on Newfoundland. We got in touch with several outfitters before deciding on Explore Newfoundland. They put together a package that included everything, including airfare, car rental, accommodations and vouchers for all the activities we were to attend. They also provided kayaks, paddles, stove and fuel and shuttles

- for supplies and maps as well as to and from our destination. They even gave us a lift to town for dinner one night! We learned something about drivers in this part of Newfoundland. They never lose their keys because they leave them in the ignition when they park - there's no fear of theft.

**Always found time**

We arrived at Marble Inn and met our hosts, Joe Dicks and Ed English. They and their crew ran the inn and cabins, a kayak and canoe retail outlet (new NDK Explorers at C\$2900!!!), a sea and river kayaking outfitting and guiding company, a travel agency, Lendal paddle and NDK kayak importers (the only North American alternative to uno-who), two lighthouse bed & breakfasts, and lord knows what else. Joe and Ed sat down and chatted with us. After establishing whom we knew in common, we were treated like old friends. We were to find that they always found time to chat with us.

The next day was scheduled to be a rest day, but we were off to town to stock up on food for the trip. Then they offered us kayaks to check out. I was given an NDK Explorer for the trip. I asked about the extra cost (as per their web site) - "We'll work something out!" I was told. I was told that several times before I realized he meant - no upgrade charge! Amie got a Looksha IV. We were both given Lendal carbon fiber bent shaft paddles with Archipelago blades (C\$300+ paddles in a rental fleet? Not bad!) We paddled on the Humber River out back of the inn for almost two hours.





On return, we talked to "the family" and played with Joe's kids (two boys, 6 & 4 and a girl 20 mo.) The little girl is the sweetest thing. Amie wanted to snatch her and take her home! They also had a big dog, several cats, and any other animal that wandered by and chose to stay!

### **Whitecaps**

We were scheduled to paddle on the south shore, from Rose Blanche to Burgeo, a roadless stretch of inlets, islands and fishing villages (called settlements in the Newfoundland patois). I could see from the air flight into Newfoundland that this was not to be. Whitecaps filled the Gulf of St. Laurence and the beaches on the south shore were white with surf. Plan B was to paddle on the north side. We chose the west part of Notre Dame Bay.

Day One of the trip started early. Ed looked for the 1:50,000 maps - no luck! And they couldn't be purchased in town on short notice. I had to use the 1:250,000 scale topo maps that are little better than a service station road map.

We launched from Kings Point on Green Bay, a long thin finger of water. It was completely blanketed in fog; we couldn't see the far side of the bay. I quickly realized that without my compass (packed away), there was no guarantee that we wouldn't go around in circles. By the time we reached the eastern shore of the bay, we were about a half-kilometer off course! The fog blew over to the west side and left us paddling in clear sunny weather with the opposite shore invisible. Two bald eagles soared out of the trees and led us up the bay. We stopped for lunch and after retrieving the compass, I realized I'd forgotten the sunscreen! Amie had two sample-sized packets and offered them to me, on the theory that her dark complexion would minimize her burning. That was not to be, as we shall see. (Note to self - pack a bunch of these sample packets into the first aid kit.)

### **A whale surfaced**

On launching after lunch, a whale surfaced just offshore - a small whale - pilot or pot-head. Two eagles and a whale in the first hour - not a bad start!

It soon occurred to me how different this was from what I was expecting. Georgian Bay features lots of small, low islands. Nova Scotia has larger, higher islands with lots of access points. This part of Newfoundland has tall towering cliffs with hills soaring above that. The steep rock reveals small gravel beaches with few flat spots for tents. This was to be more challenging than I anticipated! Towards the end of the day I started scouting beaches as a Plan B backup in case we had to return.

### **The GPS**

We never made it out of the bay the first day. I was not sure where we were and the map didn't help. Lots of little coves and bays were shown as a straight line on the map. You really need 1:50,000 for this area. We found a good beach and set up the tent. After preparing a great meal (salmon steaks with rice and fresh veggies) I pulled out the GPS to confirm the position. This was the first time I'd ever used the GPS for real navigating - I'd always used just map and compass before. It turned out we were a couple of kilometers closer to the start than I thought. I began to worry whether we'd make it to our destination on time!

Day Two dawned clear and mild. The weather promised to be good and it was as good as it gets. We rounded the tip of Green Bay and headed to Little Bay Islands. The ocean was calm, with a barely noticeable swell. The sun beat down on my minimal coating of sunscreen and I got off with a light burn. Amie turned darker and darker, with a light burn to boot. Beaches were hard to find and we were tired - it turned out to be the second longest and the hottest day. We finally paddled up to a great looking spot - Murcell Cove. It had low cliffs on either side of the beach and a gently sloping hill behind. The only drawback was the rotting corpse of a seal on the beach. With the wind blowing off the land, I wasn't going to let that bother me. Clouds had been coming in for a while and just as we set up the tent, the rain came down. Normally, I'd have dived into the tent. Instead, I was so mellow from the paddling experience that I meandered around the campsite, slowly stripping off my wet tee shirt and shorts and letting the rain wash off the salt and sweat. The fact that it was getting

*Various We launched from Kings Point on Green Bay, a long thin finger of water. It was completely blanketed in fog; we couldn't see the far side of the bay*

cold didn't faze me at all. Amie and I eventually crawled into the tent to read and nap. We weren't too hungry, having had good meals up to this point, so we skipped cooking in favor of bagels and peanut butter - in between the bouts of rain, that is.

### **Wonderful morning!**

Day Three was absolutely cloudless. It was cool enough for fleece sweaters during breakfast. The sun dried out our gear while we ate. The horizon seemed so far away; the sky so blue right to the sea! No smoggy, polluted haze. What a wonderful morning!

While we packed up the tent, I became aware of an awful, stinky-feet kind of smell. After discreetly checking myself, I gave Amie an "Oooo Amie!" kind of look. She looked back at me and said "Boy, that seal really stinks!" Oh yeah, the seal! The wind was now blowing in from the sea.

This ended up as our longest day. While milder in temperature, the sun burned on. Amie now was quite dark, rather burned and her sunglasses had given her a "raccoon face" tan.

### **Lifted and pushed**

The sea was a little rougher that day, with little waves on a slight swell. The most open part of the crossing to Lushes Bight gave us the treat of two-foot swells. Pretty tame by most standards, but it was a welcome change from the mirror-smooth seas of the two previous days. We found an arch of stone at one point of land. I paddled into it, being lifted and pushed around by the swell. Not something this Great Lakes paddler is used to! I then paddled through a little rock garden, trying to time my passage with the swell to avoid hitting rocks. This was baby stuff compared to what Doug L. and company do, but it was fun for me to try. I began thinking in terms of a plastic Skerray with helmet to practice this in. and maybe elbow pads. and shoulder pads. maybe a face protector. padded gloves.

In Lushes Bight, a settlement of about 400 people, we landed on a beach for lunch. A man and his gang of kids, with cousins, friends and hangers-on, paraded over to say Hi! It isn't often that strangers in skinny boats

arrive, so they had to check us out. We chatted a bit, while other townsfolk drove by and stopped to see what's up. We offered the kids cookies, but they turned them down. Amie gave them to Dad, so he offered them to the kids and they munched happily. So shy and, I guess, street smart in a very safe, remote community. They left and while we packed up, another little girl, about eight or ten years old, came to watch. She was absolutely adorable with long blond hair and a pixie smile. She said she liked kayaks and wanted to learn how to paddle. Amie encouraged her to get her parents to let her do it and showed her how to get in the kayak and hold the paddle.

### **Last night out**

We steered a course to Brighton to camp, on a point almost inside the town. It was our last night out, and I was starting to regret the end of a short trip. We feasted on pasta with pesto sauce, eaten on a large flat rock like a table. After dinner, we wandered to the town side of the point and watched the slow, almost imperceptible activities of the settlement across the bay while the sun drifted down.

The next morning was a repeat of the previous. Our meager supply of sunscreen was almost gone so we longed for cloud. No luck - it was clear and sunny as far as the eye could see. I gave the last bit of sunscreen, so preciously hoarded, to Amie. Her face was dark reddish brown, already peeling, and her arms the color of dark teak. We both opted for wet suits and long sleeves that day.

### **Find a phone**

We paddled into town to find a phone so we could alert the outfitters where to pick us up. There were no pay phones in town, but a local let us use the phone in his workshop. "We've never had a tourist ask to use the phone before" he said. We talked about kayaking for a while. He was amazed that we traveled all the way from Kings Point in these little boats. "You're more courageous than me, b'y (boy, pronounced bye in NF)" he said, "You must know more about the sea than I do!" This from a Newfoundland fisherman! I don't know half what he knows, but I wasn't going to debate it with him. His wife,

*We found an arch of stone at one point of land. I paddled into it, being lifted and pushed around by the swell*



doggy in tow, and a neighbor came over. We chatted some more and with friendly goodbye waves, made our way to the next destination.

### **Brighton Tickle**

I hadn't looked at the map in a while. Knowing that Brighton Tickle (a tickle is a small channel of water) was to the south, we headed off. The wind was quite stiff by now and we found ourselves beating into it all the way down the shore. After an hour, we pulled ashore to snack and check the map. We had covered barely two kilometers! And the tickle was that teensy little passage we passed an hour ago! \*^&%#@ map! It only took fifteen minutes to return, surfing most of the way. Through the tickle, it was only a few kilometers to the end at Triton (Troytown on old maps). There we found a kayak outfitter that welcomed us. He let us use his dock and shed to land and get changed. He offered us his house to wait in. "I have to go now," he said, "But you can stay if you like." They don't lock their doors in these parts of Newfoundland; they still have faith in their fellow man. Welcome to Atlantic Canada, one of the only civilized places left on earth.

Dirk picked us up a while later. He offered us some fresh-baked date squares that Diane made that morning back at the Inn. A crowning touch to a great trip; but what do you expect from a class outfitter?

That may have been the end of the kayaking, but not the end of the trip. We picked up a rental car and headed off to Gros Morne National Park. This beautiful, much-hyped park was, to be honest, a letdown after the experiences we had kayaking. After all, looking at the park can't compare with touching, breathing, smelling and tasting the environment to the north.

### **First Viking settlement**

Next day was busy, driving to L'Anse au Meadows and the site of the first Viking settlement in North America. A fascinating place for those with an interest in history.

Finally, the activity that turned out to be the highlight of the trip for me. We drove to Quirpon (pronounced karpoon!), boarded a

small fishing boat to Quirpon Island and stayed at the lighthouse keeper's cottage for the night. Ed had purchased it when the lighthouse became automated and runs it as a bed and breakfast. What a fabulous site! Perched high on a cliff, the house sits just inland from the lighthouse. No trees on this big island, it's a hilly mass of rock, lichen, low bush and bog. The house was beautifully restored with wood walls and very tasteful furnishings. The beds have big fluffy pillows and soft, high thread-count sheets, all covered with handmade quilts. The towels are thick and soft. The art on the walls is from local artists and is available for purchase.

### **Watched for whales**

Doris, the housekeeper, treated us to a good meal of cod. We headed out to the helipad and watched for whales. Sure enough, a big one (minke?) surfaced just below the cliff. We retreated into the house and chatted with the other guests before heading off to bed.

The morning brought yet another spectacular day. Sitting on the "throne" in the washroom, I could see the lighthouse with the Atlantic in the background. What a view! After a hearty breakfast, we were allowed to climb up into the lighthouse, see the workings of the light and wander around the outside platform. Wow! I've always wanted to do that! I banged off a roll of film just there.

### **Sense of peace**

Later, sitting on the porch of the house, I felt an overwhelming sense of peace. This, to someone who as a boy wanted to be a lighthouse keeper, was heaven on earth. A spectacular view, the cliffs all round, the seagulls crying from every direction, whales spouts rising in the distance - I could spend three lifetimes there. What a great way to end the trip.

Michael Daly is a Toronto-area paddler whose usual haunt is the Great Lakes. His essay first appeared on the Paddlewise list-server.

*After an hour, we pulled ashore to snack and check the map. We had covered barely two kilometers! And the tickle was that teensy little passage we passed an hour ago! \*^&%#@ map!*

# Where the BELUGAS mass

by

MIKE  
SHARP

The only Beluga I ever did see was a young one up on the shore, buried by rocks and dead. It had been taken from its dead mothers womb and was left amongst the rocks with its small black eye open having never seen the real world. The locals would leave it that way for several months until it rotted to a nice consistency, before they ate it. A delicacy. It seemed sad.

I first went to Cumberland Sound on Baffin Island in 1994. There were 4 of us. A small float plane came in and dropped off 2 double folding kayaks in exchange for our sleds and rafting tubes then took off again for the only city on Baffin Island, Iqaluit. Our approach over the Penny Icecap with sleds and skis finally rafting down a river to the coast is another story, another adventure and, after the float plane had gone, another life.

As is often the case when you first turn up somewhere, what you expected to be a problem is not. One's arrival on this northern coast of Canada has timing that is crucial, too early and the sea is frozen and too late and it is starting to freeze up again. We hoped we were not too early but though we hoped the sea would be open we expected the ice still to be stuck hanging on the shore lines. When the sea freezes it also freezes to the land, with the tide going up and down all winter a hinge or tide crack forms. In the spring (June/July) the ice floats away leaving a thick band of ice still frozen along the length of the land. This is called an ice-foot, and in terrain that is generally steep to, would make for very difficult landings. At high tide you have a one foot

ice wall to come up against with the kayak and at low tide you have a three foot ice wall with an overhang twenty feet above the water. Crampons were discussed as were techniques for getting out of a rubber kayak wearing them.

In reality there was no ice. We cruised down remote fjords with steep rocky ice scared walls, mosses and Alpine flowers, nesting birds and the occasional Gyrfalcon. We paddled through calm sunlit waters on the ten metre tide. Some quirk of glaciology has left a 100 metre wide shelf coming out from the shore at low tide on the outside edge of which is a long series of 3 metre high boulders. Launching your kayak in the morning was not the same as the landing had been the evening before. Some-how it all passed too fast, and we did not visit Clearwater fjord where the Belugas mass.

(The 4 - 5 metre white whales mass annually in certain parts of the Arctic to rub themselves on smooth rocks on the bottom.) So I had to go back. In July 2000 I took myself and my single folding Feathercraft back there. I flew into Iqaluit and the next day found myself on a short flight to the small community of Pangnirtang (pop 600 Inuit). The pilot, whose whiskey I had been drinking the night before, hauled me up into the cockpit to have a look at the ice conditions in Cumberland Sound. This time there was plenty, and pushed up by the East wind onto the side of the sound I wanted to paddle.

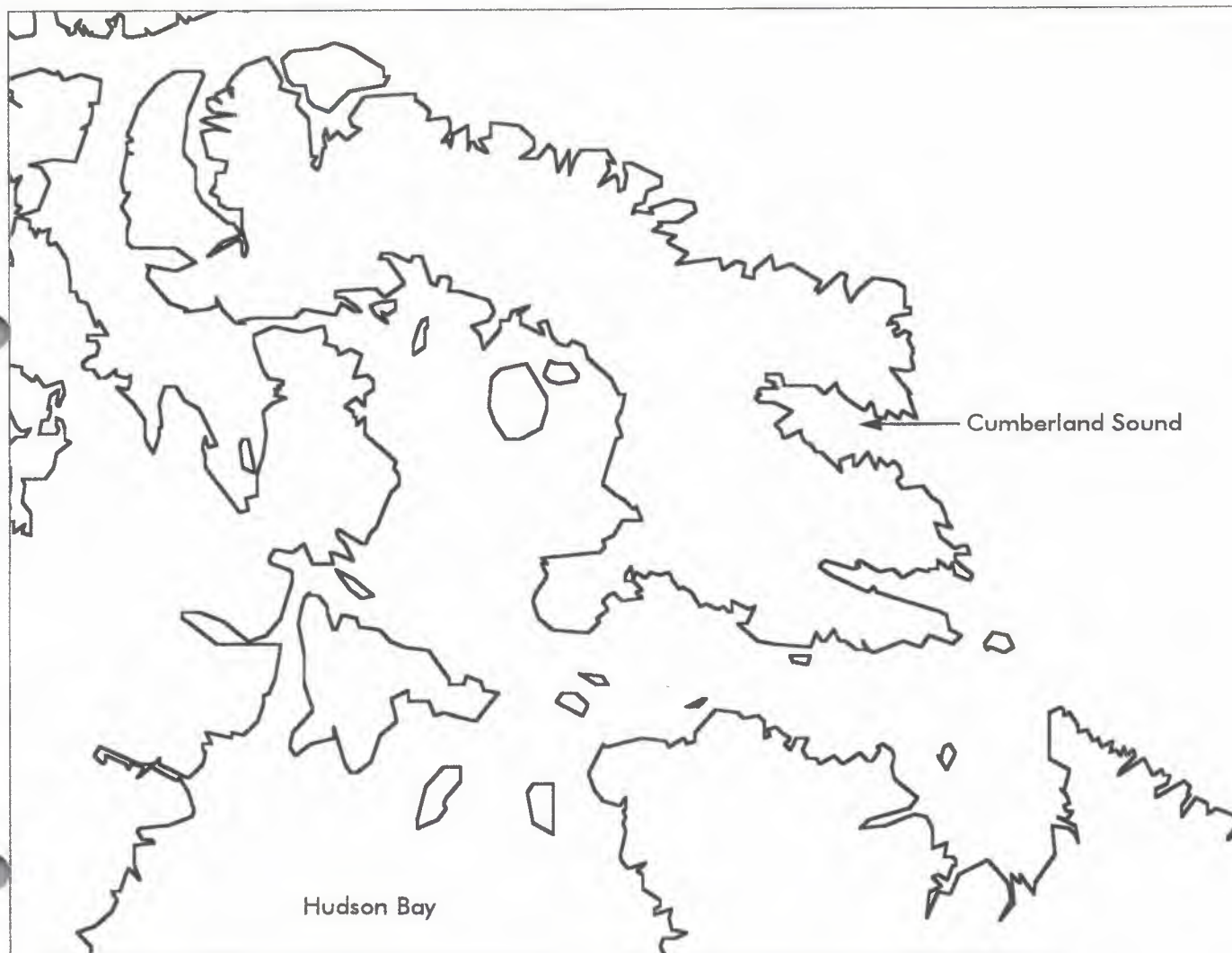
In Pangnirtang I sort out the wild life officer. The news was not good. Several families were trapped in their motor boats in the

*One's arrival on this northern coast of Canada has timing that is crucial, too early and the sea is frozen and too late and it is starting to freeze up*



pack and had been for a week. There was talk about rescue. At the community office I heard the same story but they lent me an EPIRB. ( There are so many rescues of Inuit hunters that the community provides free beacons to make the search easier and cheaper) Lastly I climbed the highest hill and looked out. The Belugas would be in their

along just off shore keeping an eye out for the boulders appearing from the falling tide. In the late afternoon I pulled into a small cove and camped next to buried stone hut circles and discarded whale bones. A former community probably abandoned when the Canadian government of the sixties decided that everyone should be housed in more



rubbing grounds in the northern fjords, which would probably be clear of ice but there was no way to get there.

I changed my plan and paddled East for two days to the spectacular Auyuutuk National Park where I got some hiking done to look at the spectacular granite columns Mt Thor of Mt Asguard. 10 days later I climbed the hill behind Pangnirtang again. The ice had drifted west and was now a line on the horizon. By now though I had 8 days before my flight out.

I set off for the mouth of the fjord and Cumberland Sound on calm waters and through low fog patches. I paddled softly

regulated municipalities with schools and health care, roads and supermarkets, coca-cola, plastic bags, hot water, central heating and bills. Now one could just make out the half dozen houses with their low arched door, sleeping platform for the family at the back and remains of the whale ribs that would have held up the sealskin roof. The highly organic soil around the old houses now supports generations of wild buttercups. In the evening I set off to climb a steep little rocky hill to see what was in store. At the latitude of the Arctic Circle the sun sets at this time of year but it never gets dark. I gazed northwards at the lowering sun

painting the calm waters red. The ice was against the outside of the islands but between the islands and the shore it seemed to be clear.

In the morning I started early. My intuition told me that the larger body of water behind the islands would cause a current in the narrow passages between them. I had no idea how great this might be but a 10 meter tide generates a lot of water and I felt a need to be through the passage at slack



rather than be involved. Around the first headland I was in the ice. It is a fantastic feeling. The weight of the ice removes the waves, every floe is different and for some inexplicable reason they all seem to repel one another. One can sit back and cruise, weaving from open water to open water the colour of the sky reflected in the calm sea. There is a magic of quietness and calmness. Time stands still, gulls flap lazily overhead and a small wind laps ripples splash splashing on the ice edges.

I reached the narrow entrance and the ice was more dense, the floes were gathering for the change in direction of the tide. A bit of weaving and dodging, a narrow passage behind a rock a slight scraping as I ran aground jumping out of my boat and pulling it through a gap before the ice grounded out too. I was through the jaws and in the trap.

The area is called Avataktoo Bay and, though only about 15 km long and 5 wide it holds a vast amount of water that has only three small shallow exits. I hoped it would be my ice free passage north. And for the moment it was but it was also stunningly different. The walls of the bay were a dark

steep granite, everywhere. It felt foreboding and sunless though the sun was still shining. The sides rose to a tumble of bare rocks and boulders, crevices filled with damp mosses and a silent dark water. The occasional lazy gull was now replaced by a startled one emitting a lonesome shriek of alarm. Feeling unconfident I paddled on. Evening found me trying to find a place to land and camp. The 1:250,000 map did little justice to the maze of whale backed humps of dark rock pushing out of the water. Without really knowing where I was I found a wide gulch filled with saturated sand and mud that led to a beach of sorts and a place I could put the tent at high tide under an overhanging rock.

That evening I went to investigate my surroundings on foot and locate what looked like it could be a lake or a large inland area of the sea. It turned out to be both, a large tidal lake fed via a narrow 30 metre deep gorge. At half tide the lake level was the same as sea level but then the sea rushed in to fill the lake before the tide turned and the water did its best to get out in time. Below half tide the gorge became a river and then a waterfall.

A morning of damp drizzle and I brew up an extra cup of coffee before getting into my dry suit in the tent. The tide has been in and back out again filling the gulch with grounded dripping ice floes. I carry everything through between the floes to the waters edge then head on north. I meet a huge flock of black guillemots on the water cheeping to each other and picking fly larvae off the surface. Small and black with distinctive white wing patches and bright red feet they nest in cracks in the steep cliffs, these small friends take off and fly a circle as I approach then land behind me again unafraid. They ease the rain and I paddle on with thoughts of the thousands of generations that have bred here and spend their winters in the North Atlantic seemingly untroubled by the changing world.

My destination is the head of Avataktoo Bay where I should be able to make a short portage into more ice-protected water. I arrive there and land on a strange curving beach scattered with drift wood in a land with no trees. The land is low and boggy, mosses and waterlogged dwarf willow, small lakes. I stretch my legs across the point and



anxiously look for the way forward. The portage would be short but the drift must have been from the north, the other side of the headland the sea is covered in ice packed against the shore. It is difficult to understand where it has come from, how has it slipped round there in the last couple of days?

I examine my surroundings before making my way back to set up camp. There was an important community here once, many house circles and several mounds of stones marking burial. I peer into the stone mounds and see the small brown skeletons of some of the inhabitants. They would have spent their lives travelling and hunting, collecting birds eggs, eider down and fishing. They would have hunted caribou on the islands to the north and probably have gone to Clearwater fjord for Belugas. They would have had to adjust their lives to the vagaries of the ice I would have to do the same. Next morning I climbed Usualuk Mountain to confirm my thoughts. The ice had moved back across Cumberland Sound from the east and was now pushing up hard against the island. I made my way down to sit on a rock at the side of a small pond inhabited by a red throated loon family with a small chick. They never did relax while I was there, always wary, so I left and paddled south towards home with the wind and through light pack. Avataktoo Bay seemed a little friendlier now that I had landmarks with memories.

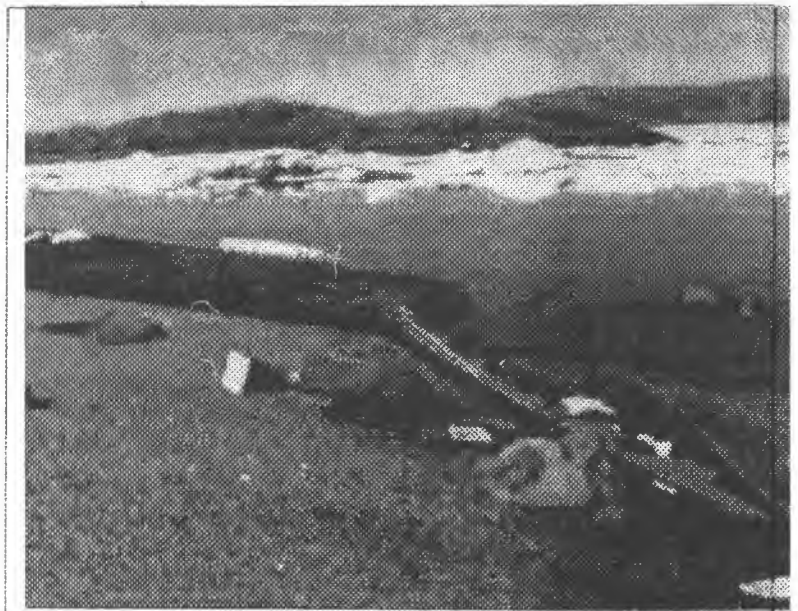
I thought I would take a look at the seaward side of the islands and exited by a wide passage to a strange place called Quickstep Harbour. Strange to have an English name among so many unpronounceables. An American sealer in the 19 century? Not much of a harbour, no water, landing on a slab and nowhere to put tent pegs in. The pack to the west was extensive disappearing into mirage, but I could hear motorboats out there somewhere the first non-natural noise for days.

Morning rain cleared at ten and I paddled across my exit passage to the next island south, Sanigut Island. At the northern point of it I came across a fishing camp and, as the tide was running quite strongly against me, I pulled in for a brew of tea. One large white canvas tent the shape of a circus tent with a raised platform across the back half

in a very traditional form. All the old houses had been built for a thousand years in the same style, the raised platform at the back for the whole extended family to sleep on. Some of the family still were while others were up and about. 9 year old James showed me the cut up Beluga they had shot and the foetus calf, pure white and buried in the rocks. Not what I had come to see but that was it.

The family had a motor boat and were in contact via CB radio with other families, one of whom were stuck in their boat in the ice only 3 kilometres away. The family was hoping to go back to Pangnirtung for more petrol and other supplies but did not think they would be able to make it. The annual supply ship was unable to get in to the community either and was standing off out in the sound. The west wind was pushing the ice in and the forecast was for no change in the next week. It was beginning to sound a bit fraught, I had a once a week flight north to catch to meet up with friends.

When the tide seemed to have slackened sufficiently I headed out back the way I had come into the reasonably ice free Avataktoo Bay. It was sunny and calm but things were



moving. There were peculiar strong currents now, ice floes were shifting in different directions and perspective was constantly changing. The floes seemed to have taken on attitude and were going different ways with intent, they seemed to have destinations that were not easily discernible. Suddenly I had a destination I was having difficulty making, the tide was not going in the

*If I had managed to get there in time I could have made it through, it was wide enough and the floes had spread out. I went home for sleep, thoughts whirling in my head.*

direction I was expecting. Nothing was constant, I could only gauge things by concentrating on specific solid dark landmarks. I ducked into an eddy behind a small island and made progress before pulling out and increasing my stroke and power. Floes rushed towards me at different speeds. I felt the suck of powerful hydraulics under the boat. I gradually eased away from the island and ferry glided to the next and the next. It was with relief that I pulled away from the tidal stream and back to familiar terrain.

But now a small doubt entered my head, a nagging thought that, with the extra ice about, the passage at the south end of the bay might not be quite as easy to negotiate as it had been when I had casually cruised through on my first day. The tide was now bigger and stronger and.....and..... and... I landed before the tidal passage and went off to see if I could find an alternate overland. A beautiful clear sunny evening but I was feeling stressed as I climbed the 400 metre hill behind the camp for a view. Well the ice was up against the coast but only at about four tenths, that meant that six tenths of the area was still water. However from the air that is easy to see but from a kayak it is very difficult to tell where to go as the horizon all around looks solid.

Back at the tent at midnight I was unable to eat and decided to leave on the 2 am high water slack. No chance, the bay I was camped in was solid with floes. I scrambled round mossy ledges on the cliffs to have a look at the narrows. If I had managed to get there in time I could have made it through, it was wide enough and the floes had spread out. I went home for sleep, thoughts whirling in my head.

Up at six in order to make the 8 am low water slack. The bay was still full of ice but it was grounded and I had to carry and float everything through knee deep water to the low tide boulder edge in order to get past that barrier. But I needed to keep on pushing myself. I did not want to even think about getting to the point of letting off the EPIRB in order to make my flight, or in order to prevent a rescue being set under way because I was alone with no communication and overdue.

The boat was packed, the sun was up and...the passage was blocked. With the

low tide floes had grounded on rocks and other floes had been pushed up against them with the current making a complete log jam. Now what? I climbed out at a small niche and had a look. Hopeless. I took the kayak over to a slab where I could get out and walk the loaded boat up to high tide level. I would just have to sit there for another six hours and wait.

But waiting is not in my temperament and twenty minutes later my whole perspective on the world changed. I thought I would just have a quick stroll up a small sort of valley leading away from my rock slab. Scrambling up mossy rakes I quickly came to a small saddle the other side of which led to a downward valley populated by a family of Canada geese. To my amazement there was almost a path and it led to the sea.

Suddenly I was standing on a small indented beach on the shore having completely and unexpectedly avoided my logjam. It was a traditional Inuit kayak portage that avoided the tidal area and made for easy access at all states of the tide.

An hour and a half later I was brewing a coffee with my boat and all my possessions around me.

The next day I was weaving through the densely packed floes getting my final hours of enjoyment from the being there. As I crossed the fjord to Pangnirtung I glanced out to sea and was surprised to see bearing down on me in a cloud of black smoke a Canadian Coast Guard icebreaker. It was clearing passage for the visit of the supply ship that had been waiting out in the sound for the last four days.

I didn't get back first but I could not help feeling that I had just had a real adventure for myself.

### **Postscript**

I had been staying at the nursing station so I went back to 'report in' The door was opened with difficulty by a huge Norwegian. Both his hands were bandaged as were both his feet and he was on crutches. My eyes opened wide in amazement. 'What happened to you?' 'Oh, I got a bit of frostbite in my kayak' was the reply. It was Roy Willy Johansen who had just paddled solo the 243 miles from Sisimiut in Greenland to Cape Dyer on the Baffin coast.



# Beyond the Wild Frontier

by

ROWLAND  
WOOLLVEN

—misadventures in the red zone

My aim in this short article is to explore and promote an attitude of mind that remains aware of and open to our surroundings. There are no lists of things to watch out for - because by the very nature of what we do and where we do it, it is the unexpected that is likely to cause the problem. The key lies in developing our spatial awareness and having a readiness to continually reassess the situation - and then taking appropriate action. Venture with me into the red zone of sea kayaking.....

## **Scenario 1**

Seven kayakers (5 singles, 1 double), paddling in an unfrequented area, are making their way north up an east shore, looking for a river entrance in which to take shelter from a rising (Force 5 plus) easterly wind. The seas are steep and short, the submarine contours indicating shallows extending a long way offshore. Suddenly 2 or 3 seas combine to produce a truly awesome breaker which grabs the double, capsizing it and forcing a wet exit by both paddlers. Kayak, paddlers and all manner of deck and cockpit cargo are now in the longshore rip heading towards the confused seas breaking over the bar at the river entrance. The surf is now 5 ft plus, dumping onto a steep shingle beach.

## **Scenario 2**

Four kayakers (2 paddling singles, 2 in a double), on an expedition in a

remote area, are heading south on an open coast exposed to massive swells. The day is overcast and misty, the wind (running across the swell direction) is Force 2 - 3. The group round a point, running south through the overfalls with the tide and start to cross an area of shoals, interspersed with reefs. Half way across the shoal area a huge set of swells come through - these are 2 to 3 times the size of any that have been through before, are 12-15 feet front face height and are breaking. The 2 singles escape over the unbroken shoulder of the first swell and head seaward rapidly. On pausing for breath, there is no sign of the double. After several minutes of waiting and watching, the double is spotted - capsized, both paddlers out, kit strewn all around the scene. The kayak and paddlers are directly in front of a reef, and are clearly incapable of helping themselves. The area is a formidable no-landing zone for the next 7 nautical miles.

## **Scenario 3**

Six kayakers, all in singles, make their way south through thick mist (visibility is less than 50 yards) on a no-landing coast exposed to large swells. They are scouting for a cove entrance in which to take a rest and prepare for the rounding of the cape which lies some miles to their south. The area is studded with shoals and reefs and the swells that are running can be heard breaking amongst the

fangs and rocks along the shore. One paddler is working close inshore looking for the cove entrance when a rogue swell comes through the group, tubes over the scout, capsizes him and carries him into an area of rock fangs.

## **Scenario 4**

Eleven club kayakers, all in singles, are rounding a point, bucking the tide in order to gain a cove on the north side of the headland. From there they will use the back eddy to run north east for 6 miles to the pick up point. The section of overfalls is a half mile long and the seas at their maximum are 5 - 6 feet and breaking. Early in the passage an older paddler capsizes twice, each time being put back into their boat by a single rescuer. On the third capsize, the rescuer recovers the paddler and then gets another kayaker to stabilise him before setting off to tow the rafted pair around the point. On reaching the beach, the older paddler is put into shelter and given food and drink. Another kayaker then arrives saying that a second person is in difficulty and needs assistance. The rescuer of the first casualty goes back around the headland and discovers a raft of 2 kayakers being towed by a single paddler. Because the group has taken so long, the overfalls are now at their fiercest, and going in the wrong direction.

Both rescuers join forces and start to tow the raft in a V formation. At this

point another paddler joins onto the raft, losing his paddle in the process! No-one in the rafted trio is carrying a spare paddle. As the combination enters the area of wildest water, a breaker takes down one of the towers; as he attempts to roll, the towline wraps around his body and paddle and forces him to wet exit.

### **Scenario 5**

Two experienced sea kayakers, in single kayaks, are mid-way through the multi-day circumnavigation of a remote and wild island. The plan for the day is to make an open crossing of 6 miles and round 2 headlands, completing about 24 nautical miles before stopping to camp. The weather is overcast, with driving rain and a Force 3 plus wind coming from the paddlers' right side. Squalls are forecast. Shortly after leaving the shore, conditions worsen to a steady Force 4 coming from the right, creating tumbling white caps and reduced visibility in the swells. Two miles into the 6 mile crossing, matters worsen yet more: the wind is now Force 5, gusting Force 6, with breaking waves all around making boat control and communication difficult. The area directly ahead is a continuous belt of broken water - the 300 ft submarine cliff is creating a monstrous overfall in the present conditions. Both paddlers are apprehensive: neither rescue nor rolling in these conditions is guaranteed and the nearest land is an inhospitable islet 2 miles downwind and down sea. To reach this, the pair would have to skirt the overfalls and then surf 2 miles of breaking waves. The alternatives are to turn and work back to the shore they had left, or to claw seaward of the overfalls, continue the crossing and make the headland - off which are further extreme conditions. As the pair consider the alternatives, a squall comes through and reduces visibility to zero, with maelstrom conditions.

One insurance company used to advertise 'we don't make a drama out

of a crisis' - which is a fairly good way of looking at the scenarios above. In each of them, a critical point has been reached - but the important factor to draw from all of them is that the critical point was not, in fact, one distinguishable point but rather somewhere on a sliding scale from 'OK' to 'very much not OK'. The key lesson is that it is the small incremental steps that matter - and it is usually only in hindsight that it is possible to realise that the red line has been crossed! So, how do we improve our 'vision' to enable us to see when we approach the red line, rather than merely forever recognising it in the rear view mirror?

Look again at the scenarios in turn - in Scenario 1, was it necessary for the double to be so close in as to be vulnerable, until it was on its landing run? Probably not - given the option, scouting in difficult conditions is better done in a single than in a double. Could the conditions have been foreseen by a more thorough reading of the charts, combined with a cross-reference to previous experience of steep seas over shallow bars? The answer is probably 'yes'. In Scenario 2, did the desire to stay in contact with the shore drag the group further inshore than was wise, given the submarine topography? Almost certainly 'yes'. Could the effects of swell over submarine plateaux have been foreseen? Certainly 'yes'. Scenario 3 is almost a replica - the effects of swell barrelling up as it approaches shore through reefs and fangs are eminently foreseeable; when combined with an over-focused concentration on finding the cove entrance did this mean that the appreciation of this dangerous position was largely overlooked? Almost certainly 'yes'. Scenario 4 is the breeding ground for a mass casualty incident - was it wise to continue with a plan when it became clear that at least one paddler could not cope? Definitely 'no'. Was it sensible to tow upstream through

overfalls in the first instance? Probably 'no'. Was it sensible to tow upstream through overfalls in the second instance, even with the prospect of a split group if a different decision was taken? Almost certainly 'no'. Could the group have been better organised and prepared? Definitely 'yes'. In the last scenario the paddlers are, like Macbeth\*, stuck in the middle! To return to shore means turning in violent seas; to turn and run to the islet means accepting the prospect of wild surfing in loaded expedition sea kayaks for a considerable distance - both of these options have a real risk of capsizing. Rolling and rescues are not guaranteed and will certainly be hazardous. To continue to the headland, into an area of visibly dangerous water seems suicidal. Could the deterioration of conditions have been foretold from the forecast and a reading of the sky signs? Certainly 'yes'. Would turning back on the first noticed deterioration of the weather been a better solution? Certainly 'yes'. Would, in fact, opting to camp and wait out the weather and not leaving the shore that day have been the best and most sensible option? - without doubt, 'yes'.

Most dramas do not develop 'out of the blue' but result from the continual adding of small pebbles to the avalanche. By the time you have to deploy your skills, you have usually already passed the stage at which you should have taken some different action! The best way of avoiding having to paddle for your life is not to put yourself in that position in the first place - and, in the manner of the majority of avalanches being triggered by those caught in them, most paddlers are the architects of their own misfortune!

One approach that may be useful is to visualise the paddler and kayak being at the centre of a sphere or globe in both time and space. Use the awareness of time to compare things past with things present and future as the timeline passes through



the paddler - in other words apply past experience to present conditions in order to foretell future conditions. This is not 'rocket science' - but we do need to remember to do it! All of us, even the paddler newest to sea kayaking, have background knowledge and experience of weather - is a raincoat required today? I don't know, go and have a look! As we gain more experience we can recycle it to improve our ability to forecast how particular weather and sea states might impact on us as paddlers - the key is not growing idle, complacent or lazy, because that way lies arm wrestling with Neptune!

Think of the 'space' sphere as the need to consider all manner of possible influences upon us as paddlers - from things overhead to things underwater and all around us. Only if we maintain this global awareness will we lessen the chances of being caught unawares. Avoid over concentration on one particular task or aspect to the detriment of the bigger picture - that dark patch at upper left of your vision might actually represent a more critical problem than the one you are concentrating upon.

The size of your awareness sphere will depend on your ability, your confidence, your approach and, above all, on the prevailing conditions. At the very least, make sure that it extends beyond the bow and stern of your kayak and the ends of your paddle!

Lastly, listen to your body. If your mouth has gone dry and your pulse is somewhat elevated, there is usually a very good reason for it! How you deal with the physical and mental reactions to danger is a very personal judgement call, but if you are in the red zone, way beyond the wild frontier and heading for catastrophe, should you be there at all? - and can you see just a faint splash of red in the wing mirrors.....?

## "Sea Change - Alone across the Atlantic in a Wooden Boat"

by Peter Nichols

I have just finished reading this book which I enjoyed immensely. I have taken an extract from it which gives some of the well known weather lore relied upon by sailors in the past, long before satellites, computers and weather faxes were ever available..

*When the wind shifts against the sun*

*Trust it not, for back it will run.*

This morning the wind veered: it moved from north-east to north-west, or in the direction of the sun's passage. But had it backed, moved contrary to the sun - say, from north-west to north-east, or south-west to south or south-east —then I might have thought of this rhyme, not trusted this wind shift, and waited for it to shift back again. As it is, the wind might sit in the north-west indefinitely now, forcing us to beat. On the other hand, it did happen quite quickly:

*Long foretold, long last*

*Short warning, soon past.*

Sailors found these rhymes accurate, put their faith in them and passed them on. Some, apparently so unerringly useful, have been purloined by landlubbers ashore:

*Red sky at night is a sailor's [or shepherd's] delight;*

*Red sky in the morning, the sailor takes warning.*

Many times a day - each time I make an entry on the left-hand page of my daily log-1 look at the barometer. Its reading will considerably affect my own inner barometer:

*At sea with low and falling glass,*

*Soundly sleeps the careless ass.*

*But when the glass is high and rising*

*Soundly sleeps the careful wise one.*

But it must already be high and rising, because there's a rhyme that warns me to look out for a sudden rise after a low:

*Quick rise after low*

*Foretells a stronger blow.*

There are many such rhymes, about the appearance of the sky, when and how the wind blows, handed down from sailor to sailor as long as old salts have broken in new ones:

*Mackerel sky and mares' tails*

*Make lofty ships carry low sails.*

*If rain before wind, tops'l sheets and hal-yards mind.*

*If wind before rain, soon you may make sail again.*

*When clouds appear like rocks and toilers,*  
*The earth's refreshed by frequent showers.*

*When the sea-hog jumps,*

*Look out for your pumps.*

This last refers to the debatable lore that porpoises leaping close inshore may augur stormy weather. True or not, I like it, and if I see dolphins or porpoises leaping close to shore, this old saw comes to mind.

More than their possible usefulness, what I like about these rhymes is the company they bring me. They give me a kinship with sailors of the past, common seamen, as frightened as I by the prospect of hard weather, who looked skyward and mumbled to themselves:

*If clouds appear as if scratched by a hen,*  
*Get ready to reef your topsails then.*

And then looked aft, anxiously, to the officers strutting on the poop deck, awaiting the order to run up the shrouds and get those bloody topsails in. They were superstitious men, largely ignorant of the science and theories that lay behind the phenomena they observed at sea. For them the natural world was riven with magic and mystery. They saw, as I have seen, the sun flash green on sinking into the ocean, the heavens hung with glowing curtains, and pellets of fire in the water around a ship's hull. Books have explained these strange sights to me, stripped them of their wonder with cold science, but the sailors of old remained ignorant and felt their magic.

# Along the Wesfrisian islands

— by **Udo Beier**

*The facts about my tour along the Wesfrisian islands (Netherlands).*

Den Helder / Noordpolderzijl (Netherlands) (1./8.06.01)

**Charts:** Hydrografische Kaart voor kust- en binnenwateren, No. 1811 and 1812 Waddenzee (west- and oostblad), ed. by Koninklijke Marine / Dienst der Hydrografie (Netherlands), 2001. Tidal current tables: Waterstanden & Stroom (HP 33) - Tidal heights / Streams, ed. by Koninklijke Marine / Dienst der Hydrografie (Netherlands), 2001. (zu beschaffen bei: z.B. Eckardt & Messtorff (Hamburg) (www.eumhh.de) Guide-Book: It is good to have such a book to know where are the relevant camp grounds. The German-language book of R. Hanewald (Hollands Nordseeinseln, 3. Aufl. 2001) contains from each island a map which indicates the position of the camp grounds. Topographical maps: It is advisable to have a map of each island. You can buy it on the islands. Camping: It is only allowed to camp on an official camp ground. That's way you need a trolley for you sea kayak. The relevant camp grounds are easy to reach within half an hour. Also within summertime - when camp grounds are full - you will get a place for one night. Only on the sands of Engelsmanplaat and Simonszand (eastside) you can camp "wild". Arrive: 31st May 2001 to Den Helder (Camping "Donkere Duinen" - south of Den Helder)

**Launching:** 1.6.01 Den Helder "Royal Navy Yacht Club" (we ask for permission to leave our cars on the grounds of the club and ask

the tower ("Verkeerscentrale Den Helder" (VHF Channel 12)) for permission to launch.

**1st Day** (1.6.): Den Helder (yacht harbour) - (side of waddensea of Texel) - Oudeschild (Texel) - De Cocksdorp (Texel) - rescue station "KNRM" near by Eierland (Texel-North) = 34 km (afterwards about 500 m with our sea kayaks on our trolleys to Camping "De Robbenjager").

**2nd Day** (2.6.): Texel-North (Camping) - (by trolley) - rescue station "KNRM" - (Robbengat) - (Engelsmangat) - (waddensea-side of Vlieland) - till buoy VH 6 ("suddenly" wind increase to 7 Bft. and more (Our realization: "If the weather report forecasts 9-10 Bft, you must at least reckon with 7-8 Bft. also when you launch by 3 Bft.!") - "distress" landing on the sands of Vlieland-West (Vliehors / "Sahara"; military area, entrance forbidden at least during the week, but we had Whitsun holidays (Sunday) - after 1 km by trolley we did the "first" bivouacking directly behind the tanks, which were targets for the jets = 9 km.

**3rd day** (3.6.): Wind forecast 8-10 Bft., we went by trolleys to the car-road, with the help of the guard duty we leaved the military area and got contact with an outdoor dealer who carried our sea kayaks to Camping "Stortemelk" (Vlieland-East) = 3 km by trolley and 13 km by car.

**4th day** (4.6.): Oost-Vlieland (Camping) - (by trolley to) - yacht

harbour - (Schuitengat) - West-Terschelling (till the very end of the yacht harbour) (waddensea-side of Terschelling) = 11 km (afterward by trolley about 2 km to Camping "Cnossen") (in the evening a bicycle-tour around the western part of the island).

**5th day** (5.6.): West-Terschelling (Camping) - (by trolley to) - yacht harbour - (side of the waddensea) - (Osterom) - (Wantij) - (Boschgat) - (surf-side of Ameland) - till Camping "Duinoord" (in the north of the village Nes) = 44 km (about 300 m by trolley to the campground behind the dunes).

**6th day** (6.6.): Ameland (surf-side) - platform "AWG-1" - (Pinkegat) - (Westgat) - (the idea bivouac on the sands of Engelmanplaat was cancelled because of the forecast of 7 Bft. wind) - sands west of Schiermonnikoog - (waddensea-side) - Schiermonnikoog (yacht harbour) = 32 km (afterwards by trolley 1,5 km Camping "Seedune").

**7th day** (7.6.): No sea kayaking because of 7 Bft. wind. We rent bicycles ("Fietse de hur") to "sail" with the wind along the "fietse pads" of the island.

**8th day** Etappe (8.6.): Schiermonnikoog (Camping) - (by trolley to) - yacht harbour - (waddensea-side) - (Brakzand) - (passing nearby Lauwersoog) - (Lutjewad) - (Horenhuizerwad) - (the idea to bivouac on the sands of Simonszand was cancelled as the weather report forecasted 6 Bft. wind and plus 50 cm higher water level) - Noordpolderzijl (harbour) = 34 km (by trolley to Café "T Zielhoes"; camping on the meadows opposite of the Café).

**9th day** (9.6.): Because of the weather report we cancelled the tour to Delfzijl. At 15.30 the drivers hitch-hiked to the next station to take the train and bus to Den Helder. They were back with the cars at midnight.





# 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 enjoyed the article in the June Ocean Kayaker "A Word about Skogs". I agree with everything the (un-named) author says. There's an added refinement, which is that the underwater turn point (point A in the diagram) isn't in a fixed place on the boat. It's near the middle of the boat when the boat's stopped, but it moves forward when the boat starts to move. And the faster the boat moves, the further forward it goes. That's why the skog has to be adjustable: it provides a variable amount of lateral resistance at the stern, chosen by the paddler to balance the boat at the selected cruising speed. A fixed skog would only work at one speed - scary if that speed were your normal cruising speed, and you were trying to push slowly into a strong wind. See Canoeist, February 2000, for more on his, my favourite subject.

*Robert Craig*

From Christine Carter, Shropshire.  
***Hello, John,***

Kindly put a note in the next newsletter to warn west coast of Scotland paddlers that the sea-kayaker friendly camp site at Arduaine, 20 miles south of Oban has now closed permanently, with nearest sites currently being at Lochgilphead and Oban. It is the end of an era. The last 17 years of which have been characterised by the special welcome

and knowledgeable attention from the Rentoul family who have built a particular bond with a generation of sea kayakers.

*Christine Carter,*

## *Hello, John,*

Once again the latest edition of Ocean Kayaker (June 2002) is another good read.

I was a bit surprised to see the article "Lepe through the Needle" supposedly written by Mike Fitter. I did not go on the trip and did not write the article. I have now spoken to Nigel Williams and he confirmed that he wrote the article. Perhaps you could acknowledge this in the next issue of Ocean Kayaker.

*Best wishes,  
Mick Fitter*

Dear Mick  
Sorry about the confusion. Keeping too many balls in the air is my problem. anyway I will rectify the mistake in the next ISKA newsletter.  
Best wishes, John

## *Hello, John,*

My name is Yanick Godin, Paddleone representative man.

Paddleone is a new canoe and kayak simulator for indoor training. Drawing, modified and patented since 10 years by one of the best paddler in the world call Patrick Lynch.

The Paddleone give a excellent cardio-vascular training. He help to develop the arm and dorsal muscle.

The paddleone is ready to be known in the world of indoor and outdoor training.

Look about our website and send us your comments or question about it. [www.paddleone.com](http://www.paddleone.com)

If you can do something to help us to be known by paddlers, we will be very grateful.

*Thanks  
Yanick Godin*

[Yanick.godin@paddleone.com](mailto:Yanick.godin@paddleone.com)

## **Review by Peter Hatt**

### **HF Kayak Trolley**

North West Sea Kayakers used this trolley extensively during the 2001 season these are our findings.

The trolley is a lightweight no frill's piece of kit at the budget end of the market costing £50. It consists of a lightweight alloy chassis onto which are mounted 17 cm pneumatic wheels secured by locking pins, assembly takes seconds. It breaks down so that all parts can be stowed below deck.

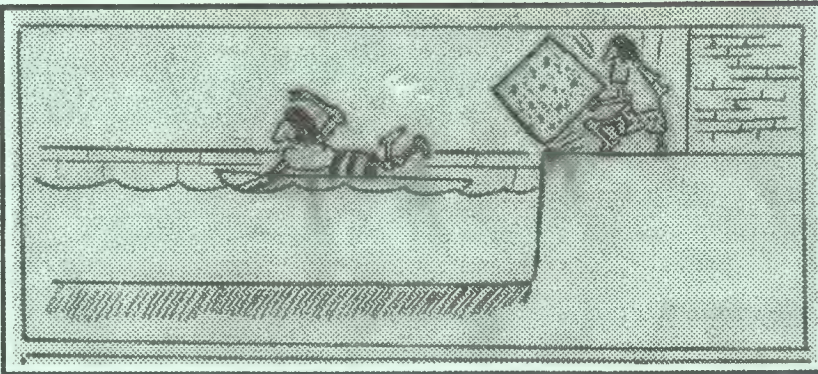
The kayak sits on the chassis rather than in it secured with a 3m strap (not supplied) round the hull. It performs well over all terrain's with a lightly loaded kayak however with an expedition loaded kayak there is a tendency for some sideways slippage.

Summarising it's a good piece of group kit that saved numerous long back breaking carries. One suspects that its origin lies with the open canoe therefore it would have a dual function.

It is available from Knoydart.



# The simple things work best?

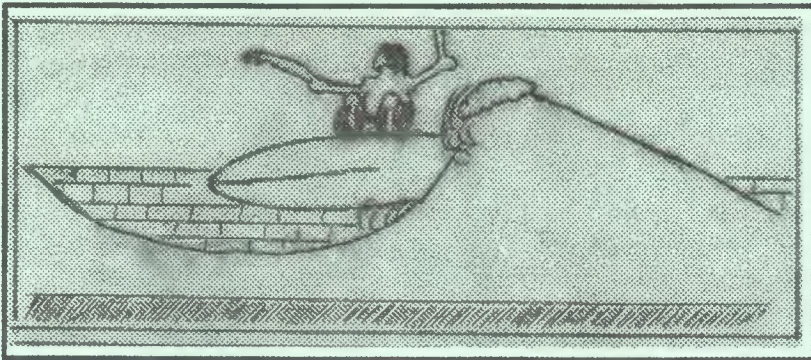
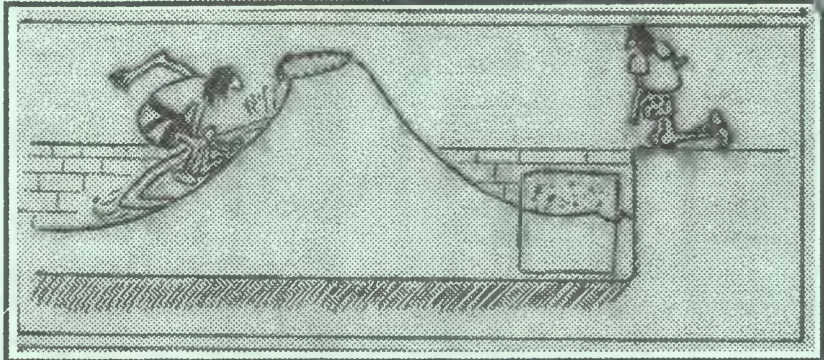


◀.....

*Designed for surfers, utilising all the high technology for which they are renowned*

.....▶

*The first simple wave machine for use in your local pool, - incorporating very low installation costs*



◀.....

*Bottom turns; cut backs; nose riding. Yes, all is possible at your local pool using this device*

.....▶

*They have, however, encountered a few minor teething problems with this system, but they are confident that their design team will iron these out once they are up and about again!*

