



Newsletter of the Burley Griffin Canoe Club
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*Well done to all BGCC paddlers and land crew who participated in the
2011 Mighty Murray Marathon*

 **SPORT & RECREATION ACT**

The ACT Government assists the BGCC through Sport and Recreation ACT



President's report

The lowered lake level in Burley Griffin is still causing some interruption to our paddling in the river. However, before the Burley Griffin Bash weekend on 25/26 February 2012 we will be surveying our paddling areas and placing markers on large snags that we are unable to move.

TAMS have advised that large snags and logs are still moving along the waterway and as a result will be willing to help us out if we identify some particularly troublesome snags. The water ski area was opened temporarily but is now closed due to the movement of logs along the river.

Closer to the Bash weekend we will be asking for volunteers to help with some of the jobs over that weekend, so if you are not paddling and would like to see first-hand what happens at a NSW Marathon 9 series race, please come along.

We have had a lot of interest in our Introduction to Paddling courses lately and plan to conduct at least two more prior to the end of this season. We now have a membership of 250, which means that there will be an increased number of new paddlers at the river. I would ask the older members to make yourselves known and help out newer members if you can, particularly those who are time trialling for the first time.

We have not had any progress reports from TAMS on the construction of the new toilet block. However, I now have the name of the Project Manager and I will try to get a timetable so that we can plan our next extension.



I would like to thank everyone who helped with the Triathlons on the weekend of the 27-29 January 2012. There were some last minute changes that Triathlon ACT forgot to tell us about; however, we had more than enough boats to cover the swimmers. To show how valuable our presence is, on the Sunday a swimmer called one of our boats over and was in a bit of trouble. He was transferred to the tinnie and then an ambulance. It turns out that he had a heart attack during the swim.

For those who were there on the rough and windy Friday night – I was pushed!

Thanks again

Bob Collins
President



From the editors' desk ...

Already we are into the second month of the new year, with those of us who like to think of ourselves as competitive paddlers preparing for the 2012 racing events after the Christmas-New Year break. It comes around quickly, doesn't it.

However, much of the focus of this month's *Blazing Paddles* is on the sterling efforts of, and great results achieved by, BGCC paddlers in that ultra-distance event, the Murray Marathon. This 404 km, five-day flatwater race along the mighty Murray River starts at Yarrowonga on 27 December and finishes at Swan Hill on New Year's Eve. Read about the experiences and results achieved by our club's paddlers.

This month's newsletter also reports on the increasingly popular ocean racing series, which BGCC paddler Gordon Burns regularly competed in – with some "spectacular" finishes.

Russell Lutton and Carolyn Williams

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## Boat Captain's report

This month I have my boat Nazi hat firmly on. We have had some naughty people in the shed lately. No names will be mentioned, but I will nag worse than your mother.

### **Boat Rack Holders – A crackdown is coming**

Do you know where your boat is? Is it where it is supposed to be? There are murmurs that boats are moving by themselves, onto the wrong racks. So this is a reminder to everyone with a rack. **Make sure your own boat is on your own rack!** If not, I will move it. Please also note that if you want to use a boat captain's rack you will need to get in touch with the boat captain before you use it.

The new boat racks are currently full, but get in touch and you can be added to the waiting list.

### **Using private boats**

If it is not yours, do not use it without permission. Anyone caught doing so will be disciplined.

### **Using club boats**

Take care when using club boats in our newly lowered river. Snags are a definite possibility. Please also remember to complete the sign in book each time.

### **New Boats**

There are some new club boats on the horizon. What will you do (or not do) to be one of the first to paddle them?

### **Get in contact**

Remember, if you are ever in any doubt about the shed or club equipment, get in touch with me and ask beforehand.

*Russell Murphy*

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Canoe polo convenor's report

Canoe polo recommences at Tuggeranong pool on Wednesday, 8 February at 7.30 p.m. Next month's newsletter will also feature a report on the canoe polo competition at the Oceanic Games.

James Harmer

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## Sprint convenor's report

BGCC represented at the NSW Sprint Championships (14–15 January, SIRC)

BGCC was represented at the NSW sprint champs a couple of weekends ago by competitors Rachel, John and Margi together with Mitchell and Bre Reid and spectators Ted, Cherie, and Kiwi. On Sunday Mark and Randall showed up to add to the BGCC cheer squad. It was a well-attended event, with many of Australia's Olympic hopefuls present. In fact, the event had atmosphere with many people in the stands, several commercial tents with boats, clothing and paddles on display and some excellent racing on the water. This, together with fine weather, good regatta management and excellent company, made it a regatta of note.

Regattas bounce off people in very different ways so below follows the personal accounts of the weekend by Margi, Cherie, Rachel and John ....

**Margi** ...it has been a long time since I last attended a sprint regatta as a simple competitor – usually I am tied up in the tower with regatta operations as well as with coaching responsibilities, however commitments over the last couple of years has seen me give those volunteer activities a bit of a rest. So for the first time in over a decade, I was just a simple competitor in the little ole ladies competition. And I had a ball. The highlight was definitely scooting down the course with Rachel in Scotty and Garbo's Epic K2 (complete with Simon on the bow), giving the U18s a run for their money in the 200m. And seeing everyone in the group have sooooo much fun. It was a great weekend away from the shallow waters of Lake BG. So who is up for Nationals in March?

This event was reported in the media as a show-down between Ken Wallace and Clint Robinson over 1000 m. That was unfortunate for a couple of reasons; the main one being that it is very, very early in the season and no sensible coach would have his/her athlete peaking at prime level yet. For the record, both Ken and Clint got done by a young lad from Sydney called Murray Stewart. Why is this interesting. Well, Murray's dad, Robbie, and I represented South Africa on the same sprint team in 1977. Small world! The other highlight of the regatta was catching up with Robbie who I haven't seen in about 3 years. Here are the official results for the 1000 m

### OFFICIAL RESULTS

### Distance: 1000M

| Place | Name                | Club            | State | Lane | 500M | 1000M   | Margins     |
|-------|---------------------|-----------------|-------|------|------|---------|-------------|
| 1st   | Stewart, Murray     | Manly Warringah | NSW   | 6    |      | 3:36.99 |             |
| 2nd   | Wallace, Ken        | Currumbin Creek | QLD   | 2    |      | 3:39.65 | 2.66 +2.66  |
| 3rd   | Benassi, Maximilian | Italy           | ITA   | 3    |      | 3:40.27 | 0.62 +3.28  |
| 4th   | Wycherley, Paul     | Great Britain   | GBR   | 5    |      | 3:40.32 | 0.05 +3.33  |
| 5th   | Clear, Jacob        | Gold Coast      | QLD   | 4    |      | 3:44.18 | 3.86 +7.19  |
| 6th   | Smith, Tate         | Gold Coast      | QLD   | 8    |      | 3:45.90 | 1.72 +8.91  |
| 7th   | Bain, Bill          | Sunshine Coast  | QLD   | 9    |      | 3:47.44 | 1.54 +10.45 |
| 8th   | Robinson, Clint     | Sunshine Coast  | QLD   | 7    |      | 3:53.49 | 6.05 +16.50 |
| 9th   | Regazzoni, Alberto  | Italy           | ITA   | 1    |      | 3:56.42 | 2.93 +19.43 |

**Rachelle** *(Editor's note): Rachelle's comments on the NSW Sprint Championships can be found later in this edition in "New Boats on the River", where you can read about both her experiences at the sprint championships and more generally her new acquisition of a Max Kayaks K1.*

**John** ... I'm not sure why I decided to enter the NSW Sprint Championships because I'd never done a sprint race of any kind before. Nevertheless I entered all single races available to me which turned out to be 4 finals in the over 55's. On Saturday morning I contested the 1000m race. The new starting gates were not set up at the 1000m start so the old starting system prevailed i.e. the paddler had to back the K1 into the pontoon and have the rear of the boat held by a volunteer. Unfortunately the young girl who was to hold my kayak was somewhat

overawed by the occasion and was of very little help. The problem was exacerbated by my poor skills in manoeuvring a K1 backwards. The result was that when the race started I was actually pointing side on to the race line. Luckily Tony Hystek was so fast that he had established a winning lead by about the 100m mark which left me a chance to pick up the rest of the field. By the 500m mark I'd moved into second and did enough to hold that position to the end.

The 500m race in the afternoon was dominated by Tony Hystek again but I'd had a good start from the new front holding starting gate and was able to establish a lead over the others quite quickly and then 'simply' held them off to the end. The front starting trap was much easier to manage than the hand held rear start.

Unfortunately the start of the 200m on Sunday morning proved to be more difficult. A strong breeze from slightly across and behind made lining up the starting gate more difficult and I seemed to be stuck in the gate when it pulled away. This resulted in a massive left hand brace and a major stall as my opponents raced towards the finish line. Tony Hystek cruised to an easy win again. I simply focused on getting to the finish line as fast as I could and was lucky enough to reel in the entire field except Tony. I beat 3<sup>rd</sup> place by 6/100<sup>ths</sup>, very lucky.

The 5000m 'sprint' was held in windy conditions which deteriorated further to heavy rain. We started with the 45's who quickly established a pace I couldn't match. Not unexpectedly Tony Hystek had the power to hang onto their wash for the first 3500m and once again the rest of us were competing for second. As Tony and his mates disappeared into the rain I was able to open up a handy lead over the others which I was able to hold until the end despite an ever growing clump of weed on my bow.

I enjoyed my first foray into the world of sprint racing and might well go to the Nationals in March. I'd like to become more consistent, especially with my starts, and maybe get a few seconds back from Tony Hystek who appears at this stage to be unbeatable (by me at least).

A feature of this regatta was the amazing power and skills of the competitors in the feature races. These paddlers, both male and female were absolutely awesome to watch. Sprint racing allows club members to cheer on the efforts of our club mates as they work through their program of events. I enjoyed watching Margi, Rachelle, Mitchell and Breanna battle with the starts, the weather and their opposition. All in all it was a good weekend's entertainment.

**Cherie (Mitchell and Bre's Mom)** ... My observations was that it was a great regatta and good comfortable weather for paddling and not too hot for us spectators. There was great competition with the open men's races being a highlight in all distances, but there were so very close races and a great field of paddlers in all age divisions. Weather was great with the exception of the showers towards the end of the regatta on Sunday Arvo, with very, very big hail-size droplets of bucketing rain. We could hardly see who was paddling and I am sure the extra weight of water in the K1 and her soaking wet clothing didn't of help Bre in her distance 2500m event. *(Margi comment ... we are all very proud of Bre. Her technique was sooo much better than last year and in the distance events, she was only 2 minutes behind the other girls who were U16. Bre is U14. This bodes well for the future – well done Bre).*

Margi and Rach also coped a soaking in their last K2 Race of the day on Sunday. They paddled well over all distances and only had a couple of practice sessions in the K2, with Rach being called the dancing ballerina with speed and strength by the commentator at the regatta during one of her K1 races, she paddled well with good speed, Margi also got some words for wonderful return to the sport of sprint by the regatta commentator, during one of her races, I think he said what a wonderful return to sprint and that she is a fantastic level 2 coach, John raced hard all weekend and was in the top of his field in every race, all paddlers were relieved with the workings of the new starting gates with all feeling a little unsure before there races but all coming back with smiles at the ease of use, but also stating a little more practice would be nice. All that who train for sprint with Margi would also agree to these positive comments, WELL DONE John, Rach, Margi, Mitch and Bre and thanks to Kiwi, Ted for being great spectators and Randall, Mark and co for calling in on Sunday to check fellow paddlers progress and catch Rach and Margi's last race.

PS – we are looking for some JUNIORS. We need a junior under 14 Girl Sprint paddler with a DOB close to 14/3/98 we would like to train a doubles team to compete, also a 17 – 18 years male sprint paddler to also train for a doubles team to compete.

*Margi Bohm*

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## **Photo of the Month**



Always the showman, Gordon Burns has his ski perform a triple summersault at the finish of the recent 20 beaches race. Gordon's race report and more pictures of his death-defying stunts feature in this month's newsletter.

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Boat Blog-the monthly goss on who's doing wot in wot

What's white, very fast and, at 8.02 metres, too long to fit in the club boatshed? It's **Adam Scott** and **Craig Kentwell's** recently acquired Red 7 double ocean-racing ski. The March newsletter will feature this monster in the boat of the month segment – but if you see it on the river, particularly when turning, give it a wide berth!

Another boat sold through the *Blazing Paddles* classifieds recently is **Roy Willis's** ultra-light Elliott Kayaks Ominus, which previously resided in Roy's Mossy Point boatshed. **Roger Hobbs** is the lucky paddler who has added it to his ever-expanding fleet.

The transition to K1s continues apace this month, with **Stephanie Rake** being the most recent paddler to acquire a K-boat – a smart pink and black “mature” Sladecraft boat christened *Lola*. Gary reports that kayak and paddler are currently “bonding”.

Good to see **Alan Clark** and daughter **Ceara** back in Canberra at last Wednesday's time trial. Alan commented how he appreciated the Canberra “winter” paddling conditions after the 40 degree Perth summer heat.

Also seen at the river last Wednesday was **Tom Hick**, who is making a flying visit to Canberra from the US. Tom returns to America and his family in early April.

In a move that surprised many observers, **Russell Lutton** acquired another kayak last month – this time in partnership with **Adam Scott**. The boat is a Competition Kayaks K2, which was built for 2000 Sydney Olympics. It has had little use since that regatta, being stored in a Tathra shed for many years. As Russell technically has acquired only half a boat, this leaves scope for possible future acquisitions – even as early as next month!

Jenna Leonard has recently acquired a very smart looking Horizon Kayaks Flyer with a view to doing some long distance paddling in 2012. How many Flyers are there now on the BGCC register, hey?

Question: who isn't paddling the Canberra Marathon 9 race and the Burley Griffin Bash on 25-26 February? Your club needs time-keepers for both days, helpers on the water, and volunteers for the food stall – particularly on Saturday. Don't forget that all entries can be done on line, as well as for the Spit Roast by the river on Saturday night. If you can help with any (or all!!) of these tasks, please let **Helen Tongway** know in the first instance.

As the only point of gossip is to spread it, let us know what you know at
editor@bgcc.org.au

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# VicSuper Murray Marathon 2011

*The Murray Marathon is a legendary ultra-marathon event on the Australian paddling calendar. Late last year seven intrepid BGCC paddlers – Julie Quinn & David Baldwin, Scotty Hunter and Pete Garbutt, Gary Rake, and Phil Smith & Bernie Fitzpatrick - committed to attempt the 404km event starting at Yarrowonga and, all going well, finishing at Swan Hill five days later. They provide firsthand accounts of their trials and successes in the following reports.*

## ***Julie Quinn and David Baldwin's report***

The Murray Marathon is an iconic paddling event with a very long history. I first heard about it over 30 years ago and so when Julie suggested it as a training goal for the Christmas break I was happy to agree.

The full distance at over 400km in 5 days sounded a bit too much, so we thought that doing half each as a relay team of 2 sounded like it would be a lot of fun and quite achievable. 40 km per day in two chunks on average, surely not too hard?!

Our training consisted of around 4 sessions/week. A long paddle on the weekend which we built up to around 40 km, and sessions on Tuesday morning, Wednesday time trial and Thursday evening - each about an hour or so. Training on the lake is a more than adequate substitute for the river as it turned out. The current assistance of anything up to 4km/h on the Murray made the still water training seem like hard work in comparison!

We thought that self-supported would be practical - we doubted we'd convince anyone to take a week out of their life to be support crew just for us, and if we could share the same boat it would just be a matter of alternating between paddling and driving between checkpoints. The only downer was when we got to scrutineering we were informed that according to the rules we did not meet the definition of a competitive relay team, so were relegated to the non-competitive "Great Adventure" category. Not a big deal in practice, since we still got to start with the K1s and solo TK2s as they recognised we would still be moving fast enough despite our designation.

The event centre is based around a sportsground or showground with camping and copious basic toilet and shower facilities laid on - this year with 2 nights in each of Cobram, Echuca and Swan Hill. This meant a drive of up to 150km at the start or end of some days, but it was less hassle to only have to pack and unpack camp twice during the event.

The race starts each day with wave starts from about 7AM - slowest boats first with the last wave nearly 2 hours later. The river is closed to all other traffic for 3 hours with lead boats ensuring all is safe in advance. Any stragglers get pulled off the water at the next checkpoint if they fail to make the cut-off. Once you start paddling it is clear how popular some stretches of the river are with ski-boats, wake-boards, jet-skis and fishing, and hundreds of people camping along the banks, in houseboats or with houses and jetties. Some of the beaches looked like car parks with all the boats pulled up!

This year the first day was repeated twice due to access issues to checkpoints on the usual day 2 course. It's one thing to be able to drive to the river, but parking for a couple of hundred cars and traffic that doesn't snarl up on narrow tracks is essential!

The race starts just below Yarrowonga weir on Lake Mulwala. The flow in the river is quite evident from the boat ramp. The race was started by the local mayor! The waves were each a reasonable size with not too much crowding. It was impressive to see how quickly some people sprint off the line even when they have 90km to paddle!

Julie started out fairly conservatively, and I had plenty of time to pick up some supplies at a local supermarket and make my way to the first checkpoint. The upper parts of the river are quite sandy with lots of long beaches, and there was plenty of space at checkpoint Alpha for everyone to spread out on a long beach, so much so that Gary Rake couldn't sight his support crew when he first arrived - they found each other at the other end of the beach as he started paddling off. Scotty Hunter and Pete Garbutt came through at high speed, easily catching the wave in front of them which is an impressive feat! Julie arrived and after a quick adjustment to the foot pedals



I was on my way.

The river winds back and forth, with a few snags from fallen trees and submerged logs to catch the unwary with under-slung rudders. Lots of beaches and bars so quite easy for those going the full distance to pull over if they needed a break - although finding any privacy if a toilet stop was required was challenging with so many campers anywhere with road access! There were plenty of boats to pass and also a few faster boats coming through for a bit of wash-riding practice if you could hang on. Well before I expected it, a blue flag had come into view and I was at the checkpoint. This one had very limited room at the foot of a steep

bank, but I was able to squeeze in and Julie was quickly on her way again.

Scotty and Pete arrived a bit later - surprising given how fast they'd been going, but Pete was feeling pretty crook and they decided to pull the pin. Theirs was an all-or-nothing campaign - they'd come to try for the win, and failing that were happier to head back to Canberra to be with family than just going through the motions.

I found the car and headed to Thompson's beach for the next checkpoint and some lunch. Nice shady lawns and even a kiosk, this is the best checkpoint on the river! Caught up with Justin, Steph and Ben who were waiting for Gary to come in. He stopped for a bit of a stretch, food and drink, lathered on more sunscreen and was on his way again. Julie wasn't far behind and it was my turn again on the water.

I stepped up my intensity a bit more from the morning's effort. A short leg past Delta checkpoint with a wave from Julie gives the relay teams one last paddler change for the day - the rules apparently require relay teams to change a paddler at every checkpoint, and for multi-seat boats no paddler can do two consecutive legs. If we'd been complying with these rules, the distance split for the day would be 27/67km which doesn't make a lot of sense! Legs are 22, 21, 25, 6 and 20km!

A boys school relay TK2 came sprinting out from the beach. I was with a couple of other paddlers and they were cutting close in front of us around a bend. They didn't see a snag even when we called out, and suddenly found themselves swimming as they ran into it! There are a good number of schools entering TK2 relay teams, and it was quite a challenge to try to stay with some of them as they powered through each leg. Some of them even had a "jack in the box" routine where they'd come into a checkpoint and the paddlers in the boat would launch themselves into the water to make room for the new paddlers with minimum delay.



There were short stretches with head winds,

but compared to paddling on the lake it was nothing, and the wind would disappear at the next bend if not before. My efforts were starting to take a toll with the boat becoming uncomfortable, but a quick stop and stretch on a beach gave relief that lasted to the finish. The boys TK2 finally caught up again, and a few km of wash riding were a nice reward. The finish at Tocumwal came none too soon, and some hot chips and cold drink were a fitting reward!

Day 2 on the same course, we decided to see the bits we'd missed, so I got to start. Gary Rake's main rival in the K1 solos was Corin, a 16 year old from WA who'd beaten him in, and another guy not far behind them. A young guy with big hair decided to lead out the sprint, but popped after a few km and dropped off the lead pack – he pulled out at the next checkpoint! I'd moved up steadily and was sitting with the leaders, then found myself at the front with Corin chatting away on my wash. I'm not used to matching it with K1s (even if they were paddling much further than I would today), but I was happy to enjoy leading the wave down the river. I paced it fairly well but was quite glad for a break when the checkpoint finally appeared. Corin stopped for all of 30 seconds and was on his way again - Gary had his work cut out for him!

At the next checkpoint Julie appeared before I was expecting her, but we didn't lose too much time. Even by the second day, you start to recognise some familiar boats and faces as you pass, and many people have their names or team on their boats. Julie took over for the last leg of the day and after meeting her at the finish with some hot chips, we headed to the Big Strawberry for pancakes – Yum!

We were very lucky on the drive to Echuca – I hadn't refilled with petrol, and we got into Nathalia just as the servo was closing. If they hadn't unlocked their pump again we wouldn't have had enough to make it! Echuca's campsite was a big oval and we found some space to share with Gary and his crew.

Day 3 starts at Picnic Point in the Barmah Forest. The river runs in a very shallow course here and the forest spreads wide on a marshy plain. Julie took the first leg which was quite winding with a lot of snags. Last year the river was in flood and running through the forest - some paddlers took short cuts! I had a longish drive around to Lake Barmah which is only a relay change checkpoint. Julie wasn't far behind the main pack, and as we changed over the green K4 Challenge team came through. The K4 Challenge looks like a fun package of training for the event with a large group of others if you live in Melbourne – no experience required, everything laid on with bus, camping, uniform, team songs, the lot! I managed to catch the K4 after a couple of km, and then overtook! I paddled straight through the next checkpoint, - with 20 km for the 2 legs it wasn't worth stopping. I couldn't remember whether it was an 8/12 or 12/8 split, but I kept seeing groups ahead to chase down. Eventually I caught the main pack again. Had a quick chat to Corin who was leading Gary again, then powered on. Eventually caught up to Phil and Bernie in the club Mirage 730 who were doing the full distance. By now I'd realized the split was 8/12 and I'd overcooked it a bit! Seeing dust from cars along the bank was a sign there wasn't far to go and I shortly pulled into a muddy bank for a quick change with Julie.

The next checkpoint was a model for the rest of the course – a high steep bank with very deep mud (up to knee deep) along the water's edge, and lots of roots and snags – no more sandy beaches! At least there was plenty of shade. Enough time for a decent feed then I was on my way again. Coming into Echuca the number of houseboats and people along the banks steadily increased. I'd been warned about the paddleboats and sure



enough one was heading up the river just as I neared the finish. No problem dodging it and its wash. A final sprint to try to catch one last boat and it was over for another day. The finish is on the edge of town, so with no big drive we had plenty of time to sample bakery delights, go to the supermarket for a few supplies, and then do a phone interview for the Canberra Times.

Day 4 is "red day". Some of the teams really get into this, and the junior girls K1 Cup team won the best red team award for their red balloons, raffia skirts and sombreros. The CWA team had red lace-trimmed bonnets, blouses and bloomers. Even the race director was sporting a fine "red-coat" colonial military outfit.



We started from yesterday's finish, and it was my turn to start. This time I was quite ready to paddle off the front without any passengers on my wash. The finish is near a weir, so the flow progressively drops off, but no problem with lots of lake training. Julie was also flying along today, and we finished with time for a picnic lunch together before

the long drive to Swan Hill where we were staying at the caravan park near the finish with Gary and his crew. We watched the local paddler steamer head down the river at sunset, tooting its whistle at every opportunity.



The last day finishes in Swan Hill. A drive upriver to the start which is just above a narrow span lifting bridge. This made for some tight starts and nail-biting sprints to be first under the bridge. Julie let the sprinters go, but again wasn't far back at the checkpoint. We were both starting to feel the previous days of effort, and were happy with a steady effort without going all out. I had the final leg to the finish. There is a small island and a narrow channel with good flow and some eddies leading into the final straight as you hear the crowd cheering – thankfully I didn't come out but some did! Sprint to the line and it was all over at last.

Phil and Bernie weren't far back, then Gary Rake – the boats and the crews had seen quite a bit of each other over the 5 days, and a bigger club contingent would work well – let's get something big happening for 2012!

The final presentation was held at the pioneer settlement nearby – an interesting place to poke around! There were New Year's Eve fireworks and bands in the park to top it off.

### Scotty Hunter and Pete Garbutt's report

We had a crack at the MM on minimal training and a boat we really weren't all that comfortable in due to limited time we had to train together. Before we knew it, Boxing Day was here and we were setting up camp with a beer in hand, carbo loading the night before! Getting to the line first day, we found two other boats in the K2 class. Bang went the gun and we were off! Taking it very easily, we headed off at around 13-14 kph just wanting to stay in the boat during the messy water of the ten or so boats we left with. After only two or three km, we were well in the lead with a very easy pace working our way into the race. After about 15 kms we started picking up the bunch that started earlier and we hadn't even picked up the pace yet.

It was about then I noticed Pete's arms getting a little lower and his posture dropping. "You OK, mate?" "Yeah" was all I got back and for those of you who know Pete, it is usually a lot more full of self praise than that. He decided to get out at the first checkpoint which we were planning on paddling through to have a stretch and took a minute or two to get back in the boat.

Afterwards, the next 20 kms was slow, fast, wobbly, slow, out-for-a-stretch and so on. Something was not right as Pete always leaves me hurting on a paddle. At the second checkpoint we called it a day before something really went wrong. We still don't know what caused the lapse but luckily there was nothing serious resulting. Apart from a big dent to an over-inflated ego and a few dollars and days wasted in the trip and planning, we both live to fight again.

The good thing is that when we got home we did a time trial with our positions in the boat reversed and found it almost 20% quicker and more comfortable; so lucky we didn't do the full 404 km they way we were as it would have been a tough paddle.

Looking to next year!

### Gary Rake's report

Many readers will know that I am fairly new to this paddling caper. This month (Feb 2012) marks exactly 2 years since I took up paddling. As a former elite runner, my body is used to being punished...but with the non-existent arms, back and core of a former elite runner, learning to paddle has been a big challenge.

In 2010, I went to the Murray Marathon as part of a 4-ski relay with Peter Garbutt, Shane Lund and Darryl Coventry. We had a great time. Bob Collins (who did that MM solo) said to me, on New Years' Eve 2010, *"I reckon you'll do it solo next year"*. I think I gave him a two-word reply. The second word was *"off"*.

In Feb 2011, I heard a rumour that Garbo and Scotty Hunter were planning an assault on the MM in a double ski. Always up for a challenge, I suggested to Justin Channells that he and I try paddling a K2 and maybe we could race the other boys down the Murray. Justin and I bought a boat and did a couple of marathon series races. We seemed to be getting it all together. The other boys had to abandon the double ski idea due to Epic's inability to actually build and deliver anything on time, and they ended up in a K2 as well.

Garbo and Scotty thought it was hilarious that two scrawny paddlers like Justin and I would dare challenge the might of two well built athletes such as themselves. Our response was *"We're like the drover's cattle dog...all dick and ribs!"* And thus was born our new team...**Dick and Ribs Racing**. A quick chat to a graphic designer friend, and we even had a logo.



In early Nov 2011, disaster struck our team. Justin's doctor ruled him out of the race. Justin suggested I drag someone else into the K2, but I didn't want to learn to paddle with someone else. So I started thinking about whether I could get a K1 down the river. I used the BGCC 24 Hour Race as a test. I managed a few extended

periods in the boat and decided to give it a crack. Justin agreed to come along as support crew along with my wife Stephanie and son Ben.

My publicly stated aims for the race:

1. Finish – no racing necessary
2. Fall out of the boat less than once per stage (ie less than 4 times per day)
3. Try not to look like a complete muppet

### Arrival & Scrutineering:

We arrived at Cobram for check in and scrutineering after a short test paddle at Yarrawonga on the way through. We all survived the water at Yarrawonga (me in my Nelo-knockoff Aurum K1 and the boys in their Epic Legacy K2).

A few club members know that I have a 'milestone' birthday coming this year and would like a new marathon K1 as a pressie. At check in, I was eyeing off the other boats. Mmmm, there's a nice Epic Legacy in marathon layup. I heard some school kids complaining that the legacy was owned by one of their school-mates. "Dunno why he bought that boat", they said, "He's so bloody slow!"

### Day 1: Yarrawonga to Tocumwal – 94 km



Arrived to find a good flow of water through the weir at Yarrawonga and a pretty solid head wind. Solid enough to be throwing 20cm chop back up the river. Bugger! My start group included K1s, surf skis, long rec boats and TK2s. With the strong flow, eddies, pressure of a start in front of the crowd, wash from other boats and the headwind...the stars were all aligned for me to fall out of the boat...but I didn't.

*Pic #1: Like a lamb to the slaughter*

I got away from the line well, stayed out to the side of the pack, avoided their wash and just pushed on into the head wind. By 3 km, I had moved past most of the pack and was paddling in a group of 4 K1s. A young girl in an Elio Sprint 65 Marathon who was taking the first leg of a schools K1 relay team, a blue Quantum Sonic Marathon K1 being paddled by a bloke who would become known as "Nemesis Dan" and the Epic Legacy Marathon, being paddled by a 16 year old named "Coran".

*Pic #2: A safe start – me at the far right of the photo*

After another few km, Nemesis Dan dropped off and it was just 3 of us. Coran suggested we work together. I explained that I was too much of a novice to hold their wash, so I was happy to just paddle at my pace and, if I was going fast enough, they were welcome to sit on my wash. So they did. Coran even found time to chat the young girl up. He was an extremely polite young man and was paddling along quite easily. I remembered the boys at registration had called him "slow". I wondered how fast they must be?



At the 10 km mark, I hit an eddy, wobbled a bit and dropped behind. I was about 200m behind at the first check point (Alpha). I paddled in, looking for my support crew. Couldn't see them...stopped...had nasty thoughts about support crew letting me down (and let a few of my "inside voices" become "outside voices"). Gulped down a gel and set off. Paddled round the corner and there was the support crew! I stopped again and let all of the "inside voices" out again – with vigor...oops!

Got back in boat and paddled away. The inside voices told me, "Hmmm, abusing your support crew on the first stage of the first day...not a good idea". I got to the second checkpoint (Bravo) and apologised to all concerned!

Scotty and Pete were due to start each day 30min behind me. I figured they'd be a total of an hour or so faster each day, so my aim was to get to the half way mark each day before they caught me. On day 1, this meant getting to Bravo...and I'd managed it. The crew told me that the boys had not been going well at Alpha. As I got back in boat, I wondered how long I could hold them off.

I got to Charlie...still no sign of the boys. I stopped, got out of boat, had a drink and a gel, looked around...hey!...my "inside voices" wondered "Scotty, Garbo...what are you doing here?...I didn't see you come past?...and why aren't you in your paddling gear?". I didn't like what I saw and I didn't need answers. I just got back in the boat and paddled away.

The final stage hurt. I was tired. I was sore. I fell out of the boat for no good reason. I got to the line in just under 8 hours. 2<sup>nd</sup> K1 by about 25min. 10min back to 3<sup>rd</sup> K1. Had fallen out only once, so was succeeding in one of my targets. Didn't look too muppet'ish, so I'll claim that too.

### **Day 2: Due to poor roads & impossible crew access to river, was a repeat of Day 1. Ouch!**

There was no wind today but I got a bad start off the line and dropped behind the pack. Took most of 10km to get back in front of them. David Baldwin took the first leg for the David/Julie relay and had paddled away from the pack right off the line. He kindly towed my K1 opposition with him (he wasn't to know and later apologised! It didn't matter to me, the kid was clearly a better paddler than me anyway). I fell in (again, for no good reason) but enjoyed the swim.

I started noticing some strange habits in Nemesis Dan. Anytime I was trying to sit on the pack wash, he'd start moving his boat around, which made awkward wash come my way. I wasn't sure if he was doing it deliberately or was just being clumsy. But it was annoying.

Late in the day, Nemesis Dan and I were paddling alongside each other and he started doing the wash throwing thing again. I started thinking it was not an accident. Then a K4 came past we decided to try to get on their wash. As we rounded a tight bend, Nemesis Dan chopped my line, throwing wash and forcing me to adjust my line, just as I hit an eddy. I fell in. He didn't stop or even call out to see if I was OK. I knew the game was ON! I caught him at Charlie and paddled away. Finished the Day 5min quicker than Day 1. Another 20min behind Coran in leading K1 but put an extra 10min into Nemesis Dan.

Two swims for the day, still ahead of target and not too much muppet-eering. No need to worry about Scotty and Pete – they'd gone home.

*Pic #4: A rare image: My boat in moving water – red side up!*



### **Day 3: Picnic Point to Echuca – 76 km**

The start of the first leg goes through "the narrows"...tight turns, narrow river, and strong flow. I got a bad start and dropped out the back of the pack again. On the second bend, there was a clash of boats ahead of me and a TK2 sunk. It took them over 20min to recover the boat (got caught under a willow strainer). I avoided that mess but still had a really tough day.

I fell out once and had to deal with "Mr Helpful" in a TK1 who would not leave me alone to self rescue and insisted in loitering, offering advice, obstructing my efforts and eventually throwing a tow line. I just wanted to be left alone...I was fine...if a little grumpy.

Late in the day, I fell out again. I had been following the gentle wash of a Masters K1 who was, in turn, following another boat. A schools' TK2 came past and we all hopped on their wash. The boys in the TK2 thought it would be funny to throw their boat around to shake us off the wash. It worked. So I decided it was time to stop for a

drink...but the middle of an eddy was the wrong place to do that and I fell out. While I was swimming to shore, Nemesis Dan paddled past and made some sarcastic remark.

I got in and struggled to the finish line. Coming into Echuca, the paddle steamer "Canberra" came upriver with its 2-foot steep wash. I paddled through it but got filled with water over the combing. Paddled the final 1km in a "half-boat-half-submarine". Lost 3min to Nemesis Dan and 10min to Coran in the Epic. Two swims and a nomination for muppeteering. We were all getting tired and sore.

#### **Day 4: Echuca to Torrumbarry Weir – 63 km**

This is supposed to be the day which most suits Canberra paddlers. The day starts with good flow but it gets slower and slower and finishes in still water – much like our training ground.

I got a shaky start but was at the front of the pack by the 5 km mark. Then I paddled away from them. All of them, including Coran in the leading K1.

I had been watching Nemesis Dan loitering on the right hand side of the pack and throwing wash back at me when I was on the back. He'd look back to see me wobble and brace and then he'd move back into the pack. When I stabilised and chased back onto the pack, he'd move out again and throw more wash. This went on for a few km. So I waited for a long straight with a left-hand turn at the end and used that for my attack so he could not jump over to my wash. It worked.

While I stopped at Alpha for a drink, the pack went past. Nemesis Dan grabbed nothing.

I caught the pack again and used the long straight tactic once more to go past them. This time, I made sure I said hello to everyone up the line except for Nemesis Dan. It was enough to just see his face as I paddled to the front of the pack and then paddled away from them again. That was the last time I saw them that day.

I felt strong all day and just kept going. I ended up being the fastest solo competitor that day across all classes (K1s, skis etc). I pulled 6 min back on Coran and put 26min into Nemesis Dan. That gave me nearly an hour over him – which I figured would be enough for the final day even if I had a shocker. I didn't fall out all day. So...this is what it feels like to be a half-reasonable paddler!

#### **Day 5: Murrabit to Swan Hill – 75 km**

Just need to get it finished. Tired, sore, over it!

Got through to the final checkpoint without falling out. I had let Nemesis Dan get away from me and asked the crew how far ahead he was. They told me about 5min. But then I saw him on the bank 50m away and he was just about to paddle away – he'd taken a long break. I finished my drink and jumped in the boat – only a minute behind him. We had 21km to go.

I caught him with 18km to go. Feeling confident, I paddled right up alongside and said gday. He replied by asking if I'd fallen out much lately? I'd had enough...so I said, *"You know what, mate? It doesn't matter how many times you fall out of the boat! It only matters who is the fastest down the river!"* And then I attacked – as hard as I could go.

I quickly got out to 100m lead and thought about pushing on until I was a full river-straight ahead and out of sight. Then I had a more evil idea. I looked back to check that he was chasing – yep, he was. So I adjusted my pace to keep him about 80-100m behind for the next 18km.

Every corner, I'd brace and have a look back and check that he was still chasing. If he'd gained, I'd speed up. If he dropped, I'd ease up. It hurt me a bit paddling like that, but I knew it would be hurting him more.

I finished the race with that gap intact. He literally fell out of his boat as he crossed the line and needed to be lifted out of the water. Good – I didn't feel sorry for him!

*Pic #5: At the finish line in Swan Hill. One of these people is still enjoying the vibe of the event!*

#### Post race

The damage includes a bruised bum, a bit of chaff (yep, should have heeded advice to use Vaseline) and a few joint/muscle niggles. No blisters on my hands but blood blisters under 5 fingernails. They are slowly all falling off – very ugly!

After two weeks, my glutes and hamstrings seized up...basically scar tissue from repairing themselves after 5 days of clenching to hold the K1 upright!



The race was much more painful than I expected – and I generally love subjecting my body to pain. I can't say I really enjoyed it and I still have no overt sense of satisfaction. But I did enjoy Day 4 and the idea that one-day I might be a reasonable paddler!

A very big thank you (and another public apology) to my support crew Stephanie, Ben and Justin. I really could not have done it without them to help carry my boat, hand me medication and sun-block...and a beer at the end of each day!

Ben wants to do the junior race next year. I'll happily stay out of a boat. I can be his support crew.

#### Phil Smith and Bernie Fitzpatrick's report

Bernie and I joined BGCC in March 2011. We lobbied up at one of the beginners days where Helen and Patricia gave us the opportunity to have a go kayaking. After the first days on the river we both were keen to join the club and set a few goals such as completing the 2011 Murray Marathon. Neither of us really knew much about the race other than it took 5 days and it was probably going to be hot. I think both Patricia and Helen thought we were dreaming but both were always very encouraging as was everyone we spoke to at the club.

After 9 months of preparations (as prepared as our lifestyle, families work etc would allow) it had come time to head off to Yarrowonga. Even at that point we really had no idea what we were in for, but we both were determined to finish. We had entered in the Long Rec 40 double class – (old blokes in a slow boat, dumbed down).

We had a support crew of two – my Dad Col, in his Winnebago and Stu Green (work mate) on a motor bike. Lesson 1 had been learnt earlier that week: we had no way of getting the boat to Yarrowonga; that could be a problem. Luckily, Justin Channells was at the club one morning about 4 days before departing. I told him of our situation and he offer to take the 730 down as he was heading down as support and had a spare spot on his roof.

As it panned out, Justin was sent from the kayaking gods as without his help we probably wouldn't have got to the start line day one and then every day after that. He and Steph Rake's help over the

next 5 days was awesome. They didn't go there to help the 2 of us but without their help I think we would have been buggered. Legends!

We arrived, found the other guys from BGCC, did the usual registration, scrutineering etc and set up camp at Cobram. Once done we then realised that the start line in Yarrawonga was 35 km away. Again, Justin came to the rescue. What a champion! We loaded the boat on his roof and agreed on a 6.30 a.m. departure. We then fired up the BBQ, had a couple beverages and hoped for a good night sleep.

Day 1 - here we go, a bit nervous but keen to get started. We arrived at the starting point on time, ready to go. 7.45am start. Hopped in the boat, felt quite good. In the water, heading over to near the start line. Sitting in the back I pushed against the footrest, snap. Lesson 2 - maybe should have checked the screws holding the footrest on. Within 1 minute it was sitting on the floor of the boat, 30 secs later the gun went off to start. I mentioned to Bernie we had a problem, I was not a happy camper but we agreed to paddle out of view of the start line (would have been quite embarrassing to pull in to the start line) pull off on a bank and see what we could do to get the footrest back on. After quite a bit of swearing, throwing anything I could get my hands on into the river we managed to get the footrest reattached and hoped it would hold on until we could have a closer look after day one.

About 25-30 minutes gone but we were now going. We were feeling pretty good, cruising along. At the first check point, hoped out, rechecked the footrest, and off we went. By about ½ way through to the next check point, we started to catch up to those that started the same time. Some of the faster boats that started after us were going past us as well so there were plenty of people about.

We stopped at each checkpoint day one except for the last one. Day one was 96kms, at about the 85km mark it was a bit of a slog. Getting a bit sore, particularly in the butt and feet. Got to the finish feeling pretty good overall. It was pretty windy that day but not too hot – about 30c. Had a beer, jumped in with Justin and headed off. Went back to the “HUB” and relaxed, at that point the days results went up. Prior to that we really didn't have anything on our mind other than finishing. We went through the lists and we were going OK, there seemed to be about 50 categories but our nearest competitors in our class were about 2 hours behind us. We then were a bit more mindful that it was also a race.

Day 2 - same course as day 1 - 96 km, bit hotter and a bit windier. Footrest tight, butt sore but feeling good. Most of that day we were going well. Shorter stops, bit more organised. As it panned out, we started to get a feel for how we were travelling as to when we started to catch others that started before us and when the quick guys such as Gary Rake went past us.

We seemed to go ok that day; it wasn't till a fair bit later we started to get caught up to. I recall the last 10kms that day being really hard. I had a few spots that were rubbing quite a bit and my feet and butt were really sore. I was also really feeling it in the shoulders. Bernie may have been but wasn't letting on, He's tough little bugger.

Finishing day 1 was a bit of a feeling of euphoria, ending day 2 was not. I felt really sore, was starting to have a few negative thoughts. We also had a 100km drive to Echuca. Was in the car hoping that the soreness would go; arrived at the HUB, ice on the shoulders, ice pack on the chair and had a couple of refreshing ales. Had a look at the day's results and we had gone pretty well. We put about 1 ½ hours on our other competitors in our class and we also noticed quite a few competitors showing “DNF”.

Day 3 - started at Picnic Point. It was a ripper of a spot. River was very narrow and tree-lined. Heading to Echuca 75 km away. River was flowing but lots of sharp bends which slowed you down a bit. Feeling great, shoulders were good and the sore butt, legs and feet seemed to have gone. We were cruising even though in the double Bernie and I didn't really talk much, other than when to stop for a drink, banana or if there was something worth looking at on the river bank (usually wearing a bikini).

Stopped at the 2<sup>nd</sup> checkpoint that day and stayed in the boat for the others. We had the guys throw us anything we needed, such as restocking of drinks and food. We were expecting to go through a lake that day which was on the map and meant to be a pretty crappy paddle. As it panned out, that part of the river only become a lake in flood. Once again all was good except the last 10 km. That hurt.

Getting to Echuca was good, very nice coming into the port there. Met up with my family there so was good to see them. We went to a BBQ with family in Echuca (about 40 of them); so that was nice. May have had a couple more refreshments that evening than normal and that may explain some of the issues the following day. My mate Stuey was also looking like he'd taken a shine to my wife's aunty; so it was time to get home.

Day 4 - shortest day. Echuca to (we'll call it the hell hole). Woke up feeling good but as soon as I got in to the boat just didn't feel right. Was starting to get sharp pains stabbing in my right forearm, shoulder and hands. Had happened a bit the day before but went away after about 45 minutes. The pains lasted for about 3 hours. Bernie was feeling good and I think basically did 70% of the work that morning, which was good to see as I had been doing 70% of the work up to that point (only jokes Fitzy).

Once I started to feel ok that day, Bernie started to feel like crap. That was one thing with being in the double: great to give each other a bit of support when not feeling so good. The river wasn't flowing that day so the 40kg Mirage 730 felt like 80kg. It's amazing how a bit of flow makes the going that bit easier. It was also getting hot – I'm guessing about 36-ish by that stage. Finally finished; we knew we didn't have a great day but done. Another long drive to Swan Hill. Wasn't the best day but only one to go.

Day 5 - Murrabit to Swan Hill - warm morning, expecting about 40°C that day. Crappy spot to start, we hopped into the boat after being up to our thighs in mud. Were about 50 metres behind everyone else when the gun went off. Anyway, it was the last day; who cares. Seemed a bit more flow that day. The pains seem to go after about 30 minutes. We were both feeling good, fair bit of chat, joking etc. It was hot but was ok. It is heaps cooler on the water than on the bank.

We probably had our best day. We were going along well, no stopping and knew that we were going to finish. Once again, the last 10 km were hard but the finish line appeared well before we expected.

Every other day you get caught out thinking, "It must be just around this corner" and were disappointed when it wasn't. The last day it just appeared. We were done.

It's a bit chaotic at the finish; lots of action, trying to find your car, working out what you're going to do now. You basically get handed your medal for finishing and off you go. There is a presentation that night but that was 4½ hours away. Won't be hanging about for that. We figured we had won our class. We probably made up a bit of time that we'd lost the day before overall and were pretty happy to have finished. We jumped in the Winnebago and started heading closer to home. Stopped at a little town of Barham; went to the pub for dinner and didn't quite see in the new year. About

9.30 p.m., we done for the year. Was a bit of unrest (riot) in the street 10 metres from where I slept. I heard nothing.

We are keen to do it this year. Having done it, there are so many things we'd do differently and will learn from the experience. That also added to the adventure – flying by the seat of your pants, as they say, but will try to be a bit more organised next time around. We are looking to get into a faster boat; so we will be seen falling into the river over the coming weeks.

All in all, it was a ripper of a time. It was great to do it with a good mate and have mates/family there to experience it with us. Again, another huge thanks to Justin and Steph. Hopefully, next time there's more BGCC members there to enjoy what is a great experience.

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Paddler Profile

This month's Paddler of the Month segment features another of BGCC's growing fraternity of new members – Costas Livanos – who has dived into paddling at the deep end, so to speak, with his acquisition of a Horizon Flyer, a boat choice that is becoming increasingly popular with both new and seasoned paddlers.

How long have you been paddling and who or what got you involved in paddling?

About 2 years ago I noticed a neighbour's flotilla dangling from the ceiling in his garage. I asked about the boats, the sport and its pursuit in Canberra, having arrived here only a short while before. Since then Russell Lutton's generous loan of boats, paraphernalia, advice and guidance has slowly got me more involved and membership of BGCC, doing time trials etc. all followed.

What boats have you paddled and what are you currently paddling?

The first boat I tried was a TK1 but I fell out a lot – it's an inner ear thing! Then I tried the other end of the spectrum in the shape of a Mirage 580. It was more forgiving but I wanted to go faster. A boat somewhere in between was obvious and after some research and many questions put to Russell I decided on a Horizon Flyer.

I watched Geartrade for ages looking for a good used one to come along and also missed a good one at Wetspot but eventually caved and bought one fresh from the mould.



That was about 6 months ago. It's a great boat - stable enough for windy Canberra afternoons and fast enough - for now. The motor is still a problem but hopefully that will improve.

What are the best experiences you have had and where were they?

Tough one – it’s all been a steep learning curve and the infrequent sessions at the Reach have been mostly about wrestling with technique and fitness. I suppose a small triumph was the first time I managed a lap or two without a humungous blister at the base of my right thumb. Managing to do the 9.7km (?) at time trial pace for first time was also great.

What is the current focus of your paddling?

Trying to figure out and ingrain a reasonable technique is a priority - and building up fitness to do the 9.7km time trial without flagging/cramping/vomiting/cursing would also be nice.

What are your paddling goals (e.g., PBs, competition, tours, having a good time, etc)?

Paddling was always about an additional, more interesting way, of combating middle age spread. So learning reasonable technique and building paddle fitness so that I can do 20 or 30 km a week at a good pace is my current aim.

Costas Livanos

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**New boats on the river**

*If the maturity of a club’s paddling fraternity can be measured by the number of its members paddling K-craft, BGCC’s stocks are surely rising, with an increasing number of its paddlers stepping up to this elite level. The latest to make the move is Rachelle Irving, who relates the catalyst for her decision to “jump into a K1” and the wider paddling horizons the decision has opened up to her.*

After spearing my much loved Epic V10L into the ocean floor during a (not so) spectacular end to the Bondi Big Paddle, I checked her in to the Wetspot Hospital where the friendly medical staff weaved their repair magic on her (again). Meanwhile, I had no boat to paddle for two weeks so decided it was about time I jumped into a K1.



After two paddles of the club boat I was hooked and began looking for a K1 to buy myself. I found a Max Kayak copy of a Van Dusen in Sydney which was advertised as being ‘fast, not for beginners’. Perfect I thought – once I learnt how to sit in it .... I’ll be flying in no time.

So Kiwi and I trudged off to Sydney early one morning in late December and picked her up. We were back before sundown so I was able to take her for a

quick spin from the clubhouse. Actually, there was more ‘spin’ than ‘quick’ happening! I paddled her for about 15 minutes and decided that my first K1 feat was going to be to race at the NSW Sprint Championships. That was four weeks away so I had heaps of time to learn how to master paddling her without falling in!

I decided the only way I was going to achieve this was by throwing myself head first into it and commit to paddling the exact sessions that I had been doing in on my ski – regardless of the wind, waves and wash that the lake was guaranteed to throw at me. I stuck to it, fell in many, many times and became quite proficient at deep water entries (thanks Margi, Kiwi, Garbo, Scotty and everyone that allowed me to leverage of their respective hulls while the drowned rat got back in her boat) in the process. At some point Margi came up with the fantastic idea that we should paddle a K2 together at the Sprint Champs. To say I was chuffed that she wanted to sit in a boat with me (and in public) is the understatement of the century – I was absolutely thrilled and couldn’t wait.

Garbo and Scotty kindly offered us their Epic K2 to train and race in so we had three paddles together before we headed off to the State Champs.

My goal for the K1 races was to not fall and to see how much work I needed to do by next year when I have hopefully developed some ability and can get through a single session without falling in. Well, I achieved my goal for every race, but judging by the official loudspeaker commentary as I tore (alright, that's a lie – I mean wobbled) down the course pretty well says it all. During the 500m race he called me a ballerina – not for my grace or precision I suspect! Then in the 200m race, he called “and Irving has stopped and is having a rest” – probably because I had to brace so hard to stop myself from falling in that I just about came to a standstill. Needless to say, the K2 races were a lot more fun as I could just concentrate on paddling my butt off and trying to stay in time with Margi (the photos will reveal whether I achieved that). In summary, some might say that it was a little premature for me to decide to race, but that aside, I had an absolute ball and getting to share that fun with Margi was just icing on the cake.



My advice to anyone who is considering getting into K1 paddling is to JUST DO IT – just head out into the lake and never let fear stop you from venturing past the mouth of the river. I've learnt that falling in won't kill you, it just dints your pride a little; continuous swimming and drinking of the lake water has only has 'relatively' minor health repercussions; and you will get so sick of the hassle that goes with falling in, emptying the boat then paddling soaking wet, that you will very quickly MAKE yourself learn!

*Rachel Irving*

## Ocean racing

*Report by Gordon Burns*

*Ocean racing is the fastest growing segment of Australian paddling, and BGCC member Gordon Burns has represented our club with distinction at major harbour and ocean racing events. His reports below on the 20 Beaches Ocean Classic and 14 January Fenn Cup races make for interesting reading on the thrills and spills associated with this type of racing.*

### 20 Beaches Ocean Classic, 17 December 2011.

The 20 Beaches is the finale of the six race Ocean Series organised by Surf Lifesaving Northern Beaches. It's a 25km downwind run between Freshwater and Palm Beach. This year saw a big field of around 200 skis.



#### Navigating a beach full of skis

I found it a tough but rewarding race. Just getting to the start line offshore from Freshwater was an experience. A long period south swell was closing out on the sets. I snuck out just before a solid set cleaned up a few folk behind, washing skis onto the rocks.



Getting out to the start at Freshwater's northern corner, as a solid set arrives in the distance.

The wind forecast had looked dire all week – not much at all. I feared the race would become a long, hot slog in the flat. Only a light breeze came through in the end, but the swell spiced things up.

After the usual chaotic start, we set off north. There were some small runs to be had, but you needed to paddle pretty hard to get onto them. (My strong preference for surfski races is strong wind and steep waves: more surfing, and less paddling!).

We rounded Long Reef and headed out wide away from the coast. The field spread wide and sorted itself out. Soon enough I was chasing and being chased by the usual suspects.

As we closed in again on the coastline near Whale Beach, I was really tiring. I felt like a vice was slowly tightening on my left triceps. My concentration - so critical to managing and making the most of the ocean bumps – was lapsing.

On reaching the cliffs, the paddler just in front fell in. I'd been chasing him for ages. My mind wandered to the witty comment I might make as I gleefully passed ... then, before I could overtake ... I was in the drink too. Served me right.

The water below the high cliffs was a mess of rebound from all directions. If you have the energy, this means great opportunities for steeper runs to catch. But it was tough going and needed 110% of my concentration. After a while I got a couple of good runs and made up a few places.

By now of course much of the field was relaxing on the beach, and taking in the spectacle of a stream of weary slower paddlers like me encountering the sandbank at the North Palm Beach finish.

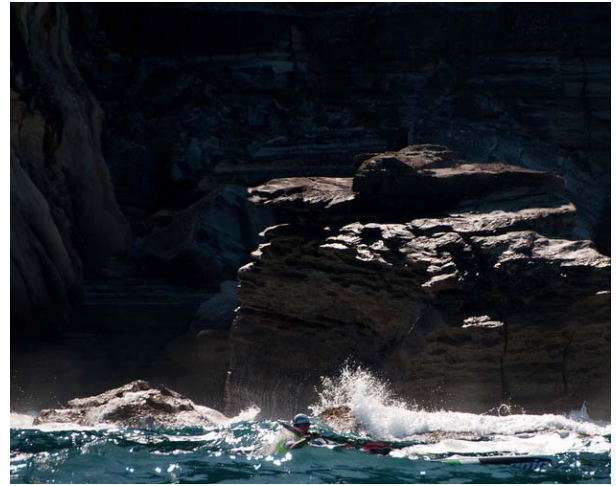
I didn't disappoint the waiting crowd, with an undignified (but good newsletter photo-fodder) arrival. I thought I had the arms to sneak in on the back of the smaller wave ahead, but alas no. I was



quickly relieved of my ski by the set wave coming behind. Fortunately the bloke below survived unscathed, despite his nerves as my ski soared overhead.



At the pointier end of the field, Clint Robinson flew into town to defeat Freshwater's Tim Jacobs (who'd won all races in the series thus far), then jumped back on a plane that afternoon.



Clint Robinson showing how it's done, along the cliffs. Paddling as though its a perfectly calm day on the river.

Race details and results at [www.oceanseries.com.au](http://www.oceanseries.com.au)

Race report and video at [http://www.surfski.info/races/aus-nz/item/1374-clint-robinson-dominates-20-beaches-  
aus--rambo-video-\\*.html](http://www.surfski.info/races/aus-nz/item/1374-clint-robinson-dominates-20-beaches-aus--rambo-video-*.html) . (my arrival gets a gig in the photo section)

### Fenn Cup, 14 January 2012.

The Fenn Cup was held in similar conditions to the 20 Beaches, with a small-ish field of 90-odd skis lining up for the 16km run from Long Reef up to Palm Beach.

So much for a downwind: aside from the slightly shorter course, the main difference to the 20 Beaches was even more underwhelming winds! Though we had a south-north course, and some moderate south swell with us, the wind ended up swinging ENE just during the race, then back to SE once it was all over.

So would I learn from my 20 Beaches lessons? I watched the 20 Beaches video, and tried channelling Clint Robinson's effortless cruise through the headland rebound chop.

But alas no. In exactly the same spot, the guy I was chasing fell in. Then, rather than pass comfortably, I fell in again. Same spot, same situation. But this time I'd picked a more ambitious inside line near the cliffs. Not so successful, and I fell back.



Race winner Jeremy Cotter negotiating the confused water below the cliffs

Race report and video at <http://www.surfski.info/races/aus-nz/item/1380-ballistic-beginning-to-the-2012-world-series.html>

Results at <http://www.oceanpaddler.com/events/fenn-cup-series/results/>

Some new skis looked impressive at these races. The Epic v10 double looks stable and good for intermediate paddlers as well as the elite folks. The Fenn Swordfish also looked great, with a few surfing well during the races.

Unless the postponed Manly King of the Harbour is rescheduled in early 2012, that's it for ocean ski racing in Sydney until next spring. In the meantime, there's so more sheltered racing in the *Bridge to Beach* on 18 March, *Kayak 4 Kids* on 25 March (I've posted details on the BGCC forum), and the Harbour Racing and Iceberg series ([www.harbourracing.org.au](http://www.harbourracing.org.au)).

*Gordon Burns*

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Five-day kayaking tour of the Whanganui River, New Zealand

Report by Patricia Ashton



Four BGCC members, Karen, Lynne, Jennie and myself travelled over the ditch to New Zealand in January to do a 5-day tour with Canoe Safaris on the Whanganui River on the North Island. The trip was great – we were lucky with the weather, no rain, the others in our party were good value – we even had 3 young children with us but they were excellent and provided some of the entertainment. The guides were fun and knowledgeable about the local area and canoeing but also told many a story about their own travels around the world.

The food was excellent and we didn't need to prepare it – the guides did that and cleaned up afterwards. Even the sleeping mats were good quality. The river was at a very manageable height – probably flowing at about 4kph which made the 31, 41 & 37 km days much easier! While we were expecting some rapids, there were plenty but mainly grade 1 with very few rocks to negotiate – still for flatwater paddlers it gave us enough thrills, bouncing through the occasional wave train, doing 360s in the eddies and leaning (often the wrong way, Patricia!) across eddy lines.

The scenery was quite spectacular, although you do notice the lack of wildlife – we saw a few birds and some feral goats but on the whole its eerily quiet. Don't have to worry about snakes as you wander off into the bush, and there are no strange rustling noises or scuttling lizards etc, even the pit toilets are devoid of spider webs. As we clambered through a creek and rainforest to a waterfall we weren't thinking about leaches or ticks either, which was just as well – it was hard enough to keep your footing. One thing there was in abundance was sand flies though!



We camped out – tents and mats were provided – for the first 2 nights then on the 3rd we stayed at the Bridge to Nowhere Lodge, (after taking a side trip to walk up to the Bridge to Nowhere) which was set in a stunning location and provided showers and beds and



some great hospitality. Also provided a quadbike to carry all our gear from the river up to the lodge. At the camp sites, that was the hardest job which everyone pitched in and helped with, carrying all our gear across river rocks, up steps, sloping paths or steep sandy banks. The 4th night was camping again. There were several family groups paddling the river also; so some of the campsites were quite busy but all were well

maintained with pit toilets and a shelter with tables and seating and fresh water, and flat grassed areas.

The last 2 days we only had to paddle 10km each so at the lodge we could either go for a hike up one of the 'hills' or spend the morning relaxing. The hike was hard work but worth it for the view from the top, Karen and Lynne seemed to enjoy their relaxing too, but we were all keen to get back on the water. We soon pulled over to visit the 'Beauty Parlour' – Mud Cave. What fun!! Mud up past the knees, squishy, squelchy, lovely mud – the guides and the kids were absolutely covered, the rest of us enjoyed it with a little less gusto.

We also went to explore up a creek where we were told was a great waterfall – slipping sliding, waist deep in cold water – but yes it was worth it – water cascading down from the heights into a pool.

We only had a few mishaps – 2 of the guys fell out of the kayak they were paddling and on the last day in the 2nd last rapid, Lynne and paddling partner Gabrielle got caught in one of the eddies – no harm done and in fact Lynne was so chuffed that she managed to not panic and get back into the canoe with not even a lost drink bottle!



All too soon though the trip was over – 5 days goes quite quickly; Jennie and I considered turning around and heading back – not for long though, it's not easy paddling against a 4km flow! Luckily we had another 5 days in NZ to fill in – which we did, hiking, horse-riding, mountain biking Great Holiday.

Patricia

Patricia Ashton

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# Happenings in the region and beyond

## Flatwater racing

Summer time trials every Wednesday evening, start at 5.45pm, various distances.

25 Feb – RACE 1 Vajda Marathon 9 series, Molonglo Reach, Canberra, hosted by BGCC.

26 Feb – Burley Griffin Bash, hosted by BGCC, Molonglo Reach, Canberra.

6-8 April – National Marathon Championships, Sydney International Regatta Centre.

21 April – RACE 2 Vajda Marathon 9 series, Woronora, hosted by Sutherland Shire Canoe Club.

27 May – RACE 3 Vajda Marathon 9, Narrabeen (the lake is at present tidall!!!), hosted by Many Warringah Canoe Club.

## Ocean/harbour racing

11 Feb – Harbour Racing Botany Challenge run in Botany Bay ([www.harbourracing.org.au](http://www.harbourracing.org.au))

25 Feb – Bay to Beaches, from Botany Bay to Gunnamatta Park, Port Hacking. ([www.paddlensw.org.au/blog/inaugural-paddlensw-ocean-racing-series-starts-25-february](http://www.paddlensw.org.au/blog/inaugural-paddlensw-ocean-racing-series-starts-25-february)) 18km. Includes sea kayak class, in addition to oceanskis, OC & SUP.

4th March – Harbour Racing - Paddlefest at Lake Macquarie

18 March – Bridge to Beach - Sydney Harbour, straight from under the Bridge to Manly ferry wharf ([www.oceanpaddler.com/events/bridge-to-beach/](http://www.oceanpaddler.com/events/bridge-to-beach/)). ~11km

25 March – Kayak 4 Kids - Sydney Harbour, under the bridge, along the northern shore and around into Clontarf ([www.kayakforkids.com.au](http://www.kayakforkids.com.au)). ~16km

31 March – Harbour Racing - Middle Harbour Challenge from Clontarf Beach

29 April & 12 May – more harbour series events

(TBC?) Manly King of the Harbour (downwind between Long Reef and Manly, [www.oceanseries.com.au](http://www.oceanseries.com.au)). Was postponed last year. ~16km

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For sale and wanted to buy

If you have any boats or items of kayaking equipment for sale or that you want to acquire, provide details to the Blazing Paddlers editors.

Don't forget to check out at the end of this section the success Blazing Paddles has had with its classifieds. It's the place to be seen!!!!

For sale

Mirage 580 Kevlar.

White in colour.

Never been to sea. Some minor scratches underneath but good condition overall.

Has spray skirt and cockpit cover.

Price - \$2000.00 Non negotiable. Contact Barry 0419 603 119

Funky ski is of brand unknown but is carbon/Kevlar construction so quite light for this type of boat i.e. 13.5kgs. Although it looks like a Surf Life Saving Specification ski, it is not as it is too light. Would suit a 5'8" to 6' paddler. Sit on style boat with venturis for draining. Great for training and would be a great marathon 9 series boat. Funky ski lives on the South Coast but has contacts in Canberra. \$700 ONO. Contact Pete 0427 983 947.



Kevlar blade wing paddle, adjustable length. Price: Any offer considered. Selling as part of a spring clean of unused gear. Might suit someone looking for a low-cost spare wing paddle; spare for the sea kayak? Purchased new three years ago for ~US\$250. Medium blade size, similar width as epic mid wing but shorter blade, less area. Kevlar is durable, flexes a bit while paddling. Main issue is that the length lock (collar design) can slip under heavy paddling. Would need some repair, replacement or gluing in place if using for time trials etc. Contact Gordon on 0402 145 672.

Two TK2s for sale and am asking only \$1,000 for each for a quick sale both are kevlar and in excellent condition. Swampy. 6255 8044



DD3 Envy, PRICE REDUCTION Full Carbon, Less than 3 Months use! Immaculate condition Be on the water for your next race. Contact Damo 0411 383 337. \$3200. Will deliver from Northern Beaches to Ulladulla, but have contacts in Canberra and the Bay. Be on the water for your next race. Contact Damo 0411 383 337

TK1 by Horizon Kayaks, in excellent condition, carbon layup, recently fitted with new rudder and footplate set up; fast but stable hull. Kayak located in Canberra, \$1,300, Call Russell, 0401005274.

SOLD



Omnius kayak from the renowned Elliott Kayak range. Carbon/kevlar construction, 11.5 kg making it light, responsive, fast yet stable. Kayak is in good condition. Price \$1800 ono. Contact Roy Willis, Batemans Bay, Phone 0408 428 843

SOLD

Q Craft SLSA spec ski. This is an older ski designed and made in Sydney. Always been kept inside and had long periods of no use; so overall is in good condition. Would best suit a paddler around 5ft 8 to 6ft 3, give or take a bit. Happy to chat to anyone interested in more detail regarding condition. Ski located in Canberra but can get it down to Bateman's Bay-Sydney. Price \$870 neg. Call Andrew, 0401353920.

SOLD



Think Legend, \$2100 ono. Kevlar 12.5kg. Fast & stable. Good condition. Contact Gordon 0402 145 672
gordon_b_burns@yahoo.com

SOLD



Wanted to buy

Coaming covers to suit K1/TK1 cockpit size (the type suitable when transporting and/or storing kayaks)
Call Russl 0401005274.

Waterproof spray deck to suit K1, contact Nick, 0400472348

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*“Believe me, my young friend, there is nothing - absolutely nothing - half so much worth doing as simply messing about in boats.”*

Kenneth Grahame, *The Wind in the Willows*