



Newsletter Spring 2010 Editorial

Well spring has finally arrived and we have a packed newsletter for you to read to get you back into the swing of paddling again.

One event for you all to note is that Jade is in the process of organising an event for Sports Relief which will be the longest continuous paddle in the clubs history – it would be great if as many people as possible could take part in this club event

Newsletter articles always come from a small group of people – it would be great to see some new contributors in the next newsletter so if you go on a trip or have a memorable session why not drop me an article at mquadling@btinternet.com

Have a great season and I hope to see you on the water soon.

Mark Quadling

Three Star Adventurers

Currently there are a group of intrepid wannebe 3 star open boaters all working hard for their 3 star

assessments on April 17. Aply lead by our instructor Chris “the canoe” Wright we have spend many Saturday mornings down at the club practising all manner of things.

We have all been practising strokes on our “wrong” or “bad” side because at 3 star strokes have to be equally good on both sides. We have poled, J’d, Indian stroked (No there aren’t any Indians on the river Wensum!), C stroked, and pried until our arms ached. Our absolute favourite though is paddling backwards in a figure of eight.... going backwards in a straight line, no problem just get a reverse J and a cross deck backwater on the go and you’re off. Add a figure of eight and you’ve got possibly the hardest set of strokes of all, with a bewildering (for me) amount of different strokes all to be done at just the right time or your going the wrong way round your figure of eight! Add a little bit of wind and you might as well start handing round the after eights because its curtains. I have to say that many of my fellow paddlers seem to sail round easily and good for them!

We have also had several days out on Barton broad paddling in to the wind, towing, sailing and yes you guessed it paddling backwards in a figure of eight in the wind, definitely more practise required!

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We had a great opportunity of being able to use the pool one Sunday for capsizing and rescue practice which was great. We did lots of different rescues from one person capsized to an all in, which was good fun and very instructive!

So wish us luck and spare a thought on April 17 for our intrepid band off to Barton Broad come rain or shine hoping to impress our assessor not only with our paddling prowess but also with our knowledge of maps, compasses, weather and knots!

Kate Pontin
Poor backwards paddler!

Chairman's Chat

Well that was the winter, and what a chilly one! Personally I can't believe that we are back at enrolment time of year, but it's great seeing the club come back into bloom, with a flurry of maintenance activity, a lot of the familiar faces coming to see what's in store for the summer and a new members joining to find out what it's all about.

The Coaches have been busy over the last month putting together a monster programme of activities from April until the AGM in October. There is a club night every Wednesday and we hope to run a wide range of progress awards from paddlepower/1 star to 3 star together with fun nights with BBQs, themed Friday nights where this year we have introduced a "just paddle" night where you are invited just to come and have fun, and a "ladies night" for all our female members. This is something a lot of clubs are doing, but it really is up to you ladies to decide what you'd like to do with these sessions, so come along

with some ideas or see me before the first session. We also have a pool session the last Sunday of each month which will be tailored to specific award groups. And finally there are a range of week ends away, with 3 canoe camps and several white water trips, together with lots of local trips – and all for one price!

I was always brought up with the view "the more you put in, the more you get out". As many of you will know, Eagle Canoe Club is run entirely by volunteers and we do rely on people helping where they can. From the programme you'll see that the Coaches commit a tremendous amount of their time and we hope that members will assist in these activities by providing transport, helping out at BBQs, etc.

I hope you all have a great summer season and join in as much as you can.

Stuart Pontin

White Water Sledging

Whilst many of you had to make do with good old fashioned sledging during the winter I was fortunate enough to be in a much warmer climate in New Zealand. Now the New Zealanders have a bit of a reputation for inventing ever increasingly mad ways of entertaining themselves so when we saw an advert for white water sledging we just had to investigate further.

So what is a white water sledge? Imagine the smallest play boats you see at Eagle.. Saw one into two pieces through the cockpit so you have a front section. Stuff it with polystyrene and add a couple of handles. You have your white water sledge. No need for paddles, spray decks or dry bags – you

just hold on and kick your legs a bit for control— how hard could this new sport be!!! An alternative way of describing a sledge is to think of it as a large swimming float!

Anyway we had signed up and were soon equipped with our sledges, wetsuits and flippers (fins for the divers amongst you). The river was a large glacier melt water which was passing through a gorge. A lovely blue colour and not very warm! A few minutes training and we started to head off down the river at some pace in the fast flow. A number of techniques were used to control the sledge, your fins providing the main propulsion.

We soon came to our first white water which was fun with nice wave trains to bounce over. As we moved along one of the games was to get stuck in whirlpools and get spun round a couple of times before the flow caught up with you and took you on the onward journey.

You would think the sledging really can't be that hard but for some reason I struggled with using the flippers to move myself through the water. It's probably fair to say I was going down the river on the same path that a cork or floating bottle would!!

Before long we hit some big white water. Out of control I headed straight for the biggest pile of moving water I have ever been in. With water hitting me from each side I quickly got rolled over and swiftly managed to perform a perfect sledging roll at the same time swallowing bucketfuls of water. Quickly dropping into the next hole the next mass of water was going to be quickly upon me. It must have been the best part of 8 feet to the top of the next wave. Completely out of control my sledge was almost ripped from my

grasp as the water battered me but under no circumstances was I going to let go!! Another gallon of water swallowed and back down into another hole - this started to go from enjoyment into panic!! How long was this white water and was it going to get bigger!!

With no chance of breaking out into an eddy (lack of control and no eddies anyway!) I bobbed, rolled, swallowed, spluttered my way through another 30 seconds of violent water before things started to calm down and I was able to regroup with the rest. Everyone apart from me had big grins; I was far too busy trying to cough up water!



Before long we got to the end of the piece of river that they sledge and it was time to return to the start for a second run as experienced sledgers. Bruised, battered and hardly recovered I decided to give it a miss and sat in the sunshine instead reflecting that I would perhaps stick to the more traditional version of sledging!

Mark Quadling

Money, Money, Money.

Must be funny – but we never have enough of it!

Over the years we have been very fortunate to receive a number of grants from local companies like Aviva and Mot McDonalds together with lottery grants including £10,000 in 2007.

This year we have been looking at the number of members who re enrol and trying to develop a programme which allows members to progress past 2 star and to develop their skills in specialist areas. This is with a view to growing the club over coming years, to develop the number of coaches and their skills and to sustain our membership. In this context, we hope to put in another bid to the lottery for equipment which helps us to achieve these goals and will be looking to buy some IT equipment, a wider range of specialist boats including some solo canoes and a trailer to allow us to transport more equipment with fewer vehicles to encourage more trips away. As part of this we will also be looking to put a shipping container on the site to store the trailer and some of the equipment.

You'll also note from other articles in the Newsletter that over the coming year we hope to move forward with a more permanent arrangement to our lease of the premises. With this will bring additional responsibilities for the club in terms of bills, insurance and probably most importantly, the maintenance/repair of the buildings and equipment.

To date, members of the Committee have identified possible grant sources and have completed the applications. However, in the not too distant future (hopefully), we will have to become much more aware of what funding is available and how best to secure it. We are therefore looking for a "volunteer" to co ordinate our efforts, ideally somebody who has experience of grant funding in the past. If you are interested in assisting the club in this way please contact me or any of the committee members.

Hope to hear from you soon!!!!
Stuart Pontin

Eagle Does Sports Relief!

On the 8th and 9th May we will be holding an on-the-go 24 hour relay paddle in aid of Sport Relief. There will be a chance for everyone to get involved with paddling from 4pm until 4pm!!

Not only is this a chance to have a paddle and meet new faces but also to help out a good cause. Bring along your family and friends and try out different boats. How many lengths can you do in your time slot? There will be games, films and drinks for those that want to do more but need a rest.

Please come along and support our club and have a go day for sports relief and tell people who you know and sponsor yourself and sports relief today.

If you would like to get involved please speak to myself, Stuart or Steve

Jade Kirkham - Organiser

Xmas Paddle 2009

We have traditionally made the last Wednesday paddle before Xmas a bit of a celebration and decorated our boats, played music and even sung carols as we have paddled down towards Norwich.

This year it was a particularly miserable, damp night and the main theme was to wear a silly hat of some kind. We had around a dozen of us standing by the river admiring our efforts (or sadly our lack of effort) when suddenly a blue and red glow appeared across the grass.

Closer inspection showed that amongst a mass of lights, tinsel and baubles x & z were grinning away. The bar had been well and truly raised!!

We set a float and I was half expecting a crackle, a buzz and a couple of half fried paddlers but x electrical skills must be good as the lights remained on.

We paddled down into Norwich in convoy with several of the youngsters in fine voice. The reflections on the Wensum in the dark are well worth seeing and for anyone that has not done an evening trip into the city I would well recommend it.



When we returned to Eagle the lights were still working and the hats even made a late appearance in the pub afterwards where a few people had met for a drink.

Next year we all need to make a huge effort for what will be a fantastic convoy of lights travelling down the Wensum

Mark Quadling

Photos

The club has an internet based photo album where you can have a look at pictures of many of the clubs events and trips and also some videos of our more intrepid paddlers. To access the site go to <http://public.fotki.com/eaglecc/>

Channel Crossing

This is just a quick note to let all club-members know about a crazy enterprise that Claire, Olly, Shaun and I have been working on for the last few months. Towards the end of last summer Claire decided that she needed a challenge, and having recently joined the club and taken to kayaking like a fish to water, she thought that crossing the English Channel would be a good idea. She asked for volunteers to join her, and I clearly didn't step back quickly enough, as I soon found myself drafted onto the team!

So from October onwards, Claire, Olly, Shaun and I have been training as regularly as possible, eating up the miles and increasing our fitness levels, to try and maximise our chances of success. As well as this we've set up our own dedicated website at www.eaglekayakthechannel.co.uk complete with movies, pictures and all sorts of information, a Just Giving site where people can sponsor us, and even a Facebook group that you can join.

Personally, I've found it really hard work. The training has been done through the worst winter for 30 years, and more often than not, we've got off the water with our kayaks coated in ice. I'm doing this in my 'spare' time, as well as my full time job, working hard towards my next set of qualifications, trying to keep up my

whitewater skills, and most importantly, spend time with my five month old son Ashley, who arrived after a rather stressful week in hospital and is now the light of my life!

There's nothing worse than paddling in sleet and snow and hating every minute, thinking that I could be at home playing with Ash under his jungle gym, or redecorating the downstairs of the house with Baby Porridge. Claire, Olly and Shaun are just as busy with work and other commitments, so hopefully you can see that we're putting in a lot of effort.

The crossing itself will be done with a pilot boat supporting us, we've managed to secure the services of the same support team that accompanied comedian David Walliams on his cross-channel swim last year, so we'll be in good hands. So assuming that we get a good day weather-wise, the busiest shipping channel in the world isn't even busier than usual that day, and that the training pays off, we should be fine.

We've received massive help from Eagle Canoe Club, letting us use boats and facilities, and from Rich and the gang at Sues Canoes, who have been really kind, lending us a fourth Speeder to train in. Further sponsorship has come from Heroes Fitness Store in Norwich, and Mott MacDonald, my employer, who have given us some money towards the cost of the pilot boat. We've been in the Evening News already, and shortly hope to have a slot on Anglia News so watch out!

We'd really appreciate any support you can give us...

Simon Allen

Eagle Canoe Centre

At the 2009 AGM we set out that over the coming year we would be holding discussions with the owner of our site to try and find a more secure tenure for the club for the future.

To date, Eagle Canoe Club has rented the premises on a sessional basis and used to share the site with lots of other organisations. Over the years these other organisations and activities have moved to other premises which now means we have the site to ourselves. This is very nice, but it does mean that it has been very difficult to get the buildings repaired, grounds maintained etc and this has resulted in the club holding maintenance days to do these tasks.

Over the winter the Committee has been discussing ways forward with NPS. These discussions are still a long way (a very long way!) from concluding. When there is a more definite proposal we will need to call an "extra ordinary meeting" for the committee to propose any changes to the clubs constitution etc. As things develop we will keep you posted on progress, but if you have any questions or are able to help in any way please see me or any of the committee members..

Stuart Pontin

Another way to enjoy the Rapids!..

For the longer serving club members you may remember an article I wrote a few years ago describing the huge variety of ways that I had travelled down rivers in just a few months. Well there is some bad news for our already

overcrowded waterways... Something new is about to arrive on the scene....

A jet boat can hold over a dozen people and uses water jets for propulsion. Without doubt it's the fastest thing I have ever been on in water. With speeds up to 80mph and the ability to stop dead and spin on the spot a trip in a jet boat is just mind blowing. Rivers simply shouldn't go past your eyes that quickly.

The particular trip we selected was famed for jet boating up the largest commercially jet boated rapids in the world. The guide quoted them as grade 5, I would have guessed them to be about grade 3 but it was the middle of a dry summer.

Rather than carefully picking a route down the rapids the approach was more align to hitting the rapids at top speed and leaping down them! Heated hand rails saved the knuckles from going too white!



A trick for on the way back up (going against the flow and up rapids is no problem) was to surf in a huge wave and with a little bit of power drop the front of the boat into the water so it pours over the front of the boat.

Probably not a sight most of our river users want to see and unlikely to ever get permission to operate on the broads but if you ever get the opportunity to try one I would well and truly recommend it.

Mark Quadling

After Eagle Sessions

The club is fortunate to have acquired a lot of kit through its own funds and grants. Please can you ensure that at the end of each paddling session you put away any kit that you have used in the correct place.

If you see kit that has fallen off the hooks or racks, please pick it up and put it away properly.

Kit is expensive to replace and quickly wears up if trampled on or left on the floor so please take great care of it.

Why you should never underestimate the importance of safety gear...

This is a cautionary tale for all Eagle Canoe Club members, to highlight the importance of maintaining a good level of safety gear in your paddling kit. This has been learnt the hard way, by me, and I'm passing this on so that you can all benefit from my experience and be prepared should the worst happen in the future.

It's all too easy when you're patronising your friendly local paddling retailer to spend a fortune on the latest designs, the latest materials. Many people are often guilty of neglecting to purchase even the most basic article that, rather than keep them bone dry or warm, or look cool, might well save their bacon. We've all spent far too much on a dry bag for example, when a cheaper one that does exactly

the same job could be bought, along with a throw line to rescue a swimming friend, or air bags to keep your now pilot-less boat afloat, or a river knife for attaching to your buoyancy aid (those sandwiches don't make themselves, you know). Are we, as paddlers, actually more interested in being dedicated followers of fashion when it comes to paddling gear, than being safe and competent on the river? My story below, I hope, highlights why your purchases should be carefully considered, and you should never be without even the most basic of safety and rescue equipment.

First I shall set the scene...

It is December, and the long nights this time of year mean that it's dark already. It's cold out, very cold, with a couple of inches of snow on the ground. It's been a long, hard day, and I'm tired. But this account doesn't take place on the banks of any raging whitewater river, or some bleak distant coastline. Oh no, not for me. I prefer my experiences to be gained on familiar ground. In my back garden, in the shed, in fact. Read on...

Christmas is approaching, and I'm trying hard to get all those odd jobs out of the way, so I can soon put my feet up and relax, satisfied in the knowledge that I've worked hard and achieved all that I need. This evening's particular task needs some varnish. I'm pretty sure it's in the shed, in that box on the left hand side, above the lawn mower, right at the back. I'll go and find it. I leave my wife feeding our baby on the sofa, in front of the telly... "Back in a minute, I'm just going to find a tin of varnish..." and out into the bitter, blustery night.

Out in the dark night it's stormy enough to be blowing the shed door

around. It's banging, and we're trying to get the baby to sleep. I know I'll be a few minutes while I hunt around in here, so I pull it too. Peace. Lovely. After a few minutes of shuffling piles of stuff around I can see the varnish in the torchlight, right in the corner, underneath all sorts of junk, so over I reach, knock everything out of the way and grab it. Fantastic. It's only been a few minutes but I'm freezing already, I can go back in and get warm now, get on with my jobs.

Or apparently not. The door has only been closed for a few minutes, but now I can't open it. Someone's playing a joke, it's the wife being funny... I listen, but can't hear a thing, no giggling, nothing. She's still inside with the baby. The wind blows harder and harder outside, making all sorts of racket, and listening, it dawns on me that it's clearly strong enough to have blown the catch over – I'm locked in. Oh *&£@~!

It's cold, very cold, and I'm only in a t shirt and jeans, I didn't anticipate being out here for long, been ages now. Must be sub-zero, I can see my breath. I check my pockets – no mobile, it's indoors next to the telly. Hmmm. So I hunt around a bit more and finally find a scraper, and try to wedge it between the door and frame, to flick the catch back open. I spend ages fiddling, trying to break free from my perishing prison but nope, that's not going to work, wrong angle. I can't reach the catch. Oh heck, I could be here for hours, days even. Tammy will realise I'm missing later in the week, finally work out where I am, and she'll find a skeleton in jeans and a t shirt, scraper in hand, varnish on the shed floor. Oh no...

Ok, what would Ray Mears do? Don't panic, think rationally... Stay calm,

that's the most important thing. It's hard though, shivering uncontrollably like this. Minus ten by now? Minus twenty maybe? I guess I've only got a matter of minutes before a lonely death, keep it together Si, keep it together. You've got a degree for goodness sake, you can do this. Think.

I feel like I should shout to try and attract someone's attention, but what to shout? "Help? Can anybody hear me?" Sounds ridiculous, I'd rather die of hypothermia than face that particular humiliation in front of the neighbours. Or would I? I'm freezing. And then – Wham – after quite some time out here now, twenty minutes at least, it hits me. My paddling gear is here, I can use my whistle to attract Tammy's attention! Whistling is so much cooler than shouting. It's on my buoyancy aid. I'm a genius.

So I blow my whistle, feeling very proud of myself at having solved this particular life-or-death problem. Ray Mears eat your heart out. I can survive! I blow. And I blow. And I blow louder, and louder... Come on Tams, Grand Designs isn't that absorbing, can't you hear me? I'm blowing so hard now that it hurts my throat. (I didn't know that was possible, but apparently it is). But all the time I'm thinking, crickey, this is traumatic, I could die, I should write about this in the next Eagle newsletter... Tell everyone why whistles are so important – mine's a lifesaver now, or at least it will be when Tammy rescues me.

More cold, lonely minutes pass, whistling loudly and swearing, not quite so loudly. Finally I can hear the patio door opening. She's heard me! "Are you OK in there?" "Yeah I'm fine, can you come and let me out please?" Feels really daft asking, but hopefully she'll be more worried than

she is amused, I've been out here absolutely ages. The patio door is closing now, she's coming to my rescue. Brilliant. Only, I can't hear her footsteps in the snow. I don't believe it, she's gone back indoors!!! Aaaahhhhhhhhhhh!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!

The moral of this harrowing true story: Never neglect to purchase rescue gear, one day it could save your life!

Simon Allen

New Year Day Paddle

Bright Sunshine and freezing temperatures didn't stop a large group of club members from taking part in the clubs New Years Day Paddle.

The trip was from Wroxham through to Salthouse Broad and back. As normal for the winter we found we had the river to ourselves with only a few hardy people out in their cruisers!

Given the weather, surprisingly Wroxham Broad was only covered with thin ice which we quickly paddled through with the ice shattering in all directions!

When we arrived at Salthouse Broad we were met by the sight of it being half frozen over and covered with snow. This was too much for most to resist and very quickly paddlers were finding a way through the ice in a scene that looked more like the North Pole.

When we stopped for lunch some members could not resist having a go at sledging down the bank in their kayaks. A video was taken of Kevin who had the most interesting experience – it is sure to appear at a club night or on you've been framed

so we can all have a good laugh at his antics!



By the time we paddled back to Wroxham most paddlers were cold and tired and pleased to retreat into the relative warmth of their cars

Mark Quadling

P-Y-B

Joining Eagle is a great way to improve your paddling, either touring, on the sea or as an introduction to whitewater, but there's still room for more improvement, which you have to go a little further a field for. With this in mind, I joined Tom, Pete and Si on a weekend to Plas Y Brenin, possibly the best canoe and kayak coaching centre in the UK, to push our whitewater skills.

We enrolled on the Performance Whitewater Kayaking two day course, and hit the road on Friday afternoon, a six hour drive ahead of us. Talk of past paddling exploits, as well as those to come, meant the journey was soon behind us, as we checked in to our penthouse suite at the centre and sat down with a beer.

Saturday morning began with an ace fry-up, and soon after this we met our instructor for the weekend, Dino Heald. We'd heard of him before, and seen him in print several times, so it

was good to meet him; we knew we'd be in good hands. The rain the day before and overnight meant that we could paddle the river right next to the centre, the Llugwy, and we were soon heading downstream, under his watchful eye.

Dino took us right back to basic initially, and spent a while really working on breaking in and breaking out, with many tips and tricks to polish our skills, and make us think hard about how we paddle in different situations. Starting on basic water we soon built up, and by the end of the day we were running some nice fruity rapids confidently and with ease. For each of us, the day held several "Eureka!" moments, whereby things we'd done badly or not at all suddenly clicked into place, and the progression felt tangible. This is what we paid our money for!

After several hours on the water, we were picked up and taken back to the centre. Time for a rest? Nope. Dino had booked a classroom for us, and we spent an hour watching footage that he had taken during the day, so we could see exactly what we were doing well, not so well, and how we improved as time went by. After this we thought it was surely time for a well earned-beer, but tea and cakes would have to do for the time being.

Having hoovered up the best cakes in Wales, whilst watching people on the dry ski slope outside, we were then taken to the on-site pool, where we spent another hour on the water, with yet more gems coming our way from Dino. Rolling is a skill that can be bullet-proof one day, but can leave you just when you need it the most. Another "worth every penny" moment happened here, whereby one simple instruction, one eight word phrase,

completely turned around the roll of one of our group, as was proved the following day, when the success rate was ten times what it had been previously. After a fantastic meal and a few beers in celebration of a brand new roll, we hit the hay...

The trouble with mountains is they tend to be quite steep, so water doesn't stick around for long. So it was that we found ourselves at JJ's in Llangollen on Sunday, as it was the only place with any water. The morning warm-up was a slog along the canal, followed by a lot of work at Serpents Tail, a well-know rapid on the Dee. Time was spent on the bank plotting our lines, with input and advice from Dino, as well as a bit of "try it and see" style of coaching. First runs happened, and then further advice and analysis was given. Second and third runs were then undertaken and just small shifts in boat positioning, speed and direction resulting in vastly more successful runs being achieved. It was amazing what tiny alterations can do to your success rate on the water, these were the kind of tips we can apply anywhere, and this was exactly what we'd hope to learn this weekend. We spent the rest of the day using the features at JJ's, improving our river running, surfing, and working in stoppers until we were all absolutely shattered.

It was an absolutely awesome weekend. With just the four of us on the course there was a good mix of banter and support, and Dino seemed to get our sense of humour quite quickly, joining in and punctuating his coaching spiel with gags and digs when he thought he could get away with them. We had a brilliant time and learnt loads from him. We'll definitely go back; we've already been skimming through the brochure for the next weekend away. Although initial costs

seem high, bear in mind that it includes some of the best coaching you can receive, warm, dry accommodation, drying rooms, all meals, use of the pool, the on-site climbing wall, all sorts. We can't recommend PYB highly enough...

PS One course they don't provide, but perhaps should do – "Roof-racks for Intermediates". You can tell how tired we were on the Sunday afternoon because it took us ages to get the boats back on the roof!

Olly Quinton

Parking at Eagle

Was of the challenges at Eagle is around parking spaces. The clubs parking is along the fence that joins our Eagle Site. The piece of parking in front of the Scouts building is reserved for the scouts so please avoid parking in this area.

We have an agreement that we can use the Caravan Site at the top of Heigham Street in the evenings and this enables us to park a good number of cars.

Please can all members park carefully to maximise our parking spaces and also leave the Eagle site as quietly as possible to avoid upsetting the local residents.

Paddle Abel Tasmin

Abel Tasmin is a sea reserve on the north part of the south Island of New Zealand.

Famed for its fantastic scenery we just had to have a guided sea kayaking session. With a mountain of brochures all trying to get us to part with considerable amounts of money we

took advice from the owners of the campsite we were staying on. 'These guys are expensive, but everyone who has gone with them has always come back full of praise for them'. A lot poorer we were quickly signed up for a 1 day guided paddle the following day.

The weather was kind to us with perfect blue skies, warm temperatures and light winds. We quickly got kitted up and then oddly got a ride down to the sea in a large boat on a trailer being towed by a tractor! The boat was loaded up with about 8 sea kayaks and a number of keen paddlers.

Before long we were racing through the sea to our starting point in the sea reserve where the boats were unloaded.

We had a group of 7 paddlers to 1 instructor and all the boats were tandem. Apart from the instructor, myself and Verity the other people were all new to paddling and a little unsure of what they were going to experience!

Before long we were all kitted up with neoprene decks, paddles and boots and set off along the coast.

The sea was totally crystal clear and calm but apparently they run trips in most conditions, even with a 2 metre swell and beginners. We quickly spotted some penguins swimming close to us along with shoals of fish leaping out of the water.

The coast line was made up of large rocks with countless small sandy bays. On many of the rocks seals were lazing around looking after young pups. In one large cove we were able to watch blue cod and other fish swim around. These areas were ancient hunting grounds and now protected creating a real haven for sea life.



Before long it was time for a break and the instructor pulled out a café from his boat and was quickly offering a choice of cappuccinos, lattes, muffins etc. Something we should do more of at Eagle perhaps!

With deserted beaches we paddled around 15k which was an easy distance in the sea kayaks. In one shallow bay we were just about able to see a stingray. Upon leaving the reserve I was able to collect some tasty mussels for my tea!

The instructor continued to feed us information throughout the trip including lots of Mori stories from the past (a bit like Tim on eagle trips!) and also pointed out lots of points of interest we wouldn't have spotted if we had not paid for a guide.

All too soon we reached our final destination to be picked up by sea taxi to return to where we started.

Mark Quadling