

My life in Rowing

Bryan Draper, OAM

I clearly remember being greatly impressed as a child by the sight of a full sized rowing oar and other rowing memorabilia on display at a friend of my father's house. I later found out that he was a former member of Torrens Rowing Club.

Nevertheless, and due no doubt to my size, I went as a teenager into A grade baseball and tennis. My general awkwardness and non-lightening reflexes meant that my performance results were quite ordinary.

By chance, in 1950, at age 20, a fellow bank clerk took me over to the Savings Bank of SA to meet Jack Bollen (Vaughn's dad) who was head coach at Torrens. Jack was well known throughout rowing in SA.



I jumped at the chance to try the sport. The Torrens clubrooms were basically as they are now, having been built by members in times past. Torrens was known as the tradesman's club, as distinct from other wealthier clubs on the Torrens Lake. It was quite gloomy inside with just a few atmospheric photos on the walls. The change rooms and toilets on the first floor were, shall we say, just adequate. But down below were a number of sleek (to my eyes) wooden boats and oars.

I was in – no question! Where do I start and how soon?

The answer came quickly enough. Into wide, heavy, copper riveted Harold Lounder made tub boats. The Club Captain, Bruce Roberts coached this group of newcomers, as we laboured up and down the Torrens. It was great fun. Although, in one outing, we did come across the floating body of a man somewhere behind the zoo.

Soon, competition began. As stroke of the tub four, my first race was less than noteworthy, being beaten by a crew of St Peter's schoolboys. I didn't win a race all season.

Nevertheless, to the surprise of all, myself included, I was named to row 4 in the SA state King's Cup eight. And in 1952, we raced in this prestigious interstate three-mile event on the Nepean River at Penrith (the Sydney International Regatta course at Penrith was many years in the future). It was there that I got to meet members of

other clubs, notably Port Adelaide, though the SA state coach, Reg Francis. I also learnt a lot out of the boat. It was clear to me that the Torrens equipment was too old. The annual sandpapering and painting of all our boats and oars did not disguise how behind the times we were.

I rowed in 5 more King's Cups (1953, 1954, 1957, 1958 and 1959), all the time learning and taking in more information to help our club and our state.

Gaining confidence, I took on the role of Torrens Club secretary – the one who opens all the correspondence and knows where all the skeletons are buried!

After a few years of limited success on the water, we had to good fortune to elect Laurie Baulderstone as Captain with Ray Carter as Vice-Captain. They immediately took on the task of renewing the club fleet. Out went the aged eights and fours and slowly new, sleek wooden boats appeared.

Fund raising for these became the focus. We tried various methods.

Thanks to Alan Southcott and Frank Lodge, we sold bottles of red wine, labelled with the club logo and produced by a newly migrated wine maker by the name of Wolf Blass.

We ran Friday Bingo evenings in a Kilburn Hotel, with our own Jack Bollen calling the numbers.

The senior four, myself included, publicly offered to paint house roofs for the equivalent of \$400. We attracted one customer and spent the next few weekends clinging from house chimneys with paintbrushes in hand!

We also had the brilliant idea to engage an “experienced lady dancing star” from Melbourne and secretly sell tickets for her rather dubious performance at the club. It was left to me to arrange the Melbourne Express train trip and transport for her to and from the train station.

This is just a selection of the ways an amateur sporting club could be kept afloat – “in the good old days!”

The mid-1950s and onwards to the 1960s, saw a considerable improvement in the club fortunes. Newer boats and oars, recruitment of more athletic young rowers and more alert club management began to pay off. Coach Jack Bollen built a senior four (where I rowed 3) which proved unbeatable in SA for many years and won the SA Championship Senior Four title for eight consecutive years.

With excellent newcomers, generally young tradesmen, such as Bob Russell, added to our senior ranks, the Torrens senior eight reigned supreme in SA for some years.

As well, the TOMs Supporters Group (now the TOMs – Torrens Old Members) came to life and started Sunday morning rows in an eight on the Torrens, followed by a few(!) beers and pasties supplied by a retired and distinguished rower, Peter Morelli (in real life – a baker). If it was your birthday, you were expected to put 6 long necks

on the 'long table' for everyone to share. The TOMs developed over the years under guidance of Grant Baldwin and remains part of the club fabric, still rowing on Wednesday (and more recently, Friday) mornings.

Another splendid move in those early times was to take on board the start of the CBC boys rowing club. Over the years, the recruits Torrens gained from the college were invaluable especially in the newish Lightweight rowing class – think Luigi Lippis, Bill Carey, Wilf Otten, David Neall, Nick Lippis, Michael Eastaughffe and others. Not only did these rowers boost our club, some also won Australian Rowing titles. Later a Torrens youth four+ won an Australian title and some went on to represent Australia at the World Championships.

On a personal note, while training for my last King's Cup in 1959 in Perth, I married Colleen.

This 1959 race was the last over the traditional three miles and in 1960, it was changed to 2000 metres.

In 1961, I was nominated and elected as a Life Member of Torrens.

Ten years of intense physical effort was enough for me, and I wanted to take up coaching. I had the vague hope of a couple of years "apprenticeship" under Jack Bollen and then taking on the senior rowers when he retired. This is basically what happened and I enjoyed reasonable success with good results locally, taking Junior rowers into Senior ranks. In the early 1960s, Torrens was the main force in Senior rowing in SA.

I was appointed King's Cup coach for SA in 1962-4. Our crews were clearly too small and too inexperienced when rowing against the top Australian competition. For a 'green' coach, it was impossible to find any up-to-date coaching information. I did find two English rowing books, one by RC Bourne (1925) and another by an Australian born international coach, Steve Fairbairn (1934). The latter's first paragraph was entitled "The Oarsman's song" – most helpful.

Torrens, meanwhile went from strength to strength in most facets of rowing, both in SA and Australian rowing. The exception being in men's eight, where Torrens' dominance of local SA races was not reflected Australia wide.

A few Torrens stories may be of interest.

In the late 1960s we noticed the talents of a Pulteney schoolboy – one Bill Dankbaar. He left school and entered the Police academy at Fort Largs. That presented us with a problem. Torrens had signed him up, but his police duties meant that he could not guarantee to be available each weekend. So, John Blank and I obtained an interview with the fearsome boss and founder of the police cadet Academy, Brigadier John McKinna, a man with a reputation for chewing ears at the slightest upset. Nervously, John and I put our request and sat back waiting for the explosion. To our surprise, our wishes were granted and Bill was ours for the weekend. The great man added "Ah! Dankbaar; a good recruit but a rather lazy lout considering his brains!"

Another story concerning Bill. One evening I called at the Dankbaar residence to talk with Bill. Dankbaar Senior made me wait and listen first to the family string quartet. Not only Bill, but also his brother Roland (also a member of Torrens) and parents took up violins of various sizes to play classical music – a Dutch family custom, not usually followed in Australia.

Bill, the “lazy lout”, went on to be a King's Cup oarsman and coach, an Olympic oarsman and coach for Australia, surfboat coach and successful coach and mentor of hundreds of schoolboys and schoolgirls in South Australia and NSW. Sadly, he died on the 4th March 2013, aged just 60. At TRC, we have a boat named after him. A full description of Bill's life can be found here (<https://www.smh.com.au/national/hero-figure-to-young-rowers-20130423-2icf2.html>)

Through the late 60s and early 70s, Torrens was the top (or near top) club in SA. Good coaching, adequate administration and excellent recruiting had paid off. A number of our rowers and coaches featured in Australian crews with medals in lightweight and female races.

Unfortunately, in 1975, the clubrooms lost its roof in a spectacular fire, due to a workman's welding mishap. When, as Secretary, I arrived at the smoking ruins, I was surprised to hear one of the suited-up fire brigade chaps in the still smouldering roof, callout – it was one of our excellent new rowers, Brian Thomas, well known in later years for running the tourist boat at Port Adelaide and West Lakes.

Captain Frank O'Brien and Luigi Lippis insisted that the club shed be made whole again and within a relatively short time, the rooms were rebuilt, thanks in a large part, to TOMs members, Howard Bone and Graeme Footer.

The club was in a ‘nice place’, so much so that I moved away from the club and became Secretary of the SA Rowing Association (SARA, now Rowing SA, RSA). There things were not quite so rosy. There were no headquarters, no paid officials, not even a typewriter. The whole structure was kept afloat by a dedicated band of long-suffering, part-time volunteers – worth their weight in gold.

But school and women's rowing were advancing rapidly, giving the promise of new recruits. From my point of view, it seemed sensible to find out what more successful Australian states were doing. We also needed to know more about international rowing. I came to rely on the insights of Willie Hay, an Adelaide RC member and later, an Australian selector. Others included Ross Webb and Colin Williams, both from Port Adelaide RC.

Amid all this rather uninspiring news came the establishment of a rowing support group called the Resting Rowers Consortium - a wonderful development that delivered in spades. Made up mainly of businessmen in the wine trade with a rowing interest, the group bottled their own red wine (as mentioned above) and sold it widely with profits going to support selected state rowing projects. Our own Alan Southcott was a major player in this group, and later his son Lindsay Southcott (an early Patron of TRC) bolstered the consortium. Through their connections, members of the group learned of a planned huge new housing estate to the west of Adelaide CBD – West Lakes.

In a marshy area where the Torrens "River" entered the sea, many new homes were to be built by Delfin Realty. The Torrens exit was diverted with great swathes of sandy soils excavated, compacted and used as building blocks. The bonus for SARA was that by excavating more than 2000 metres for a rowing course, the required recreational aspect of the new development were satisfied. Cleverly, new seawater would enter at one end and flow tidally down the course to exit in the Port River.

The first building block sold in this development was on the current finishing line of our national rowing course. Although owned freehold by SARA, it is believed that the cost was borne mainly by Alan Southcott. Constant vigilance, aided by Alex Ramsay, the boss of the SA Housing Trust, ensured the finished course was near to the actual plans. The first race on this great new course was in 1977.

But to return to the early 70s. Things were stirring in Australian Rowing – John Coates, assisted by John Boulton, another solicitor and based in London, began an Australian wide revision of rowing administration. The 1976 Montreal Olympics ended the general Australian sports assumption that our native healthy amateurism would enable us to hold our own in the sporting arena. In Montreal, Australia won a silver and 4 bronze medals. That decidedly ordinary result brought significant government money to assist all sports (including rowing), improved coaching standards, team participation and recruitment.

Within a year or so, Australia had an Institute of Sport (AIS) based in Canberra. Australian Rowing sought a National Coaching Director, preferably with international status. Reinhold Batschi, a Romanian coach with impressive rowing and coaching credentials entered the scene. His command of English was basic, but there was no question that he would not allow interstate rivalries get in his way of developing Australian rowing. Currently, the National Training Centre for men's rowing in Canberra carries the Reinhold Batschi name (ed - the women's centre is in Penrith at the Hancock Prospecting National Training Centre).

On a personal note, our son, Matthew, later became Reinhold's apprentice coach.

Time for some light relief from this saga – some stories from my many years as an Australian Boatrace Official.

First, the scene is Lake Wendouree, Ballarat at the 1985 Australian Rowing Championships. I arrived at the start in the Umpire's boat to take the next race only to see men running in all directions with others chasing them and blowing whistles. The reason? The Victorian Rowing Association had recruited a number of supposedly trusted inmates from the local goal to act as boat holders! You can imagine how that news was received on the two-way radios. Eventually, all the 'cons' were caught and racing resumed with more reliable boat holders.

Another more dignified incident at another Australian Championship, when I was called into the bank to pick up the Governor-General of Australia. Regatta organisers believed that a close up of a race would pass the time satisfactorily. Delicately putting the GG in the back of the boat, we followed the President's Cup for single sculls. The race was uneventful and I returned His Excellency to the shore. At the

later Umpire's debriefing, I casually advised the group that "I believe I heard him say on leaving the boat... Good job, Mr Draper. Arise Sir Bryan". Stunned silence, followed by universal bollocking.

Returning again to SA rowing in the 70s. Thomas Keller, World Rowing President (of FISA), millionaire and President of Swiss Timing came to West Lakes to determine its suitability to hold international events. SARA had put in a bid, with some State help, to gain the right to hold the World Junior (up to 18 years) Championships. Herr Keller created history in rowing by insisting that all emphasis must be on the athletes – not officials or administrators. He needed assurance that we had a fair course across all lanes and that the wash from umpire's boats would not affect any racing. As State Secretary, I was to meet the great man and take him to the course. Thanks to Frank O'Brien (TRC again), Toyota motors was sponsoring the association and, as the head dealer in luxury cars, Frank loaned us a special car. So, I met Herr Keller in a huge BMW saloon, hoping to impress him. That fell in a heap when I was not able to open the boot to retrieve his satchel. A phone call (no mobiles in that time) to the dealer was required to sort this out.

Another stratagem to impress him was a helicopter flight to view the course from the air. Naturally, I had to accompany him, doing my best to appear as if this was our usual form of transport. While airborne, he quizzed me on the general geography and physical properties of our course; luckily, we had answers to most of his questions. Sometime later, I found out that his report was not too bad at all. He had, however, picked up on a few of the not so good features, eg, that the usual direction of the wind is from the west and thus was a cross wind and that there was the possibility of wave reflection from the vertical sides of the course near the finish. Not killer problems, but items for further work. In the end, our bid lost out, but we gained pleasing support from other countries.

Turning now to the late 70s and early 80s, not necessarily in chronological order.

The Alex Ramsay Rowing Course at West Lakes was officially opened on March 18, 1977.

At the 1979 Australian Championships at West Lakes, we had a major problem with our relatively new course. Two days out from the start of the regatta, we arrived to find a few hundred lane buoys on the rocks near the finish. The spring clips holding the buoys to the longitudinal stainless steel cables had corroded and the buoys consequently detached. Southcott Engineering quickly told us that electrolysis was the cause. At the speed of light, Alan's company located suitable quality stainless steel, set up a stamping press and delivered a couple of thousand new clips to the course. All hands on deck – I recall John Blank and I spent the whole night re-attaching the buoys to the wires by torchlight. Other TRC members assisted. Problem? What problem? TRC to the rescue yet again.

It was becoming clear that SA was benefitting from the Batschi imposed small boat selection trials for heavy weight (HW) men at the 3 courses in SA, Victoria and NSW. Not only did active rowers improve, but the administration had to improve to run these trials successfully. Certainly our lightweight (LW) men and women were well to the fore here and overseas, but our own HW men's 8+ could only achieve second

place for some years. Amidst some minor concern from senior SA clubs, an “elite 8” was put together under the part-time coach Willie Hay. They trained regularly at the weekends for months. For SA, at that time, the crew comprised mainly men from Adelaide RC, University and Port Adelaide. Our Frank O’Brien kept Toyota interested with the worthwhile sponsorship of a new ‘red’ state eight boat. At the 1981 Australian Championships, it finally came together when SA won the Kings Cup by two metres. At last, we would no longer hear about our last KC win in 1937, some 44 years earlier! Torrens was closely involved in this effort, supplying the coach, Bill Dankbaar and the manager, Peter Giacchino. This win also resulted in some of the crew gaining Australian representation.

A victory dinner at the Morphettville racecourse reception room followed. The SA Premier, David Tonkin, and a pleased Toyota representative, were present. Preparations for the event involved hauling the winning eight up to the first floor via outside windows.

The following year, 1982, SA won the King’s Cup again, this time with a TRC member, Steve Mann as stroke. In 1983, SA won again, with our John Quigley and Steve Mann in the crew with two TRC coaches, Bob Cooper and Bill Dankbaar. At the same regatta in WA, the SA Youth crew under TRC coach, Bob Russell, took out the national title.

The SA boat for 1981 had been donated by Toyota Motors Adelaide and SA used it to also win the King’s cup in 1982. It was painted red; however, it was a rather old fashioned boat made by Towns in NSW and in 1983, the crew tried a more comfortable SA built King eight. To maintain connection with the sponsors, the boat was named Toyota and had red stripes along each side. The crew won again.

In 1981, I was granted Honorary Life Membership of Rowing SA.

It was in the early 1980s, that a proposal arose to admit women as full members of TRC, both on and off the water. In 1983-84, under the Presidency of Michael Eastaughffe, women were admitted into the Club as full active rowing members following a Special General Meeting. It was approved despite some strong opposition and that decision surprisingly lost us some valued members.

In 1986, our Australian Men’s 8+ took out the World title at Nottingham, UK. I was lucky enough to follow the race in the travelling grandstand and nearly fell off as our eight won in the unfancied lane one.

Here is an interesting side story (I hope) from my international adventures. I’m not too sure of the date, but I took up an offer to attend a regatta in Germany to gauge the likelihood that European nations (East Germany in particular) would attend the proposed 1990 World Championships in Tasmania. The occasion was a ‘friendly’ competition held annually on a short course in a West German port. A wealthy West German industrialist paid the total travel and accommodation expenses of all East German crews attending. At that time East Germany, always short of funds, were winning everything. On arrival in West Germany, I was met by the German Minister for Nuclear Energy in his huge Mercedes car. I duly attended the regatta and later attended the free farewell dinner for all crews. I was seated opposite an East

German coach, whom I immediately recognised as one of the famed Landvoigt twins – second only to god in my view. In their active days between 1974 and 1980, the twins, Bernard and Jorg, won all but one of their 180 coxless pair races, including four world championships and two Olympics. Their pictures were in every coaching manual as the epitome of pair rowing. I immediately started quizzing the great man on how East Germany could effortlessly win so many world titles. Greatly to his credit, he answered in quite reasonable English. He stated in a somewhat guarded fashion that there were a number of reasons, including ‘streaming’ young boys and girls, amongst other reasons best not disclosed now. Further, if I could come to Leipzig University, where he taught, more would be revealed. I wasn’t able to do that, but thinking about it later, it occurred to me that this may have been a hint that some chemical assistance was involved. At that time, drug testing was quite primitive.

However, I was able to consult a number of nations and received a great number of positive responses regarding the proposed 1990 Tasmanian regatta. I took the train to see John Boultree, the World Rowing Secretary in his Alpine wonderland and reported these positive results back home.

To return to SA and West Lakes. First some background before launching into building operations. Whenever an Australian title race is held, organisers must supply and up to date survey certificate as to the genuine length of the course – makes sense! I’ve participated as a ‘slave’ in three of these surveys of West Lakes, helping a couple of ARC licenced surveyors. The first, in the early days, was by a linked chain and theodolite. The ‘zero point’ was the western edge of the finish line in line with the judge’s camera position. The next survey was some years later using more modern equipment. This revealed that the eastern side of the finish was 2 – 3 metres long. The most recent survey in which I participated, with radar and GPS showed that even then the eastern side was 10-15 centimetres long. Over the years, how many races have been won or lost by just centimetres?

So, we had acquired a 2000 metre waterway and land at West Lakes. The next step was to build a boathouse. With priceless help from Ross Webb and Colin Williams, both from Port Adelaide, we had established good working relations with the Woodville (later Charles Sturt) Council, the Mayor and the town clerk, Doug Hamilton. Our land was part of a more or less grassed area with 400 metres of beachfront. An extensive playground was planned to adjoin our property. Our sporting group offered the Council responsible organisation that did what it promised. It was a reputation to which we scrupulously adhered from day one and had significant later pay-offs.

Under SARA/RSA President Bruce Robertson (from TRC), we badgered the state government endlessly for some form of financial support to get the build started. As it happened, this was a time of high unemployment rate and the government started a program known as the RED scheme. Unemployed men, under suitable supervision, were paid to take on building projects that needed skilled workforce. The deal was that the government would pay all wages and provide the supervisor, while the recipient of the package would provide the building materials. It just so happened, much to our advantage, that the entire program was administered financially by the local Woodville Council. The problem was our ability to find the many thousands of

dollars for materials. SARA had a reasonable cash holding, but nothing like what was needed. Bruce and I came up with the idea of selling Foundation Life Memberships that came with a number of future benefits when we had the finished the boatshed, for the then not small sum of \$200. It was a considerable success and over a relatively short time, we raised close to \$70,000.

I used to follow construction at least weekly, often more. I got to know the appointed skilled building supervisor, a Yugoslav hard man, Tony Tokic. Once in my presence Tony kicked over a waist high wall the boys had spent half the day erecting because the work was less than perfect. A short aside might help gain a picture of Tony's worth as a work gang boss. A few years later, he was in charge of a RED scheme working on the new bridge at Murray Bridge. A crane had jammed where the cable runs over the wheel at the end of the boom. Tony climbed out there and somehow freed the jam – it did so with a tremendous jolt, catching his fingers in the machinery and throwing him into the water below – minus a finger! He surfaced and amidst flowing blood, started swimming to the bank. Noticing his men watching all this, he roared “Get back to work, you lazy @#%s”. After a short visit to the local hospital, he returned to work that afternoon. He didn't have too many problems with staff members.

A last minute funding crisis for the construction project was solved when SARA Treasurer, Don Boulderstone, from TRC, offered us a short term loan.

We finally had a solid clubhouse with entertainment area, a kitchen and a possible canteen window with a sizeable boat shed. The next issue was to ensure that all clubs had reasonable access for training, without causing funding problems for the sport. Our excellent support from the Woodville Council was dependent to some extent, on us making the complex available not only to rowers. We went along with this verbal request by agreeing to comply “if at all possible”. Fortuitously, Ross Webb and I had earlier been meeting with planners at the SA Education Department, who had been looking for a place to start a state aquatic sports centre. They offered generous terms with full usage of our place by the children during school hours on weekdays. We had to provide a reasonable area for their equipment. Any damage was to be repaired immediately with the children closely supervised by teachers and parents. This arrangement continues to this day, I believe, and complies with the Council's requests. Similarly, we negotiated with the CEO of the newish SA Sports Institute (formed around 1989-1990) for storage of boats for their rowing program. Signing up these well-financed tenants was the answer to the earlier financial viability questions.

The main purpose of the building was to provide SARA clubs access to proper training facilities, most often away from their established Torrens River home base. Thanks to Ray Carter and Phil Lord (both TRC again) somewhat rough boat racks were provided, laboriously put together out of surplus steel train line. Quite early, we were able to offer a few rack positions to clubs for their top crews at a sensible yearly rent. Rack positions were determined by luck of the draw system at the start of a season.

Things were a bit bumpy over the early years, when late training crews left the boatshed doors open on leaving. I had the occasional pleasure of visiting the shed at

1am to lock up after being alerted by our hired security people – early on, we were not willing to give them our keys.

Use of the lake by our early morning training crews and during regattas also presented some problems to the locals. Having paid mega-bucks to acquire a lakeside home, a few owners naturally felt they had a right to swim at will, even if early crews were using the same water. The new sport of wind surfing was also a little disruptive, especially during regattas. Repeatedly, we rowing administrators warned our members of the need to be 'good neighbours' with the affluent locals. By and large, we received only little flack over the years as 'both sides' came to terms with SA Rowing's rights to be there. In those early years, the Woodville Council designated Colin Williams and me as "Lake Marshalls" with official badges; we were given real power to move offenders out of the way on the water "for their own safety." In real life, we wielded our power very carefully to maintain the 'good neighbours' relationships.

We tried to involve local residents in the sport, so they understood the demands made on serious athletes. Hence the arrival of local solicitor Lou Crotti. What a find! I remember accompanying him as SARA representative to the Liquor Licencing Court to apply for or vary our licence. His elaborately polite treatment of the judge, a notorious fire-eater, was a joy to behold. He was and still is involved with SARA.

My time in SA rowing continued for some years as I moved from Secretary, to Chairman and to President. I did not really enjoy the largely ceremonial role of the Presidency and was required to intervene in various challenges. One such challenge disputed the legitimacy of the SARA AGM. And another, where a very successful men's 8+ insisted they be selected intact to represent SA in the King's Cup. Rule 101 is that rowers do not pick their own crew; the selectors do that. We were not able to compromise and the KC 8+ consisted of the selected men from other clubs. Unfortunately, at the regatta, there was some 'disagreeable' discussion of the crew, which did not show SA administration in a good light to the rest of Australia.

I was not all that unhappy to move on and see what Australian rowing Administration had to offer. I had promised David Schier, the solicitor spark plug from Tasmania, that I would help them organise the 1990 World rowing championships. With Tasmanian government and local council support, David and his north Tasmanian rowing group located and promoted a new world class course at Lake Barrington. It was relatively remote in a thickly wooded ravine and consisted of a sheltered stretch of water well up stream of a hydroelectric dam. Getting there from Devonport on the north coast, involved a 20+km journey over narrow winding roads. There were many logistical difficulties to overcome, eg, no electricity and no TV or phone coverage with a fair amount of native bushland to clear. David had taken care of most of these issues, but didn't have experienced people in rowing administration; he happily took up my offer.

I flew to Launceston many times for monthly meetings and 3 months before the event, arrived in Devonport to meet the full time general manager, Brian Roe, who had no rowing experience, and came from athletics. My responsibilities were for volunteers, accreditation, accommodation for most countries and return boat transportation for northern hemisphere crews, a condition of Tasmania getting the

championships. The latter was a minefield, which I failed to overcome, saved luckily by a large local ferry manufacturer.

I spent the next 3 months working a 7-day week with a few days off. It quickly became clear that northern Tasmania could not provide enough people to run the regatta. Surprising to me, I discovered that the North and the South (Hobart based) rowing associations had a challenging relationship. I organised a meeting of the two at a 'demilitarised' location in the centre of the island and we reached an agreement to work together and for the southerners to provide quite a number of helpers.

We had no major sponsor yet and money was tight. Almost at the last minute, a large West German ball-bearing making factory, with the rather unfortunate acronym FAG, signed up. Another problem, never resolved was computerisation, then in its infancy. Despite the valiant efforts of own computer tech, the multitude of coded access passes and photos were all 'hand-made'.

Crews were all accommodated, with the assistance of a full time representative of the Devonport and Launceston Housing Trust, in nearby private homes providing bed and breakfast.

I was involved in a serious security incident when meeting the Finnish group (their coxless pair plus manager) at the airport. There was some conflict between me, the owner of the accommodation that I had assigned the Finns and another rather unhappy lady who, unknown to us, had also arranged accommodation. The day after the regatta ended, I was having lunch with other helpers and a Star Force police officer rushed in calling my name. The disgruntled lady had been spotted by airport security carrying a 'silver revolver' in her bag and was on her way to the course 'to get me'. Under heavy police escort, I packed my bags, was taken to the airport and left Tasmania within hours. I found out next day that the person had been intercepted by police and a search of a bag identified the so-called pistol as a cigarette lighter.

We had more security back on the rowing course prior to the regatta, where we had undercover policemen hiding in the heavy scrub opposite the finish line ready to intercept any 'greenies' who stated they were going to tie themselves to the finish post – luckily, the police were not needed.

A major feature of the Championships was the Opening Ceremony. This was held on a flat area adjoining the course at the bottom of the surrounding and heavily wooded hills. At a vital part of this ceremony, a sharp, loud whip crack was heard. With that, down the surrounding hills, thundered to the sound of galloping horses, their Drizabone covered riders yelling and continuously cracking whips. Arriving at the bottom from all directions, they rode up to Denis Oswald, the current World Rowing President, to present him with a ceremonial Welcome Scroll. Horses were steaming, snorting and puffing in a scrum. Every spectator's mouth (especially foreign ones) was wide open; an amazingly powerful performance of the Man from Snowy River. Many eyes, including mine, misted over. That set the tone for future proceedings of the event.

These 1990 World Championships marked the end of East Germany as a separate contestant. It also heralded the end of the outdated Australian Rowing Council

structure where the Presidency changed yearly depending on which state held the King's Cup regatta. At the suggestion of 2 council members, David Schier and Margot Foster (of the 1990 Championship organising committee) with the support of all state delegates, a new Executive board was elected in January 1991. A Victorian, Reg McKay became President and I was elected as Vice President. Bob Hemery was appointed as full time Secretary (a position later renamed as Chief Executive Officer). Regular, monthly meetings began to address unresolved issues of years past. I worked with Bob over 3–4 12 hour days to compile a fully costed plan for Australian rowing for the next 5 years, as required by the Australian Government for their financial support.

Part of this plan included a World Masters Rowing Regatta at West Lakes, to be held a few years in to the future. I attended the World Congress at the Vienna World championships, to gain approval for this event.

In the late 1980s, I thought 'Rowing' should show more interest towards the SA Olympic Council, who raised money for the teams to attend the Olympic Games. The fact that John Coates, a former rower, was heavily involved with the AOC, spurred this on. The SAOC had been given a Holden car to raffle to raise funds for teams at the Barcelona Olympics. It went well, raising \$70,000+ with me as recorder and financial contact – never again!

In 1992, I had the great Honour of being awarded the Medal of the Order Of Australia (OAM) in the Australia Day Honours List. The citation reads...*"In recognition of service to the sport of rowing, particularly through the SA Olympic Council"*

However, despite some conflicts within the state representatives of the Council that surfaced occasionally and variable support for Reinhold Batschi at the AIS, the Council worked reasonably well. It later became clear that I was not likely to retain my position on the Board, so after a forty-year single-minded devotion to the sport, I resigned.

I was still willing to help rowing whenever I could and did enjoy supervising the building of the extensions of the West Lakes clubrooms, planned by Rob Cheesman and designed by TRC's Ian Russell. Equally, I enjoyed volunteering at the 2000 Olympics, the SA Masters regatta and the World Cup regatta at Penrith.

In my later years, I am a little disappointed that RSA have not been able to provide a King's Cup eight for seasons 2022 and 2023.

I do keep abreast of developments in world rowing. My son, Matthew, is a full time executive in the World Rowing office in Lausanne, Switzerland and his wife, Conny, is a respected doctor of Biomechanics often hired by leading rowing countries.

This will see me out nicely and I am at last able to make up for years of neglect with family affairs.

