Toby Carr

Fellowship Report
2018

WINSTON
CHURCHILL
MEMORIAL
TRUST

GOOD MORNING, AND NOW THE SHIPPING FORECAST ISSUED BY THE MET OFFICE, ON BEHALF OF THE MARITIME AND COASTGUARD AGENCY, AT 0015 ON SATURDAY 08 DECEMBER 2018

THERE ARE WARNINGS OF GALES IN ALL AREAS EXCEPT NORTH UTSIRE SOUTH UTSIRE AND TRAFALGAR

THE GENERAL SYNOPSIS AT 1800
LOW WEST FAIR ISLE 964 EXPECTED SKAGERRAK 973 BY 1800 SATURDAY. NEW LOW EXPECTED ROCKALL 987 BY SAME TIME

THE AREA FORECASTS FOR THE NEXT 24 HOURS

VIKING
CYCLONIC BECOMING NORTHERLY 5 TO 7, OCCASIONALLY GALE 8 LATER IN NORTH. SQUALLY SHOWERS. MODERATE OR GOOD

NORTH UTSIRE
SOUTHERLY BACKING NORTHERLY 5 TO 7, DECREASING 4 FOR A TIME. SHOWERS. MODERATE OR GOOD

SOUTH UTSIRE
SOUTHWESTERLY BECOMING CYCLONIC, THEN NORTHWESTERLY LATER, 5 OR 6, DECREASING 4 FOR A TIME. SHOWERS. MODERATE OR GOOD

FORTIES CROMARTY FORTH TYNE DOGGER FISHER GERMAN BIGHT
SOUTHWEST VEERING WEST OR NORTHWEST, 6 TO GALE 8, OCCASIONALLY SEVERE GALE 9 EXCEPT IN TYNE, THEN DECREASING 5 AT TIMES LATER. RAIN OR SQUALLY SHOWERS. GOOD, OCCASIONALLY POOR

HUMBER THAMES DOVER WIGHT PORTLAND PLYMOUTH
WEST OR SOUTHWEST 7 TO SEVERE GALE 9, DECREASING 6 AT TIMES. RAIN OR SQUALLY SHOWERS. GOOD, OCCASIONALLY POOR

BISCAY
WESTERLY 5 TO 7, OCCASIONALLY GALE 8 IN NORTH. RAIN OR SHOWERS. GOOD, OCCASIONALLY POOR

TRAFALGAR
VARIABLE 3 OR 4 IN NORTHWEST, OTHERWISE NORTHERLY OR NORTHEASTERLY 4 OR 5, OCCASIONALLY 6 IN SOUTH. MAINLY FAIR. MODERATE OR GOOD

FITZROY
WESTERLY OR SOUTHWESTERLY 5 TO 7, OCCASIONALLY GALE 8 IN NORTH, BUT MAINLY VARIABLE 4 IN FAR SOUTH. RAIN OR DRIZZLE FOR A TIME. GOOD, OCCASIONALLY POOR

SOLE LUNDY FASTNET IRISH SEA
WEST OR SOUTHWEST 6 TO GALE 8, INCREASING SEVERE GALE 9 AT TIMES. RAIN OR SQUALLY SHOWERS. GOOD, OCCASIONALLY POOR

SHANNON
WEST OR SOUTHWEST 7 TO SEVERE GALE 9, DECREASING 6 FOR A TIME AT FIRST. RAIN OR SHOWERS. MODERATE OR POOR

ROCKALL MALIN
WESTERLY 6 TO GALE 8, INCREASING SEVERE GALE 9 AT TIMES, THEN BECOMING CYCLONIC 4 OR 5 FOR A TIME. RAIN OR SHOWERS. GOOD, OCCASIONALLY POOR

HEBRIDES BAILEY

NORTHWEST VEERING NORTHEAST 5 TO 7, OCCASIONALLY GALE 8 AT FIRST, THEN DECREASING 4 AT TIMES. SQUALLY SHOWERS. GOOD, OCCASIONALLY POOR

FAIR ISLE
CYCLONIC BECOMING NORTH 5 TO 7, INCREASING GALE 8 AT TIMES. SQUALLY SHOWERS. GOOD, OCCASIONALLY POOR

FAEROES SOUTHEAST ICELAND
NORTHEASTERLY 5 TO 7, INCREASING GALE 8 AT TIMES. RAIN OR WINTRY SHOWERS. GOOD, OCCASIONALLY POOR

+++ 3 minutes +++

Summary

This report details the Fellowship journey I made in summer 2018 to visit the northern sections of the UK Shipping Forecast by sea kayak. My journey was born out of a love for the daily BBC Radio 4 broadcast as a comforting constant through difficult times in my life and seeks to make connections between the people and places of the Forecast, shared histories, stories and cultures. My aim is that through this project I can inspire others facing challenges in their own lives as well as finding out more about the barriers people may face in making the most of the outdoors.

The journey took me to Iceland, the Faroe Islands, Norway, Denmark, Germany, the Netherlands, and Belgium. I crossed the Viking sea, kayaked to the remote islands of Utsira and Helgoland, heard stories of Faroese giants, whales and seabirds. I ate boiled sheep's head, fish balls and herring, crawled thorough lava tunnels, negotiated the sea of flames and Norway's Bermuda Triangle. I visited the site of a UFO landing, crossed the gates of hell and became an expert at loading a sea kayak onto ferries. Throughout the journey, I met with others sharing a love for the sea and passion for the outdoors, finding out what makes it important for them. This report presents a summary of the stretches of coastline I visited and through a series of case studies, highlights some of the common themes that came up during my interviews.

I have called the project 'Moderate Becoming Good Later' which is a phrase taken from the Forecast and is also intended to reference a positive outlook and capacity for change. I have been featured on BBC TV and Radio as well as local and international news. you can hear me talking about it and read press articles here. There is an introductory film to my trip on my website here and a short summary of the journey so far here I have also kept a blog of my travels and summary of each area here. The trip will continue to France, Spain, Portugal, North Africa then Cornwall, Ireland NE England and Scotland. Throughout the journey I will continue to share my story and experiences and hope to collate these into a series of short podcasts, or a radio documentary.

My Fellowship has put me in contact with a wide range of people who are interested in the Shipping Forecast as a cultural, poetic and almost mythical literary reading. It has variously been described as a secular prayer, an 'incomprehensible bedtime sea story' a 'strange salty fable' and was selected by Jarvis Cocker on Desert Island Discs as the song he would save from the waves. There is more about the cultural significance of the forecast here including links to some of the songs and poems associated with it. I have been contacted by people with a shared connection to the daily checkup of the waters around the UK, imagining fishing trawlers and ships out there somewhere, from the comfort and safety of their warm beds as they drift off to sleep. People have offered help, tips, support and shared stories, memories, legends, poems, sound recordings and paintings with me. A common link being the writing in brackets after their name which forecast area they are from (Thames)

I have made contact with authors, adventurers, broadcasters and journalists as well as dedicated radio fans and outdoor enthusiasts. Some highlights being meeting Charlie Connelly, author of the bestselling book 'Attention all Shipping' a journey around the Shipping Forecast, being retweeted and mentioned by BBC Radio 4 announcer Corrie Corfield and having my own forecast reading recorded by Zeb Soanes for the BBC Travel Show. I have also received messages of encouragement from the British adventurers Sarah Outen and Justine Curgenven as well as huge support from the International kayaking community, my local club and outdoor centre. They have read my blogs, followed my pictures, helped me make connections with others and posted kind words of encouragement about my trip so far.

My sister and brother in law have been hugely supportive and I wanted to thank them and the rest of my family and friends for going with this mad idea and believing in me to do it. Thanks also to my colleagues at work who managed a busy summer whilst I was on the water. Finally I am massively grateful to the Winston Churchill Memorial Trust who had faith in me when I went to interview, still recovering from a near fatal infection of Meningitis. You can read more about my personal story here. This challenge has broadened my horizons in ways that I could not have imagined and I hope to be able to share my experience with as many people as possible.

You can follow me on Twitter and Instagram as well as my website www.m-b-g-l.org

Background

I started kayaking around seven years ago following a Christmas break in Jersey with relatives and avid outdoor enthusiasts, who never miss a chance to get in or on the sea. My dad had died suddenly the previous year and I was in need of a new focus. I found this when I got home, through my local canoe club and in the murky waters of the Thames. Since then I have met many fantastic people through kayaking who have encouraged and inspired me to 'dream big'. I've paddled around various parts of the UK coast as well as overseas in Arctic Greenland, Sardinia and France. I'm also a keen white water kayaker and volunteer coach. I work as an architect and university tutor in a firm specialising in public buildings and environmental design. I'm hugely grateful and proud to have been awarded a Churchill Fellowship to kickstart my adventure.

Around the same time as taking up kayaking, I was diagnosed with cancer, something my brother had be battling for a long time. Determined not to let this get in the way, I underwent a couple of rounds of surgery to remove the early stage tumour and got back on the water as soon as I could. My brother was not so lucky and following numerous operations, life changing reconstructive surgery to his neck and face, he lost his ability to speak or eat and passed away peacefully in a hospice in 2017.

I've always found the challenge and reward of outdoor experiences exhilarating. A hard slog on a loaded bike up a winding mountain pass, the uplifting beauty of a stunning vista and sense of achievement it brings. The enveloping power of a landscape and the connection with deeper time and a simpler life. The utter exhaustion after early starts just to be smashed around by the power of the eternal force of the tides. The deep tiredness that only physical exertion can bring, paired with the ability to say - 'I did it'

A friend jokingly said to me recently 'There's nothing like surviving a near death experience to make you feel alive' and in many ways he's right. I am recovering from a shock infection of bacterial meningitis which jumped up on me whilst driving home on New Year's day this year. Emerging from a long course of IV antibiotics, it's true that things seem differently real, focussed in sharp clarity. Food is tastier, colours seem more vibrant, my senses more alert, but that could just be the effect of the drugs or no booze for a while. Some people might call this kind of thing 'peak experience'. My dad would have called it a boot up the jacksie. Basically, I've had a near miss and on reflection, I've actually had quite a few.

Born with a rare genetic condition, Fanconi's Anaemia, my brother and I were no strangers to hospitals as children. He had some of the bones in his wrist and hands missing and I have some slight skeletal oddities, sometimes beneficial for party tricks. We both had abnormal blood counts and were seen regularly by consultants in London. This somewhat explains the strange sense of comfort I feel whenever I've been in hospital, I secretly quite like the starched sheets, hospital pyjamas and smell of alcohol wipes.

As children, along with our older sister, we had a full and active life despite our illness although as things progressed, I could do less and less. My parents took us walking, sailing, swimming and occasionally to athletics (my brother and I were good at this as we were on a continuous dose of anabolic steroids to boost our bone marrow, which now seems quite unfair on the other children) This was made more challenging for my dad following the acute, acquired brain injury that tragically hit my mum, aged just 39, sending her into a coma and destroying much of the frontal lobe of her brain. I only remember fragments of the day she had woken up in bed next to him, not knowing who he was or recognising any of us three children. She lived with us at home for a while until it became too difficult. After a long time in rehabilitative care, she now lives in a supported home and remarkably, still has a sense of humour.

By the age of 12, my blood counts started to take a plummet and I became transfusion dependant for a number of years, a result of bone marrow failure which then developed into acute myeloid leukaemia. I carried on at school but called in at the hospital three times a week for a top up until the risk of infection became too great and I was taught at home. I was part of a gene therapy trial in the United States where I met children with the same condition as me and saw first hand how differently it could affect others.

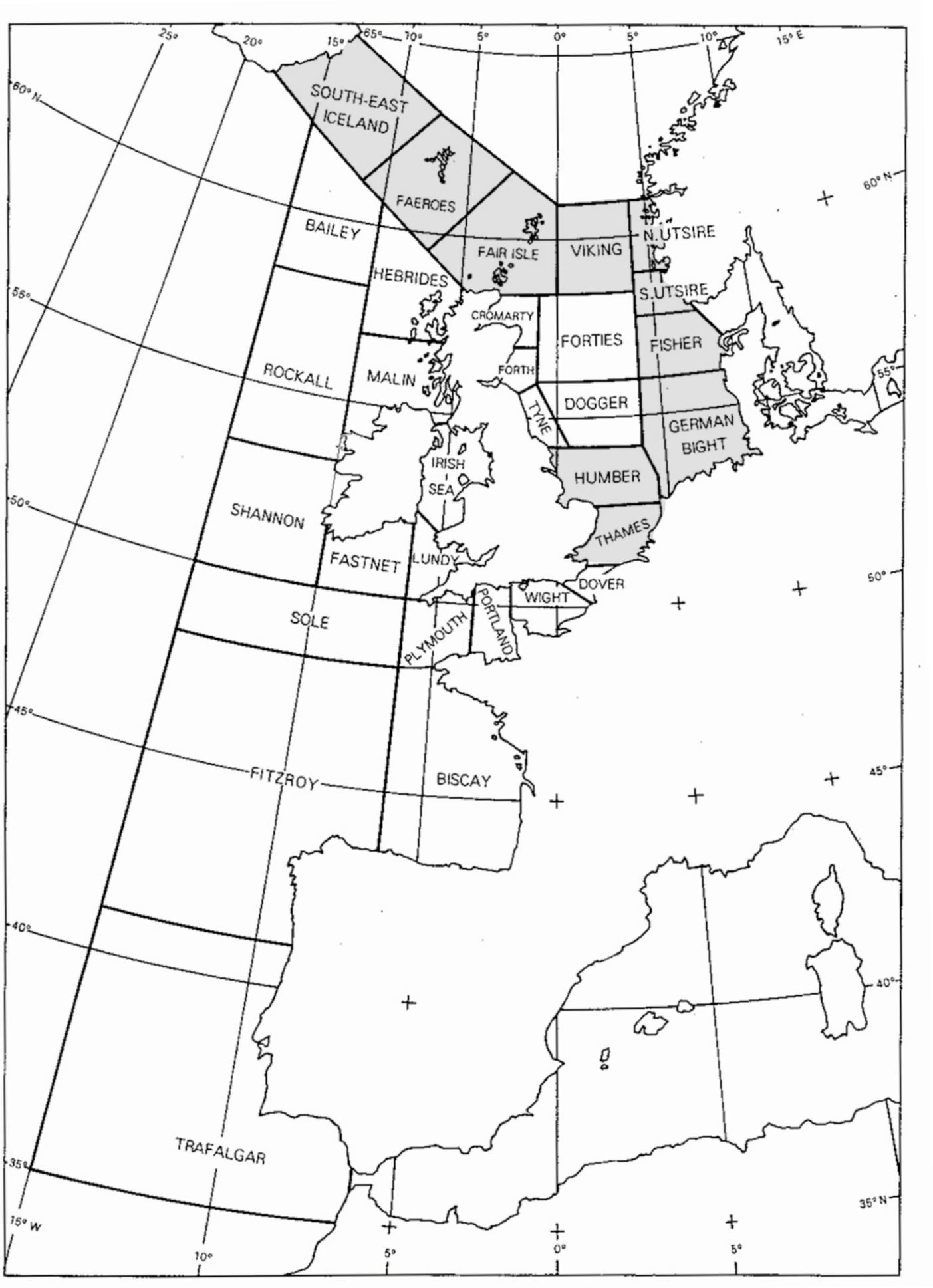
After several years of unsuccessful searches, and having built up antibodies to the donated blood products I was receiving, things were looking very ropey until an unrelated donor match popped up on the international register and I received a bone marrow transplant aged 15. This risky procedure was followed by several years of complications including having my spleen removed, something that is largely to blame for my near miss with meningitis on the motorway earlier this year.

As a young family, we were supported by our grandparents and an amazing woman from our village,

who saw my dad needed help and took us three young kids under her wing. Keeping us all, including my dad, in check. She died of lung cancer shortly before I finished my A levels but not before sorting me out with a part time job at the local pub where I became the charity shop child of our mad but loving landlady.

I continued treatment through my undergraduate studies, having a pint of blood taken off every few weeks in an attempt to bring my dangerously high iron levels down. I was then relatively free of hospitals until I found a small lump in my throat that Christmas in Jersey. I got into cycling in my twenties and have done several long touring trips, largely to places with interesting buildings and nice food. My mum and dad had been keen dinghy sailors in their time but despite my dad's best efforts, I never got into it. We spent many weekends on England's east coast as children and it was on the cold, brown, churned up waters of the north sea that I first heard the shipping forecast. Captivated by its slow repetitive rhythm, I have found it a comforting constant ever since. Now as a sea kayaker, I've re-learnt its meaning and importance. For this trip it forms a framework and a way to link faraway places together, learn from others and push myself further. As I write this, I'm hugely excited, if a little daunted about the prospect of the trip. My head is buzzing with logistics plans and I'm on the look out for anyone who wants to share the journey with me.

So what has all this taught me? I have realised that these things can be difficult to write about, mainly, I think as I don't spend a lot of time thinking about them and have generally found it more productive to get on with things, knowing there are always others facing greater issues. Probably, it has taught me that life is fragile and we should make the most of it. Moreover, I've learnt that we all have the capacity to challenge ourselves and change our experience by thinking about things differently.
London, April 2018


SOUTH-EAST ICELAND
FAEROES
FAIR ISLE
VIKING
N.UTSIRE
S.UTSIRE
BAILEY
HEBRIDES
CROMARTY
FORTIES
FISHER
FORTH
ROCKALL
MALIN
DOGGER
TYNE
GERMAN BIGHT
IRISH SEA
HUMBER
SHANNON
THAMES
FASTNET
LUNDY
DOVER
WIGHT
SOLE
PORTLAND
PLYMOUTH
FITZROY
BISCAY
TRAFALGAR
60° N
55°
50°
45°
40°
35°
25°
20°
15°
65°
10°
5°
0°
5°
10°
15° E
15° W
10°
5°
0°
5°
35° N

Contents

The report is in three sections. The 'General Synopsis' gives an overview of the journey so far, the route, distances and a summary of each section. The 'Area Forecasts' give a more in depth look at each of the areas I visited and the people I met through a series of case studies. 'Outlook' lists my future plans and outlines the next steps of the journey. It also consolidates some of the key themes raised in my interviews and highlights some observations on how we can overcome barriers to make more of the outdoors for all.

TT CWS MET R4SCHED R4ANNOUN
.FROM MET OFFICE EXETER
TO BBC RADIO 4

AND NOW THE SHIPPING FORECAST ISSUED BY THE MET OFFICE,
ON BEHALF OF THE MARITIME AND COASTGUARD AGENCY, AT 0505
ON WEDNESDAY 23 MAY 2018

THERE ARE WARNINGS OF GALES IN SOUTHEAST ICELAND

THE GENERAL SYNOPSIS AT MIDNIGHT
HIGH NORWEGIAN BASIN 1029 EXPECTED FORTIES 1030 BY
MIDNIGHT TONIGHT. LOW JUST WEST OF TRAFALGAR 1010
DRIFTING SLOWLY SOUTHWARDS AND FILLING 1013 BY SAME TIME

THE AREA FORECASTS FOR THE NEXT 24 HOURS

VIKING NORTH UTSIRE
CYCLONIC, MAINLY NORTHERLY 4 OR 5, OCCASIONALLY 6 IN
NORTH, BECOMING VARIABLE 3 OR 4. FAIR. GOOD

SOUTH UTSIRE NORTHEAST FORTIES
NORTHWESTERLY 4 OR 5, BECOMING VARIABLE 3 OR 4 LATER.
FAIR. MODERATE OR GOOD

SOUTHWEST FORTIES CROMARTY FORTH
VARIABLE BECOMING SOUTHEASTERLY 3 OR 4, OCCASIONALLY 5
LATER. FOG PATCHES LATER. GOOD, BECOMING MODERATE,
OCCASIONALLY VERY POOR LATER

TYNE DOGGER FISHER GERMAN BIGHT
NORTH OR NORTHEAST 4 OR 5. FOG PATCHES. MODERATE OR GOOD,
OCCASIONALLY VERY POOR

HUMBER
NORTH VEERING NORTHEAST 5 OR 6. FOG PATCHES IN WEST.
MODERATE OR GOOD, OCCASIONALLY VERY POOR IN WEST

THAMES DOVER WIGHT
NORTH OR NORTHEAST 5 OR 6. SHOWERS, PERHAPS THUNDERY.
MODERATE OR GOOD, OCCASIONALLY POOR

PORTLAND PLYMOUTH NORTH BISCAY
NORTHERLY OR NORTHEASTERLY 4 OR 5. SHOWERS LATER. GOOD

SOUTH BISCAY
VARIABLE 3 OR 4. SHOWERS. GOOD

FITZROY
NORTHEASTERLY 4 OR 5, OCCASIONALLY 6 IN SOUTH. SHOWERS IN
SOUTH. GOOD

WEST SOLE
VARIABLE 3 OR 4. FAIR. GOOD

EAST SOLE LUNDY FASTNET IRISH SEA
NORTHERLY OR NORTHEASTERLY 4 OR 5. FAIR. GOOD

SHANNON SOUTHEAST ROCKALL
VARIABLE 3 OR 4. FAIR. GOOD

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SOUTH UTSIRE NORTHEAST FORTIES
NORTHWESTERLY 4 OR 5, BECOMING VARIABLE 3 OR 4 LATER.
FAIR. MODERATE OR GOOD

SOUTHWEST FORTIES CROMARTY FORTH
VARIABLE BECOMING SOUTHEASTERLY 3 OR 4, OCCASIONALLY 5
LATER. FOG PATCHES LATER. GOOD, BECOMING MODERATE,
OCCASIONALLY VERY POOR LATER

General Synopsis

The area forecast is broadcast on BBC Radio 4 four times in the day 05.20, 12.00. 5.00 and 00.48. The late night broadcast being the most comprehensive and always prefaced by the gently lilting music 'Sailing by' due to the timing of the late night broadcast, people often find themselves drifting in and out of sleep as they listen to it. The words may not carry any meaning to many people and on the face of it are nonsensical and contradictory. How can 'rain later' be 'good'?

To others there is a specific and important meaning which is shared by seafarers around the world. There is a fascinating history to the origins of the shipping forecast which I have written about here. Its founding father Robert Fitzroy being honoured in 2002 when the area 'Finisterre' was renamed, Fitzroy, the only area in the Forecast to be named after a person. There are 31 sections in the area Forecast. They are named after estuaries, islands, sand banks, bays and stretches of sea. The reading always starts with 'Viking' and goes in a roughly clockwise direction around the UK and Ireland finishing with South East Iceland. My aim is to kayak in all of them, selecting the most interesting or challenging bits of coastline in each area, linking them together by sea crossings. I carried a tent and camping equipment with me and was able to pitch up close to the water most days. The fully loaded kayak with 2-3 weeks of food roughly 15L of fresh water weighed around 200kg. This in itself was a logistical challenge, moving the kayak and full expedition kit from place to place along the way.

My trip started in 'Southeast Iceland' and although it is always the last area, I decided to tackle it first. I shipped my kayak from Immingham on the North Lincolnshire Coast (Humber) It was packed into a container and arrived in Reykjavik four days later. I flew to Reykjavik and was welcomed by a fellow kayaker Guðni Pall Viktorsson who helped me massively with the onwards logistics to get me to my planned start point in Höfn. Guðni has kayaked around the whole of Iceland, we talk about the mental and physical challenge of this as well as his memories listening to the much loved Icelandic forecast with his fisherman grandfather. My kayak was delayed for a week, clearing the notoriously strict Icelandic customs. Whilst in Reykjavik, I was invited to join the local kayak club on the water and met Arian Ne, a volunteer with the esteemed Icelandic national rescue team, Landsbjorg or ICESAR. Arian took me on a tour of the local landscape, which included potholing in a lava cave, visiting a flooded volcano crater and the last refuge of the now extinct Great Auk. I kayaked along the exposed south coast and through the foggy East Fjords from Höfn to Seydisfjordur. I covered a distance of 235km over 6 days with 3 break days. I met Ari Benediktsson in Neskaupstadur who set up, built and runs a local kayak club. He has forged partnerships with the local council and fishing industry to support the club which was born out of his love for the water. He dreamt up and built his own kayak as a boy having never seen one before. In building the new club in Neskaupstadur he and a team of volunteers literally moved and entire house to its new position on the water front. As well as a clubhouse it is used as a community hall and a base for the local ice swimming club.

From Iceland I took the Nøronna (an overnight ferry) arriving at three in the morning to strong winds and rain in Tørshavn in the Faroe Islands (Faroes) I met Jan Egil Kristiansen a local kayaker, hiker and wildlife warden for tourists on the remote island of Mykines. I kayaked 180km in large ocean swells and strong tides on the exposed North Atlantic coast and was subjected to the rapidly changing weather that the Faroese are so proud of. I circumnavigated the island of Streymoy, taking in Eysturoy, Vagar, Mykines, Koltur, Hestur, Sandoy and Nolsoy. I was storm bound in a force 9 gale for two days on the island of Mykines where I met Heine Heineson, son of the last lighthouse keeper on the island and now a tour guide. He tells me stories of fishermen, giants, whales and gannets as well as debating the future of this remote island community with only eight full time residents. I listened to Faroese music in the Nordic House in Torshavn and met the German captain of a sailing boat bound for Greenland.

I travelled onwards on the Nøronna to Denmark. We crossed the Viking sea (Viking) and passed so close to the Shetland Islands (Fair Isle) I could see the lighthouse at Muckle Flugga. Around ten years ago, the ferry would stop in Lerwick and Bergen but no longer does so I drag the kayak off one ferry and on to another heading for Norway (North Utsira, South Utsira) On the Ferry from Hirtshals to Stavanger I bumped into Erin Bastian, a UK kayaker with her own business running expeditions and training largely for women. She is also a British Canoe Union Women's Paddling Ambassador. I'm met in Stavanger by Alina Natalia and Ivar Kim Røkke both Norwegian kayakers and part of a well known rough water and surf collective 'Neptun Kajakk' Alina joined me on the water for the week with Ivar Kim keeping an eye on our navigation from land. I carried out most of the sections of the trip solo so it was nice to have some company on the water for this leg. Alina had just returned from coaching for a week at the Arctic Women's Playground an established festival run for women, by women in Tromso, north Norway.

We discussed the role for these types of events and how they can help others to improve confidence and skills.

We kayak 225km from a harbour just outside Bergen to the island of Finnøy near Stavanger. We cross the notorious Sletta and spend a day on the tiny island of Utsira (North Utsire, South Utsire) An early start on the first morning meant that Ivar Kim had caught the Norwegian Shipping Forecast on the radio and we share stories and compare notes on the areas. Off the water, I travelled to Arctic Norway where I had been invited by Kristoffer Vandbak to speak to an international group of kayakers in the Lofoten Islands about my trip so far and the reasons behind it. I met and talked to two of the kayaking worlds most popular Instagrammers and have continued to share my journey with them. Kristoffer very kindly lends me a tent as mine is lost on the flight. I returned via Bergen, the Hanseatic Kontor and the place that the dried stock fish from Lofoten's extensive cod fisheries would have been traded.

Taking the ferry back from Norway to Denmark across the Skagerrak puts me back in Hirtshalls from where I kayaked 275km along the surfy and sandy Danish west coast (Fisher) I was stormbound for a day as a result of strong westerly winds and big waves crashing onto the beaches. I had really useful advice from two people in Copenhagen, both called Anders, one of whom is the image of a Viking warrior and follows a strict Viking diet including eating raw potatoes. On my storm bound day, by chance I meet fellow kayakers Thomas Neilsen and Morten Vogelius and we kayak the next short section of the coast together the following day. We launch from the 'Bunkers' surf spot near 'Cold Hawaii'. The coast is peppered with concrete remnants from WWII that would have formed part of the Atlantic Wall and are now lying on the expansive beaches or falling into the sea. I'm treated to beautiful sunsets and deserted beaches along the way. I finish the trip in Henne Strand a popular stopping point for people attempting the red and white ribbon challenge, a circumnavigation (almost) of the Danish coast. I meet the previous owners of the hostel who tell me stories of past attempts and stoke my confidence by confirming that the west coast is the most challenging bit. Morten shares stories of listening to the Danish shipping forecast with his young sister, being sworn to silence as their grandparents focused on the clear and crisp words being read out. Martens introduces me to a Danish app which gives information on a network of emergency shelters, wild camping spots and simple bothy type accommodation available at no cost for people exploring the outdoors.

The next leg of the trip took me to Germany (German Bight) and an open sea crossing to the small island of Helgoland. I'm met by Dorris Hoelterhof and Felix Dreuke and we do the 52km crossing together. We have excellent conditions and they very kindly pick me up

and drive to the start point of our trip at St Peter Ording. The crossing is approximately 51km and takes us around eight hours. We spend a day or so exploring the island, see Germany's only Gannet colony close up, kayak around the distinctive red sandstone cliffs and find out more about this contested tax free outpost that was swapped with the British for Zanzibar. We are pleased to be able to cross as an anglo-german team and make a toast to following dreams with some warm, fizzy and slightly salty wine. The beaches of northern Germany are packed with people, a reminder of the relatively small coastline that the country has. Felix and Dorris are unlikely kayakers, living near Dortmund, a long way form the sea. We talk about how they got into it and what it is they love about being on the water. I tuned into the German Bight coastguard on the way back and catch a reading of the German shipping forecast as we bob around on the water. Doris contacts the German network of sea kayakers, the Salzwasser Union who give advice on where to land and camp along the next stretch.

Still in Germany, the next section took me along 245km of the Frisian Island chain to the Netherlands. I did this section on my own over eight days, navigating around the channels and sandbanks of the Waddenzee, a unique environment governed by the ebb and flow of the tides and an important habitat for seals and wading birds. I met one of the few surf kayakers in Germany and solved the mystery of the glass case full of small porcelain spaniels on the island of Baltrum. I met kayakers from Oldenburg and we watched a legendary band from Bremen underneath the stars at the Old Laramie on Spiekeroog. I slipped off the edge of my charts near the Dutch island of Schiermonikoog and despite having the digital versions on my ipad, spent a day searching chandleries on the mainland for new ones. I passed Engelsmanplaat and Simonsands and was reminded of the treacherous nature of these disappearing sandbanks for ships by a map of shipwrecks on a pub menu on the island of Ameland. I have never seen so much sand in one place before. I passed vast offshore windfarms, crossed shipping lanes and weaved my way past ferries and tourist boats.

The last island in the chain is Texel and as I kayak towards Den Helder on the Dutch coast I'm back in the 'Humber' area of the forecast. I was invited to speak about my trip at the annual training week for Dutch kayakers which is based here. I'm very kindly picked up by one of the participants, a young(ish) kayaker from Amsterdam. The invitation came from the event organiser and international kayak coach Axel Schoevers we talk about kayaking in Holland as well as how he got into it and what he gets out of it. We share stories of the forecast areas and he recalls the exact phrasing and meanings of terminology that is used across the world. I spend an interesting afternoon on the choppy waters of the Marsdiep and find out that one translation of Den Helder means 'The Gates of Hell' I catch the mechanical sounding pre recorded Dutch shipping forecast on my VHF and am herranged on Twitter for asking what people would make of this computerised version in the UK. One Radio4 listener suggested that replacing Corrie Corfeild and Zeb Soanes with a robot could amount to treason and would be 'the end of days' Corrie herself reflecting that at least they wouldn't have to get up so early. I kayak in this area for a couple of short days covering around 45km. I'm treated to a traditional Dutch meal cooked by an ex naval chef and after a bit of a logistical leap back and forth across the channel. I rejoin the group with my car, returning back to the UK on the ferry from the Hook of Holland.

In total I kayaked over 1300km in six countries over 65 days, 34 of which were on the sea. I averaged around 40km/day and had a speed of around 2.6 knots. I took thirteen ferries and five flights, crossing over 2000km of sea. I lost a tent, a map case, a paddle, the lining to my helmet and the frame for my wheels. I was met with warmth, kindness and generosity and heard some amazing stories, songs and legends of the sea. I saw the coastline change from the volcanic peaks and snowy caps of Iceland to the dark, brooding cliffs and crags of the Faroe islands. I saw some of the oldest rock in the world in Norway, shaped and sculpted by glaciers and immersed myself in the extensive dune landscapes of Denmark. I experienced the tidal flats and fine sands of the North Sea coast which I am still removing from my kit. I saw a huge variety of wildlife at close hand including a range of sea birds, lots of gannets, puffins, guillemots, eider ducks, as well as dolphins, proposes and seals. I ate a lot of fish. I loved hearing about similar forecasts and radio broadcasts held close in the memories of their own nations with the same fondness and familiarity. This shared experience of something that many consider to be an odd, nonsensical but soothing part of a national cultural identity in the UK was an unplanned outcome and I made several recordings of people reading their own forecasts in their own language, an interesting switch in perspective. I returned with the feeling that in a time of increased national divisions, the sea, and its shared, strange salty fables are what can bring us together rather than pulling us apart. The next section of this report focuses in more detail on the people I met in each area as well as descriptions, maps and photographs of the areas themselves.

Area Forecasts

Dogger, Rockall, Malin, Irish Sea:
Green, swift upsurges, North Atlantic flux
Conjured by that strong gale-warning voice,
Collapse into a sibilant penumbra.
Midnight and closedown. Sirens of the tundra,
Of eel-road, seal-road, keel-road, whale-road, raise
Their wind-compounded keen behind the baize
And drive the trawlers to the lee of Wicklow.
L'Etoile, Le Guillemot, La Belle Hélène
Nursed their bright names this morning in the bay
That toiled like mortar. It was marvellous
And actual, I said out loud, 'A haven,'
The word deepening, clearing, like the sky
Elsewhere on Minches, Cromarty, The Faroes.

The Shipping Forecast by Seamus Heaney


20°
15°
10°
SOUTH-EAST
ICELAND

Southeast Iceland

The tidal harbour was drying out quickly to reveal a black sandy mud, I needed to get going on this tide and make the most of the day. I pushed my hands off the bottom and slipped through the weeds towards the lighthouses marking the entrance to the harbour. A pointy headland loomed to my left at the end of a long stretch of inhospitable steep slopes of black sand. The place had an underlying menacing feeling that whilst it was calm now, I knew any minute, the clouds could descend and the sea would start to play rough. Limited landing places of this first stretch made me push on for the next nine hours in the kayak. Stopping briefly on an island where seals were bathing in the sun and surprised birds squawked and fired their streaky poo at me. The scale of the landscape is immense and over the next few days, I spend many an hour staring at the same headland, lighthouse, mountain range or fjord. I break these sections down into smaller challenges in my head, if I just get past that next bit...I'm so ready to land at the end of the first day that the small cove I'm looking for materialises in several places in my mind as I try to fit what I'm seeing with what I'm looking for. I land briefly on a wide west facing beach having convinced myself this must be the north facing sheltered spot I'm looking for. Big dumping waves coming from a relatively flat sea tell me that if it is, I'm not staying here. I push on and am rewarded by the most beautiful pinky purple sky and perfect camp spot.

Guðni Pall Viktorssen

Guðni describes himself first as a father then a kayaker. He has a young daughter and lives with his partner, Eva in Reykjavik. During the summer months, he works as a kayak guide for Kayak Centre Iceland in the Westfjords where he grew up and praises it enthusiastically as the most beautiful part of Iceland. He says *'The Westfjords, my home area, is my favourite spot. It's different to the rest of Iceland and is the oldest part, what you have there, you don't have everywhere. The landscape is more grown, with more trees'*. The ring road which loops around Iceland doesn't go to the Westfjords which means it is also one of the most remote parts of the country.

Guðni is a volunteer coach and leader at his local kayak club 'Kayakkluberin' on the outskirts of Reykjavik. He got into kayaking when an ankle injury meant he could no longer play on his local football team and he was looking for something else to do. I interview him in the Reykjavik campground, sitting in the open boot of his car as he tries to stop his young daughter picking up eating various things including spare batteries. He has been kayaking for around eight years and started paddling as he says he 'needed something different to do with his time' he had seen people on the water when he was growing up and was inspired to give it a go. In 2013, he kayaked solo around Iceland. When I ask him what he gets from it says *'To find myself in a better place, than sitting at work'* He is a well known name in Icelandic kayaking as well as being sponsored by several major brands and attending international kayaking festivals. He says '*Kayaking in Iceland gives me two things, depending if I'm paddling in the summertime or the wintertime. In wintertime it gives a bit of everything in the sport, in the summertime it is an absolutely lovely way to travel around Iceland and see different spots*'

He describes his reasons for kayaking around Iceland as following an old dream which he'd been thinking about for a long time and decided to try to make it happen. Given the journey I am about to embark on, I can fully understand this. I am reminded of a quote from T.E. Lawrence shared by the leader of the outdoor centre that my club is based at in London '*Those who dream by night in the dusty recesses of their minds, wake in the day to find that it was vanity: but the dreamers of the day are dangerous, for they may act on their dreams with open eyes, to make them possible*' Guðni set up a website for his expedition and posted videos, photos and interviews on Facebook giving people regular updates. In an online interview he answers questions on his journey. He undertook physical training for the trip but admits that he was mentally unprepared at the start. He says that the long periods of solitude were the hardest part of the trip and he found the mental challenges of this difficult. Alongside this, he talks about the challenge of maintaining a healthy weight and eating well when on expedition. He eats traditional Icelandic stockfish on the water as a rich source of protein and something that wont perish. He talks about the expense of an expedition like his and says it is hard to put a true figure on it as a lot of work is done by people out of kindness or a desire to be involved and they don't take anything for it. He says it was a difficult expedition and that he did have worries along the way and sometimes was really scared. He reflects on this and says he thinks it has made him stronger.

We talk about the challenges of kayaking in Iceland. He says *'Paddling in Iceland will all come down to the weather in the end. It the only thing that will slow you down or help you in any way. The south is notorious for bad weather and big waves, you need to respect the weather and the waves'* Reflecting on this he says the Icelandic weather is well known for changing fast. His father and grandfather were both fishermen so the weather was always something they talked about back home. He thinks the weather has changed a lot in the last years. '*The bad storms are pretty bad but not as bad as they were 15 years ago. There are more of them, more frequent bad weather but not so often the really bad storms*' During the week that I wait for my kayak to be released from customs a strong gale force wind blows in followed by a cold and grey mist. The days between are glorious sunshine with deep blue skies. Gudni tells me it has been a harsh winter and many people are leaving Iceland to holiday in warmer climes. We review the weather information together and he describes an imaginary line down the centre of the country that divides the weather systems.

Guðni shares his memories growing up and listening to the Icelandic shipping forecast which is also broadcast on national radio and cherished dearly by listeners. *'It's very strongly in my mind, when I was young, sitting with my grandfather, late in the evenings and he was going out to fish. I remember him listening to the radio, at twelve o'clock, we have this weather forecast in Iceland, always the same voice, for almost 25 years. It's the last weather forecast for fishermen before the morning, six o'clock is the next one. In my memory, he was sitting with his cup of coffee, listening to it. I can hear this voice talking about pressure and lows coming in. An old gentleman telling the news, with a deep voice. I knew when he listened to it and he tapped his hat, that would be his decision point and the next morning he'd go out on the sea. Now today when I do this stuff, looking at the weather for myself I am listening*

to same thing. Like a flashback' He tells me a story from *'back home'* with fishermen going out in rowing boats. *'You can still see on the beaches in Iceland these really small gaps where the rocks have just been lifted off, When the farmers started to go for a fish in the summertime, every year they had to clear the rocky beaches. Taking the big rocks out, just to get the boats down. If they lost a man in the bad weather, they would leave one rock in the area that they would take the boat out. When you couldn't get the boat out anymore, you had to make a new one as you'd lost so many fishermen, you'd need to find a new place to go fishing from, they would move to the next valley or something*' It reminds me of the treacherous nature of this work, a connection with the land and sea and the impact it would have had on communities and families. We chat about other stories of the sea and Gudni tells me of the Syneta disaster, a tanker sailing from Liverpool en route to Eskifjordur to collect cod liver oil. It sank after colliding with the Skrudur rock and all twelve crew members died. It has been immortalised in a song by the Icelandic singer Bubbi Morthens.

Gudni went out of his way to help me, sorting out logistics and shipping for the kayak. We kayaked together with Gudni's local club in Reyjavik and watched the Icelandic football team being beaten in a friendly with Norway just before the World Cup. I was lucky to be in Reykjavik on national seafarers day in June where we watched women battling each other on a pole suspended over the icy waters of the harbour, he laughed when I inadvertently tried pickled shark meat from a stall on the quayside. Gudni and I are featured in an article in the Icelandic national newspaper here

On the next stretch, the ring road moves inland from the coast and the place takes on much more of a wilderness feel. The bird life is fantastic. It's been pretty good up to now but in this untouched corner, goes into overdrive. Fulmars and gulls fly low, right over the bows of the boat and flocks of Puffins, Guillemots and Kittiwakes flap and bob on the water and oysters catchers fuss and peep around my tent. The constantly surprised 'Oooohhh' call of Eider ducks makes me chuckle as they sit and gossip around my boat on the beach, ducklings waddling and bobbing behind. It's teeming with life and the bright green mossy ledges contrast sharply with the black, charred rock faces. It's bulbous and strange, like whipped cream splurging out of a layered cake. Sometimes it's stacked in lines like a clutch of pencils, occasionally snapped and broken. The mountain faces are formed in steps, laid down as the lava set over millions of years. I'm told that at around 13million years, Iceland is a relatively young landscape with the East and West fjords being the oldest parts. There are no metamorphic rocks here but there are some very special minerals and geodes. I can see at a large scale, the effect the water has had on these giants. This all disappears in an instant when thick fog descends the next morning. Both compasses giving different readings and an hour long crossing of a fjord ahead of me, it's totally disorientating. The wrong bearing could easily send me way out into the Icelandic sea. Tentatively I push on keeping the just visible sun behind me and checking a gps I'm carrying. My route track looks like that of a drunken spider until I settle into it and gain confidence.

Arian Ne

Arian is a member of the revered Icelandic Rescue Team ICESAR (Landsbjörg) We met at the kayak club in Reykjavik and she invited me to join a nature sightseeing tour with some visiting friends. She treated me to a cliff top picnic and invited me to her house for brunch with Viking hens. We piled into her 4x4 along with their small dog Lindor. We visited a vast area of drying cod heads, went cliff top bird watching, pot holing in a lava cave and visited steaming, smouldering geysirs. We even spotted the rare Golden Plover. Arian has a deep connection with nature, respect for the landscape and its wildlife. She is a special needs teacher and lives in Reykjavik with her family, various animals and her autistic husband who is a radio ham enthusiast.

Arian was born in Switzerland and fell in love with Iceland when visiting the country with her brother as a teenager. She moved and settled there soon after. She talks to me about the Icelandic landscape and as she does so, realises that all the Volcanoes in Iceland are referred to as female, some of them still erupting, the rivers are male. She talks about the 'tourist glaciers' where people pose for photos and clamber around, ill prepared. She recounts the risks of these active landscapes and tells me of places that they go skiing in winter near live volcanoes or glaciers, knowing that if the signal is raised, they have only forty minutes to evacuate the area. We sit in her dining room overlooking the garden and she passes me a tactile map of the country that she uses with her students. Running my hand over it, I can feel the changes that form this dramatic landscape as she takes me on a photo tour around the coast of Iceland.

The Icelandic rescue service comprises over 10,000 volunteers (over 3% of the population) It was established in 1918 by women organising support for their husbands working in the fishing industry in the Westman Islands. It is a volunteer organisation with no direct government funding. A plane crash in the1950's left survivors stranded in the wilderness, a civilian force of local people travelling on foot and skis to carry out the rescue after a failed attempt by American forces. This helped establish the network of volunteer groups which has now become ICESAR. Volunteers are on standby 24/7 and raise money in interesting ways. ICESAR is the sole permitted importer of Fireworks into Iceland, it is illegal to set off fireworks at any other time than New Year. The service is professional and highly regarded by the Icelandic people and internationally too. For this reason, people wanting to support the service buy lots of fireworks, making New Year's eve in Reykjavik a spectacular blow out. Alongside this, the service sells a 'rescue guy' figure in a different guise each year. As well as search and rescue, the service also carries out activities related to accident prevention and has women and youth sections. ICESAR also has a training ship 'Sæbjörg' and runs a summer training camp for youth groups in Gufuskálar, Snæfellsnes. The team have developed specialist knowledge cooperating with other countries when major earthquakes occur and operate an international search and rescue unit. ICESAR also maintain the network of emergency shelters around the coast and in some mountain areas. Accident prevention activities include safety awareness training, checks on safety kit, advice, lectures, talks and guidance. ICESAR also run life skills classes in Icelandic primary schools and have an online tool where you can submit your expedition plan in advance. In recent years, the Icelandic rescue teams have been facing issues with increased tourist numbers and people doing silly things driven by the quest for the perfect image, the sale of the idea of the landscape often overtaking a respect for nature.

Arian joined the rescue team following a personal tragedy with the death of her brother on a glacier. She tells me she wanted to be able to help others who get into difficulty in extreme environments. Iceland has no army and only a small coastguard. Its unique landscape, volcanic features, snow, glaciers, avalanches, lava eruptions and large, unpopulated areas make it enticing for tourists but also poses many dangers. One of the biggest threats is the rapidly changing weather and people often underestimate this. The rescue service lists incidents of people lost in fog, snowstorms or blizzards, falling down cracks in lava fields and glaciers, wearing inappropriate clothing, freezing to death, or capsizing in the rough, icy seas. Tourism in Iceland has grown massively in the past few years and it is clear that this is not without its problems. Arian points out places within the lava cave where rock formations formed over thousands of years have been damaged or taken by tourists. The population of Iceland is still relatively small (around 340,000 people) and the sense of this small community is evident in the place names. *'Husavik'* says Arian, '*it means house, bay with the house*' Located on the North coast of the island, she goes on to tell me *'Here there is a big whale watching activity going on, the river brings so much oxygen and its such a wide river and comes with a lot of stuff from the glaciers which starts the plankton going, then the small fish and so on, then the whales go there feeding. That's why they have the best whale watching here, because of that river. Even the big whales would be seen in that bay'* She tells me the company is a family company and their daughter often stays with her when she is at the Captain training school in Reykjavik, operating the ships with her brothers. They

buy and restore old oak ships which twice a year they sail to Greenland.

She tells me of her first trip to the Westfjords with her brother where they got a ferry and arrived in this de populated area looking for adventure. *'There was no one there, we crossed two mountains and only saw sheep'* Pointing at the map she says *'There we knew there was a lighthouse and we expected someone to be there, there is one lighthouse warden and he had not seen anyone in nine months. He was so pleased to see us. He taught my brother to use all the equipment in twenty minutes and then he went to sleep for twelve hours. He said he had not slept for more than three hours in nine months as he had to provide data on a regular basis'* Arian and her brother were invited to stay with him for the rest of the summer. *'It was designed for two families but it never worked, they always started quarrelling. He had a power supply from a small stream which he had to keep working. He was talking to the ships. It's not the same now, it's automatic and now its a guesthouse'* The lighthouse keeper was relocated to the city when the lighthouse was automated but couldn't adjust to it from such a remote existence and now lives on a small island with a farm. I hear similar stories of the problems and destruction which results from forced resettlement when I speak to Heini Heinison in the Faroe islands. The Icelandic lighthouses are all a brilliant bright orange colour in distinctive shapes. Arian tells me her dream summer job is going round and repainting them all.

I have noticed old fishing boats left by the coast becoming playgrounds for children and also notice children playing with simple wooden models of ships *'they can play sailors or pirates on these boats'* Arian says. It is clear that a connection to the sea is part of the Icelandic culture. I ask her about fishing and farming in Iceland and how it may have changed. We discuss the use of hunting licences for fishing salmon and shooting reindeers, reserved only for those with unlimited funds. I have notices a lot of deserted farms, and she says the land is now un farmed as people give up and go to town, the buildings and grazing lands slowly re-wilded. *'I sometimes don't know what I want as I think all this fishery is robbery, they just take, all this fisherman romance about the sea, they just take. At least a farmer*


MIA

who is working the land is putting something back in like a circle, fish is only one way. These big fishing trawlers are very bad, only destroying and taking' Arian talks about the threat of geothermal power plants, damming rivers and creating impacts on nature in the guise of generating 'green energy' The aluminium processing plant near Reykjavik is an example of this mixed branding. Raw materials shipped in from across the world to be processed with the so called green energy then shipped back out around the world. There is a dichotomy here as the Icelandic economy is now so dependant on fishing, tourism and to a lesser extent energy production. Arian acknowledges this issue *'So what do I want? you might ask, I don't want too much industry, I don't want too much tourism, So I want Iceland to be untouched nature, how can you help me'*

We talk about the Icelandic connection to nature and the juxtaposition of ancient or traditional foods and culture. *'We even eat the head of the sheep, cut in two. We eat that. They burn the sheep hair off and take the brain out, they freeze it and pack it and we cook it for quite long. We eat around the teeth, the nose and eye and so on…as I'm a teacher sometimes we go to day trips and kids have it for their lunch, they take out a sheep's head'* Arian laughs. She also recounts stories of families gathering together to make sausage from liver in a sheep's stomach, preparing for winter sewing it together, someone would pack it and cook it, parents cutting the fat into cubes, a traditional communal activity. *'Really back to the roots'*. I wonder how this connection remains in a modern world full of iphones, hot dogs and flat screen TV's. Arian tells me about children going to the countryside to work on the farms during lambing. She says all the kids were sent to the countryside to work all summer for six months. *'Every kid in town was sent to the countryside to help, they worked and they learned about nature, thats how they kept their connection to the countryside. It's the generation of my children that maybe don't go anymore. My children are perhaps not typical, they all want to come and bring their friends so I will be in the highlands with six youngsters this summer, there will not be internet or battery in the phone after two days and we're not in a hurry, we just want to enjoy it'*

The conversation moves on and we discuss the merits or otherwise of challenge or competition in an environment, rushing through and not seeing anything. She tells me about the Mountain Marathon, *'I go and we take 5-6 days but they run it in some hours, what*

for? its a pity to just run through, sixty km on your own, fighting your own tiredness. I find it not at all rewarding or interesting' We talk about the benefits of setting your own goals and challenges, meeting people and sharing experience. She tells me about her trip ski sailing across the highlands of Iceland *'We came very late on evening to a house and it took us two hours to get into the house as there had been this huge snow massing up against the door, we had to take turns to take it down and shovel it away. After 19 hours on skis, one of my colleagues he couldn't move his shovel anymore so we had to keep him warm and shovel at the same time'* It sounds extreme and I begin to realise how serious the work of the rescue team must be. Arian is a great role model for her children and their friends and takes every chance she can to connect with nature *'I love to be outdoors and do all kinds of outdoor sports without competing in any one, so in wintertime I am much in back country ski's or cross country skis, we can easily cross Iceland on such skis, I did 700km on skis just this winter'* She says *'One bigger project was to cross over the highlands it look us 6 days, we had good weather and we can use sails, we could go 60km per day which is my personal record. We have our stuff on pull carts so with the wind behind us'* I ask her what she likes about kayaking '*For me it is just looking around and enjoying to be outside without the sounds of any motor, just with my own force, I only do sports which don't use any fuel and don't make any noise*'

The previous day, we had visited one of the black sand beaches and seen the remains of traditional houses, piles of rubble on the beach. Farmers would have been sent over winter to fish in the dark days and stormy seas *'It was half camping, with wind going in between the stones. We cannot imagine it'* Arian says thoughtfully. The timber tree trunks thrown far up into the dunes at the back of the bouldery beach are just a hint at how wild this coast can be. We look at some other examples of simple Icelandic homes *'This was rather warm as there was soil on it and grass, that was rather comfortable in comparison as it keeps the heat, there was no wind going in there and they even had windows'* Survival and resilience in this harsh and changing climate is an important aspect of the Icelandic culture.

Continuing the photo tour, Arian tells me about Akuyeri, a town in the north of Iceland, surrounded by kit houses imported from Norway, sulphur gasses whistling and peeping from the land and seal colonies and caves with hot water in them. When the financial crash hit Iceland, the local mayor and town council were concerned that many people were facing loosing their homes and livelihoods and started to move away. *'People were very afraid'* Arian says. A movement started to encourage people to look out for each other. Schools started giving porridge in the morning to children, realising that some kids would not have eaten breakfast. People starting to knit again, Arian tells me, coming together to help combat fear and reduce the risk of suicides and depression. As a reminder to think of others '*All the red traffic lights are hearts in Akuyeri but its from 2008 when there was this big fear in people thinking we will loose everything'* This sentiment was also evident in Reykjavik, Arian says *'In my school there started to be this direct sale, so the grandfather of a child would come and he had fish and people would buy it as they would rather cook that fish, others came with carrots and this girl came in always with the carrots, there would be a table with sweaters for sale. People started to ask what could I do to help myself or help others? People who lost their houses moved in with friends or lost their cars and had to share'* It's a heart warming story and a reminder to look out for each other.

Before I head to the harbour to watch the national seafarers day celebrations, Arian talks me through the bird-life I am likely to encounter on my trip. She shows me the plants in the garden and laughs at how long it takes things to grow here. We meet the Viking hens, a hardy breed which can survive low temperatures are resilient survivors. *'Like the Icelandic people'* she says.

I stop in Neskaupstadur, the largest fishing port in Iceland. I've been in contact with a guy who runs and has built a kayak club here. His passion for it demonstrated at the age of 15 when he made his own boat out of timber and fabric, not from drawings or patterns or photos (as this was pre internet) but just how he imagined it might look. He admits it's not really sea worthy but out of this has grown a local club, new club house and 50 or so kayaks stored in a beautiful spot by the side of Nordfjordur. I'm greeted by a group of swimmers taking a dip in the icy waters, they're as intrigued by me as I am by them. One has a belly so round it has become his whole body, he stands there proudly showing it off and grinning. Over the next few days I look around Neskaupstadur including its open air pool and hot tubs (for research purposes) and a really great museum about the fishing industry, rocks and wildlife. I'm excited to see ships instruments from London, Hull, Birmingham, Hamburg, Bergen and Aberdeen. I become intensely interested in Icelandic knitting as I stretch out a coffee long enough to charge my things in a wool shop and cafe. Knitting is a big thing here and jumpers are for sale for upwards of £150 handcrafted by a 67 year old man in the town. There is also a knitting and gossip circle on Thursday evenings and the shop has an informal lending library of new and traditional patterns.

Ari Benediktsson

I'm sitting in Ari's house after being invited for a cod supper with his parents. Fried simply in lemon pepper and butter accompanied with rice and potatoes, the yellowy flakes of fish almost melt in the mouth. That afternoon, they had taken me to watch a horse gymkhana where their grandchildren had been on residential, learning how to ride and care for the horses. *'Do you want to go to the valley to see the horses?'* His dad had asked me, unlocking the kayak club, showing me round and making me feel welcome after a couple of days in the tent. It's late at night and Ari has just driven in from the North, there is a dusky light outside the windows which overlook the fjord from the hillside above the town. We'd been in contact beforehand and I was keen to meet with Ari who had set up the kayak club in Neskaupstadur from scratch and built his own kayak with nothing more than an idea of what one might look like. The smart clubhouse now stands next to the shoreline with newly metalled sides and white painted timber detailing around the windows, it's an ongoing project and definitely a labour of love.

'We got this house and it was going to be torn down. It was originally bought from Norway as an old catalogue house. It was used for keeping fishing nets, salt and processing fish. Then the rescue team owned it, then the fish industry owned it and then the town. I asked, can we have the house and move it to this location? It was all rusty and leaking and didn't look that good and we put it next to the church. We put in on trailers and drove it beside the church. the crane barely could move it over. In this whole process, I got so many people to help' he explains *'I wouldn't have been able to do it without help. Here we have a community company that gets money from the fishing industry when it is doing well, they use the money to give to the community to fund projects'*

Ari goes on to tells me about the land that the clubhouse is built on and where the boat storage is.
'It's on the coast, where we keep our boats now, it's owned by the community and was storing things that weren't used. Eventually I just scooped everything out and put the kayaks in, we have about 50 boats now. I like to take people out for kayaking, sometimes we take all the boats out. We go every week in the summer time, everyone can go all together. I've been doing also teaching with the kids as they love to be out on the water' I ask him what he enjoys about being on the water *'It's a passion for me to be on the water, to take people out and to get to know other people on the sea. What I have experienced from going abroad, I've met so many good people, the sea kayaking community is so small. when you meet people on the water or on the coast, you are all doing the same thing, I don't know what it is but no body is..'* He paused and thinks *'it's raining up to their nose but its good people and good friends, you meet such good people on the sea'*

He talks me through the areas along the coast I am about to kayak. Protected areas where there are rich mineral deposits and nesting birds, both heavily guarded. He points out Easter Cave and says *'that's where the lava went over the trees and you can see the kind of left small holes behind'* moving his finger along the map on his computer screen he says *'You can go to dog bay, Hundsvik. You are getting when it becomes very steep. This mountain is actually the steepest, highest mountain to see in Iceland, 800m high, you can see the birds a few hundred meters up there. Here'* he says *'If you are on high tide, there is a small cave you paddle through'* He tells me there is a cave called the sawmill as in big swells, it will cut logs into pieces as the sea surges up and shreds the timber. *'There are really nice sea caves in here and this is really beautiful this area here, if you land'*, he says *'here, there are really nice hikes, an interesting and beautiful bit of coast'* It's clear that he has a strong connection with the landscape and that this is a remote place as he starts to name the points that I am likely to see people. *'This is really nice area of rocks and cliffs, here is a house where people are, I think this is a place people come to study but it's just an old farm. It's owned by my uncle in Seydisfjordur. There is an Eider duck farm here'* He warns me. My ears prick up as he explains to me *'In Mujor fyordur, there are eleven people living there. This is the oldest lighthouse in Iceland, and you can land there, there is a woman who lives there, she it the lighthouse keeper and she also reports the weather, it is one of the few managed stations in Iceland that is left'* I make a note to pay her a visit and realise over the next few days that the Icelandic meaning of 'hike' is somewhat different to ours.

'I got into kayaking when I was fifteen, I made my own boat, just from pictures and it's not that sea worthy, and then we got some old British plastic boats called Pioneer. It was one of the first boats that came to Iceland those plastic kayaks' He tells me they were brought to Iceland strapped to the bridge of a fishing trawler. We talk briefly about the history of kayaking in Iceland and if people would have had their own boats *'In the Westfjords they got some Greenlanders coming over with traditional boats'* he tells me but otherwise, he says *'They made their own boats from drawings'* We talk about the development of kayaking and a rise in popularity *'It's not that old sport in Iceland, the ocean sport. It was mainly in the beginning more for kids and introducing them to the ocean before they go for work on the sea, now its more a leisure thing'* It is clear how important this link to the sea as a workplace


MODERATE
BECOMING
GOOD LATER


WERNER

is and Ari tells me about his family connections to it *'My grandfathers both were sailors. Many people were growing up with stories of people getting lost on the sea. One of my ancestors drowned in the Fjord. Once there was a boat that capsized here in the harbour in the winter time, crazy weather, someone got drowned'* There is a lifeboat in Neskaupstadur, it looks strangely familiar and I release later that it is an ex RNLI launch, sold to Iceland *'There were few accidents earlier, like 1950, 60, 70 with people getting killed using their own boats and not having the right clothes or equipment or the knowledge of how to use it. So when I was getting into kayaking there was everybody saying this is dangerous, because of some old stories or incidents, but we are doing it quite differently now'* Ari tells me.

He recounts a tragic story of a British man, Neil Schafe, whose grave I visit the next day in the small churchyard looking out to sea. *'He took his only life'* Ari tells me as he explains more of his influence here *'There was this guy from England who came to Iceland. He started coming to Iceland maybe 30 years ago and introduced Icelanders to the star awards. He was a psychologist and used to come with some kids from Britain that had problems. I think twice he crossed the Arctic circle with the kids. He came to Neskaupstadur for several years and eventually he moved here. He learnt Icelandic and taught us how to paddle. He did a lot for kayaking in Iceland'* Neil Schafe was responsible for introducing the British Canoe Union coaching and training system (the star awards) to Iceland and as Ari says, the perception of paddlesports is changing *'People have seen that there are programmes for making good safety'* an important development supported by enthusiastic people that enjoy spending time on the water together and sharing it with others *'We have done several symposiums here, courses introducing people to kayaking'*

Just before I leave, Ari shows me some faded colour tinted photos in frames hanging in the hallway. There is one of the harbour on a stormy day, with the sea lashing at the sides of the pier and the frenetic activity of shipping, not least, the herring catch as told in the brilliant local museum *'This picture'* he says, pointing at one of the ones on the wall *'was a prize for a rowing competition. It was taken on seafarers day, for us it's like a national celebration'* This important day is celebrated across Iceland, not just in Reykjavik and all fishing fleets are required to return to their home ports. There is a procession, Ari tells me, to the church yard *'We visit the grave of the lost sailors in the cemetery, there is a ceremony in the grave yard then everyone goes out on the big trawlers, everyone can go. In the harbour we have a rowing competition, two boats, with 6 people in each to compete. In the swimming pool they put out floats and you knock people down into the water'* In a previous job, Ari was manager of the local outdoor swimming pool, where I see pictures of people in the 30's scraping away snow drifts to access the water. Swimming lessons are mandatory for primary school children in Iceland, a reflection of the strong links to the water and an inland with its settlements almost entirely along the coast. *'We always go to the rescue centre and buy a coffee to raise money. There is a big rescue team here for ocean rescues and land rescues. We buy the old British boats (life boats) many of the boats are from Norway or from Britain, the old one was Dutch'* Ari says. There is a clear and direct connection with Fishing here and it is Iceland's most important port in that respect. It's almost right in the middle of the Southeast Iceland Forecast area and makes me realise why the lines have been drawn where they are. It is clear from talking to Ari, the passion and commitment it takes to get a project like his together, driven by the desire to share his love of the water with others and teach them how to respect and enjoy the wild nature.

In the evening, realising it was a stupid idea to try to walk, I take to the water fo the quicker route back to the lighthouse. They are bright orange here and stand out clearly in a landscape that doesn't have any other bright orange things. They look like small castles with crenelated tops and small red hats. I see two sailing boats on the sea which is an unusual sight and actually I haven't seen many boats at all for the whole trip, I later find them in the harbour and notice they've come from Shetland. As I wander ashore in the evening light after an hour and a half in the kayak, I'm met by three sheep dogs running towards me barking, they skid past at high speed rolling over each other before returning to jump up at me to give them some attention. They are playful and friendly, followed by a woman in blue overalls riding a quad bike. I hope that this might be the 67 year old lighthouse keeper I've heard about and low and behold, it is and she's equally friendly. She'd seen my small boat on the water yesterday and is interested in what I'm doing, she lets me look around the lighthouse and tells me about it as she cuts up horse meat for he dogs. 'It was an old horse belonging to a friend' she says, and the dogs are working sheep dogs. She tells me that the fog horn isn't used anymore but sometimes she fires it up just for fun. Her parents were lighthouse keepers here and she took it on from them. 'It's just a job' she says as I perhaps over romanticise the role of a lighthouse keeper. I wave goodbye and pat the dogs once more before paddling back to my camp.


Kort 3
FAEROES
Streymoy
Eysturoy
Vágar
TÓRSHAVN
Koltur

Faroes

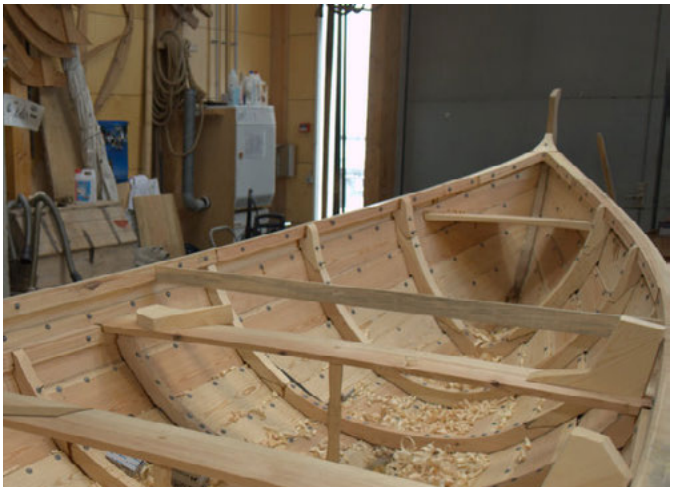
It's early evening by the time I bite the bullet, leave the harbour and round the corner to the east of Streymoy, heading north, flanked by Esturoy. The strips of land are like reptiles waiting in the waters just showing their backs, the green and black colour palette like scales. Sharp shafts of light piercing through the moody grey skies highlight spots of vivid green on the hillsides. The effect is a dramatic contrast like a fresco in an Italian cathedral. I half expect to see an arm reaching out of the sky ready to save someone from eternal damnation or imagine that I'm witnessing an alien abduction. Instead, the wind gets up and it starts to rain. Then it stops and the sun comes out. Cold side winds blow down the fjords and make progress slow. I also have a building tide against me and it all gets too much as I near my target and decide to pitch the tent under a road bridge to wait until the flow starts going the other way. I've been paddling for nearly 7hrs and the hot drink and food I've fantasised about for the last few hours doesn't materialise as my stove seems to be broken. Great. I eat some sweaty cheese and salami I've been carrying for a few days. Waking early, I see the water is starting to flow the other way. I pack up quickly, the flat topped mountains in the distance looking like a collection of jaunty hats.

Jan Egil Kristianssen

I contacted Jan-Egil through Facebook before setting off on the trip as I figured there must be people kayaking in Torshavn and was looking for some advice. His profile picture is a photo or Dr Spock from Star Wars and he described himself as a 'timid kayaker' so I am surprised to meet a wily, short haired man who has an excited and wild look in his eyes. Jan-Egil is a member of the local kayak club who have a boat store amongst the fishermen's sheds over the other side of the harbour from where we meet. It is a single storey timber building sitting in a row of similar structures facing out towards the harbour entrance. He leads me, with a quick movement in his step up the small hill behind the grass roofed parliament buildings and down around the cluster of fishing and sailing boats. We weave our way through the ship yards where huge trawlers are hauled up on the slipways for repairs and repainting. Jan Egil describe a lone wolf culture to kayaking in the Faroe Islands and laughs when I ask him about the weather. He does tell me about a series of weather stations dotted around the islands and jokes about the time the airport recorded no wind at all and no-one knew how to report it. Despite this, the boat shed is full well used sea kayaks and kit. There are marked up charts of the sea between Torshavn and the island of Nolsoy which Jan Egil says is a regular trip for club members with some interesting tidal challenges.

Jan Egil is a bird warden and guide on the remote island of Mykines. He says he got into kayaking after being thrown onto lakes and rivers as a teenager and having to figure it out for himself. After showing me around the shed, he tells me where the key is kept and says I can stay there when I return to Torshavn. He introduces me to other members of the kayak club and shows me their other building in the town which has been acquired through support from the local council and cleared out by a group of volunteers. A short, short haired man is working in the shed next door to the kayak club making a traditional Faroese rowing boat. Racing these boats, which are not unlike a Cornish

Gig, is a big thing in the Faroe Islands. He comes to chat and welcomes us in, gesturing to explain the different parts of the boat, a craft learned from his father. I see him again later in the week wearing overalls and work boots, paddling a pink white water play boat around the harbour It's a calm but cold evening. He quizzes me about a famous tidal race off the coast of Pembrokeshire called The Bitches. He wants to know if I've paddled it, which I have. Another man joins us and tells me about his trips sailing to the Shetland Islands, these small islands in the North Atlantic are more connected than it seems.



A few days later after several hard days on the sea, I land in Mykines where Jan Egil comes to meet me, bounding down the step steps to the small harbour with a grin on his face. He helped me carry the kayak over the rocks and negotiates with the harbour master, a village elder and a sheep dog to have the kayak hauled up the steep incline on a mechanical goods winch. There's a storm building and everyone agrees my boat will be safer at the top of the cliff than at the bottom. He helps me lug my kit to the camp ground on a piece of communal

Rounding the headland the next day at the corner of Vágar, the tidal flow is chaotic with eddies and streams colliding and the occasional flat section that always makes me suspicious. The swell has dropped significantly overnight and this bit of the coast is sheltered from the southwest, the flatter seas allow me to explore some caves, arches and get closer to the cackling and cawing of the bird cliffs. I'm aiming for an odd shaped, pointy headland where I have another tidal gate to meet. As I round the slightly bumpy point I am suddenly hit by a strong headwind, I know I have limited time for the crossing to Mykines before the tide starts building. Fog starts to descend and I check my bearings in case I loose sight of the Island. As I near the eastern tip, I can see a large, wide tiderace building across the channel. It's picking up quickly and I start to push harder to head towards the point. It looks a bit like the kind of thing that in other situations, could be fun to play in. It's big and fast and I'd prefer to avoid it. I skirt round the headland and into two further races mixed with building swell from the southwest. This continues along the layered green cliffs of south coast of Mykines which is now covered in a blanket of fog. The wind is pushing my boat inwards in the direction of breaking surf waves on the rocks below. Fulmars and guillemots come to check up on me as I desperately wait for the harbour to appear. At the last minute, it reveals itself, a small wall tucked in behind a narrow rocky cove with some sheds and huts on the cliff top, a sense of relief descends as I can feel the conditions building and know the weather is closing in.

Heini Heinesen

I am sitting in the warmth and comfort of Heine's house after we met staring at the angry sea smashing into the tiny harbour on Mykines, the most westerly of the Faroes islands. He and his wife are chatting in the kitchen, clattering around as they kindly prepare a snack for me and a warm cup of coffee. A football match is on the TV in the background, it is a welcome refuge after two days being battered around in the tent. Russia are playing Egypt, the match being accompanied by the gentle snoring of an overweight Beagle, named Freya, who is lying on the sofa next to me. Heini is the son of the last lighthouse keeper on Mykines. It sits high on the end of a windswept ridge looking over the North Atlantic. He grew up on the island and now acts as a guide for tourists taking the small ferry out here from the neighbouring island. Heini is retired from his job but his wife is still working as a nurse in Torshavn. They live here part time and run an AirBnB apartment *'That must have become good for you now?'* Heini says, smiling broadly, with twinkling eyes as he hands me the plate and a fresh cup of coffee *'Ha! you are welcome! Ahh' he laughs 'Eat, eat! This is good. This is actually from a lamb, it's meat from a lamb and we do it as a sausage with some salt and some spices, this is good, really good'* He's right, it is nicer than anything I would have cooked for myself on the small burner in the rain.

I had spotted a lambs leg drying outside by the porch. It looks a bit like Serrano ham but is darker. He asks me if I want to try some and later returns with two slices of what smells like over ripe cheese '*So, that's beautiful yeah?'* He asks, and it is. I've noticed some ragged looking sheep roaming the cliff tops and wonder why they have half the wool left on them *'If you don't catch them to shave, if they are not in your field, they just start to loose the wool by themselves. They look very funny'.* The lounge is a single storey, timber lined room with a pitched roof and a large window at one end *'Is this a Puffin catching net?'* I ask, looking around and seeing a long wooden handle with a tiny net on the end of it *'Yes I have the original just outside, if you look outside. This one is a mini size'* He tells me *'Do you catch them?'* I ask. He signals a backwards movement, not that way, up, like that he says. *'We do it with Fulmars, not with Puffins. The puffins it is not allowed today because some years back they had a very hard time, couldn't fed the chicks so in 12 years in a Row from 2002, they didn't survive these chicks, they couldn't feed the chicks' 'Because they are over hunted?'* I wonder, *'No, because of the food. We have caught them for a thousand years so that's not the reason'* he is quick to point out. He offers more bread and jokes that *'You don't want to interview me, you just want a coffee and a sandwich!'* He says he had had a walk around, the day before and tried to catch me and a couple of others who were camping, a French and a German guy. They ended up sleeping in the toilet block *'The toilet is excellent as there is heating in the floor'* Heini says *'I would do exactly the same'* I'd stayed in the tent, the wind changing direction half way through the storm and buffeting the sides of the tent relentlessly. His wife brings a plate with more bread and lamb on it *'Now you survive another night'* he laughs.

Idly watching the TV, I ask if there is a Faroese team *'We do have a Faroese team but not in this competition, we are not so high league'* Heini explains, they compete in the island games. I am familiar with this competition as I have family in Jersey and my cousin recently competed in the mountain biking. Set up in 1985 on the isle of Mann, the 'mini Olympics' provides an arena for small island communities to compete in a range of sports and build links between nations. There are currently 24 members and 14 disciplines. In 2018, the Faroese government committed to hosting the games in or before 2029, perhaps representing a desire to put themselves on the map. The Faroe Islands are self governing but remain a part of the Kingdom of Denmark. *'Do you support Denmark?'* I wonder. *'I support the Icelandic. I could support Denmark. If Denmark played Iceland, I would support Iceland'* Heini says, hinting at a slight animosity I have detected from others over the relationship with the Danes. He has spent much of his life working on ships searching for oil, *'A lot of Faroese do that'* he says, He has also worked on the trawlers as an engineer. *'We have tried to search for oil'* he tells me *'but thats another story, we must then import bigger companies from abroad to search for oil as we don't have the equipment. I hope we don't find oil. If it is underground it would belong to us but the Faroe Islands themselves do belong to Denmark, what we find underground and the fish would belong to the Faroe Islands'* We talk about the fishing industry and he lists the main catches *'Cod, Herring, Mackerel. Mostly Cod but also the Saye (Halibut)' 'Everything in the Faroe Islands is imported except..'* He pauses 'no actually also fish and a lot of women we also import' He jokes with his Faroese wife, about he lack of women in the islands and recent moves to 'import' women from Thailand and the Philippines *'Our fish is exported all over the world, you use a lot of them for fish and chips'* He tells me.

Heini strides up to the large picture window at the end of the room, overlooking the small heliport and the rocky coast as it stretches from the harbour towards the lighthouse *'Look at my view, If you sit here, I have all the puffins and the seagulls, its an amazing view. If you approach the window, you see, its so fantastic'* He

gestures towards the sea as he's talking *'Yesterday and today it is so windy, all you can hear is the wind'* He is proud of the beauty of this place and wants to share its stories. We can see the windsock stretched out in the gusts. The helicopter comes three days a week, he tells me. Wednesday, Friday and Sunday, in winter Monday as well, as the ferry doesn't come. Seeing the wild sea smashing against the rocks, firing foam high into the air on this summer day, I can well imagine that the winters here are wild. *'Were you at the pub yesterday evening?'* He asks. My mind flashes back to the seemingly abandoned houses, lashed with rain and wind that thrashed the tent around whilst I tried to sleep *'You didn't know about that? Yes there are actually two pubs here'* obviously quite well hidden, I thought *'And the swimming pool'* He says excitedly *'you know it was the First swimming pool ever built in the Faroe Islands. It was teacher in the 30's. He was active in sports and managed to build the swimming pool in 1927. At that time there were 180 people living here, today there are 8, all year round'* I'm interested to know what this small collection of people do here in the dark winter days when the ferry doesn't run *'For the local people there is no impact because, I don't think they are so much involved in anything here. They are the only young family if you call them young. They are in the middle of the 40's. All of the others are in the middle of the 60's. All others, I mean the other 6!'* He laughs *'I would not say they are living here, I would say they stay here alive, do you know what I mean?'* I ask Heinie if he thinks the community will die out *'I don't know but I hope so. Why should you stay here in wintertime, why? In the world we live in now why should you stay here and not live somewhere else. This island will not die it will be more alive if no-one lives here all year round'* His voice raises and he says with conviction *'It will never die out as it will always be an attraction, it will always exist, how can it die because people are not living there. It would be more alive!'* There's a slight pause as we sit inside looking at the television and watching the windsock 'you want a beer?' He asks. I'm not going to say no and so he hands me a cold can on Føroya Bjór. *'I have a very good deal for you. if the ferry doesn't come tomorrow, you can stay at my home. My wife will leave tomorrow with the Helicopter to go to work. You can stay here and help me to build a new house, I have lots of stones so you can work, you will have free food and a bed. I am tired today, I have been carrying*

stone all day' It sounds like a good deal although I'm hoping to be able to get back in the kayak tomorrow.

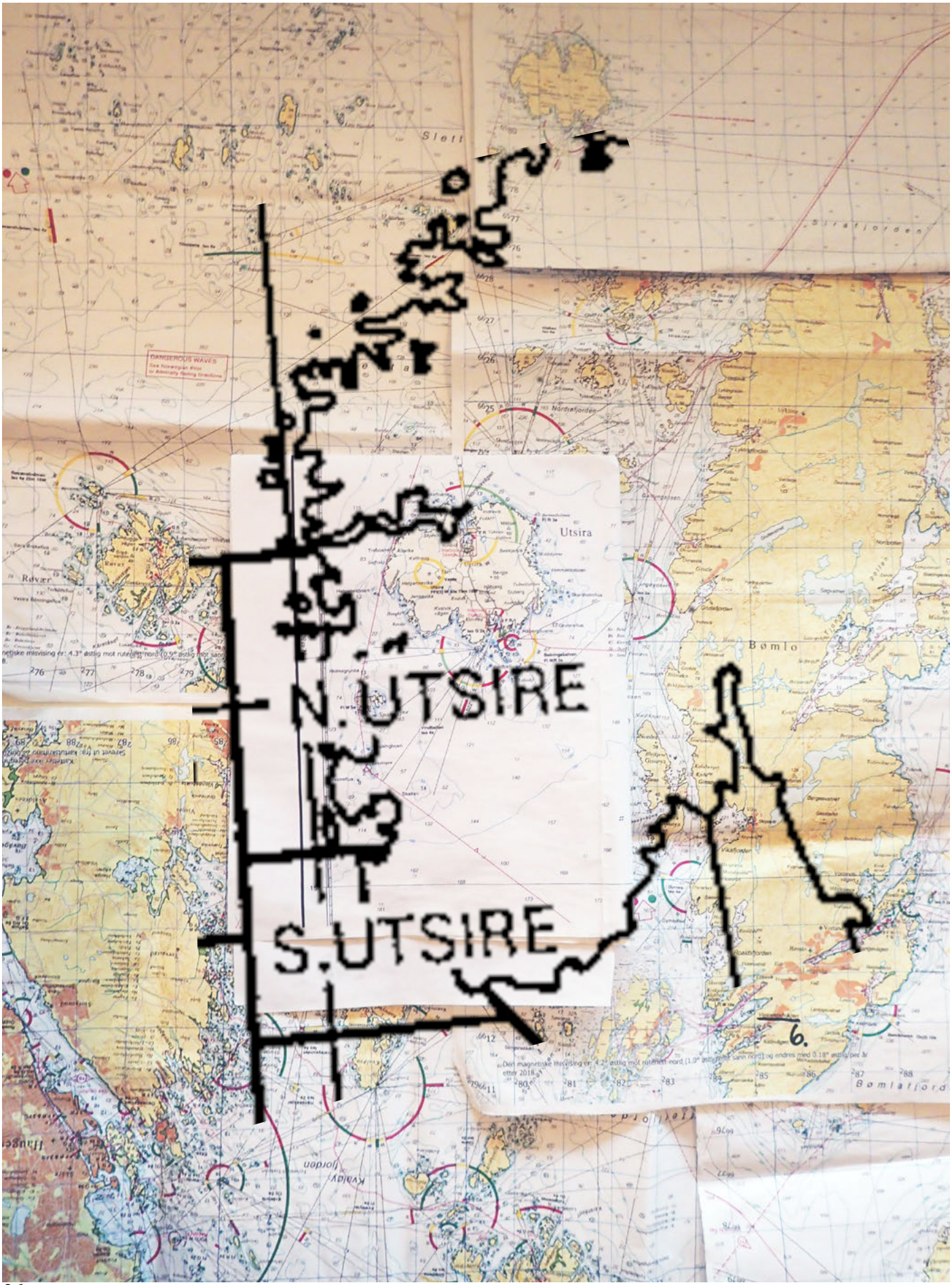
We talk about the closure and resettlement of small communities or nomadic, hunting cultures often to make way for industry or agriculture, sometimes just dying out or moving on. Heini talks of the repression and destruction of traditional societal structures this causes and lost connections with the natural world or specific belief systems. *'It's very hard mentally'* he says *'They are given money to survive, its not good' ' They were people living in the nature, when they're out hunting and they could catch two seals each they come back again and are very happy and everyone was very happy as they say we don't have to go hunting tomorrow because we have enough meat and then when they don't have meat then they go out hunting again. When they transfer them to these blocks and gave therm money, why shall I hunt? Because I have money and can just go and buy, so they actually have just killed the people. It was awful or it is still. I have been working in Greenland at sea and was onboard a trawler and two people from Greenland couldn't speak to each other, one was raised in Nuk and the other was Danish, he could not speak Greenlandic only Danish. I was sitting there thinking there is something definitely wrong. Both looked like a Greenlander. Greenlandic language is very hard'* He says, pointing out how communities can become isolated through language barriers.

'Now, you are kayaking the Faroese waters' He says, changing the subject, *'how do you train for that, I mean you must be pretty fit because this is serious sea, just put it that way. Especially thinking about currents. If you are not that fit in the conditions here, you can be very sorry'* I try to reassure him that I've been in big conditions before and start to show him where I've been. he is also not the first person to warn me of this. *'It is very important for you to know how the currents run, do you have a smart phone? Do you have this Rák? It's excellent'* Rák is an app showing the changing tidal currents around the islands in 15 minute intervals. It has been developed in partnership between the fishing industry and the state oil company. I do have it on my phone as a Cornish kayaker I bumped into in Iceland had also recommended it to me *'You must respect this current,*

the wind is one thing but the current is so strong and so dangerous that you have to respect it a lot. This Rák is very good' Heini is clearly concerned about how I will get back to Torshavn '*That is a short distance but you also need to be very careful with the tides. Don't play with it*' He tells me '*Just in my lifetime, I know of at least three Faroe islanders with big boats that went down because they didn't respect it enough. Its strong current, as a kayaker, you know if you have no current and just wind, yes you could deal with almost everything but with this hard current its dangerous if you don't know hat you are dealing with. It can be dangerous. Really dangerous. Also if you get caught by them, you cant do anything unless you have a big motor. I'm not scaring you but go to the waterside and have a look and use this Rák*' I am glad to have people looking out for me in this harsh place.

I ask Heini about the changing weather in the Faroe Islands and if they have a regular broadcast '*In the radio everyday from 7 o'clock, the weekly days you can hear it almost every hour, the forecast*' He says '*12 o'clock you can hear those people that have died that day and 6 o'clock, the forecast and who's died. Except Sunday they do it twice or once a day. Also when they get buried and if my dog is lost and I call them, they will also broadcast that*' We talk a bit more about the weather here and Heini reflects on his experiences travelling on fishing trawlers as an engineer '*In my job I have been travelling worldwide and I had a job where I was five weeks on, five weeks off and the weather in the Faroes is perfect I mean where else can you have all seasons within 24 hours? this is such a beautiful weather*' This has defiantly been my experience so far here, strong and changeable winds, dramatic skies with changing almost unreal light. '*The wind, we have the gulf stream and with this all this sea around us the water doesn't get too cold, we never experience frozen sea' If you have a good house to live in and good clothes, you will be fine. I do believe all this sun, you can suffer but from the cold in the Faroe Islands you cant suffer*' As an example of this, Heini tells me a story behind the British military naming this island 'Maybe' during the occupation of the Faroes in WWII '*Its true because they were in the waters around and they actually built the airport, around 5000 men there and they planned Mykines. Of course because it was the military, they put a date on everything. They tried it and realised that they couldn't come and so they put a label, Maybe*' Despite this, Heini says '*Nothing stops me from doing whatever I want to do except with my boat I don't have so much time to take it out, I was out days catching as many fish as I want over 30 fish*' He says, skirting the question of how, as with other areas, there are strict quotas on the size of catch and fishermen must pay to be allowed a certain quota '*not with a line*' he says '*never mind what I used*' I ask him about the monument on the hill above the village. He explains that one one side facing the sea it's for those who have been lost at sea. One the other its for those who have fallen from the land catching birds '*Next to it, you see this one laying down? We actually update it every week, its for all those who have lost their lives kayaking…*' He laughs heartily and so do I, telling him I hope they wont need to update it.

'*It's too nice weather here for staying inside, you have to go out on the edge and see the sunset*' Before leaving, Heini's wife gives me the recipe for Faroese fish balls, taking sharp intakes of breath as she recalls it, I've come to learn these exclamations are characteristic of Faroese conversation. I say my goodbyes and start to walk up the hill above the village in the dropping wind and soft evening light. Heini joins me on a quad bike, shows me the monuments and treats me to the local legend of giants, whales, trees and gannets. I go to sleep that evening with his stories swirling around my head like the rapidly calming waters of the sea.


N.UTSIRE
S.UTSIRE

North Utsire, South Utsire

We wake to thick fog. Visibility is definitely poor. The smooth flat water of the harbour reflects the eery calm of the most immediate surroundings but the rest is erased by this white blanket. We've decided to take a walk to south Utsira which seems quite intrepid from our new home in the north. One road leads there and it's not easy to get lost. The fog starts to clear and we immediately pick out what must be the haunted school, it's dominant presence atop a rocky outcrop and long narrow windows make it look like a scene from Scooby doo. There is a macabre street art exhibition in the basement gallery with fake blood and hand prints on the windows not helping the spooky feeling. We carry on to the south harbour which is more open than the north and the buildings more scattered. Some deck chairs give it a holiday feeling and we buy ice cream and postcards from the Joker on the harbour front. There is a small beach and a fleet of timber rowing boats. The afternoon crossing back is uneventful as the fog breaks up and visibility improves. We have a sense of madness as there is very little to look at along the way and start singing songs to keep ourselves entertained. We land in Skudeneshavn as the wind picks up, we're kindly met by a local kayaker who lets us into the club toilets and lets us camp in the harbour. Alina cooks reindeer meatballs for our dinner which with some powdered mash, are good solid camping food. Before going to bed, we stroll around the pretty town in the evening light. It reminds me of some of the towns on the east coast of England. Red pantile roofs and white painted timber cover the higgldy piggldy houses with overhangs and roofs at jaunty angles giving a relaxed feeling to the place. Large, shiny motor boats jostle for space in the harbour with traditional fishing boats and large trawlers and drilling boats. It's very quiet.

Alina Natalia & Ivar Kim Rokke

I'm wiping my sleepy eyes as I pull the kayak off the ferry at Stavanger, having slept on the floor in the lounge. It's 6am and as I reach the automatic gate, I can see two smiling faces welcoming me with a yellow sign saying 'Mr Toby' Alina and Ivar Kim's car is easily recognisable as it has the long pointy giveaway of a sea kayak strapped to the roof. Alina, who I met at a training week in Cornwall a few years previously, joined me for the Utsiras leg along the Norwegian coast. We'd planned to head south to north from Bergen to Stavanger but the wind is not in our favour so we switched the leg around and Ivar Kim very Kindly offered to drive us the 5hrs up to Bergen on an overcast and drizzly Sunday morning. There are several ferries crossing fjords on the way and a couple of stops to recharge the electric car, we use these to plan the trip and talk about the notorious waters of Norway's Bermuda Triangle.

'*Sletta is an infamous leg between Espevaer to Huagesund*' Ivar Kim explains *'The reason it's infamous amongst the seamen is that its very deep but it also has a lot of shallows that also make the sea very messy in windy conditions sometimes especially during wintertime the weather can change very quick. Usually it is not that bad but people living around have always been told 'Sletta is dangerous, you should keep away from it and you should definitely not do the leg in a kayak unless you have some boat following you or a death wish. There are also a lot of ships that have sunk in the Sletta so it's kind of infamous in Norway. When you are going to cross to Utsira, it's suddenly more exposed. On a nice calm day its beautiful but in windy conditions, everything changes so much because the current out there can be stronger than other places and comes in an opposite direction, if the wind is strong and it breaks the waves over the underwater rocks, it can be really messy out there. If you are in a boat it is harder as you don't have the same, the speed is bigger than the kayak. For most people they would say that crossing Sletta with a kayak, that's just crazy, you shouldn't do it*' Later I hear a story from Alina of accompanying a fisherman to buy new clothes as he had survived a disaster where the ship sank in the Sletta, a combination of human error and unsealed access doors, her dad worked on the trawlers and laughed with wild eyes as he recalled the rough waters and heard where we'd been.

Both Alina and Ivar Kim are part of an informal group of kayakers called Neptun Kajakk who are well known for their footage of rough water paddling in Norway, particularly around the rocks and big winter swells south of Stavanger. *'What I like here is the variation*' Alina tells me *'you can do many kinds of paddling because there are are so many things. You can paddle calm, sheltered water, you can paddle exposed water with big swells and rock hopping, down wind paddling. It really depends on the weather conditions what kind of paddling you do here and I like this. You have these sandy beaches with the surf, you have these rock gardens*' I'm interested in how they both got into kayaking and what led them to join Neptun Kajakk, Alina explains '*It started when I was 16, I got an invitation for a survival camp in France and we got a list with skills we should train for. So my dad took me kayaking on a lake in Poland (where she grew up) and I just loved it. When I moved to Norway, there was just water everywhere Here I have to do kayaking. So I took a course and after some years I bought my kayak. I didn't want it to finish when the summer was over so I bought this dry suit and it cost so much money so I thought, no I have to paddle all year I cant just have it in the closet. So I contacted this guy Roald from Neptun Kajakk and ask him if he could do a workshop with me about paddling in conditions in the winter because it's different things you have to think about; cold water, wind waves, things like this. I went on this workshop and they liked me and thought it was funny to have me on the water and start to invite me more and more. I was very happy about that and it started from there*'

Ivar Kim has a similar story of pursuing a passion to be on the water, being supported and welcomed by others who shared their skills and experience although as he explains, may have constructed his own barriers when starting out *'It started when I was moving to Haugesund and I was thinking kayaking would be fun to try. One of my colleagues he was kayaking a little bit and I asked him about the opportunities. He said I am a member of the local kayak club and will let you know when they have a course eventually I went on this course and I had the Swine Flu, I was so sick before the course but I had been so looking forward to it for over two years actually. I decided I just give it a try. In the beginning I didn't paddle that much because the course was late in the autumn and winter was coming but then I started in the spring time again and I liked it. I was then looking at some people that did a bit of rougher paddling and thought, Ah, I want to try that as well but I need to train myself to get as good as them before I ask them to join in, so I maybe did some stupid things but at least I survived*' He laughs. *'One situation I had to swim and drag the kayak after me because I wasn't able to do the self rescue and I was thinking I am on a skerry, how am I going to get to land again then it calmed down a little bit so I jumped in the kayak and paddled for my life to the shore.* We all laugh at this, recalling similar experiences where we've pushed ourselves too far *'After that I realised I need to maybe paddle with some others. So then I asked them if I could*

come along and they said of course, no problem!' His initial worries of not being accepted, unfounded *'they thought it was fun that someone else was coming and then I got into a group of paddlers who were quite skilled and they took me out rock hopping and in windy conditions. One guy, he is really good and we have been paddling a lot together, since I like the moving water and breaking waves, we often went to the beaches trying surfing with kayaks and I took a course on river paddling then I came a bit into surf skiing, surf kayak…It was becoming a lifestyle'* He realised *'The main attraction of it I think is some times I have trouble concentrating at times because my thoughts are drifting but when I'm paddling in rough conditions I need to be present and it makes me so free because it's so revealing that I don't drift away in my thoughts. I just love it. Even though you have to be alert all the time, it's at the same time relaxing as you have to be so in the moment'* I'm interested to hear this as it is also one of the things I find appealing about being on the water and I know others share this feeling too. *'Then I met Alina and it got even better'* he laughs *'we started catching food together'* says Alina *'So now we go on trips and take our diving equipment, do some free diving, sometimes do some spear fishing, just for fun and watch the life underwater'* As we talk, we've just finished eating a delicious lunch of fresh fish and scallops caught on a morning trip into the bay by their flat on the island of Finnøy.

I ask Ivar Kim about the popularity of kayaking in Norway and if it is a growing scene *'It has become very popular in last 2-3 years. 10 years ago it was a curiosity when you could see a car with the the bars for the kayak on the roof but nowadays you can see it everyday on several cars when you are driving just ten kilometres so it has become very popular lately. Most people just enjoy going out on the nice days, sunny days when it's a calm sea. For the more rough paddling and specialised paddling I think it's small groups in the different clubs that are enjoying the white water on the sea. Me and some friends we like the downwind paddling with surf skis, so its a lot of variety round here'*

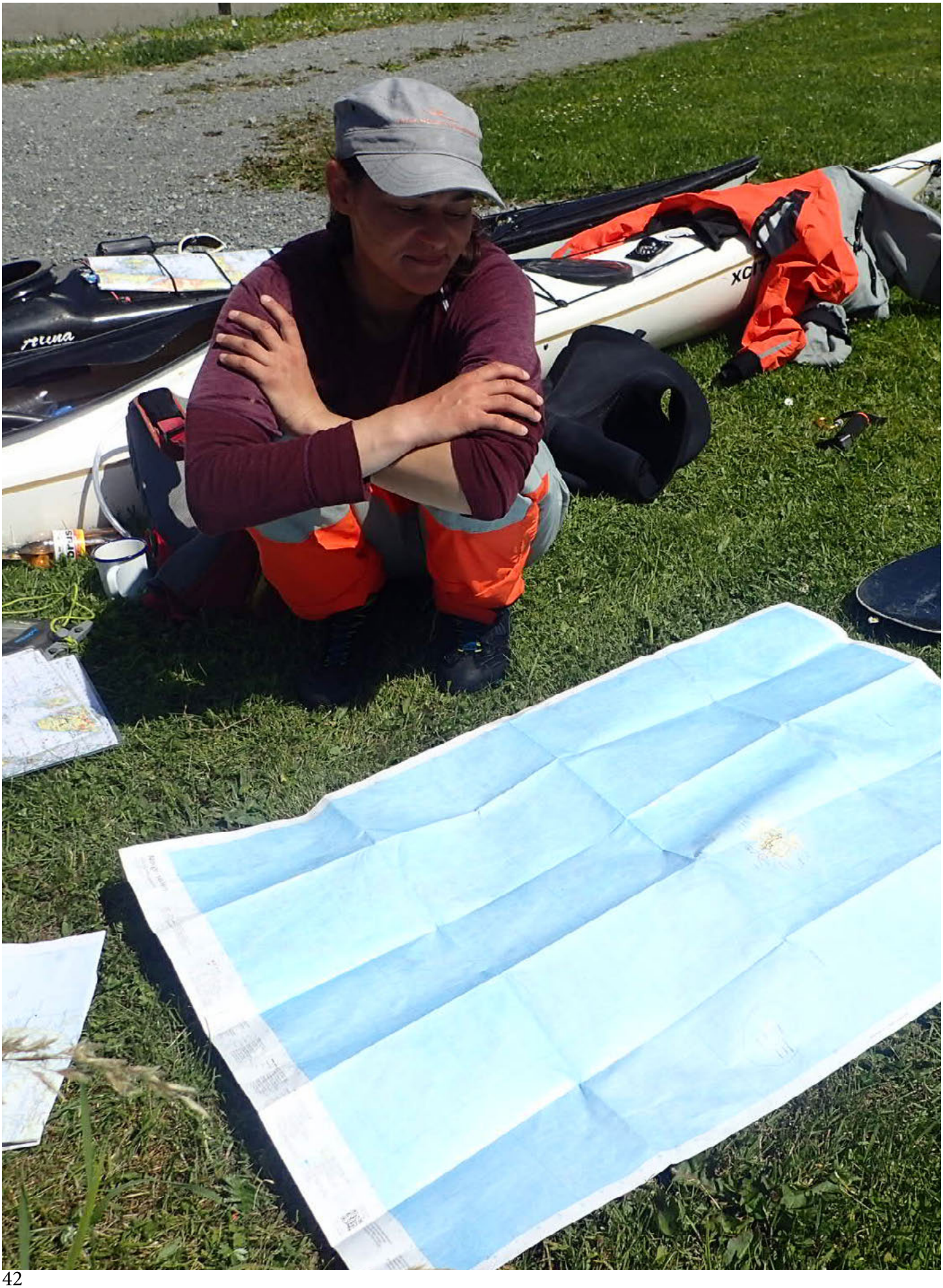
Alina has just returned from a week coaching at a women's only symposium in the North of Norway, The Arctic Women's playground. We talk about the role of these events to support women to build skills and

confidence. Reflecting on her own experience, she says she has never felt these kind of barriers and has just got involved, perhaps a result of her dad encouraging her at a young age to follow her interest in adventure, perhaps due to her independent and determined nature. She recognises her influence as a role model to other women and I ask her if she was offered a coaching position at a similar festival, would she take it *'Yes definitely I would take it. I was thinking why only for women? Why not for both but in the world it is like that, that the women are giving space for men. They're doing that not on purpose but unconsciously they are doing it. I was never thinking about that before because I am taking my place in this paddling situation. Its like I don't care who I am paddling with, I'm just going paddling. Some women made me aware that other women are not like that and they are holding back because of the men. So when the situation is just women around, they feel more free to fail and to take the space. I think it is still needed. I was thinking it is maybe a thing that is not necessary in this day because we are more equal but I think still women may be holding back so I think it's a good opportunity for them to learn to take the space and to show that we as coaches can also show them that you can do it and you don't need the men. I think it's good and positive'*

We talk a bit more about the barriers that we may construct for ourselves *'I think that Ivar Kim said now'* Alina says *'he thinks he has to get better to ask people to go with them. I think this is a thing in kayaking, where people think, I don't want to go with them because they are so skilled and I am not there so you are keeping the distance and you are holding back and maybe not developing yourself because you have not enough confidence to go with the people. That is in our head because usually people are very open and have people with them on the water but I think the think that is holding people back is that they are thinking 'I'm not good enough to be with them. We were speaking because we are making these video with this crazy stuff and it can work against you, kind of scaring people, so to take the level a bit lower and show that it is fun, fun for us doesn't need to be fun for another, its OK to roll'* We reflect on this and agree that it's not just in kayaking that we hold ourselves back in this way but can apply to lots of aspects of life where we convince ourselves that we're not good enough for whatever reason.

Setting of from the yacht harbour, we have a list of places we can land and camp, including several kayak clubs who are happy for us to pitch up next to their boat sheds. This unquestioning support from a global network of like minded people is becoming a theme of the trip. A few days into out trip, Alina and I have put in some long days and made it to a decision point about whether or not to cross the Sletta and continue on to Utsira. We're camping at an unusual spot hidden amongst the rocky inlets of an island just off the coast of Norway. Weaving around the fish farms dotted amongst the rocks and navigating from lighthouse to lighthouse, I ask Alina to describe where we are *'We are on the third day of our expedition and we are in a super cool place called Espevaer, here about 40 years ago was a UFO landing and we are sitting just beside the UFO ring which is a big tourist attraction. There are many stories about the ring which is here. Some people think it is mushrooms going round, some other people think it is the rabbits when they're mating but people from Espevaer don't believe in that one as they think there are no rabbits on the island. I don't know, I believe in the mushrooms'* Alina says, laughing. Alien heads painted on rocks overlook our camp and there is definitely a strange feeling about the place *'People who are living here get into this story and they make walking routes that are full of these mystery eyes and mystery shoes. So you are going on a trip in this island and you are getting crazy. I am being watched all the time, am I alone?…'* We think we've seen Utsira as we climb the hill above the UFO ring *'We look at it, we saw it and it's far, but we'll make it'* says Alina defiantly. I like her positivity and commitment to the challenge. Do you think we'll make it to Utsira? *'We have no other option!'* She says. I ask Alina how she's feeling about paddling the 'Dangerous waves' of the notorious 'Sletta' tomorrow 'I Heard many stories about that and was stressed about that but I think it's not so bad' We have had large swell and a force 4/5 tailwind so far, the waves 1-2 meters on average and often loosing sight of each other between peaks and troughs. She talks about 10/11 winds and I must have looked shocked as she quickly reminds me that's m/s and not the Beaufort scale. I'm becoming used to stowing my paddle in a brace position whilst I take photos with my camera and Alina says *'When I see you making pictures near these skerries and making pictures, I think OK, he feels comfortable and so that makes me think its fine too'*

The crossing is relatively straightforward and we have good conditions with a following sea and smaller swell. Arriving on Utsira, we are pleased to find that by chance it is the one night of the week that the pub is open and we land right next to it. It is a pretty place and is a short walk from one end of the island to the other. I'm excited to be able to step from North Utsira to South Utsira and see that the two places do have a different character and on the days we are there, different weather. We visit the school that Alina's friend, Norway's state funded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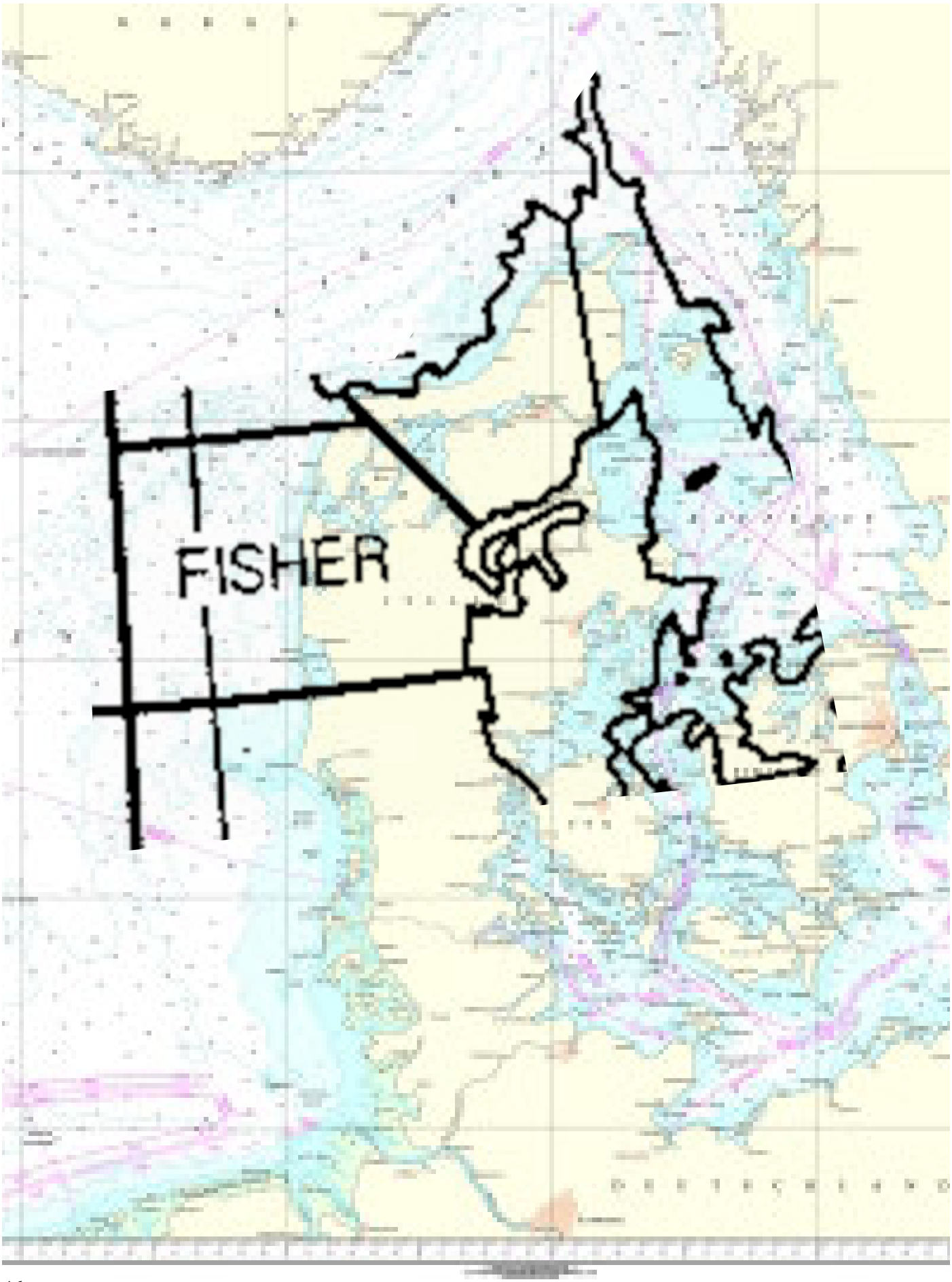
exorcist, was commissioned to cleanse of ghosts. We meet a volunteer bird guide, who has seen 299 of Utsira's bird species but laments the increasing reliance on the state on volunteer work. We learn of the construction of the harbour, being the first to be funded by the Norwegian government due to the importance of this place in the Herring fisheries. We stand by the statue of the first ever female mayor in Norway, appointed to the post in this, the smallest commune in the country, as a result of a kind of practical joke. Her all female council, successfully leading local politics when no-one else would take it on. We are approached by Jehova's Witnesses and discuss the overuse of plastics in the world.

Alina tells me of the divisions in Norway between different belief and religions. The strictest forms, looking disapprovingly on activities related to play, fun and individualism, taking a hard line on frivolity and self discovery and favouring strict structures, formality and service to the word of a higher deity. She recounts a story of the parents of some of the children in her school reacting a against a yoga and dance class for children as they believed it was the work of the devil. Some of the more extreme amongst them telling their children that the teachers were possessed and evil. These deep routed beliefs are not uncommon in Norway and in part are what the notorious Norwegian Black Metal movement were reacting against with their arson attacks on churches. It seems that this inability to accept another viewpoint is not just divisive in communities but prevents any form of otherness. To further this, Norway has three languages, Sami, NyNorsk and Bokmål, the later two both being official Norwegian. Communities can decide on the language that they will adopt and it is not uncommon for people from neighbouring settlements to be unable to understand the other.

Later in the week, we are sitting in the sunshine on the balcony overlooking a small harbour, Ivar Kim has agreed to read the Norwegian Shipping Forecast and as he finds it online, excitedly laughs '*It's in New Norwegian (NyNorsk), that will be funny! oh no*' he says, scowling down 'it's also in Bokmål. We talk about the shared areas and the similarity of the forecasts *'Dogger is the same, Utsira Nord Utsira Sud, Viking, Tiske Bugte*' Ivar Kim says before reeling off a brilliant version in Norwegian, he says the first time he'd heard it on the radio was as they drove to pick me up from the ferry at 5.30am the previous week. Before I leave, Alina recites one of the songs we were sharing with each other on the long days on the water. '*This is the song you are singing when making crossing, you are singing a lot, the proper song for that crossing*' Ivar Kim says. *'This song is about the big sea where we sitting are rowing, the sea is big and there are big waves and small waves coming*' Alina explains *'the sea is going in waves*'

The next day we cross the widest fjord in Norway. It feels like it too. Shipping lanes we've been warned about turn out not to be as busy as expected and we run the gauntlet across a group of sailing boats. We dodge the ferries crossing the fjord and have a cross wind most of the day, my boat behaves badly in the wind as its pointy ends are high out of the water and get pushed around with each gust. It's tiring constantly pulling it back on course and feels like a battle. The landscape feels different and I realise it's because there are trees again. Towards the end of the day, as we near our destination in Finnøy, the sea picks up and pushy waves suggest some tidal movement, something we haven't seen much of here but which makes the final stretch a bit of a slog. This is soon washed away when we land, met by Iva Kim who has cold beer in the fridge and homemade pizza in the oven. We spend the next day fishing in the heat of the day and Ivar Kim dives for scallops. We eat our bounty later, cooked simply in butter, the scallops are tender and fresh, the fish I caught is tasty but too small to make a good meal. It's followed by fish burgers before we jump in the car and I start a side leg of my trip to the spectacular cod fishing grounds of Lofoten further north and within the Arctic Circle. I sit on the bus as the sun sets and we cover the ground it's taken Alina and I a week to paddle. I doze off feeling tired but relaxed, contented and full of fish.


FISHER

Fisher

The wind changes speed and direction after a few days. There's a quartering sea with crossing swells throwing the boat around. The relentless noise of the wind rushing past my ears is like sitting in a room with an loud, untuned radio. Occasionally, I stop and turn my head away for a break but the wind pushes the kayak backwards, loosing ground. It's a slow slog to the wind turbines I can see across the bay in the far distance. The wind has increased to a force 5 westerly, right in my face. I battle with it but have the feeling that I'm not getting anywhere. I realise I'm quite far out and loosing energy fast. Paddling closer in takes ages and I need to push hard to make progress. The Repeating rhythm of deep troughs and peaks sets in making the boat jump and slam onto the water, giving me a periodic soaking. Sun cream dribbles down my face stinging my eyes to the point of crying, my bum is sore from hours in the boat and I struggle to shift myself out of a whimpering stupor. Despite the conditions, I feel a sense of pressure to round the corner that I've spent the whole day staring at. I land briefly and refuel and refocus, launching back into surf and staying close in to the beach. I run the gauntlet through a flock of windsurfers and kites zooming around and jumping off the sharp, clean surf wave that's formed at an angle to the harbour wall at Hantsholm. Rounding the end, I'm met by a big, choppy sea rising and falling where the Skagerrak meets the North Sea and throwing the yellow poles of the special marker buoys into a drunken swaying dance. The water smashes and rebounds off the edge of the harbour as I change my course to head south. A view down the coast ahead slowly reveals itself as endless dumping waves. I think I can see Klitmøller or at least something poking out along the coast but don't have the energy to get there and am worried about landing. The weather is closing in and I know that wherever I stop, I'll be there for a few days. I decide to take my chances and head in whilst I can.

Morten Vogelius, Thomas Neilsen

I met Morten by chance when I was stormbound for a couple of days on the surfy west coast of Denmark in a force 7 wind. A man cycled past my tent, saw my kayak and said 'There's another kayaker camping over the other side of the fence, you should say hi' So I did. The same day I'd seen a car drive past with a kayak on the roof the same make as mine and had posted online to see if I could find out who it was. I met Thomas shortly afterwards. On holiday with his family, he is a regular visitor to this bit of the coast and knows the local surf spots well. We are at 'Cold Hawaii' a favourite amongst many Danish kayakers and surfers.

Sea kayakers are relatively easy to spot as the boats themselves are difficult to hide. The next evening as the wind drops we paddle together down the coast, Thomas's wife kindly picking the two of them up in a car as I continue my journey south. Morten is on a tour of Denmark, paddling between two large gatherings of sea kayakers that happen every year. A chance to meet others, develop skills and share stories. I had been invited to one of these by a friend in Copenhagen but couldn't make it work with my route so put it in the calendar for next year. We chat on the water and Thomas shares stories of the sea. One being the largest fight in Denmark between a gang of motorcyclists and local fishermen. The fishing communities are strong here even though they're dispersed. Boats are hauled up onto the beaches, there are very few harbours as such. I visit several small fishing museums which all tell the same story of survival and tragedy in harsh weather and the strong community links based around a shared endeavour. Whole families would have been involved and this is evident when Morten shares memories of his grandparents with me.

He is happy to be part of my *'Beautiful voyage about the forecasts for the sailors'* and tells me it is his first trip on the west coast. I'm glad that I could share that with him and perhaps give him a reason to give it a go. We chat about the forecast and I am delighted to hear him tell a similar story to Gudni in Iceland of listening to the Danish Shipping Forecast late at night with his grandparents. *'My grandfather, he was a fisherman and we could be in their living room, my kid sister and me. It was almost the same areas and we could be there but*

we had to be very quiet, then in the end when I grew up and hearing this again was like putting me back in those days and still I have these feelings and now, I can even use it myself We talk about some of the areas that are shared with the UK Forecast and the others specific to Denmark. *'It would be like 'Fisker' is Fisher, Dogger Bank, you know, then Kattergat, Skagerrak, then we have Østesoen and Pren Bornholm, the east sea around Bornholm and the west Eastern sea as they are always findings there, what else? Norske Herns the Norwegian Sea…'* We land after the sun has set, the sky has turned a milky pink and the fine sand dances down the beach in a light, warm breeze. I record Morten reading what he can remember of the forecast in Danish and it is beautiful to hear a similar rhythm and tempo, familiar places in a gentle but unfamiliar language.

Whilst we are chatting in the campsite, Morten introduces me to some really useful sources of information that are designed to help people make the most of the outdoors. The day before as I dragged my kayak 12km over land, I had been amazed to find a well kept, simple and clean public composting toilet in the dunes. I had seen in Iceland, the difficulties of encouraging tourism in remote areas without infrastructure in place and have also seen this on the Isle of Skye, in Scotland. There is a difficult question here that was raised by Arian, at what point do the car parks, toilet blocks, cafes and walkways start to ruin the beauty of the nature they are intending to celebrate and protect. The Faroese are also looking to increase tourist numbers and I can see will face the same issues.

One of the things Morten shows me is the Danish Shelter app. Only available in Denmark but using data and interactive, searchable maps from the national parks service. We are in 'Denmark's greatest wilderness' as described on the park's useful website. The app shows a range of information from protected wildlife areas, designated will camping areas, open shelters (often a simple canopy that you can bivvy under) old bunkers, or a small houses like bothies) to places it is safe to have fires, camp grounds and where to find sources of fresh water. This information can allow people to make their own choices and connect more freely to wild places, in the knowledge that if the weather changes or things take longer than they thought then there are facilities available without having to call for help. There is also an app called safe sail with information about tides, markers and navigation. Thomas tells me about the red and white ribbon challenge, touring around the coast of Denmark. This is regulated by a group of enthusiasts in Denmark and is a high accolade in the local kayaking community.

He also tells me of a local kayaker, Jesper Tilsted and his father, surf kayaking pioneers based near Cold Hawaii, running courses and lessons for a range of abilities. I'd heard this from Anders in Copenhagen too but sadly he's away whilst I'm in the area. Thomas connects me with a number of Danish kayak groups on Facebook and puts a call out to them to look out for me. It's great to be welcomed so warmly and assimilated into a network of people sharing a love of something together and helping each other make the most of the sea.

The waves are steepening and are close together, the wind is howling and pushy, the kayak is heavy. Bigger sets are coming through and I need to choose my timing carefully. I watch as one after another the waves rear up, start to break and foam, dropping and picking up again before smashing down violently onto the steep shingle. The sound is incredible, tiny pebbles and sand are dragged out from the shore by the retreating water, churned, pummelled and spun before being thrown back onto the beach. A dumping beach is a kayakers nightmare. There's a real danger of serious injury, loosing or breaking kit and boats. I'm apprehensive but see no benefit in carrying on. I will have a long drag up the beach and then need to pitch a tent, cook and make a plan for the morning. The dwindling energy reserves I have will be needed. Watching closely, I choose my moment, turn the kayak to face the beach and start to paddle in. The white water of the collapsing peaks surges as I paddle backwards to gain control and get onto the back of one of the smaller dumpers. In a split second, the one behind jumps quickly on my tail. It lifts the back of the boat up and pushes forwards fast, the boat rises and I lean back hard, pushing on the foot pegs to lever myself upwards and counterbalance the force. I'm practically standing upright, propelled towards the gravely sand when the nose of the boat digs into the beach and I'm sure I'm about to be catapulted over it. I dig harder and brace as the wave breaks and violently sheds its anger and shrapnel onto me, the kayak and the beach. I rip my deck off quickly and the next wave fills the boat with water. I grab it and pull hard up the beach away from the roaring monster. The force of the sea has ripped the lining out of my helmet and I'm lucky not to have broken anything else.


GERMAN
BIGHT
HELGOLAND
SCHIERMONNIKOOG

German Bight

We'd selected this weekend for the spring tides and the hope it would work out, we could see a gap in the weather with almost no wind for a few days, what wind there was would be largely behind us. We packed up quickly and drove through the Bourbon biscuit brick villages with pointy orange pantile roofs. It's a hot and languid morning and the whole of Germany seems to have crammed onto what little bits of beach they have here. We negotiate the huge area of parking on the sand and start the long drag of kayaks through the crowds. The trolleys we have are easily overcome by the fine sands of the North Sea coast. A combination of dragging, pulling, tugging and carrying gets us to the water's edge, hot, sweaty and agitated. We look around and are surrounded by tanned bodies in brightly coloured tight swimwear, the sea is gently lapping at the shore and a series of timber frame beach cafes teeter on stilts pinned into the sands. It's a long flat beach and I suspect there is nothing to stop it taking a huge belting if the winter storms feel like it. We lather ourselves in suncream and feel an immediate sense of relief as we float away from the shore. We pass bike parks, paddle boarders, wind surfing and sailing schools, pulling away from the sandy strip towards the tiny speck of a cardinal marker we can see in the distance. The visibility is crystal clear, almost strangely so. The sky is a deep blue and there's a very subtle swell sauntering around. The surface of the water is like a sheet of smooth silk gently billowing. We pass the yellow marker of a weather station in the middle of sea and scour the horizon for the next point "The next big thing is right in front of us" Felix says, and he's right, on many levels. We stop every few hours to snack and regroup before pushing on toward the tiny humps of land we can start to see emerging in the distance.

Doris Hoelterhoff, Felix Drueke

It's a hot and dusty day when Doris and Felix arrive in Henne Strand, Denmark to pick me up and drive into Germany. We met at a sea kayaking symposium in Jersey a few years ago and as Felix shared stories of their mishaps and adventures in pursuit of spending time outdoors and on the sea, I knew we would get along. We have planned to paddle for a few days together in German Bight and hope to cross to Helgo or Heligoland. The sun beats down through the glass as we sit overlooking the beach and eating lunch, we have to move into some shade before setting off on the drive across the flat lands into a spectacular the sun set over the mud and sand. The North Sea sand is particularly fine grain and gets everywhere. Doris and Felix are experienced sand kayakers and tell me of their previous experiences in German Bight. *'When we arrived on Sylt, we got into a storm'* Felix says *'A strong wind, Force 9. It was Easter and it was very cold and stormy. We put up the tent on the sand. When we woke up the next day, the kayaks were gone. They were not really gone, they were still there but you almost couldn't see them anymore because they were buried by sand, just like our tent which was around half a meter in the sand. In the night we had to get up and free it a bit as the inside got smaller and smaller as the sand was pushing down the tent. Everything was covered in sand. We even lost a wheel from the trolleys, it was somewhere in the sand and we dug everything but couldn't find the wheel anymore'* He recalls *'Then we paddled back with almost Force 7 against us'. Yes there was quite a lot of wind in the end'* a typical understatement from Felix.

We are luckier with the conditions and have chosen our timings carefully to make the most of the spring tides. The sea is beautiful and silky smooth with a gentle lilt accompanying us on the 8 hour crossing to Helgoland, there's an uplifting freedom of a clear horizon out of sight of land in any direction. We're sitting on the harbour wall looking towards the start of the Frisian island chain a few days later and I ask Doris to describe the trip *'We paddled over in very good conditions, we spotted the first gannet half way to Helgoland and it was very exciting as we've never seen gannets in Germany. That was the first time to see them there, they are such amazing birds. There are two types of seals here in German Bight, there is the harbour seal with the puppy nose and the other one, you call it the grey seal and we say the pegelhoper'* On the way back, the sea is flat, hazy, and immersive, you can easily drift into a dreamlike state in these conditions as we cant see where the water ends and the sky begins, its like being suspended in mid air but you have to focus. The water was crystal clear with small crabs floating along and porpoises swimming alongside the kayaks. Doris asks me if it's the first time I've paddled to a German island. We've paddled together before in Hamburg but I've never paddled on the German coast before and this is the longest crossing I have ever done. I had heard of Helgoland but didn't know where it was. I'd always thought the name had a mystical feeling.

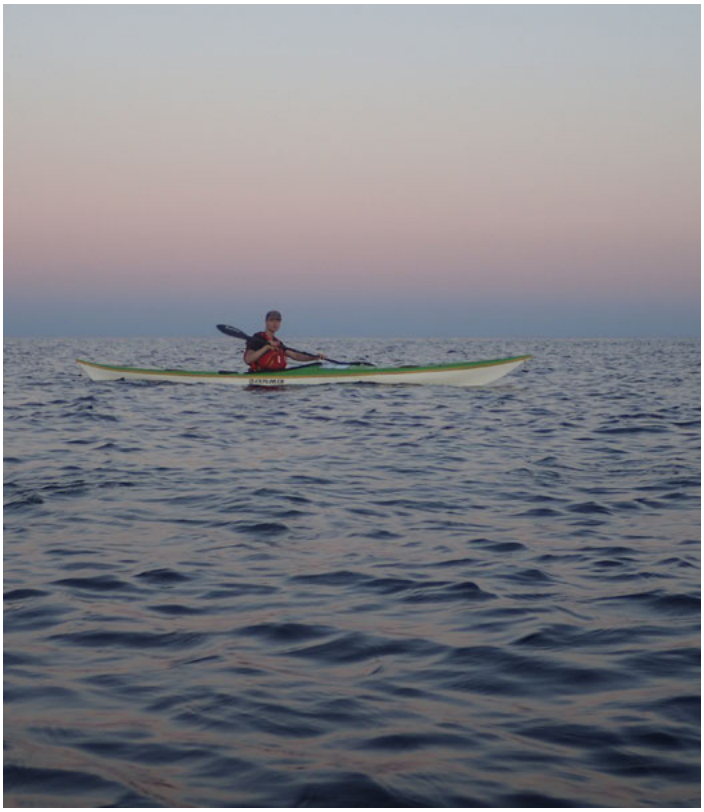
I ask Felix how he got into kayaking and he tells me *'My life consisted of work and driving a motorbike and I felt that was insufficient. So I just thought I need to do something else and somehow I went to the local kayak club which was mainly doing white water kayaking and just wanted to try something for me. Just a few weeks later I practiced almost everyday rolling and all sorts of stuff that you do in white water so I sold my motorbike and was only doing kayaking. Later when Doris and I met we both discovered that we were interested in doing sea kayaking and we started doing courses in sea kayaking and then did lots of nice travels to Corsica and Sweden and then later Scotland and that's what we still do today'*

Doris has a different story of an almost accidental discovery of sea kayaking *'I got into kayaking on a motorboat trip with some friends of mine in Sweden. Every time when we approached and Elk or something on the coastline, he ran away. Then I saw all these people with canoes and I thought, wow, that's cool, it doesn't make noise, it doesn't make any waves and makes you a bit more sensible to the nature. Then after this trip I thought one day I will buy a canoe. Several years later I bought a canoe and did some tours on rivers in Europe and then I got into sea kayaking. First of all into white water kayaking. I was on a party and then a guy came over to me and said 'hey I heard that you are into kayaking' and I said no, no. no, no, no. way, I hate kayaking I'm into canoeing, that's more cool, I thought. He had to get rid of a kayak as he wanted to go to the south of France, to Biarritz to learn surfing. His parents said to him, first of all you have to get rid of all the stuff in our garage and there was a kayak in there. He told me OK you can have my kayak. I totally refused but two weeks later he came and brought me the kayak. So then I bought a paddle and a spray deck and went to visit my grandma who lived near a small river in Germany. I did a tour by myself and borrowed a sailing jacket and trousers, oilskins fortunately I didn't fall in! The trip was two days on these small rivers. Then I got hooked into it'* They live together in the centre of Germany so are unlikely sea kayakers although this distance from the coast has perhaps led them to explore further afield.

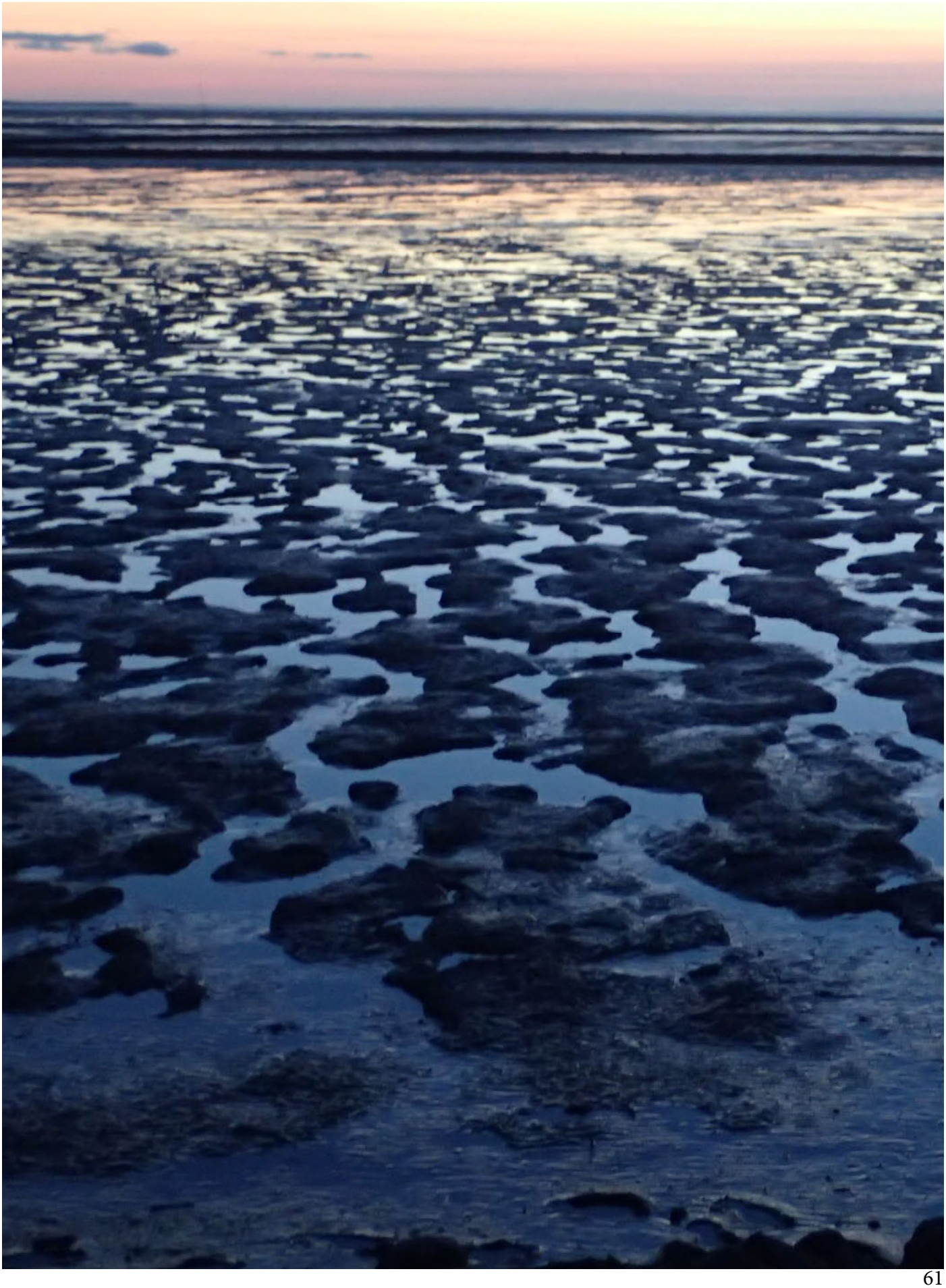
I ask Felix what he likes about it *'The nice thing about kayaking, what I think is nice is that it is a mixture of sport and activity and it's outside. Also its not just outside*

like you do when you are going for a run for half an hour. You are outside for quite a long time. If you are doing a day paddle you are out in nature for several hours and if you are on holiday, several days. You don't necessarily need a car for that if you are travelling so you quit with everything else that's in your mind for some days and that's very relaxing for the mind and is also nice for the body. Very good recreation'

Later, we are sitting on the roof terrace of a traditional East Frisian Tea Sturber (tea house) overlooking the harbour with the island of Spiekeroog in the background. Doris and Felix explain the Frisian tea rituals to me and we look for the clouds made by cream poured carefully from a special spoon. Before I leave them to start the next bit of my trip along the island chain, Doris contacts Rolf from the German Salt water union (Salzwasser union) a group of kayakers in Germany sharing knowledge and skills together. He has information on the approved places to camp on the islands and very helpfully lists them out over the phone as Doris makes notes. The preference is to camp in the harbours as much of the tidal sand and mud flats are protected nature reserves. It is helpful advice and Rolf kindly wishes me well on the trip. On the way back from Helgoland, I caught the German forecast for the area on the VHF, as with other places, familiar names and rhythms in an unfamiliar language. Felix tells me about the regular radio broadcast 'The Duetscher Zeewettering, the German sea weather service' He says *'We normally don't listen so much to it but we check it on the internet'. 'I listened to is when I did a tour with a woman on Spiekeroog'* Doris says *'I can only remember that it had these areas Dogger, Fisher, German Bight…'. 'And it is said very slowly and clearly'* adds Felix. We reflect on the trip together and agree that it's been a good cultural exchange to a place with a contested past, having been both German and English territory. Doris summarised it well *'I think it was really special that we did it as an English and German team as Helgoland has a German and an English history and that we switched, you taught me to say Heligoland. When we got the first email from Toby it said, do you want to come with me to Heligoland and we thought this is a mistake, where is this place? In the end Toby now says Helgoland and we say Heligoland'*



I've decided to go outside the next island, Vllieland which is a quick route and less complicated tidally, I should also have a small amount of wind behind me. Passing the timber stilted beach cafe, surrounded by windbreaks, StandKorbs, tents and canopies. It looks a bit like a campsite. Small surf bounces along the breakwaters and the sandy beach picks up at the back to form a small dune. People wander along the sand with kites and body boards. A surf school is set up on the beach but there is hardly any movement in the water. There's a military zone marked on the map and I'm unsure if it's a firing range or a test site, I pull away from the land to get a bit of distance and can hear the grinding of tanks and trucks beyond in the grassy flats. Seals and bird life enjoy this deserted, deserty place. I tentatively pass the red flag on the beach and the coastguard observation station. I can see sailing boats further out and start to head towards them. The land is sandy and flat, it blurs with the sky and it's hard to tell how far away I actually am. I hear a whirring noise coming from the sands and look around to see a Chinook helicopter coming towards me, flying low and moving in large circles. I turn the kayak more obviously out to see to signal that I'm leaving and hope they're not going to launch into a bombing exercise. I head further out and with the helicopter returning and circling nearby, I tell myself they're not following me but certainly don't want to chance it. Behind the low lying sands, I can see the tower of the Texel lighthouse poking up, or at least I hope that's what it is as it's the only tall thing marked on the chart for miles. People are scattered around the beach and in the water with small camps of varying complexities. The beach is huge and it's a long walk for them down to the shoreline. The tide is low and I drag the kayak on its small trolley though the sand and fall asleep in the shadow of its hull, protecting me from the hot afternoon sun. Texel (Humber) is the last island in the chain.




HUMBER
TEXEL
NOORD-
HOLLAND

Humber

Nearly a kilometre of sand lies between the beach cafe and the shoreline, I head away from the bodies strewn about in the shade under it's raised deck and back to the kayak just in time as the tide it coming in. There is a couple on the beach taking a sunset stroll. He has a toned and tanned body, she has a tight perm, is almost wearing a leotard and has high hipped shorts. She hangs off his arm with light footed, sparky energy. Together, they look like they've walked out of an eighties movie. The sky turns a strong orange colour and the sea gently licks the shore, it's romantic. I feel a bit out of place. They're inquisitive about my kayak and ask lots of questions about what I'm doing. They're chatty and interested, both Dutch and on holiday here but tell me that most people on Texel are German, there is a ferry every half hour from the mainland so it's easy to get here by car. After a bit of a chat about sleeping on the beach, Jennifer Gray and Patrick Swayze say goodbye and wish me luck, I watch them walk into the sunset half expecting (and hoping for) them to break into a dance. The sun dips below the horizon and gradually the smooching couples leave the beach so I can pitch my tent and go to bed. Nobody puts Toby in the corner! It's not an easy night's sleep as I check the weather for the next few days and my news feed is full of reports of big thunderstorms in the UK. I'm startled by a light shining into my tent and am convinced it's the beach police coming to tell me to leave but soon remember I've camped by a large lighthouse which intermittently pans across the deserted beach. I can hear the rumble of thunder in the distance and pick out the flashes of light that are definitely not the lighthouse. It's spectacular to watch as the storms pass across the sea northwards along the coast of the UK. The skies light up with forks and sheets and there's a cool streak to the humid air. I hardly sleep as I worry about the weather. Being in the middle of the sea with a boat made of carbon fibre (a conductor) and a long, pointy stick made of the same, when there's lighting around is not a good idea.

Axel Shoevers

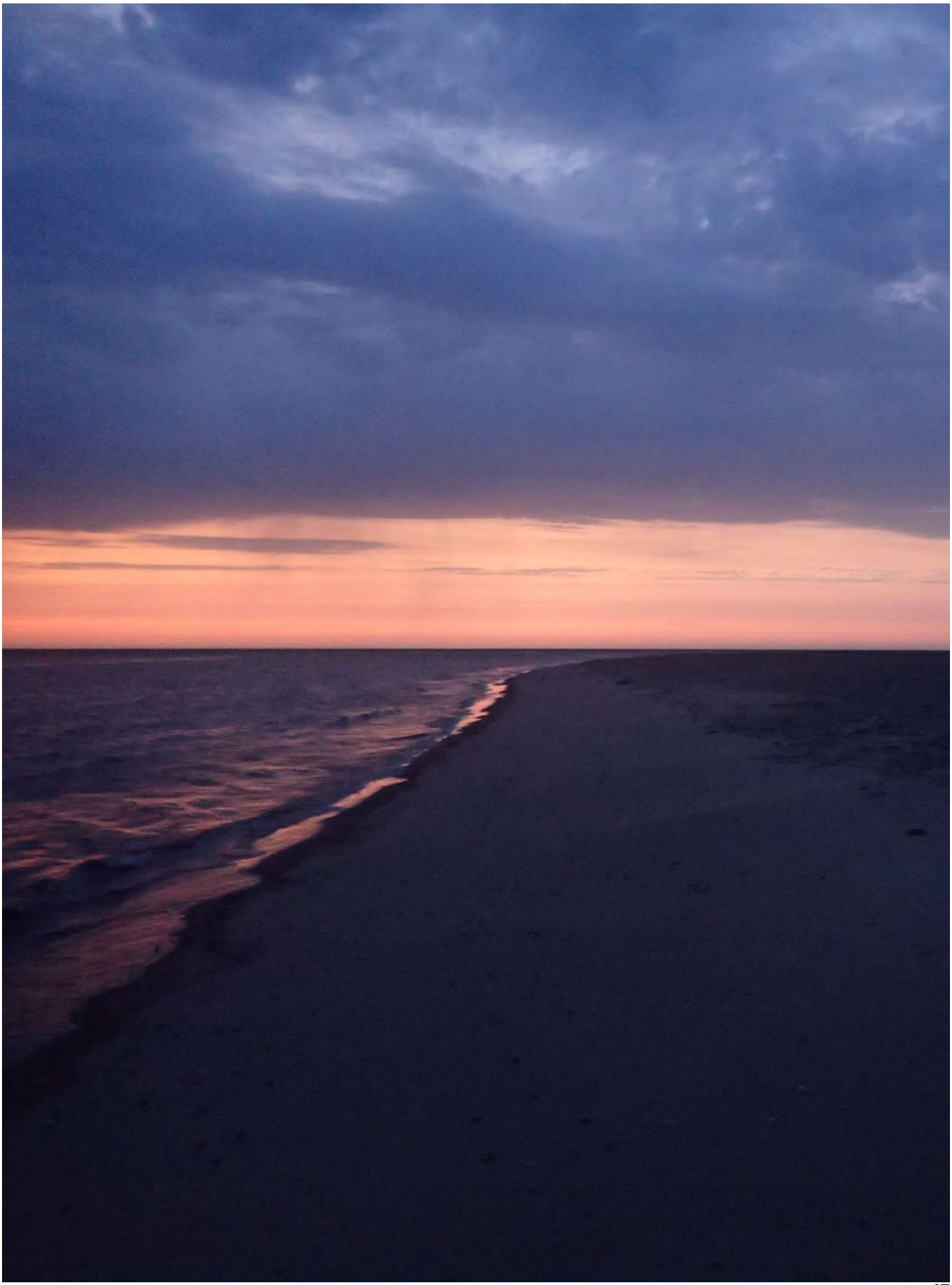
I contacted Axel to ask for some advice on kayaking in the Netherlands. I met him in Cornwall several years ago as he was coaching on a training course I attended, which was also where I met Alina from Norway. Axel very Kindly invited me to speak at the annual Dutch sea kayak training camp in Den Helder which he is co-running with a colleague. I was given a very warm welcome and enjoyed meeting another group of international kayakers. Axel explains that Den Helder is one of the best sea kayaking areas in Holland with strong currents and sandbars, lots of activity especially when there is a south going wind opposing the ebb. On the west coast it's all sandy beaches. The Wadenzee, where I've just been, is a national park, with lots of nature reserves and protection for wildlife. He laughs as he explains the unique nature of the tidal flats here *'In the rule of twelfths, for drying heights, this is a great training ground for Dutch sea paddlers'* he says *'with that knowledge the people in Holland can paddle all over the world'*

Axel is a well known international sea kayak coach. His calm style and years of experience have made him a respected figure in the kayaking world. He is a regular coach at British sea kayaking symposiums, especially the long established Anglesey event. I ask him how he got into it in the first place *'I started kayaking in 1994 after seeing a documentary about sea kayaking in Alaska, I thought, that's cool, I want to go there'* Sitting in the marquee and talking about the training week that we are at the start of, he says '*Actually this event 25 years ago was the first event I went to to learn how to become a more proficient paddler. Soon I learnt there was much more to learn that just buying a kayak. This event from a participant to a coach to an instructor now I am co-organising this event, this year is the 39th year. Next year we have our 40th anniversary'* I ask him if he ever made it to Alaska after being inspired by the documentary *'In 1999 we went to Alaska with 4 people and did a 5 week trip and after that I started coaching. I haven't been on that many personal trips' he says 'but I have been all over the world and worked in wonderful places with wonderful people. I have been fortunate to be invited to lots of nice places. The people you meet and the knowledge they bring into sea kayaking is great, so you learn from different places and people'* I ask him what he likes about it and he says *'For me it's personal development, I found out learning things that are done different in other countries helps me develop, I would say its more personal development than a job'*

We talk about the UK Shipping Forecast which Axel knows well from his time working at different events and paddling the UK coastal waters. He carries a small laminated version of it in his kayak as part of a quick reference set of notes for planning and navigation. He remembers his first trip to Scotland, in a remote place, before the days of smart phones and 3G. Waking up at 5am and listening to the early morning forecast on the radio. We talk about the familiarity of the Shipping Forecast and the sting sense of connection that people have with it in the UK. He remembers the song played ahead of the forecast in the early morning and the controversy around the BBC's decision in 2006 to stop playing it. I assume he means 'Sailing By' which precedes the late night forecast and search for a version I can play to him and reassure him that it is still used. We listen to it together but he doesn't seem to recognise it. A bit of digging around later turns up a bit of forecast history that I'd overlooked. Axel was of course right, for years the Radio4 theme had been played ahead of the early morning 5.20am forecast as a way to signal to mariners that the forecast was about to start. It's a strange bit of patriotic Britishness. It included instrumental versions of several popular English, Welsh, Scottish and Irish songs "Early One Morning", "Rule, Britannia!", "Londonderry Air", "Annie Laurie", "Greensleaves", "Men of Harlech", "Scotland the Brave" and "What Shall We Do With the Drunken Sailor" Sections of the tunes are mixed together and overlaid An oddity of British radio history

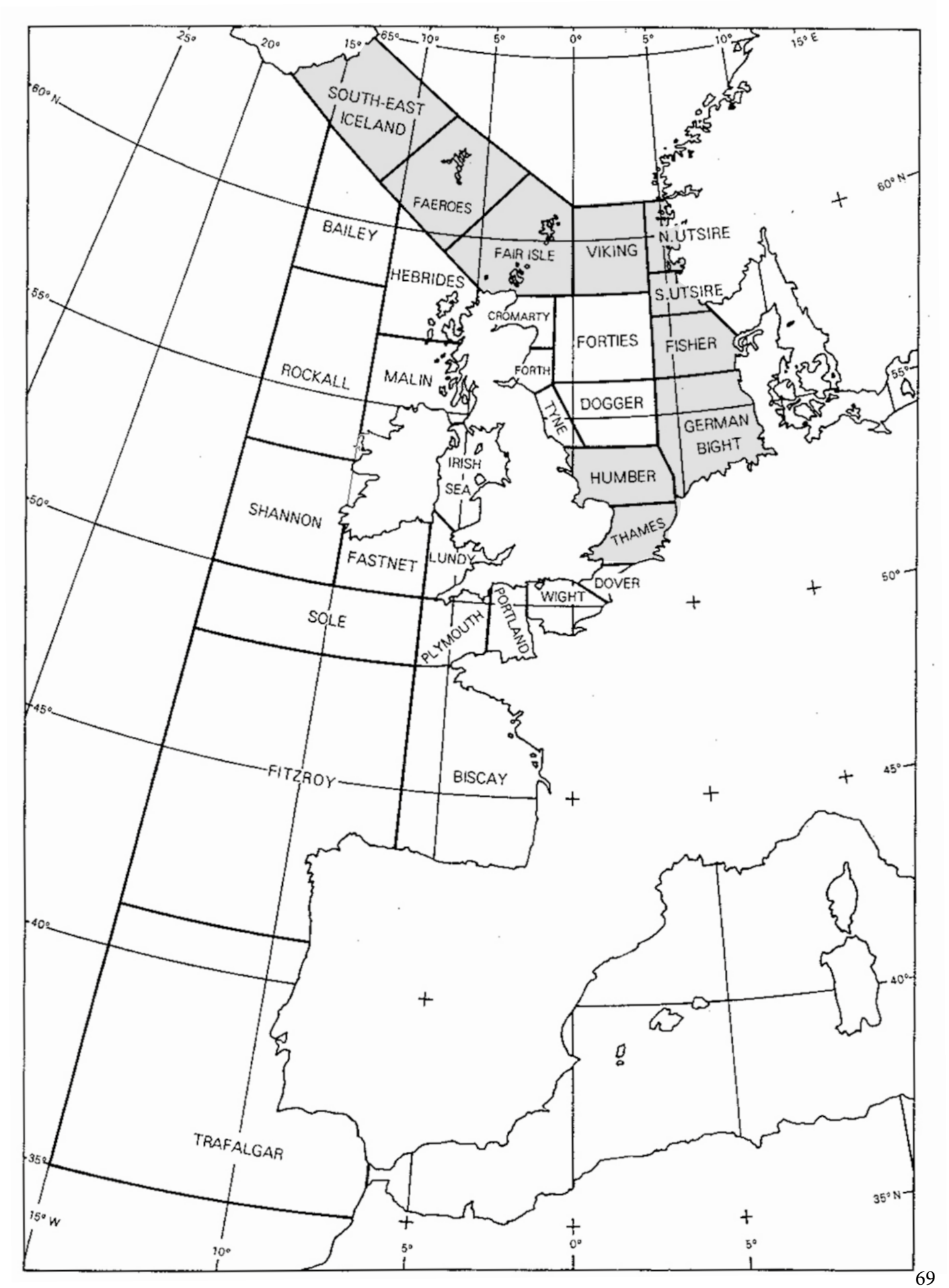
ending with a triumphant flourish of 'Rule Britannia' and presumably intended to celebrate a proud maritime history. It would have been the morning wake up call to match the current evening close down sequence of Sailing By, the Shipping Forecast, the Radio4 announcer wishing everyone goodnight before playing the national anthem and handing over to the World Service.

I tell Axel that I've heard the jerky, pre-recorded, robotic version of the Netherlands forecast and we conclude that this would not be acceptable to the highly protective UK audience. *'There is a Humber forecast in Dutch'* he tells me, *'and an official sea forecast. These words are extremely standardised, around the world, there's not a wrong word in it'* He searches for the Dutch version and prepares to read it out to me say excitedly *'You'll like this, this is in Dutch for Humber and Thames, there is even a warning in it which is always nice'*



The water is choppy with a back and forth movement to it. I'm launching at low and plan to arrive as the tide comes in, meaning that whatever happens, I should be washed back to land rather than out to sea. The current has different ideas and doesn't match this plan exactly. Strange shaped boats are leaving Den Helder and the Ijsselmeer beyond. One, shaped like a shoe with a protruding hull seems particularly strange and I assume it is something to do with the offshore gas industry. Another, a fishing boat has its arms fully stretched out and nets trailing like a winged cape behind it. Birds follow its wake as it plows past me. I cross the channel behind them and aim towards the sandbank I can see infant of me, negotiating the marker buoys and landing on the shallow flats in the sunshine. I stop to record the shipping forecast for the area in its actual location, something I've been doing since starting the trip in Iceland. The tide is coming in and soon laps against the side of the boat. I decide to paddle on and see if I can make it around. Towards the corner I'm met by an interesting sea which is a combination of tide rushing around the sandbank, a slight swell caused by the wind and the breaking waves in the shallows of the sandy waters. Deep troughs form between steep peaks which curl and roll towards the beach. It makes for a fun play spot and I push against it to get far enough away to surf back in again. After a few runs I'm starting to get tired but decide that I'll play here for a bit rather than trying to get around. I get washed gradually back eastwards and paddle out to be slapped around by the choppy waters of the channel, it's a fun paddle and more that the afternoon bimble that I though it could be. I set my sights again on the lighthouse at Huisduinen and aim off to arrive near the portakabin. The tide is further in and the swell has picked up to make swimming seem like madness with the bathers now clinging to the floating rope and staggering, shaken out of the water. The beach has gone so For me, swimming is the easiest way to get my kayak and myself ashore. I clip a line onto the boat and jump into the water, scrabbling up the sea wall as the waves crash against it.

Outlook


SOUTH-EAST ICELAND
FAEROES
FAIR ISLE
VIKING
N.UTSIRE
S.UTSIRE
BAILEY
HEBRIDES
CROMARTY
FORTIES
FISHER
ROCKALL
MALIN
FORTH
DOGGER
TYNE
GERMAN BIGHT
IRISH SEA
HUMBER
SHANNON
THAMES
FASTNET
LUNDY
DOVER
WIGHT
PORTLAND
SOLE
PLYMOUTH
FITZROY
BISCAY
TRAFALGAR
60° N
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5°
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5°
35° N

My Fellowship travels took me to 10 of the 31 areas of the Shipping Forecast and I kayaked in 8 of them. This experience has increased my confidence in different conditions and improved my skills. It has required me to overcome a number of challenges. For example, kayaking on my own, something I had not really done before, long crossings, requiring focus and commitment, contending with rough seas and strong tides with no option but to carry on. Tough decisions about when to go and when to stay, gaining mental strength through perseverance. I have broadened my knowledge of navigation, geology, wildlife, landscapes and other cultures. This was the longest stretch of continuous expedition kayaking that I have done, living in a tent for two months or sleeping under the stars. I have learned how to tackle the logistical challenges of a trip like this and what to take in terms of kit. Since returning to London, I have received offers of sponsorship and support from several major brands of equipment which will help me to take on the next stages. I was very lucky to meet such a broad range of people on my journey. The range of conversations I had along the way, providing a rich background to reflect on my own experience. I have no doubt of the positive benefits this has had on my mental and physical well being as well as transferable skills in problem solving, increased confidence, self belief, communication and collaboration with others. It has been a privilege to meet and learn from so many other kayakers enjoying the sea in the their home waters in the same way I do in the UK. There are several observations that I have made during my travels which could help others to make more of the outdoors and benefit from the positive experience I have had. I will take these as research themes for the next stages of my journey.

Respect and awareness
A common theme across all the conversations I had was a sense of respect for the environment, the power of nature and closeness to wildlife. This was evident in the depth of knowledge that Arian shared with me, the concern expressed by Heini over my safety and the stories Ari shared of tragic loss of life on the sea. The importance of safety training and sound judgement in dynamic environments is clear. Some initiatives that could be adopted in the UK are training in general life skills for primary school children as per the Icelandic model, enabling children to make informed decisions and not to be afraid of the outdoors. As far as I know, this doesn't exist in the UK and safety warnings are more based around fear rather than informed choices. Logging trip plans as per the ICESAR model could also be a useful tool for anyone involved in outdoor activities. This could assist UK mountain rescue teams, emergency services and the RNLI as well as ensuring that people have made sounds plans before setting out. The RNLI actively promotes doing this although there is currently no coordinated platform to do so. Safety kit checks could also be a useful addition to the current safety information available.

Skills and training
I met people who had trained and gained skills in a number of ways. Some countries, for example, Iceland and Norway, have their own training and awards schemes based loosely around the British Canoe Union (BCU) scheme. Clubs in Iceland are currently working to set up a national scheme. Whilst the BCU is well regarded worldwide and its awards are internationally recognised, there could be scope for a sharing of knowledge or a working group to help countries looking to set up their own schemes to address specific challenges of their environmental conditions and funding opportunities. This takes place informally through networks and friendships as well as events such as international symposiums and training weeks, like the one I attended in the Netherlands. There is a list of the clubs and groups I met with in the reference section of this report.

Knowledge and collaboration
The network of safety shelters in Iceland and the Shelter app in Denmark are good examples of ways to support people to make their own decisions and to reduce the risk of requiring rescue or risk to life if conditions and plans change. There is a careful balance to be struck with locating these kind of simple facilities in wilderness environments as is evident in Iceland but access to information could help to avoid emergency situations in some cases providing mobile network coverage could also support this. In the Faroe Islands, the Rák app for indicating tidal movement is a good example of how accessible information can open up possibilities for people looking to engage more with nature or those for which the sea is a workplace. As a partnership between interested parties; government, business, leisure users and academia, the app also has function for users to report if they experience different conditions to those indicated forming a kind of collective research project. This approach to sharing knowledge and experience was evident in the conversations I had, many people being involved in local or national organisations, helping others to get outdoors.

Mental strength and self belief
I heard not just of the physical challenges of longer trips but also the mental challenges that can often

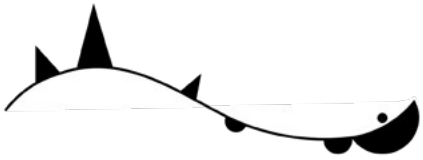
be more demanding. Gudni spoke of this in relation to his round Iceland expedition. Ivar Kim and Felix told me of the mental peace they experience from immersing themselves in an highly active environment, demanding attention and focus, clearing away the background chatter and worries in our heads. Some focus and recognition of this in the BCU training award schemes could help those considering taking on longer expeditions although to some extent, it is perhaps something that is learnt through experience rather than taught. In some ways, as I heard from Alina and Ivar Kim, some of the barriers we perceive to taking on new challenges or pushing ourselves further may well be constructed in our own minds. Feeling able to take a leap of faith whether related to confidence, financial commitments or social issues. Overcoming false perceptions can lead to realisation of things we may not have thought possible. The role of events such as The Arctic Women's Playground to create platforms for different groups that may feel unable to take their place and develop skills within mixed gender groups. Several events like this are now running in the UK and improvements could be made to achieving more gender balance between coaches at events, promoting female role models can also support this.

Role models and inspiration

I met many people who were role models in their communities for example Alina and Ivar Kim pushing themselves into wilder waters. Arian as a role model for a younger generation of outdoor enthusiasts through her family and their friends. Importance for people to see others like them taking part in something different as a way to help to demonstrate achievable targets and build confidence. The importance and willingness of coaches, leaders and experienced kayakers sharing their knowledge with others was also evident when asking others how they got into kayaking in the first place. This network of skills and facilities, whilst in some instances is a commercial enterprise, in most cases exists as a result of people volunteering their time and taking pleasure in the reward of introducing someone else to a new skill and seeing them thrive.

Kindness, support and sharing

At the heart of all my meetings was a genuine love for the outdoors and a desire to share their passions with others. People I met were going above and beyond. Ari, for example moving an entire building to create a kayak club. He forged partnerships with the local fishing industry, town council and a team of volunteers working on the building. The gentle enthusiasm I saw from Gudni, to help others in his club to learn new skills was impressive. As well as the eagerness of others to share their own knowledge or knowledge from their communities and networks was another demonstration of the support I received from the wider sea kayaking community. A shared love of doing the same thing together bridging boundaries of national borders, language and culture. Something that develops strong friendships, trust and respect between people.



I plan to continue my journey in 2019 and will continue to investigate these themes. Since returning to the UK, I have continued the trip and made further contacts in 'Thames' and 'Dover'. Based on my experience this summer, I will break the next bits down into chunks. The first being a southern section (Biscay, FitzRoy, Trafalgar) and the next a section around Scotland and Ireland. I will continue writing, tweeting, posting and talking about my travels and hope to launch the first of a series of podcasts before undertaking the next sections. I hope that through sharing my experience, this trip can inspire others to take on new challenges, make more of the outdoors and benefit from the rejuvenating beauty of the natural world.

Thanks again for everyone who made this possible

Some days, although we cannot pray, a prayer
utters itself. So, a woman will lift
her head from the sieve of her hands and stare
at the minims sung by a tree, a sudden gift.

Some nights, although we are faithless, the truth
enters our hearts, that small familiar pain;
then a man will stand stock-still, hearing his youth
in the distant Latin chanting of a train.

Pray for us now. Grade 1 piano scales
console the lodger looking out across
a Midlands town. Then dusk, and someone calls
a child's name as though they named their loss.

Darkness outside. Inside, the radio's prayer -
Rockall. Malin. Dogger. Finisterre.

Prayer by Carol Ann Duffy

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Kajakklúbburinn Kaj, Neskaupstadur, East Iceland
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http://towerhamletscanoeclub.co.uk/wiki/Home

Weather, Safety information and further info

ICELAND
Icelandic Meterological Office
https://en.vedur.is/

Icelandic Shipping Forecast (national radio)
http://www.ruv.is/utvarp/spila/vedurfregnir/25274?ep=7h10rc

ICESAR
You can submit a travel plan here
https://safetravel.is/travel-plan

Training exercises in the highlands
https://guidetoiceland.is/history-culture/rescue-teams-in-iceland]]

Travel in unihabited areas
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Toby Carr, April 2019