

It's been a wonderful year

This year's 2x2 relays had a way of reminding us, month after month, why we keep coming back. Not just for the paddling, but for the creativity and the quiet sense of belonging. We began the year with **New Year's Resolutions**. The team names felt thoughtful — balance, consistency, awareness, forward motion — and in hindsight they traced a neat outline of the year ahead.

March brought **The Ides of March**, and with it a dose of theatrical flair. Shakespearean names, dramatic moments on the water, personal bests, unexpected swims: *“Among these noble crews, John T. did strive with heart so fierce, his eyes set on the prize, his zeal such that, he fell into the drink ‘fore all their eyes.*

Rich Y, in his vessel, swift and sure, this day did mark his personal best, his pace by none could be contest. David L, who with hasty sprint did dash into the bush, declaring in his flight, “I am that merry wanderer of the night.”



April's relay was devoted to all types of lagomorphs. For several paddlers it was a first encounter with the 2x2 format, and it did not take long to discover that paddling 2 km “four times” is a very different proposition from paddling it once. One of the standout performances of the morning came from Cass O'Connor, paddling eight and a half months pregnant. There was a real tussle between the “Rascally Rabbits” with the “Cal and Myx Bunnies”. Kev suggested it would have been a moot point if his partner, Andy, didn't persistently line up for his leg 20m behind the start line. Bunny ears appeared in many variations, including homemade efforts and one very large Lindt bunny mounted to a boat — later claimed enthusiastically by Grace.



The arrival of spring coincided with **Aussie Icons** and a new course that demanded both effort and interpretation. True to the Aussie spirit, the event had all the flavours of a “laid-back” culture that could only be described as iconic. *Some were paddling upstream, some downstream, and others seemed to be following the Sydney Harbour Ferry lines. Paddlers were confused as a roo in headlights and the German timekeeper reconsidering her life choices.* Don, paddling as part of the Budgy Smugglers, took the team spirit to a whole new level by rocking up in a pair of actual Budgy Smugglers. While most people would have opted for more subtlety, Don clearly thought: “*Why not give the crowd what they want?*” There was laughter, encouragement, and plenty of banter, reminding us that the relay format thrives as much on connection as it does on competition.



October's **Australian Rivers** relay was a standout for its atmosphere alone. The Lane Cove River was calm and generous, with birdlife along the banks and shimmering jellyfish beneath the surface. The group received an introduction to standing and running changeovers which we'll all have been practicing in the coming events. Appropriate to the theme there were lavender scented bath bombs and shower gels after the race. But the real highlight (and surprise) was a baby goat on a dog lead.



The 2x2 series continued with **Music to Paddle To**, which began under heavy rain and ended in sunshine. Despite the weather, every team turned up. The racing was tight, the handicaps challenging, and the theme was embraced with enthusiasm — from decorated boats to carefully chosen soundtracks, such as the *Sound of Silence*.

December report from Justin Paine and Duncan Johnstone

Justin: "The final 2 x 2 relay of the year had a Christmas theme and was paddled in a Christmas spirit. Many of the competitors voyaged up and down the river in Christmas outfits. Ho Ho Ho and all that Yuletide stuff.

The event was held in a relaxed Christmas atmosphere – everyone out to have an enjoyable time and share happiness with everyone in sight. We were confronted with an abundance of wise men. One team had 2½ Wise Men. The ½ apparently not having just ½ the wisdom of his mates but being the younger ½ of a father-son combination. Sadly, there were no Wise Women Team. Perhaps there is a biblical explanation for that. No one would have dared challenge the wisdom of the women in the relay.



Duncan: "In our last 2x2 of the Year, the Christmas relay, the Gringes thought they were given good reason to live up to their name typically mumbling and grumbling and complaining their way around the course. One was overheard muttering about how he hated Christmas. But there was one ray of light amongst the grumpy old men in the form a wonderfully bright and bubbly first time paddler, Abby, who showed the Gringes what the spirit of the day and Christmas was all about day.

Justin: "Gremlins (or rather Caroline) got into Wade Rowston's computer. So to try and establish the finishing order, Wade asked everyone if they could remember who finished in front of or behind them. In my case (I was the finishing paddler with Phil Newman), Lachie Wrenford had destroyed the lead Phil had created over Ian Wrenford and finished well ahead of me. Phil Geddes pipped me on the finishing line, and Don Johnstone and daughter Abi also slipped but they were a lap behind. In the end it was agreed that one of the Wise Men, John Thearle, and the 1½ Wise Men combo of Scott and Eli Tyers had won.



Not that it really mattered too much. We're competitive on the water, in an ultra-friendly, relaxed way, but are more interested in enjoying



the fun of the contest than caring who wins. No sheep stations on the line here.



After washing down the boats it was time for morning tea/coffee, complemented by creamy cakes and juicy cherries. Caroline, as usual, added to that with a Christmas bag of goodies for each competitor. A nice festive touch!

The 2 x 2 relay has become a fun monthly Sunday morning feature on the LCR K calendar thanks to the enthusiastic organizational skills of Wade and Caroline. It's a lighthearted affair which has evolved, among other things, into a family affair.



You'll commonly find teams of husband/wife, father/son, father/daughter, even on occasion a team of two young brothers in one double and Dad with a younger son in another double. Ten teams participated in Sunday's relay and the event is growing popularity. What better way to spend Sunday morning."