

NSWRA Presidents Report for 2010

Alexa McAuley, 20 March 2011

Events

2010 saw a memorable line up of events. As usual, we started the year with the Metrogaine – held on Sydney's north shore. It was a wet day but still saw a great turnout of almost 400 people. Richard Green has become a regular Metrogaine course setter over the last few years, and I think he always does a great job.

We held our first Minigaine in 2010, with the idea to attract more new rogainers to the sport. If you've never been rogaining, the idea of a 6 hour event can seem a little daunting, so we thought that a 3-hour event might sound more appealing. We've also tried to schedule it at a time of year that should suit uni students, who are just getting into their semester at this time, but aren't yet swamped by exams. The first Minigaine was held at Manly Dam and while there was room for improvement, we definitely thought it was worth repeating.

Our autumn event was a memorable rogaine, held at Joadja in the southern highlands. Phil Whitten, Richard Smyth and Graham Millar set a spectacular course, but it was also very challenging with many clifflines and complex creek systems. The course setters did a lot of work to locate and mark up passes through the cliffs, but participants in the 12-hour event still had a challenging time. As the central part of the course was cliff-bound, anyone who decided to do a full circumnavigation of the map found themselves thoroughly committed! Many teams were late back, but mostly they were still in high spirits when they returned. This event was particularly special for me, because it was the first event where I've ever been in the winning team overall! Not only that, but both the 6-hour and 12-hour events were won by female teams – a first I'm sure for NSWRA.

The Paddy Pallin event in June was another fun event, held at Kariong on the NSW Central Coast. Andrew and Nicole Haigh, who have been rogaining for many years, set a great course – the bushland was prickly, but still very beautiful. The Haighs had a challenging time meeting all of National Parks' needs, and we're really grateful that they persisted to put on such a lovely event. Our hosts Andrew and Rebecca Harris were wonderful, and did an amazing job squeezing all the cars into their place. We had some unexpected excitement at this event with one participant airlifted off the course with a broken ankle (in a tricky-to-access location). There were a few others who needed first aid attention at the finish and we were glad to have the St Johns team on hand. It emphasised the need to consider safety in all our planning.

The annual Lake Macquarie event was held in the Jilliby State Conservation Area this year. As per usual, Bob Gilbert and his team put on a lovely event, complete with a popular tea and damper stop on the course. The event offered something for everyone, with plenty of tracks but also some nice creeks and bushland. As we have come to know and love at the Lake Macquarie events, of course there was also some lantana and lawyer vines thrown in for good measure!

In September, the annual 24-hour (and NSW championships) event was a highlight of the year – it was held in lovely open bushland in Abercrombie River National Park. The setters and veters braved rain and snow, but the event itself proved "High 'n' Dry" thus living up to its name. This was welcome indeed for anyone who braved the cold and wet at Mt Werong in 2009! It was a huge team of volunteers who contributed to this event, but I can't fail to mention Michael Watts who ably co-ordinated them all.

In October we held a weekend navigation workshop, which has now been a feature of our calendar for the past three years. Again it was popular and everyone (participants and trainers

alike) had a fun weekend. One of the nice (and somewhat unexpected) things this year was the large number of families who took part in the workshop. There was a festive atmosphere with all the kids livening up the scene at Rydal Showground.

As usual, we rounded off the year with the Socialgaine, which was held in the Georges River National Park, Salt-Pan Creek, and surrounding areas. The event was officially declared the most social socialgaine ever! Course setters Bronwyn and Paul Batten organised an ingenious system of sticker-swapping to get all the participants talking to each other out on the course.

Even though it wasn't a NSW event, I can't fail to mention the World championships, which drew a handful of NSW rogainers across the Tasman. It was great fun to do an international event, and still see so many familiar faces. Not everyone was super-competitive and many went simply to enjoy the special atmosphere of a world rogaining event.

The state of rogaining in NSW

During 2010 we have been focusing on strategies to improve the volunteer experience, because we are always in need of more enthusiastic volunteers to help put on events. Ironically the most dire lack of volunteers is on the committee, where we have been short both a volunteer co-ordinator and an events co-ordinator for most of 2010. This has made it hard to focus on much at all, other than just keeping up with the workload!

We introduced a system where volunteers are offered free entry to their next event. This has been relatively simple and successful, although we've been chronically slow on the administration side! This is something we hope to improve as we get more into the swing of it in 2011.

We also put in place a contractor to run Administration at our events. This was a big move for the association, which has previously relied solely on volunteers in this role. Unfortunately it was not entirely successful, and we've put the position on hold for the moment. We're hoping to re-think and resurrect this idea later in 2011.

We've continued to be very well supported by a few key organisations who deserve mention:

- The 1st Waitara Scouts have provided catering for the Metrogaine, the Paddy Pallin and the Socialgaine in 2010, and they always put on great food with minimal fuss
- The Bushwalkers Wilderness Rescue Service provided safety services for our 24 hour rogaïne, as well as the Lake Macquarie. They bring valuable skills and equipment for safety patrols and potential incidents at our bush events
- Paddy Pallin supported the rogaïne of the same name, providing publicity, insurance and spot prizes on the day
- St Johns provided first aid support at the Paddy Pallin

The support of these groups helps reduce the workload for volunteers and makes it easier for us to run successful events. I encourage anyone who has participated in a few rogaines to consider helping out at an event. It's a great way to meet fellow rogainers and see what goes on behind the scenes. Some jobs (e.g. course setting, vetting, flag hanging and collecting) still let you get out on the course, and others (e.g. helping in Admin or the Hash House) still let you enjoy the atmosphere of the event. Often there is also the opportunity to spend time out on the course, as there are quiet times at Admin and the Hash House between the start and finish of most events. Most of the jobs require no special skills and for the few that do, there is plenty of support from the committee and others who've done it before.

Thanks

I would like to finish off by thanking a number of people. First, all of the people that have volunteered over the last year at one or more events – you've all done a great job and I hope you've enjoyed it too. Second, the committee members that have kept things running smoothly over the last year – you've all worked hard and I'm glad that most of you are keen to continue in 2011. Graeme Cooper deserves special mention - he not only looks after the website, the online entries and the event software, but in 2010 he and his wife Vicky were also our most prolific volunteers at events - they attended all but two of the rogaines to help with administration!

I hope to see you out on a course or around the hash house in 2011!