



PPCA Newsletter
May 2022

Introduction

Welcome to May's Newsletter. This month Terry continues his perambulations around the Sound while Stephen takes us to the Greek islands where, apparently, it can rain occasionally which offsets my jealousy a bit.

Editorial

It's good to see the photos from the Easter Paddle. A sure sign that things are getting back to normal (assuming your definition of normality means being in the middle of Plymouth Sound with a chicken on your head).

A small cautionary tale, born of bitter personal experience. It's not sufficient to say to a group of people "let's do the Lynher at 09:30 on Saturday morning". Apparently there is more than one place to launch on the Lynher....

Ivor Jones

Newsletter Editor

Next Committee Meeting

Please forward any items you would like considered at the next committee meeting to secretary@ppca-canoe-club.org.uk. They will go to the secretary.

Next Edition

There is no specific deadline as such for contributions but please bear in mind my general sloth and indolence and let me have anything time-sensitive well in advance.

Contributions

Please send any contributions to newsletter@ppca-canoe-club.org.uk

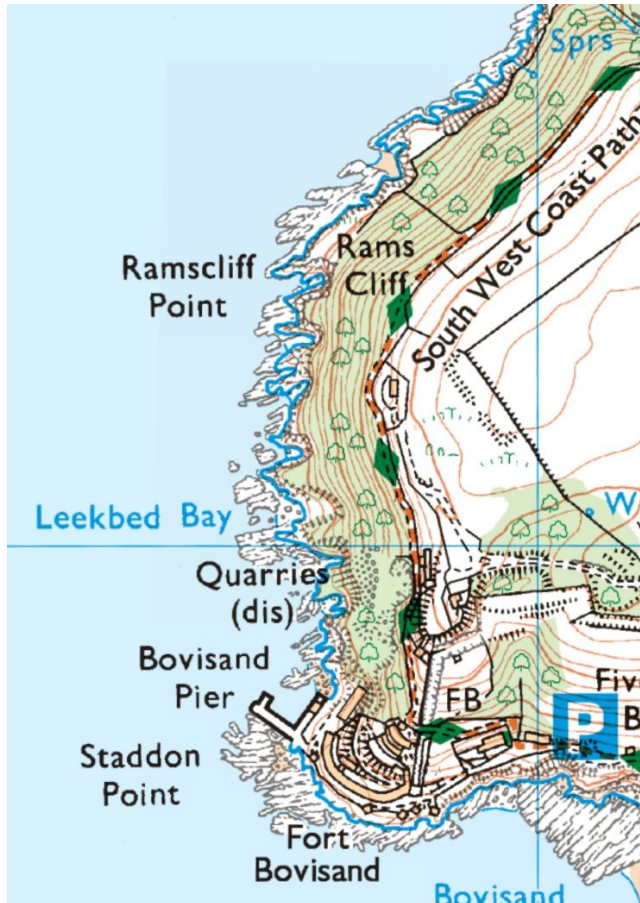
Acknowledgements

As ever, I have plundered Facebook for the cover photos - my thanks to all concerned.

Features

Plymouth Sound Snippets #4, Ramscliff Point by Terry Calcott

What's in a name? Ramscliff Point is situated at the southern edge of Jennycliff Bay. I use it as a useful waypoint when heading out across Jennycliff Bay for a paddle in that direction. Or as a welcoming feature when returning after a long paddle, knowing that home is not far away. I am a firm believer in knowing the names of our local features and landmarks and using them when out paddling. Ramscliff Point is very distinctive having two concrete beacons set on the cliff. Ramscliff is the area set back from the point heading up to the coast footpath.



Ramscliff Point



The North Cave

No prizes for guessing where the name Ramscliff is derived from. My research showed that it was an area where Rams would have roamed. Below the rocky headland is a small scenic cove, a sheltered place great for a quick break after crossing Jennycliff Bay. Either side of Ramscliff Point are a couple of small caves. The northern cave is larger and on the right height of tide you can paddle out the other end. (Wear a helmet and don't enter caves with any sort of swell running). This cave has a colourful display of Jewel anemones. The southern cave is set back in the small cove, although smaller it is still possible to paddle into it.



Jewel Anemones in the North Cave

The two concrete markers rising up on Ramscliff Point are anchorage beacons. They were used by ships as a visual feature when coming into the nearby anchorage. The earliest record I have found of the beacons use is on a chart from the 1920s. The beacons are also a favourite perch for the resident Peregrine falcons.



A Peregrine Falcon on its Perch

The rocks in the Ramscliff area are of the Staddon Formation, a mix of Sandstone, Siltstone and Mudstone formed in the Devonian period 350 to 400 million years ago. There are some impressive folds and upheaval in some of the rocks.



The South Ramscliff Cave

Ionian Islands Kayak Expedition, April 2022 by Stephen Pryor

The plan was an expedition to four islands in the Ionian Sea: Kefalonia, Ithaca, Meganisi, Lefkada and back to the kayak base at Argostoli on Kefalonia. A weather window was opening which might allow a Kefalonia west coast route for the first time in several years.

April is still out of season on the Greek islands. The beach tavernas are closed, inter-island ferries do not operate and there are no passing yachts. Re-supply points are few and require a detour. Exit routes are virtually non-existent by road. A coastguard response would be uncertain. Yes, there is good mobile coverage of the islands but there would be no external help within reach or exit points. Once on the route we would be committed and had to be self-reliant.

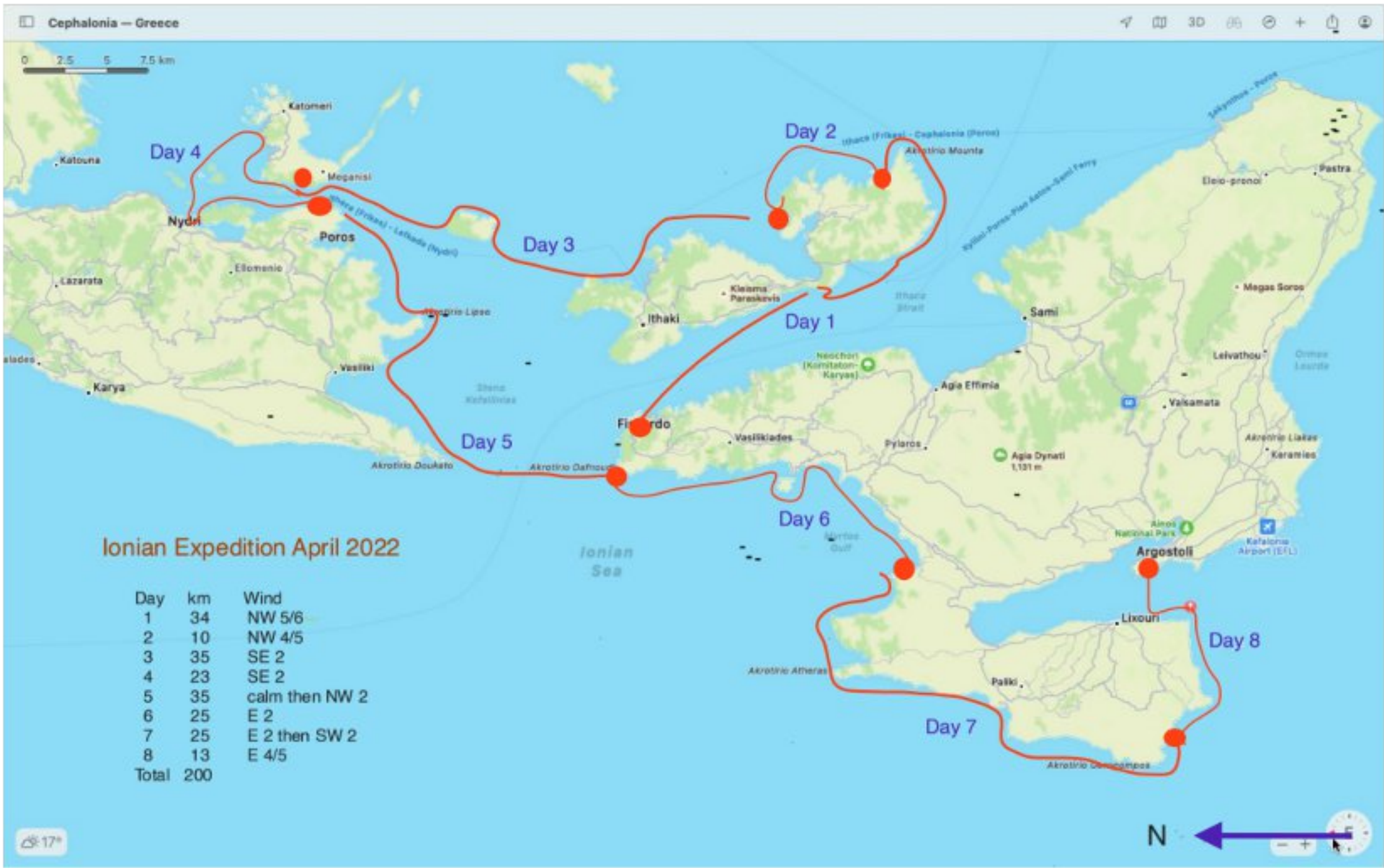
We were a group of seven including Shaun, our leader from Sea Kayaking Cornwall who arranged the trip and Paul who was assisting. Ages ranged from 18 to me at (nearly) 68. All the others had advanced sea kayaking experience except the youngest. He joins the Marines soon and picked things up fast.

The weather varied from classic Mediterranean blue skies and light winds, temperatures from 18 – 20° to cold blasts and rain from the northwest. The sea was 16°, nowhere near its summer 25°. Tidal range is minimal, mainly due to changes in pressure.

The boats were Perception Essence 17' with rudders. Paddling days started at around 9.30 on the water and we made camp between 5.30pm and 7.00 pm. The times given are paddling hours excluding rests.



Shaun our Leader



Day zero. We met at the kayak base in Argostoli for a briefing and loaded the boats with five days' food and water for two days, 3 litres per day. All was ready for a road transfer the following morning. In the evening we got to know each other over a Greek meze meal. Hopes, fears and kayak stories were exchanged.

Day 1 - 6.5 hours, 34km

Kefalonia island is beautiful and mountainous but communications are difficult. The road transfer to Fiskardo, the NE tip of the island took an hour.



Fiskardo Launch

The Greek beach beaches are steep and stony (note: take steel pegs next time). We camped at 7pm with just enough time to pitch tents and get a hot meal before dark. I crashed out with the ground still rolling under me and didn't hear the rain and lightning overnight.

We were on the water by 12:30. Clouds were gathering around the tops. The forecast was NW 3/4 rising 5/6. We handrailed the east coast lee shore of Kefalonia for a couple of hours watching white horses in the channel to Ithaca. The crossing with a half gale astern was the roughest conditions I have ever paddled. The windblown crests would dump onto the spraydeck, the fully laden boat would wallow, shrug it off and continue surfing. Shaun kept the group tight and the rudder gave essential control which a skeg would not. We were blown across to Ithaca in an hour and a second hour with the wind now dead astern took us down to the southern cape of the island. We then had an easy couple of wind assisted hours along the south coast before turning into the teeth of the wind again for the last hour to find camp. It rained off and on.



Heading out to Ithaca Channel

Day 2 - 4 hours, only 10 km.

The skies cleared to a Mediterranean blue but the NW 4/5 continued. We plugged at it for 4 hours finding shelter for a breather every hour in little coves or tucked in the lee of a headland. We were well short of our target distance to catch the weather window but Shaun called it a day. Up a stony track, we found a small terrace just big enough for seven tents. Luckily we were only 45 minutes walk from a small port village. Beers, hot chocolate and Greek baklava all round.



Olive Grove Camp, Meganisi Island

Day 3 - 7 hours, 35 km.

Perfect! Clear skies and a light SE breeze helped us on two long crossings. We took a direct line to the NE cape of Ithaca after stopping for a rest at Kioni. The first crossing was to Arkoudi island where there is a tiny beach and then to Meganisi. A beach at the back of the cave was the only place for a break. Then we paddled on to a lovely camp in an old olive grove. West facing so we dried our kit in the evening sun and warm enough for a swim. The NW weather system had retreated so all looked good for the next few days. A classic day's paddling.

Day 4 - 4 hours, 23km.

Flat calm for a lazy day to Porto Spilia and around the Onassis island of Skorprios, now owned by a Russian oligarch. The Mediterranean colours came out: sometimes Homer's wine dark sea, sometimes cornflower blue from dissolved limestone. We had a long lunch break at the only taverna open in Nydri: a super Greek salad and a huge mixed grill for the meat hungry. This was the last re-supply point before the return to Kefalonia where there is nothing along the west coast. An hour's paddle in a cooling SE breeze took us to another lovely camp in an olive grove. The evening view to the mountains on the Greek mainland was serenity itself.



Homer's Wine-Dark Sea



Cornflower Blue Waters in Limestone Caves

Day 5 - 6.5 hours, 35 km.

The day started flat calm and we paddled the along coast and then crossed Vasiliki bay heading to Doukato, the south-west cape of Lefkada. VHF radios were on but Shaun knew the big ferry timetable so we crossed the channel without a ship in sight. Paul saw a turtle but in fact there was little other bird or fish life. I saw swallows, shags, a type of cave nesting egret and unidentified birds of prey high up. We thought it would be a long crossing but as we left the cape a light NW breeze sprang up. We sped across to camp at Dafnoudi beach in less than two hours. The beach had been washed out by a rain storm a couple of years ago and clearing rocks to make camp was tiring. A long day but in perfect conditions.



Departure for Crossing to Kefalonia

Day 6 - 5 hours, 25 km.

A light east breeze gave sheltered conditions for a long paddle down the west coast. The cliffs were colossal, multi-coloured and magnificent but also committing, impregnable and exposed. We felt small in our kayaks. We reached Asos for a long break in a light offshore breeze and then pushed on round the peninsula dominated by a 15th century Venetian era fortress. We camped at Fteri, a sandy beach west of Mirtos, apparently the most beautiful on Kefalonia, but I thought ours was nicer. We had sand, bushy groves for shelter and big views across the bay to the cliffs.



West Coast Kefalonia

Day 7 - 5 hours, 25km.

We set off in a light westerly, close to the cliffs which were sheer white walls dissected by ravines. It seemed a long paddle around headland after headland gradually turning south east to the southern cape of Kefalonia. On route we had a view of Kipouria monastery perched high on the cliffs. At the cape we met a long slow south-easterly swell which nearly caught one of us out going through a rocky gap. After the lighthouse we had an easy landing at Kounopetra, a sandy beach protected by reefs. We pitched camp on the edge of a field with wild flowers including fennel which went into my pasta that night. We shared food and water as supplies were getting low. The forecast for tomorrow looked good with a forecast easterly 2/3 and only 13 km to go to the Argostoli base. Lunch was booked at the restaurant.



Final camp Kounopetra

Day 8 - 5.5 hours, 13km.

The forecast was wrong. The wind blew east 4/5 occasionally 6 all day. We hugged the south coast dodging in and out of what shelter was available rounding several tricky reefs and the possibility of a capsize felt very real. I found the going hard and was on a tow part way to keep up with the group. The planned lunch was cancelled. We finally arrived back at Argostoli mid-afternoon. The sense of achievement was fantastic and the anti-climax which followed was soon dispelled with a wonderful end of expedition meal with Shaun and his extended family in the evening. A tough day to finish the expedition and well deserved celebratory beers and wine.

Total distance paddled in 8 days 200km.

Day 9.

The group managed a local paddle of 20km to bring the total to 220km. I opted for a couple of days' sightseeing as it was my first visit to Kefalonia. Back in the hotel what a joy to have a shower after all that salt. The NW weather arrived that afternoon with temperatures down 5° and heavy rain.

The expedition was the real thing in terms of commitment and endurance and was a fantastic achievement for everyone in a team that worked together and supported each other. I could not have done it without that. The route planning, decisions, judgement of conditions, clarity of communication, concern for group welfare and local knowledge of Shaun our leader, together with Paul, were leadership of the highest calibre. And that is not to mention the humour and banter that eased us along on long days. You could not ask for more. For me it was the trip of a lifetime. What next?

Exchange and Mart

Discount Available at Millets, 38/40 New George St, Plymouth PL1 1RW

One of our members works in the Millets store (Big 'Thank you' to Lee McKenzie!) on New George Street, Plymouth and has negotiated with his Manager a great discount of 15% on production of your PPCA club membership card. Usual T's & C's apply, e.g. goods already discounted/sales items might be excluded.

Discount Available at Kayaks and Paddles

Kayaks and paddles offer discount to local kayak and canoe clubs. The PPCA and Tamar Canoe club can get a discount up to 10%. This is an offer not a right for the person that is making a purchase, so please do not go upsetting Kayaks and Paddles employees as this discount might be taken away.



Raise free donations for us every time you shop online with easyfundraising!



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