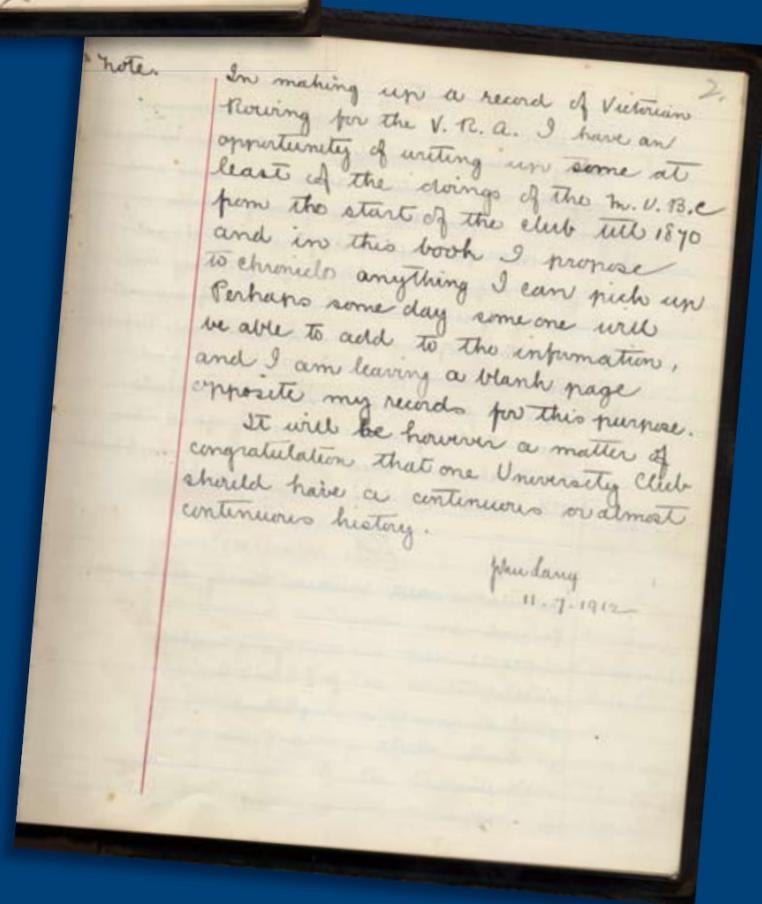


The front page and accompanying note to the reconstructed records of the Club 1859-70, completed by John Lang in July 1912



Well Rowed University

MELBOURNE UNIVERSITY BOAT CLUB

THE FIRST 150 YEARS

Judith Buckrich



MELBOURNE UNIVERSITY BOAT CLUB INC.



CHAPTER SIX

Moving into the world 1966–1979



1974 World Champion Lightweight Coxless Four:
Colin Smith (bow), Geoff Rees (2), Andrew Michelmore (3) and Cam Johnston (stroke)

The Club now had its eye on international competition and Harvey Nicholson's son Peter, the Assistant Secretary-Treasurer of the Club in July 1966, proposed 'a broad plan to ensure that some MUBC members are selected for the Mexico City Olympics.'

Interestingly, his first suggestion was to encourage postgraduate members to keep rowing, and that a senior eight be selected immediately after intervarsity and continue to train every day—one or two days a week in small boats, one or two days a week as a crew and three or four days a week weight training. The motion was passed.¹

Peter Nicholson had already started to achieve some success in club rowing by stroking MUBCs maiden eight, which won at several regattas during January and February of 1966. In the end, his proposed winter training program was overly ambitious, but Peter eventually organised a small core of rowers to begin weight training at the Oasis Gymnasium in the city, under the supervision of Stan Nicholes. Stan was a pioneer of weight training. He had made a name for himself training champions in several sports, including tennis players Frank Sedgeman and Margaret Court. This began a long and fruitful association between Stan and both MUBC and MULRC rowers that would eventually make a significant contribution to the Club's outstanding record, particularly in international lightweight rowing. Nicholes felt that his training methods for rowers were the most influential: 'In 2000 metre river races good technique depends on muscular endurance—rowing is 2000 metres of muscle endurance; nothing else.'² For forty years he trained rowers to build on their strength. The first Club from which members went to Nicholes for training was MUBC. The best known of Nicholes' trainees is present MUBC President and Olympic gold medallist, Peter Antonie, who has had one of the longest careers as an international competitor.³ Efforts to forge close ties with other universities in Melbourne also went forward and Ormond representative Peter Martin proposed that the Monash eight be allowed to boat from the MUBC boatshed in the 1967 season. This motion was also passed, pending approval from the Sports Union.

The 107th annual meeting held on 21 October 1966 was dominated by the Nicholsons (Harvey and Peter), the Keon-Cohens (Russell, Bryan senior and Chester), David Salmon, Ron Jelbart, Lloyd Williams and Jim Gobbo. Peter Nicholson was elected Captain of Boats for the 1966–7 season. Harvey Nicholson took up the presidency again and David Salmon continued as Treasurer. The constitution had been altered to allow for eight vice-presidents instead of six, and stipulated that two vice-presidents had to have graduated 'not more than five years prior to election as vice-presidents.'⁴ Harvey Nicholson reported to the meeting that, despite coming only third, the 1966 intervarsity team was the most enthusiastic he had ever known. That year, there had been ten universities competing in the men's eight event and Tasmania had a fine win—its first for forty-one years.

Harvey Nicholson had, since 1957, produced a newsletter called *Mubc* that came out intermittently at first, but by 1967 it was produced regularly, about every two or three months. The newsletter enabled him to impart much more information to all Club members on a regular basis. Several interesting trends began in 1967 when the January issue featured articles about international developments in which MUBC members were taking part. Past Captain, Bill Stokes, for example, wrote about rowing at Waseda University in Japan.



TOP: (left to right) Stan Nicholes,
Sue Chapman-Popa and Paul Reedy
Barbara Fenner Collection

BOTTOM: 1966 MUBC intervarsity lightweight
four: Brian Speed (bow), Stewart Peters (2),
Mike Dalling (3), Peter Nicholson (stroke)
and Richard Kendall (cox)
Michael Nicholson collection

Rowing styles

From this time, the Club became conscious of trying to keep up with changes in national and international rowing styles and training. Cheaper air travel meant that many more individuals were able to travel to observe global events. Harvey Nicholson was himself an accredited FISA official and officiated at various world championship events.

Over the 1966–7 summer three members of Mercantile, David Palfreyman, Dick Garrard and George Xouris—who had competed in the Australian coxless four at the 1966 Bled (now Slovenia, then part of Yugoslavia) World Championships—had a go at coaching from various positions in the MUBC eight, ‘and thanks to them, the crews got a better idea of the true Ratzeburg style.’⁵ ‘The German eight that won the gold medal at the 1960 Olympic Games had trained at Ratzeburg and, by comparison with other crews up to that time, placed much more emphasis on the ‘catch’ as opposed to the ‘finish’ and on an even ‘run forward up the slide’ as opposed to slowing down as one approached the ‘catch’.⁶ The main crew that boated in the 1966–7 summer rowing season was a junior eight, which rowed an exaggerated version of what they imagined the Ratzeburg style was. The eight performed disastrously in the state championships and in subsequent seasons, the Club went back to rowing with a more conventional rhythm. However, the long, hard season was good preparation for those who rowed right through it.



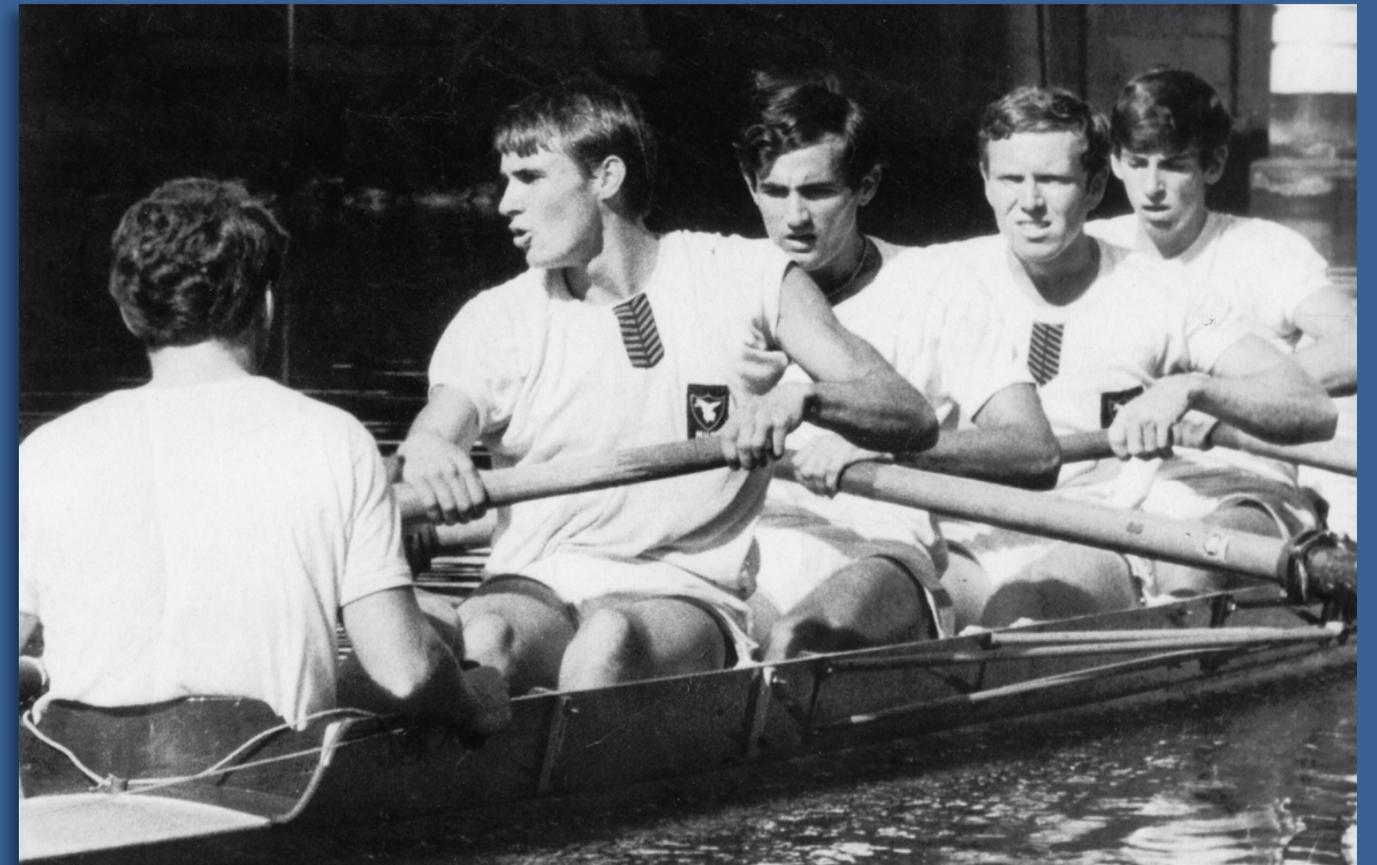
Harvey Nicholson in typical coaching pose
Michael Nicholson collection

1967 intervarsity

At intervarsity at Penrith in 1967, the Club had a fantastic year. The eight was coached jointly by Harvey Nicholson and Terry Davies (Harvey taking the first four weeks and, after he went overseas, Terry taking the last three weeks) and the lightweight four by Mark Schapper. The eights race was very significant, although nobody knew it at the time, for it turned out to be the last occasion that the Oxford and Cambridge Cup would be competed for over a distance of three miles. According to Harvey Nicholson, a longer period of training (he aimed at 100 miles per week including numerous sessions of the ‘bridges’, that is, a time trial from Princes Bridge to Chapel Street and almost immediate return, all at race pace) and the experience gained, as well as ‘the modern outlook of our coaches and oarsmen helped. The Italian mould of our eight, regarded at the time of purchase as radical for a three-mile race, contributed towards the eight’s win.’ Harvey’s disciplined approach to training and fitness, combined with Terry Davies’ good eye for individual technique, produced an eight that raced and won comfortably over the three-mile Nepean River course, defeating the titleholders Tasmania, with the rating not dropping below 38. The stroke, Bryan Keon-Cohen, became the fourth member of the Keon-Cohen family to stroke a winning intervarsity eight. Harvey’s son, Peter, stroked the lightweight four to victory at the same intervarsity regatta. According to Harvey Nicholson ‘Each crew rowed a smooth European looking style ... fast entry of blade into the water, noticeable in both our crews, is a feature of European rowing.’

A resurgence gathers pace

It was from 1967 on—after a hiatus of a number of years during which the Club had been in the wilderness in terms of lack of success at a senior level at Victorian Rowing



TOP: 1967 winning MUBC intervarsity eight (Nepean River) Harvey Nicholson and Terry Davies, co-coaches: Bill Christophersen (bow), Andy Robson (2), Arthur Godfrey (3), David Elder (4), Paul McSweeney (5), Geoff Withers (6), David Hornsby (7), Bryan Keon Cohen (stroke), Geoff Nice (cox) Paul McSweeney collection

BOTTOM: 1967 winning MUBC intervarsity lightweight four (Nepean River) Mark Schapper, coach: Rob Stewart (bow), Stewart Peters (2), Mike Dalling (3), Peter Nicholson (stroke), John Lamb (cox) Photograph courtesy of John Peck



1967 Australian coxed four (left to right): Hubert Frederico (coach), David Douglas, Graham Boykett, John Harry (MUBC), Tom Daffy (cox) and Stephen Gillon, after winning at Canadian Henley
John Harry collection



Peter Nicholson sculling
Photograph courtesy of John Peck

Association sponsored regattas—that Club oarsmen began to again achieve state and national representative honours. John Harry and Paul Renouf who had been in the 1966 intervarsity eight were selected for the state crew in 1967 (Paul had rowed during the 1966–7 season for Mercantile). John then rowed 3 in the Australian coxed four that won at the Canadian Henley and the first North American Rowing Championships. This four was the first Australian crew to win a gold medal at a FISA international regatta. Peter Nicholson, although not competing as an Australian representative, gained international experience by sculling at the Canadian Henley where he came fourth in the junior 135 pound sculls and third in the senior 135 pound event.⁷

John Harry, together with Kerry Jelbart and several members of the winning 1967 intervarsity eight, then rowed over the summer of 1967–8 in the first senior eight that the Club had boated for nearly ten years. The young crew acquitted itself well in the state championships, won by a very experienced Mercantile crew, that contained a number of Victorian and Australian representatives. After the state championships, John Harry and Kerry Jelbart were selected for the Victorian King’s Cup crew, but they were not selected in the Australian eight that competed in the Mexico Olympics, despite an expectation on the part of some that this would occur. The members of the selected Australian eight were mostly from New South Wales, except for David Douglas of Mercantile.

Unfortunately, about this time, Peter Nicholson had to cease rowing actively due to a serious illness, and the Club temporarily lost the benefit of his innovative ideas and oarsmanship. His pervasive influence was exemplified, among other things, by the highly successful and detailed program, which he developed in April 1968, for attracting new school recruits to the Club.

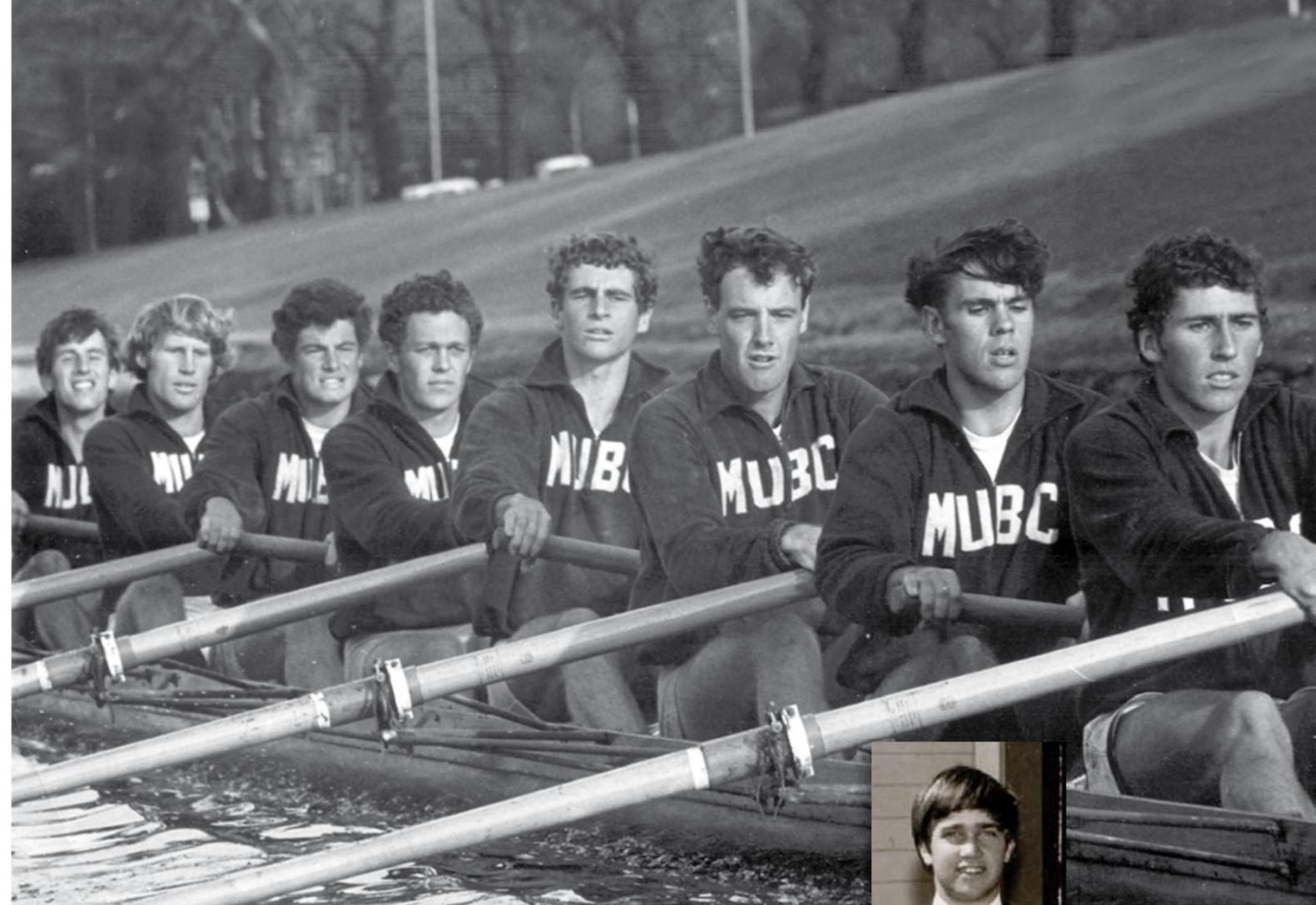
1968 Olympics

The 1968 Olympic team Captain was past MUBC member, Paul Guest, who was a member of the coxless pair with David Ramage from the Corio Bay Rowing Club. It was the first Olympic Games ever held in Latin America, and Mexico had been the only country willing to take on the expense and difficulty of organising an Olympiad. Paul Guest wrote movingly for *Mubc* about Mexico’s massive effort at housing and moving the teams around, as well as the fantastic arenas they had built for the Games. He described the rowing course at Xochimilco as ‘an overgrown swimming pool’ about 2080 metres long with lanes 12.5 metres apart and buoyed at 20 metre intervals.⁸

Guest had previously rowed in coxed pairs at the Rome Olympics with Neville Howell and in the eight at the Tokyo Olympics. He had been in the 5 seat in the Australian eight that won the gold medal at the 1962 Commonwealth Games. The coxless pair suffered oxygen deficit problems as a result of the altitude at Mexico City when leading the semi-final with 100 metres to go, and tragically missed out on a place in the final. They went on to win the petite final in a faster time than the eventual gold medallists, East Germany. The Australian eight, in an outstanding performance, won silver, despite altitude issues.

Into the thick of things

The years from 1967 to 1970 saw the Club emerging from many lean years of Club rowing (as distinct from success at intervarsity level) to start to win more events at



Victorian Rowing Association regattas. The 1967 annual report showed the Club racing in twenty-seven regattas with a record participation in Club rowing.

Indeed, success at intervarsity was used as a launching pad for success in club rowing.

The intervarsity eight that rowed in Perth in 1968 was a very successful crew. Early in training it showed its potential by defeating Mercantile and winning the VRA State Champion Junior Eight title, the first time the Club had ever won this event. Harvey Nicholson then concentrated on moulding the eight into a superbly fit combination. In Perth, the crew had to face the unbackable favourites, and winners of the Grand Challenge Cup at that year’s Henley Regatta, Adelaide University. The Adelaide University eight ‘were so determined to win their first I-V for 34 years that members gave up their chance to row in the S.A. King’s Cup crew to stay together.’⁹

Perth intervarsity turned out to be the last intervarsity eights race to be held over a greater distance than 2000 metres, on the two-mile course on the Canning River. MUBC was rowing in the racer which had one of the Club’s most distinguished racing careers, the *Clive Disher III*. Both Adelaide and MUBC had easy wins on the day before the final in their respective heats. On the following day: ‘[they] staged one of the great I-V Boat Races (comparable with the 1951 and 1973 races). Adelaide led from the start and to within 200 metres from the finish. Melbourne increased its rating to 42 and finally 44 (oars were shorter in those days), and passed the post half a length ahead of Adelaide.

ABOVE: 1968 winning MUBC intervarsity eight (Canning River, Perth) training on the Yarra (Harvey Nicholson, coach): Jim McMeckan (bow), Tom Yuncken (2), David Hornsby (3), Arthur Godfrey (4), Will Liley (5), Geoff Withers (6), Paul McSweeney (7), Gus Ferguson (stroke), inset Simon Turner (cox) *Photograph of the eight courtesy of John Peck*

BELOW: 1968 MUBC intervarsity lightweight four (Canning River, Perth) Mark Schapper, coach: Rob Stewart (bow), Bill Ethridge (2), Brian Clarke (3), Cam Johnston (stroke), Ian Walker (cox) *Photograph courtesy of John Peck*



RIGHT 1969 MUBC senior eight at Barwon Regatta (Harvey Nicholson, coach): Cam Johnston (bow), Rob Zahara (2), Mike Dalling (3), Geoff Withers (4), Dave Hornsby (5), Gus Ferguson (6), Paul McSweeney (7), Peter Nicholson (stroke) and Simon Turner (cox)
Peter Nicholson collection



TOP: Members of the 1968 intervarsity team relaxing prior to racing on the Barwon River in a club regatta

MIDDLE AND BOTTOM: Waiting in the lock at Mildura and en-route to Wentworth in the epic 38 mile training row for the 1968 intervarsity eight
All photographs from Simon Turner collection



Perhaps that was the *Clive Disher III's* greatest race ...¹⁰ The lightweight four, stroked by Cam Johnston, was narrowly edged into second place by the University of Sydney crew coxed by John Boulton (who was subsequently to become the Secretary-General of FISA). Rob Zahara, the emergency for the eight, came third in the sculling event.

The nucleus of that winning 1968 intervarsity eight then formed the basis of the first MUBC senior eight to defeat a Mercantile senior eight in nine years during the summer of 1968–9, beating the old foe on three occasions in the process. Although not a win, one of the senior eight's memorable performances was in the 1969 Henley Grand Challenge Cup, in which it led narrowly until the 1500 metre mark, but was finally rowed down by the heavier and more experienced New South Wales King's Cup crew, rowing as Sydney Rowing Club, comprising five silver medallists from the previous year's Mexico Olympics. Peter Nicholson, having recovered from illness, brilliantly stroked this crew. In addition to himself, the eight also contained two other lightweight oarsmen, Cam Johnston and Mike Dalling, together with the remaining members of the MUBC heavyweight senior eight, after losing Will Liley and John Harry to King's Cup selection. Cam went on to become a world lightweight champion. These lightweights proved that talented lightweight rowers could test the mettle of even the top heavyweights.

Harvey Nicholson's report for the 1969–70 season revealed that ten MUBC members and former members had won Victorian blazers. The MUBC senior lightweight four won the Victorian state title for the first time. In the King's Cup, Paul Guest (intervarsity 1959), John Harry (intervarsity 1966) and Kerry Jelbart (senior eight 1967 and 1968 and former intervarsity sculler for ANU) rowed in the winning crew and Will Liley (intervarsity 1968) was emergency. Guest and Jelbart were members of the Australian eight which came fifth in the 1970 World Championships at St Catherine's in Canada.¹¹ This eight featured in a sensational incident in the semi-finals: 'At the order "partez" and the drop of the flag, all other crews raced away, with Australia left at the start. Australia claimed their cox's hand was up. This was verified in the TV film later, and Australia was permitted to start in the Grand Final in the outside lane as a seventh crew; but only after racing flat-out over the course under supervision, so that it could not be claimed they had an unfair advantage.'¹²

Rise of the lightweights

Perhaps of particular interest was the rise of MUBC in lightweight rowing. Melbourne University crews came to dominate lightweight rowing in Victoria and Australia throughout the 1970s and into the 1980s. The foundation for this domination was laid through success at intervarsity level. In the first twenty-five years of the lightweight fours event at the intervarsity regatta, from the success of the four stroked by Geoff Park in the inaugural race in 1963, Melbourne University won an amazing nineteen times. The first lightweight oarsmen from MUBC to gain state selection in the Penrith Cup were Peter McCabe Doyle (1964), Geoff Park and McCabe Doyle (1965) and Brian Clarke and Bill Ethridge in 1969. They were to be followed by many others over the next twenty years.

An important part of this development came from the coaching of Mark Schapper, who had coxed the winning intervarsity eight in 1963, and first coached the intervarsity lightweight four in 1966. Crews under his guidance were victorious in 1967, 1969 and 1970 and came a very close second in 1968. He also coached the Club's senior lightweight four during the period from 1967 through until 1972, culminating in the Club's first ever national championship win with a victory in the lightweight eights on Lake Kurwongbah in Queensland. Success in winning state lightweight four titles in 1970 and 1971 were followed by Mark being appointed coach of the Victorian Penrith Cup crew (the interstate race for lightweight fours) in 1970 and 1971 (which produced the first win by a Victorian crew in that event since 1966).

Success in lightweight events had only come after many defeats in Club rowing. It was greatly facilitated by combining MUBC oarsmen in state crews with such champions as George Xouris and Jeff Sykes from Corio Bay. Mark Schapper worked hard on increasing the efficiency of his crews, primarily by concentrating on accelerating the oar through the stroke to the finish. This assisted the crew to learn how to race effectively and was not driven by 'style' so much as by Mark's understanding of the physics involved. At the same time, he realised it was important to make training more enjoyable by introducing as much variation into training sessions as possible, thereby enabling the crew 'to enjoy the training more, and actually work harder without realising it.'¹³

For Mark, the critical breakthrough was the 1971 Penrith Cup crew. As he recalls: 'By the standards of the day this combination was seriously fast ... By the time we went to Perth for the race, this crew, at 68.2kg average and with a cox on board, could repeatedly hold the winning King's Cup eight from a standing start to 250–300 metres ... By 1972 our LW squad was pretty strong—and the best of the group very nearly ready to take on the World—which they did in 1974.'¹⁴

1969, a pivotal year

1969 proved another year of developments and victories. Melbourne dominated intervarsity at Ballarat, winning the men's eight, the lightweight four and the newly introduced event for coxless pairs for the Carlton & United Goblets. It was the first time that the Oxford and Cambridge Cup for eights was rowed over 2000 metres. Melbourne easily accounted for Sydney and Adelaide in cold and blustery conditions on Lake Wendouree. This was a particularly satisfying victory for MUBC as it demonstrated 'that a well-trained crew can win over any distance.'¹⁵



TOP: 1969 winning MUBC intervarsity lightweight four (Lake Wendouree, Ballarat) Mark Schapper, coach: Kim Abbott (bow), Andy McKinley (2), Brian Clarke (3), Cam Johnston (stroke), Tony Richards (cox)

MIDDLE: 1969 winning MUBC intervarsity eight waiting for the start of the final on Lake Wendouree, Ballarat (Harvey Nicholson, coach): Bill Christophersen (bow), Peter Wilson (2), Phil Norman (3), Ian Farran (4), Paul McSweeney (5), Geoff Withers (6), David Hornsby (7), Gus Ferguson (stroke), Richard Kendall (cox).

Note the canvas splashboards and the obviously freezing conditions

Paul McSweeney collection

BOTTOM: John Boulton, cox of the 1969 Sydney University intervarsity eight and later Secretary-General of FISA

Michael Nicholson collection

Invitation from Japan

A most exciting development was an invitation in 1969 from the Japan Amateur Rowing Association to send an eight to compete in the All Japan Rowing Championships on the Toda Olympic Course. The only crews previously invited had been Cambridge in 1954 and Oxford in 1959. Neither had won the Championship.

After the success of the intervarsity eight in Perth in 1968, Harvey Nicholson requested Desmond McSweeney, who was Australia's Minister Commercial at the Australian Embassy in Tokyo and whose son Paul had rowed in the Perth eight, to approach the Japan Amateur Rowing Association (JARA) for an invitation to be extended to the Melbourne eight, as Australian Universities champions, to compete in that year's All Japan Championships. JARA replied that there was insufficient time to arrange such an invitation for that year, but agreed to extend one for the All Japan Championships Regatta to be held in August of the following year. This meant of course that it became even more imperative to retain the Oxford and Cambridge Cup in May 1969, so that the crew could go to Japan later in the year as the Australian Universities champions.

Gus Ferguson and Bill Christophersen from the intervarsity eight, as well as Richard Kendall the cox, were unavailable to go to Japan. Rob Zahara and Jim McMeckan replaced Gus and Bill in the eight and Harvey's son Michael, who was then a cox at Scotch College,

became the cox of the Japan eight. The crew comprised: Jim McMeckan (bow) 12st 5lbs, Rob Zahara (2) 13st 5lbs, Phil Norman (3) 13st 12lbs, Peter Wilson (4) 13st 10lbs, Paul McSweeney (5) 13st 10lbs, Geoff Withers (6) 14st 7lbs, Dave Hornsby (7) 13st 3lbs, Ian Farran (stroke) 13st 7lbs and Michael Nicholson (cox) 6st 11lbs. The two emergencies were Bill Magennis, 13st 10lbs and Rob Benson, 13st 5lbs. who trained in a pair.

Two of the most generous donors towards the team's trip were Clive Disher and Lex Rentoul. That loyal clubman, Lex, was also present at Mascot Airport to greet the team as it arrived from Melbourne en route to Tokyo and wish it bon voyage and good luck.

The team trained strenuously from the end of intervarsity in May 1969, including a weights program designed by Stan Nicholes at Oasis Gymnasium, through until they departed for Japan in July 1969. The eight was a sectionalised boat made by Sargent & Burton, was crated up by Jeff Sykes, the Geelong boat builder, and transported to Tokyo courtesy of the Japanese shipping line NYK. The pair rowed in a borrowed boat which had been left behind by one of the foreign crews in the Tokyo 1964 Olympics.

Training commenced from the day of arrival in Tokyo on the Olympic course at Toda and continued for three weeks until the day of the regatta on August 1969. During this time there was an opportunity for competition at a lead-up regatta and sightseeing at Japan's ancient capital of Kyoto, which the team travelled to on the famous bullet train.

The eight performed well in lead-up regattas, but the competition from Doshisha University and Keio University, in particular, was extremely good. Doshisha had the same crew that had been selected to represent Japan at the previous year's Mexico City Olympics. After winning by large margins in the heat and the semi-final, Melbourne drew an unfavourable station in the final, which was held in a strong cross headwind. In the final Doshisha won by one and a half lengths from Keio with Melbourne, a further canvas behind in third place.

In the coxed pairs event, Bill Magennis and Rob Benson, coxed by Michael Nicholson, won the All Japan Championship. They then came second in the coxless pairs event (using the same boat and weighing the bow down with a bag of sand to correct the trim!). This was the start of Bill's very successful international rowing career for Australia.

The 1969 trip to Japan was an unforgettable experience for all members of the team who participated and was a milestone in the history of the Club in that, apart from the coxed four which rowed at Henley Royal Regatta in 1963 and which was steered by an OUBC cox who had been made a member of MUBC, it was the first time that a Club crew had competed outside Australia.

The All Japan Championship was the turning point from the traditional to the modern MUBC. Until the mid 1960s, the Club had been primarily devoted to college or intervarsity competition, and participated in club regatta rowing with intermittent enthusiasm. Individual MUBC members had competed in state, national and international competitions throughout the history of the Club, but these had always been dependent on the enthusiasm of individual coaches, captains or presidents; but from the time of the All Japan Championships, the Club was continually involved with all levels of rowing—club, intervarsity, state, national and international. A significant part of the credit for initiating this change must go to Peter Nicholson who reinvigorated the Club during his short period in office and committed it to full participation in all parts of the rowing calendar. The dedicated efforts of Harvey Nicholson as both coach and administrator played a key



ABOVE: 1969 MUBC Tokyo team (left to right in back row): David Hornsby, Peter Wilson, Rob Zahara, Paul McSweeney, Geoff Withers, Phil Norman, Rob Benson, Bill Magennis, Ian Farran, Jim McMeckan, Michael Nicholson and Harvey Nicholson, with Japanese hosts on a visit to the ancient capital of Japan, Kyoto
Michael Nicholson collection

BELOW: All Japan Championships final with 200 metres to go (left to right): Doshisha University, Tokyo University, Keio University, Melbourne University and Waseda University (behind on the far station)
Michael Nicholson collection



TOP: All Japan Championship Regatta Programme
Paul McSweeney collection

CENTRE: MUBC's 1969 All Japan Champion coxed pair and runners up in the coxless pair: Bill Magennis and Rob Benson, with the Japanese winning crew in the coxless pair
Michael Nicholson collection

BOTTOM: HRH Princess Chichibu congratulating the cox of the All Japan Champion coxed pair, Michael Nicholson, with coach and father Harvey Nicholson looking on proudly
Michael Nicholson collection

role, as did the technical skills improvement brought about by the outstanding coaching of Mark Schapper with the lightweight squads.

Poignantly, the era's end was marked by the death of (Uncle) Russell Keon-Cohen. Much loved and admired, he and his brother and nephews represented the great continuity of the Club. He moved the acceptance of the annual report at the 19 September 1969 annual meeting. At the next committee meeting on 2 December everyone stood in silent respect for his memory. Born in 1901, 'Uncle Russell' had been one of the Club's most colourful, passionate and loyal members. He had stroked the Henley Grand Challenge for the Club in 1924 as well as many intervarsity and college crews. He was one of only three honorary life members alive at this time.¹⁶ A new four was named after him.¹⁷

The centenary intervarsity and the first win for women

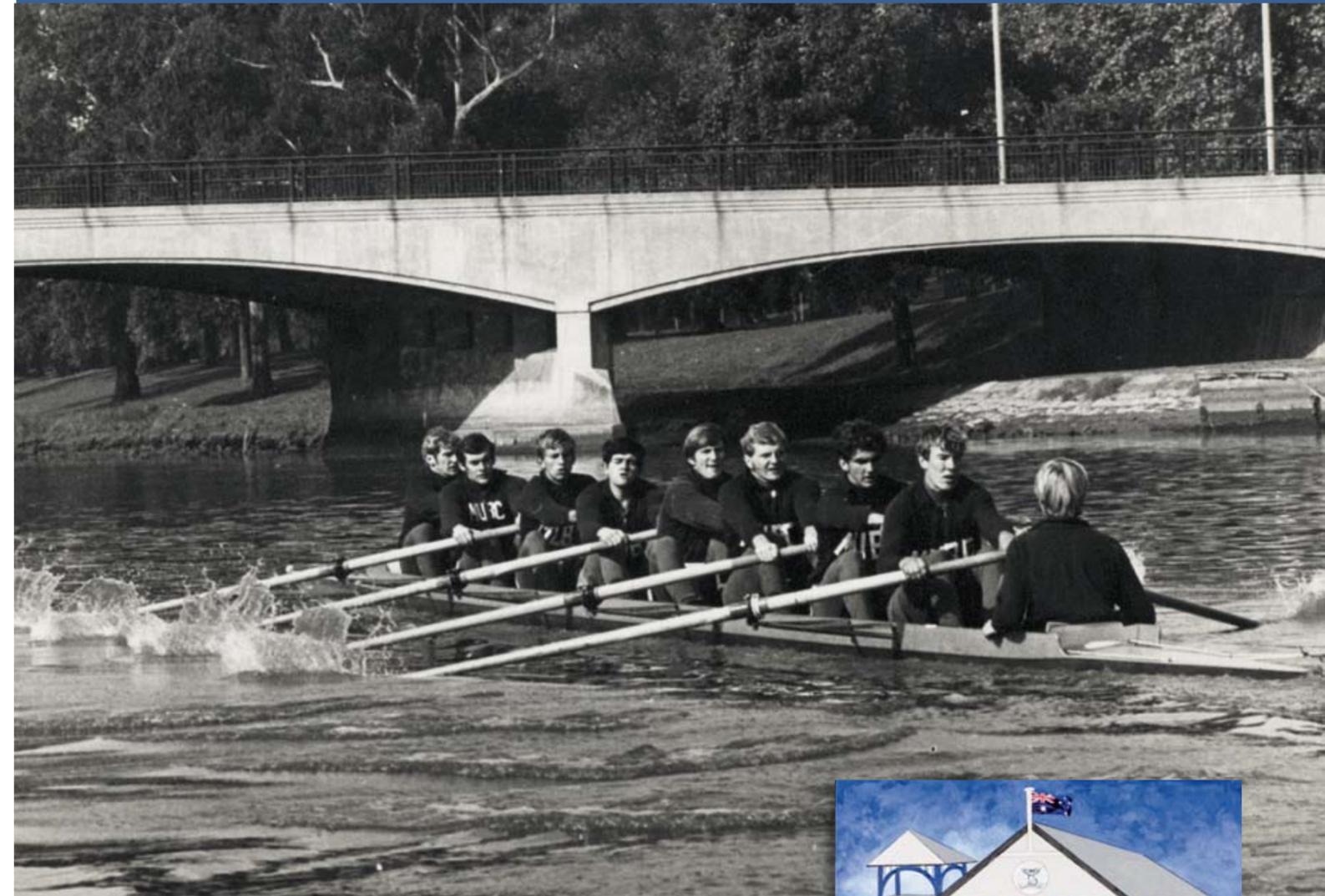
In 1970, intervarsity competition began its second century. On 21–23 May, the regatta was held for the first time at Lake Burley Griffin in Canberra in near perfect conditions. The Australian National University was the host. It provided real satisfaction to the Club in that it won the men's pair, lightweight four and the men's eight events, beating Sydney University Boat Club. They had won 100 years before in 1870 when there had been only one event—coxed fours—and two universities, Melbourne and Sydney.¹⁸ It was in 1970 also that Melbourne won its first intervarsity women's event—the coxed four.¹⁹

The men's victories were all the more satisfying as many crew members had not previously competed in intervarsity races.

The eight were Field Rickards Jnr (bow), Tony Oakley (2), John Paterson (3), Rob Zahara (4), Bill Magennis (5), Peter Wilson (6), Lachie Payne (7), Ian Farran (stroke), Peter Hyslop (cox) and Harvey Nicholson (coach). The coxless pair was John Paton (bow) and David Bainbridge (stroke) and Harvey Nicholson (coach). The lightweight four were Andy McKinley (bow), Kim Abbott (2), Brian Clarke (3), Cam Johnston (stroke), Tony Richards (cox) and Mark Schapper (coach).

Training had begun soon after the intercollegiate events on 23–25 March. As well, the eight and pair went to Mildura and Wentworth regattas for training during Easter. Many of the lightweight four trained at Ballarat where most of the crew had represented Victoria in the Penrith Cup (finishing a somewhat disappointing third). This was the first occasion on which a whole MUBC crew had been selected for the Penrith Cup. Peter Nicholson stroked the crew with Cam Johnston, Andy McKinley and Brian Clarke behind him. As Peter was no longer studying at Melbourne University, he did not compete in the intervarsity event and was replaced by Kim Abbott.

As part of the training for intervarsity, long rows were undertaken at weekends and the crews were introduced to parts of the Yarra and Maribyrnong Rivers they were unfamiliar with. The crews rowed beyond Riverview Tea Gardens (on the Maribyrnong), to Footscray and the Bay in one direction and as far as Dight's Falls in the other. Harvey Nicholson's notes reveal his philosophy on training: 'Heavy rain on many nights made training unpleasant but helped to weld a determined crew which was encouraged by the resulting fast times, one 2000 metre course being done in 5mins 33secs, and two others in 5.55.8 and 5.48.5'.²⁰



ABOVE: 1970 winning MUBC intervarsity eight (Lake Burley Griffin) rowing on the Yarra in training (Harvey Nicholson, coach): Field Rickards (bow), Tony Oakley (2), John Paterson (3), Rob Zahara (4), Bill Magennis (5), Peter Wilson (6), Lachie Payne (7), Ian Farran (stroke), Peter Hyslop (cox)
Courtesy of The Herald & Weekly Times Ltd

RIGHT: Michael Nicholson's oil painting and photograph collage depicting the MUBC boatshed prior to the 1979 extension, with Harvey Nicholson, Michael Nicholson, Geoff Withers and the 1969 MUBC Tokyo crew in the foreground
Paul McSweeney collection reproduced courtesy of Michael Nicholson





The first MULRC crew to compete (and win) at intervarsity in 1970 on Lake Kurwongbah, Queensland (Richard Burn, coach): Peta Brewster (bow), Robyn Lyons (2), Betty Gawthorne (3), Pat Oddie (stroke), Vicki Richards (cox.)

Courtesy: *Newspix*, The Courier-Mail

The women have arrived

In 1968, the first year that a women's four event was held at intervarsity, a group of women from University Women's College, Janet Clarke Hall and St Hilda's, colleges which had competed previously in social intercollegiate events, decided to set up a women's rowing club. The women, Margaret Costigan and Elaine Skinner, both in their last year of studies, were joined by Robyn Lyons and Vicky Richards, both in their first year. The Sports Union obtained a tub four for the women, from the YWCA, that was housed in the MUBC boatshed. The first club Captain was Robyn Lyons.

In a report in the 11 July 1969 *Herald*, Lyons said they were out to win the state junior and lightweight fours championships as well as the University Women's Four championships of 1970. Training for this had begun in March of 1969. The club received encouragement from Kath Suhr (now Bennett), a mainstay of women's rowing. She and

the secretary of the Victorian Ladies' Rowing Association met with Bill Tickner on the women's behalf and convinced him that women's rowing was viable. They were initially coached by Bob Mann of Yarra Yarra Boat Club, but Richard Burn came on board to become their first official coach. The intervarsity crew comprised Peta Brewster (bow) Robyn Lyons, Betty Gawthorne, Pat Oddie (stroke) and Vicki Richards (cox).

At this time these Melbourne University Ladies' Rowing Club members were the only women rowing out of a shed on the Yarra. Other women's crews used Albert Park Lake. It was a great advantage that MULRC were able to train with the men's lightweight four. However, there were difficulties with rowing out of the shed as there were no women's showers or changing rooms, so the women used the caretaker's flat. Other than that, they were by and large ignored.

In 1970 MULRC was officially established as a club affiliated with the Melbourne University Sports Union. The MULRC crew travelled to Lake Kurwongbah in Queensland for the Club's first intervarsity. By this time the women had acquired a brand new racing four which would be called *Kooboora*. They easily won the event over 1000 metres in Brisbane by two lengths from Sydney, Queensland and Newcastle. The emergencies Denise Widmer and Sandra Kousal were taught how to row by Field Rickards Snr and Bob Mann. They came second in the heat of the pairs race to eventual winners Queensland. The intervarsity four were awarded Blues without the usual probation period new clubs needed to qualify.

In 1971 the Melbourne University Junior Four won the National Title in the Australian championships. The crew were Pat Oddie, Sandy Ronsat, Denise Widner, Betty Gawthorne and Vicki Richards.

1971-73

In 1971, for the first time in four years, MUBC lost the men's eight event at intervarsity, though it did win the lightweight four and men's pair. The eights race was won for the first time by Monash in an extremely close race. Monash went on to retain the Cup in the following two years. The Club led the Victorian lightweight premiership with 60 points. They also did well in the junior premiership which covered all junior, maiden and novice events, where the Club earned 100 points compared to their old rival Mercantile, which had 92.

The senior premiership was dominated by Monash University with 120 points, double that of Mercantile. MUBC had only 16 points in this season.²²

The August 1971 *Mubc* noted that seventy oarsmen had been actively engaged in the previous season (1970-1). The Club had won forty events including four championships.

Captain for the 1971-2 season was Robert Zahara whose brother Julian had rowed for the Club. Zahara was a member of the senior eight crew in the 1969-70 and 1970-1 seasons. Hon Secretary, Rob Stewart, noted 'His ability to keep the club and any crew of which he is a member laughing whatever the situation is invaluable and is undoubtedly a large factor in his success. He epitomises what can be done with perseverance and quiet determination.'²³

Another member of the Nicholson family was also prominent at this time. Michael Nicholson won the 1971 Herald Shield for sculling by one point from Don Carlton of



The winning 1970 crew and the traditional dunking of the cox

Courtesy: *Newspix*, The Brisbane Telegraph



Michael Nicholson aged 15 practising in Japan for later glory in the Herald Shield sculling competition, which he won twice
Michael Nicholson collection



TOP: 1971 MUBC junior eight defeating Banks by one foot on the Barwon River, Bill Stokes (coach): Ag Michelmore (bow), David Bainbridge (2), Tim Doherty (3), Ric Krohn (4), John Reid (5), Tom Yuncken (6), John Paterson (7), Tony Oakley (stroke) and Sandy Hancock (cox) *Tony Oakley collection*

ABOVE LEFT: 1971 MUBC senior eight's guard of honour at Field (Jnr) and Jeanette 'Millie' Rickards' wedding *Field Rickards collection*

ABOVE RIGHT: One of Field Rickards Snr's earliest veteran crews: Peter Robinson (bow), Julian Zahara (2), Don Handley (3), Peter ('Harry') McKeon (4), Arthur Adams (5), Jim Robson (6), Ian Bult (7), Field Rickards Snr (stroke) and John Henry (cox) *Field Rickards collection*

Mercantile. He coxed many MUBC crews, including the 1969 Tokyo crew, and also occasionally rowed in a lightweight pair.²⁴ Michael also went on to coach many successful MULRC women's intersarsity crews.

With a strong committee and an excellent program of year round rowing, the Club had finally taken itself beyond the problems that had plagued it for the previous 100 years. Old members remained to coach or administrate or fundraise and the line-up of Vice-Presidents bore out the force of the Club. In 1972, they were Arthur Adams, Chester Keon-Cohen, Tony Oakley, Field Rickards Jnr, David Salmon, Rob Stewart, Bill Stokes and Mark Schapper. Harvey Nicholson was again President, Rob Zahara, Captain and David Salmon, Treasurer. The Club had two Patrons, Dr Clive Disher and W Balcombe Griffiths. Throughout the season the Club had gained four Victorian titles and one NSW title for senior coxed pairs, senior sprint pairs and senior lightweight fours. There were two MUBC members in the Victorian King's Cup eight and one in the 'A' coxless pair; the whole of the Victorian Penrith Cup crew, including the coach and all the equipment, were



TOP: The dramatic finish of the 1971 Victorian State Championship final for senior eights at Lake Wendouree, Ballarat *Geoff Withers collection*

БОТТОМ: 1972 MUBC National Champion Lightweight Eight: David Yates (bow), Ian Harbeck (2), Rob Stewart (3), Murray Fedderson (4), Chris Low (5), Ag Michelmore (6), Andy McKinley (7), Cam Johnston (stroke) and David England (cox) *Rob Stewart collection*

from the Club. MUBC won the lightweight fours and coxless pairs at intervarsity and was beaten by inches in the Oxford and Cambridge Cup final. Will Liley was selected in the 3 seat in the Australian coxed four going to the European Championships in Moscow.

With so many good oarsmen from past years still involved, it was inevitable that the idea of veteran rowing would take off. Field Rickards Snr was its inspiration and brilliant organiser.

The Club was, in Rob Zahara's words, 'a friendly group of "good blokes" with a common aim.' Throughout the year there were organised film and theatre nights and a dinner dance in the Ormond College dining hall.

Bill Tickner, Alf Lazer and John Chinner of the Sports Union also provided strong support to the Club. Four new boats were christened in the 1972–3 season—an eight was named *Clive Disher IV*, a four *William Stokes*, another four *Robert Zahara* and a pair *Alf Lazer*.

The new Coxswain's Trophy was won by Victor Ronai 'in an overall performance that beggars [sic] description.'²⁵ At the time Ronai was in Form 3 (Year 9) at Kew High School. He was the University's senior cox and also occasionally rowed in a pair with fellow MUBC cox David England. Ronai's mother had rowed in Germany before the Second World War and his sister was a member of the MULRC.²⁶

Dave Elder successfully paired with Tom Yuncken in the junior pair events at this time. Elder had returned from the Vietnam War where he had served as an Army Captain at the Australian Hospital in Vang Tau. He had resumed study to complete his surgeon's exams.²⁷

The Club had fifteen senior rowers (men who had won a senior event²⁸) at this time. They were Ian Farran, Gus Ferguson, Paul McSweeney, Cam Johnston, Peter Nicholson, Phil Norman, Will Liley, Bill Magennis, Lachie Payne, Field Rickards Jnr, Geoff Withers, Peter Wilson, Greg White, Tom Yuncken and Rob Zahara. Peter Nicholson and Cam Johnston were listed as senior lightweight oarsmen. The others were Andy McKinley, Kim Abbott, Brian Clarke, Andrew (Ag) Michelmore, David Yates, Ian Harbeck, Rob Stewart, Bill Paterson and Greg Johnson.²⁹

One of the highlights of the 1972 season was the Club's victory at Henley-on-Yarra—now called the Moomba Henley—at which the MUBC senior eight defeated their old rivals Mercantile by 2½ lengths. Xavier came third. The crew were Lachie Payne (bow), Tom Yuncken (2), Dave Bainbridge (3), Will Liley (4), Joel Shelton (5), John McKeand (6), Bill Magennis (7), Greg White (stroke) and Vic Ronai (cox).

The Club finished second in the senior premiership and had victories in the Australian Championship Lightweight Eight, the intervarsity lightweight four, the Grand Challenge Cup for senior eights and many other events. Bill Stokes was senior coach. As well, the Club now had a regular veteran eight.³⁰ It was stroked by Field Rickards Snr.

The Club then achieved a major milestone in 1972 by winning its first national title, the lightweight eights. The crew members were David Yates (bow), Ian Harbeck (2), Rob Stewart (3), Murray Fedderson (4), Chris Low (5), Andrew Michelmore (6), Andrew McKinley (7), Cam Johnston (stroke) and David England (cox). Mark Schapper was coach.

Following Mark Schapper's retirement, Peter Philp was appointed coach to the lightweight squad for the 1973 season. Philp had been stroke in Scotch College's winning 1963 Head of the River crew that included MUBC men, Peter Nicholson as cox, Bryan

More caretaker worries

'The President announced that the Club Caretaker, Mr W Pearson was once more residing on the premises after a temporary absence. The Sports Union has placed several conditions on Mr. Pearson's continued tenancy of which the major ones are that he refrain from hoarding inflammable materials in the club house and that he should not approach the Sports Union direct on any matter but must direct his queries through this Committee.'³¹

Keon-Cohen, Peter Martin, Jim McMeckan and Kerry Jelbart.

1972 was an Olympic year but no current MUBC members were competing in Munich. Former member, Kerry Jelbart, was there, rowing 3 in the eight. Harvey Nicholson and Bill Stokes attended as spectators.

The Club was now involved at all levels of rowing and its committee and members held offices in the Victorian Rowing Association. Harvey Nicholson was a VRA Vice-President.

In international competition, Will Liley was selected to represent Australia in the European Championships in Moscow on 28 August 1973.

The President's Report to the 1972–3 annual general meeting noted that the Club had been represented in almost every regatta and had had twenty-eight wins for the season. Ninety-nine oarsmen participated in the regattas. As well as the active participation of so many members, there was also a more professional approach. Late in 1972 a meeting about 'Rowing Training and Technique' was held at the boatshed. There were several speakers including Stan Nicholes, who discussed individual training for individual physiques. Phil Cayzer, who had been involved as rower and coach in more than a dozen King's Cups, spoke about rowing techniques. Harvey Nicholson 'emphasised the absolute necessity of getting miles under one's belt ...' and Colin Porter spoke about motivation.³²

1973 intervarsity at Mildura

The 78th Annual Australian University Boat Race and Rowing Championships were hosted by Melbourne University and held on the Murray River at Mildura on 18 and 19 May 1973. The regatta was sponsored by Carlton and United Breweries. There were entries from thirteen universities. MUBC won the men's pair, men's lightweight four and came second in the men's eight by the narrowest of margins. Although it was difficult to organise because of the distance from Melbourne, the location was approved by all: 'The river was flowing quite fast, but was fair to all crews, and no station stood out as having any unfair advantage.'³³ In fact there had been very heavy rains just before the course was set up and the river could almost have been said to be 'in flood'. Setting the course proved extremely difficult and the times rowed were very fast. There was a large crowd 'in the glorious sunshine' at the final. Arthur Adams, Field Rickards Snr, Roger Wilson and Julian Zahara officiated.³⁴

The event also took in a 'Representative Meeting' held on 10 May at the Mildura Rowing Club. AUSA head, Rob Stewart, was the Chairman and convenor of the meeting. Rob Zahara represented MUBC. Sydney's delegate was John Boulton. Many important decisions were made including a change to enable representatives meetings to make binding decisions rather than just recommendations to the AUSA. The motion by Sydney University to recommend to AUSA that all Women's Intersivity events be held at the same venue as the men's events was lost. Melbourne thought such a move would provide too much work for the men's convenor and Adelaide suggested that amalgamation might lower the standard of the present regatta.³⁵

In November 1973, the Club sought and obtained from its life members the majority of funds to construct the extensions to the boatshed to incorporate the full changing facilities required by the Ladies Rowing Club and boat rack storage for both clubs.

Harvey and the MUBC committee

'When asked what a quorum at a committee meeting was, the President [Harvey Nicholson] cast his eyes about the room and then answered: "I don't know, but I imagine it's about five."³⁶

Harvey Nicholson was ever the 'old fox' when it came to procedural and constitutional matters. For example, on a number of occasions at committee meetings Harvey would say that 'the constitution says ...'. In particular, he used to quote it in relation to the non-selection of people for intervarsity who had represented other clubs during the season. However when queried, Harvey never produced the constitution as a whole. Instead, he would bring along a small typed piece of paper with just the one clause that referred to the particular issue in contention. When the Club was finally established as an unincorporated association, a new constitution was drawn up for that process, to the relief of all committee members!



1973 Australian coxed four, Joe Saunders (coach): Gary Dehrig (bow), Bill Dankbaar (2), Will Liley (3), Laurie Anderson (stroke), Brian Tonkin (cox), training for the European Championships in Moscow. The crew was finally seated with Dehring in the 3 seat, Liley in the 2 seat and Dankbaar at bow
National Archives of Australia
NAA: A6180, 6/7/73/16



1974 World Championship gold-medal-winning and 1975 World Championship bronze-medal-winning lightweight coxless four: Colin Smith (bow), Geoff Rees (2), Ag Michelmore (3), Cam Johnston (stroke) with Peter Philp (coach)
Eric Wadsworth Australian Information Service P74/514 10/7/74/55 National Library of Australia

Though the extension was not completed until about 1979, this was the beginning of real recognition of MULRC and the acceptance of the permanence of women's rowing. Apart from intervarsity, when they tended to use either the Ormond or Trinity eights, the women had few boats. However, by the late 1970s they did take over some of the men's surplus equipment, usually the men's lightweight crews' boats. After this the women's events continued with irregularity and from 1975, the women's intervarsity regatta was held at the same time and place as the men's, though MULRC was not always represented. They did not win again until, with much better organisation in 1978, they won the pair, coxed four, lightweight four and (unofficial) eight events.³⁷ That team included Barbara Griffiths who represented Australia at the World Championships later that year.

1974, a watershed year

The Club was well represented in the Victorian team to contest the 1974 King's Cup and Penrith Cup. David Slessar, Bill Magennis and Roger Atkinson were selected for the King's Cup crew in bow, 5 and 3 seats respectively, and a MUBC lightweight four was selected as a whole to represent Victoria for the second year running. The 1974 crew were Colin Smith (bow), Geoff Rees (2), Andrew Michelmore (3), Cam Johnston (stroke), David England (cox), Andy McKinley (emergency) and Peter Philp (coach).³⁸

This outstanding crew convincingly won the Penrith Cup (having previously won the Victorian and NSW state titles) and was selected to represent Australia at the World Championship in Lucerne, Switzerland in September. This was the first time that lightweight events were to be included on the program for a World Championship.

The 1974 annual meeting was the Club's 115th. It was a great year for the Club. Harvey Nicholson made special mention of the Club winning the senior premiership for the first time ever. Rob Stewart discussed the expansion and improvement of the Club. 'The club six years ago had no wins, no annual dinner, no amenities or a refrigerator, no representation on the VRA apart from club delegates ...'³⁹

In fact this year was a watershed for the Club and for rowing in Australia. The lightweight four became the first Australian crew to win a gold medal at World Rowing Championships or Olympic Games. One hundred and nineteen donors assisted the crew with their expenses. The appeal had raised enough money to cover all costs including the special racing four built for the crew by Jeff Sykes named *Alex McLeish* after the then President of the AARC. It was transported to Duisberg in West Germany to be used for the World Championship.

The team left Australia for Europe, with Lachie Payne and Rob Stewart as supporters, via Vancouver on 19 July. They stopped in Vancouver for a few days to break up the trip. They were impressed by the facilities and the fact that the Canadians had full-time well-paid coaches. Despite their advantages, the Canadians had to borrow boats and did not do particularly well in the championships.

The team arrived in Amsterdam, picked up their bus and went to Duisberg to participate in the West German National Championships. They didn't win but the crew began to combine much better. They returned to Amsterdam and did plenty of long, hard rows on the Bosbaan, the Dutch man-made course. They then left for the next regatta at Hanover, West Germany, feeling very weary, but only managed to come third. After a break in Interlaken where they drank a lot of beer and did no rowing, they sang a lot of bawdy songs on the bus on the way to Lucerne. The team's final destination was the Rotsee in Lucerne, one of the best natural courses in the world.

Their outstanding win in their heat in fastest heat time took them straight to the Grand Final with other heat winner Holland. '... On the Sunday morning, in near perfect rowing conditions with a very slight headwind, Australia led soon after the start and increased their lead to win by nearly two lengths from Holland in 6mins 38.12secs. With USA 3rd, West Germany 4th, Sweden 5th and Norway 6th. The actual margin of 5.12 secs was the second largest margin of all the Grand Finals.'⁴⁰

Harvey Nicholson was there for the victory. Bill Stokes, Tony Oakley, Lachie Payne and Rob Stewart also witnessed the event. In addition, the Club was represented at the World

'Bill' Everard William Pearson, caretaker

On 6 February 1975, Bill Pearson, died. He was found in his flat by MUBC oarsman, Will Liley.⁴¹ His military funeral was held at Fawkner Cemetery and Field Rickards Snr delivered the Oration. Pearson's life may seem unusual to us now, but during the middle of the twentieth century, there were many men who lived alone and took on jobs that required them to reside on site and be on call six days a week. Many buildings had caretakers, and these men were often also the handyman on the job. Some were married, but more often they were single men who had no apparent close ties.



1975 winning MUBC intervarsity lightweight four (Huon River) (left to right): Frank Saccardo (bow), Jeremy McGrath (3) Bob Brownlee (cox), Norman O'Bryan (stroke) and Nick Robinson (2). This was the last intervarsity crew coached by Harvey Nicholson
Michael Nicholson collection



ABOVE: 1975 winning MUBC intervarsity eight (Huon River) Bill Stokes, coach: Bruce Longden (bow), Mark Nolan (2), Rick Widmer (3), Jim Lowe (4), Murray Ross (5), Dallas English (6), Tim Horkings (7), Simon Swaney (stroke), Pat Howman (cox) out of picture
Courtesy Ken Toleman

Championships by Bill Magennis in the Australian heavyweight coxless four. Thus the Club began its era of successful international competition.

Internationally, the Club's champion lightweight four was again selected to compete in the World Championships held in Nottingham, England in August 1975. They were again coached by Peter Philp. Also selected in the Australian team was Will Liley, who was emergency for the heavyweight eight.

[The four] put up a magnificent performance in the grand final, in a less favoured lane, to come third, and win the bronze medal. This was the first time an Australian crew had won two medals at World Championships or Olympic Games regattas ... At each of these World Championships, Harvey Nicholson was a member of the Jury, and a 'juge-arbitre' on four days of racing. As the entire Australian lightweight coxless four was from the one club, MUBC—in accordance with the FISA articles—was awarded a large bronze-gilt medal and a large bronze medal.⁴²



History repeats itself

Despite the Club's advances there were some problems that were perpetual. The selection of men who rowed for other clubs in intervarsity crews was one such dilemma. During a March 1975 committee meeting, one of the important items was the appointment of coaches for the intervarsity crews. Three nominations were received: Christopher Dane (from Monash University Rowing Club) for the eight, Harvey Nicholson for the eight, or four, and Bill Stokes for the eight, 'with the proviso that he was free to select the best oarsmen available at Melbourne University.'⁴³ This was Bill Stokes' second attempt at selecting someone from outside the Club. In 1974 he had tried to select an active member of the Mercantile Rowing Club to the eight, and had had the rules read to him. He demurred, saying he thought this was a very bad rule, but was forced to concede. In the same year Harvey Nicholson had selected a member of the lightweight four from the Corio Bay Rowing Club. He had been permitted to do so because he came within the Club rule which allowed men to be selected for intervarsity, if they were members of a club outside a twenty kilometre radius of Melbourne.⁴⁴ When the committee discussed

1976 winning MUBC intervarsity lightweight four (Lake Wendouree, Ballarat) Colin Smith, coach: Paul Van Veenendaal (bow), Peter Antonie (2), Simon Gillett (3), Geoff Rees (stroke), Tim McCoy (cox)
Courtesy Ken Toleman

Men's intervarsity pairs

Among the successful crews for the Club in the sixties and seventies in the Carlton & United Goblets event for men's intervarsity pairs were Rob Benson and Bill Magennis in 1969; Jon Paton and David Bainbridge in 1970; John Reid and David Bainbridge in 1971 and 1972; Geoff Rees and Ag Michelmore in 1973, coached by Harvey Nicholson; Mark Nolan and Bruce Longden in 1974; and Andrew Rigby and Norman O'Bryan in 1976, coached by Ag Michelmore.

the matter again in 1975, David Salmon, Arthur Adams and other committee members selected Stokes as coach of the eight and the pair. They did not explicitly forbid him selecting men from outside the Club but that he should earnestly consider the rule when making his selection.⁴⁵

In fact the 1975 eight (in the end, all Melbourne University Boat Club members) won at intervarsity as did the lightweight four. The eight were Bruce Longden (bow), Mark Nolan (2), Richard Widmer (3), Jim Lowe (4), Murray Ross (5), Dallas English (6), Tim Horkings (7), Simon Swaney (stroke) and Pat Howman (cox). The regatta was held in Tasmania on the Huon in freezing conditions.⁴⁶

Despite previous objections the women's races were also conducted at the same regatta, but there were no representatives from MULRC.

Other old problems were evident in the state of the Club's finances. Hon Treasurer, Bill Stokes, 'gave a critical analysis of the club's finances' which he emphasised were 'on a very low [sic] state.' Subscriptions had not been collected for two or three years. Stokes was adamant that once the back subscriptions were collected, no member of a crew should be allowed to row unless he was financial. Membership cost just \$5; very low when compared to the years before Melbourne University Sports Union support. Stokes also thought that life members who used the Club's equipment should also pay the \$5. Stokes was a formidable member of the Club as a rower and official. In 1975 he was elected as a member of the VRA.⁴⁷

A 'personnel rejuvenation' subcommittee had been established. Murray Ross, who was then in charge, reported at the 20 November 1975 meeting, 'that an enormous amount of stock could not be accounted for.' The missing stock included forty-two dozen bottles of beer.⁴⁸

The intervarsity lightweight fours continued to bring the Club success, and in 1976 the lightweight four included two new recruits, Paul van Veenendaal and Peter Antonie in the bow and 2 seat respectively, Simon Gillett in the 3 seat, and 1974 World Champion Geoff Rees in the stroke seat—a formidable crew. Tim McCoy was cox.

Finally in 1976, the question of eligibility to row for the Club was resolved. The Melbourne University Sports Union declared that undergraduates paying union fees, graduates, staff members, or past students who paid union fees, graduates from other universities paying union fees and undergraduates from universities which do not have a boat club could all be bona fide members of the Club. The MUSU also declared a 'tolerance' for schoolboys who were leaving school and applied to attend Melbourne University.⁴⁹

The Club went into another of its minor lulls with no entries in Christmas regattas at Nagambie, Rutherglen, and Yarrowonga. In February 1976, the Secretary was instructed to reply to a request from the Sports Union 'on whether or not it is in the best interest to conduct womens IV together with mens.'⁵⁰ The Club was against the idea: 'the main reasons being the difficulties in starting races on the 1000 metre course for the women, which is superimposed on the 2000 metre course for the men.'⁵¹

On a more positive note, the Club christened four new boats: an eight called the *Harvey Nicholson II* christened by Harvey's wife, Joyce; a heavyweight four, the *John Chinner* christened by Patsy Forsyth, wife of John; a lightweight four, *Luzern '74* christened by Agnes Johnston, Cam Johnston's mother; and a pair, *Nottingham 75* christened by Jean

Rees, mother of Geoff Rees. The occasion was witnessed by 100 friends and supporters on a sunny Sunday morning. A handicap race was held for the occasion with refreshments afterwards. The sheds which had been cleaned and spruced up by members of the Club had never looked so good. The refreshments, which included champagne, beer, fruit juice, sandwiches and pies inspired Arthur Adams to say 'This is the stuff of which oarsmen are made', with beer in one hand and pie in the other.⁵²

Another auspicious moment in 1976 was the intercollegiate victory by Newman College for the second time in two years; this despite five members of the crew leaving and having to be replaced in 1976. Newman had not won for ten years before this. The crews in both 1975 and 1976 were coached by Adrian Maginn.⁵³ Peter Antonie stroked the 1976 Newman crew which won by five and a half lengths.⁵⁴

Vale Clive Disher, the end of an era

Sadly Dr Clive Disher died on March 13. Harvey Nicholson wrote a tribute to him in the 24 March 1976 *Mubc*. Disher's interest in the Club had never waned; his correspondence with Nicholson lasted for 23 years from January 1953 to February 1976. His first letter began thus: 'I fear I am a very bad Patron as I rarely put in an attendance, but I am more interested in the Club than any other outside body that I have been connected with, and I do appreciate some connection with it however slender.' His contribution included the Clive Disher Fund and he often donated extra money for boats and oars—especially the latter so that winners of the intervarsity eights could keep their oars as trophies. He gave generously when the Club was invited to row in the All Japan Championships in 1969, and toward the expenses of the MUBC lightweight coxless four in 1974 and 1975. He remained throughout a quiet, generous and humble supporter of the Club.⁵⁵



Adrian Maginn, Australian and Victorian representative, MUBC and intercollegiate cox and coach, pictured coxing a master's crew in 2007
John Michelmore collection



1976 winning MUBC intervarsity coxless pair (Lake Wendouree): Andrew Rigby (bow) and Norman O'Bryan (stroke)
Courtesy Ken Toleman

1975 Victorian Colts Eight (all MUBC members) coach, Bill Stokes: Mark Nolan (bow), John Cumper (2), Roger Atkinson (3), Tim Ross-Edwards (4), Murray Ross (5), Dallas English (6), Bruce Longden (7), Greg Longden (stroke), Peter Gome (cox) out of picture
Courtesy Ken Toleman



Brigadier Harold Clive Disher

CBE, ED, MD, DA (RCP & S), O ST J

1891–1976

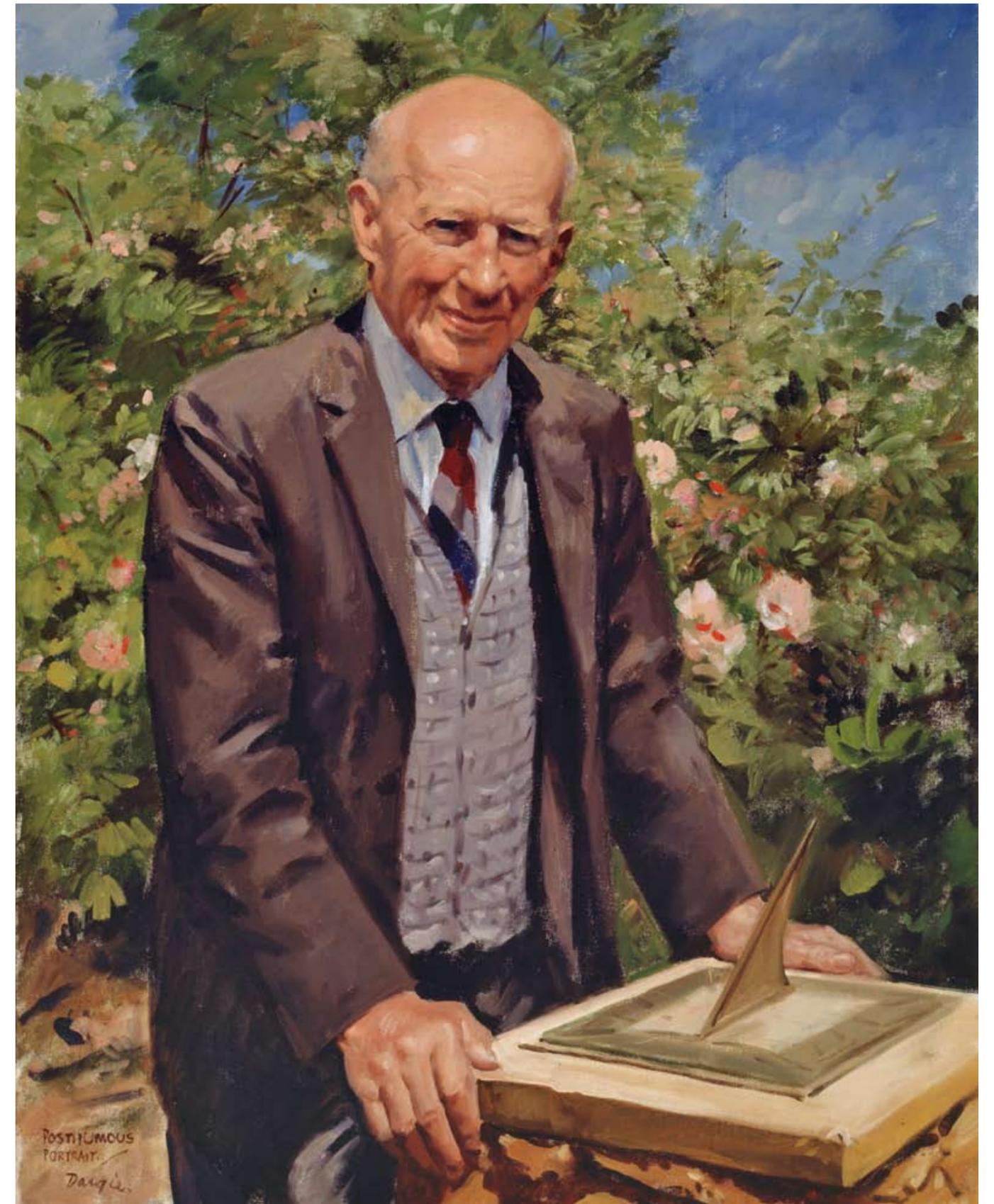
One of the best loved and most respected members of MUBC, Clive Disher was born at Rosedale, Victoria, and attended Rosedale State School, Gippsland College, Sale and Scotch College where he rowed in the 1910 and 1911 Head of the River crews. He entered Ormond College in 1912, rowed for Ormond, and stroked the winning MUBC intervarsity eights of 1913 and 1914. He also rowed in the 1914 Victorian eight. On completing his medical degree he was appointed Captain, Australian Medical Corps, served in France with the 5th Field Ambulance with distinction, and was recommended for the Military Cross.

Between the wars Clive worked mainly as an anaesthetist but joined the AIF again in December 1939. During 1940 and 1941 he had responsibility for medical services in North Africa. He was then appointed CBE and took part in the Greek campaign. In November 1942 he was promoted to temporary Brigadier and sent to Port Moresby.

After the Second World War he lived at 'Strathfieldsaye' in Gippsland, a property his grandfather had acquired in 1869. His wife predeceased him and he had no descendants. At his death in 1976, he bequeathed the property to the University of Melbourne.

He was Patron of MUBC, in Harvey Nicholson's words, 'for as long as we can remember', and remained so until his death. In his tribute to Clive in the *Mubc* newsletter of March 1976, Harvey Nicholson said:

... two of the many qualities of this great man [were] his quiet modesty and his great loyalty to the M.U.B.C. These never wavered ... Undoubtedly his greatest rowing achievement was in 1919 when, as Captain H. C. Disher of Melbourne University Boat Club, he stroked the No. 1 A.I.F. Crew at the Henley Royal Peace Regatta ... Many years later Clive Disher was named as "Athlete of the Year" for the Australasian Section of the Worldwide Helms Trophy ... Clive was one of three living honorary life members of the M.U.B.C ... in particular, I will remember the humility, generosity and loyalty of this great man.



Sir William Dargie's posthumous portrait of Clive Disher, 1978 *Courtesy of the Estate of the late Sir William Dargie*



1976 MUBC senior eight, winners of the VRA Centenary Regatta (Bill Stokes, coach): Bruce Longden (bow), John Cumper (2), Ewen Kilpatrick (3), Lachie Payne (4), Tim Ross-Edwards (5), Jim Lowe (6), Murray Ross (7), Greg Longden (stroke), Adrian Maginn (cox) *Courtesy Ken Toleman*



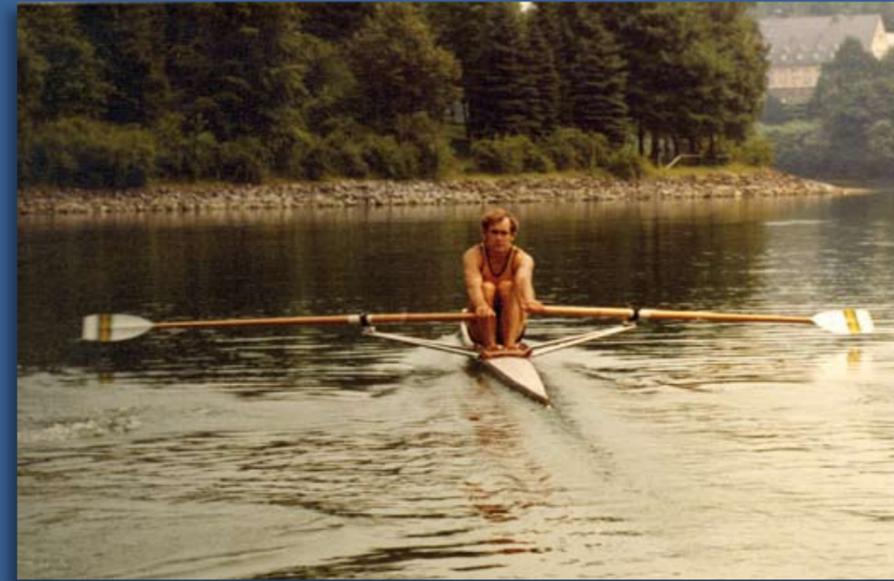
TOP: 1977 winning MUBC intervarsity eight (West Lakes) Cam Johnston and Mark Schapper, coaches: Brad Fenner (bow), Sandy Cameron (2), Andrew Rigby (3), Bruce Longden (4), George Fulford (5), Julian Bailey (6), Andrew Cassidy (7), Sandy Hutton (stroke), Tim McCoy (cox) *Courtesy Ken Toleman*
BOTTOM: 1978 MUBC Victorian and Australian Champion Lightweight Eight (Peter Philp, coach): Michael Quinn (bow), Vaughan Bollen (2), Paul Van Veenendaal (Don Cooper for Australian Championships) (3), Rob Stewart (4), Colin Smith (5), Peter Antonie (6), Simon Gillet (7), Geoff Rees (stroke), Adrian Maginn (cox) *Courtesy Ken Toleman*

As a result of Harvey Nicholson's long friendship with Sir William Dargie, a wartime army comrade of Harvey's, the Club raised funds from members and commissioned a portrait of Clive by Sir William. Although it was rare for Sir William to agree to undertake posthumous portraits, he agreed to do so in this case, and the magnificent painting of Clive in the garden of his homestead 'Strathfieldsaye' remains one of the Club's most treasured and valuable possessions.

A zenith

The Club was at a zenith in the summer season of 1976-7. At the VRA Centenary Regatta, the Club's senior eight won the main event and were presented with their medals by the Governor of Victoria, The Hon Sir Henry Winneke. An outstanding No. 1 lightweight four crew won both senior fours and senior lightweight fours and were presented with their medals by Harvey Nicholson as Vice-President of the VRA. The no. 2 lightweight four also won junior four, junior pair and novice four events. The lightweight eight defeated the Mercantile lightweight eight, which had been undefeated in Australia for three years at the Henley and Barwon Regattas and the Victorian Lightweight Eights Championship. Murray Ross and Tim Ross-Edwards were selected in the King's Cup crew along with Adrian Maginn as cox. A composite MUBC-Mercantile crew won at the Barwon and Ballarat Regattas and the Grand Challenge at Henley. The Club was leading the senior premiership in March 1977 with 81 points to Mercantile's 47.⁵⁶ The Annual Report which was published on 14 June 1977 declared the year to be one of the most successful in MUBC's 118 years. The Club did win the senior premiership. The highlight of the year was the outstanding performance of the No. 1 lightweight four. From the time of its final selection it won every lightweight four event (as well as many senior four events), was selected as the Victorian Penrith Cup crew, and won both coxed and coxless

The Governor of Victoria, Sir Henry Winneke, presenting the 1976 VRA Centenary Trophy to stroke Greg Longden, with coach Bill Stokes and crew members Murray Ross and Jim Lowe looking on
Courtesy Ken Toleman



LEFT: 1978 Australian lightweight sculler Andy McKinley
Rob Stewart collection

BELOW: 1978 Australian lightweight eight (left to right): Dennis Hatcher (bow), Malcolm Robertson (2), David Palfreyman (coach), Phil Gardiner (3), Bob Cooper, (4), Lyall McCarthy (5), Ian Porter (6), Jeff Sykes (7), Colin Smith (MUBC) (stroke), Adrian Maginn (MUBC) (cox)
Peter Philp collection



Australian lightweight championships by large margins. The crew were Geoffrey Rees (stroke), Simon Gillett (3), Peter Antonie (2) and Colin Smith (bow), coached by Peter Philp. They won gold at the Copenhagen International Regatta at the end of July and silver at the World Rowing Championships in Amsterdam in August.

In England, MUBC oarsman and 1976 Rhodes Scholar, Ag Michelmore, stroked the Oxford crew to victory over Cambridge in the 1977 Boat Race.

The 1977 intervarsity regatta, held at West Lakes in South Australia, saw a young MUBC eight win the Oxford and Cambridge Cup. The crew were Brad Fenner (bow), Alexander (Sandy) Cameron (2), Andrew Rigby (3), Bruce Longden (4), George Fulford (5), Julian Bailey (6), Andrew Cassidy (7), Sandy Hutton (stroke) and Tim McCoy (cox); coaches were Mark Schapper and Cam Johnston. The lightweight four crew consisting of Chris Piesse (bow), Stephen O'Bryan (2), Paul Van Veenendaal (3), Glenn Robertson-Smith (stroke), John Bishop (cox), coached by Rob Stewart, came second in their event. Tony Chenco (bow) and Andrew Griffiths (stroke), came third in the men's pair event.⁵⁷

After five years of regular Friday night training, there were now two veteran crews called the 'Darks' and 'Lights'. The 'Darks' were George Raymond (bow), Julian Zahara (2), Bill Stokes (3), Ian Blair (4), Ian Bult (5), Jim Robson (6), Arthur Adams (7), Field Rickards Snr (stroke) and John Henry (cox). The 'Lights' were Peter Bubb (bow), Peter Foster (2), Don Handley (3), David Were (4), Peter Latreille (5), Patrick Moore (6), Peter Williams (7) and Christopher Hazard (stroke).

Further extensions were underway at the boatshed with changing rooms for women and new showers, toilets and boat racks. The building works did not go smoothly and the entrance had to be redone because it was made too narrow for the boats.⁵⁸

The 1978 Intersivity Report boasted the results of women's rowing for the first time. The Captain, Bruce Longden, reported that the New South Wales Rowing Association had presented the Centenary Cup for competition between competing universities to be held by the university with the highest aggregate points on the following basis:

	First	Second	Third
Eight	24	12	6
Four	20	10	5
Pair	16	8	4
Scull	12	6	3

Melbourne won the Cup for this year with 76 points. Points were not awarded for the Women's Invitation Eight.

Women's rowing takes off

For the first time in the history of intervarsity rowing, women's events made up over half of the 1978 intervarsity programme. *Mubc* no. 63 of 6 June 1978 reported that MULRC lightweight fours and heavyweight fours combined in the eight, with the lightweight four in the bow and the heavyweight four in the stern, coxed by Alison Inglis. The members of the eight were the lightweight four—Mary Johnston, Gini Skinner, Janet Johnston and Margaret Campbell, whose cox had been Clare Warburton and coach, Michael Nicholson,



TOP: 1978 winning Victorian coxed four members (left to right, all MULRC except for Pam Westendorf): Barbara Griffiths, Pam Westendorf, Sally Harding, Susie Gaskin and Anne Chirnside *Barbara Fenner collection*

BOTTOM: The crew training ahead of winning the Interstate ULVA Trophy (the first of eleven consecutive wins) *Barbara Fenner collection*



1979–80 MULRC coxed four and the first women's crew to represent Australia in the Olympic Games: Anne Chirnside (bow), Verna Westwood (2), Pam Westendorf (Dimboola) (3), Sally Harding (stroke), Suzy Palfreyman (cox)
Barbara Fenner collection

and the heavyweight four—Jenni Donaldson, Margot Foster, Lynn Matheson and Jacqui Marshall, whose cox was Alison Inglis and coach, Brad Fenner. Barbara Griffiths and Anne Chirnside were the pair, and both had rowed in the MULRC women's coxed four which won the Australian Championships during Easter on the Franklin in Tasmania.⁵⁹ Half the oarswomen came from the winning Ormond crew and they were able to use an Ormond boat. The heavyweight four had three members from the winning Ormond eight (Jenni Donaldson, Jacqui Marshall and Lynn Matheson) and two from the Trinity eight which had come second (Margot Foster and Alison Inglis). Margaret Campbell, a lightweight from the Ormond crew, switched from the bow seat to stroke 'and started rowing like an East German gold medallist...'⁶⁰

Melbourne won every sweep-oared event in women's intervarsity in 1978—the eight coached by Michael Nicholson, the four coached by Brad Fenner and the coxless pairs. Only the women's single sculls eluded Melbourne.⁶¹

Fundraising issues

Discussion took place in May 1978 on 'the urgent financial position to get our Australian teams overseas for the world rowing championships. On budget costs, the estimated expense is \$2800 per man.' Life members were asked to support this again.⁶² Following an outstanding season including wins in the Victorian and National Lightweight Fours and Eights Championships, the Club was again able to send an outstanding coxless four crew to the FISA World Championships, being held in 1978 in Copenhagen. Despite strong competition—the crew consisting entirely of MUBC members, Geoff Rees (stroke),

Simon Gillett (3), Peter Antonie (2) and Vaughan Bollen (bow) with Peter Philp (coach)—they won a bronze medal. The crew were selected on the basis of their performances at the national titles on the Franklin. The team took their own boats in crates designed by Jeff Sykes to fit perfectly into the freight car of a train.

Two members of the lightweight eight, which also won bronze in Copenhagen, were from MUBC; they were Colin Smith (stroke) and Adrian Maginn (cox). The two reserves for this race, Rob Stewart and Don Cooper, were also MUBC members. The lightweight single sculler, Andrew McKinley, was a former successful MUBC lightweight now rowing for Wendouree-Ballarat.

Fundraising for international competition had continued to present the team with a huge problem. \$40,000 had to be raised, a huge amount in 1978. The VRA, old oarsmen from MUBC and Mercantile, the Melbourne Underground nightclub and many companies donated money and the Commonwealth Government gave a grant.⁶³ Team members resorted to many activities to raise money, including rattling tins in Geelong when training down at the Barwon River and organising a gambling night to be held at Mercantile Rowing Club. Unfortunately the police somehow got wind of this latter event and raided the Club. Many attendees, including eminent judges, barristers and solicitors managed to leave before police arrived and monies that were being held were quickly stuffed into trouser pockets. A large number of people were charged with gaming but the charges were thrown out by the magistrate. The then owner of the Underground nightclub, having read about all of this in the press, generously hosted a fundraising night at his disco.

In October of 1978 the Captain, Norman O'Bryan:

reported that since the last committee meeting extensive alterations had taken place within the main changing room. Lockers on both sides, the northern and eastern side and that portion of the western side to the door leading into MULRC had been removed and had been placed in its present position, joining the entrance to the showers. The lockers had been painted, paint and material had been provided; the work was largely done by himself, Bruce Longden and Charlie Bartlett.⁶⁴

The racking was complex and expensive and quotes ranging from \$1050 to \$1350 were received. But the design was more important than the cost, and Stanley Wheeler's quote of \$1162 was the one the Club would recommend to the Recreation and Grounds Committee because with these racks, the bolts would go in the wall and the prefabricated racks could be 'placed forthwith on the walls.'⁶⁵

First World Championships in the Southern Hemisphere

In November 1978, the first World Rowing Championships to be held in the Southern Hemisphere were staged at Lake Karapiro, New Zealand. The *Mubc* report noted that attendances were much larger than at world championships held in Europe, or even the final day of the Munich Olympics. A crowd of 22,000 witnessed the elimination heats for men and women and 36,000 attended on the final day. The Club was represented by Jim Lowe, and former members Bill Magennis and Kerry Jelbart. Life member David Bishop coached the coxed four.⁶⁶



1979 MUBC lightweight coxless four taking the first stroke at the start of the state heavyweight coxless four championship race at Lake Wendouree, Ballarat: Vaughan Bollen (bow), Peter Antonie (2), Simon Gillett (3) . Geoff Rees (stroke). This crew was seated the same as the crew that won a bronze medal at the 1978 FISA World Championships
Barbara Fenner collection

After the New Zealand championships, the Club welcomed the President of FISA, Thomas Keller, at a formal cocktail party held at Harvey and Joyce Nicholson's home. All the Australian team members wore their Australian blazers and the AARC international tie. The evening was a great success.⁶⁷

Financial troubles with the University

The problem of funding the Club's many activities remained and was exacerbated by a lack of clarity about membership fees for MUBC and the Sports Union.⁶⁸ The Treasurer's report revealed that the Club was \$6654 in debt. This was partly because the Recreation and Grounds Committee refused to refund claims of \$3500 because the Club had overspent an agreed budget. To try and resolve this, Cheryl McKinna, Director of Sports and Physical Education, Alf Lazer, Chairman RGC, Harvey Nicholson, President of MUBC and Bill Stokes, Treasurer of MUBC, met and agreed that the deficit for 1979 would be carried forward to 1980, but only if expenses for the two-year period did not exceed the budget.⁶⁹

Equipment and repair of equipment cost more each year and funds from the University, membership fees and donations just could not keep pace. The association of the Club and the Sports Union remained strained. It is perhaps worth quoting extracts from the minutes of a meeting of the Boat Club Committee and Sports Union held on 19 November 1980, chaired by Cheryl McKinna and attended by Alf Lazer, Field Rickards Snr, Charlie Bartlett (Secretary, MUBC), Jim Peters (Vice-Captain, MUBC), Dr Anne Chirnside (President, MULRC) and Barbara Griffiths (Captain, MULRC):

A tour of the sheds and YYRC [Yarra Yarra Rowing Club where some MUBC boats were racked] were carried out and the names of all the boats and all their positions noted.

In the Committee room a discussion took place regarding the necessity for the Union to pay for racking space at YYRC which was \$400 per year ... Mr Rickards said that they had been given first preference by YYRC and had been informed that if we did not need the spaces then they would be promptly hired to Carey Grammar ... if we lost our space there was no way we could ever get it back as racking space along the river bank was extremely tight.

The women's intercollegiate crews used the boats owned by various student clubs and these were not available for use by MUBC. University College hired a boat from YYRC, for the price of \$125 during their rowing season. Mr Nicholson related the history of the formal agreement between the University of Melbourne, the Sports Union and MUBC negotiated at the instance some eighteen years ago, in which the boatshed and all equipment then owned by MUBC was transferred to the Sports Union, which entered into various obligations to the Club.

Payment of union fees and eligibility

The Director informed the meeting that in the newspaper on Monday she read of the MUBC successes and found, having checked with University records, that seven oarsmen mentioned in the report had not been paying their annual fees to the Union. She said that under no circumstances would the Union tolerate oarsmen using equipment without paying their fees and this situation had to be remedied immediately.

Until this was remedied she would pay no more money over to MUBC and indeed if this was not attended to she would cause the doors of the club to be locked. The fees were \$40.00 per annum and she required every member of the club who rowed or used equipment to pay current fees of \$40.00 and a fee of \$40.00 from next year commencing January 1981. One who uses club equipment as a member of the club has to be financial member of the Sports Union as well as being a financial member of MUBC.

Boats

The Director suggested that, having heard from Dr Chirnside and Mr Nicholson of the position of boats between MULRC and MUBC that apart from the best boat in each category, the use of which was the responsibility of the MUBC Committee, there should be an amicable inter-change of boats on occasions between MULRC and MUBC.⁷⁰

A revolution commences in the Club and in Australian rowing

Notwithstanding the perennial internal housekeeping issues, a revolution was about to commence in sculling that would have a profound influence on the Club as a whole. David Yates had been a successful lightweight oarsman at national and intervarsity level in the early seventies and had himself been influenced by Mark Schapper as a coach, and by rowing with three champion MUBC oarsmen—Cam Johnston, Ag Michelmore and Geoff Rees. David had a BSc (Hons) and PhD in Chemistry, and this background, coupled with his propensity for exhaustive analysis of all matters technical and bio-mechanical, resulted in the tag 'the Professor' by which he was known by many.

While undertaking a research fellowship in the UK in the mid-seventies, he experienced their more extensive sculling programs and studied their latest training ideas. When he returned to Melbourne in 1977, Yates started experimenting and putting these new ideas into practice, which led to a revolution within MUBC sculling ranks that had a profound impact on the Club for the next twenty years. David describes how it started:

In 1979 Andrew Rigby, then Captain of Boats, Steve Spurling and George Fulford asked me to coach them for an attempt on that year's national championships in Adelaide. I introduced them to the approach I had learnt from our successful lightweights and to the training ideas I had learnt in England. Broadly that involved competitive training, greater volumes of steady state type aerobic work and systematic training cycles. These training methods are now the basis of most modern training programs but at that time were not being widely used in Australia.

Success was almost immediate and all three scullers had a successful 1979 national regatta. In particular, Andrew won the national junior single scull and Steve came second in the lightweight single and was selected in the national team. A little later in the year Andrew went on to win the intervarsity scull in what was a surprise when he convincingly beat the 1978 intervarsity champion and 1976 Olympian Chris Shinnars.⁷¹

Meanwhile, Australian rowing as a whole was about to undergo a massive change. The end of the seventies was a time when selection processes changed the stage for all



George Fulford, one of the original members of the 'Team Yates' scullers
Andrew Cassidy collection



The 1979 MUBC Champion Lightweight Eight of Victoria at the finish line at Ballarat (Peter Philp, coach): Tony Hall (bow), Rick Rees (2), Tim Hyett (3), John McKenzie (4), Sandy Marshall (5), Michael Quinn (6), Paul Van Veenendaal (7), Charlie Bartlett (stroke) and Adrian Maginn (cox)
McKenzie family collection, reproduced courtesy Ken Toleman



Reinholdt Batschi was appointed Australia's first, full-time director of coaching in 1979 and was head coach at the AIS from 1995 until his retirement in 2006. He was

born in Romania and began rowing at twenty in 1962. His rowing career lasted nine years; he was emergency for the Tokyo Games in 1964 and rowed in the 1968 Mexico Olympics as well as many European championships. He then attended a two-year course for sports coaches and then coached in Romania from 1970 to 1974, when he defected and became Head National Coach for the City of West Berlin. His appointment with the AARC was financed by the Commonwealth Government. He went on to coach Australian crews for the Olympic Games from 1980 to 2000 as well as many World Championships, Commonwealth Games and other international and national regattas. The changes he made (which were implemented by top level rowing administrators, John Boulton, John Coates, Bob Aitken and Bruce Evans) caused controversy at the time. But they brought great results for Australia.⁷⁴



ABOVE: 1979 Australian lightweight eight (all MUBC members except for John Hawkins and Mike Smith, the latter replacing the injured Vaughan Bollen (MUBC)) Peter Philp, coach: Phil Gardiner (bow), John Hawkins (2), Denis Hatcher (3), Mike Smith (4), Peter Antonie (5), Ag Michelmore (6), Geoff Rees (7), Simon Gillett (stroke) and David England (cox)
David England collection

OPPOSITE PAGE: 1970 MUBC intervarsity eight in training on the Yarra with the subsequently demolished and unlamented Gas and Fuel Corporation building looming in the background
Courtesy of The Herald & Weekly Times Ltd

athletes seeking national selection. From 1980 onwards, prior to nomination to the trial squad, the selectors required ... each person seeking selection in an Australian team to compete in three trial regattas and the National Championships in both pairs and fours – or alternatively single and double sculls – to satisfy selection requirements.

The men's team was put through stringent testing prior to selection as had been done the previous year. The women's crews were again selected by separate selectors. This was the first season of Reinhold Batschi as the National Director of Coaching and he devised a very tough training program for all crews.⁷²

Close of the decade, dawn of a new era

In 1979, the Club fared well with continued success in intervarsity, winning the men's scull, men's lightweight four, women's scull, women's pair and women's eight events.⁷³

In the Penrith Cup for 1979, the unusual situation arose whereby more than one crew per state was permitted to race in the event. Three Victorian lightweight fours were selected to represent Victoria in the race and eleven of twelve members were from MUBC— something which has never happened before or since. Moreover, two of these crews finished first and second in the Penrith Cup. In another demonstration of the extraordinary strength of lightweight rowing that year at MUBC, the Club boated two eights which finished a length apart from each other in first and second place in the Australian lightweight eight championships.

The decade finished on a high internationally, also with the Club fielding one-third of the Australian team at the 1979 FISA lightweight championships in Bled. Among the Australian men's lightweight eight crew, the MUBC representatives were David England, Dennis Hatcher, Simon Gillett, Geoff Rees, Ag Michelmore, Phil Gardiner, Vaughan Bollen (who injured his ankle and had to return to Australia) and Peter Antonie. Steve Spurling was the Australian men's lightweight single sculler. The Australian women's coxed four at the 1979 World Championships comprised Anne Chirnside, Verna Westwood, Sally Harding and Susie Palfreyman from MULRC and Pam Westendorf from Dimboola Rowing Club. At the same World Championships, Bill Magennis and Jim Lowe were in the heavyweight eight.

At the one hundred and twenty-first annual meeting held on 20 June 1980, Harvey Nicholson:

expressed his delight at the outstanding year of the club which could hardly be paralleled. Internationally, no less than thirteen of our members were in the Australian rowing team which competed in the World Rowing Championships at Bled but [sic] both heavy weights and light weights rowed their way through to the Grand Final.

On the local scene, not only did we win the senior premiership by a substantial margin but won the newly created "Champion Club of Victoria" for the most wins in regattas throughout the season.

At MUBC, the lightweight athletes coached by Peter Philp had led them to be the pre-eminent lightweight club in Australia, if not the world, and had paved the way for other members to follow.

