

The Mooloolaba

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CONNECTION



**Our Newest Life
Member**

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**Plus tributes to Jenny Crawford and
Peter Lambert**



Then & Now



Almost 50 years have elapsed since this gun boat crew put up their oars. They were once one of the state's most dominant crews and beat the field twice in front of royalty. Turn to the last page to read their story, as told by Bob Yarbrough.



(L-R) Harry Hughes, Dick Kelly, Jeff Smith, Bob Yarbrough and Len Dittmar. (Len and Bob in different positions in the boat.)

Cover Story



The humble champion

They call him Mega

It might take a while for anyone to surpass Steve Meredith's achievements in the maroon and white. But his competitive feats are only part of the story which is why he was a very popular recipient of Life Membership last month.

CHAMPIONS don't come much more humble than Steve Meredith. He may be the most successful open competitor in MSLSC's history, a prolific patrol member in his day and a former club secretary, yet, when he first heard he was being nominated for Life Membership of the club he joined as a nine-year-old nipper, his reaction was shock. "I think anyone would be shocked," he said after the nomination was officially ratified at the AGM in June. "It was just not something that I had ever given any thought to." Nor, these days, does he dwell much on his glory days of competition, having to pause momentarily when asked about the successes that stand out in his memory. "It would probably be the ski race when I won that at the Australian Titles then the World Titles a couple of weeks later," he said. "It was a proud moment but I don't think about it much any more to be honest. I'm just so busy with kids and work and everything. It's only when something like this happens that you reflect on things a little bit I suppose."



"It was a proud moment but I don't think about it much any more to be honest. I'm just so busy with kids and work and everything else."

Steve's list of achievements is exhaustive. By the time he retired competitively in 2007 his tally stood at one world title and eight national titles (along with two silvers and two bronze medals) across a range of water and craft events, including IRB racing. His state medal tally totals about 50. Add to all that a decade competing in the various elite Ironman competitions and you understand why he is nicknamed Mega. These days though, his number one priority is unequivocally his family – wife Summer, herself a three-time national beach flag champion for Mooloolaba, daughter Millie, 12, a keen nipper competitor and Charlie, 9. Life Member Bryan Collins, a former nipper coach and team manager, who initiated the life membership nomination, said he saw something special in Steve from his earliest days on the beach after he'd been encouraged by his new neighbour, Sonny Day, to give it a go. "I recall saying to people at the time, 'This kid's got potential'. He wouldn't win every surf race, he wouldn't

win every board paddle as a nipper, but he was always attentive and he always took notice of what coaches said. He did have a lot of natural ability but he had to work hard to take it to that next level.” Bryan said Steve was in the fortunate position of having straddled two quite different eras in the surf club, which made him an ideal representative to carry on the life member tradition. “He was there when we still had bunk rooms up top and even though he just lived down the road, he used to come with his bag and spend the full weekend at the club with his mates.

“We’re all getting older now so it’s good to have people who appreciate the club the way it was. I know times change and you’ve got to change with them, but guys like Steve respect that history and can help to preserve it.” Steve cites those bunk room days as a highlight of his experience in the club: “... living in the dorms all weekend until dark on Sunday night when Charlie Raines said, ‘You guys better head home!’”

He said the most dramatic change he experienced during his career was the explosion in competitive talent at Mooloolaba that occurred from the mid-to-late '90s. “The competitive team went from something like 20 to 120 in the space of two or three years,” he said. “I remember the first Gold Coast Carnival I ever went to, Charlie (Raines) took us down on the bus, which was a 14-seater, and the whole competition team was on the bus – including Joe and the boat crew.”

Steve said he really enjoyed being challenged by the extra competition. “I thought it was a good thing because it drove us all a bit more and definitely



Steve after being named Sunshine Coast Sports Person of the Year in 2000

when you have an influx of quality competitors it drives everyone else to be better,” he said.

In his case it actually provided an even greater impetus to excel: “I did always want to be Mooloolaba’s best competitor, that was definitely something that drove me, because a lot of the guys weren’t home grown, That’s all good, we had fantastic teams and great times, but I was always proud that I was the only one who had come all the way through from the nippers.”



On IRB duty with Jimmy Cleaver

Bryan Collins said that home-grown aspect figured prominently in the decision to make the life member nomination. “He stayed all the way through and when all the big money started floating around targeting all these up-and-coming competitors, especially when Steve started to make it as an Ironman in both the NutriGrain and Kellogs competitions, big clubs came knocking on his door with big financial offers but he always said he was a one-club person.”

“I was always proud that I was the only one who had come all the way through from the nippers.”

Bryan said one of the early episodes that illustrates Steve’s character and talent occurred the year after he won his first State medal (a silver) in the Under 15 surf teams alongside Ben Dittmar and Aaron Bourke.

Mooloolaba’s senior Taplin team at the State Titles was a swimmer short and started scouting around for volunteers. Steve, 15 at the time, put his hand up. They were tied for the lead in the final with favourites Surfers Paradise, boasting guys like Hendy and Thuys, when Steve went in for the last leg. “I was up against Sean Davis who was the current Australian belt champion and Australian team captain. I wasn’t expected to even get close. I came out of the water with him but he just got me in a sprint up he beach by a couple of millimetres.”

“That’s the first time I realised I might actually be OK at competing in the surf.”

Vale Jenny Crawford



“She was just an out and out club person but also a beautiful person who did everything for the kids.”

Jenny Crawford's commitment to public service became ingrained at a young age and it was MSLSC's good fortune that for so many years it was channelled into the surf club and the wider surf lifesaving movement.

At her funeral in June her son, Tim, said because Jenny could not swim, she was determined that her children should become excellent swimmers, which led them all into nippers. But Jenny, a former schoolteacher, was not content to just sit on the sidelines; she rolled up her sleeves and got stuck in. Tim said her leadership skills and ethos of public service kept

going long after her own children had moved on from lifesaving.

“While it was an interesting and relatively temporary diversion for us, mum really took to the surf club,” he said. Over the years Jenny served as nipper president, first aid officer and instructor, as well as youth development officer for the Sunshine Coast branch. She was also a respected surf carnival official for many years and even got husband, Kerry, into officiating. Post retirement Jenny was able to combine her love of travel, food and wine, with her lifesaving interests and planned her travel itineraries accordingly,

which enabled her to officiate at five World Championships. She was awarded life membership of MSLSC in 2017.

Fellow life member Stu Canham, who got to know Jenny when his own children joined nippers, said she would have helped multiple generations of kids through the nipper program and beyond. He said she played an important role in their transition into cadet ranks, putting them through their bronze and SRC. “She was always on the beach, she was always judging at carnivals,” he said. “She was just an out and out club person but also a beautiful person who did everything for the kids.”

Another long-time nipper associate and fellow life member, Bob Smith, said Jenny was a true quiet achiever. “If she had a task to do you knew it would get done,” he said. “She was always there backing you up and she never made a fuss about anything. She just got on with the job.” He said she was totally committed to the maroon and white and to her young charges. “She was all for the kids. She loved the kids having fun and doing what they were there to do.”

Bob also paid tribute to Kerry for the unwavering support he always gave to Jenny's surf club activities. “He was always behind her 100 percent.”

100 Club: what has been happening since the draw

Graeme Vierow instigator of the 100 Club fundraiser said on Friday the groundwork had now been completed for the panel to start considering potential recipients of the money raised. He said he had obtained legal assistance in drafting up the selection criteria and terms of the award to ensure it was handled in a professional manner and this should allow the recipient to be decided in the next two weeks. He said the panel would be made up of himself, Gus Gordon, Steven Miller and Jim Hoban, along with club president Andrew Cairns. Key criteria on which it would be decided include family financial circumstances; involvement in surf lifesaving duties and the contribution made during previous seasons. "We will also be looking for a demonstrated willingness to contribute to the sporting and general life of the club and to uphold the values and rules that govern the club," he said. Under the terms of the award the money can be used for school education costs, surf lifesaving activities or to cover basic living costs for families experiencing financial hardship such as health, housing and utility costs.

New club captain keen to integrate different generations

MSLSC last month elected just the second female club captain in its history, with Heidi Imbrogno following in the footsteps of Australia's first ever female club captain Cathy Harding.

Cathy, who was elected way back in 1987/88 when Mooloolaba would have been lucky to have more than five active female members, has hailed the outcome as a positive development for the club.

"When I was talking to Heidi, she said it was really hard to retain girls in the club beyond a certain age, so I think having a female captain allows them to see what is possible," she said. "There are a lot of different roles in the surf club that I'm sure they're all capable of doing, so this may hopefully broaden their horizons and inspire them to potentially also see leadership opportunities."

Heidi first joined the club as an associate member in 2005 when her sons joined the nipper program. "My niece and nephew had been nippers with Mooloolaba for years and when we moved to the coast I registered the boys for the upcoming season," she said.

She decided to do her bronze in 2008 so she could become more active on Sunday mornings, particularly helping out with water safety duties. "The following year I completed my First Aid, ART and Crewies course, again, to help with the nippers on Sundays and at carnivals but also for patrols," she said.

She has served as a patrol captain for the past three seasons, taking out two Patrol of the Year awards and a patrol captain of the year award, which she topped off last year by winning the Daryle Payne Old Boys Excellence Award.



Heidi said the volunteering spirit had been instilled in her by her parents, who had always set an example of giving back to the community and Mooloolaba Surf Club had been a natural fit. "It suited our lifestyle here on the coast," she said. "I loved the way members of Mooloolaba Surf Lifesaving Club included us straight away and encouraged me to go out of my comfort zone ... I even gave IRB racing a go for a couple of seasons."

She said one of her key aims in the role would be to help unify different generations. "(I want to) continue with the fantastic path the club is on, assist with the retention of our youth and to use new or old initiatives to bring the club together as one from nippers through to the Life Members," she said. "I believe the club captain's role is to not only offer advice but to receive it from our experienced members."

A Mate's Tribute: Peter Lambert

Another of those special relationships that are cemented by a shared surf club experience ended in May when Mooloolaba's oldest surviving member Peter Lambert died aged 94.

He had been due to attend the Old Boys lunch earlier in the month with his old mate Ken Chadwick but was unable to make it.

Peter was known not just for his exploits in the surf as a strong swimmer but as the architect for all the big upgrades the Mooloolaba clubhouse underwent in the 1960s and the rebuild after the 1979 fire.

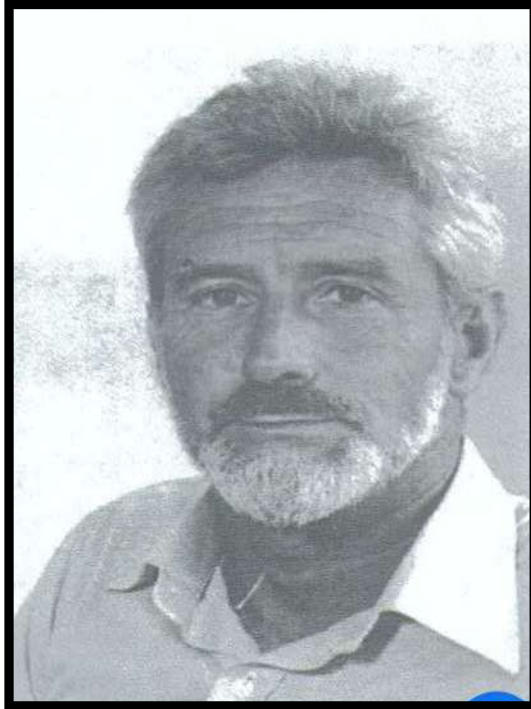
He and Ken first met when the Lambert family moved to Buderim where Ken's father farmed. They used to trek to school together in Nambour on the mail bus and back up Buderim hill at the end of the day and both started in the surf club during the Second World War.

"We joined at virtually the same time," Ken said. "He got his bronze around Christmas '43 but I wasn't 16 so I got mine in the Easter of '44."

After Peter's family moved back to Brisbane Ken said he would always travel back each weekend in the style most members utilised in those days: "A very colourful character called Keith Blake had a truck and he used to bring up a truckload of guys just standing up or sitting on the back of his tipper tray."

Peter went on to enjoy a successful architecture career while Ken moved to Melbourne in 1952 to follow a professional music career.

But the friendship was re-kindled when both ended up living at Coolumb and Peter encouraged his old mate



"Peter was my longest living friend of 79 yrs."

Ken Chadwick



"He was one of those rare people who really had an empathy for others. He never had a bad word to say about any of his associates and he was very much loved because of that."

to join his daily swimming group the 79ers. They remained close for the next 30 years.

Ken said Peter was admired during his days at Mooloolaba and beyond not just for being a strong swimmer but for his personal qualities. "He was one of those rare people who really had an empathy for others. He never had a bad word to say about any of his associates and he was very much loved because of that.

"I would say of all the hundreds of people who went through the 79ers in the last 35 years he would have known all of them and had some influence on them and it was the same in Mooloolaba lifesaving club. He had an effect on people of being a perfect mate."

Ken said Peter ended up defying his doctors' predictions that he would be lucky to survive beyond January. "He kept on going until the 28th of May and even when he was dying of cancer, he would ring me up every second day to see how I was going."

Inaugural 100 Club Draw



Hayden Kenny, Joe Western and Peter Morey

THE plan to get more active and strengthen the Old Boys/Past Members network seems to be working, judging by a series of events that have taken place over the past couple of months.

One of the highlights was the 100 Club, instigated by Graeme (Stumpy) Vierow, that culminated in more than 60 people gathering to witness the big draw in mid June.

As they enjoyed food and drinks put on by the Social Club, Graeme and his barrel boy, Gus, got down to the serious business of pulling the numbers. First prize of \$2500 was won by Heidi and Tony Imbrogno. (It was a big week for Heidi who, a week later, won the vote to become new club captain.) Peter Graham's number came out second, Jim Hoban third, followed by Stacey Campbell and fifth was Cameron Wyllie.



Todd McKee with club president Andrew Cairns



Robyn Jewry and Vonnice Tallon



Steve Miller, Mick (Rocky) Allwood, Peter Adams and Mal Arbuthnot.

Photos: Tracey Boldery



Heidi Imbrogno with Fay Payne



First prize winners: the club's new captain Heidi Imbrogno and her husband Tony



Clive Sharp and Jim Faulkner



Down to the serious business



Bill Wadley and Dave Jewry

The Man from Walcha

WALCHA: located midway between Brisbane and Sydney at the crossroads of the Oxley Highway and Thunderbolts Way. Population: 750,000 sheep, 85,500 cattle and 3150 people – including one Daniel John Reardon.

Danny, a former state R&R medal winner-turned-boatie, has been immersed in the life of this prime-grazing and timber town since 1975 when he and his wife, Sue, decided to move from Brisbane and settle in her home town. Despite the distance and change of pace, he says he felt at home “pretty well instantly”, which will come as no surprise to any of his old mates. “It’s a beautiful place, very friendly, very community oriented and there was also plenty of work,” he said. “The day I came down my father-in-law had me lined up for a job as a mechanic, which is my trade, and I started about two days later.” He said another key factor in the move was the relative cost of housing. “We paid \$9000 for our house here.

Houses in Brisbane at the time varied between about \$20,000 and \$30,000.” And there was no need to pine for the beach he had left behind - Port Macquarie is just 200 kms away and some of Sue’s family there were always welcoming. Danny’s first job was at a garage in town, which opened up vast new possibilities. “That was the most experience I ever got mechanically,” he said. “Like all country garages down here, you can end up fixing everything from a bobby pin to big four wheel drive tractors and trucks. All the big cow



Danny and Sue (R) with daughter Larissa and her husband Simon and their three granddaughters (front)

cookies around here have their own trucks.” After that it was all heavy machinery as he moved into the logging industry, then thriving in the forests around Walcha, and got his first exposure to driving big trucks when the company struggled to find drivers. In more recent years Danny has also done stints of long-distance driving, which explains why he thinks nothing of the trek he makes most years to attend the annual Old Boys lunch. “That’s easy,” he said. “From here to Mooloolaba is about eight hours with a half-hour stop for lunch somewhere in between. I love getting back up there. Its enjoyable meeting up with all your old mates and there’s a lot of new fellas

now from later eras as well.” But the chances of Danny ever moving back closer to his roots are precisely zero. “When I go back up there now I grow tired of having to battle through the traffic. I used to know every square inch of Brisbane when we were young fellas and single and trying to suss out all the parties, but every time I go back now I’m always driving down the wrong streets.” City bustle aside, it’s Walcha itself that provides the greatest magnet - his daughter Larissa has settled in the area, giving him and Sue ready access to their three granddaughters and son Aaron is now working as a baker about 45 minutes away in Armidale.

Annual Old Boys & PM Lunch



Wayne Vierow (L) Gary and Doug Schmidt



(L-R) Fay Payne, Robyn Jewry, Helen Cichero, Ros Tilley and Wendy Graham.



Pat Parsons and Danny Reardon



Dave Jewry, Ken Chadwick and Andrew Cairns



Mick "The Miner" Saunders, his wife Jan and Cheryl Ferrier



Karen Parsons and Robyn Canham



Jim Martyn and Danny Reardon



Steve McDougall and Stuey Canham

Past Yarns

In the wake of Graeme “Stumpy” Vierow’s successful 100 Club initiative we asked him about another slightly more colourful fundraising effort that proves his talents go back a very long way.

by Graeme Vierow

“In 1974 we were trying to raise money for the Australian Titles being held that year in Glenelg, so instead of just running the regular chook raffles, I decided we should raffle a pig. There would have been about seven or eight of us involved – guys like Bob Yarbrough, Jeff Kemp, Rang Quinn, Alan Inwood, Stuey Canham and Jimmy Hoban. I bought two pigs from the butcher and I made arrangements with my dad, who worked at McDonalds pastry cooks in the Valley, to keep one of them in the fridge, so that every couple of hours we could swap them over. The pig would have been about a metre long and we had it set up on ice in a wheelbarrow so it wouldn’t go off too quick, then we put all sorts of different coloured vegetables around it and an apple in its mouth to make it look good. We had a plastic trumpet and every now and again somebody would walk in front of the pig and blow the trumpet.



Cartoon by Doug Schmidt

It was just a little plastic kid's trumpet but it ended up in a few funny spots at times.

We wheeled it up Queen St first and we'd just stop at various points, sell as many tickets as we could, then move to another spot. We had Bob Yarbrough's little purple escort panel van to get the pig to the different venues. The next stop was the Valley and then we went to Racecourse Rd and into the races. They let us stand just inside the gates and as people came through, we sold them the tickets. After that we went to the Albion Hotel and then the Crown at Lutwyche. The publicans were great and the punters really got behind it because it was for a surf club. We started about nine o'clock in the morning and we ended up delivering the pig to the bloke who won it, at Logan, about

7 o'clock that night. It turned out he didn't really want the pig, he just wanted the wheelbarrow, so I had to inform him that the pig and the wheelbarrow went together! By that stage we were just so glad that someone had won the darn thing and we could get it off our hands.

The winner got the pig that had been in the fridge last and we took the other one back to the surf club. We tried to cook it on a spit but the river stones kept exploding so we got the local butcher to cut it up and we cooked it on the rotisserie. I think we only paid about \$28 for the pigs so our costs weren't that high, and we ended up making about \$130, which was quite a lot of money back then, especially when the tickets were only 20c. That's a lot of tickets."

Then and Now: The story behind the photograph



Bob Yarbrough

How did the crew come together? Well Dick Kelly and Jeff Smith were sailors and they came up to the club and got their bronze in probably 1965 and one day when we were sitting around on the beach Frankie Cahill came up and asked if we wanted to have a go at rowing a surf boat. We said, 'Sure, why not'. Frankie took us for a couple of rows and we all seemed to get on and liked the rowing so we became Frankie's crew. Then after a couple of carnivals Frank went to Harry Hughes – and this is not wanting to blow our trumpet – but he said, 'These guys are too good for me. Do you want to have a look at them and see if you could take them on?' So Harry came down for a bit of a look, took us for a couple of rows and he said, 'Yeah, I think they've got potential.'

How successful were you? Our first real competition with Harry was an annual row they had from the Spit to Maroochydore on New Years day. It was our first race together and we won it. We turned out to be a pretty good crew. We won a lot of races during the season and we've got the sad stories like every boat crew has about State titles and Australian titles that we should have won but it was never to be. We won branch titles and I think we came second twice in State titles in very big surf and fourth in an Australian title at Ocean Grove. And you talk about carnivals, over the years we won the Prince Charles carnival when he was over and the Queen's carnival at Coolangatta so they were two pretty big wins.

Did you do much training? Very much so. Harry used to train us twice a week on the river and once down at Redcliffe. He'd come around and shake everyone out of bed at 4 o'clock in the morning and drive us down to train in the Redcliffe chop for a couple of hours. On the river we used to row down near the Regatta Hotel and Harry would take us home and give us dinner every night after training. Harry was extremely generous to us. At one stage I was the main income earner in my household, my mother was a pensioner, and I didn't have a lot of cash and so a lot of times I had to say to Harry, 'I can't go away this weekend' because we'd try to get to every carnival we could and he'd say, 'Don't worry. You don't have to pay anything. Come along.' He did that for a little period of time and it was pretty special.

My Surf Club Story

By John Martyn

Our family generally holidayed at Mooloolaba. I can remember the first time, it would have been in the mid '50s, we had to go by train to Woombye, then we caught a bus to Mooloolaba, Dad was a champion swimmer in his day and a clubbie from the Northern Rivers before and after WW2, so he decided one day when we were sitting on the beach, to go up and see about Jim and I joining. The answer was of course yes and Jim and I were hooked right from the start.

I must have got my bronze in 1970. I can't remember the team except for my brother (Jim), Glen Royce and Vic Mellors, a footballer from Redcliffe who had followed Tony Obst to the club. Vic was a terrible swimmer and on his turn as belt swimmer, I was patient. He kept saying all the way in that he was going to drown. I kept telling him to calm down, that we were being towed in anyway, but he kept saying it until eventually he announced, "I'm going to drown now" and he released me. Anyhow his feet touched the sand and he was OK, so he ended up getting his bronze.

From then until I left, I would have spent most weekends at the clubhouse all year round.

I was vice-captain for a couple of years and went on to get my Instructors,



John Martyn (front second from L) with Jeff Black, Brad Boustead, Graham Dakin and Abe Gordon. Back row Ross Drayton, Dave Purecell, Gary Tanner

Examiners and Advanced Resuscitation certificates. Mark Hunt and I ran Advanced Resus. courses. I can remember one student on a course we did was (radio and television personality) Jamie Dunn from Noosa Club. I'd never heard of him so I just called him Jim the whole time.

I was married in 1977, so I was a regular from 1970 until about a year after that. My wife was a nurse on shift work so I couldn't get to the club as often as I used to.

I can certainly remember my first rescue - it was like Keystone Cops with Jim and I running this way and that, but we got the kid in OK. I also remember rescuing an Italian guy, which got us a picture in the local rag. The guy kept saying to me,

"Thankyou for saving my life. I will save your life someday." I never saw him again, it would have been better for him to throw the club \$20 or something.

I was never a serious competitor, probably an average swimmer, not too bad as a sprinter and got a couple of places in flags. I used to paddle a board in Taplin Relays and do linesman on belt races and of course I did a couple of seasons of R&R with the amazing Freddy Wilkes as coach. We had a great group of guys, a lot of them Juniors. Everyone got on and it was just fun from Friday night to Sunday afternoon. As for major influences, it would have to be Ray Dawson. What a guy, so sad he is no longer with us.

This is an extract from John's response to the questionnaire everyone has been asked to submit to assist in compilation of the club's 100 Year History. So far responses have been slow coming in, but we really need to increase the momentum to meet our deadline and achieve our goal of making it a history as seen through the eyes of its members, not just one that draws on the stats and past records. If you haven't looked at your questionnaire yet, please make it a priority. If you don't have one, let Brad or Jim know (bonkers@bigpond.net.au or jimhoban@biscomms.com).

