



Well, the Hawkesbury Canoe Classic is done and dusted for another year. It seems to have been a night of anomalies: depending on who you ask it was hot, cold, windy, still, and the tide was both great and not so great. A broken-down ferry grounded much of the fleet at Wiseman's, some for up to half an hour, while winds were so high in the early hours of Sunday morning that the race was called off at Spencer. But of course the race and the river are only one part of the story, with paddlers spurred on by landcrew and volunteers doing the HCC in true LCRK style: enthusiastically and efficiently with oodles of smiles and lots of laughter.

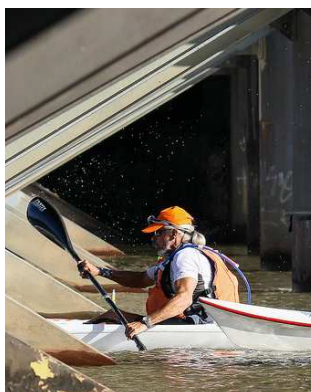
The Lane Cove Team

Among a race fleet of 285 paddlers in 210 boats in the 42nd Cane Classic, Lane Cove recorded 38 paddlers in 29 boats. That's about 13 percent of the whole fleet! 19 boats paddled competitively, with three existing records tumbling, the Ladies' Vet 40+ K4 setting a brand new record, and a further seven boats paddling within an hour of record time. Seven singles and two doubles tackled the non-competitive Brooklyn or Bust with stories of chatting and singing their way down the river.



Landcrew unloading the K4 at Windsor

2018 will be remembered as the year the ferry didn't quite get it right and of the highest Sunday morning winds in HCC memory. The year of a fabulously smiley women's K4 and of Tony Hystek going for an impromptu swim.



Strength in numbers and a veritable hoard of supportive landcrew ensured the club retained the coveted Commonwealth Bank trophy for the third year in a row. And some are even wondering whether it's too early to begin planning their tilt at the race in 2019.

Left: Jezza makes an early bid for lead boat in the 5:15pm start

LCRK Results

HCC 2018 Results for LCRK Associated Paddlers - still preliminary

Name	#	Current Record	Official Race Cat/Class	Distance	Time	Htime	Position
Tony Hystek,	181	10:16:02	Mens Veteran 60+ - UN1	111.0	10:12:40	10:20:37	1 of 1
Ruby Ardren,	164	11:19:34	Ladies Veteran 40+ - k1	111.0	11:08:15	10:22:08	1 of 1
Peter Fitzgerald, Brendan Trewartha	210	08:21:43	Mens Veteran 40+ - UN2	111.0	8:54:10	9:57:43	2 of 3
Mark Hempel , Caroline Marschner	128	09:05:38	Mixed Open - UN2	111.0	9:27:00	10:08:23	2 of 2
David Young,	204	08:45:28	Mens Veteran 50+ - ORS1	111.0	9:33:39	9:53:43	1 of 3
Naomi Johnson, Sophie Wallace	167	09:47:50	Ladies Open - K2	111.0	10:27:33	10:09:58	1 of 1
Nick Blacklock,	227	09:33:30	Mens Veteran 50+ - LREC1	111.0	10:30:45	10:08:02	3 of 7
Rae Duffy, Alison Curtin	228	10:29:24	Ladies Veteran 40+ - LREC2	111.0	10:33:39	9:22:40	1 of 1
Tom Simmat,	174	10:35:24	Mens Veteran 70+ - SREC1	111.0	~11:24:30	~9:22:40	1 of 1
James Pralija,	248	08:27:48	Mens Open - ORS1	111.0	9:55:45	10:55:55	1 of 1
Peter Manley,	230	08:45:28	Mens Veteran 50+ - ORS1	111.0	9:55:45	10:16:36	2 of 3
Jeremy Spear,	240	08:45:28	Mens Veteran 50+ - ORS1	111.0	10:00:50	10:21:51	3 of 3
Richard Yates, Duncan Johnstone	183	08:21:43	Mens Veteran 40+ - UN2	111.0	10:03:25	11:15:13	3 of 3
Don Johnstone,	226	08:38:47	Mens Veteran 40+ - ORS1	111.0	10:47:00	11:30:59	3 of 4
Anjie Lees , Wendy, Kerrie, Jana	177	NEW	Ladies Veteran 40+ - K4	111.0	12:27:40	13:20:45	1 of 1
Rob Llewellyn-Jones,	238	09:06:32	Mens Veteran 60+ - ORS1	111.0	13:03:58	13:14:09	1 of 1
Chris Thompson,	193	N/A	BOB1	111.0	13:19:00	-	16 of 39
Craig Salkeld,	203	N/A	BOB1	111.0	11:10:30	-	2 of 39
Graham Cleland,	215	N/A	BOB1	111.0	11:10:30	-	3 of 39
Trevor Nichols,	165	N/A	BOB1	111.0	11:10:30	-	1 of 39
John Duffy,	101	N/A	BOB1	111.0	12:22:50	-	8 of 39
Darren Williams,	196	N/A	BOB1	65.0	7:09:00	-	32 of 39
Warren Huxley,	206	N/A	BOB1	31.2	3:45:00	-	39 of 39
Merridy Huxley,	205	NEW	Ladies Veteran 60+ - LREC1	98.5	12:08:00	-	1 of 2
Cathy Miller,	229	10:59:33	Ladies Veteran 50+ - LREC1	98.5	12:47:00	-	1 of 1
Suzie Rhydderch, Mitchell Coffey	194	09:05:38	Mixed Open - UN2	111.0	9:13:51	9:54:16	1 of 2
Gareth Stokes, Peter Faherty	180	07:50:10	Mens Open - UN2	111.0	9:13:55	10:39:13	1 of 1
Richard Barnes , Chris Stanley	111	N/A	BOB2	98.5	12:32:00	-	9 of 27
Kenji Ogawa , Luke Keanan Brown	133	N/A	BOB2	98.5	15:30:00	-	25 of 27

Note that at the time of publication, Tom Simmat is still without an official handicap time.

Records and Honours

Everyone paddles the Hawkesbury for a different reason, some for a great time or to raise money for Arrow, some to chase personal goals and records. For those that were inclined towards the latter, the HCC BBQ at LCRK on Wednesday 31st October saw the presentation of four perpetual trophies, two newly donated by Justin Paine. Then on November 10th, the HCC presentation dinner in Mooney Mooney celebrated a range of outstanding achievements in the race.



Brendan and Fitzy at Pitt Town

Not content with his 2017 trophy for Fastest Lane Cove Paddler, **Brendan Trewartha** teamed up with newly competitive **Peter Fitzgerald** in the Men's Vet 40+ UN2 to take it out again. Despite taking some time to choose their craft, the duo flew down the river in a time of 8:54:10, ultimately the second boat to cross the finish line. As well as his hours of training, Fitzy was again the highest fundraiser for the event, earning the Spencer Township Shield, and brought home the Arrow Cup for the SHOCkers' efforts in raising around \$16,000. A huge effort!

New HCC doubles team **Rae Duffy** and **Alison Curtin** paddled Alison's first Classic in a time of 10:33:39 in the Ladies' Vet 40+ LREC2. Despite not quite snatching the class record, the duo were the fastest women's crew on handicap, and look set to win the trophy for best Lane Cove time on handicap as well, with their time translating to a blistering 9:22:40. But then there's Tom..



Alison and Rae all smiles at 10kms in

In 2018, Justin Paine carved and donated two new Lane Cove trophies. Beautifully adorned with reliefs of paddlers, the trophies recognise the oldest LCRKer to complete the classic, and the fastest woman to paddle the race in a single. Though rumours abound that he's not a day over 40, **Tom Simmat** received the trophy for oldest paddler, completing the race in a provisional time of 11:24:30 in the Men's Vet 70+ SREC1. He also received the Classic's Bruce & Joan Morison Memorial trophy for fastest Vet 70+ paddler in the event, set a new record in his class and might just clinch the Lane Cove award for fastest on handicap as well. Stay tuned! **Ruby Ardren** was the fastest single woman on the night, finishing the Women's Vet 40+ K1 in a new record time of 11:08:15.



Tom and Ruby receive their new LCRK Classic trophies from Justin



Interstate sisters **Naomi Johnson** and **Sophie Wallace** received the Waterski Gardens Pro Assoc trophy for fastest ladies' crew in the race, beating their 2017 PB with a time of 10:27:33 in the Ladies Open K2.

Left: Naomi and Sophie with the ladies' trophy

David Young earned the Len & Dawn Farnham Memorial trophy for fastest Vet 50+ boat in the race, winning the Men's Vet50+ ORS1 in a time of 9:33:39. He was also fastest single on the night!



Right: David with landcrew Allison and Gaby at the finish line



The K4 crew get in a team hug before the ladies' start

The Ladies' Vet 40+ K4 is a previously uncontested event at the Classic, and this year the Lane Cove team of **Anjie Lees**, **Wendy Andrews**, **Kerrie Murphy** and **Jana Osvald** set a brand new record of 12:27:40. With three HCC newbies in the boat and the monumental logistics of coordinating a K4 team across training and the race itself, this crew really captured Lane Cove's 2018 HCC spirit with their enthusiasm and never-give-up attitude.

Despite a quick dip after Wiseman's **Tony Hystek** shaved a few minutes off the Men's Vet 60+ UN1 record, setting the new bar at 10:12:40.



Right: Tony at Pitt Town

Don Johnstone and **Rob Llewelyn-Jones** received certificates recognising their efforts in fundraising over \$1,000 for the 2018 Classic.

Stories from the K4

**Wendy Andrews, Kerrie Murphy,
Jana Osvald, Anjie Lees**

Ladies' Vet 40+ K4

Time: 12:27:40

Swims: 2

Kerrie: Less than 18 months ago I found an hour paddling to be as enjoyable as an hour in a dentist's chair. It really hurt! And all I could focus on was getting to the end and out of the boat. Fast forward two months and whilst I really enjoyed 12km Wednesday night double sessions with Wendy, I thought the HCC was for slightly mental people. Anyone who could want to do that distance, single discipline, on flat water, all through the night? Well the vortex of LCRK HCC emails and enthusiasm, and then the idea of a K4 finally sucked me in.



The K4 smiling their way through Pitt Town

Getting a K4 to the start line is no easy feat and would have been a recipe for stress, tension and failure if it were not for Anjie and Clay. They put in an amazing effort in the 10 weeks to get us there. The physical effort of managing the K4, logistics and 4 team members were demanding! The lead up felt like weekly masterclasses in technique, navigation and boat setup and maintenance. I was lucky to do this journey with such an inspiring group of women, each bringing balance to the boat:



Kerrie at Windsor

Anjie – the powerhouse, the bracer, the leader, capable and selfless (there was no forward movement without Anjie)

Jana – the wise, the foodie, the carer, the consistent

Wendy – the determined, the battler, the juggler

Highlights of the night: the balmy enjoyable first 60km, chatting to Ruby, Clayton's dry humour, Malcom's massage, getting the tired giggles, the swims, Low Tide Pit stop cup of tea standing around the fire, seeing my Dad with tears in his eyes at the finish line and my mum's lovingly prepared basket of goodies.

For those thinking of doing the same, here's a recipe for a K4 HCC with three beginners:

Ingredients:

- 1 x boss person (no more)
- 2 x super selfless amazing support crew
- 1 x K4 with seats, footplates, pumps
- 4 x comfortably aligned seats (cause of nightmares for me)
- 1 x supportive club
- 1 x team with same goal

Instructions: Mix all ingredients together, and bake for 10 weeks. Enjoy served with a balmy night, cup of tea and a few midnight swims.

Thank-you again to all who helped, including my husband and young girls – I can't thank you enough for your enthusiasm, kindness and continuous support. Will I do it again? Hmm maybe, but it would be hard to beat this experience.

Jana: It was really great to have a company of three other girls, and to have Anjie coaching from the back seat in particular. I came in as a 'reserve' and considered myself a weakest link, so I tried to prepare as best I could. I attended all the famils, all K4 training and the Myall Classic. That was only phase one! Then there was preparation for the day. The food...I am very fussy and generally I don't eat anything if I can't see ingredients. So here is my HCC meal plan: oat porridge in the morning, protein shake on the way, a sardine pasta lunch with homemade protein balls and an avocado and vegemite (B12) sandwich an hour before race. Two bottles of ginger Kombucha before the race. For the race I decided to cook myself a thick lentil dhal with rice, potatoes and sweet potatoes – with all the spices. Savoury hot dhal worked really well with the other sweet things I had, like bananas, dates laced with coffee and cinnamon, and protein balls.



Jana all set to paddle

My meal plan was beneficial, but what I didn't expect was the pain from my hip that started before Sackville. I had to take three Nurofens. I think I tried to do some yoga stretches before the race and I over-did it...too much of the healthy stuff is not recommended!



Apart from a few flying rocks, the race was relatively uneventful until we started to get lost with the night settling in. The blue line of the GPS led us directly into trees. Luckily Kerrie who has really good eyes spotted them just in time and we were able to stop the 'freight train'. But the night was beautiful and we enjoyed ourselves. Somewhere before Wiseman's, Wendy started to feel unwell, but she kept paddling. Anjie persisted with her consistent instructions BOOBS TO THE BANK and LEFT RIGHT and TIMING!! A lot of bracing on her part got us to Wiseman's ramp. After a long break induced by stuck ferries, we set off again. After about an hour it became obvious that Wendy did not feel well – so we fell in. And yes there was a sympathy spew. The remount worked brilliantly! However this is where my meal plan didn't work, as all my food was ruined. The low tide pit stop came in handy and there was Elke with wonderful cakes, of which I ate four, and a hot cup of tea. We continued with Wendy insisting she was OK. Really she wasn't, but

she paddled like a mad bulldog into the storm, the K4 flexed and wobbled, Anjie was constantly bracing, Kerrie yelling instructions passed on from Anjie and I was just digging my feet into the footplates trying to keep balance and KEEP PADDLING. DO NOT STOP KEEP PADDLING. I think Kerrie asked kindly could we stop and readjust, the answer was NO, but she got what she asked for very soon. Somewhere near Bar Point we had another swim, remounted this time with some help of TAS paddlers and kept paddling until the end. I think the finish is same for everybody, you see the bridge and the ramp but it feels like the goal post is being constantly moved away from you. We made it.

Will I do it again? Possibly in a double, I understand the addiction.



'Boss lady' Anjie at Windsor

Anjie: The start of our race went to plan with Ruby wash-riding to Sackville. The hold up with the ferry at Wiseman's was like a blessing in disguise (at first I was worried they were going to stop the race there). Wendy was not well and I was worried she might have wanted to pull out – she is just such a trouper.

Between Cumberland Reach and Lower Portland the Garmin screen stopped working – it was saying to go straight ahead and the trees were very close. We had to

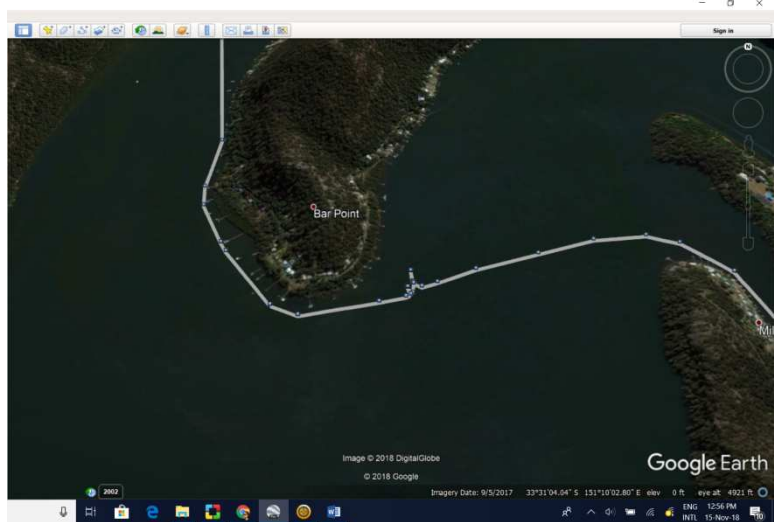
'back the bus up' and following green cyalumes until the Garmin restarted. Our first deep water re-entry, doesn't

look so deep (or dark) on the map. We all had to stop giggling once we fell in to execute the well oiled re-entry plan.

The guys at low tide pit stop were listening to our interesting conversation about bras (please don't ask my position on life jackets and re-entering a boat) and called us over. It took us a bit of maneuvering to get in to the tiny boat ramp. I have always had the 'paddle through' (choosing not to get out of the boat in the mud) option at low tide pit stop but stopping was just the best getting out having a hot drink and something sweet by the fire not to mention catching up with Elke. We almost dried out instantly (aka someone might have nearly got burnt).

Kerrie wanted to stop and for us all to have a little break at O and I firmly said “No” as I was finding it challenging to keep the boat upright when 1 stopped paddling let alone all 4 of us. Kerrie just soldiered on and accepted my response.

We went in for a swim just after bar point, and I must admit I was a little concerned how we would go with a deep water re-entry in the rougher conditions, as well as fatigue. Along came our knights in shining armour – Angus and Jack from The Armidale School (TAS) in the most beautiful Mirage 730 I have ever seen. They asked if we were OK and I asked if they minded rafting up to help us get back in. I swam to the front of the boat and pulled them alongside ours. I climbed in first, then Jana and Wendy and lastly Kerrie, the boys offered to paddle with us to the finish however we were now facing upstream and had a large turning circle to face the right way and head for the finish.



The K4's watery route through Bar Point

It was just the best to be cheered at the finish by many LCRK paddlers who had waited to see us finish. We were lucky we were probably one of the last boats through before they stopped the race at Spencer.

As a team we worked really well together and Kerrie had said along the way there is definitely “no princesses in this boat” – there were no complaints from anyone and we all just dug in and paddled.



Wendy, Jana and Kerrie getting warm at Sackville

fiberglass repairs and flotation.

Our team was four ladies, two with young children and families as well as overseas and interstate work commitments. I had an overseas wedding. It meant lots of times we had a seat to be filled, and many people stepped up and filled in for us. Jana was the only one who made it to every single training session – you could always count on Jana. All I can say is what an awesome club to be a part of.

I definitely can't forget Clay in all of this, he drove the trailer for each famil, helping shuttle all the boats from the end of the famil to the start to make logistics simpler for everyone.

On the day attended to us making sure that not just I had what I needed but that we all did.

...So what could be a bigger challenge for next year?

I have now completed six Classics, and Wendy, Kerrie and Jana have completed their first. We achieved our goal of finishing this year as well as setting a record in the Ladies Vet 40 K4. I think I have swum in every one except my first.

All of this would not have been possible if it was not for the club and its members – it has taken quite a bit of work to get the boat up to spec to complete the HCC, from footplates thanks to Tony and

footstraps and pumps from Matt Blundell, new seats from Don Andrews, some



Wendy in the driver's seat at Windsor



"Ok...everyone back in the boat!"

On Four Glitches

Don Johnstone

Men's Vet 40+ ORS1

Time: 10:47:00

Glitches: 4

My Hawkesbury was a story of 4 glitches. The first 60km went really well – with the hot afternoon cooling into very pleasant, warm, still paddling conditions for about 2.5 hours

of sunlight, a favourable tide from Windsor to Sackville for a 2 minute pit stop, and then 3 hours into the night with the tide gradually turning against me.

The first glitch was when I was ready to leave Wisemans Ferry at about 11pm when the race was called to a halt for 25 minutes while a broken ferry was hauled across the river. I did my best to keep warm but was itching to keep paddling.

The second glitch was at the 90km mark, when I made a wrong turn. I paddled north along Mangrove Creek (bloody big creek) for 2.5km until I became suspicious about the lack of lights and by the tide flowing against me (I had been expecting a favourable current from about 80km to the finish). I turned around and stopped at a beach to ask directions, and was told I was at Spencer.

This annoyed me so much I didn't concentrate, so my third glitch was capsizing a few minutes later. After remounting my ski, and uttering a few expletives, I tried to regain my momentum for the final haul. Conditions got really choppy as I approached Brooklyn Bridge so I had to do a lot of bracing just to stay upright, and my fourth glitch was that I overshot the finish then looped back in order to gain wind protection in the lee of the bridge.

I was very wobbly on my feet for at least an hour, and very grateful for my trusty land crew of Amanda and Hamish, but after sleeping most of Sunday I was almost fully recovered within two days, and am now determined to return again for a tilt at the magic 10 hour mark.



Don going the right way through Pitt Town!



*"Come my children, we will portage around the broken ferry"
(the clock showing ferry closure time)*

You'll be right...

Peter Manley

Men's Vet 50+ ORS1

Time: 9:55:45

Nothing like finishing a race/event like the Hawkesbury, particularly when thoughts about dropping out part way through have been conquered. I hadn't revisited the HCC for almost

30 years and took to it with some trepidation.

"It's going to be a good night with favourable tides and a full moon - you'll be right" said more than a couple of LCRK comen. Before I knew it I had signed up.

A warm start was certainly welcome and it seemed easy up to Sackville. A quick stop (banana and drink) then off again, though the doubles rides had cleared out. James Pralija and I had agreed at the start that we would stay together for the whole race, knowing that it is easier to have company when times get tough, and so it turned out. About midway between Sackville and Wiseman's I hit the wall – wrists playing up etc. and I am grateful for James being there to encourage me through and waiting while I took short periodic breaks in the boat. I hope I was able to return the favour in the lead up to Wiseman's through the unexpected chop, sticking with James who is no fan of rough water in the dark. Wiseman's stop was a little longer than hoped but stayed just long enough to refresh and was lucky to be the last boat through the ferries before they were closed.

We caught Tony H at this point, which was useful for the two HCC novices as we now had someone who could show us the best lines for the last section. Unfortunately Tony had a swim, creating an unplanned detour as we helped him to shore. The next section was filled with thoughts of "the tide is supposed to turn in our favour now...it will happen any minute...should be with us..." Never felt like it arrived, but we continued on slow and steady, finally pleased to see the finish line – "oh wait there are still 3kms to go after leaving Milson's Passage – bugger, thought it was over." Crossed the line to LCRK cheers and still able to smile.

Enormous thanks to my landcrew Lesley and all the LCRK volunteers at every checkpoint. Will I be back – to be decided but a double may be more appealing.



Pete in the freight train of 5:15pm starters



LCRK Caption suggestions:

"James, can you pass me Tony's swim cap please?" (James P)

"Tony can you PLEASE get a wriggle on? Over there, Tony Carr has cooked me a perfect Salmon en Papillote. It's ready NOW!!!" (Ian W)

"I'm telling you, Spencer is that way!" (Tony C)

"Get the f*** out of here" (Derek)

Thoughts about 'The Secret River'

Suzie Rhydderch, Mitch Coffey

Mixed Open UN2

Time: 09:13:51



Suzie and Mitch, rumoured to have kept exactly the same 'game on' faces for nine hours!

Suzie: My tale for HCC 2018 starts with a promise/premonition/wishful thinking from the year before... Mitch Coffey, who'd just had a blinder in his single in 2017, had wondered out loud if we should have a crack at the mixed doubles

record in 2018 – “how good would that be”, and, “watch this space”. It turns out that, after the delirium of the race the year before wore off, Mitch was actually serious! And when the marathon season rolled around for 2018, we decided to train together, race together, and to make sure we could still be mates regardless of what happened in races – tick, tick, tick!

Mitch couldn't have been a better training partner throughout the year. Never mind the fact we live an hour away from each other, Mitch never shied away from my ideas for training paddles – “6am on the water at Brooklyn”, I suggested, “never mind the 25km winds and racing tide”, I announced, “what rain?” I asked – was it just me, or have we had a lot of challenging conditions on Sundays leading up to Hawkesbury!

In the lead up to the big night, Mitch was cool as a cucumber, and gave me every confidence that we could do this adventure race together. We had incredible support from Graham (Mitch's dad), Kaia (Mitch's girlfriend), Frankie (their new pup!), and the trusty Dave Salter, who turned 82 on the night, and had me believe that HCC is the only thing he'll stay up all night for!

With the record firmly in our sights, we took off powered by Mitch's incredible starts, and managed to settle in with the double of Gene and Cam. I did wonder if we'd be able to hold that pace, but there's nothing like 'strap yourself in for the ride' kind of thinking to make you a little braver than you are.

We soon found our rhythm and were thoroughly enjoying the quick kms afforded by the outgoing tide, though 'how low will it go' ran through my mind, more than once. I have always taken advantage of stopping at Sackville, and wondered how we'd go sailing on past our trusty landcrew; but after a quick “you good Mitch?”, and a swift “yep” (man of few words), we carried on into the night, with the darkness increasing, inviting the tide to turn and the waves to stand up for the run into Wiseman's.

It's strange, I actually have very little recollection of this leg – I either had a major nanna nap that Mitch was too polite to mention, or something about putting your head down, blocking out the decreasing pace being advertised on the GPS, and just trying to find your happy place in the dark, bumpy, lonely stretches of the Hawkesbury creates a bit of necessary amnesia.

But whatever state of flow you're in, the lights of Wiseman's are a welcome, 'snap out of it', as the allure of the muddy carpet, a bit of relief for the backside, and a cuddle with the crew are all on offer. I had plenty of time to strategically plan the four things I wanted to do in the five minutes we had at Wiseman's: “wee, water, food, top” – in that particular order. With the efficiency of a racing pit crew, our landcrew helped us with this, and so much more as they announced we were still 20 minutes ahead of our

scheduled time. Buoyed by this, and the thought that "the next time we see them will be at the finish", we enthusiastically (right Mitch??) got back in the boat and started our home run.

How fortunate were we to find a pair of Hobbits bobbing next to us as we waited for the ferry to cross, "how are you faring, on this fine night", I said, (or something less poetic). On the basis that we were all about as grumbly as each other, we concocted a wonderful plan to work together, for as long as we all shall live....

For me, these last 40kms were the most colourful, as they were spent enjoying the company of another team, who was equally working their backside off (quite literally in my case!) to make it home as quickly as possible, never mind what the tide had in store for us. We turned out to be a good catch for some fisherman, and that woke us all up! The boys encouraged us when we were fading, and I like to think we spurred them on at times too. It was also colourful because of the bioluminescence, which came out sometime after Spencer – it really is a wonderful distraction to the feeling of your shoulders being dislocated with each stroke...

My GPS died somewhere about the 80km mark, but almost in response, Mitch found another 20% and upped the pace considerably. I took this to mean that the minutes we'd lost to the greedy tide had perhaps started to speed up, if only the tide would hurry up and help us along! Rounding bumpy Bar Point, and Mitch announced to me, "we're not going to make the record Suze," but never giving up, he suggested, "so let's go for a podium finish instead". Turns out the Hobbits also thought this would be a good idea...

We came into the home straight just in front of the boys, but we weren't so silly as to think we were comfortably home. As they edged up on our right side, I simply said "boat on the right", and Mitch played it smart, taking a moment to compose himself, before ramping it up to sprint for the finish, at a pace commensurate with how we started, snagging third place over the line. I can hand on heart say that a sprint to the finish at the end of such an adventure was not something I'd anticipated. And I think that happy shock was still with me when Tim asked "for a few words" as we wobbled up the boat ramp. I reliably said something naff, and then looked for my landcrew, who by this stage also included Gaye and Chris, who had been roused from their slumbers simply to drive a muddy and tired Dave and I home.

When I'm out there, I remind myself, "the aches and pains will fade, but the memories will not" (at least for some time, I hope!), and that is such a motivating mantra. The personal satisfaction, sense of achievement, and the buzz of pushing my body is something I seek when I am out there, and what I will go back for more of, one day. Coupled with this, is the enormous gratitude I have for all those that make it possible – our partners who give us a kiss goodbye as we roll out of bed at 4, 4.30, 5 (if we're having a late session!) on so many weekend mornings, only to return later in the afternoon, too tired to do much else; our family members, who are either out there cheering us on, or at home, waiting to hear that we've made it back safely; our club members, who provide knowledge, boundless encouragement, and services that should only ever be offered on such a "one night stand!"

My biggest thanks goes to Mitch Coffey (and his father Graham, who co-owns the beautiful Carbonology Blast we paddled). He took on the challenge of paddling with me, and he did it without blinking. I am almost certain that my random facts, inane chatter, and persistent optimism during training sessions would have driven most people mad, but Mitch hung in there and made sure that what started out as a "wondering out loud" became a reality. We missed the record (this time), but not for lack of trying, and I wonder (out loud) when we'll have another crack...

The Hawkesbury River is known as the Secret River, and we can tell these tales, but oh the stories it can tell about us!

Sisters in a K2

Naomi Johnson, Sophie Wallace

Ladies Open K2

Time: 10:27:40

Sophie: This was our third Hawkesbury in the Lane Cove club K2, and this year we were promised good tides, a large moon and wind. Well, we got one of those!

Having paddled much of our last two Classics alone, we were pleased to have another women's double paddling at a similar speed to us, sharing some wash riding. It helped us keep up a good pace and stay in a good frame of mind.



Naomi and Sophie at Pitt Town

We had agreed to try and cut down our stopping time at Sackville and Wisemans. Our landcrew Frazer and Kieren, together with Alanna, Leslie, Keg and Allison helped us achieve an epic 3 1/2 minute stop at Sackville, where we refilled camelbacks, added extra layers of thermals and left with me still eating a bread roll! At the Sackville exit checkpoint we overtook the first boats from the 4.15pm BoB start, and were now the leading the entire field as darkness quickly descended.

Entering the Big W, we could really feel the incoming tide, and knew the next stretch would be challenging. Much to our surprise, we were still the leading boat coming into Wiseman's Ferry, which was an amazing feeling. We were warmly greeted by Kieren, Frazer and the Lane Cove crew with hot soup from the BBQ and lots of encouragement. We had our first slight hiccup with Naomi's PFD and had to continue with it only half done up (shhhh).

We had been overtaken during our 10 minute stop at Wiseman's, including by our women's double friends Alison and Rae. Keen to catch them again, we were battling a strong incoming tide and tail wind, making large waves that rendered our front cyalume underwater. We found our friends at the second ferry crossing, which we thankfully cleared before technical issues held paddlers up for so long.

After this we were expecting two things to happen, the tide to change around midnight, and the moon to make an appearance. Well, the moon skulked moodily behind the hills up until it was so overcast that it could no longer aid our visibility, and we didn't feel a solid kick of outgoing tide until around Spencer!

It wasn't all bad though, because we had some company passing us, and for the third year in a row we saw bioluminescence. It was so far upstream from the finish that we both had to verify that we hadn't started to hallucinate. This is the stretch of the race that both Naomi and I generally hit a wall; either physically, emotionally, or both. This year, though, we felt strong and solid all the way through.

The wind picked up strongly as we approached Bar Point, but we followed shrewd advice from Tony H to aim for the far bank. We crossed the finish line at 2:42am after 10:27:40, as the fastest women's crew for the second year. Our land crew had been well fed at Wiseman's so were ready and able to help us hobble around and pack up.

As always, we could not have completed this epic race without the love and support of LCRK; organising pre-race preparation, providing our boat, feeding our land crew, jumping in at checkpoints and generally being warm, approachable and supportive. Thank you so much!

So Close to 10

Jeremey Spear

Men's Vet 50+ ORS1

Time: 10:00:50 (!!!!)



Jezza had cooled off a bit by Pitt Town!

My plan was to complete the race in less than 10 hours, as my last solo paddle was 10h 47 mins in 2013 in a UN1. The scheduling .xls has been much refined and is now very accurate – but anything can happen. This year the tides were spot on time but bigger in both directions due to spring tide (full moon) and prevalent high pressure system. So we were faster than anticipated paddling with the tide and slower when punching into it. As it happened, I was 12 mins ahead of schedule into both Sackville and Wiseman's Ferry, but then there were issues...

I started fast as usual, going out at 14.5kph, and even got a bit of a ride with lead doubles for 500m! That's probably too fast for a 111km marathon so backed off and slipped back through the pack. Rich and Duncan in the SLR2 caught up after maybe 5km so I tucked in beside and behind and ahead of them, taking my leads when possible. We set a good strong pace and were probably 200m off the lead pack at Pitt Town and 500m back into D.

I left solo and Don had caught me so we paddled a bit together. I even followed him too wide on a sharp right hand bend between E and F about when the tide changed, but only wasted 30 secs. Dropped Don and proceeded solo to Wiseman's up the western bank, then crossed over into two foot standing waves head on. I was nervous at times so backed off and paddled long and strong to stay upright. Felt pretty empty, but good quick pit stop as planned. I was ready and attempting to go before we were held by the ferry, so hopefully 23 mins added to my time!!!

From Wiseman's I went up the right hand bank and caught all at blue flashing ferry lights. A bunch of six or eight of us were told to stop as the ferry was about to go. Stated to nice water police officer that we had been held for 20 – 30 mins already and ferry wasn't showing flashing lights. A bunch of us were let through ("paddle like hell you blokes!") and immediately the ferry showed lights and moved – then stopped and was obviously held for us. I dropped Don from LCRK, then joined Chris from Ballina in a Red 7 and paddled together to the finish. We experienced strong cold, southerly blasts head on again at approx 80km and there was nowhere to hide. Felt fine at the end, and even punched out a few normal and clapping pushups on the boatramp for a laugh. Obviously didn't paddle hard enough!

My landcrew Ange from SIP was bloody excellent. If you want the best landcrew, find someone experienced from the film and television industry! Nothing was a problem. Any issues were sorted before they happened. Extreme eye for detail with all bases covered – food, clothing, tiny details, times, race plan management, Jezza management, boat aspects, human aspects – all logistics well covered. Very pro!



Jezza's data on the race, giving 'going out hot' a totally new meaning.