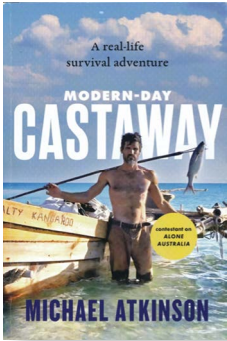


# BOOKS

## Reviews of books and publications

### Modern-Day Castaway



Michael Atkinson  
Self published, [www.outbackmike.com](http://www.outbackmike.com)  
978 0 6458058 0 2  
2023  
220 x 150mm  
244 pages, paperback

Off the Queensland coast in 1846 a merchant sailing ship was wrecked on a coral reef. A raft with 23 survivors drifted westwards over the Great Barrier Reef to the coast where, eventually, only one man survived, who was integrated into the local Aboriginal tribe. His survival story was the inspiration for author Michael Atkinson to

build a dugout canoe and sail north up the Queensland coast to Cape York, using the basic materials that the shipwreck survivors used on their raft drift to shore.

After finishing school Michael started university but dropped out to join the Australian army as a helicopter pilot. Between overseas deployments and training he was based in Darwin and made a point of doing every military survival course for which he could sign up. Solo voyages in a tinnie (aluminium dinghy) around Melville and Bathurst islands led to a trip with his girlfriend in the tinnie from Darwin around much of the Kimberleys. After qualifying as a fighter pilot but bottom of the class Michael left his flying career and decided to make a film about the two German aviators who, in 1932, landed a floatplane off Cape Bernier in the Kimberleys and their eventual rescue by a local Aboriginal tribe. The film did really well in Aussie and overseas, which led to his planning to make a second film about a dugout canoe voyage.

Starting out with a four tonne log, Michael initially used hand tools to shape a dugout canoe, then sped up the process with power tools. Two outrigger floats (amas) provided stability and he carved a rudder out of a single piece of wood. Film making equipment required solar panels and battery banks with a drone for aerial shots. Material for a canvas sail was acquired from the Sydney Heritage Fleet. His self rescue plan was an inflatable paddle board, along with a waterproof survival bag. Michael did include a PLB and EPIRB with satellite tracking ability.

As backup he had a battery operated dropdown propeller.

Although an initial sea trial required rescue by the NSW Water Police it was a good learning experience for his future sailing skills. So, that's the background to the voyage.

Michael launched from Cape Cleveland, near Townsville, close to where the survivors of the 1846 shipwreck came ashore. A very readable yarn with good historical snippets and how Michael endeavoured to live off the land with fishing and gathering onshore bush tucker. Almost 50 days and 500km later he completed the voyage on Thursday Island.

Michael made a point of ensuring he had prior permission from the local traditional landowners and on the sailing voyage he made every effort to catch up with the locals and compare how his bush tucker gathering skills matched that of the locals.

Rather concerned with crocodiles when he slept overnight on the dugout, he descended into a cubicle but armed with a big knife that he could slide up through a gap around the hatch cover to deter an ondeck croc! The snippets about croc attacks are vague with no dates although Dave (Crocodile Winky) who rescued his paddling mate from a croc attack is briefly noted. Dave gets mentioned neither his surname nor the fact that he was awarded the highest bravery medal in Aussie from the CG for his courageous rescue.

The single page map of Queensland shows his sailing route and the 1846 raft drift. The text is well illustrated with relevant black and white pics while a central 20 page colour section adds life to the illustrations but each photo page has almost as much blank white paper as text. Why

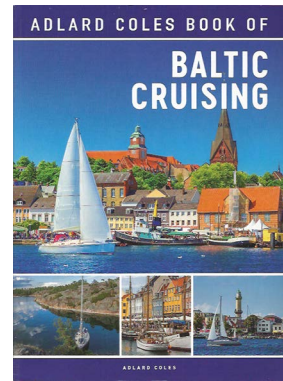
publishers can't bleed photos out to the page margin continues to baffle me.

In his author notes Michael writes that he deliberately avoided naming or sharing of exact locations that he visited because he 'didn't want to increase the amount of traffic they get'. Having paddled this section of the Queensland coast in 25 days back in 1982 it took a bit of head scratching at times to figure out where he landed or which bay he crossed and who else but expedition kayakers are able to cruise so close to this beautiful coastline.

His doco of the dugout canoe voyage is still in the offing and I reckon there will be impressive footage of catching his drone from the dugout stern on a bouncy sea. A very readable adventure story with excellent hints on surviving on the Coral Coast without (most of) the trappings of modern day society. As well as the print paperback there is an ebook and an audio book.

Paul Caffyn

### Adlard Coles Book of Baltic Cruising



Adlard Coles  
978 1 3994 0126 5  
2023  
250 x 180mm  
231 pages, paperback  
£25.00

Despite the title, this is a translation of *Sehnsuchtsrevier Ostsee* of 2019, a compilation of contributions from ten writers, particularly magazine writers from Hamburg. The lack of an introduction suggests this might be a collection of magazine articles.

While it might seem, at first glance, to cover much of the same coast as Imray's massive *The Baltic Sea & Approaches* (Nov 2017, p24) or even *Germany & Denmark* (Nov 22, p38) it is very different in approach and this complements the others. Although primarily for sailors, again, there is not the technical detail or charts.

Instead, it is about getting off the beaten track, finding coastal gems, secret hideaways, communities small enough for individuals to be introduced, where bathing beaches rather than facilities are significant attractions. Probably over half of the book is devoted to pictures, up to double page spreads. Is it just coincidence that a high proportion show millpond conditions?

The mood is conversational, introducing those running specialist maritime museums on small islands or baking unexpected gastronomic delights. A venue that is deserted is a valued find. However, some big cities are visited, Copenhagen, Helsinki, Tallinn and Gdansk, the latter with kayaks on the Motlawa. Canoeing competition venues such as Nykøbing and Vaxholm are included.

Although mostly coastal, especially around islands, the Göta Canal is followed, as is the Peene River, where an open canoe is shown as a way to explore shallow peat bogs reminiscent of the Broads.

In the Kattegat 'The boat navigates west past Kyholm, north of Lindholm. The shallow islands and lagoons up here in the sea, which mostly only kayakers can reach, glitter like the Maldives.'

Although an ancient and gentle landscape in the aftermath of glaciation, damage can be inflicted surprisingly easily even by having a campfire on a rock surface, resulting in cracks which are then opened by winter ice.

These are waters where families can escape, no drama, just venues on a human scale.

### Uncommon Courage

Julia Jones  
Adlard Coles  
978 1 4729 8711 2  
2022, 2023 edition  
200 x 130mm  
320 pages, paperback  
£9.99

As the Second World War approached, the Royal Navy's mind was set on warships. Many recreational sailors around the country, however, felt that their knowledge, especially of coastal waters, could