

Sea Trek



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Photo: Ben Flora



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VSKC

Victorian Sea Kayak Club



President's Heads Up *Sea Trek* Summer 2018

Greetings everyone and I do hope that many of you have had an active summer paddling season. From what I have seen around the traps there have been many exciting and socially rewarding Club and private trips underway over summer. I know from some of the trips I have led that we are seeing an ever more diverse mix of members getting out on the water. I was particularly pleased to welcome many new members at our recent Canadian Bay paddle in February, including some younger members with serious paddling potential. Indeed, as we have been focused on growing the participation of female members in the Club's on water activities, we are equally focused on similarly attracting more younger members this year.

Running a mix of private and Club trips has always been a feature of the paddling network we have in the VSKC. This is a good thing in my view because one ends up benefiting the other. People hear about private trips and end up being motivated about getting onto those themselves. One type of trip catalysis growth in the other it would seem to me. Far better to have an active sea kayaking network than one that solely relies on Club arranged trips to sustain it. Of course, it is both prudent and sensible

to run any kayak trip, public or private in accordance with established safety and risk management protocols.

In my own case I had the pleasure of collaboratively leading a group of 7 paddlers drawn from the Club on a 2 week expedition to the Fleurieu Groups of islands in NW Tasmania in January. The story of this fantastic trip is featured in this issue of *Sea Trek*. I mention this because even though it was a 'private' trip, we ran it as we would a Club trip. In this case the group was formed from the nucleus of a group who had paddled several times before down in Tasmania, but we deliberately then invited some other colleagues who had not previously had the chance to do a big expedition style trip. The idea here was in part to extend the 'network', of those who have done so in the Club (and hence increase the potential for more such trips to be mounted). So, should this have been a 'Club' trip or run as it was, 'private'. Good question, but in reality it is hard to mount a significant expedition without shaping group selection in a way that enhances the chances of a successful trip (i.e. skill, team cohesion, aspiration, etc). My purpose in canvassing this point here though is to encourage all members who elect to run occasional



Woolamai : Photo: Greg Skowonsky

'private' trips to actively think about inviting colleagues from the Club who might not always have the chance to get invited on such trips. Doing this I suggest helps to strike a sensible balance between self-interest and collective endeavour. It is easy to only invite the 'usual suspects'!

paddling to be had. I am very much looking forward to our huge Easter paddle where we have 25 paddlers heading off for fun and frolic in the Nooramunga Marine Park. So stow away the warm weather paddling kit, get on the cooler weather kit and get out there. It is a great time of the year. Despite these

I am pleased to report that the Committee is now up and running for 2018 and I am very pleased to welcome Ray Pilbrow as Treasurer and Chantelle Mizzi as Communications Coordinator. Both join our Committee at an exciting time as we press forward with implementation of the new Club Grading and Training Model. Indeed, we have had a great response to our call for Sea Instructor and Sea Leader nominees and the process to train them up commences in April. Also in April will be a special all members forum at the Mordialloc Sailing Club to engage members in planning implementation of our new grading model which will occur between now and the end of 2019.

As we move into the autumn paddling season, whilst the weather cools, the winds settle (for a while) and there is sublime

Cover

Photo: Fleurieu Group

Terry Barry



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Fleurieu Group, Photo: Helmut Heinze

seasonal cycles though, one thing that is a constant is the pleasingly steady stream of new members into the Club. Many new members are just starting out, not raw beginners, but with a real hunger in wanting to extend their paddling repertoire. Can I urge all established members to actively reach out to our new paddling colleagues and help where you can? Getting along to the regular Canadian Bay new member paddles is a great way to make these connections, and then help to get new members up and running (E.g. go for a hit out with them to help iron out any boat setup and paddling kit issues).

So, I commend this issue of Sea Trek to you all and thanks Ben for his fantastic efforts to keep raising the bar on the production of our Club magazine. I continue to look forward to seeing as many of you as possible out on the water, before the allure of cosy nooks supplant even the most ardent paddlers best intentions!

Richard Rawling

VSKC President





Red Eye Rolling practise : Photo: Ben Flora

Epic journeys and pathways. Truly appreciating the beauty of the great outdoors. Going where few outdoors people have gone. The more you get involved in the VSKC, the greater the opportunities to experience all that Sea Kayaking has to offer, however, it does take effort. If you spend time practising the art of anything, you will get better at it. With regular paddling, sea kayaking brings health and fitness. The VSKC provides it's members with plenty of opportunities to improve ones Sea Kayaking skills. We have the early morning Red Eye's, the WOFF Pack Thursday after work paddle, our Canadian Bay end of month, new member intro paddle and plenty more to choose from. These along with, our roll night's and new training plan, all add up to provide a great launch pad for bigger and better trips. As you get to know more people in the club you will find that there are opportunities, for self organised or private club member paddles and trips. We have plenty of member's who have crossed the Bass Straight and some are planning and training for Straight crossings now. The more one gets involved and attends the paddles, the more likely these opportunities will come their way. Richard's trip to the Fleurieu Group is one such paddle. Oh and guess what? There's no stopping, with our new training calendar to be launched there's plenty to look forward to in the coming winter months. Time to look for some warmer gear and enjoy some more of the great the outdoors.

Editorial Musings

Editor: Ben Flora



Mar 2018

14 Days in the Fleurieu Group

Words and photos: Richard Rawling



Photo: Helmut Heinze

2018 Fleurieu Group



When you are stuck on a beach with 30 Kts of wind, day in day out, one might be forgiven for dreaming of pizza, wine and anything but dehydrated meals. We needed a weather window that saw the wretched wind at nearby Cape Grim abate enough to dial down some serious wind on tide off our beach at the southern end of Hunter Island. The weather situation was clearly abating as a big high moved in, but was taking its time.

Eager to go, we combed the forecasts and reckoned that Tuesday was a goer, but hang on, maybe we could just escape on the Monday instead of getting further sand blasted at our beach camp. Boats optimistically packed, we pushed off towards Stack Island 500m away. Once we burst through the gap in the reef opposite our camp we were greeted with wind on tide and very choppy seas as far as we could see.



Kathryn Botherway, Sue Mountford, Tamsin Visik, Richard Rawling (Trip Leader), Terry Barry, Helmut Heinze and Steve Collins.

No worries, back to camp we go, but getting back across the channel was no mean feat as the tide and wind had both revved up to the point we were surrounded by 1-2 m standing waves. One of those times where kayakers should not look at what's coming behind them! As we picked our way through this gnarly mess, and tried to hold the pod together, we all could see those pizzas rapidly drifting off towards Cape Grim on the wind! C'est la vie.



Photo: Terry Barry

This expedition to the Fleurieu Group of islands in NW Tasmania, has long been on my radar screen, and that of Terry and Steve. The three of us had twice paddled Tasmanian waters (The Furneaux Group in 2016: Sea Trek 85, and Freycinet and Maria Island in 2015: Sea Trek 83). The main islands in the Fleurieu Group include Three Hummock Island (where author Eleanor Alliston wrote 'Escape to an Island' published in 1966), Hunter, Walker and Robbins Islands. In total there are in fact 10 or so sizeable islands in the group and they span a large area north of Cape Grim and south of King Island off the NW corner of Tasmania. King Island is also part of the group. It is a wild place with almost constant wind, especially at Cape Grim, fast moving and strong tide races (over 5 kts), complex tidal flows and deep channels abutting

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shallow banks that foster confused breaking waves. It is also a very beautiful place, islands festooned with granite boulders, turquoise blue waters, white sand beaches and dramatic seascapes, especially the wild, west coast of Hunter Island. In fact, the wind and swell that smashes into this coast has nothing between it and South America. Hunter, Walker and Robbins Islands and the area around Cape Grim are operated

We wanted to circumnavigate Three Hummock Island (taking our time) and we thought that getting out to Albatross Island and exploring parts of the west coast of Hunter Island were possibilities in the right weather. In the end we paddled 170 kms, and skipped the west coast of Hunter due to the atrociously strong winds we encountered (more later). It was a fantastic trip in an edgy, yet spectacular sea-kayaking destination.

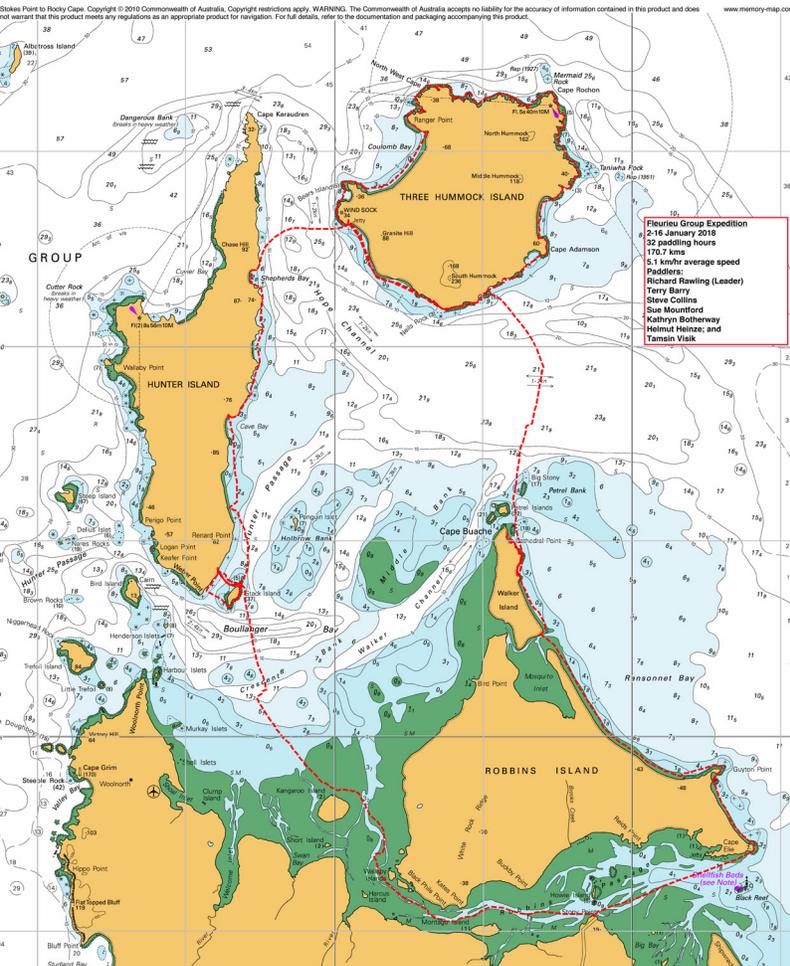
The joys of planning and logistics

I was keen to form a group that gave paddlers who had not done big multi-week trips like this a chance to do so. Terry, Steve and I had paddled these big trips before, and colleagues from those trips were asked to come on this one, but could not for various reasons. Bill Zombor, who had also paddled on these big Tassie trips with us had to pull out at the last moment (but he acted as our onshore contact). After casting around various possibilities and availability, Kathryn, Sue and Helmut emerged as starters, joined later by Tamsin (who has done a Bass Strait crossing). I was very pleased with this group in terms of character, diversity of experience and aspiration. As with our previous trips, this was to be about soaking in the delights the area had to offer, not rushing around doing big distances each day. We were also going to operate as a cohesive group, on and off the water.

Pre-trip tasks were quickly allocated and progressed with aplomb. We booked the ferry in August to secure the dates we were after in the first half of January, having allowed 2 weeks for the paddle, with 4 days or so post paddle for other stuff. The main pre-trip tasks included overall coordination/advice (myself), leaseholder contacts (Sue), tide and communications information (Helmut), route planning – to the extent we could (Terry and myself) and food preparation advice (a somewhat self-organised exploration of dehydration possibilities only previously dreamt of!). A key issue was our ability to obtain drinking water along the way (we carried 16 litres each). We were able to locate suitable rain tank supplies with input from the leaseholders, but we were most grateful to John and Bev on Three Hummock because of the route we planned to take (i.e. a circumnavigation of this island). Because we were leaving our cars for two weeks, we also needed somewhere safe to do so. We planned to start the trip at Montagu campground, which is west from Smithton.

by leaseholders who run high quality beef herds (including wagyu). Making contact with the leaseholders as part of our pre-trip planning was very important so that we set a positive and welcoming climate for the trip. We also made sure we contacted Bev and John O'Brien, caretakers on Three Hummock Island as we needed water from them. In fact our stay on this island and Bev and John's hospitality was a real highlight of the trip – more later.

Our plan was to paddle 170 - 190 kms around these islands over two weeks, seeing as much as we could.



We made contact with the Council employed caretaker here and he was very helpful with parking of the cars (at no cost). It is worth noting that there is no drinking water at this campground.

It was a great learning experience as we helped each other with boat set up, trip planning and gear advice. This is how it should be too, because it ultimately enriches the trip experience as plans come to fruition. One thing we did insist on was sails. No sail, then no joining the trip. This proved to be a good move, and one that helped on several occasions as we covered long distances easily. This meant that several boats had to have sails installed and tested, which was done with collaborative spirit, so important on long trips like this one.



The culmination of all of this planning over 3-4 months saw us meeting at Sue's place ahead of the 4 cars with 7 paddlers driving up to join the ferry loading queue for our overnight sail. This all went very smoothly and we were soon on board enjoying a beverage ahead of the pleasant bistro carvery meal. After this we grabbed the marine chart and talked through route intentions. We had a suitable weather window so the plan was to drive off the ferry, grab a decent breakfast in Davenport, drive to Montagu via Smithton, pack the boats, park the cars and go. With a forecast of 15-25 Kts westerly, and the tide ebbing east, that determined our route – the east coast of Robbins Island it was to be! After a relatively smooth crossing, and the sort of sleep you get on these ferries, we hatched our plan and were soon on our way in convoy to Montagu (~150 kms west).

Upon arrival at the boat ramp at Montagu, one scan of the channel we were launching in quickly reinforced our decision to go east. It was blowing hard and the standing waves just to the west of the boat ramp were unpleasantly impressive. We had insisted on doing a test pack before the trip, but it is always a tricky point when one

first packs for a trip. But no dramas and we were all soon good to go. Some of the locals from the campground turned up to watch this boat packing ballet, a time where one is polite yet purposeful, lest GPS batteries or whatever get left behind. Terry and I decided to take our Nadgee trolleys wheels to lessen the amount of boat carrying over the trip, but it is always a chore carrying heavily loaded boats to launch. We could all rejoice in the fact that we would be eating our way into lightness over the expedition though!

2018

MONTAGU CHANNEL SAILING



Given the concrete ramp, current at full flow (probably 3-4 Kts) and choppy conditions, we had to push off quickly. Once we were in the channel, we starting cranking along and in no time most of us had sails up. This area is very much like the channels around Port Welshpool and the sand islands in Corner Inlet, but here they are wider, more exposed and feature occasional rocky reefs. We belted along, heading for Cape Elie, the SE tip of Robbins Island. The GPS trace showed a maximum speed of 17 kmh. Once we rounded Cape Elie and headed NW, we were on a lee shore and we made our way up to Guyton Point (12.9 kms in 2.25 hrs, 5.8 kmh av). This was far enough for our first day and late start. We made camp on a partly sheltered, but open site with wagyu beef roaming in the distance. It is always a good move to get a trip underway like this. Not long after we had set up one of the owners family turned up on a quad bike to check us out. There is no doubt they had eyes on us as we paddled along, but our prior contact with the owner (John Hammond) ticked the right box, so we were welcomed and wished well. After a game of cards an early night beckoned as we were pushing north the next day.

At this point, one of the icons of this trip emerged, Helmut's umbrella. At this location it was used to shelter from light showers, but over the rest of the trip it was variously used to shelter from stinging sandstorms, keep sun at bay, ward off bulls roaming on the beach, fend off snakes, a

walking pole, a mega tent peg (in the strong winds we encountered) and a latent threat lest anyone cheat at cards! The one thing it was not used for was a sail, but knowing it was in the cockpit in the event of a sail fail, that may well have eventuated also. A true first on any expedition I have been on, and an 'innovation' that earned our grudging admiration over the rest of the trip!



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HELMUT AND UMBRELLA

Cape Buache, darling.....

This cape at the northern end of Walker Island was our next target. Tamsin and I could not work out how to pronounce it, so Cape Buchay, darling entered the lexicon for the rest of the trip – very posh! Walker Island is separated from Robbins Island by a tidal channel (Mosquito Inlet), and boy does the water rip through there! We sailed up the lee shore of Robbins Island (12-15 Kts W), and scooted across the very fast flowing channel to lob for lunch on the southern end of Walker Island. After a quick lunch, we headed up to camp near to Cathedral Rock. Our plan was to be within striking distance of the Cape for our crossing to Three Hummock Island. After 16.9 kms paddling we found a great campsite, and decided to stay for two nights to get the right weather window for our crossing.



CAPE BUACHE ROCKSCAPE

Fleurieu Group



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The Cape is spectacular, with shards of red lichen covered rock jutting out of the ocean. In the distance we could see Petral Banks hooting and judged that we needed to get our crossing of that just right! Our forecast for the following day was for a significantly strengthening westerly, so we decided to explore the Cape in a short out and back paddle (6 kms). On this paddle Tamsin trolled up the first fish of the trip, albeit a parrot fish (which Steve unhooked and promptly dropped in the drink). This was on one of Bill Robinson's patented Macca Straw fish killer lures, attached to a pink thong. The thong became a source of much humour over the trip, as one never quite knew which thong and what use was being referred to! Once we got back from the Cape, Tamsin and Steve kept fishing and a delighted Tamsin trolled up a Tailor and a Salmon – both of which ended up as sushi. We always knew when Tamsin was delighted as there was the joyous scream that became a true hallmark of the trip!



THONG FISH KILLER

2018 Fleurieu Group

WALKER CAMPSITE



We explored around our campsite, walking with gators up to the ridge line to get phone signal and check out the views. The sight of Three Hummock Island 14 km to the north was impressive, knowing that this was the likely jewel in the crown of the expedition. There was a large mutton bird rookery to the rear of our camp and on the two nights we were there, we rejoiced in David Attenborough like mode as we sat quietly amongst the birds as they came back in at night to feed their young; a really impressive and moving sight. Our second morning at this lovely place saw Tamsin leading some meditation sessions on the beach, which reflected the serenity of this campsite. Even Terry joined in the slow walking, yoga style.

YOGA ON BEACH



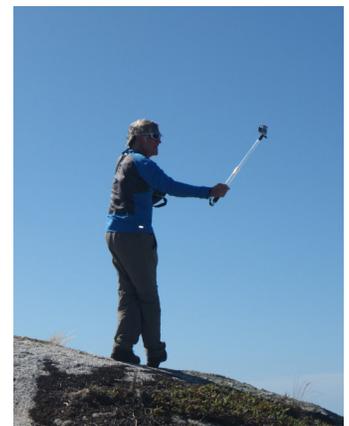
Three Hummock Island here we come

Whilst Walker Island was a lovely place, we knew from our research that Three Hummock was the real jewel. It lays some 12 kms north of Cape Buache, across a large channel that flows at 2-3 kts E-W. We had to get the wind right for this, especially given the Petral Bank shoals near Cape Buache. So we checked the tides and planned a 50/50 crossing. GPSs are very useful in these long, tide-affected crossings to keep track of deviation to the rhumb line. In this case we also had a clear view of the South Hummock as we sailed across in a 10 Kts westerly breeze, stopping near Neils Rocks on the southern edge of the island. A great crossing, perfectly executed, so after a leg stretch and weather update, we headed NW towards Chimney Corner where we planned to get water and connect with caretakers, John and Bev O'Brien. Steve trolled up a decent salmon on the way, and we clocked up 24.3 kms for the day.

2018 Fleurieu Group

Photos: Helmut, Richard and Terry

STEVE WITH FISH



Chimney Corner is an old boat launching area, although now comprises not much more than an old wharf, shed and rusting machinery that evokes its long-standing role as the service boat landing for the island. It is also a mecca for march flies, that we grew to really hate! We walked up and said hello to John and confirmed it was OK to grab some water from the new rainwater tank at the old wharf. As we were loading up the boats to head off around to camp at a nearby area away from the homestead, Bev and John wandered down to check out proced-

ings. "What, you're leaving already!" was Bev's refrain, "You are welcome to stay and camp under the pine trees around the homestead, use the loo etc."

The appeal of this option was just too good, so we hoofed everything 100 m up to the camp spot and got cleaned up. What a lovely place, nestled in the cool shade under the trees in front of the old homestead (now used as a B&B for guests who fly in by helicopter or plane), with free range Cape Barren Geese and wallabies everywhere. Both John and Bev are lovely people who, having been caretakers for 9 years, are finally moving back to the big smoke this year. John kindly offered to take us around in their 4WD to inspect some local highlights including the resting place of Eleanor Alliston (author of 'Escape to an Island' which evokes the experience of remote island living). John also gave us a tour of their self-sustaining vegetable patch, salt harvesting rock pools and their charming cottage. What a fabulous place! We just couldn't resist nabbing a couple of bottles of wine at island prices from Bev (who does a lot of catering for fly in guests), and then settle down to nibbles and dinner on the deck of the homestead. We all just looked at each other with the same thought – this IS sea kayaking!

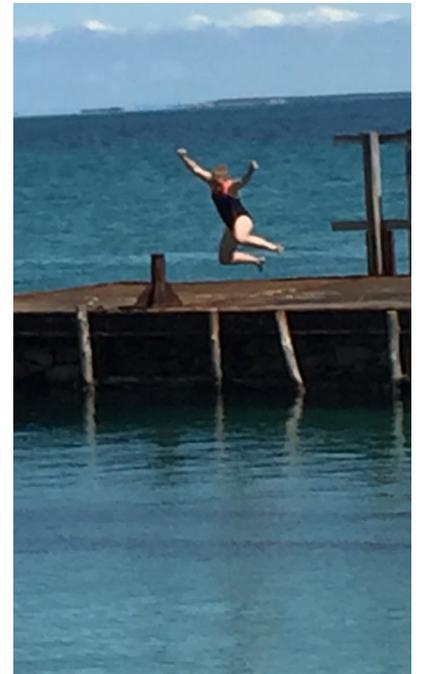


Photo: Sue Mountford



DINNER ON DECK AT CHIMNEY CORNER

With guests arriving by helicopter the next day, we packed up and loaded the boats to decamp around near Bear Island. We had 20 kts NE howling across Coulomb Bay which was an unappealing headwind, but when we got to Bear Island, we all agreed that we should stiffen up and head for Ranger Point across the bay. Well, as we rounded the point it was on for young and old. We paddled in pairs keeping an eye on everyone and slogged through some gnarly chop and rebound. Once out in the bay, we still had the headwind, but a more predictable paddling rhythm was possible. After a slog of only 9.4 kms for the day, we were happy to settle on a lee shore out of the NE blow just south of Ranger Point. The lee shore continued out along the cliff line, which



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saw Steve and Tamsin troll up some great salmon that were dispatched to the plate quickly, along with abalone gathered by Terry. With a SW change coming in over night, we were keen to get off this beach and head around to the north coastline of this gorgeous island.



TAMSIN WITH HER FISH

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The magic of Mermaid Bay and beyond

We had seen some video of this coastline and we expected there to be many coves we could camp at. As we rounded Ranger Point in 10-15 kts SW, we started checking out the convoluted coast in detail. Rambling granite boulders, skerries, golden sand and a verdant green backdrop had us spell bound. Many of the beaches we had seen on the video were there, but at low tide were not suitable for landing heavily laden kayaks due to rocks.



SEASCAPE N COAST THREE HUMMOCK

We lifted our sails and glided past massive granite boulders. At times we had a lively sea as we span around small headlands. At one point a gust grabbed us all as the SW breeze kept building and flung us along at great speed. Exhilarating. Steve trolled up another great fish and as I filmed the post catch kill, blood well and truly splashing all over our boats. Memories of Terry's boat being tickled up by a shark down at Maria Island 2 years earlier saw me beat a hasty retreat, but not before Steve nearly lost the fish with me helping stuff it back under deck bungees using my paddle!

As we pulled into Mermaid Bay after 10.6 kms paddling, just west of Cape Rochon (the NE corner of the island), our eyes lit up. A steep, golden yellow sand beach, perfectly sheltered camp spot from anything other than a big NE blow, great rocks for fishing from and heaps of walking potential meant we had found another example of sea kayaking heaven. The only slight downer was that Steve decided to put the aforementioned fish (filleted) in a plastic bag under a rock in the shallows. You guessed it, the tide came in, water got deeper and stingrays turned up. No more fish! Notwithstanding Steve's stingray feeding endeavours, Katherine then caught a nice replacement fish in Mermaid Bay, winning praise for reducing our reliance on dehydrated food for yet another night!



KATHRYN WITH HER FISH

CAMPSITE AT MERMAID BAY



With a strengthening SW blow settling in we were more than happy to lob here for a couple of nights. The weather had turned quite chilly at night, yet warm during the day. We spied some nasty tide races off shore and were hoping we did not have to paddle those on our exit from this camp. Our second day at this great spot saw a parade of sea ablutions, beach walks, snake spotting, Helmut bathing sans paddling gear (a unique sight), losing fishing lures on rocks and penguin spotting at night. On a walk down to try find a track to Cape Rochon, the crew spotted some very large tiger snakes hanging around the mutton-bird rookeries. Tiger snakes are scary, yet impressive animals, underscoring why we all decided to carry gators on the trip! All good things must come to an end, and after two nights in this great spot and a favourable weather window we were ready to move on.

The SW blow had been strengthening and was running between 15-20 kts, but we remained on the lee side of the island. It was awe inspiring rounding Cape Rochon as we again glided past spectacular granite boulders covered in flaming orange-red lichen and deeply fissured gauntlets. Tamsin and Steve also trolled up 5 or so great fish as we headed for Cape Adamson. We chose this destination because passing here in a SW blow put us straight into a testing headwind. That is the benefit of an island circumnavigation. We rounded into Three Gillies Bay and spied a yacht at anchor. After a quick chat with the crew and a welcome weather update, we crunched on towards Dead Mans' Cove, named after an event in the 1920's where a German scientist was stationed there to do some experimental explosives testing. He never made it out! Each time we rounded a south facing point we got hammered by strong wind and wrap around seas. Finally we pulled into East Telegraph Bay with its 3 km long golden beach. It was a bit of a slog across the bay as we headed to the southern end and shelter; 12.7 kms for the day. We all made a mental note that getting off this beach in a big easterly blow would be amusing, and that was coming in the next 24 hours!

Our final day on Three Hummock saw us make the run back up to Chimney Corner. A 15-20 E wind had set in which made the first part of the trip interesting! But once we rounded Neils Rock again, we sped up under sail to Chimney Corner on an ebbing tide. The sand banks along here throw some amazing waves out in the channel proper and some of our group got onto some ripper runners. Back at the old wharf we restocked on water, said our goodbyes to John and Bev and decided to make the run across Hope Channel to Hunter Island.

Our nemesis, Hunter Island

We sailed across Hope Channel, which is a foreboding body of water with serious tide flows N-S. It is not something to be messed with, but with a stiff Easterly up our backs we flew across at 7 kmh+. Upon landing through small surf at Shepherds Bay and a quick lunch we all agreed that Cave Bay further south was the better bet as a camp spot; more interesting things to do and within walking distance from the island homestead. Rounding the east facing headlands on our way down to Cave Bay saw us wrestling with significant seas and we were glad to beach through the surf at the northern end of Cave Bay near the old boat shed facilities. We had enough for the day (28.7 kms) and quickly set up camp on crappy ground at the back of the beach. As the easterly strengthened, it was pretty clear we would be here for at least 2 days.

Having decided to stretch our legs, some of us walked the 3 kms up to the homestead to check out water supplies and the set up. The place was unlocked but vacant so we had a bit of a look around before heading back, very attentive about snakes on the walking track.



CAVE BAY PANORMA

Sure enough, the wind was howling on Day 2 at Cave Bay (up to 30 Kts ENE). So with no real prospect of getting off the beach we walked to the homestead again, checked out the ablution and washing facilities and then onto the west side of the island. Our first glimpse of the west coast of Hunter Island was awe-inspiring as the wind and swell ripped in with Steep Island rearing up out of the angry sea. We all thought that paddling this coast would be a serious challenge. Once back at Cave Bay, we hunted for access to the large cave on the headland that has been used by Aboriginals for thousands of years, but with a full tide we could not get to it. The views south from the top of the cliffs here were truly impressive, especially in that strong wind. Otherwise we amused ourselves with card games in the old fertilizer shed. Later in the day a light plane landed on the island and the lease holder, Lachie, duly showed up at our camp to grab his old 4WD parked nearby. It was good to say hello to him.

We managed to get off the beach through surf the following day in a strong northerly (25 Kts). But as we headed south to the tip of Hunter Island we got hammered by squalls, and at one point were forced off the water as we experienced gear failures and genuine threat to safety. I gazed at my GPS at one point and without paddling I was being rocketed along at 18 kmh (a tad scary and expletive laden). Terry was quite right to whistle us all off the water at around this time! A bit battered, we plugged on towards Stack Island where we thought we could camp, but the weird tides in this area soon turned against us as we clawed along. Eventually we scrambled onto a beach on the island, only 500m off shore from Hunter Island. Soaked from rain and spray and tired after our slog, we concluded that camping with thousands of penguins was not a good idea, so we bashed across the channel to set camp on the opposite beach. Little did we know we would be trapped here in strong winds for 3 days. As a group we were tested over only 13 kms, but I was proud of everyone having a red hot go.

We awoke to a howling 25 kt southerly blow that shot stinging sand everywhere, and soon concluded that our campsite needed to be moved up into the lee of a small sand dune. Even tying the tarp to kayaks resulted in the boats being lifted off the beach! Everyone, apart from Helmut made the move, but the following day when a sizeable bull turned up on the beach and took a liking to Helmut's tent and kayak, he also concluded that a move was a good idea! We had spied a small shack at the end of Hunter Island and upon closer inspection, even though the place was a dump, it had a great rainwater tank that was a real saviour. Without this we would have run out of water given the time we got pinned on this beach.

Our excursions to the southern end of Hunter Island to gaze out from Weber Point across Hunter Passage and Boullanger Bay towards Woolnorth Point reminded us all of the power of really serious wind on tide. It made Port Phillip Heads look like a pond at times. The wind gauge at Cape Grim repeatedly showed 30-40 Kts during this time! We could barely stand up, indeed Steve and I on a subsequent fishing trip nearly got blown off the rocks. A really awesome place, but that is what we had to conquer to get back to the Tasmanian mainland. Despite this mayhem we could see a weather window emerging on the following Tuesday, maybe Monday as the wind swung to the NE. But we had to wait it out, and amused ourselves with copious games of cards, fixing Tamsins' broken mast with epoxy, beach boules, walks, fishing (and we got some), walks to get water and wash at the shack in an outdoor shower set-up and chasing away bulls that strayed onto 'our' beach. We even created a huge sign on the beach with seaweed 'SEND PIZZA', as we were all a bit over dehyd and running low on supplies as we waited for the weather to abate.

Our aborted attempt to get off this beach, mentioned at the outset saw us flogging our guts out for 5.3 kms, only to admit defeat and land back on the same beach. But we were confident of making our escape via a long paddle back to Montagu or nearby the following day – fingers crossed! We were all now fantasizing about a pub

meal washed down by our favourite beverage. Besides which, 2 week vintage unwashed thermals were getting pretty ripe!

Escape from Hunter Island, at last

With a 12-17 kt NE blowing, it was hard yards getting the loaded boats off the beach, we all struggled as boats got swung around in the head wind and surf. Once off we belted across the channel, through the gap in the reef and spied the expanse of Boullanger Bay and Walker/Robbins Islands in the far distance. Once clear of the choppy nonsense around Stack Island we threw sails up and were away. We set a rhumb line on 120 degrees across Walker Channel, with a view to counteracting what we thought the tide would do and to hit a channel entrance north of Kangaroo Island (a potential but non-preferred camp if we needed it). Our sails really assisted with this passage and we made great time on the 19 km crossing to Kangaroo Island. Unfortunately we underestimated the effect of wind and current and ended up on sand flats, required a tiring drag of boats in shallow water for 300m to make the deeper channel.



MEETINMG WITH JOHN HAMMOND

We kept trekking along a clearly defined channel that wound its way along the southern shore of Robbins Island. We played a guessing game trying to pick where the tide streams split, much like Middle Ground in Nooramunga Marine Park east of Port Welshpool. We must have got our timing just right because we were soon belting along with strong current assistance. As we ambled along a boat turned up, very curious at our endeavours. As a pleasant surprise it was John Hammond, the leaseholder for Robbins Island, and it was great to have a yarn with him. Just after this encounter, we paddled into a huge bait ball of fish that was boiling along in the channel.

Montagu campground beckoned, but it was a drawn out affair getting there as the exploits of the last 2 weeks began to take the edge off our stroke making. Finally the boat ramp was in sight and we glided in off the strong current to nudge the concrete ramp. 30 kms for the day was solid hit out and we were all so glad to be back after a fabulous adventure. As we wrangled the boats it was high fives all round and the obligatory landing photo. Many of the folks from the campground ambled down for a gawk, remembering us from when we pushed off 14 days earlier and keen to hear how we had gone. As quick as we could it was off to Smithton to a campground, shower and that pub dinner we had been dreaming about over on Hunter Island.

The nut, a pieman and cradle

Whilst I had a few ideas for short post trip paddles, we only had 4 days left before the ferry home. I sensed that everyone had done enough paddling, and we had well and truly accomplished what we had set out to do. So, we decided to play tourist instead. We spent a delightful day roaming very atmospheric Stanley, which is at the foot of the spectacular Nut rock formation. Fish and chips on the foreshore for lunch and a lovely self-catered dinner back at camp made for a relaxing day out. Indeed, the view over to where we had paddled from the top of The Nut underscored the scale of the area we had covered. Interestingly, the Hersey family that owned the fishing cooperative (and fish shop) lost one of their sons (Patrick) trying to rescue a sea kayaker attempting a Bass Strait crossing many years ago. We all wondered who that was.



The next day we headed south, aiming for Corinna and to do some paddling on the Pieman River. We called in at Green Point near Marrawah to check out the west coast swells along the way, then Arthur River and the impressive 'Worlds End' zone where the outflow from the tannin stained river spills into massive surf. We all thought that trying to break out from here would be very challenging. We then scooted down the very remote Norfolk Wilderness Road to Corinna, arriving late afternoon. Luckily we snagged a camp spot right next to the river and the small settlement and pub. What a lovely, lovely place set deep in the Tarkine Wilderness. The Pieman is a very large river, with access to the open ocean 20 km away. It has a long history of timber getting and mineral exploration, notably gold. After a swim, a beverage up at the pub and an early camp dinner, we sat mesmerized by the grandeur and primitive beauty of the river. The following morning we launched the boats and paddled up into the far reaches of the Whyte River, checking out Huon Pine trees as we went. We then paddled back downstream to some waterfalls, where a 6 kg gold nugget was discovered many years ago. After an enjoyable 16 km paddle and lunch, we loaded the boats and headed up the remote Savage River Road to Waratah, an old mining town. After a very enjoyable night in the old local pub, including a darts throwing challenge and daggy juke box music, we settled into our tents ahead of our final day – Cradle Mountain.



Photo Kathryn Botherway

PIEMAN RIVER PADDLE

Cradle Mountain is one of those places that when the weather works, it is spectacular; otherwise it can be a foggy, damp squib. We were lucky and got bright sunshine. It is a stunning place and as we ambled around Dove Lake and then up to the old Waldheims' Chalet it reminded us all of the importance of preserving natural environments of this quality, indeed all natural environments. This was an uplifting bookend to our Tassie adventure, and one we all savoured to the hilt. After this we headed up to the ferry via Sheffield, only taking about 2 hours or so. There is simply no point arriving early at the ferry and sitting in a queue, especially when you have just strolled around in Cradle Mountain National Park.



Post trip reflections

Having a great group matters a lot on trips like this, and ours worked really well. It is important to agree the objectives for the trip though and to be flexible as weather dictates your fate at times. This can be frustrating, but far better to just work with it and enjoy. There is no doubt about it, you have to be comfortable paddling in strong winds to really enjoy sea kayaking here. Tasmania has some fantastic paddling destinations and we are not done with them yet. I sense there will be many more trips to this fantastic place. But, do your planning well, prepare your gear thoroughly, get paddle fit for the conditions you will likely encounter and above all else, be prepared for some real adventure in one of Australia's top sea kayaking destinations. We had a blast, in more ways than one!



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My First Paddle

Story and Photos : Brett Hedger



My background is with bush walking and more recently peak bagging. In mid-2017 I'd set myself the challenge to walk around Port Phillip Bay. Half way around I injured my right knee and don't think I've fully recovered even now, eight months later. Laying around during my recovery phase got me to thinking about doing something different, with the upper half of my body.

A mate of mine had done the Murray River marathon more than a decade ago in a sea kayak. I always had an idea in the back of my mind that I could do the same one day. On the 24th of July 2017 I had my first kayak lesson, an all-day affair, everything from maps and tides to towing and rescuing. I enjoyed it but, I wasn't too confident out beyond the safety of the breakwater.

I tried out a few different kinds of boats and asked heaps of questions, even testing whether I could carry each of the different boats several hundred metres comfortably depending on their weight. I couldn't. The weight of a given boat was clearly an issue for me, given what I wanted to do with it, and where I wanted to go. I spent another month or so going through all the different bits of gear that would be needed for my kayak.

By October, I was ready to purchase my Mirage 352 Sea Kayak made of Kevlar-IRT and was very happy with its 17.5kg weight. My next problem was a shoulder injury, so after getting my new kit safely home, I put it all away in the shed for a couple of months. During this time I was working on rehabilitating another leg injury along with my shoulder and still recovering knee.

On December the 10th at 5am I set out for Albert Park Lake for my very first paddle. I wanted to go somewhere safe where tides, wind and other weather conditions wouldn't be an issue. I also wanted to see the sunrise and test how my shoulder coped with a gentle lap around the lake. It took me a little over an hour as I stopped heaps of times to take photos of the wonderful morning views and take a plenty of rests.



Since that first time, I've been back to the lake eight times and my son has been with me on most of these occasions. While I'm paddling, he'll run a couple of laps and we meet back at one of the rowing clubs. It's been almost three months since my first paddle and I've been all over the place with my new kayak. I've been along the Barwon, Yarra and Maribyrnong rivers and spent much more time in the bay, both paddling and swimming.

My biggest adventure to date was a recent crossing to French Island to go camping which I thoroughly enjoyed. I realised that my kayak has a lot of carrying capacity and can take me places I couldn't have even imagined a year ago. Crossing at low tide presented some issues for me, not so much with dragging my fully laden boat through the mud, but damaging the fragile environment. It's been fun and challenging and I'm looking forward to many more adventures.

Brett Hedger



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To sail or not to sail. That is the question.



Woolamai Philip Island

Jan

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Photos: Greg Skowronsky



On the Origins of the Skull Stroke



Photo: Ben Flora

The Thims Nailuj brace, a modern reinterpretation of the skull stroke

It is not often that a humble club magazine like Sea Trek attracts international attention, even notoriety. A less than optimal depiction of a skull stroke in Sea Trek 89, p13 has elicited a swath of highly erudite observations from across the Tasman, published in Sea Trek 91, p43 (Caffyn, Skullduggery). While we acknowledge the superior authority of its author in all matters of kayaking we hold a slightly different view which we wish to present herewith. – Ed.



A necessary caveat to start with – please regard the short text below as a limited sketch, not as a fully researched treatise. The sources are quickly found but not necessarily always the most authoritative ones. In any case feel free to skip right away to the practical part III if you feel less inclined to wade through the somewhat dry and yet somewhat superficial historical parts.

Part I

Let's start with brief linguistic clarification. The English term skull stroke, is actually a metonymy derived from the semantically more apt skull brace. Both are linguistically unrelated to the similar sounding but different scull(ing) stroke. While the historical origins of the practice itself can be traced back to ethnographic studies of the Inuit cultures of Greenland – more on this further below – the history behind the English term displays one of the strange twists we so often encounter in adaptations from different languages. The word skull is actually meant to mean skull, but this is based on a fitting but mistaken misreading of the Faroese and Icelandic skål or skaal. The latter does not mean skull at all but divine luck, good health. And yet skaal itself is a term coined by observers of the original Inuit culture, mainly Danish whalers, and as such completely unrelated to the any Inuit language Kalaallisut if one follows Bengtson 1988. The latter also recorded the term skaal tunusmillugu, a linguistic hybrid mixed together from Faroese and Kalaallisut, adopted back by locals. Those linguistic shifts and drifts back and forth and 'wrong' but fitting semantic adaptations are not unusual, just think of the term butterfly roll, a highly descriptive term and yet, clearly, not related to any original Greenlandic name – for butterflies don't come readily to the mind of an Inuit person naming a certain kayak roll.



Photo: Ben Flora

The dark side of the skull stroke

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Part II

Let's keep referring to our stroke as a "skull stroke" or "skull brace". Where does it come from, what was its function, if it has a function at all? While a rich repertoire of rolling techniques can be found all over Arctic hunting cultures the skull stroke represents more an odd thing that can be observed occasionally in some areas and seem to be absent elsewhere. It's certainly more than an individual solution to a problem (think of the well-publicised but in its cultural relevance vastly overrated Petrusen manoeuvre). The skaal tunusummillugu, our skull stroke is more widely known. Its status is highly ambivalent, partially a jesting gesture, partially a challenge of fate, a strange duality that is not uncommon even in European folk culture, just think of the medieval Carnival, baroque depictions of the Dance of Death etc. The dark side of the skull stroke figures prominently in Eskimo folk tales (see the collection in Rasmussen/Worster 1922).



The dark side of the skull stroke in Eskimo folklore - Illustration from Rasmussen/Worster 1921, p 96 – note the illustration is of course not 'original' but an artifact added to the publication of the tales.

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Photo: Ben Flora

Skaal! – Lucky recovery

Part III

Too much etymology and ethnography? Let's focus on the practical side with a recipe of the skull stroke or skull brace.

Technically it's a high brace turn with the paddle wedged between shoulder and – yes – the skull (but remember it's wrong etymology : skaal originally does not refer to the skull!) and one arm loosely supporting the shaft. When using a Euro paddle the power face of the blade in the water points forward. You need a bit of speed and good luck (skaal!), for there is a fine line between recovery and a wet and very cold failure. From the latter you may recover with a sculling brace or if flexible enough with the Petrussen manoeuvre, but those are strictly speaking not part of the stroke or brace but linkage options.

It may be of interest that there are many local variants, parallel invention. One modern variant is known to me as the Thims Nailuj brace (I have heard about it but cannot verify through independent sources). In this variant the free hand pulls up the cockpit rim, resulting in a harder edge and facilitating a cleaner turn.

Sources

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Photos: Ben Flora

WOFF Pack Paddle

Thursday nights during Summer, the regular WOFF pack paddles from Woolleys Beach Reserve. Plenty of interesting paddling, this part of the world.



Testing the Wind



*When a windy day
Blows your way
Covering your windscreen
With a salty sea spray*

*Go grab some friends
A coffee or two
Check out Baywinds
Figure out what to do*

*Then go out and play!
On the waves in the Bay
But you better watch out
for that salty sea spray*

*The perfect way
To spend a not so lazy Sunday*



Chantelle Mizzi

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Photos: Rachael Halliwell

Danger At Stony Point

2018

With the permission of 'Maritime Safety Victoria, a branch of
Transport Safety Victoria'



Brad Mountford, a VSKC member, brought this story to my attention earlier in the year. It was first published in Maritime Safety Victoria's (MSV) Shipshape newsletter. Antonia from MSV was happy for us to republish this story in our magazine. Although this person isn't a member of our club, it's definitely food for thought,. Even if we think we have all the right safety gear for paddling solo in more trecherous conditions, things can still go wrong. - Ed.

One can read more maritime news from MSV on their website via the link below, and or subscribe to their Shipshape newsletter:

<http://transportsafety.vic.gov.au/maritime-safety/recreational-vessel-operators/>

Lessons Learnt: How a routine commute led to capsized

Rasmussen, K and W. Worster. Eskimo Folk-Tales. Copenhagen 1921. 4 January 2018

In October 2017, a well-prepared paddler was undertaking his regular 4.5km commute home by sea-kayak from Stony Point to French Island when his vessel capsized.

The wind was gusting to 29 knots from the WSW. Twenty minutes into his trip the sea-kayak was capsized by a wave and he was unable to roll back upright.

The regular ferry service passed within 300m of his position while he was in the water, however he was unable to gain their attention.

He was unable to get back on, so attempted to swim the kayak to land – he only activated his personal locator beacon (PLB) when he thought that he might not make it.

Timeline

5:48pm: Departed Stony Point, paddling SE in lee of the land



6:00pm: Turned to the East in following seas

6:09pm: Fell out halfway to French Island - stayed with sea-kayak kicking it towards French Island at slow speed until he thought he might succumb to the cold.

6:31pm: Beacon Alert received by the Joint Rescue Coordination Centre (JRCC) in Canberra- owner details and emergency contact information gathered while the beacon's position was determined.

6:40pm: Position determined by satellite & emergency contact advised of situation.

6:44pm Water Police contacted by the JRCC in Canberra.

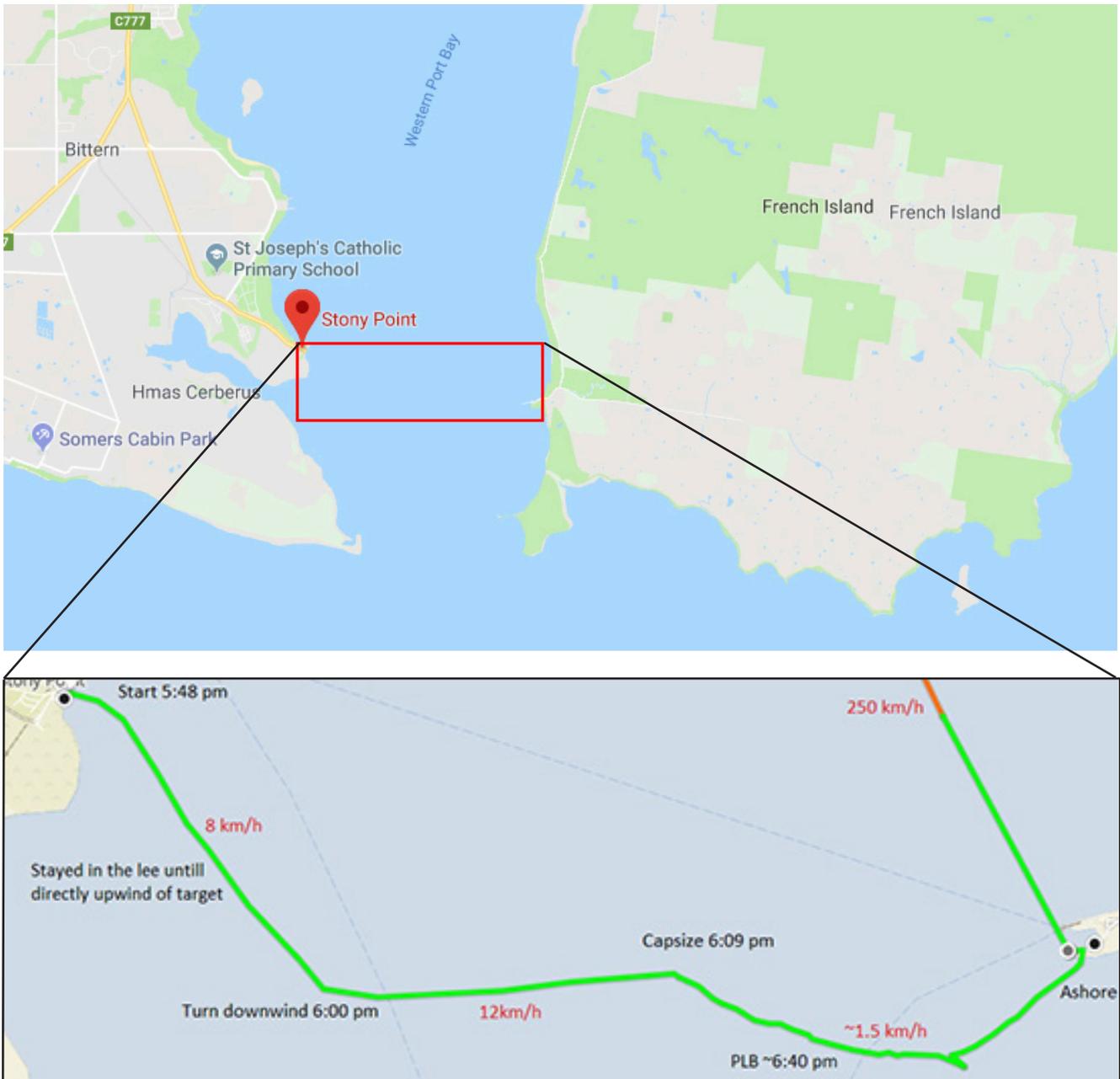
6:49pm Air Ambulance was tasked by the JRCC to respond.

7:09pm Air Ambulance airborne and en route to last known location.

Two Marine Search & Rescue vessels were tasked by the Water Police and a resident of the island also launched his own boat to assist with the search.

7:43pm the Air Ambulance located the paddler in the shallows of French Island. Body temperature 30.5 deg. Having spent more than an hour in the cold water until he was seen near shore by the helicopter crew, he was





transferred to hospital suffering from hypothermia.

We spoke to the man after the ordeal about what went wrong despite his usual precautions.

Trip preparation

He had practised self rescue techniques including eskimo rolls and deep water re-entries.

He wears a life jacket and carries a phone in a waterproof pouch, GPS-enabled PLB and radar reflector on his kayak.

He had recently purchased a portable VHF radio, but it was not on board because the battery was flat.

He always lets his partner know his trip plans, and she was able to track the journey by his phone's GPS.

He had considered an up to date forecast, and wind conditions matched the expected 25-28 knots W/SW. How-

ever, the weather and sea conditions were beyond his capability.

After capsize

His life jacket supported him in the water both while he attempted to re-enter the sea-kayak and while kicking towards the shore.

His waterproof phone pouch failed because it had degraded over time.

The regular ferry passed him by without sighting him in the water and he had no means to gain their attention.

Due to poor positioning of the PLB whilst the kayaker was in the water, there were intermittent gaps between PLB detections. However, as the location had already been determined, this did not affect the response time.

Lessons learnt

Know your limits and be prepared.

When in an emergency you should call for help as early as possible. It is important to note that the most effective way of communicating your situation is via verbal communications for instance radio communications or a mobile phone. Any delay may result in a less than favourable outcome.

Having multiple ways of calling or signaling for help will cover more than one situation. Sometimes alerting those in the near vicinity provides a quicker outcome than waiting for a rescue to be coordinated from afar.

PLBs require direct line of sight with the satellites to ensure detection, therefore positioning of the PLB is critical. Unlike an EPIRB, a PLB is not designed to float upright in the water. Instead, a PLB should be attached to the upper portion of your life jacket, so that it is above water with the aerial pointing vertically towards the sky.

A pea-less whistle may be effective in raising the attention of people who are nearby. There are personal rocket flares as well as rocket flares and smoke flares that can be used by paddlers if there are other boaters, planes or land based people within visual range.

A paddle float adds to the stability of your craft if you are having trouble getting back on board or back inside in choppy conditions.

High-vis hats and high-vis life jackets or flags will assist in collision avoidance – but will also assist searchers if they are looking for a person or kayak in difficult conditions.



Lessons Learnt articles first appeared in Maritime Safety Victoria's Shipshape newsletter, along with other news items. You can read previous editions of Shipshape and subscribe at <http://transportsafety.vic.gov.au/maritime-safety/recreational-vessel-operators/read-our-newsletters-online>



Photos: Ben Flora



Skullduggery

Is this a new stroke?

2018 Mar

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Photo: Ben Flora

Woolamai



Photo: Ben Flora