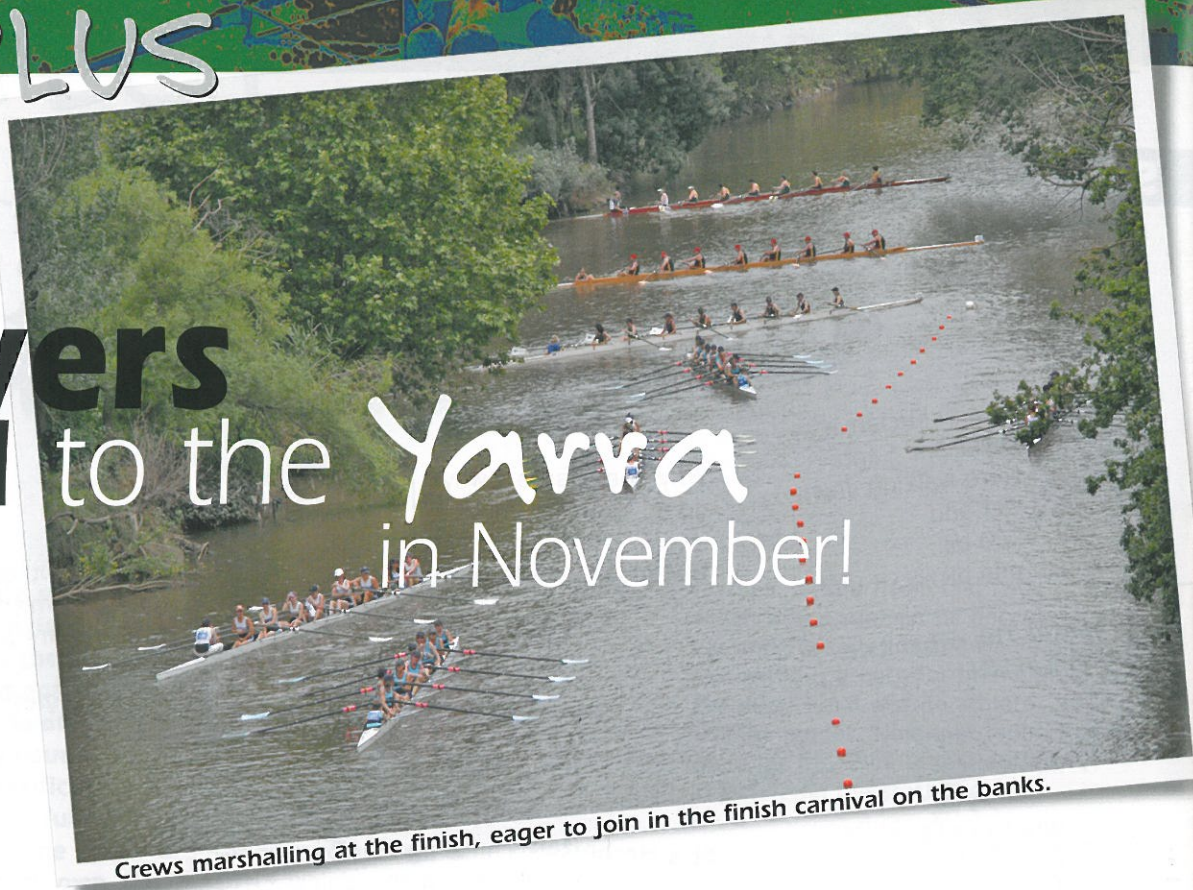


by Donald Gibb

Rowers Head to the Yarra in November!



Crews marshalling at the finish, eager to join in the finish carnival on the banks.

On two Saturdays in November the Yarra River in Melbourne will be the location for two time-trial distance events:

- Melbourne Head on November 19 - Mixed boat sections, rowed over 4.3kms from Herring Island back to the city finishing near Princes Bridge.
- Head of the Yarra on November 26 - 18 sections, only in eights, rowed over 8.6kms from Princes Bridge to the Bridge Road on the border of Hawthorn and Richmond.

While Melbourne Head is a recently introduced event, the 2005 Head of the Yarra will be the 47th; the first commencing in 1957 with 14 crews and last year having 139 eights, 1112 rowers and 139 coxes involved.

The Head of the Yarra in recent years has attracted entries from New Zealand, along with interstate and country crews, 2004 saw entries from Wanganui, Union Boat Club and North Shore from NZ, Riverside (Adelaide) and Port Adelaide in the Masters E+, Pembroke (Adelaide) and a number of crews from Geelong, Bendigo, Colac, and Hamilton.

A feature of 2004 was the introduction of the Stan Jeffrey Memorial Trophy for the Universities Challenge - it was Stan

who suggested the Head of the Yarra to the Hawthorn Rowing Club (established 1877) and the Club has organised the event ever since. Winner in 2004 being the Melbourne University Boat Club with a time of 26 min.37.69 sec.

Other section winners in 2004 were from Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology, Melbourne RC, St Kevins College, Melbourne Grammar, Scotch College, Banks RC, Pembroke RC, Mercantile RC, Essendon RC, Melbourne Ladies College and the Alan Mitchell Club.

The section with the most entries was Female School B with 15 crews, this was won by Melbourne Ladies College with a time of 33min.29.97 seconds, finishing in 80th position overall.

Three other sections had 11 entries: Men's School B (1st Melbourne Grammar), Men's Masters B & C (1st Banks C) and Men's Masters E+ (1st Banks F), this section had the oldest crew from Banks finishing 85th overall with a time of 37 min.40.12 seconds. The average age of the crew was 75 years, the oldest being Rolf Howard in the bow seat, aged 86, also in the crew were Neville Howell (75) bronze medallist in the 1956 Olympic Eight and Don Christie (76) Victorian Kings Cup 1954/55.

For details on entry, boats & accommodation and to view a video of last years action check out the website: www.headoftheyarra.com



Closer to the action on the big bend. Coxswains use all their skills navigating this bending course.

Some Handy Tips for Rowing on the Yarra!

by Robyn Selby-Smith

The 7km stretch of the Yarra that is most heavily used (from Bolte Bridge to Herring Island) has 14 bridges, 6 floating landings, 4 litter traps, 2 channel markers, 1 marina, occasional ski jumps and about 5 corners. Rowers share this part of the river with: kayakers, dragon boats, river taxis and cruisers, speed boats, fishermen and more recently - dead eels. Therefore, it has some simple rules to keep everyone happy.

For most of this section of the Yarra there is one lane going east (next to the south bank) and two going west (centre and north). But keep in mind that some people don't know this and others don't care. Slower boats move to bow side and let faster boats pass on their stroke side. The onus is on the slower boat to warn approaching boats to move over, unless it's a kayaker (because they can't see you coming) or a powered boat (because they don't care that you're coming). School crews, unaware of the difference between a sculler, pair, double, four, quad and eight simply yell "sculler" in all cases to warn them. So whenever "sculler" is yelled out, everyone in ear-shot has to check their course. And it is best to do it quickly. Though the warning is often given with about 100m notice, when there is no chance of a collision, it can also be given with about 2m notice when impact is inevitable. Rowers also have to be aware of the rule that school boy first eights abide by, that they are always in the right and will not stop, or move, for anyone. It is also worth noting that some school crews have no idea of the rules and so their coach on the bank will try and warn rowers of their crew sitting in your path. You usually can't hear what the coach is yelling, so it's best to check your course. Also, be aware that many coaches don't have a megaphone and are simply yelling their coaching tips at their crew, which of course has nothing to do with you at all.

School boy first eights are always in the right and will not stop, or move, for anyone.

You also have to know where you can turn your boat around and where you are allowed to stop. You are not allowed to stop at the finish tower or in front of the boat sheds. You have to go through Princes Bridge to turn, but some people go further. At the other end, some people turn at the railway bridge and some at the island. All the turning areas are about 100m long. Some crews assume that everyone turns at the same spot, so if a crew is heading straight for them they are not concerned, because they are sure they will stop. By the time they realise that the crew is planning to keep going the chance of avoiding a 'T' collision is slim. It's also worth knowing that it is common for people to do pieces over the last 1000m before the finish tower. So, they can line up across the river to do a standing start. But a group of scullers may also do longer pieces, from the island and take up the whole city-bound width of the river. In this case you need to hope you can out-run them.

Fortunately, coaching from a speed boat is not allowed, unless the crew is rowing to the docks or is from Scotch. This means that all the coaches are on bikes on the bike path, which is 1.5m wide and shared with commuters, walkers, joggers and dogs. I'll leave "handy bike-path tips" for another day.

So really, it's all quite simple. Just don't try it at the height of the season, in the dark, when most crews don't have lights! 