



In 2007 Paddling Pilgrims gathered at Ratimera Bay in the Marlborough Sounds for Dancing with the Stars themed dress ups. Both women who drowned in September 2022 are in the front row, Cathye with red dress, Susan with red hair.

Paddling pilgrimages

Marlborough Sounds - New Zealand

Pilgrimage: *A beguiling exploration of our primal urge towards journeys of purpose, wonder and self discovery*



Former Oxford paddler Conrad Edwards at the 1999 pilgrimage in Pelorus Sounds, where a replica of a jet ski was stoned and burnt. He ensured appropriate dress standards for the Saturday evening.

Although New Zealand is not much bigger than Britain, it is a challenge for Kiwi sea kayakers to assemble annually for paddling pilgrimages. Aside from a three hour vehicle ferry crossing of Cook Strait, the tedious drives from the top of the North Island and the bottom of the South Island take 8-10 hours.

The inter island ferry from the North Island berths at the small picturesque port of Picton, which lies at the head of Queen Charlotte Sound. From there paddlers can stock up with food and head out into the multitude of bays, inlets and drowned river valleys which comprise the Marlborough Sounds. While there are challenging tidal and sea conditions off the headlands, there are wonderful secluded sea-only access bush surrounded campsites in the Sounds.

Back in late 1998 we put word out via our sea kayak newsletter for an inaugural gathering to be held over a long weekend on Arapawa Island in Queen Charlotte Sound. Apart from a gathering of the like minded, it served as a spring wakeup call for the kayaking fraternity to dust off kayaks and kit and prepare for an active summer.



Melanie Grant and Paul Caffyn tripping the light fantastic for the Dancing with the Stars 2007 gathering.



Max Grant and AJ, masters of style.