

**FAIRFIELD CANOE CLUB**

*Celebrating 85 years  
1919 – 2004*

# Newsletter

**SUMMER ISSUE – DECEMBER 2004**



*Livia and Zoli Szigeti with Alex James recipient of the 2004 Szigeti Medal.*

- **The Big Bash** ● **Club Interview**
- **Theodore Roosevelt and Canoeing**

# FAIRFIELD CANOE CLUB COOPERATIVE LTD

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### Website

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

### Mail

PO Box 253, Fairfield 3078

### Newsletter Dates 2005

Deadline for Submissions:

21 February 20 June 22 August 21 November

### Printing dates

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### How to contribute

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

Contributions can be made by email or by post to the editor.

Articles can be supplied on disk (Mac or PC). Disks and photos will be returned.

### Please submit material to the Editor

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All photos by Michael Loftus-Hills unless otherwise stated.

## UPCOMING EVENTS

### **CANOE 2005 – FESTIVAL OF AUSTRALIAN CHAMPIONSHIPS**

**Canoe 2005 – the Festival of Australian Championships** will be ten days of awesome sporting action, featuring Australia's Olympic representatives, national team members, and Ironmen competing in all canoeing disciplines.

#### **WHAT IS CANOE 2005?**

**Canoe 2005 – the Festival of Australian Championships**, sees Australian Canoeing bring all its discipline championships together in Penrith over Easter 2005.

Penrith, the host City for Canoe 2005, is located approximately 55 kilometres west of Sydney's Central Business District and is on the western outskirts of the Sydney metropolitan area.

#### **EVENT SCHEDULE**

Australian Flatwater Championships	22nd to 26th March 2005
Australian Marathon Championships	27th & 28th March 2005
Australian Canoe Polo Championships	To be confirmed
Energy Australia Canoe Slalom International	25th & 26th March 2005
Australian Canoe Freestyle Championships	25th March 2005

### **THE RED CROSS MURRAY MARATHON 26-31 DECEMBER**

The Murray Marathon is looming, with competitors set to tackle 5 days of competition commencing 27 December. The Murray Marathon is raced over 404kms from Yarrowonga to Swan Hill. Fairfield Canoe Club will be represented by two "Paddy" teams, Paddy Express and Paddy Stopping All Stations, competing in the mixed and open TK2 relay categories. There will also be a full distance K4 crew taking up the challenge, manned by Stephen Beitz, David Richards, Colin Day and Peter Thompson and a full distance K1, Antony Miller. There will even be some younger members from Trinity Grammar taking up the challenge in the schools relay event. We wish all competitors a successful event and loads of fun.



### **FAIRFIELD CANOE CLUB CHRISTMAS BBQ SUNDAY 19TH DECEMBER 12.30pm**

**Snags and bread provided.  
BYO other meats, drinks, kids, fun,  
\$5 present for Kris Kringle.**

If you are good, the jolly man may appear!  
Ho Ho Ho!



## CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

Welcome to the Summer edition of the Fairfield Newsletter.

During the last two weeks we have been privy to the power of nature with the Yarra River rising from its normal 1m to 5m at the Chandler Highway Bridge. Sadly the deluge and subsequent flooding has claimed the lives of two Melbournians on the Yarra and its tributaries. It is timely to ask all members to reflect on the increased risks of venturing onto the river in these treacherous conditions, and to stress that all members who choose to paddle should always be wearing a PFD regardless of the conditions.

A great deal has happened since the last edition of the newsletter. The AGM was held on the 20th September at which we saw four members of last year's board step down. Annette Kendall, our Chairperson for three years and Secretary for one year, has moved on to the Chairperson's position at Canoeing Victoria. Annette's contribution to the board along with all retiring members was acknowledged at the AGM. Rose Curtis and Peter Thompson spent three years on the board, providing a significant contribution to the Communications and Boat Racking Committees respectively. Last but not least, Pamela Lilburne spent two years on the board putting her considerable skills to the smooth running of the Race Organising and Skills Development Committee.

To these four Fairfield members we thank you again for your contribution.

The carryover board members, Mick Kane (Chairman), Liz Wells (Treasurer) and Kevin Hannington (Maintenance), have now been joined by four new board members. Kelly O'Shanassy (Secretary and ROSD), Robyn Ward (Boat Racking), Joan Dorian (Social Committee) and Marc Bellette (Communications) have settled into their respective roles.

The main objectives of the board for the coming twelve months are still being formalised, but will primarily focus on consolidation. This consolidation will concentrate on such things as policy and procedures which need to be updated to reflect recent changes, the introduction of a risk management committee to identify the types of risk we as club members are exposed to and then to examine the ways in which we might deal with that risk. Finally we would like to oversee the completion of the landscaping project.

Zoli has not been well over the last 6 to 8 weeks. We wish Zoli a speedy return to health and look forward to seeing him back on the river in the not too distant future. To those generous members who have contributed their time to continuing the beginner's sessions and the Sunday Morning training, thank you.

Finally I would like to wish Liz Wells and Simon Sharrock all the very best for their wedding day on the 18th December.

Happy Paddling

*Michael Kane*

## THE BIG BASH

The Big Bash was truly BIG, with around 120 people gathering at the Abruzzo Club to eat, drink and celebrate Fairfield Canoe Club and a great year of paddling.

For me, it was great to see the diversity of paddlers there with canoe polo players present, along with participants from the winter series, sprint regattas, touring expeditions and recreational paddlers. There were also plenty of partners present to turn the conversation to topics other than paddling and even some paddlers from other clubs.

Some generous donations such as \$150 worth of boat repairs from Steve Vegh, a jumper signed by the Essendon football team and a brand new paddle lit the floor with auction bids, all going towards the club's fundraising efforts for the landscaping project.

The stars of the evening were the winner of the inaugural Szigeti medal, Alex James and the winner of the coaches award for the most improved paddler, Pamela Lilburne. However, given the "formal with a touch of thermal" theme, the true star was the winner of the best dressed award, Glenn Anderson, resplendent in tails and bow tie with full thermal leggings and top.

Amusement was easy to come by with Glenn providing the dancing music and announcement music for the award winners as they approached the stage.

Liz Wells walked the walk to "She's a Man Eater." Some individuals attempted to launch Alex James' Szigeti medal into space by tying it to all the helium balloons in the room while Chris Sando enthusiastically organised the line dancing.

All in all it was a magnificent evening and great value. Connie Todaro's report on the award winners from the evening follows.

*Anna Millward*



*Chris Sando and incoming President Mick Kane enjoying the evening.*



*Pamela Lilburne showing her "touch of thermal" with Rachel Heath.*



*Tony Payne showing a "touch of thermal" with Robin, Mary Joe and friend.*

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# 2004 FAIRFIELD CANOE CLUB ANNUAL AWARDS

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Fairfield Canoe Club's annual "Big Bash" was held on Saturday 2nd October 2004. At this annual event the club recognises its members achievements by presenting trophies and medals in different categories.

## ACHIEVEMENTS

Fairfield Canoe Club has achieved major wins this year, starting with our novice canoe polo team – The Amazons in winning the 2004 Autumn Grand Final.

The Club also won The 2004 Winter Series trophy for a consecutive 3rd year. An achievement that could not have been possible without the continued support, commitment and enthusiasm of the members and of course, Joe Alia, for his continued obsession with winning. Congratulations to Patterson Lakes Canoe Club for some good, hard fought competition.

As most of you are aware the club hosted Race 2 of the winter series season. It was the most successful race of the season, with the club raising in excess of \$1,000. It was the highest attended race this season, with 50 Fairfield members competing in the race and approximately 20 members and their families and friends volunteering their time to help run the canteen. Congratulations and thank you.

## CANOE POLO AWARDS

The first award of the night was for the best and fairest canoe polo players and was presented by Brendan Kenna.

### Best and Fairest – Spring Season Amazons

Kate Kenna

### Best and Fairest – Spring Season Gladiators

Jim Anderson

### Best and Fairest – Autumn Season Amazons

Shawn Ramraj

### Best and Fairest – Autumn Season Gladiators

Fred Henry

## WINTER SERIES AWARDS

The Marathon Winter Series is one of the most successful events on the racing calendar. The winter series awards are presented to the club's best performed male, female and junior in the winter series season.

The Club's Race Director Joe Alia and Steve Vegh from Canoe Innovations and Patterson Lakes Canoe Club presented the following awards.

## JUNIORS

**1st Place** Jonathon Eager

**2nd Place** Sam Potter

**3rd Place** Tom Darlington-Bortoli

## FEMALE

**1st Place** Kelly O'Shanassy

**2nd Place** Julie Perriam

**3rd Place** Liz Wells

## MALE

**1st Place** Steve Gadsden

**2nd Place** Tony Payne

**3rd Place** Werner Bolz

Steve Gadsden and Werner Bolz both competed in all eight winter series races this season and Kelly the only female to have participated in 7 races. Great effort guys and thanks for continued support over the past few seasons.

## UNDER THE YARRA

The next award was the "Under the Yarra" Award. This is awarded to the member who epitomises the Fairfield Canoe Club spirit and is voted by the members.

Last year's recipient Mick Kane presented the award to the 2004 winner: Michael Loftus-Hills. Lofty's work was appreciated by everyone at the Big Bash as we all viewed his video about Zoli. Lofty provides endless support to the club with his photos, his creation and maintenance of the club website, video footage and enthusiasm for all club projects.

## COACH'S AWARD

The Coach's Award is awarded to the best improved paddler over the twelve month period. The award was presented by Zoli Szigeti and last year's winner Greg Bauld to Pamela Lilburne. Pamela has worked hard with coach Dasha to move into the ranks of elite K1 paddlers. Pam has been rewarded with a third place in the State Marathon Championships and is training in preparation for the sprint series.

## PRESIDENT'S AWARD

The President's Award goes to the member whose contribution on or off the water is beyond the call of duty. The winner of this award is chosen by the President and Board of Directors. The award was presented by the outgoing President of Fairfield Canoe Club and the incoming President of Canoeing Victoria Annette Kendall. The winners of this year's award were myself and Joe Alia.

I must say I was very surprised and speechless but very proud and honoured to receive such a prestigious award. Sincere thanks to Annette and I am looking forward to working with Annette at Canoeing Victoria.

## THE SZIGETI MEDAL

The final award of the night was the inaugural "Szigeti Medal".

This medal is awarded to the best performing member at an elite level, and it is the highest honour that the club can bestow on one of its members.

"The Szigeti Medal" is named to honour Zoli – a man who has committed and dedicated his life to a sport that has made him a true champion and a highly skilled coach. His commitment to Fairfield Canoe Club and its members – both past and present is exemplary. Zoli is a man with exceptional talents, and he has been instrumental in passing valuable skills and knowledge to members of the club. He is highly respected and loved by all, not only at a club level, but in the canoeing world.

Any of us who have attended one of Zoli's sessions, either beginners or the famous "10.00am Zoli sessions", will know how welcoming it is to hear Zoli say at the end of a session "The pleasure was mine". Well the truth is, "The pleasure is ours".

The winner of this very prestigious medal was Alex James. Alex is a very deserving recipient whose continued commitment and determination over the years has resulted in him being honoured as Fairfield Canoe Club's Paddler of the Year.

Congratulations to Alex and to all our winners.

*Connie Todaro*

*Outgoing Chairperson*

*Race Organising and Skills Development Committee*



*Jon Mayne acknowledges fifty years at Fairfield Canoe Club.*



*Katherine Lee and Peter Thompson at The Big Bash.*

Chair **Marc Bellette**  
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## COMMUNICATIONS COMMITTEE

### COMMITTEE MEMBERS



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*Newsletter editor*  
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annarw@tpg.com.au



**Michael Loftus-Hills**

*Photographer/website*  
Michael@loft.com.au



**Julie Perriam**

*Layout and design*  
julie@disegno.com.au

### MISSION STATEMENT

- Communicate to members of the Fairfield Canoe Club
- Communicate to potential members of Fairfield Canoe Club
- Communicate to Board of Fairfield Canoe Club
- Facilitate communication between members

### WE WANT YOUR PHOTOGRAPHS OF:

- club members
- races
- Murray Marathon
- you
- your dog or cat

**Digital only – email to michael@loft.com.au**

**All contributions most welcome**

### LATEST DEVELOPMENTS

New faces take on the challenges of the Communication Committee.

Julie Perriam has kindly offered to take on this task of newsletter layout and design. Marc Bellette has joined the committee as Chair and comes to Fairfield from Central Victoria, having previously been a member of the Bendigo Canoe Club.

### SUGGESTION BOX

Remember that the red suggestion box has been installed at the club and is for correspondence between members and the Board of Directors, and a safe box for general business that is addressed to the Board members. Please remember to provide your name for feedback/correspondence.

### WEBSITE

With summer approaching, the club's website has received an increasing level of use suggesting that it is a useful point-of-call for many paddlers. The Communications Committee are hopeful of getting all 2005 newsletters loaded onto the website and we are also investigating a system of email reminders when the newsletter is electronically available.

If you have a moment, take a look at the photos from the Big Bash 2004 by following the links from the website [www.fairfieldcanoeclub.org.au](http://www.fairfieldcanoeclub.org.au) and check out the awards list.

### WHITEBOARD

The Communications Committee has been discussing the need for a whiteboard so that paddlers can leave messages for other paddlers on a day-to-day basis.

Remember, we are always keen to hear from members willing to write articles for newsletters.

*Marc Bellette*

## CLUB PROFILE – JONATHON EAGER

*In this issue of the FCC newsletter we interview Jonathan Eager.*

Jonathan Eager "Jonno" is a year 11 student at Trinity Grammar School. Jonno joined FCC in 2000 – with the Trinity kayak program – and has since paddled in the Murray relay, completed a winter series and now trains with the Dasha Kopececk group.

### **When did you first paddle?**

I have always had a passion for water sports, and I had my first paddle in a friend's kayak in Queensland when I was 8 years old.

When I was at primary school I began to play club hockey, but by the time I was in year 7, I had changed sports because of injury. I was very fortunate to be at Trinity Grammar, which offered kayaking and had an affiliation with Fairfield Canoe Club. I tried it out as a sport and really enjoyed it. I took up kayaking with Trinity at Fairfield as a sport at the start of the summer of 2000. I find I enjoy the competitive aspect of kayaking as well being able to train in such a scenic environment with great people.

### **Have you competed in any races?**

I competed in the Murray Marathon in the Schools Relay Competition for the first time at the end of 2003. It was a great experience and the weather was sensational.

The atmosphere was great with lots of schools competing. I had visited the Murray Marathon previously and I thought 2003 was more competitive than previous years in the schools competition. It was really fun being part of a tightly knit team and most of us who are still eligible to paddle in the Schools Relay are planning to go back this year.

During this year I have participated in five Winter Series races. It has been great to race for such a friendly and competitive club. I have really appreciated the people who have helped out the junior members of the club with training and racing advice as well as helping us get to races.



*Jonno (left) and members of the Trinity kayak squad at the City race, hosted by FCC, earlier this year.*

### **You have recently started to train with Dasha's group – what is that like?**

Since February this year I have had the opportunity to train with Dasha's group on many occasions. She has invaluable knowledge, which she shares with us very generously. The people who have been training with her have improved immeasurably. Her enthusiasm has encouraged me to involve myself more in the sport, even making me wake up in time for 5:50am training sessions.

Currently I am studying in Year 11 at Trinity Grammar, and my favourite subject is Business Management. I enjoy bicycle riding and sailing and in the winter I play hockey for Box Hill Hockey Club. I also enjoy building and flying model planes when I have the time.

Chair **Kelly O'Shanassy**  
Race Organising and Skills Development  
Phone 0421 054 402  
Email [kelly.o'shanassy@dse.vic.gov.au](mailto:kelly.o'shanassy@dse.vic.gov.au)



## RACE ORGANISING AND SKILLS DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE



### COMMITTEE MEMBERS

#### **Pamela Lilburne**

Sprint and coaching  
Phone 0408 600 093  
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#### **Joe Alia**

Marathon and coaching  
Phone 0418 920 404  
Email [aliatec@alphalink.com.au](mailto:aliatec@alphalink.com.au)

### Coaching Representatives

Julie Perriam, Michael Loftus-Hills

### Board of Directors Representative

Kelly O'Shanassy

### Canoe Polo Representative

TBC

### MISSION STATEMENT

- To develop members' skills and enjoyment of the sport, in the various disciplines
- To introduce members to attend organised competitions
- Wherever possible to ensure that FCC participates in competitions at all levels and to achieve the best result for the members and the club.

### LATEST DEVELOPMENTS

#### COACHING AT THE CLUB

Our long serving club coach, Zoli Szigeti has been taking several weeks off due to ill-health. Julie Perriam and Michael Loftus-Hills (assisted at times by Jo Alia and others) have been doing an excellent job of running the Sunday morning beginners' sessions in the same way that Zoli teaches it. We hope to see Zoli's good health return again soon.

#### ARE YOU INTERESTED IN BEING A CELEBRITY COACH?

We have had a series of "guest coaches" running the 10am Sunday session and have had lots of good feedback from members who have enjoyed the different sorts of training sessions. Thank you to our guest coaches who have run them, and to our members for their ongoing support of the sessions. If you're interested in running a Sunday 10am training session – please let Connie know as she will be drawing up a new timetable very shortly.

#### LEVEL ONE COACHING COURSE

FCC hosted a successful Level One Flatwater Coaching Course last month. We thank club members for their understanding and patience while this course was being run. The goal of the course was for participants to obtain their Level One accreditation from Australian Canoeing.

#### INTERMEDIATE COACHING COURSE

You may have seen Margaret Buck running Saturday morning coaching sessions at the club. Well, by popular demand, she is about to start another course. So if you're interested in expanding your kayaking skills and haven't been in contact with her yet – call her straight away on 9489 0556 to register interest. Scheduled times are usually 8am or 10am on a Saturday.

## BEGINNERS JUNIOR COURSE

Joe Alia will be running a junior beginners flatwater kayaking course, starting soon and continuing again in the new year. This is a beginner's course designed to teach kayaking basics, or to introduce current competent TK1 juniors to develop K1 boat skills. Dasha Kopecek will be assisting Joe with the set up of the course and coaching program.

If you know of any young people between the ages of 10 and 21 years who would be interested, please call Joe Alia on 0418 920 401.

## SPRINT COMPETITIONS

The only Melbourne sprint race will be on Saturday 11th December. Over the last two years we have had lots of club members come along to the city sprint race and have fielded full races of TK1s and TK2s, as well as the usual K boat categories. Get your entry in early! Contact Pamela for more information on 0408 600 093 and check the club notice board for entries.

## FESTIVAL OF CANOEING – NATIONAL CANOEING COMPETITIONS NEXT EASTER

There is a fabulous timetable of kayaking/canoeing events across all disciplines to be held in Sydney next Easter. Given our club is so strong in both canoe polo and marathon disciplines – it would be great to get a lot of club members going up, having a great long weekend away and supporting each other! I would particularly encourage people to consider entering the marathon champs – as this is a very social event and veterans as well as TK boats are well catered for. Stay tuned for more info on this one.

*Pamela Lilburne*

## VICTORIAN FLATWATER RACE PROGRAM 2004–2005

### Melbourne Sprint Race – Saturday 11th December

*Put this one in your diary – fun day for TKs or K boats!*

### Regatta 3 1000m & 500m 11th December 2004

State level competition – Footscray

### GP1 1000m & 500m 7, 8, 9 January 2005

National level competition – Adelaide. Entries close 6 Dec

### Regatta 4 1000m & 500m 6 February

State level competition – Nagambie

### GP2 1000m & 500m 11, 12, 13 February

National level competition – Sydney. Entries close 14 January

### State Championships 26, 27 February

All distances. State level competition – Nagambie

### National Championships 22–26 March

National level competition – Sydney

### School Sprint Championships 30 March

State level competition – Carrum

Entries for all regattas are due 10 days before the event to:

Jenny O'Shea, 19 Sandhurst Road, Eaglehawk.

Phone 03 5446 8499

GPs and National Championships entries are to be forwarded to Jenny O'Shea.

All craft and distances will be catered for at each regatta.

## UNDER THE YARRA

*This column was not meant to be taken literally. However, Lofty has been on a personal mission to sink himself in the Yarra, with or without a partner.*

**1** First of all there was the Paddy TK2 training session. On the way to Dights, Lofty paddled in the back with Ren in the front. As there didn't appear to be any problems with this arrangement, it was a little confusing why Lofty switched to the front seat on the way back. The boat assumed a distinct nose down attitude immediately. We took off and with Lofty washriding, the boat's nose became totally submerged and a stream of water flowed over Lofty's cockpit. The boat gradually took on water until Ren was paddling on a cushion of air, the back end of the boat completely out of the water. Lofty was underwater and looked like he was desperately paddling to the bottom of the river.

With slow forward motion Lofty and Ren got to the next landing, nearly causing severe injury to Steve Gadsden due to uncontrollable laughter.

Lofty didn't get put off by this episode and the next week tackled the TK2 again with Kelly as partner. This time the fun began on the way to Studley Park. Once again, with the TK2 on the wash, it nose-dived and Kelly wasn't hanging around for another mad paddle to the bottom. She abandoned ship and left Lofty trying to paddle alone.

*Please, for next edition, let's just stick to gossip and innuendo and leave the bottom of the Yarra alone!*

**2** Dasha has also been exploring the bottom of the river. She tied up the motor boat after one training session. She realised that rain was forecast so left some slack on the rope to allow the boat to rise with the river levels. However, she didn't count on the torrential rain that eventuated and when she came to get the boat the following day, the chain was pulling it under.

Dasha went to the rescue! She dived into the river to search for the rope and loosen it off. It would have been better if she was equipped for scuba diving. The rain was falling, it was getting dark, she was up to her chest in the Yarra and searching for a knot in a rope to loosen off under water. She was, literally, *Under the Yarra*.



*Roger Tralaggan replacing new plants at the club.*

**3** You may have noticed over the last few weeks some new plants appear around the landing.

Bushland gardener Roger Tralaggan has replaced riparian species plants washed away or damaged during the recent flood.

Species to look out for include:

<i>Poa ensiformis</i>	<i>Purple Sheath Tussock Grass</i>
<i>Lomandra longifolia</i>	<i>Spiny-headed Mat Rush</i>
<i>Prostanthera lasianthos</i>	<i>Victorian Christmas Bush</i>

Please take care not to step on or damage these plants whilst they settle in at FFC.



*Flooded river at Fairfield Canoe Club.*

Chair **Kevin Hannington**  
Club Maintenance  
Phone 0405 120 821



## MAINTENANCE COMMITTEE



*'The Strippers' Ivan Gaal (left) and Jon Mayne.*

**4** After a hard paddle Ivan Gaal invited Jon and Jenny Mayne to dinner at a Hungarian pub. Needless to say all parties were somewhat shocked to find the bar maid topless. The dinner menu noted the strip show times so our intrepid C paddlers had an inkling this was no normal pub. After Ivan was asked to undo the strippers bra she then rested her ... lets just say ... not her paddle ... on Ivan's head. Jon was then given an even closer view. Apparently Jon's head continued to shake after the women left.

**5** After awarding the first Szigetel medal at the Big Bash, Zoli has been a bit scarce at the club. Zoli is spending time at home recuperating after a very bad chest infection and we all look forward to seeing him at the Christmas Party.

**6** At a recent Zoli session Veronika Nemes was spotted yawning by Margaret Buck. Margaret claimed this was good, as Veronika was inhaling plenty of oxygen. We wonder how Veronika would go in a sprint asleep in her TK1!

*Committee Members: The odd-jobs and upkeep of the clubhouse amount to a massive project. Please call Kevin if you can assist in anyway.*

### MISSION STATEMENT

- To maintain the club-house
- To carry out or assist with finding contractors for proposed alterations/maintenance to club-house
- To co-ordinate working bees for all club members

### LATEST DEVELOPMENTS

With the rise of the river please be aware of the slippery mud and grass on the approach to the water's edge.

The neighbours on the down river side have requested that a relatively simple, yet childproof fence be built along our shared boundary. Details for construction have been received by the Board, and a shared-funding arrangement based on the quotation provided has been agreed to.

A working-bee is to be planned for the new year once the summer race season is over. Meanwhile, summer is here and the grass and river continue to rise. Anyone with a spare 30 minutes, please assist with any of jobs about the club by organising your involvement with Kev. Thanks very much to those members who have taken on cleaning off mud from the deck and mowing the lawn.

## THEODORE ROOSEVELT AND CANOEING

The sports activities of political leaders have generally been activities like golf, walking and sports watching. Few leaders in their mature years have participated in a sport that was very vigorous or exposed them to danger. Vladimir Putin is an exception in practising judo.

Theodore Roosevelt, the twenty-sixth president of the US, from 1901 to 1909 is a far more remarkable example. He was a most enthusiastic outdoorsman and conservationist and he was also a canoeist, most notably on a wild tributary of the Amazon.

Roosevelt is one of the four presidents whose likeness is carved into the rock of Mount Rushmore beside Washington, Jefferson, and Lincoln. The Mount Rushmore website says: "Theodore Roosevelt was a conservationist, setting aside five National Parks, eighteen National Monuments, and millions of acres of National Forest for America. He was a champion for the working man, a trustbuster of business monopolies, representing fairness in economic growth. He spurred economic growth by linking East to West with the construction of the Panama Canal. He led by energetic example – the doctrine of the strenuous life – that we might grow as a Nation as we entered the new century."

A brief biography of Theodore Roosevelt is presented on the White House website. HYPERLINK <http://www.whitehouse.gov/history/presidents/tr26.html>

See also the following site, which has a photo of the Brazilian expedition: HYPERLINK <http://www.theodoreroosevelt.org/life/biopictures.html>

I learnt of Roosevelt's Brazilian journey from a TV documentary film on his life, one of a series on the lives of US presidents. At the age of 55, when his presidency was over, Roosevelt took part in a dangerous canoeing expedition, scenes from which were recorded in the film. Here is an edited text from the film on Roosevelt's canoe trip:

*After 1912, Theodore Roosevelt's life takes a tragic turn. The rest of his life, the qualities that had made him so constructive, so successful and so great turn on him.*

*Deeply troubled, Roosevelt once again fled to the wilderness, this time into the jungles of Brazil. He had heard of an unmapped river flowing north towards the Amazon, and joined an expedition organised to chart its course. Fifty-five years old, Roosevelt was about to embark on what would be the most harrowing adventure of his life. "I have already lived and enjoyed as much of life as any other nine men I know," he said, "and if I must leave my bones in South America I am quite ready to do so."*

*With his son Kermit at his side, Roosevelt headed into the jungle toward the unexplored river, collecting animal and botanical specimens along the way. After 40 days, they reached their destination, the headwaters of a river churning with mile after mile of treacherous whitewater. The Brazilians called it the River of Doubt.*

*A river that wasn't supposed to be there, and had never been mapped, nobody knew where it went. It was complete wilderness and unknown. And this 55 year old man, who was many, many pounds overweight and clearly not in good physical condition, took off on one of the wildest adventures of his career.*

*On February 27, 1914, at the height of the rainy season, Roosevelt and 21 fellow explorers turned to face the river. "Shortly after midday," he wrote, "we started down the River of Doubt into the unknown."*

*The river itself was extremely dangerous, with rapids of the most fierce kind. The boats they were in were huge dugout canoes – that weighed 2,500 to 3,000 pound each. The boats were very hard to manoeuvre, and very difficult to get down the rapids, so they had to be portaged about these rapids. We're talking about a 2,500 to 3,000 pound wooden canoe that had to be moved only with block and tackle on the long roads that they built and using rollers of logs that they cut. It took them four, five, six days to portage around one rapid.*

And then they would get back in their boats, load them up again, start down the river, and maybe 15 minutes later come to another rapid where they had to start it all over again, and they did this 36 times.

Roosevelt and his men were caught in torrential downpours. Insects ate through their clothes and bit painfully into their flesh. One man drowned. Another went mad under the strain, murdered a member of the party, and escaped into the jungle. The trip had already turned into a nightmare when suddenly two canoes capsized and caught in the rapids.

Theodore Roosevelt had to spring into the water to try to save one of the canoes, and banged his leg quite seriously on a rock, reactivating an old bone infection.

In the humid jungle air, the wound quickly grew infected. Roosevelt came down with malaria and dysentery. This began to get worse and worse. His temperature went up to well over 105. Some nights Kermit didn't believe he'd live through the night. Unable to walk, in agony, he begged to be left behind. "I feel I am only a burden to the party," he told his son. Delirious, he recited poetry; the same line over and over "In Xanadu did Kubla Khan a stately pleasure dome decree."

He said that, "Whenever I went on an expedition like this, I always used to take enough morphine with me to kill myself if I found myself facing a lingering death." And he said, "There was only one time I thought about using that morphine, and that was in the Brazilian trip. And the only reason I didn't do it," he said, "is I realised that my son Kermit would take me out dead or alive, and it was marginally easier to take me out alive."

With his father growing weaker and weaker each day, Kermit had no choice but to continue into the seemingly endless rapids on the River of Doubt.

It began to look worse and worse as each time they thought they'd come to the end of the rapids, they'd go a little further and find a whole 'nother of them again, but pure pluck and perseverance pulled them through.

After nearly four months, they emerged from the jungle. Roosevelt and his companions had explored the entire length of the river, 1,000 miles. In tribute, the Brazilian government changed the name of the River of Doubt to the River Theodore Roosevelt.

But Roosevelt's powerful body would never be the same again. "The Brazilian wilderness," a friend wrote, "stole away 10 years of his life." Barely able to walk, still suffering from malaria, he had lost 50 pounds in six weeks. "At your age," a friend asked, "why did you do such a thing?" "I had to go," he said, "it was my last chance to be a boy."

"Last chance to be a boy." That is a phrase that resonates with me and I expect, many middle-aged canoeists.

Geoff Hindle



Geoff Hindle and Julie Slattery at The Big Bash.



**Fairfield Canoe Club Co-operative Ltd**

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