



KAYAK KAPERS

June 2012

Tom Simmat's mysterious flight to [REDACTED]

Tom Simmat has filed this report and photograph. Parts of the report have had to be blacked out for security reasons.

At the end of April I flew over to Perth to check on the site for a large helicopter hanger I am designing and also for my grandson's second birthday. I was staying at my daughter's house at Mindarie, north of Perth. Her house backs on to the scrubby sand dunes that lead to the beach about a half kilometre away.

I have a surf ski and a kayak over there, but my daughter and son in law took their cars to work each day so I had no way of getting them to the water to do a bit of training. So each morning at five I would sneak through the back gate and jog through the sand dunes and along the windswept beach. Fantastic, not a soul anywhere.

As it was [REDACTED] I got back about seven, in through the back fence and straight in the shower. The current wife comes in as I am getting dressed and tells me there are a couple of gentlemen waiting for me from [REDACTED]. In my other life I work for [REDACTED], at various places around Australia, in [REDACTED] and the [REDACTED]. Sometimes I am requested to attend meetings at very short notice, but usually by phone or email.

The [REDACTED] men were very agitated and said they had been trying for days to find me and that I had been called to a very important meeting outside Australia and must leave immediately. There I was standing in my socks, R.M. Williams jeans and shirt. Some hurried questions, "I don't have my passport with me, What do I need? How long will I be gone? Where are we going?" Answers, "Put some shoes on, grab a jacket, it's cold there, you don't need your [REDACTED], hurry, we are going to miss your flight".

Going out the front door there is a big black Ford limo standing in the drive, tinted windows and [REDACTED] number plates.

"He has his first grandson's second birthday on Saturday afternoon and he has to be there," the current wife interrupts as I am hustled to the car.

"Don't worry ma'm, he will be back." This was the first time the second gentleman had spoken and in a very strong

[REDACTED] accent.

The ride to the Perth international airport was hair raising to say the least, that is what I could see wedged in the middle of the back seat between these two big guys. The trip from my daughter normally takes nearly an hour in morning traffic. We did it in half that time, assisted by some mobile phone chatter by the one on my right elbow and [REDACTED] for the last ten or so minutes. I asked more questions and got silence for answers.

We drove through a side checked gate straight on to the tarmac to a waiting small [REDACTED] jet and I was hassled up the stairs inside. There were about [REDACTED] inside, some turned facing into [REDACTED]. There were about [REDACTED] other people.

I was directed down the back where there were seated a couple of [REDACTED] of mine, [REDACTED] and [REDACTED]. They said it was all a bit of a mystery. They had been flown across from [REDACTED] the day before, where they were doing some tests. We have been working together on the design of [REDACTED].

In principle the [REDACTED] was [REDACTED] through a much more [REDACTED] building. The building [REDACTED] was also quite different and now used in a number of [REDACTED]. That was my part. The principle was also used [REDACTED].

We were not told a destination, but said our initial flight time was about [REDACTED] hours where there would be a [REDACTED] and restock break, before a longer flight of about [REDACTED] that time.

The seats [REDACTED] were [REDACTED] and we were literally launched into the sky. Once we levelled out some of the seats were again [REDACTED]. We [REDACTED] huddled together and tried to guess where we were headed. The flight was too long for the [REDACTED] so we were headed for somewhere in [REDACTED]. But by the sun we could see we were travelling sort of [REDACTED].

A hint came at lunch time when [REDACTED] asked if he could have



Continued on page 3

PADDLING ON (A BIT OF) THE MURRAY

by Paul van Koesveld



Together with my wife Angela, this late-starting paddler with a narrow range of paddling experience is living on the NSW/Victorian border for around a year. We love the role of provider of grandparent/child minding services to our daughter and grandson. However, this old paddler is also taking the opportunity to try out a paddling scene that is quite different to what I expected.

I do a bit of paddling near Howlong where we live, but most of my paddling is with the Mitta Mitta Canoe Club (MMCC) in Albury, 30km to the east. To put this in some geographic context, Albury is 26km downstream from the enormous Hume Dam and around 150km of winding river upstream of the start of the Murray 400 at Yarrowong.

Here, both the craft and the water are totally different to my own LCRK experience. MMCC members' craft are about 50/50 Ks and TKs – people here look at you funnily if you mention Flash, Sonic, Renegade, Marauder, Matador, Flyer, Rocket, Wizard, Vindicator, SLR2, Supersonic, Zero Tolerance etc. They have heard of skis but these are not in evidence around here.

The "Mighty Murray" may be mighty in length, economic importance and beauty but there is nothing mighty about its width around Albury – I have been told you could walk across the river during the drought years and even in flood it is no wider than the Lane Cove River upstream of Rotary Field.

However, it is very tricky due to numerous trees lying in the river and many hidden snags in a flow rate of at least 5km/h. I did not believe that it is trickier when there is little water than a lot, but I was wrong: water swirls in torrents around exposed banks and many more snags come to the surface. The river has also become trickier in recent years due to the new policy of leaving trees where they fall as a natural habitat for various native species. This does mean that the river now looks wonderful rather than the "gutter" it apparently used to resemble around here and platypuses are now regularly spotted near town.

The Murray around Albury and Howlong is largely human controlled. One day it might be approaching the top of its banks but have less than half that flow a day or two later. As a recent example, heavy rains in Albury and the Alpine region led to a sharp drop in flow out of the Hume Dam to offset the huge volumes of water pouring into the Murray downstream from the Murrumbidgee and Darling floods.

Mighty is, however, an appropriate descriptor for the MMCC club. Paddlers here seem born to handle the swirls and hazards of the river in a way I am struggling to approach. It is amazing to see flotillas of MMCC K1s in fierce combat at close quarters on this swirling river.

It is true that MMCC members include Mick Leverett (current Open K1 and K2 national marathon champion), Amy Peters (current Open K1 runner-up and K2 national marathon champion), Emma Peters, Jo Murphy, Kieran Babich (who has sometimes joined us on our river) and other nationally prominent male and female paddlers.

MMCC's facilities are amazingly good. I gather luck may have paid a small part in this but the club is well managed and makes best use of the facilities for itself and for local community organisations. Beautifully located close to the middle of town, the main clubhouse is in parkland close to the river at Noreuil Park. It can accommodate about 130 craft on racks and has good toilets, change rooms and a substantial clubroom with deck.

There is also a smaller club shed which holds close to 50 kayaks on a small "lake" nearby that offers a lap of just under 2km. One quarter of the shoreline still reflects its origins as a quarry and cement works but the remainder is nicely landscaped; lake access is available only to members of the kayaking, dragon boat, rowing and water ski clubs which co-habit well. This is a great place to try out more tippy craft and undertake sprint training because the water is still unless you happen to be nearby on the rare occasions when the water skiers are practising for slalom or jump competitions.

The two MMCC buildings store a large fleet of club kayaks, mostly TK1s and TK2s, but also some K1s and K2s, all available to members for the outrageous fee of \$3 per session.

Whereas we LCRKers need to load and bring our kayaks from home, then wash off the salt before reloading and carting it back again, MMCC paddlers just lift their craft directly off and back on to the clubhouse racks; there is no salt to worry about around here and you can even drink the water you are paddling in.

The main open race hosted by MMCC is the Frank Harrison. This is a 26km race from below the Hume Dam wall to the clubhouse. Results from the singles race on the Saturday are added to the doubles race on Sunday to determine the overall winner. Participants are largely in K craft but with some TKs also participating. This year the singles race was won in 1:38.28 and the double in 1:36.58.

I recently participated in the supposedly more social Agitated Paddler event for members – allocated teams in club TK2s battled it out in a fairly short blast down the river to a club-sponsored breakfast.

Much of my time has been spent wobbling around the lake, first in a TK1 and recently in a "hybrid" K1, trying to remember which way is up, so I can compete in the upcoming Sunday afternoon time trials. I can report from regular experience that the water is becoming very, very cold and its temperature has a fair way yet to fall. I look forward to the warmth of a Wednesday night on the Lane Cove River.



LCRK at the National Marathon Championships



Tony Hystek approaches the finish tower

2012 Australian Marathon Championships, SIRC April 7/8				
Competitor	Event	Distance	Time	Plc
Richard Robinson	K1 M35+	21k	1.41.07	2
Tony Hystek	K1 M55+	21k	1.41.03	1
Ann Lloyd-Green	TK1 W55+	15.75k	1.48.34	1
Tom Simmat	K1 M60+	15.75k	1.27.11	3
Paul van Koesveld	MRec1 M O	15.75k	1.37.09	1
Phil Geddes	LRec1 M Vet	15.75k	1.35.44	3
Liz Winn	LRec1 W Vet	15.75k	1.37.09	1
Steve Newsome	Ocean M40+	15.75k	1.19.04	1
Matt Blundell	K1 M O	31.5k	2.32.48	5
Richard Robinson/ Joy Robinson	K2 35+	21k	1.49.27	3
Tony Hystek/ Tom Simmat	K2 50+	21k	1.35.58	1
Liz Winn/ Leo Powell	TK2 60+	15.75k	1.28.33	2
Craig Ellis/ Carmen Ellis	LRec2 40+	15.75k	1.20.19	1



Matt Blundell



Paul van Koesveld



Liz Winn



Carmen and Craig Ellis



Steve Newsome



Tom Simmat

Tom Simmat's mysterious flight

Continued from page 1

a "Sorry Sir, this is a aircraft. We have on board."

recognised airport in when we landed. We were allowed out of the plane, to stretch our legs but not allowed to venture more than about fifty metres. Back in the plane, some dinner, and the caught up. The seats could be laid back flat and we were given blankets. So we puzzled and dozed.

It was still when we landed so no clue as to where we were except the obvious accents. We were somewhere in the.

We were taken at a more leisurely pace together in an SUV through some and a building. We were assigned an escort in one of those that had more and shown a place to have a shower. While in the shower my R. M. Williams boots were polished and my singlet replaced with a and my pants pressed.

My jacket was my Avon Descent coat and I still had my Paddle NSW cap. My wallet, watch and mobile phone were placed an envelope that was tightly held by my escort. The

of us met up again in a pleasant room. It was just getting light out side. We were given horrible coffee.

The gentleman whom I had first met in my daughter's house that now seemed an age away, started by apologising for all the mystery, "but" he went on "wanted to thank you in person for your efforts." He went on, "Your unique design has saved many lives."

"The of what" butted in. "The president of the" came the answer.

He was much taller than I thought, we got the expected thank you, he asked me about the jacket and Paddle NSW. I told him he had the build for a good paddler and if he ever immigrated to Australia he should join Lane Cove River Kayakers. "We take all standards of paddlers."

My trusty escort, with all the slipped my mobile phone out of the envelope he was clutching and took the attached photo. It all took less than a couple of minutes.

We were flown back to Australia in less secrecy, business class on and with the help of we cleared Australian immigration.

and went back to, I arrived back in Perth late Friday night in time for my grandson's second birthday.

All a bit of a blur.



The K4s tackle the Narrabeen chop

The much-talked-up K4 Challenge for the Narrabeen marathon M9 race on May 27 turned out to be a bit of a fizzer. Only two clubs took part, and one of the three boats was manned by subjunior who withdrew early in difficult conditions.

Lane Cove's pickup team of Tom Simmat, Nigel Colless, Matt Swann and Tim Hookins did the job by winning, coming in a long way ahead of a mixed crew from Manly-Warringah, even if they were 4 minutes slower than the best time of the day. And they were sartorially splendid in their matching club outfits.

Challenging conditions on the day, with a fresh sou'wester slinging in a testing side chop that struck diagonally, caused no end of problems for the K boats and led to a long line of DNFs. There were plenty of swimmers and some quit just because they didn't like it out there. Few finished with a smile on their faces.

But LCRK had a few performances to smile about. Jason Cooper and Michael Mueller,

racing together for the first time, finished 4th in division 2; as an untried pair they were "ranked" as part of the new M9 appraisal system. Janet Oldham and Friederike Welter continued their sparkling form with a 2nd in division 5 and new member Tim Binns, in his first single outing in LCRK colors, won div 6.

The M9 race at Woronora on April 21 had three LCRK crews in division 1, hopefully a forerunner of things to come. Matt Blundell seemed to have some petrol left in the tank in easing away approaching the finish to win, but it was the new pairing of Tony Hystek and Tom Simmat who raised a few eyebrows with their stirring 2nd place in the fast time of 1.31.50. Bruce Goodall and Richard Robinson were disappointed with their 1.36.37.

Andrew Mathers had an excellent win in division 4. Richard Barnes teamed up with Sutherland's legendary Joan Morrison in division 2 – they are planning to do the Hawkesbury Classic together.

M9 Race 2 Woronora				
Competitor	Div	Time	Plc	
Matt Blundell	1	1.31.45	1	
Tony Hystek/ Tom Simmat	1	1.31.50	2	
Bruce Goodall/ Richard Robinson	1	1.36.37	4	
Steve Newsome	2	1.44.31	5	
Richard Barnes/ Joan Morrison	2	2.07.15	11	
Craig Ellis/ Carmen Ellis	3	1.49.34	7	
Andrew Mathers	5	1.52.25	1	
Wade Rowston	5	1.56.16	4	
Janet Oldham/ Friederike Welter	5	2.01.20	12	
Don Rowston/ Jon Harris	6	1.57.54	2	
Derek Simmonds	6	2.01.47	5	
Duncan Johnstone	6	2.03.30	8	
Liz Winn	6	2.10.22	20	
Joy Robinson	6	2.12.10	22	
Phil Geddes	6	DNF		
David Hammond/ Tim Binns	7	1.22.07	4	
Tony Walker/ John Greathead	8	1.59.16	5	
Tracey Hansford	9	1.05.31	5	
Justin Paine	9	1.10.44	6	
Elke van Ewyk	9	1.29.20	8	

M9 Race 3 Narrabeen				
Competitor	Div	Time	Plc	
Tom Simmat/ Nigel Colless/ Matt Swann/ Tim Hookins	K4	1.40.28	1	
Toby Hogbin	1	DNF		
Bruce Goodall/ Richard Robinson	1	DNF		
Jason Cooper/ Michael Mueller	2	1.41.48Rnk		
James Mumme/ John Thearle	3	1.48.21	5	
Bob Turner/ Kristy Benjamin	3	1.49.48	6	
Richard Barnes	3	1.52.41	11	
David Hammond/ Tony D'Andreti	4	1.51.58	3	
Andrew Mathers	4	1.52.20	4	
Phil Geddes/ Paul van Koesveld	4	1.55.26	6	
Janet Oldham/ Friederike Welter	5	1.55.28	2	
Wade Rowston	5	1.57.19	5	
Tim Binns	6	1.56.42	1	
Derek Simmonds	6	2.02.40	6	
Duncan Johnstone	6	2.05.55	8	
Joy Robinson	6	2.15.14	14	
Tony Carr	7	1.35.39	12	
Tony Walker/ John Greathead	8	1.01.32	9	
Steve Newsome	8	1.12.27	12	
Craig Ellis	8	DNF		
Tracey Hansford	9	1.09.37	8	
Ann Lloyd-Green	9	1.10.11	9	
Justin Paine	9	1.17.02	10	



Marie Carr and Andrew Mathers at Narrabeen



Janet Oldham and Friederike Welter (inset)



Richard Robinson and Bruce Goodall

The dynamic new double combination of Tony Hystek and Tom Simmat



Jon Harris and Don Rowston



Tony Walker, Wade Rowston, Duncan Johnstone, Paul van Koesveld and Phil Geddes keep warm at Narrabeen



Elke van Ewyk at Woronora

Challenging conditions in the Harbour Series

More and more Lane Covers are taking to harbour racing which is attracting big numbers of paddlers and proving highly successful. The summer Harbour Series (5 events) has just finished and the winter Iceberg Series (4 events) starts on June 23.

More than a hundred competitors regularly line up for long and short course races, sometimes in very challenging conditions – in the Rose Bay event a southerly buster smashed the fleet with winds of almost 35 knots (around 60km/h).

Jeremy Spear, one of three LCRK representatives to be a series category winner (see table), summed up this way: “This was a fantastic series. All events were run very professionally, safely and with the competitors’ needs very much in mind. Locations and conditions were favourable for all events. These events are intended to try you out a bit. It does feel good when you successfully experience some trying conditions, as felt at Rose Bay.”



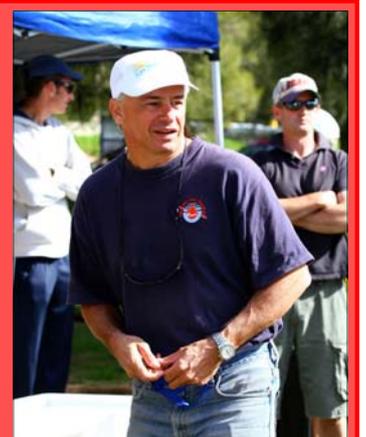
Clockwise from top left: Jason Cooper, Tracey Hansford, Glen Orchard, Jeffrey Tonazzi, Tony Hystek. Pictures by Allan Coker Photography

Final Series points (5 races, max 250)				
Competitor	Category	Pts	Plc	
Long course				
Matt Blundell	M40-49	142	5	
Jason Cooper	M40-49	139	6	
Steve Newsome	M40-49	110	=7	
Andrew Mathers	M40-49	64	=21	
Matt Acheson	M40-49	47	28	
Tony Hystek	M50-59	200	2	
Tom Simmat	M60+	98	3	
Short course				
John-Paul McLoone/ Neil Carlyle	Dbl ski	190	1	
Jeremy Spear	MSeakyk	240	1	
Phil Geddes	MSeakyk	44	8	
Matt Swann	MSeakyk	43	9	
Tim Hookins/ Steve Newsome	Dbl seakyk	48	=4	
Tony Walker/ Don Rowston	Dbl seakyk	46	=5	
John-Paul McLoone	M30-39	48	3	
Jeffrey Tonazzi	M40-49	220	3	
Tim Hookins	M60+	58	2	
Tracey Hansford	WSeakyk	210	1	
John-Paul McLoone/ Neil Carlyle	Dbl seakyk	50	2	

HARBOUR SERIES				
Competitor	Category	Time	Plc	Cat/plc
Middle Harbour Challenge April 14				
Long course				
Glen Orchard/ Jason Cunningham	Dbl ski	1.16.00	2	2
Matt Blundell	M40-49	1.21.20	10	4
Tony Hystek	M50-59	1.24.14	15	1
Steve Newsome	M40-49	1.28.18	33	15
Tom Simmat	M60+	1.32.34	40	2
Matt Acheson	M40-49	1.34.23	44	21
Jason Cooper	M40-49	1.35.38	50	23
Andrew Mathers	M40-49	1.37.01	53	24
Don Rowston/ Tony Walker	Seakyk dbl	1.51.48	89	3
Short course				
John-Paul McLoone/ Neil Carlyle	Seakyk dbl	43.51	1	1
Jeffrey Tonazzi	M40-49	52.09	10	5
Tracey Hansford	WSeakyk	1.08.09	29	1
Rose Bay Challenge April 29				
Long course				
Glen Orchard/ Jason Cunningham	Dbl ski	1.14.09	3	2
Matt Blundell	M40-49	1.16.22	6	2
Tony Hystek	M50-59	1.21.25	12	1
Steve Newsome	M30-39	1.26.53	24	6
Jeremy Spear	M Seakyk	1.52.46	46	1
Jason Cooper	M40-49	DNF		
Short course				
Jeffrey Tonazzi	M40-49	32.00	6	4
Tracey Hansford	WSeakyk	DNF		
Tim Hookins	M60+	DNF		
Pittwater Challenge May 12				
Long course				
Glen Orchard/ Jason Cunningham	Dbl ski	1.06.31	5	3
Steve Newsome	M40-49	1.14.49	26	12
Jason Cooper	M40-49	1.16.30	35	16
Matt Acheson	M40-49	1.24.05	68	27
Jeremy Spear	MSeakyk	1.24.09	69	2
Phil Geddes	MSeakyk	1.32.27	88	3
Matt Swann	MSeakyk	1.33.00	89	4
Short course				
Jeffrey Tonazzi	M40-49	55.35	7	3
Tim Hookins	M60+	56.32	9	2
Tracey Hansford	WSeakyk	1.10.11	26	1

You've got to finish to win by Jeremy Spear

The first lap of the Rose Bay Harbour race was easy with a 10-12 knot south-westerly. The water was clear, flat, benign – but we had seen the radar and we knew a change was coming. In the second lap a 25 knot southerly came through. Downwind was great but into the wind some of the skis started falling over. There was a 1½-foot chop cresting on top. By the end of the second lap I had taken 40 litres of water into my Marauder, it was 8 to 10 inches deep. I pulled in to the shore to empty the boat and did a 200m portage to my car, 100m there and 100m back, to get a spray deck which stupidly I hadn't taken in the first place. I was kicking myself for not taking it. Some people thought I had finished the short course or was pulling out and wanted to help with my boat but I told them "I'm still racing, don't touch it!" The third lap it was gusting to 33 knots, it was an absolute hoot downwind, down to the last mark then back up into it – and I was first in the seakayak class. There's an old Sydney-to-Hobart saying: "You've got to finish to win."



Six kayakers from Lane Cove and Manly Warringah travelled thousands of kilometres to far north Queensland, only 150 kilometres from the Gulf of Carpentaria, to compete in the outback's famous Gregory River Canoe Race. Matt Blundell and John Thearle describe their trip in the articles below.

A long trek north to tackle the Gregory

by Matt Blundell

On May 3 2012 I boarded plane along with Brett Greenwood and Stu Innes of the MWKC bound for Mt Isa where we would begin our Gregory River Kayak Race adventure. We land at Mt Isa and pick up our Nissan X-Trail rental car and head for the Gregory Pub which will be our base for the next few days. It's a 3½ hour drive along both sealed and unsealed roads but we arrive in one piece at Gregory Downs which is a one-pub town, well in fact it only has a pub, it literally has nothing else.

Once at the pub we meet up with the rest of the boys, "The Lane Cove Crew" - James Mumme and Bert Lloyd, who have driven from Sydney 2500km with a trailer with our kayaks and picked up John Thearle who flew up, but will be driving back with them.

The boys are camping but we have the luxury of sleeping in the local pub accommodation called Donga's. These can be likened to a prison cell, a dirty prison cell. They are like a 40ft container split in to 5 parts, each with a door, window, bed and



race track, as the race combines with the once-a-year horse races and it's packed (200 people) and the dinner is put on by the local ladies (anywhere within 300km), but a great feed is had by all.

Race day dawns after an average nights sleep; the local boys (brothers) in the Donga's next to ours sat up all night and talked and are still going at 6.30am in the morning when we leave (man, those brothers can talk). Brett and Stu get tangled up with the



Matt Blundell after Gregory

other K2 in their start and take a swim, but are quickly back in and racing. The river is a series of small rapids with long water holes in between. We all soon settle into a steady rhythm. James and John are 20 minutes ahead so I slowly start to reel them in. I hope to hold off the K2 which is 3min back.

The first major obstacle 7km in is Kamarga Falls a grade 2-3 rapid depending on who you talk to. I have a smooth run down the first half and cruise the second part. Brett and Stu portage this rapid as it can be a race-ender if you get it wrong. After 90 minutes I see two green specs in the distance and my pace quickens as try to catch James and John. A pull up for a quick chat, all is well, and I head off into the distance. More water holes mixed with small rapids (wipe out bend 1 & 2) brings us to the river's next obstacle, Pandanus Alley, a narrow windy bit of river (3km) with pandanus trees overhanging the river. Get it wrong and you're pinned under a branch. Or cut from the sharp leaves.

The K2 catches me and I try to stay with them but they have too much speed in the straight flat water and I let them go on to challenge for the record. 3km to go I hit the wall, a combination of lack of eating and too much sun but I hold a steady pace to the finish. The K2 boys just miss the record after a few mishaps cost them. I finish 3 seconds over the 3 hours and John and James come in 20min later grinning from ear to ear, another river done and dusted.

Bert, John and James have a day's holiday, then start the long road back to Sydney.

Brett, Stu and I head to Cairns where we will meet our



small table and not cleaned particularly well, but beggars can't be choosers and it's a roof over our heads.

Saturday morning it's off for a practice on the upper section of the river which contains the only major rapid. Along the way we come across our first obstacle: James' car can't get to the river as it has sports suspension and you need a 4WD to get in. A bit of juggling and 2 trips and we get the crew down to the river. We cruise down the river, Brett and Stu in the K2 and me in the K1, the LCRK in their Spirit plastic skis, about as fast as you're going to get in a plastic craft. Straight away you can't help notice the beauty of the Gregory River and its surrounds, nice clean fresh warm water and so peaceful. After that a bit more car juggling and it's off to registration. Then dinner at the



Brett Greenwood and Stu Innes after winning the Gregory race

families for a week's holiday and do the Barron River Race. After a week of relaxing and swimming in the hotel pool at Palm Cove we head to Mareeba, the start of the race which is 50km and runs from Mareeba to Kuranda.

This is a definite step up from the Gregory, with several major rapids to negotiate. The river is running at 1.73m which is up from the last few days as they were able to get a water release from the dam at the last minute., but still well down on last years 1.92m.

Once again a staggered start and we head off last. We have no real idea what the river holds in store for us, only word of mouth. The first 12km is narrow winding river with a few small rapids but nice moving water, very similar to the Gloucester Mountain Man paddle section for those who know it but following faster. In this section I am able to stay in front of the K2 as all the turns give the K1 a big advantage. Then the next 15km is wider river with intermittent rapids, grade 1-2 but fairly challenging with the low water level. They take a toll on the kayakers, especially the K2 which takes a hammering.

Having put some distance between me and the K2, I portage my first rapid, the biggie of the day - 200m long and finishing with a grade 3 drop at the bottom. Then through the 31km checkpoint, 19km to go. Still feeling good and no sign of the K2, I push on and come to a small rapid with a metre drop at the bottom, all goes well until a branch pushes me in, my



Matt Blundell on the Barron River

first and only swim of the day, but 30 seconds later I'm up and going again. Another 15km remaining to the finish. It is a series of small bony rapids with flat stretches in between. I portaged a couple of these as I took the wrong side of the river and ran out of water.

I finish in 3hr 57min for a race record. Brett and Stu came in 15min later in second place with a very beat-up kayak.

I strongly recommend both these races and combining the two makes for a great holiday. We found the organisers to be very helpful and accommodating. Anyone who is interested just let me know and I can help with any queries or questions. All going well I will be back for both next year.

by John Thearle

James and Bert left on the Tuesday for the 2500km drive north to Gregory River. They were in James' car towing the club trailer with 6 boats - 2 K1s for Matt Blundell, a K2 for Stuart Innes and Brett Greenwood from Manly Warringah, 2 WA-made PRS plastic skis for James and me, and Bert's Endorfin ski.



On Thursday I flew to Mt Isa and met them at lunch time and we drove to Gregory Downs where we set up camp. Gregory Downs is the pub which is really the town and is at the finish of the race.

Matt, Stuart and Brett flew to Mt Isa on Friday and hired a 4WD, arriving at Gregory Downs that afternoon.

We found that new regulations had been brought in for the race because of their affiliation with Queensland Canoeing. To be sanctioned they had to have safety people and safety gear. The race went from being fairly casual to very controlled, they even had a chopper.

Competitors had to wear helmets, boots and PFDs and we



Bert Lloyd, John Thearle and James Mumme in Gregory Downs

were unaware of this, even though James had made inquiries by phone and through the internet. The organisers brought up a consignment of gear and we were able to hire everything.

Bert, James and I had a practice paddle in the lower section of the race course on the Friday, about 15km.

On Saturday morning all 6 of us did the top section of the course, about 20km, which included the biggest rapids. We had a big hassle getting to the race starting point, as an access road of 2 or 3 km had not been graded and was at the limit even for a 4WD. In the end we did a shuffle with Matt's hired 4WD, with the boats on the roof.

Matt went straight through the first rapid but the K2 drove into the bank and decided to portage as they didn't want to destroy the boat before the race.

Bert, James and I went through after first surveying the rapid. I came out and bounced down the rapid, but carried my boat back up and got through the second time.

On race day we had to hitch a ride to the start. I went first, then James arrived virtually as the race was starting. Bert couldn't get a lift and wasn't feeling too well anyhow, and didn't race.

The river at the start was very narrow and we went in waves every 4 minutes. James and I were in the second wave, for recreational boats. I was first down the first rapid, only 20 metres from the start, and led for a while.

James caught up and we paddled together to the first big set of rapids, where James went for a swim. I went to the front again, but he caught me and we paddled together to checkpoint 3, a narrow section known as Pandanus Alley which is surrounded by pandanus trees and logs and is only a couple of metres wide. James dismembered a tree and I went ahead of him for the remaining 15km of the race.

Matt and the K2 passed us about a third of the way through the race and I also was passed by 2 TKs, they were the only boats that passed me. There was one boat from the first wave I didn't catch, so I finished 6th, with a time of 3.44. James was 8th. The K2 was 1st and Matt 2nd.

James finished up half full of water because he didn't screw the back hatch cover on properly.

It was real good fun, hard work and technical in the rapids, dodging trees was new to me. There was a lot of fast flowing water with trees and rocks - I lost my paddle a couple of times - and big pond sections in between. The plastic boat was an advantage because I didn't have to worry too much about banging into obstacles.

There were only 51 starters, they were hoping for 100, including 16 from NSW. The future of the race is now in doubt.



Wednesday nights at the pontoon with Wade Rowston



We have now settled into the long night stretch of the Wednesday night time trials and the number of paddlers has dropped off a little from the summer peaks. On the up side there is rarely any wind and water conditions are pristine as long as you don't mind playing chicken in the dark with the channel markers in the S's on the return run to the pontoon from the top (ie Fullers/Delhi Rd) bridge. Also there is little chance of overheating unless you miscalculate the thermal layers to wear. On the downside ... not much duck activity.

Wednesday April 18 saw torrential rain and a massive "fresh" water flow on the night. It's been recorded as "Big Wednesday" as many paddlers said it was easily the biggest current they have seen. Amazingly 14 hardy paddlers turn up and completed the course in pouring rain. The heavy rain washed a lot of debris, including some telegraph-pole-sized logs, into the river, some of which are still loitering around. May 9, after a number of consecutive super high tides (in fact the highest in 5 years), saw every log with in the vicinity of the river drift to the middle. I think every paddler hit numerous logs that night. It has been named "Log Slalom" night.

There continue to be paddlers improving on their personal bests. A rare event, a sub 50-minute paddle. Toby Hogbin and Dave Coward teamed up on a double ski to do a simply stunning 49.19 recently. How is that possible?

Janet Oldham and Friederike Welter continue to improve at an impressive rate. Their latest PB is 65.24. Phil Geddes has teamed up with different doubles partners to record PBs with each. With Liz Winn, an impressive 63.30, and with Paul van Koesveld 63.23. Liz, I suggest you ask Phil to trim his beard before the next paddle to create less wind resistance and pick up those 7 seconds! Jeremy Spear has suddenly picked up a few minutes in recent weeks and clocked a fast PB of 65.28. Well done everyone.

No doubt there are others, not mentioned, achieving PBs. These are the ones I know about and manage to remember.

LCRK AGM and Annual Dinner

The LCRK AGM will be held at the Lane Cove Club at 6.30pm on Friday July 27, to be followed by the Annual Dinner at 7.30pm. A feature of the evening will be the 2nd Great Kayak Trivia Quiz. Bring your partner to the dinner for an entertaining evening of friendship and fun.



Do you remember a UK visitor, Ben Dooley, who paddled with LCRK in March? He sent us this photo with the following comment: "I just wanted to drop you a quick line to say thank you again for your hospitality when I was in Sydney. I really enjoyed having the opportunity to paddle when I was away and would be very grateful if you could pass on my thanks to everyone at the club as well. I have attached a picture of myself and a guy from the Irish national marathon squad training on the west coast of Ireland. This picture is especially rare as the sun is actually shining!! Thanks again to all and hope to see you again in the future."

Please let me know if you do a PB. We are working towards extracting everyone's PBs from the records we have, so hope to be able to report new ones when they occur.

Both the Crudslime and Coffee Cups have seen a paddler jump out to a handy lead. In the Crudslime Cup, Craig Ellis has been paddling strongly with his wife Sally and sister Carmen to record excellent results. Not far behind are Jeffrey Tonazzi, Toby Hogbin and Martin Dearnley. Still a long way to go so anything can still happen, and history has shown it often is down to the last paddle to determine the winner. Tracey Hansford has been too consistent for the opposition so far and has one hand on the Coffee Cup. Well done, Tracey.

For the record, top results in the 2011 competition were:
Crudslime Cup - Nigel Colless 410 1, Matt Blundell 400 2, Wade Rowston 371 3, Tom Simmat 365 4, Tony Carr 340 5, Tom Holloway 324 6, Paul van Koesveld 310 7, Martin Dearnley 309 8, Derek Simmonds 307 9, Tony Hystek 304 10.
Coffee Cup - Justin Paine 194 1, Joy Robinson 74 2, Jane Williamson/Yavuz Gencer 73 3, Marie Carr 72 4, Alec/Ian Wilson 71 5.

A bit of housekeeping. It makes it a lot easier for me to record the results if you use the same number each week. If you do not have a permanent number then please let me know (rowsto@tpg.com.au) and one will be arranged. Also, as always remember white lights attached to the kayak (not the PFD) and of course always wear a PFD at night.

Happy paddling!

Classic training

Last year's successful series of training paddles on the Hawkesbury to help members prepare for the Hawkesbury Classic will be repeated this year with the following schedule:

Sunday June 17, Ebenezer: 9am start, paddle upstream 1½ hours and return; high tide 11am. (Visit nearby 1809 Ebenezer Church, the oldest church in Australia.)

Sunday August 5 Spencer: 9am start, paddle upstream 1½ hours and return; high tide 11.15am.

Sunday September 30 Wisemans Ferry: 9am start, paddle upstream 1½ hours and return; high tide 10.20am.

Sunday October 7 Lane Cove River: Two laps of the 12km Wednesday night time trial course, starting from the pontoon. Start time to be advised.

This series is open only to LCRK members, except that an LCRK member may paddle with a non-member in the same boat. \$5 per person per event (\$10 for non-members). Paddlers who wish to do shorter distances may do so. No preregistration required.

Best article in KK

The Frank McDonald Prize for the best contributed article in Kayak Kapers in 2011-12 will be awarded at the Annual Dinner. An independent panel will choose the winner from the following finalists:

Wade Rowston, "A day paddling in Katherine Gorge", KK Dec 2011.

Rae Duffy, "The Classic and Moreton Island - in the same day", KK Feb 2012.

Richard Barnes, "Emotional rollercoaster in east Bass Strait", KK April 2012.

Matt Blundell, "A long trek north to tackle the Gregory", KK June 2012.

Paul van Koesveld, "Paddling on (a bit of) the Murray", KK June 2012.

Lane Cove River Kayakers
PO Box 163 Lane Cove
1595

dodd.tim@bigpond.com
0407-440-160 www.lcrk.org.au

President: Matt Swann

Vice-President and

Treasurer: Nigel Colless

Secretary: Tim Dodd

Kayak Kapers Editor: Justin Paine 9858-3323

Committee members: Tom Holloway, Liz Winn, Paul van Koesveld.