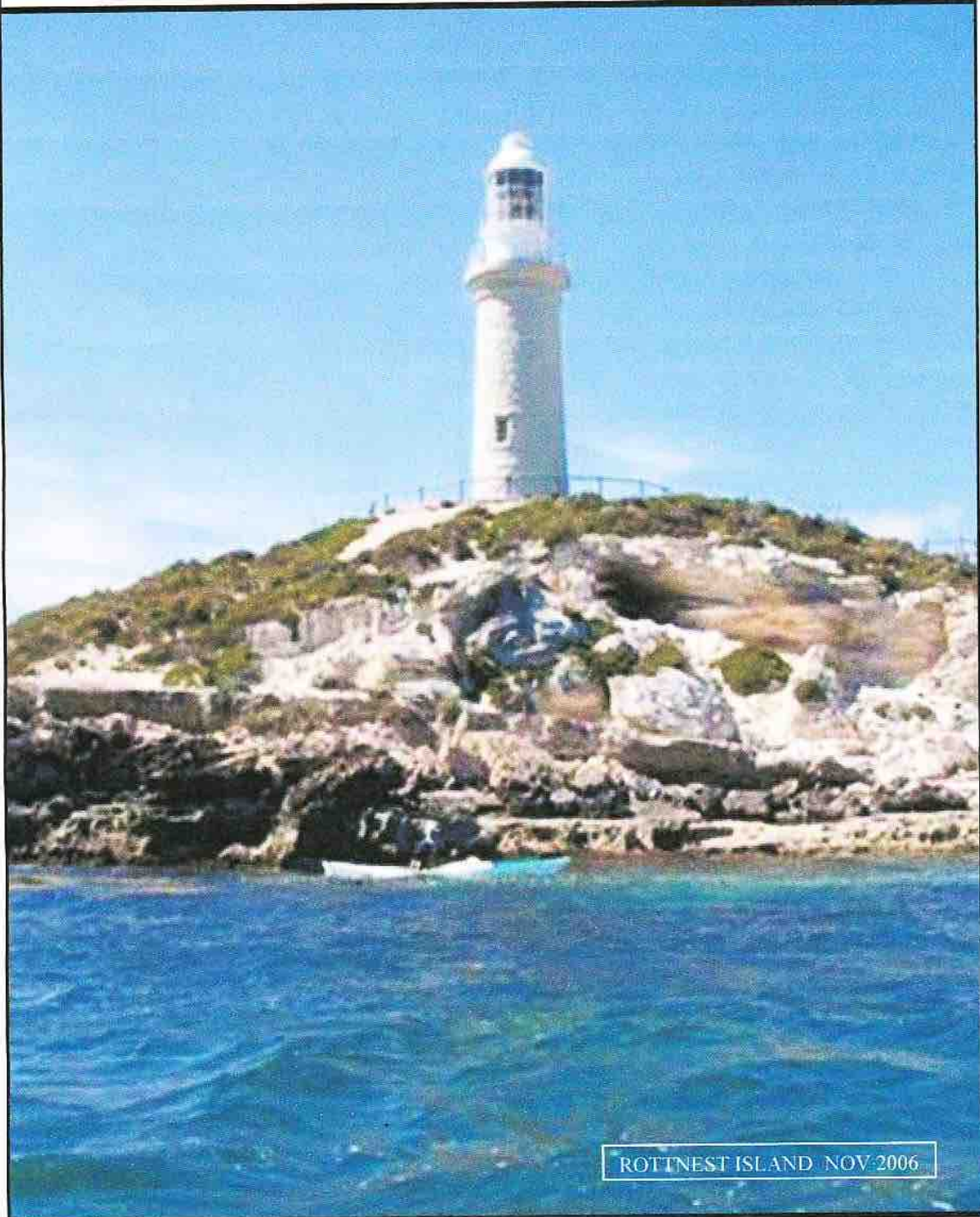


WA Seakayaker



ROTTNEST ISLAND NOV 2006

OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER OF THE - SEA KAYAK CLUB W.A. INC. - Issue No 64 Jan - Feb 2007

PRESIDENTS REPORT



The committee has been working very well with a great deal of communication taking place, particularly through e-mail.

All actions taking place are discussed and consensus reached before further action.

With more people taking responsibility for the club's progress it has meant that there is a shared feeling of ownership of the club.

This was evidenced in the great feeling that existed on the Rottneest trip and the number of members that came to the Xmas party. It was great to have new paddlers Steve Foreman and Norm Atkins and partners in attendance. Also, Matt Erkens, one of our less regular paddlers.

I extend a warm welcome to our new members and hope that they will feel comfortable in contacting any of the committee if there are any problems that might arise.

West coast Kayaks are having regular training on Saturday mornings on a fortnightly basis and this is offered to club members at a reduced rate. It is a great opportunity to brush up on our skills. In our club programme there have also been some during the week skills sessions included.

Congratulations to Roger Lloyd on producing our first e-magazine in full colour. It was excellent and we look forward to many more.

Judy

COMMITTEE MEMBERS AND OFFICE BEARERS - 2006 / 07

President	-	Judy Blight	ph - 9433 3719	email - carita@iinet.net.au
Vice President	-	Phil Evans	9383 7190	pevans_2@bigpond.net.au
Treasurer	-	Rod Coogan	9535 4515	rodneycogan@optusnet.com.au
Secretary	-	Wayne Stocker	9433 5588	wds1@bigpond.com
Programme	-	John Radovich	9242 3529	jrado_7@hotmail.com
Training	-	Phil Evans	9383 7190	pevans_2@bigpond.net.au
Web Site	-	Russell Hobbs	9335 5182	sueandruss@bigpond.com
Newsletter	-			
Social	-	Sue Harrington	9335 5182	sueandruss@bigpond.com
Committee	-	David Oakley	TBA	TBA

Address for mail - Secretary, Sea Kayak Club W.A. Inc. - 30 Davies Street, Beaconsfield, WA6162

NOTICE BOARD

FROM THE CLUB SECRETARY.

Members are reminded that use of the club kayak trailer is restricted to members on club sanctioned trips only.

There will be a General Meeting during February, date time and venue are not yet available and will be advised in due course.

A new DVD entitled "This Is The Sea 2" has been purchased and is available from the library. See Judy if interested.

SANDY ROBSON WEBSITE.

Members wishing to follow Sandy Robson's progress around the coastline can do so via her website at the following address - <https://net.storage.penrhos.wa.edu.au/slap>

ALBANY TO PERTH.

Kelvin Lewis advises that a visiting American friend of his, Marcus Demuth, is intending to paddle from Albany to Perth during February 07. Kelvin and possibly others will be accompanying him for some of the trip. You can monitor their progress on his web site at - <http://www.marcusdemuth.com/>

LONE PADDLER TO TACKLE THE TASMAN SEA.

The West Australian newspaper recently reported that a Sydney based sea kayaker, Andrew McAuley, is attempting a solo, 1600 km, crossing of the Tasman Sea from Tasmania to the South Island of New Zealand. The trip is expected to take about one month. Details are available on his web site at - www.andrewmcauley.com.au or www.crossingtheditch.com.au

SAFETY.

Members are reminded that while the wearing of hard hats is not a compulsory requirement for club trips. It is strongly recommended that a hard hat is worn, as a minimum, when paddling in or near rocky areas, in surf, during beach launchings and landings and during rescue training. At present, it is the individual paddlers responsibility to decide whether or not a hat will be worn. Those who chose not to wear a hard hat on club trips do so at their own risk. Ref. page 15 SKCWA Safety Guidelines And Operating Procedures.



ROTTNEST ISLAND WEEKEND 2-3 DEC

By Judy Blight.

I always look forward to going on the Rotto trip. The sea kayaking is always different—some years the winds are high, other years the swell will be huge which makes it interesting rounding West End.

This year there was a rush of people and we filled up the quota of 12 very quickly. In fact we had 14 people at different stages but we won't spread that around. Sandy and Ian planned to paddle over in the evening and went down to find the winds too angry for even them. So, not to spoil their plan they left at 3 a.m. and arrived just in time for breakfast on Sat. morning.

The other more sane variety of sea kayaker paddled over at 8.30 am on the Friday (John Rad., Judy, Helen, Rod, Martin) when the wind was in our favour and we could be seen by the ships, submarines and occasional crazy boater who frequents the channel.

We were all really pleased with the accommodation as we hadn't expected it to be as good as the big house that lies directly above the sandhills. It was set back further but still had great views and there was room to leave our kayaks in the sandhills.

There was a great atmosphere from the start and it was fun to meet and get to know the partners of some of our regular paddlers. Rod's wife Carolyn is a great artist and spent most of the time biking to various haunts to discover new areas to paint.

Martin and Val have only lived in Perth since mid-year and were warned not to go off the tracks or they would step on a dugite. As they were honorary guests they were allowed the only double bed so hopefully they enjoyed the privilege! They were also given special barbecue lessons by Rod Coogan and strict instructions on steak cooking.

Day two was only going to be a saunter around the protected half of the island with Russ and Sue, Helen, Judy, Martin, John, Sandy and Ian starters.

We slowly and lazily explored the reefs, wending our way between the reef from The Basin, Longreach, Geordie and Parakeet Bays. The clear blue water with variety of blues and greens was mesmerizing. The beauty of paddling over the reef is that no power boats can venture where we dare to go (sometimes risking a scrape of the gel coat).

We had every intention of turning around at Narrow Neck... I have circumnavigated Rottneest about 4 times and well know the difference there can be with the two sides. Everyone was keen to keep going around the big swells at West End but after the peaceful kayaking I don't think they were aware of the unpredictability that lay ahead.



Ian Pexton led us around West End and we made sure to keep together. Before leaving Eagle Bay we were surrounded by a number of playful seals, leaping out of the water, rolling over and generally showing off. Helen was the first to receive a shock as she had been watching the swell coming in from starboard and then took a look at Fish hook bay----suddenly John said watch to the right. A big wave was about to break. Helen remembered her lessons—leant into the wave and she just made it over the breaking white cap. Needless to say, this resulted in

all of us moving out a little deeper as the swell here comes from all directions. We had a slight breeze behind us which enabled us to use our sails. However, this ease was soon to be disrupted as we were about to round Parker Point where we could see waves breaking inconsistently. At this stage we all had our sails down (Rod Collinson was having his first paddle for a year and didn't even have a sail to help). Ian decided to cut through between some breaking waves and Sandy decided to follow him. Russ and Sue, Helen, John, Rod and I decided on a course further out-luckily. I looked over to where Sandy had been and thought she may have been taken out but we didn't have time to think of others as waves were nearly breaking on top of us. It was heart stopping stuff. After rounding Parker Point we pulled in and discovered that Sandy was indeed dumped by the wave. The force of the wave had ripped her out of the boat and not allowed her to roll up. Eventually she was able to grab the boat and re-entry roll (a must for sea kayakers). Sadly, she discovered that she had lost all of her sail except for a tiny piece of bent Aluminium. At least it was a good road test for her trip around the coast of Australia.



As we paddled back to our lodging (32 kilometres) we felt great to have achieved the circumnavigation. There was a helicopter and a lot of activity and television crews nearby—was it all for us?? Not likely. Unfortunately, an older competitor in the swim through Rottnest had suffered a heart attack and died.

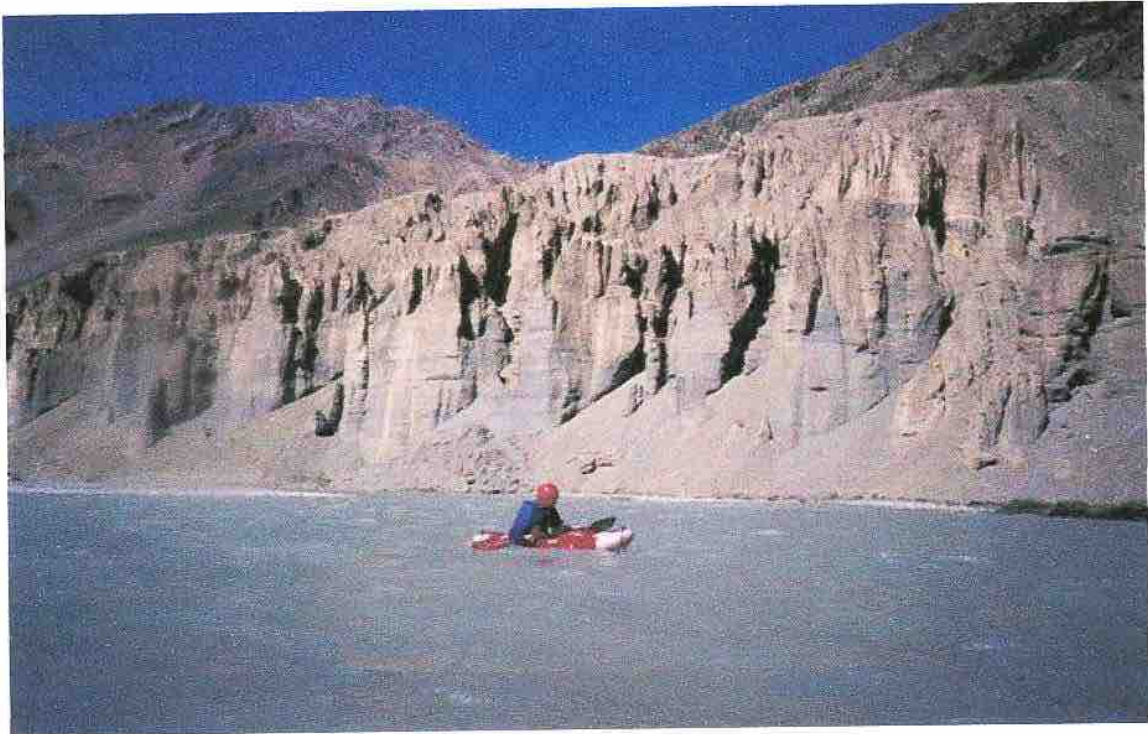
We had our last barbecue and obviously Val had learnt her lessons well. Wayne and Rod had missed our adventure but had obviously gained a lot of brownie points from their wives

for their family day out. I have recently found out that Rod and Wayne spent a number of days completing the Cape to Cape, arriving back in Perth just before our club Xmas gathering.

We paddled back to Perth with a side wind.(paddlers included Rod, John, Martin, Helen and I) I discovered the beauty of the Les Allen sail and have since changed my Pacific Action sail to one of the smaller sails more suited to our ocean conditions. This sail is based on the NSW model with a few variations.

Thanks to everyone for the best Rottnest trip ever.

JB



The akademick, the dog, the dwarf and the bimbo (part 1)

By Martin Burgoyne.

So what shall we do?

What a great idea! Fuzz the akademick was going to India for 3 months after finishing his degree and we would all meet up with him at different times for a paddle. Every one sounded enthusiastic. Two weeks here, three weeks there. It seemed he was going to have lots of paddling partners! However when it came to the crunch there was just three of us left. Mark the dwarf with PhDs in water related fetishes, Claire the bimbo and the dwarfs' better half, and me the dog – doddery old git!

So what should we paddle? I had always fancied the Zanskar, having first seen it Guy Bakers video of the London Docklands Youth Expedition. Isolated, fantastic scenery and not too difficult it had remained in my memory. A year earlier, I had also acquired a sketch map of the Tsarap/Zanskar from Alan Allard who had done it a couple of years before while paddling with him on the Karnali in western Nepal.

It didn't take too much to convince the others and the decision made. We would do the Tsarap from river from Sarchu or Whisky Bridge to its confluence with the Zanskar and then the Zanskar river past Padam and on through the deepest gorge in Asia to its confluence with the Indus at Nimu. With a further sketch map obtained from Slime and we had an expedition in the making. I thought we would need about three weeks to be safe, four days travel from Delhi to the put in, seven or eight on the river, two or three days of zzz's and R&R in Leh and then another four or five days to get back to Delhi. As it happened, it had to be three weeks as this was all the holiday the bimbo was allowed. A tight schedule, and being August we would still be in the monsoon season so anything could happen.



Getting there.

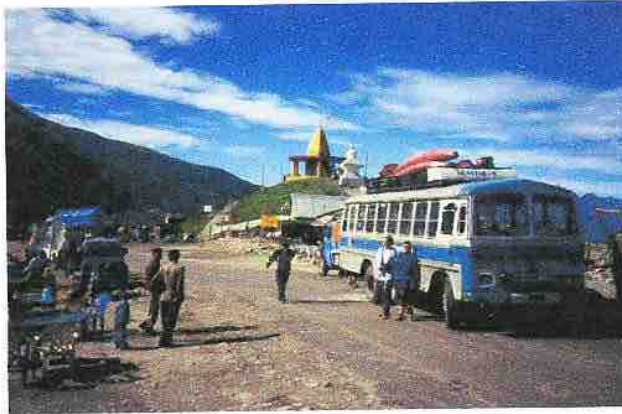
The akademick and his boat flew out in June, though not quite together! The agreement was to try to stay in touch and then meet up at Manali at the beginning of August. After his problems with just one boat, we were somewhat concerned about flying out with three, and what about getting them back! Fortunately, Syr-

ian Arab Airlines our carriers used Air France at the Heathrow check-in and were totally unconcerned about our funny shaped suitcases. The loaded boats weighed in at around 20/25 kg each, exactly on the limit, while the contents of my carry on hand baggage, carefully compressed to the minimum size, which they didn't bother to weigh had tipped the scales at home at around 30 kg! However, no worries, we were checked-in and on our way – the first hurdle over. My next concern was also unfounded, as they didn't question the Israeli stamps in my passport when we landed in Damascus – Oh the joys and excitement of cheap air travel!

Once in Delhi and a dispute over the cost of a taxi ride - with three kayaks on the roof, we found the akademicks note at the mosquito infested tourist lodge. 'Nice place and safe food' he said, we gave it a miss and left the same evening on the overnight bus to Manali. It was no surprise to find it piloted by the usual young crazy driver (there are no old crazy drivers), who was determined to race every thing away from every set of traffic lights. What surprised us more was how the traffic cop, who pulled him up for dangerous driving, had managed to single him out from the three thousand other crazy drivers on the same rush hour Delhi road – though we thought it might have been something to do with the three canoes on the roof! However, we did manage to travel a little slower but only for about next ten minutes or so. As the day dawned, the bus started to follow the Beas River up the Kullu valley towards Manali. The river looked quite big with the arch of the outflow from all five pipes on the Kullu dam being spectacular.

As we went further up the valley, we started to notice the odd large tree growing straight out of the river – strange we thought. Then we came to an abrupt stop where the road had been completely washed away. The trees we had seen growing out of the river were in fact due to the previous weeks 'once-in-thirty- years' monsoon flood which had completely changed the course of the river. It turned out that a few days before we arrived the 'once-in-thirty- years' flood (actually the second in the last three years), had totally blitzed the valley! Every thing had been washed away, roads, buildings, bridges, whole hotels and many people. So, we had our first portage as we transferred the kayaks across the washed out section to the waiting bus at the other side.

Finding the akademick in Manali proved relatively easy, but getting out of town the next day proved far more difficult. The road up the valley had been totally washed away as half a hillside had collapsed into the river. We had to wait half a day before the road gangs managed to blast a narrow precarious footpath across the slope.



A second long portage got us up the valley to village of Bhang where we were assured buses would be available for the next stage of the bus journey over the 3978 meter Rohtang La to Keylong. We spent an itchy night in a crummy hotel complete with cockroaches, frogs in the shower and blood stained sheets. The early morning bus was packed, the scenery was spectacular, and after negotiating a few more landslides and fol-

lowing the interesting looking Chandra and Bhaga rivers, we eventually arrived at Keylong. Our failure to secure seats for the next stage of the journey to Sarchu saw us squatting in the isle as the bus drew out at 4.30 the next morning. We breakfasted at Darchu before the long pull up the amazing 4883 meters Baralacha La.

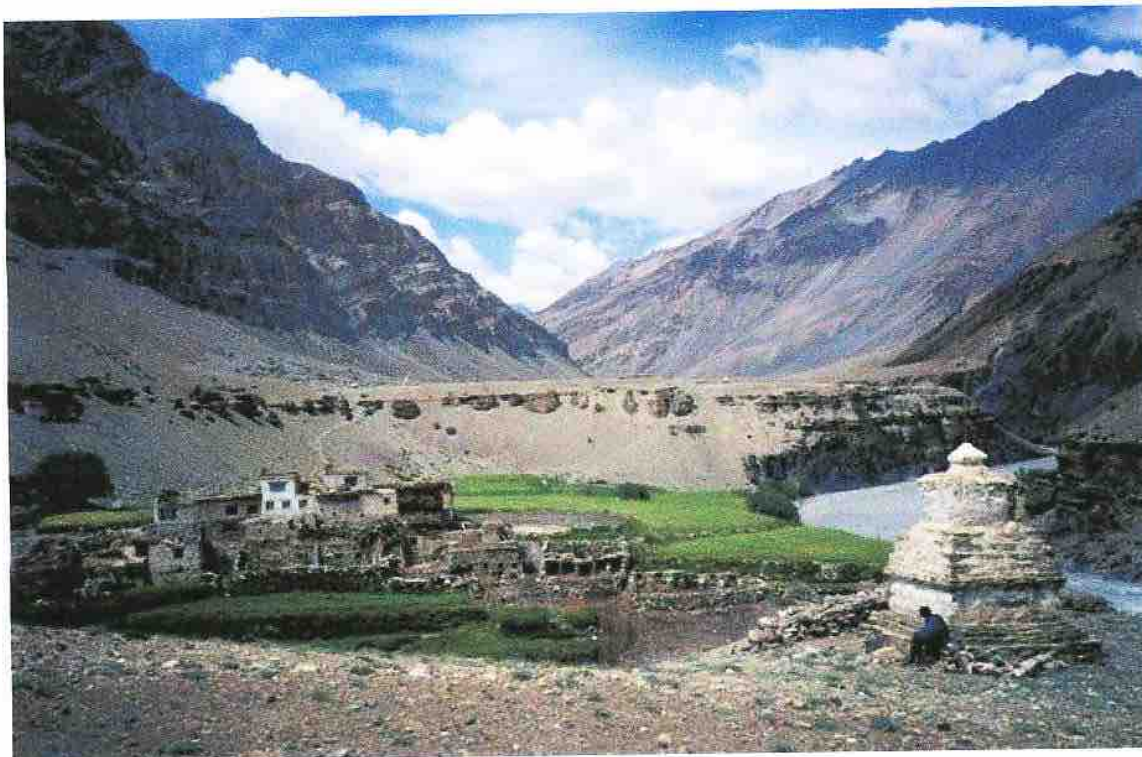
More delays

Already a day behind schedule owing to the washed out road at Manali we were concerned when the road was again blocked, long before we reached the top of the pass. The heavy monsoon rains followed by some clear hot days had caused a GLOF (glacial lake over flow) which had run down the mountainside cutting across the road in four or five places as it zigzagged up the slope. We had a long 5 hour wait while a bulldozer crawled its way up from the valley below to clear a way through.

A sudden rush of people at the highest blockage made us think that the road was at last the road was clear, but no, the GLOF was running again, similar to the volcanic lava flows one sees on TV but this was cold and relatively quiet. It was as if some giant cement mixer had dumped a million tons of concrete high up the mountain side and it was slowly finding its way down. We got within a meter and watched in awe as it moved past us almost blocking the river below. We became very aware that this part of our planet was very much alive and moving. It was going to take the bulldozer a long time to clear this lot again, so the bus driver decided to go back to Darchu for the night. Our bus drivers race to outrun another GLOF we could see moving down the mountainside added a little more spice as we bounced back down the road.

We were now at least three days behind schedule. Would we get over the pass the next morning? Even if we did, what were our chances of getting back once we had finished the trip? We were running out of time, should we consider another river?

However, the road was clear the next morning and so we threaded our way over the Baralacha La and into the Kingdom of Zaskar. Indigo blue skies and spectacular coloured mountains in an almost lunar landscape – we were nearly at our destination. A shredded rear tyre on the bus caused us another half days delay and gave the bus driver his third 14-hour stint at the wheel in the last 72! A temporary tented road camp in the wide valley of the upper Tsarap was our home for another cold night.



Whiskey Bridge to Phuktal Gompa

With another 4.00 am departure, it wasn't long before we were at Whiskey Bridge and our start point. After almost seven days on the bus, it was a relief it see it drive off. We were on our own at last. What would the river hold for us? How long would it take? How would the loaded boats handle with all the gear in them? Would the altitude at around 4000 meters affect us?

After sorting out our gear, packing it, and the struggling to get into our paddling kit it was 7.30 am before we were actually afloat. The boats seemed a bit sluggish and tail heavy at first but we soon got used to them as we bumbled down towards the main Tsarap River. It didn't take long either before we decided that with all our difficulties on the road over the last few days we had actually acclimatized to the high altitude. Paddling at 4000 meters didn't prove to be the great effort we had expected.

It was good to be on 'our' river at long last. The low early morning sunlight and crystal clear air really highlighted the colours, detail and textures of our surroundings. Contorted rock strata, weathered earth pillars and the odd distant snow peak made that long bus ride worthwhile! Our early morning progress required a degree of concentration as we picked our way down our small tributary into main braided section of the Tsarap. Its shallows and dead ends kept us alert as we tried to drink in the scenery and come to terms with our isolation. No GPS, EPIRB, VHF radio or flares here - we were on our own, and five days from civilization!

The road followed us high up on the right bank for a couple of hours and then zigzagged sharply up the mountainside as it headed to up to the Manang La. Now we were really on our own with the next road access being at Padam the capital 'village' of Zanskar, at least 4 or would it be 5 days down river.



As the road left us, the river narrowed the braded section ended and the current picked up. The river was cold, and a sort of milky grey, not the blue we had expected. We decided there must be more snow melt in it, and it was therefore going to higher than we had expected – perhaps the 'once-in-thirty-year' rains had managed to stray over the Himalayas. AS the Zanskar range closed in it became difficult to tell which way the river would go

next. But we had our sketch map! It suggested that a short very narrow gorge was close, but it still caught us by surprise. Trusting the sketch map rather than our judgment, we went blind into the gorge, but had no problems. Yes, it was boily and in our heavy boats, it seemed like we were paddling through treacle, but there was nothing horrendous in there and we emerged to the first real white water of note – probably a class IV.

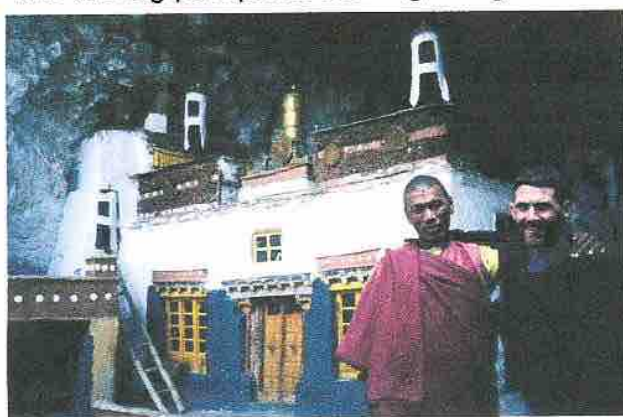
We were now having fun! The river speeded up and narrowed down again as it worked its way through a long shallow gorge. There was always the threat of something big around the next corner, but nothing ever materialized. We had now been up for 8 hours and on the water almost 5, and with the sun now high in the sky and burning hot in the clear air we looked for a camping beach. It didn't take long before we found an inviting sandy beach with tress for shade. We laid out our wet gear to dry, rigged up the tarp to give us some extra shelter from the burning sun and crashed out.

While squatting over my hole for the call of nature the next morning I was startled to discover some enormous over size paw prints in the sand. We were all rather shocked when we found they circled our small open bivv site. My own dog at the time was a Great Dane so I knew what big paw prints were like, but these were at least twice the size!

The paddle down to Satok was excellent, continuous fun class III/IV with the odd constriction to keep us on our toes, as the narrow shallow gorge continued. Satok was the only 'town' marked on any of the maps we had perused, so we were rather surprised when it only had two houses! Our sketch map indicated a class VI fall about an hour below the 'town', and again we were surprised when it arrived in only 20 minutes. The horizon line was obvious, though the choice of which bank to portage on with fully laden boats, proved the value of our sketch map as we followed its notes and got out on river left.



The view into the gorge that followed was rather restricted, and it was obvious that getting out in a hurry wasn't going to be an option. Getting back onto the cooling waters of the Tsarap was a real pleasure after the exhausting 600 meters portage around the falls. The next section was continuous class III, bouncy and a real delight and made up for the portage. A couple of horizon lines required inspections and gave us some photo opportunities where the river plunged through two narrow slots in the dramatic scenery, then after another short classic gorge complete with rustic swaying suspension bridge high over head the clear blue waters of the Zora Cha entered and the river opened out. The sculptured earthy pillars, which made up the river cliffs helped to take our mind of the next 10 km as we slogged into a vicious head wind. We camped that night below Marshun and had an excellent 'pig-out' meal that helped to lighten our boats. It rained a little over night, loosening the scree on the far bank that then seemed to rattle down all night, or was it the animal with the big paw prints stalking us again!



Phuktal Gompa.

We caught our first sight of the Phuktal Gompa high up in the side of the gorge around mid morning. Its amazing position built around a cave high up on the side of the gorge became more apparent as we paddled further down stream. Its white-washed buildings clinging precariously to the cliff face both inside and around the sacred cave were impres-

sive. We pulled in below the footbridge that gave us access to the steep path up to the Gompa. We followed it past chortons and Mani walls piled high with the stone inscriptions brought by centuries of pilgrims who had passed before us. However, we found a more incredible sight as the path reached a ridge and a small area of flat ground. It was a heli-pad prepared by the monks ready for the visit of the Deli Lama!

Looking round the Gompa was one of the real high points of the whole trip. Our guide was one of only two monks left at the Gompa, as the rest had gone on a four-day trek down to Padam to see the Dalai Lama. However, it meant we had access to almost every room, as they weren't in use. The library, the sacred well deep in the back of the cave, the prayer rooms, and the head Lama's quarters. It was a pity that we missed the chanting of the monks.

Phuktal Gompa is on the spectacular trekking route from Padam to Darchu and as such, the monks are starting to cash in on their share of the short tourist season. Two of the rooms had been turned into a 'hotel' and one could stay the night with dinner bed and breakfast for a few rupees. The view from the single communal bedroom, festooned with rugs and blankets was impressive as it dropped 400 meters to the river below. One of my biggest regrets of the trip is that we didn't stay the night! The ackademick jaded by three months of Indian culture didn't join us on the walk up to the gompa – its just another Indian temple, seen it, done it, been there, got the tee-shirt!

To be continued!