



## October 2015

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*Another Russian super-yacht hogs the premium berth at the Silo Marina up near the Wynyard Quarter. At 140 metres in length, Ocean Victory dwarfs my own little 5.8 metre super-kayak. Both craft add a splash of colour to an area that was once a bleak industrial backwater.*

PHOTO ROGER LOMAS

## Auckland Canoe Club Information

### Postal Address

P.O. Box 9271, Newmarket, Auckland

### Clubrooms

Marine Rescue Centre, Mechanics Bay

### Website

<http://www.aucklandcanoecub.org.nz>

### Officers

<i>Patron</i>	Ian Calhaem	579 0512
<i>President</i>	Philip Noble	575 3493
<i>Secretary</i>	Rona Patterson	528 1155
<i>Treasurer</i>	Matthew Crozier	817 1984
<i>Trips Advisor</i>	Colin Quilter	360 6271
<i>Publicity</i>	Roger Lomas	846 6799
<i>Storage/kayaks</i>	Gavin Baker	528 5188
<i>Assistant</i>	Roger Lomas	846 6799
<i>Vine House</i>	Trevor Arthur	817 7357
<i>Newsletter Editor</i>	Claire O'Connor	027 238 1250
<i>Webmaster</i>	Ian Calhaem	579 0512

### Email addresses

patron@aucklandcanoecub.org.nz  
president@aucklandcanoecub.org.nz  
secretary@aucklandcanoecub.org.nz  
treasurer@aucklandcanoecub.org.nz  
trips@aucklandcanoecub.org.nz  
publicity@aucklandcanoecub.org.nz  
merchandise@aucklandcanoecub.org.nz  
vinehouse@aucklandcanoecub.org.nz  
newsletter@aucklandcanoecub.org.nz  
webmaster@aucklandcanoecub.org.nz

hire@aucklandcanoecub.org.nz  
(for kayak hire, or any related questions)

storage@aucklandcanoecub.org.nz  
(for questions about storing kayaks in the locker)

## Club Trip/Event Policies

Visit the Club website for details of safety and other important policies.

### Contacting trip/event organiser

You must notify the trip organiser in advance of your intention to go on a trip. Organisers need to know numbers and to be able to contact you if the plan changes.

You must also discuss with the organiser in advance any medical or other conditions (such as your experience and ability) that might affect the progress of the group.

### Cancellation

If the weather looks uncertain call the trip co-ordinator.

## Club Banking Details

<i>Bank</i>	BNZ
<i>Branch</i>	Newmarket
<i>Account</i>	02-0100-0023453-000
<i>Name</i>	Auckland Canoe Club
<i>Particulars</i>	Your FULL name (Initials are not enough to identify some members with common names)
<i>Code</i>	Either <b>SUBS, STORAGE, HIRE, OTHER</b> (depending on what you are paying for)

If your payment is for several items, then please make **separate** payments for **each** item.

### IMPORTANT

**If you are depositing money to the Club Account please ensure that you include YOUR name so that the Treasurer knows who deposited the money.**

### Internet Banking

All major banks have set up Auckland Canoe Club as a registered payee for internet banking.

This means that you can pay to

**Auckland Canoe Club**

without having to enter the account number.

Check with your bank.

## Kayak Hire

To book a kayak, enter details in the diary. Check diary before taking a kayak.

### Kayak Hire Rates

#### Single kayaks

Daily hire – out am, back pm \$20.00

Half day – out am, back am  
out pm, back pm \$10.00

#### Double kayaks

Daily hire – out am, back pm \$30.00

Half day – out am back am  
out pm back pm \$15.00

- Please enter details of hire in register and on an envelope.
- Put money in envelope and place envelope in honesty box.
- **No I.O.U.s!**
- Carry or wheel kayaks to water.
- No seal launching.
- Please wash kayaks before returning to rack.
- Report faults or problems on the faults/problems sheet.

## Regular Events

### Vine House Weekends



On one weekend each month we have the use of Vine House. This gem in Mahurangi Harbour is a 2 km paddle from Sullivan's Bay, which is the ARC park at the end of the Mahurangi West Road, first on the right past Puhoi.

The house sleeps 10 and has all creature comforts. Bring sleeping bag, pillow case and food. A shared meal and nibbles is the norm for Saturday night, so bring your goodies.

Lagoon Bay is very tidal, so bringing a kayak trolley is a good idea. The range of paddling is endless, e.g. Waiwera, Warkworth, Kawau Island, Motuora Island – your choice. Or just rest and read and enjoy this tranquil and special place. We recommend you take a carry bag to get all your gear up the track to the house. Secure parking is at Sullivan's Bay. Leave a note on your dashboard reading "Vine House Volunteer" when you park in front of the ranger's house.

Please ring to book a bed, and for detailed directions. **Trevor 817 7357 or Matt 817 1984.**

### Saturday Morning Coffee Cruise

Most Saturday mornings some club members do a short paddle from the club lock up at Okahu Bay.

We set off from the lock up at 9.00, returning by 12.30. The level is fairly easy and you can nearly always hire a club kayak. The route depends on the tide and the weather. We often paddle out to Bean Rock lighthouse and then stop at Kohi Beach for coffee in a local café before paddling back.

Join us for a relaxed paddle. It's a great way to meet people in the club.

Be aware: People don't go every week. You might go one week when no-one else happens to turn up.

You should have basic paddling skills to join this group, you will be responsible for yourself.

**Note:** Paddlers under 18 to be accompanied by a guardian!

**For more information,** contact either Lester Miller on 575 5942 or Chris Dentith on 486 5599.

## NEW MEMBER



### Welcome

The Committee extends a warm welcome to the following new member ...

**Saskia Bosman**



## Deadline for Next Newsletter

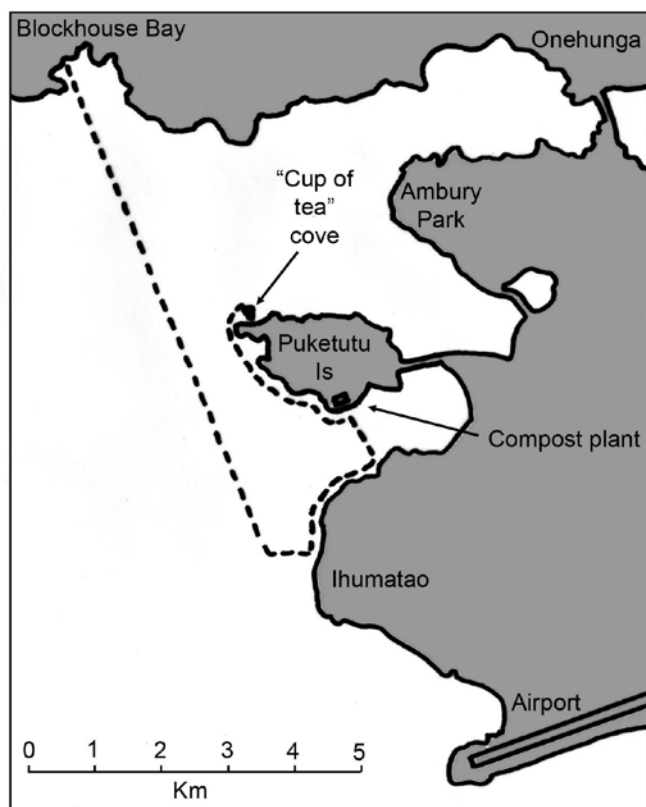
**15 October 2015**

## Blundering about on the Manukau

Colin Quilter

A Monday morning in mid-September. After weeks of windy weather, the forecast was for one calm day before the next front arrived. Since high tide on the Manukau Harbour was going to occur in the late morning, I decided on a cup of tea at my favourite beach on the northern side of Puketutu Island. There had been fog across the upper Waitemata early that morning, but by the time I left home it was clearing, and I confidently expected the Manukau Harbour to be calm and sunny by the time I reached my launching place at Blockhouse Bay.

However conditions at the boat ramp in Endeavour St, when I got there, were a surprise. Fog, and lots of it! Visibility was no more than 10 metres, and standing on the boat ramp at the water's edge I was unable to see my car parked just behind me. I thought ruefully of my compass and GPS, left at home, and unavailable just when I really needed them. If I went back to get them I would miss the tide; so I wondered if perhaps I could make the trip without them? Looking upwards I could faintly see the pale disk of the sun through the fog, and I decided that would be sufficient. My destination was about 5km away in a southeasterly direction, and the sun was to the northeast; so in theory all I had to do was keep the sun at right-angles to the kayak, above my left shoulder, and paddle for 40 minutes, and all would be well.



I launched the kayak, paddled for a minute or two, looked back, and the land was gone. On every side the fog lay heavy on oil-calm water. Sounds from the land – vehicles and voices – were muffled as if from a great distance. I paddled on.

Twenty minutes out a small flock of gulls crossed my path, flying purposefully to the west; or what I assumed was the west. Birds have an excellent sense of direction, and the ancient Polynesian seafarers used them as an aid to navigation. However to be useful, you have to know where the birds might be headed, and I did not.

A little further on I met a seal, corkscrewing in idle circles, who looked at me with sorrowful brown eyes. Seals never seem to know where they are going, and when earlier this year one turned up in a car-wash in Papakura, an expert from DOC said that they frequently arrive at unexpected locations. If you are lost, don't follow a seal.

Soon my 40 minutes of paddling was up. I rested and listened intently. The grey fog pressed down on all sides. No sound of waves on an invisible shore. No sound of aircraft taking off from the airport either; no doubt because flights were cancelled due to the fog. I decided to paddle for another 10 minutes; and when that yielded no sight or sound of land, another 10 minutes.

By now, an hour after leaving Blockhouse Bay, I had to accept that my "celestial navigation" had failed. Since I had clearly missed Puketutu Island there were only two possibilities; one that I was mistakenly heading eastwards, up the harbour towards Onehunga and Mangere Bridge; the other that I was heading south towards Waiuku. Looking on the bright side, I reflected that an experienced navigator is not someone who never gets lost, but rather someone who has been lost in every possible way, so this trip was one more item in my navigational *curriculum vitae*.

Thinking about my options, I decided the safest course was to turn left and head eastward. Wherever I was, too far east or too far south, that should bring me closer to land. Another 10 minutes passed, and to my relief mangroves appeared close ahead, almost within touching distance. Behind them was a grassy bank with macrocarpa trees. Surely this was nowhere near Onehunga or Ambury Park, it could only be on the coast leading south towards the airport. Perhaps near the stonefields of Ihumatao?

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I turned north and followed the coast until a light breeze arrived, (from a direction I presumed was northwest); and it carried the unmistakable smell of rotting vegetation! Now I knew my exact location. On the southern shore of Puketutu Island there is a large composting plant run by Living Earth, and I must be directly downwind. Like a seagull sniffing sardines I turned and headed upwind, away from the shore and into the blank fog once more, but this time confident of my course. Soon the rocky coast of Puketutu Island loomed out of the mist, and I turned left to follow it northwards. A little later I passed a few white feathers floating on the water, and I remembered that Royal Spoonbills sometimes roost on a reef at the western end of the island. Sure enough they appeared, standing like silent grey ghosts, so now my position was confirmed. Finally, two hours after leaving Blockhouse Bay, I reached my cove. While I drank tea on the beach the fog rolled back, and soon the whole of the Manukau Harbour basked in the sun around me.

It is customary to finish confessional stories like this with a list of "lessons learned." In this case the lessons are so obvious that I can't bring myself to write them. However I will make two observations.

**First:** don't scoff at navigation in fog using the sun. It can work surprisingly well. Many years ago in the days before GPS I crossed from Kohimarama Beach to Rangitoto in thick fog, having left my compass at home, (some people are slow learners). Since Rangitoto was to the north I headed straight towards the sun. After 40 minutes of nil visibility, with the occasional sound of boat engines passing nearby but nothing sighted, I was alarmed to see something large and black looming up not in front of the kayak, but overhead. I back-paddled frantically before realising that the black shape was the deck of the Rangitoto Wharf, and I was sitting beneath it, between the piles.



Crossing Lake Te Anau in fog. Is that an engine I can hear in the distance?

**Secondly:** GPS is not the answer to all problems. A few years ago I crossed Lake Te Anau in heavy fog, heading for Brod Bay on the western shore. I had Brod Bay entered as a waypoint in my GPS, so in spite of being unable to see more than a metre or two in front of the kayak, I set off confidently across the lake. Unfortunately for me, the Water Taxi which takes trampers across the lake to the Kepler Track also had Brod Bay entered as a waypoint. The skipper assumed that no other vessel would cross the lake in such conditions, so he proceeded at speed. I heard him approaching through the fog, got a brief glimpse of a shocked face peering at me out of the wheelhouse as he shot past just metres away, and then he vanished into the mist. If you are navigating in poor visibility and another vessel is using the same waypoint, then the logical consequence is that near the waypoint you will meet; perhaps abruptly!

*Happy paddling!*

*Colin*



## Are you ready to go back to school?

Ian Calhaem

We are a diverse Club – the oldest in the country having been in continuous existence since being registered in 1954. But there is evidence that we existed several years earlier e.g. we surveyed the Crater Lake, Ruapehu after the 1953 Tangiwai Disaster.

Like any organisation the Club exists for its members, by its members. YOU are the Club, and the existence of the Club depends on your involvement in one way or another. The needs of the Club have changed over the years and thus the nature of the Club itself has changed. Initially we were predominantly river based and the Club organised trips using its own bus to transport its members to various rivers around the country. Today we do more sea kayaking than river kayaking because it is easier and cheaper for an Auckland based club to access the wonderful Hauraki Gulf as it is on our doorstep.

In the early days everyone built their own kayak out of wood (using lathes), and canvas. This was a fun project in its own right but it also had the very important feature of bringing members together to learn from each other whilst they completed their kayaks. Today it is easy to go to a shop and purchase a “nice looking” kayak, put it on the water and go kayaking!

If only it was that easy...

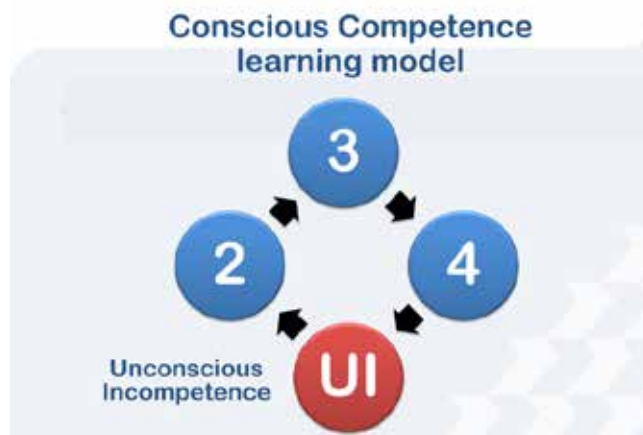
Kayaking is a great sport, but like any water sport has its dangers. The sea is unforgiving; there is often no second chance; if something goes wrong it goes wrong quickly and with devastating consequences. In my view it is essential for any kayaker to have a basic understanding of the sea and the limitations of their kayak and their own kayaking skills before venturing out on the water.

The Club has a duty to its members to ensure that everyone has the opportunity to gain these skills in a safe and positive environment. However as I pointed out earlier the Club is YOU.

Members of the Auckland Canoe Club have many years of experiences and we all have skills in different areas. It is also accepted that today we are all time poor – no one person has copious free time to donate to the other members to train them, but if we all contribute a little that we can collectively provide the experience needed by our new members.

### So, are you ready to go back to school?

I recently attended the Coastguard New Zealand annual forum and there we discussed how people learn and their levels of competence.



### Four levels were identified

1. **Unconscious Incompetence**  
(blind faith in one's own ability)
2. **Conscious Incompetence**  
(you know what you don't know)
3. **Conscious Competence**  
(you are in control, you are learning and open to new ideas)
4. **Unconscious Competence**  
(you are in control without having to think too much about it)

However you are not likely to remain at level 4 for long as it is too easy to get over confident and slip unknowingly back to level 1.

So, as you read this article, where do you think you lie on the spectrum? Level 1, 2, 3 or 4 – or perhaps you do not know.

I will put up on the website a full article about Unconscious Incompetence for you to read and I would like all members to consider how you can help your Club...

I am seeking expressions of interest from members who would like to be involved in developing and participating in a skills training program which will involve both theory and practice, starting from the very basic information. There exist, at a price, commercial courses to teach basic kayaking skills, but these are not usually aimed at the complete novice. It is also easier to learn from fellow members, who can provide ongoing advice.

As I said earlier, we are all time poor, so I am not looking for large commitments of time from either trainers or pupils. I would be interested to learn what time people think they could provide.

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## October to December 2015 – Trips and Events

### **Saturday 3rd October**

#### **A paddle through the harbour**

Take advantage of the 3.4m tide to push us up through the harbour. We'll start at Kohi Beach then pass through Mission Bay and Okahu Bay where other paddlers might choose to join the group, past the Container Wharf, the Ferry Building with a possible cuppa tea stop at the Viaduct Harbour. We will cross the channel, paddle past the Naval Base and around Stanley Point to a quiet beach in Ngataranga Bay for packed lunch. Return with the outgoing tide.

Email **Philip** on [nznobles@gmail.com](mailto:nznobles@gmail.com) to express interest and for further details. You are not committed to come on the trip but can be kept updated.

### **Sunday 11th October**

#### **Ponui Island**

Meet at Kawakawa Bay wharf 8am. We will paddle across to the northern tip of Pakihi Island and up the western side of Ponui Island. If we turn round at Kauri Point and head back that will be approx 20 km. On the way back if we want to paddle a couple of km's more we can go around the western side of Pakihi Island.

If the weather is unsuitable for this trip, I will try to come up with an alternative trip.

Everyone interested in coming should email me in advance [gedfagan@gmail.com](mailto:gedfagan@gmail.com) You are not committed to come on the trip. It will make it easier for me to advise you of a change of trip destination. **Gerard Fagan, 021 071 5917.**

### **Sunday 18th October**

#### **Lunch at the Riverhead Pub**

Join John Hotham for this easy tide assisted 7km paddle up the Inner Harbour to the Riverhead Pub. Bring your own or enjoy what the Pub has to offer, tell some tall yarns and jokes before returning with the outgoing tide to your car.

Call **John** on **482 1417** for further details including departure point and time.

### **Weekend 24th to 26th October**

#### **Possible camping at Home Bay**

Details will be posted on Club Website.

### **Sunday 1st November**

#### **Motuihe Island**

Join Philip & Sue for a ± 20km day's paddle from Kohi Beach to and possibly around this iconic island and returning. We will use the ebb tide to assist us out and the flood tide on our return. Weather dependant and may be changed to Saturday or other trip to suit weather.

Email your interest to [nznobles@gmail.com](mailto:nznobles@gmail.com) to receive updates on details and any changes. Emailing does not commit you to coming.

### **Sunday 15th November**

#### **Herne Bay to Bastion Point Swim Escort**

See page 8.

### **Sunday 6th December**

#### **Year End Picnic and Barbecue**

Venue and details to be advised.

### **Sunday 13th December**

#### **Bays Swim Escort**

See page 8.

## Are you ready to go back to school?

*Continued from page 6*

As most of you know, I teach the Kayak theory course for Coastguard Boating Education, and I am certainly willing to be involved in Club training in that capacity. A course is normally two evenings of 2 hours or a day course at the weekend. I would like the opportunity to assist others to teach this course as well – using the teaching material already prepared. Later there could be an opportunity for members to apply to be a Coastguard tutor themselves.

I believe that amongst the Club members we also have trained teachers who might be willing to impart their teaching knowledge to give tuition to other

members to assist them in presenting their skills to others, i.e. "teach the teachers".

Others who might not feel comfortable giving theory training in a classroom atmosphere might offer their services to run basic practical skills training courses, aimed at the absolute novice and based on the theory that these members should have acquired on a theory course.

Remember we need teachers and pupils to make this "School" successful.

*Ian Calhaem*

## Master Swim Association 2015 / 2016 swim and swim escort details

The following are the dates and times for this season. Kayakers need to ensure they are on the water 15 minutes before the start of each event. (If you have any queries please phone Philip or any of the committee members, see phone numbers on page 2 of this newsletter.)

	Event	Date	Swim Start time	High tide
1	Herne Bay	15/11/15	10.00 am	10.44am
2	Bays	13/12/15	8.00 am	9.38 am
3	Chelsea	20/02/16	6.00 am	? am
4	Rangitoto	13/03/16	7:45 am	? am

### Notes

- 1 Herne Bay swim runs from Herne Bay Beach to Masefield Beach via Watchmans Island. Kayaks launch at Masefield Beach at 8.30am to paddle to Herne Bay for briefing at 9.45 am.
- 2 The Bays swim runs from St Heliers Beach to Bastion Point boat ramp. Briefing at St Heliers at 7.20 am
- 3 Chelsea swim runs from Masefield Beach to Chelsea Sugar Factory. Roger will be serving a hot breakfast from 5.15 am at the car park in Curran Street Extension. Kayakers briefing at Masefield Beach at 5.40am.
- 4 The Rangitoto to St Heliers swim starts at Rangitoto Wharf at 7.45am. Briefing will be at 7.15am. Kayakers have two options: to paddle from the beach on the morning of the swim or paddle over on Saturday afternoon and camp on Rangitoto on Saturday night. More details nearer the event.

## Poet's Corner

*There's an onshore wind a-blowing  
At a decent rate of knots  
The tide is coming in  
On Kohi Beach  
The baby waves are perfect  
For those half forgotten skills  
Essential to the little boats  
We love so well  
So forgo my warm and cosy place  
This morning  
Don the soggy paddling pants  
And top  
Get out there in the wet  
And windy ocean  
Remembering that it seldom is*

*As bad as it all looks  
That onshore wind and baby waves  
Are brilliant  
For those braces turns and sculls  
We don't use much  
When we paddle off sedately  
On our great wee picnic trips  
To lovely places  
In our little ships  
Back on Kohi Beach this wild Spring morning  
Seaweed for the garden gathered up  
A bite of lunch already in the picture  
And you've guessed a very welcome cup.*

*Mike Randall*



## On the waterfront

Roger Lomas

In recent years, we have been enthralled by the many bold attempts to kayak across the Tasman Sea. An Australian duo managed to make a successful crossing back in 2008. Two separate solo attempts almost made it. Andrew McCauley's heroic effort ended in tragedy off the coast of Fiordland in 2007. Kiwi kayaker Scott Donaldson abandoned his brave attempt almost on the doorstep of victory. Scott still has a desire to get the job done and plans are well underway for another attempt.

A new craft for Scott is being built up at the Barracuda factory in Silverdale. It will utilise the hull of a modified Barracuda Outback double sea kayak. Later this summer a prototype version will undergo sea trials out in the Gulf. If you encounter the distinctive shaped craft, look out for another distinctive profile paddling it. It will be none other than Mr Barracuda himself, Gordon Robinson. He will be out there making sure that everything is ship-shape and fine-tuned. A perfectionist for detail, Gordon will ensure that Scott's next endeavour at paddling the ditch will be in a strong, sturdy and reliable kayak. Scott Donaldson has a website to keep us all informed on developments leading up to the next attempt. Many of us keenly followed his last foray, and you can proudly feel part of the new one by making a small donation.

Quite a few of our club members paddle craft emblazoned with the Quality Kayaks logo. This is a well-established kayak company based in the small Manawatu township of Ashhurst.

Local legend Max Grant has been designing and manufacturing a good range of capable sea kayaks here since almost before the moniker of sea kayak was first mentioned. A man of action, Max and his equally famous daughter Mel often feature in kayak journals with tales of their paddling exploits. Max has just released a book which chronicles their recent adventure filled sea-kayak journey around the South Island. Details on how to obtain the new book titled '*Fiordland and Beyond*' can be found on the Quality Kayaks website. Somehow he still manages to find time to run his busy kayak factory.

The latest creation from the Q-Kayaks designer is a very low profiled kayak called the Sea Hawk.

Meanwhile up at the Barracuda factory another new sea kayak has emerged. The Enigma made its debut appearance at the big Cambridge to Hamilton kayak race last month. It certainly made quite a statement; 1st outright in the sea kayak division, and 1st and 2nd in the plastic sea kayak class. The Enigma is another of the new ultra-light class plastic sea kayaks that Barracuda have become famous for. Coast to Coast legend Steve Gurney provided some input with the design and testing. With that sort of racing pedigree and the inaugural race success, the Enigma looks destined to succeed in the big endurance events. They will be out in the shops shortly.

The venerable old Albatross sea kayak, which has been out of production for some years now, could be about to flap its wings again. First launched back in the mid-nineties, it quickly found favour with many Auckland paddlers. Almost at the brink of extinction now, we occasionally catch a rare glimpse of a seaworthy version from the handful of known survivors.

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*It's just another training paddle for the early morning group up near Purewa Creek. The locomotive engineer gave the group a friendly toot as he whisked the Northern Explorer along the waterfront at the start of its journey down to Wellington.*



*The Beaver floatplane arrived in Auckland for scenic flights last summer. Another one has just joined the fleet and they will both be buzzing in and out of their base up near the new North-Wharf café precinct.*



*On a sparkling spring morning, there's always something interesting to see up around the fishing boat berths. The early morning group were out to explore the Onehunga and Mangere Bridge coastline late last month.*

If proposed production plans go ahead, they will see the re-born Albatross emerge as a light weight plastic sea kayak, utilising the technological skills gleaned from the pioneering work achieved at the Barracuda Sea Kayak facility.

They were certainly halcyon days for sea kayaking back in the nineties. It was a time when our club membership boomed as many flocked to participate in the new 'in sport'. Auckland kayakers were somewhat spoilt back then. They were lucky to have their very own well stocked kayak specialist store. This was the Auckland Canoe Centre. It was tucked away in the middle of the busy Mount Eden shopping district on Dominion Road. Proud proprietors Peter and Su Sommerhalder were always on hand to assist with their valuable kayaking knowledge.

That little store was loaded to the gunnels with everything kayaking. If it wasn't in stock, it would be ordered and on its way the next day. It became a mecca for kayaking aficionados from throughout the land. At times it almost resembled our clubs meeting rooms; such was the gathering of familiar faces.

Soon others were trying to emulate the Sommerhalder's kayak shop success formula. It wasn't long before there were four or more rival stores all vying for our attention. Somehow, they couldn't quite match the personalised service provided by Peter and Su.

During the nineties Auckland became the New Zealand hub for sea kayak manufacturing. No less than four designer/manufacturer facilities were churning out a vast array of colourful composite sea

kayaks. Competition was intense and innovation abounded. Sea kayak design moved ahead with quantum leaps. Promotion of the product brought about a competitive rivalry of almost unhealthy proportions. When the spray finally settled only two of the competitors were left floating. They are both still in production today.

In an era when most of our manufacturing has gone offshore, we are fortunate indeed to have local kayak builders still in situ. The benefits of this are immense. They include options for customized kayak construction as well as that all important service and repair capability. We still make some of the best kayaks on the planet. Just look about next time you are out on the water with a group of paddlers. It's easy to spot the smart kayakers; they are all paddling New Zealand made craft.

The keen paddlers from the early morning team deserve a well-earned pat on the back. Those stout-hearted stalwarts managed to front up for paddling action right throughout winter. It's easy to spot these tenacious types. They are the healthy fit and fast looking paddlers that we would all like to be. Watching them come ashore for tucker time just recently, a completely different opinion could have been formed. We all tucked into a huge treat of delicious home baking. It seemed that everyone had each brought along enough for us all. It became a very long morning tea break. It will take weeks now to work it all off.

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I was out to solve a mystery, why has Vine House lost its popularity? This is the Auckland Council controlled holiday house up on the shores of the Mahurangi Harbour. We as a club have access to it for one weekend each month in return for a few house-keeping chores. Popularity problems have plagued the property in recent years. Our venture with Vine House all started off with a hiss and a roar, but with successive years, the interest has dwindled. If it wasn't for two regular stalwarts, there would be many club weekends when the house would be empty. Club treasurer Matt is the most regular attendee. On some weekends he is the sole resident. I asked Matt what people get up to on a Vine House weekend. 'Not a lot really,' was his casual reply. 'Well I suppose we do lots of walking, reading and listening to the national programme on Radio New Zealand'.

That all sounded pretty normal, so I probed around a bit more and inquired as to what chores the club was obligated to in return for the weekend's lodgings. 'Well not a lot really' replied Matt. 'We just keep things tidy. I mow the grass around the house. There's quite a bit of it. Sometimes it takes two or three hours. We use one of those petrol powered line trimmers.' Hmmm.

There's nothing like the scent of summer to activate all those kayakers who hibernate over winter. Well there are no excuses left now. The recent spell of sunny spring weather has awakened the comatose types and club fleet numbers are reflecting this. There is now plenty of activity advertised on the club calendar and paddlers are spoilt for choice on some weekends. Our club website is a good place look for

the latest events. They can be promoted here at very short notice, so keep an active lookout. If you would like to organise an event, be it an expedition or a short picnic paddle then this is the place to post it. If you are competent enough to follow the prompts, then you can do it yourself. If you are having trouble with the technology, then take heart in the fact that you are not alone. The usual remedy here is to seek help from a ten year old. If all else fails, Matt Crozier or Ian Calhaem are our resident experts.

Every once in a while I hear tales of woe from budding trip organisers. They are despondent because their advertised event only pulled a handful of punters. From my perspective, and I have been busy organising paddling trips on a regular basis for the last twenty-five years, I offer the following and hope that it is helpful – Don't feel deterred if your advertised event only attracts a small turnout. Consider yourself extremely fortunate. Big numbers can be fun, but it can all turn pear shaped if paddling conditions deteriorate. Many club trip leaders have walked away from incident events never to be seen again. Decision making and management within a compact group is a whole lot easier when the proverbial happens. The success of an organised event is rarely about numbers attending; think of it as more about the enjoyment factor. Small groups have the advantage of being more sociable and are often the catalyst for prompting a return event. We need more trip organisers and they need to enjoy themselves too.

One of the bonuses of being a trip organiser is that you get to choose where to paddle. Variety is important here and a rotation of departure points helps make accessibility to all paddlers in the group equitable. It also keeps the destinations interesting. Choosing the right place for morning tea is of immense importance, well it certainly is amongst our early morning group. A good trip organiser will have this well and truly under control. On one of our recent outings, a sunny spot was selected at the base of some coastal cliffs. These gave good shelter from the cool south-westerly wind that was starting to pick up. There was dissent amongst the ranks at the chosen site which utilised large boulders from an ancient rock-fall for seating. This was dangerous. The point was taken and the dissenter was asked to choose a better site. He selected one a short stroll away. Just as we were about to be seated a small rock-fall tumbled down from above and we all beat a hasty retreat back to the original site. My thankful gaze skyward was two-fold.



*'Tickets please.' The Duckbus will be out and about on the Auckland Harbour this summer.*



Whilst our focus for many years has revolved around sea kayaks and how to stay safely in them, other avenues may need to be explored. The growing trend in paddle sport in recent years has been towards stand up paddleboards (SUPs) and racing skis. Sea kayak sales have flattened right out. Perhaps within our club we now have the last bastion of salty old sea kayakers. This has caused alarm in some circles.

It is highly likely that the sea kayak boom bubble has been burst. The light-weight racing skis and the SUPs are starting to dominate the paddle craft to be seen out on the water each weekend. It is almost certainly their simplicity of design and ultra-light weight which helps make them more attractive. This combined with the user friendly advantages gained from ease of re-entry are beating us hands down in the popularity stakes. The light-weight sea kayaks have helped retain some prevalence for us. They have certainly prolonged the paddling longevity for some of our senior paddlers.

But the writing could well be on the wall. We sea-kayakers are all getting older; few young people are joining our clubs. Something needs to change.

The thought now is that maybe it could be a good time to consider fostering some of the new paddling craft and their paddlers within the club.

The SUPs are just about everywhere now. Their paddlers embrace a broad age bracket. We also see many family SUP groups out and about on the water together. This is almost unheard of within the kayaking clubs now. The SUP craft are evolving to meet their paddler's needs. Soon their craft will reflect this with storage compartments for picnic gear and probably camping gear as well. They can skip along at a good clip. In the right conditions they will give many a sea kayaker a good run for their money. To the best of my knowledge, they don't have an organisation or club that caters for their recreational needs. They currently have racing events, but most of these revolve around manufacturer driven promotion initiatives. Often they just tag along on existing kayak racing type events. I'm sure the slower recreational SUPs would welcome overtures to join a friendly paddling club.

The ski paddlers are a completely different story. As mentioned in earlier dispatches via this column, they are extremely well organised with club houses

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*Could that conventional sea kayaker be casting an envious eye over the new breed of ski type craft with storage hatches, or is he just wishing that it would bugger off and stop trying to show him up with its superior speed?*

and a very active events calendar. Their craft do however offer an opportunity for us to capitalise on. Few of the skinny six metre long racing skis will appeal to us. Even fewer of us will ever be able to stay atop one. But there are other more user friendly stable skis on the market now. Outwardly they look very similar to the sleek speedster models, but the discerning eye can detect subtle differences. Most noticeable is a bigger beam or width. This combined with a low slung seat makes them a whole lot more stable.

Most of the big ski manufactures now have at least two of these beamy models in their product range. A few of them even have storage compartments for all those goodies that sea kayakers like to stow. The skis have a few big advantages over our conventional sea kayaks. First up would have to be the ease of re-entry. Fall off and you just climb back on-board. You are quickly off on your way again. This relatively simple sounding task can take a bit of practice though. Self-draining cockpits suck the water away through venturi type outlets in the hull.

The skis come in a range of weights depending on material and lay-up, with some clocking in at around the 11 kilogram mark. You could trot down to the beach with one of them tucked comfortably under one arm. Ski paddlers need to wear some special gear to offset that lack of cockpit protection.

Many high tech paddling garments are readily available for this now. Just a couple of weeks ago we encountered the ski boys up the harbour early one morning. One paddler had streamlined silver foil paddling pogies on. He looked a bit like Flash Gordon as he whizzed past.

Naturally with a lighter craft and a faster hull, you are going to have a bit of a competitive advantage over your conventional sea kayaker mates. You will be able to leave them well behind when the pace goes on. But isn't that exactly what we are all trying to do most of the time? I've already bought mine.

*Catch me if you can,*

*Roger*