



Alanna Ewin is all smiles as Tony Hystek finishes the final day a clear winner on handicap

Jason Cooper: "It was brilliant, the relay was real fun, I recommend it to anyone. It was good to do the race as a team. On day 1 I did the start and the final leg, and on day 2 just a 16k sprint. On days 3 and 4 I did double stints, one was 2 legs together – 12k and 19k. On the final day I did the middle leg. On the first 2 days the current was good and we were pulling 14k and 15k. The temperature was in the mid to high 30s but it was not too hot on the water, although it was hot and dirty for the landcrew. Dianne was our landcrew, organising, driving and fixing the lunches. The last couple of days the wind was up and we were hurting a little. One day I saw a 20m high gum tree crash down on the bank – an old widowmaker."

Michael Mueller: "I got roped into the relay when John decided to go in a single. Relays are a fun way of doing the race but it's not easy, you still get sore and you don't pace yourself, you go flat out. There is a lot of pressure on the changeovers, some of ours were like Formula One, some were not. On day 2 I did 42k and didn't hold back. I did the 25k 2nd leg, then Jason did a leg and I jumped in after him and did another 17k. That was our best day and we finished ahead of Tony and the Central Coast double of Mick Carroll and Jack Ward who were the fastest boat in the Murray this year. Steve had a lot of pressure on him that day, he started the final leg with a 300m lead over the double, they were coming to get him but he held them off."

Steve Russell: "We were very proud that the 3 of us managed to beat Tony Hystek in actual time! It was nice and cool, nothing over 40°. We had a ball jumping in and out of the boat. Our first change took 40 seconds and we got it down to 8 seconds. We paddled an Epic V10 ski which was Jason's at the time, now it's mine. Michael and Jason had the same footrest position, it needed changing only for me. Michael kept asking every morning what the tide was. Well, we had the tide with us for 5 days. On New Year's Eve, after the final day, I was in bed by 11.30, I didn't see any fireworks but a big black cloud bank was coming through and the lightning in it was just as spectacular."

Liz Winn: "James and I did all the training, we did the Myall and I felt if we could do that in those conditions we could do any-



John Thearle glides in to finish day one. Landcrews do it a lot tougher than those in the Hawkesbury Classic.

thing. But I discovered that carbo loading for women is very different to carbo loading for men. Previously I have always carbo loaded for big endurance races for 5 days and put on weight in the butt and legs, but I was in Mirages and boats with bigger seats. When it came to getting into the narrow seat in the Vindicator I was wedged in and couldn't rotate. I tried to slip back into the seat and it cut into my back. I was sliced to pieces, I have only just healed now. I couldn't have had a better partner than James, paddling with him is just magic, and I can't tell you how bad I feel. I'm going to do some research on carbo loading for women, it's different for men, who put on weight in their upper bodies."

James Mumme: "Day 1 went well for the first 50k but then Liz became uncomfortable, she had rub marks on her skin. I went in to the front but we couldn't get settled. From then on we were in and out of the boat, changing seats, swapping positions. Over the last 20k I don't know how many times that happened. We did a lot of training without any problems like this. We started day 2 but it was too uncomfortable to continue and we stopped after about 25k at the first checkpoint, and spent the rest of that day and day 3 landcrewing for John Thearle. Steve Paget had been landcrewing for us and did the one-day Challenge on day 4 with me. He hadn't done a paddle of more than 20k in the last 2 years and it was very good of him to offer to give me another day on the water. We gave Michael a washride which dragged him up to the leaders and after 20k caught Tony who had started earlier. Then Steve's bum started to get sore. He nicknamed the Vindicator the Torture Chamber."

Steve Paget: "I did landcrewing, looking after John as well as the relay. On day 4 I did the one-dayer with James, it was my first paddle of more than 20k since the Murray 2 years ago. For about 40k I was all right, then my bum started playing up. It reinforced my decision not to do any more long races."

John Boakes: "The day before our one-day race I was inspired by seeing Tony finish. His hands were very calloused and he gave me some advice – put vaseline on your hands. On day 4 we got away early, it was pretty hot but there was a bit of a breeze and on the water you don't feel the heat as much. There was not as much flow as I'd hoped, 1 to 1½k. With the



Left: The relay team of Steve Russell, Michael Mueller and Jason Cooper with the race starter. Centre: James Mumme and Liz Winn prepare for the day one start. Right: John and Zena Boakes are pleased with their race.



Steve, John, Alanna, Tony and Jason dine in style at Tocumwal on Christmas night



Shade can be scarce for Landcrews on the banks of the Murray



STOP PRESS: See page 11 for John Thearle's comments on the race

twists and turns all my calculations went out the window, in one section where we rested the wind pushed us back. At 25k Tony came flying past, riding the wash between James and Steve and a single, and they shouted out encouragement. At 30k and 45k we stopped for a 5-minute break and had some food and a stretch. From then on it was tough and we broke it up into 15-minute blocks, with a 30-second break to open our hands."

Zena Boakes: "Lots of people were shouting at us from the bank, they were very friendly and supportive except for one yobbo who wanted us to give the river back to him for water skiing. It was great to see such a variety of craft, including kayaks with 3 and 4 people in them. The race was well organised and went without a hitch. At 25k we passed the dragon boat with the women promoting breast cancer who are doing the Yukon this year. It was very encouraging passing other boats, we passed about 20. And our marriage survived the day!"

For lots more Murray pictures, go to the Picture Gallery at www.lcrk.org.au. Thanks to Di Cooper for most of our Murray pictures.

Day by day on the Murray by Tony Hystek

Preparation for this year's Murray Marathon got off to a rocky start. I had to withdraw from the 2009 Hawkesbury Classic, suffering balance problems early on in that race. I was determined not to let it happen again.

At the start line, the obvious contender for line honours was Simon Stenhouse, who had been training long and hard since he missed out on the unrestricted V40 record in the Hawkesbury Classic by around 30 seconds. The 'Double Dragon' (Mick Carroll and Jack Ward) team from Central Coast had entered in the Rec 2 class, and had secured an early start time. Some notable absences were Damien Daley, last years fastest, and Tony Zerbst, a multiple winner.

John Thearle and I had an 8.15 start, with the relay team starting 5 minutes later. James and Liz started at 8.30. John and I were the bunnies!

Day 1, 94km. After the usual first day sprint from the start, I settled down next to the K1 of young Victorian paddler James Pretto, who would be my shadow for the next 5 days. The river flow in this section was a reasonable 2km/hr, as the GPS was showing 13.8-14km/hr. As expected, after around 20km, Simon Stenhouse caught us.

I planned for just the one pitstop this first day. Fast work by Alanna and her helpers (Air Force Cadet girls) had me in and out of checkpoint B in less than a minute.

Paddling hard I caught the relay team again and a couple of corners later we found Simon, parked on the bank and looking very ordinary. He had picked up a gastro bug at a dinner and was out of the race. We offered him a wash ride for a while, but he was too ill, and just made it to Checkpoint C before withdrawing.



I caught up to James' K1 and we paddled through to the finish. A short sprint gave me a one second advantage over James at the end of day one, and a 20 minute deficit to an outrigger in overall handicap. I was amazed, a race win now looking a distinct possibility.

John Thearle had a great day too, coming in only half an hour behind; an outstanding performance. James and Liz were having seat problems, with Liz in pain from an ill-fitting seat. Their race was looking precarious.

That evening, my gel seat was abandoned, additional foam begged from John Thearle, and a new seat constructed. The modified seat lasted the remainder of the journey unchanged!

Day 2 was the longest, 96km, and the chance to cement a firm lead if handled well.

Mick and Jack in the Double Dragon SLR2 were moved back to the 8.20 start. That meant James and I could get going for a couple of hours before being caught, then try and sit on their wash for a while.

Fortunately, their pace was perfect for James and I, who enjoyed a 70km washride all the way to the finish. Coming into the

Picnic Point finish, the double upped the pace leaving James and me a sprint finish for the minor places.

John Thearle had another excellent day, coming in half an hour later. Not so lucky was Liz Winn and James Mumme, who retired midway, unable to solve their seat issues.

Day 3, 76km, is regarded as the highlight of the event, meandering for the first 30km through 'the narrows' downstream of Picnic Point, before widening out coming into Echuca. Flow-



At Tocumwal, at the finish of the 94km day one stage



Tony and constant paddling companion James Pretto

ing through majestic redgum forests, you can almost reach out and touch the banks, the morning light filtered through the dense timber. There was little time to enjoy the scenery though, as James and I were determined to keep the double at bay. Coming into checkpoint B and still no double, we kept up the pressure, heart rates rarely dropping below 120. Jack and Mick finished 200m in arrears. Apparently the finish at Echuca is a fantastic experience for paddlers, passing all the old steamers and wharf. I can't remember a thing!

Day 4, 64km, saw the introduction of the single-day event. James Mumme teamed up with Steve Paget in the double, also on the 8.20 start, and a new variable was introduced into the equation. Steve also didn't appear that comfortable in the front seat.

With Steve and James gradually slowing, the black Jack'n'Mick double took the lead just as the headwinds in-

creased. James in the K1 was finding the going a bit tough, and dropped back to washride Steve and James. In a three-hour battle for line honours, we saw the finish up ahead and applied pressure. James' K1 led out, black double on one side, me on the other. We crossed together, meaning I was still just one second ahead at the end of day 4.

Steve and James in the double carried on to finish, demonstrating a degree of determination from Steve, and prompting the relay team to sign him up on the spot for next year. John had another solid day, though seat issues were to plague him as well.

Day 5, 75km. All I had to do was finish to get first place on handicap. However my more important goal was to finish in under 30 hours, especially as James Pretto was equally as determined to break the 30.

With one eye constantly on the speed indicator, the other on the heart rate, we were constantly pushing 130bpm, but managing only 12.9 km/hr, the urgency in our mission making for little small talk. By checkpoint B, I'd consumed 2 litres of my new wonder drink, diluted Sustagen, plus an equal amount of water.

We caught and passed one of the half distance junior K1's, who jumped across on to James' wash. A couple of corners later and sploosh! James was in, taken out by the junior as his paddle got caught between them. That was the end for James. I sent the rogue K1 on ahead for his own safety, as James knew him and was 'not happy'. It took 5 minutes to get James to the bank, retrieve his drink system and help him back in. There was no way I was going to leave him there after all we had been through together. But now I had 5 minutes on him, blowing any chance he had of getting second fastest down the river.

I had used all 5 litres of water 5km short of checkpoint C, and ended up using 7 litres for the day. The last 20km into Swan Hill was a sprint, with my seat making things even more difficult. I constantly had to lean back to take the weight off my rear, meaning I'd lose the wash ride and have to sprint to get back on. This would have happened 30 times.

By the first willow tree 3 km out I was done for, with James equally stuffed. We glanced down at the GPS, and saw 14.2km/hr average for the last section. Wow, we couldn't believe it. We'd make the 30 hrs with minutes to spare. We let the double get ahead and cruised down the last 3km. Though I led most of the way, I'd not have been able to achieve my time without him.

I now have a better appreciation of what determination Tom Simmat must have had to win the Murray Marathon as many times as he did. I still have a long way to go to match his credentials. An event like this can bring out the very best, the 'dark horse' performance, in a paddler that no one has seen before. John Thearle is a testament to that.

This is an edited version of a longer article, which can be seen in full at www.lcrk.org.au.

Next issue: Tony discusses the technical side of the Murray, including training and preparation, racing, clothing, nutrition, and the mental side of things.

Skis are out in force

Lane Covers took part in a number of events of different types over the Christmas-New Year period, notably several involving skis.

The annual 20 Beaches attracted a good field, but relatively few from LCRK. This time it was from Manly to Palm Beach to make it as downwind race. Tim Hookins said it was tough going, and when he fell in off Turimetta Head he decided to stay in the water for a rest and a drink. Off Barrenjoey some good waves built up and he was able to surf his way to the finish.

Placings included 48th Matt Blundell Epic V10L 1.43.15 17th 30-39, 69th Jay Wilson Epic V10 1.46.20 25th open, 80th Kobi Simmat surfski 1.47.42 27th open, 160th Tim Hookins Fenn Elite 1.58.39, 206th Matt Shields surfski 2.17.05 67th 30-39, 208th Tom, Simmat Mako 6 2.22.01.

The Rottneest to the coast in WA became a Fremantle to

Rottneest race on January 16 because the wind unexpectedly came from the east. Competition was so intense that South African Hank McGregor, who won the last Molokai, was relegated to 12th. The winner was another South African, David Mocke, in 1.12.33.

Results included Kobi Simmat 60th 1.27.18 (39th open), Glen Orchard 73rd 1.29.24 (46th open), Tim Hookins 131st 1.45.49 (41st 40+ ski), Tom Simmat 148th 1.54.20 (49th 40+ ski). A full report on this race will be included in the next issue of *Kayak Kapers*.

Results from the 15km Sydney Harbour Challenge, first race in the Harbour Series, on Jan 23 from Balmoral Beach included: Matt Blundell 1.05.21 13, Len Hedges/Steve Padget 1.09.56 26, Matt Acheson 1.12.50 37, Tom Simmat 1.13.38 44 (1st in 60+), Evan Oppen 1.15.12 53, Ian Wilson/Tim Dodd 1.17.54 58, Rob Vallis 1.19.09 61, Jeremy Spear 1.23.01 69, John Boakes/Zena Boakes 1.22.56 68.

Find a new challenge on the whiteboard

Lane Cove River Kayakers is promoting a new program to boost club and team spirit and encourage more club members to participate in a wide and diverse range of events throughout the year.

One of the main objectives of the Whiteboard Events Program will be also be to make our members aware of many exciting races on offer and help them join others in an LCRK team to take on these challenges.

Lots of these competitions may be regular fixtures on the paddling calendar, but others are more obscure and involve different sports like adventure racing, cycling, running, triathlon and rogaining. We have a number of members who excel in these sports, as they showed in several races in 2009.

This will not interfere with or detract from our main emphasis on paddling, but will complement it.

A whiteboard will be put on display at the registration table on Wednesday nights to carry information about upcoming events and avenues for members to enter them and seek support from other LCRK people.

It will provide basic details of events and need a "leader" to organise the LCRK "team" for separate races. That "leader" will seek to get all those competitors for that event pulling together as a single unit, helping each other prepare and turning up together on race day. They will probably although not necessarily race as individuals but gather together again at the finish.

Some of the events which will appear on the whiteboard will be:

- ❖ The **Tour de Hills**, a road cycle on March 7 in an area basically north of Castle Hill. Derek Simmonds has volunteered to be team leader. (See separate story.)
- ❖ The **Sydney Morning Herald Half Marathon**. This annual 21.1km run will start and finish at Hyde Park on May 16 and takes competitors through the CBD, including the Rocks district. The team leader will be Steve Paget and there is already interest from a number of strong runners in the club. Numbers for the race are limited and it fills up quickly.
- ❖ The **Akuna Bay Multisport** race on August 14 features a hilly 32km road cycle leg, a 12km paddle and a hilly 12km trail run, all in Kuringgai National Park. Entries open on March 1 and fill up quickly, so if you're interested don't wait too long. Graeme Jeffries, a regular in this challenging race, will be team leader and is keen to increase our participation above the 19 members who competed last year. You can do the whole race or one leg as part of a relay team.

There are plenty of other events which could be supported in this way – sprint series, ocean series, harbour racing series, adventure races. If you have a particular favourite event which you'd like to promote, enter the details on the whiteboard. The program is designed to be self-sustaining and will depend on the interest and support of members for its success.

The Marathon 10 series attracts a strong contingent of LCRK competitors and probably doesn't need any resuscitation, but we do need to work hard to attract more of our veterans back to the Hawkesbury Classic. That is a task the club will look

at as the year progresses.

Incidentally, for those who plan well ahead, this year's Classic promises conditions for a fast race. It will be high tide at Wisemans just before midnight and low tide at Brooklyn at 3.46am. So the faster boats will be able to splurge on an outgoing tide for the whole of the back end of the race.

A competitor starting at 5pm and completing the race in 12 hours can expect to go with the tide to just before Sackville, then into the tide to somewhere around Wisemans. From there it will be a run-out tide except for the last few kilometres into the beginning of the new tide.

And for those who hate the darkness – a full moon will rise at 8.33pm and set at 7.14am.

Go on tour—get on your bike

by Derek Simmonds



Why not get on your bike and give your bottom half a workout?

Some LCRK paddlers have been enjoying the second-best fun sitting down, joining a cycling bunch for a few training rides and then taking on the challenge of some of the many charity bike "tour races" on offer.

Interested in joining a bunch to train and drink coffee, and ride as a team (optional) on the day? It's more fun to do it with a few mates. And the cross-training is good for you, physically and mentally.

Watch out for emails and check the new events whiteboard at the sign-on table at the pontoon.

Here are some of the upcoming rides in early 2010:

Sunday March 7, Tour de Hills Bicycle Classic. 100, 70 or 35km ride through the Hills district of Sydney. Start at Dural Country Club. <http://rotarynews.info/2/Club/4201/788/r.i>

Sunday March 14, Loop the Loop Bicycle Challenge. 85 or 50km around Lake Macquarie. Start at Spears Point or Morisset. www.loopthelake.com.au.

Sunday April 11, Blayney to Bathurst Cyclo Sportif challenge. 110 or 70km. Starts at Blayney. www.nsw.cycling.org.au.

May (date not yet available), Central Coast Century. 100km ride through the hills of the Central Coast hinterland. Start at Mt Penang.

If you want to really test yourself in the mountains you could join Graeme Jeffries, Dave Kavanagh, Craig Elliott, James Mumme and Peter Janecek in the 3 Peaks Challenge – 230km of rugged climbing (there's also a 115km option) from Falls Creek circumnavigating the Victorian Alpine region on March 7.

I'm heading off to New Zealand to do three races, with gradients up to 12%, in four weeks: Le Race, 100km Christchurch to Alkaroa on March 20; Forrest Grape Ride, 100km through the Marlborough district on March 27; and the Great Southern Cycle Challenge, 150km through the Southland from Invercargill on April 10.

Mark these events down in your race calendar

The full 2010 paddling program has not been decided yet, and is subject to change, but here are some dates you should enter in your personal race diary.

Marathon 10 series: Race 1 March 27 Canberra, race 2 April 24 Narrabeen, race 3 May 23 Berry, race 4 June 12 Windsor, race 5 June 10 or 11 venue TBA, race 6 Aug 1 Central Coast, race 7 Aug 21 or 22 venue TBA, race 8 Sept 19 Lane Cove, race 9 Oct 16 Wagga, race 10 Nov 13 or 14 venue TBA.

State marathon titles Feb 27/28, Narrabeen. National marathon titles April 3/4 Adelaide.

Sprint national titles SIRC March 13/14. Sprint State 10,000m

titles April 17 SIRC. NSW sprint series June 19, July 17, Aug 14 SIRC.

Bridge-to-beach March 7.

Harbour racing series: Jan 23, Feb 13, March 14, April 18, May 8.

Sydney Morning Herald Half Marathon May 16.

Yukon River Quest June 30-July 4. Yukon 1000 July 19.

Avon Descent Aug 7-8.

City2Surf Aug 8.

Akuna Bay Multisport Aug 14.

For a full 2010 diary, go to www.paddlensw.org.au.

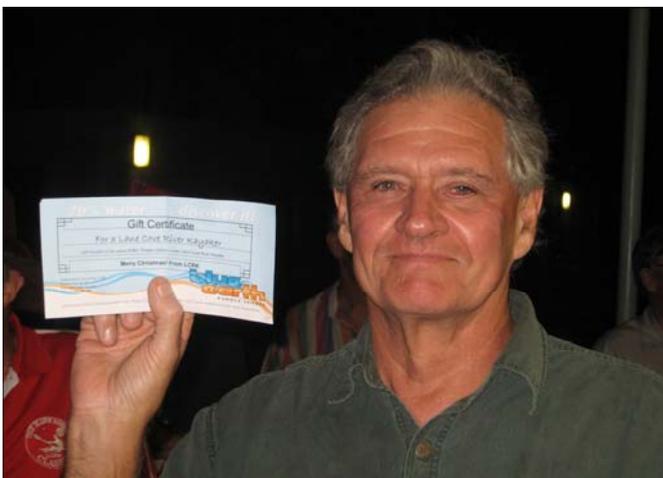
Scavengers at work at Christmas BBQ



Miss Lane Cove River Kayakers 2009 (aka Tony Carr)



Jason Cooper is presented with the Crudslime Cup by President Steve Russell — he's the new No. 1 paddler



Do you think Tony Walker was pleased to win the \$60 voucher in the Christmas BBQ lucky draw?

The LCRK Christmas BBQ was a great finale to a happy and active year. It was a knockabout occasion, with many of the revellers suited up in fancy dress or Father Christmas outfits.

Once again Tony Carr stole the occasion – and the prize for the best costume – when he paddled up slinkily dressed as Miss Lane Cove River Kayakers 2009, complete with suddenly acquired long blond locks. Even getting one of his high heels caught in the pontoon walkway decking and having to continue as the Barefoot Contessa couldn't dent his style (see page 8).

As usual, there were loads of children around, and many of them went out on the water with parents or friends to take part in the *real* fun.

A scavenger hunt on the water was organised for paddlers, resulting in a search for small Australian flags which had been strategically hidden up and down the river. Each flag had on it a number which corresponded to a prize.

The BBQ marked the 20th anniversary of the first of the regular Wednesday evening time trials which are the backbone of LCRK's activities. And in a bid to reclaim a link with our past, the trophy which was raced for in those days was once again presented.

It is the Crudslime Cup, so named, according to a 1990 document, "as no Lane Cove boat ever stays white for long, it's that rich streaky brown finish on every boat that has given the Crudslime Cup its name".

The original Crudslime Cup has long since disappeared but Peter Janecek, one of the original Wednesday night paddlers*, presented the club with a replacement, a handsome replica of the original made from Australian hardwood. It went to the person who scored the most points in a series of handicap time trials throughout the year.

The winner, and the first to have his name inscribed on the trophy, was Jason Cooper, and it was a fitting reward for a paddler who has shown continuous improvement over the past year or so.

Along with the trophy he gets to have the Wednesday night number 1. This number had originally been carried by Graeme Jeffries, but he generously vacated it (and moved to 2) so it could be held by the Cup winner.

Jason is No. 1 for the next year, and will have to beat off many challengers in 2010 to retain the honor.

Tony Walker won a \$60 Blue Earth voucher, sponsored by Cafe de Justin, in a Christmas lucky draw.

Many people were involved in preparation for the scavenger hunt and BBQ but special thanks go to Steve Russell, Matt Swann, Ian Wilson, Tim Dodd, Liz Winn, Diane Cooper, Ian Hofstetter, Roger Deane and Mark Sier.

* Survivors from those early days who were at the BBQ were Don and Wade Rowston and Derek Simmonds.





LCKR CHRISTMAS BBQ



1



2



3



4

1. Miss Lane Cove River Kayakers slithers elegantly ashore. 2. 'Whoops! My heel is caught.' 3. 'Damn, it won't come free.' 4. 'Bugger it, I'll go barefoot!'



Please Sir, may I be excused?





Happy 8th birthday, Spencer Vallis



Just over two years ago four young rowers came through the Heads into Sydney Harbour, having crossed the Tasman Sea from New Zealand. They were travelling in the opposite direction to the kayak of James Castrission and Justin Jones, and at one point came within 100km of them. **Kerry Tozer**, who has now turned to kayaking, was one of the rowers and has written this account of their adventure for *Kayak Kapers*.



‘Dolphins frolicked in our bow-wave’

December 30 2009 marked the second anniversary of the day we finally rowed through the heads into Sydney Harbour, following in the wake of our water police escort. It was an utterly perfect Sydney day but we didn't know that yet: it was still dark, and the four of us were exhausted and in pain from 31 days of rowing at sea through sometimes dreadful weather, caring only about how soon we could beach the boat at the closest available location and get off the damn thing and see our families, friends and some fresh fruit.

I thought to refresh my memories of the expedition by pulling out my diary ... the pages and pages of pencil scribbles are barely legible due to the rocking of the boat, with the exception of the expletives written aggressively in capital letters throughout!

My first involvement in the expedition was an innocuous coffee at the beginning of 2007 with a friend I had met abseiling off a cliff in full formal attire to partake in a suspended dinner in 2003. We'd kept in touch every now and then, and on this occasion he'd mentioned that he'd been thinking about a rowing trip across the Tasman. It wasn't until May or June that I received a phone call asking if I wanted to be part of the crew – an invitation that took little over a second of deliberation to respond to affirmatively!

By this stage, Steven Gates had arranged plans for an ocean four rowing vessel designed to be built from flatpack Duflex (an end-grain balsa wood and resin composite) with a fibreglass shell, and engaged a boatbuilder in Salamander Bay to put together the hull for us.

The boat plans were drawn by Peter Bosgraaf in the Netherlands. 11.10 metres long with a 1.8 metre beam, the original boat *Vopak Victory* had successfully crossed the Atlantic in record time for an ocean four. Steve had decided on three rowing positions, planning to use two at a time for the most part, and

after advertising for two other crew members and recruiting Sally Macready and Andrew Johnson, preparations were under way.

Our original plan was to depart in February 2008, an ambitious timeline. We knew that James and Justin, of “Crossing the Ditch” fame, had been well over a year in preparing for their kayaking expedition and were planning to leave near the end of 2007.

So began months of initially heading up the coast to the boat-builders, and later working out on the street where the boat on the trailer was parked to sand back fibreglass layers, cut fibreglass sheets, roll on resin under the watchful eye of the boatbuilder, sand back paint layers, install hatches, install



drainage tubes and rowing scull setups, silencing until our fingers were all stuck together, getting custom oars made, designing steering and electrical systems, installing netting and storage, bilge pumps and manual pumps for pumping out the deck hatches, and looking at equipment lists, logistics requirements, departure locations, regulatory requirements, food, and the odd bit of learning how to row!

In around August, we found out that Allison, Steve's partner, was pregnant and due in late February 2008. This threw out our whole schedule, and in the end it was decided we would leave in November instead. Our trial row across Bass Strait was already planned for the October long weekend plus a few extra days, as we all still had work commitments and little annual leave to spare given the earlier departure date and indefinite duration.

Looking back, I'm quite amazed that we managed to leave when we did, and have all our equipment installed and operational! This was due to some rather large arguments between ourselves, and drawing on huge favours from others; the tracking beacon was installed by torchlight inside the shipping container on a Saturday when the freight company was closed, with a borrowed drill and an electrician friend of the father of one of the guys working at the freight company pitching in! And this between clearing customs in Auckland after the boat got a steam bath – due to our not-so-pristine silicone application



Kerry and Andrew relax in the rear cabin



Ladies at work—Sally and Kerry man the oars



looking a bit dirty! – and getting delivered by side-loader to Opononi, a small town about 4½ hours north of Auckland on Hokianga Harbour, on the west coast of the North Island of NZ.

The website went live only after we (minus skipper Steve) had already flown over to NZ to facilitate the Maritime NZ inspection and clearance for our boat, which had become affectionately called the *Salty Bidet* in reference to necessary bodily functions and flip-out toilet seats, the latter of which we definitely did not enjoy the luxury of.

I cannot say enough about how wonderful the Opononi community was in making us feel welcome and helping us with preparations; no matter what we needed, they dropped everything to help us out – particularly Harry, the owner of the caravan park where we were staying.

After watching the weather for a few days, on November 29 we were towed over the sandbar at the end of Hokianga Harbour by the NZ Coastguard and took off under oar to the sound of a traditional Maori farewell. Steve and I were first shift. Our timing was shocking, and we had to stop for a few adjustments before we really hit our stroke, but we were off!

What followed was 31 days of hard slog aboard the *SaraG*, named after Steve's children. 10 of those days were spent listlessly huddled into the cabins waiting for rough weather to pass – unpleasant not just for the humid, cramped space, but because it allowed no personal space or time away from each other, and with the rough seas it was difficult not to face-plant the boat walls or fall out of your allotted space into the footwell. We were always keen to get rowing again as soon as the seas had dropped enough, and on some occasions rowed through some very choppy seas where it was only just possible to get the odd oar stroke in on one side with waves crashing over your head, leaving you leg-deep in water!

We rowed in pairs, staggering our shifts so that each two-hour shift was rowed one hour with one person, then the second with the other person in your rotation. The two hours off were spent stretching muscles, checking navigation, repairing equipment, cleaning the salt off oneself and one's clothes, treating ailments, cooking and eating, unravelling tangled anchor ropes, and if you were lucky, sleeping. Or on the satellite



phone, but this was an expensive and limited pastime with the exception of Christmas Day.

But there were definitely some amazing highlights. Some days were glassy and smooth, with the eddies and currents working in our favour and keeping everyone in good spirits, some days we sang on board making shifts seem to go that much faster. On one evening, we had flying fish land on our legs in the pitch black absence of the moon, and on Boxing Day we had a pod of dolphins frolicking in our bow-wave ... well, as much of a wave as we created!



Steven, Kerry, Sally and Andrew on arrival in Sydney



Almost every day on the open ocean we had a visit from an albatross or two, and we had a few encounters with freighters which were rather larger and faster than us, and on one occasion somewhat confused as to why we didn't have a mast!

A day or two out from Sydney we were advised by Johnno's father, Keith, who was assisting us with data on current maps provided by the CSIRO, that a front heading down the East Australian Current was likely to push us as far south as Nowra if we couldn't escape across the eddy we were in, so we changed our rowing shifts to three rowers, three hours on, one off and rowed as hard as we could. This was stretching our weakened and tired bodies, and we transitioned eventually into one and a half hours on, half an hour off, which continued until we beached the boat at Watsons Bay for customs clearance and the reception from family and friends.

It's difficult to summarise 6 months of preparation and a month on the water in a short article, with so many incidents and experiences to recount. I found a page near the end of my diary listing all my injuries, but I have to admit I'd forgotten about most of them, meagrely background to the overall experience – except perhaps for the blisters.

SaraG was purchased by World Ocean Rowing in February 2009, and was due to begin a crossing of the Atlantic in January 2010 (with some slight modifications).

STOP PRESS Reports from the Murray Marathon

As this issue of *KK* was being readied for the printer, **John Thearle** returned from holiday in Tasmania and gave us these thoughts about his race in the Murray Marathon: "It was pretty good, everyone should do it. I reckon it's 2½ times as tough as the Hawkesbury. After spending 4 days trying to get my seat right, on the last day my customised foam seat was lost on the way to the river for the start and I had to use a gel seat. I spent 90% of the day at a 30° angle trying to get comfortable. Now I'm left-leaning. I went down to break the 40+ unrestricted record which I think was about 34½ hours – they don't keep records any more – and I did 32½. I was also 5th fastest single."

New rec paddles – lots of choices

by Tony Carr

PaddleNSW Rec Paddles, which started life as a Lane Cove program, continue to attract big numbers. LCRK members are strongly supporting, but it's also great to see representatives from many of the other NSW clubs participating. It's fun to see who is paddling what and hear about their adventures.



Since inception two years ago, recreational paddle days have been held on Berowra Waters, Parramatta River, Colo River, Woronora/Georges Rivers, Sydney Harbour, the Central Coast, the Nepean River, Lake Burley Griffin, Myall Lakes and Pittwater. Paddles are programmed three months in advance and featured on the LCRK and PNSW websites. They are free to PNSW members. Non-members pay a mandatory single day insurance fee of \$20.

Islands of the Lower Hawkesbury, the January paddle, was a sell-out and on **Saturday February 13**, Michael Perry and the Sutherland Shire Canoe Club will take us via the clear waters of Cowan Creek to historic and beautiful Refuge Bay in Ku-ring-gai Chase National Park. This is where a secret training camp in World War 2 prepared Australia's elite naval commandos for the successful attack on Japanese ships in Singapore Harbour.

On **Sunday March 21**, Paul Bourne and the Windsor Canoe Club invite you to enjoy the excitement of the rapids on the Nepean River. There will be three groups, to suit paddler experience levels. You do not have to be an expert to do this paddle. Bring a boat you don't mind getting a few knocks.

April 17-19 will see the Lismore to Ballina charity paddle, run by the Far North Coast Canoe Club. It will be held in three sections over a total distance of about 100km and overnight is at local camping grounds.

In **May**, Ted Carpenter and the good guys from the Central Coast Canoe Club will show us another aspect of beautiful Brisbane Waters. This is an encore performance for Ted.

Last time we were up that way he took us to his canal home for a fully catered afternoon tea. We encourage this kind of thing!

These paddles provide an opportunity for members to experience the State's extraordinary network of beautiful waterways at a leisurely pace. They typically start around 10 in the morning and focus on ecology, history, notable sights and social interaction. Each paddle is organised by a kayak club and led by one of the club members. Often the leader is a local identity who knows the area well.

Even hardened racers have attended and enjoyed!

Skills workshops are also held with fully qualified instructor Christine Heywood who takes newcomers through the basics of technique, focusing on safety aspects and self-rescue. Just the ticket for partners if they a bit nervous about getting out on the water. The next skills workshop will be held on Narrabeen Lagoon on Sunday March 21.

Correction – Silver to Steve and Jason

The list of results for LCRK members at the World Masters Games which was published in the December issue of *Kayak Kapers* omitted the 2nd placing of Jason Cooper and Steve Paget in the men's 35-39 K2 marathon. They finished the 21km race in 1.54.52 and their silver medal increases the club total medal tally to 53.

Meet Spiderman

Tim Hookins has found a way to slow Tony Hystek down.

He's been breeding spiders in one seat of his Supersonic and on the first paddling evening back in the New Year invited Tony to join him in the doubles time trial.

Guess which seat Tony got.

A resulting spider bite had Tony's foot badly swollen and laid him up for a few days.

The lesson to be learned? Check your boat out each time before using it in the hot weather.

THE PERFECT GIFT AT 60



Derek Simmonds decided to treat himself to something special for his 60th birthday and splashed out on this beautiful Struer K1. He says it was brought to Australia by a European competitor for the 2000 Olympics and left here. Have a good look at the picture because you may not get to see it in the flesh, so to speak. "I'm not going to bring it down to the river and get it bashed around," says Derek. "And I'm not going to race it in the M10 series, either, for the same reason. But I'll probably use it in the sprint races at Penrith where you have a lane to yourself."



What did you get for Christmas? Paul Myers got something to cherish – a pictorial record of his first Hawkesbury Classic (last October, at the age of 60) prepared in book form by his wife Pauline and daughter Zoe. It's a beautiful, professionally published book with a collection of photographs starting at Windsor, including race shots at Cattai and Wisemans, and concluding with a triumphant finish at Brooklyn.



Kenji Ogawa used his ice-carving skills to campaign against global warming late last year. This picture appeared in the *Mosman Daily*, along with the following article: "An ice sculpture was built at Blues Point reserve, North Sydney on Saturday morning to raise awareness about global warming. Ice sculptor Kenji Ogawa, assisted by Mitch Sawatari, built an ice penguin family standing on an iceberg covered with snow. The sculpture lasted for about three hours before it melted. All that was left were penzins made of paper. 'I think people got the message,' Mr Ogawa said, adding that they had several people stopping to say thank you for highlighting the issue. 'I thought it was quite good.' The One Day - Global Warming Awareness Project aimed to highlight Antarctica's melting ice, which endangers the life of penguins. Kenji Ogawa and his ice sculpture."

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