



December 2014

The 2014 Classic: A night to remember

The Hawkesbury Classic 2014 was a night of high drama – records tumbling, a coordinated attempt to retain the Commonwealth Bank Cup, our two top guns combining for an assault on the fastest ever solo time, an 80-year-old trying to become the first octogenarian to paddle the Classic solo, broken rudders, yobbos trying to capsize competitors in the dark, a fierce electrical storm, a coffin among the fleet of ultra-fast kayaks, even veterans getting lost in the dark moonless night. It was all happening. What a night!

The prime objective of winning the Commonwealth Bank Cup as the top club for the 11th time in the past 12 years was achieved, cementing our prestigious record in this iconic event. A combination of bonus points from recorder-breakers and other fast crews plus the extra points from the large number of club boats gave us 2290 points, ahead of Central Coast 1880 and The Armidale School 1845. (See picture page 12.)

Our two fastest paddlers, Matt Blundell and Toby Hogbin, worked together in an attempt to better the record Toby set two years ago for the fastest Classic time by a solo paddler – 8.18.19. Their aim was to get somewhere close to 8 hours.

It was not to be. Aided by an outgoing tide they sat on 4.27/km pace, about 13.5km/h, and were quicker to Sackville than Toby was two years ago. But from Sackville they were into a tide that was stronger than they expected, and Matt had some difficulties in the dark with a K1 that was pretty tippy. Coming out of the Big W he fell back and told Toby to go on, as he would probably withdraw at Wisemans.

Toby, on his new Uno Max ski, had had a quick bladder refill and was gone by the time Matt reached Wisemans where, with hopes of a record gone, he pulled out. "I wasn't going to smash myself all the way to Moonee Moonee," he said. "I'm not in it to finish, I've done that."

Having fought the tide from Sackville to Pit Stop, Toby was happy to get in under 9 hours. "I was surprised to get through with the time I did, I thought it would be slower. I was shot at Wisemans and struggled until the tide turned, it was a combination of everything – tide, exhaustion, heat."

His time of 8.35.21 is thought to be the fourth fastest ever by a solo paddler and broke Barry Lumsden's long-standing record (1996) for the UN1 40+ category of 8.57.57. It also earned him 2nd place on handicap.

In addition, he took out both the LCRK trophies – for the club member with the fastest time and the best on handicap.

Not far behind Toby in time, and not getting the recognition

he richly deserved for a tremendous race, was Richard Robinson on his DD3 ski. His 8.57.29 was the second fastest solo time and broke the OSR1 40+ record of 9.01.14 which clubmate Glen Orchard set last year when he was the fastest single.

Richard's time was all the more meritorious considering he was entangled in three fishermen's lines just past the Wisemans ferry. As he stopped to free them, two hooks and sinkers were whisked dangerously past his face as the fishermen reeled in their lines. The third line broke and he dragged a huge sinker and hook downriver for several kilometres before pulling in to the bank to rip them off the ski.

Richard and Tom Holloway, and possibly others, had to survive yobbos in the river in the Big W who tried to capsize them. What looked like yellow buoys turned out to be heads of swimmers who leaped at the passing boats. In the case of Richard and Tom, the boats actually slipped through their hands. Which is probably as well they did. A crack on the head from a carbon fibre paddle could have caused some damage.

Four other Lane Cove entries set records, and a fifth established a record:

- Anjie Lees smashed the women's 40+ ORS1 record by over 70 minutes, her time of 11.08.20 also being a PB by an hour and a half.

- The scratch pairing of Jeremy Spear and Bruce Goodall took 22 minutes off the K2 50+ record with their 9.33.57.

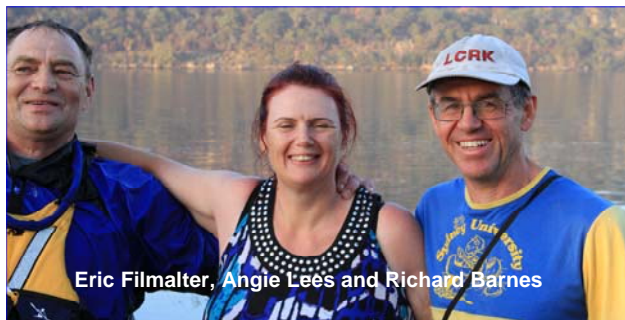
- Richard Barnes, who pulled in at all available stops – as usual – eclipsed the previous best time for the DRR 50+ by three-quarters of an hour with his 11.19.20. The previous record holder was Brian Lyon, who until this year had competed in all but one of the previous 37 Classics (behind only John Harmer, who has done them all).

- Bob Turner's 10.02.49 beat James Mumme's LRec 50+ record of 10.05.10.

- Rae Duffy and Merridy Huxley with their 10.52.35



Toby Hogbin receives two LCRK trophies, for the fastest and best on handicap in the club, from President Paul van Koesveld



Eric Filmlter, Angie Lees and Richard Barnes



Oscar Cahill finishes in style



Merridy Huxley and Rae Duffy established a K2 record



Adrian Clayton hams it up with John Duffy and Ruby Gamble

LCRK Competitors in 2014 Hawkesbury Classic

Competitor	Category	Time	Plc	Hcp time	Hcp plc
Toby Hogbin	UN1 40+	Ⓢ8.35.21	1	9.10.24	2
Richard Robinson	ORS1 40+	Ⓢ8.57.29	1	9.34.02	10
Bruce Goodall/ Jeremy Spear	K2	Ⓢ9.33.57	1	10.09.32	31
Stuart Myers/ Chris Quirk	BoB2	9.42.29			
Tom Holloway	LRec Open	9.45.51	2	10.01.05	24
Bob Turner	LRec 50+	Ⓢ10.02.49	1	9.41.07	15
Tony Hystek	UN1 50+	10.06.55	1	10.28.10	44
Kyle Wilson/ Luke Heasman	LRec2 Open	10.21.09	2	11.04.38	63
John Duffy	UN1 50+	10.25.50	2	10.47.44	57
Ross Fraser/ Ken Holmes	LRec2 50+	10.26.59	2	10.30.07	46
Tony D'Andreti/ David Hammond	LRec2 Open	10.31.42	3	11.15.45	71
David Young	OSR1 50+	10.45.28	4	11.08.03	65
Justin Ryan	BoB	10.46.27			
Rae Duffy/ Merridy Huxley	W UN2 50+	Ⓢ10.52.35	1	10.02.20	26
Derek Walker/ Liza Dean	X LRec2 40+	10.58.00	2	10.26.25	43
Duncan Johnstone	LRec 60+	11.00.25	3	10.23.26	41
Anjie Lees	W OSR1 40+	Ⓢ11.08.20	1	10.10.51	33
Peter Millard	LRec 50+	11.11.58	2	10.47.47	58
Richard Barnes	DDR 50+	Ⓢ11.19.20	1	10.07.19	29
Meg Thornton	BoB	11.26.30			
Ruby Gamble	W UN1 Open	11.43.06	1	11.05.50	64
Richard Yates	MRec 40+	11.56.20	2	11.40.34	84
Tony Carr	LRec 60+	11.59.30	4	11.19.12	73
Jonathan Peters/ Warwick Sherwood	BoB2	12.00.10			
Shane Gibson/ Sam Gibson	BoB2	12.09.22			
Tony Mathers	MRec 50+	12.11.15	2	11.33.14	81
Rozanne Green	W OSR1 50+	12.46.50	1	12.08.26	93
Kenji Ogawa	LRec 60+	12.52.28	6	12.09.13	94
Andrew Kucyper	BoB	13.39.35			
Eric Filmlter	BoB	14.28.36			
Oscar Cahill	MRec 50+	16.03.14	4	15.13.09	115
Justin Paine	BoB	16.58.57			
Adrian Clayton	UN1 60+	9.12.00		withdrew at chkpt K	
Matt Blundell	K1 Open	5.09.00		withdrew at Wisemans	
Phil Geddes	OSR1 50+	7.25.00		withdrew at Wisemans	
Jeffrey Tonazzi	MRec 60+	8.25.00		withdrew at Wisemans	
Garry Thompson	BoB	8.57.00		withdrew at Wisemans	
Antoni Lewinski	BoB	9.49.00		withdrew at chkpt F	
Ann Lloyd-Green	MRec 60+	4.42.00		withdrew at chkpt E	
Neil Duffy	MRec 50+	3.53.00		withdrew at Sackville	
Tom Simmat	SUP	6.28.00		withdrew at Sackville	

established a record in the women's K2 50+.

There were some other notable achievements. Justin Paine became the first person over 80 to paddle the Classic solo (see page 10). Tom Simmat, who always likes to surprise, certainly did so this year when he turned up with a coffin which he paddled as a stand-up (see page 11).

Broken rudders, apparently caused when boats were being pushed back out from the low tide mud at Sackville, caused panic for David Young and Jeff Tonazzi.

David paddled in circles before deciding to abandon the race, then realised he had a spare ocean-racing rudder in his car 2km parked from the checkpoint. There was a 35-minute wait while his landcrew retrieved it via the shuttle bus before he could set out again. The larger rudder forced him to paddle away from the reeds and out in the middle against the tide, and still collected lots of rubbish, but he got home a quarter of an hour faster than last year.

Jeff's rudder was ripped off, but by the time he figured out what had happened and got back to the checkpoint his landcrew had gone. A frantic exchange of phone calls managed to catch them in time to return so the rudder could be fixed. However, by the time he had battled on to Wisemans he was well behind schedule and decided to withdraw.

Tony Carr also had rudder problems when his rudder cable broke in the Big W. Phil Newman carried out emergency repairs at Wisemans and enabled him to finish the race in fine style.

Dave Hammond managed to smash his paddle on the anchor chain of the checkpoint boat at Spencer and the left blade disappeared into the water. He had to paddle the rest of the way on one side only, but as he's a dragonboater that only slowed him and Tony D'Andreti down from 13½km/h to 10-11km/h (with the tide),

A fierce electrical storm broke on the river while it was still daylight, with lightning strikes everywhere. It continued intermittently during the night, with some lightning bolts crashing down perilously close to paddlers. While many competitors said they were not worried as the



Richard Robinson ... second fastest solo paddler



Jonathan Peters and Warwick Sherwood at Wisemans

lightning was not too close to them, others were very concerned and expected the race to be called off.

The LCRK Committee has since met to discuss concerns of members and is talking to other relevant parties to work towards having a comprehensive lightning safety policy in place for next year's Classic.

Highlights of this year's Classic included:

- This was **Kenji Ogawa's** 20th Classic and his most comfortable. He has a piece of sheepskin which he sits on, and this time he turned it upside down, with the furry side down. The result was no bum pain at all. Is there a lesson to be learned from this?
- When **Anjie Lees** got to Bar Point she thought a swirl in the water was an eddy and paddled over it. It wasn't an eddy. It was a rock. And in she went. While she was standing on the rock preparing to get back on to her Epic V14 a bunch of male paddlers who had been washriding her waited close by. She told them she was all right and they should press on, but they said they were waiting so they could continue the washride.
- **Adrian Clayton** got too close to the bank in the dark a kilometre before checkpoint K and hit a mangrove tree with sufficient force to be overturned. He had a skirt on and, like any competent seakayaker, was able to roll up safely. Trouble was he lost his paddle in the process and a torchlight search failed to find it. He had to paddle by hand to K and withdraw. Some paddlers put reflective tape on their paddles so their landcrews can pick them out. Lead paddlers in K1s have been known to do it so the others can synchronise strokes with them in the dark. Maybe it would help find lost paddles at night.
- Once again **Tony Hystek** succumbed to the "Hawkesbury malaise". He can handle 5 arduous days paddling on the Murray with ease, but as soon as he takes on the Classic nausea strikes. He'd dearly love to know how to overcome it. Finding the cause would be a good start.



Ross Fraser and Ken Holmes relax before the race

- **Kyle Wilson** returned to the Classic fray with a new double partner this year. Ten weeks earlier **Luke Heasman** had never been in a kayak. Not only did they do a pretty smart time - 10.21.09 - they finished ahead of a couple of other Lane Cove doubles who have performed with distinction in the M10 series this year (no names mentioned, but look in the results column).
- The out-of-the-way checkpoint F caused some problems in the dark. You have to make a



Dave Hammond with the surviving half of his smashed paddle



David Young



Duncan Johnstone



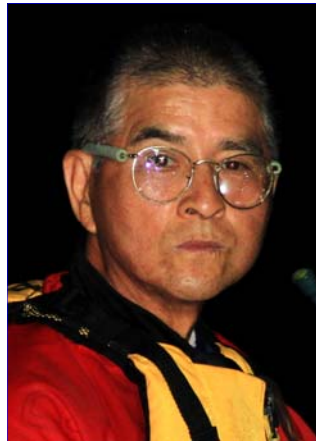
Anjie Lees



Tony Hystek



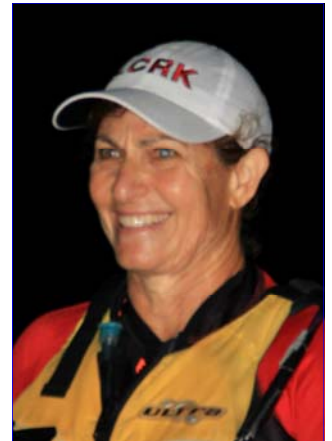
Adrian Clayton



Kenji Ogawa



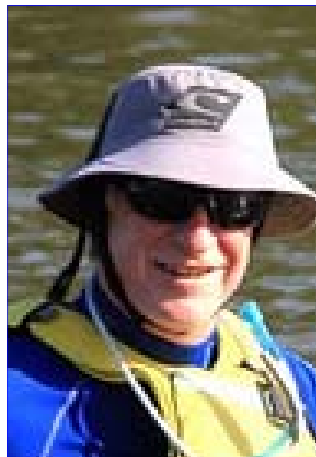
Richard Barnes



Rozanne Green



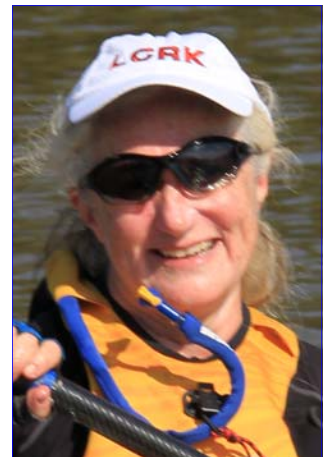
Andrew Kucyper



Neil Duffy



Tony Carr



Meg Thornton



Ruby Gamble



Phil Geddes



Ann Lloyd-Green



Eric Filmalter

turn left of maybe 120°, and if you overdo it by a couple of degrees you find yourself paddling back towards the Lower Portland ferry instead of on to the Big W. **Tony Hystek** and **Justin Paine** were among this year's poor navigators, but apparently the reason the Manly Warringah K4 was seen paddling the wrong way was because they failed to check in first time around.

- **Oscar Cahill** also got lost, but as a first-timer he had an excuse. Coming up the straight to Wisemans he stayed on the left bank, and couldn't pick out the checkpoint flashing light among the array of lights on the far bank. So he continued on past the Webbs Creek and Wisemans ferries. Eventually he realised his error and stopped to make a phone call to his landcrew, **Phil Newman**. He was lucky enough to get mobile phone coverage in that part of the wilderness, and returned to Wisemans.

- **Andrew Kucyper** was saved by a fellow competitor carrying a pair of scissors. Coming out the Big W he wandered into a bank of reeds and got stuck in "something which resembled a rubber rope or spring". His first would-be rescuer capsized, and fled without offering help. Then someone in a Mirage found he was entangled in a thick rope. The Mirager couldn't free the rope by hand, but had a pair of scissors which he used to cut Andrew loose.



Tony D'Andreti on the way to 1215 push-ups

- Has anyone ever seen **Rozanne Green** when she's not smiling? She did it through the M10 series, and now she's done it in the Classic. Look at all the photos on the website. Must be something in the biltong she eats.

- **Craig Ellis** said being landcrew for **Matt Blundell** and **Toby Hogbin** was like being part of a Grand Prix Formula One pit crew, with time at checkpoints being counted in seconds, not minutes. "A squirt of petrol, quick change of wheels, and whoosh! they're gone!"

- **Tony D'Andreti** offered to do a push-up for every dollar his friends donated to the Archer Foundation, to be done on the Sunday the race finished. So after a couple of hours sleep he set out to do 1215 push-ups. He started with sets of 40, then 30 and soon 10s. After 4 hours 35 minutes they were all done. There's a video of it all.



The man with the magic hands, Mr Masseur Don Rowston

- At the post-Classic BBQ where competitors told of their experiences during the night, paddler after paddler thanked **Don**

Rowston for the way his massages at the Wisemans checkpoint eased life back into their aching bodies. Maybe there's a new career ahead for the veteran who turns 78 this month.

- The idea for Lane Covers to identify themselves with orange cyalumes during what turned out to be a very dark night worked brilliantly and led to constant calls of encouragement from one club member to another during the race.



Jeremy Spear and Bruce Goodall with landcrew Matt Swann before their record-breaking paddle



Luke Heasman and Kyle Wilson top up with fuel at the Wisemans checkpoint



This was not Matt Blundell's year, he called it quits at Wisemans



No training and a prolapsed disc in his back still couldn't stop Bob Turner



Ruby Gamble shows a bit of leg – and a bruise from the previous Wednesday night's paddling. She bandaged it up for the Classic and said it didn't bother her.

HAWKESBURY CLASSIC 2014

Each year the Hawkesbury Classic produces wondrous tales from the adventurers who take part in it. Here are the stories from the 2014 Lane Covers, some veterans, others first-timers.

Richard Barnes (DRR 50+, landcrew Eric Barnes, Janet Corish): "My challenge this year was not to get out of the boat, even though I did all the stops. My first stop was at Cattai, where I met my landcrew at the creek. The only other people there were Tom Simmat's landcrew. After Sackville it was a bit slower and I found my seat was too narrow, so that it was squashing me. My mind was concentrating on my squashed hips. The advice I give to others not to concentrate on being sore was not working too well for me. I stopped at Wisemans and had a hamburger, Phil Newman held the boat so I could get two hands to it. I shovelled the food down and as a result hiccupped all the way to the next checkpoint. After that it was smooth sailing to the finish."



Matt Blundell (K1 Open, landcrew Craig Ellis, Steve Newsome): "It was good for the first 40-50km, then I'd had enough. It was too hot, too dark, and I was mentally tired from a heavy business schedule. The K1 I had was tippy in the dark. I wasn't going to smash myself for another 40km for nothing, if you're going for a race record you're out for one or two months, and there is too much going on for that. I wasn't in it to finish, I've done that."



Oscar Cahill (MRec 50+, landcrew Phil Newman, son Liam, Robbie Balchin): "About 3km after Sackville I got stuck in a dead tree, it was not tagged and I didn't see it in the dark. Then I found Tony Lewinski in a tree but he was okay. I was ahead of my schedule to Wisemans but stayed on the left side of the river and didn't see the flashing lights of the checkpoint among all the lights. I went past the next two ferry crossings before I realised I had missed the checkpoint and phoned my landcrew, Phil, who said to come back, which I did. So I did an extra 6km. At Pit Stop I had a nice cup of tea, then it was on to the finish."



Tony Carr (LRec 60+, landcrew Martin Shanny, Derek Russell): "I had two objectives - to finish my 5th Classic and to get a PB. In the Big W my rudder cable broke and I hit 5 other paddlers because the Challenger is hard to control without a rudder. At H I hit the checkpoint boat with such force I split the seal between the hull and the deck, although I didn't realise until after the race. At Wisemans Phil Newman, armed with a knife and a wire cutter, put his head inside the boat and reattached the cables to the footplate. Just before Pit Stop I found two 15-year-olds who were lost and upset so I accompanied them to Pit Stop, apparently it was the first time 15-year-olds have been allowed to do the race. I finished but didn't get my PB, although I would have without the rudder trouble."



Adrian Clayton (UN1 60+, landcrew Lindsay Somerville): "My HCC 2014 came to an abrupt halt about 1km north of checkpoint K, about 25km from the finish, when I ran into the mangroves at 11.5km/h with enough force to capsize. I managed to roll up with the aid of a mangrove branch but my paddle had been stripped out of my hands and a torch-assisted



search for it yielded zilch. I paddled by hand to Checkpoint K. Up to then I was on course for a sub 11½-hour finish. The light and sound show put on in the sky during the Sackville-Wisemans leg was both spectacular and scary.

Tony D'Andreti/David Hammond (LRec2 Open, landcrew Maria Hammond, Jim Cardiff): "For the first hour we averaged 11.4km/h with the tide but still found ourselves well back from the faster boats. We passed the undertaker, Tom Simmat, who was standing on his coffin and he was happy to pass on advice about staying low during the lightning storm. A quick swap of clothes at Sackville and we were off into the darkness with the tide flat and our GPS showing low 10s. The heat sapped lots of reserves. It was so dark and Dave's glasses fogged up. By Wisemans the river had really given us a beating and we had an extended break. We hit the anchor chain of the checkpoint boat at Spencer and Dave smashed his paddle, losing the left blade. He had to canoe paddle on the right side only to the finish but paddled like a madman to ensure we would beat our 2013 time."



John Duffy (UN1 50+, landcrew Jessica Duffy, Campbell Duffy): "It was my 13th Classic and the first in my Sonic. Although it was largely lonely, unusually dark and hot, it was the one I found least problematic in terms of aches and pains. I was in the groove for most of the race, kept up a good constant pace throughout, and I finished feeling pretty good. Wonderful support from the club, particularly at Wisemans where Don's massage worked wonders. The lightning never bothered me and it actually saved me once when I was heading straight for a pylon before the river was lit up like daylight. The highlight for me was recognising the Lane Covers and also seeing the club's first-timers get across the line. I have set myself a challenge next year to take it less seriously."



Neil Duffy (MRec 50+, landcrew daughter Megan Duffy, friend Linda): "It was exactly the same as last year. I started fine and at A was okay, but half way to B I started to feel a bit off. By C every time I started to drink I felt worse, so I stopped and was throwing up on the beach. I pulled out at Sackville."



Rae Duffy/Merridy Huxley (W UN2 50+, landcrew Tony Murphy, Karen Darby): "It was very dark and scary, we kept running into things, we ran into a tree and took ages to get out, the nose of the Supersonic was stuck and we had to go out sideways. I had a lot of trouble with the lightning, it was like a strobe light effect on my brain. I had to get out at G and a woman there took my paddle, she thought we were pulling out, Rae had to paddle back around the checkpoint on her own against the tide. Rae said she was secretly hoping as we came into Wisemans that I would say I had had enough, her right shoulder was sore. But after back rubs from Don Rowston we were better to the end and established a record for the category."



Eric Filmalter (BoB, landcrew Darren Thompson, Tim O'Reilly, Sue Thompson): "The biggest thing for me in the race was that all the information and advice I had been given and taken on board came together and worked for me. I was 40 minutes ahead at Sackville and 10 minutes ahead at Wisemans. I stopped for an hour at both. I was paddling with Garry Thompson but he got cramps and decided at Wisemans to pull out. Over the last stretch I felt good and was pushing it, and came in at 6.28am."



Ross Fraser/Ken Holmes (LRec2 50+, landcrew Meg Holmes, Sue Fraser, Kate Fraser): "At the start we swerved to avoid a ski and cut off three other kayakers, then had to stop to start the GPS. It took us 1½ hours to catch Keg and Dave. For the first 30km we were averaging over 11km/h, then the tide turned and we were down to 7½. Don Rowston gave us a back rub during a 15-20 minute stop at Wisemans and we flew home after that. It was nip and tuck with Keg and Dave until Keg broke his paddle on the checkpoint boat's anchor chain at Spencer. We were 2½ hours faster than last year. A big thank you to Richard Robinson and Tony Hystek for their help in training."



Ruby Gamble (W UN1 Open, landcrew Caoimhin Ardren): "I was really pleased with my paddle speed and took 2 hours off last year's time, with only 10 minutes of that being for checkpoint stops. I had lots of issues with dehydration from the heat, resulting in blurred vision which forced me to stop for half an hour at checkpoint K where the medico took me into a tent and took my blood pressure before letting me go. I have a lot of trouble with heat and fortunately didn't put on extra clothes at Sackville."



Phil Geddes (ORS1 60+, landcrew Paul and Angela van Koesveld): "I went into the race with tendinitis in my right hand so knew I might have a problem and was happy to make it as far as Wisemans All but the hand was ready to go at Wisemans. I set a race plan based on heart rate and was able to stick to it. I see this as the main achievement of my race. Arrival times were very close to plan. I came away feeling I had learned how to do an HCC which made me feel the evening was quite a success."



Shane Gibson/Sam Gibson (BoB2, landcrew Jana Gibson, Luika Bankson): "Sam and I picked up an old Mirage 730 on ebay and chose to have a not-so-serious shot at the Classic. We were third to the bridge off the BoB2 start, so pretty much achieved our goal in the first couple of minutes! We stopped at all the stops for way too long, helped a few people back into their skis, including Anjie 5km from the end. We got to Brooklyn at around 4.40am for an excellent egg and bacon roll!"



Rozanne Green (W ORS1 50+, landcrew son Michael, Mark Levi): "My mother as a teenager saw someone killed by lightning, so that was on my mind. When the lightning came I thought I was going to die, I was so, so scared. I have never been so scared in my life, and I have done a lot of adventurous things in my life. After Wisemans I found someone named Richard, he was slower than me but I stayed to paddle with him. Eventually I suggested he get on my wash but he said 'Just go!' so I went ahead and finished with a PB – it was my first time!"



Toby Hogbin (UN1 40+, landcrew Craig Ellis, Steve Newsome): "I paddled with Matt, trying to get close to 8 hours, and we were okay to

Sackville, sitting on 4.27 time with the tide which is close to 13½km/h. When the tide turned it was a lot stronger than I expected. Coming out of the Big W Matt fell back and I slowed down a bit but he said to keep going, he was probably going to pull out at Wisemans. I was against the tide from Sackville to Pit Stop and surprised with the time I did, I thought it would be slower. I was concerned rather than worried about the lightning, I thought one strike was right in front of me although I don't think it actually was."



Tom Holloway (LRec Open, landcrew wife Patricia, mother Marie): "This was my fourth Classic and my best so far. I wore an MP3 player which really helped. I paddled with Bob Turner until Sackville. Bob set a good consistent pace and this helped set up my night. Some yobbos swam out and tried to capsize me in the Big W, but luckily they slipped off. They tried the same thing with Richard Robinson, who had almost caught me by that stage. I stopped for 5 minutes at Wisemans – the service was excellent – and then for another 2 minutes near K when the lightning got too heavy. The tide finally turned after Pit Stop and gave me a great push home. I was shooting for sub 10, and managed 9:45, finishing 5 minutes behind the category winner."



Tony Hystek (UN 50+, landcrew Alanna Ewin): "I was working 18-hour days for a few weeks leading up to the Classic, not the best preparation. Once again I didn't have my hydration sorted, I drank too much, mainly water. I was not wearing glasses and my vision was not good, I couldn't see the GPS properly. I started feeling crook and had to stop at Wisemans for 45 minutes. As I was no longer going for a record I turned it into a rec paddle and it became an absolute pleasure. For the first time I stopped at Pit Stop and sampled their lovely food."



Duncan Johnstone (LRec 60+, David and Sharri Johnstone): "After DNFs in my last two Classics my intention was to finish. I decided if I went sensibly the time would come, and my goal was under 12 hours. I dragged my boat torch along for several kilometres, I could hear something bubbling in the water, but didn't know what it was until a double told me and I stopped to haul it back in. I made the wrong decision to have coffee at Pit Stop and the lost time cost me a sub-11 hour time and 2nd in the 60+ by 9 seconds. But my 11.00.25 was a PB by 1¾ hours."



Andrew Kucyper (BoB, landcrew son Jack): "This was my 8th Classic, my aim is to finish 10. I decided to take it easy and not to over-exhaust myself, and still had a PB. I'm sure the LCRK familiarisation paddles positively influenced my performance. I learned that eating rice with probiotics, formulated for infants, at Sackville and Wisemans kept my digestion in very good order up to the finish. Stretching by occasionally leaning on the kayak deck behind me, with simultaneous deep breathing saved me from painful stomach muscle cramps I suffered in previous Classics. At the last bend of the Big W I went into some tall reeds and was trapped, unable to move forwards or backwards. Eventually another paddler found I was entangled in a thick rope and cut me free."



Anjie Lees (W OSR1 40+, landcrew daughter Brianna, Michael Tanner): "After a good leg to Sackville, I was sick between there and Wisemans. As soon as I tried for leg drive my stomach would turn and I would throw up. I think it was the heat and poor hydration, although I did drink a lot before the race. At Wisemans I was low



on energy and needed sugar, so I had a mouthful of strawberry and cream jelly lollies and changed my bladder from Enduro to water. I paddled really well from Wisemans until I hit a rock at Bar Point and went in."

Tony Lewinski (BoB, landcrew daughter Iwona, son Adam): "I did not expect to finish my maiden Classic, but the way I did end up was my worst nightmare. At Sackville I felt great and reaching checkpoint E was a breeze, then I got lost and was completely alone in a pitch black environment. By checkpoint F it was clear I had lost too much time and when motorboats appeared I knew I was last and decided to pull out. I was not physically or mentally tired, my mistake was taking it too easy to Sackville and not staying with the main group."



Ann Lloyd-Jones (W MRec 60+, landcrew Sam Lloyd-Green): "It wasn't my night and I didn't do Frank McDonald's Flash justice. I was enjoying my paddle, ahead of time when I pulled into Sackville, and changed my clothes. I got back in the boat and promptly fell in. Bummer! In wet clothes I went off. Slowly but surely my right hand began to muck up. Pins and needles, then fierce burning in my hand. Then my left hand could not hold the paddle. No feeling in either hand and had I to pull out. I will get my hand 'fixed' and be back again next year."



Tony Mathers (MRec 50+, landcrew Lara Mathers): "My fifth time down the river and first for three years. A PB by 10 minutes. I was reminded that the HCC doesn't start for real until the lights go out at Sackville. Like everyone else I couldn't see anything until the lightning started and I thought the race might be stopped at Wisemans - glad it wasn't as it cleared soon after. The big difference for me was that my sports nutritionist daughter planned my liquid food and fluid intake. I stopped religiously to drink the liquids even if it meant I fell off a pack of paddlers. Maybe next time I can learn to multitask. Stupidly I turned right at Checkpoint Q as I could swear that was what the guy said (obviously not). Next time I must memorise the vital checkpoint letters to know where I am."



Peter Millard (LRec 50+, landcrew Liz Winn, Kevin Mullaley): "I had a pretty good race except for the ferry crossings. I was stopped at the Sackville ferry, then had to wait for a double crossing at Lower Portland because of some emergency, and stopped again at the next ferry. It was smooth sailing and the phosphorescence from the bow wave and paddle was brilliant, I've never seen it before. My landcrew was sensational, good humour all the way."



Kenji Ogawa (LRec 60+, landcrew Gilda Ogawa): "This was my 20th Classic and the most comfortable and enjoyable. For the first time I was completely without pain - no sore bum, no sore back, no sore wrists. I had sheepskin on my seat and turned it upside down, with the furry side down, and it worked well. At checkpoint L I was next to a paddler from Central Coast and I didn't have enough room with him beside me to turn away from the checkpoint boat. I hit its anchor rope in the strong outgoing current and lost my race number but didn't capsize."



Justin Paine (BoB, landcrew Jana Osvald): "I had only one objective - to finish and become the first 80-year-old to do the Classic solo. After DNFs in my last three starts I knew it was going to be a battle, and it was. I got lost twice in the dark, once when disoriented by the blinding light of a



rescue vessel searching for a lost paddler and again when I overcooked the left turn after checkpoint F. Both times I finished paddling back the way I had come. A succession of lightning bolts crashing down right on top of me half way down the final leg left me with black thoughts about my body being found floating in the river. I suffered from severe back pain but eventually struggled across the finish line and fulfilled my dream."

Jonathan Peters/Warwick Sherwood (BoB2, landcrew Greg Morris, Mike Ventnor): "It was the first time doing the Classic in a double for both of us. We trailed along behind some other people early and didn't put ourselves out. Against the tide we slowed down to 7m/h but it was comfortable. After a relaxing changeover at Wisemans we steamed home with the tide. We saw all the lightning but it was in front of us and didn't bother us. We were in a 730 and we're never going to do it in a Mirage again, it's too heavy."



Chris Quirk/Stuart Myers (BoB2, landcrew Chris' wife Ruth and daughters Amy and Olivia): "Our race, in brief, was a disaster, the old game of 'two halves'. A 5-minute stop at Wisemans, put the Bluetooth speaker on, and off into the darkness with nobody between us and the finish. Suddenly, 10 minutes around the corner from Wisemans, we were swimming. Some degree of panic, attempts to get back in while the boat was still upside-down, retrieve water bladders and seats, only to go in again. Stu's paddle was gone but fortunately had white blades and we retrieved it. 8 minutes later we were back on the ski and ready to go - no music, no food, contaminated water, no spare clothes. A very tentative next 3 hours and a 20-minute rest at Pit Stop where we watched the K4 rocket past. The tide changed, our speed back up to 13.5km/h, no more dramas."



Richard Robinson (ORS1 40+, landcrew Joy Robinson, Friederike Welter): "I was in a group setting a good pace to Sackville. I didn't stop there but at Wisemans I had to get out and lie down to stretch my stomach muscles and was there for 11 minutes. I had to stop for the Lower Portland and Wisemans ferries. After Lower Portland someone swimming in the water tried to capsize me but the boat slipped through his hands. Just after Wisemans I was caught by three fishing lines, one of them broke and I dragged a big sinker and hook for a few kilometres before pulling into the bank to free them. The lightning flashes were pretty intense and I was surprised there was no discussion about them. I didn't think it was a fast year for tides, given it was so dark and it was difficult getting close to the bank against the tide."



Justin Ryan (BoB, landcrew Joanna Ryan): "I led the BoB to about checkpoint A but spent too much time, just resting, at Sackville (15 minutes) and Wisemans (35 minutes). Near Spencer I heard a fast kayaker coming up behind me and called out 'Is that you Matt?' hoping it was Matt Blundell whom I wanted to go on and win, but it was Toby Hogbin who was very friendly and said 'Do you want to tag along?' Coming across the last bay before the turn up into the final straight I fell in, I was on a V14 which is tippy. I got a bit sick afterwards and ended up in hospital until Tuesday with aspirated pneumonia. I passed out and choked on my own vomit! I still have a bit to learn about eating and drinking."



Tom Simmat (SUP, landcrew Christine Simmat, Kirri Simmat, Daen Simmat): "At my advancing age it never hurts to have a coffin handy. It would be stupid to have a coffin strapped to the back of a K1, so I thought why not paddle it. If I'd finished it would have been a 60+ record except that they only have an Open record in SUP. It took me close to 7 hours to get to Sackville, when I got there they'd virtually packed up, both the checkpoints had closed down and my time was taken when I handed in my number."



Jeremy Spear/Bruce Goodall (K2 50+, landcrew Matt Swann): "Someone did see, and paddle alongside for several strokes, a big shark (but someone else also saw martians!). We had rain, thunder, lightning, waves, wind (both directions), a dark night, collisions, idiots with spotlights and rocks, ferries (we had to stop for 2, maybe 5 mins each), jellyfish, phosphorescence, but no fog and no major issues apart from a lot of weed and junk on the front of the boat, meaning we had to back down maybe a dozen times. It was difficult and unstable, especially when ripping along at 13km/h with the tide. Max speed was 15km/h. Heart rate was 175 at start and 125 at finish, av 145. We broke the 50+ K2 (2009) record by 33 mins and achieved our goal."



Garry Thompson (LRec 60+, landcrew Sue Thompson, Darren Thompson, Tim O'Reilly): "I ran the Sydney Marathon a month earlier, so training for the HCC became impractical until after that race. With only a short 3-week preparation it was inevitable that I only made it to Wisemans after 9 hours. After Sackville I came unstuck and struggled into Wisemans against the tide and the wind. I was rotating OK but badly losing power at the blade. In the last 2 hours my back got severely chafed from the top edge of padding I put around my waist to stop chafing."



Meg Thornton (BoB, landcrew Elouise Blunt): "A BoB start meant a cruisy daylight and early evening run into Wisemans at 10 something. All was brilliant until a lack of caffeine at Sackville and Wisemans hit me somewhere between lightning flashes. Wham, like a sledgehammer. My first falling out was at Pit Stop, the second on a wretched submerged branch, the third that damned rock at Bar Point and the fourth hopping on to the wash of Rae's double coming into the finish."



Jeff Tonazzi (MRec 50+, landcrew Adam Tonazzi, David Pitcher): "At Sackville I was flying, 25 minutes ahead. I had a 5-minute stop there and as my son pushed me back out of the mud the rudder was ripped off. I realised something was wrong and went around to another beach. By this time my landcrew had headed off, so I borrowed Paul van Koesveld's phone and rang my son but there was no reception. I rang home and my wife Melanie was able to call them and they came back by bus half an hour later. While I was waiting I helped David Young who had a similar problem, and fell in. I got an Allen rudder key from him to fix my rudder. Then my GPS failed and I struggled into Wisemans at 1.20am. I was physically OK but so far behind I pulled up stumps and went home."



Bob Turner (LRec 50+, landcrew Kristy Benjamin): "As usual, I had no real race plan, just get in the boat, paddle a pace I felt I could manage for as long as I could, hope to make it

to Wisemans in a reasonable time and condition, replenish drinks, get some red frogs, and continue to the finish. Around Dargle my ever unreliable back collapsed on me and I went into another world of pain. Finally I made Wisemans, and Craig Ellis and Steve Newsome somehow lifted me out of the boat. Robyn Bingle was adamant I should retire but Kristy insisted I get back in and finish it. About an hour later, once the really big lightning had passed, I actually started to feel I could get to the end, although I had to stop every half hour to relieve the back pain temporarily. When I finally passed the pier at Brooklyn, and the clock ticked over 3:02am, I knew it had been worth the effort."



Derek Walker/Liza Dean (X LRec 40+, landcrew Tim McNamara, Jessica Walker): "8 weeks before the Classic we were looking for a new activity, so we entered it. We have had fantastic support from the club. It was a pretty tough race. At Wisemans we thought we were looking at a DNF but I said 'Not far to go now, we'll be fine'. We had aimed at 11 hours and did 10.58."



Kyle Wilson/Luke Heasman (LRec2 Open, landcrew Amanda Rose, Nicole Heasman): "We only had 10 weeks training together, Luke had never paddled before. Everything went really well and smoothly and we had a great night. We had trained for the middle section, against the tide, and that was where we started passing people. The lightning was scary and I said to Luke 'If it gets us, it gets us, we won't know anything about it.' At the time I wasn't concerned, but in hindsight I'm glad to be alive today. I thought the race would be called off."



Richard Yates (MRec 40+, landcrew wife Michaela, sister Jodie): "It was my 6th Classic and 5th finish. I had an Epic 18X which I borrowed from Craig Ellis, it was the first time I've had a decent boat. It was good to Sackville, then it all turned to custard after that. I put on warmer clothes expecting it to get colder, but I got hotter and hotter and I had to stop at H to disrobe. There was a tail wind and it was choppy, and the rudder was dragging to the left, and I wasted energy trying to keep it straight. At Wisemans I had a massage from Don Rowston and took a No-Doze which worked. After Wisemans I paddled a long way with Richard Barnes, then he stopped at Pit Stop to see his family. I was hoping for a 12 hours time and got there just under that, my previous best in a single was 14 hours."



David Young (OSR1 50+, landcrew Jessica Young): "At Sackville I was 5 minutes ahead of schedule but when the boat was pushed back into water, the rudder got entangled in reeds and snapped ... bummer! I resigned myself to either a very, very long frustrating paddle or abandoning the race. I decided on abandoning and returned to Sackville and thankfully my landcrew had not yet left. Suddenly it dawned on me that I had put a large ocean-racing rudder in my car over 6 months ago. I endured a frustrating 35-minute wait while the rudder was retrieved via the shuttle bus and after a 5-minute rudder change was back in the race. The leg to Wisemans was a shocker. The large rudder attracted every reed/leaf/you-name-it in the river. I was consistently stopping and reversing to release the debris. But at the finish I was still 15 minutes faster than last year in a race time of 10h 45m."



Fairy tales come true, even when you're 80

by Justin Paine

It was well known that I wanted to become the first 80-year-old to paddle the Hawkesbury Classic solo and, having turned 80 seven weeks before this year's race, I was hoping 2014 would be my year to do it. In my last three starts I failed to make it through to the finish, so it was going to take a big effort to go the distance this year.

Time was not really an issue. If I could keep going long enough I would get to the finish. It didn't matter how long it took. And as I have been taking 43 minutes to do the 6km time trial on Wednesday nights, it was obviously going to be a long night.

So I set off in the Brooklyn-or-Bust to get the most of the outgoing tide and just paddled along steadily. The lightning which began, as best I can remember, when I was about half way between Cattai and Sackville was a topic of conversation with passing paddlers. Would we be pulled off the course at Sackville?

No, we weren't, so after a brief stop it was off into the darkness and incoming tide, next stop Wisemans.

This middle leg has always been my Achilles heel, especially when against the tide as it always seems to be, but this year I handled it better than in the past.

Except that it took me well over 5 hours. And that I got lost twice in the very black night – the first time when searchlights on a rescue boat looking for

a lost paddler blinded and disoriented me, and the second time when I overlooked the left turn after checkpoint F.

On both occasions I paddled back the way I had come until boats coming towards me suggested I do a 180 and follow them. That added about half an hour and a lot of wasted energy to my load.

By Wisemans my back was pretty sore and the realistic question was whether I could survive another 40km. Only one way to find out, so at 2.10am off I went.

For the next couple of hours I was okay. My back was hurting but I could handle it. Which meant that for the time it takes most paddlers to do the Classic, say up to 12 or 13 hours, I was still going.

But then I fell in a heap. I don't think anyone who hasn't gone the extra time can realise how hard it gets, how much it can hurt. I couldn't paddle more than a few minutes without having to stop. My back was killing me. I tried paddling just one side, like a canoe, but that didn't work.

Eventually I found if I perched my bum on the back of my



seat I could lean back with my PFD resting on the rear of my cockpit and relax my back muscles. Rather uncomfortable and, it turned out, took a chunk of meat off my bum. But I could use my shoulders and hands to drag my paddle through the water without involving my back muscles. Rather ungainly, and recommended only for use in a crisis, but I was moving again.

Then came more lightning. And this time it wasn't a couple of kilos away on the other side of the hill.

A succession of lightning bolts exploded directly in front of me, dazzling, deafening and terrifying. The blinding light and the ear-shattering crack were simultaneous. No question of counting one-thousand, two-thousand to see how far away it was. It was right on top of me.

I think there were four strikes in a couple of minutes. Fortunately I was too exhausted to appreciate how dire a situation I was in. Nevertheless I had some pretty black thoughts. Who would find my body floating in the river? At least, as I was wearing a PFD, it would be found.

What can you do in a case like this? Answer: nothing. So I just paddled on, and the lightning moved away.

After Pit Stop the fog moved in. I stayed on the left bank of the curve in the river which followed, and was mystified when

the next checkpoint, M, failed to materialise. Apparently it was on the right bank and I missed it in the fog.

By now the tide was coming in and it was a slow drag to Spencer and on to Bar Point. A paddler coming through told me he had just passed 20 or 30 others still in the race, and they were not going to catch me. Always nice to know you're not last. My back muscles had been rested and I was



Crossing the finish line to become the first 80-year-old to paddle the Classic solo

able to paddle more or less normally from Bar Point to Moonee Moonee.

It took what little energy I had left, but I managed to cross the line 63 seconds before the 17-hour mark ticked over. So I did 16 and a bit hours, not 17 and a bit. Not that time mattered, even if my ego did.

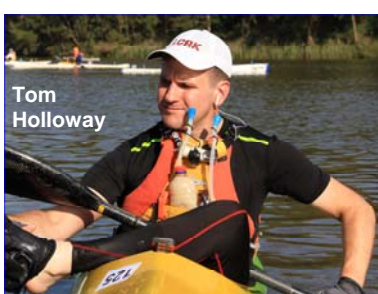
The dream had come true. I had become the first 80-year-old to paddle the Hawkesbury Classic alone.

Do you believe in fairy tales? I do. If you wish hard enough and try hard enough, your dreams can come true.

Since the race I have had lots and lots of congratulatory messages, even one from a former Lane Cover now living temporarily in Canada. Thank you to everybody, it made the effort worthwhile.

For a long time it was something to see 50-year-olds doing the Classic. They became the 60-year-olds. Now the 70-year-olds are taking on the challenge (four from Lane Cove alone this year).

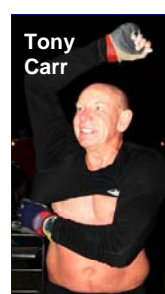
The 80-year-olds are next.



Tom Holloway



Wade Rowston, Phil Newman



Tony Carr



Les Girls: Joy Robinson, Freddy Welter, Danielle Seisun

Undertaker mistakes Hawkesbury for the Styx

A funereal note was introduced to the Classic this year when Tom Simmat turned up with a coffin which he had entered in the stand-up category (SUC = stand-up coffin).

Attired in ill-fitting mourning dress and looking like an escapee from a Dickens novel, he and three pallbearers paraded the casket around the Windsor assembly point begging for alms to pay for the flowers on it (in keeping with the tawdriness of their appearance, the flowers were probably plastic).

Comments were made that he would take so long to do the Classic the wooden box would be needed for its original purpose.

Tom claimed the coffin had survived sea trials and tried to propel it with a long-handled paddle. He might as well have used a shovel to dig a hole in the water.

A deathly hush followed his start and continued until he had reached Windsor bridge, by which time the Cattai checkpoint was expressing grave fears for his safety and asking if a rescue boat should be dispatched on a search mission, as the rest of his wave start had long since passed through.

"It took me a whole hour to battle into the headwind up one

particular straight before Cattai that was only a couple of k's long," he complained later. "At one point I was overtaken by a log floating out with the tide.

"By the time I got to Sackville the checkpoint was packing up and I felt it unfair to keep the other checkpoints waiting for me. And my landcrew had work to do on Sunday."

So the last rites were solemnly delivered and the coffin interred. Unfortunately Tom had used the holy water as a gargle. A bucketful from the Hawkesbury was surreptitiously substituted.

Tom reached Sackville in 6 hours 28 minutes but the time will not be recognised as a record because it was tide-assisted.

In a jovial mood at having avoided the grim reaper, he joked later: "My thinking was that my paddling endurance not being what it has been, I thought I would follow Richard Barnes and paddle something a bit frivolous, have some fun and not take the HCC seriously, and talk to as many paddlers on the way as possible. As it was every one passed me except Brooklyn or Bust One."

(The only reason the BoB1 paddlers did not pass him was because he started after them.)



A magic race for a world champion

by Ann Lloyd-Green

When I arrived in Oklahoma in September for the 2014 ICF Canoe Marathon Masters World Cup the desert winds tried to blow us back to Australia! So I played safe and borrowed a battered old Nelo Viper 51 and paddled that as the only starter in the 65+ age category. As it happened the wind blew away and we had good weather.

To start racing someone held our boats until the guy said "ready, steady, GO". Except the person holding my boat didn't let go until I called out "please let go of my boat" and off I went!

It was a magic race for me. Everything went perfectly, I was comfortable in the old boat, the old body felt really good, and I was in heaven.

Nobody passed me until just after the first 5k lap - 3 men. I decided not to let any woman pass me for the whole race - and they didn't. I chattered to the scrutineers on the top turn, I even found myself singing! I didn't want the race to end. My time for the 15km was 1:37. I was a World Champion!

At the end of the day a little dumpling of a girl called Nancy from Texas asked me if I would double with her the following morning. I said yes as I

desperately wanted another paddle..

Nancy could not keep time. A woman came down and said to me "I have been sent to tell you not to do this, she can't paddle, she can't keep in time, and you will do yourself an injury."

Well, somehow we ended up on the starting line and off we wobbly went. It was truly dreadful. Each lap when we passed the stand it was a show of utter surprise: "Oh they haven't fallen in yet."

We didn't fall in and got a Bronze in the 45+ age group! Our time for 18.75km was 2.03 with 4 portages.

Sprint series Nov 9

1000m. Race 1: Tony Walker 6.13 3. Race 2: John Greathead 6.25 8. Race 3: Ella Beere 5.11 4, Wade Rowston 5.20 5, Jeff Beere 5.23 6. Race 4: Richard Robinson/Joy Robinson 4.30 1, Ben Colless 5.00 6.

500m. G final: Guy Robinson 3.23 8. F final: John Greathead 3.06 7, Tony Walker 3.11 8. E final: Jeff Beere 2.31 6, Wade Rowston 2.34 8. D final: Ben Colless 2.20 5. B final: Ella Beere 2.18 8. A final: Richard Robinson 2.00 7.

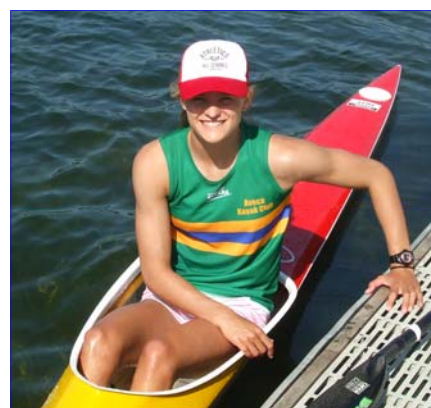
200m. D final: John Greathead 1.13 3, Tony Walker 1.17 5, Guy Robinson 1.19 7. E final: Jeff Beere 57.4 3, Wade Rowston 1.00 8. D final: Ben Colless 57.1 8. B final: Richard Robinson 46.4 1, Ella Beere 49.0 5.

Anjie aims for world record

Anjie Lees is planning an attempt on the world record for the longest distance paddled by a female in a canoe/kayak in 24 hours on flat water.

It will be made in conjunction with Burley Griffin Canoe Club's annual 24-Hour Challenge on the Molonglo River on the weekend of Dec 6-7. She will paddle an Epic V14 ski, and will have to maintain an average of slightly over 8km/h to be successful. The current record is 195.33km, set by American Robyn Benincasa on Oct 29-30 2010.

In 2007 Tom Simmat made an unsuccessful attempt on the men's record of 241.95km.



Ella Beere recorded some fast times at the sprints at SIRC

WEDNESDAY NIGHTS AT THE PONTOON with Paul van Koesveld

And then there was light. October saw the return of daylight for the Wednesday time trials. Paddling in the dark with twinkling lights is exotic and the occasional phosphorescent evening is magnificent. However, it is great to paddle when mangroves no longer ambush you and fallen branches don't leap out to trip you up. So, **bring out your tipper boats** and come back to the river, those who dislike the dark. Don Andrews led the way back and immediately provided coaching to a newcomer.

It is great to see more young paddlers. Ella Beere, Natalie Orchard and Michael Jones have joined the club and are improving fast. Ella is now in a colourful K1 and has broken the Ladies 6km record twice while Natalie Orchard has driven Glen to a 30.03 over the 6km course in their double ski. Ben Colless has also been paddling with us and going fast. **Bring out your kids and their mates.**

Timekeeping guru Nigel Colless is threatening to step out from behind the laptop and get back to Wednesday paddling. Now the rest of us need to keep the system working.

At the pointy end, Matt Blundell and Toby Hogbin recently dawdled around in 48.46 in the Legacy K2 on a night when many struggled. A number of top K1 and ski paddlers have called in for our time trials over the last couple of months - I'm calling this the Matt and Toby Effect and it is

terrific.

Also terrific is Past-President Tim Hookins' return to the water but we have temporarily lost Past-President Matt Swann - best wishes Matt and you're locked in for timekeeping in a couple of weeks.

A big welcome back into the club to Lawrie Kenyon who was with us from way-back-when and has remained an important paddling identity. Welcome also to Richard Yates, Bruce Gynther, Andrew Love and Paul Taylor.

Bring out the K4. Actually, it's already back, Tony Hystek sweeping Jeremy Spear, Ken Holmes and Ross Fraser around its special 12km course on November 12. We plan to make the monthly Reverse Night also a K4 Night. **Bring out another K4** - well, that might happen.

Actions: HCC - done, Cup retained; the Shed - virtually there; rack allocation and club fleet expansion - well under way; Anjie Lees (world record attempt) and Richard Yates off to the BGCC 24-hour paddle challenge (phew); Christmas BBQ and trophy presentations - **be there on December 17.**



LCRK paddlers with the Commonwealth Bank Cup at the Classic presentation night. Ken Holmes, Tom Simmat, Liza Dean, Derek Walker, David Young, Rozanne Green, Anjie Lees, Kenji Ogawa, Tony Hystek, Tony Carr, Meg Thornton, Bob Turner, John Duffy.

Nature Notes by Jon Harris

The Spotted Pardalote - *Pardalotus Punctatus*

Although reasonably common, this is a bird you would not have seen unless you put in a lot of effort or happen to know of a burrow site. They are one of the smallest Australian birds, hardly reaching the length of your index finger, and spend their days high in the tree canopy.

However they nest closer to the ground and this is where you will see them - anywhere else it is very difficult to get close enough to positively identify this small, flighty, fast-moving bird. I have seen them but not at Lane Cove, which doesn't mean they are not there. If you look at the mudbank next to the old ramp at Wirong Flat you will see a number of small holes in the vertical face, and these are very likely pardalote nesting holes.

The pardalote family has only 5 members and is restricted to Australia. They burrow a long tunnel with a spherical chamber at the end, and line the chamber with strips of bark and grass. Both parents are active in nest building, incubation and rearing the 3-4 chicks.



The wings, tail and head are black with white spots, yellow throat and red rump, and white stripe above the eye, straw-coloured undercarriage and body shape of a robin with short tail. The females are similar to the males but with paler markings.

They are found the length of our eastern and southern seaboard, from Cooktown around to Perth and inland to the Great Dividing Range. They

inhabit eucalypt forest and woodlands, parks and watercourses and have a soft, whistling "wheet wheet" call and beak-clicking that betrays their presence.

They feed on bugs and other insects and also the sweet sap that exudes from leaves.

It is thought they may have seasonal movement and their conservation status is thought to be reasonably good.

