



PPCA Newsletter

August 2024

Introduction

Welcome to August's Newsletter. This month Bruce raises his own bar for jealousy-inducing articles still higher and Kevin continues my occasional habit of shoehorning quotes from 1960s songs into articles. Elsewhere Helga and Clive kindly spare me the effort of blowing my own trumpet.

Editorial

So that's it then. One final turn around the block and I can hang up my desktop publishing programme. It's been great fun editing the Newsletter over the last eight years and part of me quite regrets giving it up but eight years is a long time and I'm sure the Newsletter will benefit from an injection of fresh blood (assuming a donor can be found). Who knows, I may even contribute the odd article to future editions (about open boats, of course)

All that really remains is to thank everyone who has contributed articles over the years whether as a one-off, on an occasional basis or regularly. Thanks, also, to everyone who has sent me emails etc. over the last few weeks, much appreciated. Special thanks are due to Terry and Clive who, on occasion, have kept the Newsletter going between them. Extra special thanks to Clive who has tolerated being the butt of my jokes over the years with remarkable good humour - to my face anyway.

Hopefully a new Editor will be found. I should point out one major advantage of the post - it keeps you off the blinking Committee.

Ivor Jones

Newsletter Editor

Thank You To Ivor by Helga Pinn

This edition of the PPCA newsletter is one mixed with a tinge of sadness. Our very own PPCA newsletter editor who has kept us going with our monthly newsletter, after 8 years, feels that it is finally time for someone else to take over.

We've had various editors in the past, all casting their own bit of magic on this much coveted newsletter, relying on others to share stories of interest. Ivor, thank you so much for all your efforts and keeping it going over the years. It has been much appreciated.



Cheers Ivor, we look forward to seeing you out on the water soon.

And thanks again, for all that you have done :)



It would be great if we can find a successor. I'm sure Ivor would happily share the format. It does form a part of PPCA history and keeps us all smiling when we're not out there paddling!



End Of An Era by Clive Ashford

End of an era part 1.

You can probably work out that this is a picture of a toffee apple. It is an image that I have copied from the internet with absolutely no regard for any copyright infringement, how very rebellious of me! (It's part of my secret plot to see editor Ivor rotting in jail.) So, "Why a toffee apple?" I hear you ask. Well, thanks for asking, I will tell you. Just west of the water taxi pontoon at Mount Batten there is a buoy that in my world has always been referred to as "Spikey Buoy." It has also been referred to as "The Toffee Apple" due to the fact that it looks just like, well, a toffee apple. I have often used this buoy as a place to gather before paddling across the channel to the Hoe, or as a waymark on returning from the Hoe, and a jolly useful waymark it has proved to be.



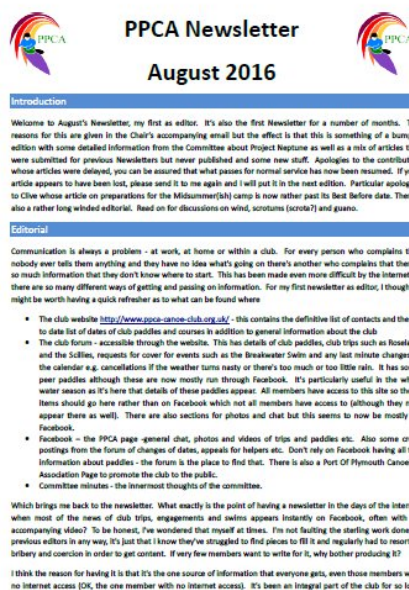
When I first encountered Spikey Buoy it was sort of an orange colour, with what looked like an iron spike (perhaps 2 feet long) sticking out of it. Over the years the colour faded and the spike was replaced with a stainless-steel affair that was both thicker and longer. I have not seen Spikey Buoy on any chart so apart from being a most excellent waymark I have no idea what purpose it served.

So, why haven't I produced a photo of said buoy? Well, I have trawled through Joy's extensive photo collection and have failed to find an image. I have also searched on line using various search criteria but have still drawn a blank. Fair enough, you say, but why not simply go out and take a new photograph? Because Spikey Buoy is no longer there to be photographed, that's why. I was shocked and horrified earlier in the year to discover that Spikey Buoy has gone. It's the end of an era and I for one am very sad. (And yes, I do realise that you probably don't share my emotional distress.)

End of an era part 2.

To the right I have reproduced a copy of the front cover of our August 2016 newsletter, the first (most excellent) PPCA newsletter that was produced by Ivor, our much-esteemed editor. You are reading Ivor's 92nd edition which, Ivor informs us, will be his final PPCA newsletter. Over the past eight years there have been many newsletter contributors but Terry and I have given these pages the most items. Terry has kept us informed and has educated us with quality, well researched items relating to the geography and history of Plymouth Sound, and the past activities of the PPCA. In order to provide a bit of contrast, my contributions were simply thrown together on a wet Sunday afternoon with no more than a nodding regard towards anything as noble as a fact.

I have enjoyed my part in making this a varied publication and I look forward to showing off my literary talents (?) in the next incarnation of the PPCA newsletter. Until then I give huge thanks to Ivor for the last eight years. The end of another era. (And it very much looks like Ivor will avoid going to jail after all!)



Wooden Ships (On The Water...Very Free) by Kevin Tole

I suppose this is a kind of writing polemic designed to elicit a response and initiate dialogue. Whassat! I hear you say.

I've always loved wooden boats and the beauty of a handmade wooden kayak is something to behold. But I have never had the space let alone the skill to build one myself. And that seems to be an essential part of owning and paddling a wooden kayak – that 'I-built-it-myself-with-my-own-hands-and-tools' and the pride that comes with that. Plus I know somebody from Totnes-on-Tamar that designed a boat and set the plans on open access which appears to be very popular. It seemed to have been a great divider amongst the Great Miserablists up the river dividing them darn the middle with the wooden pioneers keeping to themselves on paddling nights with their eskimo paddles (I dunno what they're called – they look like pokes of wood with flattened ends to me, but Mungo just pawn in game of life's paddling stream). My interest was piqued again when a mate sent me some photies from his hols in Greenland (the bar steward!) which I include here.

What you can't get away from is the absolute beauty and purity of line of these boats. And then there is the lightness of them. I was staggered when I first picked one up! None of that busting a shoulder like with a GRP boat if you can even get onto yir shoulder. I have never paddled one but given that this is THE kayak, the original types that gave rise to everything recreational and sporting in the Western canon of kayaking, my thoughts are that they must be pretty good and seaworthy. But trying to find out more about them is like ARCANES KNOWLEDGE, man. Like I'm gonnae have to shag the goat and feel the sword at my breast before you let me in, even typing the words, WOODEN KAYAK, into Google. First thoughts are.... "Hey ...this ain't cheap, buddy! I might even get a carbon fibre sea boat



Picture from National Museum of Greenland



for that kind of price". OK... maybe a little exaggeration along with the Masonic references, but you know me, the pension only goes so far. A wood strip Guillemot single sea kayak will set you back a cool £5800. That's a lot of zuma! Plus how many hours? The plans alone come in at around 150 quid. Then again, there are plenty of free plans to download out there as well. But you're going to need space.... And time..... And material access..... And skill

And all this just got me thinking from a few holiday snaps and memories of travel shows where Nanook the Eskimo is oot on the water hunting blubber (where DO they get the wood from up there?) and now of course any self-respecting surviving Inuit is using an aluminium boat with a big 500 Merc on the back. Is it all just craft nostalgia?

I'd love to try one. Anyone else excited by 'em? Anyone got one / tried one / built one? Here's a reference to Nick's free-to-download plans.

<https://cnckayaks.com/>

Paddling In Fiji by Bruce Burton (Photos by Bruce and (mostly) Elisha, his Guide)

Now that we live on the west coast of the US, we decided to take the opportunity to explore some Pacific islands. We chose Fiji to visit as there are direct flights from San Francisco, our nearest international airport. Even so, getting there entailed a somewhat grueling 10plus hour overnight flight in a crowded plane. Interestingly, on the way out, our Friday was limited to 2-3 hours in the middle of the night as we crossed the International Date Line, and on the way back we arrived before we had departed for the same reason.

Our visit to Fiji was in two roughly weekly parts. In the first we were part of a small tour group visiting one of the two main islands, Viti Levu, which is also where the capital city, Suva, lies. Our second trip was an even smaller group of just 6, including us, kayaking in the Yasawa Islands, an archipelago to the NW of Viti Levu. It amused me to find that one of our group, a lad of 17, was actually called Banjo. I never heard him say Booyah, but the Fijian for hello/ good morning/welcome is Bulah, which is quite close.

As this is a kayaking newsletter, I will talk only about the second trip, except to mention that our first included sleeping in the community halls of two remote highland villages. The second of these two villages is well known for being the place where the last recorded instance of cannibalism was recorded. They ate an unfortunate missionary called Thomas Baker in the 1860's. We were assured that they don't do this any more, but we were rather careful to comply with the local customs when we were there. We also had a day of white water rafting – not kayaking I know, but wet, as was walking under a waterfall and snorkeling on a coral reef.



Our kayaking tour started with a 5 hour ferry from Viti Levu to the island of Tavewa where our tour company, South Sea Ventures (SSV) had its base. The ferry stopped at several islands on the way and small boats came out to meet it, with people getting onto and leaving the ferry with large amounts of luggage. Complete chaos.

Our base was a set of large and comfortable bell tents with camp beds that were permanently erected. There was a camp kitchen where our main guide Elijah, from Australia, cooked delicious meals. Less exciting was a single communal composting toilet harbouring a large family of cockroaches. More apparent to men than women (think about it, or perhaps not).

Susann and I had a double kayak. It was a rather massive fiberglass kayak, a New Zealand Paddling Perfection Seabear II Packhorse. It was long, weighed a ton and was almost bomb proof. It was hard to control with a side wind. We spent a couple of hours when we got to the island setting the kayaks up to our liking, or at least so we could paddle. We then had a traditional meal of pork that had been buried wrapped in banana leaves along with hot stones and covered with earth. Very nice.

The following morning we set off on a circumnavigation of Nanuya Laila Island and the adjoining Turtle Island (see the map at the end of this piece). We first had to cross a stretch of open water paddling against the trade winds which were blowing from the NE at 10-15 mph. No large waves as this side of the island is in the lee of the main island. We headed to a gap between Nanuya and Turtle Islands and spent a bit of time exploring an extensive mangrove area. Channels had been cut into this as the islanders use the mangroves to shelter their boats when a potentially devastating cyclone is forecast.

After playing there for a bit, we continued along the E coast of Turtle Island. Lovely coconut palm fringed empty sandy beaches to enjoy on our way. This side is very sparsely populated. So we paddled for some time with almost no sign of other people. We continued past the South end of Turtle Island and decided to go round a tiny isolated island, which looked as though it should have been where Castaway was filmed. In fact, that was a somewhat bigger island to the south of us that we had passed on the ferry. We returned along the east coast and pulled into Nanuya Island Resort, which was very nice and costs about \$300+ per night for 2, and had a bottle of Fiji Gold beer, my favourite tipple. Very welcome on a hot day. Then back across a bit of open water, avoiding the coral reefs as it was now low tide, to our base. A good day of about 8 or so miles.



We continued north and stopped for lunch and a snorkel before continuing to round the northern point of the island. We were now exposed to the full strength of the trade wind which had strengthened in the afternoon. So we had to work hard to reach our evening stop at the village of Navotua. Here we were staying in a traditional bure, a hut made of woven pandanus on a wooden frame. Ours had no furniture, just a double bed. Our shared toilet was outside and there was also a shared cold shower. This was our longest day of about 15 miles.



The following day we were up early and set off NE pushing against wind and waves until we reached the south western tip of Nacula Island and continued along the western coast of that island, passing Blue Lagoon Resort (about \$500 per night) and stopping to visit Nacula Village. We saw the local police station, which must be one of the nicest police stations in the world, situated on a white sandy beach, amongst coconut palms and not much crime. We also made a quick visit to the local school where children come from the local villages. If it is too far to walk the children stay for the week at the school and are looked after by one of the women from the villages they come from. When it comes to secondary school, they have to go to boarding school on Viti Levu.



The next day was a shorter day, but started by making a crossing into strong winds and fairly big waves, heading to Sawa-I-Lau Island. This island is unique in the archipelago as it is largely limestone whereas the other islands are basalt, attesting to their volcanic origin. As a consequence there are several large caves that have been hollowed out by sea water, and it was to these caves that we were headed. When we got to the beach near the caves, because we were early, we were the only ones there. We climbed up some steps from the beach and then down some further steps into the first of the large caves until we reached a platform.



We jumped from this into the deep cool water, with fins and snorkeling gear. We swam around this cave for a short while, and then our guides took us to what looked like a blank wall. We were told that there was a short tunnel under the wall that took us into another cave. One of our guides swam through the tunnel and waited for us on the other side. The other guide pushed our heads under water so that we were clear of the roof of the tunnel, only a few inches, and we then had to swim towards the torch held by the other guide.

I was the first to go and I admit being a bit apprehensive. However it turned out to be fairly simple and I was quickly back up in the air again. Of course the guide on my side then turned his torch to guide the next person, so I was left in more or less complete darkness. Once my eyes adapted I realized that there was a small amount of light coming through a hole at the end of a tunnel going up into the roof. Eventually all of our party got through to the inner cave and we swam around for a bit until it was time to retrace our passage back to the original cave, again diving down to clear the tunnel roof.. When we got back to the first cave we found that there were several people waiting to go through, so we were doubly glad we had been ahead of the game.

After the cave, we explored a bit more of the island coast before turning round and heading back to the village we had stayed in the previous night, this time with wind and waves helping us on. That afternoon we went to visit the local primary school which had only 11 pupils and two teachers. The kids were lovely. They all lined up and sang some songs for us and then told us their names and what they wanted to be when they grew up. The favourites were policemen, teachers and one nurse and one doctor. We then had to introduce ourselves. The children learn their local Fijian dialect, of which there are about 300 within the archipelago, sometimes incomprehensible to people from another area. They also learn a generic Fijian, Bauan, which is one of the official languages of the islands, English, and the third official language which is Hindi, as 37% of the population is Indo-Fijians. This is a result of Britain bringing poor Indian people to the islands as indentured servants to work on the sugar cane. Later in the day we had a cava ceremony with some of the villagers as a formal greeting to the village and permission to stay. Cava is a mildly narcotic drink made from pounding cava roots to a powder and suspending the powder in water.

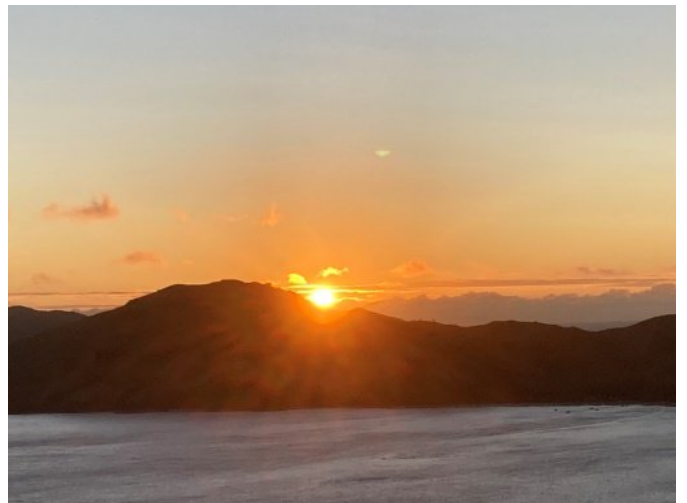
In the ceremony a half coconut shell is filled with cava and passed to each individual in a semi-circle around the special cava bowl. The shell has to be emptied in one go. When I did this before, when visiting the Cook Islands a long time ago, the same shell was passed round, but with Covid this tradition was changed and we each had our own shell. After this we were entertained by a singing and dancing event put on for our benefit by the villagers. Lovely singing which reminded me a bit of experiencing Welsh singing in pubs in North Wales. We had to join in this doing a sort of combination of auld lang syne and a conga.



A great trip and thoroughly recommended. Great temperature with the trade winds stopping it becoming oppressively hot, crystal clear water, almost nobody else on the water, coral reefs, great snorkelling, and a fascinating glimpse into the lives of the indigenous people, who still practice subsistence agriculture (they grow most of their needs) and have few material possessions. The organisers, SSV, also do a longer trip which would be worth considering. This, I think, entails more camping and longer paddles.



The following day we set off following the east coast of Nacula Island on our way back to our first base. This was lovely journey on crystal clear water past endless white sandy beaches mangroves and waving coconut palms. This paddle was a bit over 13 miles. That evening we watched a glorious sunset. As this was the tropics, the sun seemed to disappear much more rapidly than in higher latitudes. The next day we got up at about 5 am and walked up to the highest point in the island to watch the sun rise.



Maps of part of Yasawa archipelago where we kayaked and a bigger scale showing some of the whole Fiji archipelago. There are about 300 islands, of which about 100 are inhabited..



Exchange and Mart

Discounts and Offers

A selection of discounts and offers are available on the PPCA website. [Click here to see them.](#)

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.

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.

The Committee

Chair

Mark Perry
chair@ppca-canoe-club.org.uk

Vice-Chair

Vacant
vchair@ppca-canoe-club.org.uk

Club Leader

leader@ppca-canoe-club.org.uk

Assistant Club Leader

Vacant
acleader@ppca-canoe-club.org.uk

Club Secretary

Jackie Perry
secretary@ppca-canoe-club.org.uk

Membership Secretary

Helga Pinn
membership@ppca-canoe-club.org.uk

Welfare Officer

Alan Ede
welfare@ppca-canoe-club.org.uk

Intro Course Coordinator

Linda Brady
intro@ppca-canoe-club.org.uk

Treasurer

Julian Miles
treasurer@ppca-canoe-club.org.uk

Equipment Officer

Pete Anderson
equipment@ppca-canoe-club.org.uk

Publicity Officer

Sarah Carlson
publicity@ppca-canoe-club.org.uk

Youth Development Officer

Rita Ford
youth@ppca-canoe-club.org.uk

Health and Safety Officer

Damean Miller
safety@ppca-canoe-club.org.uk

Club President

Adam Coulson
president@ppca-canoe-club.org.uk