

50 Years of Mitta Mitta Canoe Club

Peter Harper

Maurice Phipps, a physical education teacher placed a story in the *Border Morning Mail*, August 1973, asking for any kayakers to come to a meeting and the club was formed. Fred Schmidt was the first president. February 1974 saw the first event held at Whale Head Rock on the Mitta Mitta River. What followed were many trips, races and fun times on the rivers nearby, even the flooded Yackandandah and Bungambrawatha creeks were explored.

Boat building happened at Mike Carter's shed just over Waterworks Bridge. Frank Harrison was the main builder. Slalom technique was practised below the rock wall of Ryans Creek with a permanent course of several gates erected.



Ziko Vesely in boat 102, at the start of the 2021 Frank Harrison Memorial Race for Mens' K1 below the Hume Dam wall [a Simon Dallinger photo]

By the end of the 1970s, the flatwater style of kayaking became popular, it involved less travel time and members could fit in training easily before or after work. Some members arranged storage of their boats under caravans at Noreuil Park.

The Red Cross Murray Marathon was the Club's feature event each Christmas and members completed the 440km paddle from Yarrawonga to Swan Hill with much success. Details of these results are proudly displayed on a framed poster in the clubhouse foyer.

The Murray Marathon also became the focus for the development of the school's section within the club and was led by teacher members, Col Peters and David Ross and Karen Zerbst. And from this base, Matt Flower formed a MMCC Junior Squad that had many successes in national competitions and selection for Junior World championships.

Members, Jim Sloan, Tony Zerbst, Phil Haydon, Matt Coulter, Olympian Martin Hunter and Mick Leveritt are some who represented the club internationally at the World Championships. Foundation member, Walter Waldner, paddled for his birth country Austria at the 1956 Melbourne Olympics.

The Noreuil Park clubhouse grew from the need to store the boats close to the river. The disused change pavilion became the boat shed. Roofing the pavilion followed. Later in 2000 to fulfil requirements of Albury City's regulations for new toilets and disabled access work began for the building redevelopment. Tony Smith liaised with Council. Funds were raised within the membership to contribute to the cost.

The extension provides toilet/change rooms and a club room for meetings and socials. A special night of celebration was held on Saturday 22 November 2003 for the opening of the new rooms. Now social events are often held on training and race day events.