

SeaTrek

Navigation Tools and Rules

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The VSKC

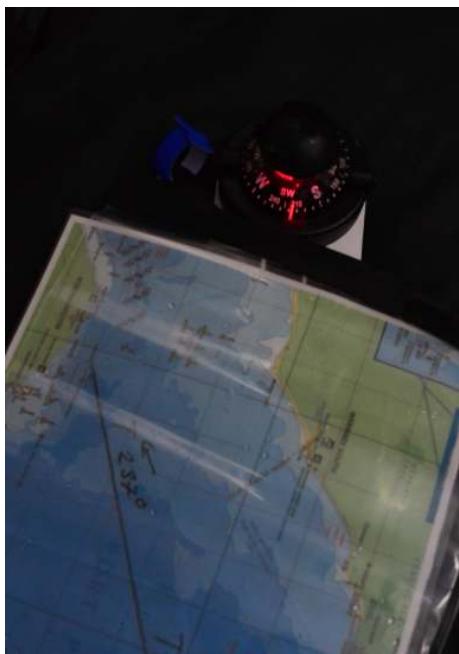
The Victorian Sea Kayak Club was formed in 1979, aimed at bringing together sea kayakers in our part of the world, creating opportunities to meet and organise trips, and to promote the interests of sea kayakers. Club members have done some marvellous and sometimes very challenging trips by sea kayak 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.





Cover

Photo: Helmut Heinze

Sigla

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Editorial



What is the connection between long-distance jet travel and kayaking? Some club members travel around the world either to get on the water (read Richard Rawlings account of his Greenland adventure in this edition) or at least manage to sneak in a paddle worth writing home about (David Golightly and Heather Torbet).

I myself had to contend with winter paddles in local waters with some time off due to the flu and a visit to South China in June.

There I was in Fuzhou, a provincial capital with few attractions and a steamy hot climate. Suffering severe kayaking withdrawal symptoms — even a mid-winter Red Eye in pitch darkness started to look appealing — I was looking for some on-the-water activity. Our hotel was next to a central leisure park with a large ornamental shallow muddy lake. But all it offered to the burgeoning urban middle class were some motor-driven plastic swans

in a separate small pond. I briefly hesitated but could not see to make it work for me, to my own disappointment and of those locals who were taking snaps of me all the time on their smart phones, for Fuzhou does not encounter many tourists at all. Let alone long-nosed ones.



Good enough a kayak ersatz?

The Fujian province is full of shippable waterways, rivers with strong currents winding through valleys with steep mountains. Scenes out of a Chinese picture book. A kayaker's dream. Yet the rivers are a brown sludge and carry a whiff of decay and sweet smelling chemicals, bringing back childhood memories of the river Rhine in Germany. Most Chinese never learn to swim — so the concept of water sports in general and boating in particular has not emerged.

This China trip and other long-distant travels bring me back to the topic

of kayaking in two ways.

One. All natural environments are at the same time cultural environments. A landscape may be ideal to be explored from a kayak but pollution and regulations may prohibit it. In this respect we are very lucky in Australia with environmental conditions by and large improving since the mid 70s. Still we can do our tiny bit — see Bronwyn Skowronski's opinion piece in this edition.

Two. The topic of navigation. There's a strange, inverse connection between jet aviation and kayaking. In a fast jet the motion determines place and time. Flying east or west, your watch is always wrong. There's the local time of the departure port, the destination port, and the current location. The fast motion compresses or dilates time on the clock, determines the season when crossing the equator, changes the location and its attributes. Navigation in aviation has to deal with these dynamics criss-crossing the globe.. Navigation in kayaking, in contrast, is bound to the local conditions, and the actual motion of kayaks is influenced by tidal currents and local wind conditions. These are sufficiently strong forces to be dealt with. Thus, travelling in a sea kayak comes with its

own navigation challenges that have to be dealt with.

Low-tech or high-tech? A compass, a chart, a wet thumb, a GPS? High-tech preparation before the trip and low-tech execution on the water? What works, what doesn't? — I would like to explore these questions a bit more, starting with this Seatrek.

As always I am most grateful to our authors, our prolific regulars, our first-timers and our guest contributor. A big Thank You to all who have contributed (in order of their initials): Bob Fergie, Bronwyn Skowronski, David Golightly, Gerard O'reilly, Greg Skowronski, Graeme Thompson, Heather Thorbet, Kate Hives, Kerrie Vogeles, Richard Rawling, Roger Bellchambers, Raia Wall, Steve Collins and Terry Barry.

Finally the obligatory not exactly kayaking related (but close enough) reading recommendation: A. J. Mackinnon, *The Unlikely Voyage of Jack de Crow*. Collingwood: Black Inc, 2009. A young teacher travelling in a 12 foot sailing dinghy from England to the Black Sea. A craft even slower than a sea kayak. Light entertainment, well written.

Enjoy!

Helmut Heinze (Editor)



President's Podcast



Photo: Tim Morris

As the weather warms up quite a few folk are getting back into the water after a period of winter hibernation. Others, on the other hand, have enjoyed a range of paddling trips through the winter period not only along the Victorian coast but interstate and overseas as well. This issue of Sea Trek includes articles on a number of these. Personally, I find winter paddling a real delight and I've enjoyed regular opportunities to get out on the water for day trips in the main. I have enjoyed a number of other multi-day trips as well. I make mention of two of these in particular, one inter-state and the other down at Snake Island, just south of the 'Prom'.

Late August, and together with three others from our club (Bronwyn S, Jeannine S and Dave B), I drove up to Yeppoon (just north of Townsville) to participate in a brilliant five days at the Keppel Sea Kayak Symposium hosted on North Keppel Island and organized by the Paddle Capricornia Club.

Numbers were limited to fifty paddlers with participants representing New Zealand and various other

states and territories beyond Qld. It was an honor to have been invited by the organizer, Tim Morris, to provide some Greenland paddling and rolling instruction as one of five instructors (Rob Mercer, Dave Winkworth, Garry Forest, Lyndon Brown being the other four). We were kept busy over the five days leading trips and offered a broad range of training instruction. I was also asked to give an evening presentation based on one of my paddling proverbs: *Capsize may be inevitable, but it's also recoverable.*



Photo: Syd Mainland

Our little Victorian contingent had a wonderful time and the three-day drive each way was well worth the time and effort involved. This was the third year that this unique event has been run and I would thoroughly encourage other VSKC'ers to consider booking in for next year's symposium around August. (<https://www.facebook.com/KeppelKayakSymposium/?pnref=story>). I know I am planning to go again. I was able to offer an invitation to a number of the symposium participants to

join us for this year's VSKC Blue Water Paddle Fest in a spirit of welcoming reciprocity.



Showing little respect ...



L3 Assessment — Photos: TB

Another multi-day trip took place early October at Snake Island and surrounds. This was our VSKC final assessment weekend for Level Three candidates — a bi-annual training event on the VSKC calendar. This year Terry B and I, together with instructor trainees Brandon S and Wim B assessed five level three candidates over a rather rigorous two days. Each of these candidates had completed a nine-month program of training and assessment culminating in this final assessment weekend. Over the weekend candidates were subjected to a range of on-

water tasks, testing leadership, judgement and seamanship proficiency. This was then followed by a two hour theory exam requiring an 80% pass mark.

While this was a very enjoyable time together, everyone (instructors included) concluded the weekend feeling rather weary given the demands of assessment tasks. I'm certainly looking forward to presenting certificates to the successful candidates at the Blue Water Paddle Fest over the Cup weekend (in spite of them showing little respect for my presidential carcass on one occasion).

The time and commitment involved in providing these training programs are not insignificant and I thank all those who have been involved, candidates and instructors alike. While Training is not our primary focus as a club, it is an absolutely essential part of fulfilling our mission purpose, "cultivating sea kayaking as an enjoyable adventure — inclusive, safe and sustainable".

Similarly, our Sea Trek magazine provides a wonderful chronicle of shared stories and insights about our common love for adventure in long skinny boats. On behalf of all club members let me thank our Sea Trek editor for another terrific issue of our club magazine. I hope you will enjoy the read as much as I have.

Cheers
Bob Fergie (VSKC President)



Tracking with GPS on a Trak folding kayak (front centre of image: in waterproof case) — Photo: RW

Raia Wall

Using a GPS for kayak navigation

This text has been adopted in a redacted form from a blog entry by the author (source: Raia Wall, Kayak Navigation — the Garmin GPSMAP 78sc. Blog. URL <http://www.eastcoastkayaking.com.au/blog/kayak-navigation-the-garmin-gpsmap-78sc>. Accessed 1 Nov 2015. — (Ed.)

Proficiency in chart reading and the use of a compass is a vital skill when venturing out on the water. A good reference for sea kayaking in the south hemisphere is *Sea Kayaking — A Guide For Sea Canoeists* by Phil Woodhouse.

I use a GPS as a trip planning tool, particularly when I am going to an area that I haven't been to before — for planning daily distances and locating suitable campsites. This is particularly useful in areas where campsites are hidden in forest and there is no obvious beach to guide the way. It is then simple to follow the GPS route into the campsite, with the paper charts as backup. We also used this technique in the Pacific coast side of Vancouver Island in Canada where we took our Trak folding kayaks three years ago and also in Bathurst Harbour, Southwest Tasmania, in December 2013.

with GPS use, though the Navionics software for iPad and mobile also contains some GPS functions. This is not intended as a comprehensive guide, but does give an impression of the workflows and workflow options involved in the preparation of a trip.

Garmin GPSMap 78sc

The Garmin GPSMap 78sc is a fairly recent addition to the number of rugged hand-held GPS' available. Why do I use this GPS model? The Garmin GPSMap 78sc has:

- Colour screen — so different colours of marine charts can be seen
- BlueCharts for AU, NZ & part of Sth Pacific preloaded
- Memory expandable with a microSD card slot — you can purchase additional cards & load charts from other areas purchased
- Buttons are that are easier & quicker to use on the water than touchscreens



The Garmin close up

This article is primarily concerned

And it gives you something to play with as you paddle!

Tips and Tricks

- Replace GPS unit's batteries each day on an expedition, otherwise every 2 days
- Do not leave open on Map pages as this burns valuable battery life
- While on the water place GPS unit in a waterproof case (eg. Aquapac 348)
- Understand how to also use a base plate and deck-mounted compass, and carry charts copied onto waterproof paper. Do not rely on technology 100%! Each person on an expedition should have and know how to use independent GPS units, in case one fails.
- Use Google Earth to plan your trip — useful for finding beaches and landing sites.
- When working between your GPS, paper charts, Homeport software and Google Earth, make sure you are using the same Lat/Long units (eg. degrees & decimal minutes) and map series (WGS 84)

Setup

Batteries — use Lithiums — will last 2 days for longer crossings if used with Compass/Trip Computer screen, less for Map page. Select correct Battery Type in System

Position Format:

Charts — will be preloaded & enabled in this model & correct map series selected (WGS 84)

Lat/Long — use decimals rather than seconds (hddd°mm.mmm') — align with your paper charts

Display / Battery Saver — leave OFF — otherwise screen will blank and you will waste time pressing buttons to wake it up. Instead reduce battery consumption by reducing Backlighting (reduce Backlight Timeout) and reduce backlight brightness by quickly pressing the power button and use the toggle.

Heading / North reference — you can choose True, Magnetic, Grid

or User. it is easier to leave as True and be aware of what the magnetic variation is. Also this is the menu where you should Calibrate the compass function.

Setting Waypoints

Setting a waypoint for the location you are currently at:

- Hold down the **Enter/Mark** button and the waypoint screen is opened, recording Lat/Long. Use rocker button to navigate through various fields to add notes or descriptive waypoint name. Enter to select letter/number/Done.
- Select **Done** to save & return to Page Setting a waypoint from known Lat/Long to navigate to:
- Read Lat/Long off chart / atlas / Google Earth or other record (eg. SPOT record from someone else's trip!). Make sure the units are the same when copy/pasting Lat/Longs, eg deg & dec minutes:

• Menu / Waypoint Manager / New Waypoint.

- Use rocker button to navigate through various field and add notes or descriptive waypoint name. Enter to select letter/number/Done.
- For ease of use, if naming waypoints in an area use a meaningful prefix, eg. WP-001 for a waypoint at Wilson's Prom.
- Return to map or other page or use **Go** to navigate to this waypoint

Creating a route

A route is a series of two or more waypoints that leads you to your destination. Either first ensure you have all the relevant waypoints already entered in your GPS or select them off the map page as you go.

Using existing waypoints:

- from **Main Menu**, select **Route Planner / Create Route / Select First Point.**
- Select Waypoints, then first waypoint by name/number. **Enter** (selects Use)
- Toggle to **Select Next Point**, **Enter**, then select Waypoints and the next

waypoint in the route — continue until all the relevant waypoints are selected.

- Press **Quit** button to save the route Name the Route:

• from **Main Menu**, select **Route Planner.**

- Select the route (eg. at this stage it is probably called Route 001), press **Enter**.

- Toggle to **Change Name**, press **Enter**, then use the keyboard screen & toggle to type a new name, then press **Done**.

View the Route on a Map:

- from **Main Menu**, select **Route Planner**

• Select the route, then **View Map**

Navigate a Route:

- Press **Find** button and select **Routes**

- Select a route, then **Go** — this will direct you to each waypoint in turn
- Tracking & use of GPS for direction/speed monitoring

Pages:

- **Compass** this page is useful for navigating to next waypoint on a Route — note that it is a straight line so if the waypoint is behind a headland it will point in that direction. Also has speed & distance to next. While in this screen use Menu button to bring up page-specific options — the fields being tracked can be varied.

- **Trip Computer** — again the Menu has the option of varying which fields are monitored. Use menu to Reset the fields & Track as you are about to set off on your journey — otherwise the average speed & odometer will continue on from your previous journey (& even from the drive to the launch point!)

- **Map** — the map page displays the current map — two views are possible: North to the top of the map or the course direction to the top. Generally it is preferable to have north to the top as this is usually how we think when orienting a map. The alternate results in the view shifting around a lot with even minor directional changes. To change this go to

- **Main Menu / Map / Orientation.** Note that leaving the GPS open to

the map page all the time severely reduces battery life.

- **Track Manager** — recording your journey:

- In **Setup/Tracks/Track** log select **Record, Show on Map**. Select **Record Method** — an option to record track points according to Distance, Time or Auto

- **Select Recording Interval** — Normal will be ok for most purposes

- Your track will record as you travel. at the end of your journey save your track by **Track Manager/Current Track / Save Track**. It is now ready to transfer to your computer if you choose (see below)!

- Clear the track at the start of your next journey — **Setup / Reset/ Clear Current Track / Yes**

Trip planning

Charts on the PC/Mac:

Rather than use up your GPS batteries, use your computer to aid in trip planning — you can use Garmin's Homeport software allows you to connect your GPS unit to your PC/Mac and view the Garmin BlueCharts and create waypoints and connect them into routes for your day trip or expedition. You can also view any other purchased marine charts on this software.

HomePort Software Link:

Homeport software is free and is designed to work with the BlueChart marine charts on your GPS so that you can download / upload from your GPS to/from your computer.

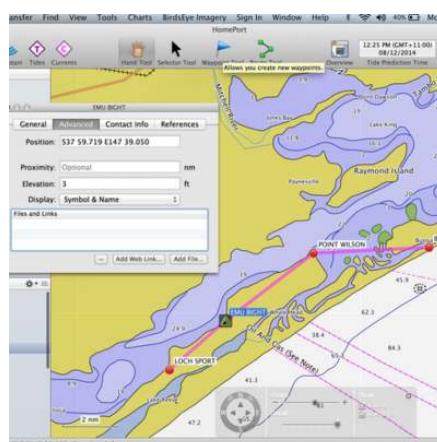
Download Homeport from https://buy.garmin.com/en-AU/prod64242.html?locale=en_GB

Creating Waypoints & Routes ahead of time

First select where you want your waypoints / routes to be saved (eg. in My Collection)

Creating Waypoints:

- Use the **Waypoint tool** in Homeport to simply click on the map where you want to place the waypoint. You can add notes and change the icon in the waypoint's properties screen.
- Alternately, click anywhere on the map to create a waypoint, then double click on that waypoint to open its properties window (Advanced tab), then type in the co-ordinates you have previously sourced.



Adding waypoints and connecting them to form a Route

Creating Routes:

- To create a route on the Map — click on the **Route tool** and click on the locations on the map you want the route to follow. To end and save the route right-click or Esc.
- To create a route from a set of waypoints, select a waypoint or use Command key to select multiple waypoints and click **Create Route from Waypoint(s)**. To edit the route hold down the Option key to add extra points to bend your route around land masses.

Using Homeport with Google Earth:

Use Google Earth to plan your trip — useful for finding beaches and landing sites. Use the **Add Placemark** button to mark a point. Copy the

latitude & longitude from the Google Earth placemark info window into a new waypoint in **Waypoint Manager** or in the Homeport software.

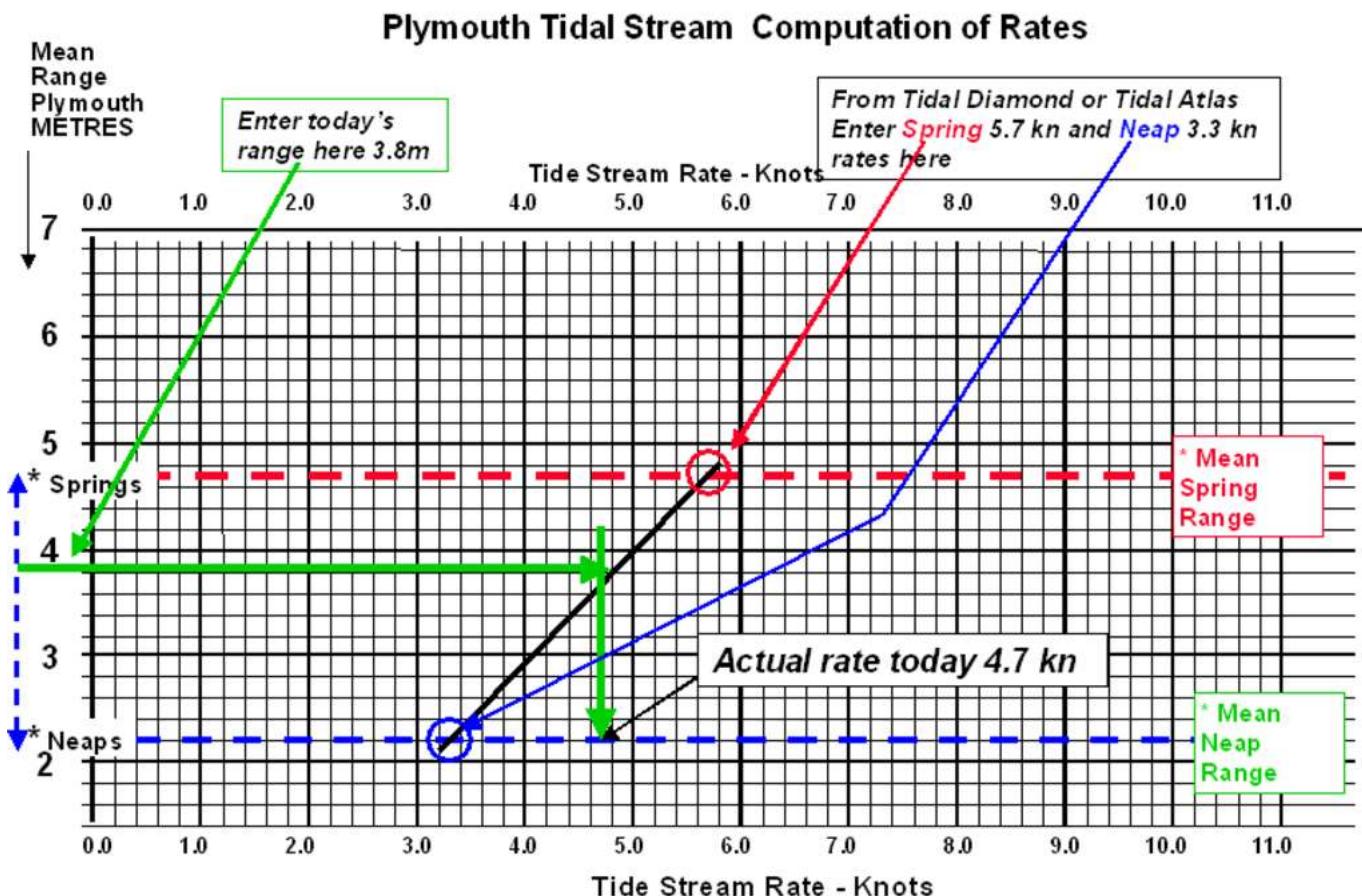
Uploading and Downloading from your computer:

- Save your waypoints and tracks from your trip to your computer:
 - Connect the Garmin to your computer using the USB lead and open Homeport software.
 - Use the **Transfer / Receive from Device** menu item or **Receive** button
 - Select what you want to transfer — eg. waypoints and tracks. All the data of this type will be transferred so it is useful to clean up the memory from time to time.
 - The tracks and waypoints will be saved as a list in My Collection as Recently Read from [device name] — you should rename this list to something more meaningful
- If you have created a set of waypoints and routes on your computer as part of trip planning you can transfer these to your GPS unit.
- Connect the Garmin to your computer using the USB lead and open Homeport software.
 - Select the list you want to transfer from My Collection
 - Use the **Transfer / Send [List name] to Device ...** menu item or **Send List** button

Final Caveat

Never rely solely on electronics! Electronic devices can let you down so never rely wholly on them — trying to push batteries too far or ingress by salt water could spoil your day. Always have a back up — know how to navigate with a base plate compass and carry charts copied on waterproof paper on your deck. Enlarge the detail so they can be read unaided!





Plymouth Tidal Stream Computation of Rates — Source: K Bater, Tidal Streams

Helmut Heinze

Rule of Twelfths and 50/90 Rule revisited

Tides matter. Kayakers have to factor them in. There are two tide-related rules in use for kayak navigation: the so-called Rule of Twelfths and the 50/90 rule. They are reasonable simple in that they don't require any serious mathematics, not even a calculator. Just some mental arithmetic required, with a bit of practice and some generous rounding it can be done on the go. Yet I have always been bothered by the question how accurate these rules of thumb are.

For those familiar with the rules but not troubled and still wanting to know: here an executive summary:

- The Rule of Twelfths: very good
- 50/90 Rule: way off, to be used with great caution

Rule of Twelfths

To quote from VSKC training material:

... in the first hour of the cycle the tide will rise $1/12$ of its range, the second hour $2/12$, third $3/12$, the fourth $3/12$, the fifth $2/12$ six $1/12$. The same relationship applies to the fall of the tide.
(T Barry, Sea Proficiency Course, VSKC, 16)

The rise is cumulative – eg in the second hour the tide rises and additional $2/12$ on top of the $1/12$ of the first hour:

- +1h: $0 + 1/12 = > 1/12$
- +2h: $1/12 + 2/12 = > 3/12$

- +3h: $3/12 + 3/12 => 6/12$
- +4h: $6/12 + 3/12 => 9/12$
- +5h: $9/12 + 2/12 => 11/12$
- +6h: $11/12 + 1/12 => 12/12$

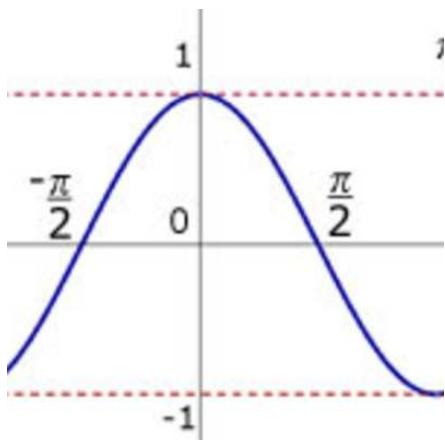
Assuming in an area with a tidal difference of 1.2m we would get a sequence like this in hourly intervals:

- +1h: 0.1m
- +2h: 0.3m
- +3h: 0.6m
- +4h: 0.9m
- +5h: 1.1m
- +6h: 1.2m

To be precise the counting starts always half an hour after slack tide. If low tide was at 10:15am the time span +/- 30minutes, ie from 9:45—10:45am would constitute the 0 hour. The +1 mark would occur at 11:45.

The Rule of Twelfths is a rule of

thumb, an approximation that can be applied in the absence more precise local data, and under the assumption that fall and flow of the tide follows more or less a sine-shaped curve (which is not really the case, even simpler tidal models use breathtaking complex mathematical functions — just have a look at the Wikipedia article at <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tide>).



Cosine curve — Source: <http://www.alvelmathstutor.com/sin-cos-tan.php>

The ideal curve of the rising tide would represent the part of the cosine function from -180° — 0° (or $-\pi/2$ — 0). If we divide this range into 6 steps of 30° , and adjust the result to our example (multiply by 0.6 and shift the curve up by adding 0.6 so that we don't start at -0.6 but at 0) we get the following results:

Apply the following formula in a spreadsheet

$$=(\text{COS}(3.14/6 * X) * -0.6 + 0.6)$$

and enter for X 1,2,3,4,5,6, you will get the following result (rounded to two digits): 0.08m, 0.30m, 0.60m, 0.90m, 1.12m and 1.2m. Let's add these values to our original list, calculated values in brackets:

- +1h: 0.1m — (0.08m)
- +2h: 0.3m — (0.30m)
- +3h: 0.6m — (0.60m)
- +4h: 0.9m — (0.90m)
- +5h: 1.1m — (1.12m)
- +6h: 1.2m — (1.20m)

How good is this! An error of just about 2% for the first and fifths hour!

— Too good. But then we ignored the 1/2 hour shift after slack tide. And the actual tidal half-cycle is more like 6 1/2h hours, but not exactly. Nor is the typical tidal wave a clean sine curve in our part of the world (or at most other places). Still surprisingly good. Given the irregularities of the tide there is no point in using complex formulae, for our purpose the Rule of Twelfths has passed with flying colours. No surprise that this rule is so well established in maritime navigation.

For us sea kayakers the practical relevance of the rule depends on the circumstances. Many won't ever use it in anger. But if for example if you plan a trip along the northern edge of French Island you may want to know how much water you can expect under your keel (or skeg, that is) on a given day at a given time.

50/90 Rule

The 50/90 Rule, in contrast to the Rule of Twelfths seems to be less established. Where the Rule of Twelfths is concerned with the gradual increase or decrease of the water level during the tidal cycle the 50/90 Rule deals with the relative flow rate.

The rule stipulates that at the end of the first hour after slack tide the water flows at 50% of the maximum speed, at the end of the second hour at 90%, the third hour 100%, fourth 100%, fifth 90%, sixth back to 50%.

Navigation tools for vector solutions of flow rates suggest that there is a linear (!) relation between the speed of the vertical rise of the tide and the horizontal flow rate of the water (see figure at top of article, Plymouth Tidal Stream Computation Rates).

So let's assume, for the ease of calculation, that the maximum flow rate be 1.2kn and map it against the relative increments of a tide rising. Referring to the Rule of Twelfths, the maximum flow rate of 100% would occur at the time when the water rises in increments of 3/12ths of the overall

difference. So let's multiply our Rule of Twelfths steps by 400 to get flow rate percentage values that max out at 100% ($3/12 * 400 = 100\%$). What do we get are figures like these: 1st hour: 33% — 2nd hour: 66% — 3rd hour: 100%. This is very, very far of what the 50/90 Rule suggests and yet consistent with more sophisticated tools as tidal stream computation sheets such as the one depicted at the head of this contribution.

How can we salvage the formula?

Starting the clock 30 minutes after slack tide, as we do for our rule of Twelfths, we may point out that the flow rates apply to *the end of the hour in question*. So we may shift our curve by adding $33/2 = 17\%$, the equivalent of half an hour. Then we would get for the first hour $33 + 33/2 = 50.4\%$ and the second $66 + 33/2 = 83.4\%$. We are getting closer but it's too much a stretch as we would get into trouble with our 100%.

So it seems that the 50/90 Rule errs, not just a little but a lot. This is fine if the rule is used when dealing with adverse conditions requiring a ferry glide or upstream paddle. In this case the rule errs on the side of caution. If, however, you want to know how much downstream speed you can expect to exploit, then the 50/90 Rule is misleading, promising way too much. In these cases better expect a flow rate proportionate to the vertical rise or fall of the tide (keeping in mind that the actual flow rate and direction is heavily influenced by the wave form of the tide with its harmonic and non-harmonic distortions and the complex swirls that form over the uneven seabed).

Sources

- T Barry, Sea Proficiency Course, VSKC-internal manual, Vic, 2015
- K Bater, "Tidal Streams." Skysail Training. TidalStreamInterpolationHandout Web Site. URL http://www.skysailtraining.co.uk/tidal_stream_calculation.htm. Accessed 15 Oct 2015.



Helmut Heinze

A year in the Epic 16x

By now my Epic 16x is well used with add-ons, scratches and scuff marks all over. I had the Kayak out on glassy calm winter mornings on the Bay, in messy, whipped up waters, in peaky rebound, on short leisure runs on Canadian Bay paddles and on long distance paddles of 70+ km (a double crossing of Port Philipp Bay and a French Island circumnavigation), not to mention various training events that involved planned and unplanned boat contacts, altogether about 60 paddles.

The good

- The kayak has a comparatively high top hull speed — tested in occasional sprints against traditional kayaks with strong paddlers.
- Comfortable enough on long distances (with an additional layer of bubble wrap on the seat shell).
- Well-defined secondary stability, easy paddling in really choppy waters, including rebound.
- Easy directional fine-control just through edging, lateral upwind / downwind control through leaning forwards / backwards with the seat in the right position.
- Paddling downwind is a treat, the boat accelerates fast, starts surfing early on typical Bay wind waves in 12 to 15kn.
- With the rudder up (I only use the rudder downwind) it is quite playful and can be easily turned with bow rudder or an aggressive low brace turn in a tight circle.
- The 16x can be surfed reasonably well despite its rockerless hull; the

easy acceleration helps to catch waves (so tested by John E.).

- The movable seat and footplate with the rudder pedals show no signs of stress cracks despite heavy use —due to the pure carbon construction (carbon either breaks or stays but does not fatigue).

The bad

- No compass mould, no fittings for spare paddles, electric bilge pump, flimsy 4mm deck lines that were so worn after a year that they had to be replaced (now with proper 6mm lines).
- Rudder lines and the uphaul line for the rudder blade look fluffy after a year despite having been rarely used.
- Hatch covers leak and require constant attention. They need to be kept clean of sand and salt and carefully centred before fastening the levers. I fitted the front hatch opening with an additional rim of rubber which seemed to keep the water out but for a few drops. The large back hatch, however, remains a concern. Rough seas or a few rolls mean inevitable a small puddle.
- The gel coat is extremely thin, or rather, there is no traditional gel coat but a protective layer of epoxy. After a year the boat is full of scratches and scuff marks; a few deeper ones (less than 0.5mm) expose glass fibre.
- Hard turns require super-aggressive edging, harder than in many traditional designs, sculling brace and rolls are OK but there are kayaks that seem to be much easier to handle (for example the Avocet which I had the

pleasure to paddle on one occasion).

The ugly

- I managed to smash the rudder assembly in surf (my fault, I lost hold of the boat after coming out on the way to a rocky beach and it rear-ended on a boulder). When patching together the pieces with epoxy and some carbon I became aware that the rudder assembly is filled inside with what looked like unprotected polyurethane foam. Over time this foam will soak water through osmosis. Shoddy design?
- After a getting clobbered a few times in surf I noticed an inordinate amount of water in the day hatch, even on calm days. It turned out that the bulk head behind the seat has partially detached from the hull and water was seeping from the cockpit into the day hatch. Hard to tell whether it was just glued in or epoxied in. Bad design, bad workmanship, or too much a pounding in surf? — I fixed and reinforced the rear bulkheads with a multi-layered seam of glass fibre cloth.

Verdict

You need to be very careful in an Epic — more than I am willing to be, or accept to watch out for problems and fix them. Yet the Epic 16x remains attractive to me as multi-purpose craft, mainly because I have become addicted to its overall speed and effortless acceleration while retaining a good level of playfulness.



Terry Bary

The Prom Alternative — Gippsland Lakes

As many readers would be aware it has been a long standing tradition to run a trip to the Snake Island Cattlemen's Huts on the Queen's Birthday weekend in June. However this year the unfavourable tide times and cattlemen's use of the huts meant an alternative plan was put in place- A trip down the East Coast of Wilson's Prom to Johnny Souey Cove.

This trip is doable for relative beginners *if* conditions are right *and* there are enough experienced paddlers in the pod.

As it turned out the weather gods combined against us and the forecast was pretty bad- 15 knot Westerly winds on day one, 20 knot NW on day two and 30 knot NW on day three !

So an alternative paddle was decided on the Gippsland Lakes a couple of days before the event, where the forecast was for west and north west winds of under 10 knots for the whole weekend, We were amazed at the difference in conditions a couple of hours drive can make. While we enjoyed sunny calm conditions over most of the weekend we kept checking the wind observations back at the prom and they got up to over 30 knots!

The Gippsland Lakes is also known as "The Victorian Riviera" with a climate that is milder than Melbourne and quite a lot of winter sunshine. The lakes system is the second largest navigable inland waterway in Australia, the Murray/Darling system being the biggest. The land surrounding the lakes is a mixture of freehold land, state game reserves and national park, between these there are a number of formal and shall we say 'discrete' camping opportunities.

The lakes are also home to about 50 of the recently described species of bottlenosedolphin, the Burrunandolphin (*tursiops australis*). The other 150 or so of this rare species are to be found

in Port Phillip. We were lucky enough to see these fascinating creatures every day, often jumping completely out of the water and very close to shore.



Burrunan dolphin — Source unknown

the shore and we could hear one close to shore during the night as well. We had an enjoyable evening around a robust campfire (thanks to Michael the volcanologist) and discovered the mozzies disappear soon after dark.



Enjoying camp at Storm Point — notice the 'terrible water conditions!'

The next morning we awoke to the sounds of gunfire as it was duck season, the birds on the lakes seemed very skittish all trip and we attributed this to the amount of hunters on the swamps surrounding the lakes.



Tony doing war dance to fend off duck hunters

By 0900 we were on the water heading for our longest days paddle to the eastern end of Raymond Island some 28km away.

We stopped at Waddy Point to check out future camp options (not too bad here), then a short break at Wattle Point before a lunch stop on the Banksia Peninsula. Predicted NW winds did not eventuate but we had little resistance from the light NE, not enough to call it a headwind! Dolphins put on quite a display along the way, jumping clear of the water and cruising close to shore where we had lunch.

We than paddled across the lake to Raymond Island and continued on the far eastern point where we were able to locate a nice discrete area to camp at about 1600. The NW winds came along and helped with this last section and made for some small chop.



Cruising towards Raymond Island

Day 3 arrived and we were underway at 0730 after an efficient pack

up by all the group. Again we encountered a very light NE wind which dropped out to no wind by mid morning. We were conscious of the predicted 20+ knot NW winds forecast for the afternoon so keen to make the 17km to Lakes Entrance before lunch. We stopped for a short break at Metung and cruised the last section to Lakes Entrance with the assistance of an outgoing current flow. At some points we were cruising at 9kmh.

We arrived at Lakes entrance before midday at a balmy 21 degrees (highest for the state that day) and soon packed up and headed for home, just as the predicted high winds hit the area. (it was gusting to 40 knots at the prom at the same time) picking up a car left at Hollands Landing along the way.



*End of the paddle — Photo: Michael ****

We all agreed we chose the best place for a paddle given the forecast and although it was not 'The Prom' it was a great paddle with lots of interest and for most of the group the first time paddling to Lakes Entrance.



Cruising near Lakes Entrance



The Fisherfolk of Eyemouth Witnessing the Disaster of 1881

David Golightly and Heather Torbet

To the First Village in Scotland

We are again fortunate to be spending the Victorian winter in a Northern Hemisphere summer – or at least we were hoping for a summer in the three months we planned to be here. Our schedule included some paddling and we had a number of iconic day trips in mind including Gigha, Seil Island, Skye, Arisaig and perhaps even as far north as the Summer Isles.

Our initial attempts however were defeated by the forecast of adverse winds on our preferred sea kayaking destination of Scotland's west coast, so we turned our attention to our nearby East coast and what it had to offer.

Our recently purchased copy of Doug Coopers 'North & East Coasts of Scotland Sea Kayaking Guidebook' provided the inspiration and the information we were seeking, when after a careful study, we modified a trip which recommended a launch in the fishing village of Eyemouth and continues all the way to England with

a finish at the historic border town of Berwick on the River Tweed, itself famed for its link with Sir Walter Scott.

Located approx. 58 degrees N and 2 degrees East with a tidal range in excess of 3 metres, this was a very different paddling location for us, add to this a sea water temperature approximating Port Phillip in winter, this was an area we would be wary off

Knowing that the potential key risk of the trip was the continuous line of skerries, sea caves and cliffs, which line the coast in this part of Scotland we needed a 'friendly' wind to make the paddle possible for us.

The forecast favoured us with SW – WNW winds making at least the direction for our planned South to South-Easterly outbound paddle, in theory at least, sort of working in our favour. The forecast velocity however for 12-18 knots, gusting to 26 knots as well as the threatened wind shift to the WNW later in the day was more

of a problem, that said, we were confident that in the expected high tide conditions we would be able to tuck close into the cliff line and make our way through the rock gardens.

The modification made to Doug Coopers trip was to simply paddle down to a wee village called Burnmouth (The First Village in Scotland), hang around for a bite to eat then head back the way we had come to Eyemouth, a modest all round trip of some 12 km. Just what was needed after a years absence from our Scottish based kayaks and from the chillier waters of these parts. In addition we hadn't paddled at all since the VSKC Nooramunga National Park Easter Weekend trip, understandably we both felt somewhat apprehensive.

The launch site of Eyemouth is etched in Scottish fishing history as the site of a nineteenth century tragedy where the local Herring Fleet, which was the largest in Britain at the time was hit by a huge storm

when temptingly close to home after days at sea working in treacherous conditions. Almost forty fishermen from the small town drowned within sight of their families who watched the struggling boats trying to reach the safety of the harbour. Today a poignant sculpture of miniature women and children commemorate the disaster.

Our chosen launch site from the beach in front of the modern Leisure Centre provided a much relieved short carry to the waters edge and soon after our arrival we prepared for a nervous launch by retiring to a local café for a coffee! Suitably sustained we loaded the little red and yellow Northshore 'Atlantic' kayaks with the minimum gear we needed for the day and at 11.30 am we were off.

Our timing came from the Sea kayak Guide and its recommendation to do the trip around high tide which would allow a more up close and personal relationship with the skerries as well as good access to the inner areas of the Burnmouth harbour at the other end.

Getting used to the boats again after a years absence made for a gentle start to the North-East as we paddled across the bay towards the narrow entrance to the harbour, this is a very busy harbour and you are well advised to approach the almost hidden entrance with care which is what we did and soon we were making the first turn around the headland to change course to the south.

The first kilometre or so is flanked by the local golf course so it is not as high as the land mass further south, as a result we didn't get as much shelter as we had hoped, nevertheless onwards we pushed leaving behind us the well known local features such as Nextends & Scout Point, sometimes paddling harder than we wished for against the strong down-drafts coming in overland from the South-West. Where we could we would head closer into shore seeking the refuge offered by the land which was getting higher and higher as we moved south.

Before long we paddled into a small bay with a considerable sea cave as its backdrop, we took stock while we identified Hurkers Haven; we were both somewhat nervous but also enjoying finally getting out on the water. Heather requested a change of paddle, she would normally paddle with a 'Greenland Stick' but being cautious in the conditions had opted for using our friend Stuarts Euro-Blade, it was now feeling too heavy – so Heather then used David's lighter Euro-Blade for the rest of the trip.

Continuing on we soon met the bigger natural elements of high cliffs (up to 150 metres or 300 feet in elevation) at Fancove Head and with it some of the most impressive caves you could imagine, in and out of the rock gardens we dodged as we rounded headland after headland none of which posed any threat in the conditions of the day. We were careful however not to venture too far from land as a capsize and potential need for a rescue in the off-shore winds, would see both paddlers pushed well out into the North Sea towards Norway before a rescue could be completed.



High cliffs and some of the most impressive caves you could imagine ...

us from their nests perched precariously high in the sheer cliffs. Interestingly this is an area apparently devoid of seals although the informative website resource www.seakayakingnorthumberland.co.uk does mention the possibility of spotting Dolphins, or even a Basking Shark or even rarer – an Orca. However, we did rejoice however in the company of the thousands of sea birds that make this area their home for at least part of the year.

Judiciously ignoring the temptation to actually enter any of the sometimes massive sea caves that dotted the cliff line – there were only two of us and we were determined to continue with our cautious approach as we explored islet after islet, reef after reef on our southwards journey towards England.

Soon the line of houses along the bottom of the cliff which we knew to be Burnmouth came into view and as we drew closer we marvelled at what must be the sight of this tiny fishing hamlet under the force of an Easterly storm, frankly it's a wonder there is anything there at all after centuries of winter gales. The high water mark is just metres from the front door of the houses backing onto the steep cliffs and the 1 in 5 road which snakes down from adjacent the main Edinburgh to London Rail track atop the cliffs.



Approach to Burnmouth Harbour

Burnmouth despite being a tiny

village has a busy productive double harbour, which displays a prominent sign advising of the ten pounds sterling fee for the landing or launching of boats – of any size! As a result we wound our way into the inner harbour and with Heather firmly gripping the rusty rungs of an access ladder built into the rock wall, we extracted our tea and our lunch. Now we were simply ‘moored’ – no payment of fees required at least by our interpretation of the sign.

We were both feeling the now bright sunshine burning our faces so before we left we reapplied copious quantities of sunscreen, why did we doubt that the sun would shine in Scotland?

This little village has to be seen to be believed, a single row of houses in a street just wide enough for one car, one wonders who lives here, are they now ‘weekenders’ owned by well-heeled Edinburgh folk, or perhaps even the English gaining a toe-hold in Scottish real estate before the country elects itself independent?

It was time to head back to Eyemouth so we began to extricate ourselves from the inner harbour, luckily Heather warned of an engine noise and around the corner came a big fishing boat looking to occupy the very mooring space we had just vacated – the men were friendly enough although a bit surprised to see our wee craft hanging around where they should be.

The Doug Cooper recommended strategy of planning our paddle around high tide certainly paid off as even on the journey back we were able to stick reasonably close in to the reefs.

Having played around in the rock gardens on the outbound journey we didn’t hang around so much on the way back, we also had the benefit of the wind behind our backs, which we were grateful for. Nevertheless, we

did stop and marvel at one or two of the larger caves en-route.



Steadily we worked our way around rock features such as Breeches Rock and Hawks Nest

Steadily we worked our way around rock features such as Breeches Rock and Hawks Nest. As our course changed from north to north-west and we began to sense that the expected wind-shift had come earlier than forecast, we were now battling to make headway as the stronger downdrafts belted us from the high ridges of the sea cliffs. Pausing in the lee of each headland we continued on until the Eyemouth Golf Course came into view as well as the rock anglers perched on every accessible spot in the now considerably reduced elevation to our left.

After about one and a half hours of our journey back we arrived at the final headland of Nextends. We paused and consulted, we knew we now had to cross the kilometre wide bay with what was now a lively breeze in our faces, the nearby reefs to our left served as reminder that a capsize would inevitably see us struggling to effect a rescue in time.

Anyway, with nothing more to say we poked the bows of the kayaks around the corner and just kept on going ... and going.

Pausing at the narrow entrance to the harbour to make sure we were not going to be run over by an emerging boat, we headed straight for the beach and with much relief landed safely.

No sooner had we caught much needed breath than we were approached by an enthusiastic local paddler who chatted for a while about his experiences paddling these waters. We were surprised to learn that he regularly went out alone – hopefully he picked his weather well as he also admitted that as yet he didn’t have the skills to roll!

Our first paddle in local waters over we slowly made the transition from water to car, wet to dry gear and headed for the compulsory and highly sought after local ‘fish & chippery’ which Eyemouth is famed for.

Later after suitable sustenance we made our way back to Haddington via Heathers brothers place where we knew we could hang out our wet gear for a hose down and dry – a difficult task in our apartment.

We had enjoyed a good day and it was Heathers first time paddling such continuous cliff and reef zones; indeed we were fortunate to be able to experience such a place.



Safely landed at Eyemouth



Bronwyn Skowronski

Keppel Snippets

North Keppel Sea Kayak Symposium. 2015, Mid-winter. What was this Melbournian really looking forward to? Warm weather and warm water. Everything else would be icing. That cake of warm QLD conditions was re-alised, so what topped it?

Perfect weather. We enjoyed a perfect window of weather. Unbroken sunshine (apart from the one morning we spent snorkelling off Great Keppel Island, what a rude joke Miss Mother Nature!) and calm breezes, joyfully wasteful evenings with rich sunsets. The oceanside of North Keppel Island delighted in gentle onshore winds, enough to whip up lumpy water for a play, but none too big to miss out on venturing into the sea caves, and for some, daring rock gardening.

Birdlife. Spotting and talking birds with fellow bird nerds. Sharon have you got that bird app on your smartphone yet? The Sea Eagles were a treat, with babies spotted peering above their nest. Curlews. I thought someone was playing a joke on my senses. Those massive eyes, tall legs, and their unreal comical darting and freezing. Such a funny bird! Too much to distract you from a great conversation at breakfast and lunch, seated outside under the shade of a tree.



A Curlew “if I stand still no one will see me”

Total immersion and selfish pace to enjoy all things paddling. Relaxed and copious time to spend with new and old friends, great to paddle with, be inspired by, learn from, and provoke sore abs from so much laughter (one being Bob’s talk one evening, I suspected the woman next to me came close to wetting herself).

People. As with my other outdoor pursuits, kayaking is a sport that attracts all sorts, and what a rich and lively world it is to mingle in. Hooksie and Syd. Syd took up kayaking at an age that would have enabled him free skiing at near any resort in the world. He paddles and rolls with the best of them, Greenland no less! If you have tendency to spit the dummy, Syd has your fix. If you ever meet these two,

you need to ask the story about the Greenland stick and the unrestrained relentless dog.

Inspiring evening talks, as dinner was digesting, on paddles near and far, done mildly and others done boldly. Europe by the Danube. New Zealand firsts. Rolling lessons for life. North Reef QLD, all man power.



Bob Fergie and Tim Morris

Learning and unhurried practice. Remarkable line-up of fabulous kayak teachers, who all gave their time for free, yet gave the guidance, care and effort worthy of a top paid performance. Egos left at the shore, great care and comradeship of all paddlers, new or decades seasoned. So often paddling peers were more supportive and delighted in assisting the learn-

ing of others. What a joy to witness Bob get one paddler rolling (who previously voiced that “Kayaking is not a water sport!”). I enjoyed being a part of Rob Mercer’s beautifully orchestrated pod control. Intense learning sessions in perfect pockets of island shore, and ventures of scenic circumnavigation.

Wonderful hospitality and tucker. Though many a time, conversations spoke of temptation to crash the neighbouring ‘XXXX Island’ and all its novel amenities.

Whale and her calf. Darn it I did not see them, but other paddlers were lucky enough! I did get a treat of a sea turtle or two.

Well done and a big thank you to Paddle Capricornia and Tim Morris for organizing such a great event. Please don’t all you sign up for next year’s symposium, as I’d like to attend again myself!



Richard Rawling

Greenland — Sea Kayaking Heaven

Paddling Group – Tasermiut Trip Leader
Leti Boscos (Argentina), Richard and Helen Rawling (Australia), Concha Guil Marchante and Cristina Fortuny (Spain), Bjørn Rasmussen (Denmark), Matteo Carinelli, Andrea Dipietrantonio and Tomaso Pelos (Italy) — Photos by various members in the group.

What do you want to do for your big “0” birthday next year? Good question I thought and the more I pondered over it, the more I was seduced by the idea of sea kayaking somewhere unique, somewhere memorable and somewhere with paddling dimensions I had not experienced be-

fore. This sounded like a much better idea than getting slowly drunk and eating too many party pies! For me, atop my sea kayaking bucket list was paddling amongst ice and experiencing the culture of those who live there – not just a land of ice alone.

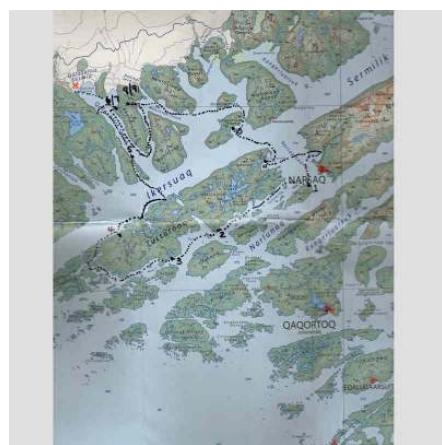
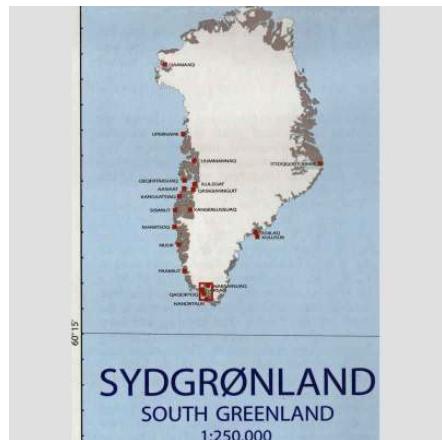
But where? Antarctica is logically a very difficult and expensive place to go sea kayaking in. Patagonia was of interest but is too far north for there to be large ice flows, plus I have already explored and hiked there. That left the Arctic regions, and as I researched options one place clearly stood out – Greenland. As I tested this idea with friends the reac-

tion was universal – WOW! I reckon I had the answer to my birthday bash challenge, and the coolest (get it?!) thing was that my wife Helen was going to join in the adventure (albeit encouraged by the promise of some history jaunts and the vague attraction of some decent single malt whiskies in Scotland post kayaking).

Greenland and sea kayaking

Greenland is the largest non-continental island in the world with an area of some 2.18 million km². The name was coined by a famous Scandinavian settler Eric The Red,

who thought that the name “Greenland” would attract potential settlers. Despite such a large landmass, the current population is only 57,600, with about 15,500 living in the capital Nuuk, located on the west coast. Greenland is a protectorate of Denmark, and is self-governing, albeit relying heavily on Denmark for economic growth. Danish is widely spoken in addition to the native dialect. English is typically understood. The currency is the Danish Kroner, and the economy is largely founded on fishing, tourism, sheep farming and forage agriculture. The majority of goods need to be imported and food reflects the expense of this necessity. The bulk of the population (some 42,100 people) live outside Nuuk in small villages concentrated on the west coast. Perma-ice inland covers 85% of the country and is generally not inhabited.



The actual North Pole is within

Greenland's borders and at these latitudes, the ice is essentially permanent. Down south there are extensive fjord systems, with non-permanent snow on land but large glacier systems that calve a lot of ice (10–15,000 icebergs per year). July is the only month in which Greenland's temperature rises above freezing point. Polar bears tend to appear between latitudes 66–88° north, which is a good thing because these animals are a real threat to paddlers. But they can also appear further south due to their tendency to live on ice flows, so it pays to keep vigilant. Other wildlife include reindeer, musk ox, artic foxes, hares, birds, whales, seals and some pretty weird fish!

Greenland is the home of the Inuit people who populated this land in about 1300 AD (the first Europeans actually arrived on the west coast around 980 AD). Arctic peoples sporadically inhabited Greenland from about 2500 BC. Together with the Aleut peoples further west, the Inuits invented the kayak. They used it to hunt and fish from, and for travel. The classic shape of the Greenlandic hunting kayak with its long overhangs at the bow and stern derives from designs that date back some 4000 years. Inuits became masters of these small, close fitting craft and this design influence is still felt today with many of our sleek, high tech kayaks owing their lines to these fine boats. We can largely thank enthusiastic early 19th century European paddlers for copying some of these designs and introducing them into western kayaking activities. Books like *Kayaks of Greenland – The History and Development of the Greenlandic Hunting Kayak, 1600–2000* by Harvey Golden (2006) point to the amazing variety of Greenlandic kayak forms, and many of us love the light, sleek, stripped back skin-on frame Greenland-style boats that are a joy to paddle. I must say that I do love my own skin-on frame boat built at a VSKC workshop last year. Many of our paddling actions also owe their origins to the Inuit pioneers of kayaking, notably numerous

types of rolling. This kayaking heritage was an utterly compelling reason for me to want to visit Greenland, especially to paddle a modern boat in its home seas – complete with lots of ice of course!

Getting there is always half the battle

As many who have tried will attest, long distance paddling logistics can be a serious challenge. The only viable way to do this trip was to find a guiding company who could supply the gear and organise the trip. It was not feasible to take boats or large gear with us, especially since we had 3 weeks of onward travel. So I fired up Google and started researching. To my pleasant surprise I turned up a few companies, but some ran custom trips (at a premium price) and some spent a lot of time outside the fjords. This was an issue because with my wife Helen coming along, it would not be fair to take an inexperienced paddler on a challenging paddle such as out to Cap Karvel and similar territory. Just quietly, I shall keep that in mind for a future trip!

My research finally turned up Tasermiut South Greenland Expeditions. This Spanish company is named after one of the iconic fjords in southern Greenland. It has been going some 20 years and was established by Ramon Larramendi, a Spaniard who has run extensive expeditions in Greenland since the 1980s. Tasermiut offers a range of guided kayaking trips, mixed hiking/kayaking and Rigid Inflatable Boat (RIB) based trips. Tasermiut has a long history of using South American guides from Patagonia, I suspect because of their Spanish origins and familiarity with a similar landscape. Tasermiut also offers kayak logistics (boats, etc) for independent paddling (now there's an idea!) I made contact and I have to say that the whole process of due diligence – registration and pre-paddle information flow was excellent. I kept wondering if something was going to unravel, notably

that they had failed to get enough people to sign and had to cancel. But in the end they were actually over-subscribed and ran two trips back-to-back (in opposite directions). As the date drew nearer I could hardly contain my excitement. I was about to live out one of my greatest kayaking dreams – paddling amongst ice!

Geography on steroids!



We flew into Narsarsuaq from Reykjavik, a 3-hour flight affording us some truly jaw dropping views over the immense Greenland coastline. Greenland's geography really does appear to be on steroids. Everything – the mountains, fjords, glaciers, icebergs – are so large and monolithic, it completely screws up your sense of depth and distance perception. Narsarsuaq effectively functions as the airstrip for the little town

of Narsaq, which is located some 50kms further south and is home to 1,500 people. We were met by the Tasermiut logistics team who wrangled our bags down to a waiting boat for transfer to Narsaq (where we would start the paddle). And we had quite a few bags too! I decided to bring our own sleeping bags, inflatable mats, some paddling gear (hats, gloves, etc) and a seat. I knew 2.5 weeks camping would do my back in, so I went a Helinox chair as well. I swear I could have sold 8 of them by the end of the trip!

Our speedboat roared down the fjord toward Narsaq on a perfect blue-sky day. Arriving in the town, our bags were ferried up to a Tasermiut-owned hostel (the standards of which were well above the average hostel).



Walking around Narsaq ahead of the pre-trip briefing, the evocative coloured houses on the shoreline

were reminiscent of typical Scandinavian architecture, and the sight of icebergs just off shore blew us away.

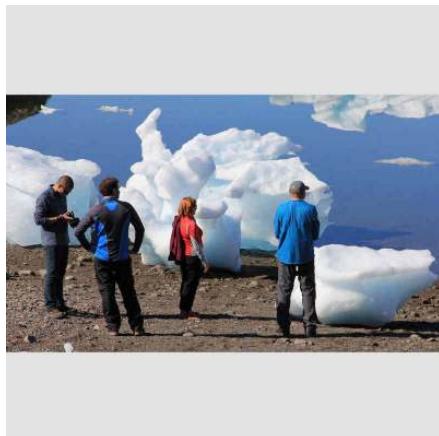
They are unique, beautiful, mysterious and potentially quite dangerous because they are prone to rolling and bobbing up in surprising places (but more on this later).

Forming the pod and getting to grips with the trip ahead

Our fabulous guide was Leti Boscos, an Argentinean who hails from Bariloche in northern Patagonia. Leti's leadership style was extremely professional and encouraged cohesion despite the group's differing paddling experience. There were 8 paddlers in our group, with myself the most experienced paddler apart from Leti. Cristina from Spain was a passionate sea paddler from the Barcelona area, and Dane Bjorn had lots of sheltered waters experience. My wife Helen, three young Italian guys (Matteo, Andrea and Tomaso) and a Spaniard from Cadiz (Conche) had limited paddling experience. With Leti at the helm, our group bonded quickly into a team with great spirit. We mainly spoke English, but our pathetic efforts at Spanish and Italian were well received. I gave up on Danish, but having Bjorn in the group was a great benefit when it came to communicating with the locals, and his anecdotes about Greenland were always interesting. Given the mix of experience in the group, the trip was never going to be 'fear, pain and danger', but it was going to have its challenges as any extended trip of 15 days would. We were living out of the kayaks, carrying all our food, water and gear.

Before we began, we sorted out the gear into what we were leaving behind in a secured store, and what we were taking. That went into a truck and we then decided to walk the 2.5kms over to the old mink farm sheds that Tasermiut use as their gear store. It is always fun getting kitted up, but when Leti arrived with a mountain of food and stuff, I was beginning to wonder where everything

was going to go.



We took the kayaks down to the waters edge on trolleys. We were using a mix of single and boats (Prijon Kodiak – single and Prijon Excursion – double). These boats were very stable and given that we were always landing on rocky beaches, a good choice. We had to wear drysuits (Crewsaver) because the water temperature was about 1.5–2.5C. I thought I would boil in these suits, but because of the cold ambient air conditions, they were actually very comfortable. Mind you, they required a bit of assistance to get on/off as they have a stiff diagonal chest zipper. You also had to be well organised for toileting, because they had no pee zip! For safety, Leti used a Delorme In Reach GPS-enabled communications device in order to stay in contact with base and other guides. This satellite-based device worked flawlessly. Those with

phones could sometimes get 3G coverage, but as we went further and further south this was lost.

Down at the water's edge, we could not take our eyes off the bay full of icebergs that we were about to paddle through.

The excitement was palpable! Given some of the group was not that experienced in boat packing, it took a while to optimise everything, but in the end there was a place for everything – even a large saucepan and kettle in the back of Leti's boat for group meals!



Tasermiut favour a system of putting 20-litre dry bags on decks, which I reckon is basically not a good idea in any sort of wind or significant wave action. But I didn't get to test my theory – the weather turned out to be pretty tame!

Finally our paddles hit the water

First paddle strokes are always exciting, but especially in such an exotic location! After some simple guidance on forward paddle strokes, we were off. Leti was always (rightly) concerned about paddling too close to icebergs because they have a nasty habit of tipping over. Paddling amongst ice is like paddling amongst floating rocks – it is hard when it hits a boat. Despite this we could not get the smiles off our faces as we glided past iceberg after iceberg on what was to become a 10km paddle to Eric The Red Island (Illutalik), so

named because this island is thought to be one of the sites of those early eastern Viking settlements.

Leti's concern about icebergs was quickly vindicated because we heard a roaring noise and turned to see a massive iceberg in the process of rolling. A spectacular sight, but an event riddled with danger for unwary kayakers. We quickly learnt to tell which icebergs were likely to roll given their shape and age, but the temptation to paddle up close was always there. We often heard this roaring sound, but sometimes it was hard to get a bead on where it was coming from. Cameras were whirring as we glided along in slightly ruffled water and we probably took a lot longer than we should have to paddle 12km as we soaked in the unique sights (including one iceberg that I reckon was at least 75m long – huge!).



It took some of the less experienced in the group a while to get the timing of the paddle strokes in the big doubles, but I was pleasantly surprised with the tempo and style of the group as we neared our campsite.

The top end of the fjord we were paddling in is close to a large glacier and as a result, the iceberg density was high. As we headed further south the icebergs thinned out, and as we skated through the last of the icebergs in this section, we beached on the island and carried the boats up above the high water mark. This campsite, and many others like it, involved camping on grass. This meant

mosquitoes. They were not as bad as I thought they might be, but decent repellent is a must if you're even in these parts. Our tents were Atlus (Spanish) and of excellent quality. Leti used a large Bergen Tee Pee Tent for the communal tent, and she also cooked and slept in there.



It got very cold at night and by running the MSR fuel stove it became quite toasty in the Tee Pee Tent (we did not make fires because there wasn't any surplus natural wood to burn). Our dinners were always healthy and tasty, but I must say that I was feeling very guilty with Leti doing so much work. Dinner was always preceded by what became our signature beverage of the trip – fruit tea. We always had hot thermos flask of water on hand in the boats, one per kayak.

As the sun started to go down on our first day we spotted a whale not 100m from camp and I was grateful I had packed binoculars. This was a pleasing offset to the fact that the area we were camped in an area that had been used in the past as a whale slaughtering ground. Fortunately, viewing Minke and Humpback whales close to our campsites became a regular occurrence throughout the trip. We snuggled into our tents relatively early, given we found that by 9.30-10.00 pm we were all so tired that a warm sleeping bag was a pretty attractive option. It would get very cold at night (probably -10C at least), so being well organised to avoid an

agonising trip to the nearest rock for a pee was a good idea! Going forward, our plan would be to have breakfast at 8.00 am and be on the water by 10.00 am. Breakfast was always presaged by Leti's musical call "*Breakfast is ready!*"; what more could one ask for, really? This regime was pretty leisurely paddling by my expedition standards, but all things considered it was a very practical plan that worked well. It was also one that the group was very disciplined in observing, lest we incur Leti's wrath!



Heading south – whales, icebergs and a flying tent

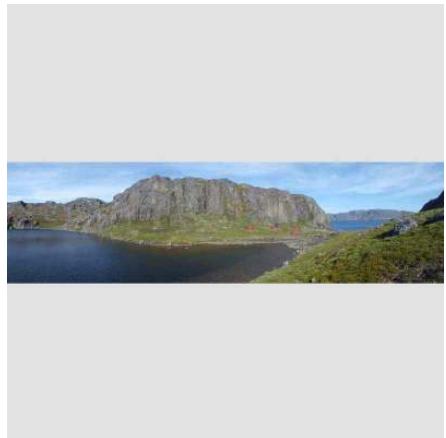
Day 2 of our trip dawned as perfect paddling conditions indeed, another blue sky day with little wind. Our route for the next few days saw us following the southern coastline of Tututooq Island in the Tunuaraq Fjord (see map) in a south-westerly direction. There is a narrow neck in the island and in a worse case weather scenario you would have the option of a 400m portage to get over to Ikersuaq Fjord on the northern side of the island. This then opens up the glacier-infested fjords to the west (but more about that later). We had a solid paddle of 20kms or so and ended up camping at a place called Turtle Point (by virtue of its appearance). Some of our open crossings on this leg were long (approximately 7kms) and would be potentially pretty exposed in decent wind. Day 3 started in similar weather to Day 2, but got windier with what I reckon was only a 12 knot headwind, but can nevertheless be annoying for unseasoned paddlers. As a result, we stopped short of the preferred camp at a place called the Lakes Camp that featured an elevated site up a short cliff at the back of the landing area. It also lost all the beach at high water, so diligence in tying the boats up was required.

What a picturesque spot, but the wind really started blowing as we struggled to set up the tents. It was so windy in fact that as I was setting mine, our Italian friends lost their tent inner and poles as the wind picked it up and blew it out to sea! I gave chase as did the others but once it landed on the water (upright) it behaved like any good sea-going tent and started heading for the far shore at a rate of knots! This was funny, but deadly serious of course. Copious swearing in Spanish, Italian, Danish and Aussie could be heard as Leti and Bjorn who were still in their drysuits took off in the kayaks after it. Once Leti snagged it about 500m offshore, she hooked a towline and Bjorn helped her wrangled it back to shore.



Lesson absolutely learned! After this excitement and given the shorter trip we decided on a hike up into the glorious mountains nearby. Once we got to the top the panorama was spectacular. As we gathered wild blue-

berries and spied yet more whales, I reflected how uplifting it is to know that places like this still exist on this planet. Simply sublime.



We continued south-west the day after the flying tent episode, pleased that the wind had settled somewhat. Day 4 saw us paddle through a complex area of channels near Little Tut-

turooq Island and crossed over into Ikersuaq Fjord to the north. We always had lunch on these days in lovely little locations on grass or rock. We saw many beautiful plants, some just coming into flower. Prostrate birch grew everywhere, as did blueberries.

We stopped at another stunning campsite on the southern side of the Ikersuaq Fjord (The Chilean Camp) after a 25km paddle. There were strange shaped icebergs everywhere, because they had spent a lot of time only partially melting. We saw a spectacular whale tail slap and dive right in front of the camp, in addition to plenty of seals and auks (a relative of the Puffin and the northern replacement for penguins which do not appear in northern climates). We were now bearing north-east, and heading for a large glacier field that we were going to spend the next 4 days or so checking out.

Glaciers here we come with mystical blue ice and curious seals



Day 5 saw us undertake a long and exposed crossing of Ikersuaq Fjord. It was pretty cold and if we had significant wind this would be tricky for anybody. My hands were starting to get quite chilled as I was paddling in yachting gloves, but on this I leg switched to neoprene gloves (which unfortunately tended to give me blisters). We could see the massive Qaletallit Glacier in the distance on

the edge of the main Greenlandic ice sheet.; it looked absolutely spectacular, especially as the sun set.

As we paddled, we were shepherded along by inquisitive seals, which were clearly gun-shy given that they are still hunted in these parts. We saw many stunning blue – violet icebergs in this area, their colour testament to the fact that they are older and the ice has been compressed over time. Different spectral effects then occur as light passes through, which renders the blue shift in the light spectrum.



We saw Caribou at our lunch spot. They were stunning as they appeared on the ridgeline, darting over boulders in an elegant dance. We finally set up camp at the northern end of a place called Skinny Island. We caught some local fish (cod) using left over sausage spread from lunch as bait.



This was tasty with cous cous for dinner the following night. It was

a measure of Leti's overall approach that she solo paddled back a couple of kilometres to fetch water, then got back and made fruit tea and dinner.

Day 6 saw us paddle further up the Qaletallit Imaa to Tasermiut's fixed geodesic dome base camp. They use this as a base camp for RIB boat trippers. Here we wrangled a food drop and did a walk across to see a large glacial lake in the moraine field which was pretty impressive in itself. The base camp had been trashed the week before in really strong winds, so we were wary of that episode repeating itself. We then paddled over in the shadow of the Qaletallit and Naajaat Glaciers to what is known as the Glacier Camp (kayakers and trekkers) where we were to stay for two nights.



The paddle over to the camp seemed to take a while and it was then I realised just how large expanses of white completely throw out your distance perception. Because there were two groups doing the trip in opposite directions, we caught up with the other group for one night at this camp. We also got our first good glimpse of the Northern Lights. At first they appeared as white clouds (even though it was dark around 10.00 pm), but as midnight approached, they steadily turned green. We saw these lights on several other nights, but it was always a struggle to haul yourself out of the sleeping bag at 1am when it was so cold and there was no guarantee that the ionospheric activity would occur.



Day 7 saw us do a 22km return paddle past the front of the Naajaat Glacier and then over to the Qaletallit Glacier where we did a walk up onto the surface of the glacier.



This was a spectacular paddle, rendered more so when as we took selfies, a huge jagged iceberg of blue ice broke free from the foot of the glacier and burst through the water

near our kayaks, much to our consternation and the annoyance of hundreds of seabirds feeding on microorganisms in the water.

The walk up onto the glacier revealed deep fissures and strange icy anthills that occur due to osmosis of earth laden ice through the glacial core. Walking up to these glacier fields is very hard work as you have to negotiate cracked boulders and moraine debris. We were absolutely exhausted when we got back to the Glacier Camp, but what a stunning day's paddle and exploration.



Day 8 saw us paddle south-east back down the Qaletallit Imaa in a stiff breeze. We had contemplated staying given the long downwind paddle and the fact that once we turned north we would have to paddle back up into that breeze. But the downwind leg was pretty quick as we shot along at about 10kph. Once we turned north into the breeze we had to hop from headland to headland in order to leverage our way up to our next campsite where we would again be for two nights. We slogged it out and after 21kms finally pulled into a magical camping location at the foot of large mountains (Akuliaruseq) where we would do a full day trek the following day.

We were all knackered, but we were getting pretty fit and dropping body weight as the combination of healthy food, strenuous activity and the cold caught up with us. It was hard to find fresh water for drinking

at this particular site, and the climb up to the high level creek was tough as you navigated your way through sharp, cracked boulders that were wicked on boots. Definitely not a good place to fall over.

Day 9 was set aside for a hike up into the mountains to view the Naajaat Glacier from the opposite mountain range. We geared up and started our 18km trek up into the mountains. At first the scenery comprised of rocky boulder spills as we grappled to get up onto the moraine fields proper. We passed many picturesque lakes and valleys, but there is a distinct lack of soil in these parts, so what vegetation there was clung to a precarious existence. The trail was unmarked, but Leti guided us well through the boulders and scree. Once we got up higher we came across a very large freshwater lake that was convenient given this was our designated ‘washing day’. The girls went right off a little rock outcrop and the boys went left. It was far too cold for me but Tomaso and Andrea plunged in stark naked. Suffice it to say, the look of horror on their faces was well worthy of photographic record as the true impact of the icy water took hold of various parts of their anatomy. Helen said and my hair was pretty disgusting after 9 days without washing, so we both opted for a head wash only which was well worth it.

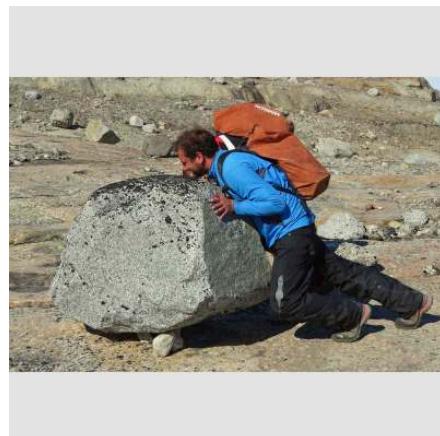


Our climb took us further up onto huge granite slabs, much like what you see at Wilsons Promontory. Here

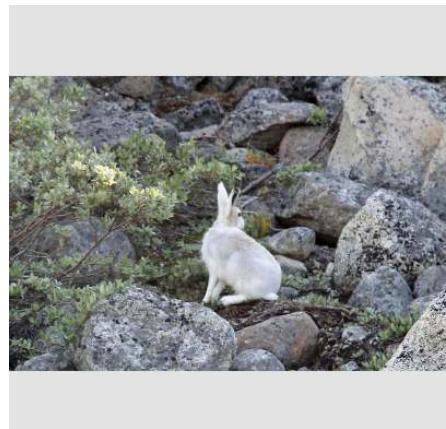
though they had been scoured over hundreds of years by active glaciers. Eventually we arrived at a stunning overlook of the Naajaat Glacier where we had lunch and napped in the bright sun.



Our trek back down was via a different path and we twisted through moraine fields where the boulders had been for hundreds of years after the ice had melted. Pretty awe inspiring, although I thought Andrea’s attempt to roll one of these monoliths was a tad ambitious!



We saw an artic hare on the way back, which for all the world looked like a bunny on steroids, much like the mountains.



The vistas of rock, small lakes, alpine grasses and the odd flower were stunning. Once we got back after a long day our legs were pretty wobbly, and we greatly savoured the famous fruit tea. By this stage another group had turned up. They were doing the 5 day kayak trip. Two Tasmanians in the group bemoaned the fact they had not done the longer trip, and I have to say that doing the longer trip was a far better call given what they told us they were not seeing what we were.

Narsaq bound but in no hurry to end our magical journey

Once we left the trekking camp we had effectively started our long, slow trip back to Narsaq, and we wanted to be sure to savour every last paddle stroke. By now everyone’s paddling was really efficient and we glided along at a good clip. I kept thinking that we should slow down to soak in the glorious scenery. As we headed south-east down Manitsup Tunua, the majesty of the massive mountains really hit us. So too did the tiredness of a period of non-stop activity. We stopped many times for a breather and Leti always seemed to find a food bar or a bit of chocolate, and of course our lovely fruit tea! On Day 10 we left our camp spot on the northern side of the fjord and crossed in perfect weather, but I again thought that this could get pretty gnarly in a strong side wind. It was a 22km leg that took us through a field of jagged and unstable icebergs.



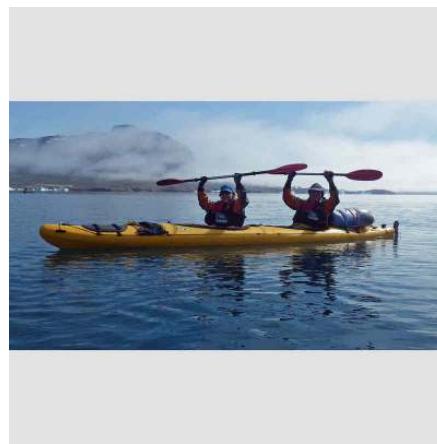
There were more icebergs here than further south because we were now much nearer the calving head of the main glacier in the area – Eq- glorutsit Kangilliit. Some of the icebergs were huge, and in some cases had fallen onto their neighbours. We gave these a wide birth, as we did the ones with moraine rubble embedded in their upper levels. We camped near an old fisherman's hut, which although being relatively modern was quite run down. The red colour of the hut was in stark contrast with the blue water, white icebergs and dark mountains in the background. We met a group of three Spanish women who had hired their boats from Tasermiut for a self-guided trip (this is actually a great option for this area provided you know where to find water). I remember ending this day sitting in my Helinox chair, sipping fruit tea and gazing out over the scramble of icebergs, and made a note in the diary for the umpteenth time – “*this really is kayak heaven*”.

Day 11 saw us leave iceberg alley and head over to a place called Stephensen's Haven. This is an old Inuit village dating from 1350 that was archeologically excavated in 1935. There was not much there, but we enjoyed checking out the old ruins where stone houses had been. It must have been a very hard life. This was only a short paddle (12kms) as we decided to avoid a big group from another company who were camped where we were heading. So we spied a nice spot and pulled up there in-

stead. Conditions were dead calm. We saw many whales and many icebergs fall apart and reform, again underscoring the dangers of getting too close. We could also by now see Narsaq in the distance. We were nearly at the end of our kayaking ice odyssey, although I think many of us could have happily gone on. Our final night was really cold and we awoke to fog. We knew Narsaq was due east, but care was required in those conditions. As we pushed on, Narsaq gradually emerged from the fog as the sun burnt through. We only had to cover 8kms or so, but use of the GPS was certainly prudent.

as a lot of the ice had moved around, but it was still full of icebergs and a perfect opportunity for Andrea and Matteo to finally test out the drysuits in the water – suffice to say it was still bloody cold!

We decamped all the boats and dragged them back up to the storage shed. Once we had washed all the gear, we had a final picnic lunch on the grass, again in sunny, blue-sky conditions. We decided to walk the 2.5kms back into Narsaq as somehow it did not seem right to jump into a truck after all we had just achieved in the boats – 180km of sheer kayaking bliss. The hot shower in the hostel was sublime, to say the least!



Time to explore Narsaq and reluctantly head back to ‘civilisation’



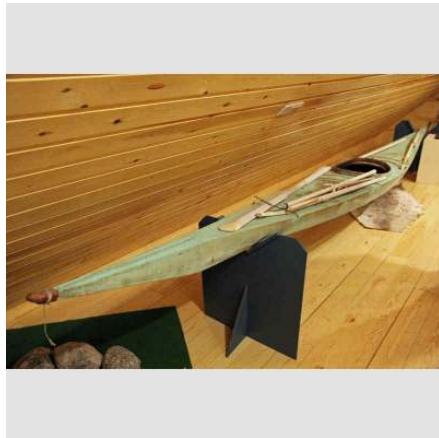
As we stopped to reflect on our accomplishments, a tinge of sadness washed over me at the knowledge that the trip was nearly over. We took a celebratory photo with our paddles in the air and then weaved into the bay west of Narsaq where we had started. It was pretty unrecognisable

Once we had settled back into quasi civilisation, the focus quickly turned to food. While paddling, we had daily fantasies about spaghetti carbonara and pizza, and this was a challenge that our Italian friends gladly accepted. So off to the small supermarket we went for supplies and then back to the hostel for a lazy pasta lunch. The boys really excelled themselves, actually hand making the pasta. Once that had barely hit the sides along with a few of the local beers to wash it down with, we went for a stroll around Narsaq taking interesting photos and checking out the little local stores. The little church interior was gorgeous, as were the brightly painted little houses in the town. The local hotel was the only place with any sort of wi-fi so we used that to reconnect with emails, and sample a hot chocolate and cake. That night the two groups joined up for a pizza party courtesy of our Italian friends again. The pizzas kept coming and we were only too happy to keep eating them – marvellous.



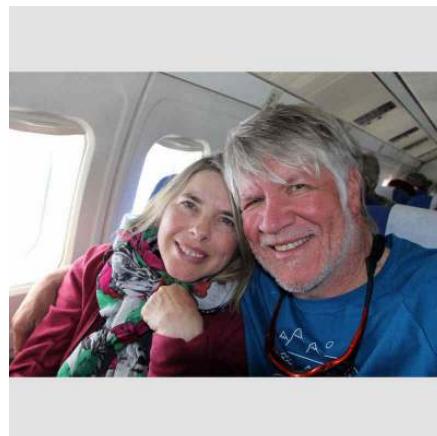
The next and final full day, we did some shopping for local maps and the like, and just kept exploring around. Our French friends in the other group were cooking on the last night and had chosen to do fish. The fish varieties in these waters were unknown to me, except wolf fish, which is god awful ugly with jaws that can crush rocks. It is a bit like an arctic version of a Moray eel. But it ended up being very tasty! They had also purchased some seal, and cooked that up in a dark glaze. Probably because I am a proud owner of a lovely Golden Retriever dog, and seals seem much like the Goldens of the sea (cute and playful), so to Helen and I the thought of eating seal was too much. Suffice to say that those who did try it did not rush back for seconds!

On our last morning we paid a visit to the small local museum. It had an interesting display of old kayaks, harpoons and other related gear. Boy, those Inuit kayaks are tight fitting!



Eventually we made our way down to the wharf for the RIB boat ride back up to Narsarsuaq. We left Leti on the wharf as she reluctantly got ready for another 3-day trip – the final trip for the season. We donned polar jackets for the fast boat ride because the air was bitingly cold. It was also quite foggy and the driver was navigating by GPS. I am just glad he didn't smack into one of the big icebergs!

Once back at the airport we got organised for the flight and had a few snacks plus what was left of the beer from our raid on the Narsaq supermarket the day before. We left on different flights at different times, depending whether we had flown via Reykjavik or Copenhagen. It was a bit sad saying goodbye given the bonds made within the group, but we have stayed in touch quite a bit since and we now have many couches that we can crash on in various parts of Europe. Concha has made a stunning video and checking that out bought back many great memories. I have a video as well if I can ever get it sorted...



As the plane pulled out of Narsarsuaq, we gazed over geography on steroids one last time. In many ways, the ice flows, glaciers and mountains were somehow now all in an even more sensible context. We had been part of that brilliant environment for 15 stunning days and it will live with us forever. In many ways, the selfie Helen and I snapped on the plane on

the return trip said it all – a sense of having had one of the experiences of our lives and one of great achievement. So how do I come down from such an amazing experience? By working on the logistics for trip number two on my sea kayaking bucket list, that's how!

Reflections and dreams of more ice

Would I go back to Greenland? Yes I would – in a heartbeat. It was stunning and logically very doable in the end. My target if doing it a second time around would likely focus on Disco Bay, Ilulissat and maybe Nuuk. But by the sounds of it, the paddling south of Narsaq around Qaqortoq and Nanortalik warrant attention. I might be tempted to free rent kayaks this time, but there is a lot to be said for a guided trip, especially with a guide like Leti, and I thought it was really good value for money (see Tasermiut website).

Things to remember when planning your own Greenlandic kayaking adventure:

- **Do your homework** – if you go on a guided trip be confident it will have enough stretch for you given your capabilities. But be satisfied that at times what will be easy for you, might be harder for others.

- **Check expected weather** – investigate the weather relative to the time of year you plan to go (the paddling season in Greenland runs from mid-June to mid-September), outside those times forget it. If you want to see the Northern Lights, then late August is best.

- **Take a few paddling luxuries** – I took a collapsible chair, a better than average sleeping mattresses, good head torch and some well worn and trusted paddling clobber.

- **Check out proposed gear and guide** – we thought Tasermiut got it pretty right, but I have heard horror stories about others who have got it badly wrong.

- **Appreciate local context** – seek to understand the local people, customs, history, geography, etc before you go,

as it makes for a much richer experience.

- **Leverage the trip** – if you are going to the other side of the planet for sea kayaking purposes, then factor in some other activities that make it worthwhile. We spent 4 days in Iceland and I paddled in Scotland for a few days (and the west coast is another branch of sea kayaking heaven from what I saw), but we also checked out a lot of historical aspects in Scotland and then had a lovely stopover in Shanghai on the way back

- **Reasonable expectations** – if you

are going with a non-paddling partner, be patient and do not push the envelope too much. This was not a trip for novices, and I worked a lot harder on boat wrangling, camp set up and the like more than I would have with an experienced paddling partner. But to do a trip like this with Helen, was really special. Kudos to her for having a go, which she did brilliantly well.

- **Narsaq weather** – www.worldweatheronline.com/v2/weather.aspx?q=Narsaq,%20Greenland
- **Viking settlement** – en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Eastern_Settlement
- **Greenland Tourism** – www.greenland.com/en/
- **Ilulissat** – whc.unesco.org/en/list/1149
- **Lagavulin Whisky Distillery, Isle of Islay** – www.discovering-distilleries.com/lagavulin/

Some useful web references

- **Tasermiut** – www.kayakingreenland.com/ ■
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Roger Bellchambers

Skills and anxieties

I write this brief piece as a reflection of my years of paddling experiences which I hope may help other paddlers.

When paddling on club day trips , AGM paddles and any extended expedition, -in fact any paddle, the things I think of as we get underway relate to the dynamics of the paddling group, including the confidence of the leader, the groups' collective skills, the experience and personality of individuals , and then where my past paddling experiences fit in with this group.

The questions I ask myself include;

The leader ...

- How confident is the leader with decision making?
- Has the leader got the skills for this particular trip and prepared for actual or potential conditions involved?
- Will the leader encourage the group to do as instructed?
- Will others try to take over and then possibly undermine the leader's confidence to lead?

The group ...

- What is the size of the group ?
- Will they stay together or stretch out ?
- Is there a big variation in people's paddling ability and speed?

- Does everyone have the skills needed for the paddle?
- Does everyone have the capacity for the distance required?

... and myself

- What is my personal paddling ability and skill set?
- What is my level of comfort on this particular event?
- I believe EVERYONE needs to assess themselves at the start of every trip.
- It is then possible for YOU to then feel comfortable with your position within the paddling group, regardless of your degree of experience.

After looking at, and considering all the above, I would add one more thought.

Anxiety

Let's distinguish anxiety from educated concerns about recognised specific risks. Anxiety, in contrast, is generic, a broad perception of danger. This perception of danger might have an object but it remains vague — it's the fear of the unknown and unspeakable. Thus, anxiety can be called irrational and unproductive, but yet, it is real.

I consider anxiety to be a major influence one's enjoyment, and ability to stretch oneself to a higher level.

My belief is that we all do need the practical skills that are taught through the VSKC — but there are often many unspoken anxieties.

We need to recognise our own fears — including fear of the unknown, anxiety about what other people think, fear of coming out of one's boat, not being able to get back into the boat; fears of the depth of water, difficulty in unfamiliar water, fears of drowning, ... and of course, the primordial fear of sharks!

Until we overcome anxieties one we struggle to move forward.

Inability to roll, and coming out of one's boat is all a normal part of kayaking, and should not be the source of personal anxiety and, thus, an impediment to improve and enjoy.

I feel it is vital for each person to be able to think through the above questions, and have confidence in the group of paddlers around them. It may then encourage paddlers to step out of their comfort zone, take more opportunities to increase skills and deal with their possible anxieties.

I have wanted to share my thoughts as have personally experienced challenging kayaking conditions, including unplanned swimming events- but have had complete faith in my fellow paddlers' ability to assist in any situation and left me with lifetime memories.





Kate Hives (Vancouver Island, BC)

Missing the Point? Women in Kayaking

Adapted for Seatrek with friendly permission by the author. Source: Kate Hives, *Love what you do, inspire others to do what they love*. Blog. <http://katehives.com>, Posted 2 Sept 2015. Accessed 10 Oct 2015.
— Kate is a coach with 'SKILS' (www.skils.ca) and holds certifications as a Level 3 Sea Kayak Guide, Guide Trainer and Examiner with the Sea Kayak Guide's Alliance of British Columbia (SKGABC), with Paddle Canada as a Sea Kayak Level 2 Coach and Level 3 Coach aspirant. Kate has been with the VSKC during training weeks with Nick Cunliffe in March 2015

I was recently asked for my opinion around how we can encourage more women into the sport of Sea

Kayaking. This has been a topic that has been circling my awareness for some time now and as a woman in sea kayaking, I feel it deserves some further investigation. It may be true that there are more men participating in sea kayaking than women; We see this represented at symposium, in coaching demographics and on the water. However, the question itself of how we might encourage more **women** into sea kayaking, might be missing the point.

If, for a moment, we set aside the polarizing aspects of gender and look at general participation in sea kayaking, perhaps we can see more deeply why more people don't get involved in

our wonderful, albeit fringe, sport. If you are a sea kayaker, you can probably identify your motivations for sea kayaking – fitness, friendship, community, time in nature/outside, love of the water, personal challenge, to overcome fears ...

The reasons that we participate in sea kayaking are varied and diverse, just like our community of paddlers. In the same breath, we need to acknowledge the various different styles of paddling that people participate in. From flat water touring in lakes and calm water; to long challenging expeditions circumnavigating continents; rough, adrenalin packed play around waves, surf and

rivers; technical rolling skills with traditional blades; racing and glide at high speeds; and so much more ... we all find a niche within the sport that suits our needs, hopefully.



This is the point ... we are diverse community of paddlers, with a range of motivations for participation in the sport. So what then are the barriers that inhibit newcomers from joining? I can identify some obvious offenders like time, money, knowledge and fear, however I will highlight that **these affect both men and women**. (It could be argued that it is more challenging for a certain demographic to overcome these challenges, but I'd rather

not go there right now.)

Ok, Kate, so what's the solution here?



With such a mix of paddlers, motivations and challenges how can we build our community to create a stronger more inclusive and unified adventure sport?

We are all paddlers, regardless of what kind of waters we like to paddle — this needs to be a part of our dialogue. To be a paddler does not mean you must surf the biggest waves or roll in 200 different ways; it also doesn't require that you paddle thousands of miles around countries... it might mean you paddle around your

local lake. There is room for all kinds of paddlers in this community, we need to foster acceptance around this reality.

What this looks like in practice is clear communication around paddling events and excursions. In creating space for a discussion around individual expectations, goals and desires, participants can more accurately select a paddling partner or group that suits their needs. This way we don't scare new paddlers in conditions over their heads and we can limit frustrations held by paddlers waiting at the front of the group, wanting to push harder. There is nothing more important in building a strong, healthy and vibrant community than clear communication and acceptance of diversity.

My call to action here is to build acceptance around all genres of paddling (from calm water paddles to rough water play), to support newcomers to the sport and cultivate clarity around expectations on our trips and events. There is room for a little bit of everything in this community, but it requires support from all angles. **Love what you do, inspire others to do what they love.**

■

Bronwyn Skowronski

Do you Leave No Trace?

With summer almost here, and the peak of camping season upon us, let's review and refresh ourselves with the principles of 'Leave no Trace' camping and general outdoor adventures. Think about how you go about treading and paddling, your good and bad habits around this, and the broader picture, so that you might encourage and educate others to looking after our beautiful playground better.

Here's a few thought provoking principles I have either previously got wrong myself, must keep reminding myself of, or commonly see others

getting wrong. You can check out the full list at <http://www.lnt.org.au/programs/7-principles.html>

One. Dispose nothing in fresh waterways. No, not even toothpaste, soap, environmentally friendly detergents (whatever that is?!), food scraps, urine, old dishwashing water. Nothing.

Two. Apple cores, banana peels etc. Yes they are biodegradable, but they do not belong in the bush. Pack them out.

Three. Don't leave food lying openly obvious, or easily accessible to

animals around campsites and picnic spots, both while you are there, and after you leave. Wombats, possums, birds learn to frequent these areas, and even become aggressive, sometimes destroying bags and tents, in their pursuit of this learned resource for food. People's food is often harmful to wild animals. Currawongs in Tasmania have even learnt to unzip tent flys and bags to gain trekkers food!

Four. Don't burn used toilet paper. Either bury it or carry it out.

Five. Have an attitude of "Leave

it better than you found it" when venturing outdoors. If you find rubbish, if it's safe and easy to do so, collect it so it can be disposed of properly.

So?

Remember that the preservation of our wild playgrounds are dependent on the good habits of every individual. The actions of 100 people, or a single one, can have a massive negative impact on an ecosystem.

So: Leave only footsteps, Take only photos (and other people's rubbish).





V-tow under sail — Photo: BF

Greg Skowronski

Walkerville Weekend (27–28 June 2015)

As part of his path to level 3, Steve C organised a weekend of paddling down at Walkerville on the weekend of June 27-28th. Around a dozen paddlers turned up for the weekend. On Saturday the weather conditions were quite pleasant with moderate swell and moderate N-NW winds so the decision was made to do a leisurely paddle from Walkerville South to Cape Liptrap. Initially the wind was behind us as we were paddling south, so we made quick progress towards our destination. After 3 km we turned west so the wind was more offshore. Just after the 5km mark a pod member felt quite sick and low on energy. So the decision was made to V-tow them back to Walkerville South. Four pod members volunteered to assist with the chaperoning duties. Initially myself and Terry B volunteered to do the towing. We put our sails up which helped slightly. After a few kms the decision was made not to do a burial at sea but just yet but keep towing them back to safety. Brendon S took over the towing duties and he and Terry finished the job. All good! The rest of the pod kept pad-

dling towards Cape Liptrap but as it turns out they turned back shortly after we left them. Apparently with the offshore wind and no safe passage close to shore the decision was made to turn back for safety reasons. After we got back a few of us decided we haven't had enough paddling yet so we paddled from Walkerville South to the nearest reef in search of some sea life. To our surprise we were soon surrounded by a pod of dolphins and seals playing around so it was well worth the effort.



A few of us played ...



... around the surf in Waratah Bay – Photos: BS

On Sunday morning a few of us played around in the surf in Waratah Bay. The more adventurous ones were surfing the dumpy surf and the rest were just happy to play in the smaller stuff closer to the shore. The tide was going out and the waves were steepening so after about an hour or so we exited the water.

I thought Steve did a great job that weekend and I do hope he gets his Level 3. Good luck!





Fun playing in the waves — Photo BS (Waratah Bay)

Steve Collins

Level 3 Surf Assessment

Ocean Grove, 19 September 2015

The surf zone is one of the most dynamic areas that we as sea kayakers paddle in. Whether you enjoy playing in the surf, or, find it confronting and a bit scary, there are times when it is unavoidable. For instance, a club weekend at Tidal River will pretty well always require that you paddle out through small to moderate surf, most can manage this, it's coming back through the surf to land on the beach where capsizes often happen. Flipped over, a wet exit, the long walk, with your kayak full of water back to the beach. Sounds familiar? It does to me, I have done it so many times in the past, pleased to say not so often now. Learning to control your kayak in surf is an intrinsic element of sea kayaking. Our club often runs training sessions in the surf, and experienced kayakers are always happy to give advice and pointers. Learn and practise in the club environment, as there are certain rules to

learn to protect yourself and others from injury. Once you have built up some skills you will feel much more confident, and, even find, that playing in the surf is loads of fun.

Our grading system requires that we have a degree of ability in surf at both Level 2 and Level 3. The requirements at Level 3 are, of course, more rigorous. With this in mind, three, of a larger group, of this year's Level Three candidates met at Ocean Grove Beach to undertake Level 3 Surf Assessment. Club instructors John E and Greg M generously gave up their time to assess whether Helmut H, Gerard O and myself each had the skills and ability in surf required of a Level 3 paddler.

Surfing, rolling, re-enter and roll, surfing backwards, entering and landing in surf and organising a group on and off the beach were a few of the skills that we needed to demonstrate.

We started out with a scenario where two of us had to lead a group of intermediate paddlers out to the sea through some quite moderate surf.

The only catch was a rocky beach with some shallow rocks above and under water that required a bit of caution and good timing. After a successful launch we followed the beach east inside and outside the surf zone, catching the odd wave. The launch then was complemented by a surf landing scenario, organised by a different team (well not entirely different, with just three candidates to mix and match there are limits). No drama here as well. This was followed by some play in the waves, tumbling and bumbling, rocking and rolling, forwards, backwards, intentionally or unintentionally (Helmut kept accusing his Epic spinning him on one occasion maliciously from a broach into a fast backward on a pile of bumpy white stuff — yet another way of surfing backwards). The session was finished off with a re-enter and roll for each of us in the surf zone.

I must say that we all had fun playing in the waves, and better still, John gave each of us pass.





Yet another holdup, what is it this time?

Steve Collins, Helmut Heinze, Gerard Oreilly, Kerry Vogeles and Graeme Thompson

Level 3 Assessment Weekend

Find below some reflections on the Level 3 Final Assessment weekend that took place 9–11 October 2015 at Port Welshpool and on the waters around Snake Island, Wilsons Prom. It should be mentioned to our readers that as much as we wish and as much as there was to tell we are not able to render a detailed account of the assessment weekend. The best stories have to remain untold.

All photos by Terry Barry. — (Ed.)

A challenging weekend

I was not feeling particularly anxious

as I arrived at Port Welshpool for the Level 3 Assessment weekend, however, as with the other Level 3 candidates, I did not sleep particularly well that first night, and not much better the second.

So, it's probably fair to say, that, with a certain level of trepidation I began what was to be a challenging weekend, both on and off the water. From the start, there was definitely a feeling of, them and us, the instructors and the aspiring candidates. Early on a bond was formed between us five candidates, so much so, that I

will forever remember who I did my Level 3 with, a great bunch of comrades. As for the instructors, well, the less said the better. They confronted us with scenario after scenario, and challenged us in many ways.

Weary and tired we arrived at the Cattlemen's Huts on Snake Island, once we had completed a written exam we were able to relax a little and reflect on what had been an eventful day. There was more to come the next day, and then finally we were back at Port Welshpool.

It was a weekend where I learnt

so much, the instructors, were really, not that bad ,and I thank them for the time and effort they put into the whole Level 3 program , it has been a great experience and I highly recommend it to others. And a big thank you to Kerrie, Graeme, Helmut and Gerard.

(Steve Collins)



Weary and tired ...

A fantastic team

At last the Assessment Weekend, the Grand Final of the Level 3 sequence was on. Actually I had been looking forward to this weekend. I arrived early at Port Welshpool after a chaotic week at work. We had dinner at the local pub, and then the pressure was on. Us, the candidates in one cabin, were sweating about details of our trips we were to lead; them, the instructors in the other cabin seemingly having a good time, presumably fine-tuning the mischief they were going to inflict upon us candidates — may their bad conscience haunt them in their sleep, I thought. But it was me lying awake and having second thoughts and re-doing tide and ferry glide calculations in my mind until dawn, only briefly nodding off with nightmares about mass drownings at Singapore Deep in mountainous waves. — Saturday morning we loaded the kayaks and readied ourselves for what was to come. Everybody complained about having slept badly, some coped better, some worse.

We pushed off on from Port Welshpool, taking turns leading assigned legs of our trip to Snake Island, and only minutes later we were battling away all sort of minor and major-made incidents. To be expected, but still nerve-racking. And when there was a lull and everything seemed to be peaceful, you knew something else was brewing and you were wondering what it might be. In the afternoon, at last, came the signal that we are off scenarios and ready to set up camp. With our last strength we pushed and dragged the loaded kayaks up the dunes. Done? No, not yet! A 100 meter swim. Bob und Terry took position in hip-deep water marking a distance of some (generously inflated) 50 meters, and we had the pleasure bumbling from one end to the other and back in whatever mode our aching and cramping bodies with PFDs, spray decks, trapped air in our clothing could handle. Not pretty, best described as truly 'freestyle'.



Very 'free'-style

The rest of the day was just a blur in my memory, my lack of sleep made the simplest task a challenge. We put up our tents, had a quick coffee and then sat our written exams until darkness, exhaustion, lack of willpower or all three made us and hand in the papers. I got pretty early to the point where I did not care re-checking my answers and handed in early. Kudos to my fellow candidates who kept working with a head torch after dark-

ness. — Sunday was pretty much a continuation of Saturday's work. More legs to paddle, other leaders, other disasters, other stuff-ups. I had a bit more sleep, was feeling much better than on the day before but was still sluggish and made too many unforced errors.

In the end I was disappointed with my performance. It's easy to blame the circumstances such as lack of sleep but the whole idea is prove that one can still navigate, keep a group together, make the right decisions and perform rescues under duress. This way, the assessment weekend doubled as invaluable training days. The weather and the sea had been very pleasant and did not pose any challenge paddling-wise, but it was an interesting experience to see how things start falling apart (at least for me) under stress.

All in all it was a tough but fantastic weekend. Big thanks to the instructors who put in their time and exhausted themselves (almost) as much as us candidates. My fondest memory however of this weekend was the spirit of solidarity and cooperation among us candidates. A fantastic team we were!

(Helmut Heinze)

Testing times

The Assessment Weekend seemed like ages away from the Level 3 Intake, it crept up on me. Nervous, am I up to this? Meet and greet at the Port Welshpool pub on a Friday night, a bit of navigation to be done that night, Saturday on the water.

The Saturday would be a gruelling day scenarios to face the prospective trip leaders, group reflections and self-assessments. Saturday's paddling ended on a beach at low tide in front of the Cattlemen's Huts, Snake Island. The last boat is lifted well above the high water mark, legs straining, will there be a cardiac arrest? What an action packed day, relax at last! Just one more hurdle this day, an exam to be done as the sun sets. Soon we would be using head torches to finish, there's

that question again; how fast will the group paddle? I'll get that one right! Finally time to light up the Trangia, relax and talk about the day's events.



Soon we would be using head torches ...

Sunday back on the water and a demonstration of how quickly things can unravel. Finally the home stretch to Port Welshpool.

What an action packed weekend and great experience. The group discussions and feedback, priceless. After a de-brief from the instructor's group everyone split to go their separate ways. This feedback from each of the instructors was most valued and will be reflected upon for a long time. Thanks to all, level 3 candidates and the instructor group for a great learning experience.

(Gerard O'Reilly)

Nothing is as good as getting out there and experiencing it

Wow ... it's over ... an intake weekend, six months of training to improve skills and prepare for the unknown, a mentored paddle, a surf assessment and now the final assessment weekend ... all done. Now that the nerves have settled, the muscles aren't quite so sore and feeling has returned to

numb extremities we can look back and, almost, laugh about the Level 3 assessment weekend.

After a (sort of) relaxing drive from the beautiful south coast of NSW we arrived at Port Welshpool and, being first, claimed what was apparently the best cabin ... not a good way to gain favour with the instructors ... really, we were just going where the receptionist told us ... honestly.

A 'nice' room (well, a bed at least), a walk along the waterfront, a couple of quiet drinks, a meal at the pub ... this weekend might be alright after all, we thought!! Well, a couple of hours later, after we had been invited into the hallowed cabin of the instructors and briefed on our mission for the weekend, that thought had certainly disappeared. The best thought though was knowing all five of us were in this together and that we would be working as a team to get through the next two days.

There was no turning back now. Two days of paddle skills, safety, first aid, leadership, navigation, swimming and camping — all tested through carefully planned scenarios. Some would say the instructors took way too much delight in thinking up these challenges!!



Two days of paddle skills, safety, first aid ...



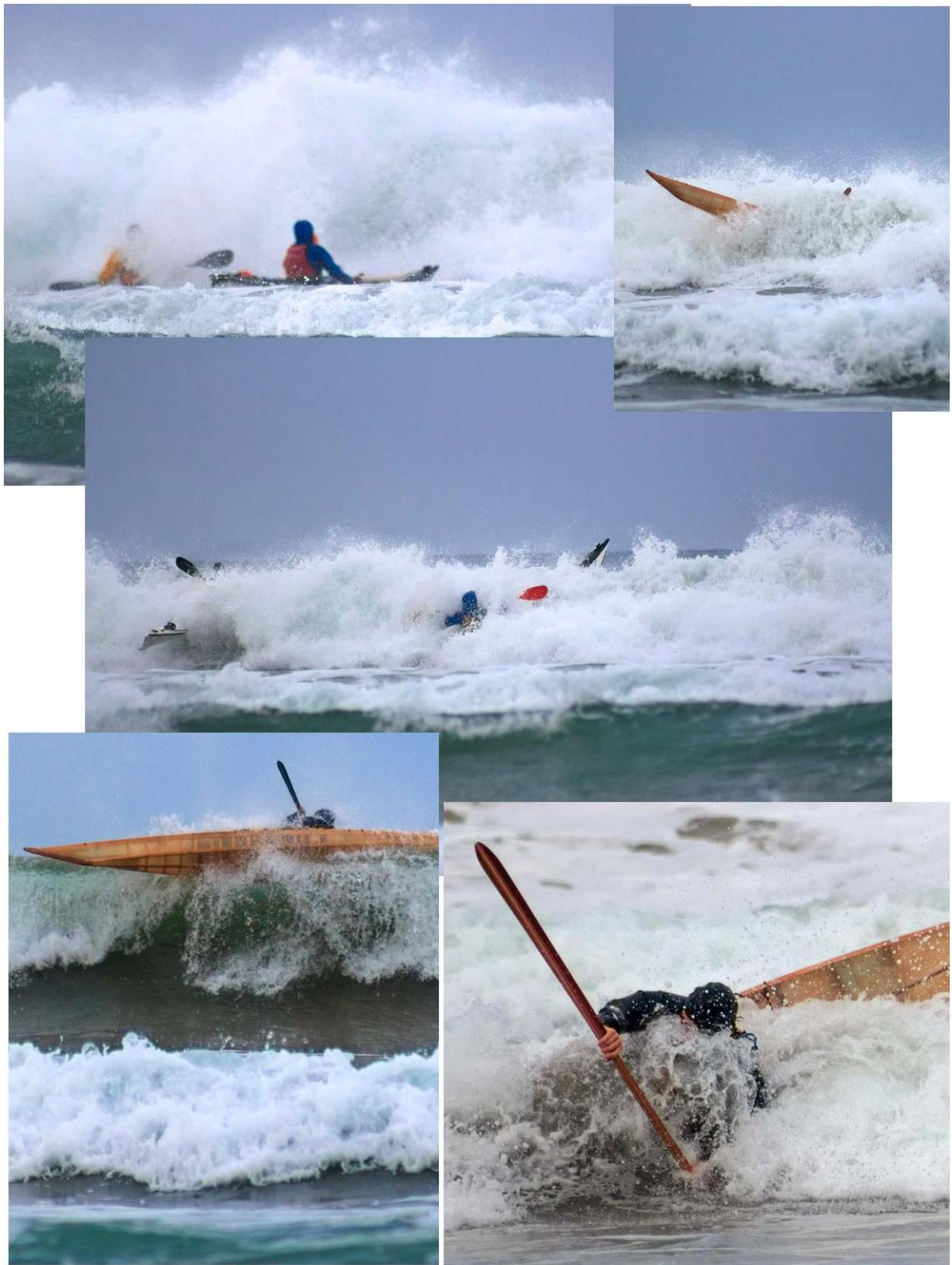
... leadership, navigation, swimming and camping

Yes, it is over and yes, it was tough ... would we recommend this to others? Most definitely. It is a fantastic learning experience and, whilst you can read all the theory, study the marine charts, buy navigation books, watch YouTube first aid clips and perform calculations on paper, nothing is as good as getting out there and experiencing it.

Oh ... and yes, we do have very fond memories and lots of laughs from the weekend.

A big thank you to our fellow candidates and especially to our instructors who certainly put it all on the line for us.

(Kerry Vogeles & Graeme Thompson)



On—In—Under at Waratah Bay — By Bronwyn Skowronski