

Mud...what mud?

2017 proved to be a particularly bad year for the mud at Wiseman's Ferry. Lane Cove set up in the usual spot right by the 'out' check, and quickly found themselves with a beach of oozy, sticky mud to contend with. And as the tide ran out over the course of the six hours paddlers were arriving, the situation only got worse. Never fear, mud larks Matt Swann, Duncan Johnstone, Tom Holloway and Oscar Cahill were up to the task.



As the night wore on, they pulled paddlers out of boats, then washed the boats while the paddlers were being tended to! From up on the bank, we could hear the faint wet squelch as the 'mud larks' loped around (almost gracefully even) in the slime and dirt.

As we returned to our boats, there was the offer of foot washing, advice on the best way to avoid Wiseman's Ferry, and of course a wonderful cheer of support as we pulled out.

Thanks guys! It looked like one heck of a sticky year, and many reported still washing mud out of their clothes several days later. But...it looks like they might've enjoyed it too!



Ten Lessons of the K1

Tom Simmat

Men's Vet 60+ K1

Classics to date: 16

Made it to F

There are ten lessons to be learnt about paddling a K1 in the Hawkesbury Classic. So, pay careful attention; at next year's famils you will all be required to sit an examination. First I must thank my land crew; my Current Wife, my son Daen and little Zarli who at fifteen months now, can be good land crew for the next thirty years.



Tom focused but upright in his Viper at Pitt Town

Lesson 1: The very best way to obtain and keep long term land crew is to breed them.

When I was just on the wrong side of sixty, I was wondering if it was possible to teach old dogs new tricks. Was it possible to learn to paddle a K1...and complete the Hawkesbury in it? With a few kilos of lead ballast I did manage to complete the HCC, including going up Mangrove Creak and around Triangle Island off Spencer all in eleven hours. That Vet 60+ record stood until last year when some miserable no good who doesn't understand protocol did it in about 10h 45min.

So a few years back I had my prostate out, (secret men's business). The surgeon said with the prostate out, I would be much lighter and be as good as new after a couple of months...he lied.

Lesson 2: Never believe what a doctor tells you.

Lesson 3: If you ever think of paddling a tippy K1 in the Hawkesbury and it starts falling off the roof going at over 100kph, don't stop.

Knowing there were a lot of quick doubles, in the mass start, who would put up quite a wash, my race plan was to start on the left hand bank, out of the tide, gun it and stay in clear flat water, close to the bank, when there was be a break in the doubles cross behind them onto the smooth water on the right hand bank, again out of the tide.

This race plan worked brilliantly until I got to the bridge. After the bridge the doubles were kicking up such a wash that there was a three foot shore break crashing on the left hand bank. Clearly, I had not done enough time in the K1 in the surf.

Lesson 4: If you are thinking of paddling a K1 in the HCC spend a high proportion of your K1 training time in the surf.

Lesson 5: If you are thinking of paddling a tippy K1 in the Hawkesbury always have a plan "B".

So I wobbled my way up the left bank and did cross to the right bank, things calmed down a bit and made it upright to Catai. I had not yet mastered actually stopping in the water and not paddling, so all would be well if I timed it right and did not have to stop for the Sackville Ferry.

I had made the 'Reprive' a little less tippy by putting a couple of kilos of lead under the seat, and I was also relying on three extra kilos of ballast by way of apple juice and water in a bladder on the kayak floor.

Leaving Sackville, I picked up speed, the tide was with me and I was doing well, passed a speed boat trying to start and had a laugh, sped past E, and then I was getting strange waves, coming from somewhere ahead...a ski boat was doing doughnuts in the middle of the river.

I thought I should paddle over and advise him that the river was closed.

Lesson 6: If you are in a very tippy K1 in the middle of the Hawkesbury and you need to rouse on some petrol head in the middle of the river doing doughnuts, don't even think about it.

Wobbling around not doing a very good job of staying upright I realised it was a warm balmy night and as a consequence I had drunk more than half my ballast which made me even more tippy. Oh, and it was dark!

Lesson 7: If you are thinking of doing the HCC in a very tippy K1 make sure you finish, before it gets dark.

Wobbling on I tried to check my speed on the GPS and realized it was a bit blurred. I then realized that there was water between my eyes and the GPS. I was upside down.

Lesson 8: If your GPS looks blurred, get new glasses, if it still looks blurred don't breathe in, you are probably upside down.

So I swam ashore, got my stuff re-organized, got back in and attempted to paddle off. There was still quite a wash from the ski boat around and a group of those pesky, noisy kids in double Mirages went past. I began counting paddle strokes between brace strokes. Forty strokes, great, twenty-five, fifteen, five, one, one, one, no stroke, no stroke. I simply could not balance in the boat.

I could see F in the distance. I crept along the shore, so if I fell in, I would not have far to swim. Brace stroke, brace stroke brace stroke. It took me what felt like the rest of the night to paddle that short distance with an ever-increasing number of noisy pesky kids in double Mirages passing me. When I got to the check point a nice SES fellow asked if I would mind paddling around the other side of the SES boat on the ramp. I said "yes I would mind and I can't." They lifted the K1 up the hill onto the flat. I pressed the alert button on my Spot Tracker and my land crew were there in twenty minutes.

Lesson 9: Get a Spot tracker they cost under \$200 (and about \$150 a year to keep registered) and your land crew know exactly where you are, all the way down the river. That is of course if you want them to know.

Lesson 10: Really old dogs probably can't learn new tricks.



Tom putting his start plan into action at Windsor

Sweet Caroline...Mud...

John Duffy

Men's 50+ UN1

Classics to date: 16

Time: 12:25:25

I resolved last year to avoid the pressure, take a leaf out of Richard Barnes' 'have fun book' and enjoy this Classic more. That turned out to be a good decision given my slightly under-baked preparation was not ideal for many reasons.

I felt good at Sackville, felt great at Wisemans but started to struggle an hour later. I had committed for the first time in many years to call in at Low Tide Pitstop so was relieved to see that light on the right bank eventually come into view. Short of offering me a lounge chair those guys couldn't do enough for me. I had paddled with James Farrell for much of the time after Wiseman's and was very grateful he nursed me over the finish line as I really struggled with tiredness and soreness over the final hour.

But I won't be paddling with James again because around checkpoint O he told me my music was crap and singing was worse. I said in response that I had never heard such a pathetic rendition of Sweet Caroline from a paddling partner in all my Classics.

Landcrew was my son, Campbell, and he did a very good job and was very encouraging, as were all the LCRKers. The Wiseman's crew in the mud were remarkable but I declined an offer from Duncan to wash my feet of all the sticky mud because his hands were absolutely filthy.

So #16 for me and I'll be back for 2018. Was this one any better or worse than the others? Not really, because they have all been wonderful experiences. I encourage all members to every now and then take it easy and smell the roses, or the river, at a future Classic.



John cruising through Pitt Town, with music of course!

...and James' right of reply



James and landcrew Don at Windsor

James Farrell

Men's Vet 50+ Lrec

Classics to date: 5

Time: 12:25:25

James took his two minutes with the microphone at the HCC BBQ to give a brief but insightful summary of John's music selection: "It was something of a mystical experience, a journey into the distant history of songs that you heard once a thousand years ago and then haven't heard since." Despite advising John not to give up his day job, the two bonded over the delights of Low Tide Pitstop and a long but rewarding paddle to the finish.

Thanks from Interstate

Tina & Gerard Effeney (Qld)

BoB2

Classics to date: 2 each

Time: 12:46:58

We live in Brisbane but the HCC has turned into an annual focal point for our paddling over recent years. We've each done the race once before as solo paddlers (2015 & 2016) and this year we thought it would be great to do it together in a double. We eventually found a boat (thanks Jeremy), got it up to Brisbane and started our training in August.



Tina and Gerard passing Pitt Town

Being from 'out of town' and having had a taste of the LCRK hospitality last year, it was an easy decision to join the team for this year's race. The support structures that LCRK activate for the HCC are second to none. Our landcrew Peter and Cameron were made to feel very welcome and we're extremely grateful to all the LCRK paddlers and volunteers for their encouragement, genuine care and concern shown to us – even as virtual strangers.

We both found this year tougher than our previous experiences. We had a great race start and were ahead of schedule coming into Sackville. We had some low points between Sackville and Wiseman's, despite the tidal assistance. An unlit speed boat going upriver provided an unsettling wash and an element of surprise to the night, and a near collision with a very large bouy that loomed up out of the darkness between G and H woke us up! We felt stronger as we got closer to Wiseman's, but we had lost some time.

Wiseman's.....the mud angels were terrific and the back rub was sensational. Thanks again to the LCRK team! Low Tide Pitstop was a welcome break with a wonderful team of volunteers who assisted us to negotiate the mud and provided us with hot tea and home cooked delights. From Low Tide Pitstop we were on our own for long periods. It was a hard slog from O to the end. We were very pleased to finish!



Paul, sitting just behind Tony and Alanna!

Paul Gill (WA)

Men's Vet 40+ ORS1

Classics to date: 1

Time: 9:09:39

Just wanted to pass on my thanks to you and all the crew at the HCC for the tips I gained from LCRKers. I had a pretty good race, and like always learnt a few things along the way. Like

next time to sort out my drinks with the trusty coat hanger like Tony and Alanna on the V10 double. Also to adjust the screen brightness on my GPS – it blinded me every 5 minutes or so. Paddle in a group as often as possible I paddle on my own 99% of the time if I get into group training regularly I think I could go quicker.

I owe someone a plastic bite valve for a Camelbak which I was given a Wisemans. Great experience, perfect conditions, and couldn't have been better on a first attempt.

Michael Laloli (WA)

Men's Open K1

Classics to date: 1 (a future Lane Cove potential?)

Time: 13:23:28

Just wanted to write and say a huge thank you to your club for your help during the HCC. I sent my kayak from Perth to Sydney and put out a request hoping someone could take it to the race and then onto the start of the Murray. David Hammond was quick to offer which was hugely generous. I didn't expect any more favours or assistance...



Michael's rudder...suitably mud-coated

Meeting David on the Sat, he was quick to integrate me into the Lane Cove team. Within no time I was in the group photos, wearing the kit and being briefed on the race, where to meet, and Lane Cove cyalume sticks added to my boat for ID!

During the race I had rudder issues with the boat. The support crew did all they could at Sackville and then gave it the works at Wiseman's Ferry. Frustratingly, after leaving Wiseman's I had further issues and needed to return! No issues for the Lane Cove pit crew!

The set up and organisation of the LCRK support team was impressive, and I was fortunate to have received support from your club. We felt very welcomed, especially my girlfriend Kristie who was travelling by herself as my support crew. You certainly made her night so much easier. Had I not received the support at Wisemans, for sure I would have had to withdraw and it would have been gut wrenching having travelled so far.

Should any of your members ever consider competing in Avon Descent, Doctor Race, Rotto Swim or any other of the iconic WA events, I would be only too happy to assist, whether that be for general advice, local assistance, logistics and so on! I truly hope we can host members of your club in the future and please record my offer at the club. I'm looking forward to seeing many of you again at the MMP and hope I can swing by the club for a session some other time.

Finally, congratulations to all the members who competed this year in the HCC, it was absolutely brutal and such a tough race!



Right: How many Lane Cove crew does it take to fix a rudder?

The saga of boat 239

- Richard Yates

Richard Yates/Craig Ellis

Men's Vet 40+ UN2

Classics to date: 9/7

Made it to Wiseman's

Our HCC 2017 started with a bang. Unfortunately the bang was accompanied by the sound of shattered glass and profanities as some clown drove his truck right through the back of our boat.

However, Epics are made tough. There was a neat fist sized hole through the glass accompanied by some red gelcoat. The driver, luckily unhurt in the low speed collision was quite ashen faced given the proximity of the stern to his head. Fortunately I had the boat in the centre of the car and Craig had polished the hull letting it slip some along the cradles. Not an ideal start.



Richard and the offending windscreen en route to the start

As for the race itself, we ended up in the late start hoping to break the 10hr barrier that we missed last year by 7 minutes. Despite the later start, hopes for a planned Hystek/Ewin wash ride evaporated as they powered past us. An interesting sight with three V10 doubles and a K4 each dragging a fleet of smaller craft on their wash.

The Hawkesbury is a mighty wide river but against the tide, near the bank, there isn't too much optimum room. Even less when the same ski sits right beside you, jostling around one side then the next, pushing other boats away to pop into the slot and then giving us a mouthful when we apparently don't leave enough room (for 20km). If you look at Ian's photos you can spot him as he is in the black boat alongside us with paddle blade shaped dents in the bow and a furrowed brow.



Craig and Richard with their somewhat unwelcome paddling companion just behind

A great trip into Sackville where we were treated to a Keg powered F1 pitstop. New fluids and carbs and off again. Leg number 2 wasn't as quick with the outgoing tide not the help we were expecting. Early mild fatigue perhaps?

The darkness was shattered by a C2 carrying a 1000 candlepower spotlight on its bow. We paddled past. I could see my crisp shadow on Craig's back. Craig said he could see the silhouette of the pair of us on the sandstone cliffs 500m in front of us. Shadow puppets. It was a powerful light, and it was awful.

No ferry delays saw us yoyo with an SLR2 heading down the river. Things were going well, until Wisemans. I thought something might be up when the welcoming lights of Wisemans elicited no more than a grunt from the bow seat.

Pulling into the welcoming hands of the mudlarks, I popped up the bank for a cup of Noodles and a coke. Craig staggered up the bank for a Bex and a lie down. Lying face first on the green mat, we asked what was wrong. Craig said he was feeling very very dizzy and very nauseous. Sal's response: "Now you know how I felt for 9 months."

Craig is a brave bloke and countered with "But I'm a bloke this is much worse than morning sickness....."

Despite that Sal asked around for some anti nausea medication. Tom 'Doc' Holloway miraculously had some, add triage to the mudlark service. While the muddy apparition headed off to the carpark, it dawned on me, Sal, Steve and Michaela that anti nausea medication is usually not taken orally... Looking at Craig's prone body on the ground, we were all thinking the same thing, it was gonna come down to rock paper scissors unless someone was prepared to put their hand up (as it were) to take one for the team.



Craig on the bank at Wiseman's

However, through divine intervention, Tom's magic pill was a wafer to be placed under the tongue so all was well. We waited for recovery but after an hour or so it was apparent that, despite some improvement, we could not risk 40km in the lonely dark with a seasick skipper. We called it a day and headed for home. Craig was still crook on Sunday so I thought I'd do some research to find out what was wrong so it wouldn't happen again.

Apparently what Craig had was Mane Languorem et Masculum or 'Blokies Morning Sickness' BMS for short **. (Probably some form electrolyte imbalance was the amateur consensus.) It is often confused with a hangover as the symptoms are nearly identical and are usually accompanied by the same questions from your significant other, namely:

'You don't look well, are you feeling OK?'

'What have you been drinking?'

'How much have you been drinking?'

'This doesn't look like fun, why do you and your mates go out and do this to yourself?'

BMS is serious, worse than Ebola but not quite as bad as Man Flu. Be warned.

Seriously though, the whole training, lead up and participation has again been fantastic. Thanks to everyone who volunteered and paddled and trained. Great work all.

Thank you also to our Landcrew of Michaela, Sally and Steve and double thanks to Steve for the use of his (now scratched, battle scarred) boat.

As for me and Craig and the Hawkesbury...well that's why they invented next year.

Short Tales of a Long Night

As told at the Hawkesbury BBQ on November 2nd and in the finish line video captured by Ruby Ardren at Mooney Mooney on Sunday October 29th. Of the 37 paddlers who each put in an incredible effort, here are just a few more stories of how the night unfolded.



Meg Thornton

Ladies Vet 60+ ORS1

Classics to date: 6

15:53:25

Meg is currently doing her Very Big Year of paddling, and shared that "the best way to paddle a long way is to do it slowly! I planned to avoid as many adverse tides as possible, and so stayed at Low

Tide Pitstop....well...until the tide turned. We toasted marshmallows, ate caramel slice. I'm just not sure about the red cordial at that time in the morning!" Congratulations Meg on completing 753kms in your Very Big Year!

Chris Stanley & Richard Barnes

BoB2

Classics to date: 1/37

Time: 14:23:43

Chris narrated his first classic as a night of both big challenges and plenty of fun. "There was a joke going round that it's mind over matter, and you don't matter and I don't mind!" The duo stopped for scones at Low Tide Pitstop, but when they were around Milson's Passage and closing in on home Chris confessed to a point where he felt he couldn't do it anymore. "So here we are, with 3kms to go. The tide has turned. And Rick says 'well I'm not paddling to the end, so we're going to turn around and go back!'...so we were floating there in the middle of the river, and Rick opens the hatch and pulls out the big jar. Packed facing each other with the tin foil on were two jam tarts. So we sat bobbing in the water, going at 2 or 3kms per hour eating these jam tarts, and then I reckon some of my best paddling was in that last 2kms!"



David Veivers

BoB1

Classics to date: 2

Time: 11:33:10

David paddled the 2017 HCC with a massive PB – over an hour faster than his time last year. He recalls "long stretches where you could see the checkpoint for almost half an hour before you actually reached it" and the long slog to reach each one. While he was "considering illegally dumping the kayak on the way home afterwards", he confessed that by Tuesday he was already thinking about the 2018 campaign.

Elke van Ewyk

Wisemans Dash
Dashes to date: 2
Made it to G

Elke again set out to complete the Wiseman's Dash, and this time came into Sackville feeling great but with a boat in need of repair. "Something went clunk, and the whole footplate just moved forwards," she recalls. "At Sackville it was like a grand prix pit stop...Peter Harris pulled something off his roof racks to fix it."

A little further down the river, however, an injury flared up, and Elke found herself "on a private jetty, seriously considering my lifejacket as a pillow for the night. When the SES boat went past the first time, I was out-of-it enough to think 'those are pretty lights', but luckily when it looped back to find me, I had enough in me to flutter my emergency blanket, and they came to my rescue."



David Young

Men's Vet 50+ ORS1
Classics to date: 6
Time: 9:48:01

David set out to have a "light year", apparently due to insufficient training. "I'll still do under ten hours," he had clarified, "I'm just not going to wreck myself, and I'll take in the atmosphere at Wiseman's." David declared at the finish line that he had stuffed up his food, but to everyone else he was doing the same thing as always: nourishing his HCC on coke and chips. "I was really craving a coke at Wiseman's," he recalls. "I sat there for a bit, then Wade told me to piss off. So I sat there for another five minutes, and then Wade told me to piss off again, so I thought I'd better get back in the boat and finish it!"



Kenji Ogawa & Justin Paine

BoB2
Classics to date: 23/?
Time: 16:13:54

Kenji and Justin had a true HCC tale to tell at the BBQ. The duo set off together in Brooklyn or Bust, but at Sackville Justin realised he wouldn't be able to continue. "But Kenji, he's done 22 Classics, never with a DNF, and he wasn't going to let this one go." "I suggested to Justin that he could just sit in the back, and pretend to paddle as we went past each checkpoint but realised sitting down for the next 10 hours was not going to work - worse than a flight to Tokyo." So, after checking with HCC officials at Sackville that it was ok to continue solo, he calmly hopped back in the boat and said "ok, I'll continue alone". Kenji then paddled another 70kms in the front seat of a double, reporting that "when I came into Wiseman's, I was like Shallow Hal. So the crew put some bottles in the back of the boat to weight it down, and they modified the rudder so I could clear it, then I set off again....Everything was a warm-up for the final kilometre sprint. I passed two boys in a double mirage and they were looking at me thinking 'huh?', and you know what, I beat them to the finish!"



Right: Kenji setting forth from Sackville alone



Christopher Thompson

BoB1

Classics to date: 6

Time: 13:14:39

At the BBQ, Chris was quick to point out that "I don't do much training for the Hawkesbury, I rather enjoy taking it slowly." He reported a particularly hard slog to the finish against the tide, but by the end of his finish line interview was already checking: "next year's got to be a fast one, hasn't it?"

Naomi & Sophie Johnson

Ladies Open K2

Classics to date: 2

Time: 10:41:30

"We had a great night, though we spent most of it alone. Starting at 4pm with the other women and juniors, we quickly started catching all the BoB1 paddles...who seemed to think we were juniors! Sophie is fantastic at setting a pace and then continuing with it almost indefinitely, and that's what she did. Most of our potential Lane Cove washrides snuck past as we were otherwise engaged on beaches – Tony and Alanna as we were pulled up on a beach at the beginning of the Big W, and then David as we were taking a quick break at Pitstop. I only got into trouble once for navigating us over a sandbar, and we were thrilled to see the bioluminescence for a second year!"



Phil Newman, Emma Ridgeway & Bob Kenderes

BoB2

Time: 14:47:50

Phil called the canoe he and Bob paddled with Emma an "assisted triple", and said that "with that extra person along for the ride to keep you geed up, it was great". He spoke of the fantastic assistance of the Lane Cove club "everywhere you looked", thanked Oscar for his help "getting the boat down to the water in the first place...I'd probably added five kilos because I kept sticking things to it thinking it's something Emma might need." He's keen to put together a Vet 60+ K4 next year if anyone else is up for the challenge.

Robert Llewellyn-Jones

BoB1

Classics to date: 1

Made it to 81.6kms

Rob reported a good start to his second Classic, though quickly realised there was a problem with his boat. Not only were there pedal issues, with the boat turning to the right and only to the right, there were also increasing puddle problems as it became obvious he was taking on water! With the help of Lane Cove landcrew he soldiered on, "until after Pitstop when I started to see little green men dancing in front of me. That wasn't a good sign." Rob decided that was a good time to call into a safety boat rather than keep working towards the finish, but by the BBQ was already starting to think about his goals for next year.



Wonderful Volunteers

It's official, Lane Cove has the best volunteers and the best landcrew. From those who set up marquees at the crack of dawn to those who stayed at Mooney Mooney until dawn the next morning. Those who sponged out the boats at Sackville, who pulled us out of knee-deep mud at Wiseman's Ferry, and then threw us back into it to finish the race we'd started. Who fixed rudders, forced us to eat the food we said we'd eat, and didn't once question our sanity in undertaking such a crazy event.

Paddling the Classic is hard work, but you made it a fantastic and much easier night. Thank you!

HCC Organising Committee: Roger Deane, Richard Barnes

Equipment and transport: (both HCC and LCRK): Tony Hystek with Oscar Cahill

HCC direct volunteers: Mark Sier, Derek Simmonds, Margaret Heine and more

Photos and video: Jana Osvald, Tom Holloway, Ian Wrenford, Oscar Cahill, David Young and Ruby Ardren's video

Windsor set-up, sales and decamp: Oscar Cahill, Wade Rowston, Tony Carr and several others packing up

Sackville checkpoint team: Peter Harris (coordinator), Nettie Harris, Tim McNamara, Rodrigo Matamala, Paul van Koesveld, Louise White AND Keg D'Andreti deep in the water

Sackville boat technicians: Peter Harris and Rodrigo Matamala

Wisemans set-up, lights, shelter and BBQ: Andrew and Joanne Mackay with our Action Sound team

Wisemans checkpoint team: Tom Holloway, Duncan Johnstone, Matt Swann, Oscar Cahill (again) – all mud larks – Wade Rowston as coordinator with Paul van Koesveld and Tim McNamara and others

Wisemans boat technicians: Kieran Babich and Rodrigo Matamala (again)

Wisemans masseur extraordinaire: Don Rowston

Finish line welcome, support and video: Ruby Ardren, Phil Geddes with Rodrigo Matamala (again) and others

Hawkesbury Famils: Duncan Johnstone

River guru, tactician and dark arts: Tom Simmat

General coordination, hassling and systems: Paul van Koesveld, Rich Yates and Ian Wrenford

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