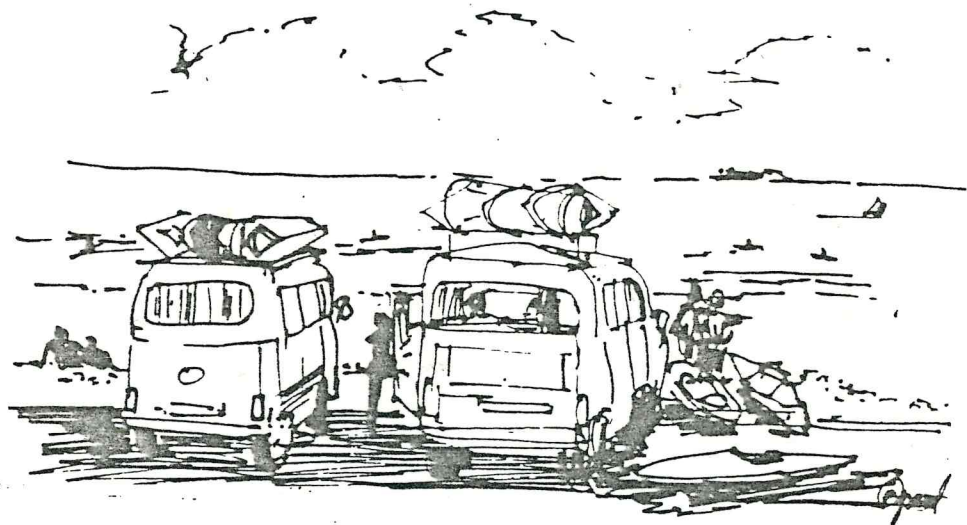


AN INTRODUCTION TO

Paddle



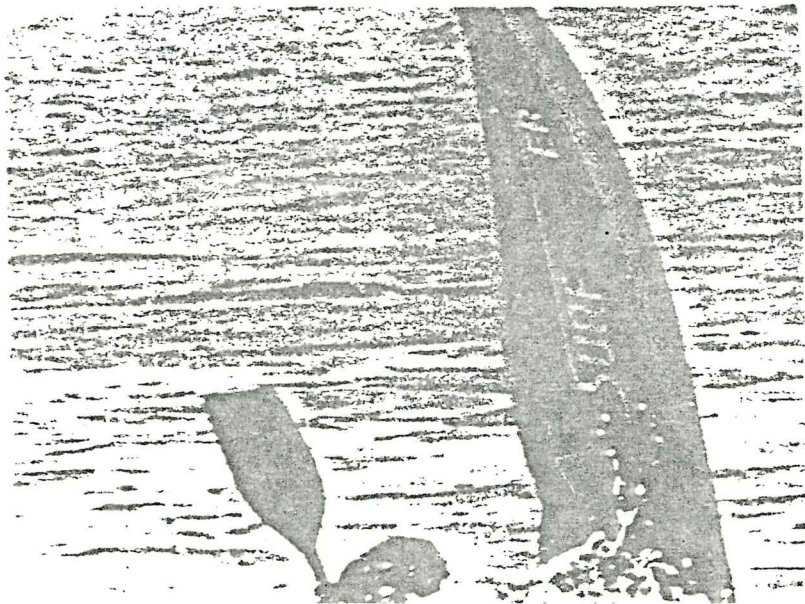
Surf

1.

A Bit of History

Surf canoeing has made tremendous advances over the last decade, from surfing any old canoe that was strong enough to take the surf, to the custom built multi-fin ski that is used by some paddlers today.

This hasn't happened in one step. It all started with the surf shoe with its flat bottom, short length and fin. This type of craft radically altered the style of surfing. This new craft meant that paddle surfers had to take waves steeper and had to stay nearer the fastest part of the wave, near the break. Manoeuvres could be performed such as the 360° spin on the face of the wave, the new speed and manoeuvrability had surfers riding steeper and faster waves. They had the unfortunate drawback that the bouyancy at the front (so that you could get your legs in) was much greater than that at the back, so that when paddling out through surf, the front would lift up and turn the canoeist over backwards, which is quite unpleasant.



The next big advance was the surf ski.

These were more akin to surf boards that are paddled. The early skis were about the same length as surf shoes, but soon became much shorter and more manoeuvrable. They are made in several different ways - the majority have a grp skin and are filled with expand-foam, but polyethelyne skis are available, which are hollow. The ski is paddled like any other canoe, although the paddle is much shorter because the surfer is sat at water level and the direction of the ski is controlled much more by moving the body and using the edges of the ski to steer them by rudder strokes.

The ski usually has foot wells and toe loops with a lap strap to hold the paddler secure, although one manufacturer has a central column that is gripped with the knees, with the paddler sitting atop the ski, the bouyancy can be reduced, the ski does not back loop as easily, but is less stable and is lighter, they can perform comparably with the surf board.

The slalom boat has stayed very much the same, but the addition of side fins sticking out at seam level along the back of the canoe has enabled the paddler to stay on much steeper waves without the back slipping down the wave. Another modification that some have done deliberately but others have done by accident, is turning the front of the canoe up enabling the front to be used to turn and reduce 'nose diving' when surfing smaller waves.

This then is a brief history of paddle surfing. These have been great advances made and with paddle surfers now travelling and competing all over the world, perhaps there will be more?

Surfing Safely

At first, glance surfing is perfectly safe, just gliding around on lumps of water out on the sea, but if you look at the sharp canoes used by some people, consider a canoe cutting a 14' swathe through swimmers or a ski with broken leash rushing through the surf, you can start to see some of the things that have to be taken into consideration.

Group Safety.

The leader of any group should be experienced in surf and keep everyone under supervision. Some groups arrive at a beach and all launch without a glance at possible problems or consulting lifeguards or talking to other canoeists. Someone should stay on the beach to keep an eye on everyone and rescue or direct a rescue if necessary. Don't forget that it can be difficult to get close to someone in surf without injuring them or yourself. Don't chase to surf on a crowded beach, its too dangerous for everyone else and only causes bad feeling.

Personal.

Surf is very different water to a swimming pool, so although you can roll everytime in still water, you may not be able to after being dragged upside down for a while. Could you even remove your spraydeck? If in doubt, try it and enjoy the swim in.

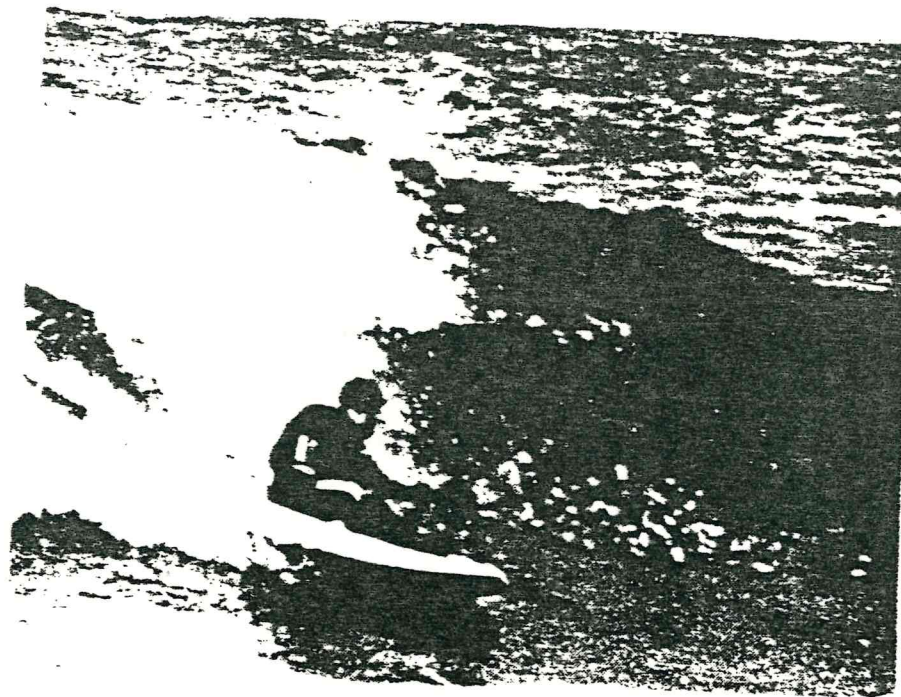
Helmets and bouyency aids will protect you from bumps by canoes or rocks. The lifejacket must be a good fit so that it will not ride up around your face when you go swimming.

Canoes & Skis

The diagram shows the minimum dimensions that are allowed in surf conditions and these should be adapted for all craft in surf.

Toggles must be used instead of loops because a canoe in surf will twist and crush your hand. The bouyency should fill any gaps and must be fitted securely. Surf skis are not without their problems. The seat belt is the most obvious, it should be easy to undo and never jam and you must be competent at undoing it even after a rumb-ling by a wave. A leash must be used, a ski can be lethal if left to run through surf and should be stretchy enough to take the shock and not snap and be securely fixed to you and your ski. The fins on skis are sometimes razer sharp and can be blunted without affecting performance.

The best safety factor is common sense, always think about what might happen.



WAVE TERMINOLOGY

SECTION

CREST OR PEAK

BREAK

FACE

SPHOLLER

SOLP

TROUGH



SWELL

BREAK LINE

DIA 2

WIND

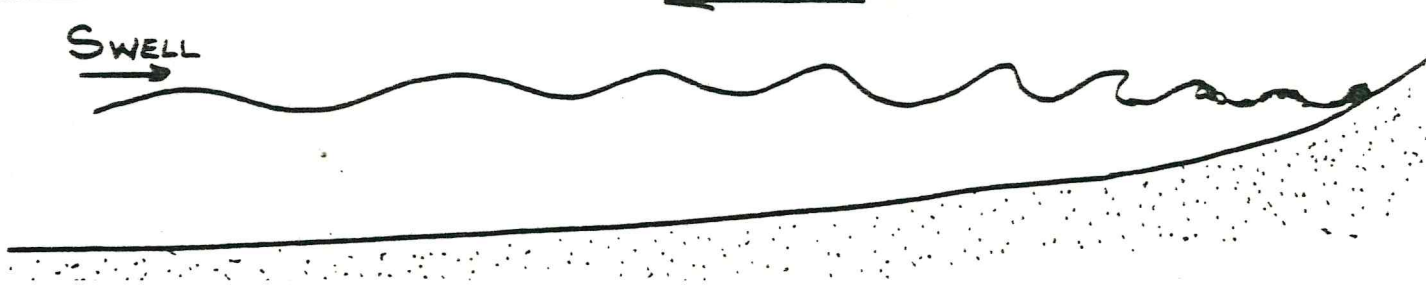
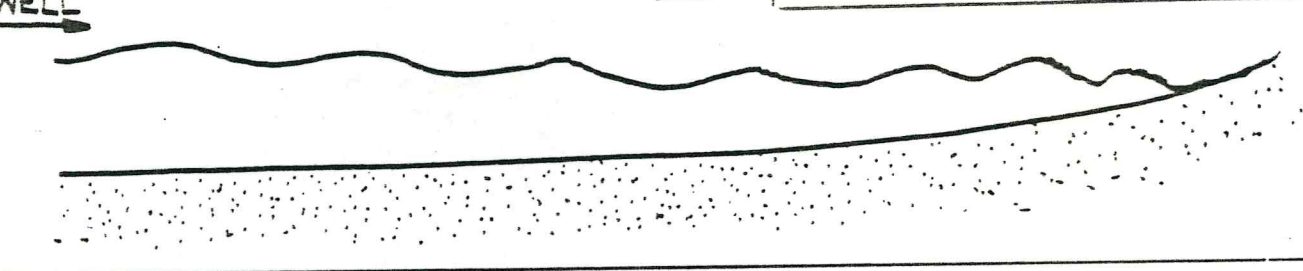
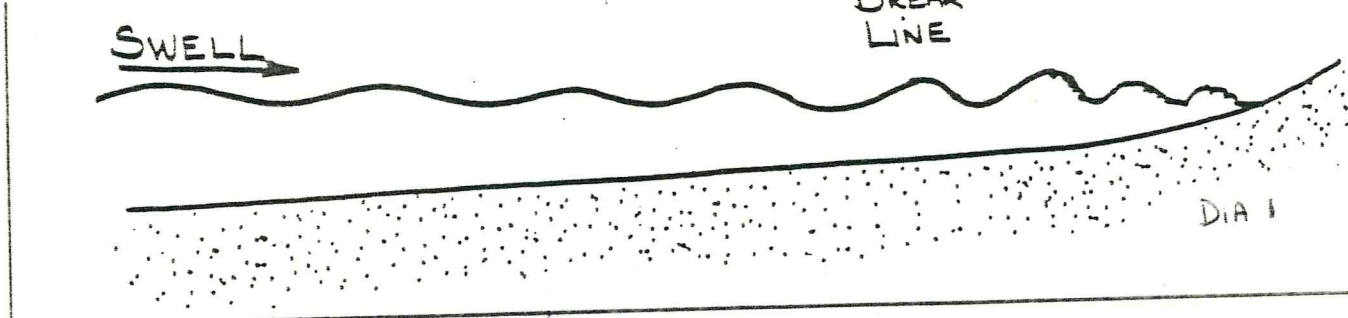
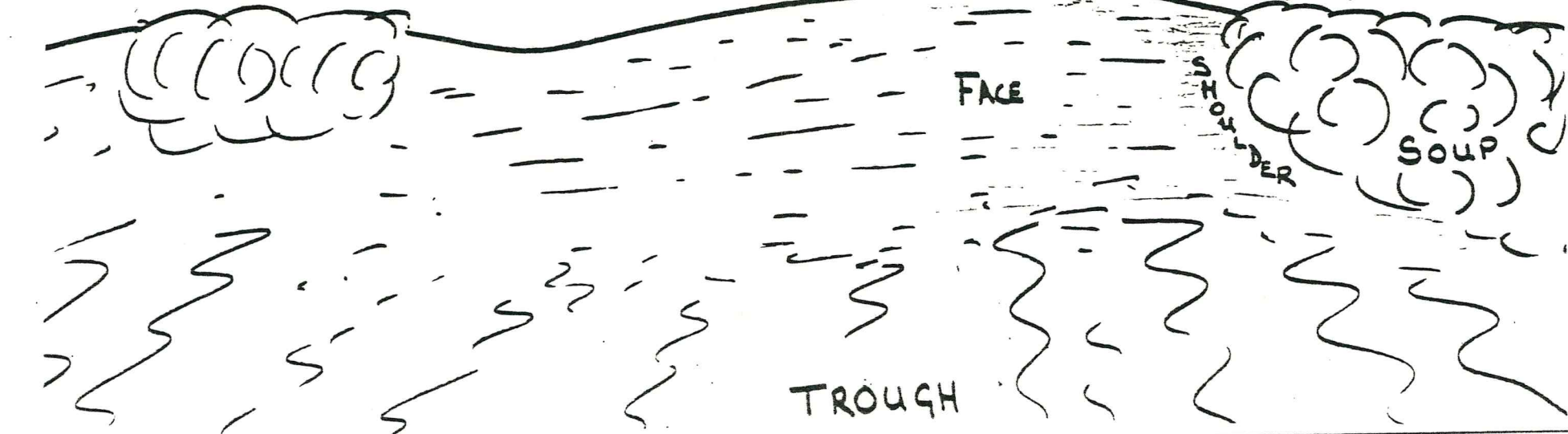
DIA 1

SWELL

WIND

DIA 3

SWELL

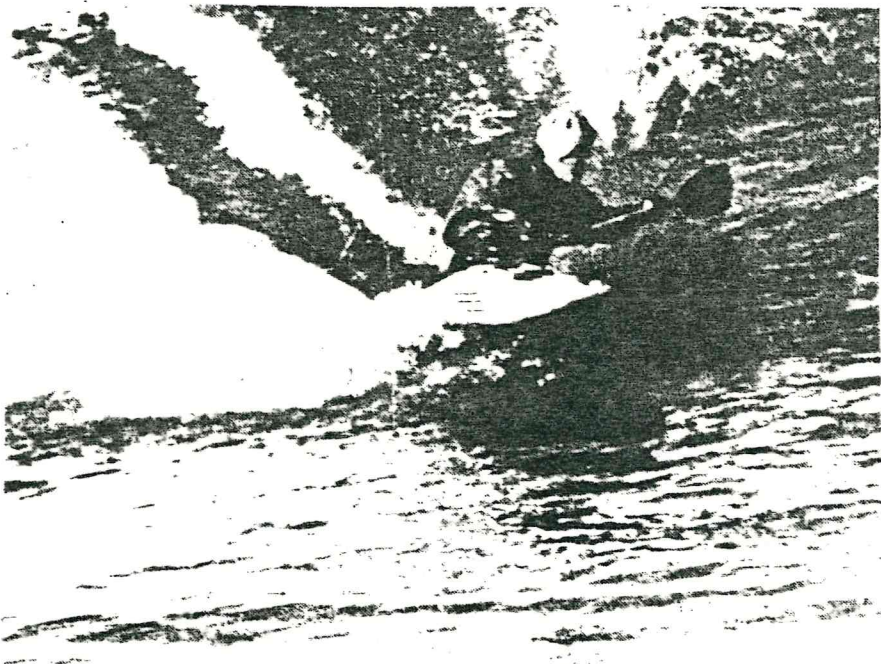


Waves & Surf

There are two basic types of wave:- swells and wind waves.

Swells are generated out at sea by storms and wind and travel away from their place of formation. Wind waves are being actively formed close to shore. Of the two, the swell produced the best surf. They are generally bigger, more powerful and a better shape than wind waves.

When any wave reaches shallow water, they build up until they become unstable and the top curls over (breaks) and rolls down the front of the wave (face). If the wind is blowing onto the free of the wave apposing the break (diag 3), the waves get steeper before they break. However, if the wind blows with the waves, they are flattened out (dia 2) and become mushy and messy.



Beginning Surfing

By now you should know a little about waves and what they are, but you still do not know how to surf them.

The aim of surfing is to use the power of the wave to enable you to run smoothly around the wave without stalling and with fluid changes of direction. This all depends on the individual wave and what it does, so you must surf each wave differently.

Before you start, you must get out beyond the break, to do this you must paddle at each wave and try to pull yourself through. Do not just hold your paddle above your level or you will end up going backwards. If you have any trouble - the surf is too big - stay in the soup and come back another day to surf.

When you are in the soup, you needn't waste your time, its fun turning side on (after making sure nobody inshore of you) and breaking the waves, you will find you have to lean quite hard into the wave using your paddle for support.

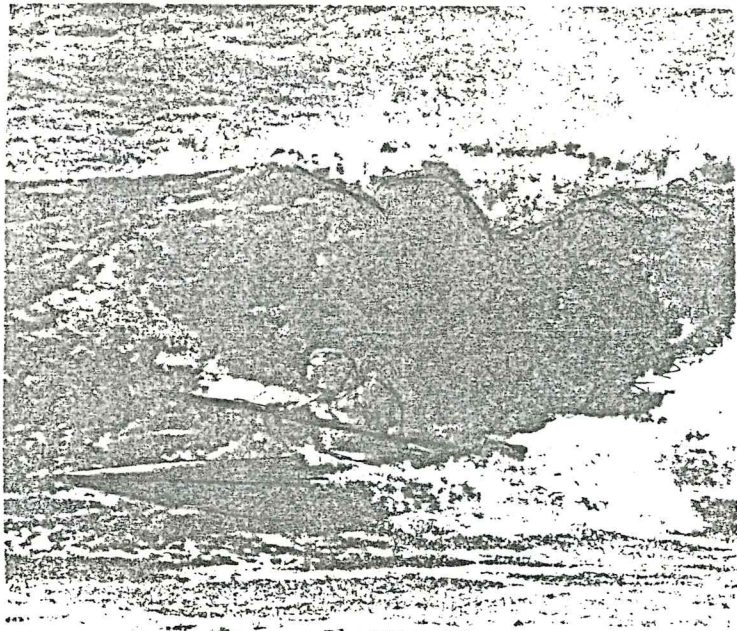
The day has arrived, your out through the soup and onto the green waves. Once outside, turn and watch where the wave starts to break and which way the break runs. You want to stay away from these to begin with.

The first thing is to be able to catch a wave and just as importantly, to get off it. To catch the wave, choose the wave you want, not too steep or big, and before it reaches you, paddle forward, then when its just behind you, sprint. The wave will lift the back of the canoe and when you are moving without paddling, you are surfing! The canoe will turn off course, correct this by using a stern rudder in on the swell side to speed the turn and get off the back of the wave. You will find that you need to lean slightly into the wave, but after you first capsize, you will remember next time!

The rides that you get will be quite short because you

will not at first be able to stop the boat turning and going off the back of the wave. What you must do is use a stern rudder on the beach side to make the course run diagonally down the free of the wave, and lean into the wave at the same time. As your technique gets better, you will want to ride the waves longer and until they are steeper. To get off these waves you need more speed, so what must be done now is to rise to the top of the wave, accelerate by leaning forward and gaining speed by dropping down the face of the wave. Turn in the trough at the bottom and climbing up and over the back of the wave.

This sort of manoeuvre sounds easy, but you will find that a lot of practice and experience is necessary to judge what a wave will do, how steep it will get and how quickly it will steepen up. Best tip is to get out and try it and watch more experienced paddlers.



Competitions

Paddle surf competitions have been around for quite a few years. They are held all around the coast.

In recent years the number of competitions have declined and some ski paddlers have formed their own association.

The surf committee yearbook gives details of where the competitions are to be held and the name and address of the organisers. To enter all you have to do is follow the instructions in the yearbook about "how to enter". The instruction sheet that the organiser sends you will tell you exactly where and when to turn up.

At the venue, a control van will have the rules displayed and where to 'sign on'. Be sure to check what time your heat is on the water and what colour of identification bids have been allocated to you. You must also check that you are not down to help the judges.

Before your heat, take all your gear down to the "Beach Marshall" who will check that they are all within the rules. Setting rules for surfing is difficult because the judge must decide what a competitor should have done depending on the wave and the judge's experience. A score out of 20 is allocated to each wave that a competitor takes and each judge (there are 3) scores each wave, which can be quite difficult when the paddlers all take off at the same time. The best 5 scores for each competition are added together and this is the score for that paddler. The highest total wins that heat.

The competition carries on through the heats, putting competitor against competitor, until the final where a winner will be decided.

Along the way, if you are knocked out of a heat, you should get another chance in the form of reperchange heats where the losers of a round get a chance to get through the the next round.

There are different classes of competition at the same venue:-

- Mens Open/Ski
- Mens Slalom

- Ladies Open/Ski Novice
- Ladies Slalom

- Junior Open/Ski
- Junior Slalom

Not all of these will be available. It all depends on how much time is available and how many competitors enter.

A competition can be the best organised, but if the surf does not turn up, there is no competition and it may all have to be postponed. The organiser may have a phone in before the weekend, when it will be decided whether there is a good chance of having the competition or not.

