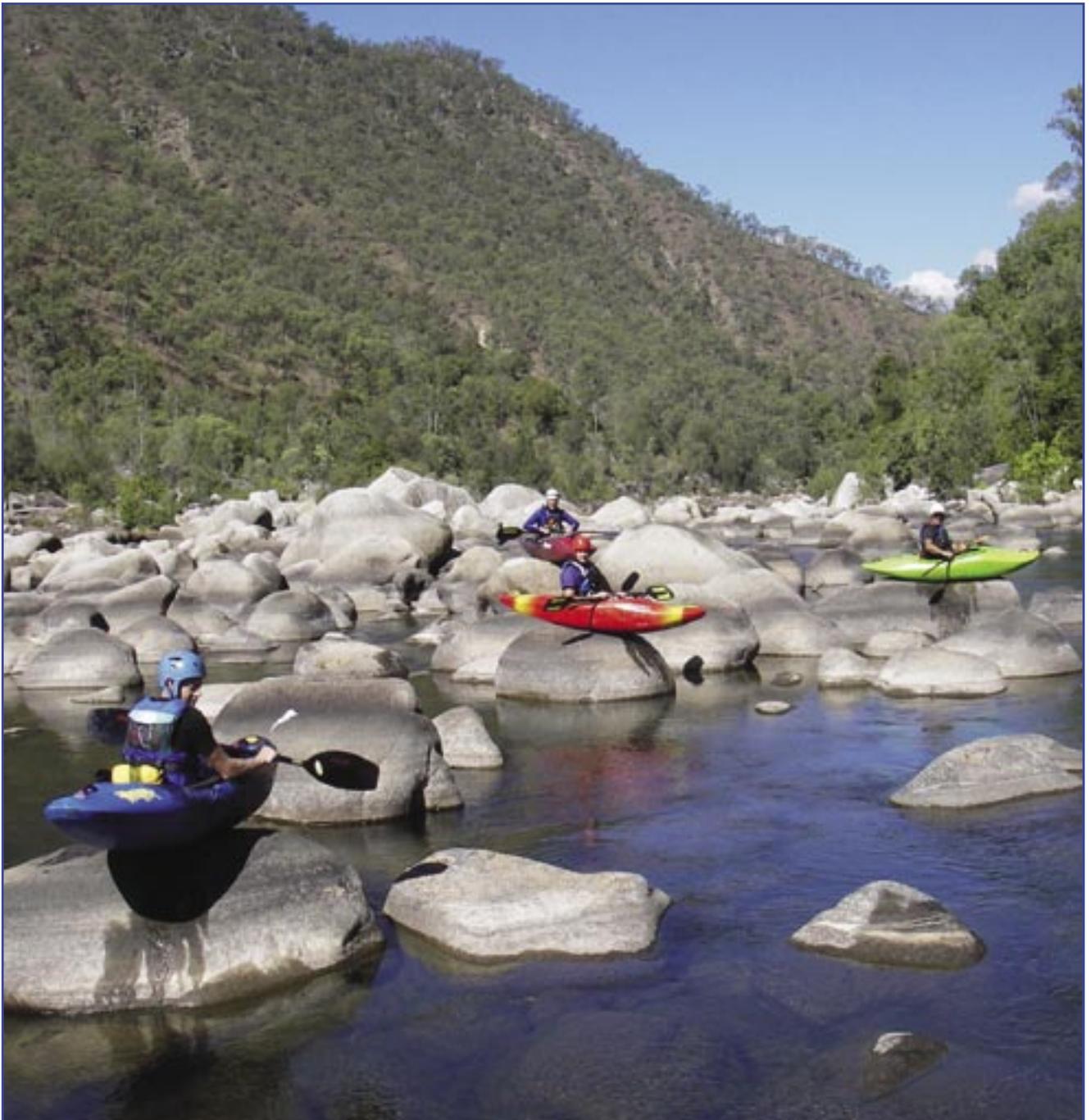


FAIRFIELD CANOE CLUB

*Celebrating 86 years
1919 – 2005*

Newsletter

SPRING ISSUE – OCTOBER 2005



● Merri Creek ● Club Profile ● Murray 100 ● Herbert River

FAIRFIELD CANOE CLUB COOPERATIVE LTD

BOARD OF MANAGEMENT



Michael Kane

Chairman

Phone 0439 301 521

Email michaelk@windana.com.au



Kelly O'Shanassy

Secretary and Race Organising
and Skills Development Committee

Phone 0421 054 402

Email kelly.o'shanassy@dse.vic.gov.au



Liz Sharrock

Treasurer and Membership

Phone 0414 560 477

Email ewells@mshf.com.au



Kevin Hannington

Club Maintenance

Phone 9819 1753



Marc Bellette

Communications Committee

Phone 9480 1342

Email m.bellette@pgrad.unimelb.edu.au



Joan Doreian

Social Committee

Phone 9836 9348 H 9874 8333 W

0437 355 578



Robyn Ward

Boat Maintenance and Rack Allocation

Phone 0414 886 220

Email Robyn.Ward@intergraph.com

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Website

<http://www.fairfieldcanoeclub.org.au/>

Mail

PO Box 253, Fairfield 3078

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How to contribute

All contributions to the club newsletter welcome – photos, articles, letters to the editor, humour, advertisements.

Contributions to be made by email.

Please submit material to the Editor

Anna Wilson, Phone 9457 1400

Email newsletter@fairfieldcanoeclub.org.au

Postal address 44 Porter Road, Heidelberg Heights 3081

We gratefully welcome any articles or advertisements submitted for publication. However we cannot guarantee that any submission will be published in a particular issue of the Fairfield Canoe Club newsletter.

The editorial team reserves the right to make minor editorial and layout changes to any submission while doing its best to preserve the intention of the original submission.

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UPCOMING EVENTS

GOOD NEWS STORY

EVENTS FOR 2005

October

1	The Big Bash	Abruzzi Club
1 & 2	Bendigo Cup	Bendigo
2	5 & 10km Time Trials	FCC
5 to 8	10th Australian Masters Games	Adelaide
8	Echuca Mini	Barmah
15 & 16	ICF Marathon World Champs	Perth
19 & 20	Twin Rivers Classic	Gippsland
22	Barwon Mini	Geelong

November

6	Bridge to Bridge	Geelong
19 & 20	Twin Rivers Classic	Gippsland
26	Swan Hill Murray Classic	Swanhill
27	10km Handicap Race	FCC

December

3	Ben Ward Memorial 40 Miler	Yarrawonga
11	Dress Rehearsal	Footscray
27-31	Red Cross Murray Marathon	Yarrawonga

There has been some discussion about the increase in the affiliation fees this year to \$75.00 per adult. I attended renewal day and received my \$10.00 discount because I joined before the 30th September 2005. That didn't seem too bad, down from a \$20.00 increase to a \$10.00 increase from last year.

The other day I received my Australian Canoeing card and an A4 sheet alerting me to a Health Insurance Discount that is available to Australian Canoeing members. I currently pay private health insurance so I was pleased to see that I could get a 3% discount. This 3% discount equates to a \$70.00 annual reduction to my family cover premium.

The upshot is I shall end up with more money in my hand having paid my affiliation fees early.

Signed

One Happy Paddler

THE YARRA DESCENT

An urban white water paddle challenge

25th & 26th February 2006

DAY 1 42kms

YARRA GLEN TO WARRANDYTE

DAY 2 73kms

WARRANDYTE TO MELBOURNE CITY

For more information contact Eric Ward, Canoeing Victoria

Phone 03 9459 4251 Mobile 0409 022 689

Email eric@canoevic.org.au

www.canoe.org.au

NEW

Canoeing Victoria website
www.canoe.org.au



CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

Welcome to the spring edition of the Fairfield Canoe Club newsletter.

I have just returned from a six week overseas trip, which included the World Master's Games in Edmonton, Canada (more about that later), to find that activity around the club is beginning to re-energize as we move away from those short winter days.

The next four weeks is particularly busy at Fairfield with the Victorian Winter Marathon Championships being held at Wesley and hosted by Fairfield Canoe Club. This is to be followed on the 1st of October by the annual Fairfield Canoe Club awards nights. The Big Bash is a chance to dress up, let your hair down, discard the thermals and put on your dancing shoes. There will be something for everyone, dancing, food, drink – in moderation, spot prizes, awards and very short speeches. In between these two events the Fairfield Canoe Club Annual General Meeting will be held. Three board members will be standing down by rotation, giving an opportunity to those members who have always wanted to assist with the running of the club. If you would like to nominate for the board forms can be found at the club. The AGM to be held on the 26th September is open to all members and is a chance for members to come along and participate in the governance of our club.

But that's all in the future. What's been happening over the past three months? The winter series, renewal day and the World Masters Games have dominated my paddling and club time.

The Winter series has proved less successful for Fairfield than in previous years, however many of our members have enjoyed the competition offered by the country and city races in both singles and doubles events. I understand that the Geelong Canoe Club has taken out the Winter Series Trophy this year; we congratulate them on a great effort.

Our annual sign-up was well attended. I once again thank all those Board members and club members who gave of their time to change locks, allocate boats to racks, take money, issue keys and cook sausages. It's a busy day requiring a complete team effort and that's what we got.

Over the last six weeks I've been travelling around the Northern Hemisphere enjoying some beautiful summer weather. Our trip began with the World Masters Games in Edmonton, Canada where Jonathan Mayne, Ivan Gaal and myself joined a number of other Australians in the canoeing marathon and sprint events. The river was wide, the river was fast flowing and the competition was competitive. The Canadian canoeing fraternity were very generous with their time, equipment and offers of assistance where necessary. Some of us were talented enough to come home with medals, and some came home with broken bones. One member came home with both. Get well soon Jonathon.

Enjoy your paddling, and let the summer days roll on.

Michael Kane
Chairman

THE MERRI CREEK

The high water recorded in the Merri Creek early this year brought back memories of R Willis and me in July 1963.

We had recently built new strip-moulded slalom or touring kayaks and had long looked at the quiet creek and wondered what it would be like paddling it with high water.

An extremely wet autumn and early winter had the Yarra and its tributaries running "bankers." A clear patch in the weather on a Saturday morning meant "Let's go!"

We left one car at Heidelberg Road bridge and then started out from Bell Street bridge.

The fact that we could almost touch the bridge as we passed under it should have sent us scurrying home in a hurry. Only the fact that we were "trying out" life jackets for a manufacturer on behalf of the VACA helped save our skins.

For quite a while the creek travelled at a leisurely pace, we even stopped for a snack. But as all good things come to an end, suddenly the pace sped up and was so fast the water did not have time to drop into the holes formed below the bridge pylons and the current started to roar, and we were definitely on a steep downhill run, only able to paddle like mad to clear one bridge after another.

We then headed to a right angle bend with a high cliff, quite a few big hay stacks led up to a wave which curled back on itself as it hit the wall, throwing me out like a cork out of a champagne bottle.

Ron saw everything I had done wrong, tried to correct, but went down as quickly as I had.

I managed to grab my kayak but lost my paddle and was lucky to be swept towards the bank where I grabbed onto the undergrowth. Ron had saved his paddle but in the process got a lot of water in his kayak and in an effort to clear a pylon lost hold of his kayak and paddle, it raced away never to be seen by us again. He managed to swim over to me where we helped each other out onto the roadway.

We walked down to the bridge, and being passed by a club member who only waved as he went past only added insult to injury.

We collected the cars and went to Dights Falls looking for Ron's kayak and the next day went along the lower Yarra but as I said we never saw his kayak again.

About this time another club group tried "the Creek" only to be rescued by the police near Dight's Falls.

Jim Smith and friends did a successful run on the Creek with a much lower height of water and wrote an excellent description of his trip in our club newsletter.

Needless to say, Ron and I never mentioned the Merri Creek again.

Tom Ohman

CLUB PROFILE

NAOMI WILLIAMS (REN)

Naomi Williams (Ren) joined FCC last winter and in a matter of months was falling out of a K1. By Christmas Ren was paddling in the mixed relay in the Murray Marathon. Ren, a former AIS road cyclist hopes to ride in the Melbourne Commonwealth Games next year.

1. The day I met you I saw you falling out of a K1 – pulling the cockpit off the boat. Can you explain what was happening?

Well I thought I was about to drown. You thought that I was very calm and coping very well but this was far from the truth, the only reason I was not screaming for some help was because I was too cold and I couldn't get a word out of my mouth. It was my first time out in a K1, in fact I'd not paddled much at all, only a few times in a TK2 and a TK1, but I was sure I could paddle a K1, just because ... it couldn't be that hard, could it? Anyway I got about fifty metres and fell in, it was the middle of winter and I thought I was going to die! It did not help when the boat started to sink, due to no flotation in the front, I had no idea what to do. But I'm still here, so that's good.

2. Why did you start to paddle?

Anna got me into paddling, I've been a cyclist for as long as I can remember and that's how I met her. I'd been injured for some time, and the bike wasn't much fun at the time. So I came down for some fun. In fact I think I was coming down for a coffee, I didn't realise at the time we had to paddle to Studley Park first. But that's OK because you can get away with putting your feet up in the back of a TK2 when you start!

3. Recently you have been seen on the bike path going to Kaners Bridge. Why are you riding your bike rather than paddling?

Yes, well I'm back on the bike, but a mountain bike this time so I've been doing a bit of training down along the Yarra. It's very similar to paddling a K1 for me, all the time scared of falling into the river! I'm very new to mountain biking but I used to race BMX before I moved to road and track cycling when I was 14. With the Commonwealth Games in Melbourne I thought it would be worth giving it a shot. I'm an outside chance at the moment but I'll do the races and see what comes of it.



Ren on a recent trip to China on the Great Wall of China.

4. After a few months at FCC you paddled in a club relay team – did you enjoy the experience?

Yeah I did, I did the Murray with Paddy Express. It was definitely one of my highlights from the last year. On the first day, though, you may have thought something different if you'd come across me on the water. The wind was just plain silly, I remember yelling to Anna (she was up front): "Where the hell are we Beep...Bass... Beep... Strait!" We are quite light as a pair and we were crashing down from off the top of the waves and getting covered in water, it was definitely the roughest conditions I'd paddled in. I'm sure I saw a shark! But overall I had a fantastic time and met some great people. It was a great experience.

5. You are training for BMX – why?

It's MOUNTAINBIKE, Lofty, not BMX. That's like me calling you a rower I think.

6. You were training with the AIS road bike team – have you found any similarities with canoeing eg tactics etc?

There are a lot of similarities, I'm sure at the top level of canoeing things would be very similar as far as training goes.

As far as tactics go, sitting on the wash is the same as sitting on the wheel and even in the boat I still find myself talking about sitting on the wheel.

I have seen a few hooks performed by the canoeists (I was rather good at that on the bike, some times it was my job in the sprints) but I don't think I'll be trying that. The start of paddle races are a lot like criterium (circuit street race) start, everyone trying to get to the front, people going everywhere, the odd crash (fall in), chaos really.

DO YOU KNOW...

7. Would you recommend that beginners at the club do the Murray Marathon?

I would, as long as you can get a bit of training in first and can do it with a team. My team were really good with me and I basically did the shortest stage each day.

But as a new paddler the whole experience was a great welcome to the paddle world. The wake-up at 5am during the Murray would be the only reason I wouldn't recommend it. But by day three you just sleep through it anyway so there is no reason at all.

8. Any thing else that you want to say?

Nope.

Well OK then.

I'd like to just comment on how well Fairfield Club is run, I don't think I've ever seen a better run club. It makes things very easy as a beginner and I found everyone very welcoming.

9. You have contributed to the club newsletter. Can you tell us about your drawing and painting?

One day when I stop falling off bikes and when I stop falling into rivers, I might become an artist!

- The Club is cleaned every week.
- *Club consumables are supplied by a combination of cleaners, social committee members and other members on a re-imbusement basis.*
- The coffee machine was a donation from a club member.
- *Coffee, tea, hot chocolate, milk and sugar are supplied at no additional cost to the members.*
- The fridge is stocked by the club and is run on an honesty system.
- *The red suggestion letter-box on the left hand side of the club is cleared weekly with issues discussed by the board at the next meeting.*
- Beginners boats and Intermediate boats are supplied and maintained by the club and are available for all members to use.
- *The Club newsletter is printed on a quarterly basis.*
- Weekly FCC update email posted to subscribers.
- *Annual Big Bash organised by the Social Committee.*
- The Board of seven meets on a monthly basis.
- *We are always on the look out for volunteers to help on sub-committees or even to mow the lawn or sweep out the boat racking area on a regular basis.*



MURRAY 100 – QUEEN'S BIRTHDAY WEEKEND 2005

I first heard of the Murray 100 race held over the Queen's Birthday weekend several years ago as something you would not recommend to your worst foe. Others since have related their experiences of this race in slightly more flattering terms but always with horrible tales of endless stretches of relentless headwind.

Still how bad could it be?

Having paddled much of the Victorian/NSW section of the Murray and various other rivers, I decided it was time to see a new section of river.

The Murray 100 and the longer version Murray 200 has paddlers completing a course of 97 and 203km respectively over 3 days on the South Australia section of the Murray from Loxton to Morgan.

Therefore, it was to Loxton in SA that I headed that weekend with Julie Perriam and Steve Beitz. Actually, I do recall Julie telling me she would never paddle the Murray 100 again. Paddling amnesia again.



Helen and Virginia (with boat) at the start of Day Three.

How bad could it be?

We drove and the rain set in. Really, set in. We took the long route through the Mallee I am sure and just managed to avoid the willy willy that tore through the countryside deroofting houses – there were trees and bits of trees all over the road to Pinaroo. The whole sky lit up with the electrical storm. It was very impressive. Less impressive was finally arriving at Loxton just before 12.30am to our deluxe cabin in the caravan park! I'd hate to see the standard one – but who cares at that time of the day.

How bad could it be?

Day One was a cool and slightly grey day but a short drive to the start. Once there the wind picked up and they brought forward the start times to try to avoid the worsening weather that was promised. I had just 15 minutes to jump in the boat! (Some valuable lesson the South Australians could teach the winter series organizers here perhaps) Hardly time to panic. Once on the water you had to keep paddling or be blown up stream. The startline was split by an island and I was on the nearside and did not even realise that there were even more paddlers in the race until we rounded the end of the island and the fleet converged. A dragonboat of 20 paddlers, canoes, sea kayaks and a few TK1s. A real race of all sorts at the start. Immediately it was straight into battling waves and a fierce head wind.

How bad could it be?

I paddled on dreading the 12km strait they call the wind tunnel I had heard so much about. I actually think there were several of those. A less twisted river here than the parts around Echuca and Swan Hill. Banks of reeds and wetlands rather than rivergums were the scenery for much of the day. The wind finally blew itself out and we paddled into the sun. This made it somewhat difficult to see where to go at times and I nearly missed the turn off to the finishline. It took me 4 hours 30minutes to complete the 37km. Rather a slow paddle but it was dead water with a headwind mostly. Stephen and Julie arrived an hour later on the St John's Ambulance houseboat. Yes things did not quite go according to plan there. They came off second best after a clash with the junior K4, testing the water temperature and depth of the Murray as a result. In doing so, Stephen injured his back and that was the end of his Murray 100.

Day Two was far sunnier and started in the middle of nowhere. The two houseboat entourage of the dragonboat team was the biggest object for miles. Just a 26km paddle that day. I made a good start but had some trouble with my drink system. Julie managed to borrow a boat and started after me. She passed me with 4km to go (must have been the rest day she had the day before as she finished 20 minutes faster than I did in total time). That day took me 3 hours. There was some amazing scenery with big cliffs – some orange, some red, some black. Very gorge like



in parts and only two horribly windy sections. We paddled past gum trees dripped in cockatoos and a log with 12 pelicans on it. The bird life was generally abundant and varied on this section of the Murray. The lack of water skiers has apparently prevented much bank erosion seen in places like Echuca.

I started to appreciate what these shorter days' paddle offers. Even with relaxed start times of no earlier than 9.30am the race was generally over by early afternoon and you still have energy to do some sight seeing. We visited Banrock Station one day. Stephen did some retail therapy and Julie and I walked to the wetlands. The sights of Loxton were my highlight – most particularly the big Pelican; a fibreglass replica of the one used in the Queen of the Murray Mardi Gras in the 1970s!



The blessing of the boats on Day Three.

Day Three began with the blessing of the boats. Yes, the Bishop of Murrabit makes a pilgrimage to the M100. This day the start was on a beach flat like Cobram. A dull day with a threatening storm. I had the first start as usual and it was ages before a boat passed me – an early start K4. In fact, the next boat to pass me was a men's K2 and that was on the final bend of the day. I had the hunted feeling of being the hare in the greyhound race for most of the 30kms. I so nearly got line honours that day! They obviously staggered the starts even more that day.



Helen, Julie and Virginia at the finish line.

I won my class – but that was not hard I was the only one in it! I did break the record by 50 minutes but again I think the 'kind weather' helped. Julie beat my time by 20 minutes both days – rather depressing.

Virginia Westwood was competing also and won her class – beating someone and setting a record!

How hard can it be?

Well it was hard work but I do believe we were fortunate with the weather. So definitely not as hard as I feared. In fact I would suggest that the M100 is a very civilized race to do. Good honest paddles each day and beautiful scenery. The towns are very frontier, often steeply sited and with grand sandstone buildings. Lush orange orchards and vineyards interspersed with wonderful wetlands and undulating tracts of gum trees and mallee shrub. I would definitely recommend the race – but maybe not the Murray 200. Why spend all day doing what you can do in half a day. You get a sense of the scenery and the paddle without the exhaustion of doing the 200.

It is a long drive from Melbourne and back however we did not manage to exhaust Stephen's Ipod selections in that time. The same cannot be said for pub meals.

Helen Neill

Photos Helen Neill Collection

WINTER SERIES

Dear Editor
FCC Publication

Could you please publish this letter in your next edition, as I would like to thank the club, and in particular the FCC Winter Series Racing Team (WSRT), for the support they have given Lofty (Michael Loftus-Hills) and myself (Wennie van Lint) to erase the demon of last year's Patterson Lakes Race.

As you and some of your readers may be aware, Lofty and I competed in the Patterson Lakes last year, but due to some unfortunate circumstances we were forced to detour late in the race (I won't go into the reason for the detour again, as the story did appear in your publication last year), turning a sure first into a noble third.

As the same race approached this year I asked Lofty whether he was happy to compete again, which he was. He felt, like I, that we owed the club our support as they were very supportive after the race last year. But not only were they supportive after the race, their support continued into the lead up to this year's race. I can't mention each little incident or gesture of kindness, but just a few, so that club members can appreciate the high level of support that exists within the WSRT.

- **Training session 1** – Lofty and I had been invited by a few other 'race goers' to go for a training run down to Dight's. Before we got onto the water we were provided with a detailed explanation as to where Dight's is and that we may find it easier if we just followed the others on the way down. They just wanted to ensure that we concentrated on training rather than having to worry about the difficult task of navigating.
- **Training session 2** – having mastered the Dight's course in the first session. much emphasis was placed on colours in the second session. Could we distinguish the yellow from red, had we had our eyes checked lately? These questions may have been prompted by a question put to Lofty (and everybody else at the race) by our race organizer – DO YOU KNOW THE ##### DIFFERENCE BETWEEN A YELLOW AND A PINK BUOY?

- **Race Day (1)** – as we hopped out of the car, we were escorted to the course map, and had the instructions read to us clearly, slowly and very precisely – three times.
- **Race Day (2)** – fellow race members made sure that we were in attendance for the whole of the race briefing. It is a great feeling, being surrounded by your mates.
- **Race Day (3)** – a personal run-down by our race organizer as to the role that yellow, red and pink buoys play in setting the race course.
- **Race Day (4)** – a reminder by other members of the WSRT that distance is OK for training, but on race day it is better not to overdo it.
- **Race Day (4)** – the presentation of a whistle by one of the WSRT, just in case we got lost. The birdseed was a good touch, but unlike H&G I didn't think it would work on the water, and besides the seagulls would have eaten it before we could use it to find our way back

So you can see, dear Editor, that the WSRT is a friendly and supportive group, always encouraging paddlers to do better, and providing positive support on race day.

For the record, Lofty and I came third again, but this time due to a technical issue (how other clubs put paddlers together on an average calculation for Division 5 races) and not due to the noble rescue mission that took us off course last year.

Wennie van Lint

WINTER SERIES

RACE 3 NAGAMBIE SINGLES

The third race of the Winter Series was held at Nagambie on June 5th. The field of paddlers were plentiful – 10 TC1s, 12 TK1V35 and 34 paddlers in Division 6. Needing plenty of K1 race experience, I entered Division 4 with 23 other starters.

Course conditions were favourable as it can be very cold and windy especially on Nagambie Lake. I started the race well but unfortunately came unstruck while paddling upstream towards Chinaman's Bridge when my paddle hit a submerged log and out I came. I eventually completed the course although a little cold and wet.

It wasn't until I was getting changed, that I noticed my bootee was full of blood. On closer inspection I had cut myself probably at the place of my unexpected exit on something very sharp as it had cut through my bootee as well. After visiting First Aid, I was advised to seek further medical treatment and ended up having three stitches in my foot on the Sunday evening.

It appears there were a few other casualties on the day. Kelly kept me company with a swim while paddling around a buoy and Kevin was bitten by a spider near his eye while paddling under one of the bridges. It was also noted that Pamela was seen nodding off and trying to stay awake as she had just flown in from overseas the previous day.

Julie Perriam

RACE 5 SALE SINGLES

Only the diehards made the trip to Sale. Well done to the ten Fairfield paddlers who survived the bitter conditions – a trip to the snow would have been more appropriate. The wind chilled you to the bone and I paddled in two thermals, a beanie and pogues on my hands. I don't think anybody warmed up before, during or after the race.

Despite the unfavourable conditions, Fairfield Canoe Club had a very successful day with a first, a couple of seconds and a third – the best results so far in the series.

Julie Perriam

RACE 6 GEELONG DOUBLES

It was an easy trip down to Geelong for the Doubles Race. I was competing in the Vet45 MXTK2 with a new partner, Steve Gadsden.

We had been training together for about three weeks and had decided that I would take the front seat position. This is a different position for me, but I quickly adapted to all that the front seat person has to contend with. Steve was offering me good advice and coaching tips so we very quickly settled into our rhythm. With Steve's help I am now more comfortable side wash riding and am more tolerant of others on my side wash.

Our aim for our training together was to increase my endurance and fitness so we started with short trips increasing the distance weekly. During these training sessions we had some great in-depth, soul-searching discussions, which for me is what paddling offers in a double kayak. I also thought it was for safety so you know that your partner is still with you in the boat! It is wonderful to enjoy good conversation along with the good conditions we have on our own stretch of the Yarra River.

Steve and I were feeling very comfortable for our first race together. We had to complete 8kms and felt it was easily within our reach. We had plenty of competition in the race including Marg and Neil and Steve and Maggie Vegh from PLCC. Our race plan was to have a good start and try and stay with the pack.

We were well prepared for the start but unfortunately the race organizers were not. The races started at least an hour late. Luckily the weather was good, bright sunshine and no wind, perfect conditions. This waiting around can be quite challenging for some paddlers and its when our Club shows what camaraderie we have. We like to congregate together to keep each other relaxed and supported. It is something that I personally think is very special.

When finally we did start our race, Steve and I had a great start and worked very hard to keep with the leaders, which we did for the first kilometre but I was not able to sustain the pace.

We eventually settled into our position, concentrated on our stroking and started looking for any washes we could use. Luckily there was enough for us to have a couple of good rides through the middle of the race, to conserve our energy for a big finish, where we overtook another boat and finished in 5th position.

I would like to thank Steve for paddling with me in a much slower and heavier boat than he is normally used to.

Liz Jenkins

CLUB COACHING STRATEGY

The ROSD Committee in conjunction with the FCC Board of Directors, are currently preparing a "Coaching Strategy." This strategy will cover a coaching/ training structure which will cater for FCC members of all levels within the club. Our aim is to have the new structure in place early 2006.

The strategy will cover:

- Beginners sessions
- Intermediate/post beginner coaching
- School groups
- Advanced level (fitness and race conditioning sessions/guest coaches/time trails etc)
- Private and group coaching sessions.

We will be asking for input and feedback from coaches and members within the club. Stay tuned to the ROSD board and the next newsletter for further information.

In the meantime the following sessions will run until the structure is put in place:

1. Beginners "Introduction to Kayaking" courses Sunday 8am run by Julie Perriam and assisted by Connie Todaro, Joe Alia and Alex James.
2. "Squad Training" every Sunday at 10am – run by various club members with an aim to develop race skills and fitness. Zoli, in conjunction with the squad training team, have put together a seasonal program for the sessions. This is a new initiative and we will be interested in getting feedback on the trial.
3. Intermediate/Post Beginner courses run in blocks of 4 sessions (same as the beginner sessions) with the first commencing Sunday 18th September at 10am and the session will be conducted by Joe Alia. Cost is \$5 per session per person or \$20 per person for 4 sessions.

ACCREDITED COACHES

One of the club's goals was to encourage more members to obtain a Level One Flatwater Coaching accreditation.

The club is proud to announce it now has three Level One coaches, Connie Todaro, Joe Alia and Tony Payne, and one Level Two coach, Dasha Kopecek.

Julie Perriam, Alex James, Simon Sharrock, Pamela Lilburne, Marg Buck and Neil Grierson have all completed their course and are working towards attaining their Level One Accreditation.

ROSD Committee

WHAT'S HAPPENING AROUND THE CLUB

19 JUNE WINTER SERIES RACE 2 AT WESLEY

The weather was pretty good for June. A successful day both on the water and off. It was a 7am start for the ever faithful few who arrived to set up the canteen and BBQ. We sold out of everything by 1pm in time for the presentations. We raised over \$800 from the sale of food, drinks and the raffle.

10 AND 11 SEPTEMBER VICTORIAN CHAMPIONSHIPS AT WESLEY

Again a success with the same willing helpers. It would be great to have some new volunteers to assist the social committee with events like these. Please give Joan Doreian a call if you are able to help! The coffee machine, as always, was a great money raiser – thanks to Joe and Connie.

Social Committee

SUDOKU PUZZLE

Courtesy of Gary Flanigan

2	7	6		9	1	4		
			4					
			2	5	6	3		
9	1	8			2			
5	4						2	9
			5			1	7	8
		4	9	3	8			
					4			
		1	7	6		2	9	4

Complete the grid so that every row, column and 3×3 box contains every digit from 1 to 9 inclusively.

The first correct entry will receive a Fairfield Canoe Club hat. Place your entry in the Suggestion Box at the club by 31st October.



Two new additions to the McConnell family – Jenny with Bella, the new family dog, and Andrew holding baby Lachlan.



Fairfield members who participated in the Kangaroo Hoppet cross country ski race on 27th August at Falls Creek. From left Scott Welsh, Julie Perriam, Greg and Jill Blackman and Stephen Beitz. Absent Michael Loftus-Hills. Photo Greg Blackman Collection.



WHITE WATER EPIC ON THE HERBERT RIVER, NORTH QUEENSLAND

Last year I received an email from a friend inviting me on a proposed trip on the Herbert River in far north Queensland. I had never heard of the Herbert River, but having been on several whitewater adventures with this group, I said, "Sure, I'm in."

I then proceeded to research the river I had put my hand up to paddle in just under a year's time. As I began to scan the internet I started to wonder about my sanity as information snippets like "crocodiles," "grade 4-5 rapids," "8 metre drops" and a 120m abseil portage started to form a picture of what to expect.

One thing that was apparent is the fact that the Herbert is in a remote area, with limited access and therefore seldom run by kayakers and rafters (2-3 expeditions a year make the effort to run the river).

Planning for the trip began in 2004, 6 people would make the journey, 4 in kayaks, and 2 would paddle the raft with all our equipment. The trip would take 5-6 days so we needed to take food and camping equipment for this time as well as repair kits, climbing ropes and rigging equipment for several abseil portages, spare paddles, an extensive first aid kit, satellite phone and camera equipment to film the whole thing.



Mick abseiling around the Herbert River Falls.

The total distance we would cover is only about 26km, but it would be through a steep sided gorge most of the way and the river drops more than 300m in that distance.

This means lots of big drops, with the 120m Herbert River Falls being a spectacular highlight.



Greg entering 30ft Falls.

On July 11th we all arrived in Cairns. Everyone was excited about finally beginning the adventure we had been planning and working towards for so long, and glad to escape Melbourne's winter for a while. All of our stuff had arrived safely on the truck, so after a final shop to pick up last minute items, we began the long drive into the table lands, south of Cairns.

After a rough 5 hour drive, our first night would be spent with Maxine and Ross at Goshen Station, a cattle station whose land forms much of the north side of the Herbert River gorge.

We had a great experience spending an evening with Ross and Maxine, who put us up for the night in the farm's staff quarters and fed us more food than we could jump over.

Ross had us up at the crack of dawn to load our gear onto his 4WD for the final drive to our put in. Although we were only 150km from the coast, the landscape was very outback like, dry and dusty with large anthills.

We enjoyed the early morning drive through the red dust with kangaroos and emus all around. It didn't feel like we were about to begin a river trip.

Our first day on the river would take us through several grade 4 rapids, with the 'Laundry Chute', a 30 foot grade 5 drop being the crux. The water level was at the low end of the paddle-able range, but would be OK. Once the raft was inflated and loaded we were on our way and enjoying the warm weather, (and warm water!).



It was quickly evident that we were in a spectacular paradise, with steep sided rock walls forming a gorge around us. We soon encountered our first drop, and the 3m chute, which proved a good warm up for what was to come. The Laundry Chute was next, and we decided to portage this 30 foot drop and move on. We soon came to more challenges, and all decided to run the next 5m drop into a deep pool below. All made it through OK, with one paddler taking a swim. On through the scrubbing board and the steps to our first night's camp above the huge Herbert River Falls.

We awoke the next day to cockatoos screeching and the sun lighting up the beautiful colours of the gorge. Today would be our biggest test; to abseil us and all of our gear down a 120m cliff to rejoin the river below the thundering Herbert River Falls.



Tony on Double Falls.

The Fire/Rescue guys among us with climbing skills rigged up the rope system that would allow us to lower everything over the side and the big day began. The raft went over first, with Tony as its escort, then our cameraman with several dry bags, then the paddlers with their kayaks. By the time everyone was down in the gorge, we were all exhausted. It had taken 5 hours, so we decided to make for the next campsite and rest for the rest of the day. We found a nice sandy beach to camp on, and the fish were biting.

The next day began with our biggest drop yet, and as the paddlers had inspected the 8m drop the day before, many had spent a sleepless night in anticipation.

The rapid was named "Coronary Bypass" and it sure did get the heart racing. For most of us it was the first time we had paddled

a drop this high. All but one ran the drop for the biggest scare, then thrill of our lives. The raft was pushed over unmanned, and feeling invincible now, we couldn't wait for the next one.

Two more big drops for the day in Dog Leg Falls, and Canyon drop had us all wearing big grins by day's end.

After another night around the fire on a spectacular sandy beach, we were back on the river and worked our way through the Boulder maze rapid. This rapid consisted of about 200m of dump truck sized boulders which formed a technical grade 4 rapid. Double Fall was next, and we were all in awe of the beauty of the massive gorge through which the two 8m drops of double fall rapid ran. Each drop fell into huge deep pools the size of football fields and were surrounded by sheer 30m rock walls.

We all ran the first drop, and all but one decided to run the larger second drop. The setting was simply stunning, and we made to camp shortly after, still marveling at the day's experiences.

Through the following days the gorge began to open up and the rapids changed from huge drops, to more technical rapids with some smaller drops still to be encountered.

Due to the lower water levels we found we were having to drag the raft over shallow rapids more, and the aptly named "Pox Rocks" rapid proved arduous.

After 5 days we arrived at our take out point at "Blencoe Falls," where Blencoe Creek joins the Herbert River. We were happy to take out here, as crocodiles are encountered below this point. As it was we had been on the lookout for them the last day or so anyway, but thankfully none were seen.

The next morning our helicopter arrived on time, and we loaded our stuff on board for the flight out of the gorge. This was a spectacular way to end the trip, flying back over the gorge we had paddled through. Although we were all looking forward to a shower and a cold beer, it was sad to leave the river behind.

Extensive video footage was recorded of the trip to make a documentary style film.

When the editing is complete and the film is ready for viewing, I will arrange a viewing at the club for interested Fairfield members.

Greg Blackman

Photos Greg Blackman Collection