

TASMANIA CIRCUMNAVIGATION 1979

Since the first visits by European explorers the coast of Tasmania has presented great challenges to seafarers. Much of the coast is very rugged and sparsely settled. The west and south coasts are notorious for dangerous seas, with fierce storms and huge swells rolling in from the west and up from the Antarctic throughout the year.

In 1979 Earl Bloomfield (now de Blonville) and John Brewster set out to follow the 1793 circumnavigation by Bass and Flinders. Travelling anti-clockwise, the start and finish was Georgetown at the top of the Tamar estuary.

Two kayaks were built to the British Nordkapp design with modifications to withstand the hazards of the journey and allow the carriage of adequate food and fresh water for each stage of the journey. Planning for the trip involved research into meteorological data, detailed mapping and the identification of accessible food drop locations.

This expedition took place before the proliferation of satellite communications. Navigation was primarily visual and contact with settlements minimal; land fall was often in remote places. At most stops the team camped out on the beach or in scrub, therefore light, durable camping gear had to be carried.

The trip of 1600 km took 66 days, including layups for bad weather, repairs and R&R. The average daily distance paddled was 35.7 km; the longest day was 65 km from Little Musselroe Bay to Waterhouse Point



Packing the kayaks



Kayaks beached SW coast

Map of circumnavigation of Tasmania by kayak 1979

