

## Fine Dining on Scroby Sands, Great Yarmouth.

At 1230pm on Sunday 11<sup>th</sup> April 2010, a group paddlers consisting of Myself, Paul Jary, Peter Jones, Keith Poulson and John Ricketts, led by Rob Randall met near Great Yarmouth Pleasure beach for a paddle out to Scroby Sands, a large sandbank which sits around half a mile off the coast of Great Yarmouth in the North Sea. For those unfamiliar with it Scroby is home to a large seal population as well as a large population of wind turbines hooked up to the national grid capable of powering 41,000 domestic houses (when they work!).



A blue sky shone over the horizon and the green bouy which marked the southern tip

of Scroby was clearly visible from the promenade. Although we had the tide on our side, the wind was a North Westerly Force 4 which we would find ourselves paddling into on the way out. After shifting the boats and a quick briefing from Rob on the beach, Rob radioed Great Yarmouth Coastguard under the call sign 'Randallkayak' to inform them of our intentions. We headed off, with the wind ahead of us at a course of 110 degrees due south so that we wouldn't overshoot the destination on the tide. For some of us who hadn't paddled on the Sea for a little while now was the time when we got our 'sea legs' back on. The wind was co-acting against the tide and small but choppy waves were breaking up under

our boats forming white horses. The wind also made things a bit chillier than on land.



It took us around an hour to make the 1.5mile journey out to Scroby, looking over my shoulder as we paddled away from the coastline you could see the amusement arcades, pleasure beach, the Britannia and Wellington Pier, Nelson's Column and the cranes of Great Yarmouth's new outer harbour looking more and more distant. Because of the nature of the tide, maintaining a steady course was quite challenging and for me personally the rudder helped quite a bit. Surprisingly as we got closer to Scroby we had a welcoming party of a Seal who decided to escort us towards the

sandbank by tailing several members of the group. The Seal showed little fear of us and looked very inquisitive and had the confidence to get close to us. After all of that effort, all of a sudden we pushed through the breakers and hit a sand bank just fore of the main Scroby 'Island'. So I decided to pull my boat across and wade through the shallow water onto Scroby, however the water as I found was not as shallow as I thought and as I waded across to the beach up to my waste in chilly seawater thankfully I had my dry suit on and it worked! Much to the amusement of the curious seals looking on.

At this point Rob took the opportunity to do a Radio check with the coastguard. In the shadow of the Wind Turbines, we decided that we would have lunch and explore the Scroby whilst awaiting the tide to

change its course. The Sandbank which we were on seemed unspoilt albeit for a small tin of radiator paint which had washed up. Several seals lie in a docile state to our right as the sun shone over the East Norfolk Coastline. Over to the west the sky looked more overcast and was gradually drifting over to Scroby and would eventually kill of the sunshine we'd been blessed with up this point. On the west side of Scroby, a large colony of perhaps a hundred seals was relaxing on the beach and playing in the breakers. As soon as they noticed us, some of them in apprehension moved in a great stampede out to sea.



We'd spent around an hour on Scroby, and soon it was time to head back to Yarmouth. The tide had turned as planned, we did ponder paddling out

towards the wind farm however the general consensus was that it was something for another day, as whilst we were on Scroby the wind picked up strength and increased to around a Force 5. We decided to head towards the Britannia Pier on course of the Tower of St. Nicholas Church, this wind was to our advantage as now we had both wind and tide on our side. The waves were very challenging at times and you really had to keep your wits together, as we surfed back down the Yarmouth Coastline passing the various Piers and amusement arcades including the Jetty where Nelson's armada landed.

After a challenging paddle back, eventually we found our way back to the gap in the dunes where we launched from, manoeuvring through the breakers back onto the beach and Rob again contacted the coastguard confirming we were off the water. The trip was well planned and well managed and made for a challenging and stimulating experience. Special thanks to Rob Randall for organising the trip.

**Alan Jary**