

# THE SEA CANOEIST NEWSLETTER

Issue 63

June - July 1996

Editor: P Caffyn, RD 1, Runanga. West Coast .N.Z. Ph/Fax: (03) 7311806

The Sea Canoeist Newsletter is published 6 times a year as the official newsletter of the Kiwi Association of Sea Kayakers (N.Z.) Inc.

Subscriptions are \$10.00 per annum & should be made out to K.A.S.K.

(NZ) Inc. & sent to the Treasurer: Sandy Ferguson, 12 Dunn Street, Christchurch 2. Ph: (03) 332 5155 home, Fax: (03) 364 2110

Correspondence to the Secretary: Peter Sullivan, 7 Monowai Cres, North New Brighton, Christchurch. Ph.(03) 388 3380.

## INDEX

|   |      |
|---|------|
| EDITORIAL   | p. 1 |
| CALENDAR  | p. 2 |
| KAYAKERS RUN DOWN<br>BY A POWERBOAT                 |      |
| by Glyn Dickson                                     | p. 2 |
| BOOK REVIEW   |      |
| Deep Water Passage -<br>reviewed: Chrissie Williams | p. 3 |
| TRIP REPORTS  |      |
| Foveaux Strait Crossing                             |      |
| by Stan Mulvany                                     | p. 4 |
| Kapiti Island Epic                                  |      |
| by Catherine Brown                                  | p.4  |
| Trial & Tribulations in the Far North               |      |
| by Glyn Dickson                                     | p. 5 |
| LITERARY CORNER                                     |      |
| Picton for Tea                                      |      |
| by Conrad Edwards                                   | p.7  |
| Ode to a Wind Paddle Wielding Bard                  |      |
| by Glyn Dickson                                     | p.7  |

## EDITORIAL

### The KASK Handbook

The first printing is now out of print, a veritable best seller! Feedback and constructive criticism to date has been very positive.

The second printing is very appealing to the eye, with thanks to Peter Sullivan, Libby O'Connor and Nicola Johnson. Libby went through the Handbook correcting spelling, grammatical and layout errors; Nicola penned the beautiful sketches; Peter scanned the sketches, corrected all the errors, and arranged for the second printing. Also the Handbook now has an ISBN number.

Peter has received three additional chapters to be included with 'the mother of all sea kayak manuals' and I will be completing the important chapter on navigation.

We are still treating this second printing as a draft for critical com-

ment, and especially the addition of topics still not included. I would like to set a deadline - end of October 1996 - for final receipt of comment, corrections, stunning colour prints, chapters etc. Please mail to:

P. Caffyn, RD 1, Runanga, West Coast,

as Peter is taking a short break from his secretarial role.

In November, Peter and I will then tackle the format, layout and printing of 'the mother of all sea kayak manuals'.

KASK lacks the finance in kitty to undertake printing of a book that we all can be proud of. This would be in range \$10,000 to \$13,000, depending on the print run and number of colour pics included. There is a desperate balancing act between unit printing cost and the print run numbers - as the print run numbers increase, the unit printing cost decreases.

Possible finance options are:

- applying for a non-refundable grant  
- applying for a refundable but no interest loan, repaid with income from Handbook sales

- bumping up KASK membership fees for one year to say \$50, which with our 200+ members would generate \$10,000. KASK members would naturally receive a gratis copy of the Handbook.

- seeking commercial sponsorship; either each chapter sponsored with an advertisement at the end, or at the end of the book a section containing commercial advertisements such as included in the fourth edition of Derek Hutchinson's manual of sea kayaking.

If you have strong feelings on how the final book should appear, and the finance options suggested, drop me a line.

### The Lake Tarawera Collision

Glyn Dickson has an article on the powerboat running over the top of two paddlers on Lake Tarawera, which by a miracle the two survived with minor injuries. A formal complaint was laid with the Rotorua Police, but to date I am not aware of any subsequent action taken against the boaties. As Glyn notes, if the powerboat had struck the double kayak 25cms either side of midships, serious injury or a fatality may well have resulted. I feel strongly that either the Police or the Maritime Safety Authority should take action over the boaties failing to maintain a proper lookout. Failing this, then KASK should pursue the matter.

### Prince William Sound

I recently returned from a 'mission' with Conrad Edwards in Prince William Sound. The scenery in Blackstone Bay and Harriman Fiord is mind boggling; rivers of ice plunging from the neve fields to calve with a thunderous roar into the sea; sea otters and their pups kipping on the floating ice floes; rain, mist and cold katabatic winds descending from the ice fields. Duly appointed scribe and bard of some note, Conrad Edwards, will be furnishing a graphic account of the trip in the next newsletter.

What greatly concerned me was a meeting with a party of 11 high school kids in Blackstone Bay, on a two week outdoor kayaking experience course run by an outfit from Wyoming. Of the two 'instructors', the leader had picked up his experience from previous trips with contracted sea kayak guides, while for the second instructor, it was her first time in a sea kayak! Three kayakers have been killed in the past six years in this very bay!

**CALENDAR**

**One Day Sea Kayaking Symposium  
Foxton - October 6, 1996**

The Ruahine White Water Club is hosting a sea kayaking symposium at the Manawatu Marine Boating Club Rooms, Foxton River estuary, on October 6, 1996.

Foxton is on the lower west coast of the North Island, north of Levin and southwest of Palmerston North.

The management/instruction team includes:

Mike Rowley, Dave Herrington, Libby O'Connor, Kerry Howe and Max Grant.

Topics include: risk analysis, weather and sea conditions, navigation, gear for gear freaks,

trip planning, leadership and safety, launching and landing, rescues, paddling strokes for beginners on the estuary, paddling and surfing on the Foxton bar for intermediate paddlers.

A maximum of 20 paddlers will be accepted.

To register: send your name, address and phone number, and \$25 fee to Margaret Grant, Treasurer, 71 Salisbury St, Ashhurst.

**Auckland Coastbusters 1996  
Update**

The sixth annual Coastbusters Sea Kayak Symposium will commence on Friday evening, 11 October, and run through the weekend 12 to 13 October, at the Marine Education and Recreation Centre (MERC) at Long Bay Auckland.

The theme is one of education, through lectures, workshops and practical on-the-water sessions, and also through the exchange of ideas with fellow paddlers. An unprecedented number of workshops will be on offer, with topics ranging from paddling skills and rescue techniques for paddlers new to the sport, through to fishing from kayaks. While beginners and intermediate paddlers stand to gain most from the symposium, this year features more in depth workshops for experienced paddlers. Such topics include developing kayaking strength and fitness, and the ever popular 'gadgets and gizmos', a look at the latest developments in sea kayaking

accessories.

Keynote speakers include Malcolm Gunn, leader of a recent expedition to Tierra del Fuego, Conrad Edwards who is currently paddling in Prince William Sound, Alaska, and Jonathan Iles who is a qualified British Canoe Union Senior Instructor. Jonathon is the coordinator for Sunday's activities which splits the delegates into paddling groups that will undertake various exercises designed to be fun and yet educational at the same time.

For more information on Coastbusters, pick up the September issue of 'Wilderness' Magazine which will include the full Coastbusters program and registration form, or contact Coastbusters by phone or fax on:

(09) 473-PADL (7235)

or write to PO Box 89-104, Torbay, Auckland 10.

***Kayakers Run Down by a  
Power Boat  
by Glyn Dickson***

Aucklanders Bryce Packard and Ali Roigard were thrown into the waters of Lake Tarawera when struck by a six metre powerboat travelling at an estimated 20 to 25 knots. The impact launched the powerboat into the air, narrowly missing a second kayak, while the propeller ripped through the centre compartment of their 'Sea Bear Packhorse' double kayak.

Bryce and Ali were both struck by the kayak as it passed. They successfully avoided greater injury by leaning their bodies and the kayak away from the boat as it struck. The two metre plus wide boat was deflected upwards sufficiently that it passed through the 1.6m gap between the two paddlers. After being picked up by the boaties, the initial reaction of the Bryce and Ali was nervous laughter, which quickly faded as they realized how serious the incident could have been. Had the point of impact been as little as 25cms in either direction, a serious injury or death may have resulted.

Conditions on the lake on June 2, were sunny with a strong wind blowing at 30 knots, although the collision occurred only 500m from the sheltered edge of the lake. The collision occurred at 11.30am, so the sun was high, and the powerboat approached

from an angle across that of the sunlight.

Bryce commented that it all happened so fast that they had no time to get out of the way. They realized the boat was coming and frantically waved their paddles and yelled to get attention. The other kayakers had neither seen nor heard the boat approaching until then. It was the only other vessel they had seen on the lake since commencing paddling.

Bryce, a professional sea kayak guide, offers the following warning to kayakers: "Always be on the lookout for approaching boats, because you can't expect them to see you."

International collision regulations have a number of rules that apply to all vessels including that a lookout must be maintained by all means available, collisions must be avoided under all circumstances, and that an overtaking vessel must keep clear. There are no clear rules indicating right of way concerning human powered craft however. The rule for carrying lights on a vessel under oars, is either to carry the same lights as a sailing craft or to carry an all around white light, or torch capable of signalling an approaching vessel in time to prevent a collision. Reading between the lines, this suggests a kayak may be considered an anchored vessel (also uses an all round white light) and that all other vessels must keep clear. The Sea Kayakers Operator's Association (SKOANZ) through Ron Augustin, have been corresponding with the international controlling body to clarify this.

As a recommendation to kayakers, whether or not there is any legal precedent to give right of way, assume you have none. Keep a lookout at all times, and take early action to avoid the path of larger vessels (sail, power, and even other paddled craft such as rowing skiffs). By using transit marks, you can identify whether an approaching vessel with pass ahead, behind or in fact is on a collision course with you. If you are on a converging course, look for transit mark behind the vessel. If over the next few seconds, the vessel remains in line with your transit, you are on a collision course, so take action! If the vessel appears to move ahead, relative to the transit

mark, it will pass astern of you. Warning: this only applies as long as you are both travelling straight ahead at a constant speed. If either of you changes speed, or course, this will change so constantly monitor the transit angles of approaching vessels. Once you know where you are placed relative to the approaching boat, you can plan accordingly - stay put, speed up, go back etc.

A kayak is extremely difficult to see, particularly in choppy water where it disappears in the troughs, and also when the sun is low in the sky with the kayak lying between the vessel and the sun.

I know of a number of near misses with power boats and fast ferries, and have personally experienced several. Make yourself as visible as possible to alert other water users to your presence, but assume that you will need to avoid them and not vice versa.

\* make sure your clothing and kayak are brightly coloured

\* consider spray painting paddle blades day-glow colours. as paddles flashing are usually the first thing seen.

\* Travel close to other kayaks. A group is easier to see than a single kayak.

\* Rig a brightly coloured flag on a short 1.5m high pole. These are amazingly effective.

\* At night use an all round light, and carry a torch to shine directly at an approaching vessel is if appears not to have seen you. Alternately shining the torch on your kayak/group so the oncoming vessel can identify you. Be aware of 'light clutter' around urban harbours where background light make you white light almost invisible to an approaching vessel.

\* Last ditch warning attempts could include the use of an air horn, or if in imminent danger of being run down, firing off a flare.

Given the number of vessels on the water are increasing, and that numbers of kayakers are also steadily rising, I believe it is only a matter of time before a paddler is killed or seriously injured in an accident like this one. Please take steps to ensure it isn't you.

Glyn Dickson

## EDITORIAL COMMENT-

### *Collision Avoidance*

I would like to emphasize several points raised by Glyn Dickson in avoiding collisions with powered craft:

1. never assume a boat has seen you or your group.

2. always plan immediate evasive action when a powered vessel is observed approaching

3. be extra wary in the hour after sunrise and the hour before sunset of vessels travelling towards the rising and setting sun, that is into the sun.

4. avoid congested shipping/boat-ing lanes, and when necessary to cross these, paddle across them at ninety degrees (square on) and not obliquely.

5. practice at using transits, both on shore and on larger vessels, is vital to establish the course and speed of an approaching vessel.

6. the situation at night, when a small vessel shows only a masthead light, it is extremely difficult to gauge the speed and course of a vessel. The navigation lights of larger vessels (red -port, green - starboard, and white - masthead) must be used to determine if a vessel is proceeding towards or away from you.

7. Lastly, when faced with an impending collision with a powered vessel, either in daylight or at night, I would suggest the time spent in either trying to locate and fire off a flare, or shine a light on the kayak, is better utilized in attempting to set a water speed record for the kayak, away from the course of the vessel.

Paul Caffyn

### *Missing at 1996 KASK Forum*

Alec Kent had a fluoro yellow parka that went walkabout during the paddle to Mistletoe Bay. If someone ended up with an extra parka, please drop a line to:

Alec Kent  
38 Vodanovich Rd  
Te Atatu South  
Auckland 8

### **Title: Deep Water Passage: A Spiritual Journey at Midlife**

**Author:** Ann Linnea

**Publisher:** Little, Brown and Co.

**Publication Date:** 1995

**ISBN:** 0-316-52683-5

**Price:** US\$22.95 Can\$30.95

**Available from:** Canterbury Library, Shirley Branch 797.122 LIN

**Reviewed by:** Chrissie Williams

This is a wonderful book. It's the type of book I'd like to own so I could keep going back to reread it, or certain sections of it.

It was by chance that I discovered 'Deep Water Passage' - I was browsing through the kayaking books at the library and it was sitting there waiting for me to pick it up. It felt like it was meant to be, that I find it and read this book.

Ann Linnea, aged 43, describes her 65 day trip in a sea kayak around Lake Superior - the world's largest lake. The journey over the summer of 1992 is an arduous one - Ann braves bitter cold, roaring winds and high seas. She spends time paddling alone, and in the company of her colleague Paul, to become the first woman to circumnavigate this lake - 1200 miles.

She has the ability to live the adventure fully, extending herself physically, emotionally and spiritually far beyond all limitations, and then to write of this with equal grace and honesty.

Ann writes powerfully of one woman's willingness to appraise everything - her perceptions of herself, her relationship to her husband, children, friends and parents; her understanding of life, death and spirit.

Described on the back flap as an ecofeminist, the author has appeal to women, but I am sure men reading this book would also be inspired.

The book is definitely one for your 'must read' list.

*When we deliberately leave the safety of the shore for our lives, we surrender to a mystery beyond our intent.*

Chrissie Williams

**TRIPREPORTS**

**FOVEAUX STRAIT BY KAYAK**

by Stan Mulvany

Date: 7 January 1996

Party: Ross Sinclair, Roger

Deacon, Belinda and Stan Mulvany

Foveaux Strait separates the southern coast of the South Island from Stewart Island, or Rakiura as it is known by Maori. It has a reputation for stormy seas as many of the passengers on the 'Foveaux Express Catamaran' will testify. It lies in the 46° latitude south, in the path of the Roaring Forties. Thirty kilometres across at its narrowest point from Ocean Beach to Saddle Point, the strait has a prevailing southwesterly swell and strong tidal stream flow, flooding to the east and ebbing to the east.

Despite a history of adverse conditions, there are days when the strait is calm and we could see no reason why a fit party could safely kayak across, given an early start with favourable conditions and tides. Wayne Mangu from Bluff suggested leaving three hours before slack water. The ebbing tide would carry us westwards as he postulated and the flood would assist us on the other side to Halfmoon Bay. The weather was a critical factor, especially wind strength. We needed several days of light winds to flatten out the seas.

December was a month of poor weather but towards Christmas it improved. I did a trip down to Bluff and decided Ocean Beach was the best place to leave from as it avoided the strong tidal rips at the entrance to Bluff Harbour.

On January 6, I noted exceptionally calm conditions and an excellent weather forecast. The trip was on. We decided to take two single kayaks and our K2 Double Feathercraft. We took sleeping bags, tents, spare clothes, food, stove, emergency equipment, wetsuits, cellphones and spare paddles.

Sunday morning dawned fine with low mist on the Southland Plains and no wind. We drove to Ocean Beach. Rakiura beckoned to the south over a millpond sea. Wayne arrived to see us off and at 7am we launched and

pointed the bows south. A fog bank lay to the west and I thought the sun would burn this off in time. We quickly established a rhythm and drew away from the land. I had estimated six hours to landfall if all went well. There was a gentle swell. Belinda thought the fog bank was moving in on us. After two hours it suddenly enveloped us but not before I had retrieved the compass and taken a bearing on a mountain on the northern coast of Rakiura. There was a certain apprehension about being at sea in fog knowing that every paddle stroke was taking us further from land. Ross rafted up called Meri Leask at Bluff on his cellphone to report our position. On we went. Overhead were glimpses of blue, and a misty sun sent down occasional shaft of sunlight.

At 10am the fog showed no sign of lifting. The light was flat and the sea merged with the sky. We seemed to be paddling through infinity and seemingly getting nowhere. To our left a large white bird floated silently on the still sea. It was startled by our appearance and flew straight at us, zooming overhead. Ross identified it as a Shy Mollymawk, a member of the Albacross family.

By noon the fog had lifted a little, but it was hard to say how far the horizon was, but I guess only 100m if that. The swell had disappeared and then we fancied we heard the distant sound of surf to our right. One we went following the compass needle, ever southwards. Now we were certain we could hear the call of a bellbird and that could only mean one thing. Roger then sneezed, a sneeze that said so much. "Hayfever another hopeful sign." Suddenly we saw a vague mountain like an apparition in the mist in front of us. Its details were indistinct and we thought we saw snow gullies on its flanks. A little later, it took the form of green hillsides with forest, bush and a beach. We had arrived at Rakiura. It was exactly six hours since leaving Ocean Beach. A green plaque on a rock told us it was the Van Leeuwen landing.

We stopped for an hour to get circulation going and lunch. Ross went up the hillside and was able to make a few telephone call. The sun was shining and it was tempting to camp there.

Into the kayaks again and we followed the coast eastwards towards Halfmoon Bay. Roger put on his goggles and would turn upside down to inspect the sea floor, a most amusing sight.

At first it was clear but then around a headland we were back in fog. We passed a kelp bed and saw a blue penguin emerge onto a flat rock. He seemed apprehensive about us and kept glancing over his shoulder at us. Further on we saw a large flipper poking out of a kelp bed, a large fur seal on his back, dozing.

At Port William we stopped for a rest and food. The beach is lovely, with a hut on the northern coastal track, but the sandflies were thick and we did not linger. At sea again it was a slog into wind and tide around several headlands to Halfmoon Bay, where we arrived at 8pm, happy but tired.

Innes Dunstan helped us ferry our gear around in his van to the Shearwater Inn. Then we returned to the hotel for a scrumptious meal. Innes reckoned we were the first party to kayak across for three years and some previous hopefuls had to be rescued halfway across. Next day we boarded the 'Foveaux Express' for a speedier return.

Stan Mulvany  
Invercargill.

**KAPITI ISLAND EPIC TRIP**

by Catherine Brown

(from 'Korero' - the Ruahine White Water Club Newsletter)

Sunday 5 May. The day dawned calm and fine. Max, Dave, Ken, Jan, Thomas, Kevin, Kerry, Libby, Graeme and Margaret McIntyre, and myself set out on a dead calm sea towards the northern end of Kapiti Island. The plan for the day was a leisurely circumnavigation of the island, a lunch stop of Browns Island, and finally a cruise back to the mainland with the tide in our favour. It all started very well.

We rounded the northern end of the island with no problems. Even the strong current didn't have an effect. It was destined to be a brilliant trip. A short stop at the start of the back stretch of the island yielded a baby

seal and its mother sunning themselves on the rocks, the baby being the more inquisitive of the two. Various others were spotted in the water, close to the rocks. The wind had got up a bit by this stage, not that anyone seemed to be noticing much. With the discovery of a few tunnels, we spent a bit of time getting up courage and having the thrill of making it through a number of them successfully, some drier than others due to a slight mistiming of the swells coming through the tunnels. Jan was a little more adventurous than most, daring a tunnel that had already pushed back others. He obviously had the swells on his side as twice he made it through an angled tunnel that I was for one keeping well away from.

And so we progressed to round the southernmost end of the island to stop for lunch around 2pm. Two rather suspicious looking characters approached us in a boat. After a few guesses as to who they were, they introduced themselves as being from the Coastguard's office, there to inform us they were concerned for our safety on the final stretch of our, so far, a very pleasant trip. His concern was met with slight disbelief to begin with but after a bit of convincing, and trying to get the two cellphones on hand to work (Max had to ring Margaret in Ashhurst to find out his phone number so he could give it to the Coastguard), we agreed to be careful and set off from the beach not expecting any trouble at all. And so the fun begins.

The wind had certainly picked up. Our calm sea had turned into seething three metre swells, whipped up by 20 to 25 knot winds, racing along from our right as we headed back. Our group fairly quickly separated out, Dave staying with Libby at the rear. Bodies appeared and disappeared from sight between the swells as we all tried to keep contact but at the same time not to stop paddling for being tipped out or turned off course. Thomas was kindly picked up by one of the spectators of our epic efforts, and Libby accepted a lift after fighting the gales for long enough. The rest of us limped into shore in twos and threes about 5.30pm. What a trip! To have started with such a calm sea and end with such a struggle just doesn't

seem right, but overall, and I hope I speak for everyone, it was a very exciting trip, an epic effort.

Catherine Brown.

### **TRIALS AND TRIBULATIONS IN THE FAR NORTH**

by Glyn Dickson

A beeping electronic alarm disturbed slumber at 6am. Gradually awakening, I realized where I was, camped near Scott Point at the northern end of 90 Mile Beach, north of Kaitaia. We had been delivered to our campsite the previous afternoon by Graham, our driver, following a very pleasant drive up the beach - although the van probably would not have agreed; with nine people, one trailer, eight sea kayaks and enough gear for eight people to last one week. Looking outside the tent, it was obvious that we had fog, while the number of mosquitoes convinced me to stay in the pit for another half hour, hopefully leaving me enough time to pack, breakfast, squeeze things into the boat and still be ready to depart at 8am.

An air of excitement gripped us as we made ready on the beach. Most kayakers treat the West Coast with a great deal of respect, and here we were about to head out into the surf and paddle to the top of the West Coast and around Capes Maria van Diemen and Reinga. We were incredibly lucky with the weather. A light northerly was blowing, while the surf off 90 Mile Beach was a gentle one metre break. Perfect! We could see the surf had increased slightly overnight but as we peered into the fog, the surf did not appear frightening - it was just enough to get the adrenaline flowing.

Given the favourable conditions and the air of excitement, the start of paddling commenced with something akin to ready, get set, go! Colin Quilter and I took turns to help the other members of our party, Vincent Maire, Matthew Crozier, Jonathon Isles, Grant Stone, Mike Randall and Kevin Jose, into their boats and away. As we hopped into the boats ourselves, two of the party were unceremoniously washed back in, their boats careering along the waves like wild, riderless horses. The surf didn't look that bad

and I wondered whether it was the beginning of the trip nerves that were to blame. I definitely had some of them myself.

After they were in their boats again, we headed out. As I got out to what I thought would be the back of the surf break, I was astounded to see rows of big, ugly West Coast waves rolling in and crashing down. Several large offshore sand bars were causing the incoming swell to break, and what I had just paddled through was only the shore break.

This was definitely heart in mouth stuff. Normally with surf, the best approach is to watch it carefully from the area where the waves have already broken and are foaming white water. As you ride up and over these, you are constantly looking to where the waves are breaking - the impact zone - and beyond. If you are patient, you will observe that their size varies considerably; and when there is a smaller group of waves coming in, you paddle like hell to get out past the dangerous impact zone before the big waves resume.

As I looked out, the fog prevented me from seeing to the back of the break, and after lengthy deliberation (about a quarter of a second) I decided to just go for it. Bashing through broken waves was one thing, but as I neared the first impact zone, I had a race on with an incoming wave. My hat which I had stuffed down the front of my lifejacket was getting washed out onto my lap. I desperately tried to stuff it away before paddling hard to get over the top of the next wave. The bow went up and I knew it was going to break over the top of me. It was a two to 2.5m high wall of water and despite leaning forward, it flattened me onto the rear deck. Lifting my body up and starting to paddle again, I looked straight into the next wave, slightly larger, that would break slightly further out. Seconds before impact, I knew it would crash right down on top of me, so deciding that it was time to put theory into practice, I tipped over and let the breaker expend its energy on the Slingshot hull, before rolling up and paddling to escape the clutches of the following waves. That was only the second break, and I was lucky enough to get a window

through the outer break which was only breaking with the largest waves.

Over subsequent days, the surf seemed to grow bigger as we relived the experience in our stories. Some of the waves could easily have been three to four metres in height, and some of the party had seen another paddler on the wave face ahead, with the kayak angled up steeply, and the wave face significantly higher than the angled kayak. It's hard to be objective when you look back on the incident and relive the emotion, and recall the feeling of looking up to a huge cresting wave that is towering over your head. Even when a wave is at head level, it looks large, and larger than that, it's just plain ugly.

The most objective measure of the surf is to consider the score lines. While we may have scored eight points for all eight of us getting out, the surf scored quite a few points too. Three of us capsized and swam, one capsized twice and Eskimo rolled, and one capsized intentionally to avoid being monstered. Equipment took its toll, with odd sponges, hats, drink bottles and a pair of contact lenses claimed by the sea. So to be fair I'd have to say it was a hard fought draw, and we're not in a hurry for a rematch.

If that wasn't enough excitement, it didn't stop there. The majority of the group had got together well out beyond the break. Even close to the break it was difficult to see the shoreline through the fog, and it took some time to get the group together. Only one of us had a compass fitted on the boat - some others had hand-held compasses - and further out it was possible to become completely disorientated. Matthew regained the group by virtue of his extra loud whistle, but even so it was an uncomfortable feeling to think of the potential for disaster. Heading north with the group back together again, the feeling was still there, and the next problem was sea sickness. One of the group was affected due to the fog - loss of horizon - and the swell. This is a debilitating thing, and I didn't envy him as we tandem towed him up the coast, past an easy landing at Twilight Beach, and up to Cape Maria van Diemen to try and arrive at slack water before the tidal stream became too strong.

In the following days we talked in depth about all the things that we did wrong on this first day despite the depth of experience within the group. The following are the major points:

\* We could have commenced paddling the previous evening when the surf was smaller. Colin had observed aerial photos suggesting Twilight Beach (only 6kms away) offered an easy landing point even in large swell. We could have quickly done a reconnaissance paddle in empty boats to evaluate it then paddled up and camped there.

\* We should have made plans to regroup after coming out through the surf, and for signals in the fog. We were completely lulled into a sense of false security by our mental picture of the previous evening's surf, and the fog which obscured the view of what awaited us. What would we have done if all the party arrived outside except one? What if someone had several attempts and ultimately got too cold or intimidated to get out?

\* It showed the benefit of the Eskimo roll, and being securely padded into your kayak. Most of the party could roll in reasonable conditions, but after being churned about in a wave, they were either desperate to get out, or had been sucked out of the cockpit already. In one case the sprayskirt was collapsed by a breaker, and the cockpit had filled with water. A capsize in the outer break without rolling up would have resulted in a lengthy and most unpleasant swim back through another two lines of surf. By the end of that, hopping back into the kayak (assuming it hadn't been damaged on rocks or sand) and having another go would be the last thing you would want.

\* While waiting for a window in the waves, one of the party was cleaned out by a broken wave which he had been backing away from. When it hit, he had insufficient to drive through it, so was unceremoniously surfed backwards and 'tailstood' before being ejected from the cockpit. Part of the problem was paddling a loaded boat which takes a lot of effort to get moving compared to the empty boats we paddle most often. You can't change direction of paddling quickly. The other side of the coin, was that the

loaded boats once moving would crash through the top of a wave with their momentum, whereas empty boats would be surfed or thrown backwards.

\* Once out through the surf we were experiencing difficulty in seeing the shoreline so a compass was desirable.

\* While towing our semi-disabled paddler we were all feeling warm and didn't stop to consider him. He had anticipated the sun coming out and was wearing a cotton shirt rather than polyprop, and had been cool before leaving the beach originally. He became mildly hypothermic before we got him back to shore again.

We reached Motuopao Island off Cape Maria van Diemen around 11.30am and were most relieved to land on its sandy beach facing the cape. Recovery was the order of the day as we ate, slept or stretched our legs. The island was originally the site of lighthouse which is now sighted on the mainland. There is evidence of a cantilevered wharf, short railway, and various house sites which we could glimpse through the fog.

Cape Reinga was hidden in the distance but while we had a leisurely stop, the fog began to break up and the sun came out. I find it difficult to describe the beauty of this area. To me it is something you must feel to experience. It is remote, unforgiving, wild, yet peaceful and extraordinarily beautiful. Somehow as land creatures exploring the sea we are out of our natural element, like being perched on a dangerous slope where the views are exquisite, but we know that at any time nature can humble us if we are not sufficiently careful, and cause us to fall. Somehow the words 'there but for the grace of God go I' take on a real meaning as this is genuine tiger country as far as sea kayaking is concerned.

The afternoon was light and sunny with warm winds. A stark contrast to the real and perceived dangers of the morning. Cutting across Sandy Bay the sand hills glowed with the sun, the water sparkled and the surf crashed onto the beach, the rocks and of course onto Columbia Bank further out, as we sneaked around Reinga looking up to the tourists standing by the lighthouse. Turning the corner and look-

ing into Spirits Bay was a notable change, having left the Tasman Sea and now onto the Pacific Ocean. The swell was smaller and less powerful, and we could explore close to the rocks without as much fear of being crunched by big waves. A smoko stop (in another Sandy Bay) was memorable for small surf, clear water, white sand, and pohutukawas. If this isn't paradise I don't know what is ....

A short paddle down the steep rocky coast brought me close to being cap-sized and washed up onto the rocks while rock gardening (whoops!) and a couple of kilometres later, we reached Tapotupotu Bay, where after negotiating a slightly larger surf we stopped for the night in a DOC campground.

During the following six days we successfully rounded North Cape, and explored the coast down as far south as Whangaroa Harbour. We saw more of this magnificent part of the country, met some interesting people and were extremely lucky with the weather to the point that we scored a wonderful tail wind down Great Exhibition Bay when we really wanted to cover the ground. As nice as it was, somehow the sheer grandeur of the northern coastline, and the moments of terror experienced in the West Coast surf provided the highlights of the trip.

Glyn Dickson

### LITERARY CORNER

The following ballad was written after a successful crossing of Cook Strait by Conrad Edwards, Tony Jennings and Glyn Dickson, the team reaching Picton in time for the opening session of the Picton KASK Forum.

#### *Picton for Tea*

by Conrad Edwards

We started in the witching hour  
- around half past three  
A dark, moonless night it was  
For Tony, Glyn and me.

Titahi Bay we left from  
to reach Picton for tea  
In-between, Cook Strait  
and fifty miles of sea.

Into Inky waters we  
slied our chosen craft:  
three Slingshot kayaks,  
long, sleek and fast.

A high over New Zealand  
a metre's ovean swell;  
a light southerly breeze;  
all these boded well.

We rallied off the beach,  
torchlight on frozen breath,  
splashes, voices, yawns,  
we set off, heading west.

Mana, squat and brooding,  
one league to our right.  
Ahead an eerie nothing,  
but the Brother's light.

One for all and all for one,  
we paddled in racing Vee,  
in line abreast, in Indian file,  
a gaggle upon the sea.

Starlit sky above us:  
heaven's very essence,  
Black depths beneath,  
touched with phosphorescence.

Through the hours of night,  
into the twilight zone,  
three ghostly silhouettes  
paddled on and on.

{Tiring was the effort,  
but what was twice as bad:  
to catch the crucial tide,  
just two hour's sleep we'd had}.

The sun rose over Kapiti  
radiant pink and gray:  
no dawn parade more splendid  
on that ANZAC day.

Daylight spread around  
uncovering we three  
perched in tiny kayaks  
alone there on the sea.

Past Brother's islands  
tidal streams abound.  
Cape Koamaru the prize -  
gateway to the Sounds.

On Arapawa Island  
we found a tiny bay:  
tucker, tea, an hour's rest.  
Still only half way.

Queen Charlotte Sound:  
ridges, bush and shore,  
mile after mile of it,  
and then some miles more.

We raced against each other,  
taking turns to lead:  
carbon paddles flailing  
each trusty kevlar steed.

Or we'd throttle back  
relaxing with the flow,  
yawning, stretching, chatting;  
still some way to go,

Thirteen hours all told  
{or sometime thereabout}  
to reach Waikawa Bay,  
and Picton's lengthy Snout.

Finally, we're there,  
Picton beach at last -  
and perfectly timed, for  
the opening of the cask!

#### *Ode to a Wing Paddle Wielding Bard* by Glyn Dickson

Roll over Shakespeare  
and your literary mates  
there's a new kid here,  
so much better than Yeates.

He writes with skill  
and rhymes with ease,  
he captures the thrill  
of paddling the seas.

And while Blake's tiger  
is burning bright.  
Conrad's speed blades  
whir off into the night.

The moon and stars  
inspire him most,  
to leave his bed  
and hit the coast.

But it's in the storm,  
yes, that's when,  
he forgoes his paddle,  
for his pen.

As the wind howls,  
the verses flow more,  
Keep writing Conrad,  
your poems we adore!

If undelivered, please return to Sandy Ferguson: 12 Dunn St., Christchurch 2.  
Sandy's E Mail address: <http://john.chem.canterbury.ac.nz>

Check your address label. If the number is the same as the newsletter issue number or less, then you need to renew your subscription immediately. This is your subscription renewal reminder.