

## The Importance of Ken Taylor's Igdlorssuit Kayak

(To be read in conjunction with the accompanying diagram)

In 1959 Kenneth I Taylor, a member of the Scottish Hosteller's Canoe Club, and then a student at the University of Glasgow, undertook a one-man expedition to Igdlorssuit in the Uummannaq Fjord area of West Greenland, to study kayaks, kayaking techniques and seal hunting by kayak. While there he had the local kayak builder, Emanuele Korn Nielsen, make him a fully equipped sealskin covered kayak. The following year I and other members of the Hostellers, had the opportunity of paddling it on Loch Lomond, Scotland and trying out some of the techniques Ken had demonstrated to us.

I was so impressed with the handling characteristics of the kayak that I took profile and bottom view photographs, enlarged these to produce a lines drawing which became the first in the "Canoeing" magazine's "Project Eskimo" series. I also used it as the basis for the design of a plywood hulled sea touring kayak, which was built in 1961. My then paddling companion, the late Joe Reid, an experienced sea paddler, kayak designer and builder was so taken with the design that he also built one. Being of the age when I had my first serious girl friend I designed and built a double version, this time canvas covered. Both single and double proved to be good sea boats and were taken up by the "Canoeing" magazine's plans service. When Brian Skilling gave up editorship of "Canoeing" the service was dropped, but distribution of the plans for the single and double, now called "Kempock" and "Cloch" respectively, was taken over by R&W Canoe Plans. Kayaks were built to these drawings all over the world and some are in active use to this day, other members of the Hostellers built plywood and GRP versions of the Cloch. Big John Reid, from Coatbridge, got plans for the "Kempock" but thought it too small for his bulk. He built an enlarged canvas covered version and for its maiden voyage set off solo, from Morar on Scotland's West Coast to finished the trip at Lerwick in the Shetlands Isles, he now resides in France and still paddles "Manannan".

In 1964 Ken Taylor moved to America and left his kayak in Joe's care. With the real thing to hand Joe built a canvas-covered semi-replica, a little wider and with a bigger cockpit. Andrew Carduff, of Irvine Canoe Club, impressed with Joe's semi-replica, lifted templates from the hull and built a plywood kayak by Ken Littledyke's ply-tie method. He called his boat the "Skua". In turn John Flett of Aberdeen copied it in fibreglass and many were built for use with the outdoor activities program within the Scottish school system. Later a modified version, fitted with bulkheads and hatches was produced commercially under the name "Griffin".

Joe and I carefully measured Ken's kayak in October of 1964 and I drew up a more accurate set of lines, copies of which were and still are, given freely to anyone interested. Using the improved lines plan I drew up a new plywood kayak called the "Gantock". We both built prototypes and proved them on a trip to Norway. Five or six years later, in response to many requests, plans were drawn up for a version with a canvas deck and taken up by paddlers' worldwide. One of them produced a GRP version, which he called the "Cumbrae". A double version of the "Gantock" rapidly followed the single. However, home construction plans for it were not produced until much later. Subsequently it was built in 19 foot and 22 foot versions.

Tay Canoe Club built canvas-covered semi-replicas in the 1960's. They even used them for down river white water racing.

With the increasing use of glassfibre for small craft, I produced lines for a round bilge version in 1970. Joe built a prototype of the "Hebrides", modified for cold moulded veneer construction. However, neither he nor I fancied working with glassfibre so it was not until some time later that a modified GRP version appeared as a club kayak, produced by Paisley and Garnock Canoe Clubs. A double version followed, produced by Garnock and called the "Cloch Clubman", after the Cloch Canoe Club, who's winding up provided the funds to finance its construction.

Among the people who received the lines drawing of Ken's kayak from me was Geoff Blackford. Geoff, then in charge of canoeing at the Calshot Centre on the Solent, could not find a commercially produced sea kayak to suit his requirements. So he took the lines drawing, increased the length by some 9 3/4 inches and altered the ends to suit plywood construction. To accommodate European sized bodies, the deck was raised and a bigger cockpit fitted. The resulting sea kayak was called "Anas Acuta". Subsequently, he designed an "Anas Acuta Chick" and "Mini Chick" for his children. The "Chick" later became the basis for the "Sea Squirt" and "Sea Squirt II" produced by Radical Moves.

The "Anas" proved to be an excellent craft, not surprising considering its development over thousands of years. Carl Quaife then Alan Byde became involved, reproducing it in glassfibre. In 1972 Frank

Goodman of Valley Canoe Products took up commercial production, under licence to Geoff, Carl and Alan. Till then Frank's expertise had been with river paddling, the "Soar Valley Special" slalom kayak being one of his early successes. However, with his introduction to the "Anas" he became increasingly involved in sea kayaking. At the time of writing Valley's kayak production is exclusively sea boats and the influence of the "Anas" is obvious in the current range. Frank has told me that he and his friend George Parr, a hydraulics expert, had developed a formula for converting hard chine designs into round bilge ones and that its application to the "Anas" had resulted in the "Pintail".

In 1977 Grahame Sisson began manufacturing the "Nordkapp" in New Zealand under licence to Frank and is still producing a version of the original. Grahame's "Arctic Raider" sea kayak, developed from the "Nordkapp" in 1991, is more stable, has a longer waterline and incorporates ideas from the famous extreme long distance sea paddler Paul Caffyn. Also in 1991 the multisport racing kayak the "Eliminator" appeared based on the "Raider" hull. A narrower version of the "Eliminator" was produced in 1994 called the "Esprit". An even longer and narrower development of the "Esprit" appeared in 2000 under the title "Centrix". The following year a double version of the "Arctic Raider" emerged under the title "Voyager".

The late John D Heath from Texas, an internationally renowned expert on Greenland kayaks and paddling techniques, gave a number of presentations to a military sea kayak symposium hosted by the American Seals at their Machrihanish base in Scotland in the spring of 1995. To assist him with the Greenland style rolling demonstrations a plywood hulled semi-replica was built, based on Ken's but sized to fit Gordon Brown who was doing the rolling. Gordon now runs Skyak Adventures in Skye with his wife Morag. Ken Taylor had a kayak frame built for John in 1959 at the same time as his own kayak was built.

While in Scotland John attended the Scottish Sea Kayak Symposium and he so impressed the contingent from Jersey that they invited him to their Symposium the following year. For that event another semi-replica was built, this time with a canvas skin and only eighteen inches wide. Gordon again did the rolling.

A friend, whose sea kayak was a large heavy touring boat, underwent serious back surgery. So, a made to measure, state of the art, three hatch, lightweight plywood day kayak was built for him in 1997. Austin must have been of similar stature to Ken Taylor as his new kayak's hull was almost the same as Ken's sealskin one.

As part of the kayak building demonstration at the 1998 Jersey Symposium I built a small kayak, designed to fit Sara Mansell, the 12-year-old daughter of the Jersey Club's Chairman. Again based on Ken's kayak the "Jersey Junior 98" was 4.3 metres by 46 centimetres and weighed in at 9½ kilos, fully bulkheaded and hatched.

Steve Maynard, a level five sea coach, who had worked along with Radical Moves on the development of the "Sea Squirts" from the "Anus Chick", was given a set of drawings of Ken's kayak in 2000. He had come up with a method of producing a custom built, made to measure sea kayak, which would be as strong or stronger than a GRP kayak, yet lighter and still, he thought, be reasonably priced. His prototype, with a hull shape based on Ken's kayak was launched in the spring of 2001.

2002 saw the appearance of the "Expedition" from Island Kayaks of Skye. This large capacity (by British standards) kayak is another, which is based on Ken Taylor's. Island's new junior kayak the "Newt" is based on the "Jersey Junior 98".

I gave a copy of the drawing of Ken's kayak to a lad from Germany at the 1999 Scottish Sea Kayak Symposium. He has since built a plywood sea kayak based on the drawing and I am presently trying to get further details of it.

At the time of writing I have just discovered that Ken Taylor had himself built a larger version of the Igdorrskit kayak for camping trips in the United States of America.

It may be that the reader can add to this list or correct some aspect of it. If so I would be delighted to hear from you. Never the less, I doubt if any other single kayak has had such an influence or given rise to so many derivatives, direct or indirect, as Ken's. In my opinion its pivotal roll in the development of modern sea kayaks in the UK, and beyond, deserves better recognition.

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