



## VICTORIAN SEA KAYAK CLUB

### TRIP REPORT – TINA'S TRAVELS FROM KENNETT RIVER TO LORNE

AUGUST 2008

#### PADDLERS:-

Tina Rowley -	Nadgee Expedition – Trip Leader
John Evertze -	Nadgee Expedition
Tony Chick -	Nadgee Expedition
Chris King -	Nadgee Expedition
Greg Murray -	'A <i>different</i> kayak'
David Golightly	'A <i>different</i> kayak'

Other than an impromptu marketing opportunity for Nadgee, any winter paddle with the Surf Coast 'bruisers' was always going to be an interesting outing. Throw in club resident 'stirrer' and *raconteur* Greg Murray and the word unpredictable comes to mind.

Tina's simple "travel plan" involved a surf launch at Kennett River some twenty-odd kilometres West of the target completion site – Lorne. So after depositing Tony's car at Lorne we all headed along the iconic Great Ocean Road to Kennett River in pouring rain contemplating the day's forecast of 20 kn winds from the Northwest predicted to increase later in the day & shift Southwest. Swell & wave action to match were the order of the day.

The unpredictability of the day manifested itself immediately by delivering a sudden hailstorm just as we prepared to launch into a surf zone that guaranteed we would get wet! A sudden squall hit and within minutes the beach was white with hail, paddlers rushed to scoop handfuls of frozen rain from the seats of the kayaks before heading out to sea for what was hoped to be a great day of winter season paddling. The cranially follically challenged among us resorted to protecting exposed flesh from a battering by hail using whatever means were to hand, including innovative use of single paddle blades. Any thoughts of anyone hanging around to listen to Tina's highly detailed pre-departure briefing were abandoned as the pod rushed to minimise the effects of the winter cold by sealing themselves into their kayaks and heading out to sea. By 10.20 am we had assembled beyond the surf zone and prepared ourselves to head east for Lorne and all points in between.

2.



Tina, Chris, Greg, John and Tony 'sunning' themselves

The usual testosterone fuelled early charge soon had us well on our way & in my case already regretting a decision to mix it with the serious surf coast club members as I struggled to maintain pace. However within three nautical miles of Kennett River earlier decisions to discard sun protection for the day in the light of the predicted miserable weather were revisited as the sun broke through. Underway again we continued to follow the line of the Great Ocean Road while enjoying the benefits of the strong tail winds as we surged along. Another hour passed before Tony Chick's bladder sent him signals for a shore break. However my intended relief was forgotten as Tony and John headed for a beach which to me looked totally suicidal. Fortunately local knowledge of the coastline was respected by the rest of us & we dutifully followed into the beach for what turned out to be a rather tame surf landing.

While enjoying a quick snack the local crew explained that we were now at the site of the adventure race sponsored by retail outlet Anaconda and we tried to imagine how crowded this smallish beach would look under starters orders as hundreds of competitors fought to maintain a clear run to the water's edge. Unfazed Greg Murray outlined his cunning masterplan to ignore the usual strategy of forming a relay team and to just race the entire one hundred or so kilometres of running, paddling, ocean swimming and mountain-biking on his own! The rest of us mere mortals wandered away out of earshot before headaches developed from thoughts of the pain such a race would involve.

3.

Unfortunately continuing on involved breaking out through the impressive looking surf zone, a task I for one was not relishing. It was with some perverse delight on their part that Chris King & Greg Murray launched me seawards into a well-timed chest thumper of a wave, amazingly I survived the experience, albeit with what seemed like a sizeable volume of Bass Strait washing down inside my outer clothing.

John Evertze was soon setting the challenges to the pod as he in his usual quiet way demonstrated that our paddling location well outside the surf zone was rather 'wimpish'. The rest of us on the other hand ignored his line of attack, which was not too difficult because from where we were, all we could see was John's head and the occasional paddle blade. Later John explained that his strategy was to check the shore for suitable sites to 'fly-camp' should the need ever arise on some future paddle.



Chris King in a downpour off Kennett River

#### 4.

The predicted shift in the wind velocity & direction was soon upon us and soon the paddling techniques changed to accommodate the difference in the following swell and sea state. Noticing my relative discomfort, the ever watchful Tina hung back to coach me along through the conditions. This was exactly the experience and exposure I was after prior to a soon to be tackled trip from Mackay through the Whitsunday's to Airlie Beach in Queensland.

We were now eating up the miles quickly as we occasionally surfed our way towards the distance point break that marked the headland to the west of Lorne. As we approached Tony briefed me for a planned safe passage through what to me looked like impenetrable surf into Lorne harbour. Rule one explained Tony - 'is whatever you do, don't follow John Evertze', 'right I said so what do I do'? 'Follow me says Tony!' I didn't like these options at all, one surf coast 'bruiser' was as bad as the other in my closeted view.

Fearing being abandoned altogether I followed the big lad in an arc around the breaking point zone and then watched from a safe distance as the rest of the pod selected various lines of approach to gracefully surf the waves into the lee of the newly completed Lorne Jetty, the scene of yet another of Victoria's sporting events – The Lorne Pier to Pub swim.

Eleven nautical miles in just on three hours including a half hour rest stop was not a bad effort for the day in my view. We had all enjoyed our winter day on the surf coast and to the accompaniment of the continued heavy rain we set about getting into warm dry clothing before the drivers headed back along the road to collect cars from the launch site at Kennett River.

Over coffee's in the local café plans of another surf coast winter season paddle were formulated. Next time we might go from Lorne Eastwards along past the wonderful Airey's Inlet lighthouse and on to Torquay.

Then again perhaps we might wait till summer!

David Golightly