

The following ballad was written after the crossing of Cook Strait by Conrad Edwards, Tony Jennings and Glyn Dickson, and reaching Picton in time for the opening session of the Picton KASK Forum.

Picton for Tea

by Conrad Edwards

We started in the witching hour
- around half past three
A dark, moonless night it was
For Tony, Glyn and me.

Titahi Bay we left from
to reach Picton for tea
In-between, Cook Strait
and fifty miles of sea.

Into Inky waters we
slid our chosen craft:
three Slingshot kayaks,
long, sleek and fast.

A high over New Zealand
a metre's ocean swell;
a light southerly breeze;
all these boded well.

We rallied off the beach,
torchlight on frozen breath,
splashes, voices, yawns,
we set off, heading west.

Mana, squat and brooding,
one league to our right
Ahead an eerie nothing,
but the Brother's light

One for all and all for one,
we paddled in racing Vee,
in line abreast in Indian file,
a gaggle upon the sea.

Starlit sky above us:
heaven's very essence,
Black depths beneath,
touched with phosphorescence.

Through the hours of night,
into the twilight zone,
three ghostly silhouettes
paddled on and on.

Tiring was the effort,
but what was twice as bad:
to catch the crucial tide,
just two hour's sleep we'd had.

The sun rose over Kapiti
radiant pink and gray:
no dawn parade more splendid
on that ANZAC day.

Daylight spread around
uncovering we three
perched in tiny kayaks
alone there on the sea

Past Brother's islands
tidal streams abound.
Cape Koamaru the prize -
gateway to the Sounds.

On Arapawa Island
we found a tiny bay:
tucker, tea, an hour's rest
Still only half way.

Queen Charlotte Sound:
ridges, bush and shore,
mile after mile of it,
and then some miles more.

We raced against each other,
taking turns to lead:
carbon paddles flailing
each trusty kevlar steed.

Or we'd throttle back
relaxing with the flow,
yawning, stretching, chatting;
still some way to go,

Thirteen hours all told
(or sometime thereabout)
to reach Waikawa Bay,
and Picton's lengthy Snout.

Finally, we're there,
Picton beach at last -
and perfectly timed, for
the opening of the cask!