

Sea Trek

*Weathercraft for
Sea Kayakers*

www.vskc.org.au

Summer 2013



Issue 79



VICTORIAN SEA KAYAK CLUB
PO Box 161, Black Rock, VIC 3193
Australia

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www.vskc.org.au

About the VSKC

The Victorian Sea Kayak Club was formed in 1979, aimed at bringing together sea kayakers in our part of the world, creating opportunities to meet and organise trips, and to promote the interests of sea kayakers.

Club members have done some marvellous and sometimes very challenging trips by sea kayak around our nearby coasts of Victoria and Tasmania and further afield. Our founding members made the first sea kayak circumnavigation of Tasmania and the first south to north crossing of Bass Strait. Members regularly paddle across Bass Strait, and take their kayaks to remote and interesting areas. Equally, we all love relaxing short trips in our local waters, with plenty of time to socialise.

We welcome new members and encourage a culture in which members help each other with skills, gear, safety, trip information and organisation. The club runs training courses and has a grading system, although training is not aimed at absolute novices. New members are expected know something of sea kayaking, have access to a kayak, and be ready to explore the marvellous opportunities which sea kayaking offers. The club gets together once a year for its annual general meeting held as part of a weekend of activities on and off the water, with informative training sessions and presentations from interesting speakers. We run a range of club trips throughout the year for all levels of ability, helping members to improve their proficiency and take part in trip leadership. We keep in touch through this website, email news, and our club magazine Sea Trek.

For more information read go to the Docs and Downloads link from the Web page, and download our Operating Principles and Membership application, or contact our Membership Officer.

Contact

Membership Officer: Richard.Rawling@vskc.org.au



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Responsible Editor for this Issue:
Helmut Heinze
(seatrek@vskc.org.au)



Cover

Cropped section of a photo by Peter Dingle (full images see Weathercraft for Sea Kayakers).

Sigla

AC: Andrew Campbell — AW: Anne Woolard — BF: Bob Fergie — BS: Brandon Stewart — BSK: Bronwyn Skowronski — FC: Fiona Coates — GSK: Greg Skowronski — HH: Helmut Heinze — PD: Peter Dingle — PT: Peter Treby — RB: Robin Boundy — RR: Richard Rawlings — SM: Sue Mountford — TB: Terry Barry — TC: Tony Cusack — TCH: Tony Chick — TD: Tom Davies — XH: Xufang Heinze.

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Letters to the Editor

Find here a selection of comments, observations, additions, corrections and suggestions that are of general interest to the readers.

Please feel welcome to send your comments to: seatrek@vskc.org.au

[Articles on Safety]

From: Terry Barry
Subject: Article
6 Sep 2013

Came across this and thought that with permission from the author it would make a great sea trek article: <http://tsunamirangers.com/2013/08/26/cold-water-safety-rule-no-5-worst-that-can-happen>.

From: Sue Mountford
Subject: Article in Sea Kayaker
22 Dec 2013

I've been given an august edition of Sea Kayaker and there is an excellent article on Technique: risk perception — to launch or not to launch. It is long, however extracts would be worth reprinting if we could get permission.

Editor's note:

Great stuff but I am pessimistic about reprints – we should however consider a regular review column with short summaries and links or publishing details to track this kind of information.

Editorial



Mea culpa. I once said, don't fix what is not broken. Excellent idea! But too late.

Firstly, I wanted present you a Sea Trek that comes in two formats, one in PDF for printing, and one that comes as Web pages. As every computing project it went over time and over my workload budget. As a result, we are

late, and the text columns look a bit ragged.

Worse, too little time has gone into reviewing and polishing the contributions, many authors did not get an opportunity to read final proofs of their texts. Don't blame them, it's my fault.

Secondly I would like to have for each issue a lead topic that will be featured on the cover in text and image. — A big Thank You! to Peter Dingle, the author of the feature article of Sea Trek 79: *Weathercraft for Sea Kayakers*. While listening to his talk on the VSKC Forum I thought to myself: This is fantastic, this knowledge needs to be preserved in print, be in in Sea Trek or somewhere else. Peter has spent many after days recrafting his talk into an article. He has delivered a meticulous piece of work.

Then there is someone else who deserves special thanks: Laurie Caulfield for his graciousness and generosity

to share his memories of a kayaking mishap in Wilson's Prom as a brief, subjective flashback, complementing Peter Treby's meticulous factual write-up of the incident. Nothing beats first-hand experience, and I urge both beginner sea kayakers as well as experienced ones to read both contributions in conjunction and incorporate the lessons learnt into their own decision making.

And a big Thank You! to everyone else who has contributed to this issue with texts and pictures. The list of names is long, and I hope that I have not forgotten someone, for it has been a wonderful experience receiving so ready support from all of you: Anne Woolard, Bob Fergie, Brandon Stewart, Bronwyn and Greg Skowronski (with two co-authored texts!), Fiona Coates, Robin Boundy, Richard Rawlings, Sue Mountford, Terry Barry, Tony Cusack, Tony Chick, Tom Davies and Xufang Heinze. And apolo-

gies to those who I should have asked and followed up with but didn't as I was a bit overwhelmed with everything. I

hope I can do you justice in one of the next issues of Sea Trek..

*Helmut Heinze
(Editor)*

President's Podcast



Welcome to another issue of Sea Trek.

Let me begin by expressing my sincere appreciation to my predecessor and mate, Terry Barry for the most significant contribution he has made over the past three years to the VSKC. The club is in a very healthy place today as a result of Terry's strong and determined team leadership. I'm sure you will agree that we have all benefited from the legacy of his efforts, not for-

getting those of other retiring committee members, Raia Wall, Neil Brenton and Grant Stewart.

The management baton has now well and truly been passed on to the new committee and we have hit the ground running, as they say. It is a very experienced team and I am very much looking forward to their individual and collective contributions. On December 7, we set aside a very full day to focus on strategic planning. Richard Rawling (our membership officer) organized an excellent venue and facilitator, Sarah Connelly, to lead us through the day. I have no doubt that there will be many positive spin-offs from this team building and forward-thinking day, so stay tuned.

One of the things I am planning to do by way of regular communication to all club members is a monthly 'President's email broadcast'. While this will cover a range of things, in particular I want to provide specific feedback on committee decisions and planning. As with all committee members, I value constructive comment and feedback from all club members. So, catch

me on the water or send an email as together we consider ways of strengthening the services of the club for all members.

Finally, a special welcome to Helmut Heinze as our new Sea Trek editor. To say that I am pleased to see him in this role is a serious understatement. As I know only too well, the editor's role is a challenging and time consuming one. No doubt Helmut will bring his own unique combination of skills, experience and creativity to this role, something that I'm very excited about. Let's do our best to support him with articles and photos as we contribute to celebrating all that our club delivers for members.

I commend this Sea Trek issue to you as another wonderful chapter of VSKC life and activity and I look forward to catching up on the water soon. Have a terrific Christmas and a great start to the New Year.

*Bob Fergie
(VSKC President)*



Photo: Eddie Safarik

Terry Barry

VSKC Forum at Camp Coolamatong & 2013 VSKC AGM



Rushhour at Ducks Point — Photo: XH

Camp Coolamatong, Banksia Peninsula Paynesville 8th – 10th November 2013

This was the second VSKC Forum to be held and proved another great success with over 100 people making the drive to East Gippsland to partic-

ipate in a wonderful weekend of all things sea kayaking.

There were a total of 31 workshops and skills sessions on offer over the weekend, along with great evening presentations from special guest Eddie Safarik from the Queensland SKC and our own John & Tina Evertze on Saturday night.



Special guest Eddie Safarik — Photo: BF

The gear auction was once again a popular attraction on Saturday night with

many a bargain to be had. Of course lots of socialising was a big part of the weekend.

The Photo competition saw an amazing array of entries of high standard, the “Short Film’ category was won by Andrew Campbell- the only entry! Plenty of scope for competition next year!



Going, going, gone! — Photo: XH

At the AGM awards were presented to the following-

Level 3

- Glen Evans
- Brandon Stewart
- Tamsin Visick

VSKC Instructor:

- Peter Costello
- Tom Davis
- Bob Fergie
- Mick Shankie
- Julian Smith

Life Membership

- Allan Bernardi
- Peter Newman
- Steve Weston
- Paul Snelgrove

2014 committee

Following this the committee stepped down and elections were held with the following members forming the 2014 committee:

- President- Bob Fergie
- Vice President- David Golightly

- Secretary- Sue Montford
- Treasurer – Greg Gleeson
- Sea Trek – Helmut Heinze
- Communications- Vojin Maladinov
- Membership- Richard Rawlings
- Training & Trips- Robin Boundy

There is a tremendous amount of planning and preparation that goes into running a gathering such as a Forum, Terry Barry and his team from the committee did a great job in putting the weekend together. However the weekend would not have been possible with the support of those who ran workshops, held presentations or took on roles in the administration and running of the weekend.

A special thank you to all those who helped make the Forum one of the most successful gatherings of its type held by the VSKC.

500 Words – A Greeting from Queensland *Eddie Safarik*

I still remember paddling my very first sea kayak for the very first time on the sea in Tasmania. I couldn't believe there wasn't a crowd of people doing the same. "This is spectacular" I thought, I felt like I was given the exclusive keys to a new and beautiful world. That part proved to be true but I came to realize I got so much more than that, including an almost family like community of passionate sea kayakers locally, around Australia and around the world. There is barely a stretch of significant coastline anywhere that you wouldn't be able to meet up with a sea kayaker who's eyes light up when talking about their trips or your trips or just jabbering on in the universal sea

kayakers language of "boatish". The recent VSKC's AGM/Forum proved this again. Ron Hurst and I were blown away by the warm welcome we received. It was a welcome that helped bring out our best too.

The QSKC has been around for about a third of the time as the VSKC and our membership is about a third of the VSKC numbers which probably helped Ron and I see something special within your club, a certain depth of experience, experiences, history, genuine care and friendships. We have good helpings of all that good stuff too but it is intangibly different, some things just

develop over time like wine I guess but it is something to be very proud of.

I enjoyed all the sessions I attended. I brushed up on my stick paddling with Bob Fergie and took a shine to the Aleut style paddles. I joined Tina and John Evertzes' Bow Rudder session and dodged and maneuvered around some pylons with bow rudders. Some of us students had blue lips but mine weren't the result of zinc cream. As an instructor I am a perpetual student so it was brilliant for me to be a student on these sessions and see other instructors impart their own unique style on things. The sessions also reminded me of how valuable Nigel Foster, Cherry Perry and Turner Wilson's visits have

been to all our clubs. These visits also gave our clubs something in common to talk about just like the footy does. "Hey, how bout them Hawks?" "Hey, how bout that Nigel Foster?" See, same thing. I know Robin Boundy has the same leg length as me because he was kind enough to loan me his Nadgee with a custom bulkhead during the Summit. I signed up for his Rescues session but my cold got the better of me so we just swapped notes instead.

Paddling in South Africa sounded like a brilliant adventure in itself but I had also heard great stuff about Tina

and John's other hardcore trips so my interest was peaked for their presentation on Saturday night. Great story, images inspiration and laughs from two passionate sea kayakers!

Another name that keeps coming up all around the country and beyond is Dave Winkworth. It was a great honour to meet Dave for the first time and take part in his loaded boat surf strategies session. I learnt some great ideas that I will pass on to my students too.

James Bate's flares and emergency strategies session was pure gold for sea kayakers. Just knowing what goes on

from a searchers perspective and learning how to become a good rescuee was priceless. The flare demo also created some great pic opps.

There were lots of other fun moments during the weekend like the gear auction but just as good as the events are the general chats and laughs shared with lovely people on and off the water. Fun, I'm pretty sure that's why we do it. VSKC thank you for a top weekend! : See you in Queensland.

Kindest regards,
Eddie Safarik.

A Sea Trek Chat Terry Barry and Bob Fergie

Terry Barry had been the VSKC president for three years; Bob Fergie succeeded Terry at the last Annual General Meeting of the Club in November of this year. During my few month as a new member of the club I met Terry and Bob on a couple of occasions, Terry first on a wintry training day on Philipp Island, and later as a co-organiser and presenter of an intensive navigation workshop; Bob on my first Crossing of the Bay in a Day in May, and later at rolling nights and on other occasions, including a memorable long and lazy lunch break at Tankerton.

Both men enjoy a terrific reputation among those members of the Club who have been around for longer but, as so many newcomers, I know little about their background. The hand-over of the presidentship of the VSKC may be an opportunity to catch up with both, Terry and Bob, and with the office holder and the person behind the office.

Ed. — Helmut

HH:

Terry, tell us about your background. How did you come to sea kayaking?

TB:

I've been an adventurer all my life, my formative years were spent living very close to Patterson River where I spent my time mucking around fishing, snorkelling and playing with boats. At 15 I finally convinced my parents to buy me a wet suit and I took up SCUBA diving. This remained a driven passion for well over 20 years. I found something I had a real passion for and to my surprise I was pretty good at it! I was an instructor and Dive Master and I became President of the Frankston diving club in the early eighties until I relocated to the Sale area in Gippsland with work. There I continued diving with the Sale Scuba Club. I have had a life-long attraction to the ocean and wild places. I was a teacher for 26 years and although my area was as a trade teacher I soon found myself becoming involved with Outdoor Education and eventually graduated with a Diploma in Outdoor Education and gave trade teaching away. In around 1992 I was leading a group of students on an extended bushwalk along the Croajingalong coast and we camped one night at Wingan Inlet. There I saw my first sea kayak. Larry Grey (life member

of the VSKC, paddling legend and designer of the Pittarak Sea Kayak) was camped there with a film crew making a documentary and was trialling a trapeze system to join two kayaks together and sleep on them at sea for a voyage near New Guinea. He spent some time in the evening talking to the group around the camp fire and I knew then I had to get in to this. Although it took a few more years until I finally got around to it. In 1997 I finally got my chance when I was able to go on a 4 day trip around the Snake Island area with a group of outdoor educators lead by non-other than our own Pete Dingle. I borrowed a Pitterack from a colleague and soon found out about weather cocking in a rudderless expedition kayak! Non the less I was smitten and in the late 90's bought my first sea kayak and joined the VSKC.

HH:

What was the VSKC like ten/fifteen years ago when you joined? Similar to nowadays, or different?

TB:

The VSKC was a lot smaller when I joined, I think we had around 30 members. Julian Smith was President and Sea Trek was a monthly newsletter typed out and photo-copied by Tina Rowley. There was no grading or formal training as we have today. Being a much

smaller club everyone knew each other. Therefore you learned by an informal mentor process. Everyone was willing to give you tips and show you how once you proved you were serious about becoming involved. Canadian Bay paddles were the starting point. I well remember how it felt to be at the back of the pack trying to keep up. After you persisted a few times you would be encouraged and shown better technique. There was only one female member — Tina Rowley. In a way it was different, but in other ways it is very much the same. By that I mean it was a great social group with a common love of sea kayaking, full of people willing to freely pass on knowledge and experience but only if you demonstrated some persistence. If you only turned up occasionally there was not a lot of coaching given to you. I owe a great deal to those that showed me the way such as Bill Robinson, Tina Rowley, Peter Provis and many others.

HH:

How did you then become involved in running the VSKC? Having been accepted into the social group, enjoying mentoring and companionship out on the water, nothing seems to be further away from the almost primordial experience of sea kayaking than serving on a committee and dealing with dry organisational matters.

TB:

When Peter Provis was President and he ran a Level 3 intake and assessment which he developed and ran by himself, there were a number of us in it and it gave us confidence to start going on more challenging trips and also running a few of our own. Peter moved away and so left a vacuum as far as training was concerned, after a year or two three of us got our heads together – John Woolard, Tina Rowley and myself and stuck our hands up and offered to organise club training. It was a bit of a bold step as none of us saw ourselves as ‘experts’ or instructors but I thought what came first the chicken or the egg? Someone needs to step up. So we became the first training group of the VSKC under the umbrella of the committee. It was quite a lot of work as we developed the current grading scheme and all the competencies and paperwork to go along with it all. I started to attend some committee meetings and soon found myself elected as the ‘Training Officer’, a role which is now enshrined in the VSKC committee positions. From there I also became Vice President under Les Bognar. I stepped out of the committee about 6 years ago to concentrate on setting up my own business. But after a years absence I nominated once again for the Training Coordinators role and then for President.

I must admit one of my driving forces in all of this was frustration with how some parts of the VSKC were organised. Group spread was a major problem on many trips and without a sign up sheet I could see a situation where if a paddler went missing we may only know the paddlers first name! No records of contacts or any other details. Would be quite embarrassing not to mention negligent from a legal sense. My professionalism from outdoor education was a driving force along with my nature as an organiser (some might say control freak!). I enjoy

leading and guiding both in the outdoors and from an organisational perspective.

HH:

Anyone new to the VSKC would have taken notice of the formal briefings at the start of each trip — I have to say that I was mightily impressed by what seemed to be a very well established safety culture. This is of course observed from the viewpoint of an inexperienced new paddler. — Terry, are you happy with the current safety culture or do you see a need for further work in this area?

TB:

Sea kayaking is an inherently risk activity, we have to be careful to balance the risk without destroying the adventure. It is a balancing act, one which I think we have got right so far. The current culture sees us performing risk management routinely on club paddles. Evidenced by trips being graded, launch briefings and in many other ways. Sound judgment is the most important factor in all of this. We leave this up to the individual trip leaders rather than trying any ‘big brother’ approach. I believe this is the way to go, it allows any particular group to assess the situation and act accordingly. The Level 3 training program instils this approach with our club trip leaders and I am quite happy with the system. Of course all things are a work in progress and there will always be ongoing tweaking of our systems and protocols.

HH:

Looking back to three years presidentship, what have been other major achievements?

TB:

A difficult question, there always seemed to be a never ending list of things to do. Some of the positives has been increasing the number of instructors which has made access

to training more accessible, converting Sea Trek to an electronic publication, putting practices into place to make the committee meetings run more efficiently and of course initiating the National Sea Kayak Clubs summit. But really it's all been a great team effort from the committee over the past 3 years. So really the most important achievement is to having been the orchestrator of a successful team.

HH:

What is your future involvement with the VSKC? Training? Trips?

TB:

You're right on both of these, the role of President certainly came at the expense of some personal paddling. I am looking forward to becoming a bit more active on the water. I will be running a few more trips — give Mick Shankie a run for his money! Training is something I find personally rewarding and so will continue to be involved in this as well. I have quite a few years ahead of me and so a return to a committee role is also on the cards but not for a while.

HH:

Do you have any final message to the new committee and its president?

TB:

The current committee is a great line up of talent and passion. They certainly wont need me looking over their shoulders. Succession planning is one of the main reasons the VSKC has developed so well in the past decade and I look forward to seeing this continue. A wise man from Tathra once said to me “If it aint fun don't do it” it is a good guide to have in the back of your mind when it all gets ‘serious’. We are after all just a group of sea kayakers.

HH:

Bob Fergie, you have succeeded Terry Barry in the role of the presi-

dent of the VSKC. It would be an understatement to say that you are well known. Yet allow me on behalf of all readers, inside and possibly outside the club, to ask you briefly about your personal background. How did you come to sea kayaking?

BF:

It was my GP who I have to thank for getting into paddling. While I have always been actively involved in sport (AFL footy, cricket and basketball) inevitably this took a toll on my joints to the point some 8 years ago that I had 80 year old bone on bone knees in a 52 year old body (my GPs words). I wasn't able to exercise as I used to and as a consequence had put on a good deal of weight which was not helping me with the control of my diabetes. My GP suggested paddling as a way of exercising without further damaging my knees.

Neither he nor I had 'sea kayaking' in our minds though. It was for both of us more about paddling a short, wide and relatively inexpensive little Anaconda tub around our local lake at Lilydale. Looking back, I have to laugh, but I quite enjoyed my initial introduction to paddling.

However, I soon became aware that there was a lot more to experience and explore through real sea kayaking, including getting my wife and family involved with me. Doseena and I bought a couple of plastic Prions in 2006 and headed to Tasmania for a 3 week camping/paddling holiday. We had a great time but also realised that we needed help from experienced sea kayakers if we were to continue paddling safely. I contacted Peter Costello, joined a Red-Eye paddle and the rest is history.

We were hooked and 10 boats later have continued to gain great pleasure from the ever broadening experience of paddling long skinny boats with mates.

HH:

You have been elected president of the VSKC with an overwhelming majority. The overarching theme of your own candidature and of other members of the committee was continuity, rolling on ..., implying that the club is fine as it is, or at least tracking in the right direction. Terry has received standing ovations at the end of his presidentship, suggesting that members by and large are very happy with what has been achieved so far. — So, what can we expect, what is it what is to be continued, and where might we see changes?

BF:

There's no question in my mind that our club is in very good nick at present thanks in large part to the leadership of Terry Barry and his committees over the past three years.

The task before my new committee is to keep the momentum going while at the same time identifying areas where we can further develop the services of the club. Towards this end, a strategic planning day was held on Saturday the 7th December 2013. With the very professional facilitation services of Sarah Connelly from the Nous Group, our committee identified a number of things we aim to achieve over the next twelve to twenty four months, both in terms of club culture and club services. With respect to club culture our commitment is to 'cultivate sea kayaking as an enjoyable adventure that is inclusive, safe and sustainable'.

In terms of club services, we will continue to survey club members for input and feedback to ensure membership satisfaction in the various and expanding offerings of the VSKC. We intend to develop a new members support process that among other things will included

new member welcome events and a buddy system to help link new folk into club trips, training and social events. We are keen to encourage greater participation from women and younger people, particularly through offering trips and training that meet their specific needs and interests. We want to further develop communication and administrative efficiencies particularly through our web site and have appointed a sub-committee to identify appropriate ways forward in this regard. We are also keen to strengthen the club's relationship with commercial operators in ways that are mutually beneficial, and finally, we are working very intentionally to address governance issues so as to ensure that management procedures and policy support the healthy development of the VSKC into the future.

To test our progress in these plans, we have identified various measures of success as well and through my regular President email broadcasts in 2014, I will provide the membership with up-dates on the committees progress.

Reflecting on our recent strategic planning day the thing that stood out to me in addition to the various plans noted above, was the quality and commitment of our new management committee and the collective commitment to work together as a team for the health and well-being of the VSKC. Personally I am very much looking forward to building on this in ways that prosper an inclusive culture and the safe, adventurous and enjoyable paddling ethos of our club. As I said in my pre-election speech at the AGM, this has everything to do with 'rolling on for P.O.D.S. (paddling, organisation, development and safety) sake.



Photo: XH

*Tony Chick, Bob Fergie, Brandon Stewart, Tom Davies,
Terry Barry*

Workshops Revisited

There were over 30 workshop sessions scheduled during the VSKC Forum. Planning and announcing a workshop is one thing, conducting it another, and reflecting about with the benefit of hindsight is yet another.

Sea Trek has offered organisers to comment on their sessions, to provide some insight from their own perspective and, if they wish, to address their participants.

Find here a selection of contributions, in no particular order, each different in style and extent, each reflecting the subjective perspective of the author, and all together reflecting the weekend not as an exact mirror image but in in colourful, kaleidoscopic snippets.

Ed.

Forward Paddling — Tony Chick



Nothing to add ...

My thought behind my workshop was this, I figured get any VSKC group on the water for forward stroke & most will look technically really good.

I thought it would be interesting to look at how another sport trains for a very similar repetitive foundation skill such as martial arts and a punch combination.

The mechanics are very similar & apply directly to kayaking but training mentality is very different. Once someone develops the skill to punch really hard, if they don't have a deep understanding of basics they will break their hand or worse. In kayaking the repetition injuries are not so immediate, more long-term. But worth giving serious thought.

High level martial artists always focus on perfecting basics, eg footwork. The goal to be able to perform perfectly, without thought, in any conditions & under pressure. You rarely see fancy stuff.

Faults in paddle technique rarely show until pushing your limits. On the sea when it hits the fan, (or it's just a long day) you will rely on a few basic techs, probably not the fancy stuff.

For me this is basically my forward stroke (keep going), a panic brace & a non-flashy roll that gets me up.

An efficient forward stroke is important, never stop improving yours,

look at the tiny details, they do make a difference.

It's not a beginner skill we learnt once & now ignore.

I hope this session got crew thinking; nobody opted to give the instructor a good punching which was a good sign. Maybe they worked out I may punch back!

Tony Chick a West Coast paddler who prefers to keep the right way up. In pre-kayaking life, an instructor of Indonesian Pencak Silat.



Punching lessons — Photo: XH

Greenland Paddle Techniques – Bob Fergie



Bob in his SoF using an Aleut wooden blade – Photo BS

Paddling with a 'stick' may sound 'Neanderthalish' in the modern world of 'you-beaut' carbon fibre euro blades. Indeed there are many sceptics who

see them as little more than cute but primitive and inefficient artefacts from the distant past. But don't be fooled. Greenland and Aleut paddles may be 'old' technology, but when paddled correctly they are remarkably efficient and more than able to perform credibly with modern day euro blades in all paddling disciplines and conditions. The real issue is understanding how they work and the unique technique required to harness their power and grace.

I ran two sessions on the Saturday of the Forum with seven keen participants. I began with a brief session on shore explaining the basics of how to use a 'stick' like the wing of an aircraft to gain 'lift and support'. We then experimented with this by trying this diving blade technique while standing in knee deep water, with participants discovering with some amazement how powerful was the grab of the blade. Finally, participants practiced the forward stroke in their kayaks, concentrating on a relaxed angled blade entry that causes the blade to slice/dive in towards the gunnel as the blade is pulled through to just behind the hip. This is a rather different technique compared to a euro blade, and at first it seems strange and unstable. However, as participants practiced the correct technique they progressively experienced the power and grace of these simple yet unexpectedly powerful traditional blades. We tried a range of other strokes in the session as well (sliding stroke, sweeps, bow and stern rudders, bracing and so on). However, the best is still to come I think. For me personally it is the 'sticks' brilliant rolling capability that evokes the greatest 'wow' factor. I didn't have time to demonstrate this at the Forum, however I'm planning to organise regular summer Greenland rolling practice sessions this year down at Canadian Bay, so stay tuned. The fun has just begun!

Rolling — Brandon Stewart and Andrew Campbell



Learning the essentials to a good roll — a rolling clinic from two of the VSKC masters (who are still learning themselves). Learning your first roll or improving your technique, this was the theme of the workshop.

The wind and the waves were not ideal to teaching a rolling workshop, however, I was impressed with how everyone had a go and was willing to try something new. A beautiful still, warm summers evening down at Canadian Bay might just be the ideal follow up needed for many of the participants to continue the practice the skills that were learnt.

A final message to the participants: ... and remember once you've got the role mastered on one side don't take too long to learn the other side.

Towing — Tom Davis

Towing is an important aspect of our emergency procedures on the water and is a skill that everyone should be proficient at. In this session we covered tow lines and tow points and how to construct them. We also covered when and why to tow or not and the various situations that arise. Different techniques were discussed and practiced on

the water and this was followed by a debrief and summary discussion.

The idea was to get participants to think about the realities of towing both situational and practical, to practice in real time deploying tow lines and to realise the difficulties that can arise with unfamiliarity with equipment and the impracticalities of their stowage. Also to provide a safe learning environment where these concepts could be explored. Unfortunately participant numbers were lower than hoped for but I guess no one likes to tow!

For those who did participate, good on you for getting involved! Keep practicing with your deployment and change over whenever you are out on the water because remember you might need it when you least expect it!

Family Fun Paddle — Terry Barry

A relaxed paddle in the sheltered waters of 'Duck Arm' with some fun games for the big and not so big kids thrown in.

The idea was to offer fun session for members kids to have a fun time in a kayak and explore a bit of Duck Arm. The reality was only 4 people signed on two in a double and no kids! So all ideas of kayak team games went out the window and off we went for a short paddle, 'limbowing' under some jetties and weaving around playing 'seals & sharks' for a short while. It wasn't long before the small group eyed off another workshop practicing bow rudders so we did a bit of impromptu instruction and practice and finished the paddle off with a bit of mucking around in boats. Bit of a fizzer really.

Tracking Straight Without A Rudder — Terry Barry

This session is designed to explore the nuances kayak of control using body

weight, position and use of the paddle without using a rudder. A vital skill if you wish to master kayak control and look like a pro!

The group assembled on the beach after helping remove a wayward kayakers car from the sand (No a good Idea to try driving along a soft sand beach in a Camry!) and after a few minutes neutralizing a Mirage rudder with duct tape we started by finding out how far you could edge your kayak without tipping over. One participant (we wont name) tested this theory to the limit — and beyond!

The group then headed off in a triangular course in mill pond conditions experimenting with different techniques to get their kayaks under control in this rudder free zone. All did really well with the exception of one wayward soul who seemed to own a kayak with a mind of its own, well that's the excuse anyway.

The aim was to start an understanding of how your body position and subtle movements can assist you to control direction and the group seemed to respond well, but I cant say their kayaks all followed them!

How to use Flares in an Emergency (Presenter: James Bate) — Report HH

This workshop consisted of a theoretical part indoors and a hands-on practice outdoors.



Theory ... — Photo: XH

The indoor segment turned out to be way more than just a prelude for the practical part. James covered extensively numerous aspects of distress signalling, their pros and cons, providing an insight into their limitations from the viewpoint of those conducting search and rescue missions.

The morning workshop was well visited and the discussions spanned from organisational aspects (for example the differences in the communication chains triggered by SPOT satellite devices as opposed to PBLs/EPIRBs) to the effectiveness of signalling mirrors, torches, strobe lights, signal lasers and, last not least flares, under various conditions, mainly from the viewpoint of air searches.

The theme dominating the presentation was the double contingency of a person in distress to make the emergency known and the odds of a search party to locate the person, be it on land in a hard-to-access area, possibly with

extensive tree coverage, or be on sea in rough waters in a tiny boat or, worse, just a bobbing head in the waves. It was a sobering reality check, frightening and yet helpful to know when it comes to making the right choices in a given emergency situation.

The practical part, burning off flares beyond their use-by date, took place at Ducks Point. Most participants stayed on land at the water edge, a few opted for a more realistic simulation, went out, capsized and set off their flares swimming. Despite some misgivings (general aversion against water) I joined the other kayakers. A valuable exercise: I almost lost one flare, just catching it before it slipped out of my wet hand. Lesson learnt: they are heavy and don't float – don't rush, go slow! Then I could not pop off the cap. Lesson learnt: read the instruction before you go out, you twist/screw the cap off! — The first one became too hot to hold. Lesson learnt: hold them way down at the bottom.



... and practice — Photo: XH



Fireworks — Photo: Eddie Safarik

And besides the educational value: it was great fun and great fireworks.

Mystery Dry Bag Challenge *Anne Woollard*

“Sea Kayaking is non-competitive right? Don't kid yourself, just watch any group of sea kayakers cooking the evening meal around the camp and watch the competition for the tastiest meal!”

This year we were challenging culinary skills in the Master Chef sorry VSKC Mystery Dry Bag Challenge (we don't carry boxes in kayaks). Participants have 1 hour to produce a meal from the contents of the Mystery Dry Bag provided to them, all done with a camp stove and what you use to prepare camp meals.

There are 12 ingredients in each Dry Bag plus a pantry to get extra ingredients.”

The Challenge was organised by Neil Brenton; Rohan Klopfer from East Coast Kayaking (<http://eastcoastkayaking.com.au/>) sponsored the competition with the prize, a Trangri cooker.

A Mystery Dry Bag Challenge was part of this year's Forum/AGM. Neil Brenton thoughtfully devised the format and prepared all the ingredients for the challenge. Contestants were Bronwyn Skowronski, Andrew Hurnard, Helen Doyle, Terry Barry and Tamsin Visik assisted by Robin Boundy. The difficult task of judging was awarded

to Annie Woollard, Annie Sharp and Doseena Fergie.

The contestants were required to provide their own cooking and plating up equipment, they selected one mystery dry bag with 12 base ingredients and had an open pantry.

Each bag contained one of the following: dried mince beef, dried mince chicken, dried mince lamb, canned fish, or eggplant. The bag also contained, mushrooms, onion, tomato,,

capsicum, zucchini, UHT cream, tomato paste, Deb potato, egg, dried apricots, dried apple, raisins.

The pantry contained things you would have in your kit bag when on an extended trip (if you are on one of our leisurely Whitsunday trips!) Pasta, rice,, kidney beans, oil, butter (who carries butter??) flour, curry powder, herbs and seasoning.



Calm and organised under the pressure ... — Photo: BF

None of the dishes were inedible and contestants produced dishes any of us would be pleased to eat on a paddling trip.

Terry was very neat and organised and was the only contestant to produce three dishes, entrée, main and desert. Terry's main dish of pasta was equal dish of the day! He scored extra points for his time management to produce three dishes but the competition was tough!

Helen had some hindrance from Les and was a little frantic to start with however she settled and produced the only dish to use dehydrated meat

(lamb) and a desert. She was also quite neat with her organisation.

Tamsin was ably assisted by Robin and Ellen Boundy. Robin's chopping skills were remarkable with this team producing very tasty dishes. This team started with a messy prep area by dropping an egg. It took them a while to decide to clean the egg up rather than walk around or in it.

Brownyn was extremely organised and smiled the whole time. She has a great face for TV so perhaps she should try for Masterchef? Bronwyn was very calm while producing her delicious dishes.

Andrew was very calm and organised under the pressure of the competition and presented his dishes with the additional pressure of another club member, who shall remain nameless this time, who chose this time to talk to Andrew about one of his pet subjects; birds! Andrew's desert dumplings were equal dish of the day however one judge felt hers was a tad burnt in one place....a bit harsh I thought!

David Golightly and Heather Torbet were scratched as they did not present at the starting time....we think they were threatened by the opposition.

All contestants presented their dishes well and the judges had a really difficult task to determine the over-

all winner. After lengthy deliberation and tasting of the delectable dishes Andrew was awarded the title of VSKC Mystery Dry Bag Chef for 2013 and received a Trangia kindly donated by Rohan Klopfer from East Coast Kayaking.



Judgment time — Photo: XH

The judges would like to thank Neil Brenton for organising the challenge, the contestants for competing and producing some amazing dishes (we know now who to invite on our trips) and Rohan Klopfer for supporting the event with the prize. We would also like to volunteer to judge next year's challenge, although there were quite a few others who were keen to taste the creations too.



Photo: PD

Peter Dingle

Weathercraft for Sea Kayakers

This article is based on a talk I gave to the Victorian Sea Kayak Club AGM in Nov. 2013.

Disclaimer: *The information here is provided in good faith and is largely based upon my personal observations and deductions. Use this information as a guide only.*

I welcome input and corrections. I also hope that what I write forms the basis for others to learn from, apply, modify, correct, add to and improve such that our collective weather knowledge can be improved.

Peter Dingle

I would like to introduce you to the joys of reading signs of Nature that tell us about weather. I often suggest that the greatest aid to sea kayaker safety is the J-word; *Judgement*. And for many trips, if not all, judgement relates to decisions involving working with or around the forces of Nature; wind, waves, tides and electrical storms.

Just as *Bushcraft* implies competency at surviving and living comfortably outdoors, *Weathercraft* implies understanding of the forces that affect

our survival and comfort in relation to weather.

The obvious question is, ‘Why would you want to know about ‘reading-skies’ when as sea kayakers we often have Internet access coupled with the many good weather Apps around? For me, I just love the information that you can gain access to with smart phones & tablets and I blend it with Weathercraft. When the forecast weather doesn’t arrive, you have to rely upon weather craft to assist decision

making. And of course, we don’t always have internet access.

Weathercraft assists in making sense of what you see going on around you and to better guess as to what is heading your way in the coming hours or days. Sure, weather forecasting is so good nowadays, that you need to be cautious about making predictions that differ, but sometimes the weather the experts predict just doesn’t come; the wind direction is wrong, the wind strength is wrong or the timing of the

predicted change is wrong. Increasingly they are brilliant at providing accurate forecasts, but you have to rely upon other sources for your decision making input if your chosen preferred source fails.

Before I start: I'm no weather expert. I'm just a self-taught mug who tries to make sense of what I see. I've been sky watching, reading and thinking about Weathercraft for some 25

years as an outdoor educator, but if what I write here is inaccurate, please provide feedback.

Weather is incredibly complex and I do not pretend to present myself as an expert. What I offer cannot compete with professional meteorologists, mathematical models and super computers. I have made many assumptions and omissions in the logic-train. The

intended audience here is for mug amateurs like myself whom I want to encourage to be more weather observant outdoors in order to supplement safety on land or at sea.

I'll introduce this segment of Weather Craft by talking about: (I) Three weather basics; (II) Outdoor forecasting, (III) Weather gear to take on trips.

I Three Weather Basics

Victorian Weather

Most of you, I suspect, will know that Victoria's weather comes from the west. What Perth gets in West Australia, eventually wanders over Adelaide before it gets to us. The weather in the west travels eastwards.

However, there are some exceptions. Victoria does get some weather (rain) coming from inland, down from the tropical NW of Australia and East Gippsland is certainly aware of the southerly busters, the Low pressure cells that travel south down the NSW coast bringing heavy & sometimes flooding rainfall. But these weather patterns are in the greater minority. The greater majority of Victoria's weather comes across from the west.

Clouds

Clouds are Nature's way of telling us what is happening now and what may soon happen. Clouds are simply a visible form of moisture in the air. The more clouds there are, the more moisture in the air. Because of the brevity required here, I won't discuss HOW the different clouds are formed, but will instead focus on Cloud Height and the 10

main cloud types and what their significance is to weather forecasting.

Clouds are considered to be in 3 height bands; Low Clouds are below 2500m, High Clouds above 6000m and Middle Clouds are between the two (2500-6000m). Cloud height is measured to the cloud base. As a general rule, High Clouds give clues as to what weather is coming in the longer term (days) and Low Clouds give clues as to what may happen in minutes or hours. At ground or sea level, we get no precipitation from High Clouds, minimal precipitation from Middle Clouds and most precipitation (rain, hail, snow) from Low Clouds. As deteriorating westerly weather approaches you will see the descending progression of clouds from High to Middle to Low.

Within these three height bands, there are the 10 main cloud types. At all heights there are what I call lumpy clouds and layer clouds; the lumpy ones are the Cumulus Clouds. These have some vertical shape to them and may be puffy, heaped.... or just plain lumpy. The layer clouds are the Stratus Clouds and are spread horizontally across the sky.

High Clouds are called *Cirrus* clouds. Three of the 10 cloud types are High Clouds. *Cirrus* means *wispy* or *hair like* and are sometimes called *Mares Tails* (like the tail of a horse)

and these type of clouds are just simple called *Cirrus* clouds. If you have High Clouds with lumps or ripples in it, it is called **Cirrocumulus**. If you have high clouds that are spread out like a layer, a strata, then they are called **Cirrostratus**. As it is so very cold up at this height, the moisture in the clouds is in the form of ice crystals. Seeing halos around the sun or moon indicates there is sun refracting through **Cirrostratus** clouds; a layer of ice crystals. No precipitation occurs from Cirrus clouds.

Middle Clouds (2 of) have the prefix '*alto*' to them. Thus middle height clouds with lumps are **Alto cumulus** and flat, wide spread middle height clouds are called **Altostratus**. When we get to discussing forecasting from the observations you make, middle clouds are helpful in that they can confirm if the cloud base is rising or lowering; signs of improving or deteriorating weather respectively. The slightest of precipitation possible from **Alto cumulus**, and in my experience, **Altostratus** is a reasonably reliable indicator of precipitation coming; the sun behind the clouds has the appearance of looking through ground glass.

Low Clouds are the ones that hold the most interest for us. By far the majority of precipitation comes from these 5 Low Clouds:



Thin layer of Altostratus; nothing threatening but look for further signs of change – Photo: PD



Forced rest day: Nimbostratus with heavy rain and strong winds, Wilsons Prom. — Photo PD

- **Cumulus** clouds, the puffy white cotton wool sort of cloud, are a fine weather cloud. These gentle creatures often occur under bright blue calm skies. They are formed by rising air (convection); a reason why glider pilots seek them out. Often in the morning as the sun rises over rain saturated ground, you will see cumulus clouds appear as the sun evaporates moisture from the wet ground. As the sun rises higher, more and more cumulus clouds appear, until from about mid-morning, the sky is covered in a layer of grey, lumpy clouds ... **Stratocumulus**, and likelihood of drizzle.
- More frequently in summer, as the sun rises, Cumulus clouds appear and can rise higher and higher becoming towering Cumulus. If they develop further they get to be very high lumpy clouds indeed; the **Cumulonimbus** (*nimbo* = rain bearing). These are the big thunderheads that can reach over 16km high, the ones we as sea kayakers actively seek to avoid for they can produce heavy bursts of rain, strong squalls and downdrafts, fatal lightning strikes and heavy hailstones.
- And **Stratus** clouds are the low, layered clouds; the overcast sky which can produce either calm or drizzly skies and if they get thicker, darker & lower, they form **Nimbostratus** with heavy rain possible.

In summary, the **10 main cloud types are:**

High Clouds:

Cirrus	Mares Tails
Cirrocumulus	High lumpy clouds
Cirrostratus	High layered clouds

Middle Clouds:

Alto cumulus	Mid level lumps
Altostratus	Mid level layer

Low Clouds:

<i>Cumulus</i>	Low & puffy/lumpy
<i>Stratus</i>	Low layer
<i>Stratocumulus</i>	Low layer of lumps
<i>Nimbostratus</i>	Low & rain bearing layer
<i>Cumulonimbus</i>	Thunderheads; rain, squalls, lightning

I recommend you do an Internet search on clouds to get a more thorough understanding and, in particular, the circumstances that contribute to their formation.

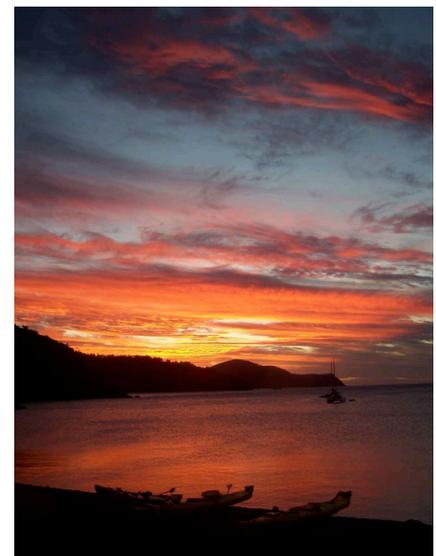
Determining Cloud Height

I find this difficult, so here are some aids I find helpful.

On sunset, the higher clouds remain illuminated last; the reverse happens at sunrise with the higher clouds being the first to be illuminated with the lower ones still in the earth's shadow.

Most jet aircraft fly above 10,000m. You often see the *contrails* (condensation trails) of these aircraft. Watch to see if the contrails go above or below the High Clouds.

All Australia's mountains are below 2500m, so any clouds touching or near coastal hill tops are going to be Low Clouds.



Sunsets are good for seeing different cloud heights; lower clouds fall into the earth's shadow first as the sun sets – Photo: PD

Sometimes you can see clouds at different heights moving in different directions. This is easier to see when on shore, standing under a tree where you can use an overhead branch as a fixture to determine relative cloud direction movement.

Angry skies

Sometimes a sky just looks mean; just looking at it you know that what you

see is unusual and deserves caution. My first experience of this was heading south on the east side of Wilsons Promontory. The weather was unsettled and reasonably threatening anyway, but a large unusual white cloud quickly built up on the ridgeline above. We kept paddling south, parallel to the coast, some 1-2km offshore and watching and discussing its unusual form. Before long it started to literally roll over and over before just rushing down the steep slope towards us. We suspected that this was not good. We had a good 5 minutes to clear the decks of loose gear (including hats), zip up the parka, draw down the hood, check the deck compass bearing for approaching loss of visibility paddling, double check the paddle leash, ... and as I was in a double with a strong partner, we just kept paddling. In hindsight, we should have turned towards it. The wind was incredibly powerful and at times we just got low and hung on tight to our paddles. The rain was that intense that the sea and air were white with water-splash. Visibility was only a few metres and we paddled on our compass bearing. It was all over in 20-30 minutes.

I can remember another instance off the NSW coast; we were a few km offshore on a rocky island outcrop and saw the angry clouds build up on the mainland mountains. We quickly decided to head to shore and were not long underway when we got pummeled. The beauty of paddling a fully loaded, fast double sea kayak with a strong paddle partner became apparent. We made forward progress, though the bow paddler got very, very wet paddling directly into the wind and waves (we got it right this time). Later, approaching shore, the Coast Guard caravan on the jetty informed us the wind was 65knots. From memory, the offshore weather seemed to build up on the ridgeline, seemingly amassing its energy for some 20 minutes, before the sudden unleashing. Fascinating.



The day before ... — Photo: PD



... the next morning: 'Let's sit this one out', 70+kn winds — Photo: PD

I'll briefly mention an overseas occasion (mainly as I have photos of this), and though the sky was not angry as such (merely threatening) the evening before, an early next morning departure was delayed in light of this (coupled with local advice). The morning started calmly but soon the wind slowly built up. 70+kn winds were blowing by mid-morning (my anemometer only registered to 70 knots, and it was off the scale). I can remember we had to do some serious tent and guy rope pegging and heavy-rock anchoring to keep our tents in a location of our choosing. We secured our boats inverted on shore, but they seemed to handle it fine. The winds lasted a good hour.

I mention these instances as I'm keen to hear of others experiences with angry weather bursts.

Learning from Clouds

For us as sea kayakers, bear the following in mind. Watch for change. This is the key to what will happen. A deterioration in the weather is signaled by a lowering of the cloud base (High to Middle to Low Clouds) and an increase in the percentage of cloud cover (from a sky with little cloud cover to 100% cloud cover). If you witness the reverse process happening (cloud base rising, more 'blue holes' appearing'), then the weather is improving.

Another key factor is the *direction* of cloud movement. Before we understand wind direction, we need to understand more about Weather Maps.

Weather Maps

After understanding where most of Victoria's weather comes from and how clouds can demonstrate friendly or unfriendly moisture content of the air, the third important thing to understand 'outdoors weather' is weather maps. After this short section, I hope you will be able to 'see' weather maps outside.

Weather maps are about air pressure. Air pressure is important as it influences hot or cold weather, wind, fogs, frost, cloudy or clear skies, rain, snow, storms or dry skies; all things helpful for happy sea kayakers to be interested in.

As in Clouds, there are 10 important items here also; the first 8 of them involve air pressure, so let's start there.

I assume most of you know weather map basics, so I'll skim over these.

The lines on weather maps look like the contour lines on topographical maps. Whereas contour lines join places of equal height, *isobars* on weather maps join places of equal air pressure. The similarity continues with a closed loop indicating a high mountain summit; a closed loop of a High pressure cell indicating the location of the highest air pressure. Similarly *ridges*; places of higher ground descending from a summit...places of

higher pressure descending from a central High. In between mountain summits are low places called *saddles*; in between separate cells of High pressure are areas of lower pressure called Lows. Gullies or saddles on topographical maps become *Troughs* on weather maps. Contours close together means steep ground; further apart gentle ground. Isobars close together means strong winds; further apart gentle or no winds. The similarity ends with contours remaining fixed in the one location; isobars move. We walk over contours, isobars ‘walk’ over us. Contours are fixed (barring bulldozers), isobars change constantly, including ridges or troughs coming and going.

Air pressure is simply the weight of air. If you were to stand on a coastal beach and imagine an open tubular column of glass, containing air, going vertically up to the top of the Stratosphere (about 50km), then the weight of all those air molecules would force down on the beach – a certain air pressure. Now consider another similar glass column containing air, perched on a high mountain top, reaching to the Stratosphere; the weight of air inside the column, I’m sure you would agree, would be less. The air pressure on a mountain top is less than at sea level; air pressure decreases with rising altitude.

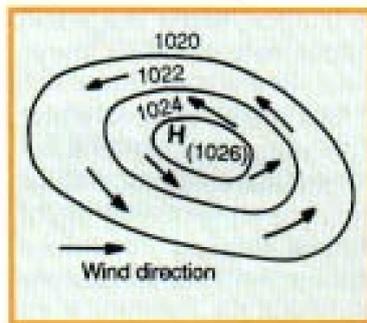


Weather typical of the centre of a High pressure system: clear skies, no wind, calm seas, smiley faces — Photo: PD

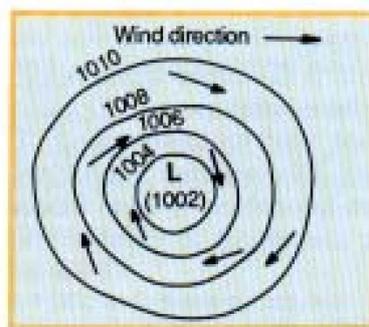
Air pressure is apparent in other forms; if the sun heats the earth’s surface and

any moisture in the ground is evaporated and rises with the warmed air. The rising column of air creates a lower pressure at the earth’s surface; lower than those neighboring areas not heated as much. When you see a Low (L) on the weather map, it is simply an area on the map that has a lower pressure relative to the neighboring area surrounding it. The important thing for us is that it is from rising air that clouds form.

Conversely, a High (H) on a weather map means air is descending towards the earth’s surface. Remember, clouds require ascending air, not descending air, to form; that is why when you have a High Pressure Cell over the top of you, you often get cloudless skies.



A High pressure cell is simply an area of air pressure higher than its surroundings. In Highs, winds blow anticlockwise and roughly parallel but slightly outwards from the centre and have more settled air, with finer weather. — Courtesy of Bureau of Meteorology Boating Weather Series, ‘Wind Waves Weather. Victorian Waters’ (1989)



A Low pressure cell is a region of lower pressure than its surroundings. The value of the isobars increases

away from the centre. In Lows, the winds blow clockwise and roughly parallel but slightly inwards. The isobars are usually closer together than in a High. Rain, showers and strong winds are usually associated with Lows. — Courtesy of Bureau of Meteorology Boating Weather Series, ‘Wind Waves Weather. Victorian Waters’ (1989)

Winds blow clockwise in a Low pressure cell, roughly parallel to the isobars (and slightly inwards towards the centre). Winds blow anticlockwise in a High, roughly parallel to the isobars, but slightly outwards.

So for outdoors people, knowing if there is a Low or a High coming over you is important, for Low’s can signify unstable cold, wet and windy weather whereas High’s are more symbolic of stable and steady conditions of relative warm weather. Low’s can move quickly, Highs are often a lot slower. A fast moving Low or Cold Front (more on this shortly) coming in from the west will often be deflected SE down and below any stationary or slow moving High. Sea kayakers generally like Highs and are wary of Lows and Cold Fronts, but of course, watch the closeness of the isobars (the Pressure Gradient) for indications of wind strength and direction of any pressure cell. We as sea kayakers generally prefer isobars widely spaced for nice gentle paddling conditions.



Classic signs of approaching Cold Front: lowering cloud base and 100% cloud cover – Photo: PD

Weather maps also show us Cold Fronts and, to a degree, air temperature. A Cold Front is simply a parcel of air that is colder than the air it is moving towards. They originate in the Southern Ocean. Cold air sinks (can you remember riding your bike of an evening down a hill and as you cross over the gully at the bottom of the descent, you feel the sudden temperature change of the cold air lying at the bottom?). A Cold Front, having denser and colder air, slides along the surface like a big wedge and the pointy end of the wedge will be forcing any other air ahead of it upwards and over it as it slips underneath. Cold Fronts are called unstable in that they force the air on this leading edge to rise. As you know, rising air causes increased cloud formation, and the greater the difference in air temperature in front of and behind the Cold Front, the greater the violence in the rising air. For us as sea kayaker, Cold Fronts deserve great respect; not only can they elicit a sudden drop in air temperature, but if you look at Cold Front isobars, you sometimes see a sharp pressure gradient with the compression of the isobars (strong winds), heavy rainfall and a rapid change in wind direction, sometimes up to 90 deg. At such times, be-

ing in sheltered waters or better still, off the water, is best.

And finally, weather maps give clues to air temperature and humidity. *Air tends to assume the characteristics of the terrain over which it has travelled.* Thus a northerly wind that has travelled from a long way north of you will have travelled over the hot, dry inland of Australia and will thus be a hot and dry wind. Northerly winds in summer, as we know, are the most dangerous as their heat & low humidity (sometimes less than 10%) dries out the vegetation making for high bush-fire risk. (I've been on two sea kayak trips where off-shore winds are blowing smoke and ashes over us at sea.) Similarly, a wind travelling from way down south will be cold and moist as it comes up over the Southern Ocean from Antarctica. Be cautious though; a northerly wind can strangely, on the odd occasion, be cold and moist; the weather map isobars will reveal why. Most likely the isobar that is over your location will show that the majority of the winds journey to get to you has been over the cold and moist ocean, and very little of it has been over land.

Nature strives for equilibrium, and winds are the result of nature trying to balance out the areas of High with Low pressures. The winds don't blow in a straight line from a High to a

Low pressure but they in fact rotate (the earth's rotation affects this). For the Southern Hemisphere, in a Low Pressure Cell, the winds rotate Clockwise and in a High Pressure Cell, the winds rotate anti-clockwise. This is an important aid to understanding weather outdoors; for knowing this fact you can now more easily visualize weather maps outdoors.

Here's how you do it.

The Right Hand Rule for Determining Cell Location Outdoors

When looking at weather maps, to help you remember which direction the winds blow in High and Low pressure cells, use the Right-Hand Rule (for the Southern Hemisphere). If you hold your right fist with the thumb pointing up (ie pointing High as in High Pressure Cell), then your fingers are pointing and curled in an anti-clockwise direction; the direction the winds blow in a High Pressure Cell. Still with your right hand, but with the thumb pointing down (ie. Low), then your fingers are pointing and curled in a clockwise direction; the direction the winds blow in Low pressure cell. (For the northern hemisphere, use the same process but with your left hand).

II Outdoor Forecasting

So, with this amount of background information, we're now ready to nibble away at forecasting outdoors.

To summarize so far:

- most of Victoria's weather comes from the west,
- clouds indicate the atmospheres moisture content
- there are 10 main types of clouds over 3 different heights, with each cloud giving clues to its signifi-

cance, method of formation & likelihood of precipitation.

And from this some aids to forecasting are apparent with:

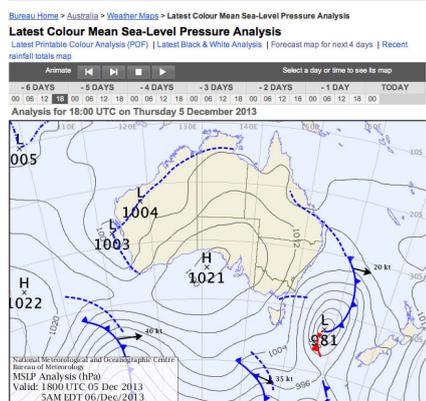
- improving weather signaled by raising cloud base and decrease in cloud cover
- deteriorating weather signaled by lowering of cloud base and increase in the percentage of cloud cover.

- Good weather is generally associated with Highs (High Pressure Cells)
- Poor weather is generally associated with Lows (Low Pressure Cells) & Cold Fronts

So now, with understanding weather maps, we can go a step further.

Look at isobars on the weather map above. If you are on the coast just east of Melbourne, and you face into the wind, you will be facing roughly SW.

You will note that *when you face into the wind, the High is on your right and the Low is on your left*. This is important to remember, and remains true in the southern hemisphere. Check this truth out on other parts of the pressure cells on the above weather map across the country; up in central Northern Territory, on the southern coast of West Australia, in Tasmania. For our purposes here, a Cold Front or a Trough can also be interpreted as ‘a Low’ just as a Ridge can be interpreted as a High.



Understanding how wind direction aids in determining Cell location — http://www.bom.gov.au/australia/charts/synoptic_col.shtml

Now, combining this knowledge with the fact that ‘our weather comes from the west’, you can deduce the following:

- Southerly winds indicate the weather will stay the same or improve
- Northerly winds indicate the weather will stay the same or deteriorate.
- Westerly winds indicate the weather will stay the same
- Easterly winds indicate the weather will stay the same.

Explanations and clarifications for outdoor forecasting:

- remember, this is short term forecasting; half to one day ahead ... or until nature gives you further clues as to what to expect.
- this is general forecasting; local weather in your region can influence this (land or sea breezes, orographic effects,...)

- the ‘stay the same’ statements allow for the ‘too early to tell’ scenario along with the ‘wait and see’ approach to allow more time for observations
- If you are facing south into a southerly wind, then the High is on your right; ie. the High is to your west. Remembering that our weather comes from the west means that the High pressure cell is coming your way, or the weather is going to improve or stay constant. A southerly wind means the barometric pressure is rising (check the isobars around the High on the weather map to verify this); another sign of stable or improving weather. (A southerly wind infers a wind from within the spectrum of SW, S or SE).
- Further clarification is required of the statement ‘stay the same or improve’. If you have a southerly wind with showers, you can still expect rain periods (after all, showers infers intermittent rain), but of a decreasing frequency. Your peers, after experiencing a spell of pleasant weather after rain, may deride you at any subsequent precipitation for claiming a weather improvement, but you just simply need to say that the rain event frequency will trend towards reducing. Despite wishes to the contrary, weather change is often gradual.
- If you are facing north into a northerly wind, then the High is on your Right and the Low on your left. With the High on your right means it is now east of you, ie gone. What is to your west is what is coming your way; in this case, the Low. A northerly wind means the barometric pressure is dropping (see weather map) and this infers a deterioration in the weather. So northerly winds in general indicate a Low or as is often the case here in Victoria, a Cold Front is next in line to pass over you. *So, northerly winds are a warning that there is a deterioration in the weather happening right now.*

Northerly winds are a heads-up to be vigilant and weather-wise. The deterioration in weather may take days or hours and you need to look for other signs (lowering of cloud base, increase in cloud cover, darkening of sky, particularly to the SW) to determine if the change, the approaching Cold Front, is a mild or severe event. As before, a northerly wind infers NW, N, NE.

- A clarification to the point above, even though you may be experiencing a northerly wind, keep looking for darkening skies to the SW for this is where any severe weather blast from an approaching Cold Front will come from.
- If facing west into a westerly wind, then the High is on your right to the north and the Low to your left to the south. This means it is hard to interpret what is coming from the west, so the weather will remain constant until you see other signs. It’s a ‘too early to tell, wait and see’ situation.
- If facing east into an easterly wind then the High is to your south (a more common pattern in summer). Similar to a west wind, enjoy the constancy of what you are currently experiencing and just wait and see.
- *Contrails* are also an aid to weather predicting: no contrail means lower moisture content in higher air so fair weather coming. A quickly disappearing contrail means not enough moisture up high so once again, no immediate weather worries, and a lingering contrail means higher moisture content and increased chance of precipitation in coming days. Look at the direction that the contrail moves; this will indicate the wind direction likely to be hitting you, possibly in the next day or so (a lingering east-west contrail may drift northwards indicating that southerly winds coming down to us on the earths surface).
- Use your outstretched arm and hand as a guide to determine cloud drift. If

you see a cloud bank just above the horizon, measure its distance above the horizon with your outstretched arm; for example, there might be a gap of '2 fingers high' between the horizon and the cloud bank. Check some minutes later to see if the gap has reduced to 'one finger high' or increased to 'three fingers high'. This will give you an indication of whether that cloud bank is coming towards you or will miss you.

- It is my observation that clouds at different heights moving in different directions can be a forecast guide; the direction of higher clouds indicating the next wind direction to hit you. If there are 2 separate cloud levels, and say the lower cloud level is moving west and the upper cloud level is moving south, and it is calm at ground/sea level, then the wind direction next to affect you will be the first cloud layer above you, the westerly, and following that the next highest, the southerly. Use these clues to help time your dash to safety or sheltered waters.

Why Distinguish between Cellular Winds and Local Winds?

So, as hinted at earlier, not only are clouds important in understanding weather, but so is their direction of travel. But we need to clarify between cellular and local winds. Cellular winds are the winds that represent the wind direction as per the isobars on the weather map. These are the winds important for us in weather prediction. Local winds are winds that may have a different direction to cellular winds (and some may be caused by cellular winds), and can trap you into making embarrassing predictions. For example, on the coast you may be experiencing a strong onshore sea breeze, or winds directed down valleys; ignore this and look to the direction of cloud movement above for making pre-

dictions. Similarly, on mountain ridgelines you can get Rotor Winds; a strong northerly wind coming over the ridge may rotate over you such that, depending upon where you are on the ridge, you may experience strong southerly winds; winds from the opposite direction.

How Do You Forecast if There Is No Wind to Guide You?

There are two scenarios for no or little wind; you are either underneath the centre of a High Pressure Cell (so expect stability in the weather, the current conditions to prevail but northerly winds...and hence a change.. at some stage) or the isobars surrounding you are very widely spaced apart. The weather will remain the same until you see further signs for changing your forecast.

So How Can You Predict Severity of Weather Deterioration?

The sky will generally give you signs on whether the forecast change implies urgent evasive action or casual observance. However, in my experience, accuracy here is not always possible. The clue is to not so much look at the clouds, but at the changes. Look for the classic signs of lowering of cloud base and increasing cloud cover. If it continues, and the sky gets darker and darker, and the sky takes on an angry appearance, then prepare yourself for strong winds and/or heavy rain. Sometimes you observe this lowering and thickening of clouds happening, and then at the next observation, the cloud base is thinning and the cloud base is rising. *That* was the change. It was just a mild deterioration in the weather. The key is to watch the sky constantly during the classic signs of weather deterioration.

Can Animals Aid in Outdoor Weather Forecasting?

It is indeed sad that the accumulated weathercraft of countless generations of our indigenous inhabitants has been lost. Current culture unfortunately places a lesser value on this way of knowing.

I can offer little here.

Birds: My relationship with birds is one of transient observation; I'm most often on the move rather than being in a fixed location, so my observations are hence restricted in this regard. What I have noticed though is birds are good wind direction indicators, particularly large birds. Birds, like planes, have more control if landing or taking off into the wind. I'd first noticed this when I disturbed a group of large water birds while paddling and I thought it strange that they would fly directly over, rather than away from me. Then it struck me that they needed the extra lift from the wind to take off, even though it took them over 'the danger'. Now I notice it all the time; birds perch on rocks, limbs, powerlines; all facing into the wind. Of course, on cloudless days, this is a bonus clue, being wary, however, that it may be a local rather than cellular wind.

It has certainly been my experience that Yellow Tailed Black Cockatoos fly out of the mountains when there is the threat of rain.



Yellow-Tailed Black Cockatoo —
Source: http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Yellow-tailed_black_cockatoo04.jpg

Ants: Ants, particularly the small Argentine Ants, do increase their activity

prior to rain or seemingly to a falling barometric pressure. However, if you use the observations above, you will often be aware of weather changes well before you see ant activity. Ants only confirm what you have already observed, often days beforehand.

I have heard people say that ants build high mounds around their en-

trances prior to rain, to prevent the ants from getting flooded out, but my observations are that the mounds only appear *after* rain. My guess is that the rain softens the soil making the removal of soil, and hence renovations, easier. Much like us waiting until after rain to do the weeding in the garden. The entrance mounds are like the Coober Pedy mine

shaft entrances; the waste from digging is just thrown out the top.

I've read that seagulls will flock on beaches if there is a fall in barometric pressure, but I find this a difficult one to confirm with much contrary evidence. Some animals are able to hear a wider range of frequencies that humans, for example dogs can hear the thunder from electrical storms well before us.

III Handy Weather Equipment

Internet Access & Smart Phone Applications

For us sea kayakers who operate at the margins of human powered propulsion when it comes to dealing with the wind and waves, there are few things more comforting (particularly on a multi day trips) than having access to information from weather professionals, *if* you have internet access *and* a means to recharge your smart phone. Discussing this will be brief for it can only be really learnt through personal use and besides, I have gone on far too long in this presentation already. But suffice to say, there are a few key things worth highlighting.

Things I have found particularly helpful from the excellent service of the Bureau of Meteorology (<http://www.bom.gov.au>) website are:

- **4 day weather forecast maps** (http://www.bom.gov.au/australia/charts/4day_col.shtml)
- **Satellite** (<http://www.bom.gov.au/australia/satellite/>) helpful for showing intensity of coming weather systems and rate of travel. Helpful for trip planning.
- **Tides** (<http://www.bom.gov.au/oceanography/tides/MAPS/vic.shtml>)

Particularly important where there are substantial tidal ranges and implications of resulting tidal streams. In constricted spaces, for example, Port Phillip Heads, Westernport Bay, and in between islands or headlands and islands (offshore islands, Bass Strait), correct timing of passage and crossings is critical. Check the tide tables to see what the lag time is between moon phase and Spring and Neap tides, and check which of the daily tides is the highest tide (if you misread the tide heights and you confidently left your boat untied overnight, it can be slightly embarrassing in the morning to find your boat missing having floated away during the night. You only do this once.)

- **Specific areas forecast** (<http://www.bom.gov.au/vic/forecasts/>) For Port Phillip and Westernport Bays, Gippsland Lakes, Wilsons Prom, Bass Strait and all other coastal areas. Essential for trip planning.
- **Weather warnings** (<http://www.bom.gov.au/vic/warnings/>) Strong, Gale or Storm force warnings are also essential for trip planning & safety.
- **Rain Radar**

(http://www.bom.gov.au/australia/radar/vic_radar_sites_table.shtml)

This is great for showing you what is coming your way. Apart from showing rain & rain intensity to your west, it shows wind direction and speed. Very handy if you have an open water crossing and you need to track the location of the oncoming Cold Front and its increases in wind speed and change of wind direction. This shows in real time (not what is forecast) what is happening right now in a specific location.

- **Marine Wind Forecast Map** (<http://www.bom.gov.au/marine/wind.shtml>) Shows a timeline of wind speed and direction that is forecast for today and in the days ahead. Great for trip planning.
- **Met Eye** (<http://www.bom.gov.au/australia/meteye/>) It is another way of presenting the information for a specific location. Gives wind speed, direction, chance of rain, barometric pressure and you can click on adjacent weather stations also.
- **VIC latest observations** (<http://www.bom.gov.au/vic/observations/vicall.shtml>) This shows the latest observations for all weather stations in the state. A

wonderful aid if you wish to see if a forecast change has reached weather stations to the west of you...ie to see what time frame you have before it hits you. Handy at looking at current wind speed and direction, as well as temperature drop if associated with a Cold Front (drops of 20°C over 15 minutes can have clothing choice implications !) A wonderful aid for on-the-spot trip adjustment.

Weather Apps for Smart Phones

Explore the many options, but a few are Pocket Weather, Bay Winds and Willy Weather. They all use BOM information, but present it differently. They have excellent graphics for displaying predicted wind speed and direction, waves and wave heights, radar images. They are just fantastic; great for checking out the forecast when in the sleeping bag and again in the morning. A wonderful aid to safer trip planning.

Finally ...

As suggested earlier, the greatest safety aid is between your ears (judgement), and sometimes you get it wrong. Using your smart phone can help reduce this risk. As suggested above, check observations at weather stations to your west in relation to wind speed and direc-

Weather and On-Water Decisions

“Is it safe to paddle today with this forecast?” — The Weather Bureau provide an excellent service, and offer increasingly more accurate forecasts. But, as we are finding out, sometimes they get it wrong for our location.

Paddlers and trip leaders are often faced with this dilemma. The issue is when Wind Warnings are current or the forecast is for marginal or difficult wind speeds (and directions), but the conditions facing you when standing on the beach deciding whether to go or not, do not match what has been forecast. The problem is what to do with contrary trusted advice; the ‘stay-on-shore/amend your route’ implication of the weather forecast or the ‘these conditions before me indicate safe paddling conditions’ and in your opinion, your group can handle it. When do you trust your own judgement and when do you trust the Weather Bureau?

For this reason I carry an *Anemometer* to measure wind speed. Though expensive, they can give peace of mind; and supporting evidence if disputes arise later about why you

tion. As outdoor educators are aware, Coroner’s Reports of tragic outdoor incidents have criticized leaders for *not* carrying and using available technology to ensure safety for trip participants.

The implication is, use the best advice at your disposal to make your de-

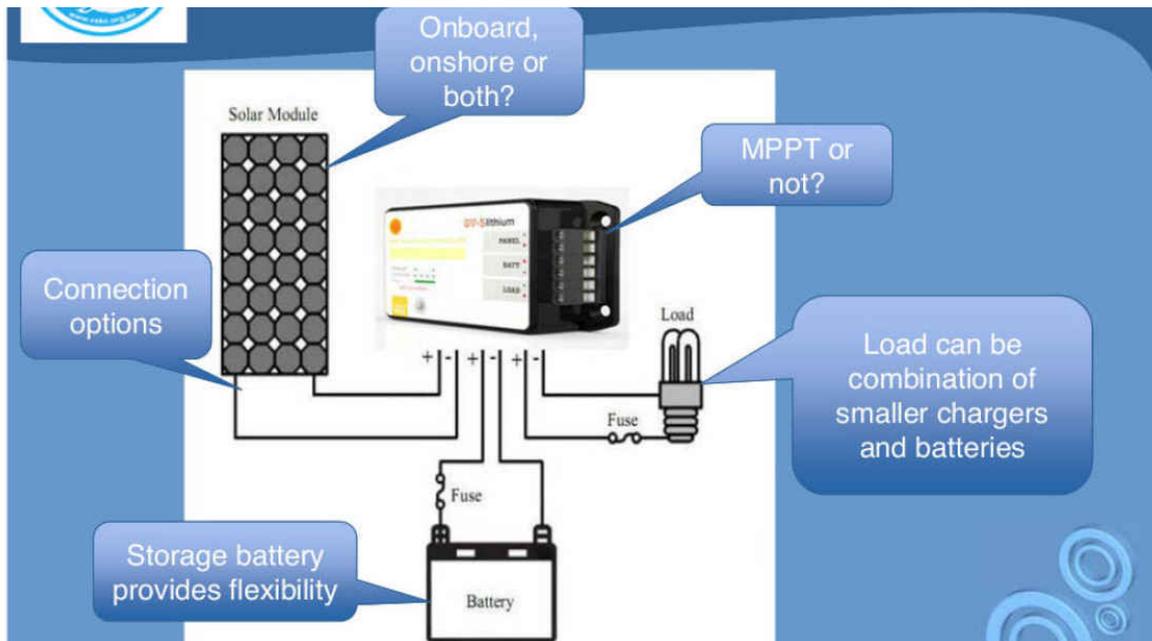
made the decisions that you did. (I carry my pocket anemometer in a clear plastic empty honey jar with a screw top; for waterproofness and impact protection. It fits nicely in the day hatch.)



Pocket anemometers are a great aid to determining wind speed. — Source unknown, but similar: <http://kestrelmeters.com>

This is a frequent dilemma: There is a Strong Wind warning current, but current wind speeds are less than 10 knots. This is particularly so for those responsible for school groups or novices on water and the legal implications of going against forecast weather warnings.

isions, and carry the technology that could be reasonably expected of a sea kayaker/sea kayak leader to enable the gathering of this information to facilitate good decision making. The implications are stronger if you are responsible for other people’s children.



Slide RR — <http://www.vskc.org.au/uploads/docs/VSKC%20Solar%20Panel%20Presentation%20R.pdf>

Richard Rawling

Expedition Kayaking Solar Power Systems

The following summary picks up key points from my presentation at the 2013 VSKC AGM on the issue of on-board solar panels for charging 12V devices such as GPS', phones, pump batteries, iPads, lights, AAA or AA batteries or whatever you like!

Fundamentally, small solar panels, batteries and charge controllers have come a long way and present expedition kayakers with many enhanced options for keep gear charged in remote locations.

There are three key points to keep in mind:

- There is a need to understand the contemporary options that are available in terms of solar panels, storage batteries and chargeable devices
- You need to know a bit about solar panels and how to size charging capacity to suit your particular requirements

- You should assemble your system to the standards inherent in the design and build of your kayak

There are pros and cons when deciding to charge device batteries in remote locations

Pros:

- Do not have to carry spare batteries (eg drycells)
- Sustains devices on long trips
- Enables power back up (redundancy)
- One charger – multiple users/devices

Cons:

- Carrying recharging systems
- Plethora of battery types
- Extra gear takes up space
- Can only recharge on land (maybe)
- Risk of failure in marine environment

In order to understand solar panels it is useful to know a few of the technical terms that often get used:

- STC = standard test conditions
- Power = Voltage x Current
- 15 Watt = 1 AH (approx)
- Wstc = peak power
- MPPT = maximum power point tracking (refer later)

- Voc = open circuit voltage
- Vmpp = maximum power voltage
- Vnom = nominal battery voltage recommended to charge
- If $V_{oc} < V_{battery}$ then panel will not charge
- Isc = short circuit current
- Module efficiency (%)

Fundamentally, there are solar panels, and there are solar panels! The best efficiency is still only 40% (20% in commercial panels) and if you skimp on purchase of your solar panel then you may end up with a dysfunctional system.

12V low power systems benefit greatly from use of maximum power point style tracking style controllers for the following reasons:

- For given environmental conditions, solar panels have a maximum power output
- This equates to a load resistance (V/I)
- At MPP region, there is an inverse exponential relationship between V & I (pretty flat otherwise)
- MPPT controllers dynamically shift effective load resistance to force panel to operate closer to MPP
- Power increases of 10-50% are possible

It is also worth noting that temperature also affects panel capacity – high temperatures are actually not good! Also, blocking diodes are required to prevent night discharge of the panel.

One the fundamental things to know how to do is to work out the size of the panel required to charge your devices in the field. The basic procedure is as follows:

- Determine charging voltage (V) and current (I) for each device to be recharged
- Assume devices operate all day (t hours)

- Calculate $IV \cdot t$ for each device and then sum (D Watt-hours)
- Select preferred storage battery type and find maximum discharge voltage as % of nominal operating voltage (C%)
- Required storage battery Watt hours = $D \text{ Watt-hours} / C\%$ (oversize!)
- Required capacity of storage battery = $\text{storage battery Watt hours} / \text{battery voltage (AH)}$
- Determine preferred charging rate by assuming 6 daylight hours (ie AH/6)
- Select suitable charge controller (Vcharge at least 10-15% over working voltage) and note Icharge
- Select solar panel that delivers required charging voltage an current (oversize to compensate for panel voltage fluctuations) – minimum power rating = $V_{charge} * I_{charge}$ (Watts)

A worked example is follows:

- Want to charge GPS battery pack (6V, 1.25 AH) and camp light (6V, 2.5 AH)
- Assume operate for 6hrs/day and then recharge, so required Watt-hours is $6 * 1.25 + 6 * 2.5 = 22.5$ watt-hours
- Use LiPOFE4 storage battery with nominal voltage of 14.2V and preferred maximum discharge voltage of 10.8V ($C\% = 10.8/14.2 = 0.76$)
- Required storage battery Watt-hours = $22.5/0.76 = 29.6$ (say 30 Watt-hours)
- Required storage battery capacity = $30/14.2 = 2.11$ AH (say 2.25 AH)
- Preferred charging rate is therefore $2.25/6 = 0.375$ Amps per hour (minimum)
- We select a charge controller that will provide say 0.5 A at a voltage at least 15% greater than battery working voltage, so we choose (say 16.5 V)

- Therefore a solar panel with a minimum power output (Wstc) of $16.5 \times 0.5 = 8.25$ Watts is required. Here we would choose a panel of at least 10W to be on the safe side

It is worth noting that there are do's and do not's when it comes to connected panels together (such as you might be tempted to do if you have an on-deck panel you want to connect to a foldable on-land only panel):

- Series wiring yields higher voltage (sum of voltage from the panels) while current stays the same. Best avoided!
- Parallel wiring yields same voltage, but current capacity increases.
- If one panel has a higher voltage it will supply load current, but only to the degree that its output voltage drops to lower voltage panel.
- If a panel is shaded (reduced voltage), but other panel is not, then panel with higher relative voltage will take over load supply until voltages equalize in each panel.
- Controller selection is important in terms of available voltage step down.

If you opt for on-board charging system (ie the panel mounted on your deck somewhere), there are a number of considerations in order to get this working well and able to withstand the rigours of stormy marine environments. The basic design criteria for such a set up are as follows (see also my presentation at <http://www.vskc.org.au/uploads/docs/VSKC%20Solar%20Panel%20Presentation%20R.pdf>):

- Has to be easily removable when not required
- Must not overly interfere with boat handling and rescue
- Ideally be multi-purpose – eg spare paddle park
- Must be able to withstand immersion and reasonable impacts (eg trashing in surf)

This means that glass encased panels and sharp fittings that interfere with rescues and normal sea kayak operations and not recommended at all.

If you opt to fit a storage battery (ie a bigger battery that is charged by the solar panels and then used to charge smaller devices during paddling or on-shore, including at night – although it is possible to configure your set-up so that the storage battery also serves as your pump battery), then the following points are worth noting:

- SLA batteries are heavy (eg 4.5kg v 1.1kg for equivalent battery rating)
- LiFEPO4 batteries are 1/3rd the weight for same power output and dimensions – yet 10 times the lifespan
- Non-SLA batteries require care with charging regimes
- Double the usable capacity of similar AH ratings of SLA batteries
- Flat discharge curve means maximum power till battery flat
- Can be left partially discharged for long periods without harm (unlike SLA types)
- Voltage balance board pre-installed
- Must be placed in waterproof storage unit to avoid corrosion

There are not many MPPT style battery management systems on the mar-

ket, but I mention one brand that is very good in the presentation referred to above (Genasun – various models depending on the battery being charged). Once you resolve whether to use a storage battery or not (and what type, because that will affect the choice of battery management system), then connection of smaller devices to be charged will benefit from the following considerations:

- Belkin or similar USB chargers are ideal for smartphones and the like. Plug into cigarette style connectors.
- AAA and/or AA NiMH chargers are great for keeping general batteries charged. Must be in waterproof box.
- Universal chargers are also good for square LiPo camera batteries
- Even VHF radio battery charging stations can be carried and plugged into 12V DC
- If you are carry a laptop or require 240v, then small (<150W) DC power inverters can also be connected (use cigarette plug style connectors)
- Day hatch dry enough to lower IPC rating of sockets (hence cost!)
- Any connectors used must be IP 68 rated, and I mention a good brand in the presentation. It is foolish to compromise on the choice of connectors, especially for any through-deck or -hatch connections. You are

asking for trouble because saltwater and electronics do not mix unless the connectors are bomb-proof.

In the presentation, I outline a variety of methods for making and moulding carbon fibre brackets and fittings to support solar panel and battery installations, but in summary the following points are a useful check list when considering this type of installation:

- Decide whether you want to charge while paddling, or not
- Decide whether you want a storage battery, or not
- Decide what devices you want to charge and determine power output of solar panel (or panels)
- Decide if you want a MPPT controller, or just plain regulator
- Configure all connectors so you have maximum flexibility
- Properly engineer everything to withstand marine environment
- Do a professional job – ‘Heath Robinson’ does not belong in or on your boat!
- Know how to diagnose faults and rectify them in the field
- Have a plan B if it fails! – I suggest using pump battery
- Know whether your mates expect you to power their gear!



Photo: SM

Sue Mountford

paddling the Bohuslän Coast

I learnt of the beauty of the Bohuslän from Kristen Nielsen, who visited the VSKC in late 2012 with her partner Nigel Foster. A few months after their visit I was invited to join a friend for a holiday on the east coast of Sweden. I decided to use the opportunity to paddle the west coast prior to joining my friend for a holiday on the east coast. From my search of kayaking companies I discovered *Upplevelsebolaget* (<http://www.upplevelsebolaget.co/>), an outdoor adventure company founded and run by Joakim Hermanson. Joakim was leading a three day trip out of Havstenssund through the Bohuslän archipelago, which fitted nicely with my travel dates.

It was easy sorting out details of the trip with Joakim, who was very welcoming and replied promptly to emails. He thoughtfully offered to lend me a sleeping bag to save having to pack one into my weight-restricted luggage.



Joakim Hermanson, Upplevelsebloget
— Photo: SM

In late August I flew out to Gothenburg, a major transport and shipping hub on the west coast of Sweden. I spent a few days walking the harbor, canals, and checking out fish markets before heading off for the Havstenssund paddle. *Upplevelsebloget* is based in the historic Gustafs-

berg park by the sea four kilometers out of Uddevalla. I reached Uddevalla by train to Trollhättan, and then bus to Uddevalla. Uddevalla is a small town located on a river outlet to the sea with a scenic board walk around the cliff edge by the sea leading to Gustaf. Traveling throughout Sweden is very easy, as it has an excellent transport system awith good interconnecting services between buses and trains.



Gustafberg — Photo: SM

Upplevelsebloget is based in an historic barn. Like many of the build-

ings in the park, it is over one hundred years old. The park dates back to 1772 when it was once a sea spa for Swedish nobility, and wealthy merchants. The hostel where I stayed was just one of many quaint period buildings scattered throughout the park. It was a good place to stay in preparation for the following day's an early morning start being located about 200 meters away from the Upplevelsebloget barn.

The next morning I walked to the barn with my paddling gear in dry bags and a case to be stored. I met Joakim out trip leader and the four other paddlers taking the trip. They were Ulla, and her partner Helge, Maria, and Karsten. They were all Swedish born with the exception of Karsten who was born in Germany. All kindly spoke English for the duration of the trip to include me in the conversation. Once the briefing and introductions were concluded we headed off to launch from Havstenssund. It was an overcast day with the temperature around twenty degrees centigrade.



The group — Photo: SM

By late morning we headed along the coastline paddling past Swedish summer houses before paddling into the rocky archipelago. The smooth pink granite rocks formed a dramatic and ever changing scenery with some fun rocky outcrops to paddle through. By late afternoon we arrived at a small

sandy beach set at the foot of a rocky outcrop on the Ulsholmen island.

After pitching our tents we took time out to climb the highest cluster of granite rocks to take in some spectacular views of the archipelago as the sun set. We then joined Joakim to help him prepare a dinner of sweet local prawns he'd brought that morning. I learnt over dinner many Swedish kayakers come from a sailing background, and there are equivalent numbers of female sea kayakers to male kayakers. Many houses do not have storage space, and some local kayaking clubs have a waiting list of two years for boat storage racks. Others store their kayaks in their summer houses which can be two hours drive from their home.

On the second day we headed to the sea side of the archipelago. During this leg of the trip we experienced sea swells, and some rebounding seas which chopped every which way. The Bohuslän coast offers seas to cover every sea kayakers interests from protected waters to open seas to rock hopping. However, I came to understand the greatest challenge for any experienced kayaker new to paddling this coast is navigation, as the rocks forming the archipelago are extensive and matching similar small rock islands to the map is no mean feat. Self guided trip maps are available for experienced kayakers. Kayaks and other paddling equipment can also be hired for those not wanting to transport their kayaks.

We stopped for lunch on an island which was the site of the historic Stora Svagens light house. It was no longer in commission. Landing our boats on the rocky shore was a bit tricky but well worth the effort and rock climb to see the lighthouse and view the archipelago in the afternoon sun. After relaxing in the sun over lunch and checking out the restoration work; we headed off for our second campsite. The wind

was starting to lift and we landed on the lee side of Amundholmen island with a small forest set behind the sandy beach inlet. After a quick chat to two park rangers who were burning off undergrowth we pitched our tents. The absence of tides makes for easy management of kayaks with no need to make long treks with loaded kayaks and gear to avoid rising seas. Some went for a pre-dinner swim; the water is a surprisingly warm 19° C.



Stora Svagens light house — Photo: SM

After breakfasting in the protection from the winds by some large rocks, we headed back through the archipelago to Havstenssund, taking in the treed coastline and drifts of long stringy seaweed.

I enjoyed paddling in such dramatically different scenery. I also found it interesting to understand some differing technical approaches to kayaking from Joakim, who is an accomplished instructor. My Swedish paddling companions made for good company; I hope I have the opportunity to paddle the Bohuslän coast with them again.



Photo: TC

Tony Cusack

Whitsundays 2013

A group of dilettantes from the VSKC ventured to the north in August to meander around that fabled group of islands Captain James Cook noted:

It is form'd by the Main on the West, and by Islands on the East, one of which is at least 5 Leagues in length. everywhere good Anchorage; indeed the whole passage is one Continued safe Harbour, besides a Number of small Bays and Coves on each side, where ships might lay as it were in a Bason; at least so it appear'd to me The land, both on the Main and Islands, especially on the former, is Tolerably high, and distinguished by Hills and Vallies, which are diversified with Woods and Lawns that looked green and pleasant.

[This passage I have named Whitsundays Passage.....]

The route, one that has been followed by many before us I am told, even some who accompanied us, nonetheless it provided much to sur-

prise and amaze. Day 1 was out of Airlie to Dugong, for the first of our mini-breaks. We had decided that the journey should be one of much relaxation and contemplation (well reading and snorkelling), so we planned 2 day stays at each of our stops. A fine consideration I must add.

The first of our rest days a number of the group deciding valour being a deal more desirable than common-sense, decided to ascend to the peak of the island. A great walk and an even more spectacular view — below lay the breadth of the magnificent island group. Cook missed a great view in rocketing through without a stop!

That evening we had something of a treat in store, with a visit to the Platinum moored of Hamilton Island. What is the Platinum you ask – well we were inquisitive as well. The august David Golightly who made our numbers has a son Andrew who spends his days driving powered craft hither and

thither. Well, it turns out that he was thithered off Hamilton and the owners extended a gracious invitation for us to visit the craft – such as it is. This is not THE craft but it is very like it: http://granttorrensmarine.com.au/charter_platinum.htm. Take a squiz! It is HUGE – 34 metres long! We hobbled for a short while then scurried back to our simple lodgings in the jungle – unbelievably impressed by the role that Andrew plays in captaining a craft of this size. David was observed to beam with not a little pride.

The next part of the journey took us north along Whitsunday Island through the Hook Passage along the east side of Hook towards our next camp at Crayfish. This was such a pleasant and unruffled journey that one of our number decided to liven proceedings by going for a swim. Now this may have been a matter of little consequence if everyone had their role perfected – but no! Still, a little drama and panic does wonders

to get the mood moving. We eventually arrived at Crayfish to an international reception, Spaniards, Colombians, Italians and a Queensland couple – the latter provided the exotic dimension.

Departure from here after 2 nights was difficult, what a beautiful refuge amongst this idyll! Well, Maureen's Cove was beckoning, so, on we pressed. Much expectation was held in finding the Woolards in residence but such was not to be. I am told that this is usually their private domain and that we may be required to present credentials. As it was, the only noticeable presence was a pod of whales passing in the distance on the first evening – oh, and the odd yachtie....

One of these strange species (yachties that is) came ashore and requested the location of the butterfly dell – what??? Well, it turns out that dried out stream at the eastern end of Maureen's is a haven to a wonderful array of these beautiful creatures.



*A haven to a wonderful array ... —
Photo: TC*



*... of these beautiful creatures —
Photo: TC*

Well, where are we now, day 7 if I am not mistaken and it's on to Steen's Beach and the wonderful vista of the poor people on Hayman. Well, in fact we ignored them and focused on the sunsets now that we were back facing the west. At this point we also regained contact with the outside world again and the forecast was dire — min 19 max 24 for the foreseeable future, how were we to cope? Unfortunately, this also provided a warning of things to come, a big wind!

While we had planned 2 nights here as well, it seemed prudent to make our way back down towards CID harbour in anticipation of weather that would prevent a crossing of the passage and possibly even down the western side of Hook. This we completed the next (long) day and arrived back at Dugong via Curlew Beach on day 8 for another 2 night stay. For those who have been there, this is not the least unpleasant, although we did decide that another ascent of Whitsunday Peak was not

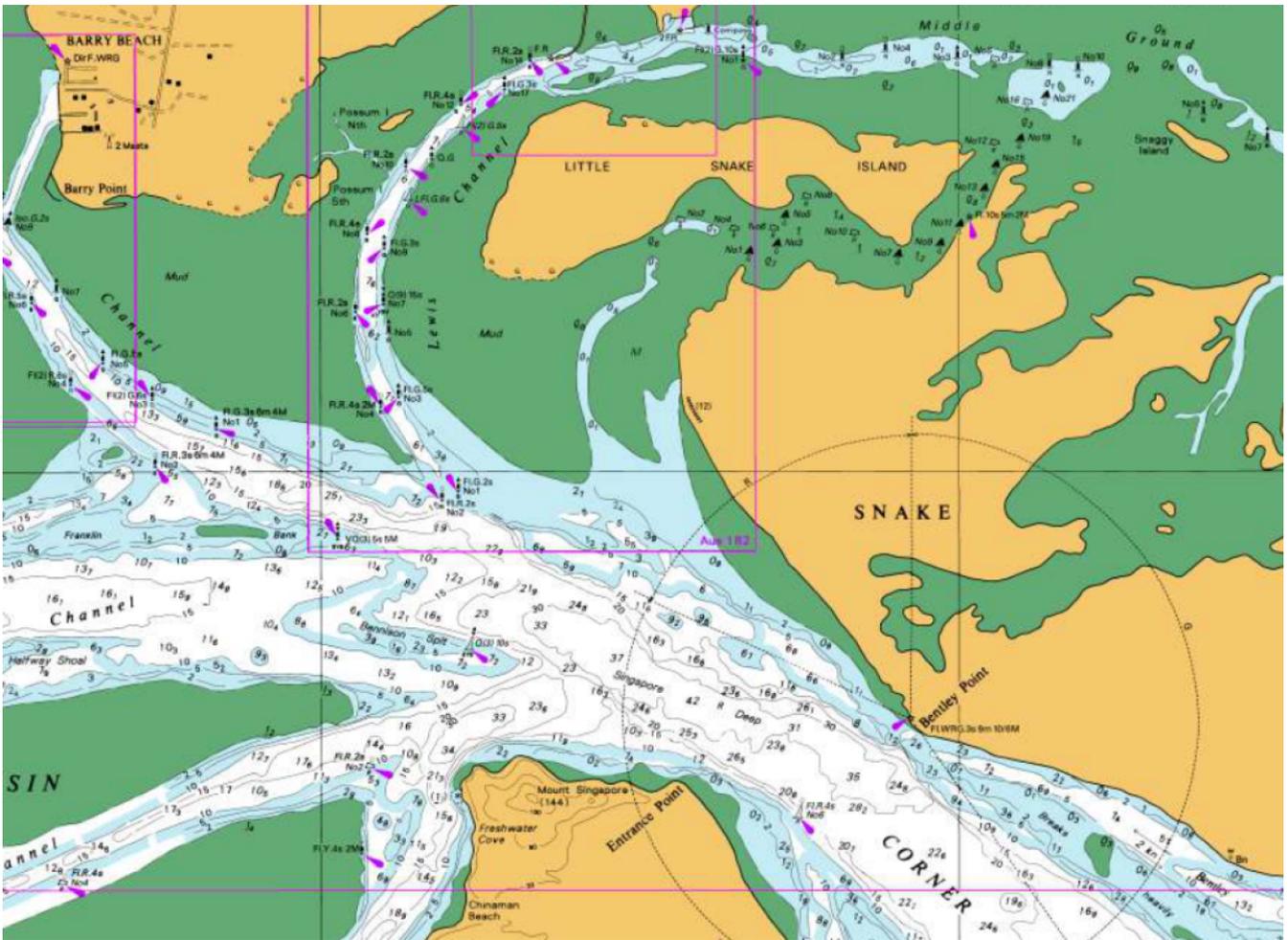
called for, especially since the coffee shop was reputedly closed.



*... not in the least unpleasant ... --
Photo: TC*

The wind forecast had been delayed, however it became clear that this was about to change and so early on the morning of day 10 we crossed back over the Passage to the Sandy Bay campsite on South Molle. At this point the group split up with the author continuing back to Airlie to begin the drive back to Melbourne. The remaining members stayed on at South Molle and succeeded in nearly being blown off with the forecast wind change finally coming through that evening. It is reported that one member of the group, who will of course remain nameless to protect the guilty, spent one windy night completely unattired trying to repair a wind damaged tent – but that is another story much deserving of its own article!!!!

Many thanks to Peter Sharpe, from all of us, for the work he put in planning the trip and to both he and Anne for the pre-trip organisation.

Singapore Deep Rescue — Report *Peter Treby**Wilson's Prom., Corner Inlet*

On Friday 18 October 2013, at around 1.15 pm, newly joined VSKC member Laurie C. was rescued from Singapore Deep, the exit channel from Corner Inlet.

Laurie has been a VSKC member since early October. He is 54 years old. He has owned his 14' plastic orange coloured Heritage Pisgah sea kayak for two years. He had planned this trip over a five week period. Laurie participated in a Red Eye paddle on Saturday 21 September. He received some advice that white caps can be seen in wind conditions of 15 knots or more. White caps can in fact be observed at wind speeds of 10 knots and above.

Chronology of Events

Laurie launched from Port Welshpool at around 10.00 am. He was paddling solo. He intended to paddle from Port Welshpool to Tin Mine Cove on Wilson's Promontory, camp, paddle to Snake Island the next day and camp, then paddle back to Port Welshpool. Laurie landed on Little Snake Island for a rest, then continued. He lined up a transit between a channel marker and Granite Island, so as to paddle upwind before turning East to run in to Tin Mine Cove.

Wind strength at the Wilson's Promontory Lighthouse weather sta-

tion during this incident ranged from 12 knots gusting to 31 knots. In Corner Inlet, where Laurie was paddling, the Australian Volunteer Coast Guard flotilla commander from Port Welshpool, who came out later, estimates the wind at the point of rescue to have been 20 knots, from the West, with waves around one metre. Twenty knots is a lot of wind for a kayaker to paddle in, and might be considered the upper limit for experienced kayakers if there is any distance to be covered. Anyone contemplating paddling in 20 knot winds in unfamiliar tide-stream affected waters would be well advised to practice in a safe onshore wind environ-

ment and ensure that they possess adequate boat handling skills for such conditions.

Water temperature in Corner Inlet was between 14 and 15 degrees Celsius. Laurie wore a long sleeved rash top, long pants, and zip front PFD. In such water temperatures, loss of dexterity occurs in 10 to 15 minutes, exhaustion or loss of consciousness in one to two hours, and death in one to six hours, according to some of the estimates available.

Sea conditions in Corner Inlet can be significantly affected by tide streams. On this day, the ebb tide started running at Port Welshpool at 1206 and at 1115 at Rabbit Island, so the tide was starting to run out where the rescue occurred. The chart (AUS 181) notes a 2 knot ebb and flood tide stream in nearby Bentley Harbour. Paddlers planning to go out through Singapore Deep can gain assistance from the outgoing tide stream, but crossing to Tin Mine Cove might be better planned for slack water or the start of the incoming flood tide stream, from the point of view of being washed in to Corner Inlet if problems occur. However, in a 20 knot Westerly, a kayaker would then be paddling in a significant wind-against-tide sea state.

He had been advised to carry a mobile phone in a waterproof covering. He carried an iPhone in a plastic cover. This failed when needed, the plastic cover had let water in, and the iPhone would not function. The touch screen control of an iPhone would not operate with water and wet hands, with fingers slipping on the surface. In any event, the iPhone had stopped working when exposed to water.

Laurie also borrowed one of the VSKC 406 Mhz personal locator beacons. Having this beacon saved his life, without it he would have probably not have been found after capsizing. Laurie had not changed the contact list before

taking the beacon with him, although had been advised to do this.

Laurie says he had been out from Port Welshpool about 2 hours. He must then have been paddling in the “Five Ways”, the area of Corner Inlet where the several channels draining Corner Inlet converge and become Singapore Deep, the exit channel. Waves of a metre or so were coming from his right, starboard side. With little warning, “a quarter of a second”, a wave hit him and he capsized. He performed a wet exit out of the cockpit, came to the surface and held on to the boat. He was shocked that the capsizing had happened so quickly.

Laurie had previously tried cowboy rescues in calmer water, where the paddler scrambles onto the back deck, and moves forward, to drop into the cockpit. Laurie tried this several times. As the cockpit was flooded, and the kayak very unstable, each attempt lead to a further capsize. Laurie tried bailing the cockpit with his hand pump from the water. The pump was stiff and hard to use. While on the back deck, he tried hand scooping water from the cockpit. After 10 – 15 minutes, without successfully re-entering the kayak, Laurie set off the Personal Locator Beacon.

While attempting to mount the kayak, Laurie’s PFD zip pulled down, and the slim cord tethering the PLB broke. After the beacon tether broke, the neoprene cover of the beacon was lost. These beacons will not float without the neoprene cover. Very fortunately, Laurie held on to the beacon after the tether and neoprene floatation cover had been lost.

While in the water, Laurie attempted to wave at the rescue vessel when he could see it. He also attempted to kick swim the kayak toward shore. The Coast Guard commented that this would not have succeeded, and would waste energy and lead to more rapid cooling and hypothermia.

The Australian Maritime Safety Authority (AMSA) received a rescue call at its Canberra Rescue Coordina-

tion Centre. RCC contacted club President Terry Barry, who was able to advise details of the paddler. Usually, Victoria Police is delegated to coordinate a rescue of this type. The nearest vessel, an Exxon Mobil oil rig supply vessel was contacted. This vessel happened to be in Singapore Deep commissioning a smaller rescue boat with a three man crew. One hour or so after Laurie activated the beacon, he and his kayak were taken from the water by the oil rig’s boat.

Laurie reported that his legs were starting to numb. He was taken aboard the oil supply vessel and down to the kitchen and warmed up. He was transferred to an Australian Volunteer Coast Guard vessel from Port Welshpool and returned there, and drove himself home.

Laurie had his paddle tethered. He had no spare paddle. He had an iPhone, and the VSKC FastFind Plus PLB. He had no VHF radio, Spot messenger, flares, dye, ribbons, or paddle float.

Lessons and Considerations

- The conditions were too much for a novice paddler.
- Solo paddling demands extra skill and care, and there are fewer fallback and self/group rescue options.
- Carrying the Personal Locator Beacon was life-saving. Users of the VSKC PLBs must update the contact list and check the beacon function and tethering. The beacon retaining cord is inadequate, VSKC should not have given out a beacon with a frayed cord, and the manufacturer needs to beef this up. Users of this type of PLB should arrange more secure tethering, and check it regularly.
- Cowboy self-rescues are hard to perform in anything but calm conditions.
- Multiple communication devices should be carried. All can fail, one

may work. Take everything practicable, and practise using it. Check that it is in serviceable condition before every launch. Consider VHF radio, PLB, flares, dye, ribbons.

- Multiple self-rescue techniques need to be mastered, starting with the best, the kayak roll.
- Staying with the capsized kayak was life-saving.
- Solid bracing skills are needed in 20 knot winds. Such skills can be built up in the inner break area of surf, for example.
- Be aware that when a long way from shore, there will not be any hope of

swimming to safety, or swimming with the boat to safety. Depending on the water temperature, this may not be too far at all. Beyond 500 metres is trouble, perhaps much less.

Club PLBs — Reminder *Robin Bondy*



Potential lifesaver: one of the VSKC' PLBs — Photo: HH

Just a reminder to all VSKC members that the club has two PLB's for member use. One is available for pick-up in Hampton and the other in Rosebud.

Simply download the *Personal Locator Beacon Loan Form* found under "Docs and Downloads" on the VSKC website — <http://www.vskc.org.au/>. Email the loan form complete with the trip details which should in-

clude dates, area to be paddled, number of paddlers with their names, contact numbers, emergency contact details, boat descriptions and safety equipment carried to either Robin Bondy – Robin.Bondy@vskc.org.au or David Golightly – David.Golightly@vskc.org.au.

Robin Bondy will then add the necessary details for the PLB borrowed onto the AMSA website so that the information will be available to rescue authorities in case of an emergency.

Singapore Deep Rescue – A Note *Laurie Caulfield*

We learn from experience, but there is experience you don't care to have. Laurie was too generous to provide the readers with a brief subjective account of the accident.

On behalf of all readers I would like to thank Laurie for sharing his experience.

Ed. — Helmut Heinze

Planned the big adventure for 6 weeks. Organised all the camping gear, dry clothes, torch everything. I could think

of weather report saying 15knot winds. Not too bad I thought considering I encountered similar conditions on

the Red Eye a few weeks before. I made sure i left on the outgoing tide. Kayaked for 2 hours with a few small

waves breaking over me from right to left.

Suddenly, without any warning, I was upside down, not even having time to take a breath. Pulled off skirt and righted kayak. Tried the cowboy entry which I practiced only a couple of times before. Kayak cockpit was full of water. Camping gear in storage made it impossible to get back on as it kept tipping over.

After about 20 mins I gave up. Activated PLB. Water was very cold and hypothermia was numbing my legs. A large ship from Exxon Mobile went past

me but could not see me, I saw it come back 20 mins later. It launched a motorised dingy with 3 men who came over to me plucked me and my kayak out of the water. Returned me to ship and winched boat onto deck.

Gave me cup of tea. Could not hold it because of shivering.

Coast guard from Port Welshpool came to ship and picked me and kayak up and returned to port

I dont mind being judged stupid when I left. It did not enter my mind I would tip over., I was not as expe-

rienced as I thought. Peter .C told me a few weeks before to borrow a PLB from the club. It saved my life.

Valuable lesson never kayak alone.

I still love to kayak but will always be traumatised by the events that day

I joined the VSKC only a few months before and I have been given more support than ridicule and for that I thank you all. It is a wonderful club and I am sure I will gain lots of experience which f ull heartedly thought I had.

Christmas Red Eye – 30 Nov 2014 Bronwyn and Greg Skowronski



Photo: HH

Over 20 paddlers took part in this year's Christmas Red Eye paddle. The conditions were ideal for most levels of paddlers, with partly cloudy skies, 10-15kt W winds and 0.5m swell. After a quick briefing we set off! The pod was on its best behaviour (for Santa might find out!) and stuck very close together the whole way down to Mordialloc. After about 1 hour of paddling we met up with Shankie who was coming towards us under sail. Once met up, it was time to turn around. There was surfing and sailing to be had! One member, obviously eager to get first bite of the Christmas feast, promptly put up sail. No sooner have he (oops, did I say he?) done this, capsized. After a couple of unsuccessful attempts to roll up, ship was abandoned! It was a bit like seeing Santa Claus trying to get out of a chimney after getting stuck in it on the way down. This was a reminder that even an expert such as San-

ta Claus sometimes comes unstuck, no I mean stuck, no....anyway. At least Peter (oops, did I say Peter?!) has an exit strategy!



With the presidential seal of approval ... — Photo: HH

On the way back the pod seemed to paddle at much faster pace. I guess

the imaginary smells of the imminent Christmas feast on the shores of Rickett's Point contributed to it.

Once back on land someone showed us their folding kayak. This was quite a novelty to me. It got the prestigious presidential seal of approval from Bob Fergie after he sat and rolled it (albeit on grass).

While the time of departure for paddling was still too early for some members, many still made their way to the feast for much banter and laughter. Bacon and eggs were expertly cooked by Neil Brenton, scones lovingly cooked by Helmut and some various sweet nibbles provided, but I am unsure who brought those along.

I would like to extend big personal thanks to Peter Costello for once again helping my wife through the paddle. And for providing laughs to all.

Nobbies (and Seals Rock) -- 1 Dec 2013 *Bronwyn and Greg Skowronski*



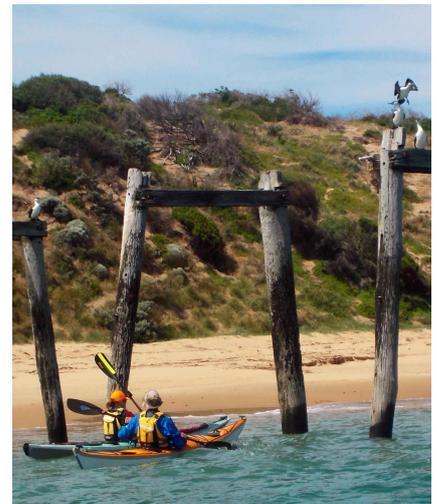
Photo: FC

Photos by Fiona Coates (FC), slightly edited for inclusion into the article.

The first day of the 2013/2014 summer saw 11 paddlers convene to Ventnor on Phillip Island to be led by Terry to the Nibbles and possibly over to Seal Rock. For Greg and I, this was our second paddle with Terry and it appears that he has a secret ability to order sensational conditions. The weather sure had us excited, all but for one particular paddler who has heard in the car park proclaiming 'I don't like water'. The bluebird day that proved to yield perfect conditions for the days' itinerary.

We set off from Ventnor with a kind tailwind and with the mornings warmth, the first roll of the day was soon done. Some paddlers set about seeking a ride on a wave and some propelled themselves with a turn on the sails. Lots of chitter chatter and that devilish laugh of Tomkins, could surely be heard by the beach walkers. A few paddlers ventured closer to shore to paddle along the beach breakers and 'live life on the edge'. The group landed for a quick break under the supervision of the local gannets on the old pier pylons. The next leg of the paddle revealed an increasingly rocky coast, ap-

proaching the Nobbies as some of the paddlers ventured close in and around the little rocky outcrops. Bombies and breakers were to be looked for. When such exploring was done, the group agreed on heading over to Seal rock, which proved a bit more of a surf for some. Hundreds of seals seemed to be as curious about us as we were them. Seals in the water soon seemed to be more energetic, checking out their visitors and showing off with swim by's and leaps. Those basking in the sun quickly jumped in and joined the commotion.



*With the morning's warmth ... —
Photo: FC*



On the rocks ... — Photo: FC

On the way back we had a headwind and current against us so the free ride we enjoyed on the way down was over. 8 members of the sacrificial seal squad were following us which was nice. They were making sure we weren't taken by any sharks. I was struggling to make any headway so I asked Greg if he could give me a tow but he told me it wasn't the right time. I was a bit confused by that answer. I angrily pushed on. Once we got past the Nobbies the sea flattened and we were on a lookout for a good place to land for a well-earned lunch. Terry spotted a landing and soon after we enjoyed a yummy lunch by a rockpool. Energised and nourished we set off for Ventnor. The

weather was superb. I was hanging at the back of the pod but Terry kept encouraging me to stay at the front. The pace on the way back was quite high because we overtook a yacht. Once we arrived at Ventnor we did a short skill session, packed up and drove off back to Melbourne. I learned quite a bit on this trip. This was my first blue water paddle so I wouldn't be lying if I said I paddled Bass Strait. I also learned that not putting your phone in a water tight bag and relying on a day hatch to keep dry is not a good idea. My phone got completely submerged in salt water so Samsung and salt water don't mix. Thanks to the fearless trip leader Terry for a great adventure.

Boxing Day Christmas Turkey Burn-off – 28 Dec 2013 Helmut Heinze



The usual suspects made it ... to Port Arlington

Find here a short, subjective report of an event that should be mentioned in the chronicles of the club: an attempt of crossing Port Phillip Bay from Sandringham to Port Arlington and back in a single day. The trip featured initially as the *Great Boxing Day Christmas Turkey Burn-off* on the VSKC Web

Site, to be renamed to the *Day after Boxing Day Christmas Turkey Burn-off*, to be undertaken eventually, due to weather considerations, on the *Day after the Day after Boxing Day ...*

Trip leaders were jointly Peter Costello and Andrew Campbell; the shifting trip dates reduced the group

of the remaining participant to Bill K, Craig H and Helmut H – did someone say: the usual suspects?

It was a warm morning, promising a hot day. We pushed off with a slight delay at 6:30 from Sandringham, sailing with a gentle northerly breeze of less than 10kn on a bearing

of about 240° SW, expecting a strong Cool Change later in the day for the return trip. We soon passed Fawcner Beacon. The conditions were almost perfect but for the odd stern rudder stroke required to deal with small quartering seas. Occasionally there was a wave you could try to surf for a few meters but mostly it was not worth the effort. We took a brief break every hour. Coming closer to our destination we corrected the course a bit more south, gaining the advantage of a freshening north wind. We made to the beach of Port Arlington by midday.

We had a lunch break at the local bakery. The really smart smart phone users among us (not me) started consulting the BOM forecast and saw *BOM Met Eye's* wind chart flooded in a sea of RED for the Bay. We were expecting a Change with fresh to strong winds but *that* was too much.

After some consultation we resolved to paddle up the coast to Werribee South, to arrange a pick-up there. This meant crossing Corio Bay as quick as possible, before the expected change would hit us and then contin-

ue close under land. The northerly by now had freshened even further, the sea had become quite lumpy and we progressed only slowly for about 2 km, getting close to the shipping channel ... and decided to turn around and paddle back to Port Arlington.

It turned out to be a wise decision, even if the worst forecast did not eventuate. As we pulled up the boats and started cleaning and packing up we were hit by a couple of very strong gusts from North and then, suddenly, out of nowhere, a terrifying blow from the West, almost like a thunder clap.

In the end, we probably had done about 40km. Good enough – turkey burning-wise anyway.

Personally, I was looking forward to the crossing as a personal challenge in two ways. I had participated in Crossing the Bay in a Day in May, to join the VSKC a month later.. I made the crossing under my own steam, but just. Now, at the end of the same year and having been out with members of the club

who patiently taught me better paddling technique I was keen to see what difference it would make. Sure, I did a bit of running to improve my general fitness, between 5 and 12km twice a week in the time running up to the event, but that would not prepare me for more than 70km of paddling. All I can say is that the 40km appeared to be a mild exercise (special thanks to Robin B, Peter C and, Tony C. — yes: the Paddling Forward workshop on the VSKC Forum was great!) — not sure, though, how I would have felt after the full return trip.



Saturday morning Red Eye training ground — Photo: HH