



# New Zealand Canoeing

06.1

## Winter Issue 2006

### The insatiable thirst for more rivers...

Another NZRCA AGM came and went, this time held in Turangi. We had heaps of paddlers who attended the meeting, interested in what's happening on our rivers. Thanks to you all for attending; your valuable input was much appreciated. The NZRCA executive welcomed several new talented members into the organisation. Positions that we were particularly keen on having filled were the Education Officer and the South Island Conservation Officer. Matt Barker, being a NZOIA instructor himself, was keen for Education and has since entered the thick of it, resolving several issues, and picking up where Bruce Webber left off.

With river conservation in the hot seat it is important to have strong representation and manpower for both the North and South Island. We thank Hugh and the others who managed to twist Kieron Thorpe's arm and spark his interest for the SI officer role. Similarly, Boyd Benton from the Naki will be helping us tackle conservation issues. Drop us a line if you share our interest in river conservation or related issues, we could definately use your help.

Finally, the Rangitata is here to stay! Years of lobbying have paid off now the Environment Minister David Benson-Pope signed-off the Water Conservation Order for the Rangitata River. The Order completes a process initiated by Fish and Game, and supported by the NZRCA, in December 1999 to protect its outstanding values.

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### Canoeist of the Year 2006 - Dave Ritchie

Since I have known Dave Ritchie I have admired his endless passion for kayaking. He is dependable and motivating, always keen to push the envelope, whether it be practicing new rodeo moves or running hard lines. His enthusiasm for the sport is remarkable considering he has been living and breathing kayaking for well over ten years. I believe he is the most skilled instructor and passionate kayaker in New Zealand.

Apart from kayak instruction, Dave has been a driving force in pushing river rescue skills courses to new levels. He has boldly run courses that others would not, pushing even the toughest professional river runners to new ground. He has been involved in numerous multisport events controlling the safety of athletes in incredibly demanding locations around the world. Dave will always be first to try something, never expecting others to attempt anything he is not completely happy doing himself.

Dave has been working hard to outfit kayakers safely, coming up with innovative designs to help kayakers of all experience levels feel more secure and comfortable whilst on the water (And they look good too!). Above all else Dave Ritchie is an incredibly kind, genuine person. When I was last visiting him, a few young kayaking lads turned up -apparently they needed to use the internet but were on a tight budget, so Dave offered his computer at home. Dave is a person that never stops offering his time and energy even though he is in the world of kayaking twenty-four-seven. He's inspirational on the river and has real concern for river users. I believe it is his time to be recognised for his continuous commitment to the sport of kayaking. - **Wayne Johnson**

This Dunedin boy has come a long way since being a lycra clad Aerobics Instructor in the early nineties. A man of many talents (we'll leave that just right there I think)! Dave has the ability to directly engage with people he is in contact with. That, combined with his irrepressible humour, leaves you uplifted on parting. The crux of this is: from working in Murchison at the NZ Kayak school, Dave assists in providing "the great leap forward" for the rest of us, collating new thinking from overseas and combining many locally inspired twists for the way kayaking is taught. Simplicity is the key, function is critical.

Wondering if indeed he is awarded the COTY, you could get him a cape to go with his old Lycra. - **Craig Adams**



Dave Ritchie throws himself down the Cesspit.

Photo Courtesy: Andy England

## About *New Zealand Canoeing*

*New Zealand Canoeing* is the official newsletter of the New Zealand Recreational Canoeing Association (NZRCA) Inc. *NZ Canoeing* is published quarterly and distributed free to around 1,000 members of the NZRCA throughout New Zealand/Aotearoa. The views expressed in *New Zealand Canoeing* are those of the individual authors and do not necessarily represent those of the Executive of the New Zealand Recreational Canoeing Association.

NZ *Canoeing* welcomes advertising from organisations associated with recreational canoeing. Please contact us for our advertising rates, and find out how to show your products and services to kayakers around NZ.

Thanks to contributors and advertisers and the myriad of e-mail correspondents for their contributions to this issue of *NZ Canoeing*. May the rivers flow for you!

All map references are to NZMS Infomap 260 Topographical series.

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*as elected at the NZRCA AGM April 2006*

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## We Care About Your Safety!

The NZRCA offers a safety subsidy to its affiliated members through the Water Safety Council. This subsidy will now **reimburse 50%** of the course costs (up to \$100) to anyone who has done a river safety or river rescue course through an approved provider.

So take control! Organise a group of people you paddle with, or from your club. Find an instructor on our website ([www.rivers.org.nz](http://www.rivers.org.nz), look under Safety, then Safety Courses) and organise a time to suit you.


To claim the subsidy, keep your course receipt, fill out the subsidy form on our website and send it out to us. We have the money to help you, please take it – we can't spend it on anything else.

## News splashes

**Hurunui** - The Hurunui River, particularly the Maori Gully section is one of the most used and highly valued pieces of whitewater in the South Island. The Hurunui Community Water Development Project is investigating the possibility to use Lake Sumner and the South branch of the Hurunui River to store water for irrigation. The scheme seeks to manage water levels in Lake Sumner and harvest "excess" water from the Hurunui. Importantly, the character of the Hurunui changes with different flows and produces substantial differences in the paddling experience which is strongly valued by kayakers. The proposed scheme is likely to result in smoothed flows (i.e., few low and high flows) and may have significant effects on the river ecology e.g., water quality, better environment for Didymo etc.

The Project's working group (which includes MainPower, Hurunui Irrigation and Power Trust, Enterprise North Canterbury, Ngai Tahu Properties and Eskhead Station) has received substantial funds from the Ministry of Agriculture's Sustainable Farming Fund and has already started public consultation. Although the initial close-off date for feedback has passed (our submission is available on [www.rivers.org.nz](http://www.rivers.org.nz)), you can still register your interest as there will be further opportunities to comment and/or make a submission.

**What you can do:** Register your interest with the Project Manager, David Viles (phone 03 310 6937 or [davidviles@enterprisenc.co.nz](mailto:davidviles@enterprisenc.co.nz))





**Attention Kayak Club Members**  
**this is the ideal "safe start" to kayaking for 2004**

**River Safety** Regular Price \$285 Club Price \$245 including NZRCA subsidy \$200

A two-day course designed to teach you the skills necessary to assist someone while you are still in your boat. Along with some basic rope skills this course is all about being safe on the river. Some of the techniques you will learn include:

- Components of an efficient Rescue
- Rescue Organisation
- Boat based rescues, Deck carriers
- "All in" rescues
- Strong swimmer rescues
- Swimming on to strainers
- Combat swimming with victim, boat and paddle
- River crossing Techniques
- Simple boat retrieval methods






**River Rescue** Regular Price \$285 Club Price \$235 including NZRCA subsidy \$195

Run over two days this course is designed for those people who are leading kayaking trips and/or those who would like to paddle more adventurous rivers. This course covers:

- Knots, Pulley systems, Z-drags
- Improvised harnesses
- Improvised Alassembling on River Rescue gear
- Pre Protection of rapids
- Rescues from Holes with boat and throwbags
- Vertical Pins and Vertical Hoists

(Please note the River Safety course is a prerequisite for attending this course)

Courses are run on a regular basis. View the course calendar at [www.rapids.co.nz](http://www.rapids.co.nz)  
For groups of 6 or more we will run the course at any time to suit your needs.

These courses are subsidised by NZRCA with money received from Water Safety NZ. Individuals and club members attending approved River Safety or River Rescue courses can apply for the subsidy on completion of the course. The subsidy is on a per head basis \$49 for River Safety and \$80 for River Rescue. Funding is on a first come, first served basis.

**Bookings**  
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**Fuljames** – Some positive news regarding access to the Ngaawapurua wave on the Waikato River. Access has been closed to the public since early last year, when a locked gate was erected at the "Hay Barn" on the access road to the Ngaawapurua (Fuljames) rapids. The Tauhara North No. 2 Trust has closed access, including foot access, past this gate because of on-going problems with dumped cars and rubbish, squatters (house truckers), fire hazards and unsuitable toilet facilities. They are also concerned about their liability, particularly considering past accidents involving kayakers.

Early communication with the security company, which manages the access on behalf of the landowners, did not result in a solution practicable for all parties.

Further research (by Peter Sutcliffe) into the status of the land at Ngaawapurua led us to the belief that the land in question is a Maori Reservation as gazetted in 1985, "for the purpose of a place of historical, cultural and recreational significance for the common use and benefit of the Ngati Tahu Tribe and the people of New Zealand generally".

The NZRCA has written to the Trust, expressing this opinion and in mid-May Mike Birch (NZRCA President) met with one of the trustees. The outcome of the meeting was positive and as a result the NZRCA will invite all five members of the Trust to a meeting with NZRCA representatives, to explore ideas for managing access for kayakers, and finding solutions to the above problems. In the meantime we still ask that all kayakers respect the closure.

### Release Schedule

#### Tongariro

Poutu Release	Sat	16 September	09:00 - 15:00
Rangipo Release	Sun	17 September	08:00 - 16:00

#### Whakapapa

Whakapapa Release	Sat	08 July	09:00 - 17:00
Whakapapa Release	Sat	12 August	09:00 - 17:00

#### Mangahao

Dam no. 2 Release	Sat	28 October	10:00 - 16:00
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#### Waikaretaheke

Piripaua Release	Sun	06 August	09:00 - 15:00
Piripaua Release	Sun	03 September	09:00 - 15:00
Piripaua Release	Sat	07 October	09:00 - 15:00
Piripaua Release	Sun	08 September	10:00 - 16:00
Piripaua Release	Sun	05 November	10:00 - 16:00
Piripaua Release	Sun	03 December	09:00 - 15:00

New **Wairoa** releases for 2006 - 2007 now online!

Please refer to our website ([www.rivers.org.nz/events/](http://www.rivers.org.nz/events/)) for the latest release schedules, including flow information. Please note that the list above is **not conclusive**.

## Life after Project Aqua – *What does it mean for river conservation?*

Proposals for schemes on the Kaituna, Arnold, lower Mohaka, Nevis, Matiri, Mokau, Waingongoro (also known as “the loop” in Taranaki), Mohikiniui, Wairau and Hurunui Rivers are all in various stages of development and this is probably just the tip of the iceberg. The predicted post Project Aqua onslaught of smaller hydro and irrigation schemes now seems to have kicked off. Another dry summer only augmented the cries from Government, business and electricity companies that we need to build more dams to increase generating and irrigation capacity. This leaves some serious considerations for the NZRCA and river conservation. We are a thinly resourced organisation reliant on volunteers and the odd bit of Ministry for the Environment funding to help us out with legal fees. As the number of campaigns increases huge pressure is put on our resources. **What might this mean?**

a) We will probably have to increasingly rely on *the local community* to lead or at least take a major part in the fight. The great thing is that local paddlers and interested parties (e.g., Andy England around the Arnold, Craig Peters, Nick Collins around the Mokau, Donald Calder, Kenny Mutton, Andi Uhl, Steffan Bennett, Forest and Bird around the Kaituna) are already leading the charge on several campaigns. The NZRCA and the paddling community are really appreciative of their efforts.

b) We may have to start making some potentially *unpalatable choices* - if we put equal effort into saving every river there is a significant risk that we'll spread our resources too thinly to be really effective. The key question then becomes what sections / rivers/catchments will the NZRCA fight tooth-and-nail for and put significant resources into saving and which will it put less effort into, potentially at risk of losing the resource. This answer to this question leads to the third point:

c) *Robust, credible survey data* is essential for kayakers to have any reasonable chance of defending free-flowing rivers or successfully negotiating hydro consent renewals before planning hearings or the Environment Court. Also, if you're not going to fight every fight equally then you want to make sure you pick the “right” fights to fight and survey data helps make informed decisions. While we have some river survey data, it is certainly not as up-to-date (think how much kayaking has changed over the past thirteen years from when the last survey was made) or as comprehensive as desirable. Unfortunately, despite considerable effort by the NZRCA Exec and others (particularly Martin Unwin from NIWA) we weren't successful in gaining funding from the Ministry of Environment for a River Use Survey. Given its importance for our future, we will revise the current application and seek to find alternative sources of funding in the near future. - **Duncan Catanach**



**WAVE SPORT**

# Shipment due in June

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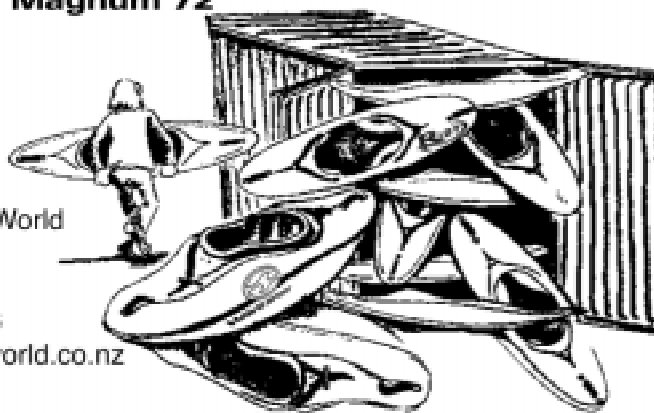
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## Arnold River - a Popular Resource

*Why the Arnold River is worth saving from TrustPower's development plans.*

If you know Lake Brunner near Moana, the Arnold River will be a familiar name. The Arnold is fed by the lake at its northernmost tip, right by the township of Moana. Its warm dark waters are well regulated by the buffer effect of Lake Brunner, meaning heavy rains have to fill the lake before flooding the river. Time spent lounging in Lake Brunner warms the Arnold to a pleasant swimming temperature for most of the year. If you were to leave the lake and float down the Arnold, you'd meander through native bush until picking up gradient around Kaimata and flowing through a series of sprightly rapids and lazy pools to Kokiri, where the gradient eases and the Arnold braids and wanders until it joins the Grey.

The section of river between Kaimata and Kokiri is unique in its attraction to a diverse set of users, excited by the same things for different reasons. To Trustpower, the Arnold represents financial opportunity. Their best spin doctors have worked hard to portray Trustpower's planned diversion through canals and hydro-power stations as being 'for the Coast'.

But to many people on the Coast, and further afield, the Arnold River represents part of their life that Trustpower simply cannot buy a replacement for. Recent attention has focussed on kayakers, anglers and rafters, but there are school groups and farmers and your classic kiwi family who jumps on an inflated tube on a sunny afternoon, who also stand to lose.

Dave Ritchie, a tutor on the Outdoor Recreation Programme at Tai Poutini Polytechnic in Greymouth, points out some facts: we supervise more than 240 individual descents of the river in February and March alone. On the Arnold River our students learn how to recognise the difference between real and perceived risk and how to deal with the effects of these in themselves and others. It's precisely these aspects of their training that make them so effective in the New Zealand recreation and tourism industries.

Educational opportunities also appeal to Greymouth High School teacher Ben Louie. Within 20 minutes from school, our students can develop their skills and personalities. They can learn the step from kayaking on moving water to whitewater. And we can be confident that they are on a relatively safe river. By that I mean it's not cold, it's close to the road, we have cell phone coverage and the rapids have that certain something we don't find elsewhere. We have a long tradition of using the Arnold.

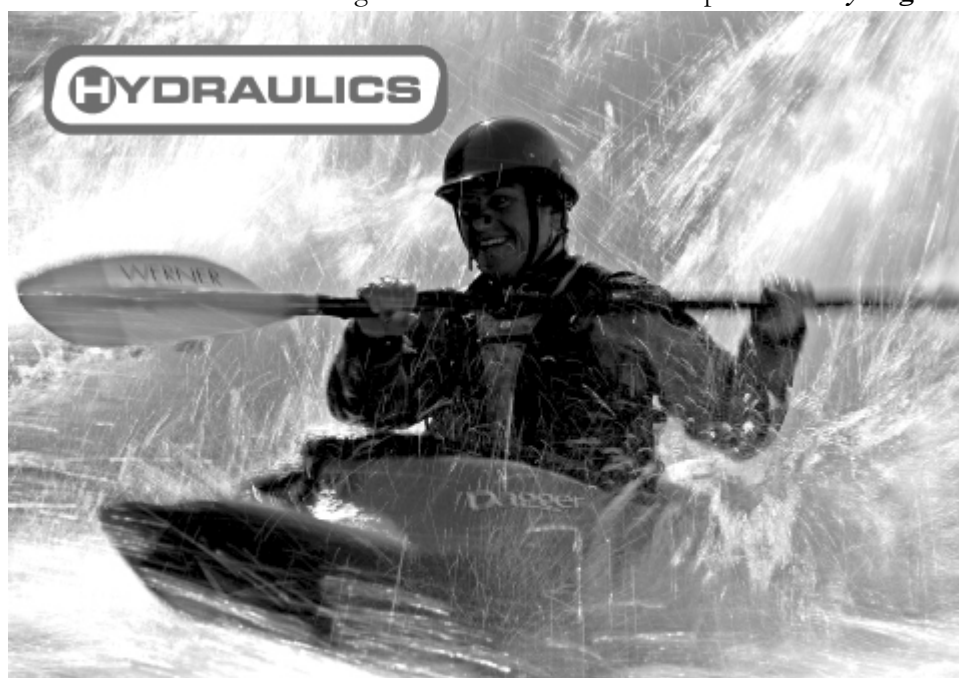
Arguably, Riccarton High School's tradition is longer still. They have a lodge, established in the '70s, to which all of their Year 9 and 10 students are

delivered over 6 months of the year. They deliberately have no transport, but are close enough to use the existing section of the Arnold River for adventurous activities. To drive to access fun would take away the very nature of their experience. Neil McKeegan, Head of Chemistry and Outdoor Ed., is also concerned about the proposed canal - to run close to the school's lodge: I've dealt with enough risk analyses to know that this presents us a problem, not an opportunity.

Westland Canoe Club, in Greymouth, uses the Arnold for beginners' trips every year. For adults, the jump to whitewater comes more quickly than for children but the enjoyment is the same. Brendan Rae, chairperson, points out that the length of the trip is perfect for a variety of uses. So close to home, we have a trip that can take two hours with beginners down to half an hour in a race boat. Even in winter, with a bit of luck you can fit it in after work.

Fish and Game have an official line, as do the New Zealand Recreational Canoeing Association, but this is about locals. Rob Roney has fished the Arnold for over 20 years. We appreciate the regular flows and warm brown water with willow and totara banks for shade. The Arnold River is one of a kind. It's a river that you can take children or beginner fly fishers to and reliably catch trout.

"One of a kind" is a phrase to remember in this debate. There is no other river in the northern South Island with all of the attributes of the Arnold. Some of these are sought after by Trustpower, some aren't. Trustpower's team would be well advised to look wider, as their consultants have already had the message: the Arnold River cannot be replaced. - **Andy England**



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## Epic Coast to Coast Journey

*This is an account of a trip recently conducted by Tim Sikma and Joe Jagusch in February this year as a re-enactment of a trip carried out 116 years ago by the Park brothers. An extract from a 1978 Press newspaper article by Ken Coates about the original Park brothers' trip was published in NZ Canoeing in 2004 and can be found on [www.rivers.org.nz](http://www.rivers.org.nz). I am currently researching further information on the original Park brothers' trip for a future article. If you can help with further information please contact me on [Tim.Sikma@gmail.com](mailto:Tim.Sikma@gmail.com).*

Joe Jagusch and I recently re-enacted a famous NZ kayak trip which was carried out in wooden kayaks 116 years ago by the Park brothers (George and Jim). The earlier expedition involved kayaking/trudging from the West Coast, up the Taramakau River, over Harper Pass (Southern Alps), across Lake Sumner, and down the Hurunui River to the East Coast. It took George Park approximately 9 days to reach the Hurunui River mouth 116 years ago, while Jim Park only got as far as the Hurunui Hotel before his kayak became too badly damaged for him to continue. Joe and I knocked the trip off in five very long days in February, using a plastic Topo-Duo borrowed from the University of Canterbury Canoe Club.

We decided to use a two person Topo-Duo for this trip as it was the heaviest whitewater boat (30 plus kg) we could find and which would best give us the feeling of what it must have been like to carry 43kg wooden kayaks over Harper Pass on the original trip. The Topo-Duo had the added advantage that it was more suitable for running the Grade 3 sections on the Hurunui River (which the Park brothers' portaged) and being plastic the Topo-Duo was robust. However, the big disadvantage is that with its short length it has a very low glide ratio (speed) compared to a 17 foot wooden kayak which, unfortunately for us, made the flat and slow braided sections of the Hurunui River a lot slower and harder going than it probably was 116 years ago.

Joe and I started our trip at Kumara Beach on the West Coast at the mouth of the Taramakau River. We managed to get about 30-45 minutes of paddling in until the river became too swift and featureless to allow further upstream paddling. This point was



*Tramping with a Topo-Duo. Photo: Tim Sikma.*

about 100m upstream of the Taramakau road/rail bridge. From there onwards Joe and I hauled, trugged, and carried the boat with all our gear up the river, over rocks, and over Harper Pass for 3 days. Interestingly, near the top of the Pass we encountered two German trampers who did not seem to blink an eyelid at the sight of two kayakers carrying a heavy two person kayak over the

Southern Alps. At Harper Biv., down on the East coast side of the pass, we encountered an English trumper, who was most amazed with what we were doing, and went about performing an interview with us, as part of his BBC Radio documentary about his own epic journey (tramping from Cape Reinga to Bluff).

It took us three long days to get to Hut 3 in the Hurunui catchment. It took another two hours of boat hauling on the fourth day before we could actually launch the kayak into the Hurunui River and actually do some paddling. With the very low Hurunui River level (about 17 cubic metres at the Mandamus flow recorder site) we could only start paddling about 3 km above Lake Sumner, and even that involved a lot of jumping in and out of the boat and pushing the boat through the shallows until we reached Lake Sumner. It was slow paddling down the flatter Grade 2 sections of



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the upper Hurunui River, but we made short work of the steeper Grade 3 'Maori Gully' section. Joe paddled intensely (as it was his first time on a Grade 3 piece of water), while I steered the kayak from the back seat which resulted in an excellent line down 'The Shoot'. We took the easiest lines down the rapids where possible, as with all our gear in the boat and without backup it was not a good place to be taking unnecessary risks. It took us 14 hours to get from Hut 3 to the Hurunui Hotel - which we made just before closing time. Travis, the owner of the Hurunui Hotel, provided us with hot showers and comfortable beds for our aching bodies and even turned the cooking vats back on to cook us some fish and chips for a late evening meal.

Day five started really well with a big breakfast at the Hurunui Hotel. We got Travis to provide us with a very large packed lunch since we had run out of food. Travis provided an excellent lunch and even threw in some extra bread with packs of honey and jam knowing that we had a big day ahead of us if we were going to make the Hurunui River mouth by the end of the day. In the end it took us a full 8 hours to get from the Hurunui Hotel to the Hurunui River mouth where the weather turned southerly and started to rain heavily (with the water we had been wanting for the last couple of days to crank the river levels up) while we waited for our shuttle driver.

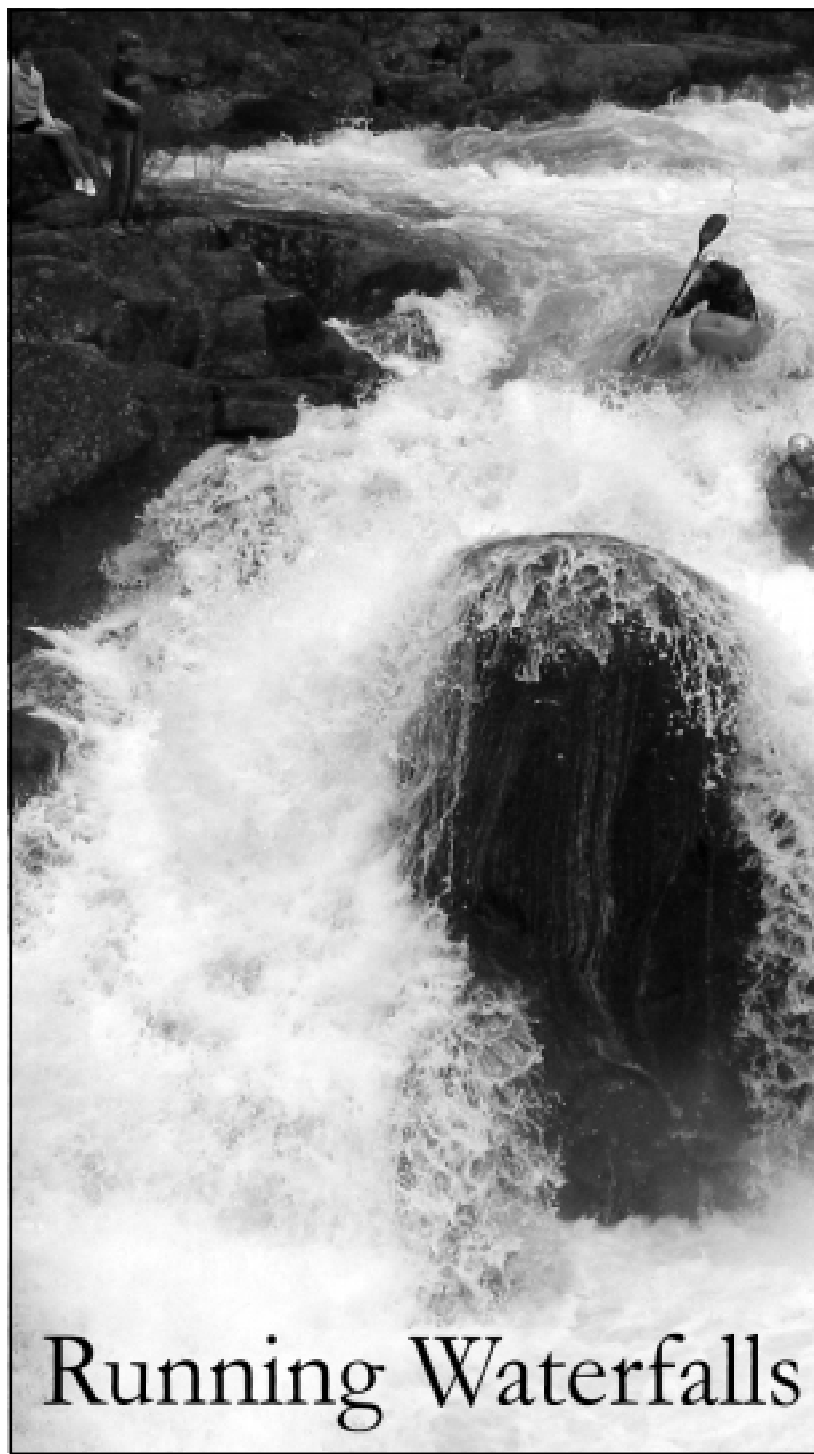
All in all it was a very hard trip which I will never do again, and probably no one will ever do in a similar style. I developed a greater respect for the original trip, and what they achieved with their wooden kayaks. We realised that while we may be fit athletic blokes, our modern bodies are not accustomed to the heavy lifting and hauling that was a common part of everyday life 100 years ago. All I can say is that they must have been hard bastards, and the Park brothers have never gotten the respect they should have. - **Tim Sikma**

### **New Zealand Whitewater 4th edition**

NZ Whitewater has once again sold out. Thank you very much to all who bought copies. I hope you have enjoyed it and will enjoy the next one to come. The book has had another overhaul and features some new runs for you to explore. The existing runs are all still there but many have been updated or overhauled to reflect the 'now' nature of NZ kayaking.

The book has all new cartoons by Bruce Dowrick of Mountoons and the colour photo section has been completely renewed featuring some superb colour images from around the country. Finally, a fresh cover and a new "Kayaking Nightmares" series will make you appreciate this new edition of our very own whitewater book.

We are looking for an early December release to coincide with the season start. The book price will remain the same and the NZRCA are once again negotiating a discount for NZRCA members. This will probably be the last edition in hardcopy print so it is a good one to get and replace the old beaten one in your glove box. - **Graham Charles**



## **Some thoughts on how to approach**

*The photo sequence on this page is of Toby Robertson running McLaren Falls. The falls lie at the confluence of the Mangapapa and the Mangakarengorengo, forming the Wairoa River. Fourteen cumecs is released fortnightly from the power station 200m upstream, filling the waterbed of arguably the most popular whitewater run in the North Island. The waterfall is run more frequently since major floods changed the drop considerably last year (the standing rock has gone since).*

*The first frame shows the final moment of transition from floating to falling - the right boof stroke on this drop was used to arrest the rate of pitch, and turn the boat so that the boater would porpoise away from the standing rock. - Photo Courtesy: Quentin Govignon.*





by Chris Joosse

## ach bigger drops...

Running waterfalls rules. There, I'm biased and there's no denying it. It's one of my favourite things to do. That said, it can be dangerous and the consequences of a mistake can be severe. This article is merely meant to be a guide - to help you think about the way you approach bigger drops, and to give you some ideas for techniques that will help you protect yourself from injury when things go wrong. What this article will not do for you, is give you the skills - for that, you need practice, lots of it; preferably on smaller, easier drops until you feel comfortable with it.

I assume that before you begin to scout your line off a waterfall, you've already decided on where you want to land, (more importantly) where your exits and hazards are, and that you've got some sort of safety set in case things go awry. This is an activity that can go from very fun to very not-fun. A waterfall has a LOT of power - so pick your drops with care and plan your execution with a worst case scenario in mind before you actually commit to it. Hopefully this is just a case of cautious pessimism, but it pays in spades to be prepared when your plans get derailed. The problem you now face is fairly complex but can roughly be broken down into the following questions:

How and where do you intend to land?

How do you get there?

How much pool do you have to work with?

How deep is it?

How hard will the landing be?

What will your desired attitude be on impact with the pool in order to reach your desired exit? What will you do if your pitch, yaw, or roll goes wrong during your flight?

State of mind? Will your mental state interfere with your concentration, execution, or ability to deal with problems?

The answers are all related, so we should start from the end and work our way back to a starting point from which all of this will work. In essence, as with reading a rapid, we begin with the desired end, and work our way backwards from there to discover where we want to start and what we'll need to do in order to get there. From there, it's all a matter of working out the details. We'll address the questions above in turn:

We begin with the exit in mind - that is, a landing that will put you in a safe place, beyond any boil lines, (getting trashed at the base of a big drop is an experience to be devoutly avoided) and then try to figure out an impact point that is attainable from the drop.

**Picking your spot** - Often a waterfall will have a crowning boil conveniently placed in the pool at the base, and this is generally a nice, soft, highly aerated state of water to land in. Landing in this is generally a forgiving experience with regard to impact, but can be difficult to control once you're there - there are few places as violent as the base of a big drop. Landing on the boil is usually desirable, provided you land on the side of the boil that's kicking in the direction you want to go - this makes your exit automatic, and doesn't require you to be 100% precise with your landing attitude. Look at the crown of the boil when scouting and realize that this is a fast-moving piece of water, and you'll go wherever it pushes you once you're there. Keep this in mind when plotting your escape - sometimes your best bet is to punch deep and resurface in a better place.

# Running Waterfalls *by Chris Joosse*

For our purposes, let's assume that the drop you're scouting is not one of those 'glorious straight-off, land-in-a-big-fluffy-pile, pointed-however-you-like' drops that will immediately spit you out into a big, calm pool unhurt and upright. For those drops, you can do more or less what you like and most of the time you'll come out okay. If all the waterfalls in the world were like this, I wouldn't have written this article and we'd all be hucking ourselves off huge drops with no problems. Alas, the world is not a perfect one and we're often faced with the necessity of dealing with situations that contain a little more risk. The purpose of this article is to give you some ideas about how to marginalize this risk as much as possible.

As drops get taller, we find that it becomes more and more necessary to land vertically. Pencilling into the pool provides us with the smallest profile, allowing us to penetrate the pool farther and effectively distributing our impact out over a longer period of deceleration time. There are a couple of things to discuss about landings, now that we have reached this point:

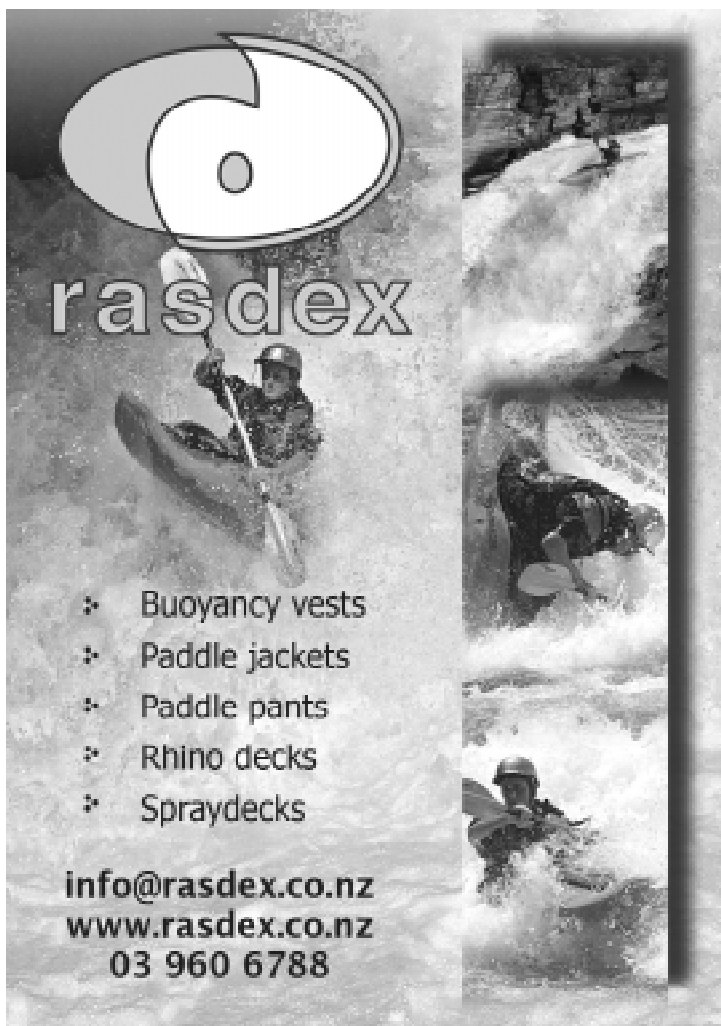
- Flat landings - what to do if you're coming in too flat?
- Bow deflections - what do you do to prevent this?
- Dealing with your paddle - some tips
- Punching a hole in the pool - some thoughts
- What about over-rotating?

**Flat Landings** - Sometimes you just screw up, sometimes your pool is a bit shallow and sometimes you just have to boof to avoid a hazard which means that you're coming in for a flat landing, or at least, flatter than you'd like. The problem here is that you risk injuring your spine on impact, and the solution is to get forward over your bow into what I refer to as the 'crash position'. Crash position involves getting yourself in physical contact with your bow deck, with an arm between your head and the lip of your cockpit combing, head turned to one side or the other. It's like the setup position for a roll, but with your paddle and arms in tight. The shaft of your paddle will be roughly parallel to the boat, your head will be pressed against your arm, and your arm will be pressed against the deck of your boat. This will keep you from whipping into the deck of the boat on impact, keep you from straining neck and back muscles fighting the force of impact, and most importantly, it'll keep you from channelling all that force of impact directly up your spine.

Instead, you'll take all of that force on the chest, shoulders, and arms. You might be sore, but you'll paddle away. Perhaps a better way to think about this position is that you're driving the force in your upper body through

the boat and into the pool - rather than fighting to get your upper body up and away from it. It should go without saying that from sufficient height, there is no way you'll be strong enough to fight the deceleration forces involved. If you try to get away from your deck (seems like the natural thing to do), all you do is strain your back muscles as you proceed to accelerate your face into your cockpit rim, and it's a reasonable bet that your day will just get worse from there. Get into contact with the front deck of your boat - it's your best alternative when you're coming in too flat.

It should be noted that all of this is likely to happen pretty quickly. Practice getting into the crash position quickly and you're more likely to use it in time for it to be useful. As a general rule, make sure you're warmed up and stretched before committing to bigger drops. Even if you do things perfectly, as you go taller the forces involved in your landing will become remarkably huge. If you just hiked in to do the waterfall or if the falls are at the beginning of your paddling day, make sure that you're physically prepared or you'll be sore afterwards. If you've ever played contact sports, you'll remember all those isometric shoulder, leg, and neck exercises they had you do. Now is a good time to go through them.



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**Bow deflections** - As you fall towards the water, your boat will probably make it there first, and because your boat has rocker, its tendency will be to porpoise upwards, or deflect, toward the surface. This is a good thing as it often brings you to the surface in a desirable way, but it's vital that you predict when this may happen because this porpoising action can be crisp, and nearly as violent as a flat landing. If you're not in a forward-leaning position, a bow deflection can turn the boat under you before you catch up with the boat, and the result could be that you'll load your spine with impossible force. So again, the crash position described above is preferred, both to prevent bow deflections, and to deal with their consequences.

For smaller drops where crash position may not be necessary, get into the habit of turning your head to one side or another on landing - just in case. The author has managed to soften his nose on the deck of his boat by failing to do exactly that on a 12-foot boof that 'looked like it had a soft landing'.

**Boat choice** - All other things being equal, I favour smaller boats, playboats even, to practice running drops, provided that the landing zone is deep enough. Smaller boats are easier to manage, have less surface area to engage on landing, and in general will penetrate the pool deeper than their longer, more highly-rockered creek brethren. However, usually you're stuck paddling what you're creeking in so if you're wavering between getting something long vs. something short, consider that shorter boats are a plus when it comes to landing waterfalls safely. Also note that round hulls tend to land with less snap (should you land flat) than do flatter ones.

**Dealing with your paddle** - There are a lot of ideas on what to do with your paddle when there's a pool of water rushing up at you, and some of them are quite bad. Do NOT put your paddle above your head as you enter

the pool. This can have several bad consequences:

- Raising the paddle over your head may cause you to lean back, away from the pool. In the event of a bow deflection on the surface of the pool, you risk hurting your spine, or possibly just whipping your face forward onto your front deck.
- When your arms are straight, your shoulders don't have any shock absorption capability and it's possible that your paddle will pull your arms back over your head. This is a position in which they don't have much mechanical strength. Shoulder dislocations occur this way.

While we're discussing things not to do with your paddle, it makes sense not to land with it in front of your face. If the impact is severe enough to buckle your arms, you could easily injure yourself. Remember, we're here for fun, not to see if we can re-set a broken nose in the field.

Two other options exist that are safe and practical. One involves simply tucking your paddle shaft down across your waist, which is what Tao Berman did on his world record drop.

However, this can be hard on your paddle, (his broke on impact with the pool) and in the event of a bow deflection you may end up taking the front of your cockpit in the face. The second, which I favour, is more or less built into the crash position I described above. You spear the oncoming water with one blade of your paddle in such a way that it'll deflect down and onto the bow of your boat. This can prevent bow deflections, and once you've shed a lot of your speed underwater, it can be turned into a control stroke as you resurface.

Be sure not to allow the paddle to deflect upwards, away from the boat. The danger is that it'll go back behind you and wrench your shoulders, or even possibly come up and into your face. Keep it low, and use it to spear a hole in the water. If you do it right, your helmet will follow through that same hole an instant later. Tuck your head into that hole, and be prepared to feel your paddle flex a bit.

Another bonus to using the spear method on entry is that if you do it right, that stroke becomes a control blade - either a brace or a quick roll, already set up.

*So there you have it - a beginning point from which to think about how to approach those waterfalls you've been looking at for so long. The next edition of NZCanoeing will feature the final part of this article which will explain how to approach issues like over-rotation, pool-punching and visualisation.*



Photo courtesy: Graham Charles

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