

Seacamp TKBN june 2007

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Because Tom and I had decided to do our seakayaking exams this year, we included the TKBN seacamp in june in our planning. After registering we received a lot of information and thus armed we drove to Ellemeet on Schouwen-Duiveland in Zeeland.

Once there, we found ourselves at the aft end of a large group of cars with kayaks of all brands and colors on top. First we put up our tent and then at 21:15 there was a campmeeting where the instructors got introduced and everybody could enlist in the diverse groups of the camp. Tom and I chose the seakayaking exam group together with 11 other people. After an introductory round where everybody could express their experience and wishes for this camp, the instructors told us we would go to Springersdiep on saturday, for strokes practice at first and later find some surf on the Aardappelbult (a 15 km long local sandbank). Then we went to bed to join the morning's meeting after a hearty breakfast. Everybody found themselves at the water by 10:00.

Our group got started with a boatinspection by Hannie, the top instructor. She had a look at all the boats and showed clever solutions as well as the points that needed improvement. That took about an hour and a half altogether so by half past eleven we were on the water in two groups of 6 and 7 people, practicing strokes like paddling forward, steeringstrokes, low brace etceteras. Around about 12:30 it was time for lunch and everybody went to the leeside of the large concrete blocks that make up the Springersdiep emergency harbor.

After lunch it got time for the real work. We paddled out as a group after having figured out a course to be paddled. That course turned out to be slightly too westward, so after having paddled after frontpaddler Birgit for a while we turned more northward to arrive at the northeastern tip of the Aardappelbult (literal translation is potatoheap, but it really is just a long sandbank). At that moment there stood about 50 cm of water with about a meter of surf at the northern edge. We crossed the surf in two's and everybody got through without any problems. Then we were instructed to paddle backward to stay in place while one by one we went back through the surf. The idea was to go through slow and let the waves roll past you if they got to steep or strong, so you got through in control. That went well for all, there were some good surfing waves that I just couldn't resist so I got through faster than meant. The second run around went less well..... Everyone got through to the north side okay through the now somewhat higher surf. It was on the way back the trouble started. The group went through the surf and had to wait for Jan (instructor) and Micheal who seemed to have trouble getting through. It turned out Micheal had gone swimming and when Jan had tried to get him into his boat, he was picked up by a large wave and flung straight over Micheal's head and landed upside down. So now there where two man in the drink. Wout (another instructor) went back to try and tow them out. That took a bit long so Jannes, I and a third man went to see if help was needed. At that moment we saw Wout capsize and it got clear to us that more power was needed to tow them out. We rigged a three man tow and tried to tow the boats and people out of the surf to the south side. Despite all our efforts however, the tide flushed us through the surf to the north side as a group. There we got everybody in their boats again, but now what?

At that moment we were joined by Han, the top instructor. She had sent the group at the south side of the surf off to Springersdiep under Tom and Birgit's leadership. A decision was made to paddle to Springersdiep over Westhoofd, the lighthouse at the tip of Goerree-Overflakkee's beach. We rigged a tow for the quite shaken Micheal and paddled west, parallel to the surf to cross it at a more quiet spot. Once in quiet water it turned out that a hatch of Micheal's new boat had been crushed inward in the surf. We patched it temporarily with a plastic bag and ducttape and arrived at Springersdiep around 19:00 where the rest was waiting for us. After having a shower and diner at the campsite, there followed a meeting with the sometimes hilarious descriptions of the other groups' trips.

For the sunday the Geerligsplaats was on the program. After the morning briefing we left for Springersdiep again where we finished the strokes training in the same groups as on saturday. Then we left at around 10:30 due west to the Geerligsplaats (another sandbank, a very small one this time). When we were well underway and got the bank in view, the instructors started to act weird. It turned out Wout had got unwell and had to be towed. A tow was needed and got rigged up. In the meantime Gisella thought she could see seals on the bank, but they turned out to be wearing anoraks. Once arrived at the bank Wout recovered in a miraculous way and it was time for a delicious lunch. After a nice stay on the rapidly shrinking sandbank (it was springtide) it was time for practicing the high brace. All that spattering about drew a curious seal (a real one this time) that swam around us for half an hour. Around half past one it got time for leaving for Springersdiep again. About halfway it was time for practising again. An all-in this time. We had to get out of our boats all together and in pairs help each other back in again. That went quite smoothly with me and Birgit, but it reminded me of one of the drawbacks of low volume boats. Every rotten small wavelet rolls straight into the cockpit. Because of that, Tom

and I paddled back with our cockpits half filled. Strangely enough it hardly affects the paddling characteristics of our boats! It seems to have effected Toms brain though.... He started to act all panicky, fell over, left his boat and paddle and swam to Gisella who allready came to his rescue. Offcourse he hung on to her boat so she went over, same as Roland who went to help as well. Birgit kept her cool and said she wouldn't help him if he didn't behave and stayed at a small distance. Gisella rather took Tom in a wrestligngrip from behind until he calmed down and we could put everyone in their boats. We then finished the trip to Springersdiep where those of us who could roll practised a bit. By about 16:00 we were at the campsite again where after a shower and final meeting we had diner at the camping's small restaurant.

All in all a very succesfull weekend with a lot of fun.

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