



HELM



Heritage of East Lake Macquarie

Mar. 2018

SURF LIFE SAVING AT CAVES BEACH – EARLY DAYS

Back in February 1929, a group of lifesavers from Swansea SLSC (which became Swansea-Belmont SLSC) broke away to form Swansea-Caves Beach SLSC. Adopting the motto of “Carry on, Caves Beach, Carry on”; it was a family-oriented club with grandfathers, fathers, sons and relatives donning the maroon and white colours. The 1930’s saw a dashing group wearing maroon and white striped blazers with straw boater hats. Amazingly, Ab Payne, the foundation President, never entered the surf; and did not even own a pair of cossies or even the surf bronze medallion! Their only rescue equipment was: 6 members; reel, line and belt; and shark bell.

They chose a site near the big cave, feeling it was the safest spot. While more permanent storage for the surf boat was organised; it was stored against a fence on Black Ned’s Bay, then Teggs’ garage, followed by Dick Holmes yard. The first building – a tin boatshed was built back against the rockface. Alas, a savage storm with rough seas undermined it, sweeping it out to sea, with boats and everything else stored in it. A lot of hard work and saving saw the first club house built on top of the hill – surely a safe piece of real estate! However, it was a long haul, carting all the gear up and down; and suffered from vandalism due to its isolated position. It became the caretaker’s hut; whilst more hard work, fundraising, fairs, grants, and royalties from the rutilic mining lease saw the club houses (a total of four) improved and progress to what we see today.

The first boat was the “James L” built at Boyd’s shipyards; then the boats became the domain of Humphries boat building yards, where the famous tuck stern was designed and built by Tom in 1946. They used to travel to carnivals with surf boat, reels, and gear loaded onto the back of a coal truck. Even though it had been hosed out, when they sat in the back, they still had coal smudged into their clothes. Arriving on Friday nights, our heroes would sleep on hard floors or sand, then up early to compete. A far different cry to air travel, and motel accommodation, while the gear is transported by rail, sea or road. During later WWII and after, Edgar’ Fox’s T model ford truck “Leaping Lena” would carry cases of drinks and sweets for the kiosk and collect helpers along the way to set up the kiosk and have the beach clean for patrols to start at 8am on Sundays; while others rowed the boat to the beach. At the end of the day this process was reversed, ending at 6.30pm.



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First three club houses – Swansea-Caves Beach SLSC



4972 1066 Caves Beach; Blacksmiths

Kindly supporting the community
– including Caves Beach Surf Life Saving Club; this edition of HELM newsletter.

ADVENTURES BY CAVES MEMBERS.

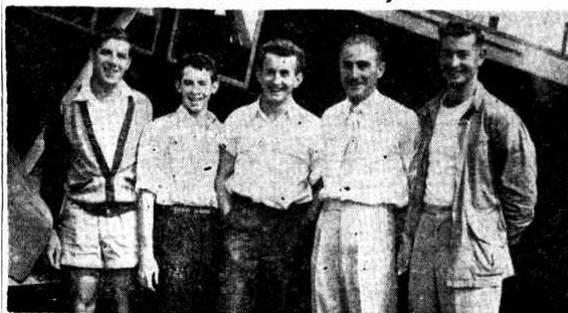
Many outings were had in the 1927 T model ford painted in Caves colours of maroon and white stripes. This impressive vehicle, named "Kayvs Bitch" made appearances at May Day celebrations and won three blue ribbons - Newcastle Show. With only rear brakes working, it often had to be thrown into reverse gear . They carried an anchor for a joke, but had to actually use it when overtaking a tram and the lights turned red. Resorting to use this emergency brake, they threw out the rope and anchor, stopping, but not before the anchor had dug into the bitumen and ripped up a large section of road. On another occasion, they employed the method of putting it into reverse gear. Not only did they stop, they then kept reversing, crashing into the car behind. On safari to the Freshwater Carnival, 13 gallons of petrol was guzzled. The running boards were built up with planks to make boxes to carry camping equipment and supplies; with surf ski perched on top. At Brooklyn they decided to set up for the night, a fire going; only to find they were in the middle of a cemetery!



Far left: "Kayvs Bitch".
Near left: The Club's 6th boat – the Gay Moorcroft; on Ern Payne's truck on the way to 1955 Maitland floods. The trips in trucks created a great feeling of mateship as they were used for transport, sleeping, eating, and refreshment.

March 1951, saw 6 Newcastle lads selected to go to Aust titles at Cottesloe, WA. Planning to get a start on the opposition by getting there early to practice and suss out tides and rips, these guys hired a bi-plane from Broadmeadow of dubious reliability. The body was made from tubular framing, with canvas wrapped around and laced up underneath like a shoe; with a surface coat of paint over the top. No luxuries like insulation! In fact, the plane was built to take the pilot and four passengers. BUT THEY WERE SIX!. Not to worry, they added two kitchen chairs, not even strapped down. The "chair-men" were nominated to hop out and spin the propellers to start the engines. With the extra bodies and luggage, the plane barely got off the ground. The original plan - over the mountains to Bathurst to refuel had to be re-routed to a valley down the coast. Now very behind schedule, the next stops were Mildura, then Adelaide. The pilot now insisted that weight had to be taken off. Luggage was sacrificed, and each member now had a towel, toiletries, a spare pair of underwear, 1 pair shorts, & a shirt. Despite the RAAF servicing the plane, all was still not well; at the Ceduna stop, the Flying Doctor mechanic gave it another tweek. The trip stayed relatively uneventful until Kalgoorlie, 8 days out from Newcastle. ABC radio had been monitoring this marathon with nightly news updates on the progress of these daring young men and their flying machine. About to take off from Kalgoorlie, one of the engines would not start. Undoing the cowling, bits of the engine fell out; the pilot fainted. Another two days for repairs saw the intrepid travellers arrive last; only to find Keven's surf ski arrived damaged. Despite this they had a clean sweep and took out the top 4 places. The return journey was relatively uneventful: - only the wheel fell off. A sad footnote to this episode: Frank Okulich, the Aust Ch, was taken a few weeks later by a shark off Dixon.

Newcastle Surfmen To Fly To Perth



Keven Harman (Caves Beach), Col. Whyte (Stockton), Les Lazarus, Russell Evans and Greg. Macguire (all Newcastle Club), who on Wednesday at 6 a.m. will fly to Perth in a Newcastle Aero Club Dragon Rapide. While in Western Australia for three weeks they will compete in surf carnivals.

In the mid 1990s the club had a very good junior team, but not enough money to buy a new boat. Gordon Richardson approached Keven Harman with the idea of building a new fibreglass, tuck stern boat for the team, gathering sponsors and doing a major job behind scenes. A few other surfing stalwarts were recruited to assist with construction; even though none had ever undertaken such a task. Countless hours of voluntary labour by "Dad's Army" delivered the new and shiny "Gordon Richardson" to the club.

In 1998 a request was made for another boat – this time to honour life member, Tom York, a club stalwart, who had been recognised for 50+ years service to the club. One of Tom's most memorable activities had been the organising of the annual carnival, a great community event, which raised much needed club funds. Tom's health was rapidly failing, so the volunteer boat builders led by Keven, reassembled and worked feverishly to complete yet another boat, for their mate. Named the [Arthur "Tom" York], it was launched in Tom's presence. Poignantly, the day after the launch, Tom's brave battle was over and he slipped away.



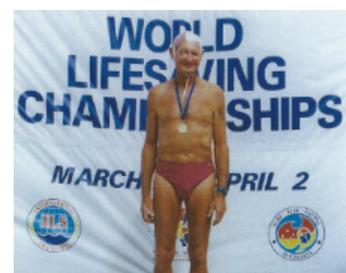
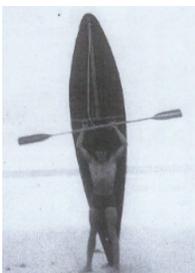
THE BOAT, OF COURSE WILL BE OUR "TOMMY YORK" ,
A ROWER OF RENOWN,, AND A CLUB LIFE MEMBER OF REPUTE,
A FINE AND GENTLE MAN,, AND A DARN GOOD BLOKE TO BOOT.
HE'S WATCHED THE WORK,'ON REGULAR VISITS,
HE'S PICKED HIS CREW TO ROW,,
WITH FAMILY AND OLD-TIMER FRIENDS, HE'S WAITING FOR THE 'GO' ,

In February, 2004, Keven, who had become an ardent surf skier, was on a practice paddle in Swansea Channel when disaster struck. Despite being Regional, State, Australian and World Masters Champion he was no match for heavy water and another out of control ski. The runaway ski struck Keven causing severe injuries, including broken ribs and a collapsed lung. Keven was supported in the water by several paddlers holding onto the ski, but could not be lifted on. As the tide was changing, they were all being swept out to sea with the surge of the huge waves. Those who could, came to relieve the tired; some boats tried to assist but the situation on the bar was too dangerous. Finally a small tinnie was conscripted to be part of a plan to race in, between waves and tow the ski and Keven into calm waters. In a split second, another wave hit the boat sending it uncontrollably sideways, the propeller connecting with Keven's feet. Soon after, he lost consciousness due to shock and blood loss. Finally, the alarm was raised back at Swansea Belmont SLSC – "Harman's in trouble". An IRB was despatched. On board the IRB, which manoeuvred heavy seas while tending with emergency care; they eventually made it back, carrying the IRB to the waiting ambulance, nearly one and a half hours after the incident began. Many weeks were spent in hospital recovering, particularly battling to save Keven's right foot.

EMERGING POPULARITY OF SKI PADDLING

Ski paddling started in the 1920's with home made timber craft to ride the waves and have fun. These craft enabled riders to catch waves further out and saw an increase in popularity in 1947. The average ski was 12' long and 33" wide – not so much built for speed but to be a better platform for tricks such as standing upright; or on your head with a girl holding your feet – (a certain female attractor).

They needed 4 sheets of plywood, making them cost effective. With only an electric drill (often borrowed) and an inspection light on the end of a long lead running from the house (often lying on wet grass) to assist, 9 skis were built on cold nights in garages around Swansea in 1947, aided by a few long neck bottles of home brew. Fun paddling was soon surpassed by serious competition; training; and lightweight, professionally made skis.



KEVEN HARMAN - ALL ROUND ATHLETE AND GOOD GUY.

Always passionate about sport, Keven was an outstanding athlete as a young man, holding several records and representing many sporting codes at District, State, Australian levels. As a teenager in the late 40's his running ability was noticed, and with some coaching, Keven blitzed the NSW Country Championships in 3 events; setting a 100m record. Invited to Sydney, another 400m record fell in the presence of Olympian, Lloyd La Beach, who commented that he was the most promising runner he had seen in Australia.

But Sydney was too far away, so Keven turned to League and wore the blue and gold of Lakes United as a winger. At a Lakes reunion, a dream team was created from every player fielded. This man was included. Footy was fine in winter, but the beaches called in summer. A youthful Keven joined Caves SLSC, a 70 year association which still remains, bestowing a life membership. There a close knit group of larrikins, travelled to surf carnivals, sharing mateship and fun. Successes in paddling led to selection for the Australian Titles in WA, with an expectation of gold medal success. The marathon flight, coupled with the damaged ski, meant that despite a valiant effort, this was not his golden year. On returning home, it was time for marriage and buying a home. Lured by living opposite the Bowling Club, friendly conversation and the odd beer, Keven joined the bowling fraternity as a young man in his 20's, unheard of in those times. Keven became club champion in his first year. Many titles followed; including district and Australian representation.

With money a scarce commodity, it was more beneficial to give up the boilermaking job at John Darling, and put sporting loves on hold, to take on interstate truck driving. Then a job closer to home with Rutile & Zircon mines operating out of a tin shed in Caves Beach, enabled Keven to spend more time with his growing family. As production supervisor his responsibilities stretched from the South Coast to the Queensland border.

This was a time to renew his love for the water. A brief interlude with windsurfing did not bring great satisfaction. In the mid sixties, Keven joined the surfboard brigade; being selected to compete at State level; and was the voice behind 2KO's beach report with Ronny White. Several generations of young surfers have learned to love and respect the ocean thanks to the Blacksmiths' Guru, his knowledge and patience.

Time to move on to sailing – successfully piloting an "A" class catamaran, the largest solo craft and using his surfboard building skills to create more craft including an 18' timber cat in 3 months. 1986 saw "Joan Two" take Keven to Australian Champion status. Following his true passion, Keven rejoined Caves in 1994, and despite never having built surf boats, this budding Noah answered the club's call for help, gathering a band of novice volunteers to build 2 boats – the "Gordon Richardson" and the "Tommy York".

Rekindling a love for surf ski comp at 64, Keven dug the paddle deep to be Aust Champ numerous times, then reaching the pinnacle of that sport – World Masters Champion in 2000 at Manly, Sports medal of Aust 2000, aged 70; followed by World Champion, Masters games, 2002; Lake Mac. Master Sports Person, 2002. This boilermaker, come fibreglasser, volunteered to maintain the club's boats, skis and boards, so a training boat was named "Keven Harman" in his honour. Sadly, a leg amputation in 2008, ended Keven's competitive life. Even then Keven turned adversity into proaction, supporting other amputees and presiding over their Assoc.



*Feb 3, 2018: The Queen's baton relay, Newcastle.
25 deserving Novocastrians carried it through the CBD,
60 days before the start of the Gold Coast Commonwealth Games.*

*What better way to say thank you to the modest champion,
who has brought honour to many sporting arenas;
and close the curtain on a passionate sporting career.*

Many thanks to Keven for sharing his life story and experiences.

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