

POWER DINGHY RACER

OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER OF THE WESTERN
AUSTRALIAN SPORTS DINGHY ASSOCIATION

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JANUARY 1995



In this Issue

**BURSWOOD MEETING REPORT
COMING EVENTS**

NEXT MEETING

9th January, 1995 – 8pm, The Palms, Cnr Rokeby & Nicholson Fds, Subiaco



Season Greetings
Wishing all a Prosperous New Year

BURSWOOD CLUB ROOMS REPORT

One of the main items on the agenda at the December General Meeting comprised the question as to whether PDRC should make a commitment to the Burswood Club Rooms. The vote taken at this meeting came up with a resounding yes vote. 34 Yes votes to 6 No votes.

PDRC will form a consortium with 3 other bodies, which will each have equal representation on the Management Committee, consisting of two delegates for each body. PDRC nominated Greg Johnson and Jeff Hodgkinson as our delegates. Our club is required to finance \$62,500.00, payable in March/April 1995 as our share of the premises (to lock-up stage). There have been some indications made that the State Govt. may provide a grant of \$150,000.00 to complete the project. An interest only loan to PDRC will cost \$7,500.00 per annum (calculated at 12.5%), or \$150.00 per week. It was viewed to PDRC members that a liquor license be granted, to ensure viability of the venture.

OTHER MAJOR DISCUSSIONS THAT TOOK PLACE ON THIS ISSUE INCLUDED:

- 1) Greg discussed the options of club members contributing in the form of donations, later members pledged \$12,500.00.
- 2) A variety of questions were raised, relating to tax relief on contributions.
- 3) The availability of a liquor license being granted.
- 4) The rents and rates payable for the premises.
- 5) Area of land involved.
- 6) Guarantors required (as club is unable to guarantee itself).
- 7) Manner of possible income generated by such an acquisition to the club.



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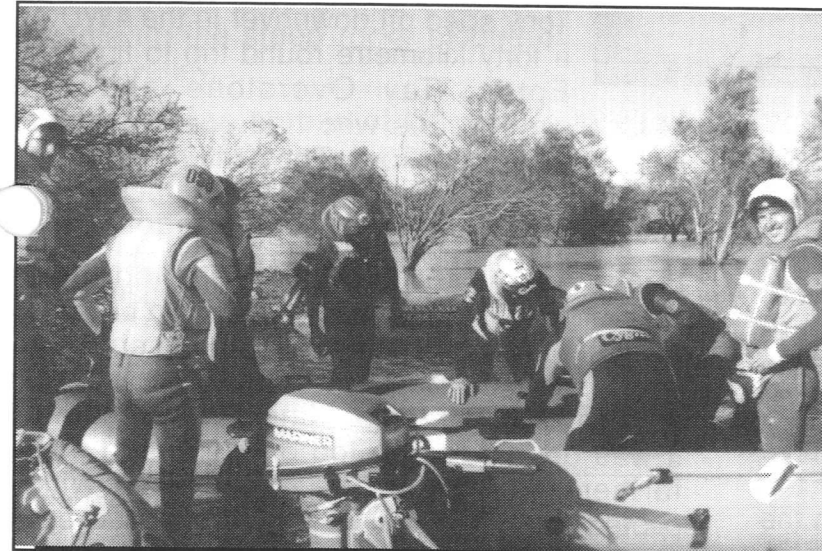
SPECIAL
INSERT

The Power of the Murchison

As David Whitney and Tony Overstone crested the hill in the Landcruiser they saw a huge rapid which stretched as far as they could see in both directions, up and down river.

"I hope they don't go into that", said David.

"Too late, they're already in it", said Tony.



Less than an hour earlier the crews of five inflatable dinghies had started from the Galena Bridge on the North West Coastal Highway to navigate the lower 125 kilometres of the Murchison River. Fifteen members of the Murchison Gorges Expedition had driven through Thursday night from Perth to arrive at the bridge just before daybreak. Exactly twelve months earlier a similar Expedition had travelled down from Milly Milly Station, 550 kilometres upriver, to the Galena Bridge. This Expedition was to finish the job started by that Expedition.

Cyclone Bobby's rainfall a fortnight earlier had created the biggest flood on the Murchison River in nearly fifty years and it peaked, virtually to the hour, as the Expedition departed from Galena Bridge.

The Hardabut Rapids at the edge of the Kalbarri National Park are about four times as wide and six times as long as anything on the Avon River. Their length, scope and power can only be properly seen from a vantage point accessed by a rough bush track. An aerial survey the day before did not

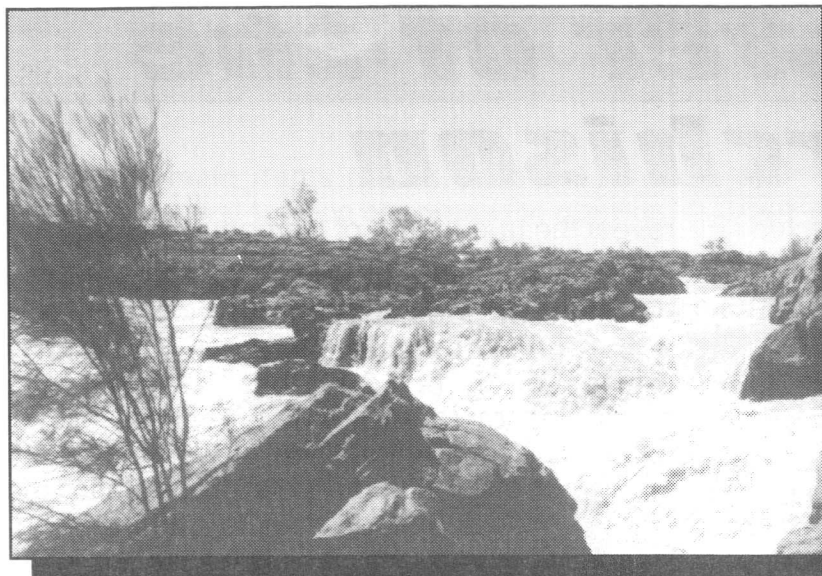
reveal the true nature of Hardabut Rapids.

The flat water approach gave those in the dinghies no idea that they had hit such a substantial obstacle. It drops about forty metres over its 1200 metre length in a confusion of raging, white-flecked, brown water. The massive volume of water charging through innumerable drops, falls and shoots was difficult to comprehend. The speed of the water was frightening. Estimates varied from twenty-five to thirty kilometres per hour. The roar of the water could be heard over the outboard motor. On land it could be heard before one got out of the vehicle. The earthy smell from so much mud and silt in the water was immediately obvious. Spray pumped out from dozens of points.

There was no safe route through this awesome spectacle. In fact, there was no defined route at all. Even if a crew could select a course through the extended length of the mighty Hardabut Rapids it is doubtful that they could line up or even remember each twist, turn, drop and shoot.

Known by some as The Washing Machine, at peak water level the Hardabut Rapids are frightening. The puny power of an 8hp outboard motor, or even a 10hp, was not match for the river. Coupled with the wildly aerated water it was a case of the river taking the boat where it wanted rather than a driver negotiating a route through.





a rope. The force of the water ripped it out of their hands.

It was in excess of thirty minutes before the two land crews could visually confirm the safety of the ten boat crew.

Although Adrian Bock and Scott Overstone made it safely through this shoot and indeed the whole mighty rapid, it is impossible to guarantee a successful attempt. The other four dinghies were sucked in, chewed up and spat out.

Tony sped off downriver in the 4WD on a forty kilometre round trip to find Kim Epton, Tay Overstone and Kim

The power of one huge seventy metre shoot on the far side of the river was awesome. This speeding freight train of water with a huge stopper rock and a four metre hole at the bottom could only be seen clearly through the binoculars – and had to be seen to be believed. It was through here that all five dinghies were drawn. Remarkably, one got through with little difficulty – by going over the rock.

But don't compare this with any rapid you've seen before. The obstructing rocks were the size of houses. The drops were bigger than the boats and the volume of water going over them was enormous. The powerful backswirl trapped boats and bobbed them about like corks, spitting them out randomly.

Heard the sayings "It's really pumping" or "It's gusting through"? What a joke! Anything in the south of our State would be like a water pistol in comparison.

The passage of the five boats through Hardabut was a moving disaster. Boats were tossed around like matchsticks in a mealstrom. The power of the water forced the night mare downstream. Crews were thrown from the inflatables into the boiling, brown water.



Cliff Hills' and John Haynes' boat was thrown up in the air and did a backflip. Shane Kelly and Phil Hargrave came unstuck near the top of the rapid. With Scott Overstone they were holding the boat by

Thorson in The Bus who had gone to wait at Ross Graham Lookout. They returned just as the boat crews were starting to sort themselves out.

Eventually all the crews assembled on an island towards the bottom of the rapid but away from the Support Crew on the southern bank. Mike Lenz's boat was irretrievably trapped in the middle of the rapid – after an hour of effort it was deemed to be too dangerous to make further attempts to free it. Cameron Wilkie piloted the only working boat and ferried each person and the other three boats, one at a time, across the raging current.

The next four hours were spent hauling four boats, motors and gear up steep, rocky slopes in 40°C heat. The sharp spiky low shrubs, spindly scratching shadeless trees and scattered spinifex hindered efforts. Finally it

was time to call a halt. Everyone was exhausted. Equipment was strewn over a two kilometre trail from where the boats had been recovered to where The Bus had been able to reach. The loss was substantial. In monetary terms it added up to nearly \$10,000 including inflatable boat,

outboard motors, spare propellers, handheld radio, compass, heliograph and other sundry items.

Thirteen weary expeditioners climbed onto The

Bus and into the 4WD for the fifty kilometre trip into Kalbarri. The extent of the floodwaters was immediately obvious as Kim brought The Bus to the top of Meanarra Hill, overlooking the town. A brown stain from the river pushed out into the crystal blue sea for two or three kilometres. It extended up and down the coast for many kilometres. After booking into a caravan park the rest of the afternoon was spent showering, sleeping and recounting the story of how lucky they were to escape alive and in a place that required only a two kilometre struggle up the steep rocky sloped of the river valley.



That there was of loss of life was fortuitous. PFDs (lifejackets) were totally ineffective in the swirling waters. Mike Lenz and Dave Snooks were trapped under water for so long they began to breathe water. Both thought they were finished. Dave surfaced and was violently ill. Mike later had treatment at Kalbarri for water on the lungs and an injured knee. John Haynes had badly injured a knee that swelled dramatically and kept him on one leg for the remainder of the trip. The injuries were not confined to the boat crews.

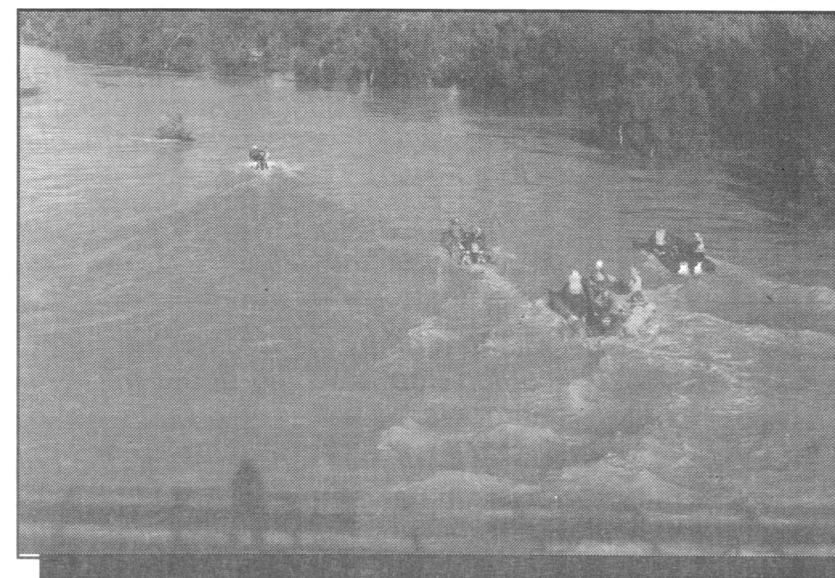
David Whitney was carrying an outboard motor up the near vertical slope when he trod on a loose rock, slipped and dropped the motor. The cav plate nearly severed the little finger of his right hand. He was driven into Geraldton Hospital where he had microsurgery under general anaesthetic and stayed overnight.

One was relishing the task confronting them next morning. Fifty kilometres later at Hardabut Rapid the heat of the sun was felt before the job started. Each boat was deflated and lashed to an eight metre annex pole. With three men

at the end of each pole the task of recovering the boats and other gear from the mountain goat territory was considerably easier. It still took four hours.

On return to the caravan park at Kalbarri damage was assessed and the boats were prepared for a run up the river the next day. Bill Breheny's motor was wrecked (although it still ran). Damage to the boats was minimal – mostly scratches caused when being carried, pushed, dragged, manhandled and pulled up the steep sides of the river valley. Spare motors were brought out and eventually four boats were readied.

After a leisurely start on Sunday, Adrian, Bill, Cameron, Cliff, Kim Thorson, Phil, Scott and Tay prepared to go up river from Kalbarri to The Loop – a distance of about fifty-five kilometres. One boat was unable to get off the start line and so Bill Breheny and Scott Overstone jumped into the back of the 4WD as part of the Support Crew. The crews in the remaining three boats had to fight the fast flowing current through the tops of the trees during their trip up river.



Kim Epton, Mike and Shane went to Murchison House Pastoral Station in The Bus to rendezvous with the boat crews, then to The Loop. They returned to the caravan park to find Tony, David, Scott and Bill there. They had followed the boats nearly to Murchison House on a different track but had to return after getting bogged. On the return journey they snapped the left rear springs and severely bent the right rear springs of the 4WD Landcruiser. When would it end!

The boat crews had underestimated the amount of fuel usage against the powerful current. Adrian returned



noticed. The Bus was quickly stopped and, to the amazement of many, the inside, 10mm thick, steel rim was found to be shattered – a victim of the rough bush tracks The Bus had travelled and the heavy load it had carried.

After a wheel change the trip continued. The Team arrived in Perth well after midnight, sixteen and a half hours after leaving Kalbarri.

Some people consider these Expeditions are only the equivalent of two laps around Baldivis – but then none of them have ever been on one. Oh, and females are welcome on the next trip.

alone with all fuel tanks, refuelled and headed off upriver. It was late in the day before the boat crews returned. They had a great trip through magnificent gorge country and declared that it would be an ideal venue for a race.

Everything was loaded for the trip home on Monday. On the way the Team called into Hardabut Rapid to see Mike's boat. The water level had dropped considerably. The flow of water through the rapid had decreased markedly. Even though the power of the water was reduced the rapid was still awesome in extent.

Mike's boat was free, upright and was being held in position by the throw rope jammed between rocks. Cameron, Scott and Kim Thorson spent an hour retrieving the boat and replacing the smile on Mike's face.

Both vehicles returned to the bitumen and the 4WD was hitched to The Bus to start the long haul to Perth. Near Eneabba a rumbling noise was heard coming from the rear axle area on The Bus. Checks at the Roadhouse failed to find anything wrong. After continuing a few kilometres the smell of burning rubber was



QUOTES

"I thought I was going to die." – Mike Lenz.

"I thought it was all over." – Dave Snooks.

"The Murchison makes the Avon look like the last day of the Blackwood." – Shane Kelly.

"The rapid from hell." – Kim Thorson.

"Giant of a river". – Tay Overstone.

"The standing waves were 3 metres high." – John Haynes.

"I'll never worry about going down Emu's again." – Cliff Hills.

"No drama until we saw that there weren't enough heads." – Scott Overstone.

"The boat crews are in trouble. This rapid is 100,000 times worse than anything you've ever seen before – and I'm not exaggerating!" Tony Overstone.

"The standing waves were so big I couldn't see the boats in front." – Cameron Wilkie.

"Nothing on the Avon will ever worry me again." – Bill Breheny.

"They had 30km to do and the current was flowing at 30kmh. After waiting for 2 hours we knew they were in trouble." – Kim Epton.

"It might need stitches." – David Whitney commenting on his cut finger.

"I hit the rock head first. My helmet was torn off by the force of the water. I couldn't do anything about it." – Phil Hargrave.

"I lost a runner." Adrian Bock (the only driver to get through).

Kim Epton

BUSSELTON FESTIVAL

DATES: 28th & 29th Jan, '95

SPONSOR: Dockers Arms, Willagee Hotel

Sat 28th: Vasse River, Council Grounds, Scrutineering 8.00am, Race start 9.00am.

FORMAT: Formula Eights, Bathtubs, Rookies.

Sun 29th: Meelyup Bay. Scrutineering 8am, Race Start 9.00am.

ALL dinghies must carry flares and flags.

ENTRY FEES: \$30.00 single
\$50.00 multiple's
\$10.00 rookies



COMING ATTRACTIONS

ROCKINGHAM REGATTA

12th February 1995

The PDRC is pleased to announce the return of the Rockingham Regatta with a new sponsor and a new look to the race, with lower nomination fees to ensure a great turn out of competitors to the event. The race will be for championship points starting with Formula Eights and Bathtubs at 8.00am and dinghies after lunch (finishing no later than 4pm).

The race has been sponsored by the Rockingham Hotel who have graciously supplied all the trophies for the event and have also supplied marquees, tables and chairs with a liquor license (on the beach). Stateside Hire have supplied 2 male and 2 female toilets for your

convenience. The saving from your entry fees will allow you to purchase an ice cold beer or cold drink, and if you are hungry a beef roll from the spit or a sausage sizzle with an icecream from the Whippy Van for dessert. The kids can have a bounce in the castle and 20% of the days takings will generously be donated to the club.

Apart from being an excellent venue, and racing for championships, the day is set to be a great day for families with 100% of your entry fee going to the purchase of a new rescue boat. So drag out those old "dingey dinghies" and come and have some fun. If you can't race just come down and have a drink and a good time.

LOCATION: Mangles Bay, Rockingham (just to the right of the Garden Island Causeway).

DATE: 12th February 1995

TIME: 8.00am (F8's & Bathtubs) 11.00am (Dinghies)

ENTRY FEE: \$20.00 single
\$25.00 multiple

SPONSORS: Rockingham Hotel & Stateside Hire (let the hotel cater for your alcohol and support your sponsor – and you won't have to walk far to the toilets).

ENQUIRIES: Kim Bovalry 015 448 999 & Gary Evans 018 919 155.

RULE PROPOSAL

Addition to Specifications.

Section 7 – Equipment

7.13 BACKPACKS.

No competitor shall wear a backpack, rucksack or carrybag of any kind on their body during an event, excepting a waist bag or money type belt with a maximum bag dimension of approx. 250 x 100 x 100mm may be used.

PROPOSED: Lynne Berloth

SECONDED: Glen Skewed

BALDIVIS MARATHON

The Baldivis 20+ lap Enduro is definitely ON. The new date is Sunday 19th March 1995, at Baldivis Ski Park. The exact format of the marathon will be announced later, but will include fuelling stops, prop changes etc. Formula Eights and Bathtubs will also be incorporated in the event. Race Directors: Peter Street & Keith Brooker.



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