

NSW Sea Kayaker

Newsletter of the NSW Sea Kayak Club Inc.

P.O. Box A1045, Sydney South, NSW, 2000
Telephone : 552-0028

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August 1994

Paddling in Fiji

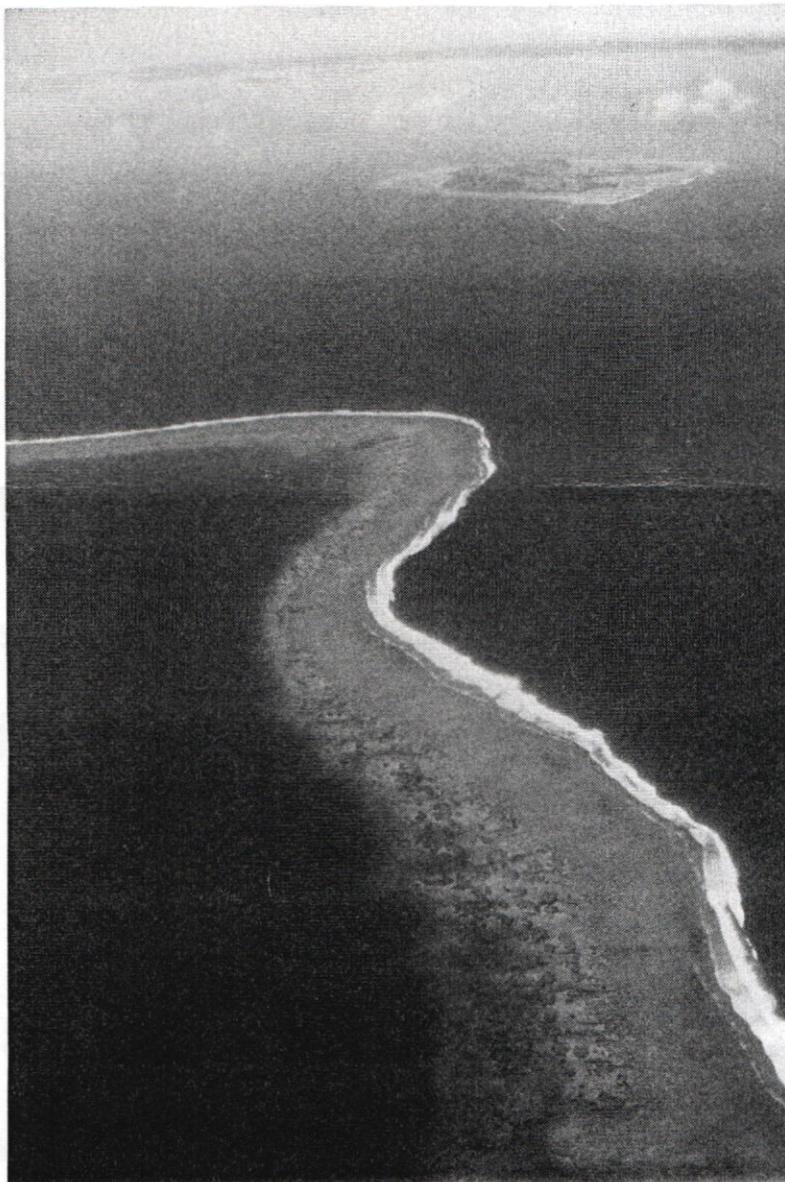
By Brian Roberts

I stepped off the plane at 5am after a 13 hour, non-stop flight. Coming from Los Angeles, I had crossed the international date line and lost an entire day. "That's funny", I thought, "I don't feel any different" and concluded that Einstein's Space-Time Continuum Theories must apply to something else. I was, however, drained by the heat and humidity and would have to wait another hour before the sun started to light up the sky and make things hotter. Here I was - Fiji!

I bought a collapsible kayak with me on the plane in the hope of exploring Fijis tropical paradise. I really had no idea where to go or what to expect. I scanned my map of Fiji and poked my finger at a group of islands that were close together. "There! That's where I want to go" - Mamanuea-I-Cake and Yasawa Groups.

They weren't far from where I had landed and the travel guide said a couple of good things about them (but, it was brief because it's hard for tourists to get to most of the islands). Perfect! A remote tropical paradise - waiting to be paddled.

I spent the next couple of days in the city next to the airport (Nadi), searching for supplies with mixed results. I found food and white gas OK, but when I asked for nautical maps, I was directed to vague plots of Fiji for tourists and when I asked for a tide chart, I was handed a divers time-table. I had to go without these luxuries (I was told later that one can find these items in Lautoka).



Above: *Paddlers paradise. Coral reef east of Viti Levu*
(Photo: Patrick Dibben)

Unable to learn more about the islands from the locals, I decided to load my kayak with camping gear and seven days worth of food and water to find out about them for

myself. I stumbled down to the beach at 4am the next morning, battling the crabs for space to set up the kayak and shoved off. I had to cover 20 miles the first day (in

Presidents Report

We have reached the end of yet another very successful club year.

As you should already be aware our AGM is on Saturday, 27th August at Tambourine Bay Sea Scout Hall. We meet at 12:00 for a BBQ followed by our talk & AGM.

The guest speaker is Paul Caffyn!

My term as President has also come to an end and as I have been in this position for two years I won't be standing for re-election.

I'd like to ask everyone to make a special effort to attend the AGM. We need more people to show an interest in nominating for committee positions.

The Secretary's position has been vacant for two years and during this time I have carried out this role as well as producing the newsletter.

The club has doubled in size over

the last two years and we definitely need to fill all the committee positions to make the workload manageable.

Despite the workload I have enjoyed my term in office and I'd like to say thanks to all those who have contributed and helped out.

The AGM will be held along with the talk starting at 1:30pm. What happens:

- Minutes of the previous AGM or previous general or committee meetings are accepted.
- General business is discussed and voted on.
- The committee presents their reports on activities of the club for the preceding year (Treasurers report etc).
- Current committee positions are declared open and election of office bearers takes place.

NSW SEA KAYAK CLUB INC

PRESIDENT: Patrick Dibben
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TREASURER: Dirk Stuber
(042) 86-1001

NEWSLETTER EDITOR: Vacant

ASSISTANT EDITOR: Patrick Dibben
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Members can nominate a candidate for a position, this must be seconded by another member and if this person accepts the nomination then if they are the sole nominee (and there are no objections) they are elected. If there are more than two candidates then we vote.

(continued back page)

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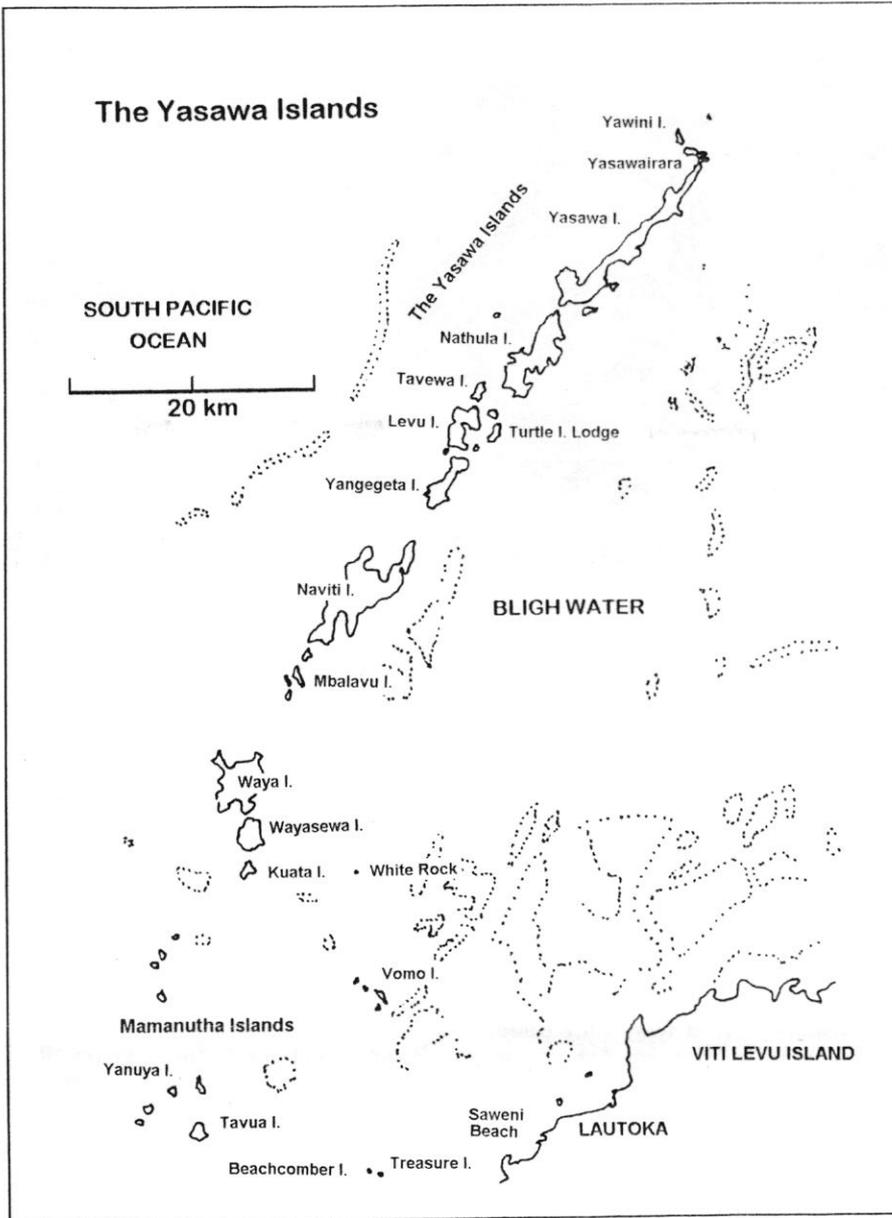
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The Yasawa Islands are beautiful. People have referred to this group as a "string of pearls" because they line up from Northeast to Southwest. (The Mamanuca-I-Cake Islands are equally impressive, but more spread out) Those familiar with the movie 'The Blue Lagoon' (the most recent version with Brooke Shields) will see it's setting on Turtle Island nestled in the middle of the Yasawas. There is also an exclusive resort there at which you can stay for a mere \$1000 per night (start saving now!).

Paddling these islands, however, is more of a cultural experience. Villages (and a few resorts) populate all of the principal islands and some of the smaller ones. So you won't have this paradise all to yourself.

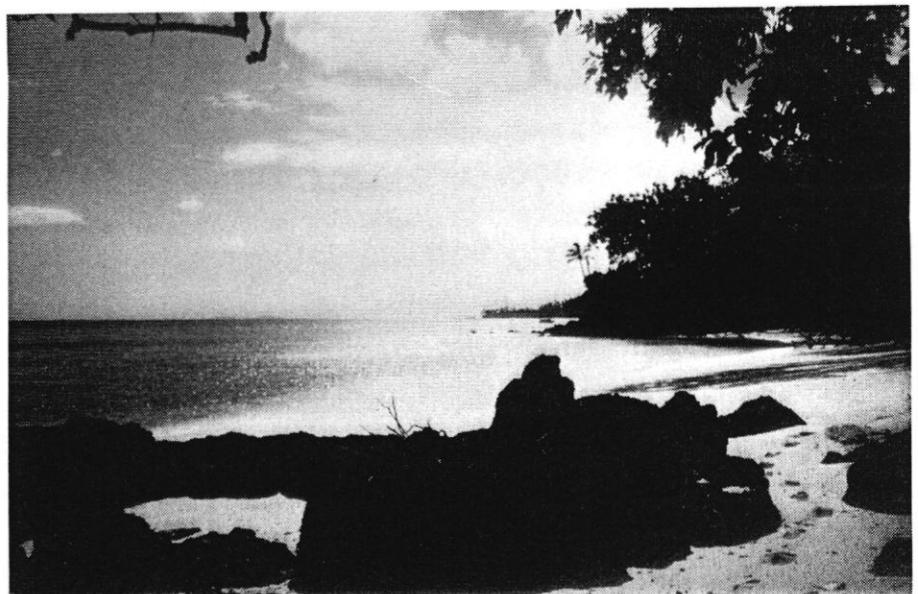
This presents a delicate problem for kayakers in Fiji; every square inch of the islands (and, basically, all of Fiji) is spoken for. Villages own the land around them and any uninhabited islets closest to them. This means you need to ask for permission to camp.

There is one chief for all of the islands in the Yasawa Group. Ideally, one would ask him for permission to camp on his islands however there are two problems with this. First, the chief lives in the village of Yasawairara located on the northern end of the Northern most island. If you're paddling from

my little man-powered barge) to get to an island where I could camp.

That was the beginning of my adventure. The whole trip unfolded into a 13 day experience. I paddled from island to island taking each day as it came and learned about the environment I was in. It turned out to be a trip that I will savour for years to come.

The islands' elements - the people, the white sandy beaches, the numerous plants, the towering volcanic rock formations, the rich sea life, the clear deep-blue waters, the coral reefs - interact with each other in a way that makes exploration fascinating. This is the world according to Fiji. For those interested in paddling it's waters, here is what I learned.



Above: This beach had pure white sand, pitch black rocks and flowering red coral trees. About 100 metres off the beach is a fringing coral reef. (Photo: Patrick Dibben)

the mainland (which is the logical route), you will have already camped on most of his islands in order to get there (however on the return trip it would be a good idea to ask). The second problem (and a little more important for the time being) is that the chief passed away three years ago and hasn't been replaced - yet. The villagers say a new one will be appointed soon but that could take a while in Fiji - so it is up to you to ask the villagers of each island (whenever possible), if you can stay on their land.

This may sound disheartening to seek permission after investing your life savings on plane tickets to Fiji, but being turned away isn't the worry. The Fijians are incredibly friendly and hospitable. So much so, in fact, that they will request that you stay with them in their homes.

If you insist on camping, some villagers may even be offended, thinking that you feel their home is not good enough to stay in.

Here lies the paradox for many kayakers who enjoy getting away from everyone and experiencing the wilderness on their own.

Staying in a Fijian bungalow (especially off the beaten track) is an opportunity that shouldn't be ruled out. I stayed in villages twice and both times were extremely rewarding experiences. I could write a book on these brief



Above: *Bula! Not the Yasawas but just as friendly near Nasori, Viti Levu*
(Photo: Patrick Dibben)

interactions, but to sum it up in a few words: the Fijian villagers hospitality in their simple existence is overwhelming.

This 'simple existence', however, is another problem to be aware of. The villagers rely entirely on the land and sea for their food. They grow small crops (no grains), gather fruits, fish and have pigs, chickens and goats (and an occasional cow or two) They trade some of their crops and fish at the mainland markets for money to buy grains, cloths, building supplies etc. In short, the villagers have enough to live on, but not much more. This doesn't hamper their hospitality, however - they will feed their guests before they feed their

family.

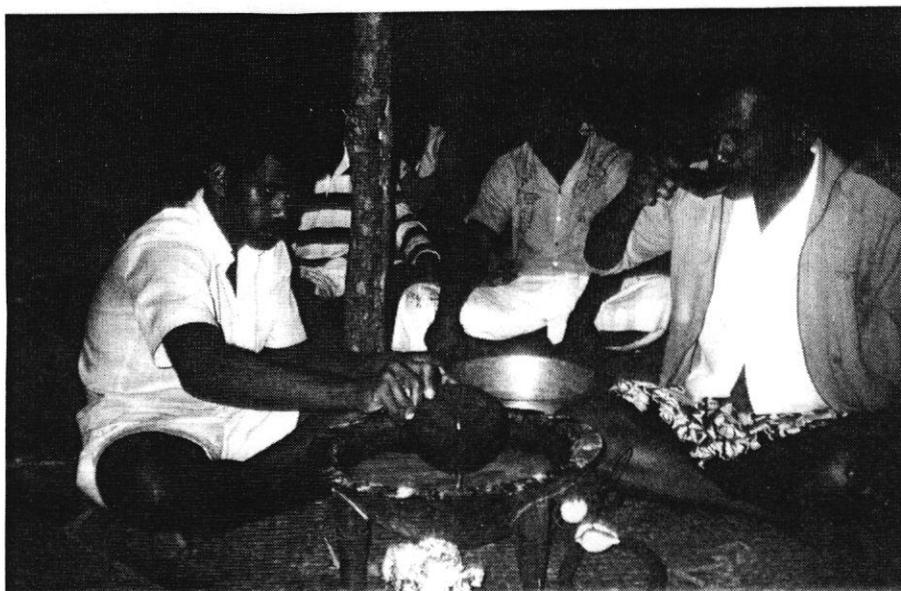
Compensating your host is definitely in order. The traditional gift of a guest is Kava roots (which can be purchased at a market in the mainland). Since most of the villagers grow this root as one of their crops (and sell it on the mainland) giving food that is harder to come by is also appreciated (like flour or rice).

Beware: as tourists are stepping off the beaten path in Fiji, the villagers (mostly in the mainland - Viti Levu) are learning that visitors have money (a lot more than them). I talked to a few people that were requested to make a monetary donation to the village they stayed in.

Camping in the Yasawas - these picturesque, tropical islands - can be interesting. Despite all of the villages, I found beautiful sandy beaches (where I couldn't find anyone to ask) and camped in peaceful solitude.

Take water with you. It is possible to refill at the villages (they all have plenty of well water) but the smaller uninhabited islands have none. Also, most villages have a little 'store' at which you can get noodles and canned fish.

Be sure to take a good first-aid kit with you. There are 'nursing stations' at some of the villages, but the nurses frequently visit neighbouring villages throughout



Above: *A Yanggona (kava) ceremony. The tanoa (bowl) is placed on new mats and the cord with the cowrie shells leads to the guest of honor - me!*
(Photo: Patrick Dibben)

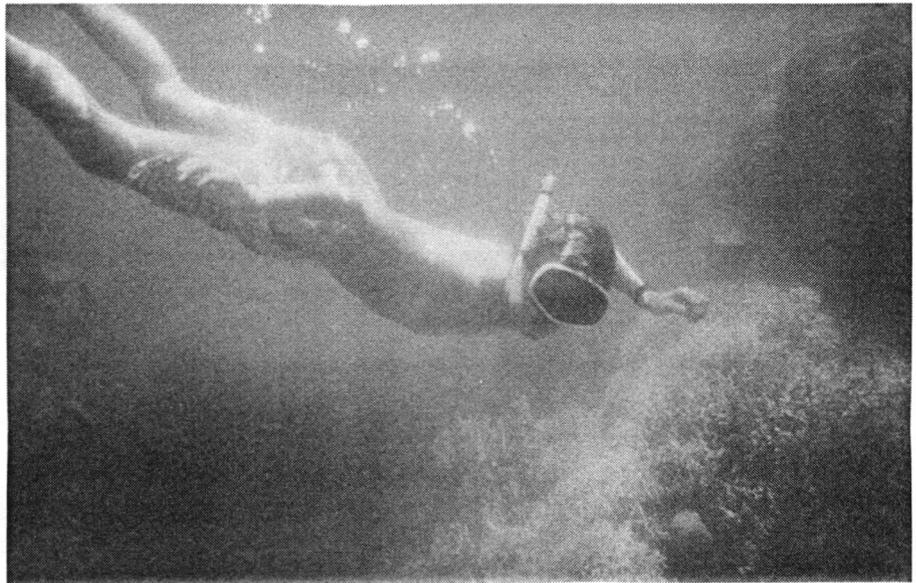
the week so finding the nurse can be tricky. Even if you do find a nurse, I was told that you take your chances with the quality of the care received.

The best time to paddle is in the dry months - May to October. Storms will be less of a problem, however, the predominant winds will still blow. A villager told me, "the winds come only from the East, sometimes North.....or the South....but never from the West. Only during the hurricanes do they come from the West!" I experienced exactly that (but no hurricane, fortunately) - everything from calm, glassy seas to 20 knot headwinds.

Bring snorkelling gear. The coral is excellent and the ocean is some of the clearest water you will find in the world.

If all of this sounds like too much hassle to explore on your own, there is a kayaking outfitter that runs trips in the Yasawa Islands. Twice a year, Southern Sea Ventures from Australia spends nine days casually moving through the island for around \$1,000.

The outfitter takes a small boat out to Tavewa Island (next to Turtle Island) however anyone can do this because there are a couple of backpacker's resorts on the island that shuttle people twice a week (\$30 one way -and a little extra for a kayak). These resorts are a good place to get a beer, a shower and



Above: Snorkelling on the coral coast of Viti Levu. There were sharks too!
(Photo: Patrick Dibben)

some conversation with people from all over the world (well - first world!). If you have a tent it's \$12 to \$14 a night (including three meals.)

Tavewa Island is where I ended my Yasawa adventure. On day thirteen, I jumped on the shuttle boat to Lautoka and paddled the remaining 15 miles back to where I started.

I wanted to paddle all the way back, but a couple of problems deterred me; I had slashed my thumb open with a knife on day five and needed to see a doctor before too long (I couldn't find the nurse!); I managed to completely wreck a

piece of my kayak frame (the kayak still worked but needed attention) and my rudder was bent after a rough day at sea. I was somewhat of a crippled barge and was looking at another five or six days of paddling if I continued so with mixed emotions I headed back.

As I reflected on the previous two weeks, I considered myself fortunate to have located such a good spot to kayak. I concluded that there really wasn't much more I could have asked for, except maybe, to have someone else to pay for everything. □

Brian Roberts visited Australia (from USA) earlier this year on an around the world sea kayaking holiday. He will be paddling NZ this summer!

Planning a trip ?

QANTAS airfares to Fiji:

- **Advanced purchase economy for October 1994 with a max 14 day stay: \$735**
- **Advanced purchase economy for October 1994 with a stay of 5-120 days : \$785**

Excess baggage on the above is at \$8/kg.

Unaccompanied freight is probably the best way to get your kayak there. This means you are a ticket holder but your freight does not necessarily travel on the same flight. It will arrive the same day.

Unaccompanied freight charges:

- **For less than 25 kg: \$3.30/kg**
- **For greater than 25kg: \$2.55/kg**

Tow Lines - A few thoughts

By David Winkworth

I am not a betting man but I would wager that sometime during your sea kayaking trips (if you're a half serious paddler) you'll have need of a good tow line either as a rescuer or as the unfortunate victim of Mother Nature's fury on the sea.

Towlines are listed as essential equipment for **all** sea trips at and above Sea Proficiency level of the Australian Board of Canoe Education.

OK, that's a sort of "big stick" approach and it really shouldn't have to be spelt out to responsible sea paddlers.....tow lines are just plain commonsense on the sea.

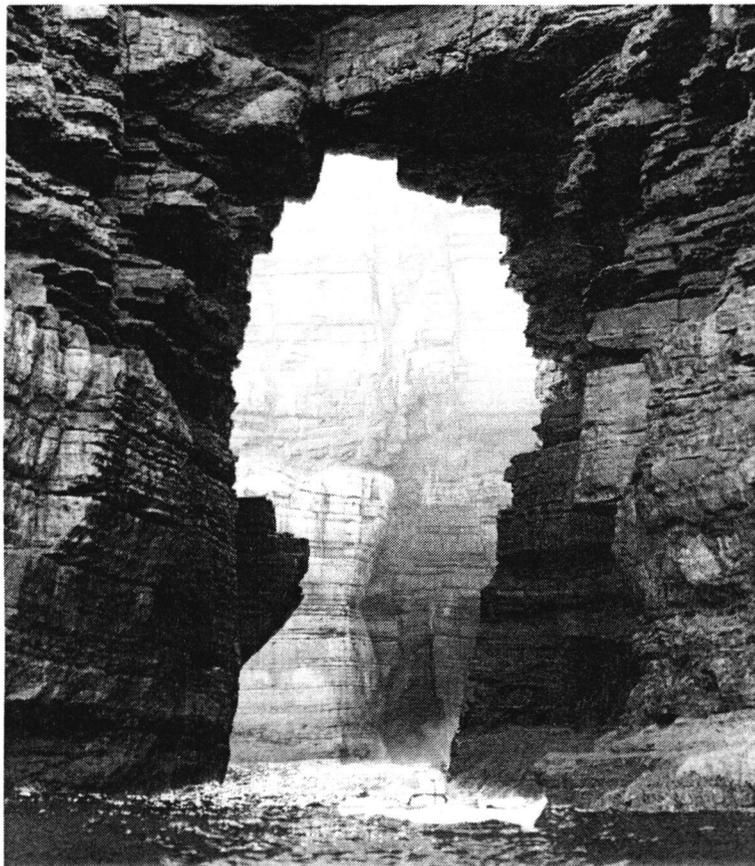
If you haven't got one or you have one that is a bit of a tangled mess on the rear deck and you'd like to tidy it up a bit, here are a few points to consider:

Length: A few years ago a NSW Sea Kayak Club standard length towrope of 7 metres was proposed. I believe this is about 8 metres too short! Consider this: you are towing an exhausted/incapacitated paddler with a 7 metre tow rope. You've attached one end of the tow rope to the bow of the "victims" (love that word!) craft and the other end to a point near the cockpit in your boat. The distance from your cockpit to stern is 2 metres which thus leaves a gap of 5 metres between boats.

In a big following sea - a possible cause of sea sickness or incapacity for the victim - they'll come surfing down that big wave into you with only a metre gap to stop....and remember, they may have little control of their boat....

So lengthen it up folks - try 15 metres for starters - you can always lop a bit off later!

Deployment: This must be quick! You may need to haul someone or someone's boat or both out of a nasty rock gauntlet run that went wrong. Your tow rope must always be quickly accessible **ON DECK**. It is probably also an advantage to be able to throw your towline similar to river rescue throw bags. A small nylon bag with a suitable closure



Above: Mark Shrimpton, near Point Perpendicular, Jervis Bay.
(Photo: David Winkworth)

(velcro drawstring) would be ideal here. Remember to attach the bag to something though. Some shock cord loops attached to decklinesa quick pull and the line is released.

If you're putting together your first towline, ask other paddlers what they use.

Flotation: Again this is common sense! Aren't you going to look a goose if the stainless steel clips and hardware take the lot to the bottom!

You could use a small line buoy - I've glued some closed cell foam to my nylon bag for flotation.

Probably not necessary for the rope itself to float although a dead-set sinker is certainly going to be a nuisance in retrieval.

Quick release: This is for safety of the "tower". If a current, wave or whatever threatens to sweep you AND the victim away, let them go!

I use a "free end" rope and a cam cleat for quick release. You may

choose a snap hook or similar. Please, don't tie any knots.

Stretch: This is important but really only for comfort...but then isn't comfort for both paddlers important during a 20km tow in choppy seas? The shock and release action of two joined boats on the sea can be much improved by the addition of a "stretchy bit" to a tow line.

Most paddlers use a small section (about 1m) of shock cord in their tow line. You might consider limiting the stretch too, if you're in heavy doubles.

My MK III towline is nylon cord of about 5mm diameter and I've found that at 15m it has plenty of stretch itself and works well - the shock cord section is nit required.

Good luck, and remember to look around at the various set-ups at your next group paddle.

In a future issue we might look at various towing configurations and their limitations. □

Equipment

My Tow Rope

By Patrick Dibben

Rope: I use waterski tow rope - 6mm poly braided ski line. Available from Whitworths Nautical World. Cost \$0.80/m.

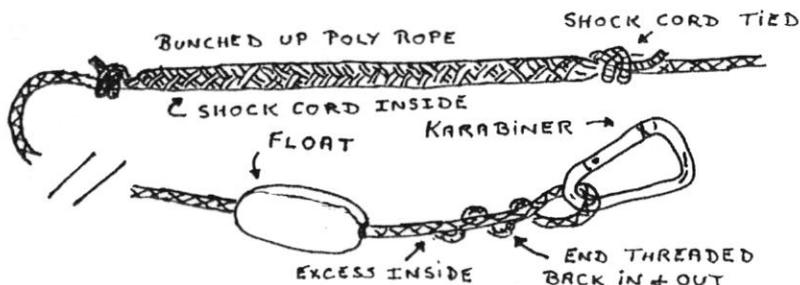
Unlike high tech nylon ropes this floats. Being braided you can also make joins without knots.

Shock Cord: I use 6mm shock cord. Cost \$2.50/m or less.

Floats: I use small fishing net floats made of a very hard foam. They don't leak or break like the hard plastic ones. Available from the Fishing & Net supply shop at Sydney Fish Markets. Cost \$0.60 ea. (You can also get small offcuts of netting for your deck at this shop)

Karabiners/Snap Hooks: I use aluminium snap link karabiners. These are much lighter than stainless steel. I use a Kong Accessory Crab rated at 650kg from Wildsports, Sydney \$8.95 ea.

Some stainless steel snap hooks have an extra eye for the rope so it



can't be lost. This is an advantage over using aluminium crabs.

Rigging: By using poly braided ski rope you can avoid using knots so your line is cleaner and easier to deploy etc.

- Melt the end of your poly rope, if necessary, so it is easier to thread.
- Thread your rope through the float. You could use knots to keep it in position if you like.
- If you use a crab then you can put them on after. If using a snap hook with separate eye then thread the rope through this.

- Form a loop in the end of the poly rope then by compressing the rope at the long end the weave will open up. Thread the short end back into the weave. Thread it in and out about four times then back in and work the excess up inside.

- The shock cord can go inside the poly rope. Open up the weave at some point and insert nearly all you shock cords (1m or so). The ends of shock cord are then tied in a simple knot outside the weave.

Storage: A throw bag is best. This has a hole in the base of the bag with one end poking out and attached to your boat. The other end has a draw string. You stuff the rope in the bag it and it should deploy cleanly. □

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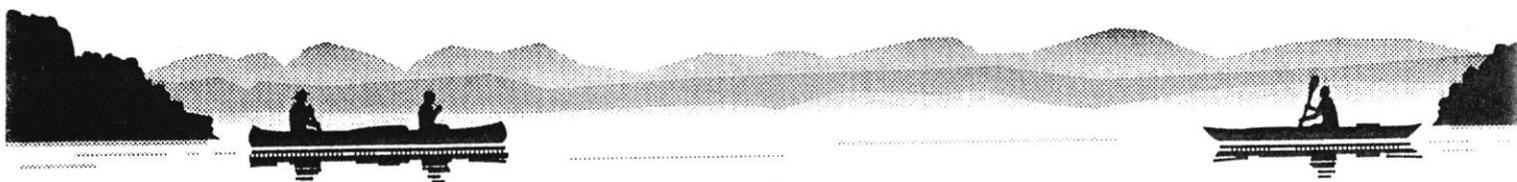
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Helmets - Should They Be On The Safety List ?

By Nicholas Gill

Helmets - the last word in kayaking fashion for dorks, or a sensible way to protect yourself and others?

My observations of South Australian paddlers and hearsay concerning Victorian paddlers, leads me to believe that NSW paddlers have a relatively low level of helmet use. Somewhat surprising, given the obvious attractions of rocky areas and the surf to NSW sea kayakers and Pittarakers (see May 1994 newsletter).

My own inclinations and observations have caused me to invest in a kayaking helmet recently. I did this for a number of reasons:

- I value my life and well-being.
- I observed a fellow kayaker hit his head when tipped in an area of rocks. Fortunately he was fine but it could have easily gone the other way.
- I like to surf and there is the potential of hitting the bottom with one's head, of being hit by one's own kayak, or of being hit by another's kayak.
- In rough seas there is potential to be hit by another kayak. Indeed Larry Gray's Wild article on his Cape York trip described just such an event, the result being concussion and delays.
- Paddling on a rocky coast always holds the potential for accident and blows to the head.

True, in a really bad situation a helmet may not save you from serious injury. But in other cases, the wearing of a helmet may turn a potentially life-threatening blow to the head, into a mere bump. It may not be the actual blow that kills a helmetless sea kayaker but the fact that one is groggy or unconscious in deep, possibly turbulent, water. This is particularly the case in sea kayaking where any blow to the head is likely to occur in relatively



Above: A behelmeted Norm Sanders at Rosedale.
(Photo: Nicholas Gill)

deep water. Blows are also likely to occur in situations where it will be difficult for others to help an injured kayaker. For example in the surf, or in areas of rocks and breaking waves. A helmet in this situation, if it has kept you conscious and able to act, will mean that others are less likely to have to put themselves at risk to help you. Thinking of oneself as part of a group, with responsibilities towards the group is an important part of my helmet wearing (and buoyancy vest wearing) philosophy. It is an approach to outdoor activities that I picked up in bushwalking, another situation where one's actions and misfortunes can affect all members of a group.

One might claim that this argument about group responsibility leads to the logical conclusion that one should be extremely cautious and stay well clear of rocks and surf at all times. I think it is more of a question of being sensible about the risks one takes, or conversely, of not being stupid and ill-prepared for activities one intends to undertake. We could all stay at home and watch TV on the weekends, or perhaps go for

Sunday drives, instead of paddling. However, a lot of us probably like activities such as sea kayaking because they offer sights, experiences and thrills that one can't get from the Saturday matinee. To deny ourselves the thrills of sea kayaking, such as surfing and paddling around rocks and cliffs, is self-defeating. Just by going sea kayaking we accept a relatively high level of risk. Having decided to go sea kayaking, however, one can easily act to reduce the chance of accident. I see wearing a helmet as just such an easy act. An easy thing to do that increases safety. Why not wear one?

The helmet I bought is a plastic 'Ace' helmet and only cost about forty-five dollars. It's lightweight and well ventilated. Once it's on, comfortably over my hat, I hardly notice it. I may not look cool, but I figure I'm a lot safer.

I'd be interested to hear other people's views on helmet wearing and experiences with different types of helmets. □

Trip Report

Queensland Notes

By David Malcolm



Above: These waves were nearly 2m wipped up well offshore by 30knt winds and strong currents
Near Solway passge about 1km from Whitsunday Island
(Photo: Patrick Dibben)

This is a brief note on a North Queensland trip that was just completed. Four of us did a marathon drive from Sydney directly to Lucinda and spent 6 days (incl. 1 rest day) paddling around the eastern and northern sides of Hinchinbrook Island.

Stage two involved a considerably more extensive paddle around the Whitsunday region. We started from Mackay and worked our way through to Airlie Beach for 12 days, restocked with supplies and then returned 8 days later.

Significant/interesting points that I found were:

- Hinchinbrook is very pretty and has very enthusiastic mosquitoes on the Eastern side. The weather was distinctly more tropical than

later on and the water was not crystal clear like postcards.

- There is a fabulous fresh water swimming hole at Zoe Bay.
- We saw warnings but no signs of crocodiles.
- Cane Toads hibernate; we only saw some racing in a pub.
- Three days out of the weeks in the Whitsundays were like the travel brochures. We had apparently unseasonably strong winds according to the 100 beaches book. We frequently had winds over 20 knots.
- Seas are flat but can get chopped up by the wind. Caution is definitely required for beginners and inexperienced paddlers.

- Tides did not prove a problem and did not affect any plans. Tidal ranges are large which often meant long carries up the beach.
- Very few people camp and campsites are generally well protected.
- Paddling enthusiasm waned towards the trips end.
- I thought the nicest place was Goldsmith Island.
- Didn't scare the fish but diving lure was the most successful.
- Trip to outer reef is well worth the effort.
- Should have done more snorkelling and checked out the fishing more fully.

By David Winkworth

Big Water

On the Wednesday prior to the June long weekend, I launched my kayak onto the waters of the Myall Lakes for three days paddling prior to joining other club members at Shoal Bay for a long weekend Advanced Proficiency Assessment around Broughton Island.

An enjoyable but windy three days culminated in a paddle down to Myall River to Port Stephens where I met Frank Bakker, John Wilde (the examiners) and candidates Arunas Pilka, Gary Parker, Dirk Stuber and Evan Shillabeer. I was part of the latter group.

I lay in the tent each night on the lakes and listened to the roar of surf whipped up by strong southerly winds. "This is going to be a true Advanced Proficiency test", I thoughtand it was I suppose.

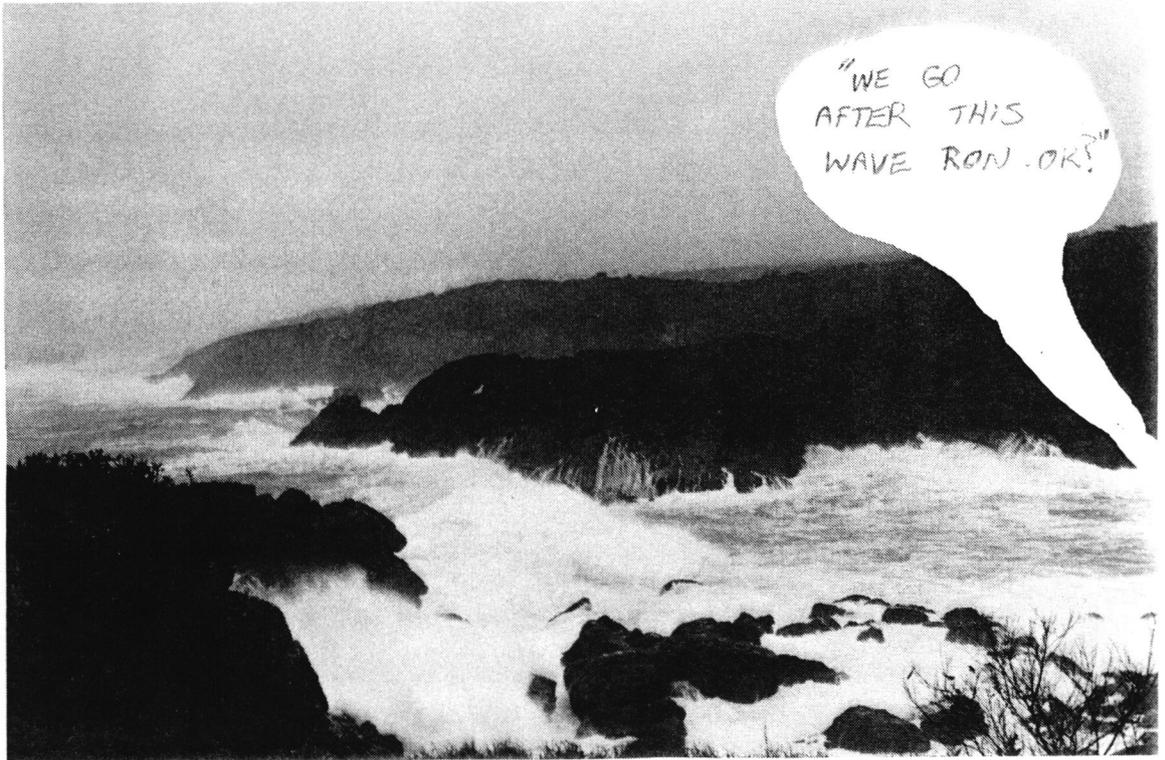
Big swells pounded the entrance to Port Stephens and the southern shore of Broughton Island.

Landing was easy on the northern beach where we camped two nights. The high point for me really, was almost paddling into a whale on choppy rebound seas on the SE end of the island closely followed by frustration in not having a camera handy! A good lesson learned.

We all passed and enjoyed the weekend.

If you have the opportunity next time a similar course is rundo it.

When I got home, local surfers told me the southerly winds brought the biggest seas they could remember to the coast.



Above: Kianimmy Bay near Tathra during big seas
(Photo: David Winkworth)

Big Bucks

Wanna make a thousand bucks just for being observant on the water? You do?

OK. All you've got to do is dob in an abalone poacher....that is they get convicted.

The reward, recently upped from \$500 to \$1,000 is offered by NSW Commercial Abalone divers management groups via NSW Fisheries.

So, as you paddle up and down the south coast, look out for ANYTHING suspicious around rocks and reefs.... like divers with big heavy bags, people hiding, from you, people shelling lots and lots of abalone. Mind you, you could also stake out your local Chinese restaurant as plenty of abs also end up there!

Vehicle numbers, descriptions of divers etc are all useful but you'll have to be quick. Your information must be fresh... and if you can't contact Fisheries Officers, call the Police instead. You never know, one pinch could pay for your new boat!

Travellin North

Ron Mudie is off again...this time on a repeat paddle to Sydney. He and Gordon Carswell will leave Wallagoot Lake (near Tathra) on August 20th, taking up to a leisurely two weeks.

Ron told me he is looking forward to good tailwinds on this trip...last time he punched nor-easters nearly all the way!

The only unpleasant part is cold early morning starts when you mis-time your launch through the surf. Good luck guys.

A Long Way North

By the time you read this, Arunas Pilka, David Malcolm and crew will have returned from Hinchinbrook and the Whitsundays....three weeks paddling in all.

Had a card from Arunas today (July 25th) he says conditions are a bit windy and he is looking forward to a skeg on his new Arctic Raider. David Malcolms Mk III Arctic Raider (with skeg) is handling the wind well.

We're looking forward to some good pics guys.....any Mirages on your trip?

No Feathers

If you're new to paddling and haven't had your brain flooded with messages to twist your paddle shaft every second stroke, please consider (just consider) using unfeathered paddles with your boat.

Myself and three other paddlers down here on the south coast believe there are advantages to unfeathered blades which make them worthwhile.

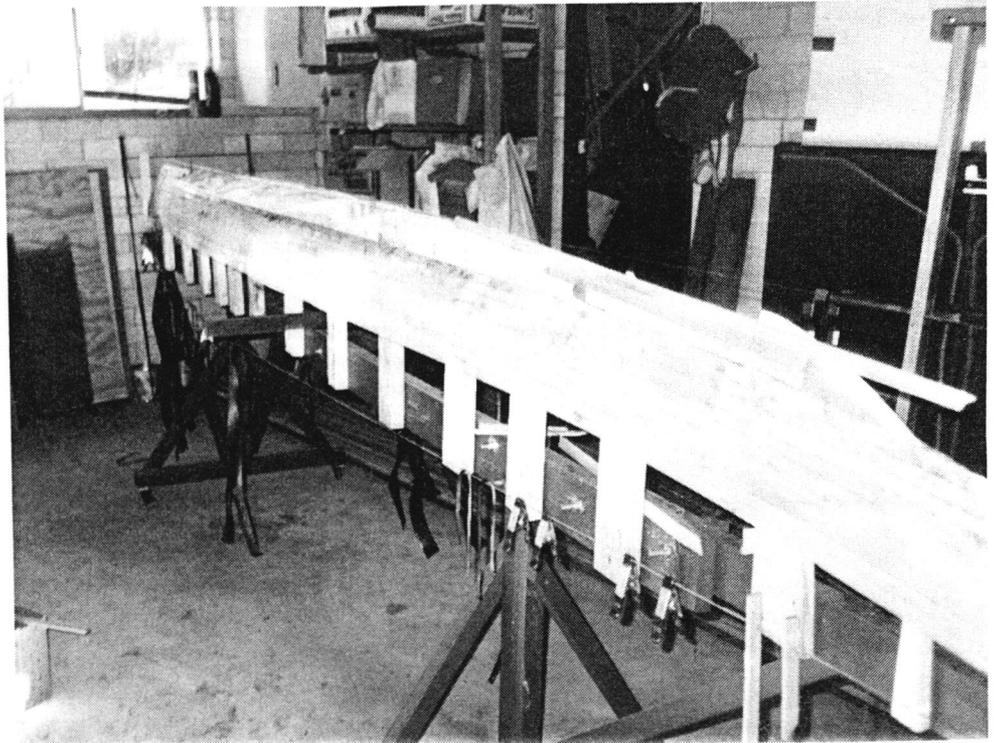
We're outnumbered heavily by the "ninety degree brigade" and even though we may just be voices crying in the wilderness we'd like to let everyone know there is an alternative to feathered blades.

So, if your kayak retailer can't offer you an unfeathered paddle for a test, hold off buying a feathered version until someone can.

Better still, give me, Norm Sanders, Ron Mudie or Gordon Carswell a call. We'll put you straight

Panache

Norm Sanders strip-planked "Panache" is taking shape slowly. norm says the bevelling and fitting



Above: *Panache* taking shape
(Photo: David Winkworth)

of each strip takes about 1.5- 2 hours !

No doubt this 18ft kayak will be the pride of the fleet this summer!

Don't expect Norm to take this boat through any gauntlets. He says after 40 years of trying to stay away from rocks in sailing boats, he's too old to change his spots now! Fair enough.

□

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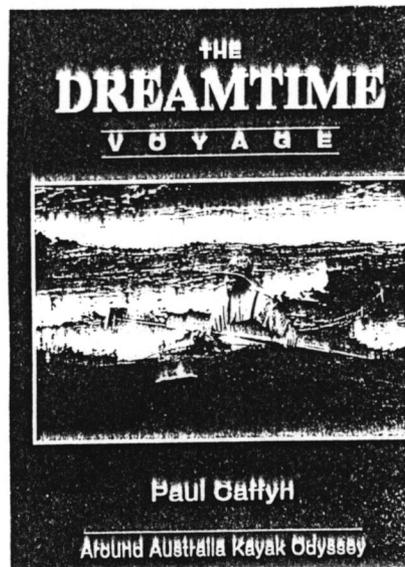
David Winkworth (064) 95-9714 (BH), (064) 94-1366 (AH)

WANTED

Double Kayak. Heather Warner a Canadian paddler and her husband are visiting Australia arriving mid October. They wish to buy a double sea kayak. Correspondence to:

Heather Warner, Box 1711, BANFF, AB TOL.OCO, CANADA

NEW BOOKS



David Winworth has circumnavigated Australia, Kenji Ogawa has already reached Broome and I'm still paddling up the east coast!

We've all been reading Paul Caffyn's new book "The Dreamtime Voyage".

It's the story of his Australian circumnavigation which he completed in 1982 - 9,420 miles in 360 days.

I haven't read enough to do justice to a review but I can tell you it is an excellent book. The comments from David and Kenji concur with this.

We should have a review in the next newsletter but you can find out for yourself by turning up to the AGM where Paul is our guest speaker.

There will be copies on sale and you will probably be able to get it autographed!

It has 79 colour plates, 85 b&w photographs in 244 pages. A4 format.

Shoulder or Upper Arm Pain

By **Nicholas Gill**

Having moved to Canberra in August last year I joined the NSW Sea Kayaking Club and attended the October Rock 'N Roll weekend as my first club event. From that time I started paddling regularly and quickly began to build up paddling speed and endurance.

I was therefore understandably annoyed when I began to develop a good deal of pain and discomfort around my right shoulder and upper arm in March this year. This problem has severely curtailed my paddling, restricting me to relatively short forays and forcing me to miss a number of club events and assessment weekends. The problem is still with me (in late July), although I am starting to get on top of it. Other paddlers I know have also had such problems to a minor extent, and it has been described in *Sea Kayaker* a few years ago. It is also common amongst rock climbers and tennis players. I want to describe what causes the problem and enable others to recognise it when it occurs, for unless one undertakes remedial training the problem is unlikely to disappear by itself.

The Problem

The problem generally manifests itself as pain on the upper arm, where it joins the shoulder. The pain may be in various places, depending upon the exact nature of one's problem. In my case, the tendons in question are those to the front of the arm. The problem arises due to the nature of kayaking and the muscles that are exercised when paddling. Paddling a kayak seems to particularly exercise the pectoralis major ('pecs' - chest), the upper trapezius ('traps' - neck and upper shoulder) and the latissimus dorsi ('lats'). I certainly noticed that these muscles were developing as I paddled more and more. Unfortunately, the strengthening of these muscles can set up imbalances with other muscles, causing changes in posture and movement. These changes can precipitate what is known as 'impingement' of the tendons that are found in the shoulder and upper arm.

The imbalance that develops is between the muscles mentioned above and a set of muscles known as the 'rotator cuff' (RC) muscles. These muscles are the supraspinatus, infra-spinatus, teres minor and subscapularis. These muscles are found in the upper back and they play an important role in stabilising the shoulder joint. Most importantly these RC muscles act to rotate our shoulders outwards and to stabilise the movement of the shoulder blade, protecting the tendons that pass through the shoulder area to the upper arm.

By strengthening and shortening our lats, pecs and traps we cause them to both pull the arm forward and turn it inward, and also to pull the shoulder forward. This has the effect of decreasing the space in the shoulder joint through which the tendons run. The result, during movement, is 'impingement', or squashing of the tendons. This can cause inflammation and swelling. Once the tendons are swollen they will be further squashed. The space through which the tendons run will be at its smallest when our arms are raised, for example when paddling, or even, as I am now doing, typing.

The problem can be hard to shake as strengthening and shortening of the lats, traps and pecs has the corollary effect of stretching and weakening the RC muscles, compounding the problem. The positive feedback of ever more swollen and aggravated tendons also makes the problem hard to remove. It is quite possible to reach a situation in which even everyday activities will cause impingement.

Unless you are lucky and the problem sorts itself out, the remedy is basically strengthening of the RC muscles and stretching of the pecs, lats and traps. The precise mix of this will be dictated by one's particular circumstances and professional advice is worth getting. In my case, the exact nature of the problem has changed and has required different exercises over time. I am currently using a mix of strengthening and stretching exercises from my physiotherapist and from yoga

Are You At Risk?

If you have pain as described above, it is possibly due to problems with your RC muscles. Of course, if you do have pain in your shoulder area don't rely on a necessarily accurate diagnosis from me. If it's a continuing problem get professional advice. If you don't have such pain it is worth checking to see if you are at risk of developing impingement. The most obvious sign of risk is the 'gorilla' posture. This is evidenced by; rounded upper back; shoulders forward; arms inwardly rotated so that one's palms are facing backwards or resting on one's thighs.

Other signs include; prominent upper trapezius muscles ('bull' neck); hollows above and below the middle of the shoulder blade (indicating wasted RC muscles); wasting of the lower traps between the shoulder blades, shoulder blades that sit far away from the spine; shoulder blades that lift away from the back when you raise your arm; tight lats.

As for me, I'm starting to get on top of the problem by dint of regular stretching and strengthening exercises. I've recently begun to do more than potter about in my kayak again, although I'm still taking things easy and not pushing myself.

In an attempt to reduce stress on my shoulder I have also modified my paddling technique in two ways. First, I have switched from a long, full-bladed paddle to a slightly shorter, narrow-bladed paddle. Second, whereas I once paddled with my arms held up and out in front of me, I now paddle in a more relaxed fashion, holding my arms down and closer to my body. These changes seem to have helped, particularly the narrower blade, although only time will tell.

Acknowledgments: Although I had an understanding of the impingement problem from my physiotherapist, an article in the Jan-Jun 1994 edition of *Rock*, by physiotherapist M. Sleeman was of great help in finding the necessary words. □

By Nicholas Gill

At the risk of trespassing onto Dave Winkworth's "South Coast News" the following is offered to keep others up to date on the Canberra Pod (CP).

As I write members of the CP are scattered across the country and the globe. Jackie Windh is in Canada, hopefully fulfilling her kayaking plans. Previously she was inhabiting some Pacific Island idyll (the name of which temporarily escapes me) with her Feathercraft in hand. Arunas Pilka is off with others from Sydney (I believe) in the Whitsundays, and Norm Sanders is also in Queensland, checking out the Russ Hinze Dam, among other delights.

The Canberra winter has put our Tuesday night paddles on hold. However, the milder weather of the coast has proven attractive. Both myself and Mark Pearson have been out with Norm Sanders around Tuross on weekends. Norm and myself also launched ourselves from Guerilla Bay, south of Bateman's Bay, and potted northwards for a few kilometres, before heading back. Guerilla Bay is very sheltered and struck us as possibly a good place to launch in rougher weather.

On the weekend of the 30th and 31st of July, myself, Jeff Blamey, Jeanette Mill and Mark Pearson headed for Murrumarang National Park, just north of Bateman's Bay. In view of the presence of hot showers, and a less than hopeful weather forecast, we camped at a caravan park at North Durras.



Above: Jeff Blamey, Murrumarang National Park.
(Photo: Nicholas Gill)

Saturday saw Jeanette walk around Durras Lake, while the rest of us paddled north to Pebbly Beach. After a few attempts at surfing the small waves, we gave up and headed back, stopping at Point Upright for a little rock shelf paddling and enjoying the rollercoaster ride off the shelf with receding waters. In the afternoon Jeff and Jeanette paddled up Lake Durras. Mark and I tried the surf, but the weather turned nasty, and we headed back for hot showers.

On Sunday Jeff and Jeanette walked along the coast, while Mark and I paddled south to Wasp Island, at the southern end of the Durras bay. Although only a few kilometres we managed to take most of the day as the surf was brilliant, and we couldn't help ourselves. We also found and investigated a sea cave near South Durras and came across a pod of dolphins. Having circumnavigated Wasp Island, we paddled back into a ferocious headwind, stopping

constantly to savour the surf. As a result, we practically fell out of our boats as we landed, all muscles having given up.

The area around Durras and in Murrumarang National Park is stunning and great for paddling. A classic NSW south coast area, with sandy beaches lying between exposed cliffs and rocky headlands. Spotted Gum forest comes right down to coast in many places. It was my first visit and I'll definitely go back. If you haven't been there I can thoroughly recommend it.

Any kayaking photo buffs out there? I recently bought a Nikonos camera, mainly for use when sea kayaking. I'd be interested to hear from anybody else of their experiences in taking photos from kayaks and of the ways they have dealt with any problems.

Once upon a time in land far, far away lived..... □

The responsibilities of the committee positions are as follows:

- **President:** Chairs meetings. Involved in overall management and co-ordination.
- **Vice President:** Chairs meetings in the absence of the President. assists in overall club management.
- **Secretary:** Maintains the minutes including : all appointments of office-bearers; names of members of the committee present at a committee meeting or general meeting; all proceedings at committee meetings and general meetings. Handles correspondence.
- **Treasurer:** Ensures that all money due to the club is collected and received; all payments authorised by the club are made; maintains books and accounts showing financial affairs including details of all receipts and expenditure.
- **Social Convenor:** Arranges and co-ordinates social get togethers for the club such as the BBQ/talk days.
- **Trips Convenor:** Co-ordinates and maintains the trip calendar. In reality this usually involves contacting members and keeping in touch with what trips are on. Updating the Info-Line.
- **Newsletter Editor:** Gathers contributions from members and compile the newsletter. In reality the person filling this role needs to have access to a PC and printer and have some knowledge of word processing software (preferably MS Word).
- **Assistant Editor:** Assists the newsletter editor.

Memberships become due after the AGM and you will be able to pay at the meeting. If you have joined after June 1994 then your fees cover you for the new year.

If you don't make it to the AGM then please make an effort to send in your membership promptly. This makes the

banking and record keeping much easier for the people who are working for you.

The club now has 143 members and I'd like to welcome our new members: Stephen Brady, Kate Crowe, Mick Crowe, Gisela Holster, John Holster, Brian Jones, Greg Lea, Peter Rossel,

Richard Routely, Evan Shillabeer, John Taylor, Norman White and Whitsunday Kayak Adventure Co.

Finally let me wish the club all the best for the coming year, I have enjoyed my term and have found it a rewarding experience.

Patrick Dibben



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