

An Urban exercise – Around the Shore Challenge

By Ruth E. Henderson



Staircase descent to Lucus Creek

Most kayaking trips are to pastures new and green, far away from the city, preferably so far and isolated that even cellphones don't work!

But, this autumn a bunch of North Shore Yakity Yak kayak leaders dreamt up something a little different, an urban route. To make it universally appealing, they called it a Race – creating a challenge for the crowns of North Shore's Kayak King and Kayak Queen – with a Latte experience for paddlers not keen to race.

After finding Kell Park, behind the old shopping centre of Albany, the first challenge was the descent to Lucus Creek getting five metre boats around corners, over railings and down steps. For those with wheels, the boardwalk was a longer route, but comparatively easy. Fittingly the park walkway is planted with flax. A statue at the bottom of the steps commemorates Daniel Lucus, the flax trader for whom the whole of Albany was once named.

When we were all assembled on the creek bank Dianne Scoones and Pam Henry did a "Take Five" for the dozen making up the Latte crowd, reminded us of pod rules, and outlined our route, the one Lucus used in the mid 1800's.

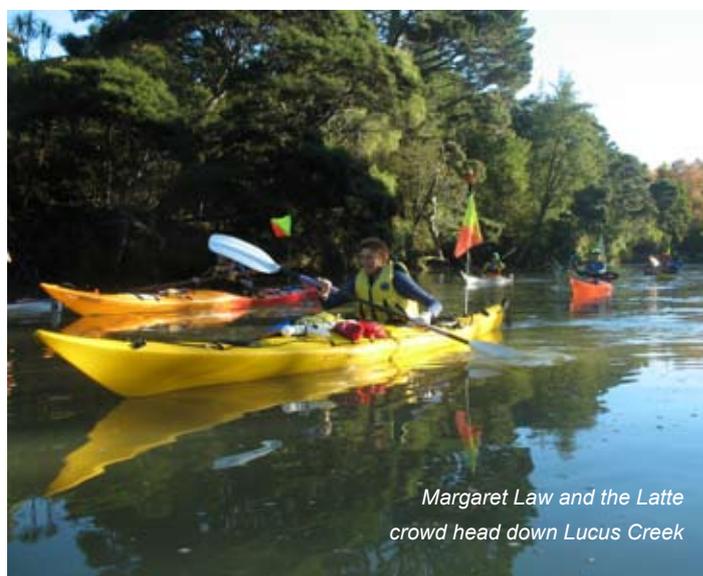
Once we (yes, I was amongst the coffee cruisers) were out of their way, Richard Saysell no doubt did the same for the eight in the Gung Ho group, but since they were paddling as individuals, pod rules did not apply. They were expected to be proficient in self-rescue or rolling and had to carry a VHF and/or cellphone.

All of us were asked to wear highly visible clothing and if possible have a flag. Both groups had to land at Devonport and sign in with the Checkpoint Charlies, Clive and Lisa Shingleton.

After a very wet and often windy month we were blessed on the last Sunday of autumn with an absolutely perfect day – blue skies, and near

zero wind. Lucus Creek is a muddy duck pond at mid to low tide so a 3.1m high tide at 0850 made our leader's planning and timing spot on for 0900 (Latte) and 0930 (Gung Ho) departures and seal or jetty launchings.

Ignoring flotsam, autumn tints and reflections made for picturesque paddling past the groomed grounds of the North Shore Golf Course and then the adjacent cemetery. The outgoing tide gave us a fast trip to the busy Waitemata Harbour, Greenhithe the boat builders on our left and Herald Island on our right. We left the rowing teams behind, played dodgems amongst the moored yachts and paddled under the Upper Harbour Bridge. West Auckland was on display with the expansive Waitakere Ranges providing the background for cars scurrying along the North



Margaret Law and the Latte crowd head down Lucus Creek

Western motorway.

Meanwhile the Gung Ho crowd had been catching us up. Off Beach Haven they streaked past, eyes on the clock, while we were looking for landing spots. After 14 kms and two hours, flask coffee and chocolate biscuits (thank you Andy) on a Kauri Point Centennial Park deserted beach were good.

Colourfully clad and in pairs for safety we paddled on past the landmark pink Chelsea Sugar factory and pointed our bows towards the Auckland Harbour Bridge, ticking off city-side landmarks – Sky Tower, Mt Eden, One Tree(less) Hill... This was the way to sightsee!

We were not alone revelling in such a gorgeous day - a fair proportion

of the Westhaven Marina must have been under sail. Ferries were busy and crossing Shoal Bay required caution, especially if the VHF chatter I picked up (“We could squash them between us”) may have related to us!

Obeying Devonport Naval Base’s signage we kept 70m clear of the new huge HMNZS Canterbury, rounded Victoria Wharf and landed at Devonport Beach.

Our racing counterparts had checked in as required by the ‘rules’, and had sped off. We, with 22 km behind us, had a well earned hour long lunch break and latte. Some even had a café meal!!

Refreshed, we rounded North Head. Rangitoto Island seemed to be adorned with a necklace of yacht spinnakers. On the stretch past



Herald Island and quietly moored boats.

Kiwi Association of Sea Kayakers N.Z. Inc. (KASK)

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Daniel Lucas statue

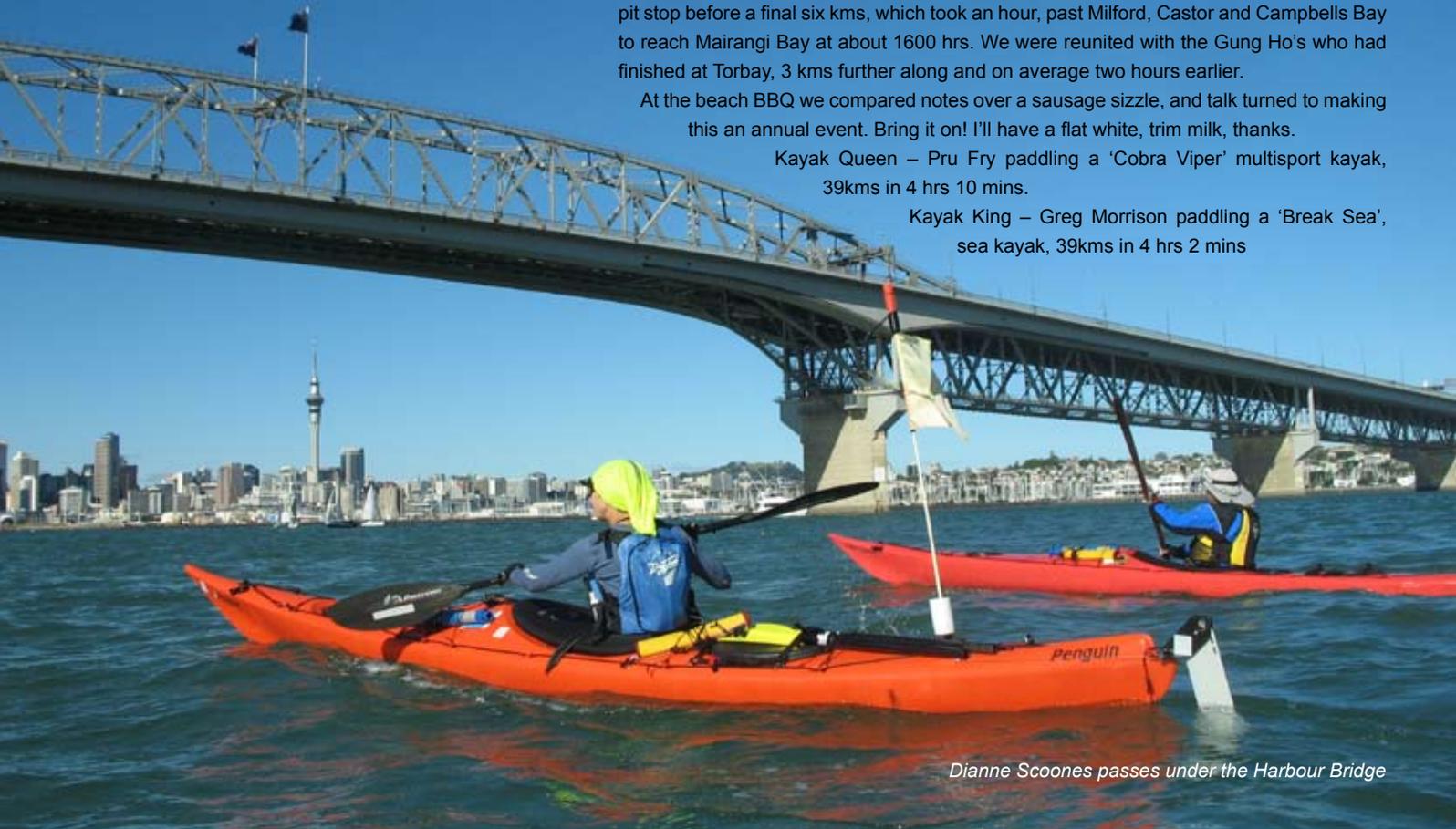
Cheltenham, Narrow Neck, St Leonards to Takapuna beach sea kayakers and multi-sporters were training, and oodles of people and dogs, enjoying the sunshine, were walking or running.

At Takapuna and the 30 km mark, two of the Latte group peeled off. The rest had a quick pit stop before a final six kms, which took an hour, past Milford, Castor and Campbells Bay to reach Mairangi Bay at about 1600 hrs. We were reunited with the Gung Ho's who had finished at Torbay, 3 kms further along and on average two hours earlier.

At the beach BBQ we compared notes over a sausage sizzle, and talk turned to making this an annual event. Bring it on! I'll have a flat white, trim milk, thanks.

Kayak Queen – Pru Fry paddling a 'Cobra Viper' multisport kayak, 39kms in 4 hrs 10 mins.

Kayak King – Greg Morrison paddling a 'Break Sea', sea kayak, 39kms in 4 hrs 2 mins



Dianne Scoones passes under the Harbour Bridge



Paddlers leaving Devonport - post Latte



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