

Record  
of  
The Melbourne University Boat Club  
from  
its foundation  
in 1859.  
  
down to  
the year 1870 when records of  
the club are preserved.

The front page and accompanying note to the reconstructed records of the Club 1859-70, completed by John Lang in July 1912

note. In making up a record of Victorian Rowing for the V.R.A. I have an opportunity of writing up some at least of the doings of the M.U.B.C. from the start of the club till 1870 and in this book I propose to chronicle anything I can pick up. Perhaps some day some one will be able to add to the information, and I am leaving a blank page opposite my records for this purpose. It will be however a matter of congratulation that one University Club should have a continuous and almost continuous history.

John Lang  
11.7.1912

# Well Rowed University

MELBOURNE UNIVERSITY BOAT CLUB

THE FIRST 150 YEARS

Judith Buckrich



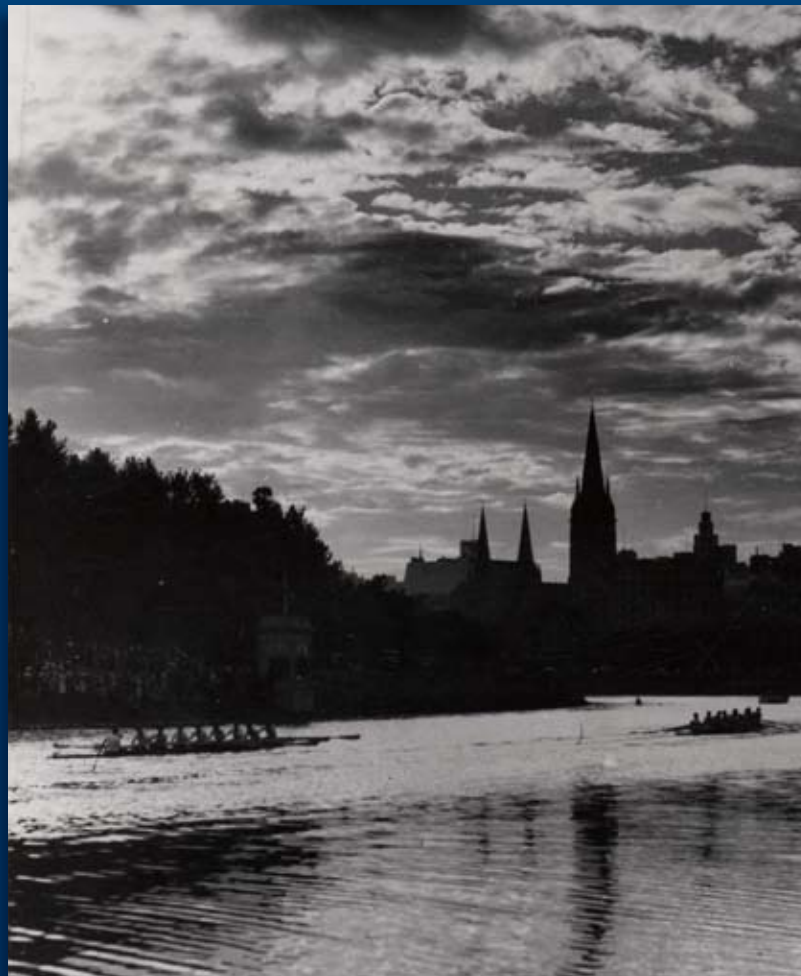
M.U.B.C.

MELBOURNE UNIVERSITY BOAT CLUB INC.



## CHAPTER FIVE

# Another war, another peace 1940–1965



Melbourne rowing scene and city skyline 1946  
*James Guest collection*

From June 1940, when the German war machine struck, and Europe rapidly fell to the German blitzkrieg of ‘lightning war’, Australia was increasingly involved in the conflict. The Club was deeply affected. Many students were enlisting and Melbourne itself was soon enveloped in blackouts and brownouts. Weekday sporting events were restricted by Commonwealth Government controls. At the annual meeting of 7 August 1940 Lex Rentoul, who had been appointed to the RAAF, retired as president but remained Vice-President temporarily. The new President, Hubert T Frederico, moved that a letter of appreciation be sent to Rentoul for his ‘magnificent work’. The meeting ‘emphasised Mr Rentoul’s complete devotion to the Club’s interests over a considerable number of years, when his time, energy, and enthusiasm not only resulted in a higher standard of rowing, but succeeded in eliminating the factions that had been visible previously inside the Club.’<sup>11</sup> He and Dr Hugh Murray, whose services were also acknowledged, were made honorary life members of the Club.

Other Vice-Presidents elected were DRM Cameron, HAK Hunt, Dr Murray, Mr Whitney King and LH Wilson. GH Gossip was voted Captain and Mr Craig, Vice-Captain. Sydney (Syd) R Bell remained Treasurer and JA Blanch re-elected Hon Secretary.

### Making ends meet

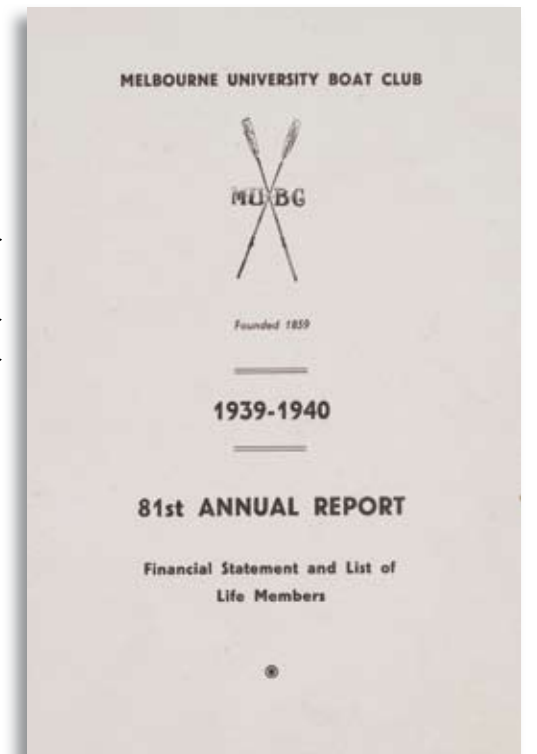
Despite larger issues, the problems of the Club preoccupied the meeting and ‘Mr Cameron ... directed a tirade against the vagaries & intricacies of the finances of the Club which would have to be cleared up shortly owing to the expenditure which must be incurred at the earliest opportunity in repairing and painting the shed.’<sup>12</sup> He put a recommendation that the financial position be reviewed as soon as possible; it was carried unanimously.

There were often costly mistakes made with the Club’s property such as the extra-collegiates best oars being taken for decorating to be given to the intervarsity team instead of an older set. Many members were concerned at these incidents. There seemed to be a gap in communication between those purchasing equipment for the Club and the committee, and sometimes even the Treasurer. There was a real effort made to stop these blunders.

In August, Bell gave a full report on finances and began planning for the repair of the boatshed. The first estimate was that £200 to £250 was needed. Whitney King suggested that the Treasurer ask the Sports Union to put aside £50 a year for depreciation. Bell suggested delaying this action until after the Sports Union meeting of the following week. He offered to donate the paint for the interior of the shed (the possibility of getting money out of the Sports Union seemed unlikely). The Captain and Secretary took it upon themselves to organise clearing the shed.

The Sports Union was indeed reluctant to vote money to the Club and recommended that MUBC’s request be put to the Recreation and Grounds Committee. When it became evident that the Grounds Committee would not meet till the following May, the Club called an urgent meeting for 17 October and decided to send a special delegation to the Sports Union to try and sort the matter out sooner.

The War was not forgotten, and Whitney King suggested that capital from the Simon Fraser Boat Building Fund and other Club funds be invested in War Loans.



OFFICE-BEARERS AND COMMITTEE FOR 1939-1940	
<b>Patron:</b> Dr. H. C. DISHER.	
<b>President:</b> A. L. RENTOUL, Esq.	
<b>Vice-Presidents:</b> Dr. H. M. L. MURRAY, G. G. C. MCKENZIE. D. R. M. CAMERON, Esq. H. T. FREDERICO, Esq. W. H. WHITNEY KING, Esq. H. A. K. HUNT, Esq.	
<b>Captain:</b> C. D. SMITH.	<b>Vice-Captain:</b> G. H. GOSSIP.
<b>Hon. Secretary:</b> J. A. BLANCH.	
<b>Hon. Treasurer:</b> S. R. BELL, Esq.	
<b>Committee:</b> Trinity: J. S. GUEST, H. S. MORONEY. Ormond: C. R. AMPT, J. A. SMIBERT. Queen's: A. W. BURTON, N. L. KEYS. Newman: E. A. ANDRE, G. J. LOUGHRAN. Extra-Collegiate: L. H. WILSON, J. P. NOONAN.	

Front cover and page 4 of the  
1939–40 MUBC Annual Report  
*MUBC papers at University of  
Melbourne Archives*



### The war effort, casual rowing, interfaculty competition and financial restraint

‘As part of the University National Service, the Club has pledged its willingness to assist in every possible way the drive for national fitness. This is developing by an increase in the number of causal rowers who have been seen taking the water of late, in addition to crews training for the Interfaculty Boatrace on July 31st.’ *From the Club’s Annual Report 1939–40*

Interfaculty rowing was then discussed, Mr Wilson said that this event should not be allowed to lapse, especially as the S.R.C. was anxious to hold interfaculty events. After some discussion Mr Hartnell moved, seconded by Mr Wilson, that the event be held on Saturday 27th December, the honourable secretary to organise the race, and the club to provide refreshments. The motion was carried. *From the Club’s minutes, 11 August 1941*

‘Interfaculty rowing was then discussed. Five crews competed and a keg of beer donated by Carlton Brewery assured the success of the meeting. Mr Frederico asked why the club had not provided refreshments as had been decided at a previous meeting. Mr Bell replied that, in view of the large expense of repairing the boatshed, and the club’s attempts for a larger grant, expenses of this nature would create a bad impression on the Ground’s Committee. Mr Frederico did not entirely agree with this, and suggested that the question be again raised when Mr Crawford was present.’ *From the Club’s undated minutes of a committee meeting held in November 1941*

Nothing was done through the university holidays, so when the committee had its first meeting in March 1941, there was an even greater sense of urgency about repairing the shed. The Melbourne City Council’s architect had also urged Bell to act promptly. The question of raising the money was discussed again and Frederico suggested that a copy of Bell’s report be sent to the Vice-Chancellor of the University. Yuncken was appointed Hon Architect and he was urged to get tenders for the repair and painting of the shed.<sup>3</sup>

By the time Frederico, Bell and Hunt visited the Vice-Chancellor, the estimate for completing repairs had risen to £700. They asked for half this amount. He thought this was too much, but Frederico pointed out the cost of the alternative, that is, if the Sports Union accepted proper responsibility for the boatshed (as was the case at Adelaide University) they would have to allocate at least £80 of college subscriptions a year towards its upkeep. The Sports Union would also have to take responsibility for wages, upkeep, rates and the general running expenses of the Club. This would amount to at least £120 per annum. At this point, the Vice-Chancellor promised to do what he could.<sup>4</sup>

Frederico later addressed the Grounds Committee about the matter. The outcome was that the Club had to spend its Building Trust Fund and ask the colleges to contribute £25 each; after that the Grounds Committee would supply the balance of the money.<sup>5</sup> Unfortunately, only Newman College was willing to contribute £25 to the scheme, so MUBC abandoned this idea and decided to spend the entire Building Fund of £217, half of the year’s credit balance (£50 and the £83 grant from the Grounds Committee). The repairs would have to be done for £350.<sup>6</sup>

### Marking time

There was not much other activity at the Club; the War had taken over as the focus of everyone’s lives. The last official intercollegiate race was held on 8 May 1940. Harvey Nicholson, who was to become a stalwart of the Club in the postwar era, coxed the winning Ormond crew in that race. No intervarsity race or formal intercollegiate races were held in 1941; only the annual interfaculty races went ahead on 27 September 1941.

The annual meeting of 8 October saw many of the previous years’ office bearers enlisted in the armed forces. The remaining committee was Colonel HC Disher CBE, Hubert T Frederico, Dr Murray, Captain King, Mr Hunt, Dr Cameron, Dr Wilson and Mr Duane. P Kirby was the new Captain of Boats and QJN Whitehead, Vice-Captain.

In order to facilitate the financial management of the Club, its rules were changed so that a member of the Grounds Committee could come onto the MUBC Committee. This was the first step towards the true integration of the Club into the Sports Union.

Only the interfaculty race was held again in 1941–2. Five competing crews enjoyed a gift from Carlton and United Breweries—a keg of beer ‘assured the success of the meeting.’<sup>7</sup> With no other races planned, there was no meeting until 21 May 1942 when money was again the focal point of discussion. Because the colleges were not using the sheds they wanted to cancel or at least greatly reduce their subscriptions. Bell pointed out that there were still expenses such as caretaker Gilligan’s wages, electricity bills, repairs, rates and leasing from the Melbourne City Council. Bell suggested that this might be an excellent time to build up the Club’s finances, so that after the War new boats could be purchased. Mr Pryor of Queen’s College didn’t think the idea of new boats for future crews

was of much interest to present college members, underlining the long-term problem of a Club where members, by definition, were only temporary. Bell then pointed out that if the colleges lowered their subscriptions, it was likely the Sports Union would follow suit. In the end a reduction was proposed—the reduced subscription to be determined at a future meeting—and Bell prepared a statement of probable expenditure under war conditions.<sup>8</sup> The decision was to halve the usual subscription of £1 is but for one year only, to be reviewed.<sup>9</sup>

The committee also discussed the problem of Sunday rowing. Sunday was the caretaker’s only day off. The Club was now used on Saturday afternoons for military training, and weekday practise was curtailed. The committee resolved that ‘Gilligan be spoken to, to persuade him to open the sheds.’<sup>10</sup>

At the annual meeting held on 22 October 1942, Frederico was pleased to report that the sheds were now in good condition. The rest of his report highlighted the death of Gilligan over the long vacation of 1941–2. He had served the Club for twenty years. The absence of a caretaker soon led to the theft of money from the sheds during training and racing sessions.<sup>11</sup> In August 1943, the Club gave permission to the Naval Auxiliary Patrol to use the rooms formerly occupied by Gilligan. This was advantageous in two ways, it prevented theft and the Patrol undertook to renovate part of the shed. The Melbourne Grammar School boathouse caretaker also did small jobs and boat repairs.

The Captain of Boats, DH Davis, resigned when he entered the navy. Generally, most rowers left the Club soon after they completed their degrees, but at this time, they left immediately. Davis was replaced by KC Westfold-Scott. There was still no formal rowing activity in 1943 but a casual intercollege race ‘to Como Island and back’ on 7 August resulted in the Ormond crew beating Trinity by twenty seconds in a time of 34mins 19 secs.

The annual report for 1943–4 listed 138 members serving in the armed forces. Three had been killed in action: Pilot Officer TN Rowe, Surg-Lieut Dentist MC Townsend (killed on *HMAS Sydney* in the battle with the German raider, *HSK Kormoran*) and Lieut J.L. Kenny.

There were four prisoners of war: Lieut-Col A Spowers MC DSO (mentioned in despatches), Captain IGG McCormick, Lieut PJ Eckersley and Major J Palandri.<sup>12</sup>

### End of the War approaches

The strength of tradition and the desire to return to normal programming was evident in the re-establishment, in early 1944, of the intercollegiate boat race and the John Lang Cup. The races were held between 26 and 28 April.<sup>13</sup> The Captain of Boats, LA Cartwright, reported:

Since the official opening of the University on March 7th, the boatsheds have been the scene of vigorous activity. The college crews have been training ... & a good number of newcomers have been trying their skill at the noble art.

The sheds are in good condition, but some of the equipment is beginning to show signs of strain, owing to the inability to replace & repair effectively during the war years ...

An Air Force Regatta was held on the river recently & several Women’s Auxiliary Australian Air Force WAAAF crews were given permission to use the sheds on that day

### Colonel Allan Spowers (1892–1968)

Allan Spowers, according to the *Australian Dictionary of Biography Online*, was ‘tall and sparely built, with penetrating grey-blue eyes and a commanding voice.’ (see *photograph on page 85*). He rowed for MUBC immediately before and after the First World War and was a staunch member of the Club’s committee for a number of years. He interrupted his university studies to travel to England where he enlisted in the British Army and was commissioned in the East Lancashire Regiment on 4 May 1915. He fought at Suvla Bay, Gallipoli and won the Military Cross (1916) for leading his men in a night-attack during which he was twice wounded. He was also awarded the Distinguished Service Order (1916) and was mentioned in dispatches.

Returning to Melbourne, he worked as a journalist on the *Argus* and *Australasian* and within a few years he was a director of the company that ran them. He married Rosamond Sandys Lumsdaine, a niece of AB (Banjo) Paterson.

He was in the Middle-East during the Second World War and was twice mentioned in dispatches for his services. His leadership was described as ‘outstandingly meritorious’ and he was awarded a Bar (1945) to his DSO. On 12 July 1942 he became a prisoner of war when his jeep was inadvertently driven into enemy territory. He was freed in Germany in March 1945 and was repatriated in August.

The following obituary was given by Russell Keon-Cohen in the Club’s 18 June 1968 minutes: ‘Allan Spowers rowed for Geelong Grammar and Trinity, was in Clive Disher’s 1914 crew, and stroked the first ‘varsity crew after the war. He was eminent in war, not undistinguished in peace, wrought mightily in the cause of charity and was principally memorable for his great personal charm. I remember him with affection.’





1944 Dental crew, winners of John Grice Shield: (standing left to right) FB Heriot(3), R Duncan (2), F Parkes (5), I Todd (4), D Ramsay (bow), (seated left to right) RG Purdue (stroke), A Malcolm (cox), CN Halkyard (7), Inset M Doyle (6)

**PJ Gilligan, caretaker 1923–1942**  
Gilligan repaired boats, kept the boathouse operational, lived on the premises, and was an excellent craftsman, being able to do most repairs that needed to be done. He was really valued by the Club and looked after by Dr Disher when he was ill. In the 1942–1943 annual report the Secretary, KS Michael noted that he would be ‘long remembered for his spontaneous verse and his unfailing memory for old faces.’  
One matter for which Gilligan became renowned was his implacable opposition to Sunday rowing. The first mention of the topic appears in the minutes in June 1928 (see p.114 above). For the next fourteen years there are periodic references in the minutes to various schemes to permit limited use of the sheds on Sunday, and also references to a number of complaints registered by Gilligan over the years concerning the use of the shed on Sundays by some groups (often one or other of the colleges, particularly Newman) who had obtained keys by one means or another.

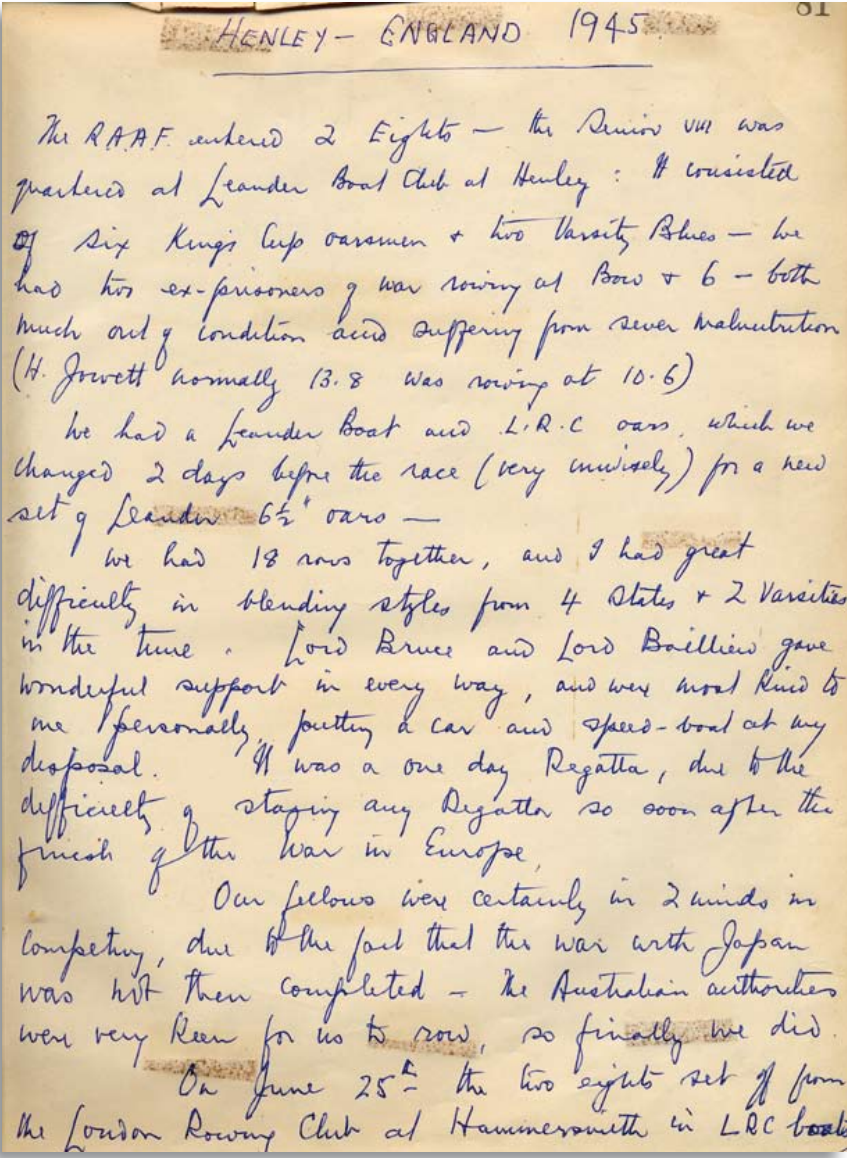
& despite the fact that many of our members were rowing that afternoon, everything went off smoothly ...  
This afternoon a working bee was held in the shed & it was thoroughly cleaned out in preparation for this season, which I trust will be a pleasant one to all.<sup>14</sup>

At the annual meeting of October 1944, Dr Hugh Murray was re-elected President (he had been elected to replace Hubert Frederico in the previous year) and Brigadier Disher remained Patron. Bell informed the meeting that the Naval Auxiliary Patrol was about to be disbanded and would leave the sheds. The Secretary, GW Hiscock, noted that the War had taken a striking turn for the better and all of the university sporting clubs were more active.<sup>15</sup>  
The annual report again listed members serving with the armed forces which now included eight additional names. Two more had been killed in action since the previous year: Captain W Sherlock and Pilot-Officer T Laidlaw. The full rollcall of enlisted men is contained in Appendix IV.  
Lex Rentoul’s absence was already felt at the 1943–4 annual meeting of 10 October 1944, when old college rivalries wrecked the meeting and a special general meeting had to be called. The President demanded that such behaviour should cease and said that such methods always resulted in ‘unsuitable’ men being elected to the committee. There was some discussion as to whether ‘unfinancial’ men had voted, and confusion about who was appropriate to be elected and who was not. Many blamed the outdated constitution and the resulting lack of understanding of due process.  
Finally new elections were held and unfinancial members were told they ‘need not vote.’<sup>16</sup> This seemed to satisfy everyone and on 20 November the committee decided to bring the constitution up to date. Six months later a subcommittee, consisting of the President and one representative from each college, was appointed to deal with it. They were given two months to come up with suitable suggestions, especially in regard to the election of Captain and Vice-Captains and their corresponding duties. Discussion commenced immediately about whether the Captain was responsible for college as well as MUBC equipment in the shed, with some suggesting he should be responsible and others opposing this suggestion, as he had no rights regarding equipment that was not controlled by the Club.<sup>17</sup>

1945 Royal Henley Regatta

Another milestone in Lex Rentoul’s illustrious coaching career was reached when he was invited to coach the senior RAAF crew which competed in the first Royal Henley Regatta to be held since the beginning of the War, on 7 July 1945. The War had only just finished in Europe, but was still continuing against Japan. In a letter to Clive Disher twenty-five years later, Lex recalled:

When the war terminated in Europe Mr Bruce [SM Bruce, former Prime Minister of Australia who was then Australian High Commissioner in England, and who later became the first Australian member of the House of Lords as Viscount Bruce of Melbourne] sent for me and said ‘Rentoul, I want an Australian Eight to row in the



first post war Henley—if only to emulate the example of the First AIF Crew and the King’s Cup.’ I replied that I did not in fact know one single serviceman in England who had rowed. Bruce said: “That is your problem, not mine—get cracking.” To cut a long story short, I managed to produce two eights and a four ...<sup>18</sup>

The story of the regatta is taken up by Lex in his own words:

The RAAF entered two eights—the senior eight was quartered at Leander Boat Club at Henley: it consisted of six King’s Cup oarsmen & two Varsity Blues—we had ex-prisoners of war rowing at bow & 6—both much out of condition and suffering from severe malnutrition (H Jowett normally 13.8 was rowing at 10.6) ... Lord Bruce and Lord Baillieu gave wonderful support in every way, and were most kind to me personally, putting a car and speedboat at my disposal ... Our fellows were certainly in two minds in competing, due to the fact that the War with Japan was not then



Lex Rentoul’s notes on the 1945 Royal Henley Regatta, with accompanying programme  
Lex Rentoul collection



completed. The Australian authorities were very keen for us to row, so finally we did ... twenty-three eights started in the Danesfield Cup, presented by the Henley Stewards in lieu of the Grand Challenge Cup. Both RAAF eights started in the Cup ... [The Second RAAF crew was beaten by two feet in its heat. The First RAAF crew won its first heat against Metropolitan Police by two lengths and its second heat against Oxford by two feet] ... In the Final Imperial (London University) beat RAAF by  $\frac{3}{4}$  of a length, with Jesus, Cambridge, 2 lengths back. Imperial had been together for fifteen months, being composed of men in protected jobs (not on active service). Our 6 man Jowett, who had collapsed after the semi-final, very nearly collapsed 100 yards from the finish of the final and did extremely well to go over the line, when he did collapse, and was “out” for nearly an hour. The three races in the one day proved exceptionally severe for the two prisoners of war in our boat, and I voted against the crew rowing in the final for this reason. However, I was outvoted by the committee. The crew had the makings of a first class international crew, given a few more weeks of training.<sup>19</sup>

Peace at last

At a committee meeting on 4 October 1945, it was reported that ‘the [Melbourne] City Council was thinking of pulling down the sheds of the riverside clubs and replacing them either with one large building, or with gardens. In the latter case, the clubs would have to procure another site further up the river.’<sup>20</sup> Fortunately, nothing seems to have come of this proposal.

At the 86th annual meeting held on 19 October 1945 there were about forty members present. The Secretary was pleased to report that ‘the world had been relieved of the clouds which had hung over our heads for almost six years.’ The constitution was also discussed and changes proposed.

Certificate of appreciation to MUBC for the loan of its sheds and equipment to Richmond Rowing Club following the disastrous fire of 1926 which destroyed that club’s sheds

Recovery from War

Preparations were underway for the return of many men from the War. There was a sense of urgency, and Bell urged that problems and plans be ‘attacked systematically and not in a haphazard fashion as had been done in the past.’ The committee meeting of 2 November 1945 noted that: ‘... in view of the large numbers of students expected next year, all the equipment should be repaired and re-organised ... It was also decided that more keys to the boatsheds be cut, and that the building be put in order.’<sup>21</sup>

Intercollegiate races took place for the first time since 1941. With no resident caretaker the sheds were broken into and several boats badly damaged. Richmond Rowing Club had kindly offered to lend boats until those damaged could be repaired or replaced, thus repaying the favour afforded to that club when MUBC lent Richmond the use of its sheds and equipment following the disastrous fire in the Richmond sheds in October 1926.<sup>22</sup>

By the following March of 1946, when the Club had its first meeting of the year, a caretaker had been engaged to live at the boatshed and work two half-days a week. He was paid £1 a week. The boats were being repaired ‘and the colleges were to be charged appropriately when the final cost was known.’<sup>23</sup> Bell also said he had written to the colleges asking for their lists of members.



TELEPHONE :  
WHITERACE 9341-  
London Wall 1787

*Secretary's Office,*

74, ST. JAMES'S STREET,  
LONDON S.W.1-

13th July, 1945.

Winchester House,  
Old Broad Street,  
London, E.C.2.

Squadron Leader A.L. Rentoul,  
R.A.A.F. Liaison Office,  
Air Ministry,  
Adastral House,  
Kingsway, W.C.2.

Dear Rentoul,

I must say that your letter has given me very great pleasure and when I have copies sent to the others concerned I am sure they will feel great appreciation of your kind remarks. It was a great pleasure to meet your boys and I must say they were an exceedingly attractive lot of fellows and I hope we shall see some of them back here before very long.

I am trying to fix with Clive and Sir Angus Gillan an evening for our discussion and, as soon as I get a probable date, I will give you a ring

I can only add the pleasure I derived from our conversations together and your keenness for the international character of rowing in the future has given me decided encouragement.

Yours sincerely,

*Harcourt Gold*

Letter of appreciation to Lex Rentoul from the famous Henley Royal Regatta secretary, Harcourt Gold  
Lex Rentoul collection. Reproduced with kind permission of the Stewards of Henley Royal Regatta



Intervarsity resumes

The Secretary of the Adelaide University Boat Club had written to say that the first postwar intervarsity race was to be held at Mannum, South Australia on 8 June 1946. The crew would be selected after the John Lang Cup. College races were not to be held until 8–10 May which gave little time for training—the difference in distance between the two races was quite marked and this was not really enough time for a crew to prepare. But there was now no Lex Rentoul to ensure early preparation. As before, the intervarsity crew would be selected from the best men in the intercollegiate and John Lang Cup races. One of the Vice-Presidents, GK Duane, stated that ‘It could not have been selected earlier as the college races would lose their interest’<sup>24</sup> and ‘... Bell pointed out that a coach should be available for some time as it might take years to win.’<sup>25</sup> Duane was selected coach and he and two other men, Colin (CD) Smith and CR Ampt, were asked to select the crew.

In fact MUBC won the first postwar intervarsity race, with an eight stroked by the evergreen CD Smith, and the Club decided to hold a celebratory dinner to try to bring back past members. The question of presentation of oars to the winning crew took some deliberation because new oars now cost £4 each and painting them cost £3 an oar. Alternatives were suggested such as cups or smaller oars (in Sydney they presented the blades with the shafts cut down). The matter was still not resolved in September when the Club met to decide on the date of the annual meeting and, among other things, the allocation of Blues.

The most important decision made at the 1946 annual meeting was that Melbourne could not host the intervarsity on the Yarra because no suitable and fair course could be found. This was the result of wartime activity that had affected the river and the port. Also, Spencer Street Bridge had cut off the full three-mile course and there were no speedboats available for coaching. In March 1947, the committee suggested that intervarsity should be rotated between the Penrith, Mannum and Huon courses each year.

The Australian Union of Sports Associations suggested that the 1947 race take place in Tasmania on the Huon, but the Tasmanian club refused as they had not resumed postwar activity. The 1947 race was therefore held in Sydney at Penrith. Sydney University won and Melbourne came second, with CD Smith stroking the crew for the fifth time. All the states except Tasmania were present. Western Australia came third, Adelaide fourth and Queensland fifth. This began a winning streak for Sydney which lasted until 1950.

Back to normality

In the meantime, the new boatshed caretaker ‘had been placed in legal confinement’ so a replacement for him had to be found.<sup>26</sup> The Club’s records do not reveal the offence for which the caretaker had been found guilty.

In July 1947, there appears the first of a series of terse comments in the Club’s minutes concerning its ‘dissatisfaction with the response of the faculties to the interfaculty race.’<sup>27</sup> The annual report for 1948–9, for example, stated that in relation to the race for the Sir John Grice Shield, ‘Only three crews were entered—Meds., Engineers & Architects ... as has been the case in the last few years, the race was not treated very seriously.’<sup>28</sup>

The annual meeting of 1 October 1947 elected Bryan Keon-Cohen as President, continuing a family tradition of involvement in the Club’s activities both on and off the water.

As the year came to an end, the committee was again discussing the problem of securing adequate training time for the intervarsity race. It was resolved to instruct (not ask) the colleges to arrange the intercollegiate races for as early in 1948 as possible.<sup>29</sup>

The committee focus on this issue at the end of each year rarely led to any continued solution. The University closed in November and did not open again until March. It had been less problematic briefly in the 1920s, when MUBC members participated in various summer events, but with the focus in the 1930s and after the War shifting heavily to intercollegiate and, to a lesser degree interfaculty competition, it was impossible to keep the momentum going through summer. Until that situation changed, the problem of allocating sufficient training time for intervarsity remained. The committee thought at least six weeks was needed between the intercollegiate and intervarsity races.

Colin (CD) Smith

Colin (CD) Smith had stroked the winning Head of the River crew for Geelong Grammar in 1935 and prewar MUBC intervarsity crews of 1938 (second), 1939 (first) and 1940 (first). According to some, he would have been selected to represent Australia in 1940, had the War not intervened. During the War he served in the Royal Navy as a submariner, one of the most dangerous of all branches of the service.

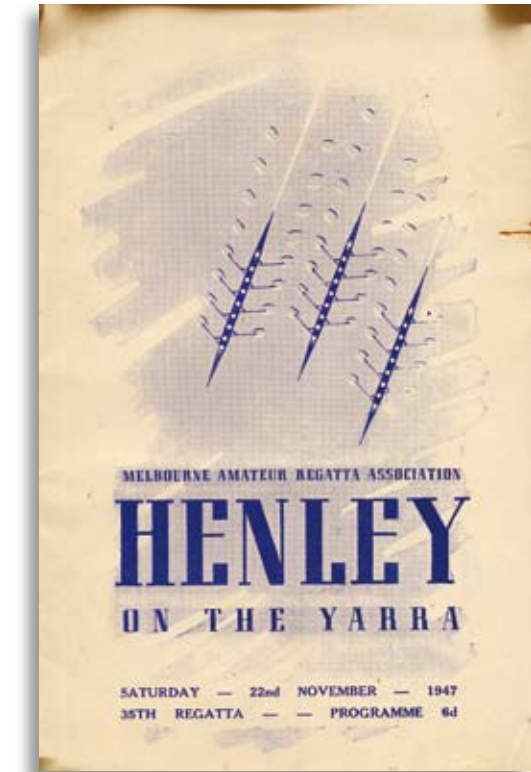
Having survived the War, he resumed his rowing career and stroked the intervarsity crews of 1946 (first) and 1947 (second). In 1948 he was selected to row for Australia, at the London Olympics, in the 2 seat of the Australian coxed four, which was coached by the well-known Victorian oarsman and coach, Ray Todd: ‘A fact that was remarkable as it was significant was that he [CD Smith] rowed unorthodox or Fairbairn style ... whereas the other three members of the crew rowed Victorian orthodox.’<sup>30</sup>

Smith was held in high regard in and out of rowing circles. His own rowing technique was described by a fellow member of the 1939 and 1940 Melbourne intervarsity eights as: ‘a stroke with a magical rhythm, and in addition, rowed as powerful a puddle as anyone in any crew. No shaved blade for him!’<sup>31</sup>

Club rowing resumes

Many members were enthusiastic about the Club participating in VRA regattas over the summer. Bryan Keon-Cohen thought the Club should participate in as many events as possible. The colleges were to be canvassed for crews to enter the Barwon Regatta of 6 March 1948 and the Ballarat Regatta following.<sup>32</sup> The need for year long rowing was apparent.

The 1948 intervarsity race was planned for Perth. The date was fixed for 5 June. The Sports Union was asked to subsidise the crew’s fares and a request for the use of a boat was put to Perth so the Club would not have to transport one from Melbourne. The Sports Union supported the Club’s request.



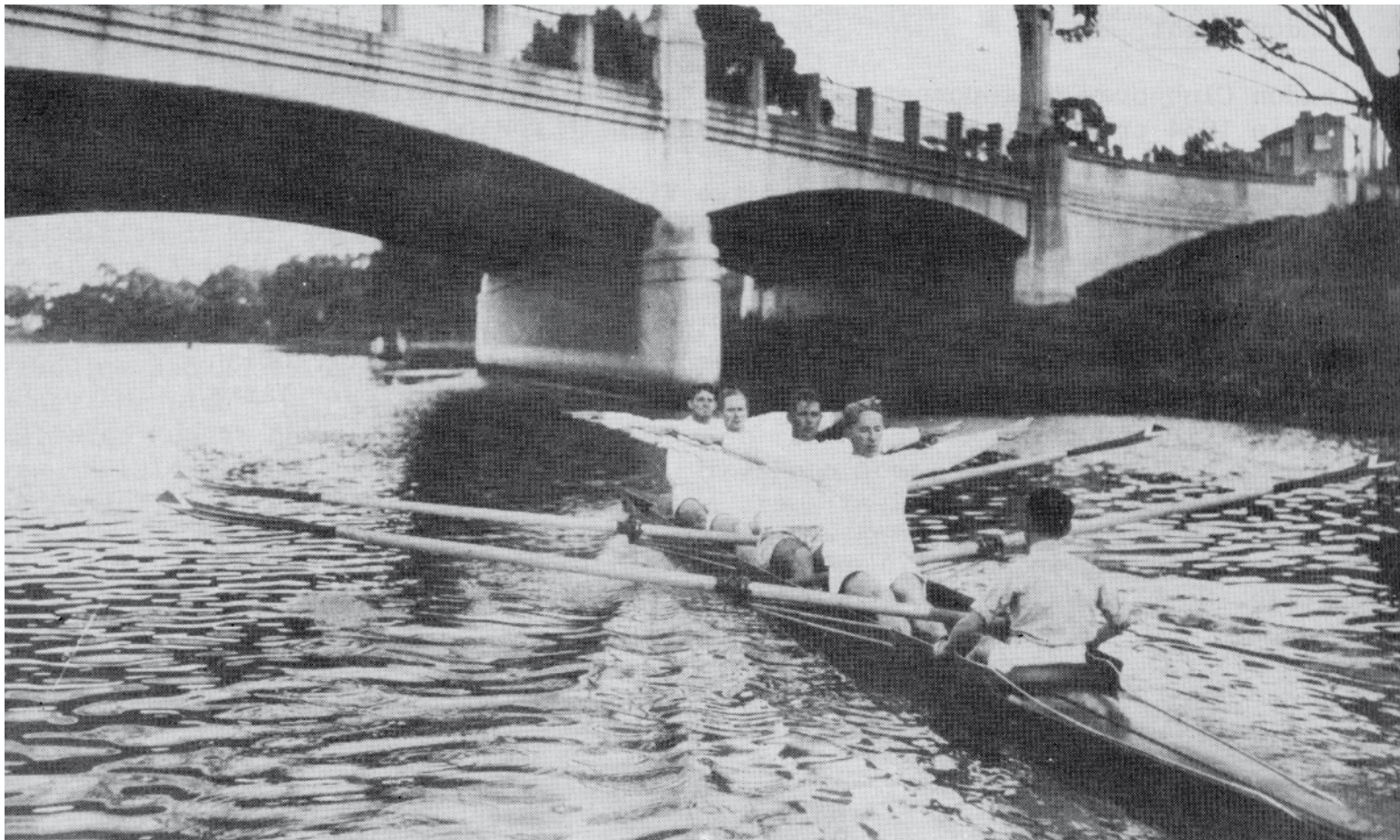
TOP: 1947 Henley-on-Yarra programme

BOTTOM: 1948 Medical crew, winners of John Grice Shield: (standing left to right) DR Hocking (bow), AS Wood (7), JR Gutteridge (2), O McK Coltman (4), HL Williams (3), AC Cole (cox), (seated left to right) LC Weber (6), KV Bailey (stroke), VG Vivian (coach) WP Austin (5)



1946 winning MUBC intervarsity eight (Mannum, Murray River, South Australia) GJ Duane, coach: (standing left to right) KB Nelson (4), JM Ferguson (3), MG Whiteside (2), MJ Scriven (bow), (seated left to right) WLM Armstrong (5), CD Smith (stroke), AL Bennett (cox), JA McCallum (7), H Stretton (6)





1948 Australian four training on the Yarra for the London Olympics, with Colin (CD) Smith of MUBC in the 2 seat, performing what was called a ‘hot Toddy’ (named after their coach, Ray Todd)  
*From Rowing in Victoria, p.20*

The obvious advantage of participation in summer regattas was clear and the committee decided immediately after the Perth 1948 intervarsity race (which was won by Sydney University, MUBC coming third) to begin selection of the 1949 crew. The implication was that the men participating in summer regattas would gain experience and race toughness, as well as form friendships with members of other rowing clubs. The coach, CR Ampt, thought that two crews should be selected by the end of term two, containing likely members of the 1949 intervarsity crew. He also thought that many other crews should train for regattas. All these ideas were supported by the committee.<sup>33</sup>

Although the makeup of the University population changed after the War because of scholarships provided to returned servicemen, the majority of boat club members were university college residents who had come from Melbourne and Geelong private schools.

At the 1948 annual meeting Brigadier HC Disher CBE was re-elected Patron and Bryan Keon-Cohen remained President of the Club. Vice-Presidents were CR Ampt, JA Forbes, R Daffy, Charles (Charlie) Saleh, W Balcombe Griffiths and Harvey Nicholson. This was the first appearance of Nicholson on the committee. Saleh and Nicholson were soon to become important coaches.<sup>34</sup> At the following meeting on 31 October, selectors were appointed for the 1949 crew. They were Charlie Saleh, CD Smith and Harvey Nicholson, a formidable trio.<sup>35</sup> Another important future coach, David Salmon, was asked to join the Club. Salmon was born in 1929 and grew up in Geelong where he attended Geelong College and coxed the eight in 1946. This was also the first year that he coxed for Trinity

College where he had friends. His father and grandfather were also oarsmen. He was never a Melbourne University student. He coxed the winning Victorian eight at the 1947 King’s Cup regatta on the Swan River in Western Australia. He coached for Trinity from 1947 to 1949, when he also coached Corio Bay Rowing Club, and coxed twice more for Victoria in the King’s Cup.

CD Smith had strong ideas about training and the installation of a gas hot water system—a gift from the Melbourne Rowing Club in gratitude to MUBC for having allowed them use of the shed and boats—was timely as cold showers were a definite no-no on his list.<sup>36</sup> He was also articulate and analytical about rowing training and a promoter of ‘scientific attitude’ with regard to sleep, diet, blood tests, exercise, building up endurance, relaxation, breathing, balance, warming up and cooling off, boils, use of soap, boats and oars and more.<sup>37</sup>

A full report of the 1949 Brisbane intervarsity regatta given at the annual meeting showed the intensive training now being undertaken towards the three-mile race. Unfortunately, on the day before the race, the weather deteriorated so much that an alternative course of two miles at Bulimba Reach had to be used for the race. In the face of the unpredictable weather in most Australian cities in June, the Captain of MUBC suggested shortening the race and finding more sheltered courses. He was not heeded. After a good battle, Sydney was too strong and defeated Melbourne by two lengths, with Queensland a length behind in third place.

1949–51 seasons

The 1949 season was marked by the gradual return of MUBC to regatta rowing, and the John Lang Cup race between the winning college and an extra-collegiate crew saw the entrance of a first and second extras crew for the first time since the War.

There was some concern in the Club about the low joining rate from the general university population, considering there were now 6000 students. It was put down to the ‘apathy of the University as a whole towards rowing at the present time.’<sup>38</sup> There was also some concern at the lack of equipment for practise by non-college students. The colleges had their own boats and could practise any time. There was little they could do but conclude that the four colleges were the backbone of MUBC ‘at the present time’.<sup>39</sup>

The intercollegiate competition for the Mervyn Bournes Higgins Trophy was held from this time on the new Henley course of one mile. In 1949 Queen’s was coached by Jim Ferguson, and David Salmon coached the Trinity crew. Coach for the extra-collegiate first crew defeated by Queen’s for the John Lang Cup was Harvey Nicholson.<sup>40</sup>

Jim Ferguson had rowed in the winning 1946 intervarsity crew and became a prominent coach at MUBC. He recalls that after the War and up to 1949:

... there was little MUBC action in club rowing. I was sitting next to Ian Everist in lectures. We would write lists of possible eight-oared crews, and pass these lists to each other. We realised that there was great talent in the university, so we decided to boat a crew, with me, an undergraduate, as coach. As the stroke, Ian Everist was a senior King’s Cup oarsman, we had to enter club races as a senior eight. In the 1949–50 season we were undefeated in senior eights and became Champion Senior Eight of Victoria. Most of the crew rowed in the King’s Cup with Ray Todd as coach.<sup>41</sup>



Charles (Charlie) Saleh

In a letter to Club President Peter Antonie from the late Jim Ferguson, Jim paid the following

tribute to Charlie. ‘He made an important contribution to Victorian rowing. It is sad to say that many people were quick to mock him because of his Palestinian heritage and religion. He was a good Australian born man, who lived by Christian teachings, without any denominational bias. Charlie would be considered too old to be a front line soldier, but he fought in the Middle East and New Guinea, before he was discharged, suffering from tropical diseases and with symptoms of war neurosis. A list of coaches who rowed under Charlie’s coaching is an indication of his influence during the first three decades after the War. Albert Bell, the Searle brothers, the Shears brothers, Bill Wallace rowed under him. Bob Aitken and Jim Ferguson rowed under him at Geelong College and Mercantile ... Saleh had good experience as a sculler, lightweight stroke, and coach at the Sydney Rowing Club.’<sup>42</sup>





1949–50 MUBC Champion Victorian Senior Eight: GC Gault (bow), AC Kingsbury (2), O McK Coltman (3), RW Buntine (4), DS Macglashan (5), LC Weber (6), AG Barrett (7), IC Everist (stroke), AL Bennett (cox), JM Ferguson & CG Saleh (coaches), DS Gibson (rowed bow in senior eights, Ballarat)

Training for the 1950 intervarsity race began eight months before the race in September 1949 under the direction of Jim Ferguson. The five members of the crew and cox—selected to represent Victoria in the 1950 King’s Cup—were also selected in the MUBC intervarsity crew. Intersarsity was delayed until after the King’s Cup to allow men to participate in both events. Jim Ferguson then recommenced coaching the intervarsity crew. The intervarsity race was held in Melbourne and the crew took up quarters in Ormond College so they could be together for the last ten days before the race. On 3 June conditions were perfect. All six universities participated and Melbourne won. Many put the achievement down to the efforts of Jim Ferguson and Charlie Saleh ‘who gave advice and assistance throughout the season.’<sup>43</sup>

A progressive breeze blew in 1950 when the John Lang Cup was won by an extra-collegiate crew coached by Harvey Nicholson whose influence on MUBC was becoming noticeable. In the ensuing twenty years he would become a formidable power in the Club. But the Club was not so progressive as to support a Sydney University proposal for a Women’s Varsity Race to be rowed in 1951:

The committee of MUBC, whilst recognising the growing popularity of women’s rowing in other states, is taking a negative attitude towards it, but would be prepared to assist any women’s club which might be formed here.<sup>44</sup>

The Club was not alone among other universities in adopting this attitude; there having been a meeting of intervarsity captains, secretaries, coaches and strokes in Melbourne on 31 May 1950 in which there was considerable discussion, but no resolution regarding the establishment of a women’s intervarsity competition.<sup>45</sup> In the meantime, the boatshed was again undergoing repairs under the direction of architect W Balcombe Griffiths, a Club Vice-President and, in later years, President, Patron and very generous benefactor. The floor and side walls were replaced around the shower area and a new drain was put down by the Melbourne City Council.<sup>46</sup>

There was another election of officers at the first meeting after the 1950 annual general meeting and Bell remained Treasurer. The position of Secretary was now filled by O McK Coltman. A vote of thanks was given to Bryan Keon-Cohen ‘... for his work over the last three years and the heights to which the Club had risen under his encouragement ...’<sup>47</sup>

In November the Club received news from the Sports Union that Ansett Airlines would give a fifty per cent reduction to all students travelling to participate in intervarsity sporting events. This was particularly important to prevent exhaustion from long overland travels before intervarsity races. Air travel was still a luxury in these years and remained so until at least 1967, in which year some of the intervarsity team travelled to Sydney by overnight bus.

A sign of growing enthusiasm for rowing in Melbourne was a letter from the Secretary of the Henley Regatta Association saying there were so many entries in the 1950 maiden four event that preliminary heats were to be held. Henley was close to exam time and two students complained that they had exams on the day.

During the course of a discussion on the fleet, the matter of the Club accommodating novice rowers was raised. Harvey Nicholson felt strongly that boats should be made available to anyone who wanted to learn to row. Most MUBC rowers learnt to row at private schools and little if anything was done to assist men arriving at the Club who had never rowed. Nicholson felt strongly that this was the Club’s responsibility. The Captain of Boats, Barrett, thought novices were not interested in MUBC, but said he was quite willing ‘to come down to train them two or three nights a week.’<sup>48</sup>

1951 intervarsity dead heat

The Secretary’s report for the 1950–1 annual meeting noted that the ‘season was not as successful as the last in the actual winning of races, but an encouraging number of new oarsmen made an appearance particularly at the end of last year and should form a good foundation for future crews.’ The intervarsity crew for the 1951 race held on the Huon in Tasmania comprised JA Gobbo (bow), DR Sutton (2), JD Bailey (3), MFA Robertson (4), O Mck Coltman (5), RW Buntine (6), AG Barrett (7), JS Edwards (stroke), JN Button (cox) and JM Ferguson (coach).



1950 winning MUBC intervarsity eight (Lower Yarra) Jim Ferguson, coach: (standing left to right) GR McLeish (bow), AC Kingsbury (2), AL Bennett (cox), O McK Coltman (3), RW Buntine (4), (seated left to right) DS Macglashan (5), IC Everist (stroke), JM Ferguson (coach), AG Barrett (7), LC Weber (6)



**James (Jim) Mephan Ferguson**  
Jim rowed in the First VIII at Geelong College in 1941, coached by Charlie Saleh. After service in New Guinea during the war

Jim entered Melbourne University and Ormond College studying for a degree in mechanical engineering. He rowed in the winning college First VIII in 1946 and 1947 and also rowed in the first post war MUBC winning intervarsity crew in 1946. Jim’s special contribution to MUBC was as a coach. He coached winning Queen’s College crews in 1948 and 1949 as well as Ormond College in 1950 and 1951. In 1949, he coached the winning MUBC Grand Challenge Senior Eight. While in Queensland for his wedding that crew, coached by Charlie Saleh won the 1950 Victorian Championships. Jim coached the winning intervarsity crew in 1950, and also coached the 1951 intervarsity crew that featured in the only ever dead-heat (with Sydney University).

Jim introduced rowing to Bell Park High who were ultimately successful at the High Schools’ Regatta. Jim’s sister Helen married Edward ‘Weary’ Dunlop and his nephew Gus was a champion MUBC stroke in 1968–69. Jim died in 2008 aged 86.





1951 MUBC intervarsity eight which dead heated for first place with Sydney University (Huon River): (standing left to right) JD Bailey (3), JA Gobbo (bow), JN Button (cox), DR Sutton (2), MFA Robertson (4), (seated left to right) RW Buntine (6), JS Edwards (stroke), JM Ferguson (coach), AG Barrett (7), O McK Coltman (5)

The race was the first in intervarsity history to be declared a dead heat (with Sydney).<sup>49</sup> By any measure this was a truly remarkable race, taking place over the three-mile course on the Huon River. Western Australia came third. Jim Ferguson and Charlie Saleh coached the crew and both men had a major influence on all the crews they coached, not least this one:

The course on the Huon was excellent and is situated at Franklin, which is a few miles from Huonville. The river is very wide and almost straight for three miles.

The effect of two rows each day was shown immediately. The crew made great progress and as race day approached, were rowing very well. Conditions were very good though the weather was a little cold. Several courses were rowed and the crews form in these rows consistently improved.

Prior to the race heavy rains fell and on the day of the race there was a very fast following stream. To get used to this, the crew went out on the morning of the race and practised several starts, which later proved invaluable in the race.

Apart from the very fast following stream, conditions were ideal. The crews were anchored to a wire hauser across the river by ropes held by the coxswains.

At the start, Melbourne benefiting from their practise starts that morning, handled the difficult first few strokes very well and immediately stood out. After about 300 yards, Melbourne were well clear, about one and a half lengths from WA, with Sydney third. Melbourne soon dropped their rating from the initial 38 to a steady 33. From the half mile on Melbourne maintained their advantage of one and a half lengths over Perth, while Sydney was gradually overhauling Perth.

At this stage the other three crews were well behind and had formed a “second division”.

From this point on, accounts vary but from the observers’ reports Sydney gradually gained on Melbourne and caught them with about a quarter mile to go. Here Melbourne sprinted desperately and drew away to about a half length lead. Sydney however was not to be denied and continued to gain steadily. At the finish neither knew which crew had won and the judges were unanimous in calling the contest a dead heat; the first in the history of the race.

Melbourne, the title holders, will continue to hold the Oxford and Cambridge Cup.

Our thanks are due first to Mr Ferguson for his untiring work in coaching the crew, and to Mr Saleh for his assistance.<sup>50</sup>

New caretaker

A brief note in the 1950–1951 annual report refers to the changeover in caretakers following the death of Sam Ryan: ‘Our caretaker Sam Ryan died during Christmas vacation. His successor, obtained by the good work of the Treasurer, was appointed in April and has proved very satisfactory.’<sup>51</sup> The new caretaker, Harry Remfrey, signed a note assigning Mr W Dockrey to take care of his affairs should anything happen to him ‘during his employment at the Melbourne University Rowing (sic) Club’s Boat House’. He probably thought this was a wise precaution as two caretakers had now died during the University’s summer vacation.<sup>52</sup>

Success grows on the water

Dr Disher remained the Club’s Patron throughout this time. In October 1951, JM Buchanan was re-elected President; Bryan Keon-Cohen, W Balcombe Griffiths, Harvey Nicholson, Charles Saleh and LC Weber were elected Vice-Presidents. Another notable MUBC oarsman, PN (Neil) Everist, was elected Captain and MFA Robertson, Vice-Captain. Everist suggested simple but important actions such as asking all members to put their names and phone numbers on a sheet of paper at the door to make the job of calling crews together easier. A rule was changed enabling the coach and intervarsity crew to be selected by the committee. And the coach was to ‘rule selection of the intervarsity crew.’<sup>53</sup>

The Club was again on a drive to get members and the Captain wrote to the schools to encourage membership of students who would be coming to Melbourne University. Ties to the schools continued to be strong and the committee offered the use of its facilities to Melbourne Grammar School whose sheds had burned down. In 1952 Salmon was appointed coach to the winning intervarsity crew that included Jim Gobbo, Rod Carnegie and John Button. Salmon was held in high regard throughout his years at the Club. He



Ian (top) and Neil Everist (bottom) being congratulated by their father on the separate occasions of them having stroked a winning MUBC intervarsity eight  
*Neil Everist collection*





1952 winning MUBC intervarsity eight (Mannum, Murray River) training on the Yarra, David Salmon, coach: Jim Gobbo (bow), Tim Hewison (2), Adrian Monger (3), Rod Carnegie (4), John Bailey (5), Frank Robertson (6), John Hall (7), Neil Everist (stroke), John Button (cox)  
*Adrian Monger collection*

was MUBC President from 1962 to 1963 and Hon Treasurer from 1965 to 1973. He was made an honorary life member on 14 July 1972. Only Clive Disher and Harvey Nicholson were living honorary life members at that time.

When the committee met for the first time in March 1952, there was a review of regatta rowing with Neil Everist being congratulated for coaching several successful crews during the summer. MUBC crews competed in a dozen regattas during the summer. Everist drew attention to the fact that three members of the senior eight were in fact freshers recruited from schools in the previous year. He suggested that everyone on the committee use their contacts at their old schools to further this movement. As well as providing rowers, the schools lent their boats to the Club during the summer.<sup>54</sup> On a lighter note, Mr Bell asked the Captain to get the beer stains cleaned off the committee room floor, and the President’s suggestion that this task be undertaken by freshers was greeted with acclaim.

The 1952 season was another highly active and successful one. A new racing boat had been purchased by the Club and Mayne Nickless allowed the Club to rent a truck to transport it to Adelaide for intervarsity at half the usual cost. The crew went to Adelaide in two cars. They were coached by David Salmon and stroked by Neil Everist. Jim Gobbo (bow), Rod Carnegie (4) and John Button (cox) were part of the crew. Gobbo went on

to become President of the Oxford University Boat Club and rowed in the winning centenary crew. Like Gobbo, Carnegie would go on to Oxford and become President of the Boat Club there. Both men were eventually knighted and both would maintain their keen interest in the Club. In later life Sir James Gobbo became the 25th Governor of Victoria (1997–2000) and Sir Rod Carnegie was for many years Managing Director of CRA Ltd, the forerunner of Rio Tinto Ltd, one of Australia’s foremost mining companies. John Button would become a minister in the Hawke Labor government.

1953 proved just as successful; there were now so many good rowers in the Club that David Salmon found it hard to select the crew for intervarsity.

Those selected were: SN John (bow), Geelong Grammar & Trinity; JTC Hewison (2), Melbourne Grammar & Trinity; Rod Carnegie (3), Geelong Grammar & Trinity; MFA Robertson (4), Wesley College & Extras; Adrian Monger (5), Geelong Grammar & Extras; JG Howden (6), Geelong College & Ormond; JP Hall (7), Wesley College & Queen’s; Neil Everist (stroke), Geelong College & Extras; and the cox was again John Button, Geelong College & Ormond.<sup>55</sup> Salmon thanked Everist and Hall for rowing after a long season in the Victorian King’s Cup crew.

Financial troubles again

Rod Carnegie played a key role in the reorganisation of funding the Club that was gradually taken over by the Sports Union. The process of altering the source of funding for Club expenses began at the annual meeting of 17 October 1953 with a ‘Motion on Notice’:

- That in view of the Club’s expenditure during the last three years being more than £100 per year in excess of its income from all sources, and in view of its inability under existing circumstances and with its existing grant from the Recreation and Grounds Committee of the University of Melbourne to meet its annual recurring expenditure, the meeting instructs the Committee
- 1) To negotiate with the Recreation and Grounds Committee whereby the Club will be relieved of maintenance and upkeep costs of the boatshed and receive an annual contribution towards boats and oars.
  - 2) In considering ways and means of securing greater financial assistance from the Recreation and Grounds Committee to offer to place the Club in a similar relationship to the Recreation and Grounds Committee as other Sports Clubs of Melbourne University.
  - 3) To draft such amendments to the Club’s Rules as may be necessary to give affect to this resolution.<sup>56</sup>

The President, Harvey Nicholson, noted that this motion was, in effect, the recommendation of the outgoing committee following a long and detailed examination of the Club’s financial position, and after a series of meetings between representatives of the Club and the Recreation and Grounds Committee. He also mentioned that income had not increased since 1935, while maintenance and expenditure had increased enormously with no evidence of any unnecessary spending. He touched on the difficulties with the





LEFT: 1953 first winning MUBC intervarsity single sculler pictured with the 1953 winning MUBC intervarsity eight (Nepean River) David Salmon, coach: (from left to right) John Hunt (the sculler holding the sculling blades), Neil Everist (stroke), John Hall (7), Jim Howden (6), Adrian Monger (5), Frank Robertson (4), Rod Carnegie (3), Tim Hewison (2), Stuart Johns (bow), and with John N Button (cox) at front  
*Adrian Monger collection*

BELOW: Adrian Monger's commemorative oar from the 1954 intervarsity race



RIGHT: 1954 winning MUBC intervarsity eight (Swan River) training in Perth, David Salmon, coach: Mac Murray (bow), Ian Douglas (2), John Colville (3), Michael Somerville (4), John Hunt (5), Stuart Johns (6), Adrian Monger (7), Clive Smith (stroke), Richard Hyett (cox)  
*Adrian Monger collection*

BELOW: 1955 winning MUBC intervarsity eight during the race on the Hamilton Reach, Brisbane River, with one mile to go (Lloyd Williams, coach): John (Jack) Gibb (bow), Ian Douglas (2), John Colville (3), Hugh Smith (4), Michael Aikman (5), Jim Howden (6), Adrian Monger (7), Clive Smith (stroke), Richard Hyett (cox)  
*Adrian Monger collection*



LEFT: 1956 MUBC Grand Challenge Cup winning crew: John Colville (bow), Ian Douglas (2), John Hunt (3), Bob Simpson (4), Michael Aikman (5), Terry Davies (6), Adrian Monger (7), Jim Howden (stroke), Richard Hyett (cox), Dr Lloyd Williams (coach)

BELOW: MUBC senior eight (furthest from the camera) defeating the Mercantile senior eight by one foot to win the 1956 Grand Challenge Cup.  
*Adrian Monger collection*







1956 winning MUBC intervarsity eight (Lower Yarra): (standing left to right) John Colville (2), Bob Simpson (4), John New (cox), Michael Hilditch (3), Jon Goodsall (bow), (seated left to right) Ian Macmillan (6), Ian Douglas (stroke), Dr Lloyd Williams (coach), John Michie (7), JM (Kim) Jelbart (5)

Recreation and Grounds Committee refusing to accept responsibility for buildings off campus, and that it was almost impossible to get increased grants from that committee. This discussion took place with the Recreation and Grounds Committee representative, WR (Bill) Tickner, who was present at the meeting.

Tickner replied that more money alone would not get the Club out of its difficulties and even another £200 a year would not be enough for new boats. He thought the Recreation and Grounds Committee would not come to the party for some time yet, despite the obvious need of the Club.<sup>57</sup>

Indeed, it did prove to be a long process, but at least it had begun. The Club employed a new resident caretaker, Joe Heath, in June 1954.<sup>58</sup> This was announced at the same meeting on 20 June where congratulations were given for yet another victory at the intervarsity competition, held this time in Perth. David Salmon was again coach. The win was perhaps a little surprising as most of the crew were new men (only two of the previous year’s eight were available). The crew were MDG Murray (bow), Ian E Douglas (2), JR Colville (3), WM Somerville (4), John A Hunt (5), SN Johns (6), Adrian C Monger (7), CJ Smith (stroke) and RG Hyett (cox). Substantial training proved the key to the win. This fifth consecutive win was a record for the intervarsity competition.

The same meeting raised the matter of a transfer for Hubert (Freddy) Frederico (the son of the former Club president), the forerunner of a number of similar requests for graduates in particular. The committee felt that ‘as Frederico had given good service to the Club, he should be granted his transfer.’<sup>59</sup>

### Preparing for the 1956 Olympics

Ron Jelbart raised the matter of representation in the 1956 Melbourne Olympics. He thought that a coxless four should be purchased for training a crew for Olympic trials and the committee agreed. In July a decision was made to purchase a ‘more useful coxed four and a coxless pair boat’.<sup>60</sup> David Salmon proposed the purchase of the coxed four in lieu of a coxless boat, because there was no guarantee of Olympic selection and a coxless boat was susceptible to greater risk of damage.

In September 1954 Harvey Nicholson resigned the presidency. At this time it was a policy of MUBC that the presidency change hands every two or three years. Neil Everist resigned as Captain and Adrian Monger took over the position.<sup>61</sup> Ron Jelbart was elected president and Nicholson became a Vice-President of the Club. David Salmon was intervarsity coach until March 1955, when Adrian Monger reported that Salmon had to retired temporarily due to work pressure. Salmon’s work as coach was greatly valued and it was going to be difficult to replace him.<sup>62</sup>

The matter of Club finances and its relationship with the Recreation and Grounds Committee was also discussed at the 1954 annual meeting. Nicholson had been asked to submit a draft of agreement to the Sports Union as a starting point. He was optimistic of the outcome. The Club’s success and the general economic advancement of the University no doubt contributed to this hopeful outlook. By May 1956 the annual grant from the Sports Union had increased from £150 to £300.

There were many formal and informal get-togethers, some serving as fundraisers such as the bonfire party held on the eve of the 1954 Melbourne Cup at Ron Jelbart’s country property which raised £30 for the Club. Another was planned for 1955.<sup>63</sup> Friendships

were formed at this time that lasted for the next half century.

These were fantastic years for the Club with victory for the intervarsity eights in Perth in 1954, Brisbane in 1955 and Melbourne in 1956, when the intervarsity eights race for the Oxford and Cambridge Cup was conducted over a two and quarter mile course on the Lower Yarra on 2 June. Melbourne University won for the seventh successive time. The event boasted a record field of seven crews with the NSW University of Technology, later known as the University of New South Wales, entering the field.<sup>64</sup> All visiting crews were accommodated at Trinity, Ormond and Newman Colleges. Dr Lloyd Williams coached the MUBC intervarsity crew.

The coming Olympics were a magnet for athletes and coaches. The Games contributed to the arrival at Melbourne University of world famous athletics coach, Franz Stampfl, who had coached at Oxford between 1953 and 1955 and had introduced interval training there for great middle distance runners like Roger Bannister, Chris Brasher and Christopher Chataway. In Melbourne too he concentrated on training runners like John Landy, but briefly spent time with the outstanding 1955 University eight, which now included Terry Davies from the 1954 Western Australian intervarsity crew that had come second to MUBC on the Swan River. Davies had been preceded to MUBC by two other Western Australians, Adrian Monger and John Hunt, both students at Trinity College. John Hunt was a champion sculler who had won the intervarsity sculls on the Nepean River in 1953. Like many oarsmen at this time, Davies was hoping for a place on the Australian Olympic rowing team.

Throughout the summer of 1955–6, the Club trained and competed in many regattas. They were coached by Dr Lloyd Williams, a former Oxford and Victorian King’s Cup oarsman. Although they were beaten by five-time champions Mercantile in the Albert Park Regatta early in the season, by the time Henley was rowed in March 1956 the training was paying off and they beat Mercantile,<sup>65</sup> winning the Grand Challenge Cup. Until then Mercantile had soundly beaten the MUBC senior eight throughout the 1955–6 season, but MUBC’s win in the Grand Challenge Cup was a triumph for their coach, the quiet and urbane Lloyd Williams. As one of the Mercantile crew recalled much later, MUBC rowed ‘a much smarter race, a mongrel match race ... [in which MUBC’s stroke] Jim Howden never let Mercantile get away ... [but] kept scrapping with us ... and worried us out of it’.<sup>66</sup> MUBC’s win was remarkable because it ended Mercantile’s five- year domination of senior rowing.

The Club had four members in the winning King’s Cup crew for 1956: Adrian Monger, James Howden, Michael Aikman and John Hunt. Monger, Howden and Aikman were subsequently selected in the Australian eight which competed in the Melbourne Olympics.<sup>67</sup> Sole selector and coach for this crew was Bob Aitken, a powerful but sometimes controversial figure in the history of Victorian rowing.<sup>68</sup> Harvey Nicholson and Ron Jelbart coached four and coxed pair crews for the Olympic test races.<sup>69</sup> Jelbart was especially disappointed that a four he had put together (that included his son Kim) was beaten by a few feet at the Olympic trials.<sup>70</sup>

The Melbourne Olympics was held in November 1956. Rowing events took place at Lake Wendouree near Ballarat and ten crews were entered in the men’s eights. The Australian crew came third in a close final race between the USA, Canada, Australia and Sweden, in what was considered to be the most exciting of all the rowing events.<sup>71</sup>

### Tribute to David Salmon

‘Mr. Monger told the committee that Mr. David Salmon had informed him that, due to pressure of work, he would be unable to coach this year’s Inter-Varsity Eight. Mr. Monger said that he considered no one had made a greater contribution to the Club than Mr. Salmon during the time he had been associated with it, and expressed the sincere hope that he would find it possible to return to the Club as an active coach within the next year as the Club would undoubtedly need him. Mr. Monger had much pleasure in proposing a motion of thanks to Mr. Salmon.

Mr. Everist seconding Mr. Monger’s remarks said that during the time that he had been associated with Mr Salmon in the Club, he had never ceased to admire the enthusiastic and capable way in which he had coached its Senior crews, particular its Inter-Varsity crews. He considered that a great deal of the Club’s recent successes in Inter-Varsity races was directly due to the time Mr. Salmon had spent in individual coaching during the inter-club season.

The motion was carried unanimously.’  
*From the Club’s minutes, 28 March 1955*

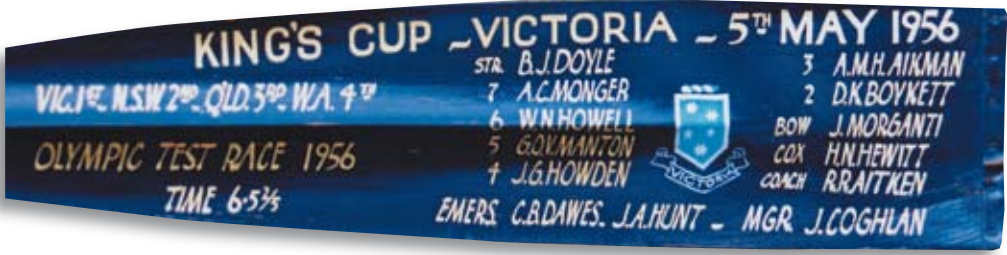


David Salmon  
Adrian Monger collection





ABOVE: 1956 King's Cup eight (Bob Aitken, coach): Jack Morganti (bow), David Boykett (2), John Hunt (MUBC) substituting for Michael Aikman (MUBC) (3), Jim Howden (MUBC) (4), Garth Manton (5), Neville Howell (6), Adrian Monger (MUBC) (7), Brian Doyle (stroke), Neil Hewitt (cox)  
*Adrian Monger collection*



RIGHT: Adrian Monger's commemorative oar from the 1956 King's Cup regatta

### Sydney R Bell

'The President spoke of the incalculable amount of work done for the club by the late Sydney R Bell. He recalled that Mr. Bell had been with the club for over thirty years and had been at all times the nucleus around which the committee was built. To show their respects those present observed a minute's silence.'

*A tribute to Sydney Bell by Ron Jelbart recorded in the minutes of the Club's 1956 annual meeting*

### 1956–8, the Club's powerhouse years

In euphoric mood, the Club elected Harvey Nicholson as President in December 1956 with David Salmon, Neil Everist, Dr Lloyd Williams and Ron Jelbart as Vice-Presidents. Sydney Bell, who had been the Club's Treasurer and a member for over thirty years died in this year. Many recalled with great warmth his reluctance to spend any money whatsoever.<sup>73</sup> His thrift probably saved the Club during long periods of paucity. Ron Jelbart was elected Treasurer on 21 February 1957. In that year the MUBC senior eight won the state championship with the following crew: John Colville (bow), Stuart Johns (2), Mike Hilditch (3), Bob Simpson (4), Brian Ward (5), Terry Davies (6), John Hunt (7), Ian Douglas (stroke) and JB Richards (cox).<sup>73</sup> With Harvey Nicholson as coach and Kim Jelbart as stroke, the intervarsity eight was victorious in 1957 on the Derwent in Tasmania.



During 1957 and 1958 the focus was essentially on selection for the Empire Games. In May 1957 Victoria won the King's Cup with four MUBC rowers in the crew: the stroke, Ian Douglas, John Hunt, Bob Simpson and Brian Ward. Terry Davies was emergency oarsman. The coach was Lloyd Williams and Bob Aitken was the selector. None of these men were in the victorious intervarsity crew which raced a month later on the Derwent in Tasmania, and which was stroked by Kim Jelbart and coached by Harvey Nicholson.

In January 1958 trials were held at Lake Wendouree to select the Australian crew for the British Empire and Commonwealth Games in Cardiff, Wales. Three crews competed: Victoria, New South Wales and, exceptionally, MUBC. Four members of the Victorian crew, Ian Douglas, John Hunt, Bob Simpson and the emergency Bryan Ward, were MUBC members. They were coached by Lloyd Williams. The MUBC crew were Jon Goodsall (bow), Colin McDonald (2), Taffy Jones (3), Terry Davies (4), Peter Gillon (5), Ian Macmillan (6), John Michie (7), Kim Jelbart (stroke) and John Barry Richards (cox). The coach was Ron Jelbart. Sadly, neither the Victorian nor the MUBC crew was able to beat the New South Wales crew, which went on to win a silver medal at Cardiff. Nevertheless, it was an extraordinary testament to MUBC's strength at this time, that one complete eight and half the other eight, which raced off against NSW, were from the one Club.

1957 winning MUBC intervarsity eight (Derwent River) Harvey Nicholson, coach: Jon Goodsall (bow), Colin McDonald (2), Peter Gillon (3), Phillip Roff (4), Michael (Taffy) Jones (5), Michael Hilditch (6), David Jones (7), JM (Kim) Jelbart (stroke), Peter Manger (cox). This was the Club's eighth successive winning intervarsity crew (including the dead heat in 1951)

*Photograph courtesy of The Mercury*





1957 MUBC State Champion Senior Eight:  
John Colville (bow), Stuart Johns (2),  
Michael Hilditch (3), Terry Davies (4),  
Bryan Ward (5), Bob Simpson (6),  
John Hunt (7), Ian Douglas (stroke),  
John Barry Richards (cox), on staging  
Dr Lloyd Williams (coach)

Disappointment at not getting to Cardiff was compensated with many victories at Victorian regattas, including the Barwon Regatta and the Henley Regatta (beating Mercantile on both occasions). Lloyd Williams and Ron Jelbart were co-coaches.

Ian Douglas, Kim Jelbart, Robert Simpson and Terry Davies were selected for the winning 1958 King’s Cup squad coached by Bob Aitken.<sup>74</sup> This was the first time an interstate championship included the lightweight four championship for the Penrith Cup. It was raced over 2000 metres on the Nepean River in New South Wales.<sup>75</sup>

Tensions boil over

A special meeting held on 22 December 1958 tried to deal with mounting friction over coaching styles. The tensions between coach and crew became so fraught that Lloyd Williams, the Club’s summer coach and VRA state selector, offered to resign as coach for the senior eight. The Captain, Ian Douglas, denied that his conversations with Williams leading up to the latter’s resignation had been conducted on behalf of anyone but himself, but nonetheless asserted that he was ‘a mouthpiece between crew and committee and crew and coach and felt he had done the right thing for the crew and the Club.’<sup>76</sup>

Nicholson reminded everyone that the coach was appointed by the committee and his resignation was a committee matter. He then asked Ron Jelbart to speak. Jelbart stressed that there ‘would always be instability in the Club if a crew knew that it could unseat its coach at the slightest provocation.’ He was surprised that ‘the Captain should have changed his views so soon after having nominated Dr Williams for the position of summer coach.’<sup>77</sup>



1958 Victorian crew for the test  
races for the Empire Games:  
Hubert Frederico (bow), David Boykett (2),  
Jack Morganti (3), Bob Simpson (MUBC) (4),  
John Hunt (MUBC) (5), Neville Howell (6),  
Don Christie (7), Ian Douglas (MUBC) (stroke)  
and Neil Hewitt (cox).

*Courtesy of The Herald & Weekly Times Ltd*

Both Williams and the Captain agreed ‘that the trouble came from both sides.’ It was obvious that the crew were unhappy that they had no direct power over who coached them, and that the Captain had taken steps to change this situation as he was the only member of the crew who was also a committee member. After more deliberation and dithering, the committee decided to accept Williams’ resignation and David Salmon was appointed summer coach. Salmon was reluctant—his business often kept him away from Melbourne for long periods of time.<sup>78</sup> Dr Williams remained a Vice-President of the Club.

Harvey Nicholson tried to control the situation and asked that the matter be dealt with in light of the welfare of the Club, ‘the people who gave up their time to help the Club’ and the rowers concerned. He said he had discussed the problem with Dr Williams, David Salmon, Ian Douglas and Ron Jelbart.

Dissatisfaction continued despite some success over the summer. The Club’s senior eight came second to Mercantile at six regattas including the VRA, Upper Yarra, Albert Park, Footscray, Championships and Ballarat Regattas, and won at Barwon and Henley.<sup>79</sup>

The John Grice Shield competition ceases

During 1959, the John Grice Shield races for interfaculty competition finally ceased. The previous year saw the ominous warning signs, where the Club was forced to write to the SRC to complain about the damage caused to equipment and to warn that if crews did not train properly, the Club would withdraw its support.<sup>80</sup> The threat was made good in June 1959 when it was decided that the committee should advise the SRC that Club equipment and facilities would not be available for interfaculty rowing.<sup>81</sup>

Friction among the coaches

The 1959 intervarsity result did not reflect the improvement in results over the summer of 1958–9; in fact it was one of the worst in the 100-year history of the Club. The race, held in May on the Nepean River at Penrith in New South Wales, saw the Club beaten into fourth place by NSW University of Technology, University of Queensland and Sydney University. The crew was feted nonetheless by Lex Rentoul at a dinner at the Australia Hotel in Sydney. He had been managing the hotel since his return from the RAAF in 1946.

No doubt the crew enjoyed the Penrith trip, where there were plenty of parties and a continuous atmosphere of riot. The crew stayed in an old style hotel in Wallacia with communal bathrooms. Two of the crew constantly flirted with and annoyed the waitresses and threw buckets of water down the stairs.<sup>82</sup>

The 1959 intervarsity crew was famous for its joint coaches. Both Ron Jelbart and Harvey Nicholson had different coaching styles which did not prove to be complementary. The two coaches usually worked with the crew on alternate outings, but it was reported that on one occasion at least there was a very heated discussion in the coach’s speedboat.

The Club held its 100th annual meeting on 25 July 1959. Dr Clive Disher CBE remained Patron. Balcombe Griffiths was elected President. Vice-Presidents elected were Dr Lloyd Williams, Peter Jelbart, Ron Jelbart, Neil Everist, Jim Gobbo and Harvey Nicholson. The



## The Jelbarts

The first members of the Jelbart family to participate in rowing were Ronald (Ron) Jelbart, his brother Peter, and their first cousins, Norman and Lloyd Jelbart, also brothers. The two sets of cousins first started rowing at Ballarat Grammar and Ballarat College respectively.

Ron's first appearance at MUBC was in 1927 as a member of the winning junior eight at Henley-on-Yarra. After graduating from Melbourne University he switched to sculling, and represented Victoria in the 1930 national championship. Peter attended Melbourne University where he was awarded Blues in four sports – rowing, Australian Rules football, athletics and boxing. In boxing he was up against Edward 'Weary' Dunlop for the heavyweight title. Peter also represented Victoria in the King's Cup crew.

Norman and Lloyd Jelbart also rowed for MUBC. In the late 1930s, Ron and Peter rowed together as a pair, as did Norman and Lloyd. In 1937 the four cousins agreed to row as a four. Rowing for MUBC, they went on to win every four-oared race in which they entered until the outbreak of the Second World War in 1939. They had the opportunity to represent Australia at the 1938 Empire Games, but unfortunately they were unable to finance the trip. All four were strong minded, close-knit and virtually uncoachable, and consequentially rowed during most of this period without a coach.

Ron went on to coach Trinity College, MUBC and Australian crews (including at the Rome Olympics and the first World Championships at Lucerne) throughout the fifties and early sixties, while Peter coached a number of Ormond crews during this period.

The second generation Jelbart oarsmen include Kim (son of Ron), Kerry and Stephen (sons of Peter) and Max (son of Lloyd). Kim rowed for Trinity and MUBC, and in the winning 1958 Victorian King's Cup crew. He rowed for Australia in the coxless four, coached by his father Ron at the 1960 Rome Olympics. Kerry's rowing career has been remarkable by any standard. He rowed for Melbourne University, ANU and Monash University (whose rowing club, with his help, and that of others such as Bill Gurry and David Bishop, became a major force in Victorian rowing from the late sixties on). He rowed in eleven Victorian King's Cup crews (including three winning crews), and represented Australia in two World Championships and at the 1972 Munich Olympics.

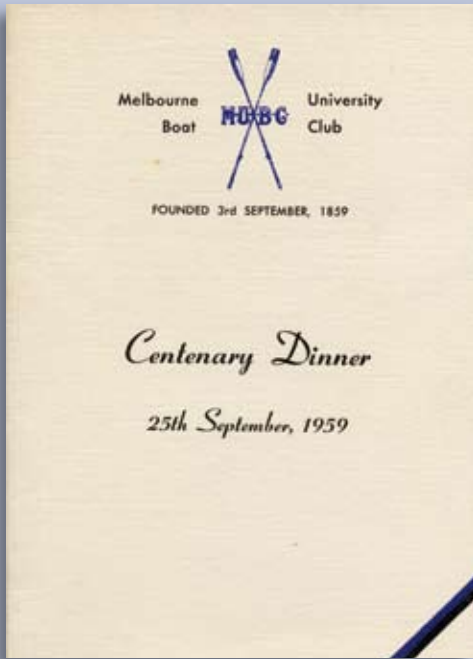
Stephen rowed for Monash University in four winning intervarsity eights, as well as representing Victoria in the King's Cup eights of 1975 and 1976. Max's shorter rowing career concluded with his membership of two winning Scotch College Head of the River crews.

The third generation of Jelbart rowers—Max's sons, Will, George and Tim—continued the magnificent family rowing tradition, Will and George both rowing for MUBC and Victoria, and Tim for Scotch College. As well as winning various national titles, George also represented Australia in the lightweight single scull at the 2003 World Championships and the lightweight double sculls at the 2004 Athens Olympics. George married fellow MUBC and Victorian representative Sally Muir in 2008.



The Jelbart family eight: Stephen (bow), Max (2), Kerry (3), Kim (4), Norman (5), Lloyd (6), Peter (7), Ron (stroke) and Tom (son of Norman) (cox) *Courtesy of The Herald & Weekly Times Ltd*





## MELBOURNE UNIVERSITY BOAT CLUB

Newsletter No. 6

14th April, 1960

### The Second Hundred Years

The Centenary Celebrations of the Club were spread over a period of some months, commencing with the christening of the two racing eights on 23rd April 1959 – the day of the John Lang Cup Race – the holding of the one hundredth Annual General Meeting on 25th July and concluding with the Centenary Dinner in the Union House on 25th September.

The Dinner was a most memorable occasion, and was presided over by the President W. Balcomb Griffiths M.C., and approximately 120 members and guests being present. Seldom have such excellent speeches been heard at a single function. The toast of ‘the Melbourne University Boat Club’ was proposed by the Chancellor of the University Mr. Justice Dean and was responded to by our Patron, Dr. Clive Disher C.B.E., E.D. in a most amusing yet moving speech. “Our Guests and all Oarsmen” was proposed by Mr. Bryan Keon-Cohen F.R.C.S. and the reply was given by Group Captain Thomas Lang, A.F.C., son of the late John Lang whose name is commemorated by the trophy for perpetual competition between the winning Intercollegiate Crew each year and the Extra Collegiate Crew.

Relics of the Club and photos of crews were on display and there was special interest in the name plate of our first racing eight – *Alexandra* as the dinner was held in the same week as H.R.H. Princess Alexandra was visiting Melbourne.

On the Sunday morning a number of older members visited the Boatsheds but preferred to discuss their by-gone prowess rather than attempt a present day demonstration of it.

What of the future? Year by year it becomes more difficult to encourage rowers from our Schools to continue their rowing at the University. Many feel – or their parents feel it for them – that they cannot give up the time to row in College and Inter Varsity Crews and risk losing their Commonwealth Scholarships or even forfeit the right to continue their course through exam failures. But while many rowers retire from active rowing when they go to the University, there are still sufficient who consider it worth while, to fill the College crews and the standard of the crews is being well maintained.

The condition of the Boatshed itself, however, has grown worse and worse, until it is not clear what is holding it up. In parts the flooring has completely collapsed and the racks are subsiding, but not at a uniform rate. No M.U.B.C. funds exist to undertake major repairs, so once again an urgent appeal for help has gone to the Recreation & Grounds Committee supported by a detailed and compelling report from our honorary Architect. Although not yet confirmed, it appears likely that the Recreation & Grounds Committee will make a special grant to enable the whole Shed to be re-blocked and the more urgent major renovations to take place.

This prospect is most encouraging and with the success achieved this year by a number of our senior oarsmen and with the increased participation in Regatta and Test race rowing, it seems the Second Hundred years is off to a strong start.

**Foot note:** The President requests the return of his copy of *The Victorian Oarsman*, borrowed at the Centenary Dinner.

## ANOTHER WAR, ANOTHER PEACE 1940–1965

new Captain was MR Jones and Kim Jelbart was elected Vice-Captain. Seventy members and friends attended the meeting.

Ron Jelbart was appointed coach of the senior eight for the 1959–60 season at the following meeting in August 1959, and plans were made for a centenary dinner. Lists of old oarsmen were made up and suggestions made about a speaker including Viscount Bruce of Melbourne, Sir Edmond Herring and the Prime Minister. One hundred and twenty members and guests attended the dinner in September, which was a memorable event.<sup>83</sup>

In an effort to bring the Club out of its doldrums a decision was made to put three or four eights on the river over the summer with a pool of coaches. As well, letters were again to be sent out to schools to encourage boys who would be attending university to join the Club rather than other rowing clubs.<sup>84</sup>

### Women’s intercollegiate rowing begins

1959 was also the year that women’s intercollegiate rowing began at Melbourne University. Members met at Janet Clarke Hall and decided that it was time for the women to have a race of their own. They were few in number as they had not had many opportunities to row at school at that time. The rowing experience was therefore new for most women who entered these first races which were held over 800 metres for first crews and 500 metres for seconds. The 1959 Janet Clarke Hall crew was Carol Austin, Mary Cameron, Diana Cole, Lou Desborough, Denise King, Susan Oddie, Celia Steeper, Margie Tate; the cox was John Freeman. Susan Oddie went on to coach many Janet Clarke Hall crews. In 1999 the Susan Oddie Sypkens Shield for winners of the women’s second eights was presented for the first time.

This did not develop into a women’s crew for the boat club. In 1960 the University of Queensland Women’s Boat Club suggested to MUBC that it should initiate a women’s intervarsity contest, to which Bill Tickner of the Sports Union replied that Melbourne University had no women’s rowing club.

### Preparations for Rome

In the new decade international trends began to have greater effect on the Club. A summary of the Victorian Rowing Association Report declared that a proposal had been put forward that the 1960 King’s Cup be held over the accepted international distance of 2000 metres as the test race for Olympic selection. Up until this time, the King’s Cup race had always been contested over a distance of three miles (or as close to three miles as the venue would allow). Club coach Lloyd Williams was a member of the state selection committee.<sup>85</sup>

The Club was also under pressure from its landlord, Melbourne City Council, to house the boats of ‘the new public and high schools.’ Ron Jelbart said that the Club would attempt to assist the schools but only until the university year had commenced. More importantly, Melbourne City Council was threatening to move all the boatsheds upstream from their area on the south bank of the Yarra east of Princes Bridge; the Club and its neighbours strongly opposed the proposal.<sup>86</sup>

In April 1960 an extraordinary committee meeting was held to discuss the eligibility of men wanting to row for the intervarsity crew. There was so much confusion about



1959 winners of the first women's intercollegiate race, Janet Clarke Hall: (back left to right) Louise Desborough, Diana Cole, Carol Austin, Susan Oddie, Denise King, Celia Steeper, (front left to right) Margaret Tait, John Freeman (cox), Mary Cameron  
*Susan Sypkens collection*





TOP: Australian coxless four in training for the 1960 Rome Olympics: Brian Vear (bow), Peter Guest (2), Peter Gillon (3) and Kim Jelbart (stroke). All members were from MUBC except for Brian Vear from Banks RC. Ron Jelbart was the coach  
*Courtesy of The Herald & Weekly Times Ltd*

BOTTOM: Edgar Tanner presents the rudder to cox, Ian Johnson, and the oars to Paul Guest (second from left) and Neville Howell (far right), members of the Australian coxed pair for the 1960 Olympic Games  
*Courtesy of The Herald & Weekly Times Ltd*

the matter that the Club’s patron, Clive Disher, was asked to attend. Harvey Nicholson was appointed coach and a motion was carried, stating that men who wanted to row intervarsity had to have rowed for a college or Extras, irrespective of whether they had rowed for other clubs over the summer. The committee was unanimous ‘that members rowing over the summer should row for MUBC rather than any other club.’ Men would often row for other clubs throughout the season and only want to row for MUBC at intervarsity.<sup>87</sup> Despite countless such resolutions, rules continued to be broken because coaches wanted the best crews and would find loopholes in order to get them.

The Club came second at intervarsity held on the Swan River in Perth with a crew consisting of D Stankovich (bow), DR Messenger (2), RB Negri (3), JCB Penfold (4), BH Scott (5), JR Vroland (6), MR Zwar (7), NC Courtney (stroke) and MA Schapper (cox). The coach was GH Nicholson with CS Keon Cohen and AP Dwyer (emergencies).

The Club was again looking to help its members gain selection in the Australian crews for the 1960 Rome Olympics. The Victorian eight-oared championships was held earlier than usual on 19 December 1959 to allow sufficient time for the Victorian eight to be selected and train for the King’s Cup in March 1960; the test regatta for the Olympics. The MUBC eight comprised Jim Grimwade (bow), Peter Guest (2), Michael Jones (3), Terry Davies (4), John Hunt (5), Paul Guest (6), John Michie (7), Kim Jelbart (stroke) and John Richards (cox). The coach was Ron Jelbart. Despite not being able to train for the four weeks around exam time, the Club came second by half a length to Mercantile.<sup>88</sup> Only brothers Paul and Peter Guest were chosen for the Victorian King’s Cup crew, which ultimately came third behind Western Australia and New South Wales. The Western Australian crew made up the eight that went to Rome. Six MUBC members who subsequently tried for Olympic selection were chosen. Final selections for Rome for the crews other than the eight were (all MUBC members except where noted) coxless pair, John Hunt and Terry Davies; coxless four, Brian Vear (Banks), Peter Guest, Peter Gillon and Kim Jelbart; and coxed pair, Paul Guest and Neville Howell (Banks). MUBC obtained the largest Olympic selection of any boat club in Australia. David Salmon coached all the men trying for the Olympics. According to Paul Guest, he was a brilliant coach who kept them going through good times and bad.

The 1960 annual meeting was held on 28 July and was attended by about forty members and guests. Jim Gobbo was elected President of the Club, his first task being to welcome the Olympians to the meeting. As well as the MUBC Olympians, Brian Vear and Neville Howell of Banks were also in attendance. The meeting was a celebratory one for all selected to represent Australia.<sup>89</sup>

### Departure of key individuals

Apart from selection for the Olympics, 1960 and 1961 were difficult years. Key members Ian Douglas, Terry Davies and Paul Guest left to join Banks in 1961, although Olympians, Peter Gillon and Kim Jelbart, stayed on. Guest remembered returning to the Club after the Olympics to find that there were hardly enough men around to form crews.<sup>90</sup> Neville Howell was keen to have them at Banks, so they all left, following Adrian Monger and GF Collison who departed for Mercantile and Power House respectively in 1961. There is still controversy at the time of writing about the reasons for these key rowers leaving. The

rule remained that only undergraduates could row intervarsity and the Club’s focus was still on university competition, hence men often felt they would be better off joining a club where they could row uninterrupted before and after graduation. The Club also had a general policy at this time of granting clearances to graduates who wished to join other clubs after their graduation. Whatever the reasons for their departure, however, the loss of these key individuals set the development of the Club back for many years.

### Financial stability

The report of the annual meeting of 1961 declared the ‘number of nominations for vacant positions was very small ...’ Harvey Nicholson was elected President. Outgoing President, Jim Gobbo, praised the newsletter, the *Mubc*, that Nicholson was now regularly publishing. The meeting signed off on a historic agreement between the University and the Club regarding funding for the boatshed and equipment. Nicholson moved a vote of thanks to Bill Tickner, the Recreation and Grounds Committee representative who had regularly attended MUBC meetings for seven years. Tickner assured the colleges that their position would not be ‘endangered’. In fact the boatshed was still used mostly for college boats. The time was yet to come when the Club would have a really good and useful fleet of boats. The colleges were more active than ever, racing in club regattas and providing second crews at the intercollegiate level.

### Rebuilding in the early sixties

In 1961 the name Keon-Cohen again appeared on the list of committee members and Harvey Nicholson’s son Peter made his first appearance as cox for the senior eight of the summer season. Chester Keon-Cohen was Captain and stroked a maiden eight that won its race at the Ballarat Regatta, winning this event for the first time since 1924, and coming second to a Banks maiden eight at Henley. Chris Hazzard sculled for the Club, winning the Victorian Junior Sculling Championships. This was also a new direction for the Club which, until this time, had few members who participated in sculling events. There were no boats for scullers in the fleet.

### 1961 intervarsity

The 1961 intervarsity crew comprised rowers from Newman (Arthur Adams), Trinity (Ian Bult), Extras (John Cade) and the balance from Ormond, which had won the intercollegiate race. The coach was Bill Wallace of Mercantile who had coached the winning Ormond crew. The race was over a two-mile course on the Brisbane River. Sydney and Melbourne were locked together, stroke for stroke, over the first mile when Melbourne’s bowman was suddenly ejected from the boat at the halfway mark. The Melbourne crew limped home last with seven men rowing over the remaining half of the course, but still were only just beaten by the second last crew Tasmania. However, that disappointing result did not prevent the team, including emergency, Ian (Busho) Blair, from later that evening manhandling an Indian motor bicycle they had commandeered on to the parapet of the Union Building, the venue for the post-race dinner. Ian then started the Indian, which

#### Story of the Club newsletter *Mubc*

From the 1960s to the 1980s the newsletter came out four times a year, often edited by Harvey Nicholson, but there were many guest editors. It was originally started in 1957 as an inducement to former rowers to become ‘non-rowing members’, a new category of membership established that year for which the subscription was still \$5 in 1974. ...<sup>91</sup>

The newsletter not only provided news and notices but also gave regular notes on rowing styles, and other information gleaned by the men who were travelling and seeing many new styles.





1961 MUBC intervarsity eight (Brisbane)  
Bill Wallace, coach: (left to right)  
Peter McLennan (bow), John Cade (2),  
Bob Negri (3), John Vroland (4), Ian Bult (5),  
Campbell Penfold (6), Arthur Adams (7),  
Dally Messenger (stroke),  
(front) Ian Wills (cox)  
*Arthur Adams collection*

he revved around the parapet before getting the bike down to ground level again, riding it into the dining hall and parking it at the foot of the high table, to the cheers of the assembled crews.

1962 saw the Club making a comeback at intervarsity level. Nicholson was chosen coach at the beginning of the intercollegiate season and made sole selector. The race took place in Sydney and, according to Chester Keon-Cohen, ‘there was a healthy atmosphere of banter and seriousness which made hard rowing a relative joy.’ The race was hard fought and according to the newspapers ‘one of the most torrid battles seen in years.’ Sydney and Melbourne were much superior to the other crews and had the race to themselves after the first half mile. Sydney started at 46 and Melbourne at 44 strokes. The Melbourne crew never rated below 38 for the whole distance, with Sydney slightly below them. Both crews broke records: the King’s Cup record for three miles by one fifth of a second and the intervarsity record by 35 seconds. Sydney won the race. Chris Hazzard represented the Club in the single sculls, and came third.<sup>92</sup>

One of the many positive effects of Chester Keon-Cohen’s arrival at the Club was the return of Russell Keon-Cohen. ‘Uncle Russell’, as he came to be known, was now a star of

the hugely popular Australian TV quiz show ‘Pick a Box’, sharing the limelight with the hosts of the show, Bob and Dolly Dyer, and a young Barry Jones, who went on to political fame.

Disappointingly, the Club had no representation at the 1962 British Empire and Commonwealth Games held in Perth. Ian Douglas, Terry Davies and Paul Guest, all now members of Banks Rowing Club, were in the eight that won gold in extremely hot conditions, beating New Zealand and England by the narrowest of margins.<sup>93</sup> This crew also went to the inaugural World Championships in Lucerne, Switzerland and came fifth. On a brighter note for the Club, MUBC man Rob Jones was selected to row in the Australian coxed four which also competed at the Lucerne World Championships, and which was coached by MUBC’s own Ron Jelbart. All Australian crews had to find the money for their expenses.

Arrangements were already underway for the next season and especially for the next intervarsity to be held in Melbourne. More extensive planning was involved because there were more universities and more events. Sculls, fours and eights of good quality had to be found for the use of visiting crews. The colleges were asked to provide some of these.<sup>94</sup> Several clubs offered to lend their best racing fours for the new lightweight four event including Banks, Richmond, Power House, Mercantile, Albert Park, Hawthorn and Yarra. The Club was to purchase new sculling boats. Ron Jelbart was appointed senior coach for the 1962–3 regatta season. He coached the senior eight over the summer without success. At the first meeting of the Club for 1963 Harvey Nicholson was appointed coach of the intervarsity eight.

The Club also undertook renovation and additions to the boatshed including adding fire stairs and carpeting the committee room and caretakers’ quarters. The carpeting material was donated by Australian Paper Mills, where Harvey Nicholson was an executive. The caretakers at this time were a couple called the Wakefields.<sup>95</sup>

In May Dr Disher donated £500 to the Club to be held in trust to pay for shed improvements, and oarsmen’s intervarsity expenses. It was the first of two instalments. The following March he donated another £500. Although he rarely attended meetings at this time, Disher was in regular correspondence with several MUBC committee members and always knew what was happening at the Club.<sup>96</sup> The Sports Union bought the Club a motor launch for training purposes.<sup>97</sup>

In March a letter arrived from Philip (Phil) Roff in London asking permission for a group of MUBC members to enter a four at Royal Henley. The group consisted of Jon Goodsall, Rob Jones, Phil Roff and Kim Jelbart. Permission was given.<sup>98</sup>

Newman’s first win

After a close second to Trinity in 1962, the drought finally broke for Newman in 1963. Coached by Hubert (Freddy) Frederico, Newman rowed over summer and then won intercollegiate for the first time, as well as the John Lang Cup. A memorable night of entertainment followed, during the course of which a vertically upended eight was set in place by the engineering students, and then set alight in the Newman quadrangle. The whole dramatic scene was captured by Harvey Nicholson’s movie camera.



1963 Newman College's first winning intercollegiate crew since joining the competition in 1919 (Hubert Frederico, coach): John West (bow), Damien Jensen (2), Peter McCabe Doyle (3), Tony Wilson (4), John Gurry (5), Tony Dwyer (6), Arthur Adams (7), Pat Ryan (stroke), John O'Brien (cox) *Arthur Adams collection*



1963 intervarsity

The 1963 intervarsity competition held on 25 May included Monash University for the first time. This brought the number of universities competing to eight, being Melbourne, Sydney, Adelaide, Western Australia, Queensland, Tasmania, the University of New South Wales and Monash. All competed in the men's eight. One of the members of the Melbourne eight, Arthur Adams, recalled MUBC racing at 38 all the way over the two and a half mile course, finishing just below Spencer Street Bridge to win by seven and a half lengths, despite having the least favourable station due to the prevailing cross-wind conditions on the day: 'One thing Harvey got was super fit, really tough crews that raced absolutely up to their best. Race day was always the best effort. His idea of miles was quite new in the 1960s. L.S.D. (long slow distance) became the standard thing in many athletic disciplines. It was just that Harvey often forgot the slow component.'<sup>99</sup>

The 1963 competition proved enormously successful for MUBC, who won not only the eight, stroked by Chester Keon-Cohen, but also the lightweight coxed four stroked by Geoff Park. That year's intervarsity regatta marked the introduction of the lightweight fours event to the program for the first time, previous regattas being held only for eights and single sculls, with no distinction for weight. The distance fixed for the lightweight fours, as well as the sculls, was the international distance of 2000 metres—the eight remained at either three miles or as close as possible to that distance at the relevant venue. The Club's sculler, DR Messenger, was placed second in the single sculls.<sup>100</sup>

The excellent results brought a sigh of relief to many including David Salmon who declared 'it was gratifying that the Club had at last earned more respect.'<sup>101</sup>

Training on the Lower Yarra

Arthur Adams recalls training on the Lower Yarra in the early 1960s:

In those days the Lower Yarra on both sides of North and South Wharf was full of shipping. Tugs all over the river pulling and pushing ships out of the tight berths. When he saw a tug, Harvey would get his crew to row flat out to avoid the enormous wash, while yelling at the tugboat to observe the five-knot speed limit. The *James*



*Pattison* tug responded every time by going flat out and the eight would have to be turned to ride out its wash, with Harvey still screaming. It was quite exciting for the crew and at least you got a break. The wharf labourers who were working on both sides of the wharves always gave you a yell if you were going flat out. They were great supporters. They liked the fact that crews were using their river still in the early sixties. The Federation of Australian Waterside Workers was in those days the most generous benefactor of Australian crews going overseas (for example, Ron Jelbart's part MUBC four that raced at Lucerne).<sup>102</sup>

1963 winning MUBC intervarsity eight's celebrations after presentation of the Oxford and Cambridge Cup beside the MUBC boatshed (Harvey Nicholson, coach) (standing left to right): Bill Dobson, Tony Wilson, Mark Schapper (on Tony's shoulders), Arthur Adams, Chester Keon-Cohen, Ian Bult, (front) Bill Stokes, Ian Galbraith and Campbell Penfold *Courtesy of The Herald & Weekly Times Ltd*

The aftermath of 1963 intervarsity

One of the few unpleasant incidents to have occurred at an intervarsity competition took place at the conclusion of the 1963 regatta. During post-race celebrations, the Club's boatshed was raided by members of one of the interstate teams, trophies were damaged and the only photograph of the Club's first 1870 winning intervarsity crew 'souvenired'—never to be seen again.





1963 winning MUBC intervarsity lightweight four training on the Lower Yarra (Keith Bilney, coach): Peter Habersberger (bow), Robin Gorton (2), Peter McCabe Doyle (3), Geoff Park (stroke), Bernie Buttery (cox). This was the first year in which this event was held at intervarsity

Another disappointing sequel to the 1963 intervarsity win was that full blues were only awarded to members of the eight who had rowed intervarsity before. It was a standard set very high: win as an eight, full Blue; anything less, a half Blue. Then came a new policy: win and also row before. The rule was ‘born from exclusivity’ in the words of one Club member at the time.<sup>103</sup>

Celebration and consolidation

The 1963 annual meeting was held on 21 September. Those present included the President, Harvey Nicholson, Vice-Presidents, Balcombe Griffiths and David Salmon, the Captain, Campbell Penfold and Vice-Captain, Arthur Adams. Also in attendance were Russell Keon-Cohen and his brother, Dr Bryan Keon-Cohen, and Professor Rawlinson, President of the Sports Union.

Professor Rawlinson spoke about the Sports Centenary Appeal and assured the Club that their intervarsity travel expenses would be covered in the coming year when the event would be held in Tasmania. He presented the winning intervarsity crews with their oars. These oars had been donated by the typical generosity of Clive Disher. When queried by Harvey as to whether the crew should be presented with oars which were brand new and had only been used for eight days, Clive replied ‘Harvey’ they get the oars they raced with or they get nothing.’<sup>104</sup>

David Salmon was elected to take over from outgoing President, Harvey Nicholson, at the same meeting and Harvey Nicholson, Balcombe Griffiths, Dr Lloyd Williams, Jim Gobbo, Russell Keon-Cohen and Ron Jelbart were elected Vice-Presidents. John Gurry was chosen as the new Captain and Bill Stokes, Vice-Captain.<sup>105</sup>

In March 1964, Nicholson was unanimously voted coach and sole selector of the intervarsity eight for 1964: ‘Full confidence was expressed in the motion by the committee.’<sup>106</sup> Keith Bilney was elected coach of the lightweight four crew. At the next meeting in April, the Club began work on a five-year plan for the purchase of equipment with the Sports Union.<sup>107</sup>

The 1964 intervarsity incident

In the 1964 intervarsity regatta MUBC came a close second to Sydney University in the eights and won the lightweight fours. It was the behaviour of crews off the river that caused the intervarsity regatta to be cancelled for 1965. The dinner had been very noisy and celebrations aboard a ferry had got beyond the control of coaches and older members. Though the Club had been officially exempted from blame, even Harvey Nicholson admitted that the crew had been drunk on the plane home. Peter McEwen, a member of the University of New South Wales eight at the time, remembered the events with great humour:

After the race on the Huon we had a formal dinner at the university and the day after took a ferry ride around the Derwent. The Queensland contingent took control of the bridge, and secluded the Captain of the ferry in a locked cupboard. Whilst that happened, Col Sutton observed that the steering mechanism of the ferry was a continuous chain which ran around the top of the first deck, from the wheelhouse to the rudder. With minimal dexterity, he withdrew the pin which kept the chain continuous, such that when the Captain was allowed back to the wheelhouse and sought to give direction to the ferry, it kept going in circles. The ferry was met at the wharf by police, who gave instructions for all participants in the intervarsity competition to be immediately dispersed—we were put on a bus and taken to the airport. The Captain of the plane allocated to fly us back to Sydney refused to do so due to the state of intoxication of some members—again we were in police company, and Geoff Beacher, to show there was no ill will, planted a small kiss on the cheek of one of the police officers. Eventually we flew into Sydney some time around 12.30am, well after the curfew.<sup>108</sup>

The most successful crew of 1964 was the lightweight four coming second in the state championships, and winning intervarsity. Keith Bilney, who had coached the crew, was to coach the Olympic Coxless Four in Tokyo.



1964 winning MUBC intervarsity lightweight four (Keith Bilney, coach): Peter Habersberger (bow), Brian Speed (2), Peter McCabe Doyle (3), Geoff Park (stroke), Bernie Buttery (cox)



## Clive Disher Challenge Cup

1965 provided an opportunity to focus on activities other than intervarsity. A new cup presented by MUBC called the Clive Disher Challenge Cup was presented at the 1965 annual meeting to the Extras crew. This trophy was donated by Clive Disher for the winners of an annual race to be held between Victorian universities. Lloyd Williams also presented each individual member with a trophy. The address by Dr Disher to the meeting speaks volumes about the farsightedness and generous spirit of the man:

He [Dr Disher] pointed out that in the future there will be three universities in Melbourne and rowing should be encouraged in the two new universities. It should be a function of this Club to help these other universities in the formation of their own clubs. He also asked for a gentlemen's agreement between all clubs, that those who are at the university should row for their university while undergraduates and not align themselves with other clubs.<sup>109</sup>

To this end, the Monash and Extras race was programmed to be held on the day of the intercollegiate final to be held on 19 April 1965.<sup>110</sup>

At this time, participation by the Club and its members in intervarsity and intercollegiate competition was healthy and strong although the Club still did not participate in significant club regatta rowing over summer. However, there was a revival coming, especially through the recruiting and operational efforts of Harvey Nicholson's eldest son, Peter, as well as his personal performances on the water. In the coming years, the Club would begin to travel overseas and take on a more outgoing approach suitable to a time when the University and its city became part of an international network that sought competitors and friends near and far.



The 1965 MUBC Extras crew celebrating the first victory in the race for the Clive Disher Cup against the Monash University crew stroked by Peter Philp. Peter went on to a very successful career as an oarsman at Mercantile and as a MUBC, Victorian and Australian coach