



WA SEAKAYAKER

December 2015

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Photo Tony Hubbard near Dunskey Beach Albany - Sea Kayak Symposium 2015



Welcome

to the second revived newsletter of the Sea Kayak Club WA. I had great aspirations to get this out earlier than this but there is so much paddling to be done, playing around with boats etc that the magazine falls behind.

Another way to look at it is that it is a magazine of variable frequency and hopefully this add to the air of expectation!

The first revived magazine received some positive reviews, sufficient to invigorate me to produce a second one at least. I hope they are of interest to club members. I am always looking for articles so please don't hold back, tell the rest of the club of your paddling experiences or perhaps your development as a kayaker. Sharing these stories makes for a richer club. Send your articles to the secretary SKCWA at info@seakayakwa.org.au.

This edition has Paul Cooper giving us some guidance on how to get the maximum power out of our stroke. Les Allen has some advice on how to turn your boat without using a rudder and tells us how to gain the skills for when the wind and water are a bit bigger than we may be used to.

Four club members have just returned from Shark Bay and they tell us of their experiences. There are trip reports from the weekend paddles for the last couple of months.

Kim Palmer and paddlers had a pretty eventful couple of days at Lancelin and is a great read.

Not content with paddling locally, Richard Lailey has had a crack at a circumnavigation of the Isle of Wight and his article is an interesting one.

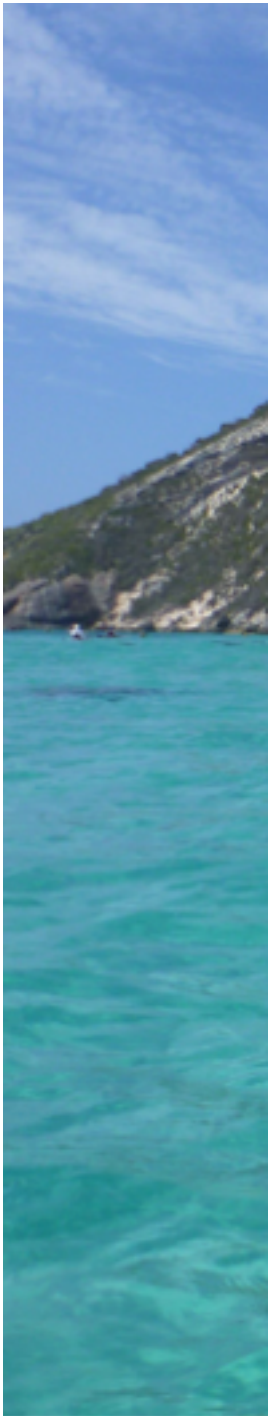
If you are still not satisfied for adventure visit Sandy Robson's page as she paddles through Indonesia and Papua New Guinea.
http://www.sandy-robson.com/Current_Stage.html

Paul Cooper held a training day in September and Pel Turner gives us some of the insights these days bring to our paddling and general sea kayak behaviour.

The SKCWA AGM was held in September and a new committee has been formed. To find out who is now on the committee have a visit to <http://www.seakayakwa.org.au/contacts.html>

Don't forget to visit the web page, Russ Hobbs is continually updating it and adding new photos of things happening in the club. Also the Facebook page at <https://www.facebook.com/groups/SKCWA/> is an immediate way to find out what others in the club are doing.

I hope you enjoy the second edition of the magazine
Andrew





DON'T FORGET! SKCWA Christmas Party

Sunday 13 December
Beaton Park, Dalkeith
0930 for Christmas
brunch **BYO**

The paddle on Sunday 1st November was well attended - Judy, Jill , Callan, Kim, Paul, Russ, Dave, Lindsay, Wolfgang and Richard with Kevin (KP) then Graham joining us along the way. We paddled from Peppermint Grove down the Swan River and just into the Fremantle Harbour. We had lovely weather - no rain and light winds, Hugging the shore we were able to check out the scenery and the bird life (feathered kind) along the way. Some also caught the boat wakes. We poked our head into the harbour for those that hadn't paddled into it before. When we returned no-one seemed in a hurry to rush off so a few of us tried out Graham's new Shrike kayak he made and also Paul's skin on frame kayak (both very impressive), while the rest were having a good old gasbag! Thanks for attending I really enjoyed the day. Jo

Power Paddling

A few things about going faster when speed and power are required. Power paddling is totally different to your casual cruising paddle stroke.

Power paddling is used when you are in different situations, such as paddling into the wind, heading out from a beach or when landing through the surf. It can also pay off in a following sea when catching the swells, also known as skurfing.

Once you have learnt the technique you can also use the stroke in more relaxed state because the same principals apply.

1 The first important point I would like to make is you must fit your boat correctly, a snug fit but not too tight, another important point is the way you sit, you must be seated upright no slouching although you may lean slightly forward during the catch.

2 Get the most out of your catch as they say [spear the salmon] concentrate this is the start of the whole exercise.

3 Now we start to wind up the stroke with ROTATION, don't just move the shoulders, start at the hips. Also remember this a full body movement. The secret of the power stroke is that it is done with the whole body not just your arms.

4 As we start the stroke your feet, legs and stomach all need to do there bit, as this is a full body exercise. You must feel the power moving through your complete body.

5 With your arms it is important to get them both working properly, Think about a good cyclist he doesn't just press down on one peddle, he also makes his other leg do some of the work as well. The same principals also applies to paddling. Imagine your arms as a fulcrum one pushing and the other pulling, why should one arm do all the work.

6 With the top arm working in the stroke, think like a boxer, punch, punch, punch but do not straighten the arm fully keep it slightly bent.

7 Remember with a Euro paddle your power comes from the beginning of the stroke and with a Greenland paddle the power comes in the latter of the stroke.

I hope you find the following tips of some use, I have found that they work for me. A lot of people have written about the following subject and I don't believe to be an expert on the subject but this seems to work well for me.

Cheers, Paul Cooper



Trip Report

13 September 2015

Les Allen

Photos L Allen

The day after a storm is always going to be a good day for swell and today was no different. 8 paddlers headed off from Rockingham to the back of Garden Island. Out the back there were big swells closing out the beach so the decision was to paddle out the back or go back to



Point Peron and do some surfing. The group choice was to go back which proved to be the better choice in the long run. Unfortunately we had one paddler who instead of waiting with the group headed out the back and a difficult time getting back.

These situations are also very difficult for the leader as you cant see the paddler, you don't know if they are ok and you are the one that has to answer to the rest of world if something goes wrong. In time he got back inside and paddled off the wrong way so we have to go back and find him. I have asked him not to come on my paddles again as I don't want that responsibility again. We had a similar incident in Albany not so long ago and on that one could have lost a paddler. When you are watching someone in that situation and expect them to die, the full weight of being a leader is felt. If you are paddling in rough potentially dangerous conditions spare a thought for the leader who has to make the decisions and defend the outcomes.

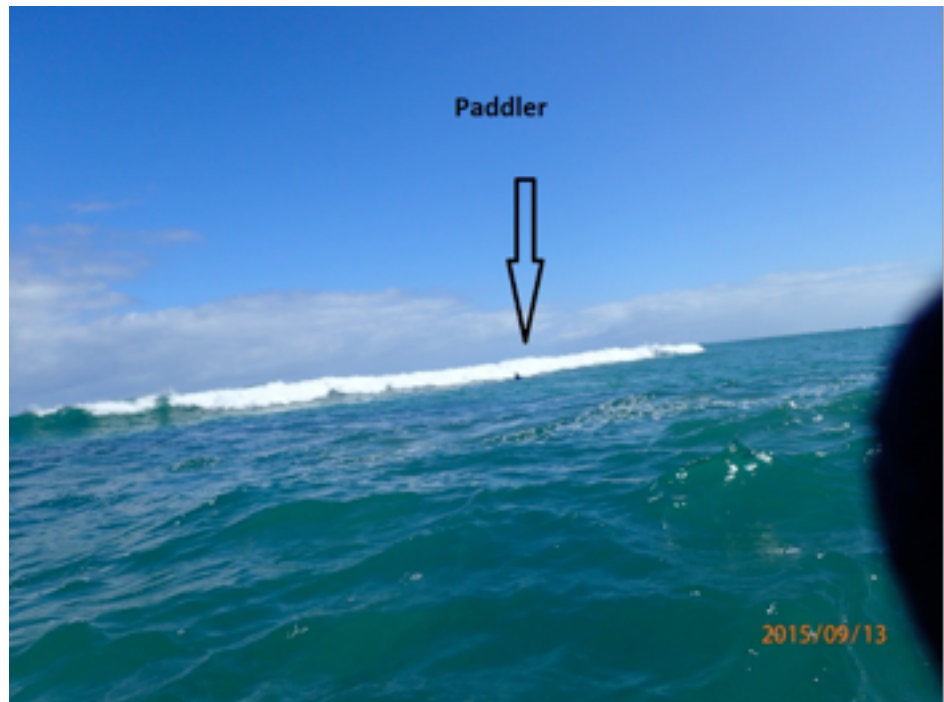
In the middle of the bay the swell was breaking across the middle of the bay. They were big fast and fun waves. We all had some good fast rides with Callan taking a big hit then rolling up after to punch through the following wave. Then the big one hit. Tony Hubbard got speared off the top, the boat got ripped off him and he came up without the boat. It was 50 mt away with spare paddles sponge etc ripped off and the paddle 20 mt away as the paddle park snapped with the force of the wave. Tony from Mandurah collected the bits and put them back together again.



Stevo tried to catch it!!! Unfortunately for him the wave did the catching and he was ripped out of the boat. His boat was not too far away so it was a re enter and roll rescue and a paddle to a safer area.

Callan was further in and was capsized by another wave and tore his calf muscle trying to roll. I was closest so it was a simple assisted rescue. When I looked out the back I could see Stevos boat upside down and had no idea Tony was also swimming. I called a halt to surfing and escorted Callan back to the beach to see the damage to his calf. The rest arrived with big smiles and big stories of even bigger waves.

Well, defiantly not a boring paddle and I hope Callan's calf is ok. Gotta love a big swell day.



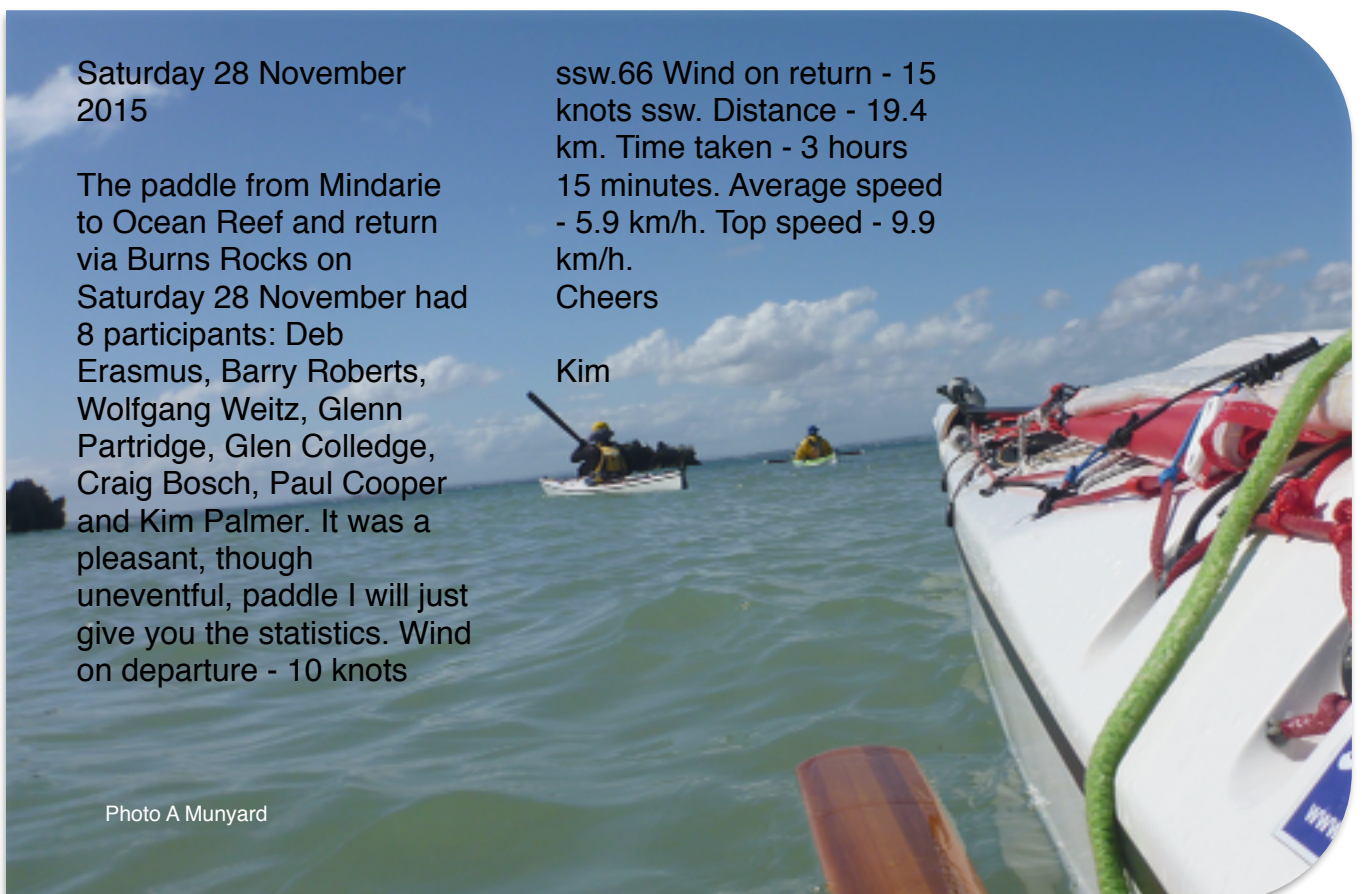
Saturday 28 November
2015

The paddle from Mindarie to Ocean Reef and return via Burns Rocks on Saturday 28 November had 8 participants: Deb Erasmus, Barry Roberts, Wolfgang Weitz, Glenn Partridge, Glen Colledge, Craig Bosch, Paul Cooper and Kim Palmer. It was a pleasant, though uneventful, paddle I will just give you the statistics. Wind on departure - 10 knots

ssw.66 Wind on return - 15 knots ssw. Distance - 19.4 km. Time taken - 3 hours 15 minutes. Average speed - 5.9 km/h. Top speed - 9.9 km/h.
Cheers

Kim

Photo A Munyard



Lancelin Trip Report – 7-10 October 2015

This paddle undertaken by Richard Lailey, Cal Gault, Paul Cooper, Glen Colledge and Kim Palmer illustrated the three qualities required of a sea kayaker:

1. Flexible attitude

Plan A was for a 4 day paddle from Lancelin to Jurien Bay. Through withdrawals, however, it soon became clear we did not have sufficient vehicles to do the planned car shuffle without multiple trips. As such, Plan B was hatched, being a multi day paddle starting from and finishing at Lancelin. Certain events, to be referred to later, however, meant we never actually left Lancelin, thus Plan C, a series of day paddles, was born.

2. Sense of humour

While not necessarily appreciated as such at the time, some of the more amusing highlights included:

- Kim, Richard and Glen's swim to the north of Lancelin Island when upended by a huge set coming across the reef (followed by a self rescue, two assisted rescues and two tows back to the island)
- Glen's unsuccessful attempt to smash Lancelin Island by ramming it with his kayak
- Richard's numerous unplanned opportunities to practise his rolling skills in the surf
- Paul's spectacular rear endo followed a bit later by another front endo on the back beach in his little orange flyer
- Glen's successful attempt to sink his kayak

3. Deep wallet

By the end of day one (our gentle warm-up day!), the following equipment losses had been incurred: 3 paddles snapped in half, one kayak holed and another kayak sunk ... hence the decision to go with Plan C as our depleted equipment reserves were assessed to be insufficient to push on. Day two, despite the reefs and bombies calling to us as we pushed into the fresh southerly en route to Ledge Point for lunch, it seemed we were on an improving trend as we had reduced our equipment losses to only one item – an expensive mobile phone. By day three, however, we had returned to form with another snapped paddle, one more holed kayak and a broken spray deck.

In short, it was a great time of challenging paddling, surfing opportunities, good weather, pleasant company, enjoyable meals, comfortable camping and ocean wildlife in a pristine environment, from which everyone returned unharmed. May there be many more such trips.



Photo Kim Palmer

Shark Bay 2015

Andrew Munyard

A very early start for Tony Blake, Andrew Munyard and Tony Hubbard and a very clear freeway run, saw us knocking on Pel Turners door a bit early, We loaded boats and what seemed like a tonne of gear in and onto cars. We southerners thought it best to follow Pel out of Perth (it was his end of town) but when he missed the Wanneroo Road turn we wondered about his navigation skills. Later , there were mumblings of defence about it being too early in the morning.

A coffee at Jurien Bay made sure we were all awake and we travelled in 2 hour blocks to get to Denham around 4pm. We were fortunate that a boat ramp very near to the Denham Seaside Caravan Park provided a launching site the next morning. That evening we had a meal at the 'Old Pub' where \$20 steaks and Jimmy Barnes belting out 'working Class Man' made us think we had gone back in time, however no years were shed from the paddlers gathered.

When planning this trip, the wind roses had told me that getting out of Denham could be a problem. The Saturday forecast had predicted SE winds for the morning which to the more optimistic seemed like

we might be able to sneak sailing across to the Prongs. Unfortunately the reality was winds more southerly at 15 to 17 knots meaning we had a head wind from the front quarter meaning a 5 hr paddle to cross the 20km open water crossing to Harrison Prong. Denham Sound is shallow and the wind created a steep chop which made the going pretty hard, especially as the kayaks were heavy with provisions for 7 days.

Slowly the Denham shoreline disappeared and the low features of Harrison Prong started to rise from the ocean, giving us something to set as a target. We over set the course to the south to allow for drift and then were able to sail the last couple of kilometres to our lunch destination. On landing, we staggered from our kayaks and really appreciated the lunch break. Refuelled and rested we sailed for about an hour towards Bellefin Prong but had to paddle the last kilometre or so to our campsite for the night. When we finally made the Prong we were pretty exhausted and with another strong wind day ahead we decided to have a rest day on Sunday.

As we unpacked our camp gear Pel unfortunately found that a large amount of water had got under his hatch covers and changed the hydrodynamics of his boat. The water had found its way into his 'dry bags' wetting a lot of his gear. As he produced a saturated toilet roll our hearts sank..., then rose again as he found another that was dry, Hallaluhla! Gingerly Pel opened the dry bag containing his sleeping bag. There were threats of paddling back to Denham if he faced a cold wet night, luckily he found that it had remained dry and we did not have to restrain him from climbing back into his kayak! A lonely tree behind our camp suddenly burst into colour as clothing was draped over it to dry.

I used the lay day to sleep in, but was greeted with



Welcome relief from the sun Photo A Munyard

comments like 'just in time for morning tea' and 'breakfast is over' from the others. We used the morning to investigate a sandbar at the tip of the prong which was showing at low tide and could prove a barrier the next day, however when we

walked to the point a narrow shallow channel was evident immediate to the shore and could allow us to sneak around the point the next day. On our way out to the point, Tony H showed us tracks in the sand that looked a bit like a camel footprint and we wondered if there might be wild camels out here on



A lonely tree burst into colour Photo A Munyard

the prong. The mystery was solved at the point where kangaroo tracks suddenly turned into possible camel tracks. It seems that as the kangaroo climbs an incline in the loose sand, it sits back harder on its legs leaving a circular/elliptical imprint and hence our thinking it might be camel tracks. The afternoon was shaping up to be pretty warm so a shade was erected, held up with 2 greenland paddles and we spent a comfortable day reading and sleeping. Small sharks swam in the shallows, ducking and darting as they chased fish.

Lighter winds on Monday from the SSW allowed us to set sail for a couple of kilometres after sneaking

Lighter winds on Monday from the SSW allowed us to set sail for a couple of kilometres after sneaking around the point via the narrow channel. From Bellefin Prong we looked across to the low profile and drifting dunes of Dirk Hartog Island, its massive extent (it is 80km long) stretching away to the horizon. I was struck by the scale of this area, it is truly expansive and amazing in this modern era that such a remote place exists.

We had lunch in a lovely cove where the explorers of the group climbed the low rocks surrounding the bay and found some bones. Whilst our imaginations ran wild of finding the remains of an ancient Dutch sailor, we had to contend ourselves with the likelihood of sheep remains from the days DHI was a sheep station.

We paddled south down the eastern side of the island using the lee of the bays and coves to make Cape Ransonet before crossing the 1- 2 km of south passage to our camp site at Steep Point. Our campsite, nestled into the low scrub, looked out to surf point and as the sun set, the pastel blues and greys of the evening light made the distant cliffs a beautiful sight.

We made a lazy start to Tuesday and just as we were about to head off to Steep Point, the ranger told us we had camped in the wrong spot and had to move up the beach 100 metres. We carried tents up in their pitched form, and during this period we found out why Tony Blake was having such good nights sleep as he carried his full size air bed , (thats 150mm high of pure comfort) under his arm. We all marvelled at how on earth he was getting it into his kayak but Tony later showed us its compact folded form.

The move had not taken long and soon we sat beside Monkey Rock just short of the point. A forest of rods looking like defoliated saplings stuck out of the rocks at the point, helium balloons were being used by the fisherman to take their baits out away from the cliffs and it was now that Pel wanted to talk about the possibility of sharks due to the amount of baits and burley that the fishermen were putting in the water. On the mention of sharks our disparate group of paddlers were suddenly paddling shoulder to shoulder as we made our way out to Steep Point. The sea was essentially flat, and we photographed each other with the small swell crashing into the cliff beneath the point. Steep Point is the most western point of mainland Australia (Cape Byron the most easterly) and is proud to boast the most western dunnie in Australia. The dunnie, a simple structure of corrugated iron is easily identified due to its architectural splendour. I did not notice which way the door opened but assumed it must be a 'loo with a view' and no doubt users would 'pass ' the time enjoying the distant cliffs of DHI.

As we paddled back through South Passage the water suddenly transitions from a deep blue to a tropical turquoise as the sea floor suddenly rises from 40metres deep to a few metres in a very short distance. In a big swell, this area would be very, very dangerous as waves could suddenly appear from the deep to crash on the shallows of south passage. Pel, who has fished here over the last couple of years, had stories of waves breaking right the way across South Passage, however there was no such excitement for us as we leisurely sailed back to our campsite. In the late afternoon we were transported back to an earlier time in our lives as the music of John Denver and Simon and Garfunkel wafted over our camp from the greying nomads nearby.



Steep Point on a very calm day

Tony Blake and I paddled to a very placid Surf Point on Wednesday while Pel and Tony Hubbard had a day relaxing back at camp. In the shallows of Surf Point I drifted over purple corals and green lipped clams. On our return, a small turtle swam under my boat and I could see its front flippers madly propelling it along. In the evening light, cloud cover gave us a blood moon, silhouetting the moored yachts which swung from anchors off the beach.

As we sat having breakfast on Thursday morning, dreaming of scooting to the north under sail, the catamaran moored off the beach swung more and more easterly meaning sailing was not going to be an option to get to our destination of Bellefin Prong. (Where was the southerly wind when you wanted it?). As we paddled north, the wind died to a calm and the sea became flat. As we passed over the shallow waters we could see clearly to the bottom where sting rays and starfish could easily be seen. and turtles and dolphins were spotted at a little distance. With no wind, the quiet was astounding, here we were in such an expansive place, there were no speed boat noises just the gentle lapping of the water on our hulls. We camped on the prong and in the evening looked across Denham Sound to our destination for the next day.



Although Friday saw a light SE breeze hold sway, we managed to occasionally raise sails to make life a bit easier but we essentially paddled the 20 km back to Denham. in 2 hours less than at the start of the trip! After getting the boats off the water and the gear tidied up we wolfed down a hamburger and sat back very satisfied that we had pulled off a Shark Bay trip when all the data said we were in for a windy experience, we had been lucky.



Photo P Turner

Shark Bay is a wonderful place, it is harsh rugged country but the water and the range of wildlife is amazing. Cruising over the clear shallow water seeing to the bottom as if wearing goggles is a wonder to behold



Photo A Munyard



Photo A Munyard



Photo A Munyard

Around Garden Island

Sunday November 22 2015

Andrew Munyard

This was to be a big paddle of around 36km. I had tried to do this paddle a few months before but had no takers, so I was very glad when I had a response from Linda Glover, Royd Bussell and Al Hale to say they were starters.

We launched from the eastern side of the Woodmans Point boat harbour, with the wind blowing about 14knts from the NE so we tore off for Herring Bay at the Northern end of GI. Royd and I had sails and we hardly had to do a stroke to keep up with Linda and Al who were to paddle the whole way round.

We cranked out to Herring Bay at around 8.5 km/hr which was a lot of fun and we made the little bay to the south of Herring bay in no time.

We sang to ourselves a little tune of 'paddling with the wind is fun, fun, fun'.

The bay is perfect for kayaks as no larger boats can cross the shallow reef. We sat in the shade of an overhanging rock and rested. On departing, Al banged his head on the said rock, thinking that looked like fun I did the same and drew blood. Linda couldn't reach the

rock and Royd thought better of joining in the fun.

Now we had the west side to traverse and as if on cue, the wind had now gone into the north and was forecasted to swing into the NW. Again, we tore off down the west side, the swell being pretty small so we could go where we wanted to and we made the 8km to the bay at the southern end of the island in an hour.

We sang to ourselves a little tune of 'paddling with the wind is fun, fun, fun'.

Lunch was again had in the shade, this time the overhang was huge and precipitous so we decided to sit on the edge of the cave, the theory being that we could run quickly if we heard any rumblings or saw rocks fall. We joked that it would be great if the weather forecasters were wrong and that a fresh sea breeze would come in. But as we looked south from our cave, we did not notice any whitecaps which meant the wind was still in the north,

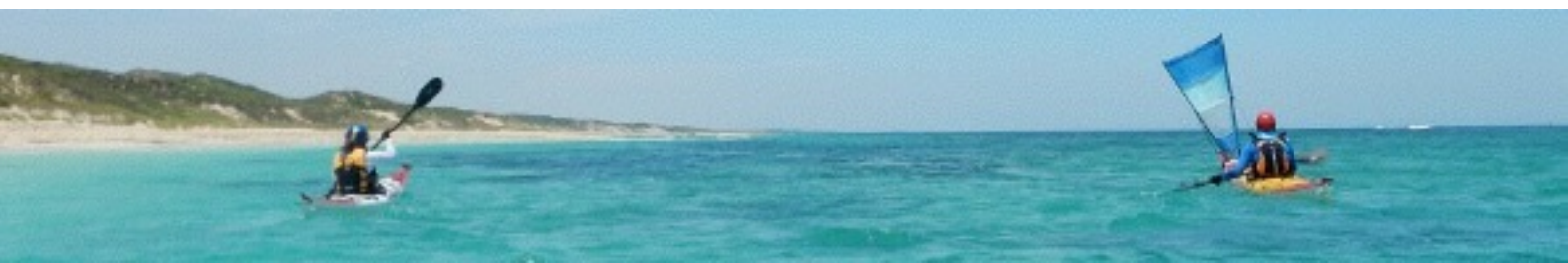
Passing under the high level bridge we started to feel the effects of the wind and it had not swung as far to the west as we hoped and was blowing 15knots solid from the NNW. Only 13 km to go we said cheerily and we set our sights

on the massive shed at the marine complex. We tried to convince ourselves that the wind was abating, that the shed was getting closer or that some feature on the island was not staying in the same position.

We sang to ourselves a little tune of 'into the wind is no fun, no fun, no fun'.

The final leg took 3 hours to complete and everyone was glad to reach Woodmans Point, comments of 'I'm getting too old for this' and 'what doesn't kill you makes you stronger' were used to justify our exhaustion. In the end, we had travelled 37.5km so a very decent paddle indeed.

Note to self, next time, try to organise an easterly out to the island and a rip snorter SW for the return.



SKCWA TRAINING DAY AT HILLARYS

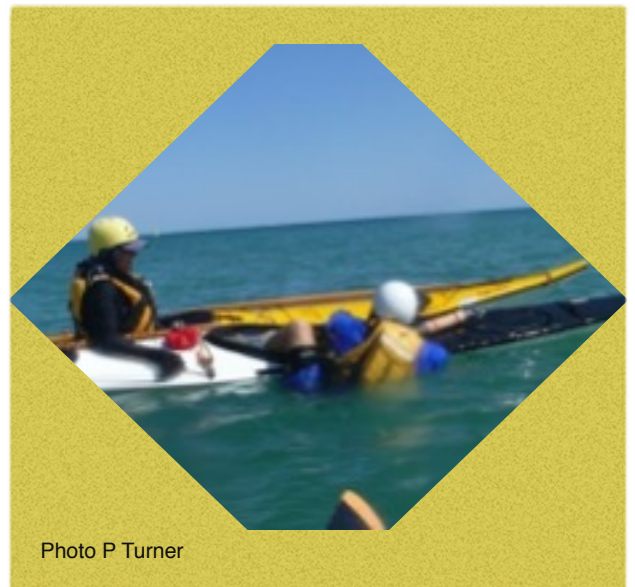
27 September 2015

As we know, quantity does not always mean quality and this can be so on Club training days, a small group is more focused on what they are doing with less distractions. So with that positive spin we began our club training day at Hillarys led by Paul Cooper and attended by Kim Palmer and myself.

Conditions were good with strong easterly winds gusting to 20knts which made reverse paddling challenging and almost finished the day early with Kim and I paddling in front of our old training day nemesis, the Hillarys fishing charter boat while Paul watched from a safe location.

Next, side stroke practise was again a new challenge in the conditions and we found a little skeg down helped keep the boat straight. Towing was interesting using short towropes (5mtr) and deck towropes (1-2mtr) to find the best towing position. We found side on to the wind having the tower on the leeward side kept the towee? against the other boat and easier to control.

After all this work it was time for a little play with a paddle out to Cow Rocks slopping around in the wash and then around the channel markers. It was my first paddle in a kayak with a skeg in strong winds and found the advice from Andrew and Les in the last club newsletter very useful, playing the skeg up and down to track straight, thanks guys!



Back at the North Wall Kim tried the Heel/Hook entry rescue and was pleased it worked well. Some rolling there and back in the Harbour to complete the session and off for a coffee at Spinnakers. As we were leaving we ran into Phil Evans, a previous trainer/leader and stalwart of the club, looking good after 2 knee replacements.

I got a lot out of the day thanks Paul and it shows no matter how experienced a paddler you are you will always learn something at a club training day and it may be a skill that helps you or someone else out of a tough spot. Hope to see you at the next one!

Cheers Pel



Tech Talk

Les Allen

EDGING YOUR BOAT.

Edging is one of the most important skills for a sea paddler to master. Most of us can edge on flat water when asked but it is often not a natural part of your paddling. The three ways we keep our boat on track are edging, foot push and of course rudders. In flat conditions any one of the three will turn your boat but as conditions get more challenging and turning or tracking becomes harder the more turning tracking influences the better the outcome. Relying on just your rudder is not a wise thing especially if your rudder breaks.

Setting up your boat

The best thing you can do to aid turning is cross your rudder cables so the right tab turns left and the left tab turns right. That way if you are doing a left turn you lift your left leg, that sets up the edge, push with your right leg and use your right toe to turn the rudder to the left. This is a very natural way to turn your boat where lifting your left leg to edge and trying to push the left ruder tab is not and will encourage you not to edge your boat. Also it is wise to have your foot plate, padding etc so you push through your heel rather than the ball of your foot. Providing you have a solid bulk head you can pad out the foot rest with closed cell foam so your heels are driving and delivering your force to the boat.

The paddler

The only way you will be able to turn your boat in all conditions is to be very comfortable with edging in all conditions. This means it has to be instinctive. To get edging instinctive you have to edge every time you turn your boat. Once you have mastered edging instinctively and in rough conditions you can use that skill to capture energy from side seas, following seas etc. Good edging is the first step to becoming a good paddler. Most people don't edge their boat every turn and to master edging in rough conditions you have to be very comfortable "dipping" your spray deck in flat conditions.

So if you want to be a better paddler first master edging in flat water to the point where your spray deck is in the water on the turn. Set your boat up properly and form the habit of edging every time you turn or change course. Keep edging in rougher and rougher conditions till it's a natural part of your paddling or it's instinctive. That alone will make you more confident and ensure you can turn in adverse conditions like strong winds, currents, big following seas etc.

Paddling Around the Isle of Wight (10-12 July 2015)

Notes from an Expedition

Richard Lailey

The Isle of Wight has a population of about 140,000 and lies a few miles off the south coast of England. It has a beautiful charm of its own, and is famous for its coloured beach sands, pop festivals (which back in the day rivalled those of Woodstock and Monterey), and the small town of Cowes - the yachting capital of England. There is a long standing joke about the town: what's brown

its motorcycle racing, as is the Isle of Man in the Irish Sea, which is why Aussies often confuse the two UK islands!

The Isle of Wight is also the place where I grew up, and in recent years I have made three attempts to paddle around the Island with a company called IOW Adventure Activities who run 3 to 4 trips a year, each of them 3 to 4 days long. The cost is £280, about \$600 aussie at today's exchange rate. On the first attempt I had been the only person interested (others had dropped out and a minimum of two are required) and the second was cancelled due to bad weather.



and comes steaming out of cows – the IOW car ferry of course!

Down-under recognition of the Isle of Wight comes in the form of streets named after the main Island towns (Perth has many), Freshwater Bay on the Swan, and Phillip Island in Victoria where the two main towns are Cowes and Ventnor. Phillip Island is of course well-known for

However, this year it was third time lucky and a few days before the trip I received a call to say the trip was on, which I had found surprising as the weather forecast for the first paddling day was E'ly force 3 to 4 switching to W'ly force 3 to 4 on the morning of the second day, increasing to force 5 or 6 (possibly 7) during the afternoon and the day after.

I guessed that instead of starting from Freshwater at the western end of the Island, as was the custom, we would begin at Bembridge to the east to avoid opposing winds in both directions - right? Wrong!! We were to paddle from Freshwater Bay as planned because the trip had to consider strong tidal currents (see map which shows typical tidal currents for HW+4hr UTM, relative to HW Portsmouth) and a fairly high tidal range, which at Ryde is over 5m during springs. For this reason the paddles are

very strong paddlers - and being local, they had brought their own paddles.

I had been looking forward to the trip for some time – I figured that over 3 to 4 days using currents and winds wisely, the trip would be reasonably leisurely and scenic. And besides, there is something special about circumnavigation - no car shuffle to worry about, you're not trying to conquer something but understand it, your mind is forced to appreciate



organised at neaps, as was the case for our trip. It is interesting to note that the tides on the Island and most of the UK are mainly semi-diurnal (2 tides and 4 tidal streams per day) and generally large, as opposed to Fremantle where they are mainly diurnal (one tide and 2 tidal streams per day) and small – the tidal streams are in fact virtually non-existent.

Our group comprised leader (Tim), assistant (Josh –who was astonishingly tall and unfolded like a giraffe whenever he climbed out of his kayak) and four clients –all local Brits apart from myself. As it turned out, two of the clients (Jan and Jen) were triathlon junkies and the third (Olly) was an iron man specialist – all were in excellent physical shape, young and virile, and

whatever it is you're circling, and there is a certain beauty in the fact that you are returning to your starting point. But now I was not so sure – the paddlers were competitive and very fit, the weather was not looking good and I was concerned there would be no time to “stop and smell the roses”.

So, at around 11am on Friday 10 July, after hurriedly packing our boats, we set off under a sunny blue sky from Freshwater Bay to begin our 100km journey. As predicted we were paddling against a 12-15 knot headwind – nevertheless, the others charged off like rats up a drainpipe - and I could barely keep up! **Note to Self No 1 – check out the paddling group (or make sure you have a strong paddling technique) before you book!**

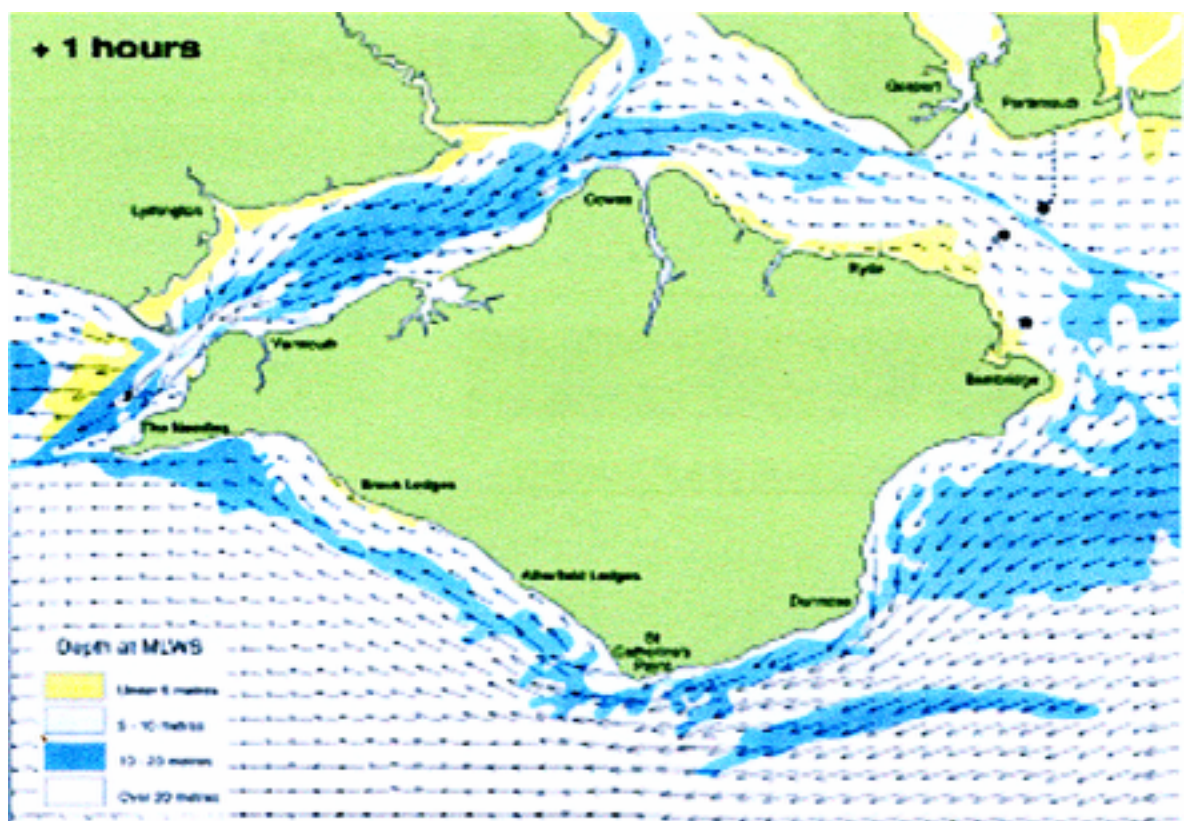
We passed Compton Bay, the Island's premier swimming and surfing beach (which cannot compare with WA beaches), and where there is also a shipwreck visible above the waterline. After 2.5 hours we pulled into our first half-hour stop, Blackgang Beach, a distance of 16km. As we neared the end of lunch I remembered this used to be the local nudist beach when I was at school and we would sneak over at every opportunity. I looked along the beach in both directions in the hope of finding a few young nubile but could only see a few lumps which looked like small sand dunes. A check through the binoculars, however, showed that they were in fact bottoms, quite large ones in fact. And then one moved as an elderly fat man stood up. Time to go! **Note to Self No 2 – be careful what you wish for!**

After rounding St Catherine's Point and lighthouse, the southernmost point on the Island, we passed an old Roman port and some patches of rough water before arriving at the picturesque town of Ventnor. The time was 4.30pm and we had paddled another 10km. Our second half-hour stop included a much needed coffee and slice of cake (which tasted like nectar) from a beachfront cafe!

Our last paddle of the day took us around another corner of the Island, past the towns of Shanklin and Sandown (which has a pier), and the tiny village of Lake nestled in between. Shanklin's claim to fame is that it has more sunshine hours per year than anywhere else in the UK

(perhaps with the exception of the Scilly Isles). The last section turned out to be an endless slog across Sandown Bay, battling against a strong headwind (and currents towards the end) to a beach called the Yaverland, just before Bembridge. In hindsight hugging the coast, though longer, would have been an easier paddle. It was now 8.15pm, we had paddled another 10km, and we (read "I") were exhausted – a total paddling day of 36km! Because of the consistent headwinds we were behind schedule (our goal for tonight had apparently been Bembridge).

We dragged our kayaks as far up the beach as we could and this is where we discovered that most, if not all, hatch covers had leaked and our hatches were full of water. This had presumably happened as we rounded St Catherine's Point. Unfortunately for me, one of my dry bags had leaked – the one with all my warm dry clothes (now soaking wet and not warm), gas stove and headlamp (both now useless). **Note to Self No 3 – check (carefully) there are no holes in your dry bags, and pack important items like headlamps, keys and matches in a waterproof box.**



We set up our tents on some undulating hillocks of mud and gravel, finding a patch of level ground where we could (except there wasn't any)!

After a meal of dried pita bread and water, approximately 2 hours of sleep and getting up at 5.30am, we set off on Saturday morning to cross Bembridge Ledge while the tide was in to avoid having to paddle around it. This was fun as there were some standing waves to paddle through near Whitecliff Bay but unfortunately there was no time to "play" (the other paddlers were in auto-drive and ready for breakfast). One thing I had noticed (presumably because my skeg was broken) was that I was having to "edge" a lot in order to keep a straight course (which I found tiring)!

We pulled into Bembridge Duver, after rounding the easternmost point of the Island at 8.30am, a distance of 9km, where we stopped for a bite to eat. Unfortunately the Baywatch Beach cafe wasn't open yet (a plate of eggs and bacon would have been unbelievably welcome), but luckily Olly took pity on me and offered some hot water for my bowl of porridge and mug of coffee.

The next stage took us past St Helens, Seaview and Ryde (another pier), where fortunately the large tide was still mostly "in", and into a stretch of water known as "The Solent". We were paddling against a strong westerly headwind as we passed Wootton Creek (my home town) and arrived at a very slippery, muddy and smelly beach called Woodside where we could only stop for a half hour as the tide was starting to quickly recede. We had paddled another 12km! We'd had the southern part of the Island virtually to ourselves but The Solent presented lots of commercial traffic (ferries, catamarans and hovercrafts) and private boats to look out for.

The winds were now really starting to blow and paddling was becoming very hard work. To

make matters worse I was starting to develop a couple of blisters on my left hand! I was paddling with a euro blade, very different to my beautiful Greenland cedar paddle! Although there was a group first aid kit, and I had my own, I was finding the waterproof plasters did not stay on for long. Of course, it's best to avoid them in the first place, eg by not gripping the paddle too tightly, perhaps focussing on pushing rather than pulling the paddle, or by wearing gloves. But once you have them, it's too late! **Note to Self No 4 – make sure you have plenty of good quality waterproof plasters or moleskin patches, and treat your blisters early.**

We headed off at 12.30pm and as we passed Cowes (the northernmost part of the Island) we were barely able to make headway and, to top it all, we had the currents against us. We finally gave up at Gurnard as winds had increased to at least 25 knots (probably more), the waves were very steep, short and breaking, and we were being pushed backwards. We had travelled another 11km, a total of 32km for the day, and we ("I") were again exhausted. With a forecast of force 6/7 for the rest of the afternoon and evening, we decided to call it a day.

The afternoon provided an opportunity to dry my wet clothes on a seafront railing (I had to stand guard the whole time as they kept blowing away even when I tied them on). We also treated ourselves to a hot lunch from the beach cafe, and a meal and a beer at the local pub during the evening. Over dinner it transpired that paddlers and even whole groups had pulled out on previous trips due to blisters and fatigue! We pitched our tents after dark on a patch of grass behind some beach huts. We would see what the morning would bring and decide on our strategy then, as we were now even further behind schedule (we had hoped to have reached Newtown by now)!

During the evening, I had mentioned to Tim the problem I'd had steering my kayak. He told me that edging, though often necessary in a side-wind, had possibly been even more necessary in my case as my kayak was possibly unbalanced due to uneven packing. **Note to Self No 5 – make sure your weight is evenly distributed left and right as well as fore and aft when you pack your kayak.**

The next morning, after some overnight rain, the winds had abated but were still strong (force 5 to 6); nevertheless, we decided to push on to Yarmouth and end the trip by paddling up the River Yar to Freshwater Town. Although a circumnavigation of sorts, we would sadly miss out on the most exciting and scenic part of the adventure – the cliffs of Alum Bay (home of the



Photo R Lailey

coloured beach sands) and the Needles, a row of three distinctive chalk stacks (and a lighthouse) that rise out of the sea off the westernmost part of the Island. They are not as magnificent as the Apostles in Victoria, but impressive nonetheless. Here sea conditions can be treacherous!

There are also some interesting tidal races, turbulence and eddies where the channel between Totland and Hurst Castle narrows to less than 1.5km, and currents reach 4 to 5 knots; but with loaded boats we would of

course have hugged the coast. Today, sea conditions at the Needles would have been dangerous, and to have attempted the full circumnavigation (an additional 12km or so) would have been foolhardy!

Interestingly, the remnants of an old rocket station are situated on (and inside) the cliffs above the Needles. The Isle of Wight is where the Black Knight and Black Arrow rocket launchers were developed and built during the 1950's and 60's, and subsequently launched from Woomera in South Australia during the 60's and 70's.

So, leaving Gurnard at 8.00am, we set off on the final leg of our journey, literally hugging the coast and sheltering in any small nooks and crannies we could find for brief respites. After 8km we reached the shelter of Newtown Bay and stopped for breakfast and a well earned rest. Following a short break we headed for Yarmouth and finally upriver to Freshwater Town, arriving at 12.30pm after paddling a further 14km - giving a total paddling distance for the day of 22km. Even paddling up the River Yar along the home stretch, the wind had been relentless!



Photo R Lailey

Looking at our trusty plastic Valley (Nordkapp and Aquanaut) and North Shore (Atlantic) kayaks as we unloaded them (Tim and Josh had fibreglass boats), they seemed old and tired. None of the skegs had worked, the hatches had leaked and the foot braces had slipped on several occasions.

Photo R Lailey



Time perhaps to invest in some upgrades! **Note to Self No 6 – check out the condition of the boats and equipment before you book.**

Did I enjoy the trip – in all honesty, not as much as I'd hoped! As I suspected before we set off, the journey had turned out to be a bit of a slog with no time to properly explore the towns and beaches, or features such as caves and shipwrecks, or enjoy the scenery and wildlife, or simply just play! Looking back I would have preferred the trip to be 5 days. I was also disappointed at missing out on the final and most

interesting leg of the journey (but you can't help bad weather)!

On the other hand, it had been a personal achievement, having paddled over 30km on each of the first two days, and an overall distance of 90km over 48 hours, mostly against the wind. And the company had been good, Tim and Josh had been excellent leaders, and they had been spot on with the currents and tides!

I still love the Isle of Wight and its 6 Wonders: Ryde where you walk, Cowes you can't milk, Needles you can't thread, Freshwater you can't drink, Lake (or Brook) you can walk through without getting your feet wet, and Newport (the capital) you can't bottle - not to be compared in any way of course with the Hanging Gardens of Babylon and the other 6 Wonders of the Ancient World.

One day I will go back and properly complete the circuit!

