

Laurie,

Please find attached the latest draft of the report. This report will be published in the near future.

Again, I would welcome corrections to any matters of fact and comments on matters of opinion. Roger Greenwood

The following pages are a report sent to me by Roger Greenwood (Victoria) about a paddle in Banks Strait. I apologise for it being so long but that is what he sent me. For some unknown reason he has included the report I wrote about the same paddle, and also the report that Ian Macdonald wrote, and also the report that John Lawler wrote. These are freely available to read on my website so I can't understand why he insists on repeating them. Roger's report is also made much much longer because he has included pages and pages of "data". (20 pages actually)

Needless data in my opinion but if that is what turns the modern paddler on then go for it. But it does seem to me that it would have made more sense to just tell people that data was available if they wanted it, instead of forcing it on everyone.

When I wrote my report which is here

<http://www.laurie-ford-kayak.net/Banks%20Strait%202018.html>

I didn't see any need to ask Roger Greenwood for comments or corrections.

When Ian wrote his report which is here

<http://www.laurie-ford-kayak.net/Mac%27s%20trip%20report.pdf>

he didn't see any need to ask Roger Greenwood for comments or corrections.

When John wrote his report which is here

[www.laurie-ford-kayak.net/THE%20NIGHT%20OF%20THE%20LONG%20PADDLE.pdf](http://www.laurie-ford-kayak.net/THE%20NIGHT%20OF%20THE%20LONG%20PADDLE.pdf)

he didn't see any need to ask Roger Greenwood for comments or corrections.

But Roger Greenwood has been persistently pestering me for comments on his report. I did resist this but after three emails and also a phone call I finally gave in and will add comments, as he plainly invites me to do in paragraph 5 on his first page.

I have not altered his report except for my comments which are in **red** when inserted in his pages. But I have also inserted a document called "Real Sea Kayaking" (page 22) straight after his endless summary and comment pages and immediately before his endless pages of data. He has actually sent me two reports – the first was a PDF document of 61 pages, and the second was a PDF document of 62 pages

[Return to Laurie's homepage](#)

## Banks Strait 2018 Roger Greenwood

The following trip report describes a failed attempt at a night crossing of Banks Strait from Little Musselroe Bay (LMB) to Spike Cove on Clarke Island. The members of the paddle were Laurie Ford (Leader), Ian Macdonald, John Lawler and Toby Clark from Tasmania and Tom Mackie, Georgia Clarke – Edwards and me from Victoria.

**Toby Clark is from NSW.**

The trip reports from Laurie Ford, Ian MacDonald and John Lawler are appended to this report. These reports are reproduced entirely unaltered.

I offered to share my GPS data with Laurie on a reciprocal data sharing arrangement but Laurie refused my offer. GPS data is appended to this report and a KLM file of my track is available to anyone who is interested.

**I am rather hurt by this comment as it is not the truth. I defy Roger to produce anything to back this statement up. I have sent him at least two or three emails explaining that I don't have any data. I was using a borrowed tracker and the only thing I have is the map with our route plainly shown on it. That map is in my report and duplicated in this report. Read my lips Roger I-DON'T-HAVE-ANY-DATA.**

The wind data used in this report is from the weather station at Swan Island.

I emailed this report to Laurie Ford and invited comment and correction of any matters of fact. Laurie's only comment was to suggest that this report is false and misleading although he has declined to elaborate on this accusation.

**You finally wore me down so to stop any more emails and phone calls I am commenting - at your request.**

Having taken up ocean kayaking in November 2015 it has been a significant goal of mine to undertake a Bass Strait crossing from the start of my involvement with kayaking. I was therefore pleased when Peter Newman asked me if I would be interested in joining a trip across the Strait that he and Andrew Lerk had planned for around Easter 2018.

While I felt that my skills at that stage were not adequate to the task I was confident that I could improve to a standard adequate for the trip within the next twelve months.

Shortly thereafter Tom Mackie and Georgia Clarke – Edwards, paddling a Mirage 730 double, joined the trip. With four boats and five people it looked as if we were set for a crossing and organisation for the trip began.

Unfortunately Peter developed Carpal Tunnel syndrome and had to abandon the crossing and about two weeks before our departure Andrew developed a staph infection that had him laid up in hospital and he also had to abandon the trip. At this point Tom and Georgia decided that a two boat crossing was rather more exposed than they were comfortable with and so I was the only boat left in the crossing.

**You know what Roger, I have a niggling suspicion that is not the whole truth. It is well known that Tom & Georgia had every intention of doing the crossing with you. I believe the three of you were doing a training paddle at Wilson's Prom a couple of weeks before the start of this trip. I am led to believe you had a huge argument and they refused to paddle with you any longer and pulled out of that training trip. Then on the first day at Little Musselroe Bay when Toby mentioned something to Georgia**

**about her friend Roger she very vehemently – and I'll repeat that – very vehemently replied "He is not our friend."  
I guess that doesn't surprise me!**

Peter Newman had been in touch with Laurie Ford, the doyen of Tasmanian paddling, during the planning of our trip as Laurie was planning a two week paddle around the Furneaux Group at around the same time that we proposed to set off. We thought that we could perhaps join up with him to cross Banks Strait and perhaps beyond.

Tom and Georgia decided to join Laurie and his partners for the two week Furneaux Group trip while it was my intention to head out on a solo crossing of Bass Strait immediately after crossing Banks Strait.

Laurie is hugely experienced in paddling these waters and has crossed Banks Strait 39 times. He came highly recommended by people that I respect so I had every confidence that he was competent and capable of leading the paddle across Banks Strait and beyond.

Laurie agreed with this plan although he made it quite clear that this was two separate and autonomous groups travelling together rather than a single interdependent group. However the changes in Tom and Georgia's plans meant that they could now be considered part of Laurie's Group rather than part of mine.

It was arranged that we would meet at LMB on the morning of the 24<sup>th</sup> March 2018 and paddle out of LMB for Swan Island at about 1600 hours with the main crossing to Spike ~~Cove~~ Bay the following day. **Weather permitting.**

Tom, Georgia and I arrived in LMB in the late morning on the 24<sup>th</sup> March and met up with Laurie and Toby Clark.

After brewing a cup of tea (no good adventure is complete without tea) we fell to discussing aspects of kayaking and at some point in this discussion Laurie advanced the opinion that the Bureau of Meteorology are incompetent and the accuracy of the BoM predictions are not better than 50/50. He further opined that he can do better than the BoM looking out his kitchen window.

**Your imagination is working overtime if you thought you heard that from me. I have never ever in my life claimed that I can predict the weather, by looking out my kitchen window or by any other means. But for many years people have known my view that weather forecasts from the BOM are quite often inaccurate. I have never in my life called them incompetent. The whole basis of my discussion about weather forecasting is that no-one can predict the weather with a great deal of accuracy. (And in fact every time I have paddled with you, you yourself say the forecast was inaccurate).**

**Have you ever heard of Edward Norton Lorenz? No I take that back – silly question. But he is the most well-known meteorologist in the world and because of his work The European Centre for Medium Weather Forecasts assessments suggested that the world saved billions of dollars each year from predictions that were statistically better than nothing. But beyond two or three days the world's best forecasts were speculative, and beyond six or seven they were worthless.**

**I agree that they are statistically better than nothing, but that is the best you can say about them – they are statistically better than nothing.**

**I can thoroughly recommend a book to read. It is called CHAOS, Making a new science – by James Gleik. A fascinating book which will explain a bit about weather forecasting, as well as other aspects of Chaos Theory.**

Now I have a very high opinion of the BoM and believe that they do an excellent job of predicting the behaviour of the hugely complex and variable system that is the weather. While I am perfectly happy to concede that they do get the weather predictions wrong at times, it is certainly the case that they are substantially correct most of the time and that any BoM predictions are going to be vastly superior to personal observation and forecast.

Accordingly I was not about to let Laurie's opinion go by unchallenged and a lively debate ensued. I believe that the animosity generated by this debate played a significant part in the subsequent events of the next 24 hours. It is also apparent that Laurie does not believe his own rhetoric as he demonstrated a slavish (and sensible) devotion to the weather forecasts for the entire duration of our time together. **I listened to the forecast twice.**

At some point in the morning Laurie announced that we would not be paddling anywhere till about Tuesday as the weather forecast was for strong winds that made crossing Banks Strait inadvisable.

Accordingly Tom, Georgia and I set off to find mobile phone reception up the road to let everyone know that we would not be paddling for a few days.

During this time I took a look at the BoM Marine Wind Forecast for Saturday and Sunday and as I recall it the prediction for mid to late morning on Sunday was for 40 – 50 knot winds to the south of Clarke Island.

On arrival back at LMB Laurie informed us that he was contemplating a night paddle across Banks Strait depending on the VHF weather forecast at 1730 hours being favourable.

**It was actually the 1733 broadcast. This is a hang-over from the old "silent period" days when operators on marine frequencies observed silence periods worldwide - of three minutes' duration, starting on the hour and half-hour - so that operators in difficulties can be heard. It is still recommended that users of HF marine frequencies observe this.**

At approximately 1530 hours Ian MacDonald and John Lawler arrived and unloaded their boats. At about this time either Ian or John observed that one of the rudder cable shackle pins on my Mirage 582 was completely unscrewed and that I might want to tighten it before we went out. I have never had a rudder shackle pin come loose in the past and given that the entire rudder actuation system is under constant tension from the shock cord rudder pedal return it is difficult to see how this could have occurred spontaneously.

After listening to the ~~1730~~ **1733** weather forecast Laurie announced that we would set out for Spike ~~Cove~~ **Bay** on Clarke Island at about 2200 hours that evening and that we should pack our boats before nightfall and be ready to leave at about 2200 hours.

LMB to Spike ~~Cove~~ **Bay** on Clarke Island is a paddle of approximately 25 km which was expected to take 3 - 4 hours.

With boats loaded I mounted the international standard white navigation light to my boat and asked Laurie if it was acceptable as he had previously specified red navigation lights for any night paddling. Laurie responded that he would; “Smash that light off your boat” if I went out with a white light. I did not respond and Laurie repeated his threat.

This did not inspire confidence but with Ian and Johns’ help we managed to find some red material to cover my navigation light and Tom and Georgia used a red dry bag to cover their white light.

As far as I understand Laurie carried a Spot Tracker with an SOS function and a VHF radio but none of the Tasmanian boats carried Personal Locator Beacon (PLB) or Electronic Position Indicating Radio Beacon (EPIRB) devices. During discussions on this subject it was made clear to me that carrying electronic distress signalling devices was a sign of effeminate weakness not countenanced by real men. Tom & Georgia and I carry three PLB and two EPIRB devices between us as is required under Tasmanian maritime law for off shore paddling.

**You seem to pick and choose which piece of Tasmania maritime law you obey. Tasmanian maritime requires you to carry a VHF radio, and you are in Tasmanian waters to within 10km of Wilson’s Prom – Rodondo is a Tasmanian island. I did not see any evidence of you carrying a VHF radio even though it is mandatory.**

It also seems unlikely that any of the Tasmanian contingent carried whistles, manual bilge pumps, paddle floats or any other safety equipment. I do not know if they were carrying flares or other distress signalling equipment.

Only Tom and Georgia were effectively dressed for prolonged immersion with light weight wetsuits.

**I can’t for a moment realise why this is at all important. If you come out of your kayak someone will come alongside and help you back in. There should never be prolonged immersion. In 40 years of paddling I have never seen anyone immersed for more than a minute or two.**

At about 2145 hours we lifted the boats to the water during which Laurie slipped and fell heavily on his backside although he did not appear to be hurt. We then set off following Laurie into the darkness.

Low tide at Swan Island was at 2214 hours with a height of 0.9 metres and so we left about 30 minutes before low tide. High tide at Swan Island was about 0404 hours with a height of 3.44 metres giving a tide range of 2.54 metres which, as Laurie has subsequently indicated, would create a strong tidal flow through the strait to the west during our trip.

The charts for this area indicate that tidal flows of between 1 and 2 knots can be expected in Banks Strait and given the 2.54 metre tide range it is likely that the tidal current would be closer to 2 kn than 1 kn. A tidal flow of 2 knots is approximately 3.7 km/h.



**If you think you can get tide currents from a chart it just shows your infinitesimal knowledge of currents in Banks Strait. I implore you to read this page before you venture into Banks Strait again. [Banks Strait Tides](#).**

Trusting to Laurie's expertise and judgement I had not done any research on the Banks Strait crossing and was largely unaware of the tides, tide ranges or tidal flows before we left. This is an error that I will not repeat on any significant paddle event.

Given Laurie's experience on Banks Strait, my own extensive solo night paddling experience and the GPS equipment that Tom, Georgia and I carried, I was not too concerned about navigation and was happy to follow Laurie into very dark night with only a gentle breeze and slight swell. The conditions for a night crossing could not have been better and with the light on Swan Island gradually disappearing behind us we settled into a very relaxed pace.

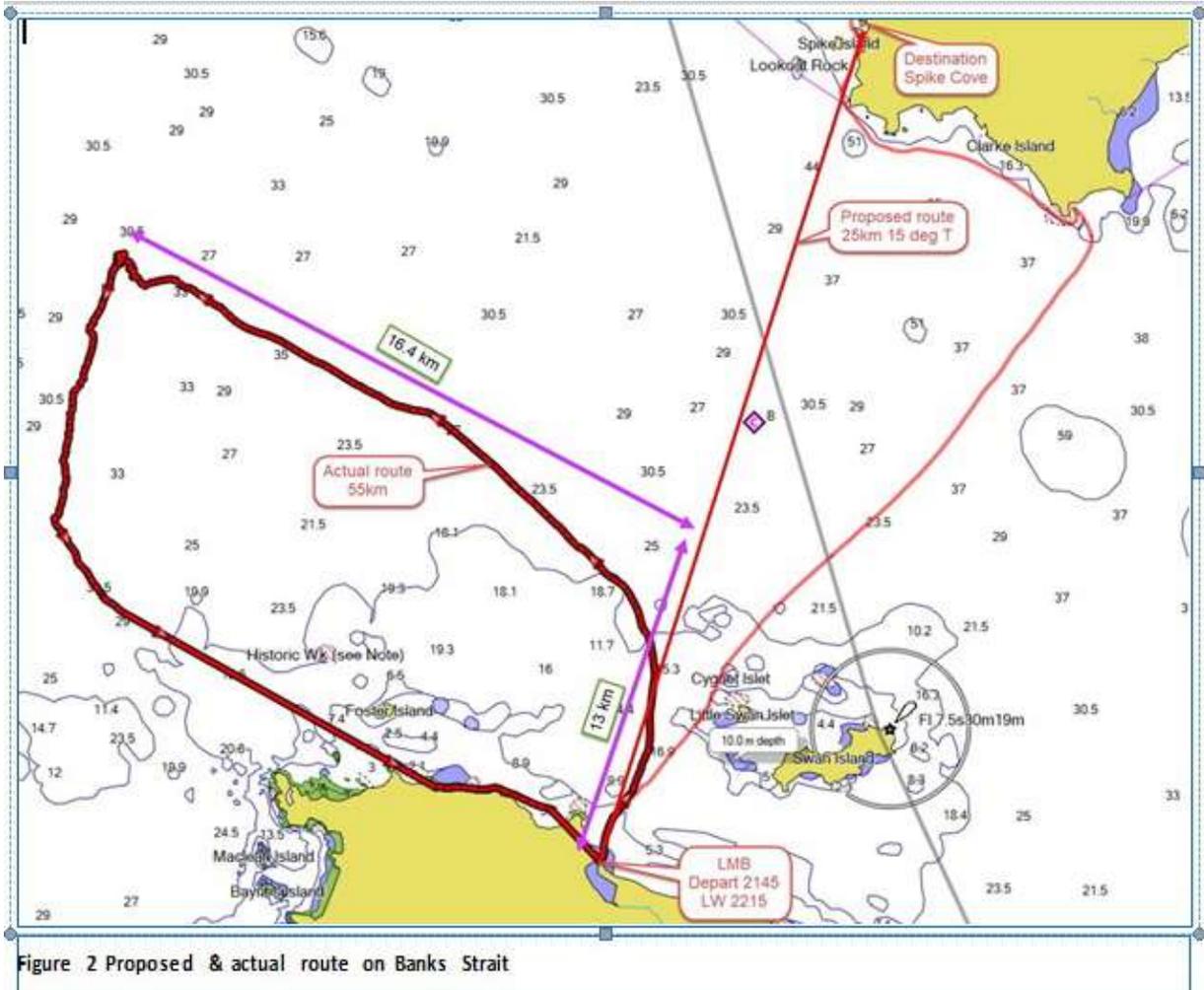
**Keep in mind this statement "my own extensive solo night paddling."**

After about an hour of paddling I became concerned about Ian MacDonald as he seemed to be some distance behind the group and I dropped back to his position. When Ian came alongside I kept pace with him and watched as the group became increasingly attenuated.

It seemed likely to me at that time that Ian and I were paddling at between 2 and 3 km/h and I was having some trouble keeping my boat on course following the others due to the very slow paddle pace.

This estimate of paddle pace is borne out later by the fact that, despite paddling on a constant bearing of 0°M, we only made a total of 13 km in a northerly direction (toward Clarke Island) over seven hours of paddling. This equates to less than 2 km/h and while the GPS indicates that we were travelling at between 4.1 km/h for most of that time it is apparent that we were only travelling at about 2 km/h in the desired direction to the north and a somewhat faster speed to the West (Figure 2)

The remaining paddle pace (2 – 3 km/h) was to the west and was entirely attributable to tide flow.



In short, we travelled 13 km in the desired direction and 16.4 km to the west. In fact, after midnight we made almost no progress at all in the direction of Spike Cove Bay.

This slow paddle speed was purely a function of slow paddling as neither the wind nor the tide would have had any significant impact on our progress in the direction of Spike Cove Bay. While the tide obviously pushed us to the west we would have made good time to the north as well if our paddle speed had been a more normal 6 km/h.

I also lost sight of the lead boat or boats for much of this time and I assumed that the boats ahead of us were following Laurie.

While packing the boats Laurie had made much of the need to stay together over the duration of the trip and so I was surprised that he allowed the group to spread out to the extent that his boat was not visible from the rear of the group.

I stayed with Ian up to about 0300 hours as I was concerned about his being left behind by the faster members of the group.

During this time I became concerned that our pace was too slow to complete the 25 km paddle within a reasonable time frame and with the threat of very bad weather in the morning I was keen to avoid an all night paddle to Spike Cove Bay.

At 2 km/h the 25 km to Spike Cove Bay would have taken approximately 12 hours.

Accordingly I suggested to Ian that he accept a tow so that we could pick up the pace but he declined. With Ian on tow I am confident that I could have lifted his pace to between 5 or 6 km/h and if Tom and Georgia and I had put him on a "V" tow we could have lifted the pace to 7 km/h or faster. **The tide right at this moment would have been at its maximum against you. You are assuming everyone else is going to paddle at 7km/h (or faster) – or would you just paddle off into the dark and leave them?**

At this faster pace we could have made Clarke Island without any trouble within about 3 hours at the most. **Pure speculation.**

After about five hours of paddling and at about 0300 hours we caught up with Laurie and the leading boats. It was apparent that Laurie was unsure of our position and he kept stopping to consult his compass. When I enquired as to our ETA at Clarke Island Laurie appeared unsure and declined to give any estimate.

**It was a pitch black night, no moon, no stars. Of course I was looking at my compass.**

At this point I suspected that we were lost and checked my GPS to ascertain our position. I was amused and somewhat concerned to discover that we were an estimated 15 km off course and about this distance to the west of Clarke Island. On checking the distances on my desktop computer it is apparent that we were approximately 20 km off course (Figure 3)

Over a 25 km paddle this is a truly impressive error and Tom and Georgia were horrified when I handed them the GPS.

**Georgia had already had her own GPS on and had showed it to me.**

At this point it was apparent to Tom, Georgia and me that we had to change course to the NE and that we had to increase our pace. This could have been readily achieved by putting Ian on tow and heading for Clarke Island as fast as we could go.

**My report quite clearly states I had already realized we had to head NE.**

We were also concerned that the tide was about to turn in the next hour or so and that at our current paddle speed we would be pulled back down Banks Strait and possibly out into the Tasman Sea. Facing the predicted weather conditions anywhere on Banks Strait or in the Tasman Sea was not an appealing option and so we urged Ian to go on tow and requested that Laurie insist that this action be taken.

**The tide was not due to change till approx. 0600.**

Ian declined our offer of a tow and Laurie refused to insist that he accept a tow. In our opinion we now had no chance of reaching Clarke Island unless Ian went on tow. However Laurie insisted that we could paddle NE until we got to Clark Island and refused to accept that at our current paddle speed it would take about 7 hours (based on my then estimation of the distance to Spike ~~Cove~~ Bay), if we got there at all.

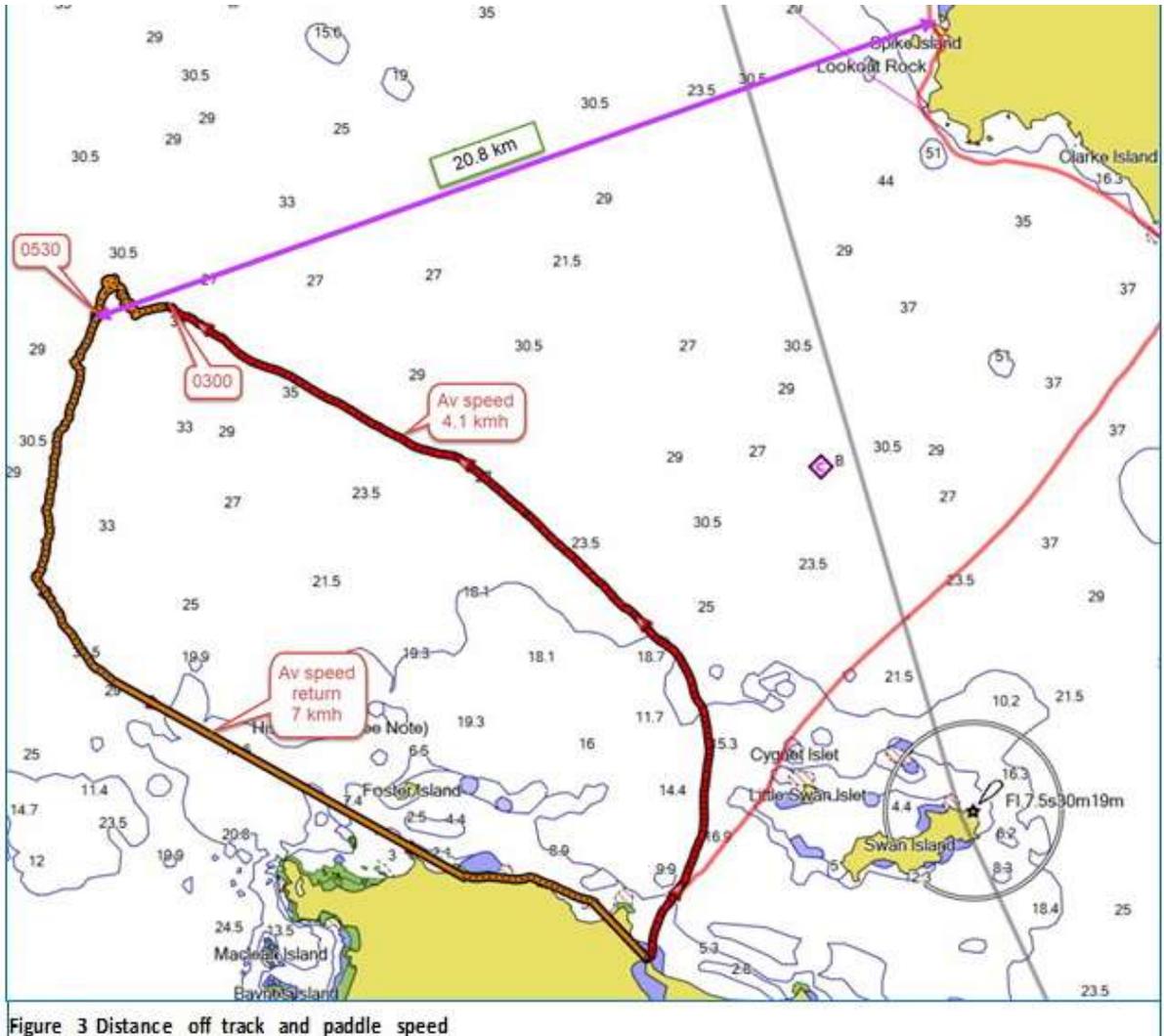


Figure 3 Distance off track and paddle speed

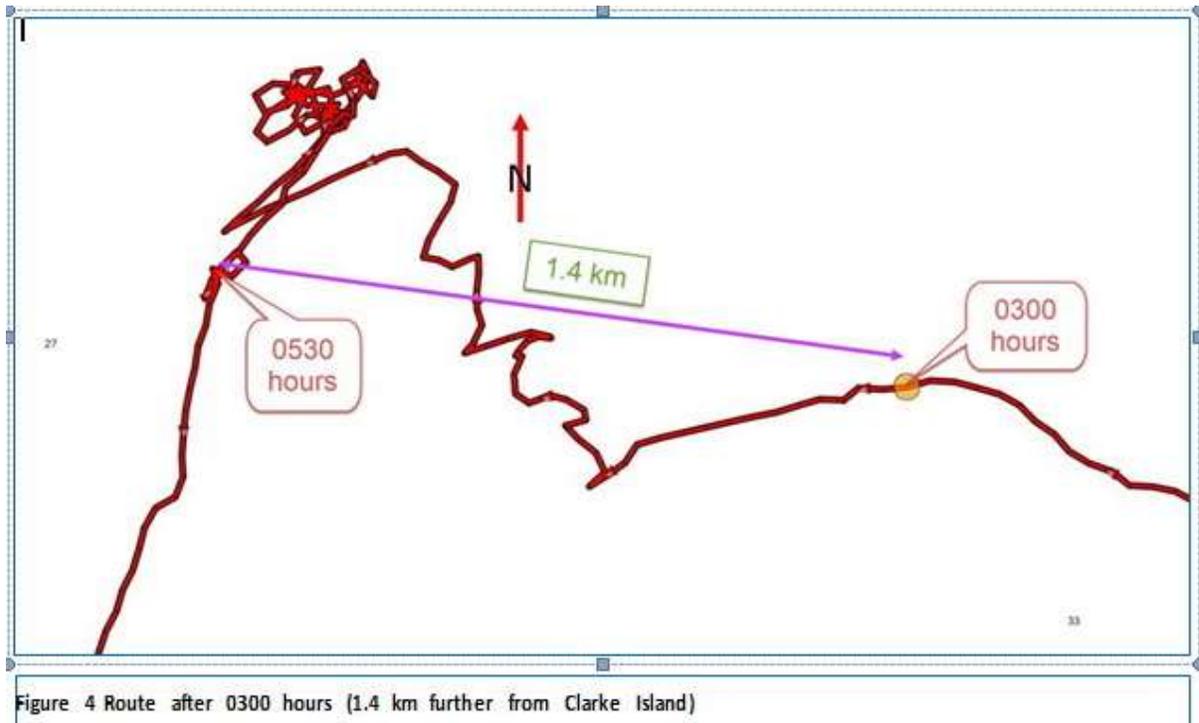
Where you show **“Av speed return 7kmh”** you now have the current (3.7km/h according to you) assisting you. If you got that data from your GPS then your actual paddling speed in still water would have been about 3.3kmh, or maybe less. You possibly should read this page: [Is your GPS misleading You?](#)

Despite significant misgivings about this course of action and rather than breaking up the pod, Tom, Georgia and I agreed that we would paddle NE in the direction of Clarke Island as Laurie suggested.

At or about this time Laurie fell out of his boat and had to be assisted back in by Tom & Georgia. He also had to borrow my manual bilge pump as his electric bilge pump battery was dead and he did not carry a manual bilge pump. I subsequently discovered that, while getting back into his boat Laurie apparently damaged the cockpit rim of his boat which then leaked significantly.

When I rafted up with Tom, Georgia and Laurie I was struck by Laurie’s parlous appearance and he looked exhausted and very unwell. I also discovered later that John had vomited twice so far during the paddle and Ian was suffering from hallucinations.

I was having difficulty in maintaining a paddle course during this time as I was inexperienced in following a compass bearing at night. Following other boats is not difficult but maintaining a bearing a low speed at night took some getting used to. This accounts for the very confused path in Figure 4 and I later found maintaining a compass bearing at my normal paddle speed much easier.



**(“I was having difficulty in maintaining a paddle course during this time as I was inexperienced in following a compass bearing at night.”) Roger, I have trouble with this statement considering your extensive solo night paddling experience. Where on earth (or water) did you paddle extensively at night and not use a compass – the Hawkesbury River perhaps, or Port Philip Bay?**

After a further 2.5 hours of paddling to the NE as suggested by Laurie (at about 0530 hours) I checked my GPS again to discover that we had made no progress toward Clarke Island. On later examination of the data I discovered that we were actually 1.4 km further away from Clarke Island than at 0300 hours (Figure 4). **We were paddling almost directly into the current.**

At this time the entire group came together and Tom, Georgia and I suggested that we now had absolutely no chance of reaching Clarke Island before the predicted weather deterioration. It was apparent to us that we should all retreat to LMB, with Ian on tow, for the following reasons:

1. We had no chance of reaching Clarke Island before the predicted weather deterioration.
2. We had made no progress in the direction of Clarke Island in the past 2.5 hours despite more or less ideal paddling conditions.
3. Ian’s paddle speed, at 2 km/h, was insufficient to overcome even the slightest adversity in paddling conditions.

4. Laurie appeared to be exhausted and unwell, his bilge pump battery was dead, he did not have a manual bilge pump.
  - a. I did not know at this time that his cockpit ~~rim~~ rim was leaking.
5. John was vomiting and could be expected to have a reduced stamina as a result.
6. 40 – 50 kn winds were predicted for Banks Strait about mid morning.
7. In my opinion the Tasmanian paddlers had no capacity to cope with the seriously adverse conditions that were predicted and that even moderate conditions would be a trial.
8. I was very unsure of my ability to cope with the predicted conditions.
9. To my knowledge none of the Tasmanians other than Laurie carried any form of electronic distress signalling devices.

Ian again declined our offer of a tow and Laurie again refused to insist that he accept a tow.

Laurie announced that we should continue to paddle NE toward Clarke Island despite having made no progress in that direction over the past 2.5 hours and that he would not countenance retreating to LMB or putting Ian on tow.

I believe that Ian's refusal to accept a tow was based on a fear of ridicule and shaming that is likely to attend the atmosphere of belligerent domination that pervaded the trip.

At this point Tom, Georgia and I decided that we were putting our own lives in danger by staying with the Tasmanians and announced that we were retreating to LMB. I believe that this decision was justified on the basis that, despite clear and incontrovertible evidence from the GPS that we had no chance of reaching Clarke Island and in the face of a very poor weather forecast for later that morning, continuing to attempt to get to Clarke Island at a paddle speed of 2 km/h was a dangerous, incompetent and irrational.

The irrationality of this decision I can only attribute to my earlier argument with Laurie about the BoM weather predictions and that Laurie, for reasons known only to himself, was not about to admit that his leadership of the trip as in any way defective, incompetent or dangerous.

Accordingly at about 0530 hours Tom, Georgia and I invited each of the Tasmanians individually to join us and return to LMB.

Each of the Tasmanians declined our invitation and Tom, Georgia and I departed the group for LMB at 05:31 hours.

The decision to split the group was not taken lightly and Georgia and Tom earlier argued against it on the basis that our loyalty to the group took precedence over the looming issues of safety. However at 0530 hours Tom, Georgia and I were in agreement that retreating to LMB was the only reasonable course of action.

Immediately our paddle speed jumped from about 4 km/h (mostly tide assisted and in the wrong direction) to 8 km/h and we made good time to the south with a rising NE wind.

Summary		Time		Speed		Elevation	
Points:	75	Elapsed Time:	0:28:53	Avg:	8 km/h	Min:	15 m
Distance:	3.7 km	Moving Time:	0:28:53	Avg Moving:	8 km/h	Max:	22 m
Area:	3274 sq m	Stopped Time:	0:00:00	Min:	4.2 km/h	Grade:	-0.2 %
				Max:	9 km/h		

Ind...	Elevation	Leg Distance	Leg Time	Leg Speed	Leg Course	Time	Position
617	23 m	31 m	0:01:02	1.8 km/h	143.6° true	25/03/18 05:28:10	S40 36.472 E147 53.405
618	23 m	43 m	0:00:52	3.0 km/h	222.3° true	25/03/18 05:29:12	S40 36.485 E147 53.418
619	22 m	43 m	0:00:38	4.0 km/h	293.4° true	25/03/18 05:30:04	S40 36.503 E147 53.397
620	23 m	36 m	0:00:42	3.1 km/h	162.3° true	25/03/18 05:30:42	S40 36.494 E147 53.369
621	22 m	50 m	0:00:21	9 km/h	200.4° true	25/03/18 05:31:24	S40 36.512 E147 53.377
622	22 m	50 m	0:00:30	6 km/h	188.4° true	25/03/18 05:31:45	S40 36.537 E147 53.365
623	22 m	50 m	0:00:26	7 km/h	198.6° true	25/03/18 05:32:15	S40 36.564 E147 53.359
624	21 m	50 m	0:00:20	9 km/h	187.3° true	25/03/18 05:32:41	S40 36.589 E147 53.348
625	22 m	51 m	0:00:22	8 km/h	191.9° true	25/03/18 05:33:01	S40 36.616 E147 53.344
626	21 m	51 m	0:00:22	8 km/h	189.6° true	25/03/18 05:33:23	S40 36.643 E147 53.336
627	21 m	52 m	0:00:22	9 km/h	184.7° true	25/03/18 05:33:45	S40 36.670 E147 53.330
628	21 m	50 m	0:00:22	8 km/h	184.0° true	25/03/18 05:34:07	S40 36.698 E147 53.327
629	20 m	50 m	0:00:23	8 km/h	177.2° true	25/03/18 05:34:29	S40 36.725 E147 53.325
630	20 m	49 m	0:00:27	7 km/h	198.8° true	25/03/18 05:34:52	S40 36.752 E147 53.326
631	20 m	48 m	0:00:25	7 km/h	237.5° true	25/03/18 05:35:19	S40 36.777 E147 53.315
632	19 m	51 m	0:00:21	9 km/h	206.4° true	25/03/18 05:35:44	S40 36.791 E147 53.286
633	20 m	50 m	0:00:20	9 km/h	192.7° true	25/03/18 05:36:05	S40 36.816 E147 53.270
634	19 m	51 m	0:00:22	8 km/h	195.2° true	25/03/18 05:36:25	S40 36.842 E147 53.263
635	19 m	50 m	0:00:20	9 km/h	204.2° true	25/03/18 05:36:47	S40 36.869 E147 53.253
636	19 m	51 m	0:00:20	9 km/h	194.5° true	25/03/18 05:37:07	S40 36.893 E147 53.238
637	19 m	51 m	0:00:24	8 km/h	204.9° true	25/03/18 05:37:27	S40 36.920 E147 53.229

Figure 5 Average paddle speed between 0530 and 0600 hours (8 km/h)

Given the extent that the incoming tide had pushed us to the west we were concerned that the outgoing tide might pull us back out to the Tasman Sea past Swan Island and so we agreed to paddle to the SW on the basis that it was better to reach the Tasmanian coast to the west of LMB than to end up out to the east of LMB and have to paddle back against an outgoing tide.

Also the north western tip of Cape Portland was the closest land to our location at that time and so heading directly to the south made more sense than the longer but more direct route to LMB. With the outgoing tide we estimated that paddling to the south west would give us a more or less southerly track.

As it turned out we could have paddled due south as later suggested by Laurie and with the outgoing tide we would have reached LMB sooner than we did. However, our overriding goal was to reach the coast before we were hit with 40 – 50 kn winds and it was my opinion that reaching the coast to the west of LMB was the lesser of several evils.

At 30 minute intervals we rafted up to check our position to ensure that we were on the right track and making reasonable progress to the South.

Over the first hour the wind began to rise from the north east and by dawn at about 0630 hours the estimated wind speed was 15 kn NE. I was working hard to keep up with Tom & Georgia in their double although at about this time I was able to launch my sail and make better pace with less effort. **The average wind up till 0600 was 7knots or less. See Ian's tables. Incidentally sunrise was at 0717.**

Over the next 2.5 hours the wind kept rising and peaked at between 25 and 30 kn. It was, as Laurie later said, an exhilarating ride and the best mornings sail he'd ever had although at the time I was extremely concerned that if the wind continued to rise to the extent predicted by the BoM then we would all be in serious trouble.

**There was a gust of 26kn in this period, but the average was 19kn. See the table in Ian's report.**

I was also hugely concerned for the Tasmanians as I was doubtful of their ability to cope with the existing conditions and knew that they would be at serious risk of harm in the predicted conditions. Without electronic distress signalling capacity it is very unlikely that they could have been found and rescued in time if they had become separated and had come out of their boats.

**Now you have really confused me Roger. You have already stated I had a tracker with SOS capabilities. You have already stated I had a VHF radio. But now you are contradicting yourself and saying we didn't have any of that. And let me quote from my report: "Finally directly ahead we could see the wind generators on Cape Portland, and then could easily see a lot of beaches straight in front of us. When we were closer and obviously all going to make shore I pulled the sail down with a lot of difficulty because of the force of the wind. When they caught up again I told Mac that there was no way I could get to shore without sailing – my legs were getting a bit excruciating by now. He nodded and kept going with John and Toby. Now I had a hell of a job to get the sail back up again. I'd just get a cm or two of the mast in the hole when I would have to let it go to do a support stroke and the sail and mast would blow into the water. This happened three times, and my paddle went in as well once."**

**So quite obviously the three of us Tasmanian paddlers and the NSW paddler were close together for the whole return trip until we were very close to Cape Portland, so quite obviously could have used electronic signaling at any time if necessary.**

**And this is the VHF coverage map from the Marine & Safety Tasmania website showing the VHF coverage round Tasmania.**



**“I was doubtful of their ability to cope with the existing conditions and knew that they would be at serious risk of harm in the predicted conditions.” Once again you are confusing your standards to Tasmanian standards. It is not our practice to become separated. And we have already coped with the predicted conditions over the last 40 years. Once all the way from Deal Island to Flinders Island – not just a few km back to Cape Portland.**

I also seriously doubted my ability to cope adequately with the predicted conditions although with electronic distress signalling capacity on board I was more confident of survival if I did end up out of my boat.

At 0708 hours my GPS shut down from lack of batteries. Anticipating a 3 – 4 hour paddle I had not changed the batteries although with the coast clearly in sight now this was of little consequence. Accordingly the track section from 0708 hours to 0826 hours when we landed has no recorded track positions. The GPS revived again at 0826 hours but died completely at 0905 hours.

**Could you not get this missing data from Georgia, or was her GPS off?**

At 0836 hours Tom, Georgia and I reached the coast and got out to stretch our legs on the beach. We then paddled back down the coast and reached LMB at 0950 or just over 12 hours after setting out the night before. I was relieved that we had made it back to LMB without serious incident.

After getting our boats out of the water and stowing our gear we headed out to find mobile phone reception to contact Peter Newman to see if we could find out what had happened to the Tasmanians. Peter had access to Laurie’s Spot Tracker trace and provided they had stayed together we should have been able to locate them.

As it transpired the Tasmanians also turned back for LMB about an hour after Tom, Georgia and me and Ian, John & Toby reached LMB at some time between 1100 hours and 1200 hours.

**We turned back an hour and a half after you. All 4 of us landed within about 1km of Little Musselroe Bay in 3hr 15 minutes or less, in my case only 3 hours.**

The Spot Tracker trace showed that Laurie had landed on the coast to the west of LMB and so we set out to find him. However, after an hour of searching up and down the coast with no success, we returned to LMB where we found Ian, John and Toby who had recently landed. **Why did you panic Peter Newman into ringing the Police if the tracker showed I was ashore?**

I understand that the Tasmanians came in separately and that they had been separated for some time before landing on the coast although I was not able to accurately determine when they split up. **At the risk of repeating myself this is quite clearly stated in my report. “Finally directly ahead we could see the wind generators on Cape Portland, and then could easily see a lot of beaches straight in front of us. When we were closer and obviously all going to make shore I pulled the sail down with a lot of difficulty because of the force of the wind. When they caught up again I told Mac that there was no way I could get to shore without sailing – my legs were getting a bit excruciating by now. He nodded and kept going with John and Toby. Now I had a hell of a job to get the sail back up again. I’d just get a cm or two of the mast in the hole when I would have to let it go to do a support stroke and the sail and mast would blow into the water. This happened three times, and my paddle went in as well once.”**

At some point I understand that at some point on the return trip Laurie launched a sail and left the rest of the group.

**Very close to Cape Portland when it was obvious to me that everyone was going to get ashore safely. Do I have to repeat myself again, read my report. I'm not quite sure why you have to keep understanding things when they are there in black and white before you.**

Tom and Georgia decided that they had had enough of ocean kayaking for the time being and headed off to do some walking around Mount Ossa while Ian and John headed back to Hobart and the entire two week paddle around Furneaux Group was abandoned.

Laurie was found on Monday having camped out in the scrub along the coast and I went out with Laurie and Toby on Monday to collect his boat. I understand that Laurie and Toby later went paddling with Ian and John around Maria Island. **You don't have to "understand" – it is clearly stated in my report.**

I reset and paddled out for Clarke Island and beyond on the following Tuesday morning on my solo Bass Strait crossing.

Given that the Banks Strait crossing was supposed to be a 3 – 4 hour paddle, undertaken in near perfect conditions to Spike ~~Cove~~ Bay with plenty of time to spare before rising winds were predicted the following day I can only say that this was an epic failure, marked by exceedingly poor planning, a complete failure to effectively evaluate skills, competencies or capabilities, even worse decision making, irrationality, incompetence and intransigence.

The only reason that fatalities were avoided on this trip was because the severe weather forecast by the BoM did not eventuate, the irony of which is rather amusing.

However it was definitely the most entertaining time of my Bass Strait crossing and the rest of my trip went almost entirely to plan including a 60 km night crossing from Killiecrankie to Erith Island.

In summary and in my opinion the following factors contributed to the failure of the night paddle to Clarke Island.

1. The overriding cause of failure was the exceptionally poor leadership of the trip by Laurie as evidenced by:
  - a. His puerile arguments about the BoM weather forecasts.
  - b. His threats to me and my boat around the navigation light.
  - c. His refusal to accept any external input in the navigation of the trip despite having access to GPS navigation.
  - d. His refusal to admit that he was lost and had little idea in which direction to proceed or how far from our destination we were.
  - e. His refusal to take obvious decisions that would have enabled us to reach our destination.
  - f. His refusal to retreat to LMB when it was absolutely clear that there was no chance of reaching Clarke Island.
  - g. His delaying the decision to retreat to LMB until weather conditions forced the decision.

- h. His failure at any point to understand the gravity of the situation or accept responsibility for the situation.
  - i. The condescending and dismissive tone of his subsequent trip report
- Well if that is the way you feel Roger, I won't take you out paddling again.**
2. The argument with Laurie over the BoM created a leadership tension between Laurie and me that may have contributed to his later refusal to accept any suggestions or advice from me.
    - a. If I had not argued with Laurie it is possible that he might have been more inclined to accept that things were going badly and to take appropriate action.
  3. A complete absence of any skills, competencies or capabilities assessment meant that critical deficiencies were not picked up ahead of the paddle.
    - a. No one was asked, as far as I am aware, if they were comfortable or experienced in night paddling although we were invited by Laurie to indicate if we did not feel comfortable in continuing after the first 30 minutes or so. Ian's slow paddle speed was not identified.
    - b. Laurie shrugged off his fall during boat launching.
  4. There was no briefing or discussion on the issues of paddling at night including the possibilities of dead reckoning errors, sea sickness, hallucinations, disorientation or separation.
  5. There was no audit of safety gear in each boat.
  6. The dead reckoning used to navigate the trip was entirely defective.
    - a. The strength of the cross current tidal flow was significantly underestimated.
    - b. The 2 km/h paddle speed was not considered at all.
      - i. This critical factor was also not identified in Laurie's subsequent paddle report although it is acknowledged in Ian's report.
  7. Available GPS navigation gear on both my boat and Tom & Georgia's boat was ignored.
    - a. Spot checks at 30 or 60 minute intervals would have identified the extent to which we were being pushed off track and allowed timely corrective action to be taken.
    - b. Once we discovered the extent of the navigational blunder it appeared that the incontrovertible evidence from the GPS was either not understood or not believed.
    - c. Despite being entirely lost and having no capacity to determine our location Laurie did not ask for assistance to determine our location.
  8. The only decision that we could have taken to reach Clarke Island (putting Ian on tow) was refused.
  9. The decision was taken by Laurie to continue to attempt to reach Clarke Island even when it was patently obvious that we had no chance of getting there.
  10. The failure to turn back or take corrective action put the lives of all of us at risk and particularly the Tasmanians who were poorly equipped and resourced and whose capabilities were obviously not up to the severe weather forecast for Sunday morning.

## Timeline

The following times are generally approximate only as I did not record or even take particular note of the times of various events during the trip. However some of the times are accurate as they can be derived from the GPS trace of the trip.

Approximate times are noted as such in the following timeline.

Item	Date/Time	Event	Notes
1	1100 24/3/18 approx	Arrive LMB.	Met with Laurie and Toby.
2	1230 24/3/18 approx	Argument over BoM forecasts.	
3	1400 24/3/18 approx	Paddling cancelled until Tuesday.	Bad weather on Banks Strait.
4	1430 24/3/18 approx	T, G & R drove out to let all know paddling cancelled.	
5	1430 24/3/18 approx	Checked weather forecast for Sunday.	40 – 50 knot winds forecast (from the Marine Wind forecast).
6	1500 24/3/18 approx	Laurie decides that a night paddle across Banks Strait is possible.	Pending the <del>1730</del> forecast. <b>1733</b>
7	1530 24/3/18 approx	Ian & John arrive.	
8	1735 24/3/18	Laurie announces that the night paddle across banks Strait is on.	Based on a favourable BoM weather forecast.
9	1900 24/3 18 approx	Laurie threatens to smash the light off my boat.	
10	2145 24/3/18 approx	Depart LMB.	
11	2330 24/3/18 approx	I become concerned about Ian's location and drop back to keep pace with him.	
12	0030 25/3/18 approx	I become concerned about our paddle pace.	Pace estimated at 2- 3 kmh.
13	1300 25/3/18 approx	Offer Ian a tow.	Offer declined.
14	0300 25/3/18 approx	T, G & R become concerned about our location.	Checked GPS and discovered we were an estimated 15km off course (later measured at about 19.4km).
15	0300 25/3/18 approx	Laurie informed that we were 15km off course. Suggested that we need to pick up the pace, tow Ian and head for Clarke Island .	
16	0400 25/3/18 approx	Laurie falls out of boat.	Cockpit rim damaged. Laurie appears unwell. Bilge pump dead.
17	0550 25/3/18	Laurie informed that we had made no progress towards Clarke Island, suggested that we need to pick up the pace, tow Ian and retreat SE LMB	Offer of tow declined and Laurie insisted we could still make Clarke island. Suggestion of retreat to LMB ignored.
18	0531 25/3/18	T, G & R depart group and retreat to LMB.	Ian, John and Toby invited to retreat to LMB.
19	1615 25/3/18 approx	Wind starts rising from the NE	
20	0630 25/3/18 approx	Tas crew retreat to LMB.	Apparently they retreated when the wind started rising at about 0630
21	0700 25/3/18	Wind gusting to 26kn.	
22	0836 25/3 18	T, G & R make Tas coast.	
23	0950 25/3/18	T, G & R make it back to LMB.	Almost exactly 12 hours after departure.
24	1000 25/3/18 approx	Laurie arrives back at Tas coast.	As noted in his report.
25	1019 25/3 18 approx	Ian arrives back at Tas coast.	As noted in his report. Time at LMB not recorded.

## Comments on Laurie's report

Laurie has refused to share his spot tracker data despite a reciprocal data sharing offer from me. Accordingly much of the return trip comparison between the Tasmanians and the Victorians is speculative. **The tracker map quite clearly shows our complete track. Unfortunately your battery died so we do not have a complete map of your track. And if you don't have that, then how the hell can any comparison be made????**

I can only assume that Laurie's refusal to share the Spot Tracker data is caused by his knowledge that it would graphically indicate the failures of his trip leadership.

**The tracker map of our route is published in my report and quite clearly shows our track. Read my lips Roger, I-DO-NOT-HAVE-ANY-DATA.**

The entire GPS trace for the trip from my boat is attached to this report and is available as a KML file for anyone who is interested. **Except for when the GPS battery conveniently went flat.**

1. Laurie makes the entirely reasonable point that the best way to cross Banks Strait is to use the 50 / 50 rule where you paddle for half of the expected paddle time with the tide going in one direction and the other half of the time with the tide going the other.
  - a. This neutralises the impact of the tidal flows on your paddle course although you do need to accurately estimate the duration of time that you will be exposed to the tidal flows.
  - b. In this case a four hour paddle should have meant leaving 2 hours before the tide change and getting in 2 hours after the tide change.
  - c. However, given Ian's paddle speed of 2 km/h, the projected paddle time exposed to the current would have been about 12 hours (approximately 45 minutes at the start and finish would be more or less protected from the tidal flow) which would mean leaving LMB at about high tide or at about 1615 hours.
    - i Leaving 30 minutes before low tide was a very poor decision.
2. Laurie contends that the white navigation lights are a serious problem and that he will only paddle with red lights.
  - a. Having done a lot of night paddling with white lights I can attest that they have little impact on night vision provided they are not too bright.
  - b. The threat to "Smash the light of my boat" was indicative of the manner in which the rest of the paddle was conducted.
3. Laurie quotes Tom, Georgia and me as saying that "we have to head NE toward Cape Barren Island".
  - a. This is not correct and we were perfectly aware that the closest land was Clarke Island in that direction.
  - b. This is also rather amusing as without our GPS locations Laurie would have had absolutely no idea where we were or in which direction we should proceed.

4. Laurie fails to mention not having a manual bilge pump. **You fail to mention you were breaking the law by not carrying a VHF radio. But what a picky little point to mention anyway. This is in my report, “I had lost my sponge and a bottle of Coke in the capsizes so borrowed Toby’s sponge. It was slow but I could feel the water getting lower – but not fast enough for the others and Roger gave me his hand pump.” Surely any half intelligent reader will assume that I did not have a hand pump without needing it spelt out for them.**
5. Laurie notes that after his capsizes “a little panic set in” and that I “ordered Mac (Ian) to accept a tow”.
  - a. While I was significantly concerned with the risks being imposed on us by the mismanagement of the trip to that point there was no panic and I merely made the inescapable point that the only way that we were going to get to Clarke Island was if Ian accepted a tow.
  - b. Also I was more concerned for the safety of the Tasmanians than my own or Tom & Georgia’s as by that stage I was sure that we were much stronger paddlers than they and much better equipped for any further misadventure that might befall us.
6. Laurie notes that the group should not have split and I am inclined to agree.
  - a. However, in the face of his intransigent refusal to take any decision that
  - b. would improve our circumstances and the forecast for severe winds later in the morning I was not about to take the risks inherent in a pointless and clearly doomed attempt to reach Clarke Island.
  - c. Tom and Georgia agreed with me in every respect on the decision to return to LMB and Georgia’s subsequent Facebook post makes her feelings on this very clear.
  - d. Laurie later split from the three Tasmanians when it suited him to do so. Laurie had earlier made the point that we were paddling as two separate groups.
- 7. At no point does Laurie acknowledge that the situation was life threatening both for him and the other three Tasmanians despite the graphically detailed difficulties that they all had in getting back. No one had any difficulty in getting back and in fact we got back faster than you did.**
8. Laurie makes the point that he and Toby had paddled in much worse conditions in 1987.
  - a. He seems unaware that this was 31 years ago and that their capacity to cope with adverse conditions might have declined since then.
9. While I am entirely in agreement with Laurie’s sentiment that if you get yourself into trouble then you should make every endeavour to extricate yourself without external assistance, in this case at the age of 78 Laurie is at very serious risk of heart failure or other health problems. In his case a greater level of concern is warranted and action was required to ensure that he was ok.

- a. A thankyou to Peter Newman for his concern and action would have been more appropriate than the dismissive tone of Laurie's report on this issue.
- 10. The patronising and dismissive tone of Laurie's trip report downplays the bungling that led to the lives of people being put at risk and elides all responsibility for the monumental cockup that occurred.
- 11. Laurie maintains that he landed at about 10:00 hours and only 15 minutes later than Tom, Georgia and me and wonders how they made up so much time on us despite having turned back approximately 1.0 hours after we did.
  - a. We made the coast at approximately 0826 hours which means that we were approximately 1.5 hours ahead of them.
  - b. However, not knowing the coast and not wishing to be too far out to the east we reached the coast further to the west than the Tasmanians and then had an hour and a half paddle along the coast to LMB. **An hour and a half to go about 5km or less? Surely you jest? I think I probably could have swum it faster than that.**
  - c. This probably involved an additional 2 – 3 km of paddling over what the Tasmanians had done.
- 12. Laurie speculates on how they made up so much time on us on the return trip when it is obvious that they did not.
  - a. We left LMB to look for Laurie at about 1100 hours on Sunday morning and the Tasmanians had not arrived at that time so they must have arrived somewhere between 1100 hours and when we got back at about 1200 hours.
  - b. Given that we arrived a LMB at 0950 hours this means that we were at least 1.2 hours ahead of them and possibly more.
  - c. Laurie never made it back to LMB by kayak.
  - d. They would have lost even more time in comparison to us if we had done as Laurie later suggested and paddled due south. However that would have placed us at risk of being pulled out past LMB into the Tasman Sea by the outgoing tide and so I was happy with the decision we made to paddle SW. Ian must have picked up the pace on the return trip dramatically which was very fortunate.
  - e. The irony of Laurie speculating negatively on Tom, Georgia and my paddle pace and navigation skills is quite breathtaking given the monumental failures evident in every aspect of his leadership of this trip.
- 13. Despite getting incredibly lost, nowhere near to our destination, doing battle with rising wind and seas (which did not, fortunately, get as bad as predicted) and having the Tasmanian contingent arrive back exhausted and unable to walk on exiting their kayaks, and everyone abandoning the planned Furneaux Group paddle, Laurie still appears to count the trip as a success.
  - a. Given the tone of his trip report it would seem that he does not think that any serious mistakes were made or that any lessons were to be learned.

- b. This absence of any reflective capacity means that he will most likely continue to make the same mistakes until he retires from kayaking or dies as a result of his errors of judgement.
- 14. Laurie makes note that being much younger and fitter than the Tasmanians, we Victorians should have been much faster than they.
  - a. At 59 I am not much younger than Ian or John.
  - b. Tom, Georgia and I routinely paddle at between 7 and 8 km/h which is significantly faster than the Tasmanians on this trip.
- 15. Laurie makes no mention of the fact that our decision to return to LMB was correct and was mirrored by the Tasmanians about 1 hour later.
  - a. Given that they had made absolutely no progress in the direction of Clarke Island in the 2.5 hours between 0300 and 0530 hours it beggars belief that they would continue in that direction without making some radical change to the order of progress.
- 16. At no point does Laurie concede that his actions put other people at risk or that, if the BoM forecast had been correct, that it is likely that people would have died out there.
- 17. Laurie patronisingly notes that we Victorians will have learned some excellent lessons in tidal stream navigation. However the real lessons from this trip are:
  - a. The dangers of incompetent leadership.
  - b. The need to be self-reliant even when lead by very experienced paddlers.
  - c. The dangers of following others without reasonable care.

### **Notes on John Lawler's report**

1. John notes that the group should never have split and I am inclined to agree.
  - a. However, in the face of Laurie's intransigent refusal to take any decision that would improve our circumstances and the forecast for rising and severe winds later in the morning I was not about to take the risks inherent in a pointless and clearly doomed attempt to reach Clarke Island.
  - b. Tom, Georgia and I agreed in every respect on the decision to return to LMB.
2. John makes the point that Laurie disappeared at about the time that they saw the wind turbines which contradicts Laurie's claim that he stayed with them until near the coast.
3. It is apparent from John's report that they all came in to the coast as separate boats. If that it the case they would not have even been in any position to render assistance to each other in the event of difficulty and they would not have even been aware that any of the others were in trouble.

### **Notes on Ian Macdonald's report**

Ian's report sums up the trip with the words, "All in all a disastrous trip ....." with which I can only agree. **Why not quote all of what Ian said. "All in all a disastrous trip, conflict, splitting up, Laurie's capsiz, John being sick, me being slow and terribly confused seas with high winds." Ian is much too polite to say where he considered the conflict was. Splitting up? Well we all know who he is referring to there. Roger, I am entirely in agreement with you – I can only agree with Ian's summing up.**

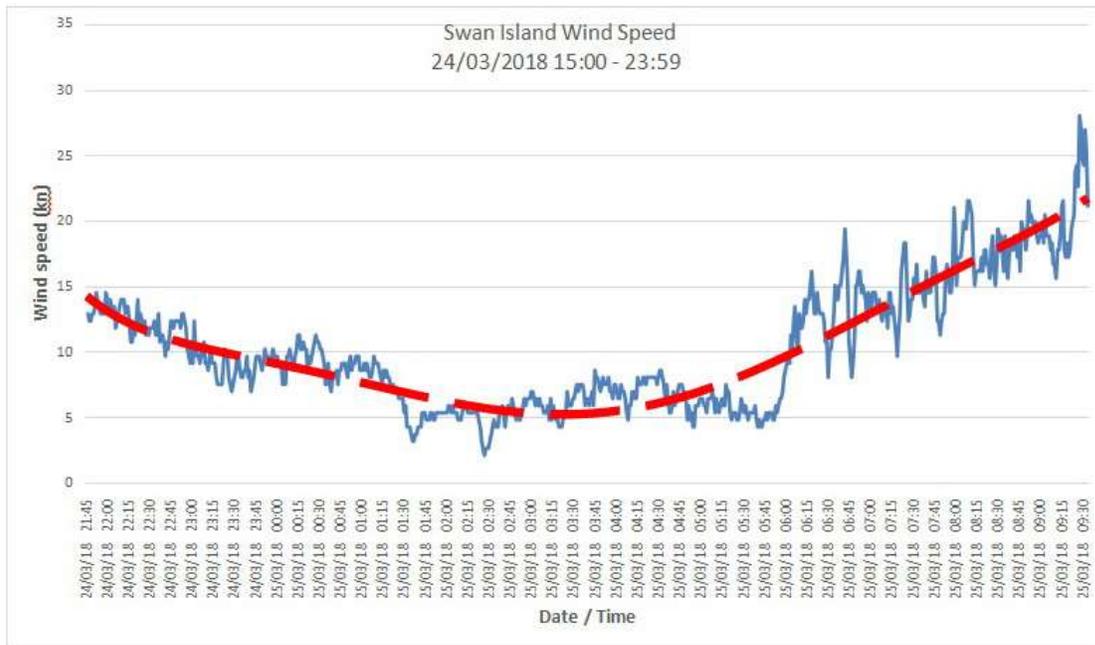


Figure 6 Median wind speed from Swan Island (Wind gusts not included)

### **Real Sea Kayaking (Laurie Ford)**

Dear Roger Greenwood,  
 Thank you for your report (Banks Strait 2018 Roger Greenwood [62 pages]) of the paddle in Banks Strait. I have circulated it around amongst my fellow paddlers and friends and we have decided we will nominate it for the Pulitzer Prize because it is the most entertaining work of fiction we have read in a long time. I have to say that my first impression was that it had been written by a little boy who had just had a big fright and can't stop babbling on and on – 62 pages! Many readers in northern NSW had a good chuckle over it. Especially **"the atmosphere of toxic hyper-masculinity"** in your first version. You should have left that in in this version.

Obviously with your very limited experience (the new kid on the block - 2 years 4 months you say) you are entitled to express views different to real sea kayakers.

Now I have openly admitted I stuffed up with the tides on this paddle. I don't have any problem with that. I have been sea kayaking for about 40 years – 14,600 days – and one day in 14,600 I made a mistake. The biggest mistake I made was in actually thinking you were a sea kayaker. The NSW Sea Kayak Club states a **"A sea kayak is a kayak designed,**

**constructed and fitted out to be able to be paddled safely in a wide range of open sea conditions.”**

(I think that we can assume that they would define a SEA KAYAKER as a person that paddles in a wide range of open sea conditions). I am not sure you fit in this category because I don't have any knowledge of any of your paddling that fits this description. I would be very pleased to see some of your trip reports.

You rabbit on and on in your novel about the predicted forecast, and suggest **your** doubts on **your** ability to cope with the conditions, you have only been paddling for two years 4 months after all.

Let me tell you what I was doing about that time after I started kayaking. I was off the West Coast of Tasmania in the Southern Ocean paddling in 25+ knot winds. This is part of that trip report:

**THURSDAY 25th JAN 1979**

***We were kept awake part of the night by one of the biggest thunderstorms I've ever seen, the ground literally vibrating from the intensity of the thunder and when we finally arose the stiff NW from the previous day had increased, bringing still more rain and lightning.***

***It was rather eerie paddling along in the middle of this storm with lightning hitting the sea around us, the nearest being over 1 km away fortunately.***

***With the aid of these 25 knot winds we made the entrance to Port Davey by about 9.30 am and here I left the others, they were going in to spend a week in Port Davey and Bathurst Harbour while I tried to make it out to Recherche Bay in two days on my own.***

***This was part of our original planning and I had a mast and sail to help me along in hard following seas. The conditions were ideal, a hard 25 knot NW which I hoped would get me round the dreaded SW Cape before the change came. The barometer had been falling like a stone and fishermen had been warning us of the impending fury, as well as receiving gale warnings on the radio.***

***I shot away with the sail pulling like a team of wild horses and four hours later rounded SW Cape after one of the most exciting rides of my life, a battle all the way.***

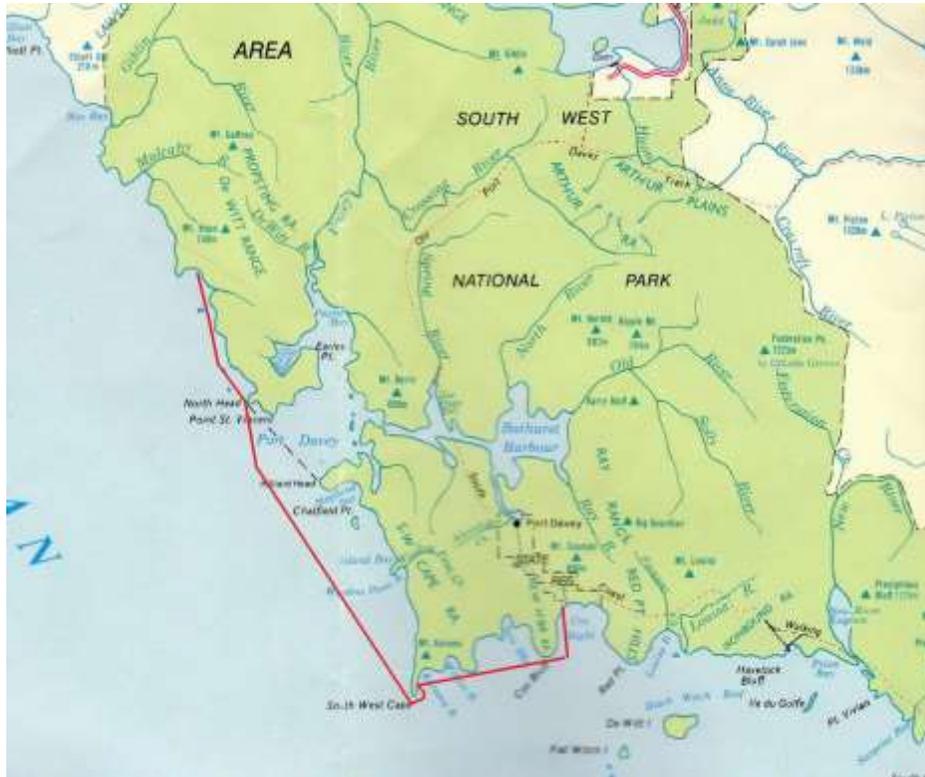
***The big breaking sea often had me up to my armpits in water and my kayak was continually awash. Thinking the worst was behind me I stopped for a brief rest behind the Cape, only to be hit by the SW change which screamed in without warning and unbelievable velocity and almost had me driven on to a nasty lee shore consisting of unclimbable rocky cliffs.***

***The spray being whipped off the water was stinging my bare arms and only a determined effort got me out of this trap and away I went on a partially controlled ride to Cox Bight, it being impossible to sail in these conditions. Although there were many hours of daylight left I felt I'd had enough at this stage and went ashore for the night.***

Now you have to try and imagine what this was like Roger. I was in a home built kayak with no bulkheads, no pump, no whistle, no GPS, no EPIRB, no flares – just me in the shell of a sea kayak and confidence in ***my ability*** as a sea kayaker. At times I was out of sight of land, with breaking waves having me up to my armpits in water. Do you have any conception of what that was like – no I withdraw that question – obviously you couldn't even begin to have any conception. Naturally with water constantly immersing the whole kayak I was getting a considerable amount in the kayak so that every now and then I had to empty it out.

Do you have any conception of what it is like to sponge out a kayak in those conditions – no I withdraw that question – you obviously couldn't. Well I'll tell you. You put the kayak side on to the long Southern Ocean swells and as soon as one goes past you whip the front corner of the spraydeck off and sponge out as fast as possible. Then as the next breaking wave gets close you put the spraydeck back on and grab the paddle and brace into the wave. You keep repeating this process for a good ten minutes or so and then when the kayak is dry away you go again on another exhilarating ride. 60kms from start to finish. It's more fun than sex.

Roger, do try and imagine being in a kayak out of sight of land for many hours with large breaking waves crashing along your rear deck and immersing you up to your armpits. Of course after this experience early in my paddling career I knew I would never need to clutter up my kayak with a hand pump – and in 40 years have ***never*** carried one.



Roger, I don't believe you will ever have the confidence to paddle in conditions like this, solo, with a gale forecast – out of sight of land for long periods with none of your alleged safety gear. Can you imagine what the wind is like when the spray is being whipped off the water hard enough to sting your bare flesh – no I take that question back. I believe that if ever you were caught out in those conditions you would probably need a few spare changes of underwear.

I wasn't caught out in it – I did it deliberately because this is what sea kayaking is about – paddling in a wide variety of open sea conditions. I get the impression that your major claim to fame is sitting on beaches waiting for ideal flat windless conditions and then paddling like a marathon paddler to get to the next beach before the weather changes and puts your life in danger again. You openly stated before coming to Tasmania that you did not intend to paddle in winds in excess of 15knots.

Just because I am a bit older now doesn't mean that I can no longer cope with these conditions, or enjoy them any less. It is still a lot of fun.

Now I know you know about us leaving Deal Island to paddle to Flinders Island in 1987 with a Strong Wind Warning forecast the night before, but unknowingly upgraded to a gale warning that we didn't hear about because we left in the dark before getting it. One of these paddlers was a young lady who had ONLY been paddling for 3 months – **three months Roger, not two years 4 months as you claim to have been.** She didn't get all hysterical and claim we put her life in danger (although at her second-last capsizing of many, very close to getting ashore, she did ask if we

were all going to die). She continued paddling with us and became one of the club's strongest and keenest paddlers and is solely responsible for our motto, **"We laugh at Strong Wind Warnings"**. (and we still laugh about **THAT** day). A huge difference to your seeming insecurity in ocean paddling.

You may care to read about this trip. I was not the leader and I did not write the trip report.

It is here, - <http://www.laurie-ford-kayak.net/maatcm87.htm> with comments like this in it - **Alf was amazed that we were where we were and had weathered yesterdays squall as he estimated it to be 80 knots - we thought this to be a bit of an exaggeration - probably only 50 knots.**

You need to get a life and get out and do some real sea kayaking before anyone will take too much notice of your hysterics. And don't ever confuse **your** paddling standards with **our** paddling standards - we do go **real sea kayaking**, even at our age.

Laurie Ford.

ACF Senior Sea Instructor.

PS: I love this quote from **Nevil Shute**: **"If I have learned one thing in my 54 years, it is that it is very good for the character to engage in sports which put your life in danger from time to time. It breeds a saneness in dealing with day to day trivialities which probably cannot be got in any other way, and a habit of quick decisions."**

I think your novel will become legendary for its hysterics and inaccuracies. A friend of mine who does not own a kayak and has never been kayaking in his life said this: **"Not sure where Roger got his tide info from. Not the same as these tide tables though....."**

He is referring to this table below in your novel.



Which are **not** the Swan Island tides. Everyone knows that Swan Island does not have tides much higher than one metre.

These here on the right are actually from the Swan Island tide tables on the BOM

40		2122	0.45
45	<b>24</b>	0334	1.47
18		1017	0.13
26	SA	1639	1.25
44		2217	0.48
47	<b>25</b>	0425	1.48
14		1110	0.10
26	SU	1735	1.26
47	☉	2311	0.49
19	☾	0516	1.49

website, whom you place great faith in. Where you got **your** info from the mind can only wonder.

**But you have just very ably demonstrated how easy it is to get the tides wrong.** I've done it once in 40 years. You wouldn't want your adoring public to find out that the great Roger Greenwood doesn't seem to have the foggiest idea of how to look up tide tables. I'd try and hush that up if I was you. You have got it wrong once out of once. Doesn't look good especially after making this statement in your novel:

***“Trusting to Laurie’s expertise and judgement I had not done any research on the Banks Strait crossing and was largely unaware of the tides, tide ranges or tidal flows before we left. This is an error that I will not make again on any significant paddle event.”***

The fact that you hadn't done any research is itself astonishing. You had been planning this trip for 12 months and had not done any research on the tides – really? **And it wasn't because you were trusting to me** because the decision to paddle with us was only made a **few weeks before the trip**, after all your other paddlers withdrew from paddling with you.

**IF** Swan Island had 3 metre tides then obviously Little Musselroe Bay would have 3 metre tides. You spent a few days at Little Musselroe Bay so surely you must have realised there weren't 3 metre tides and those tides you published above were just bullshit – or aren't you very observant? The trip across Banks Strait was a failure but I still maintain this: ***“But at least it was a good learning curve and an excellent demonstration of the tides in this area – an excellent demonstration.”***

For 40 years I have encouraged paddlers to extend their horizons from what was considered normal, even little old ladies in their mid 60's found it exhilarating to paddle in a gale in Banks Strait. (see next page)

It was nice meeting you Roger. It was a new experience to meet a person that has never made an error in their life. And if you **must** use Willy Weather instead of BOM (whom you rabbit on and on about) then take note of their disclaimer:

**“The nature of weather** - It is important to remember that **weather is unpredictable. Weather forecasting is not an exact science**, and weather observations can contain errors, omissions or loss of data.” Even if Willy Weather know bugger all about tides – they do know that the weather is unpredictable.

In 40 years I have paddled with a lot of real sea kayakers – one being an adventurous lady **who did not take up sea kayaking till she was over 60 years old**. This is a photo of her in the middle of Banks Strait and her comments:



***“Those swells out in the Strait truly seemed like mountains – about 5 meters high. I was on top of a swell and looking down on Laurie in the trough and it was like looking down a crevasse. What an exhilarating ride!”***

And these are her comments from

another trip in Banks Strait: ***“Listened to the 6:35AM weather on the radio - gale warnings, winds south-easterly. A good chance for us to go on to Preservation Island. On the water at 7:00 for a great ride with big following waves. A few heart stoppers but totally exhilarating!”***

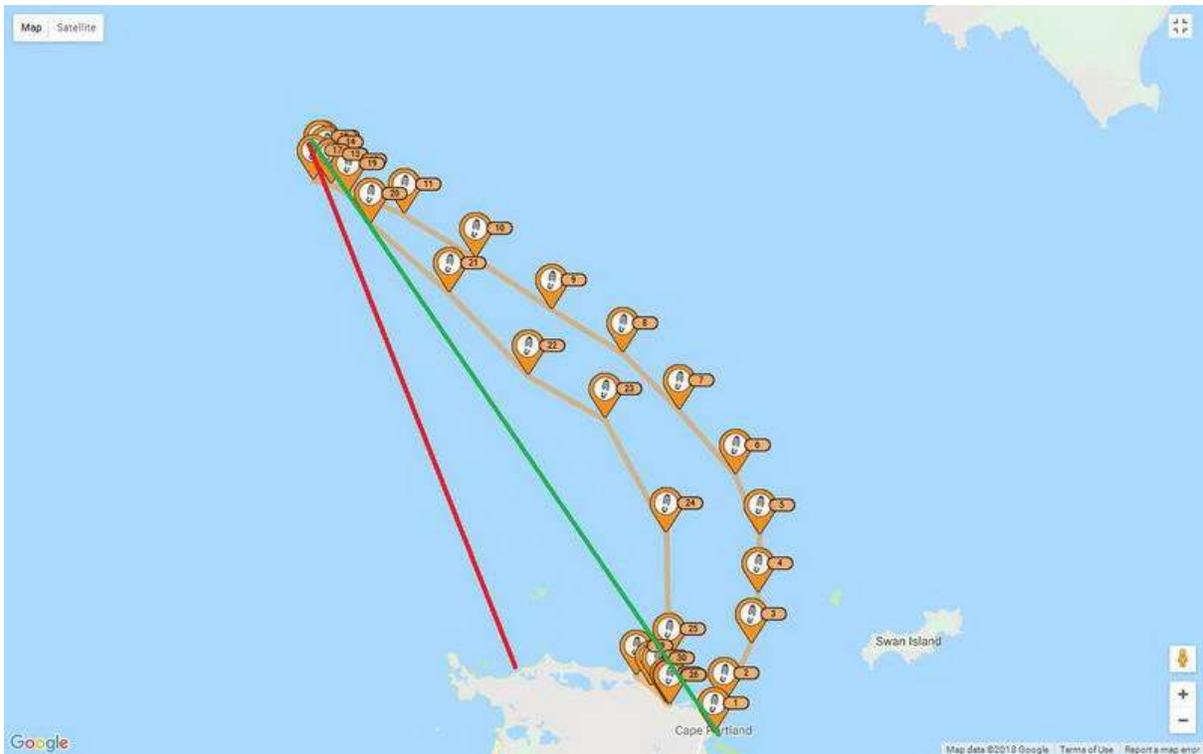
She wasn't carrying a hand pump, or a whistle, or a PLB, or flares – she couldn't roll, and couldn't even brace into big waves. She just enjoyed paddling in wind and waves. And this is from another one of her reports: ***“By the time we could see the navigation light on Fishers Point (the entrance to Recherche Bay) the full moon was giving plenty of light despite the cloud cover and at times would break through enough to make a gorgeous moon path glimmering right to my boat. There were dots of phosphorescence as well. I absolutely love night paddling at sea. The headwind was now behind us and we even sailed for a while in Recherche Bay.***

***We landed at Cockle Creek at 10pm, changed into dry clothes, opened the boot and threw everything in, had the boats on and lashed and were on our way home, getting there at 1:30am Saturday. Showers and some food. And I decided that after seven hours in the car, three hours hiking and five hours paddling all in one day, 68 isn't really old at all! It's just normal life with Laurie Ford.”***

Now there is someone with a sense of adventure. It is hard for me to visualise Roger Greenwood at the age of 68 having one tenth of that sense of adventure.

PAH! Roger, get back to me in 10 years and let me know if you have done any real sea kayaking – not just paddling long distances in benign conditions.

I wasn't going to go through your novel point by point – that is fairly fruitless. However there are some puzzling comments made. You stated you left us at 0531 – very pedantic that time. And claimed that we turned around an hour later. According to all three of our reports it was at least an hour and a half later when we turned around. You landed at Little Musselroe Bay at 0950. Ian Macdonald landed a few hundred metres away at 1015 – 25 minutes behind you but starting 1 1/2 hours after you.



I have put the red line in to denote where you started and finished your return paddle, and the green line shows where Ian Macdonald started and finished his return paddle. These lines do not show the actual route paddled, **but are merely to show the starting and finishing points**. In actual fact I have no idea where you did land on Cape Portland, but that is irrelevant for this demonstration of your slow paddling speed.

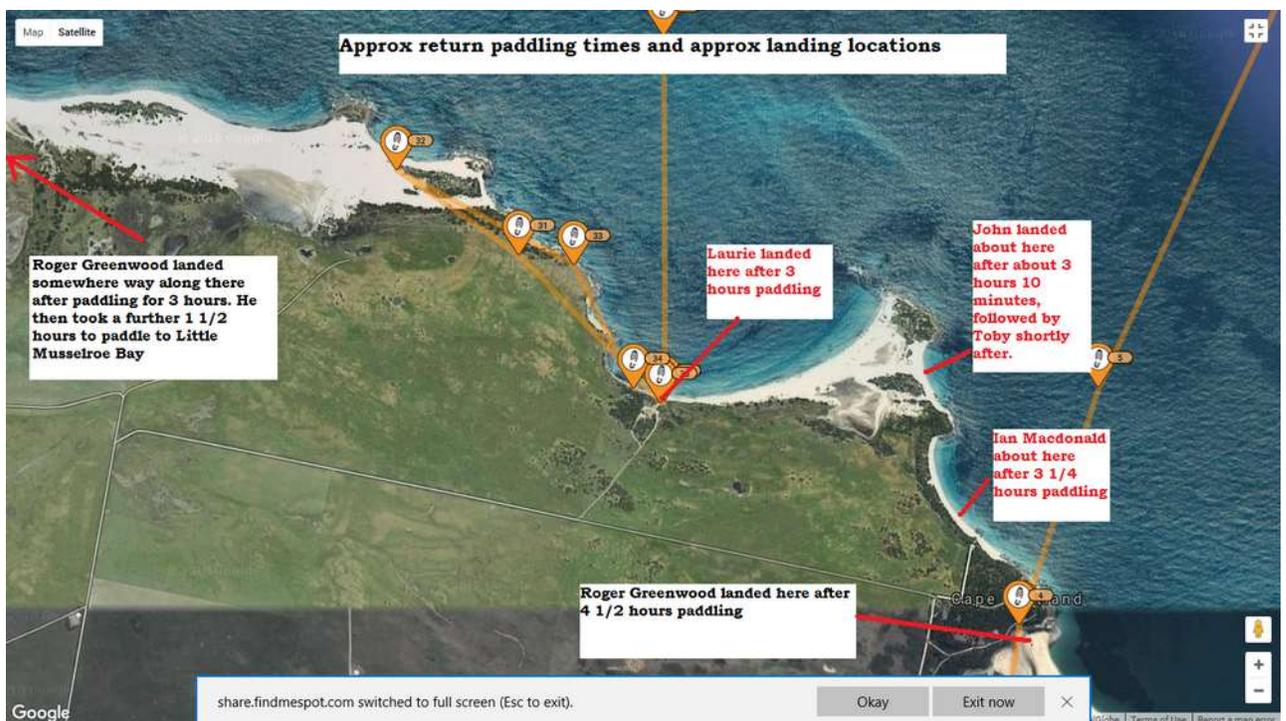
You say you turned around at 0531 and landed at 0836 – that is pretty close to 3 hours.

Ian Macdonald turned around about 0700 and landed at 1015 – about 3 hours 15 minutes, but travelled much further than you did. And you used a sail and Ian did not.

You took 3 hours to get ashore on Cape Portland on your own figures. You say you were still an hour and a half from Little Musselroe Bay – that is also in your report (page 20, 11b). So your total **paddling time** from when you turned around till you got to Little Musselroe Bay would be 3 + 1 1/2 hours = 4 1/2 hours. That is from your own figures in your report, and you used a sail for part of that time.

Ian Macdonald turned around about 0700 and landed a few hundred metres from Little Musselroe Bay at 1015 – a total paddling time of 3 ¼ hours – and he did not use a sail as you did.

**No matter how you look at it** – we were a lot faster than you on the return paddle. Your total **paddling time** from when you turned around to when you got to Little Musselroe Bay was 4 ½ hours according to **your** report. Ian’s total paddling time from when we turned around to when he got to a few hundred metres of Little Musselroe Bay was 3 ¼ hours. About an hour and a quarter faster. We took an hour and a quarter out of your time for the return paddle. That’s not to be sneezed at, in fact pretty good for some old crocks that you seem to infer are past their use-by date.



If you get in touch with me I can tell you where you cocked up and why you were so slow compared to Ian (and the rest of us of course), and spent more time on the water than necessary (and putting your life in danger for longer?). But all the information is actually in your own report

**On page 6 you state “we made only a total of 13km in a northerly direction over 7 hours of paddling. This equates to less than 2km/h. On your retreat you had to cover this same 13km but in a southerly direction which you say took you 3 hours (to Cape Portland). That equates to less than 4.5km/h. (See page 39)**

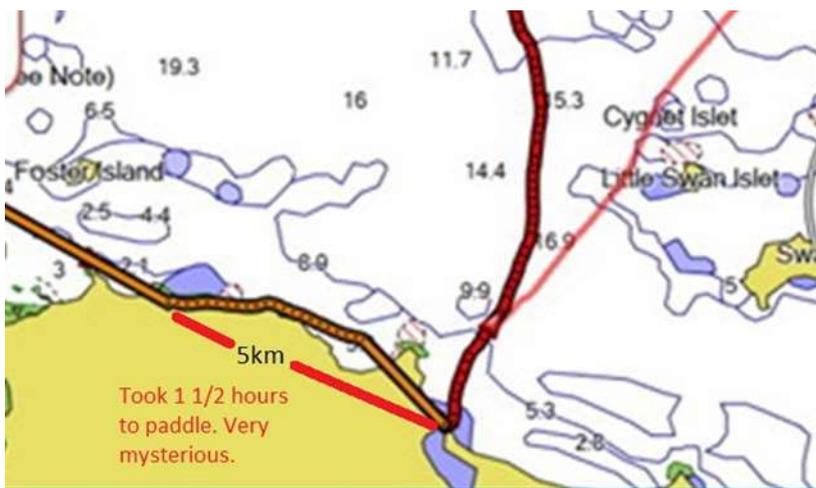
**A lot of the data from a GPS is meaningless in these waters. Nobody can tell you what direction the current is running in at any particular time – and it is changing every second. Nobody can tell you what speed it is running at at any particular time – it is changing every**

**second. Nobody can tell you when the tide actually changes at any spot out there – this is a total unknown.**

**All these things affect where and where you go but the GPS only records your track with relationship to the Earth's surface.**

**If you are paddling with a current and the GPS shows your speed of 7km/h there is absolutely no way you can say how fast the current is going – so have no idea of your actual speed and how much of the speed is due to the current – no idea.**

And of course I am absolutely flabbergasted at your comment that you were still 1 ½ hours from Little Musselroe Bay when you landed on Cape Portland, absolutely flabbergasted. (page 20, 11b). The farthest NW point of Cape Portland is about 9km from Little Musselroe Bay. I am not sure exactly where you landed but it would seem to be about 4-5km from Little Musselroe Bay. The currents in close to shore run very fast, much faster than out in the middle- they would have been running at about 3-4knots or faster when you paddled from there to Little Musselroe Bay. This is evidenced by the fact that Ian could not land where John was because he was swept past that beach by the current and landed on the next one. Also see page 42.



**1 ½ hours to go  
5km, very  
mysterious.**

So with only say 5km to go to Little Musselroe Bay and with say a 3knot current assisting you, you say it was an hour and a half. (page 20, 11b). Extraordinary. It seems almost too convenient that your GPS battery died at this stage and we don't have a track of your route. I have a sneaking suspicion that you may have been too far offshore (further than Ian was) and were swept right past Little Musselroe Bay and then had a hell of a battle back into a very fast current. This is merely my surmise of course but it beggars belief that you only had about 5km to paddle with the assistance of a 3knot current and it took 1 ½ hours. (page 20, 11b). Even my newest paddler – John - knows to keep in close – and when I tell them close I mean within 20 or 30 metres of the shore. The currents round there are fierce.

I can only surmise because your report is so light on detail. About all we have after you turned around is that you left us at precisely 0531, you landed on Cape Portland somewhere at 0836, and then landed at Little Musselroe Bay at 0950. Not a lot of other detail. It's almost as though once you left us there was no one to criticize so nothing worth writing about.

Paddling along the coast of Cape Portland is like paddling in a fast flowing river, and this current stands out very plainly – like a river. Assuming a 3 knot current (5.5kmph) plus your much vaunted paddling speed of 7kmph gives you a speed over the ground of 12.5kmph – to go 5km to Little Musselroe Bay. This is 1km every 4.8 minutes, or 24 minutes to go 5km to Little Musselroe Bay. I still wonder about that other hour. And there is no detail about how well your legs worked when you first landed on Cape Portland. Your whole return paddle is so light on detail except about your battery in your GPS dying. **That other hour?????**

It is a bit of a pity we didn't turn around a little bit earlier. We may have overtaken you and Ian could have offered you a tow.

Maybe one more point: You made this very puerile statement ***“in this case at the age of 78 Laurie is at very serious risk of heart failure or other health problems.”***

At the risk of boring you sonny boy let me tell you some of my activities ***the last few years***. I live by this – ***“Man does not cease to play because he grows old, Man grows old because he ceases to play”***. Shaw

**2014** – [A nine day paddle](#) to Flinders Island and return with The Girl. (3 ½ hours from Swan Island to Preservation Island, try beating that time.)

**2015** – [A thirteen day paddle](#) to Flinders Island and return with two novices, and Toby – The BOBS trip.

**2016** – [A solo training paddle](#) to Flinders Island and return – including a nonstop paddle from Little Musselroe Bay to Trousers Point, 10 hours.

**2016** – [A Bass Strait crossing](#) from Port Welshpool to Little Musselroe Bay with The Girl.

**2017** – [A Banks Strait crossing](#) and return to Cape Barren Island with 4 others.

**2017** – [A paddle to Flinders Island](#) and return with Ian Macdonald. The return paddle from ***Preservation Island to Little Musselroe Bay*** took 4hr, 13min, and 38secs.)

**2018** – [A twelve hour paddle](#) in Banks Strait.

**2017** – I received a phone call from NSW asking me if I would play in their over 75 hockey team in the upcoming Masters Games. I didn't ring them, they rang me because over 75 hockey players are a bit scarce on the ground – even in a big state like NSW. They did not have enough for a full team. I was selected to play every game, and we ended up winning the bronze medal. They want me to play with them again this year.



**2018** – You may not be aware that when you reach 75 the Federal Government would like to have an annual assessment of your health and living. I had mine done in May this year and although the Doctor's hand writing is not easy to read I'll share his summary with you:

***“Fit (something) Man = Living the good life”***

***“Serious risk of heart failure and other health problems?”*** What an absolutely puerile statement, but very much inline with most of your other personal conjectures in your novel.

Health Assessment - Annual (MBS – 707) Summary	
Summary	Fit (something) Man = Living the good life
Recommendations	Nil at this stage
GP Comments/Goals	
Signed:	
Patient:	Mr Lawrence Ford

Roger, I wonder if you could forward me a list of ***your*** kayak trips on the ocean.

From your novel: **Laurie quotes Tom, Georgia and me as saying that “we have to head NE toward Cape Barren Island”. This is not correct and we were perfectly aware that the closest land was Clarke Island in that direction.**

Georgia was quite plainly heard by another paddler as well as myself to say **“We have to head east to Cape Barren Island, we have to head east to Cape Barren Island.”**

Of course you are not the first Victorians to paddle with Tasmanians, to find that what we consider normal paddling conditions are not considered normal by Victorians. Here are just a few little excerpts from a report written by John Hyndman about a Flinders Island trip in 1998. John Hyndman is a Victorian (was a member of VSKC) who has much more experience and expertise than you have at your present stage.

“As we stepped from our cars next morning at Little Musselroe, and were nearly knocked down by the howling westerly, and peered out to sea across the notorious Banks Strait, I half jokingly said to Laurie, "Surely, you don't intend starting out in this?" expecting his reply to be something like, "Shit no, we're not completely crazy cobber! We'll wait until the wind drops off a little". Instead of which **he looked me up and down in stunned disbelief** and said, "Yeah! **Forty knots is ideal for sailing** . . . we can spend a bit of time on Swan Island until the tide's right, then head across to Clarke".

The trip started out well with Jeff filming proceedings on video, and Laurie, with **two sails up, running circles around us and running at break-neck speed down the face of every big wave that offered itself.** His glee was soon to end though, after an extra strong gust of wind blew one sail to rags, and the second mast jammed in it's step, proving *difficult to remove in a capsized and roll situation*. The temporary loss of a sail only slightly slowed him down, and the sewing kit and patches were brought out as soon as we landed on Swan Is., and an expert repair was effected. In fact, this was the pattern for much of the trip . . . no repair job was ever beyond the realms of possibility, and the necessary materials were always miraculously produced, despite the fact that his boat always seemed half empty and weighed next-to-nothing! “

**And**

“Seven-thirty pm. and the light seemed to me to be fading rather prematurely, so I glanced to the south-east again and recall feeling rather shocked at how rapidly the little fog bank had turned into looming steel-grey storm cloud which now extended well to the east, and round to the south-west. I dropped back to Rex and suggested he look over his

shoulder.

"Shit! 'Doesn't look good," was his retort.

The south-easter freshened to a brisk 20 knots with gusts that **prompted me to stow my sail, while Laurie revelled in the conditions and made more sail."**

***And***

"The sea was calm as we nosed our way back across Arthur Bay, and despite a gentle breeze 'on the nose', the going was easy. As we rounded Long Pt. with Whitemark again in sight, we found we were battling a strong ebb tide current. I found Jeff's description, ". . . like having your paddles set in cement ", an apt one. Then a sudden cloud-burst obliterated everything beyond 50 metres. Just as it started to clear a bit, I heard a curious roar, and then a flapping sound behind, and looked back to see Laurie with **both sails up**, and Rex attempting to deploy his sails ( the flapping sound!). **The wind had changed, and now a storm** was sweeping in from the north-west, preceded by a tremendous gust of wind. Laurie came from 100 meters behind Jeff and I in a trice, and shot past to reach Whitemark well ahead of us. Rex never did quite get his sails sorted out before the gust hit, and not being able to get them down either, just concentrated on staying up-right until the wind blew him up on the Whitemark beach. I wasn't game to put my sail up with so much electrical pyrotechnics about . . . I was worried I might get my 'just deserts' for an ill-spent youth!"

***And***

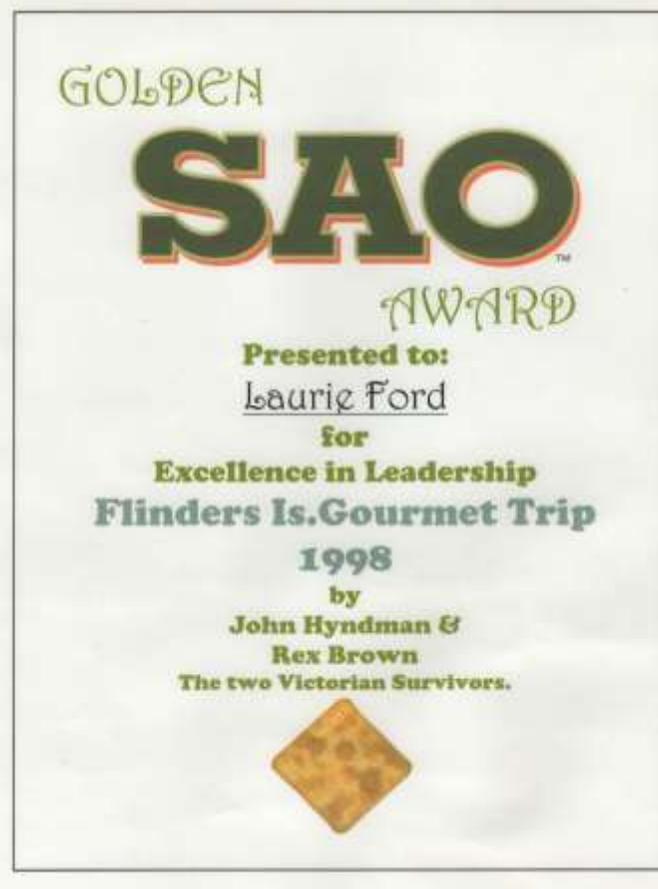
"As we drew away from the shelter of Trousers Pt. the seas became large and steep. Rex told me later that he was **counting seven paddle strokes to reach the top of the biggest ones!** I wondered why they weren't breaking. They reared-up ominously, as if they were about to break, but came to nothing. Except the one that got me, that is! I was caught-out nicely by a fairly unspectacular-looking wave that just stood-up a little steeper than the rest, and broke without warning. I was slightly quarter-on to it, and as it broke I made the mistake of reaching forward to my right to support into the crest. Unfortunately for me there was no back to the thing, and the highly aerated foam gave no support, and I capsized to my right. A roll should have been easy, but the wave breaking in my face had caused me to exhale what air I had in my lungs in an effort to clear my airways. I baled-out, rolled the kayak up and hopped back in, but before I could get settled I was rolled over again. I was just going for a re-entry and roll when Laurie drew-up along side and rafted-up to lend a hand. We were underway again in no time. In hind-sight, I would have been better to have done a low-support on my left and behind (the down-hill side of the wave!).

After a tendon-tearing slog, during which a sudden **eye-stinging rain-squall** had obscured all visibility ( "wiped Chappell off the radar screen", as Rex descriptively put it ) we finally made a landfall on Mt. Chappell Is., home of the biggest and stroppiest black tiger snakes known to man! The first bite brought a yelp from Jeff, but a close inspection of the leg of his thermals revealed nothing more than a wounded scorpion that had somehow taken up residence.”

(end of John’s excerpts, but I can send you his full report if you’d like to read about Victorians doing some real sea kayaking). But Roger, can you imagine those conditions? We deliberately left Trousers Point to paddle in waves in Bass Strait that Rex Brown (another VSKC member) was taking 7 paddle strokes to get to the top – 7 paddle strokes to get to the top. Now that is exhilarating.

Roger, your whole report is so full of conjecture, on what **you** thought, or what **your** fears were, or what **you** imagined other people could do or couldn’t do. It is all about **your** belief, and in **your** estimation. Most of it is just supposition. And nowhere did you even mention the fantastic electrical storm that went past – it was some of the best lightning I have seen in years. It would have been a real joy to be out there if I hadn’t been in such excruciating pain. Them’s the breaks.

And I am very proud to have this in a frame hanging on my wall.



In my report I mentioned that when Toby and I left Roger at Little Musselroe Bay and drove to Scottsdale we were having a laugh and a chuckle over the night paddle; and a couple of weeks later the four of us were on Maria Island having a laugh and a joke about the night paddle.

I have included some bits of trip reports where I have paddled in some rather windy and wild conditions. I can well imagine all of you reading about my trip down round the SW corner of Tasmania in a kayak without bulkheads, without a pump of any description, without an EPIRB or PLB, without flares, without a radio, in winds in excess of 25knots and a gale forecast. I can imagine you all thinking “The bastard is absolutely crazy, he’s out of his mind – mental”, and I can picture you all nodding your heads.

I gave you a little bit of John Hyndman’s report, where we obviously paddled in conditions he didn’t imagine for a moment we would paddle in. He was probably the best and most experienced paddler in the VSKC at the time. The point I’m trying to make is that most of MY kayaking life I have deliberately paddled in conditions that you doubt you could. The most important bit of safety gear you need above all your electronic gadgets and other alleged safety gear is experience in bad conditions.

I made this statement “For 40 years I have encouraged paddlers to extend their horizons from what was considered normal.” Why? Because it is the only way to get experience and therefore become a much safer paddler. Tasmania pokes down into the Roaring Forties – we need to get confident in these conditions.

I told you about the time we had a young lady with only 3 months experience, and we paddled from Deal Island to Flinders Island in a gale. She probably came out of her kayak 7 times but her life was never in danger. Someone would come along side and help her back in again. Of course she was fortunate enough to be paddling my spare Sea Leopard otherwise she may have had a lot more swims.

With that experience behind her she went on to become one of the clubs strongest and keenest paddlers, not at all put off by the experience. She is responsible for our motto being “We laugh at strong wind warnings.” And I’ll never forget that day, it will live in my mind for ever. Let me digress a bit and tell you about that day. (Her nickname was Kamikaze and how she got that name is another story)

We had a weekend camping trip scheduled to paddle down one side of Freycinet Peninsula to Schouten Island and camp and then paddle back the other side the next day. There was a strong wind warning for that weekend, SW, so we decided to paddle down the outside of the peninsula. When we got to Schouten Island there was a large fishing boat anchored in a bay on the NE corner of the island, sheltering from the conditions. Kamikaze paddled within

about 10 metres of it and as she did the wheelhouse door slammed open and a very irate skipper came out on deck and looked down on her and with an angry voice said “Don’t you know there is a strong wind warning?” obviously thinking we shouldn’t be on the water at all. Kamikaze looked up at him with a sweet smile and said “We laugh at strong wind warnings.”

I’m sure that is not the attitude of the VSKC.

Now you did mention that that was 31 years ago – but you really didn’t need to put that comment in. I’m quite capable of doing my own boasting and point out that I was paddling in 40-50knot winds 38 years before you even sat in a sea kayak, with all your electronic gadgets and your dinky little hand pumps.

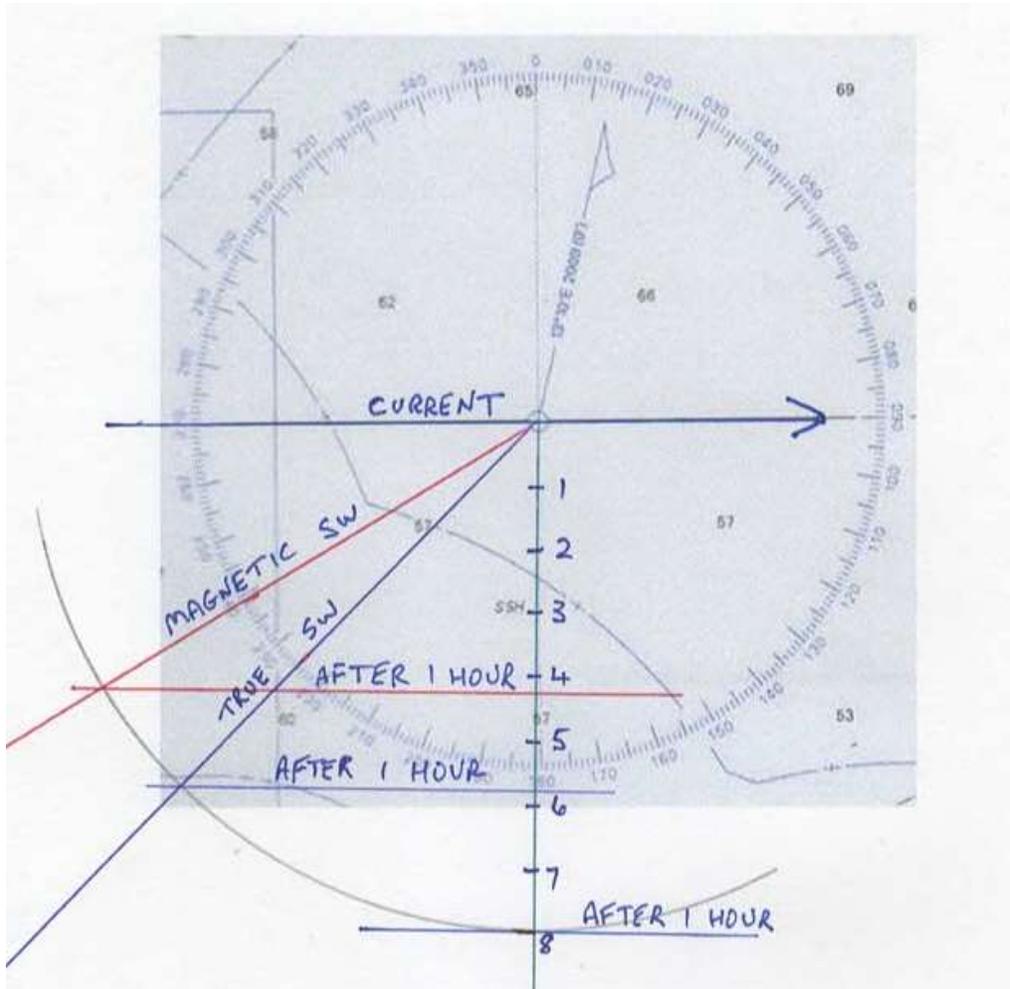
That does not mean I go out in any weather. I very carefully consider from which direction the wind *may* come from. If the prediction is for SW wind then it could come from anywhere from between S to W (and very occasionally from the opposite direction altogether). I take into consideration the ability of the paddlers with me – then I make a decision on whether we will paddle at all, and the direction we will paddle in. In 40 years we have never had an incident that required outside help – never. I believe that to be a good record especially considering the conditions *we* paddle in – which seem to be far in excess of what the VSKC consider normal.

I don’t recall the direction of the wind forecast this particular weekend of this night paddle but it was from the north somewhere. I do have a feeling that it was actually NW to N but don’t swear to that. But it was from that basic direction.

If the predicted wind had arrived earlier than predicted, which is always possible, and we had not then reached Clarke Island the wind would help us retreat to Little Musselroe Bay. If that forecast had been for say E winds we would not have left Little Musselroe Bay because if that wind arrived early we would have been heading for King Island.

So things should have gone to plan and we should have at least got to Spike Bay. We didn’t get anywhere near it because I totally cocked up with the tides – and I still have trouble believing I did that.

I am now going to jump forward a bit to where the Victorians decided to paddle SW to get ashore as quickly as possible, in view of the forecast. (Page 12) That was a serious error, but a typical one that novices make.



If you want to get to the south as quickly as possible then paddle south, keeping in mind that you will be taken sideways by the current – which is changing its speed every minute. After an hour you will have gone 8km to the south (assuming that is your paddling speed in still water). If you paddle magnetic SW you will have travelled only  $4\frac{1}{4}$  km to the south in one hour (about half). If you paddle true SW you will have travelled  $5\frac{3}{4}$  km to the south in one hour. In both these cases you will still travel sideways as well. I can understand Roger’s thinking that this was the correct thing to do but that was because of total inexperience of paddling in any area with very strong tides. After Roger got home and read my report and looked at the information about tides on my website he agrees with me that it would have been faster to get ashore by heading S, not SW.

He said this *“As it turned out we could have paddled due south as later suggested by Laurie and with the outgoing tide we would have reached LMB sooner than we did.”* (page 12) He is agreeing that he would have been faster getting ashore if he had paddled due south. *So in actual fact he spent more time on the water before getting ashore on Cape Portland than he needed* to, and if the forecast had been correct then his life would have been in danger for a longer period. Not that I personally think it would have been but that was his feeling.

As far as I am concerned you never paddle into the current like this, you only ever paddle at right angles to it, or with it of course. Now I know you meant well Roger, when about 0300 you thought we could do much better by towing Ian. But that again was never a practical option. You calculated the speed and the distance etc but with no knowledge of the tides in this area. You do not realise that right at that time the current is flowing from east to west at its maximum. The change of tide at Preservation Island is approx. an hour and a half later than at Swan Island. Read this page

[www.laurie-ford-kayak.net/There%20are%20no%20Tide%20Tables%20for%20Banks%20Strait.pdf](http://www.laurie-ford-kayak.net/There%20are%20no%20Tide%20Tables%20for%20Banks%20Strait.pdf)



This crude map shows the situation at 0300. The red line showing the direction you are proposing to tow in, and the green line showing the current flowing at its maximum. I'm sorry, but it was never ever an option. And are you aware you used the word "**tow**" twenty times in your report – a bit of overkill.

I know we should never have been in that situation in the first place, and we were only there because of my cockup with the tides in the beginning. But all that aside we needed to extricate ourselves and get back ashore as safely as possible.

Paddlers trying to cross Banks Strait have been in a similar situation to this and when they find they are so far off course with no chance of getting to where they want to they panic and set off their EPIRB. They don't realise that all they need to do is wait for the change of tide and reverse their direction and that same tide will take them back to where they started from (of course this may mean waiting for 6 hours). This was almost our only option at this stage.

So why didn't I turn back when you did? There was still a very slight chance of getting to Clarke Island depending on what the weather did. If the wind had come in smartly from a NW direction then we could have sailed in a NE direction and the speed of sailing may have got us ashore. But that depended on the speed and the direction of the wind, and also at what stage of the tide it

started. I was more than happy to wait a while for daylight and see what the weather did. Unfortunately it came in from the NE – a dead head wind so that slight option was gone and we headed back to Little Musselroe Bay.

You might then ask why I headed SE and didn't head south and let the tide take us back to Little Musselroe Bay as I suggested you should have done. Because by that time the tide had already changed and we needed to "catch up" to where we should have been.

This is in my report ***"After an hour and a half of heading SE I felt we needed to go south a bit more – we still couldn't see land in any direction."***

I felt we "had caught up". The tracker quite plainly shows where I changed direction, and quite plainly shows we hit Cape Portland spot on, within a km of Little Musselroe Bay, without using electronic gadgets.



Now I want to get back to your missing hour in your 5km paddle from where you landed on Cape Portland to Little Musselroe Bay. I still believe that you were too far offshore and were swept past it and had to paddle back into a quite fast current. Maybe one day we will get to hear of why it took you 1 ½ hours to paddle 5km with a strong current pushing you along.

This is from a report of a trip to Flinders Island in 2014 with The Girl. This is the day we got back to Little Musselroe Bay.

*But we headed in for Little Musselroe Bay, surging down the waves with the wind behind us. After half an hour or so I realised we weren't getting any closer to the shore we were pointing at, and when I looked over my shoulder I could see that the lighthouse on Swan Island was much closer. We were going backwards with the extremely strong tide running from west to east – despite the following seas and wind.*

Even with a following wind and surfing down waves the current was taking us backwards. We turned left and landed on Swan Island and waited for the tide to slacken off a bit. You say the chart shows a current of 2 knots out there – utter crap. The currents in close to shore are fierce – you will not paddle against them at times, as I feel you may have found out yourself in that missing hour.

Now this is only one side of Banks Strait. Clarke Island is the other side and the currents along close to shore there are exactly the same – you will not paddle against them when they are in full flight.

Now let's get back to your towing option.



Can you imagine what would happen as we got close to Clarke Island and we were caught in the very fast current and could not make the shore? (The tide would have changed by then) And if we didn't get ashore at Rebecca Bay there is pretty well nowhere else to land along the southern shore. We would be heading for the Tasman Sea and then really be in serious trouble. It was never an option to do that. From where we were it was very simple to get back to Little Musselroe Bay by just reversing our course.

Can you imagine being over near the SE corner of Clarke Island being swept to the east? Can you imagine what conditions would be like there if the BoM's guesses were anywhere near accurate and it *was* blowing 40-50 knots? Even with my vast experience in wild conditions I have to say "rather you than me Roger." I may possibly have saved your life by NOT agreeing to any towing, and even more importantly, saved the lovely Georgia's life by not agreeing to any towing.

On a normal trip when you are coming back across Banks Strait and slightly misjudge the tides and don't make shore on Cape Portland you have Swan Island to the east which is like a big safety net, and I have needed that on more than one occasion (as just mentioned above). Going the other direction and not getting ashore on Clarke Island and being swept to the east (as we would have been) you do not have such a safety net – you will be on your way to New Zealand. That was a possibility in your towing proposal and was an unacceptable risk. Roger, I know you meant well with your suggestion of towing but it just could have made things much much worse.

Right on the SE corner of Clarke Island is Moriarty Banks. This is another quote from John Hyndman's report. ***"An area that lies off this point, known as Moriarty Banks must be avoided at all cost! Laurie had warned us that if we saw we were being carried into this area of turbulence where the currents meet on a shallow bank, "You'd best cut your own throat and be done with!" With this warning fresh in our minds we headed cautiously north by north-west, taking the big glassy ocean swells on our beam."***

Roger, you have already learnt that it is much better to paddle at right angles to currents, and if my surmise is correct about overshooting Little Musselroe Bay than you have learnt another lesson, to get in very close to shore as John remembered I told him to do.

I did stuff up but I still make this claim: ***"But at least it was a good learning curve and an excellent demonstration of the tides in this area – an excellent demonstration."***

## GPS data

The following GPS data is in .csv format and can be imported into most GIS and GPS packages. **(Sorry, I may have lost the .csv formatting in putting this on my website. Sorry about that but I am sure Roger will send it to you if you really want it. Laurie)**

A kml file of the track is also available on request. Please email [roger.g@rgc.net.au](mailto:roger.g@rgc.net.au)

Note that the GPS batteries died at about 0707 25/03/18 and revived at about 0826 hours and then died entirely at about 0905 hours. The track from 0707 hours is incomplete for this reason.

The time in this log appears to be in Eastern Standard Time rather than Summer Time.

ID,trksegID,lat,lon,ele,time,magvar,geoidheight,name,cmt,desc,src,sym,type,fix,sat,hdop,vdop,pdop,ageofdgpsdata,dgpsid,Temperature, Depth,wtemp,hr,cad,

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**Banks Strait 2018 – Laurie Ford**  
([The Debriefing Trip](#))

([Mac's report here](#)) ([John's report here](#))

39 trips across Banks Strait without ever the slightest problem and I totally screwed up the 40<sup>th</sup> attempt by making the most basic elementary mistake.

I'm sitting in front of my computer shaking my head, and thinking "did I really do that?" But I did and I can't think of any reason why, other than I must have had a total mind block at the time. Ah well, worse things happen at sea.

I imagine I can hear the words "Senile", and "Past his use-by date" being bandied about – but no harm was done. We just didn't get anywhere we should have and had to return to the starting point – running before a bit of a gale for several hours. Not only was I way off, I also went through a whole comedy of errors during the night paddle.

I'll try and run through the whole sequence of events.

I (78) was planning to paddle out to Flinders Island from Little Musselroe Bay for 2 weeks with my friends John (65), Mac (63), and Toby (68). Toby had flown down from Ballina in northern NSW especially for it.

Three Victorian paddlers – all that was left of the original group of 5 who were going to paddle across Bass Strait decided to paddle with us across Banks Strait. Roger was then going to paddle Bass Strait on his own and Georgia and Tom in a double were just going to go out and back to Flinders Island with us.

We all met at Little Musselroe Bay on Saturday the 24<sup>th</sup> March and the forecast for the next few days was basically gales – but with a small window of opportunity to get across to Spike Bay or Preservation Island on Saturday night.

Now some years ago (2016) I left Little Musselroe Bay at low water and paddled straight across to Spike Bay and then onto Trousers Point without the slightest trouble with tidal currents.

<http://www.laurie-ford-kayak.net/Training%20Trip%20to%20Trousers%20Pt.html>

In 2014 Sue and I had left Swan Island at low water and paddled straight across to Spike Bay and then to Preservation Island, landing there 3 ½ hours after leaving Swan Island without any problem with the currents.

<http://www.laurie-ford-kayak.net/Flinders%20Island%202014.html>

So you can leave from Little Musselroe Bay at low water (but it is better from the eastern end of Swan Island) but only if the difference in the height of low and high water in Bass Strait is low, ie as much under 2 metres as possible.

So for some unknown reason I thought we could leave Little Musselroe Bay at 10.15pm (approx. an hour before low water) and do the same thing, but I never even looked at the height of the tides. That was crazy.

For many years I've been explaining to paddlers the best way of crossing Banks Strait – mainly by starting 2 hours before low water (or high water) and heading north (or south) the whole time.

<http://www.laurie-ford-kayak.net/Banks%20Strait%20N%20to%20S.html>

Now if you read that you will see that I know damn well that the difference between the height of low water and high water makes a huge difference to the speed of the currents.

So why did I blithely not even look at the heights this time – I can't explain why I didn't. Later on after the event I did have a look and the difference was about 3 metres – ie maximum current. So we left before 10pm after I made it clear to everyone that I would not entertain paddling with anyone having a white light on their kayak. I threatened to smash Roger's off his kayak if he attempted to use it. It may be the law but the authorities are not out here in the middle of Banks Strait on a wild night trying have good night vision. We have been using red flashing lights for over 35 years, and in fact Toby had one of the original ones that we home built 34 years ago before LED bike lights were invented. He had it tied across his rear deck as well as a bike flasher on his hat. Roger and the double managed to cover their white lights with red material.

And if you look at the path of the Tracker it is fairly obvious that the current took us a hell of a long way out to the west – a hell of a long way. After 5 hours I realised that we had missed Clarke Island and would probably have to paddle NE to get back towards the top of it and in the direction of Preservation Island. Roger and Georgia turned their GPSs on and found that we were miles away from anywhere and I heard "We have to paddle east to get to Cape Barren Island; we have to paddle east to get to Cape Barren Island." They didn't realise it was Clarke Island we were east of. I still preferred to go NE. We had been paddling north the whole time.

It was about now that a whole lot of comedy of errors happened to me. First of all when we had paddled out of Little Musselroe Bay I didn't have my spray deck on as I thought we may have to get out and drag the kayaks over the small bar. We didn't have to but I got a lot of water in the kayak so once out through the tiny waves I put the spray deck on and turned the electric pump on – and then forgot all about it. It runs fairly silently and it wasn't till much later in the night when I had a bit of water in the kayak that I went to turn the pump on and found it was still on, and had flattened the battery.

I found that my thighs were getting extremely painful when I was sitting upright and could only paddle when leaning back quite a bit. I had my sail up in the very light wind and calm conditions and had let the paddle go to reach forward to turn the torch on to illuminate the compass for a moment to keep checking the direction and got caught by a gust of wind from the other side of the sail – without the paddle in my hand to do a support stroke and promptly capsized. Now that was extremely embarrassing – for Laurie

Ford to capsize in those conditions. The double came alongside and helped me back in – but in pulling myself back into the cockpit I broke the fibreglass seal holding the front of the cockpit rim so now had a leaky kayak. I had lost my sponge and a bottle of Coke in the capsize so borrowed Toby's sponge. It was slow but I could feel the water getting lower – but not fast enough for the others and Roger gave me his hand pump.

In the capsize my red flasher on my hat had stopped working so I dropped it in the ocean and got a spare one out of my glovebox and put that one. Later on (on shore) I discovered my waterproof digital camera was also not working.

I think it was about here that a little bit of panic set in. I was told by Roger to order Mac to accept a tow because he was slowing us down and we needed to speed up or we would be out here all night. I told him Mac didn't need a tow and that I had no problem with being out all night. He said that he'd been on the go for 30 hours and he didn't want to be out there all night.

Not long after that he departed from us, taking the double with him, heading back to Little Musselroe Bay, after asking Mac and John and Toby if they were going to go with him. They declined, so the 4 of us were left to ourselves.

I take a bit of a dim view of this because as far as I am concerned if you start paddling with a group you finish paddling with that group. You should never have individuals all making their own decision and splitting off in different directions.

We continued till it started to get light thinking we'd see where we were but there was not a bit of land to be seen in any direction – just low cloud all round. I was in great difficulty by now and was almost lying along the back deck to be able to paddle at all – and now the forecast gale started to make itself felt. The only option was to head SE back to Little Musselroe Bay, directly downwind. Now I could put my small sail up and scoot off without paddling. I was getting a lot of water in the kayak and every ten or fifteen minutes would ease the sail out to let the others catch up, and take the front corner of the spray deck off and sponge out with one hand. I was getting it pretty dry every-time by the time the others caught up.

After an hour and a half of heading SE I felt we needed to go south a bit more – we still couldn't see land in any direction. The wind had been increasing all this time and the seas building up and I was having one of the best sailing experiences I've ever had. And there was an absolutely brilliant display of lightning from a fairly close brief electrical storm – I wouldn't have missed that for anything. The thunder claps and rolls were great.

Finally directly ahead we could see the wind generators on Cape Portland, and then could easily see a lot of beaches straight in front of us. When we were closer and obviously all going to make shore I pulled the sail down with a lot of difficulty because of the force of the wind. When they caught up again I told Mac that there was no way I could get to shore without sailing – my legs were getting a bit excruciating by now. He nodded and kept going with John and Toby. Now I had a hell of a job to get the sail back

up again. I'd just get a cm or two of the mast in the hole when I would have to let it go to do a support stroke and the sail and mast would blow into the water. This happened three times, and my paddle went in as well once.

Finally I did get it up and away I went on a wild ride towards the shore – terrific fun. I decided I wasn't stopping anymore and would let the water get higher in the cockpit and just go for it. There were many beaches but the first few had big sand hills behind them and I was looking for one with trees where we could camp in shelter. I had to get ashore and I assumed the others would want to get ashore as soon as possible as well. These beaches did all have surf on them. So I found one with trees and headed in and surfed up on the beach with the sail up and the rudder down – and then found my arms didn't have the strength to lift me out of the cockpit. I had to lie along the deck and push off the footrest to lie on the back deck and then rolled off onto the wet sand. Got on my hands and knees and stood up and promptly fell over flat on my back. I moved on hands and knees a couple of metres to my paddle and used that to help me stand up – I was in bad shape. I was wet and in a strong wind so staggered off along the beach to find a way up to where I thought I'd seen a building. There was a beautiful stone house there and I sat in shelter for some time to recover a bit. I trekked back and forth along the beach a hundred and fifty to two hundred metres to get dry clothes and tent fly and sleeping and camping gear. I'd landed at 10am, pretty well exactly 12 hours after launching from Little Musselroe Bay yesterday.



None of the others landed in here so I assumed (quite wrongly as it turned out) that they just headed into the first beach to get ashore as soon as they could. I struggled back along in that direction to check out a couple of the beaches but then was too tired to go any further.

I still had the Tracker on as didn't want to hit the OK button till I felt things were OK. We'd been so close in that even if they had all capsized they would have all ended up ashore so I turned the Tracker off – but still had a minor concern over where they were.

Mac and Toby have paddled in much bigger seas than that for a much longer period in 1987 when they did a double crossing of Bass Strait. The strong wind warning we thought we would be paddling in from Deal Island to Flinders Island had been upgraded to a Gale warning unbeknown to us.

<http://www.laurie-ford-kayak.net/maatcm87.htm>

But John had never been in anything like this and was in a very unstable kayak, but I knew he had an excellent support stroke. My concern was that he had dislocated his shoulder a few weeks ago and it was possible it could happen again with a big support stroke. Later back in Hobart he told me that he had it strapped by Matt before coming and that had probably helped a lot to stop it coming out again.

I settled in under my tent fly for the night, feeling pretty well done in. The first high tide that day came right up to the Sea Leopard so I moved it right to the back of the beach. The high tide the next morning came almost right to there so I ended up putting it on top of the 2 metre bank – in the bushes.

Unbeknown to me Toby had kept me in sight and saw the bay I went into and came a little way into it but didn't see me land. Then he saw Mac and John out further heading towards the next point in the direction of Little Musselroe Bay. He went out to follow them and shortly found John ashore on a sheltered beach where there was no surf, and joined him ashore.

I'm hoping that John and Mac will write their own story shortly. [Mac's report](#). John was slightly ahead of Mac and it was very difficult to keep looking back to see him. John remembered from previous trips that I had told him you need to keep very close to shore off Cape Portland or you will be in danger of not being able to reach the shore – and end up being swept out to Swan Island. So he kept very close and landed on the first sheltered beach, and waved his sail so that Mac would see him. Mac did but couldn't get to this beach and landed on the next one. Toby came round close inshore and landed with John.

Mac had been too far out to land on John's beach so landed on the next one. At the end of the road to Little Musselroe Bay there are steps down to a small beach – Mac landed on the next beach just to the north of that, and Toby and John were on the next one north. Mac did actually walk to Little Musselroe Bay and then back to his kayak. Toby and John rested for an hour and then paddled the last km or so to Little Musselroe Bay, gathering Mac on the way and they all arrived together. Georgia told Mac the exact time they landed and Mac and the others landed on their beaches only 15 minutes later – we had caught up at least an hour and a half on them.

I had made it very clear to the Victorians when they first turned up on Saturday that our policy is that if we get ourselves into trouble WE will get ourselves out of trouble. In forty years of paddling – sometimes extreme paddling, we have never had the occasion to involve the police.

Monday morning I had recovered somewhat and went off to find a hill where I could get phone reception – but intending to stay camped where I was till the weather was more suitable for continuing to Little Musselroe Bay. I got one bar on the phone and rang Sue (it was her Tracker) and told her I'd mislaid the others. She told me she'd had a text message from Toby yesterday and they were fine – so no problem – just a bit concerned over me.

She then told me that Peter had rung the police at Georgia's request, but then Georgia rang him again shortly after and told him to cancel it as Mac and Toby and John had just arrived. Peter rang the police again and said all was OK, which made the police very happy.

I had a bit of a chuckle over this as I had a mental picture of a chopper setting down where I was camped and the police finding me reclining under my tent fly listening to the radio and consuming an egg & bacon pie with some coke and a conversation something like this:

***Are you Laurie Ford?***

***Yes.***

***"We had a message that you were in trouble and needed rescuing."***

***"Whoever told you that you'd better take them to court and charge them with making nuisance calls."***



So I was lying under the tent fly warm and cosy and dozing when I heard “Laurie, Laurie” I couldn’t believe that anyone had found me but it was Liz Ponting and Toby. Liz’s brother Dave comes out a few times a week to open the visitors centre and he and Liz and Toby had a good look at the Tracker plot and Liz said she’d drive to the beaches about where it showed I was. They checked out a couple to the west of me before finding me. All this land is owned by the Hydro and trespassers are forbidden but Liz worked on the Cape Portland property and had keys to be able to get to some of the paddocks to check on the cattle. She still had to inform the Hydro at the entrance what she was doing.

So she drove me back to her place to get my vehicle, and Roger asked if I needed a hand and came back with me to help Toby and I to carry the still loaded kayak along the beach. Just before we arrived at the house my left rear tyre went flat and we put the spare on. We just threw my gear into the car and the loaded kayak on the roof rack and headed back past the Hydro office to let them know we were leaving.

Liz Ponting is a good friend for doing all this and refused any payment for her troubles.

Mac and John had gone home yesterday, and Georgia and Tom had also left. Toby was still keen to continue to go to Flinders Island. The weather wasn’t suitable for the next day or so and as I now didn’t have a spare tyre I opted to drive to Scottsdale to get it repaired and consider our options. We just made it 5 minutes before closing time and left it with the tyre people and booked into a motel.

I wasn’t in any shape to continue the paddle right away, but do usually recover fairly quickly from tiredness. But this leg problem was something totally new and I was a bit unsure about it. I also would have to repair the front of the cockpit. My pump battery had been recharged by my solar panel while I’d been camped on my own. In the end I said I thought it would be a little foolish of me to continue till I recovered really fully and investigated my leg problem. Sue had said when I was talking to her that this is not uncommon and is a back problem – by a bit of osteoporosis of the spine, L4 to be exact.

I have found this online:

***However, with its heavy load and range of flexibility, the L4-L5 segment is also prone to developing pain from injury and/or from degenerative changes, such as: The L4 vertebra can slip forward over the L5 vertebra, impinging the nerve root and causing lower back and/or leg pain ([sciatica](#))***

***The L4-L5 disc, in between the L4 and L5 vertebrae, can herniate or degenerate, leading to possible leg pain ([sciatica](#)) and/or lower back pain***

***The two joints called [facet joints](#) (or zygapophyseal joints), which connect to the L4 and L5 vertebrae in the back of the spine, can allow abnormal amount of motion and/or develop osteoarthritis***

***The back of the L4-L5 segment has a nerve that passes through it, from inside the spinal canal down through the back of each leg (as part of the [sciatic nerve](#)). This***

***nerve is called the L4 nerve root. If any inflammatory proteins from inside the disc herniate and come in contact with this nerve, or if anything presses against it, pain can travel down the nerve (called a radiculopathy, or sciatica).***

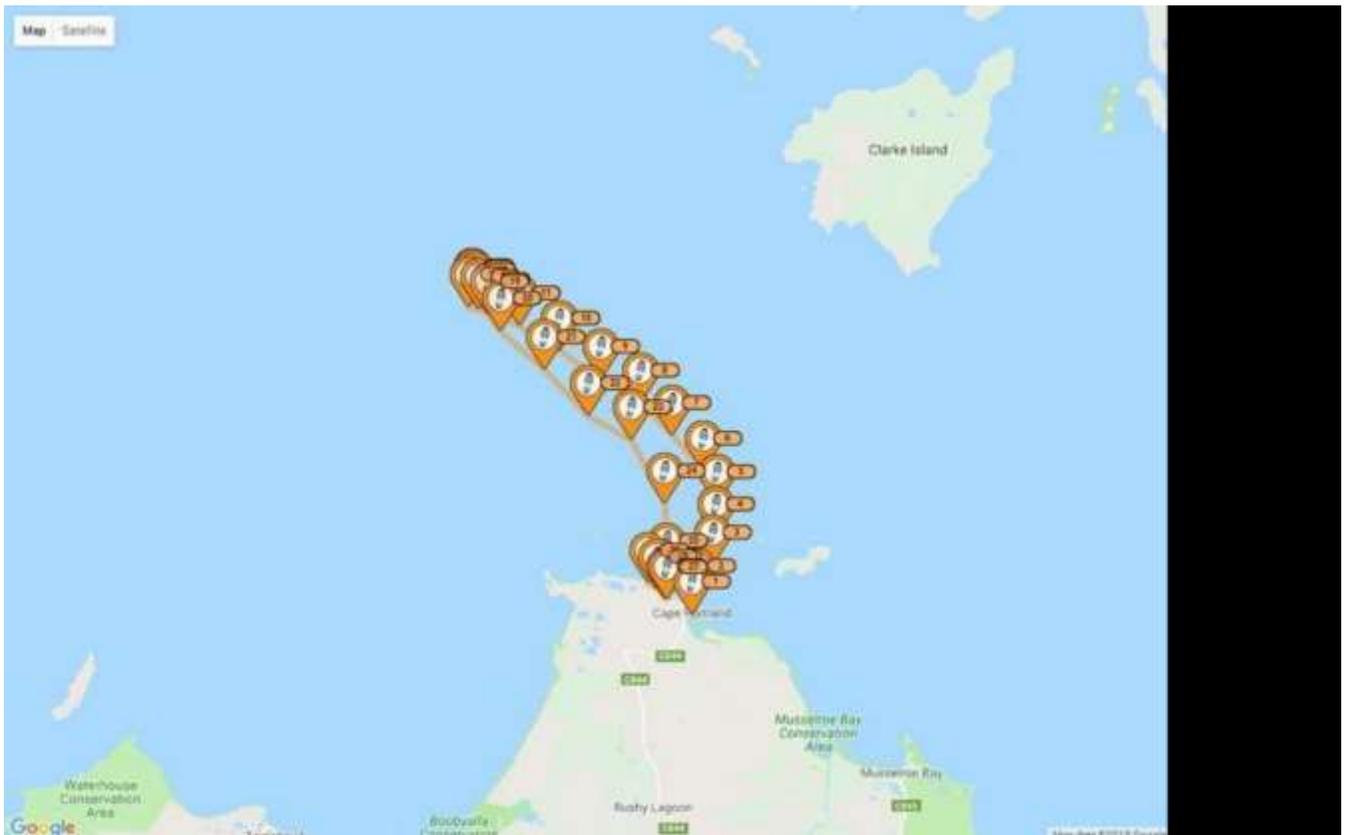
Bugger.

Anyway Toby and I had a bit of a chuckle over the whole event and the reaction of other people and he said he wouldn't have missed it for anything – but still disappointed we were not going to get to Flinders Island.

The next morning we found the tyre was not repairable and when I asked for a new one was told that he sold the last two yesterday. Toby and I continued to Launceston and then Devonport where his Landrover was. He only moved to NSW last year from Launceston and had to leave the Landrover for later. He was going to take it on the ferry when he went back to NSW. I left him and continued towards Burnie to call on a friend who had just had a quadruple bypass; and I was pulled up for speeding through Wesley Vale – 74 in a 60 zone. I was certainly having a “bad hair day”. The nice lady policewoman let me off with a caution and then noticed my haggard condition and asked if I was alright. I told her I was just having a bad day.

I stayed the night with a friend on a farm and he had a spare wheel and tyre that didn't fit either of his utes but did fit mine so I then had a spare tyre for the 6 hour drive home.

I feel pretty bad about letting everyone down, particularly Toby who had come a long way, and also Georgia and Tom. They had come with us (the experts) to learn a bit about paddling in this area – sorry about that kids. But at least it was a good learning curve and an excellent demonstration of the tides in this area – an excellent demonstration.





This quite plainly showed my track onshore, walking to check out the beaches. Why would anyone consider calling the police? Spot 27, before I started walking, was logged at 10.02am, 148.02022, 40.75404.

Sue and I are planning to paddle to Flinders Island about the same time next year but I have a feeling it might just be the two of us – I'm not sure anyone will ever want to paddle with me again. Certainly not at night. Ah well, worse thing happen at sea.

Laurie Ford.

March 30<sup>th</sup>, 2018.

### ***The Debriefing***

#### ***Trip***

Toby rang up a few days after I was home saying he wanted to come down and go for a paddle somewhere. We decided on Maria Island for 2 or 3 days - and John and Mac decided to come as well. We paddled over to Maria Island on a sunny calm cloudless day and sat around in the campsite in Chinamans Bay having lunch together. We talked about our night paddle and could laugh and joke about it, which was good to see. I told them I was proud of the way they had extracted themselves from an awkward situation.

But we couldn't understand why the Victorians were so slow getting back - they were much younger and fitter than us seniors. They were landing at Little Musselroe Bay about

the same time I was landing less than a kilometre and a half away, but had departed from us at least an hour and a half before we turned back.

It should have been so easy for them. When we left Little Musselroe Bay on Saturday night we paddled magnetic north the whole time and the current took us way out where it did. Roger and Tom and Georgia left us at about the change of tide so all they had to do was paddle magnetic south the whole time and the current running in the opposite direction would have carried them straight back to Little Musselroe Bay.

I can only think that they may have used their GPSs to navigate with and that would have been a big error if they plotted a course straight back to Little Musselroe Bay from where they were. **IF** they did that then they would not have got within a bull's roar of Cape Portland but would have been swept straight past out towards the Tasman Sea heading for New Zealand. Then they would have had a real battle to get back towards Little Musselroe Bay and would not have been able to do so till the current started to slack off a bit. That is only my surmise of how they could have been so slow and how we caught up at least an hour and a half.

Mac and Toby and John went off for a walk around to the neck joining the two halves of Maria Island, and over to Riedle Bay on the east side.

The next day Mac and Toby circumnavigated South Maria Island in an anti-clockwise direction in empty kayaks and carried them back across the neck. They had a one hour lunch stop in Haunted Bay - the whole trip taking about 6 hours including the lunch stop. I saw them launch after the portage and flashed my strobe light at them - they saw it quite brightly shortly after launching. This was over 2km away on a sunny day.

The next day we did plan to paddle up to Darlington, and then back to the cars the next day but the forecast was for a bit of rain and the camp ground at Darlington is fairly poor so we came home a day early.

I was glad that Toby came down for a paddle because otherwise we would not have all got together to talk about the night paddle. Incidentally Toby and I slept under separate tent flys at Chinamans Bay and during the last night Toby found a Wombat snuggling up against his sleeping bag - out of the rain.

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# THE NIGHT OF THE LONG PADDLE

*John Lawler*

ONCE again a sea kayak assault on Flinders Island was on the agenda and four intrepid Tasmanian seniors were lining up for the challenge, led by oldest man of the sea Laurie Ford.

With Laurie's extensive paddling experience and 39 previous trips successfully under his belt, what could go wrong? So the March 24 start date arrived, build-up paddling trips had been dutifully completed, adjustments and improvements had been made to our boats, supplies bought, practice packs made and nerves steeled. Just execute the plan .... simple.

The four Tassies leaving from Little Musselroe Bay in the state's far North-East included Laurie, expat Toby Clark, who flew in from Ballina especially for the two-week fun adventure, Ian MacDonald, and John Lawler.

On my first foray across Banks Strait to Flinders with a slightly different group we were known as the BOBs (Bearded Old Bastards). On this one I have a feeling we may be tagged the SOBs (Silly Old Bastards). If qualification for that moniker gives you just an inkling of "interesting" times ahead, read on.

Having suffered a dislocated left shoulder two weeks before a previous trip to Macquarie Harbour/Gordon River in early February, and then again in the middle of that trip, I was a tad nervous about doing the Flinders trip just five weeks after the second dislocation. No matter, I'd keep my paddle stroke low, avoid any high braces and stay out of trouble ... too easy.

After all, the orthopaedic surgeon did say my second dislocation had just been unlucky, I had regained fairly good movement and the CT scans showed I only had a small break in the tip of the roundish socket bone (my medical term) and an operation would probably not render it any better. Everything was in my favour, wasn't it?

"Life's short, make the most of it, go off and enjoy yourself," he happily encouraged. "Just avoid any shit (his medical term)."

With Toby's words of warning that the doctor's advice would only be against doing the trip, I had been thrown a real curve ball just days out from the departure. Now I was definitely going. I raced off to see paddling mate and physio Matt Lancaster to get the shoulder well and truly taped up as a support mechanism, and even got pics taken of the process so it could be taped again mid-trip if needed. Only needed the advised drugs then, and I was ready for the off.

Saturday, March 24: Up at 6am to be ready for Mac's pick-up at 8am, quick load of boat and gear and an 8.30am set-off for the five-hour drive to Little Musselroe Bay, where the initial plan had been for a possible 3pm launch and Banks Strait crossing to Clarke Island, or further on to Preservation Island if the conditions were friendly.

Having turned right at Sorell and ending up at Dunalley before realising our mistake at the East Coast turning (yes, left at Sorell), in retrospect it seemed the omens were not good. Back on track, we made it to LMB by about 3.30pm but were aware the initial launch plans would have changed because of the lousy weather forecast. We fully expected to camp there for a day or two until conditions improved. We arrived to greetings from Toby and Laurie, and to meet Georgia, Tom and Roger for the first time – three Victorians joining us for the crossing. Tom and Georgia were joining us in their double kayak for the Flinders fun but Roger was planning to continue on and do a Bass Strait crossing on his own.

With the initial forecast for gales and rain over the next couple of days we unloaded the boats (gently on the left shoulder) and were about to set up camp when Laurie suggested we hold off until the 5.30pm updated forecast.

The plan had been to wait until about 5am on Tuesday for expected light winds and low swells. But the 5.30pm broadcast offered a small window of opportunity for a night-time crossing if we left about 9.30/10pm. Light to variable winds of around 10 knots and low seas ... even in the dark it would be easy, wouldn't it?

Laurie was keen for the night paddle, having done it several times before, and was wary of the Tuesday forecast changing again and leaving us once again waiting at LMB for favourable conditions. So we agreed: pack the boats, don our gear, test out our red-light flashers and prepare to paddle out offshore a bit at 9.45pm to test the conditions before agreeing to go any further. If anyone felt uneasy about continuing, then we would all return.

In the few hours of waiting we all had a bite to eat and chatted as the darkness and colder night air drew in around us, gradually forcing us into extra layers. I retreated to Mac's car for a nervous doze. It was nervous all right and not much of a doze, unfortunately accompanied by a growing bout of indigestion following my helping of shepherd's pie with garlic. Should have copied Toby's simple repast of plain beef sausages, with enough left over to have cold later. Such an economical gourmet that Toby.

Then it was launch time. Boats lifted to the water's edge one by one, a simple move until Laurie slipped on the slimy boat ramp and fell heavily on his backside but brushed it off as nothing. Out through the lagoon entrance and some small waves and into the darkness, each sticking to the little cluster of red blinking lights like a swarm of fireflies.

After making it out okay and progressing easily into the due north direction we all agreed to paddle on. The die was cast and into the pitch black we paddled. Soon we had some moonlight and stars to brighten our way, and even my shoulder was feeling fine. It would only be another three or four hours and we'd be landing at Spike Bay or Rebecca Bay on Clarke Island.

Keeping a check on my \$10 waterproof watch (which has ticked on through thick and thin) when the moonlight and the moderate sea conditions allowed I noticed three hours had slipped by, but strain as I might I could not pick up any sight of land. No worries, another hour would do it.

I found I was paddling fairly comfortably and keeping up with the group, but there was a growing unease in my stomach. No, surely not seasickness. That was the last bloody thing I wanted ... push it out of mind, it's just indigestion, paddle on.

Four hours passed and the unease grew, this time because we had not made landfall and questions began being raised by one of the Victorians about our progress, speed and direction. Laurie stuck resolutely to his course, but I was unaware that he had his problems – back and thigh pains and plenty of water in his cockpit.

Then I had my own Waterloo. The shepherd's pie came up like Vesuvius, repeatedly, and no doubt coloured the inky waters gaily – not that I could tell or cared, though I did have a brief thought about it attracting unwanted big fishy things. Thankfully, in the pitch black, I don't think anyone noticed, and after it was up I felt heaps better. It didn't affect my paddling or balance so I knew it wasn't seasickness, and that was a huge relief. Marvellous how such things can be counted a mighty blessing in certain circumstances.

To get some sustenance back into me I rafted up with Tom and Georgia and took on some jelly beans and a swig or two of Coke. Fortified again. But no, twenty minutes or so later the volcanic indigestion struck again, only in smaller quantity – but again I felt fine afterwards, phew!

By this stage it was obvious we had been dragged off course by the tide and current and the Victorians were consulting their GPS gadgets. We were making no ground toward Clarke Island, and apparently were being swept westward. About this time Laurie capsized when caught by a wind shift while trying to read his compass, and Tom, Georgia and Roger helped him back upright and to pump out his cockpit. Unbeknown to me his pump battery had died.

Not long after the Vics elected to turn and head back to Little Musselroe Bay, fearing we could not strive against the tide to make Clarke Island because we were so far off course. And then there was the predicted oncoming storm and gale-force winds.

I have to admit I was none too bloody keen on the predicament myself, but the rest of us (Toby, Mac and me) chose to stay with our leader, Laurie. The group should never have split.

It was now about 4.30am-5am, we had been paddling about seven hours. The Tassie four rafted up to take stock and then I realised Laurie was struggling. He admitted his legs and back were troubling him and took some Asprin and had a drink. I took a couple myself for a headache I had coming on, no doubt caused by the two eruptions.

But we had a bigger headache to resolve. Miles off course, apparently, a good storm brewing and an ailing leader.

Laurie's advice was to paddle on until it got light so we could better see where we were. Agreed. Then the thunder and lightning struck, bringing heavy rain and eerie darkness. As dramatic lightning strikes momentarily lit up the skies I caught glimpses of way off land forms, but I had no idea of what islands they were. We battled on, and I remember thinking how beautiful the lightning strikes were. Strange how the thought processes work.

We plodded around for another hour or two until the grey dawn began to surface, only to be blotted out by low cloud – great. By now the winds were picking up and the seas were mounting, so the decision was made to run before the north-easterly storm and make it back to LMB – at least somewhere on Cape Portland.

It sounded good to me. Now just the strength of body and mind to pull it off.

No chance to check the time now, the seas were confused and rolling in at two metres or more. The wind was howling and all my concentration and limited experience was focused on staying upright. But it must have been around 7-8am. We'd passed the darkest hour before dawn test, so why not the rest of the challenge – at least that's the way I saw it. Now I had a definite mission it was buckle down time.

Mac, Toby and I were paddling reasonably close to one another and kept in sight often enough despite the bigger rollers dwarfing us from time to time. But Laurie put his sail up, no doubt because of his difficulty in paddling, and quickly shot off in front of us – headed for Cape Portland, I hoped.

I strained to keep his sail in sight, and he waited once more for us to catch up. None of us three were game to raise our sails, just happy to remain upright and support-stroke like crazy when the threatening big waves crashed in.

About this time I was thanking Matt profusely for his strapping job on my shoulder, praying it would hold up to the constant bracing, and repeatedly telling myself to keep the action low where possible to avoid the disaster of another dislocation. That would have made things very “interesting”.

The hours and the battle dragged on and I could barely make out Laurie in the distance. Miraculously I was staying upright, and then I could make out the welcoming sight of wind turbines on the far-off horizon atop the coastline of Cape Portland – and I had my target.

With the north-easterly pushing us toward the Cape, thankfully, we were making better strides than we thought, though it didn't seem like it at the time and some of the side-on waves were becoming perils as the wind picked up. I don't know what qualifies as gale-force, but I reckon the wind was 30-35 knots at its worst.

It seemed to take an age for those wind turbines on the horizon to get any larger, and I thought I could feel the influence of the current dragging me eastwards toward Swan Island. With Laurie's previous warning ringing in my ears, about missing Swan Island and being pulled out into the Tasman Sea, I doubled down on the paddling effort and asked everything of the shoulder. Amazingly it stood up to it.

I had lost sight of Mac and Toby by then and believed myself to be on my own – shit! Head down, paddle on and get to land, any land would do. The turbines slowly grew bigger and I thought I could see Laurie's sail on the shoreline, but the winds continued to howl and Swan Island was looming closer. I started to pick out a distant sandy beach landing spot, but the battle to reach it continued relentlessly.

A rocky point eventually offered the hope of an adjoining sandy beach but as I inched closer I could see tricky rocks blocking a straight forward entrance, and being a bit shy of rocks now I sought another beach further east on the Cape.

At one point the wind gusts nearly blew the paddle from my hand, and as I got closer to shore it changed direction and started blowing westerly and almost capsized me. Bugger that, I hadn't made it this far only to be turfed in now and ingloriously washed ashore. It was now or never to pick a landing spot.

Rounded another rocky point and spied a relatively calm corner at one end of the beach, which I willed every muscle to graft toward. Somehow I crept toward it, the water got shallower, the waves and wind dropped off, there was no surf and then there was sand under the boat – hallelujah!

Fell out of the boat on my right side, again mindful of the left shoulder, and staggered around a bit on stuffed legs before being able to pull the boat further up the beach and collapse on the deck, wondering where the hell the others were.

The trusty watch said it was 10.15am – I'd been paddling 12½ hours. I was seriously stuffed, spent and done in but graphically reminded of the value of four little words – the will to survive.

Ten minutes later I caught sight of Mac battling his way in from about 200 metres out, so I pulled the sail out to show him the easier direction to the beach. The wind almost wrenched it from my hands. He tried to get in but couldn't beat the wind and current and paddled on, I presumed to the next beach.

Then five minutes later Toby came paddling around the point from a westerly direction, caught sight of me and the sail and nosed in closer to the rocks and made it to the protected corner of the beach. I pulled his boat ashore and gave him a hand to get out of the cockpit. He was so

stuffed he couldn't walk properly for a few minutes, and then declared: "Well, we've been to the edge. We'll talk about this one for a long time."

We decided Laurie had gone ashore further to the west, and after about an hour's spell and in much calmer inshore conditions we paddled on to the Little Musselroe Bay lagoon entrance, which we found was only a 20- minute stint and a couple of beaches away to the east after doing a shoreline reccie.

As we walked our boats up the shallow inlet Mac paddled up behind us, showing us how to navigate the shallows to the boat ramp. He had landed one beach further around from us.

We all pulled up to the ramp and gingerly lifted our boats onto the pebbly shore and counted our blessings. By then it had been about a 13-hour paddle, and Mac and I had been on the go since 6am the previous day when we had risen to set off from Hobart.

It had been a 29-hour epic, including the never-to-be-forgotten Night of the Long Paddle.

JOHN LAWLER  
Night survivor

## Flinders Banks Strait March 2018

Sat. 24<sup>th</sup> Left home at 7.45am to collect John. Left John's at 8.45 and was driving via the East Coast route. Absent mindedly turned right at Sorell and didn't realise my mistake until I noticed a sign to Port Arthur just after crossing the bridge at Dunalley. 30km in the wrong direction!! Turned around and without further incident arrived at LMB at about 3.30pm, an hour later than planned. The others were all here by this stage. Laurie and Toby had driven up the night before and Georgia, Tom and Roger had driven off the Spirit that morning.

We already knew the forecast wasn't looking good for at least the next 3 days but Laurie thought if we left at low tide at 10.30pm we would get to Clark, Preservation or Cape Barren in 4 hrs or so. We waited until the 5.30 weather to make a decision. The forecast was for 10-20 knot winds with a storm approaching the next day. We foolishly decided to give it a go and turn back after a ½ hr or so if anyone didn't feel comfortable. We ended up setting off at just after 10.00pm with the wind at 25km NW. I got swamped going out LMB as I'd left my spray deck off in case I had to get out to drag the boat over the bar as it was low tide. This wasn't necessary and the first thing I knew was small waves lapping over my cockpit. Unfortunately I had my sponge jammed under the middle of my seat so any water in the cockpit couldn't get back to the pump. It would have been a couple of hours before I was able to raft up with John and empty out.

The wind had dropped back to 9km NW by 2.00am and stayed between 9km and 14km N until 6.00am.

25/10:19am	19.6	NNW	29	36	993.1	-	0.0
25/10:00am	18.3	N	23	31	993.1	-	0.0
25/09:41am	18.0	NNE	19	30	993.3	-	0.0
25/09:30am	17.6	NNE	18	22	993.5	-	0.0
25/09:00am	17.4	NNE	18	22	994.6	-	4.8
25/08:30am	16.9	NNE	19	26	995.4	-	4.8
25/08:00am	16.9	NNE	15	20	996.1	-	4.2
25/07:30am	17.3	NNE	13	18	997.2	-	2.8
25/07:00am	17.1	NE	14	21	997.8	-	2.6
25/06:50am	17.1	NE	12	16	997.0	-	2.6
25/06:30am	16.9	N	14	18	999.0	-	2.2
25/06:00am	16.6	NE	5	6	999.4	-	2.2
25/05:30am	16.6	N	6	8	999.9	-	2.2
25/05:00am	16.5	N	7	8	1000.7	-	2.2
25/04:30am	16.8	N	7	9	1001.4	-	2.2
25/04:00am	16.9	N	8	9	1002.0	-	2.2
25/03:30am	16.8	N	5	7	1002.7	-	2.2
25/03:00am	17.3	N	5	7	1003.2	-	2.2
25/02:30am	17.2	NNW	5	6	1003.6	-	2.2
25/02:00am	17.1	NW	5	6	1004.1	-	2.2
25/01:30am	17.2	NW	8	10	1004.4	-	2.2
25/01:00am	17.3	NW	9	11	1004.9	-	2.2
25/12:30am	17.5	NW	10	12	1005.3	-	2.2
25/12:00am	17.5	WNW	10	12	1005.5	-	2.2

Date/Time EDT	Temp °C	Wind			Pressure		Rain since 9am mm
		Dir	Spd kts	Gust kts	hPa	Trend	
24/11:30pm	17.6	NW	8	11	1005.9	-	2.2
24/11:00pm	17.8	NW	12	15	1006.5	-	2.2
24/10:30pm	17.8	NW	12	16	1007.1	-	2.2
24/10:00pm	17.8	NW	14	17	1007.2	-	2.2
24/09:30pm	17.7	NW	13	16	1007.6	-	2.2

It then increased to 25km N/NE rising to 52km NNW by the time I landed at about 10.19am. It was hard to hold the paddle by that stage and the water had been pretty confused since the

increase began around 6.30am. Anyway the damage had been done very early on as with our slow progress and a fast incoming tide we had been swept into the middle of Banks Strait and never got near Clark nor did we see it.

There was confusion and conflict between the Victorians and Laurie as to what we should do at around 3.00amish. Laurie was determined to continue on but change course to NE rather than continue on N as we had until then.

They reluctantly followed on but when we didn't seem to be making forward progress after another hour or so they decided to turn around and go it alone saying we were putting everyone's life in danger. Somewhere in amongst all this John was sick for the second time, I rafted up with him and tried shining my torch to let everyone know we had stopped, but alas no one noticed, the trouble with being at the back of a group. For a period of time I found it very difficult to focus and was sure the lights I was following were down some sort of steep ravine and at one stage I thought Laurie's boat was a small yacht as his white light reflected off his sail and his paddle movement seemed to confuse things also. We continued on until the wind picked up to 25km at around 6.30am. It was just starting to get light now but still there was no land in sight in any direction, although a few times during the night John had been certain he saw land in the distance when lightning had lit the sky.

Although the Victorians had turned around 1 ½ hrs earlier than us they landed at a similar time to Laurie, but they made it into LMB.

All in all a disastrous trip, conflict, splitting up, Laurie's capsize, John being sick, me being slow and terribly confused seas with high winds.

Laurie could only sail back in the end as his legs and back were giving him trouble and he couldn't sit up and paddle. Toby, John and I weren't prepared to sail but at least the wind was basically behind us, our progress wasn't much slower than Laurie's but I lost sight of him quite away from shore although John managed to see him for longer. John, Toby and I were within sight of each other, but wouldn't have been able to help one another. I landed (at about 10.15am) west of LMB by about 500m or less but was too spent and the conditions too uncomfortable to fight to make it any closer. John and Toby landed 1 more beach to the west of where I was. I had trouble standing up and walking after 12hrs in the kayak and started to walk around the rocky headland to the beach where I had seen John land (Toby arrived a little later). I couldn't stay upright and was falling over so decided to walk in the direction of LMB as that was sand for a hundred metres or so which was enough to free the legs up. I followed the shore back to LMB, the Victorians kayaks were there but they'd gone off in their 4wd looking for us I think. By this stage the wind and seas had calmed right down and the little bay I was in was as calm as a mill pond. I returned to my kayak and had another go at walking around to John but by the time I got half way around the point I could see his kayak was no longer on the beach. When I turned to come back to my boat I saw John and Toby paddling east past the beach my boat was on. I went back to my boat, followed them around and caught up to them as they towed their boats the last bit of the way to the boat ramp.

We didn't know where Laurie was at this stage although John had seen him further to the west. The Victorians returned shortly after we landed. Fortunately Georgia could contact Peter Newman and have him check Laurie's tracker position which showed him landed and moving about. Toby went for a walk around the shore looking for Laurie but came back not having found him. After some food/drink and recovery time John and I went for a walk and walked halfway around the point on the eastern end of the beach where Laurie was. Unfortunately we stopped half way and should have found him if we'd gone that bit further and been able to see the full extent of the beach. John and I decided to call it quits and head for home so we left at about 4.00pm and I was back home just after 10.00pm.

Once home I could enlarge the tracker image and worked out Laurie had landed one more beach to the west than John and Toby. Next morning I used "The List" and its satellite image of the area to enlarge it enough to see there was a house/building near to where Laurie was. I let John know this who said he contacted someone at LMB to give them this information. Liz took Toby around in the afternoon, Laurie was located and "all was well". Laurie and Toby packed up and headed out also. The young Victorian couple decided to have a look around Tassie with Roger still determined to attempt a solo crossing.

***Laurie's location***

