



The Pandozer

IN BRIEF

- Uncle Ian was tracking me for rendezvous at Lakes Entrance. This email made me laugh; "Ahoy there me matey, where are you??? Do you require smoke signals?"
- This one after I left Lakes Entrance and maneuvered towards Mallacoota also tickled my funny bone; "Have you arrived yet???? or are you water logged?"

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New South Wales Dreaming

It's Sunday, I'm lying on Newtons Beach watching the frontal clouds blow out over the Tasman Sea, and I've spent my first night in New South Wales. After an industrious fortnight it's a good chance to reflect on progress to date and predictions for the future. With my good friend Bob getting married in November (everyone's invited), there is now a sensible reason to reach Cape York before Christmas.

After eight weeks I'm just over 1000km into the total of about 5000km. Taking into account the extremely windy conditions through

most of April, current progress is as expected or slightly better. It's tempting to believe that the most demanding stretch is over, but that would be a mistake. Wherever there is ocean, kayak and myself there is some cause for concern.

The NSW coast presents several real challenges. There will be more potentially dangerous river bar crossing as I try to avoid landing on exposed beaches. The section of coast from Wollongong to Newcastle is unininvitingly developed and throws up new issues around landing and camping. Don't be surprised if I bend

a few council by-laws on the way. The wind until well into Queensland will be variable but should generally have a westerly element to it. Temperatures (it has been very cold) should warm up both in and out of the water. Forward estimates see me in Sydney by June, Brisbane by July and Cape York by late October.

The coastline from Seaspray to here has changed from unending beach to mixed rocky cliffs, bays and points. I've been predominantly in remote areas of national parks and nature reserves. It has been a gorgeous fortnight.

Day to Day

43. Seaspray to beach camp, 35km
44. Beach camp to Ocean Grange/Steamers Crossing, 36km
45. Steamers Crossing to Lakes Entrance, 23km
46. Lakes Entrance R&R
47. Lakes Entrance R&R
48. Lakes Entrance to beach camp (Ewan Morass), 35km
49. Beach camp to Cape Conran, 35km
50. Cape Conran to Point Hicks, 47km
51. Point Hicks R&R (unhappy wind)
52. Point Hicks to Wingan Point, 22km
53. Wingan Point to Mallacoota, 31km
54. Mallacoota to Newtons Beach (Nadgee Nature Reserve), 36km
55. Newtons Beach R&R (wind)
56. Newtons Beach to Eden, 41km

Rumble, Tumble, Bother and Curse

Ewan Morass State Game Reserve. Ewan Morass, I chuckled to myself, that's a funny name. Well Ewan, thanks for the hospitality but I must be going now, places to go and all that.

The Hope and Grace rocketed back to shore overhead as I dived to grab a handful of sand just in time. I'm awake now Ewan, by jiminy I'm definitely awake. I followed the tub to shore like a seal chasing a fish, only without the speed and finesse. More like a brick sinking through mud really. Emptied of water and dragged up to dry sand I recovered enough strength to salvage the boat and regroup for another plunge into Ewan's fiendish morass.

By now you are imagining something that was not. Take the towering waves sloshing through your mind and slash their size to a quarter, or even further. Now watch as the portly German tourist wearing skin-toned white Speedos wades out knee deep. Marvel as he turns shoreward to wave to his distracted wife and is struck brutally from behind by a wall of water. Wince as he is pummeled, rolled and finally

deposited face down onto the sand less artistically than a piece of seaweed. We are dealing here with small waves. A deep gutter parallel to shore denies these waves the opportunity to disintegrate quietly, and forces them instead to explode in a liquid cloud of foam and sand.

There were of course no German tourists at hand, no-one at all for tens of kilometers either direction to the best of my knowledge. Just Ninety 'flippin' Mile Beach. Flippin' flip flip.

I won't describe the technique I was using to clear the shore-break, partly because it defies sensible description, but mostly because my air of incompetence is well enough developed already. During attempt four or five I strained something in my lower back rolling and pulling the boat clear. I sat on the plastic edge breathing deeply and staring blankly at the seemingly benign scene before me. The cold was penetrating noticeably, defeat loomed.

Employing a more conventional strategy I started in the cockpit, all sealed up and poised to ride

the backwash to freedom. On first try I was washed sideways as expected. Re-angling the boat to account for the strong sideways wash (the swell was angling down the beach), I came within a stroke of clear water but was crushed by a thick lip in the face. Nearly two hours had elapsed since Ewan had first slapped me awake and my perseverance was beginning to look hopeful at best, delusional at worst.

Had I known the next attempt would be successful I would have prepared differently. Instead of gingerly seating myself like a whipped dog I would have held the paddle aloft and, with a Mel Gibson in Braveheart inspired battle cry, bellowed 'Cape CONRAN' (my destination). Alas, not to be, but I was finally clear.

Laugh, Ewan Morass, cackle like a crafty old hyena, I won't be back in a hurry.

Postscript: This episode has done much to improve my beach exits and subsequent efforts have been better. And saying 'Ewan Morass' still makes me smile, what a great name.

"I know of only one bird - the parrot - that talks; and it can't fly very high."

-Wilbur Wright (1867 - 1912), declining to make a speech in 1908.

Birds of an Engine

Sea birds are my constant companions. Working for fish, bustling along on business or bobbing around for no apparent reason, they are a delight and a curiosity. Each has a particular vehicular identity;

- Undifferentiated Albatross: Cruising the liquid highway as a Harley Davidson, smooth and immune to intimidation. Who knows when they eat and sleep?
- Cork-tailed Penguin: Also known

as the Little Penguin, this little fellow surfaces with a nervous flourish. On seeing me he'll take off like a Morris Minor going rapidly through the gears. Sometimes he seems to forget his escape route and pops up even closer. Wheels squeal as he reverses at speed.

- Gourmet Gannet: Definitely the Subaru WRX of fishing birds. Idling innocently, doing casual circle work, then BANG, from 0-

100 in 3.4 seconds, slams into the water. Mostly to impress the ladies I suspect.

- Parading Pelican: I can't think of a vehicular analogy for the pelican because every time I see one I have the same recurring image. The pelican greets my approach by twisting his beak sideways, grasping me around the head and hip-tossing me to the ground before planting a webbed foot on my face.

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E-mail: pandoz06@gmail.com

Www.pandoz06.blogspot.com

ABN: 44 911 440 038

!! STUDENTS !!

Fill up space, publish your story.

I'd love to hear about what you're doing out there and make this newsletter better at the same time. Writing about your experiences is FUN. It is.

Send it as a Word attachment with your name and school for publication. Get your teacher to check it because I'm a sloppy editor. Keep it shortish (100-200 words) and get to the point.

1081 Km

Noises Lost at Sea

"I wanna sleep on the grass tonight." If you'd tuned in to Radio Pando on the FM band last week you'd have heard it. That's the full song. I composed it while nearing Point Hicks, determined to avoid another sandy campsite. It kept me entertained for a few minutes in the tiresome final hours of the paddling day. With the hamstrings tightening and a testy sea breeze fully developed any distraction is welcome. Other classic hits have included, "What's the big Deal Island?", "Bird, don't be a fool, go back to flying school." and "Now we're going east north east." Sometimes I just hum and more often, much more often, I make no noise at all.

The morning hours are my favourite, and the most productive in terms of paddling and thinking. Completely free from distraction I wander from topic to topic as my arms, shoulders, torso and legs find their rhythm. Naturally, I spend time thinking about daily, weekly and longer term progress. There are timeline calculations to ponder and ports of call to envisage. Having a new section of map displayed in the map-case always draws my attention as I read the names of rivers, mountains and towns, and match up the coastal features. The books I'm reading provide good thinking fodder too. At the moment I mull over Dilip Hiro's account of the politics behind the 1991 Gulf conflict, or puzzle through the motivations of Peter Carey's characters in 'The Illywhacker'.

Then, because I love to, I find time to ponder my op-

tions at the end of this journey and beyond into the far future. People who 'live for the moment' don't know what they're missing! Sometimes I take a break and I couldn't tell you what I'm thinking about. If I spy something in the water I'll often think of sharks or giant squid. I've been through so many harrowing, imaginary encounters now that any real event is bound to be a disappointment. Then there's family, friends and past events to re-live. Frequently I'll let an audible 'Ohhh', as a previously mysterious occurrence or reaction finally makes sense.

And then, as my body tires, so does my mind. I get upset with the wind that's been tolerable up until then, and I fall into the trap of constantly marking progress against the shore (like watching paint dry). The energy needed for useful thinking is all used up and the grind begins. I might sing a silly song.

Upon landing there are new concerns, finding a campsite, carting gear, chatting to people, listening to the radio, cooking dinner or reading a book. This luxury of time, this wealth of empty space, mine alone to fill, exists comfortably with the daily physical exertion. One without the other would not work for me. Sitting idly in contemplation for hours a day would drive me batty. Digging a hole without contemplating why would be similarly unsatisfying. Ewan Morass.