



LEADERSHIP: Current Bendigo Rowing Club president Lynda Davis and Jesse Sherwood can't wait to see what the club will grow into during years to come.



COMPETITORS: Members of the club have competed all across the world, including national championships, in addition to Commonwealth and Olympic Games.



RISING STARS: The next generation of elite rowers, including Livia Rosaia, are now competing at the top level of the sport across Australia.

Rowing for 150 years

BRC
 observes
 historic
 past

BY ANTHONY PINDA

WITH historic roots dating back to the 19th century, the Bendigo Rowing Club is celebrating its 150th anniversary this weekend.

The sport was first introduced to the city by John Godfrey in 1872, a keen rower from Tasmania, who hand-built a wooden scull named *Australasia* which he then put on display outside the Bank of Australia in Pall Mall in hope he could raise interest in rowing.

After word spread about the new sport, participation levels started to increase which led to the formation of the then Sandhurst Rowing Club.

A few years later, Lake Weeroona was built which paved the way for what is now the Bendigo Rowing Club.

This Saturday the club's members past and present will come together at the All Seasons Hotel to celebrate 150 years of rich history on the water.

In attendance will be integral athletes such as Hannah Every-Hall and Neville Howell who've both played key roles in representing, promoting and helping the BRC develop into one of regional Victoria's top clubs.

Also to be unveiled by City of Greater Bendigo Mayor Cr Andrea Metcalf is a new regatta trophy for the inaugural *Weeroona Challenge Cup*.

The Cup will see mixed coxed quad sculls (crew of two males and two females, with a cox) which will be contested at the annual Bendigo Sprint Regatta to



HUMBLE BEGINNINGS: Bendigo rowers in 1905 at the old sheds that were located at the Nolan Street end of Lake Weeroona. Picture: SUPPLIED

be held on Lake Weeroona in October.

BRC president Lynda Davis said the celebration was a chance for past and present members to reunite and reflect on their memories of the sport.

"It's an amazing club when you look at all we've survived through during those 150 years, such as drought and war but we've always still managed to continue on," Davis said.

"We offer the opportunity for juniors, women, men all the way through to masters, to get involved with rowing.

"Overall our goal is to be an inclusive club where everyone is welcome."

BRC stalwart Jesse Sherwood has been integral in the organising of the club celebration and has been able to track down many relics from the past that will be showcased at the anniversary dinner.

The club may have many physical mementos of its history, but what matters most to Davis and Sherwood is the overall culture.

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Jesse Sherwood, Bendigo Rowing Club stalwart

"One achievement that stands out to me the most was in the 1930s when we had women from Bendigo win the coveted Henley on the Maribyrnong three years in-a-row," Sherwood said.

"To achieve something like this back in the 1930s truly smashed the perceptions around women in sport.

"It underpins that in addition to the great athletic performances of our members, we have a strong commitment to the community by being a socially responsible, family-friendly and inclusive club."

When asked where they hoped the club would be 150 years from now, both Davis and Sherwood had one simple wish - that the club

still operates strongly with the ethos of being connected to the community.

"I hope that it's thriving with rowers of all different levels participating together and continuing our ethos of volunteerism which has shaped our club culture," Sherwood said.

Davis said if the same culture were to continue, then there was no doubt the club would still be active.

"As long as people continue to come and give rowing a go and have some fun I am sure everyone who is currently involved with the club will be happy with what it grows into," she said.

Key Historic Dates:

- 1872: John Godfrey builds wooden skiff, christens it *Australasia*

and demonstrates sculling on the Upper Reserve Reservoir (now site of the Faith Leech Aquatic Centre).

- 1873: Sandhurst and Bendigo Rowing Clubs formed

- 1879: Lake Weeroona created.

- 1883: Lake Neangar created. Eaglehawk Ladies Rowing Club established.

- 1884: 5000 spectators gather at Lake Weeroona to watch world sculling champion Edward Hanlan.

- 1920s: St Paul's Ladies Rowing Club wins the Henley on the Maribyrnong.

- 1925: Impacted by drought. Social club formed to keep members connected.

- 1925: Arthur Cambridge wins the Victorian and Australian Sculling Championships.

- 1927: "Father of Bendigo rowing", John Godfrey passes away. Name officially changed to Bendigo Rowing Club.

- 1932: Members cycle 850 km on single gear bicycles

to Sydney to compete in a regatta commemorating the opening of the Sydney Harbour Bridge.

- 1941: BRC goes into recess due to WWII, reforming in 1946.

- 1969: Olympic and Commonwealth Games gold medalist, Neville Howell commences revitalisation of the BRC.

- 1976: Fibreglass boats introduced

- 1980 Construction of Lake Weeroona Pavilion.

- 1992: Jason Day strokes Australia's quad scull at the 1992 Barcelona Olympic Games.

- 2011: Floating pontoon installed to cope with fluctuating water levels.

- 2012: Hannah Every-Hall places fifth in the women's lightweight double sculls at the London Olympics

- 2018: Wood and Davis complete 90km Rowathon on the Murray and Darling Rivers.

- 2020 COVID 19 pandemic forces rowing to be postponed.

- 2022: 150th Anniversary