

THE MAGAZINE OF THE NSW SEA KAYAK CLUB
ISSUE 101 | JUNE 2016

Salt



ROCK 'N' ROLL HIGHLIGHTS

PLUS

Four Bass Strait Crossings!

AGM Notice

Our N.S.W. Challenge Continues

Queensland Percy Group

Flotsam's Revenge



Above: Tim Pearse surfing in Sydney Harbour on a recent Tuesday evening paddle (Rob Mercer)

Front cover: Megan Pryke leading a trip at Rock 'n' Roll Jimmys Beach in March 2016. Megan is a familiar paddler with the club, organiser of the successful N.S.W. Challenge, and now joins the elite list of Bass Strait crossing kayakers

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NSW Sea Kayak Club Inc.

PO BOX R1302, ROYAL EXCHANGE NSW 1225

The NSWSKC is a voluntary organisation run by members who give their time freely to the club. Membership is offered yearly. Please see the website for details and application. www.nswseakayaker.asn.au

PRESIDENT:
Campbell Tiley
president@nswseakayaker.asn.au

VICE PRESIDENT:
Tony Murphy
vicepresident@nswseakayaker.asn.au

SECRETARY/TREASURER:
Alison Curtin
secretary@nswseakayaker.asn.au

TRAINING COORDINATOR:
Stuart Trueman
training@nswseakayaker.asn.au

TRIPS CONVENOR:
Shaan Gresser
trips@nswseakayaker.asn.au

ROCK 'N ROLL COORDINATOR:
David Linco
rnrr@nswseakayaker.asn.au

INTERNET COORDINATOR:
Stephan Meyn
internet2012-13@nswseakayaker.asn.au

EDITOR:
Steve Hitchcock
editor@nswseakayaker.asn.au

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IMPORTANT: Please review the Paddler Safety, Required Equipment, Grading System and Club Calendar sections of the club website.



From the President's Deck

CAMPBELL TILEY

I would like to open by acknowledging the plethora of training opportunities on the calendar over recent months. This reflects commitment by both leaders and instructors and, in particular, the commitment by Stuart Trueman to run assessments for Sea Instructors and to push potential candidates to be assessed. An increase in Sea Instructor numbers will help foster new Sea Guides and both will fill a shortfall in active leaders and should help address the rather sparse trips calendar. Unfortunately a number of leaders have been 'distracted' from running trips by involvement in training due to forthcoming assessments. Thanks also to Adrian Clayton who has continued his prominent involvement in training including a recent Sea Skills assessment.

Megan Pryke's 'NSW Challenge' has been a great success with the majority of legs being so well supported that additional leaders have been needed to run the trips. No discussion of the trips calendar is complete without thanking Sharon Betteridge, Rob Mercer and Owen Kimberley for their weekly paddles, which collectively account for more paddlers on the water than all other trips combined.

Please come along to the AGM next month (see promo on page 5 and emails nearer the time) and ensure that the Committee knows what you think they should be doing! Please also think about any of the Committee roles not yet filled for next year. Paddlers who have been members for only a couple of years

are well placed to contribute so don't hold back from volunteering for a role just because you have not been a long-term member. We want balanced input from a range of paddling perspectives so please put your hand up.

I regularly receive requests that I circulate information to the membership about an event or cause. These may be very worthwhile fundraising endeavours or ideological causes, often with a marine ecology angle. My general approach has been to note that the members' emails have been provided for communication regarding Club activities and not for members to advocate for causes. As a result of this, I refuse approaches such as this. We are looking at the use of a Facebook page, independent of the Club website, and this may provide an option for communication between members. We do, however, need to understand the attitude of members to receiving unsolicited communication of material unrelated to the Club but generally with a marine or ecological flavour and I intend to seek advice at the AGM.

Informal networking with interstate clubs provides an opportunity to hear about issues and challenges

that they are facing as well as initiatives that are working well. At a more basic level this contact also fosters personal links that can facilitate interstate paddling. We have agreed to support a second yearly meeting involving representatives of the committees of all major state sea kayak clubs who choose to attend as well as KASK to maintain and expand on the momentum from the two national Sea Kayak Summits held over recent years to date. The proposal is to alternate between the VSKC and NSWKSC initially, with the Victorians' turn coming up next year.

Thanks to the volunteers, leaders, instructors and to David Linco as RnR coordinator who have pulled off yet another excellent Rock 'n' Roll weekend at Jimmys Beach. Although attendee numbers were down a little on recent years, the weather was perfect and the Sunday video session attracted an impressive selection of excellent short films. The support of Expedition Kayaks was also much appreciated and the comprehensive display of gear as well as ready advice from Rob, Sharon and Mark was well received as always. As for Mark's ukulele, the less said the better.

Like the Norwegian Blue I continue to metaphorically 'pine for the fjords' after our Tassie west coast trip earlier this year. I hope to provide a bit more detail from the trip in the next Salt and will enjoy the inspiring trip reports from others in this issue.



Waterfront camp near Melaleuca Inlet, Southwest Tasmania



From the Editor's Desk

STEVE HITCHCOCK

Well my season as Editor is coming to a close. Hard to believe I've achieved this many magazines without an editing background, but well worth the journey. Don't be afraid to put up your hand at the AGM (or before) to take on this exciting role, you won't regret it!

Back to the important paddling stories, and of course, Rock 'n' Roll 2016 takes front and centre stage. What glorious weather we had, and for many of us Jimmys Beach virgins, what a fantastic place to paddle and explore. Thanks David for such a great weekend. I never thought I would ever publish four

Bass Strait crossings in one edition, but after a sharp intake of breath, I did. All occurred early this year, and to be fair to all participants, all deserve the accolade that publishing their stories bring. I'm glad to say that each report gives a different perspective and I hope, like me, you never tire of reading such great expeditions.

After Rock 'n' Roll, Bass Strait and the NSW Challenge, there wasn't too much room left for other stories. So I focused on those submissions from members with wider diversity than NSW and Tasmania. It was lovely to read Sharon Betteridge's

account about paddling the Percy Group of Islands between Rockhampton and Mackay, followed by Nerissa Worwood's induction to the WA paddling fraternity. Plus it's always welcoming to receive a humorous tale from Mark Pearson, about a situation most of us must contemplate whenever we hop in our kayaks.

So thanks again to all those members who have sent in material. I really appreciate everything I receive, and it seems from your feedback, that you enjoy reading it too. I hope to see you on the water and expect to keep reading your stories for years to come.

To the Committee

What a great R&R it was this year!! And great work on your behalf with the outstanding work on the magazine!

Cheers, Garry Mansfield

Saltiest submission WINNER

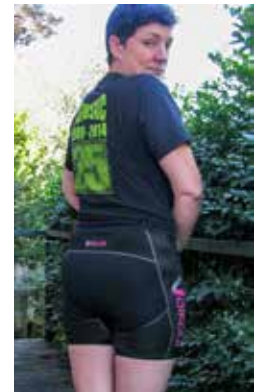
I'm pleased to announce the winner of the 'Saltiest Article' from Salt #100 was our accomplished Adobe CS6 software specialist, Ruby Gamble. As you may know, Ruby leads a very busy life yet still manages to submit articles and layout the magazine, once editing is complete.

In Salt #100, Ruby highlighted the most frequent trip reports that had appeared over the 25+ years of the Club's history. While the conclusions may not have surprised many, the research was all consuming, and the piece well

EXPEDITION
KAYAKS
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written. In Rob's words, "Talking About Trips was the Saltiest article in that edition. Very high standard in general but this was a neat overview based on many years of club mag content."

Pictured is Ruby modelling her prize from Mark. In her words; "thanks Mark and Rob at EK for the timely prize. The last pants weren't really



up to scratch any more, so these are a welcome replacement!"

On behalf of the club and the magazine, I wish to thank Rob Mercer and Mark Sundin of Expedition Kayaks for donating the shorts. I'll be in touch with Rob and Mark to determine the winner from this edition. May the saltiest submitter succeed!

EXPEDITION KAYAKS HAS
MOVED!

Drop in anytime from 0830 to
1800 Monday to Fridays.

3/185 Port Hacking Road, Miranda, NSW 2228
Phone (612) 9559 8688 or mob 0417 924 478



A picture taken of your NSWSKC Committee at the July 2015 AGM. From left to right; Tony Murphy, Shaan Gresser, Campbell Tiley, Stephen Meyn and Steve Hitchcock. Absent were David Linco and Alison Curtin

Your NSWSKC Committee – Recent News

CAMPBELL TILEY

AGM Notice 6pm Saturday 30 July Yarra Bay Sailing Club

At the time of writing, we have received no nominees for the following Committee positions where the incumbent is stepping down at the AGM:

- President
- Editor
- Trips Co-ordinator
- Rock 'n' Roll Co-ordinator

Please give some thought to supporting the Club and revitalising the Committee by stepping into the breach. Do contact us with any questions about any role; a smooth handover is all part of the service.

The AGM is an opportunity for the Committee to seek the views of the membership and for you, the members, to raise issues or otherwise make suggestions for improving the utility of the Club for the members. If there is a particular issue that you would like to raise then let me know so it can be added to the agenda.

As I mentioned in the President's Deck I will seek the views of those present at the AGM to the question: "Should the Club facilitate communication to members by members regarding causes or issues that the member believes may be of interest but which are not activities that the Club is involved in?"

Grading

If you've recently been graded 1 or 2, let the Vice-President know (Tony Murphy) and he'll update your details on the club website.

If you've recently achieved grade 3 or Leader or Guide, let the Training Co-ordinator know (currently Stuart Trueman), and he'll update the club website.

Committee email addresses are inside front cover.

Standard Operating Procedures (SOP)

Identifying Weather Limits for NSWSKC Activities

NWSKC Leaders, Guides and Instructors are to only consider activities based on a forecast provided by the Bureau of Meteorology and on current observations. The limits here apply to the BOM forecast or current observations, whichever is stronger.

Australian Canoeing limit is 16 knots for Enclosed Sea Instructor.

Australian Canoeing limit is 21 knots for Sea Leader. (14 knots if not all participants have Sea Skills.)

Australian Canoeing limit is 24 knots for Sea Instructors and Sea Guides.

If a 'Strong Wind Warning' has been issued by the BOM for the forecast area of the activity, Sea Leaders and Enclosed Sea Instructors will cancel the activity. Sea Instructors and Sea Guides can consider

operating in 'Enclosed Waters', but only if local conditions are limited to no more than 27 knots.

If forecast wind speeds exceed 27 knots on the day of the activity, Sea Guides and Sea Instructors will cancel the activity.

Advanced Sea Instructors are able to use their judgment when conducting activities exceeding 'Strong Wind' conditions.

Club Finances

The top three costliest items in the club are the magazine, Rock 'n' Roll and your club insurance. The committee accepts paid advertising in the magazine, but has decided not to accept paid advertising in the Club's main website pages. So no banner ads and no pop-up ads!

New Members

Please welcome the following new members next time you see them on the water:

Tony De La Pena, Turramurra
 Greg Patterson, Concord
 Kerry Tozer, Stanmore
 Trevor Saunders, Boambee
 Rebecca Bestic, Willoughby
 John Thearle, Turramurra
 John Curotta, Pymont
 Cameron Gee, Voyager Point
 Troy Dunn, Killarney Vale
 Fraser Duff, Queens Park
 Camille James and Bev Hogg, Hackett – ACT
 Roy Harvey, Yarralumla – ACT

Trip with Scenarios

Club Trip and Training Session

21 February 2016

BRONWYN DAVIES



Which kayak trips do you remember most? The very rare days when there's no wind and low swell, absolutely! Or are they the trips where the conditions challenge and extend you beyond your comfort zone? These are the days when your toolbox is fully open and you frantically try to remember all you've been taught. Sure we remember all our trips but to arrive back exhausted and smiling is very gratifying! You've climbed another hurdle and have more confidence in what you are able to do after one of those days. Harry's "Trip with Scenarios" was one of those trips.

*Below: Ominous skies overhead
(Image - Nick Blacklock)*



Dark skies and thunder greeted us on our arrival at Wattamolla Beach on Sunday 21 February 2016.

The forecast for Sunday was cloudy with winds 10 to 15 knots, first swell south easterly 1.5m and second swell easterly 1m. The growling overhead and dark skies caused the team some concern.

Harry Havu was our captain with Caoimhin Ardren as his right-hand man. Nick Blacklock, Ken Collins, Marty Vanderpoel, Mark Clarkson, Roy and I completed the group.

After we carried the kayaks to the beach, Harry briefed us on his plan and asked if we had any concerns for the day. Nick mentioned the

thunder which was persisting. Everyone was watching the dark sky, following the storm's progress. Luckily, it had dissipated by the time we were ready to launch.

With a pounding heart I launched into the little surf and paddled around the clapotis caused by the reefs.

Once we were clear of the headlands we paddled south into a 10 knot wind. Harry nominated a leader and overseer for each of the two teams. We were given various scenarios.

Roy capsized and I had to rescue him. Next Harry wanted me to capsize and push my boat away. Initially Roy got to me too quickly so Harry asked me to paddle away again while he physically held Roy back. We had a runaway kayak and a swimmer. Nick had to coordinate the rescue. He asked me to straddle his boat's bow while he paddled to Roy who was chasing my kayak.

We climbed the approaching 2m swell as we paddled further south.

After a break, on shore at Wattamolla, Harry gave us two options. The first was 8kms south in lumpy seas or 4kms north in the

same conditions. We chose the latter and launched into the surf and through the backwash.

With the tail wind and a following sea we flew to Little Marley for lunch.

After lunch the sea was getting increasingly lumpy and the trip back into a headwind was challenging. Caoimhin sidled up to me and told me “you’re feeling sea sick”. Nick instructed Roy to tow. I was “overcome by an intense bout of sea sickness” and capsized. Roy continued to “tow, tow my boat lumpily down the sea”. Then he heard “you’ve got no passenger mate”. Nick rescued me after Roy returned my kayak. Roy said he had felt a bit of a funny jerk but thought it was nothing and had merrily paddled on.

Meanwhile, Harry’s group, Mark, Marty and Ken did a similar exercise. Marty was towing Ken who was “sea sick”. Whoops, Ken’s sickness got too much and he capsized! And then while Ken was in the water Marty capsized. That was the scenario for Mark to get the two kayakers safely into their boats and on their way.

Harry had another task. He instructed each kayaker to paddle backwards using sweep strokes on one side only. The aim was to navigate around Harry and myself, drifting targets. It was done both clockwise and anti-clockwise in rough conditions.

Lastly we had to get back to base under a threatening sky. Heads down and paddles churning we punched into the wind and swell. The conditions spun my kayak off course requiring corrective strokes. That’s not so easy in a lumpy sea with no sight. Instinctively I gripped my thigh braces. That caused my quads to ache, my back to scream and I started getting tired.

About 1km from Wattamolla I knew I was fading, and thought it better to ask for help rather than struggle



Above: Post rescue debrief
(Image - Roy Davies)

on. Part way through the tow, Roy’s rope unclipped and I was on my own again. We were nearly into the shelter of the cliffs. Then just before hitting shore, I flipped a blue bottle onto my neck.

The trip gave both Roy and me so much more confidence in our abilities in larger swell conditions. I mastered new skills and felt a great sense of accomplishment after a very enjoyable trip.

Thanks to Harry and Caoimhin for an extremely well planned session. Thanks also to Nick for paddling alongside me giving me encouragement. Always a big thanks to Roy for directing and watching out for me. I’m looking forward to another adventure.

For more photos and a video go to:
<https://brondavies3.wordpress.com/2016/02/21/trip-with-scenarios/>

NICK BLACKLOCK

A trip with scenarios they said; “small surf, various rescues and tows at sea are all par for this session”. We certainly had these but there were a few unexpected ones too.

A thunderstorm at the start enabled us to get a couple of great pictures and then returned at the end to make sure we got off the water on schedule. A shark sighting just where we were to start doing our first rescue and bumpy conditions ensured there were minor bouts of seasickness in some of the landlubbers.

Potential leaders were put in charge and in the water at various times to manage the ‘scenarios’ and the participants got to practice their rescue techniques and test their equipment (or lack of) in real conditions of about 15 kn with two rebounding swells.

To take a break from the unfolding ‘scenarios’ we had a short downwind run from Wattamolla to Little Marley beach where we stopped for lunch. Passing walkers alternately commented that ‘it was nice day for a paddle’ as large sets rolled into Big Marley or that ‘it looks a bit rough out there for paddling’; we had to agree with both opinions!

So we had plenty of scenarios, everyone had fun on, off and in the water and more importantly everyone learned something.

DIY without blowing your budget All in one throwbag & towline

TERENCE 'CHUCK' MURPHY

We all know Sea Kayaking gear can be rather harsh on the hip pocket, and let's face it the majority of retail prices are not likely to decrease. When it comes to procuring those essential delights we all require out on our beloved ocean, two important factors come to mind: fitness for purpose and value for money.

With these two factors in mind. I present you with a little innovative DIY, lightweight, multipurpose, all in one Throw 'n' Tow that will keep the wallet moth at bay. For anyone just starting out a simple DIY like this will help you save for the big expensive items, like your first sea going vessel.



STEP 1 - DESIGN

By now you have a requirement to replace or procure new kit. Keeping in mind the purpose or multiple purposes of the item you require. Get creative and come up with a design that will serve your needs on the ocean.






STEP 2 - MARKET RESEARCH

With the items purpose in mind, start conducting a little research. Begin by trawling the internet and local retail stores. Try to create a list of gear that has potential to be used in your design.

Think about the impact of the environment on the items you list; for example, when researching steel products remember the ocean is an unforgiving force and corrosive, aim for a decent tensile strength and marine grading.

STEP 3 - ITEM SELECTION

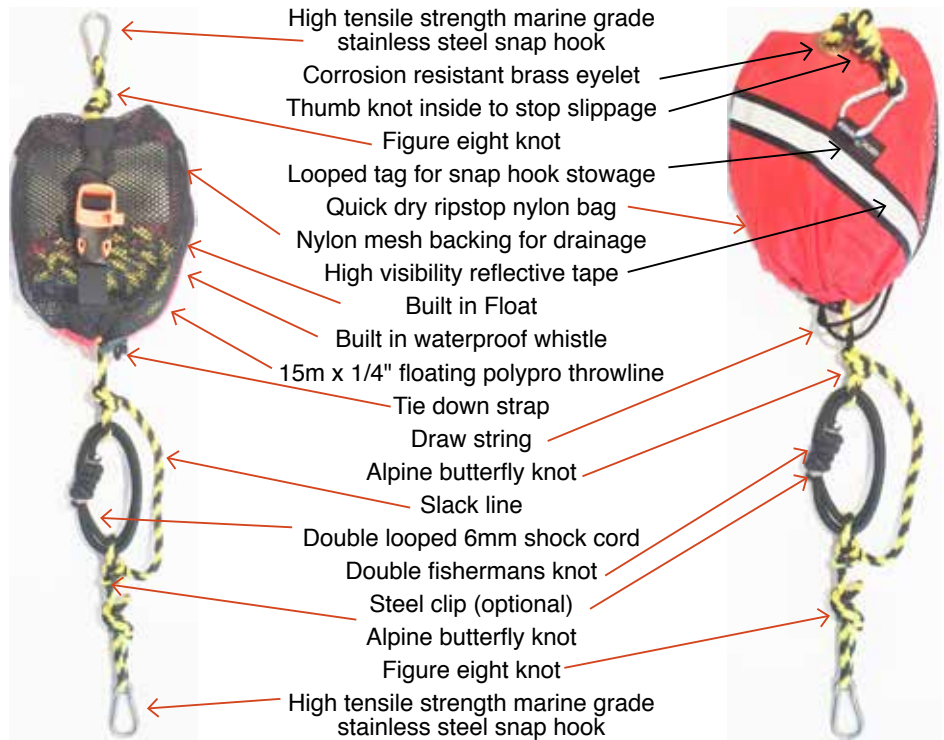
When selecting your items be sure to select each based on the two fore mentioned factors and not for their brand name. The following is an example list of supplies required for this DIY.

	Qty	Description	Weight	Price
	1	Northwater Micro Throw Towline	333gm	\$39.00
	2	6mm x 60mm 316 Marine Grade Stainless Steel Snap Hook	15gm (ea)	\$3.30 (ea)
	1	Rugged Stainless Steel Key Ring (Optional)	2gm	\$0.60
	1	10mm Brass Grommet/Tarpaulin Eyelet	2gm	\$0.12
	1	30-40cm, 6mm Black Shock Bungee Cord	25gm	\$0.50
	TOTAL		392gm	\$46.82

NOTE TO READER; the list above is not a list of specific requirements/ products required by the NSWSKC, it is only an example.

STEP 4 - ASSEMBLY

Upon completion of assembly you should have something with a likeness to the picture to the right. Ensure you leave enough slack line for the shock cord to stretch, but not to the point it breaks. This will decrease abrupt loads to the body or tow point whilst in tow. When using as a throw bag, keep the top snap hook stowed on the looped tag. This will minimize potential injuries when thrown. This will never happen, as you will always throw your bag past your mate ensuring the throwline falls over his/her chest.



STEP 5 - MOUNTING

Where to mount an all in one throw bag and towline? My answer: wherever works best for you so long as it doesn't compromise your own or anyone else's safety. Having said that, here are a couple of options that work well for me.

Body mounted

In the following images you will notice the tie down strap has been detached from the bag. It has been reattached to the shoulder molle of a PFD with a key ring. The strap remains adjustable in length allowing utilization of the waterproof whistle, which being a plastic clip, also acts as a one point quick release harness when clipped into the bag.



At the rear of the PFD the non-thrown end of the line is attached to the D-ring of a quick release harness. If you don't have a rescue PFD or standalone quick release rescue harness you may prefer a kayak mounted option.



Kayak mounted

If you don't have a towing mount centralized just behind your cockpit, you may wish to install one for this method. Simply attach the same snap hook shown in the rear PFD image to the tow mount and secure the bag under your aft bungee (daisy chain as required). Alternatively, you can use the snap hook on the bag to secure further if necessary.

Well there you have it folks, a DIY all in one throw bag and towline with whistle to toot, for less than 50 bucks. Hopefully this light weight, multipurpose piece of kit will save you from expending near on \$200 if considering to buy a tow tether, tow bag, throw bag and whistle as separate items.

Kayak smarter not harder, stay safe on the water and enjoy your paddles.

Infectious bacteria found in Sydney Harbour

The following article was published in the Sydney Morning Herald on 13 April 2016. Re-published here with permission from journalist **Daisy Dumas** / Fairfax Syndication

Two strains of the *Vibrio* bacteria have been found in high concentrations in the world famous harbour by scientists at the University of Technology Sydney.

An aggressive species of marine bacteria responsible for many more deaths than sharks worldwide each year has been found in Sydney Harbour, with experts predicting outbreaks in spots along the city's waterfront as water temperatures rise with global warming.

Vibrio bacteria, which includes the species that causes cholera, can cause serious illness in humans and animals, including gastrointestinal sickness through consumption of contaminated seafood and flesh-eating infections in swimmers.

According to a new study by University of Technology Sydney scientists, two species of potentially dangerous *Vibrio* bacteria were detectable in particularly high concentrations when the water was warmest and in areas of mid-salinity, around Parramatta Park, Olympic Park and Rozelle.

Aggressive *Vibrio* bacteria have been found in parts of Sydney Harbour, including Rozelle, Parramatta Park and Olympic Park. Photo: Adam Hollingworth

In the report, published in *Frontiers of Microbiology* on Tuesday, UTS researchers detail the composition of water samples collected from Sydney Harbour between Parramatta Park and Chowder Bay.

While the cholera-causing strain of *Vibrio cholerae* was not found in any of the samples, a closely related strain of this species was detected in high quantities. It can cause skin infections and gastrointestinal infections if ingested or exposed to open wounds.

A second pathogen, *Vibrio vulnificus*, was also detected. It is responsible for 95 per cent of all seafood-related deaths in the US, and aggressive flesh-eating infections in swimmers, where it carries a mortality rate of up to 50 per cent amongst those infected, the report states.

Co-author and associate professor at UTS' Climate Change Cluster, Justin Seymour, said the findings have serious implications for Sydney Harbour users and authorities as coastal water temperatures rise in south-east Australia, a region considered a global climate change hot spot.

"Given that these are naturally occurring marine organisms, it's not surprising that we're seeing them," he said. "People don't need to be super alarmed about their occurrence in Sydney Harbour at the moment. But what we've seen in other parts of the world are

links between increasing seawater temperatures and the abundance of these bacteria and associated illnesses.

"I don't think people should change the way they use their local beaches, but it is something local management authorities should be aware of. There are potentially harmful effects for humans if outbreaks of these bacteria in the environment become more severe and common."

Peter Steinberg, director of Sydney Institute of Marine Sciences, welcomed the report which is part of a wider program attempting to understand the ecosystems and diversity of the harbour in collaboration with SIMS. He said the results warrant further study and awareness of microbial changes in Sydney Harbour.

A spokesperson for the Department of Health said swimming in water always carries the risk of infection.

"Germs, including a large range of bacteria and viruses, occur naturally and are very common in the environment. *Vibrio* species are commonly found in aquatic environments. Many of these bacteria and viruses are harmless to people. However some can be harmful if swallowed or if they infect wounds."

Simple precautions include "not getting water in your mouth, keeping any wounds covered with a watertight dressing and avoiding injuries on sharp objects".

Footnote

CAMPBELL TILEY

SPECIALIST IN INTERNAL
MEDICINE AND HAEMATOLOGY



As Ms Dumas has summarised, the recently published study by Nachshon Siboni and colleagues from UTS provides some interesting insight into one of the many groups of creatures we share the harbour with.

Vibrio bacteria are likely to have been present as a component of the local ecosystem long before urban development but are clearly favoured by increased water

temperature and enjoy the brackish end of the estuary. Similar findings are likely in other estuaries, not just Sydney Harbour.

While Vibrio species can definitely cause a range of human disease including gastroenteritis and tissue infection, other bacteria are also important contributors to water born infection including Aeromonas species and group A streptococci.

What does this all mean for kayakers?

1. Favour the cooler, more saline and better-flushed waterways closer to the Heads or ocean for rolling practice. Admittedly few paddlers would be tempted to immerse their heads in Rozelle Bay.
2. If you injure your skin kayaking, clean and dress the area using your favourite antiseptic. In most cases that will be all that needs to be done.
3. If the wound is deep and penetrating or dirty, seek early medical advice as antibiotic cover may well be appropriate.
4. If the area of injury becomes inflamed (painful, red, swollen, oozy) a prompt trip to a doctor

is appropriate as you will need a diagnostic swab for culture and antibiotic treatment.

5. Current antibiotic guidelines provide good advice for management of water related infections, generally including Ciprofloxacin or similar to cover Aeromonas and Vibrio species. Always make it clear to health service staff that the infection was likely to be water related.
6. Rapidly spreading swelling, blistering around the area or fever are indications to seek immediate help by heading to the nearest emergency department.

Original Report

"Spatiotemporal Dynamics of Vibrio spp. within the Sydney Harbour Estuary, published in Frontiers of Microbiology" published on Tuesday 12 April 2016.

Authors: Siboni N, Balaraju V, Carney R, Labbate M and Seymour JR (2016) Spatiotemporal Dynamics of Vibrio spp. within the Sydney Harbour Estuary. Front. Microbiol. 7:460. doi: 10.3389/fmicb.2016.00460



Rock 'n' Roll 2016 - Jimmys Beach

Friday 11 March to Monday 14 March

DAVID LINCO

The Rock 'n' Roll weekend is the one weekend in the year that provides the opportunity for us to chat endlessly about the wonderful sport of kayaking. From very humble beginnings 25 years ago it has grown into a must attend open water symposium over 3-4 days with a wide range of trips, training and workshops for all skill levels. That combined with the very relaxed and friendly atmosphere of attendees mean people have plenty of time to catch up with old friends and make new ones.

When you gather with likeminded people who have a love of watersports and the outdoors, it's set to be cracker of a weekend. Jimmys Beach located on the id North Coast of NSW has been a regular Rock 'n' Roll location over the last 10 years.

As it happened, it delivered perfect weather over the weekend, which assisted trip leaders in providing a buffet of trips ranging from sailing, rock gardening, surfing, training and coffee kayaking each day. The guest speaker Huw Kingston entertained us all on Saturday night with his exceptional tale of circumnavigating the Mediterranean by bike, foot, kayak and row boat and ending to commemorate the 10th anniversary of the Anzac landing at Gallipoli.

Thank you to Rob, Sharon & Mark from Expedition Kayaks for their ongoing support of this event through donation of prizes, sponsorship and putting on the Friday night dinner. Thank you to Mirage and Sydney Harbour Kayaks for participation this year and donation of prizes for our raffle.

Several people have asked about the date and venue for next year. Your NSWSKC committee will let you know as soon as possible. Expect it to be early March 2017 before school holidays and Easter, at a venue south of Sydney.

This was my last year as Rock 'n' Roll Coordinator and I'd like to thank the very many and marvelous volunteers who have assisted me in turning this into a well-oiled event. Having been a member for just on four years it has also been



a great way to meet the wonderful community of paddlers within our club. I look forward to seeing you on the water and don't forget "No Incidents".

Below: Some of the marvelous volunteers doing lunch on Saturday; Rob and Mark from Expedition Kayaks



To David

Great event again. I thought the sit down dinner was really well run. Greatly enjoyed the training events. Well done.

Darren Friend





Huw Kingston's Presentation

STEVE HITCHCOCK

Our guest speaker this year was Huw Kingston, an ex-NSWSKC member who entertained us with his narrative about circumnavigating the Mediterranean in 2014-15.

The journey covered over 14,000 kms and passed through 17 countries, with some unusual events along the way. Some of the memorable moments were:

- Crossing borders without papers for his "ship". This necessitated a phone call back to the Tiderace



Confusion about where the Love Shack was

"I love the fact that watching the "Pogies" is like being at a pantomime. The audience grimaces with 'oohs' and 'ahhhs' when the villainous wave arrives and knocks the star of the film down, only to burst into rapturous cheers when our hero manages to roll back up, unscathed".

Martin Vanderpoel

kayak factory, to verify the identity (by serial number) of his kayak. He was politely advised not to visit Croatia again by sea.

- Paddling up the 6km long Corinth Canal, just south of Athens, to save tripping around the southern end of Greece.
- Huw paid a boat owner GBP500 to accompany him across the Straits of Gibraltar (Europe to Africa, as officially required), a distance of some 30kms with a current of about 6 knots which took him about 5½ hours.
- The shores of the Mediterranean are barely tidal, so all the rubbish washes onto the beach and stays on the beach. He reminded us how lucky we are in Australia with such clean coastlines.

- Between Algeria and Tunisia, Huw rode his bike, escorted by military police on motorbikes and stopping at border controls to pose for friendly policemen selfies.
- Three quarters around, and from Tunisia the kayak was replaced by a rowboat and Huw headed via Malta towards Crete then up to Greece to avoid hostilities at the Syrian end but also to keep to schedule. He hadn't planned for the big northerlies as he crossed the Aegean though.
- Approaching Turkey, he was met by the local navy and "detained" while his story was checked out. His kayak meanwhile had been carefully placed on a bed of coiled ropes for the night.



Your Feedback

- Clarification of group rules for Pogies.
- Some confusion over the new members area (Love Shack) during Friday night dinner.
- Trip registration was daunting.
- Program did not reflect the afternoon activities.
- More exhibitors preferred.
- Trip registration on website was not clear on how many to book for and how long each trip would run.

Rock 'n' Roll 2016

What an amazing experience!



DAVID RUEDA ROCA

Yes, it was Friday already. It was the long expected day when Megan Pryke and I drove 220 kms north to Jimmy's Beach with two kayaks on my Holden Cruze. I have never tried to drive with two kayaks on the roof of my car before, and as it turned out, this was the first of many new experiences for me over this weekend.

Once we arrived at Jimmys Beach, I discovered a gorgeous and peaceful place, a lovely harbour-facing beach as well as an ocean beach-front on the other side of the peninsula. After practising some

rolls with Megan (I am still learning how to recover decently from my capsizing without frustrating others with the delay of a wet exit), we went to meet the people at the Marquee and to sample a few beverages and snacks (everything provided by Expedition Kayaks). I registered myself into Rock 'n' Roll and started to socialize with fellow paddlers who were more than willing to provide me with some useful advice from their vast wealth of experience.

That evening, someone (I will not say his name in order to avoid possible female retaliations) asked me what kayak I was paddling. I answered that I have a beautiful

Valley Nordkapp LV. He answered that it was a very good kayak. He actually told me that she (the sea kayak) was like a woman, very responsive and very good as long as you treat her smoothly and gently, but that she would have no hesitation dropping me into the water if I made any mistake at all. Moreover, if I do not take her out often, she will also take offence, and make my paddling more difficult. So, I must learn how to treat her and how to paddle it properly. Taking into account the times I have finished in the water, this metaphor does not promise me a good future with my sea kayak. We may require come couples counselling.

I thought it would be a good opportunity to socialise more if I volunteered some tasks in the campsite. So, they asked me to prepare the coffees. Neil told me how to prepare the coffees with two machines, where the coffee was and how to operate these foreign contraptions. The next morning I woke up early to start the coffee for my fellow paddlers and then proceeded to return back to my tent. Well, Rock 'n' Roll people are very patient, because the machines did not do anything else other than heat the water. Upon my return to the kitchen I discovered people drinking tea! No one complained at all. Neil fixed things up, so there was at last one working machine preparing coffee for everyone.

Socialising aside, I then took part in a manoeuvring skills lesson given by Nick Gill. Nick is a great fellow, He is always smiling and his explanations are useful and clear. My fellow paddlers were very nice guys too. They were valiant and they attempted everything possible (even capsizing) to try to emulate all the manoeuvres that Nick was showing to us.

In the afternoon, we relaxed and came together to recite tails about our heroic actions out on the water. Dinner quickly followed at the golf club. This evening meal turned out



to be an excellent evening with the occasion complemented by the excellent table company that I was lucky to receive.

The highlight of the night was when Huw Kingston, using his sense of humour, provided us with a slide presentation (videos included) where he showcased his astonishing adventure Mediterranean. As a Spaniard (although I come from the Atlantic coast in the north of Spain), I could perfectly understand all the adventures and difficult moments that he endured during his trip. It was an amusing presentation. I hope that one day in the future, I will be able to attempt an adventure in my sea kayak paddling somewhere through the sea.

The big surprise for me that night was when I was awarded the highest prize of the raffle donated by Sydney Harbour Kayaks. I have never won anything in my life, proving it's never too late to get lucky.

Next day, the coffee was working perfectly. I even sampled the coffee to check that I wasn't poisoning the entire campsite.

This was the day when we did the lesson intro to rock gardens with



Images (Nick Blacklock) - Beach landing at Fingal Spit on Sunday; Dolphin ahead

Caoimhin and Nick. That was fun! Six people pushing up and down three sea kayaks making a triangle where the seventh paddler has to go in on his/her sea kayak and perform the manoeuvres ordered by the instructors and, of course, I was the only one who capsized! Memories of my conversation of Friday night came flashing back.

We had so much fun but the lesson finished too early for everybody. To his credit, Neil recognised my need for some improved low bracing and stayed behind to help me practise a little bit. Where else could you expect this help from a just-met-colleague?

I would have liked to spend more time at Rock 'n' Roll, however

Megan and I had different commitments that we both had to get back to in Sydney that night.

The Rock 'n' Roll 2016 was a great experience for me. I met very nice and helpful people and I discovered that in this world of the NSW sea kayak paddlers, people are friendly and always keen to help. I saw that although I have still a lot to learn and a lot to improve in the water, I will always be able to count on these friends of the NSW Sea Kayak Club.

To sum up, I would also like to thank David Linco and all the volunteers for making the Rock 'n' Roll 2016 such a success.



We drove down from Brisbane to Sydney over two days (Sunday and Monday). We know Sydney well, as we both grew up there. The rest of our week went like this:

Tuesday: Threw paddling gear in the car, then the joys of early morning traffic across Sydney to Watsons Bay. Breakfast, went for a walk on South Head, then a few excellent hours with Rob Mercer improving our boat handling skills. Later that afternoon we took ourselves west around the harbour coastline, exploring the bays and landing briefly on Shark Island. Back to Watsons Bay for dinner with the Tuesday night paddling group. A great day.

Wednesday: Packed up late, dawdled back through more traffic, and then a pleasant run north to Jimmys beach. No other kayakers in evidence – though we did arrive pretty early. Set up camp – what a great spot – nice shady trees and very convenient and right near the camp kitchen.

Thursday: We decided to do a circuit inside Port Stephens – across to Shoal Bay, then west along the coast past Nelson Bay, and eventually back to the campground. Lovely weather, clear water and dolphins – a really pleasant few hours. A few others with kayakers were arriving when we got back, and we went over to say hello. Rae suggested doing Broughton Island on Friday – we'd never paddled this area before, but were happy to give it a go if the conditions were right.

Friday: Weather was good so four of us headed off to Hole in the

Rock 'n' Roll 2016

An Interstate Visit

STEPHEN AND JENNY WALKER

Wall. We launched through pretty reasonable surf, and turned south for Broughton Island. This was a great experience for us – a wide variety of conditions and scenery, and Broughton Island is a very beautiful place. After a spectacular paddle, we returned to find that more arrivals had transformed the place, and we were camped right near the epicentre of Rock and Roll 2016. Marquee, gear display, registration, beer, fish, lots of people to meet and talk to – a most enjoyable evening after a wonderful paddle.

Saturday: We joined a trip with Mark to the islands, and this turned into an unforgettable day. The great weather, the cliffs, the small clefts that we backed into, the dolphins, the 'pointy' water around the back of Boondelbah Is., and most of all the inspiring and remarkable people we paddled with. If you had asked me before Rock 'n' Roll if it was possible to paddle a sea kayak blind, I'd have said not, but Bronwyn (with Roy) proved that comprehensively wrong, and for many reasons it was a superb day that we'll never forget.

Sunday: We had already headed west, north and east, so on Sunday we decided to head south. Led by Tony, eleven of us paddled past Mt. Tomaree and down the coast to Fingal spit, then across Fingal bay for lunch on the southern side. Yet another perfect day for paddling gave us some magnificent coastal scenery

and some fun with a couple of small surf landings and launches, with a very friendly group of keen paddlers.

As a Rock and Roll newbie I was selected as one of the judges for the Pogies on Sunday evening. The quality of the videos was very high across the board, giving the four judges a hard job, but also a great hour of videos. In the end the second video by Lisa won us all over, with its stunning views of the Tasmanian coastline and a few 'exciting' moments.

We stayed at Jimmys beach for a couple more days, and on Wednesday morning we headed back north. On the way we dropped back into the Hole in the Wall to have another look at the beach under very different conditions. Broughton Island was nowhere to be seen, lost in the heavy rain and grey, overcast gloom. The surf was far less inviting, but as we stood there, a big pod of dolphins – maybe 100 or more, cruised past, playing in and just outside the break zone. Magic!

Thanks to the organisers, the trip leaders, and all the people who made us welcome and helped us find our way around this wonderful event. Thanks also to those experienced paddlers who have done so much to help us get to the point where we could do the trips and have the experiences that we did. We had a ball, unforgettable paddling with great company. We'll be back!



Rock 'n' Roll 2016

I've Found My People!

GERARD RUMMERY



Somewhere where the land meets the ocean; I carry my kayak by myself down to the water, past curious onlookers. I put on my PFD, hoist up my skirt, climb in and grab my paddle. I head out on my own and leave the watchers behind, weaving past other folks in or on the water, doing their non-sea kayaking things. Then it's just me, the kayak and a whole lot of water. I invariably have an adventure or two, figuring it out for myself. I meet marine life big and small, experience challenging weather and just embrace the sheer joy of being on open water in such an immediate way. Later, I try and explain what I did, where I have been and what I saw. People get it, sort of. No, actually they don't.

Fast forward to my first Rock 'n' Roll; a beach lined with sea kayakers, gear everywhere, a crowd of people wearing PFD's, spray skirts and weird hats. Finally I have found my people!

Friday night was beery and friendly. I met some good people, checked out all the kayak bling and generally congratulated myself on being at what was shaping up to be an awesome weekend.

Saturday morning was an opportunity for some training. I spent it at the beach in a group with Chuck and Stu, launching and landing through surf, then learning how to stay in the boat and upright when you (inevitably) get broached. Wave; meet Low Brace, my new best friend- things are going to be a little different from now on!

It was great watching the group put the instructions into practice, get smashed, get back in and have another go, cheering each other

when we nailed it and laughing about it when we got rolled. As the morning wore on the tide kept coming and the wind got up, making conditions more challenging. Stu and Chuck were awesome the whole time- supremely competent, calm and reassuring.

At the end of the session I think everyone had learned something new and useful, and we were all a bit better than when we started in the morning. I know I sure was. In fact, I managed to get my Grade 2 signed off! Yeah!

Sunday I wanted to just go for a big paddle, so I got myself on a trip out to the islands with Megan Pryke's group.

We headed out from Jimmys beach after a briefing and made for Yacaaba, the north head of the bay. After a quick regroup, we headed out into some low swell across to Boondelbah Island. Another regroup in the lee on the south end, then we checked out a sea cave. Megan went first and got to hang out in there while all of us grade 2's backed in one by one. The swell made it pretty interesting in an enclosed environment- having the walls so close really helped me understand how far you move vertically when a big swell goes under you, and the rebound in such close quarters highlighted my (in)ability to finely control

the boat. Megan gave me a few pointers on this, which helped a lot.

Travelling around the ocean side of Boondelbah we bounced our way through some vigorous rebound and tracked for Cabbage Tree Island, then back across to Yacaaba, where we checked out another cave. Again Megan got the plum job of staying in the cave while we all took turns going in and out. Once inside, the roof disappeared up into the gloom and the light and acoustics changed dramatically. It was awesome, and I could have happily hung out there for longer, but I guess nobody likes a cave-hog.

With the fun bits over, there remained the haul across the bay back to the beach. Megan used the expression 'destination fever' as we all started putting our heads down and heading for home. I had never heard that before, but immediately knew exactly what she meant! I have added it to my lexicon and will use it at the first opportunity.

All up it was a great weekend- I really enjoyed hanging out with so many people who are so passionate about this great sport. I met plenty of great people and made some good connections for future paddles. Thanks again to everyone in the club who put this together, and special thanks to Stu, Chuck and Megan for their generosity and helping me get more out of my paddling.

Me and Georgie Girl (green Nadgee) in good company (Garry Thompson)



Post Rock 'n' Roll 2016

It's Good to be Alive



RICHARD HACKETT

Maybe I shouldn't write this? There will always be those who read it and say "bloody idiot", but if one person reads it and learns something, then it is probably worthwhile. And anyway, I am sitting at home recovering now, so here's the story.

Rock 'n' Roll was on home turf this year, just up the road from Newcastle and I was really looking forward to meeting people in the club again and getting out on the water. On the Friday night, I cycled home from work and hit a snag on the way, I was short of breath and had to get off and stop. My back was hurting, but this was probably due to carrying a pack on a bush-walking trip the weekend before. Nothing to worry about.

Something wasn't quite right when I got home, but after a couple of aspirin and a rest, I was OK and got my gear ready for an early start the next morning.

I had signed up beforehand for Grade 3 skills training. At the briefing, the plan for the day changed and we were now heading up to Hole in the Wall to paddle

around Broughton Island. Brilliant, my last trip to Broughton was not a success as I was sea sick on the way there and had to recover in Esmeralda Cove whilst the rest of the group paddled around the Island. So with sea sickness pills on board, we headed out through the surf for a great paddle around the island, a trip through Con's Cleft and some windy conditions around the east side past Little Broughton. The afternoon Nor'easter had brought the sea up for the trip back, but we all made good progress, hoping that Campbell's group ahead of us would find the right landing spot on the beach. With everybody safely back through some messy surf we headed down the road for a shower and dinner at the Golf Club. No sign of any of the chest problems that I was worried about the night before, so it must have been nothing.

I really enjoyed Huw's talk at the dinner as I had followed the trip with interest on Facebook and it was good to link the parts together and hear first hand the trials faced along the way with both the physical challenges and the cross border negotiations.

On Sunday, I headed off with Megan's group around Boondelbah Island. Conditions were good and we played in a couple of gauntlets at the southern end of Cabbage Tree Island and checked out the cave at Yaccaba headland. Thanks Megan for a great experience in the cave. Still no chest problems, so all must be good.

The weekend after RnR, I went for a walk and once again found myself short of breath - my heart rate went above 130 bpm. Maybe something wasn't quite right and I went to see my doctor on Monday morning and had a blood test. On Monday afternoon, I received a call at work telling me to go straight to hospital, NOW. My blood test had come back with high levels of an enzyme called Troponin that is produced by the heart muscle when it is damaged or under stress.

I was immediately wired up for ECGs, pricked with needles for blood tests and kept in overnight for an angiogram the next day (push a catheter up an artery in your arm and squirt dye into your heart to see if the arteries are blocked). The results were surprising. I'm 50

years old, weigh 68kg, lead a fit and healthy life style, but had Coronary Artery Disease. The Coronary Arteries are small ones on the outside of the heart that provide the heart muscle with oxygen, not the big tubes in the middle that pump the blood around the body. My right Coronary Artery was 95% blocked and on the left side, two arteries were 80% blocked. The shortness of breath I had experienced was exertional angina, where you feel fine at rest, but once your heart starts to work hard, it can't get enough blood and oxygen through the blocked tubes. I was lucky not to have had a heart attack and the general feeling was relief that the problem had been identified.

One week later, I was back on the operating table again and had three small wire tubes, called stents, fitted in the arteries to keep them open. After a few days of post operation sickness, not unlike to a trip to Broughton in a rolling swell, I am now back at home recovering. I'll have to take a few medications for the rest of life to thin the blood and keep my cholesterol level low. Otherwise, it's a matter of getting fit slowly, initially keeping my heart rate below 100 bpm and using time as productively as possible to do some stretches (always hard normally) - and write an article for SALT.

Rock 'n' Roll was a fantastic experience and the memories kept my spirits up whilst I was in hospital. With hindsight, was it the right thing to do – probably not (and apologies for saying nothing to Dave or Megan on the pre-trip briefings, but please understand, there were no problems then. I felt fine). The lesson learnt is that if you experience shortness of breath or pains in the front or back of the chest that are out of the ordinary, then you should go to hospital. I did not experience any acute chest pains, like you see in the movies, just a dull ache in my back and shoulders. An angiogram is quick and easy and can identify problems

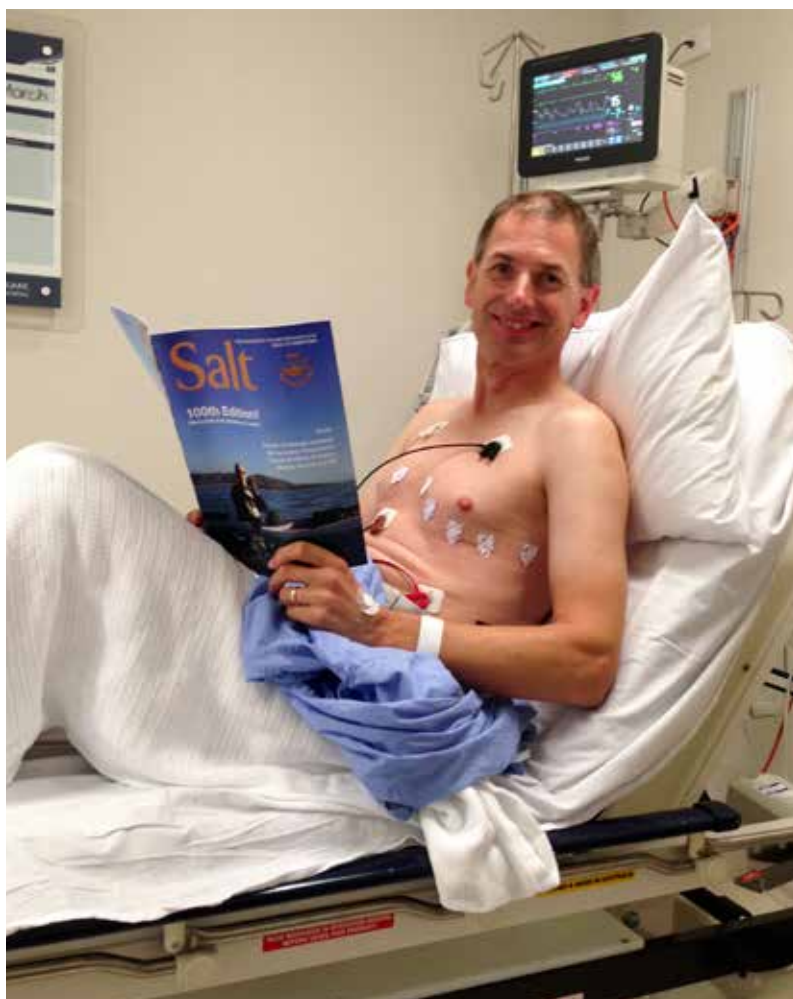
before a heart attack occurs. If you put things off for too long and have a heart attack, then at worst you could end up dead, and at best you could suffer some permanent damage to the heart wall muscle. So prevention is definitely better than cure.

I still have no idea what caused me to have Coronary Artery Disease. There is no family history, I am not overweight and we eat a balanced diet. The only thing I can think of is that, like all active people I know, I've had more than my fair share of sugar in the form of cakes, chocolate and muesli bars. There are some recent theories emerging that sugars, and in particular fructose, are as bad for you as saturated fats. I've now cut all sugars out of my diet and have lost 4kg over four weeks, with very little exercise.

At the moment, I'm glad to be alive and hopefully in a few weeks time I will be fit enough to get back into my kayak again and go for a paddle. Paul Thomas has said that he will go out with me again and I will try to make it along to more club trips, to aim for a Grade 3 assessment by the end of the year (medical certificate can be provided, if required).

If you are looking for more information about Coronary Artery Disease, the Heart Foundation has a good web site at heartfoundation.com.au. A good book on the effects of sugar on our health is "Sweet Poison" by David Gillespie.

*Images - Opposite page: Esmerelda Cove, Broughton Island;
Below: Richard recovering in hospital*

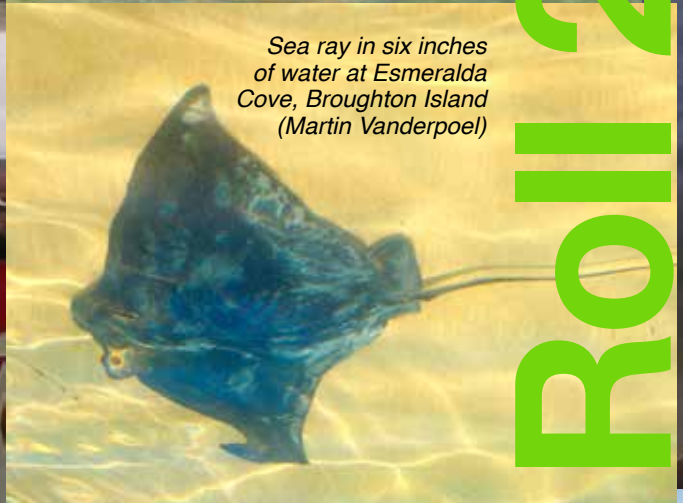




Rob Mercer developing Cathy Nolan's rolling skills



Saturday afternoon in the Marquee - Chuck delivering some paddling principles



Sea ray in six inches of water at Esmeralda Cove, Broughton Island (Martin Vanderpoel)



Celebrating a safe passage through Con's Cleft on Broughton Island (Nick Blacklock)

Rock 'n' Roll 2016





Spot the mistake



New interpretation of the Selfie



Out at sea with Bron and buddies (Roy Davies)



Set-up for a paddle-free roll



Sunday morning heading for Fingal



THE ^{40th} HAWKESBURY CANOE CLASSIC

111km

KENT HEAZLETT

This year's Hawkesbury Canoe Classic, to be held on the 29 October is the 40th year of this iconic event.

The Classic is a 111km, overnight paddle down the Hawkesbury River from Windsor in Sydney's west to Brooklyn.

For the first time organisers are offering an optional 65km distance (Windsor to Wiseman's Ferry) so as to help inspire newcomers to the event and encourage previous "Classic" paddlers to make a comeback as part of our 40th Anniversary celebrations.

All types of craft are eligible to enter, as long as they are propelled by unsupported hand held paddles. Historically sea kayaks have featured prominently in the event. Last year a SUP paddled by Toby Cracknell won the event on handicap.

Organisers are hoping to attract in excess of 600 paddlers, which would be a record for the event. A record fundraising target of \$400,000 has also been set which, if achieved, would mean organisers

would be in a position to donate a record amount to our major beneficiary, Arrow Bone Marrow Transplant Foundation www.arrow.org.au

Since 1994, when the Hawkesbury Canoe Classic first supported Arrow, paddlers in the Classic have contributed almost \$3.65 million in donations, an amazing result.

The "short-course" will also act as a "gentle" introduction to the event for those paddlers who have not experienced the magic of paddling the Hawkesbury River at night.

There are 20 checkpoints along the river including 3 major checkpoints at Sackville (35 km mark) Wiseman's Ferry (65 km mark) and Spencer, just 12 km from the finish, where paddlers can meet up with their land crew. These checkpoints are manned entirely by volunteers from the SES, NSW Marine Rescue, Sports Physio Group plus many kayak and community clubs.

Check out the details of the event at www.canoeclassic.asn.au and on Facebook.



To pee at sea

(A poem by Ruby Gamble)



A paddler crossing shore to shore
May often need to choose
Between extreme discomfort
And their privacy to lose.

The last minute morning coffee
The hastily drawn tea
Will cause the average paddler
To need to pee at sea.

The methods for this task
Are many and diverse
The blokes can use a bottle
For girls it's somewhat worse.

She can hop into the water
And pee without recourse
Unless a shark shows interest
Then she yells until she's hoarse.

For those with better balance
One can sit upon the deck
Tinkle way up high and dry
And splash it off once wet.

When the bladder gets too tight
And the sea is much too cold
A girl may have no choice
But to do it in the hold.

A quick flick of the skirt
An edge to wet your feet
Floods the cockpit ready
To wash it off your seat.

The moral of this story
Is avoiding any drink
When planning a long journey
It's the only way, I think.

The Newcastle, Sydney, Wollongong (a.k.a “NSW”) Coastal Sea Kayak Challenge

MEGAN PRYKE

I cannot believe the run of suitable conditions we’ve had for this coastal challenge. The last two trips have had near perfect conditions:

- #7 Wattamolla to Bundeena via Cronulla reported here by Nick Blacklock.
- #8 Palm Beach to Long Reef via Box Head reported here by Geoff Dauncey.

With only two legs to go it is indeed looking like we’ll complete the Challenge. Final legs to be reported in Salt 102 (September) are:

- #9 Saturday 21 May: Norah Head to Terrigal
- #10 Saturday 18 June: Austinmer (or Coledale) to Wollongong

The finale trip is short which will leave time at the end for a celebration. To date, some forty members have participated or have registered to be part of at least one trip. A few members have completed many of the trips, however no one to date has done all the trips confirming that this is truly a club challenge.

Don’t forget that if a club trip is showing as full there is a possibility of another leader being asked to help out, or a chance that someone who has registered needs to pull out, so check to see if the trip leader is running a waitlist.

Image: At the start of the Palm Beach to Long Reef paddle (Steve Hitchcock)



NSW Coastal Sea Challenge

Wattamolla to Bundeena

6 March 2016

NICK BLACKLOCK

Leaders

Rae Duffy, Tony Murphy and Nick Blacklock (training for Sea Guide)

Participants

Cathy, Karen, Beth, Debbie, Geoff & Cecilia, Abe, Alison, Darren, Steve (total 13 people)

Changing weather forecasts in the preceding days meant that although originally billed as Cronulla to Wattamolla this trip evolved into Wattamolla to Bundeena (via Cronulla), a distance of 18kms.

A fantastic calm, clear, warm Sydney day greeted the participants at Wattamolla for this trip. The promise of a brisk afternoon NE wind meant that we were off to an early start to make it to into Port Hacking by around lunchtime when the wind was due to pick up. Almost everyone was there early and keen to get on the water so the trip was off to a good start.

This was a popular trip with the obvious drawcard of a paddle along the northern part of Royal National Park. For some people this was their first trip on this section of coastline and in my case the first paddle for some time, so it was great to be back on the water again.

The car shuffle took the usual time to organise but the good team spirit was evident with the non-drivers doing much of the hard work and moving all the kayaks down the steep slope to the lagoon so they were all at the waters edge ready to go when we got back.

Rae had offered to let me run the day as part of my training for Sea

Guide so it was over to me to brief and organise the group with Rae's and Tony's assistance.

With that done we headed north with our first foray into Little and Big Marley beaches. In the interests of time rather than land thirteen people on Little Marley, we split into two groups and the leaders highlighted the features, differences and dangers of each beach. That done we reformed into one large group and headed north with Rae leading the way and Tony playing tail end Charlie, while I hung around the middle keeping an eye on the group.

We continued along the northern section of the Royal National Park coast with fantastic views of the majestic cliffs and some of the well-known features, though there wasn't much water in the waterfall. The weather was great and we could not have had a better morning to paddle along this section. We had a couple of stops for refreshments and to allow regrouping, notably inside of Jibbon Bombora where it was much calmer with the 1m E swell being broken on the outside of the bombora.

We sat and watched the bombora for a while before continuing on to Jibbon Head. The NE wind had just started to

pick up when rounding Jibbon Head so our timing was perfect as we headed for lunch into Jibbon Beach. This is a well-sheltered spot and has been much used on club trips over the years. As usual we were not the only people there for lunch with a lot of boats and a few jet skis hurtling around.

Jibbon Head is also known for its Aboriginal carvings, which are some of the best in Sydney and only a few hundred meters away from the beach. A few of us, myself included, had never seen these and really are worth a visit. While walking, it also became evident that the NE wind had picked up to a good 15 knots as forecast.

After lunch the group split with some staying in the bay and doing some rolling practice and sail setup while the other group paddled across to the Cronulla side and back to seamlessly complete the Newcastle–Sydney–Wollongong section. We decided to take advantage of the wind by paddling out into Port Hacking and then



getting a downwind run back to Bundeena. This allowed several people to try out their sails or just paddling in a following sea. Unfortunately the wind also brought out the fast sailing boats, which somewhat complicated matters until we were safely past them and back into a very busy Bundeena for a hot and sunny end to the trip.

My observations as a Sea Guide in training:

- A group of 13 is large to manage on the water, and you constantly need to be watching everyone.
- In these cases you need to delegate some responsibility and then rely on your 2ICs and other experienced paddlers in the group to be another set of eyes and ears.
- Communication with a large group takes a bit of effort especially to make sure that everyone can see and hear you and understand what is going on.
- You need to be constantly planning ahead and the next steps.
- You don't really get much time to stop and take pictures when you are in charge (at least not yet for me anyway).

My thanks to Rae and Tony for their help, assistance and advice and allowing me to run their trip. I found this great experience.

Images - Opposite: Jibbon Beach (Nick B); Below: Caoimhin with his 'Greenland' stick (Steve H)



NSW Coastal Sea Challenge Palm Beach to Long Reef

10 April 2016

GEOFF DAUNCEY

Sunday 10th April 2016 was the designated day to tackle the next section of the Coastal Sea Challenge. The group of seven, led by Caoimhin, met at Long Reef and transferred kayaks to the minimum number of cars in preparation for the car shuffle to Palm Beach.

We launched from the western or Pittwater side of Palm Beach and paddled toward Barrenjoey headland. The weather was fairly benign, clear and sunny, except for the smoke haze in Broken Bay, light winds from the south and a low swell, making for a pleasant day on the water.

On paddling around to the north side of Barrenjoey, we set our sights on Box Head, across the bay. An earlier section of the "challenge" was from Terrigal to Ettalong and our trip was supposed to be from Palm Beach to Long Reef, however this left a gap in the coast across Broken Bay. After a brief discussion a consensus was reached to add another 7 kms to our trip by crossing to Box Head and back to Barrenjoey to close the gap, before continuing down the coast to Long Reef.

As we approached Box Head we were rewarded with a close encounter with two Pilot whales, cruising nearby. It was also at this point that Caoimhin tried out a new paddle he found floating in the water. Not unlike the Greenland paddle, except it was round and made from bamboo. After a short effort making little headway, he gave up and reverted to his own paddle.



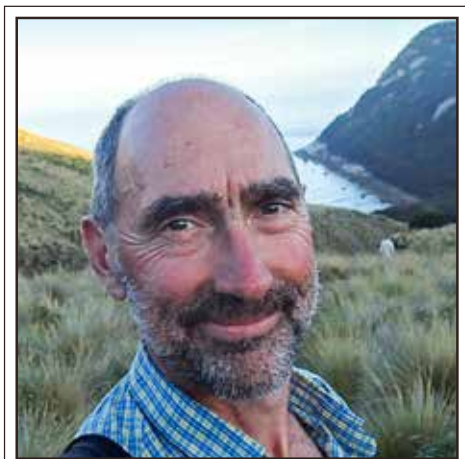
We "headland hopped" south along the coast from one point to the next, passing a number of beaches along the route. On the way we visited two sea caves, one at Bangalley Head and the other at Turimetta Head. We practiced our bracing and manoeuvring skills while being tossed about from the surging swell, as we floated in the entrances.

A stop for lunch at Bongin Bongin was much appreciated, as this was our first land stop since setting out in the morning. A small dumping surf landing stood between us and our lunchboxes, but everyone got through successfully.

After our rest we ploughed through the surf and paddled down to Long Reef. This section of the paddle was fairly easy and uneventful. The surf at Long Reef was virtually non-existent, which made for an easy landing after many hours on the water.

While some of the group unpacked and washed the boats, others drove to Palm Beach to retrieve the cars and complete the car shuffle. We covered a little over 28 kms, including the detour. A very pleasant and enjoyable day.

Thanks to Caoimhin for leading the trip and to the group, Megan, Wendy, Brian, Darren and Steve for their company.



There and back and there again

IAN VAILE

It was a difficult decision in some ways and in other ways no decision at all. On the first day we kayaked 42km from Port Welshpool to Refuge Cove, and next morning crossed the 50km to Hogan Island. The intention was to head on immediately the following day to Deal Island, another 44km, but events meant we were unable to paddle that day. The forecast was deteriorating: for the next five days at least we were expecting strong SE winds, and no sense of what might happen after that. Possibly the adverse winds could continue another week.

We were OK for food, but Hogan is a waterless little rock and even with the water previous visitors had left, it wouldn't last the three of us six days with enough for a day-long ocean crossing. We couldn't stay, we couldn't go forward. The only real choice was to abort the whole trip or to paddle back to Refuge and hope the weather broke so we could

have another crack before the food ran out. That would add 100km to a trip already over 320km.

Rae Duffy, Warren Huxley and I had been planning the Bass Strait trip for months. I knew Rae through the club but only knew Warren by reputation. To compound matters Warren had recently moved to Bellingen on the NSW north coast so he was not in Sydney often.

We had managed a few practice paddles, including a trip from Seal Rocks to Hawks Nest and a Hawkesbury Classic, but I felt underprepared as we strapped the boats to Warren's roof and set out from Sydney just after Christmas. We expected to be away for three weeks. Our time limit was to be back in Sydney by February 1st.

Warren and Rae were both in Rockpool Tarans and I was in my old Mirage 580, using a Greenland stick for the whole crossing. We all had sails – in my case that was almost my undoing.

Images - Left to right & next page: On the return leg back to Refuge; Refuge Bay; Dawn over Winter Cove as we headed to Flinders

Shark Ahoy

Heading from Welshpool to Refuge in the first day (30/12/2015) we were just at the northern headland of Five Mile Beach (still with 14km to go) when a runabout appeared headed north, with four or five blokes and a kayak on board and another kayak towing behind. They called out an alarming message: they said they had been chased by a Great White at Five Mile Beach and told us to be careful, and to stick to the surf break. Then they promptly roared off. The three of us grouped up, looking at the dozen odd kilometres left to traverse to Refuge Cove. We decided that we were safer out to sea than closer in, so we paddled in close formation for an hour or so, checking the water furiously as occasionally baitfish unnervingly erupted from the water. Rae cheerfully said sharks always come from below and behind, not the easiest place to look while paddling. The man in the grey suit didn't make an appearance though, and we arrived without incident at Refuge Cove.



Hogan (begin again)

The plan was to hit out straight away for Hogan, then next day on to Deal because the weather was looking to change in three days to rising SE winds, straight in our faces. With no running water on Hogan we packed as much water as we could, which we thought would last us the few days to get to Deal.

Setting out to Hogan, the island is invisible, 50km away over the horizon. We first caught sight of it about 36km away, by which time we were well and truly in the shipping lanes. It was a long trip out, as tides and currents turned against us in the second half of the leg and it became diabolically slow – it took nine hours.

The next morning we were up at 4am to be on water at 5am. Beautiful dawn as we headed off to Deal, but Warren had been ill overnight and after about 5km it was clear things weren't getting any better for him once we were on-water. We turned back initially for Refuge but quickly adapted that to go back to Hogan. Warren recovered and rehydrated that day, and we considered our options.

This was a pretty depressing time. The weather forecast, as far out as we could see, looked like SE winds rising in the afternoon the next day and then staying in the 20-25 knot range steadily for at least five days, possibly longer. We couldn't go forward into that, and if we stayed longer we risked being stuck. There was a bit of extra water left by divers and club member Gary Roberts but even with that we would run out well before we could head on to Deal. The only water we found was a fetid green trough, which the geese swam and defecated in. We regretfully decided to abort the trip and make a run straight back to Welshpool (about 60km), because if we lost a full week we would be at great risk of not being able to complete the trip in the timeframe – and time pressure was the thing we wanted most to

avoid. Glum all round. We called the local coastguard to ask about local fishermen who could drop water but they were unhelpful, referring us on to Marine Rescue in Port Phillip (despite our repeated assurances that there was no emergency and no rescue required). It looked like the expedition was over for us. We started to arrange by phone to get the car back from Melbourne to Welshpool to pick us up.

Then in a final call that evening Neil, Rae's partner, our main ground contact, said the latest Met Eye forecast was more favourable. It was Friday now: the new forecast predicted good conditions the following Thursday and Friday. As the sun started setting we did some quick calculations and revised our plans.

The next morning (Saturday) we headed back to Refuge to wait out the next five days. If the weather looked good Thursday onwards we'd resume the trip – otherwise make our way back home to Welshpool. There was a light SE wind that morning but by the time we were ten or so km off the coast it had risen to a 20-30 knot tailwind with 2-3 metres seas (remember a knot is 1.85 km/h). I had a bigger sail than the other two and found that my trusty Greenland stick was abundantly the wrong tool for the job. In those conditions with a fully laden boat under full sail I lacked the ability to suddenly brace when

the sail snapped to the opposite side or when a wave threatened to tip me. There were times I thought I was going over. Tired after the 50km crossing, and with continual rapid bracing and adjustment strokes, I was rattled. Had I tipped I wasn't sure I'd be able to roll up again in those conditions and if Rae and Warren were out of sight it could get ugly quickly. Warren was handling the conditions and Rae was absolutely in her element.

We made it into the calm waters of Refuge Cove. The next four days would have passed uneventfully had I not decided to go back out with Rae to practice with the Euro blade, my spare, in stiff winds. That went well, I was feeling much more confident, but returning to the Cove I decided to do some rolling practice with the sail up. A bit rusty but things coming along until I tried an extended paddle roll. The paddle blade snapped in half at the joint. This is the second Werner blade that has broken on me. I'll reconsider my purchasing!

Fortunately a nearby yachting, stuck waiting for a new starter motor, had spare carbon fibre and epoxy so with his help (and a whittled broom handle) I repaired the paddle, probably stronger than new but no longer a split paddle! Thank you and fair sailing, skipper of the good ship Aquaholic.

The weather outlook was improving; Thursday looked benign for a



crossing to Hogan, though Friday had 20-25kt westerlies. Saturday similar but lessening and the following three or four days were light NE/NW winds. Up again at 0500 and across a placid sea to Hogan. Notable encounters; a couple of big ships sailing very close to Hogan and a juvenile orca playing behind my kayak – not that I saw it!

We waited out the Friday and after much discussion about the next course of action we decided not to paddle on the Saturday either, as the wind had risen, forecast 20kt at 1030, and still strong westerly (beam). We didn't all hold the same opinion about laying over another day on Hogan, but after a long discussion decided to go with a majority decision. Three people is a tricky number for a consensus decision! In retrospect we could've anticipated such a situation in trip planning. We had decided that there would be no leaders, no passengers and every paddler was jointly responsible for navigation and decision-making. Still, it wasn't an easy or comfortable call.

We walked all over Hogan, Rae circumnavigated it, so there isn't an inch of that island we hadn't inspected by the end. Found a few soaks, which in extremis may have been able to provide water.

Four long days before the mast

Sunday marked the beginning of four days of sustained benign conditions with winds at around 10kt NE/NW, reliably to our stern.

7½ hours of pretty straight-forward paddling (44km) saw us reach Deal Island, all the way round to Winter Cove on the far side. Deal is beautiful, rugged and ragged, and with its spectacular attendant curtain Islands. We hiked to the lighthouse caretaker's precinct, and had tea and scones with the two volunteers living there for a few months.

Next morning, 5am start again, beautiful mackerel dawn. The 60km to Flinders was a reasonably fast trip up until the last 10 km or so. The Flinders skyline from the north is confusing and we weren't sure where Killicrankie was – it didn't help I had my GPS calibrated to give magnetic headings but I thought it was set to true, so I was 13 degrees out! Dumb! We ended up just a few km offshore when the tide changed and we slogged into it for almost two hours. Exhausting – but made the beach after 9½ hours in the boats. Getting to shore at Killicrankie felt like the hardest part of the trip was now done as we would be following the coast from now on until the very last day.

I won't dwell too much on the rest of the trip. It wasn't as eventful as the first half. We cruised down the Western side of Flinders for the next three days, making it into Whitemark the day before the wind came up strongly and hammered in from the west all that night and the next day. Fortunately the pub was well stocked (a huge feed, courtesy of Dee, Harry and Peter who put their card on the bar), and we hired a car for the afternoon on the second day to tour the island.

After a day and a half we headed south again to Trousers Point, where we saw but didn't climb Strezlecki. We intended crossing the Franklin Sound to camp on the southern side of

Cape Barren Island. As we headed out from Flinders, the peaks of Tasmania rose in the blue distance and on the way we met a mob of Victorian sea kayakers who crossed from the south for 13 days touring the Furneaux group. When we reached Thunder and Lightning Bay it was so unwelcoming and the other islands looked so close we just got back in the boats and continued, eventually landing in Spike Cove on Clarke Island via a brief look at Preservation Island.

Across Banks Strait we could see the shore of Tasmania, only 24km distant, with huge wind turbines spinning slowly behind Musselroe Bay. Because we'd made up so much time with consecutive paddling days we were bang on our original schedule.

Unfortunately illness intervened again, with one of our party laid low by a migraine that night and unable to paddle the next day; but it's a very beautiful island and I don't think any of us were in a real hurry to finish the trip and return to reality.



Next morning we started in a leisurely way but then decided the tides were best much earlier than we had thought, so a frantic pack and then the crossing of Banks Strait in yet another mild day.

We hit the beach just before noon, meeting the indefatigable Neil, who had been our principal land contact the whole journey. Warren's partner Merridy turned up a short while later and we cracked a bottle of bubbles. 440km travelled, 11 days paddling and 9 lay days, averaging 40km/paddling day. We managed to add an extra 100km to the normal trip by our there-and-back-again exploits.

Partly because of the choices we made, we only had one difficult paddling day (well truthfully it was only me who had difficulty) and the rest of the time paddling was in absurdly benign conditions. There was effectively no swell for the entire trip, though there were big wind-fetched waves on the days we didn't paddle. All the gear survived, with exception of my spare blade. We used the sails a lot with Warren having struck the happy medium. Mine was too big for strong winds and Rae's was too small for light winds.

And so that's done. Warren and Rae were brilliant expedition partners, utterly reliable, a good mix of skills, and I think even though we had some difficult decisions to make the debates were respectful and open. Thanks to Neil especially, and to Merridy and Trine who were our land contacts, and to Dee, Harry and Peter for that feed on the first night at the pub and for all their help in the months before.

A month or so later Rae did the much more exposed Western cross south-to-north solo. Just amazing!



Images - Opposite:Trousers Point, with Cape Barren Island in the distance; Above: End of the road

Day	Location	Distance Paddled
1	Port Welshpool to Refuge Cove	42km
2	Refuge Cove to Hogan Island	50km
3	Hogan Island	Rest
4	Hogan Island to Refuge Cove	50km
5-8	Refuge Cove	Rest
9	Refuge Cove - Hogan Island	50km
10-11	Hogan Island	Rest
12	Hogan Island - Deal Island	44km
13	Deal Island - Killicrankie	63km
14	Killicrankie - Emita	30km
15	Emita - Whitemark	22km
16	Whitemark	Rest
17	Whitemark to Trousers Point	13km
18	Trousers Point to Clarke Island	46km
19	Clarke Island	Rest
20	Clarke Island to Little Musselroe bay (Tasmania)	30km
TOTAL		440km

Hogan Island Paradise

DAVID LINCO

With high levels of enthusiasm, the Dream Team of Roddy, Mark and I paddled out of Refuge Cove with an outgoing tide bound for Hogan Island on Valentines Day, Sunday 14 Feb 2016. This was the second paddling day of our Bass Strait Crossing and following the Port Welshpool to Refuge Cove leg

the lee off Hogan Island with wind fuelled seas breaking kept us all honest.

Upon landing at the small beach, what had intended to be an overnight stay turned into four nights with the BOM changing to angry red for the coming days.

the tide. Looking forward to the entertainment, Mark & Roddy relaxed with their lunch as I stripped and tripped to rescue Ernie. At first I thought the boys had a change of heart and were coming to help only to be surprised by unwelcome paparazzi looking to capture my natural style swimming attire.



the previous day. Our plan driving down to Melbourne was to go hard with three solid paddling days and then bunker down at beautiful Deal Island to ride out the incoming gale force weather.

We paddled out of Refuge Cove just after high tide at 6.30am greeted by a magnificent sunrise. Conditions were overcast with a forecast of 15 kn westerly winds. The paddle out under sail went extremely well with winds only picking up as we approached Hogan in the last hour and a half when wind speeds were gusting at 38 knots. You know the winds are a tad brisk when you need to raft up to put the sails down. The ride past Twin Islets into

This extra spell helped change our perception of Hogan from being a transfer point only, to an adventure holiday destination in itself.

As it turned out, the newly constructed hut was invaluable in providing shelter from howling gale force winds and torrential rain. The real question was sourcing fresh water and what to do on a seemingly barren island with no trees. The visitor's book was very informative in this regard – practically nothing.

In our enthusiasm of landing, deserting our gear and re-energising over lunch, my boat had decided to head out with

The next morning we located some fresh water run off on the west side of the Island. As it was very shallow, we built a small dam but found the quality slightly salty. A second run-off was located 100m south of the hut in the intertidal range. It was of a much better quality but could only be collected at low tide from small rock pools leading down to the beach. Both water sources were only temporary but with much rain forecast our water problem was solved. It was an added bonus that our water supply doubled as the first Hogan Island Day Spa. Thanks to Rae, Ian & Warren for the water divination tips.

That evening we fished off the rocks and feasted on chilli squid with salt & pepper fish for dinner. Although we sighted much larger fish towards Twin Islets they were far too big to handle on our light tackle so we stuck to smaller fish, mainly cod and wrasse directly out of the bay.

Each evening and morning we were entertained by fairy penguins, which adamantly stood their ground, together with several blue tongue lizards and very shy Cape Barren Geese.

of each paddling day, the day and rear hatch were flooding with up to 5 cm of water. Keeping up with Roddy and Mark is no easy task for a mere mortal like me but adding more weight is simply "not cricket". My initial thoughts were leaking hatch covers but after much testing, we found the hatch rims themselves were lifting. I am pleased to advise Dr Hempel along with Nurse Roddy carried out successful field surgery and Ernie fully recovered for the rest of the trip.

The hut (rebuilt 2014) provided an element of luxury on this holiday island, as otherwise there is simply no shelter from the weather and our time would have been more challenging there.

We certainly found its reputation as a rat-infested barren island quite unfounded and would not dismiss it as a recovery point destination very much like Cape Barren, Clarke and Royden Islands. For our four-day stay, we certainly found ourselves occupied and enjoyed the time to explore its treasures.



It is a small island and took only 2-3 days to fully explore. The hilly areas were not easy trekking with hidden mutton-bird holes and thick grassland but the views from the top simply stunning. The light beacon and headland are a must-do for visitors and paddlers alike, with panoramic views to Wilsons Prom and the Kent group. Excellent phone reception through the Telstra 3G network was obtained anywhere on Hogan in direct sight of the Prom, for those with a temptation to phone home.

During our Hogan Island vacation, we took the time to attend to my boat Ernie. With the extra weight of an expedition, I found at the end

Images - Left to right: David Linco; Mark catching dinner; Roddy (team photographer) enjoying the views; David, Mark, Roddy and the ubiquitous selfie stick; Below: Native island fairy penguins





Hail the Sail!

Another Eastern Bass Strait Crossing

MEGAN PRYKE

As we rounded Little Snake Island I started to feel wind on my right cheek. Our paddling muscles were barely warmed up when I asked John Hutchinson “Do you want to put the sails up?” We hoist the sails, and our laden sea kayaks feel a little lighter. For a brief period, we stow the sails to negotiate an area marked “Breaks Heavily” which was breaking lightly. Then after picking a way across we continue to sail paddle to Rabbit Island for lunch. Back to sail paddling southward then a turn west towards Refuge Cove to camp. The southwest wind wrapped around the mountainous Wilsons Promontory, while closer to shore multidirectional gusts meant we could get occasional wind assistance. Paddling day one completed, 42km of paddling with sails up over eighty percent of the time.

There is nothing quite like an over-the-horizon long crossing to kindle the senses. Neither of us had done such a task before. With forecast south westerly winds of 15-20 knots, building to a Strong Wind Warning by the late afternoon we knew that turning back to the mainland was highly undesirable. It was a dawn start. We were barely out of

the shadow of Prom when John suggests “Time to put up the sails”. Our sails catch the wind, the load on our paddles lightens, and the building following seas engage us.

Land is not only on the minds of flying birds. I was glad to spot Hogan Island when on top of wave crests. We saw about six freighters during the day confirming that the shipping channel is definitely wider than it appears on the chart. One ship appeared face on. We kept moving along our agreed heading relieved to see its port side appear. It passes by close enough to hear its engines and read the text on the containers.

Over my right shoulder a grey curtain approached. Five minutes later it was raining and Hogan Island disappeared out of view leaving our trusty deck compasses as the only visual reference for about half an hour. After six hours of paddling we rounded the northern tip of the Hogan Island cluster. I cut in close to the rocks to find land further away than expected. I aim upwind to paddle strongly to the protection of a small bay. My struggle was nothing compared to John’s, who had gone

wider forgetting that because we had arrived earlier than expected, the current direction had changed. The best thing I could do was remain a visible target for John so I kept my flapping sail up. John slowly ground his way into the bay while I gently paddled to keep my position.

Paddling day two completed, 48kms with the sail up, 50kms in total. Winds WSW fresh to strong. Six and a half hours on the water.

We did not leave as early for our third paddling day. Moderate to fresh southwesterly winds prevailed. We hoisted our sails just south of Hogan Island’s protection. The seas were confused with intersecting westerly and easterly swell creating diamond patterns on the water’s surface. Just north of Deal’s Murray passage, with sails up, we scoff some lunch on level waters. We stow sails for the push into West Cove where a fresh headwind greets us.

After setting up camp we make the 4 km walk to the homestead area, check the forecast and make a decision to have a rest day on Deal Island. It was a privilege to have a rest day on Deal Island. We walked, swam, visited the lighthouse base

Image: Homestead area on Deal Island



and museum. It should be renamed "iDeal" island! Lovely place!

There was nothing difficult about the decision to launch for the long 60 km crossing to Flinders Island as the forecast promised very light winds. We nipped out the times the tidal currents would turn, expecting to be swept south west with the morning flow and then north east by the time we were close to Flinders Island. By 6:30am we were on the water with the sun still rising. Wind was non-existent; the water was smooth as we headed into a bank of fog. We heard the distant buzz of an engine and were glad to identify it as a light airplane. Wright Rock appeared and then disappeared. A seal was seen shortly before Craggy Island, which had a beany of cloud surrounding its summit. Finally Flinders Island could be seen as the fog cleared close to the island. Nine and a half hours of being on the water we enter Killiecrankie Bay. I will remember this day for the mysterious fog and smooth seas. It was to be the only paddling day that we left the sails on our decks.

The following morning we left Killiecrankie with a plan to head towards Erita. As soon as we are out of the Killiecrankie bay our sails are up, the northerly wind fills them, the tidal current with us. As we curve around Cape Frankland, I sight a gap in between granite boulders. "Rock hopping with sails up?" I ask John. John agrees, and we cut through the gap sails up!

At Roydon Island we stop paddling for morning tea. John suggested

a change of plan. "Why not go to Whitemark today". We agree to have a crack at it. After lunch the current direction would be against us, so we decide that if it is too strong, we could turn around and go to Erita. Our sails were up for a zippy trip across Marshall Bay, but just south of Settlement Point our progress slows down, due to the strong current. We head to land for lunch into the strongest head wind battle I have had, this time due to land wind shear. Not wanting another headwind battle we continue by hugging the coast, which heads eastwards into Sawyers Bay. This sets us up for a downwind run to Long Point with twenty knots plus behind us, sails up of course! The Kayaking for Kids at Risk guys who had arrived at Whitemark earlier in the day had seen our sails. I make no complaint of having my kayak picked up by them and carried up to the grass. After a refreshing outdoor shower we got ready for "Parmy" night at the Whitemark pub. We had paddled 53km with sails up seventy percent of the distance.

Another early start to catch the high tide to get across the shallows that separates Parrys Bay and Fotheringate Bay. A westerly wind helps us, though it dies down just before Trousers Point where John and I stop to set up camp. It is cloudy and a clear view from Strezlecki peaks is unlikely, so our motivation to climb is low. John and I decide to head to Cape Barren Island, a strengthening westerly wind helps us paddle sail across Franklin Sound. I enjoyed the lively

waters created by the west wind as we rounded the west side of Cape Barren Island, keeping up the sails was a bit dicey in the steep chop but we manage. We land at Key Island Bay and set up camp on the sand amongst picturesque granite boulders on the edge of the dunes. This campsite turned out being home for four nights.

The first night it rained heavily overnight, though the daytime was clear. Gale force winds arrive by the late afternoon. Through the night I couldn't sleep. John was camped closer to the waters edge. At 3am, with high tide approaching, I got up. The tide forecast was 3cm higher than the previous night which was enough margin for our tents however the extra surge created by gale force winds was a worry. At 3:15am in the morning it was starting to look very dicey. I wake John who gets up in time to have water wash under his vestibule. As John moves his tent I realise our pots and stove were floating off, I chase a pot through a slot in the granite boulders. As I grab it I see another pot bobbing out of reach, I leave it there safely out of reach and rush back to the tents and then to check our kayaks. John announces that his cag has gone. Searching for it becomes an immediate priority. The previously ideal campsite had become the campsite from hell. We postpone the cag search until daylight. The tide had started to recede so I went to my tent for another attempt at sleeping.



Left: John Hutchinson
Right: East end of
Rebecca Bay, Clarke
Island



In the daylight we make a sweep of the beach. In vain we cover about two kilometers of beach downwind. As I return ahead of John I spotted the khaki colour of my ground sheet. I waded out into a bunch of seaweed to grab it. My hopes rise every time I see a little bit of bright green. No luck. I return to camp, and head to the gap where the pot was washed last night. It was too narrow to walk sideways and reach so I dig out sand from the base allowing me get close enough to fish it out with a stick. Later in the day John heads down the beach for two kilometres for a second look. He spots the green of his cag in a small breaking wave, again amongst a clump of seaweed. Cag found, what a relief!

The tide height was increasing each night, so we decided to make a moat and levy to protect our tents. Although the days are windy the rain has eased, the clouds being blown too fast to stop and drop rain. A community store is open Monday to Friday for limited hours at the township, which was a good hour's walk away from our campsite. We had plenty of food, though we decided we couldn't pass up the opportunity to eat fresh yoghurt and fruit. While walking we saw some unusual parrots, a few largish snakes, pretty granite bays and I sustained my only trip injury, a blister on my foot.

With easterly winds we mostly sail paddled across to Clarke Island. We had to drop the sails as we approached Rebecca Bay. John who was ahead picked a route towards shore on the west side of the bay in between an island. It was a bit rough to get into the channel with an outflowing current standing up the waves. I stalled near the shallow channel start to allow a big set to pass by. Once in the channel the outflowing current was a bit of a grind, however it was worth the effort to avoid extra distance involved in going around a series of bommies and the lumpy water added a bit of excitement to the trip.

We set up camp on the far east end of Rebecca Bay and went for a walk. Around dinnertime we nussed out the plan for Banks Strait, noting on our kayaks in chinagraph pencil the wind forecast, the time the currents would change, estimated speed the direction of the current and our planned heading. On John's Ipad, which was carefully waterproofed, we looked at how the Navonics software had arrows indicating forecast current speed and direction. My Garmin GPS Map 78 had stopped receiving a satellite signal way back at Killiecrankie.

We had been getting quicker at packing through the trip and for Banks Strait we actually ended up launching before sunrise. Thus we could not see our trusty compasses,

so our planned heading was irrelevant for a while. Instead we targeted the Swan Island light, which at times was getting hard to spot as the seas got bigger. It probably should have been no surprise that we were further east than what we intended when we finally rafted up to check our location in the daylight. To correct ourselves, we turned and paddled a heading of 240 degrees, which put the wind directly behind us. We didn't dare put up the sails as the seas were being steepened due to wind against tide. White caps broke all around us. I experienced a few horizontal waterfalls requiring a brace, very glad to be wearing a cag. Just north of Swan Island the conditions flattened. I had a look at the laminated map and figured we had just crossed an area that the charts marked with squiggly lines i.e. rough water. With the now flatter conditions we raised our sails to head towards mainland Tasmania in between Swan and Little Swan Island.

A fisherman at Whitemark told us we would get a tidal back eddy inside of the Foster Islands and it seems that we did. Near Cape Portland I check the BOM forecast around 11:30am in knee-deep water. It seemed to be blowing stronger than forecast, though there is no Strong Wind Warning. We make a decision to make a push to Bridport, with the wind behind us, the current slowing and eventually turning with



Sea fog encountered on a windless crossing from Deal to Flinders Island



us by late afternoon. We completed the crossing of Ringaroom Bay to Waterhouse Point, 25km crossing within three hours. At Waterhouse Point we touched down to officially celebrate our Bass Strait crossing, setting off after a bite to eat about half an hour later. We knew the wind would start to drop as we crossed the bay towards Bridport due to the shape of the land.

On the final big bay crossing we had hundreds of Shearwaters on the water. We scattered them like cattle so they soared gracefully around us. The Bridport ferry passed us, a convenient way to confirm our heading. We finally drop the sails when we saw the buildings at Bridport. With a small surf landing just before 7pm, we had completed our final paddling day with a 98km paddling day completed in 13 hours. Hail the sail!

Many thanks to those who helped in the logistics; my brother Adrian, sister Karin and David Kelly who picked us up at Bridport. We took our sea kayaks on as hand luggage on a day voyage on the Spirit of Tasmania. We had made the booking from Clarke Island. John bought bubble wrap. There are two Spirits (ferries) and one has a particular trolley more suitable for sea kayaks. We had a few nervous moments not knowing if our sea kayaks would prove too much of a nuisance.

Crossing Facts

Time frame

All up, it was 21 days return to Sydney, though we had allowed a month. Trip comprised 14 days to cross with 8 paddling days and 6 weather and rest days. Remaining days were 4 travel days plus 3 days waiting to start.

Equipment

John: Pace 17 with a Flat Earth sail. Paddle Epic Mid Wing
 Megan: Mirage 530 with a Kite Magic sail. Paddle Epic Small Mid Wing
 Gear had been used and tested. Trial pack of our kayaks completed at least a week before.
 We both had spare paddle, VHF radios, flares.

Food and water

4 litres of water accessible from cockpit via under deck hydration system. No water on our backs and no need to open day hatch during trip by use of pockets for food.

Cags

I had a Reed Chillcheater. For the warmer than average conditions it may have been a bit too much but I prefer being too warm. John had a Peak hooded tourlite long sleeve cag. February to early March 2016 were warmer than prior year averages.

Images - Left to right: Sea fog encountered on a windless crossing from Deal to Flinders Island; The start of our moat on day 3 of our Cape Barren Island camp; Leaving Key Island Bay, Cape Barren Island; A bay protected from the westerly winds, Cape Barren Island



Details	Paddling Distance	Estimated distance with sail up
Port Welshpool to Refuge Cove	42	83%
Refuge Cove to Hogan Island	52	90%
Hogan Island to Deal Island	45	91%
Rest day on "Ideal" (a.k.a. Deal) Island		
Deal Island to Killiecrankie, Flinders Island	62	0%
Killiecrankie to Whitemark	53	70%
Whitemark to Key Island Bay, Cape Barren Island	43	65%
Four days on Cape Barren Island, strong westerly winds set in..		
Key Island Bay to Clarke Island (Rebecca Bay)	22	64%
Rebecca Bay, Clark Island, to Bridport, Tasmania	98	69%
TOTAL	417	65%

Western Bass Strait

RAE DUFFY



At the end of March this year I paddled Bass Strait solo via the Western Route. This is the story of how and why it came about...

In early January, Warren, Ian and I had a terrific adventure crossing Eastern Bass Strait. Upon arriving in Tasmania, Neil, and I spent the summer touring Tassie in our van, and kayaking, mainly on the east coast of Tassie. We joined the Tasmanian Canoe Club, met lots of wonderful people and went on expeditions around Freycinet, Maria Island, Tasman Peninsula as well as their regular Wednesday night paddle.

Jean invited us to join a group on a two week expedition around the Hunter Islands on the North West tip of Tassie, and although we had planned to return to NSW for Rock n' Roll it was a fantastic opportunity to explore another part of Tassie and we couldn't turn it down.

We were considering how to make it work when Neil fell and hurt his

back. In his usual generous way he still wanted me to do the Hunter trip, so we left my kayak and gear in Hobart and drove the van back to NSW, attended Rock n' Roll then I flew back

down to Launceston, where Jean picked me up and drove me to the launch spot. Greg had my kayak.

As Neil and I were working through the logistics of getting my kayak back to the mainland a friend laughed and said, "you'll just have to paddle home".

Paddling back had never even crossed my mind until then but I do like a challenge.

My first thought was that it was a long way from the Hunter Islands to Port Welshpool via Eastern Bass Strait. Then it occurred to me that there was a quicker and, for me, yet unexplored route via King Island and the Western Route. It was a ridiculous idea, wasn't it? And yet it percolated in the back of my mind. Could I do it?

I found Andrew McCauley's trip report online and remembered that Harry had done it. Swearing Harry to secrecy, I asked him about his experience while we were at Rock n' Roll.

So...with very little time to think about it, I took with me to Tassie all the maps and equipment I would need to paddle home via W Bass if the weather lined up, and if I felt up to it.

Unlike the E Bass trip, I didn't tell many people about my plans, as I didn't know yet if I would actually attempt it. I'd been kayaking lots but hadn't trained specifically for this; I was relying on general kayak fitness, and still needed time to think it through.

Images - Left to right: Greg and Jean launch from Slope Island; Sunrise soon after I left the Tassie group to go to the other side of Three Hummock Island



As Jean and I chatted in the car I was feeling odd about my plan to possibly abandon her trip before it was over. She and the rest of the Tassie kayakers had been so generous. I think I started with "Jean, I have this crazy idea" Then during the first few days of the trip I mentioned it to Greg, Alan and Tim trying to sound casual and uncommitted. The reaction was similarly low key. No one there was going to either encourage, or disapprove, of my idea. I'm very grateful to them all for that response.

In the meantime we had a fabulous trip along the western side of Hunter Island, explored Slope Island, saw more Sea Eagles at one time than I had ever seen before, watched Dangerous Banks breaking in the distance and dealt with crazy tides. If you get the chance, it's a great paddling destination. On Three Hummock Island we came across a group of Victorian paddlers including Tina and John who had paddled W Bass, so I got the chance to discuss their trip. I can't say I was encouraged by Tina's account but I did come away with extra knowledge.

As it got closer to the end of the Hunter Island trip, I was watching the weather carefully, the conditions were looking good for me to paddle to King Island and by now I was keen to do it.

This time when I mentioned my decision, the group poured over the charts with me, asking questions and helping me to clarify what I was taking on. I was in contact with Neil too, and we discussed the first leg of the trip; about 80 km to the port of Grassy on King Island.

We were on the eastern side of Three Hummock Island, so, while the rest of the group headed for Walker Island and then back to the mainland I paddled to Chimney corner on the western side of Three Hummock Island, in order to set off the next day. It was about three hours paddling so I had the rest of the day to sort and check my gear.

I got up at 4am and was on the water by 5am. It would be dark until close to 7am but my first heading, the Northern tip of Hunter Island was very clear in the moonlight. A strong tide was going my way so I was soon there and heading into open water. Suddenly I realised that the wind had changed direction and the sky looked clearer - it dawned on me that I'd turned into the wind and now, with no reference I didn't have a clue what direction I was going. Turning on the GPS I got back on course but it had been a disconcerting few minutes.

Sunrise is always beautiful on the water, and today was no exception. I could see Albatross Island, and in hindsight I regret not paddling closer

for a better look at the Albatross Sanctuary. I was more focused on completing a long crossing, and didn't feel confident enough to extend both the distance and time the crossing would take.

A variable SW wind was providing me with some assistance, but as my course was NW the beam wind over an extended time caused my back to become stiff and sore. There was not much swell and the day was mainly fine with occasional squalls of gusty wind and rain. It was at these times that an Albatross often flew close checking me out. They are magnificent and I love watching how effortlessly they glide through the sky. One time the tip of a wing was so close that it passed between me and my sail. As Albatross Island slipped away I could see Pyramid Island in the distance. Again my route would not go close but it's nice to have a reference point when you are a mere speck in the open ocean.

I kept checking the compass bearing as the kayak bobbed around, flicking the GPS on about once an hour to ensure that I was not drifting off course. My main focus was to paddle efficiently, keep sipping water and stay relaxed. I hoped to do the crossing in about 12 hours but the time wasn't as important as getting there in good shape, preferably before dark.

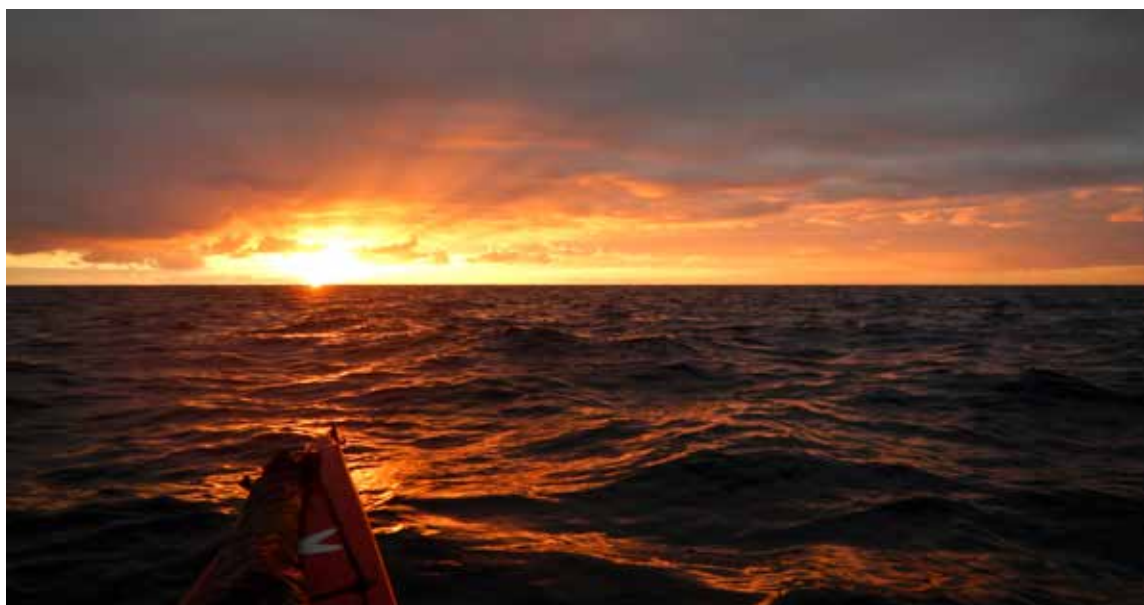




Image - A family of sea eagles on Three Hummock Island

King Island was a welcome sight when it finally came into view at about 1pm. However, my progress now was slower, the tides that had been assisting for the early part of the trip were no longer in my favour and the winds had died. I tried to work out the location of Grassy Harbour but failed and was almost upon it before I could see it. I was very grateful for the reassurance of my GPS and thought often of people like Paul Caffin who had managed so much without the electronic support available now, not just for navigation but more importantly for weather information and communication.

After 11 hours I landed at 4pm, emptied the kayak, dragged it up onto the grass at the back of the beach, repacked the gear I wouldn't need that evening, lay out the wet gear and carried my bags to where a couple of fishermen were cleaning their catch, close to a likely tent spot.

I really felt the stark contrast between this and the Hawkesbury Classic, where the land-crew takes over as soon as I land.

Everyone I met on King Island were cheerful and helpful and the fishermen were no exception, they were very surprised to find that I'd come from 3 Hummock Island and assured me that the lovely piece of flat mown lawn right on the waterfront would be a fine spot for my tent and then, to my excitement,

mentioned the hot shower in the toilets. The only yacht owner in the harbour joined us for a chat, and turned out to be Mike Snoad's brother. For newer members, Mike is a long time member and numbers several Bass Strait crossings amongst his numerous other challenging adventures. The complex tide charts I used that had been invaluable for Eastern Bass Strait and now for Western had come from Mike via Dee and Harry.

It was great to chat but a shower and food were becoming critical, and I was feeling quite shaky. I also needed to look at the maps, tides and weather for tomorrow and check in with Neil before I could finally get some much-deserved sleep.

My 'perfect' campsite had flood lights, and was right next to the car park. At 3am several cars pulled up and boots tramped past my tent as several young men laughed about an odd place to sleep and started their shift at the busy harbour that services King Island. From then on there were shouts and sudden loud noises, as well as trucks coming and going. Determined to rest I managed to sleep fitfully.

I had a lazy start to the next day and set off at 10am to paddle north along the Eastern side of the Island. The first 20km is a beautiful rocky coastline with trees and rich green paddocks. This is followed by 30km of sandy bay

with a fairly uninteresting shoreline. The western side would have been more interesting but exposed and treacherous. After 50 km I stopped for the night, camping in the sand dunes.

During the day I had been thinking a lot about what to do next. In many ways the next few days would be a big part of the adventure as I've done very little travelling on my own. In planning the trip I'd given no thought to what I would do on King Island but was pleased that the weather dictated a break and the opportunity to take a look around. Tina and John had told me about a lovely protected bay that they had landed in near the lighthouse at the NW tip of King Island. The map showed roads nearby and it seemed like a good link to the rest of the island, so I planned to follow their example.

I wanted to round the island at slack tide so got up at 3.30am to paddle the last 15km, arriving just after dawn at a beach just as Tina had described it, with the lighthouse and golf club pavilion within easy walking distance.

I tried to make myself vaguely presentable, secured the kayak and gear and packed a small backpack with essentials in hopes that I would be able to get to the main town of Currie, some 60 kms away. Planning to hire a car and find somewhere to stay for three nights as there was going to be strong NW to NE winds and big seas. Three staff at the golf club, busy getting coffees for guests, were baffled by my presence and even more so when I mentioned the kayak that I'd left at the beach and asked how I might get to Currie. They didn't like my chances but tried to help.

There's not space in this story for the fantastic three days I had on King Island, all the people I met, and the cheese I sampled. In many ways it was more interesting than the paddling. It's lush and green and I'm so pleased I got the opportunity to see and do so much during my brief time on the island.

It was time to leave King Island and make the 100km dash to Victoria. The high pressure cell I'd been watching brought with it light SW winds in the morning, turning to W and then NW by the end of the day but dropping to 5 knots then N to NE winds increasing over the next days. Unfortunately the SW swell was still 4 - 5 meters with a 14 sec wave period but I thought that the beach would be protected and once I was clear of the island the swell would be fine. High tide 6am.

My B&B host, Dieter, questioned my sanity and recommended loading the kayak onto a boat at Grassy harbour for shipping or at least consider a motor for the kayak. Despite that, Dieter and Pez very kindly drove me all the way to Cape Wickham in the early hours of the morning.

The beach that met us wasn't what I had hoped; the big sets were pretty scary. Fortunately the lulls were calmer... If only my timing had been better. I capsized in a large breaking wave and ended up back on the beach with the sail torn, my gear scattered and nerves ragged.

I repaired the sail with the help of Dieter and Kathleen from the King Island Courier, who had come to the beach to see me off after hearing about my crossing attempt. All the time I was watching the ocean and considering my options but I'm an optimist and felt that if I could get off the beach I'd be okay.

So with adrenalin running high I relaunch about an hour later than planned. Once through the breakers the sea was big and confused because the delay meant that the tide was near peak ebb and opposing the large swell. If the conditions continued they would be too exhausting over that distance. I decided to paddle for an hour to clear the influence of the island and then consider if I should turn back to Grassy where the kayak could return by ship and I'd fly home, or continue on to Apollo Bay.

It was a close call, but towards the end of the hour conditions began to

settle down. After a further half hour tracking my progress on my GPS to see whether I was actually making headway I decided to continue.

As they had done on my crossing to King Island, I was once again joined by so many albatross that swooped down past the kayak.

For 10 hours I paddled with no land in sight. At times I needed to remind myself that I love being out on the ocean and this is what I wanted to do. Besides by now my only choice was to paddle or hit the PLB button and declare that I was tired - not really an option at all.

Just before dusk I finally saw the mainland, then when it was really dark, I saw the glow of lights from Apollo Bay. I knew Neil was waiting there for me with ex member, Kate and her partner Ray.

I then had a further six hours of paddling in the dark and it was very dark as it was overcast and the moon didn't rise until after I landed. After years of Tuesday nights I quite like night paddling and there were moments of levity when twice a fish decided to board my kayak, wiggling about on my skirt, before plopping back into the waves. But mostly I just focused on the lights in the distance that rose and fell with the still 4m swell.

Neil and I had spoken the night before. He had described Apollo Bay to me, and assured me that it was well protected and that there was a



Images - Above: Camping at Grassy, King Island with Paul Snoad's yacht behind; The toilets with hot showers at Grassy

flashing light at the entrance to the harbour that would be easy to see. We also discussed the effect that the swell was having on the reefs, which lay outside the harbour and along the coast. We expected the swell to be very similar when I landed the next night.

I struggled to locate the flashing harbour light, as I wasn't on the peak of the swell long enough to identify the flashing pattern. It wasn't until I was about 1km away that I was sure. The waves seemed bigger and twice a wave broke noisily just behind me. I had the GPS running and stuck exactly to the course I'd plotted

which aimed to avoid trouble but again the adrenalin was kicking in.

The protected harbour that Neil had described to me the night before was gone; the swell direction had changed just enough so that when Neil scouted the harbour in that morning he was horrified to see surfers riding waves past the entrance to the harbour.

After over 16 hours of paddling I can't tell you how wonderful it was to hear Neil yelling at me from the breakwall but I could not make out what he was saying. The bigger waves were breaking over the breakwall and sweeping past the entrance and I could see the calm water in the harbour so picked my time and paddled hard. I could see our van and Kate, Ray and Neil. This time it was like the Hawkesbury; Neil and Ray sorted out the kayak while Kate bundled me off to bed in our

van with Miso soup and a hot water bottle.

The morning after when I took a look at the Harbour the waves had settled a bit. I watched as speedboats cruised up near the entrance then accelerated through between the waves, comparing their entrance to my own. In hindsight I should have got more information about the harbour and a daytime landing would have been better. On previous crossings, Harry had launched before daylight to land while it was still light and Tina and John had launched in the afternoon to land during the next day. Neither option was viable for me as it was too rough for me to have launched from Cape Wickham in the dark and I would have had headwinds the entire crossing. I had wanted to take advantage of the SW wind.

Looking back, I feel a great sense

of achievement and I'm pleased I had the opportunity to test myself in this way. Being solo was a big part of the challenge, making decisions and being totally self-reliant. I am grateful to Neil who was supportive and at the end of the phone checking the weather and discussing my plans. I prefer the comradery of a shared adventure but as a solo paddler there is more interaction with others and unexpected and interesting consequences.

Images - Below: The West Coast of King Island; Opposite: Cape Wickham before setting out for Victoria (Photo Kathleen Hunter, King Island Courier)



Congratulations

RAE

First **SOLO FEMALE TO CROSS**

Western Bass Strait

Truly an inspiring, amazing and courageous achievement!



Unfinished Business

SHARON BETTERIDGE

First printed in, and reprinted here with kind permission from, Oceanpaddler – Issue 49, the UK sea kayaking magazine



Background

It had been eight years since our planned kayak trip from Tannum Sands to Mackay was cut short at Stanage due to a combination of group cohesion and inclement weather that wasn't going to ease for several days, leaving us launching at the wrong stage in the tidal cycle. The lure of this stretch of coast was strong for Rob and me however, as much to do with our urge to complete it as the descriptions and photos of the idyllic islands that lay offshore.

This would not be by any means an easy tropical trip. It had all the elements of more complex crossings such as the famous Bass Strait, with remote islands (up to 80 km offshore), lengthy crossings between landing spots (up to 60 km), strong currents that would often cross our paths rather than be of any help, shallow ground with shoals and rocky outcrops, and narrow channels where the current runs at up to

6 knots on spring tides. Combine all this with the tidal range being the largest on the East Coast (at nearby Broadsound the range is 9 m), and I knew fitness, on-water skill, sharp navigation and equipment in excellent repair were going to be essentials on this trip.

Stanage

A phone repeater tower perched on a high point was an indicator that we were nearly there. We pulled off on a side road and climbed to a high vantage point to view the offshore islands. The weather was kinder than last time, and the islands shimmered emerald in a turquoise sea as a gentle trade wind blew.

A 4–5 day weather window had opened up and the tides at were at neaps. The only drawback was that the full tide was before 04:00 and the sun wouldn't be up until close to 07:00. We needed an early start

to catch the outrunning tide. With the current here running at over 3–4 knots at springs, the consolation was that we would have less current, it would be mostly behind us and the crossing to the Marble Group would be the shortest of the trip.

We booked into our night's accommodation, called the resident caretaker on Bamborough Island to ask about camping, organised a secure place to leave our car and did the final fit-out to our kayaks. After an early dinner, we packed and repacked our dry bags so we would be ready for a launch at first light. We did one last check of the weather forecast on the single sideband radio and sent a text to Mark via our tracker to ensure both these vital pieces of equipment were still working, before finally setting the alarm for an early start.



To the Marble Group

I never like to start in the dark, especially so close to a mangrove and on a boat ramp where it was obvious from the scraps that the fishermen had been cleaning their daily catch. The large sign posted adjacent warning of crocodiles did nothing to allay my fear. We packed a little later than planned, caught the full brunt of the ebb tide out of the channel and, with our sails up to catch the trade wind, we exited Thirsty Sound on a conveyor belt of current. It was an exciting albeit bumpy ride over shoaling water, and we had to navigate around several rocky outcrops.

We saw a pair of rounded rocks in the distance and Rob asked what they were called. When I responded with their name as indicated on the chart ("Two Round Rocks") he asked again, thinking that I was either being funny or hadn't heard him over the sound of wind and waves.

My reply was the same. This went on for a few volleys, until Rob finally realised I was neither hard of hearing nor being humorous and suggested we go around them on the other side; it was too late however and we left them in our wake to starboard. We arrived at Tynemouth Island for morning tea and a snooze, followed by lunch while we waited for the tide to ease. Like most of the islands in the Marble Group, Tynemouth still had remnants of its cattle-grazing days including fences and cattle-holding yards. Nearby Marble Island hosts the original farmstead and is now a resort specialising in hunting.

At slack tide we launched again and paddled across shallow water, easing our way through boils and confused water in the channel before we rounded the headland and landed through low surf onto the sand that would be our first night's camp. As

Rob jumped out to look for a suitable place to camp, I sent the first of our texts to Mark via the tracker to let him know we were okay. Deer, dog and tyre tracks and the flotsam lines on the beach gave us a fair indication of the recent high-water mark, so we set up camp on higher ground. A little later, Mary (the resident caretaker) greeted us on the quad bike with her two trusty dogs, tails wagging and mouths panting, indicating they had enjoyed the exhilaration of the ride down from the homestead. Mary was keen to hear of our plans and how our day went before she outlined a short history of the island. With a promise to bring us the weather forecast early the next morning, she bade us goodnight.





Images - Previous page: Sharon paddling off coral at Prudhoe Island; Above left to right: Stange Bay - Crocodile Warning Sign; The iconic A-frame on Middle Percy Island; Sharon and Rob paddling to Mackay with Prudhoe Island in the background

To the Percy Group

As promised Mary was up early and delivered the forecast written in her beautiful copperplate hand. I knew that after this we would have to rely on daily text messages on the tracker from Mark and our radio for these essential forecasts. The weather was still holding up so we launched nearer to the top of the tide, planning to ride the ebb to The Percy's. We did our final navigation check to ensure we wouldn't miss this group as, although they are statuesque with Middle Percy at over 240 m, smoke haze from local fires had settled overnight and our view was obscured to a few kilometres. With the ebb current and a gentle trade wind to assist us, we pushed out on a compass bearing to our next destination. It was quite eerie paddling into 'nowhere' and it would be a lie if I said that I hadn't felt a bit apprehensive more than a few times on the crossing. If our navigation was wrong we could easily find ourselves beyond the Percy Group, fighting a strong current to get back to our destination. We used a GPS to check our drift and speed.

It felt like a long crossing, but it was broken by the sound of a single male humpback following us 'singing'. He continued to follow us for some

time before our courses diverged. I looked around and he had gone as fast as he had appeared, leaving us with a 360-degree view of nothing but sea. It was an unnerving moment and I felt a little disoriented.

After more than two hours, a lofty shadow came into and out of view. A few sea birds kept us company and, although I didn't know how far from shore these large Brown Boobies ventured, I assumed their presence indicated we were close to landfall. The haze gradually lifted and we finally saw the Percy Group in all their majesty, clad in lush green forest.

Just after lunch we paddled the channel between Pine Islets and Smith Bluff before West Bay opened up. It was a busy but glorious anchorage complete with eight yachts, two catamarans, one cruiser and a fishing boat. It looked and felt like we had been dropped onto a movie set in a tropical island paradise. We pulled up on the beach in front of the iconic A-frame that houses a fascinating collection of memorabilia from yachts who have visited over the years.

Marty, the caretaker, welcomed us as he completed the cleaning of his morning's catch. Marty lives in the tree house behind the beach and

ensures visitors are welcomed and camping fees paid. We paid Marty and, on his suggestion, selected a site in a quiet spot away from the A-frame, under pandanus and palms on a bed of soft vines and leaves and the ever-present sand. Marty offered us three fresh-caught whiting and indicated the best spot to obtain good drinking water.

After setting up camp we explored the walking tracks. An inlet appeared quite unexpectedly after a short steep walk through forest and, on Marty's advice, we filled our water bags from the tank above the inlet. The lagoon itself can only be entered by boat at high tide and only with permission. It made a picturesque sight: an old timber yacht tied to a rickety wharf and a few dinghies pulled up on the mudflat nestled among the mangroves. We returned to the track and continued the climb to view the sea from various vantage points. Thankfully it was a clear afternoon and the view from the top was exquisite. Near the peak we saw the original homestead built in the typical timber Queenslander style, complete with an open front gate and a welcoming veranda.

Middle Percy Island has a long history. There is little recorded about the local Aboriginal people who,



for thousands of years, regularly visited to use the land and its coastline for the resources it had to offer. European history dates back to Captain Cook's discovery in the eighteenth century as he sailed briskly passed, naming the group in honour of the Duke of Northumberland. Later in 1802, Captain Matthew Flinders visited and named the islands. Over the following years there were the usual shipwrecks and, in the late 1800s, coconuts and other edible fruits were planted and goats were introduced to provide passing vessels with a source of food. Soon after this, a European settlement was established with the first leasehold taken in 1875. Coffee, sheep, cattle, horses and honey-bees were brought to the island for farming over the years with varying degrees of success. Eastern Grey kangaroos, wallabies, rusa deer and cane toads were also introduced over the years.

In 2011 National Parks took over the management of over 80% of the island to ensure its ongoing protection, and in 2012 the remainder was granted to Cate to ensure its maintenance and protection for the following 20 years. Cate is a descendant of one of the earlier leaseholders, and resides on the island in the original homestead.

From near the homestead Rob obtained phone reception and sent

offsome photos and a message back home to Mark. It was getting late, so unfortunately we didn't have time to investigate the track any further. We returned to meet a group of visiting mariners and share their fire, drinks and stories. They supplied us with a pan and butter and

helped cook our fish over their fire while we exchanged tales from the high seas. The skipper and his crew were Sydneysiders motoring a large cruiser to Airlie Beach for its wealthy owner. With only male company for the last few weeks, Alicia was grateful for another female to share her drinks and stories with. She listened with keen interest to a report of my trip so far and my plans for the next few days, and then recounted her own tales. She not only cooked for the crew, but also did her share of the night watch as often they were motoring 24 hours a day.

It was another early night. We bade farewell to our new-found friends and watched the sun set over the distant islands of the Guardfish Cluster as we tuned into the radio for the coming day's weather forecast.

To the Beverley Group

Day three turned out to be identical to the previous day, and tested our navigation skills once again. This time the crossing was longer, the wind was gentler, the haze lifted later and the islands were less than half the height of the Percy Group. We were joined regularly by schools of small translucent flying fish, interspersed with larger mackerel taking chase and jumping clear of the water. Brown Boobies soared above before diving for their lunch.

Finally the haze lifted. Whales continued their journey nearby to our east and we regularly saw them breaching, waving their flukes and jumping clear of the water. To our west the imposing block of Bluff Island was easy to distinguish. It was a flat day and the water shimmered. It felt remote. We were a long way offshore and surprisingly it was quite busy with watercraft. As we approached the Beverley Cluster a yacht and later a fishing boat came into view. The fishing boat altered course to greet us for a chat. With such a good weather window, they had launched from Sarina for a couple of day's fishing.

As we approached the islands we were greeted with strong currents once again before we rounded the headland into the protection of the bay. Digby Island was superb. Its beach faces onto a lagoon-like stretch of water dotted with smaller islands just offshore. We camped on low soft vegetation under pandanus above the high tide line. As we moved into evening the yacht and fishing boat joined us, dropping their anchors offshore while Rob and I lay awake on our sleeping mats watching the tapestry of stars on the dark velvety sky. We woke to a chorus of birdsong in the morning.

To Prudhoe Island

At dawn we rose to a clear day. Paddling alongside the smaller islands in the cluster on our north-westerly course we admired their beauty – red rocks smoothed by persistent weathering, majestic hoop pine, ancient grass trees and clusters of blue wanderer butterflies that appeared to be attracted to my blue and white sail. Turtles broke the surface regularly but, taken by surprise, they soon duck-dived before disappearing into the depths. Once clear of the

Beverley Group, Divided Island to our right and Knight Island to our left kept us company for what seemed like an eternity. Over our port shoulder The Bluff glowed

in the early morning light. There was no doubt as to our destination that day as we could easily see Prudhoe Island's distinctive shape in the distance. For a while a pod of dolphins kept us interested, but unfortunately the feeling wasn't mutual and they soon took off in great haste.

We skirted the northeast side of Prudhoe Island. As we approached a boulder-scattered bay, the bottom gave way to a magnificent reef just under our hulls. The crystal-clear water gave us a superb view of a selection of hard and soft corals and giant clams. Drifting across the reef we were in awe as colourful fish darted in and out and around. With a beach solely comprising enormous boulders and waves breaking over an inshore reef crest, this was a dangerous place to land and set up camp. We continued on and past Prudhoe's saddle before rounding the rocky northern headland and paddling over a shallow sandy shoal. Again the seabed gave way to more magnificent reef. We drifted across the shallows on the current several

times, enjoying the multi-coloured corals, fish and clams. A school of reef sharks were feeding close by, while a frightened turtle dived under my hull as a large tiger shark took chase.

Near the shore the reef gave way to a sandy beach. We pulled our kayaks well above the high tide line and set up camp on soft ground under overhanging branches. A snake slithered away as Rob disturbed its afternoon slumber. Ours were the only footprints on the sand. For the first time on the trip we watched the sun set over the mainland and toasted our expedition with rum-laced hot chocolate, knowing that would be our last night in paradise. After dinner we watched the star-studded night sky, so dark and clear.

To Mackay

We awoke to a hot still day and I wondered when and where the predicted 'inshore afternoon sea breezes' would hit us. Surprisingly, there was mobile phone reception so Rob called the Harbour Master

who gave us approval to cross the busy ports at both Hay Point and Mackay. It was an unusually quiet day for them. We checked our navigation again and made note of the waypoints for the exclusion zones. We set our course to take into account both these and the currents that would be across us all day, first ebbing north and, on the tide change, flooding south.

On the water the heat was oppressive, but flying fish and schooling mackerel broke the monotony. No sooner had they finished their display that we noticed a pair of whales on the eastern horizon breaching clear of the water before swimming with great gusto towards us. In a short time they had arrived and put on the most amazing display we had ever seen: tail slapping, fluke waving, breaching and finally rolling over to show us their white bellies before heading west and north towards Mackay. It lifted our spirits and we continued paddling with new vigour. I looked behind us every now and then to see Prudhoe Island getting smaller and smaller, a wisp of cloud clinging to its peak, to not only ease the boredom but confirm our progress.

Images - Left to right: View from our tent on Digby Island; Solitary cloud forms over Prudhoe Island



For the third time on our trip we paddled through a thick pink slick that stretched for kilometres. It seemed a bit too early in the year, but we had had a full moon only the weekend prior to our launch. In any case it was refreshing to see evidence of coral spawn considering global warming, the heavy use of the waterways, cyclones, invasive creatures such as the 'crown-of-thorns' starfish and the reported general degradation of the reefs caused by the local coal industry and its continual freighter traffic. I was hopeful it was an indication of the continued regeneration of the reef.

Eventually Hay Point came into view, easily discernible by the 'car park' of moored freighters lined up in neat rows all facing into the prevailing current and wind. It took ages to paddle the perimeters of the port and, to mark the passage of time, I mentally ticked off each large vessel as I passed it, ensuring we stayed clear of the exclusion areas. A sea breeze kicked up in the afternoon and I thought I could get some use out of my sail, but it was short lived and became an annoying headwind instead. Large vessels were starting to line up in the channel near St

Bees Island and we continued to watch our course as we looked furtively over our shoulders to check that these enormous beasts had indeed altered their course to Hay Point.

The sun was low in the sky as we approached Mackay; the glare made it hard, and at times impossible, to navigate. Several horn blasts and tugboat activity close to the port alerted us of an impending ship's movement. We could hear radio traffic on our VHF's and Rob called the local coastguard for information. We altered course, waited for the large vessels and tugboats to clear the port, and then followed at a safe distance, crossing the shipping lane before entering the channel between Slade Island and the mainland.

It was late. We could only hear the slop of the water under our hulls and the surge of waves on the beach. We felt the breeze on our faces and the movement of shoaling water below us. It was a very dark night and, even with our deck lights and torches, it was hard to make out the landforms around us. The lights of Mackay Harbour were well to our stern port side and Slade Island

appeared as a shadow to our right. We were keen to find a suitable landing, and focused instead on the band of lights onshore ahead and to our left. It was slow paddling against the tidal current into the north-easterly breeze, but eventually we rode in through low surf behind the local park. As our hulls touched the sand, we knew that would be the last time we would pull our kayaks above the high tide line for this trip. We had completed our trip and our 'unfinished business' in great style.

Epilogue

It took several trips ferrying kayaks and gear from our landing spot to our accommodation up near the main road before we could settle in for the evening. Even so, the next day saw us refreshed after a satisfying night's sleep. After cleaning and packing our gear and organising car rental in nearby Mackay, we embarked on the long car shuffle. Although our on-water trip was just shy of 200 km, there were 780 km of suburban roads, highway and dirt roads to drive to retrieve our car from Stanage and return to Mackay.



Further Information

Best time to paddle is July and August travelling north with the predominantly south-easterly winds. Spring tides can reach nine metres, and tidal flows four knots, so ensure kayaks and camping are well above the high-water mark and crossings are planned around tides and currents. Essential to read the charts and be aware of overflows and large standing waves. Check ahead with island caretakers and National Parks for camping permits, fees and water availability, which is scarce. Noel Curtis's book; "The Curtis Coast" is essential reading and has a wealth of valuable information for kayakers such as tides, currents and general conditions for this area.



MARK PEARSON

Background

It is a 13-day trip from Townsville to Mission Beach. My trip companions are Dee Ratcliffe (Trip Leader), Harry Havu, and Margot Todhunter. Importantly, I am a late ring-in on this trip. I had the suspicion that I had only been invited purely because I was a man and therefore had superior LKCA (laden kayak carrying abilities). But I came to suspect that I had disrupted the group dynamic of what had been a very close-knit trio. And things had gone badly when the dodgy trailer I had organised to take all the kayaks north broke down through inland Queensland, causing my three companions some inconvenience and angst. This was compounded by the fact that after they did all the hard yards in outback Queensland, I flew to Townsville in luxury. It was no surprise then that as the trip commenced I felt about as welcome as a turd in a swimming pool that had been hired for rolling practice.

Day 7 Saturday 11th July 2015

We are at Cape Richards, the northern tip of the amazing Hinchinbrook Island. My tent was pitched about 100 metres along the beach from my trip companions. I had slowly been increasing my camping 'distance' from the rest of the group by about 10 metres per

A Nightmare on the Water



night. I saw this as a way of doing penance for the dodgy trailer, and also to give the original group more space.

It had rained during the night. My kayak was parked about two metres from some rainforest foliage at the back of the beach. We had agreed to be on the water at 9am. Being so far from my companions I carried my boat alone to the water's edge, then began the pack up. A week into the trip my procedure was becoming a more efficient process and it was soon done.

I jumped into the boat to negotiate the tricky shore dump. As normally happens the wave of the day arrived at the critical moment, ran over my foredeck and deposited 20 litres of water into the cockpit as I struggled to seal the spray skirt. Cursing I paddled out while vigorously working the foot pump. Some minutes later Margot and the others joined me. The plan was to meander down the western tip of Hinchinbrook before turning northwest to our next stop at Goold Island.

As Margot and I paddled along a rocky shore the day was cloudy and cool, almost windless. I looked back. Harry and Dee were now 500 metres behind us – I assumed this was because they were still annoyed with me about the dodgy

trailer.

Tiring of the shoreline Margot and I decided to head out to sea. We were chatting as our kayaks cut cleanly through the glassy water. I'm not sure what we were talking about but it was a nice pleasant conversation. Margot was in a good mood. I was in a good mood. Life was good. Who cared if Harry and Dee had chosen to paddle by themselves. Ahead of us Goold Island looked big and exciting.

And then something is not quite right. I'm listening to Margot and there is a sensation on my right shin. I am aware of movement. The tentative but purposeful movement of a living thing. I think of rubbing the area with my other foot, but something tells me not to. Margot is still talking but I am no longer listening. With my kayak still cruising along I peeled back the spray skirt and slowly pulled my leg back.

Margot is still talking as I scream. A giant centipede is on my bootie contemplating moving onto my leg. An ugly ginger body with yellow legs. Its head, complete with the giant fangs, is on my skin. I simultaneously hit out at the horror while also kicking my leg outwards with the power that instant adrenaline provides.

It is the fastest capsizes ever. I am submerged in water. My head comes up first then I lift my right leg into the air. The thing is still there clinging to me. I groan in disbelief and thrash at it again and again. Margot, who is somewhere on the other side of my capsized kayak, is now concerned and shouting. Something along the lines of "what the F*CK is happening!?" I lift the leg again. It is gone. I'm shouting 'Centipede. Giant Centipede!'

But then I realise it is not over. I'm hanging onto my upturned kayak and its swimming towards me, the nearest 'land'. "Help me" I'm pleading. 'No way!' she says, she's not coming anywhere near that nasty swimming thing.

So we are 700 metres off shore, I'm pushing water at a giant centipede to keep it at bay, I'm slowly becoming tiger shark bait and my rescuer refuses to help. How about that for a scenario Stuart Trueman, Mr NSWSKC Training Officer?

But Margot's conscience soon cuts in and she relents. She starts barking orders as to what she wants me to do. I sense she's loving the power she now has over me. It's difficult positioning the boats and myself while keeping half an eye on the circling creature. But we manage a V rescue and I'm back in my kayak.

Harry and Dee now appear wondering what all the noise is about. Margot and I are laughing now. Harry sees the beast and picks it up with his paddle, takes some photos. Harry remains annoyingly calm and unexcited by all the drama. I pump out my boat with Dee's excellent hand pump and we head for Goold. The centipede is last seen swimming hard for Cape Richard.

Minutes later Margot quietly assures me, in that comforting womanly way, that my scream, which apparently matched Janet Leigh's in the shower scene from Psycho, will remain our secret and that

no one else need know about it. I am grateful.

My mind is now reviewing the morning's events. My kayak had been on sand. So the beast had walked onto the beach and performed a difficult climb up a hard chined hull. Probably something to do with the rain. When I'd taken on litres of shore dump water, the stowaway had probably got wet and then agitated at my vigorous foot pumping.

At Goold Island we met up with a sea kayaking tour group. Talking about the incident, the group leader told me that a giant centipede had bitten his partner some years ago. He described her experience as a 'world of pain' that went on for three days. I had been lucky.

Images - Top to bottom: Kayak parked 100m from others with its hidden secret within; Beast clinging desperately to something solid; Beast discarded to watery elements

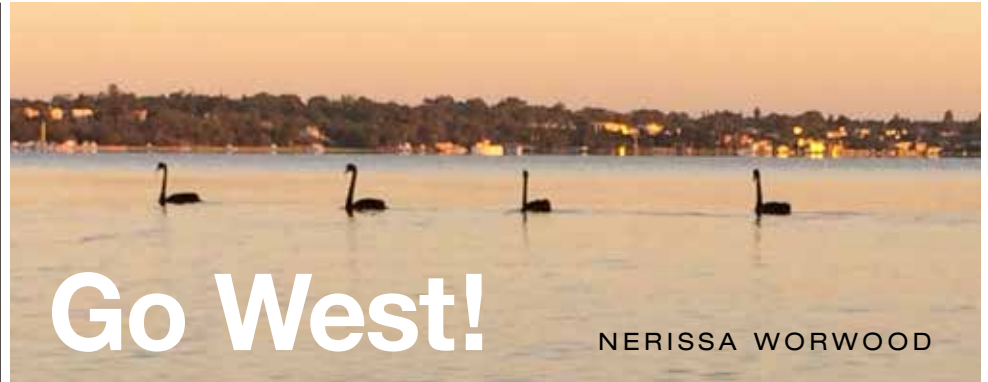


Epilogue

The beastie incident in a funny way seemed to bring us more together as a group. That night I felt less despised and isolated and so I camped a mere 30 metres from my companions.

And from then on every morning I checked my cockpit thoroughly before getting in.





I've been a Cane Toad. I've also been an Apple Eater and a Top Ender. But mostly I've been happy being a Cockroach, and I thought that with a husband, two school-age kids and a dog, Sydney would be my permanent residence, surrounded by family and friends. But hubby had other ideas.

A great job offer and a snap decision in January saw us pack up lock, stock and barrel, and move to Perth, WA. No time to sell or get rid of excess stuff, everything came over in two shipping containers, including both my triple-bubble-wrapped kayaks.

Kayak put in, Swan River, Melville Beach Rd, Applecross



So now I'm a Sand Groper. For the short term at least. But I'm very pleased to say that the place is beautiful, the people are friendly and apart from ridiculously priced coffee, and less hours of Sunday retail trading, I've yet to find a downside. In the last edition of Salt, Ruby Gamble had compiled a map of where paddlers had travelled. Well Ruby, time to starting sticking pins on the west coast.

The flatwater kayak clubs are plentiful in Perth. And what a playground the Swan and Canning rivers are. Teaming with wildlife, there are resident bottlenose dolphins, rays, white spotted jellyfish and moon jellyfish, blue manna crabs, rays and more than 130 other species of fish. I've joined a conservation group known as the River Guardians to help monitor the local dolphin community along with researchers from Curtin and Murdoch universities. And yes, each dolphin has a unique dorsal fin and hence a name.

<http://www.riverguardians.com/projects/dolphin-watch/identifying-dolphins>

The birdlife is equally impressive. Hundreds of black swans, pelicans, cormorants, black cockatoos, galahs, magpies, herons, lorikeets, pied oyster catchers, Pacific black ducks and the odd magnificent blue fairy wren.

My new house is just 300 metres from a beach kayak put-in point into the Swan River (complete with a garden hose – oh yes!). The early autumn weather and sunrise



Images - Top left to right: Parading swans; A local dolphin at dawn, with black swans in the background; Sign on beach

Bottom left to right: The friendly crew of the Sea Kayak Club, WA; The Sisters, Coventry Reef (picture Paul Browne)

paddles are a fantastic opportunity to meditate and contemplate the day (and the school lunches waiting to be made at home).

I set about contacting the Sea Kayak Club of WA and joined up. They're an active and well-organised group, with Callan Gault at the helm as President. Club trips are on most Sundays, which suits me perfectly.

My first trip was a paddle out to Carnac Island. Carnac is well known to be inhabited by tiger snakes, as well as a seal colony. The tiger snakes are almost all blind, their eyeballs having been pecked out by marauding sea gulls. One adventurous seal came out to greet us and do a lap around our kayaks.

I had been previously warned about WA paddlers and their love of Greenland paddles. It was true; half of the group was using them. Paul Cooper and I got chatting

and he suggested that I should try out his GP. You do have to adapt your technique a bit but I have to say that I quite liked it. Paul makes them, and I think that a GP with some local jarrah timber would be a wonderful kayaking souvenir from WA.

My next club trip was a paddle down in Rockingham on Good Friday, out to the limestone rocks of Sisters Reef, then over to Penguin Island (also accessible by ferry), a loop around Warnbro Sound before back to Port Kennedy. A good fun trip and some hot cross buns to boot with the stalwarts of the SKCWA.

Club trips aside, I recently took part in Unite on the Swan. This was an event organised by Rosalie Evans (Executive Officer of Canoeing WA) and Leonie Cockman (owner of Water Wanderers Tours and President of Ascot Kayak Club) to attempt to break a Guinness world record for a paddle craft raft up and

to raise money for victims of the Waroona bushfires. Unfortunately no records were broken on the day but much fun was had by all as well as good money raised. There is always next year. I hope they make it an annual event.

I am very much looking forward to being a part of the SKCWA. Upcoming paddling adventures will include camping trips out to Rottnest Island, trips to Albany, night paddles around Fremantle and hopefully a trip from Denham to Monkey Mia. I guess I had also better start training for the Avon Descent, a 2-day 124 km race from Northam to Perth held every August.

Make sure all of you put WA on your kayaking must-do lists. If you come, be sure to look me up. Just ask a committee member for my contact details. No matter your kayaking preference, there really is something here for everyone.



Rae Duffy departing King Island en route to Victoria (Photo Kathleen Hunter, King Island Courier)

