

## March 2010

Club Information .....	2
Club Trip/Event Policies .....	2
Club Banking Details .....	2
Website Password .....	2
Kayak Hire .....	3
New Members.....	3
Regular Events.....	3
Crossing the Firth of Thames.....	4
Wenderholm to Mullet Point.....	6
Fergs Kayak Sale .....	6
Swim Escort Rangitoto– St Heliers promo.....	7
Club Trips.....	8



Update Your Membership Details .....	8
President's Report .....	9
Kayaking Stewart Island .....	10
Poet's Corner.....	13
Rules of the Road at Sea .....	13

### Swim Escort March 2010

**Sunday 21 March** Rangitoto Wharf to St Heliers – see page 7



*Its the last weekend of summer and a group of early morning kayakers come ashore on Watchman Island for a cuppa.*

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>

### Email event reminders

send blank email to

[subscribe@aucklandcanoecub.org.nz](mailto:subscribe@aucklandcanoecub.org.nz)

### Officers

<i>Patron</i>	Jim Mason	
<i>President</i>	Ian Calhaem	579 0512
<i>Secretary</i>	Neil Scott	846 4004
<i>Treasurer</i>	Gerard Fagan	832 9720
<i>Trips</i>	Will Henden	550 3699
<i>Publicity</i>	Roger Lomas	846 6799
<i>Training</i>	John Maynard	626 4096
<i>Storage/kayaks</i>	Gavin Baker	528 5188
<i>Assistant</i>	Roger Lomas	846 6799
<i>Merchandising</i>	Neil Scott	846 4004
<i>Vine House</i>	Trevor Arthur	817 7357
<i>Newsletter</i>	Claire O'Connor	521 1769
<i>Webmaster</i>	Matt Crozier	817 1984

### Email addresses

[patron@aucklandcanoecub.org.nz](mailto:patron@aucklandcanoecub.org.nz)  
[president@aucklandcanoecub.org.nz](mailto:president@aucklandcanoecub.org.nz)  
[secretary@aucklandcanoecub.org.nz](mailto:secretary@aucklandcanoecub.org.nz)  
[treasurer@aucklandcanoecub.org.nz](mailto:treasurer@aucklandcanoecub.org.nz)  
[trips@aucklandcanoecub.org.nz](mailto:trips@aucklandcanoecub.org.nz)  
[publicity@aucklandcanoecub.org.nz](mailto:publicity@aucklandcanoecub.org.nz)  
[training@aucklandcanoecub.org.nz](mailto:training@aucklandcanoecub.org.nz)  
[merchandise@aucklandcanoecub.org.nz](mailto:merchandise@aucklandcanoecub.org.nz)  
[vinehouse@aucklandcanoecub.org.nz](mailto:vinehouse@aucklandcanoecub.org.nz)  
[newsletter@aucklandcanoecub.org.nz](mailto:newsletter@aucklandcanoecub.org.nz)  
[webmaster@aucklandcanoecub.org.nz](mailto:webmaster@aucklandcanoecub.org.nz)

## 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

*Bank* BNZ  
*Branch* Newmarket  
*Account* 02-0100-0023453-000  
*Name* Auckland Canoe Club

### 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

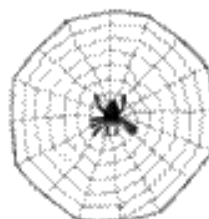
All major banks have set up Auckland Canoe Club as a registered payee for internet banking.

This means that you can pay to

**Auckland Canoe Club**

without having to enter the account number.

Check with your bank.



## Club Website Access for March

**Password** Motuora



## Deadline for April Newsletter

**16 March 2010**

## 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.

## Skills Practice

### Skills / Rolling Practice – Okahu Bay

Come along to Okahu Bay on Sundays at 10am to brush up on your skills!!

For more information please phone  
John Williams on 021 131 0516

## NEW MEMBER



### Welcome

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

Jenny Polwart

## Regular Events

### Vine House – Last Weekend of Every Month

On the last weekend of each month we have the use of Vine House.

This gem in Mahurangi Harbour is a 2 km paddle from Sullivans 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, eg 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 Sullivans 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, Matt 817-1984.**



### Tuesday Evening Paddles

A small group of informal paddlers usually meets at the Okahu Bay ramp at about 5:30pm on Tuesday nights.

### Saturday Morning Paddles

If you are into good coffee, good company and usually a leisurely paddle then these are the trips for you.

A small but growing group meet about 9:00am on Saturday mornings to paddle to one of the beaches – St Heliers, Kohimarama or Mission Bay for coffee.

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

## Crossing the Firth of Thames

*Peter Sommerhalder*

Our plan to paddle from Auckland to Opito Bay became reality in mid November last year. Both of us have paddled across to Coromandel Peninsula before. However this crossing taught us some lessons. Joe Scott-Woods was in his Puffin, and I paddled a Beachcomber.

We launched from Kawakawa Bay after 11 am. We chose this starting point, because paddling from Orere Point to Waikawau is a similar distance to a crossing from the eastern end of Waiheke Island to Te Kouma Harbour. However should the conditions for a safe crossing in single kayaks be unsuitable, we had the option of driving around to Thames and launch from there.

The 10 knot southwesterly winds (increasing to 20 kn and changing to northerly for the evening) and a high tide at 12.30pm looked in our favour to paddle across that afternoon. We were aware however that the deteriorating conditions would prevent us from crossing the next day.

After two hours we landed for a late lunch on the northern tip of Ponui Island. We watched the sea conditions carefully. Some white caps in the early afternoon had disappeared. By 2.30pm we were back in our boats heading in the direction of Coromandel Harbour and lodged a trip report with Coastguard. Sea conditions were as predicted by the weather forecast and we managed well for the first one and a half hours. There was little other traffic.

We estimated it would take us about 4 hours to get to Coromandel township, and if conditions allowed we would head to the camping ground in Papaaroha before dark. After two and a half hours steady paddling, the swells became bigger, with white caps appearing all around us and dark rain clouds became visible over Waiheke behind us. The wind changed to a northerly, creating wind against tide situation, as per weather forecast. By now we were over half way and committed, handling the swell comfortably. The group of islands to the entrance of Coromandel Harbour ever so slowly grew bigger.

We kept paddling, keeping close to each other, with drink and nibbles on the go. I noticed more and more cold water sloshing inside my cockpit because of a very leaky spraydeck. As the kayaks were loaded with six days food and camping gear, this did not affect the stability, but my calf muscles and wet bottom were getting colder.

With daylight fading and after five hours paddling we made it to one of the islands guarding the entrance to what we perceived was Coromandel Harbour.

We found a rocky inlet good enough to land, pump out the swamped cockpits of both kayaks and changed into dry clothes. We were both shivering and initially had difficulties to stand upright. It was now eight in the evening, and we knew we only had about fifteen minutes of daylight left. We felt much warmer in the dry clothes and decided to head for the mainland as quick as possible. Chances of finding a suitable spot for camping on the bush clad and rocky cliffs of this island in the dark were virtually nil.

Within minutes of pushing off it got dark. We deferred calling Coastguard for later, as we had not reached our final destination yet and wanted to make use of every minute of the remaining daylight. There were amazingly few lights shining from the mainland for guidance. A cluster indicated what we thought was Coromandel township. After a while those disappeared completely behind Whanganui Island. Amongst the scarce dots of light was one brighter spot. We headed for that one and it became our guiding star of Bethlehem.

The swells increased in size and noise. Pine forests and steep cliffs appeared as giant black shadows on our right, indicating that we were heading for shore and safety. Our headlights were packed with our gear inside the hatches, useless for now. We stayed very close to each other, careful not get separated in the dark.

Then came the moment where I could no longer see the ghostly shadow of my mate Joe. Presuming he must have slowed behind me, I stopped paddling to give him a chance to catch up. Joe did not appear between the black waves with white caps on top. Then I started to paddle in a circle, yelling Joe's name in all directions. Still – silence! What to do next? Should I use my VHF radio asking for help? Letting go of the paddle with one hand to operate the radio was an impossible task. Also the noise of the waves would make it difficult for me to hear replies to my request. Is this situation serious enough (life threatening) to activate my EPIRB? I gave it another chance, trying to keep calm. Then I blew my whistle, hard. Next I hear Joe's voice from ahead. Immensely relieved I paddled up to him: "Did you hear my whistle?" "No," he said, "I just couldn't see you any longer." This whole frightening episode lasted probably for only two minutes – two long agonising minutes.

We carried on in the pitch dark towards the still shining light. Rain was falling on and off, we carried

*Continued on page 5 ➤*

## Crossing the Firth of Thames

– continued from page 4

on. Another single light on a lamp post appeared, raising our hopes of being close to Papaaroa camp. Clunk, this was the hull of a large yacht anchored straight in front of us with its white mast light above our heads. We turned towards the brighter light again. We now could recognise it as a lit-up ranchslider door. Soon afterwards we slid into a sheltered sandy bay and climbed up wooden steps to the house with the bright light on. We were safely on shore.

A man watching TV opened the ranchslider, obviously a bit surprised at finding two dripping wet and cold elderly paddlers in his back yard. When we asked him how far it was to Papaaroa camp, he said there was a camp ground next door and that it would be 15km by road back to Papaaroa. The time was 11.15pm, three hours since we left the island. Heading for the brightest light we could see took us much further north than the anticipated 6km to Coromandel Harbour. We had made landfall at Otautu Bay at the entrance to Colville Bay.

An attempt to contact Coastguard on the radio from the shore proved unsuccessful. Our unexpected hosts, Merv and Jackie Goudie, let us use their phone to contact our families and to relay a message to Coastguard that we had arrived safely on the other side of the Firth of Thames. While putting up our tents in the garden, we were offered a welcome hot chocolate followed by a huge plate of baked

beans and fried eggs each. Apparently we were not the first strangers landing on their property, and Merv and Jackie knew exactly how to “treat” us.

Next morning we moved into the Otautu Bay camping ground for a rest day. Only then it dawned to us how different our crossing was from our plans. We got close to hypothermia, but felt we coped with the situation without panicking – just! There are lessons in this story, which became apparent in hindsight. Coastguard appreciated our phone call that night, as they apparently tried to call us on the radio. Paddling conditions in the dark made it impossible for me to listen to or operate my hand held radio. A call for assistance on the radio when we were separated could have made things worse, as we were nowhere near Coromandel Harbour at that time. Activating the EPIRB would have given our rescuers an accurate position.

Three days later we made it to Opito Bay, enjoying every moment. We had to deal with very strong south westerlies, whipping up white caps every afternoon by a strong offshore wind. Despite my remark to Joe “never again”, I had the opportunity to do another crossing from Scully Reef to Deadmans Point (Te Kouma Harbour) with Rona and Gerard two months later. Conditions were near perfect, and we were never lost while paddling for just over three hours.



Taiharuru Bay

## Wenderholm to Mullet Point – February 13

Iris Wegmueller

Gerard's trip north of Auckland went ahead on Saturday February 13, with two keen paddlers wanting to make the most out of another fine and warm summer day.

We launched our kayaks at Wenderholm at 8.30 am and paddled down the Puhoi River to the sea. Clouds were crossing the sky and the wind was on its way, but that did not deter us to head up the coast and then over to the back of Saddle Island, past Martin's Bay and up to Mullet Point.

It is an amazing coastline up there with lots of shallow rocky areas, and greatly enhanced by me catching my first ever snapper quite unexpectedly as I was winding up my fishing line before morning tea and with all the supposedly wrong equipment!

Needless to say I was ecstatic, my first snapper in 15 years of paddling! And I had not even been trying to get one! This ought to be one of the best birthday presents in a long time! (Yes, I measured it, is WAS the required size!) I decided to gut it, rather than the usual filleting that we do when catching kahawai.

Interesting, I never thought gutting would be that easy and not the slightest bit disgusting. These beautiful fish have really hardly anything inside them in terms of organs and intestines.

We had a pleasant morning tea stop that allowed us to stretch our legs and I took the opportunity to further extend my collection of sea treasures (shells, and the like) and there was also plenty of talk about ... kayaking techniques and paddles, as Willie was keen to find out as much as possible in that regard from Gerard.

Our lunch break provided us with the opportunity for a snooze under some shady trees before heading back into a brisk 20–30 knot westerly that was now blowing. About an hour away from our launch spot and just when I was putting down my head to avoid another gust, there was a pull on my fishing line.

This time I was sure I caught a rather large kahawai.



So I took in the line and surprise surprise! I had another even bigger snapper on my hook! I recall yahoing rather loudly as I got it out. Can you blame me? 15 years of kayaking and two snapper in one day, and all of this after repeatedly talking about wanting to learn from someone how to catch snapper. Well, well, it seemed like the Universe was trying to tell me something... I was over the moon, another delicious fish.

The only thing that really began to annoy me at this point was that Gerard had no such luck, despite using exactly the same lure and paddling within meters of me. But the reverse had happened in the past, so I guess it is just luck...

He did catch a large kahawai close to Wenderholm, but that one got itself off the hook before he could pull it in.

A very happy and tired trio got safely back to Wenderholm, having been blessed with another beautiful day on the water.

By the way, did you know snapper have much more beautiful eyes than kahawai, check it out the next time you catch one.

*Happy paddling!*

## Fergs Kayak Sale

As you may have heard in the news recently, Fergs Kayaks have incurred a massive fine. This was a result of court action taken after an unfortunate mishap at their Wellington indoor climbing wall facility. The upshot of all this is a need to release capital tied up in stock at the two kayak shops to pay off the fine. A major kayak sale will take place.

The Okahu Bay shop will be awash with heavily discounted kayaks and associated gear. It will be a good opportunity for club members to upgrade or renew their kayaking needs.

Our good neighbour Fergs have been very supportive to our club over the years. Why not call in and see if you can help them and maybe pick up a bargain at the same time.

## Swim Escort – Rangitoto to St Heliers – Sunday 21st March

Timing – 9.00am Pre-race briefing for kayakers at Rangitoto  
– 9.30am Race start

There is the option to **paddle across to Rangitoto on Saturday evening** and stay the night on the landing there. You will need sleeping bags, cookers and food for the drinks and meals you intend to have. There is access to drinking water.

This is a *once a year* opportunity to sleep over at Rangitoto, with an evening walk to the summit to see the sun set before bedding down under the visitors shelter (no need for a tent!)

The **second option** is to **paddle from St Heliers to Rangitoto on the Sunday morning**. Meet at 7.30am to leave at about 7.45am to be ready for the pre-race briefing at 9.00am

The **last option** is to paddle from **Okahu Bay to Rangitoto on the Sunday morning** making it a nice round trip for the day – Okahu Bay, Rangitoto, St Heliers, Okahu Bay.

Meet at 7.15am to leave at 7.30am to be ready for the pre-race briefing at 9.00am.

**Club Kayaks:** Club kayaks will be reserved for this event. **Please phone Gavin on 528 5188.**

This is the grand finale of the four swim escorts we do. Remember the swim escorts are a worthwhile trip for the club by bringing us all together and helping another organisation, plus the club gets paid – our only regular fund-raisers. It's a great introduction for new members to the club !

**Barbecue Lunch and Icy-Cold Drinks** Roger's famous barbecue back at St Heliers Beach is a highlight of this trip – and very much appreciated by all!



*Sunrise Rangitoto visitors' shelter – this smart guy brought a bug screen with him!*



*Race about to start.*



*A floatilla of boats.*

## Club Trips – March/April 2010

Please phone Wednesday or Thursday to express interest.

Please contact Will on 550 3699 if you are available to take a trip to your favourite destination or one of the following.

Note: Trips will start at the time announced. Ensure you are on time or you will be left to catch up.

### CAMPING AT MOTUHIE

**Saturday 6th or Sunday 7th March**

Come camping at one of the Hauraki Gulfs' beautiful islands. Motuhie is a relatively easy paddle from Auckland and a beautiful island with terrific beaches.

Phone Phillip Noble 575 3493

### CAMPING AT TUTUKAKA

**Friday 12th to Saturday 14th March**

I have not paddled here, so if you have or if you're the adventurous type who likes to try new things, come and join us for what I can tell will be some interesting paddling and I hope good rock gardening. Bring a trolley for easy transport of your kayak from and back to the campground.

Phone Will 550 3699

### SWIM ESCORT – RANGITOTO TO ST HELIERS

**Sunday 21st March**

See previous page for details.

### PONU I ISLAND

**Saturday 27th or Sunday 28th March**

Paddle to and around Ponui Island. We have attempted to do this earlier in the year, but alas haven't got the weather right yet, let's try again. Garry will give hints and tips on kayak fishing. Bring your soft bait trolling lure, fishing gear etc.

Phone Garry Schroder 298 1913

### KAWAU ISLAND

**Saturday 3rd or Sunday 4th April**

Meet at Martins Bay. From there we have several options depending on the wind direction. A northerly or easterly wind will suit a circumnavigation of Kawau island or we can explore the western side. But if it's a south-westerly we will head to Motuora Is and have a tailwind back. Either way we will get a paddle.

Phone Gerard Fagan 832 9720  
Mob 021 0715 917

## Membership Details

I recently sent out a brief email reminder about the post Xmas Swim Escorts. A number of emails bounced back to me as the email address was incorrect.

If you did not receive the email reminder, that means I do not have your correct email address.

To keep our membership records current, I would appreciate it if you would send me:

**Your Name**

**Your preferred email address**

to **Secretary@AucklandCanoeClub.org.nz**

If you change address or any of your details, I would appreciate it if you can keep me posted so that we can ensure that you continue to receive the newsletter.

I promise not to spam you with email except for notifications about Swim Escorts and a Membership Due note at year end.

Regards

*Neil Scott*  
Secretary



## President's Report

Dear All,

### Swim Escort

Thank you to all those folks who managed to join us on Saturday for the Swim Escort. I realise that a number of you were working or otherwise occupied on Saturday. The organisers have recognised that Saturday is harder for people to attend than Sunday but the experiment was tried this year to avoid a conflict on Sunday with other activities on Tamaki Drive.

The next swim Escort is the BIG one, Rangitoto to St Heliers and we need as many kayaks as possible for that swim. So please mark in your diaries now – 21st MARCH.

### Canoe Day

Last Sunday, the 28th February I attended the annual Canoe Day at Papakura. This is a fun event organised for the local children to give them a chance to experience kayaking in a controlled environment. Organisations such as the Coastguard and Local Council are heavily involved.

As you will all know it was an eventful day for coastal activities and whilst a good learning experience, plans were changed drastically.

At 02:27 hrs on 28th February 2010 the Ministry of Civil Defence and Emergency Management issued a confirmation notice declaring a tsunami Warning was in effect for New Zealand. It confirmed that:-

People in coastal areas should:

1. Stay off beaches
2. Stay out of the water (sea, rivers and estuaries, including boating activities)
3. Do not go sightseeing
4. Share this information with family, neighbours and friends
5. Listen to the radio and/or TV for updates
6. Follow instructions of your local Civil Defence authorities.

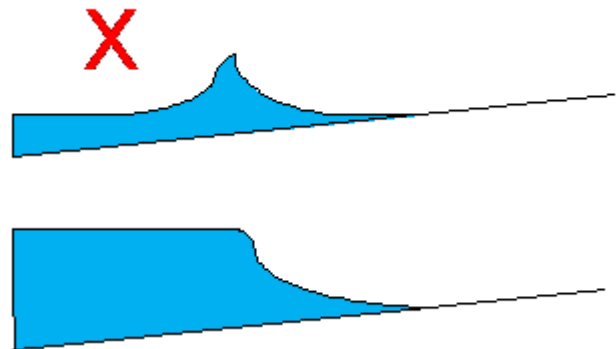
A number of the participants at the Canoe Day did not understand why all water activities were cancelled and we only did land based activities, after confirming with the authorities that the ground was high enough above sea level.

I thought it would be prudent to remind our members of the effects of tsunamis as there were reports of kayakers ignoring the warnings in the Auckland region.

The general concept of a tsunami is of a large wave that behaves similarly to any other big wave, such as the wake from a passing ship. It rolls up the beach and dissipates.

*That is Wrong!*

A tsunami is a wall of water travelling at up to 800km per hour and extending many kilometres behind the initial wall. When this wall of water comes up the beach it keeps on coming, with tremendous force. Even a small tsunami has significant potential to be damaging.



This is well illustrated by the video clip captured in Christchurch at 1750 hrs Sunday night where a seemingly small wave comes up the river. [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1zG\\_ARyEKM](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1zG_ARyEKM) (or search "Christchurch tsunami utube"). This was over 10 hours after the first wave arrived in Christchurch and was reported to be less than 20 cm high.

The Tsunami advisory was cancelled at 0835 on Monday morning.

### Boat Shows

There are two boat shows coming up soon – the first from the 11th–14th March is the International Boat Show at the Viaduct Basin, and the second is the Hutchwilco Boat Show from the 13th–16th May at Greenlane. The Club will be represented at both demonstrating safety gear and procedures.

See you on the water,

*Ian*

## Kayaking Stewart Island (Part 1)

Colin Quilter

In Physics, most forces of attraction decline with distance. For example the pull of gravitation and magnetism both decrease as distance increases. But for a kayaker the reverse is true. The more remote the destination, the greater the attraction it exerts. Which explains why, on a calm morning in Bluff in early February, I watched my kayak being hoisted on board the fast ferry which crosses Foveaux Strait to Stewart Island.

To reach Stewart Island I had driven onto State Highway 1 in Auckland and stayed on it for three days. It's not a cheap trip; the cost of petrol to drive to Bluff and back (\$400), the return crossing of Cook Strait (\$380), the return crossing of Foveaux Strait for me and my kayak (\$180), and secure parking for my car for 16 days at Bluff (\$70) totalled more than \$1,000.

While in Bluff I visited Meri and Ian Leask in their cottage on the waterfront. Meri operates the Bluff Fishermen's Radio network. Each morning and evening, from her kitchen in Bluff, she speaks to commercial fishermen scattered along the Southland coast. She is their point of contact with home, and with rescue services if they are ever needed. I wanted her help because I knew that my 5-watt handheld VHF would not have the power to contact her from remote Stewart Island beaches, and I asked her if I could request any fishermen whom I met on the coast to pass messages on to her using their 25-watt sets. She agreed that was a good idea, (and I later found out that she had asked the local fishermen to look out for me, so that information about my travels reached her, in some cases, without my even knowing). With Meri's assurance that the fishermen would keep an eye open for me I left Bluff feeling I was among friends.

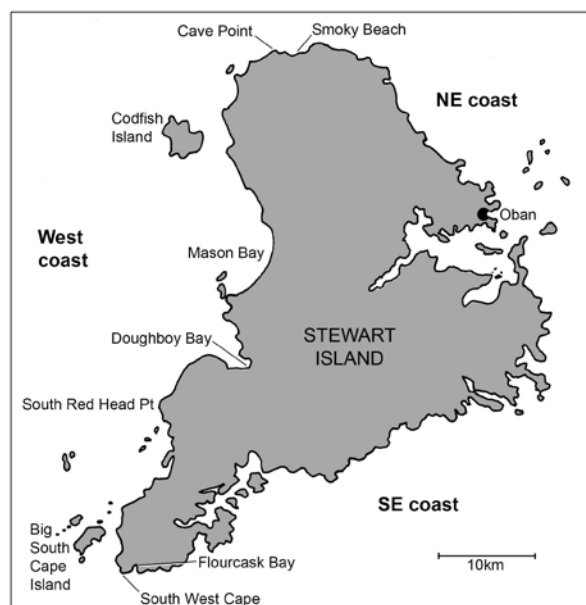


My kayak being loaded at Bluff

The Foveaux Strait ferry is a powerful aluminium catamaran. It takes just an hour to reach Oban, the only settlement on Stewart Island. I was told that

crossings are seldom cancelled, even in bad weather. Oban addresses itself to tourists; there are a couple of cafes, some bed-and-breakfasts, a backpackers, a hotel or two, and a DOC office which is where I went to fill out a Trip Intention form. The Ranger there confirmed what I already knew; that I had come at a good time. After weeks of windy weather the 5-day forecast predicted light winds due to a slow-moving ridge of high pressure over the South Island. It was time to reconsider my strategy for circumnavigating the island.

Stewart Island is roughly triangular, with each side being 60-90km long. Two of the sides (the NE and SE sides) are relatively sheltered from the prevailing westerly wind and swell. They both have many protected inlets and bays. The third side, the west coast, is a different story. It bears the full force of the "roaring forties", (its latitude being about 47 degrees south). The great southern ocean swells reach Stewart Island at their full strength; the nearest land to windward is the southern tip of South America. I knew that to traverse the west coast I would need unusually calm weather; and the forecast gave some hope that I would get it. I decided to seize the opportunity and get onto the west coast as fast as possible.



After a quick lunch on the waterfront at Oban I headed northwest along the coast. My kayak was deeply loaded with enough food for three weeks; since each day's food weighs 1kg, that was about 20kg in addition to the usual camping gear. I didn't expect the trip to last that long, but if bad weather

*Continued on page 11 ➤*

## Kayaking Stewart Island (Part 1)

– continued from page 10

trapped me on some remote beach then at least I wouldn't go hungry. The afternoon was grey and calm, and the tidal stream was running at 1-2 knots in my favour. The NE coast is made up of a series of white-sand beaches separated by headlands; a kayaker could land and camp just about anywhere, (and there are also several trampers' huts which are part of the North West Circuit Track). By 8pm I had reached Smoky Bay, with 40km paddling behind me, and most of the NW side of the island in my wake.

At the western end of Smoky Bay I found a good campsite, previously used by hunters, in the bush behind the beach. Stewart Island is home to a large herd of Whitetail Deer, and hunters have established small huts and campsites all over the island. In most of the bays where I stopped, hunters had been before me, and since they have an eye for a comfortable camping spot I found it was always worth searching for sites they had used before.

Next morning I set the alarm for 5am, and breakfasted, packed up my tent, and loaded the kayak by torchlight. At first light I was on the water, heading towards Cave Point where I would turn left onto the mighty west coast. As I turned the corner in the sharp light of morning the full scope of the problem was revealed. Glassy swells lifted themselves and broke with a roar all along East Ruggedy Beach. A dense mist of spray hung like a curtain along the coast, hiding the beach and the dunes behind it. I knew immediately that I would be unlikely to find a landing for the next 30km until I reached the southern end of Mason Bay where the Ernest Islands protect one end of the beach from the swell. At 6km/hr I had at least 5 hours of paddling ahead of me, and it was essential that I not encounter a headwind strong enough to slow or stop me.

The morning passed as I worked slowly south. The beaches on this coast have evocative names; East and West Ruggedy, Big and Little Hellfire, all partially hidden behind a mist of spray flung up by the breakers that hurled themselves onto the coast. The distant roar of the surf was a constant, and unsettling, reminder of what awaited me if the wind got up and I was forced to attempt a landing. But the hours passed, and in the early afternoon after 8.5 windless hours I eventually pulled ashore at the sheltered southern end of Mason Bay. I was tired, and very relieved to be there. Half an hour later a fresh southwesterly wind filled in across the bay; if I had still been paddling it would have brought me to a complete standstill, with consequences I didn't want to think about. It was a powerful reminder of the value of an early start, and I vowed never again to grumble when the alarm went off at 5am.



West Ruggedy Beach, partially concealed by mist thrown up by heavy surf. No easy landing here.

Mason Bay is the iconic beach on the west coast of Stewart Island. I saw it in all its rugged beauty next morning, after a cold front had passed through during the night. Lines of breakers marched ashore along its 10km length, and a grey sea flecked with whitecaps stretched northwards towards Codfish Island on the horizon. It was a day for walking, not paddling. I set off along the beach after breakfast, trying to recognise who had made the footprints on the sand during the night. Here a seal had come ashore, leaving symmetrical flipper marks. The three-toed prints above the high-water mark were from a kiwi, with a distinctive curving scratch where one claw had scraped the sand as each foot swung forward. The deep pug-marks were from deer which had used the beach to travel from one grassy clearing to another. Quite a change from the familiar beaches of Northland, where humans, oystercatchers and gulls are the most common visitors.



Looking south along Mason Bay. My campsite was below the arrow, near a lagoon called "The Gutter."

Continued on page 12 ➤

## Kayaking Stewart Island (Part 1)

– continued from page 11



Portrait of a curious dotterel

Dunes back the beach for most of its length. In places they extend a kilometre or two inland. Stonefields occur among them and on these windswept flats, dotterels were common. They were cautious at first, but when

I sat down on the sand and remained very still they approached out of curiosity, and I was able to take some nice photographs of birds less than a metre away from the camera.

At the northern end of the beach, a few kilometres inland there is a local summit – the “Big Sandhill” – about 160 metres high. The view from the top, buffeted by the wind, took in the wide sweep of the bay. Sand carried by the wind stung my legs, and I noticed that granite outcrops below the summit had been etched by windblown sand with a pattern of deep parallel grooves, all aligned with the direction of the westerly wind. Considering the hardness of the rock, one could only wonder at the timescale of such events.

The wind eased overnight. Next morning, before forecast southerlies arrived, I put in a couple of hours to reach Doughboy Bay, crossing a lumpy swell left over from the previous day. Doughboy is another curving beach of golden sand, but much more sheltered than Mason Bay. There’s a DOC trampers’ hut here, (part of the 9-day Southern Circuit). I wasn’t yet in a mood to talk to other people, and found a nice campsite in bush behind the beach, north of the hut. Behind the bay is Doughboy Hill (400m). It happens that the Southern Circuit track crosses its summit, so in the afternoon I climbed the hill to gain the view, and to see if I could pick



Overlooking Doughboy Beach. I am shirtless because sandflies are slow fliers and can’t keep up with a walking man. Just don’t stop for long!

up a VHF weather forecast from the repeater on Mt Rakeahua. Not only was that successful, but I was able to txt home as well; so the climb was well worth the effort.

By now more than half of the west coast was behind me. About 40km remained before I turned the corner at South West Cape onto a more sheltered coast. I was on edge, knowing that the good weather couldn’t last for ever. During the night the wind souged in the trees above my tent, and when the alarm went at 5am I lay in my sleeping bag in the darkness and thought that paddling today was a hopeless cause. But then my conscience stirred, and I decided to paddle out and check conditions at the headland; although I fully expected to be back, pitching my tent in the same spot, within a few hours.

Before the sun cleared Doughboy Hill I rounded the west head of the bay and had the 10km of cliffs leading to South Red Head ahead of me. Unbelievably, the wind had died away to nothing. Just as well; there were no landings here. I paddled steadily southwards across an oily swell all morning. Further south the cliffs relented and I began to pass sheltered inlets where landing would have been easy, (Three Legged Woodhen, Easy Harbour, Tupari Bay) but I didn’t stop. I wanted to have done with the wild west coast.

Now I was entering the channel between Big South Cape Island and Stewart Island, and the tidal stream had me in its grip. The headlands began to slip past at an increasing rate; my GPS showed 12km/hr, double my normal speed. I’d been warned only to attempt to pass South West Cape at slack water, and this was mid-flood on a spring tide, with the current running at full strength. But what a day; fine and glassy calm! It seemed a pity not to blast on through...

Nicholson Harbour was approaching on my left, the last sheltered landing before the cape. Should I stop.....? Too late, I was swept past the entrance. It was just like missing a motorway exit. Hesitate for a moment, and the chance is lost.

On my right, in the deep water of midchannel, continuous lines of standing waves toppled with a roar into breakers. Overfalls indeed. On my left, close alongside, swells broke on the cliffs of the cape. Between the overfalls and the cliffs was a narrow lane of calmer water where the current was less swift, and that was where I had to stay. There were huge eddies here, 50 metres across, and as I hit them at speed the bow of the kayak was flung

Continued on page 13 ➤

## Poet's Corner

*I've been counting the Godwits  
On the Sandspit flats  
Filling their bellies  
To put on some fat  
Before flying to Oz  
Then having a rest  
From there to Japan  
Minds set on a nest  
In Alaska  
After hitting Siberia  
Around about May  
The penultimate stop  
Before deciding to stay  
To continue the species  
Then returning to us  
Flying down the Pacific  
To hang out for the summer  
It's all on the Net  
But the reason for counting  
These birds on the flats  
Kuaka Whenua*

*Down in these low lying Lats  
People are thinking of building  
A Marina no less  
In the place that our  
Bar Tailed Godwit  
Likes best  
To lay up some fat  
Before flying up North  
The counting is Evidence  
To try to Convince  
The Powers that Be  
A Marina would keep  
All our Godwits away  
Just one of the reasons  
To keep Marinas at bay  
The upside to this  
Is having a paddle  
While watching the birds  
In the Estuary puddle.*

*Mike Randall*

## SEA YARN

### RULES OF THE ROAD AT SEA

WHEN ALL THREE LIGHTS I SEE AHEAD,  
I TURN TO STARBOARD AND SHOW MY RED;  
GREEN TO GREEN, RED TO RED,  
PERFECT SAFETY ... GO AHEAD.

BUT IF TO STARBOARD RED APPEAR,  
IT'S MY DUTY TO KEEP CLEAR ...  
TO ACT AS JUDGEMENT SAYS IS PROPER;  
TO STARBOARD, BACK OR STOP HER.

AND IF UPON MY PORT IS SEEN  
A STEAMER'S STARBOARD LIGHT OF GREEN,  
I HOLD MY COURSE AND WATCH TO SEE  
THAT GREEN TO PORT KEEPS CLEAR OF ME.

BOTH IS SAFETY AND IN DOUBT  
ALWAYS KEEP A GOOD LOOK OUT.  
IN DANGER, WITH NO ROOM TO TURN,  
EASE HER, STOP HER, GO ASTERN.

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Supplied by Jeff Amsden

## Kayaking Stewart Island (Part 1)

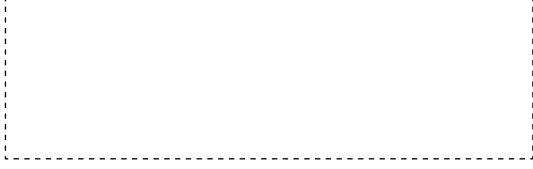
– continued from page 12

sideways with such force that a brace stroke was necessary. What made this tidal race impressive was not its speed, but its volume. The channel is 2 to 3km wide, and it felt like half the Pacific Ocean was pouring through. I have traversed French Pass at full flow, but although the current velocity is greater at French Pass, it is a puny trickle compared to the immense power of the Big South Cape tidal race. I am glad to have experienced it once; and it will be only once.

Moments after I rounded the cape, Flourcask Bay opened up on my left. This tiny cove on the southern tip of Stewart Island is arguably the most remote beach in New Zealand; I was determined to camp there, and in any case I needed to allow my adrenaline level to subside. Unfortunately, events at Flourcask Bay had the opposite effect..... but for that (as they say on TV) you will have to wait until the next episode!

Happy paddling,

*Colin*



From: Auckland Canoe Club, P.O. Box 9271, Newmarket, Auckland



To:

