



August 2014

Anjie Lees and Meg Thornton have just joined the very select group of international paddlers to have completed the 730km Yukon Quest canoe/kayak race in the wilds of northern Canada. In doing so they also joined the small band of elite adventurers from Lane Cove River Kayakers to have raced the Quest. Also in this year's Quest was Buzz Powell, a great friend of LCRK, who promptly followed this feat up by partnering Lane Cover Richard Barnes down the even longer Yukon 1000 (1600km).

## The Girls from Oz conquer the Yukon

by Anjie Lees



I think this adventure was first mentioned on a Hawkesbury famil last year as a distant bucket list item.

It all started with a coffee after the Botany Bay Harbour Series race. After having a great time on the Vic Murray, I said to Meg *what do you think?* We then proceeded with *can we get the time off work, what kayak can we get for the race, a kayak to train in and a landcrew.* We set up a training plan – which never really went to plan.

On Saturday June 21 Lorah (my sister), Merle (my aunt from NZ) and I met up with Meg in Vancouver to fly our final leg to Whitehorse. The adventure was becoming more real as our flight was descending into Whitehorse.

We landed, found our hotel, and the very next stop was to check out our boat for the race, a 7.6m Seaward Passat G3, and organise our training runs for Sunday and Monday.

Next stop was to get the last few items of gear from the amazingly huge and well-stocked outdoor camping and kayak shops. Both canoe/kayak companies in Whitehorse make it straightforward to hire a boat for the race. Both are located right on the river, you just carry your boat down and hop in. The hire included all the gear required for race, 2 training runs with pickups and transport back from Dawson.

The training runs were great, we met lots of other teams especially while we were waiting to be picked up. The first training run we were really just getting used to the moving water and had a few gear adjustments to do, particularly seating. The second day we started to pick the parts of the river moving faster. I think we hit a top speed of 19km/hour. We met

the only other team in the Tandem Womens Kayak Class – Ally actually works at the Kanoe people part-time and Priscilla was from California.

Tuesday was scrutineering. It was raining, we were a little nervous that we had everything we needed on the extensive compulsory requirements list. We were happy and singing by the time we had finished scrutineering and everything had passed without a problem.

Wednesday was race day. We planned to get to Rotary Park early to have our gear checked again and pack our kayak (it took 4 people to move it loaded). We were given our kayak starting position on the gravel bank near the faster part of the river. The start was at noon, it definitely looked like more than 68 teams. There were people everywhere. Each team and their sponsor were announced before the Le Mans start with a 400m

run to get to our kayak. The first 30 km to Policemans Point was neck and neck with our competitors Ally and Priscilla in the same boat.

We ventured into Lake Laberge and the weather changed, dramatically and quickly. Luckily for us it was a 30km/

hour tailwind rather than a headwind, a lot like Middle Head/Grotto Point. Many struggled with the conditions, one person was in the water for 20 minutes (near freezing) and was not talking sense when he finally made it to the shore straddled across a kayak.

We did see a few people on the shore at the top of the lake after taking in water/falling in but we were pretty much near the front, we were the first girls to get to Lower Laberge about an hour in front of Ally and Priscilla. We had something to eat, warmed up by the fire and got changed ready to paddle through the night.

It must have been around 2am and we were both feeling a little sleepy, so I said let's pull up and make a strong coffee to





**Meg and Anjie in their paddling gear (left) and on the podium in their Aussie gear as the top women's K2 crew**



**Anjie and Meg in foreground, with the other women's double, which later withdrew, on the left**

get us through the night. We pulled up at the bank, filled the jet boil and turned it on and coyotes started howling at us – they were very close. We looked at each other, Meg reached for the bear spray, we talked loudly and the coyotes howled loudly back. We decided to finish making the coffee and drank it quickly, hopped back in the boat and were off again, luckily unharmed.

The temperature seemed to drop quickly around 6am as the sun was rising and there was a thick fog on the water. We were cold (my fingers were numb) by that time so we stopped at the next checkpoint for a hot coffee. We were soon off for the final stretch to Carmacks. We were deciding which way to go around an island and hit a gravel run and opened up a previous repair. I didn't realise at first that we had a hole in the boat. About half an hour later the freezing water was half way up my leg and I pumped it out and continued to pump it out about every half hour until we got to Carmacks.

On one hand It was definitely a relief to see Carmacks and on the other you know you are not even half way. It was great to get Tom Simmat's facebook message "Congratulations, you are all doing great this is the toughest part of the race. Hope you recover well at Carmacks, take the rest of the race one step at a time, next step not far to Minto. Via the rapids so it is quick, then not far to Kirkmans Creek and another rest, then it's only one HCC to the finish go go go Lane Cove. TOM."

We were hoping to get around 5 hours sleep. I slept for about an hour and a half and couldn't sleep in the room anymore. Our landcrew told us that Ally and Priscilla had pulled out about 30km before Carmacks. For us this meant less racing and more enjoying the experience, so from here on we stopped at most of the checkpoints, chatting with the volunteers.

We left our support crew to clean up and dry out our boat while we were sleeping. We turned it over to gaffa tape it and get back in and a volunteer at the checkpoint filled the crack on the inside with epoxy. We were an hour late getting out of Carmacks, waiting for the epoxy to dry enough. You really appreciate a dry boat and the volunteers who go above and beyond to help.

We went through 5 Finger Rapids on our own at 2am. As we lined up on the right to go through the rapids I thought I saw an animal scurry down a steep dirt slope. I said to Meg to have a look – it wasn't an animal it was boulders of dirt rolling down the slope straight towards us. We could hear our landcrew calling out to us but couldn't see them.

This was definitely a highlight of the race. We didn't even see the support boat that was meant to be at the bottom. Rink Rapids was a non-event, we seemed to go right past without even needing to go through it.

We somehow missed the Minto monitoring point and proceeded on to Fort Selkirk. This was a very civilised stop with out-houses, a dry room and a little self-guided tour, not to mention the cookies and the wonderful coffee provided by the volunteers.

Next stop was Kirkmans Creek. We were in need of some real food by now (we were given soup and sandwiches) and a good sleep. We met and had dinner with Buzz Powell and all lay down to sleep. We decided to have 5 hours sleep instead of the required 3 hours. We felt well rested when we woke at midnight and eagerly ready to tackle the last 150km.

The next checkpoint we stopped at was 60 Mile River, we nearly missed it between the gravel runs. The water in this part of the river was about a metre lower than in previous years, which meant there were more islands and gravel runs than marked on the maps. We were feeling a little low on energy about an hour after 60 Mile River and came across another paddler (North of 55) falling asleep in his boat. It was time to get out the chocolate for a quick energy boost. There was a really big distance between our seats so we devised the paddle pass – Meg passed the paddle towards me, I put the chocolate on and she retrieved it carefully without dropping any chocolate in the water. We gave our new paddling friend some chocolate and paddled on to the finish.

We reached Dawson feeling overwhelmed and astounded at this town that looks like something out of a stage set. Happy to be finished and greeted by our landcrew and fellow paddlers. What an adventure!

The presentation day is definitely a buzz not to be missed. Many of our fellow paddlers were unrecognisable out of their

paddling gear. We were definitely not to be missed in our Aussie gear.

An adventure like this takes a lot to put together, all made easier by two very special people: Tom Simmat for his wealth of knowledge (and putting up with the hundreds of silly questions) and Tony Hystek for training Meg and me to paddle together with his amazing patience and knowing exactly what we need to do to get it right.

As I write our friends Richard and Buzz are just past Bayers Woodyard in the Yukon 1000. Good luck and plenty of admiration for them both. Definitely a race to consider for 2016.

[Anjie and Meg's race time was 63h 13m 24s. Meg then left for the US for a 5-day hike through the Grand Canyon – some people have an insatiable appetite for adventure. –Ed.]

## Inspiration from the 70+ brigade

Hats off to Lane Cove's 70+ brigade. The inspiration they have generated has spread around the world and renewed the enthusiasm of an elderly ex-paddler in Belgium .

Last September I wrote, in one of my monthly articles in *Rock-itt* magazine, about the band of veterans in LCRK who are over 70 and are still out there in endurance races mixing it with kayakers less than half their age.

The article was republished on the Paddle NSW website and picked up from there by Paul Nollen, a Belgian living in Antwerp.

He recently contacted the LCRK Committee and said that "inspired, and I must admit, somewhat challenged by your article ... I renewed my acquaintance with kayaking after more than 50 years absence."

He has posted on the US website Paddling Net a lengthy article about his recent experiences which dealt in great detail with his stability problems – solved by using "retractable fixed floats" – and developing a technique to pee safely while afloat.

LCRK member Cathy Miller responded by saying she thought he should call his kayak a "piddlefloat". – *Justin Paine*

## Rafting options in Geoquest by Richard Barnes

Each June long weekend, around 50 teams of four head out for 24 or 48 hours of non-stop Geoquest adventure racing. This always includes cycling, hiking and kayaking legs, and a distinct lack of sleep. Usually held in scenic places, this year's was centred on Crescent Head on the NSW Mid North Coast.

I am a regular competitor but this year took an easier route, acting as a volunteer, providing water rescue, manning checkpoints and setting out and retrieving checkpoint flags. Two hours sleep over the 60h long weekend was the volunteer challenge. LCRK paddler Neil Raffan was also there, acting as landcrew for one of the teams.

In addition to the regular activities, Geo 2014 included an archery challenge and a pack rafting leg.

Pack rafting saw all teams facing a 1km crossing of the

## Richard and Buzz reach Alaska

Richard Barnes and Buzz Powell have finished 3rd in the world's longest kayak/canoe race, the 1600km Yukon 1000 (the 1000 is for miles). Their amazing journey, over a distance equal to Sydney to Townsville in a direct line, took them 7 days 8 hours 35 minutes and 25 seconds, finishing on July 28.

The race was won by a Kiwi mixed double kayak in 6d 3h 47m 11s, with a Finnish canoe double second in 6d 5h 54m 22s.

The Yukon 1000 starts at Whitehorse in northern Canada and for the first 730km covers the same course down the fast-flowing river to Dawson as the Yukon Quest. It then continues on over the border into Alaska, finishing at Dalton Bridge.

Buzz had already done the Yukon Quest a month earlier in a single, and doubled up with Richard for the 1000 in an incredible feat of endurance.

The country they travelled through is utter wilderness, with an ever-present and very real danger from grizzly bears and moose. Compulsory equipment for competitors includes bear sprays and flares. Crews are totally self-reliant and camp on the side of the river for a minimum 6 hours every night.

Would you believe that two American competitors, a man and a woman, did the race on stand-ups!

A full report will appear in the next issue of *Kayak Kapers*.



**Buzz and Richard (foreground) at the race start**

Macleay River in the middle of a cycle leg. There were no limits on the raft flotation, nor the paddles, except that all gear had to be sufficiently light and small to carry on the bikes. Inflation was also an issue, with handy service station compressors nowhere near.

The solutions were varied, and variably effective. Paddle options ranged from full kayak double blades through half blades to toy raft dinky blades to nothing more than hands. Flotation choices ranged from tyre inner tubes to lilos and rafts of various sizes. Most found space for bikes but put room for paddlers at a premium. Oysters lining the banks created a trail of destruction, so many rafts sank. One queen-size lilo with four expensive mountain bikes as cargo was seen eskimo rolling.

Pack rafting may not be the most popular subset of kayaking, especially when night and cool temperatures arrived. Those with basic kayak skills still had a big advantage over the cycle and run specialists.



# Windy days for the marathon races

The weather has been getting progressively worse for the past few Marathon 10 races. At Narrabeen it was cold early and threatening to be windy, but once the sun appeared things settled down. Four weeks later, at Penrith, the forecasters said the wind would get up – and it did, a stiff southerly after the first lap: battle up the course, fly back. Then at Burrill Lake it was hang on to your hat in a really frosty southerly belter, with the wind smashing paddlers from all angles.

Through all this Lane Covers turned out in numbers in what have been generally good fields. We had 22 boats out of 152 at Narrabeen, 18 out of 114 at Penrith and 18 out of 110 at Burrill Lake.

Matt Blundell continued his unbeatable form with division 1 wins in the first and third of these races, both times beating two hours for 25km. He was away for the Penrith race when Toby Hogbin took line honours for the top division.

Tony Hystek had a gold and two silvers in the three division 2 events, and in division 3 David Young continued his impressive form with a 5th, 3rd and 4th. Christian Cox easily beat one-fifty with a ranking race in division 6 followed by a 4th in division 3 at Penrith.

Ruby Gamble's brilliant second at Narrabeen saw her promoted to division 5 where she has found the competition a little tougher. Also promoted were the "happy duo" of Alanna Ewin and Danielle Seisun who went from a win in division 7 at Narrabeen to a 3rd and a 5th in division 6 in the following races. Phil Geddes, in a single for a change, had two 4ths followed by a win at Burrill Lake (despite being blown off his ski) in division 6.

Other results which should be noted include Duncan Johnstone's and Tony Carr's seconds at Penrith, and at Burrill Lake Robert Manning's 2nd, Neil Duffy's 3rd and Ann Lloyd-Green's 3rd. Rae Duffy and Merridy Huxley, paddling together at Burrill Lake in preparation for the Hawkesbury Classic, had a ranking time in division 6 which would have won by 3 minutes.



At Narrabeen: Alanna Ewin, Danielle Seisun, Tony Hystek, Matt Swann, Ruby Gamble, Phil Geddes



Tony Carr at Penrith



At Penrith: Jon Harris, Don Rowston, Duncan Johnstone

## Marathon 10 Series

Competitor Div Time Plc

**Race 4 Narrabeen June 1**

Matt Blundell	1	1.55.46	1
Tony Hystek	2	1.39.15	2
Matt Acheson	2	1.46.57	9
Michael Day	2	1.48.51	10
David Young	3	1.46.44	5
Tom Simmat	3	1.49.03	9
David Hammond/ Tony D'Andreti	3	1.49.23	10
Richard Barnes	3	1.56.04	15
Wade Rowston	5	1.58.13	6
Duncan Johnstone	5	1.59.08	8
Tim Hookins	5	2.22.23	11
Christian Cox	5	1.47.50	Rnk
Anjie Lees/ Meg Thornton	5	2.00.17	Rnk
Ruby Gamble	6	1.57.48	2
Phil Geddes	6	1.59.09	4
Phil Newman	6	2.02.58	10
Derek Simmonds	6	2.03.25	12
Don Rowston/ Jeff Collins	6	1.54.45	Rnk
Alanna Ewin/ Danielle Seisun	7	2.06.46	1
Ann Lloyd-Green	8	1.35.53	8
Tony Walker/ John Greathead	10	1.00.02	10
Justin Paine	11	1.09.43	10

## Race 5 Penrith June 28

Toby Hogbin	1	2.01.39	1
Tony Hystek	2	1.42.20	1
Bruce Goodall	2	DNF	
David Young	3	1.47.41	3
Christian Cox	3	1.49.34	4
David Hammond/ Tony D'Andreti	3	1.50.46	6
John Duffy	4	1.58.18	10
Duncan Johnstone	5	1.59.46	2
Wade Rowston	5	2.02.16	7
Don Rowston/ Jon Harris	5	2.02.40	8
Ruby Gamble	5	2.08.56	12
Alanna Ewin/ Danielle Seisun	6	2.05.40	3
Phil Geddes	6	2.05.59	4
Derek Simmonds	6	2.08.45	9
Tony Carr	8	1.36.33	2
Andrew Kucyper	8	1.51.12	8
Tony Walker/ John Greathead	10	59.03	4
Justin Paine	11	1.15.40	16

## Race 6 Burrill Lake July 19

Matt Blundell	1	1.58.09	1
Toby Hogbin	1	1.59.21	2
Tony Hystek	2	1.40.28	4
David Young	3	1.50.12	4
David Hammond/ Tony D'Andreti	3	1.51.10	5
Robert Manning	4	1.54.20	2
John Duffy	4	2.03.02	10
Duncan Johnstone	5	1.58.51	4
Wade Rowston	5	2.00.30	5
Tim Hookins	5	2.02.09	7
Ruby Gamble	5	2.13.56	10
Phil Geddes	6	2.05.33	1
Alanna Ewin/ Danielle Seisun	6	2.09.53	5
Anjie Lees	6	2.12.52	9
Rae Duffy/ Merridy Huxley	6	2.02.37	Rnk
Neil Duffy	7	2.20.15	3
Ann Lloyd-Green	11	1.05.05	3
Don Rowston	11	1.11.35	6
Div 1=25k, divs 2-7=20k, div 8=15k, divs 9-11=10k			

## Harbour Series

Competitor	Categ	Time	Plc	Cat
<b>Stroke the Lion June 21</b>				
<b>Long course</b>				
Matt Blundell/ Damo Staunton	dbl	1.09.27	1	1
Chris Quirk/ Mark Kenna	dbl	1.15.17	5	2
Toby Hogbin	40+	1.15.27	6	1
David Young	50+	1.26.21	34	5
Caron Jander	W OC1	1.38.43	51	1
Tony Mathers	50+	1.40.21	53	15
<b>Short course</b>				
Steve Newsome/ Tony Haines	dbl	56.05	2	1
Robert Manning	30+	59.54	4	2
Phil Geddes	60+	1.01.49	7	1
Ann Lloyd-Green/ Dave Salter	dbl	1.06.23	14	2
<b>Tingara July 27</b>				
<b>Long course</b>				
Toby Hogbin	40+	1.29.56	8	4
<b>Short course</b>				
Jeremy Spear	50+	48.29	7	5
Meg Thornton	W40+	1.13.15	12	3



From left: Matt Blundell, David Young and Christian Cox in the marathon series

### Drive carefully

Gay Hatfield has sent along this item from Burley Griffin marathon regular Ian Castell-Brown, to be sung to the tunes of "In the Shade of the Old Apple Tree" and/or "Tie Me Kangaroo Down":

*An unfunny thing happened to me  
on the way up to Marathon 3,  
I got up with the lark,  
left home in the dark  
and was blissfully driving al-ong-ong-ong-ong.*

*When right there on a bend in the road  
stood a group of 6 cattle or so.  
They were blocking my lane,  
I had nothing to gain, but to swerve  
and brake hard at the ti-i-i-me.*

*But there on the opposite side  
was a view-hick-I, some owner's pride,  
it was hit car or beast,  
not a good choice at least  
so I side-swiped the softer op-t-ee-ee-on.*

*With a shUDDER the cow wandered off  
leaving me to consider my loss  
which I did and drove on  
paddled the Marathon,  
then went home to arrange for re-pair-air-air-air.*

*There's a moral to all this you know  
which is something all kayakers do(e)  
and I close this to say...  
while still in array,  
and my kayak remains in one piece.*

OHHHH O OHHHH.

## Code red change to Murray dates

by Tom Simmat

While down on the Murray 200, I slowed up and had a chat to Bill Robinson, he was on his 21<sup>st</sup> Murray 200. Anyway, he is on the "Board" of the Murray 400, the Murray Marathon.

He said the reasoning behind the date of the Murray 400 being changed from the traditional Christmas-New Year week to late November was a result of the Victorian Royal Commission into the deaths that occurred during the recent Victorian bushfires, and in particular those athletes who died during a marathon running race that was overwhelmed by a wildfire.

The advice was that if a "code red" fire danger was declared, any sporting or other event within a fire zone should be cancelled. If the event was not cancelled, the event organisers would be directly liable for any property loss, injury or death of any participant including, in this instance, volunteers and landcrews.

A "code red" could occur at any time and might last for days. A "code red" was most likely to occur in the Victorian bushfire season, December through to March.

If the Murray 400 retained its dates as December 27 to 31, there was a very high probability that having obtained the usual registration dollars and volunteer commitment, the whole event could be cancelled on the morning of the first day.

So the event was moved back out of the bushfire season into late November. While this conflicted with all the local schools' exam timetables, dates in late March or April clashed with other school events. Earlier in November or October began to clash with the HCC, and May/June clashed with the Murray 200.

So the Murray 400 will be in late November, not in a holiday period.

For the event to survive, they are relying on paddler numbers, including relays, to exceed 200. So they are looking to the "adventure" paddler community.

The event will be run on a shoe string, a bit like the Murray 200. No booked camping ovals with elaborate showers etc. Participants will be directed to local camping and caravan grounds. I will be going and we need to encourage as many paddlers from NSW as possible to keep this event alive.

## The Murray 200: a great race

by Tom Simmat

If you have nothing to do on the June long weekend, you don't mind the drive to Berri on the Murray in South Australia, you want to experience arguably the prettiest part of the mighty Murray and especially if you don't mind getting your boat ready in the dark for a very cold dawn start, then the Murray 200 is the race for you.

Over three days there are race options. Full distance requires each day a paddle of 76km, 69km and 63km. Or you can do it as a relay, or do the half marathon 100km starting at the midday check point. Or even do the mini marathon which each day starts about 12km from the finish.

I am a full-distance man and each day normally has a staggered start depending on your speed, then a 20km dash to the first check point, a lock, where we all reassemble. Sit together in the lock as the water is let down, then dash off again with the flow past the weir.

This year they were working on the lock, so the first day saw us butting the current upstream for 18km, rounding a buoy, then back on course for the rest of the day.



Angie Lees and Meg Thornton were there doing some last minute preparation for the Yukon and Duncan Johnstone and I made up the rest of the Lane Cove team.

While Angie and Meg pressed on regardless, Duncan developed a shoulder injury and opted for the shorter distances on day two and three.

I always say preparation is the key to success in ultra marathon events, especially get your seat right. I was paddling unrestricted in a Fenn Glide ocean ski. I did not pad out the seat because I thought I could tough it out. Not so, my days became a race between my pelvic bone and the fibreglass seat as to which would wear through first what flesh was left on my skinny bum.

I probably had the fastest boat and found the other leaders washriding me most of the morning. But eventually I had to take a break and get some relief from the pain, and as each day drew to a close they got away. My time was 20h 5m 22s, which was 3 hours longer than my 2012 time.

Angie and Meg did it in a credible 22h 42m 5s.

I will go back next year, and maybe with a bit of car- and accommodation-sharing organisation Lane Cove could send down a bigger contingent. Definitely a great race.

# Paul van Koesveld is the new President of LCRK

Paul van Koesveld was on July 25 elected president of Lane Cove River Kayakers and will lead a largely unchanged committee as the club capitalises on the progress of the past two years with the construction of our own boat shed.

This will be a major stage in the club's development and open up a range of new opportunities.

In the only two major changes to the committee at the AGM, Paul moves from secretary to president, and retiring president Wade Rowston becomes the new secretary. Tom Holloway continues as vice-president and Phil Geddes remains treasurer.

Duncan Johnstone and Anjie Lees continue as committee members, with Jeff Tonazzi and John Duffy coming in as new members to replace Derek Simmonds and Jon Harris.

Paul has shown in the past few years that he has the enthusiasm and leadership qualities to extend the impressive list of recent club achievements.

In particular the way he has taken charge of our preparations for the Hawkesbury Classic and blended a band of great individual performers into a unified team very heavy on club spirit and loyalty is an indicator of what lies ahead.

In recording highlights of the past year in a president's report in which he said "Lane Cove is greater than the sum of all its parts", Wade:

- ❖ paid tribute to Nigel Colless for reorganising and computerising timekeeping procedures on Wednesday nights, spending most of the year timekeeping himself and teaching others
- ❖ complimented Tony Hystek and Don Andrews for their coaching efforts to help raise the standard of paddling
- ❖ noted that the après-paddle activities of Café de Justin and the BBQ had contributed the success of Wednesday nights, providing a great opportunity for members to catch up with their club mates

❖ congratulated the club for memorable performances in the Hawkesbury Classic and a range of other ultra marathons like the Myall, Riverland, the Murray Marathon, the Yukon and Devides-Westminster, along with various Paddle NSW series.

Jeremy Spear, who with Tom Simmat has been a prime mover in organising approvals, plans

and construction contracts for the new boat shed, told the AGM the club should have a shed by late August. It will then have to be fitted out and arrangements made on just how it is to be used.

The club has now moved out of the small shed it has occupied for the past few years and will operate on a temporary basis for the new next few Wednesday nights until the new shed is ready for occupation.



**The new LCRK committee: Jeff Tonazzi, Wade Rowston (secretary), Anjie Lees, Paul van Koesveld (president), Tom Holloway (vice-president), Phil Geddes (treasurer) and Duncan Johnstone. Inset: John Duffy (absent).**



## Name your favourite spot on the time-trial course

Do you have pet name for various points along our 12km time trial course on Lane Cove River? Wade Rowston has come up with the idea that we should adopt our own names for some of the corners and stretches which for one memory or another are almost folklore to us.

At the club's AGM and Annual Dinner on July 25 he invited members to suggest names which reflect their significance from a paddling point of view.

Tim McNamara produced a large-scale map of the course and those present were able to place post-it stickers containing their ideas on various points along the 12km.

One of the most imaginative was Fishing Line Limbo for the bank on the left just before the bottom mark where paddlers have often had to duck under fishing lines – *how low can you go?*

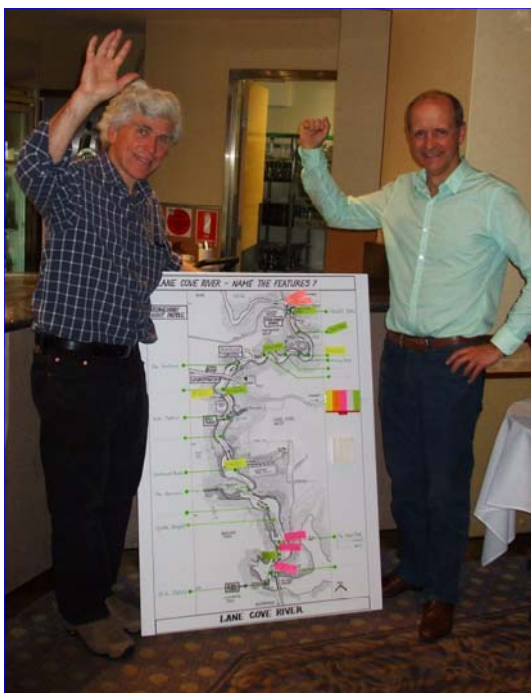
Among the others were for the Fullers Bridge mark, Collision Corner, Tip Turn and Steakhouse Turn; for the stretch coming back from Fullers Bridge, Lovers Lane; for the next right turn, Wirong Corner; for the bend between the next two lots of buoys,

Swimmers Point; for the left corner near the factory, Duck Corner and Footbridge Triangle; for the stretch opposite Blackmans Park, Broad Reach; for the sand spit, Rowers Run, Rowers Crossing and Deception Flats; and for the last right turn before the bottom mark, Rudder Rock.

The map will be on display at the pontoon for the next few Wednesday nights and if you wish to put your idea forward you will be able to do so. Alternatively, you can send your suggestions to [committee@lcrk.org.au](mailto:committee@lcrk.org.au).

When everyone has had an opportunity to participate, the committee will decide which are the best names and a final map will be produced for permanent display. And in future when we're talking about things that happen on the river or explaining the course to newcomers, we'll have clear reference marks.

So, be in the fun. Let your imagination run riot. Let's see if you can come up with a memorable name.



Richard Robinson won the Frank McDonald Memorial Prize for the best contributed article in *Kayak Kapers* in 2013/14. His article described the race he and Tony Hystek had in the Devizes-Westminster in April, which took them almost right across England. Richard was overseas at the time of the AGM and the prize was accepted on his behalf by his wife Joy and son Guy, both of whom are club paddlers and both of whom landcrewed for the D-W. They are pictured above with *KK* editor Justin Paine. Other finalists in the competition were Andrew Benoit, Tim Hookins, Chris Quirk and Phil Geddes. Judges were John Greathead, Duncan Johnstone, Anjie Lees, Tim McNamara and Derek Simmonds.



John Greathead is shown presenting brand new paddles to Anjie Lees and Meg Thornton, on behalf of boatbuilder Ron Elliott. Ron donated the paddles in recognition of the outstanding performance of Anjie and Meg in winning their category in the recent Yukon River Quest in Canada. He also appreciated the feedback he got from Anjie on the performance in the race of the Tomaree double which he built and which was used by the outright winners of this year's Quest, Britons Shaun Thrower and Steve King. Ron built the Tomaree for Urs Mader and Tm Simmat to race in the 2013 Quest, and it was left behind in Canada for use by future competitors.



## Will this year's Classic see the solo record broken?

Is a Lane Cove competitor going to set a new fastest-ever time for a solo paddler in the Hawkesbury Classic this year?

It's a big ask, given that Toby Hogbin took a big chunk of the previous record in posting 8.18.19 two years ago.

But he and Matt Blundell are planning to do the 2014 race side by side, and the prospect of these two top paddlers and good mates working off each other and encouraging each other makes the mouth water.

Toby says he could have gone faster in 2012 had he stopped for a shorter period at Wisemans and not been held up by ferries.

"I would like to better my time this year obviously, but it is a long way and anything can happen between now and then and during the race," he said.

"I'm going to have a different boat this time. At present I expect to use a Think Uno Max, which seems a little faster than the V12."

Toby prefers a ski to a K1 because the added stability, especially during a long night race, allows him to concentrate more on power.

Matt is going to paddle a K1. Of course. He's so comfortable in a K1 that he could probably sleep in one in a gale. Matt's previous Classic attempts have seen him fall just short of the 8½-hour mark. Don't bet on it happening again.

They'll leave together in the 6pm start, last cabs off the rank, and if you want to see them come into the finish at Deerubbin Reserve, Mooney Mooney, you'd better be on the boat ramp pretty soon after 2am.

The Classic is the big event of the year for Lane Cove, and all the indicators point to us having another big and strong fleet again this year to defend our title as the top club in the event.

A preliminary call for members who are contemplating doing the race has led to 33 boats, including three doubles, so far. Another dozen can be expected to emerge from the woodwork, and there have been signs that a number of visitors who have been down on Wednesday nights have been waiting for the start of the new financial year to join up and do the Classic.

Paul van Koesveld, who has been the club's chief HCC cheerleader for several years now, is at this stage not planning to be in this year's field due to recent surgery but don't write



Toby Hogbin setting the fastest solo time in the 2012 Classic

him off just yet. His double partner, Phil Geddes, is more or less resigned to doing the race solo on a ski.

The race booklet is out and copies are available at the registration table at the pontoon. Photos of LCRK competitors from last year's race abound in it. On the cover are Derek Simmonds (in a hat) followed by John Duffy and Matt Swann. If you search inside you'll find Bettina Otterbeck, Meg Thornton, Anjie Lees, Ruby Gamble and Richard Barnes. Not to mention Tony Carr in a promo for his families.

The booklet contains this year's tide chart which shows that high tide for the race start on Saturday, Oct 25 will a few minutes before 3pm. Given the view of many that the actual tides are half an hour or even a little more later than listed, this means that the Brooklyn-or-Busters who are first away at 4pm will have the benefit of almost a full outgoing

tide to take them at least to Sackville, maybe to Dargle.

The next high tide is due to hit Wisemans a whisker after midnight and offers for most another go-with-the-flow ride down the final section. Low tide is listed for the finish at 4.25am. Allow, say, an hour for the lag and for the tide to turn. That means you should aim to finish before about 5.30am or battle an incoming tide to Mooney Mooney.

It will surprise no-one that there will be no moon. Get your Garmin's out.



The Think Uno Max that Toby Hogbin likes for the Classic

LCRK is noted for its preparation for the Classic and for the advice and assistance offered by club veterans to lesser paddlers and in particular to newcomers. It has organised a number of familiarisation paddles for members to help in their training (see next page). These are especially valuable to those who are doing the race for the first time as they go over the actual course.

As in past years there will be a number of talks at which veterans offer advice on training, race clothing, race food and drink, strategies etc. Dates announced are Aug 13, Sept 10 and Oct 8 at the pontoon after the time trial.

Just about everyone in the club participates in the race in one way or another. Apart from the competitors there are those who spend the night on the river bank as landcrews. Some act as spotters to predict arrival times and warn landcrews of imminent arrivals. Some act as officials. If you want to race but don't have a landcrew, or if you want to be a landcrew or to help in any other way, get in touch with Paul van Koesveld or any club official.

Expect club meeting points at Sackville and Wisemans. That's where'll you'll learn what camaraderie is all about. If your landcrew is from outside the club, make sure they know they are welcome at these club points where they will have not only good company but expert help.

### Help needed for the Classic

Richard Barnes, on behalf of the Hawkesbury Classic committee, is seeking help from LCRK members in running this year's Classic.

He said: "We are looking for assistance in a number of areas.

The tasks include:

- at the start, at scrutineering
- at the finish, with creating, laminating and distributing finishers certificates
- at the start, sorting and distributing race-day show bags, pre-filling them with freebies.

"It may be possible for LCRK people who are paddling or landcrewing, or manning the Sackville and Wisemans checkpoints, to take on dual roles.

"Volunteers can contact me personally, via my email richard.barnes@hyder.com.au, or phone 8907-9257."



## These LCRK paddlers are preparing for the Classic

These are the LCRK members who have indicated they plan to compete in this year's Hawkesbury Classic. Some also talked about their aspirations. More names are expected to be added and all indications are that Lane Cove will once again field a formidable team.

**Richard Barnes.** Type of boat still to be decided, 50+. Aim to finish happier than I started.

**Matt Blundell,** K1 Open.

**Oscar Cahill.** Mirage 530, 50+, not sure of category. I may finish!

**Tony Carr.** Challenger or Barracuda Interface, LR 60+. Aim to beat my PB of 11 hours 36 mins 26 secs and come in ahead of Jon Harris.

**Adrian Clayton.** Valley Rapier sea kayak (which I have been using of late in LCRK time trials). Not sure of the class – maybe BorB or Unlimited 60+ (if there is such a class). No predictions other than I am expecting to markedly improve on my first effort in the HCC which was a leisurely 13hrs.

**John Duffy.** Sonic, UN 50+. Hope to get under 11hrs.

**Neil Duffy.** Will be 50+, not sure what craft.

**Rae Duffy.** I'm paddling with **Merridy Huxley** in a Supersonic, ladies UN 50+.

**Ruby Gamble.** Sonic, UN1 Open. I'm definitely in – hooked now! I'm hoping to reduce my time by another 2 hours down to 12 hours. Not looking forward to starting at 6pm though.

**Phil Geddes.** Not fully confirmed yet but it looks like I'll be in a single. Fenny Swordfish, OSR1, 60+. Hope to finish.

**Shane Gibson.** Will be entering with my brother Sam, in a double. He is not a paddler so we will be doing B&B. More of a brother bonding thing.

**David Hammond, Tony D'Andreti.** SLR2, Open. Aim to beat last year's time. Don't stop at Pit Stop!

**Tony Hogbin,** Boat at present is a Think Uno Max, unrestricted 40+. Aim is just to do well. Would like to better last year's time obviously. Will have more of a feeling in a few weeks.

**Tom Holloway.** Time Traveller, LR Open, hoping for around 10 hours.

**Timothy Hookins.** I regret I will not be able to paddle this year. I will be getting used to my pacemaker! I am getting the V8 turbo model if possible. I hope to have it tuned and purring next year.

**Tony Hystek.** Doing it again in my Kayakpro Vampire, UN1 50+. One final crack at the 8h57m record!

**Duncan Johnstone.** Elliott Renegade, LR 60+. Want to finish first, and if all goes well to get in under 12 hrs. For another attempt! The fool I am.

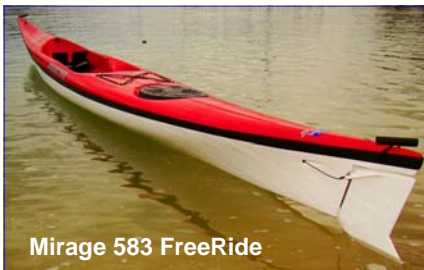
**Anjie Lees.** I'm definitely doing the Classic but I haven't decided yet what

category.

**Tony Mathers.** I am a strong possible for the HCC but am out of the country at the moment. Epic 18X MR 50+.

**Peter Millard.** Horizon Flyer LR 50+,. As this is my first HCC, my aim is to finish.

**Cathy Miller, Trevor Waters.** 50+, either the Mirage 730 or both in Mirage 583 FreeRides. The 583 is a new open-deck (sit-on-top) Mirage design. At 17kg in carbon it is tempting. It has the stability of the Mirage but is lighter (not as warm, though). It would be a grand experiment to do it in this boat. Our main goal will be



Mirage 583 FreeRide

to smile at our landcrew (Trevor Williamson, bless his socks) when finishing, which means we've eaten well, we're well hydrated and we've paddled within our abilities

**Kenji Ogawa.** Horizon Flyer, 60+ LR. My annual overnight kayaking and this year my 20<sup>th</sup> Classic, I can't miss out and I told my customers "sorry, I'm out of town" – every year.

**Justin Paine.** Flash, BorB, would like to finish and be the first 80+ to do the Classic solo.

**Jonathan Peters.** Tiderace Pace 18, MR 40+. Wanting to break 13 hrs

**Chris Quirk, Stuart Myers.** Stellar Double, 50+. Chris: subject to shoulder rehab, am planning HCC. Planning a double and will go in BB2. Aiming for sub 9 hours. Stuart: Performance depends on Quirky's shoulder, ~ 9.5 hrs.

**Warwick Sherwood.** Epic V10, 50+ rec. Aiming for 14-15 hrs.

**Tom Simmat.** I will be in the Classic this year but the type of boat and class is undecided and/or top secret, but I will try and pick up another record

**Derek Simmonds.** Decision is in the balance, but leaning towards no. We don't get back from five weeks in Canada until a month before the Classic. My damaged shoulder has been deteriorating more noticeably than the rest of my bod.

**Matt Swann.** I am planning to enter – if I can find a willing landcrew, that is! 50+,

not sure of my craft or class or aspirations yet.

**Jeremy Spear.** Conventional kayak with either 1 or 2 or 4 seats. I will likely go competitively ie 50+ MR1/ORS1/UN1/K2/K4.

**Meg Thornton.** Ladies 50+, surf ski. Expecting a below 12hr as I left plenty of time up my sleeve for improvement last year so just possibly a new class record as long as there are no other entrants in this exclusive category again. PS don't tell any one that or they'll be sure to find someone else to enter!

**Bob Turner.** SLR-1, LR 50+.

**Kyle Wilson.** Partnering **Luke Heaseman**, Mirage 730, LR2 Open. Just finish and experience the night.

**David Young.** Epic ocean ski, 50+ ORS. I have my mind set on another HCC, hoping for 10½ hours.

### Training on the course

LCRK has organised four familiarisation paddles on the Hawkesbury to help members prepare for the Classic. These are a popular way for newcomers to get a feeling for what they will face in the race and they also provide an excellent opportunity to do some solid training on the race track itself.

The first of these famils was held on Sunday Aug 3, from race finish at Mooney Mooney to Spencer and back. The schedule for the others is:

Saturday Aug 23: Windsor to Sackville, one way, 9am start. \$5 charge for parking and beach access to Ulinbawn ski park.

Sunday Sept 21: Sackville to Wisemans, one way, 9am start. \$5 charge for ski park access.

Saturday Oct 4: Wisemans to Spencer, one way. No charge.

Car shuffles will be arranged for these paddles. Check with Paul van Koesveld or a Committee member for more details.

The club is also organising 24km night paddles (twice the 12km time trial course) for the Wednesday evenings of Aug 20, Sept 17 and Oct 15. These are opportunities to improve night vision, test GPS systems and try out race clothing.

In addition to the LCRK famils, Tony Carr is also arranging famils through his company, Freedom Outdoors. Two have already been held and there will be two more for Sackville to Wisemans (Sunday Aug 10) and Brooklyn to Spencer and back (Sunday Aug 31). There is a charge of \$55 for these paddles. Details from [tonycarr@ozemail.com.au](mailto:tonycarr@ozemail.com.au).

# How fast could you paddle the Classic?

by Tom Holloway



Most of us enter the Hawkesbury Classic with a target time in mind. The tricky question is: what's an achievable target? It can be a difficult thing to estimate, even for experienced paddlers, and most of us rely on guesswork to some degree.

It's tempting to choose an ambitious target, however this can lead to frustration if your goal is unrealistic and things don't go to plan. Conversely, some people underestimate how fast they really could go.

So just what is realistic and what isn't?

Thankfully there's plenty of Hawkesbury experience in our club which helps answer the question. By looking at the past results of similar calibre 12k paddlers to ourselves we can get a good idea of what's possible given our 12k results, our level of preparation, and our effort on the night.

### Lane Cove Hawkesbury results

The graph below shows Lane Cove's results from 2006 to 2013 (ie as far as our archived results go back). Hawkesbury results are plotted against people's season-best 12k result in their Hawkesbury boat (or similar speed boat). Needless to say, fast 12k results tend to translate into fast Hawkesbury results.

### Hawkesbury results relative to 12k results

There are three trend lines plotted on the graph (and reflected

in the table): **Slow**, **Typical**, and **Very Fast**. These are Hawkesbury results **relative** to 12k results, ie they reflect the usual range of Hawkesbury results obtained by different-speed 12k paddlers. These relative trends are what we're really interested in – there's no point comparing ourselves against much faster or slower paddlers.

Take a closer look at slow, typical and very fast to see what produces each of them. That way we can get a better idea of where in this range we might end up.

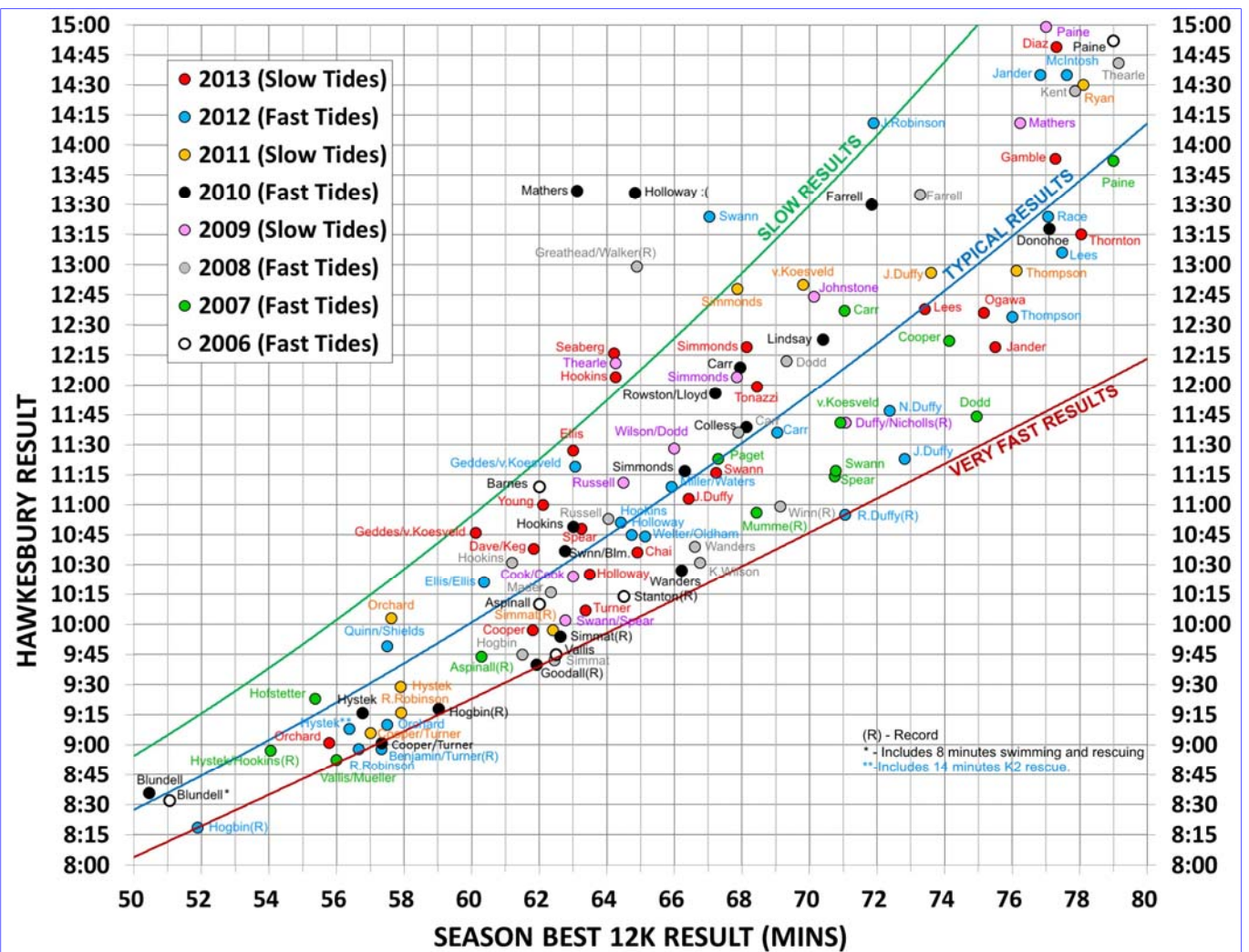
**Slow:** These are the slowest 5% of Hawkesbury results relative to 12k times, ie about 95% of paddlers will beat the green line given their 12k speed.

Slow paddlers might have had:

- a fun paddle (nothing wrong with that!)
- lots of stoppage time (stoppage time is what gets you)
- no prior Hawkesbury experience
- insufficient distance training
- gear trouble
- food trouble
- sickness or injury during the race
- navigation difficulties

All these things can contribute to a slow result.

**Typical:** These are the typical Hawkesbury results for each class of 12k paddler, ie about half of all Lane Cove paddlers beat the blue line. Typical Hawkesbury pace is around 85% of your 12k pace (including stoppage time). This is a solid effort no matter what speed 12k paddler you are.



A typical result generally requires:

- a decent base of distance training; training several times a week, with a number of longer paddles (30km+) in the lead up.
- previous Hawkesbury experience
- well organised gear and nutrition
- sustained pace
- not too much stoppage time – say 20-30 minutes in total for most people (less for top class paddlers, who typically don't stop much)
- no major problems, be it equipment failure, injury, sickness etc.

A typical Lane Cove result is a good result and will often win your class. You'll achieve a typical result with some training and effort, though maybe not on your first attempt.

**Very Fast:** These are the top 5% of results relative to 12k results. They're the truly exceptional efforts, hence all the records scattered along this line. These paddlers maintained roughly 90% of their 12k speed (including stoppage time), which is a phenomenal pace to maintain for 100km.

Interestingly these results are all clustered on the same line. This suggests that it's approaching the limit of what's possible given someone's 12k ability. To check this I asked these paddlers if they could have gone faster on the night. The general response was not much, maybe 5-10 minutes quicker with no ferries and a slightly better race. This would appear to confirm that it's getting close to what's possible. To go substantially faster (say 15+ minutes faster) the river would probably need to be in flood.

A very fast result generally requires:

- a lot of training; many of these paddlers do 10hrs/100km a week!
- a lot of experience
- the right boat and equipment
- the right nutrition
- a hard and focussed effort
- excellent navigation
- minimal stoppage time, especially out of boat time; a few minutes at Wisemans and that's about it; your support crew plays a big role here.
- good tides – notice how the very fast results occurred in fast tide years; the slow-tide years were about 15 minutes slower across the board, and no-one got down to the red line despite some stellar efforts.
- no major hiccups.

### Tips from top paddlers

Here are some first-hand tips from very fast Hawkesbury paddlers:

**Toby Hogbin:** *In my experience a quick Hawkesbury comes down to a few things: Training, nutrition and a boat you can sit in and paddle at the speed you want over the race. You want to be doing the kms, starting at least six months out. I like to be doing at least 100km a week.. Carbs are good for the first two hours, after that you are going to need protein as well; endura optimiser works well. Hammer do some good products as well. Test them out as some sit better in the stomach than others.*

**Rae Duffy:** *The key for me during the race was to stay focused but relaxed. I stopped briefly at Wisemans but didn't get out of the kayak – there was plenty of attention to food, fluids, clothing, training etc. The month leading up to the Hawkesbury I paddled 4 times a week, 10-12 hours a week. finding a pace that I could sustain.*

**Jason Cooper:** *Bob (Turner) and I trained by doing the Wed Time Trials, a Saturday morning of 20-30km at good pace, and a Sunday morning paddle. I had 2 bladders set up – 1 with water and the other a weak mix of PowerAde, an energy bar before the race, gu every couple of hours. We quickly changed*

*clothes for warmer ones at Wisemans while stuffing another energy bar and handful of lollies down my throat. Never wanted to spend any more than 5 minutes there. It's always easier in a double.*

**Bob Turner:** *The key for Jason and me was to paddle to our plan – 2 hours, no more, then a quick rest, just enough time to have a Gu and a mouthful of drink. Mentally, I learnt not to listen too much to what everybody else is doing. I look at the HCC as just another paddle. You get in, you paddle, after a while you get out. You just stay in a bit longer than your normal paddle! I try not to over-think it. I certainly don't set myself times to be at certain checkpoints, and I don't really let the tide have too much impact on my planning. I have a general idea of what I want to do, and roughly when I'd like to be a Wisemans Ferry. I have 5 minutes out of the boat there, throw a towel around my shoulders, drink a coffee, eat a peanut butter and jam sandwich, a protein drink, 6 or 7 red frogs, and head off again, and then I look at it as a 40km paddle home. My approach with Kirsty was exactly the same, except we stopped every 1.5hrs, which I learnt worked better for me. I've also learnt that it's more than just carbs you need to take on at regular intervals.*

**Bruce Goodall:** *Make sure you get your seat right, and don't change anything on race day. I drink about 6 litres in total. I don't eat solid food; I use Endura and Up-and-Go. I increase my rate (cadence) when against the tide to keep the boat running. When I'm with the tide I slow my rate, and stay out wider in the river. I'll cut the corners, but try to stay in the flow. I aim for 1km/h less than the Lane Cove time trial, that's the average speed for the entire event. It's easier in a double, you keep each other motivated.*

### How fast can you go?

Take your best recent 12k time in your HCC boat, decide whether you can manage a slow, typical, or very fast Hawkesbury result relative to paddlers who are your equal over 12km (or somewhere in between), then refer to the graph or table. That should be a reasonably good estimate of what you might achieve.

If it's a slow-tide year then add another 15 minutes to your target. People sometimes neglect to factor in bad tides and end up disappointed. 2014 should be fast so if you're hoping to make your mark this might be the year!

If you're experienced and you already have your Hawkesbury target worked out you can plot it on the graph to see how it compares against previous Lane Cove results.

Hopefully this compilation of results helps your Hawkesbury planning and sheds some light on what's possible given your 12k times, your level of preparation, and your effort on the night. Good luck!

Best 12k Result	HAWKESBURY RESULTS RELATIVE TO 12K RESULTS		
	Very Fast Result	Typical Result	Slow Result
50	8:05*	8:30	8:55
52	8:20	8:45	9:15
54	8:35	9:00	9:40
56	8:50	9:20	10:00
58	9:05	9:40	10:30
60	9:25	10:00	10:55
62	9:40	10:20	11:25
64	9:55	10:45	11:50
66	10:10	11:05	12:25
68	10:30	11:30	12:55
70	10:45	11:55	13:30
72	11:05	12:20	14:05
74	11:20*	12:45	14:40
76	11:40*	13:15	15:20
78	11:55*	13:40	16:00
80	12:15*	14:10	16:40

\*-extrapolated

## Wednesday nights at the pontoon with Wade Rowston



The first time trial in June saw the introduction of LCRK's version of the Vivid light and sound festival. Vivid is Sydney's annual Light and Sound which has gained tremendous popularity in a few short years.

At short notice a few paddlers managed to put together some impressive mobile light installations. Tim McNamara paid



tribute to the Angels, Oscar Cahill and Gaye Hatfield were each lit up like Christmas trees, and Tom Holloway's boat looked like a psychedelic crocodile tearing through the water. I had a row of illuminated ducklings following me. Jana Osvald, Derek Simmonds and Tony Carr also joined in the fun. Check out the photos from the link on our website.

Since then Wednesdays have become quite cold on occasion and a little unfavourable to post fast times. In mid June there was a dark a night that coincided with a particularly low tide. As a result four paddlers found themselves running aground or tipping in. Best just to stick to the middle of the river on those nights. Again, in early July, a couple of paddlers hit the drink in the coldest night of the year. I was freezing rugged up riverside, so it would have been a chilly swim.



Christmas trees afloat: Gaye Hatfield (top) and Oscar Cahill

Because of the regularity of paddlers tipping in, the committee has decided to

change the approach taken with swimming paddlers. It is now compulsory for the first paddler to encounter a swimmer to stop and assist. From now until daylight saving starts this is the new procedure and we ask everyone to adopt this practice in the interests of safety.

The thinking is that when a paddler tips in, in cold water, their situation can deteriorate very quickly if they can't get back into their kayak easily. Initially they think they're okay but they will need assistance as they get cold. When it is a high tide and hard to find a spot among the mangroves to empty out and re-enter their kayak, assistance will be needed. The safety of our fellow paddlers is much more important than having a slow night on the clock. The assisting paddler will receive "rescue points" if it is a Cup night. There will be some training sessions on deep water re-entry once it warms up a bit.

The Crudslime and Coffee Cups continue to be hotly contested. We are just past the halfway point and there is a long way to go. Don't give up if you think you are not in the running. You never know what may happen. In the Crudslime Cup Gaye Hatfield scored top points in June and Tom Holloway took the gold in July. Ruby Gamble tops the points table as she continues to show great form. The Coffee Cup June round was won by Karen Darby and July by George von Martini. Oscar Cahill still leads the Coffee Cup points score.

There has been a lot of activity regarding the new shed. We have now moved out of our existing shed for a few weeks while it is extended and remedial work is carried out so that the Little A's club can move into it from the area that will be encapsulated in our new shed. Hope we will have a shed shell by end August, then the fit-out will commence. A new era for the club is on the horizon.

Happy paddling!

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**Secretary:** Wade Rowston

**Treasurer:** Phil Geddes

**Committee members:** Anjie Lees, Duncan Johnstone, Jeff Tonazzi, John Duffy

**Kayak Kapers Editor:** Justin Paine 9858-3323

## Nature Notes by Jon Harris

### The Pelican – *Pelicanus conspicillatus*

Ungainly and ugly on land, graceful predator on the water, and in the air, majestic and master of all he surveys – my favourite bird, the pelican.

There are only 7 species in the world and only the Australian pelican in our waters. The male is larger than the female and they are found throughout Australia and PNG, and occasionally in NZ and the west Pacific Islands. They inhabit freshwater and estuarine wetlands and are highly mobile in their quest for good food, good habitat and breeding colonies. While not capable of sustained flapping flight, they are expert soarers and can remain aloft for 24 hours and attain heights of 3000m and speeds of 50km/hr, and by moving from one thermal to the next can achieve long distances.



Their oversized beak and pouch are important for feeding. The sensitive beak can locate fish in murky water and their upper beak has a hook on the end which helps to hold on to captured fish while manipulating them into the pouch with the head of the fish pointing down their throat. Then with a rearward jerk of his head it swallows the fish alive in one gulp.

The beak is delicately boned and the



pouch is simply an elongated throat which can hold up to 13 litres when full. Food is not stored in the pouch, it is simply used as a net to capture fish and then sieve out the water and debris. It's also ideal for catching food thrown by humans!

While some pelicans live and feed alone, most join small or large groups, herding fish together into shallow water or surrounding fish in a circle before scooping them into their pouches. Breeding is very dependant on good rainfall. Breeding colonies can number in the tens of thousands on offshore islands or secluded shores.

The female begins the courtship dance, leading 5 or 6 male suitors on a walk around the colony. The males swing their open beaks from side to side and throw sticks and stones, trying to discourage the other males and appear attractive to the female. The males gradually lose interest until only one remains, and the female leads him to her nest.

During courtship and mating the colour of the pouch becomes bright pink towards the front and bright yellow at the throat area, and parts of the beak become blue. The nest is a simple scraping in the sand decorated with sticks, leaves and other debris. 2-3 eggs are laid 3 days after mating and are incubated on the parents' feet, with male and female taking turns. The first-hatched chick is usually bigger, gets most of the food and will often kill its siblings. The chick then leaves the nest and joins a crèche of up to 100 birds, cared for communally. After 2 months they have learned to fly and head off on their own, and expect a lifespan of 10 to 25 years.