



## History of the 24 Hour Paddling Challenge

**(Next one: Weekend of 7<sup>th</sup> – 8<sup>th</sup> December 2019)**

The next one will be about the 25<sup>th</sup> (or perhaps 24<sup>th</sup> or 26<sup>th</sup> – memory fails me!) annual (almost) BGCC 24-hour paddling challenge. The Sydney Olympics interfered with us choosing a date in 2000, so there was no event that year; and we might have missed one other year, and/or added a second event one year when we changed the time of year for the race.

Memory tells me that BGCC took part in an inter-club TK1 relay challenge at Wyong, against the Central Coast Canoe Club, **in 1992**. BGCC came out tops!! We found the drive home to be a bit dangerous for all the tired paddlers, SO.....

In **1993** BGCC organised an Australia-wide TK1 paddling challenge for any club interested in competing against us, with teams paddling on their own 5 km course on their own home water and phone-ins each four hours, with the accumulated laps/distances recorded on our white-board. For a few years these races were quite popular, with teams from Queensland, WA and Victoria, as well as NSW.



You might recognise a couple of people from these “historic” photos

Above: 1996 Ladies TK1 team, with TK1 and “Ladies Plate”. The plate lost the label and is now in the club kitchen.

Below: 1998 Post Race TC1 team (and timekeeper) enjoying Champagne and Chocolate Cake for breakfast



For the first 5 or 6 years there was a lot of interest and competition between clubs around the country – then we had a bad-weather year and most seemed to lose interest; so we tried changing the rules a little. Instead of TK1's only, other boats were permitted (can you believe BGCC managed a team of six C2's in **1999**) and then more than one lap at a time by each team member; after that, smaller or larger than 6-boats/paddlers teams and eventually solo paddlers



Above: 1999 Assorted C2 paddlers and timekeeper

Interest waxed and waned, with one or two years with just one or two BGCC teams enjoying an overnight paddle on our lovely piece of river. Long-term club members might remember the water-weeds growing in the middle of the river – needing to be “harvested” every so often – including on the start-morning of our 24 hr paddle!!!

Resurgence happened in **2010** when a more enthusiastic BGCC committee decided to revamp the whole event with invites sent out to many community groups (firefighters, police, company workers) as well as inviting Paddling Clubs to join us at Molonglo Reach. (Well, at least we didn't have the long drive home after a night of paddling ☺ )

Below: 2010, the waiting crowds





2010 was also a memorable event for other reasons: this was the year when ACT Sports Minister, Andrew Barr, came along to cut the (blue) ribbon for the then latest extension to the Club Shed and for me – it was the first time I didn't take part, as I had recently managed to break a leg.



Above: Bob Collins holding the ribbon for Andrew Barr to cut – our Grand Opening (and me out of action)

2011 was probably the biggest assemblage of challengers we have had – well done to the committee of 2011. From the report in *Blazing Paddles* (Vol 22 Issue 3), there were 25 teams and over 100 paddlers! Apparently it was a bit cool and windy; and damp?. (I was away somewhere.)



Above & Left

**Scenes from the 2011 event**



2012 turned out to be even bigger and better than 2011: once again 100 or more paddlers in 32 teams! This was also a year for photos:



Above: Getting ready to start



Left: The unusual sight of Gary Rake on a SUP

Below: SUP and others at the start



Above: Jess Flint timekeeping – with small helper

Left: Three of the Slick Chicks with Sticks



Left & Below: Assorted boats on the river, Richard Barnes & ?? (Left) and Shane Lund (Below)







The post-race Shane was feeling the effect of his 45 laps in the 24 hours, needing help to get off the water, some food and water and then a good rest – anywhere!



Above: On-water competition but Right: Winners are Grinners  
Paul O'Neill, David Abela, Lee Rice and Nick Grey

2013 brought out a few new teams, including “Team Darwin” (they just evolved) with Allan Newhouse, Karmen Ison, Russell Lutton, Ben Hannan, Adam Scott and Team Manager Carolyn Williams, with Richard Fox ducking out of the photo.





**2014:** This was the year of Anjie Lees' *Guinness Book of Records* triumph. Over 5-6 December, Anjie managed a remarkable 201.2 km. (Funny how she has been back only once since then.)



2014 was also the year of the deluge, starting with sun and blue skies, followed by hail, wind and rain,



where "Changing into dry clothes was futile" and the "tent weatherproofing was tested".

Above: The lake in front of the "Beach"

Above Right: Ducks on the water



But the Sunday morning provided shining blue skies once again and everyone went home happy





2015: Above: Richard Barnes (Left) and Shane Lund (Right); Below: The weird (Left) and the Wonderful (Right)



2016: Pretty sure there was an event, but can't find anything about it.

2017: With the absence of our organising people with big ideas, BGCC were back to the small-scale event, but with some added interest from paddlers wanting to complete their Very Big Year (1,000 km in races in 1 year) plus others training for long canoe races in USA, there was a broad range of entrants, even if low in numbers.



The 9:30 a.m. Saturday start, with a couple of paddlers arriving late for their start!



Above: Tranquility of the Control Tent



Left: Paddlers taking a toe-warming break



Below: The Spectator Fleet

**2018:** Photos have again evaded me, but this time we had some inter-club competition: Lane Cove travelled to join us on the water, along with the people chasing their 1,000 km for the Very Big Year and those training for long events in the USA.

Lane Cove has promised to be back this year – so where are our top paddlers. Here is your chance to get out on our river and show them what we are about!

Come along and have a **Weekend by the Water**. Join a Competitive Team. Or help make up numbers in a more laid-back, not-so-competitive Social Team. Think you are tough (or don't want to wait to take your turn in a relay team) – go Solo.

## 2019

**When:** Saturday 7<sup>th</sup> December 10:00 a.m. start; Finish: 10:00 a.m. Sunday 8<sup>th</sup> December.

**Wanted:** Paddlers

Timekeepers

Safety-boat driver(s)

Attendants to put lights on the buoys, make sure the course is clear....

General cooks, bottle-washers and other helpers

And anyone who would like to join in!

Web scorer entry-system will be set up in plenty of time for you to enter.

Let me know if you can volunteer to help ☺

*Helen Tongway*