

Wisemans Ferry Checkpoint - Ian Wrenford

The Wisemans Ferry Checkpoint has for LCRK always been a well-resourced location and this year was no exception. It was a particularly mild night earlier on, with temperatures expected to only drop to the mid-teens overnight. The first paddlers were not due in till after 9:30pm and the LCRK facilities were all set up and ready to go before 7:30pm.

Andrew Mackay and Joanne had set up the 'restaurant' with a wide range of food including hamburgers, skewers, egg & bacon rolls, steak sandwiches, soup and broth and tea and coffee.

The effort that had clearly gone into planning and preparation was well in evidence – and much appreciated by everyone.

Ross Fraser and Ken Holmes, having packed up a trailer load (and more) of gear at Windsor had arrived at Wisemans and completed the set up. There was a light tower of sportsground proportions, the obligatory timing board, and a large well lit gazebo for ministrations and administration – complete with camp bed for those needing a powernap. Thanks to Tony Hystek/Alanna Ewin and Action Sound for supplying much of the professional equipment and the team transporting it.



The LCRK restaurant



Ross Fraser with the resuming Robinsons

The next hour or two saw the steady arrival of landcrew coming through from Sackville, setting up their base around the perimeter of the site and tucking into the food service. Sue Fraser and Meg Holmes also arrived to help out with checking off paddlers as did John Greathead and Tony Walker supplementing the on ground support.



Ken Holmes assists Tony Mathers out

The arrivals 'beach' had effectively disappeared about 8pm under a rising tide (high tide at ~11pm) with just sufficient time to relocate stray rocks and obvious trip hazards. The mudlarkers Ross and Ken kitted themselves up for the thigh high experience and Kyle Wilson arrived ready for action in his in his 'duck hunting season' waders.

The faster paddlers started arriving from 9:30pm, keen to replenish, change their kit, and get back out on the water as quickly as possible.



Kyle Wilson's complimentary kayak park 'n' wash service



Don Rowston working his magic

The frequency of arrivals started building up from 10:30 to 11:30 and the beach started resembling a busy valet parking service. Arriving paddlers were told “don’t get out, don’t get out, it’s deep” and were ushered in closer to the shore for a more decorous exit (well at least for some). With many hands at the ready, no paddlers went for an unnecessary swim – and were safely guided to the somewhat tricky shore exit point.

With the by now higher tide, the adjoining reed bank provided a very handy on-water parking facility vastly improving the efficiency with which paddlers could get back on their journey. Boats swiftly disappeared into the reeds and mysteriously reappeared just at the right time. Great job guys!

Don Rowston, was once again offering therapeutic massage to any feeling the pain - and there was a ready supply of paddlers in pain. Some paddlers were also tended to at the HCC medical tent – one exchange was along the lines of “*Where’s Sophie?*” “*She’s gone to the medical tent for her hands*” “*You’re kidding, she’s getting her nails done??*”

As is always the case, landcrew waiting on their arriving paddler were invariably chipping in and helping other paddlers in and out of the water.



Groundcrew at the ready for Duncan and Matt's arrival

Every paddler was getting a rousing round of applause as they departed once again into the darkness – no doubt lifting their spirits.

The LCRK base was better lit than much of the surrounding area and many passing paddlers called out their boat numbers thinking we might be the ‘out’ checkpoint.

As the paddlers were steadily checked off, the tide was steadily dropping away revealing the well worked beach. Packing up of all the gear was done (thanks to Andrew, Joanne, Ken and Ross) after a hard nights work.

Thanks to everyone at the Wisemans Checkpoint – those based there, those who came for their paddlers and paddlers just passing through or passing out.

Mudlark: “A mudlark is someone who scavenges in river mud for items of value, a term used especially to describe those who scavenged this way in London during the late 18th and 19th centuries. Mudlarks would search the muddy shores of the River Thames at low tide for anything that could be sold; and sometimes, when occasion arose, pilfering from river traffic. By at least the late 18th century people dwelling near the river could scrape a subsistence living this way. Mudlarks were usually either youngsters aged between eight and fifteen, or the robust elderly.” Source: Wikipedia

Richard Barnes...as told by Ian Wrenford

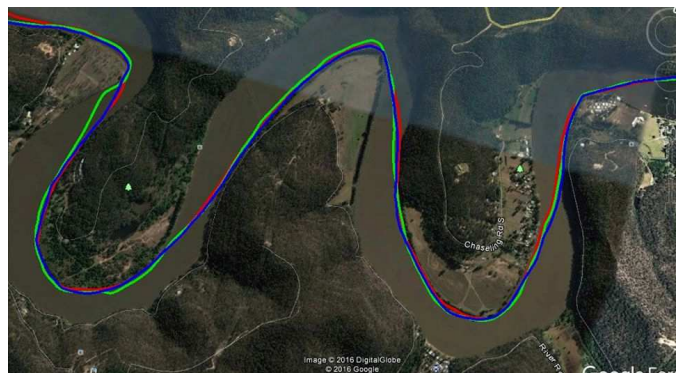
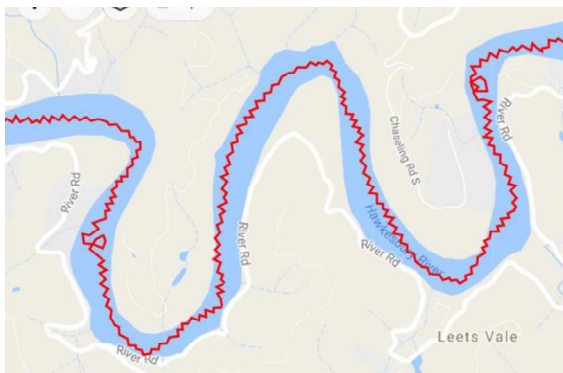
Well known LCRKer Richard Barnes was in 2016 embarking on his 36th Hawkesbury Canoe Classic in the Brooklyn or Bust category. Richard always paddles for his traditional Sydney Uni Canoe Club, with 'that' flag and 'that' number. Richard has something of a reputation of happily paddling any boat, anywhere at any time – and his arrival at Windsor with a Dagger whitewater boat (a SREC1 apparently?) drew much attention.



Richard Barnes ready to rip!

Richard successfully completed the HCC in 17:50 an impressive feat of endurance in that boat. In doing so, he has certainly proved to anyone that has ever expressed doubt that the HCC is (at least) 111km!

We're just waiting on finish line photos from around 10:30am Sunday!



*Left: Richard's secret GPS track through the 'Big W', proving once and for all that the Hawkesbury is indeed 111km (or more)!
Right: A comparison with GPS tracks from three other LRCKers, with faster times but much less rewarding night views*

...as told by Richard

What next? It's a relevant question having completed 35 previous Classics. Is it possible to recreate the euphoria of one's first finish, stepping onto Mooney boatramp, having done something that previously had seemed as attainable as a wild dream? Unfortunately it is not that simple. Fortunately there is still so much to enjoy, including the camaraderie of all paddlers, and the special bond amongst the LCRK team. The adrenaline surge needs to come in other ways. So to the choice of a cute little stumpy whitewater playboat named 'Pipe Dreams'. She is a Mamba 8.1, meaning she is 8.1 feet or only 2.45m long, roughly half any normal single, and so likely to be about half their speed. That meant more hours in the boat, well that is what I enjoy, and Pipe Dreams is luxuriously comfortable, with all possible adjustments available like a land-based lounge.

I made a guess of 16 hours, give or take, including allowance for friendly stops at all the majors and the LTPS, but even that was optimistic. Close to 18 hours also meant close to not achieving the cutoffs. That got the adrenaline pumping. It simply wasn't an option not to make the finish. Yet Pipe Dreams has a terminal velocity, and even Matt Blundell would top out at the glacial speed of 6kmh.



Richard taking a microbreak at Checkpoint A (Cattai) – and timeout for a snap of the checkpoint team

Tides were another unaccounted contributor to cutoff mania. For most, the aim was to finish before the start of the incoming tide. I was just leaving pitstop, with adverse tide likely from there to the finish. If tide runs at about 2.5kmh, that bumped cruise speed for me to 3.5kmh. It took so long that I weathered the whole incoming tide, then actually got the beginnings of the next outgoing help tide for the last bridge straight. That was a bonus. Cutoff was averted by under an hour.

A big surprise awaited at Wisemans. It was peak hour at TAS HQ, with lots of their junior crews buzzing around and plenty of parents tending to important landcrew tasks. Over at LCRK, all was silent and deserted. The flying fleet had long since flown. All that remained was one of my landcrew, and a leftover pot of soup. We helped ourselves to the soup. Multiple cupfuls later, I can attest to its deliciousness.

Pitstop was only a few hours ahead, for more sustaining fare. I was greeted at the new site by the sirens, and whisked mudfree to the fire. Andrew at Pitstop had the assembled group of four paddlers rolling with laughter as he 'sold' scones jam and cream. Every exquisite detail, from the glistening jam to the light as a feather scone meant they could not be resisted.

Having 500 paddlers adds sparkle to the river, not only from the extra glowsticks, but also from more conversations on the water. Those conversations can be quite surreal when the other party is a ghostly ethereal voice coming from the inky black. The anonymity is like beer in freeing up discussion, the topics wide ranging and comments so far from everyday expectations. So often they are punctuated by one craft or the other hitting a tree branch, or beaching on a wharf.

Altogether, an experience to be recommended, and worthy of the 40th Classic.



Meanwhile, at Sackville John Duffy demonstrates procedure for those that perhaps didn't choose quite such a comfortable boat!

Pre-race surprises and a Quick Dip

Don Johnstone

Men's Vet 40+ ORS1

Classics to date: 3

Time: 10:22:01

I've paddled the Hawkesbury Canoe Classic twice before – in 1989 and 2001 – but in the last 18 months I've actually learned a few things about paddling and joined the best sports club in Australia – Lane Cove River Kayakers. My previous PB was 15 hours and 22 minutes. On Saturday night I took 10 hours and 22 minutes, which was a really pleasing result.



Don Johnstone and Rodrigo Matamala passing Checkpoint A

I started at 5pm on Saturday night and finished just before 3:30am Sunday. I had a wonderful landcrew (thanks Amanda and Tim) who met me at Sackville (30k into the race for a 3 minute pause where I scoffed a banana and had my on-board fluids refilled) and at Wisemans Ferry (60k in, where as well as food and drink I was treated to a back rub from an 83 year old). Apart from those two stops I was on my own, though I kept company with maybe 20 different paddlers at various times, most notable being a wily old paddler called Tom Simmat I stayed with most of the way to Wisemans. This helped enormously because there was cloud cover until 1:30am and an almost new moon, so the water, banks and everything in between were almost indistinguishable. I had set myself a target time of 10 hours 30 and was always within 15 minutes of my schedule, but it certainly didn't all go to plan. My low point was at 1:45am when I'd been nodding off in the boat for about an hour, so had been navigating a rather serpentine route down the centre of the river, when I collided with checkpoint M (there are 21 intermediate checkpoints where paddlers call out their numbers so as to track their progress and to facilitate any rescues). I capsized and started swearing in frustration, and then concentrated on hauling myself back into the boat. Soon after this episode I had my high point, when I realised that the cool dip had completely woken me up, so I paddled hard and fast for the last hour and a half, passing quite a few bemused paddlers who had long ago left me trailing in their wake. I finished elated, and am revved up to do it again next year.



All smiles at Wiseman's

The one thing I'll change for next year is my preparation. 5 weeks before the big race I had a heart flutter during a training paddle. After 3 days in hospital, a barrage of tests (ECG, X-ray, MRI, ultrasound, stress echo cardiogram), the diagnosis was that I had experienced atrial fibrillation but it had been brought about by exercising too hard while suffering from a viral infection that had gone to my chest. I finally got the all-clear to paddle 5 days before the event (hence the late request for donations).

My own health scare pales beside those who suffer from leukaemia. I met a woman on the riverbank at Windsor who said she was a bone marrow recipient, and chatted briefly with a man during the race who said he was too. A number of people have approached me with their story about how bone marrow has helped save or improve or extend a life. It all confirms for me what a worthy cause this is.

On Black...

Tony Hystek

Men's Vet 60+ ORS1

Classics to date: 7

Time: 9:06:32

I spend most of my working life in dressed in black, surrounded by black things, while working for colourful people. I thought I knew black. Prior to last Saturday I knew only a pale imitation.



Tony flying past Checkpoint A

I now fully appreciate the power of real, pitch black. How it can plunge the normally lucid mind into the depths of despair. How it can cause boats to turn around in circles in the middle of nowhere. How it can make things suddenly appear out of nowhere, but only after impact. How it can make the faintest glow from a GPS appear like a fiery inferno.

This year, the HCC will be remembered for its almost total blackness. Those who managed to navigate unscathed down its length were rewarded with relatively quick times. But it left many wayward paddlers strewn amongst the checkpoints, phoning landcrew with withdrawal symptoms.

Were it not for a couple of Slades in a craft, I would surely have been one of them. Keeping them within sight after Sackville, I came up on them side-on to the river, seemingly involved in a serious domestic. Happens that they'd launched themselves headlong into 'that' tree, and were wondering how to extricate themselves. With good sportsmanship, they waited till I too launched myself at the same tree, then graciously provided a cyalume I could follow all the way to Wisemans. They were very thoughtful in assisting me.

I'd managed to keep sight of them downstream too after a quick, efficient stop at our base till they disappeared round the tightish bend of Low Tide Pitstop. In total darkness, I started exploring the banks looking for a way forward. I disembarked at a Jetty to turn on my front light, and inadvertently caught my drink system on a protruding timber 3 feet down. It took several minutes to extricate, by which time salvation had arrived in the form of Richard and Joy, with David Young in tow. I joined the merry throng through to the finish, straying occasionally off course which led me to be a little late to the finish. But finish I did, in great spirits.

...and while we're on black

"I found an SLR2 which had passed checkpoint N twice!" – Anjie Lees

"I've been down a gold mine, and I've been down a coal mine, but I think the Big W was darker." – Phil Geddes

"I was a bit disconcerting to be following the pink GPS like across land." – Rob Llewellyn-Jones

"One guy managed to get himself onto a door" – David Veivers

"I think I was motivated by fear." – David Hammond

Hawkesbury the Fifth

Ruby Ardren

Ladies Vet 40+ LREC

Classics to date: 5

Time: 11:03:40

Oh my, the darkness! The number of people I heard/saw bumping into things in the night. You would see two cyalumes (glow sticks) ahead of you on the river and it was impossible to tell whether it was two boats or one boat sideways, which is critical information when shooting down the river at 10km/hr. I managed to avoid the pontoons, trees, buoys and boats to finish the race in a very similar time to last year. I was very happy with my result on handicap, and I'm pretty proud to have completed five events.



Ruby at Windsor ready to tackle Hawkesbury No. 5

I keep coming back to this race because of the fitness benefits, my improved ability to talk myself out of needing to go to the toilet, see things in the dark (real or imagined), and endure storms. I no longer get nauseous during the race, and this year I didn't even get a sore bum (with no padding on my seat) or a single blister. There are added bonuses like the companionship in the lead up to and during the race and the bio-luminescent algae that were prolific from Spencer; apparently safe to swim in but avoid the shellfish that eat it!

Ode to my Landcrew...



Tom lining up for the start, with the named boat a clever ploy to get more cheers

Tom Simmat

Men's Vet 60+ UN1

Classics to date: 15 (one in a coffin)

Time: 10:16:02

I have said enough this year about paddling the Hawkesbury, but I would like just to briefly thank my landcrew. Starting way back in the last millennium, this Hawkesbury was the 18th time for my landcrew. In fact, she has received more nominations for best land crew than Merrill Streep has been nominated for an Oscar. Did you know that landcrewing for 18 Hawkesburys takes over 300 hrs and requires driving more than 3,000 km?

Moreover, and beyond, my land crew in the pursuit of excellence in land crewing has:

- Waded waist deep in the mosquito ridden swamps of the Murray river
- Swum where the great whites breed in the Indian ocean
- Without hesitation swum in the shark infested waters off Molokai Island
- ...and in the pursuit of excellence in landcrewing swum where the whales swim in the sub-zero waters of the arctic ocean

She has learned to thrive on carbon dust and the odour of polyester resin!

In the pursuit of excellence in landcrewing she has crossed the Pacific Ocean 10 times, and crossed the continent of Australia more than 20 times. And talk about distances driven, she has exceeded 10,000 km driving on the wrong side of the road where they not only speak English, but you need to know a little French.

Yet, in all those kilometres travelled, she has only once set fire to the support vehicle. And only once been pulled over by the police. The nice policeman thought it was not in the best interests of driving public's safety to be distracted by her travelling in a car that had on the roof racks a smoking coffin.

I absolutely must thank my landcrew, the creator of carrot and walnut cake, the purveyor of gaffer tape, and the taker of just one man's virginity! The ever suffering, very, very current wife Christine.

...and briefly on the Classic

Paddling my new fast 'Edilge' for a Vet 60+ UN1 to win on handicap with a handicap factor of 1.013, I needed to do a time of 9 hrs or less. Not realistic, so I set myself a target time of 9hrs 15min. I was 5 minutes ahead of that target at checkpoint E and would break the 9 hours as well.

What I did wrong:

- I hadn't paddled the river between Sackville and Wisemans for 3 years, forgetting this part of the river except perhaps the Big W.
- Previously I had illuminated my GPS, watch and maps with independent soft LED lights. This time I turned the GPS back light on, which was far too bright, never really tried it for any length of time at night.
- With a weather forecast for rain, I put on a light waterproof spray jacket that I had worn paddling before but had not trained in this year.



Tom demonstrates a graceful re-entry at Wiseman's

Very soon after checkpoint E it all fell apart. Blinded by the dark night and the glare from my GPS, I had no idea where I was on the river, I thought I was on the left bank and I ran into trees on my right. Even when crossing the river, I found a huge patch of high reeds midstream. I could see my GPS and was battling to hold 8km per hour let alone 9.4, and I was too scared to put any power in my stroke for fear of hitting a tree. I sort of knew my way around the Big W, but by Wisemans I was well over half an hour behind my target times.

More confident leaving Wisemans, and though the tide eventually turned I had no hope of picking up that lost time. After Spencer I was going well, I helped a fellow get back in his kayak, but he had no pump, so I escorted him in his swamped boat to the next checkpoint P. Another 300m and there was a guy could not get back in his ski. After several attempts and another skis' assistance we got him back in. How long all that took, I don't know, maybe ten minutes maybe half an hour. So a finish time of well over ten hours, which was disappointing.

The Hawkesbury Canoe Classic on a dark night, like this year, is a very dangerous event. Upside down boats have their cyclamens in the water and can't be seen, and they may be a little lost and off the paddling line. The only safety boats are the other paddlers. The best rescue boats are the experienced paddlers and these are the ones looking for good times and records. At the race briefing, there should be much more emphasis on not passing a paddler in distress, and a lot more emphases on being able to recover lost time as a result of a rescue.

Sisters in a K2

Naomi and Sophie Johnson

Ladies Open K2

Classic Rookies

Time: 11:20:46

Paddling the Hawkesbury in a double has the potential to be a minefield of negotiations. What's our target? How long are our stops? Then add in the fact that your doubles partner's in Melbourne, and that she's your sister! Sophie and I have raced a lot together, and yet the prospect of the Hawkesbury still seemed daunting. Whoever called it at night...I hope they could do the course blindfolded!

Blindfolded was exactly how we felt. We started out strongly, racing with a group from our start and arriving at Sackville the first women's boat. Ten minutes and another few bends down the river, the darkness descended like a shroud. I tentatively asked Sophie exactly how much paddling she had done in the dark. "Oh none," she replied brightly, "bits and pieces at dusk, but not at night. That's why you've got the GPS." So round the bends of the Big W we paddled, trusting the pink line above all else. "A bit left," I'd call, "now you're right on track. Keep going straight!" "Straight is a relative concept," came the reply from in front, "when you can't actually see anything."

We arrived to cups of hot soup and hugs from our concerned landcrew Frazer and Kieren at Wisemans. Suddenly the whole thing felt achievable; we were already over halfway and still feeling ok. Yet it was at Wisemans that I made the mistake of not changing the GPS batteries, nor installing the anti-splash GPS cover which Frazer had fashioned out of a plastic tub. Launching ourselves back into the night, we were back with the tide and doing 12.5km/hr again...at least when I wasn't stopping to return the liberally splashed touch-screen GPS to the map screen!



Leaving Sackville, night descended and the challenge really began

Just after K, the batteries failed, along with any memory I had of the famil session. "Scones, warm fire, hot tea," came the siren call from Pitt Stop. "How are you on AA batteries?" we shouted back. They obligingly produced a handful of AAA batteries, so I extracted the AAs from my torch and we were off again, promptly beaching ourselves on the large mud bank which I assume was the old Pitt Stop.

Alas the GPS saga wasn't over, as it turns out that it chew through regular AA batteries pretty quickly. My moment of despair came just after we had passed the

Spencer turn off, and was met with a rather abrupt response: "Do you want to go back? No, well then make peace with that fact and keep paddling!" Sophie confided the next morning that she was at a low point as well. Yet the talking-to was just what I needed. We spent the final hour and a half sitting patiently behind other boats, nodding off a little, and marvelling as our paddle strokes lit pools of fire in the water.

Big hugs all round when we made it over the finish line at 3:50am. It felt like we had conquered the world, and doing so as sisters makes it all the more special. The Lane Cove support crew were fantastic, and made our first Hawkesbury a night to remember. Bring on the next one!



Sophie and Naomi prepping the boat at Windsor

A Question of Fluids

With only two days left until the race, Rob Llewellyn-Jones appealed to the Lane Cove Brains Trust:

I need some advice about how best to attach my Camel Bak drinking tube to my PFD so that it doesn't wave around in front of me. The tube is a Camel Bak Antidote Drinking Tube and is coming from a bladder in the boat (Epic V8).

Until now I have been happily tucking the tube through the straps of my PFD BUT yesterday I tried a self rescue having turtled my HCC kitted up V8 and found that it was MUCH more complicated to leap back in being tethered to the boat via the tube attached to my PFD.

Any ideas – have tried many of my own since yesterday without success. An image of my PFD is below. Please email me IMAGES of solutions to the problem of "waving in thin air tube syndrome".

While no images were provided, the discussion on solutions was detailed, and rather wide-ranging:

I use the same waving tube as you after trying noose around the neck, papoose on the chest and backpack. Let me report that as a frequent swimmer when using my K1, going overboard with the backpack, papoose or noose has not been fun...

...BTW, I've also found last minute creative hydration solutions to be a great distraction from pre-Classic anxiety and dread. – Derek Simmonds

I would forget about tethering the bladder to your vest. There is no advantage to this over 100kms. Even over 10kms I would argue it is not worth the effort. Take the opportunity when drinking to take a micro break and leave the tube between your legs with the bladder in front of the footplate. This will allow better movement, be more comfortable and allow ease of entry and exit.

Remember comfort and peace of mind are more important than speed on the night. – Glen Orchard

I don't bother attaching my tube to me anymore. I have the tube between my legs on the floor of the kayak, and I've only got to miss two strokes of paddling to pick it up and put it in my mouth, then drink while I continue paddling. You soon get the hang of spitting it out so it drops back between your legs! Of course if you're in the habit of peeing in your boat, this may not be a good approach... – Ruby Ardren

Ruby, Luv your comment about not dropping you hose into the yellow bilge. BTW, I have discovered both in the boat and on the bike that multitasking paddling/pedalling and passing water is difficult, so another reason for an invigorating microbreak. Apologies to any punters offended by too much detail. – Derek

I would be happy to take photos of any "such details" with my camera lenses. Just let me know and don't forget to smile. Jana Osvald

I'll be keeping out of range of your long lens! - Derek



Rob sets forth armed with valuable hydration advice!

Short Tales of a Long Night

As told at the Hawkesbury BBQ on November 2nd. Of the 65 paddlers who each put in an incredible effort, here are just a few stories of how the night unfolded.



David bright and cheerful in LCRK colours

David Veivers

Brooklyn or Bust
Classic Rookie
Time: 12:35:02

"It's what I'd describe as Type 2 fun," recalls David, "it's more fun when it's finished! I had to cover my GPS with my hat because it was so bright, so I'd be going down the river just peeking at the GPS once in a while." The hazards of darkness continued to startle paddlers through the whole night: "I was marooned on a rock...one guy managed to get himself onto a door!" David reported "flapping around" for a while, before sliding gracefully off the rock, perhaps because of the incoming tide?

Paul van Koesveld

Men's Vet 60+ ORS1
Classics to date: 6
Made it to Wisemans

Phil Geddes

Men's Vet 60+ ORS1
Classics to date: 3
Made it to Wisemans

Paul and Phil planned to tackle the dark twists and turns of the river together. They were all set with an elaborate communication plan, with blasts of the pealless safety whistle signalling carefully choreographed movements. Yet their plan was thwarted by the whistle's range, with Phil recalling that he "blew so hard I almost fell off my boat, yet Paul didn't even flinch." They've recommended Vuvuzelas as standard issue in 2017. Leaving Sackville, and the duo was plunged into night. Paul reported that "my seeing eye dog was much better than me in the dark, but that still wasn't much good!" Though both decided to stay and enjoy the hot food at Wisemans, "our biggest achievement for the night was encouraging Ann and Roz back onto the water."

Wade Rowston

Men's Vet 50+ LREC
Classics to date: 8
Made it to Checkpoint F

Wade had planned to enter the Wisemans Dash, but found himself on the start line for the full classic alongside Paul, Phil and Adrian. An early highlight was "noticing a stick in Adrian's rudder, only to find it was about half a log". Once the sun set, he was plagued by the recurring "sensory deprivation nausea" of several previous classics, deciding that "F was a perfectly good checkpoint with lovely people and great landcrew access." In future, he'd like all enthusiastic Hawkesbury emails to read "Dear Paddlers...except Wade."



Wade passing Checkpoint A at Cattai

Rozanne Green
Ladies Vet 50+ ORS1
Classics to date: 3
Time: 13:37:42

Adrian Clayton
Men's Vet 60+ UN1
Classics to date: 2
Time: 13:07:24



Roz all smiles at the start

"At the start, my Garmin was set to port swimming," recalls Roz, "so I asked Anjie but hers was set to miles!" Adrian had an equally interesting start: "I don't know if it was a tactic, but we were right over in the reeds." The two crossed paths at Wisemans, where Roz was questioning whether she even wanted to get back on the water because it was so dark. "Adrian was my sherpa," she confessed, "shepherding me down the river and waiting for me when I fell back. I don't know if he noticed when I was vomiting behind him, but he didn't say anything." "I thought I might

win a heart," said Adrian of leaving Wisemans with Roz in tow. The pair finished with the sunrise, realising Adrian's dream that he "might be the first 70 year old" as well.

John Duffy

Men's 50+ UN1
Classics to date: 15
Time: 11:22:12

"My sonic is for sale, thank you very much!" was John's dramatic opening statement. A true veteran in the double digit Hawkesbury figures, John's night was full of many more dark twists and turns than in previous years. At one point he called to a young couple in a double, telling them to follow him, and promptly led all three into a bank. "Are you sure he said it's his 15th Classic," he thought they muttered.

Elke van Ewyk

Wisemans Dash
Classic Rookie
Made it to Sackville

"I've been called a mud angel, Tony Carr tells a story of me emerging from the mud at Low Tide Pitt Stop with scones and tea" says Elke of her previous years volunteering for the Classic. "I've been involved so much, and I thought it was time to give paddling a go." Elke proved herself an angel once again, rendering assistance to a fellow paddler who had run out of water on the way to Sackville, and having "a party on the water" all the way.



Elke gears up for the Wisemans Dash

Meg Thornton

Brooklyn or Bust
Classics to date: 5
Made it to Wisemans

"To do the Classic without any training whatsoever, with someone you haven't met before in a boat you haven't paddled before is not the best race strategy," concludes Meg. "So next year, you'll see me at every timetrial and every famil session!"

Jason Han & Kim Navera

Open Men's C2
Classic Rookies
Time: 10:52:17

"Doing the Hawkesbury in a canoe is tricky," reported Jason of the experience, "the furthest we had done before was the Myall, and then after 50kms I forgot how to steer." The duo also forgot about the Lane Cove stop at Wisemans, pulling in at the dragon boat team checkpoint instead. "We're quite active in the dragon boat community, so they were able to help us out with water and things," but who knows how fast they might've gone with a massage as well!



Jason and Kim decided the best way to kill pre-race boredom was to go for a paddle

David Young

Men's Vet 50+ ORS1
Classics to date: 5
Time: 9:05:48

"How many of you polish your boats?" asked David of the assembled BBQ crowd. "How many of you shorten your paddle through the race? And how many of you have coke and chips at the stops?" However bizarre, it seems like a winning trifecta for David, who finished his fifth Hawkesbury in a blisteringly fast time. It wasn't without ups and downs though – David had a great wash ride for the first few hours and then "by some misadventure got thrown off." "I'll do the Hawkesbury again," he says, "but next time I won't go so fast. I'll enjoy it a bit more."



Duncan and Matt arriving at Wisemans

Matt Swann & Duncan Johnstone

Men's Ven 60+ LREC2
Classics to date: 10/3
Time: 9:43:04

A regular pairing on the water at timetrials and famil session, Matt and Duncan had their eyes on a record heading into this year's race. Yet as the day drew closer that didn't stop some last minute doubts. "Duncan was having a whole ream of tests and doctors appointments, and even with the all-clear he really wanted to find an excuse not to paddle," told Matt. "He's pulled out at Wisemans

before, but he wasn't allowed to this time." Duncan, already departed for South Africa, had his right of reply by text message:

"Matt is a challenging partner...but thanks for a fantastic night," seemed to be the short version.

Rodney Walker

Brooklyn or Bust
Classic Rookie
Time: 11:55:27

James Farrell

Brooklyn or Bust
Classics to date: 4
Time: 11:55:27

James and Rodney set off to complete the Hawkesbury together, aiming to come in under 12 hours. "My goal in my 50s was to beat my physical 30s," said James of his previous attempts at the race. All very well for Rodney: "I paddled at 80% and he paddled at 100%, so I just followed along behind." Both were agreed that it was the "hardest physical 12 hours of my life."

The saga of boat 199

- Richard Yates (With apologies to Al Perkins Author of 'The Diggingest Dog')

WINDSOR

We'd come to Windsor Craig and me.
We'd come to paddle the HCC.
Our boat was black, our boat was sleek
My drink tube rubbed upon my cheek
The horn went off, the race was on
Before we knew it we were gone.
Out of the blocks like a well stung bee
Leading Toby, Andrew and Matty B,
And Jason and Bob in boat 183
First to the bridge in the HCC

SACKVILLE

The Night was dark, not much to see
No GPS for Craig and me.
Out of the dark, I spied a stump
Too late to stop a terrific thump.
The bow was up the stern was down
Upon my face there was a frown,
I think my trousers then turned brown.
Less a captain, more a clown.
We paddled back ferociously
We tried to wrestle our boat free.

We swore a bit, we paddled hard
we moved the boat back half a yard
We swore some more, I feared the worst
Craigs hernia must surely burst.
With one almighty backward push
We bid goodbye to the pesky bush
Finally the bow came free
It's hard to exit from a tree.
We were sweating Craig and me
It can be tough this HCC

WISEMANS

I was the saddest paddler you ever did see
Sad because the river hated me
My neck was stiff, my back was numb
I'd worn an extra hole in my bum
My tummy ached, my legs were sore
But still we had 40k's more
I called upon Don's magic hands
My landcrew ready on the sands
While Craig stood waiting patiently
Back in the water at 11:03

FINISH

The night wore on and so did we
We kept paddling Craig and me
The hours ticked by as did the miles
But still no hint of any smiles
On either of our craggy dials
No prizes for our paddling styles.
But then between points O and P
The river lit up for Craig and me
River starlight, all for free
What a race this HCC.

We paddled in past checkpoint T
Then we finished, Craig and me
Craigs legs were stiff, so was my shoulder
We looked and felt fifteen years older.
Craig was cold but I was colder
I threw away my drink tube holder.
Michaela, Greg and Alex who
Between were the best land crew
Helped us out onto our feet
The ramp beneath us felt so sweet.

We sat in the carpark Craig and me
We'd just finished the HCC.
10 hours, 7minutes and 23
For both of us a nice PB.
We both shook hands and plans were made
While Craig flew back to Adelaide
To paddle in this race next year
Hopefully with fewer tears.
So, next October, keep it free
So you can paddle the HCC



Richard and Craig at Sackville

Wonderful Volunteers

To all the Lane Cove volunteers, and to those that signed their night away for one particular person. You cheered and smiled, ministered drinks and bananas. You made sure we hit the mark at Sackville, then pulled us out of deep water at Wisemans. You asked us how we were feeling, showered us with words of encouragement, and never questioned our sanity in undertaking such an epic race...or at least not while we could hear you! For better or worse you documented it all, taking photo after beautiful photo as the night descended.

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

Windsor Transport/Setup: Jeff & Laura Hosnell, Tony Carr

HCC Marshalling: John Greathead, Tony Walker

Photos: Jana Osvald, Nigel Colless, Ian Wrenford, Oscar Cahill

Masseur & Sackville checkpoint coordinator: Don Rowston

Sackville boat handler: Peter Harris

Wisemans Transport and set up: Ross Fraser, Ken Holmes

Wisemans set up and catering: Andrew and Joanne Mackay

Wisemans light/sound/shelter: Action Sound, Tony Hystek & Alanna Ewin

Checklist/spotters: Louise White, Nettie Harris, Sue Fraser, Meg Holmes

Wisemans Mud larks & Valet Parking: Ross Fraser, Ken Holmes, Kyle Wilson

Liberi: Tony Carr, Tim McNamara, John Greathead, Tony Walker

Finish welcomers/spotters: Tim Hookins, Oscar Cahill, Jeff Tonazzi

Video: Tim Hookins

Famils: Duncan Johnstone and Tom Simmat

River Guru, Tactician, Dark Arts: Tom Simmat

General Coordination and hasslers: Paul van Koesveld, Ruby Gamble, Ruby Ardren, Ian Wrenford



Clockwise from left: Oscar flashes a quick smile while acting as a Sackville checkpoint light; Jana in action, documenting some eight hours of racing; Peter Harris at Windsor