



Andy Morton

A tidal race off Rathlin Island with Ireland in the background. Believe or not, the wind was moving from left to right (easterly) in the picture. It was just like a giant raging river, with standing waves.

Time with the tide: 5 knots for 10 nm = 2 hours.

I've knocked only half an hour off my of my slower paddle at 3 knots (STW).

The moral of the story is this: if you are going to push hard, do so *against* the tide rather than with it. And, if you are racing both up and down a river in a K1 and want to put more distance between you and the other competitors chasing you, then increased effort going upstream has a far more dramatic effect, than downstream. Simple arithmetic, put to good use. And you sea kayakers, if you haven't done so yet, get out and buy an Admiralty Tidal Stream Atlas now!

Andy Morton



Keith Moule and Fay Lamph paddling as Batman and Robin in the mixed K2s in the national marathon championships at Norwich.

The flow and wind were both downstream, left to right in the picture. The capes would have given assistance downstream but drag upstream. They were going upstream for longer than they were going downstream. They came third in the one hour race. They would have won if they had gone three seconds faster, likely without the capes.

Capsize!

Moods

It was a calm day in Glenn a' Mhaoil Bay, SE Scarba, in the late 1980s and I was demonstrating strokes to four teenagers from a children's home. When I got to the slap support I overreached myself and ended upside down in the cold sea. As I gathered my thoughts, the teenagers, I knew, would not only fail help me back into my kayak but would laugh as I swam ashore. It was the first time I had capsized by accident since 1974.

I had started kayaking in 1968 by building a Ken Littledyke plywood double kayak. Soon, a double chine single kayak followed. My secondary school had a shallow, indoor swimming pool and there was a rolling course held there that I managed to attend. Kayaks were provided and mine was an Angmagssalik of skin-on-frame construction. This design was closely modelled on Inuit kayaks with a narrow 19" beam and small, round cockpit opening. It was easy to roll whenever I got the Pawlata technique right, which was not very often. Unfortunately, we were not taught the Putacross roll. Years before, at primary school in the late 1950s, our older classes were treated to a demonstration of rolling in the outdoor pool in the school grounds. The kayaker demonstrating was also using an Angmagssalik and I vividly remember the Putacross roll among several that he demonstrated. This roll takes a second or so to set up while being suspended upside down underwater. If you happen to be drifting down a river at the time, it obviously is not an appropriate roll because of the setup time taken and the likelihood of bumping or crashing into obstacles. Much of sea kayaking lore has been influenced by river paddling, it seems to me, and so the Putacross has all but been forgotten but this roll technique has the advantage of being conceptually simple and is very powerful. If not quite successful first time it can easily be converted into a wide scull for support at the end. In kayak teaching, rolling focus instead seems to be on the faster Screw roll, more useful on rivers, and skills such as hip flicks are emphasized.

Our West Coast Adventure courses were not intended to inspire the teenagers to take up outdoor activities. Most of the teenagers were from troubled backgrounds and some had been convicted of serious crimes and were normally held in secure accommodation. The aims of a course were to teach social lessons, self reliance and the value of being proactive.

The troubled backgrounds of many of our students often made them prone to being argumentative. On this occasion one of the four sitting

above me, dry, in their kayaks was Shaun. Earlier in the day Shaun and Richard Shuff, the course leader and West Coast Adventure director, had had a serious falling out. Unusually for Richard, his patience had been exhausted and he had asked me to take Shaun for an hour or two on some activity to allow time for the disagreement to cool off to avoid any escalation. So it was that three others had also taken the chance to go out for a paddle along Scarba's south side towards the Corryvreckan whirlpool.

It had been some years since I had last rolled so I shuffled the paddle into the setup for the standard Pawlata and gave it a go. Fortunately, it worked and I surfaced. Dripping and wiping the salt water out of my eyes to the sound of laughter, I tried to persuade the teenagers to have a go at the slap support stroke but there was no way they were going to chance it, having seen how it could go wrong. Soon after that I realized the slap support is not an appropriate stroke for use at sea and I changed my teaching. The slap support is a stroke that has crept over from river kayaking. Our aim was never to turn out competent sea kayakers but to enable the students to acquire sufficient skills and knowledge to confidently undertake a three day expedition. The aim in sea kayaking is to stay warm, dry and happy and the emphasis I stressed in my teaching was to keep a paddle blade in the water all or most of the time. The analogy is that of the mountaineer on snow covered slopes. The ice axe should always be carried in a hold that can be converted instantly to an ice axe arrest should a slip occur. There is no point in holding the axe in any other way. Another analogy is special forces weapons where rifles and the like tend not to be fitted with straps since a weapon over the shoulder on a strap is not ready for instant use. So, at sea, the blade in the water, even when the kayaker is resting and admiring the scenery, is ready for use instantly to push against for support.

We paddled on around the corner and along the coast before returning in time for lunch. As we paddled into Glenn a' Mhaoil Bay again a thought occurred to me and I moved closer to Shaun, out of earshot of the others. 'Shaun, you won't tell Richard I capsized will you?' I asked in a hushed and confidential tone. The clear implication was that I was ashamed and wanted it kept a secret from the boss. That was it, Shaun was taken in and the 'secret' was eagerly shared and discussed in whispers amongst the rest of the course students while the morning's big bustup disagreement with Richard was entirely forgotten.

Peter Lamont