

Surfboat rescues two on lake burley griffin.

It was sold to us as a “nice, stretchy, gentle row”. After the men raced the ladies over 9.5 km on From the previous day where the ladies tossed the vets men out of the fry pan, those of us who remained in Canberra for the long weekend decided to take the boat out for a leisurely [Saturday morning](#) row with Captain Claire promising a sweeping master class at the very gentlemanly hour of [6am](#). The team was looking forward to a 15 minute sleep in after a big week of training and banking extra rowing hours on the legs.

15 mins before the alarm was supposed to off, the familiar ping of a new text message roused us from our sleep-in. Our illustrious leader informed us that it was going to be windy (how very-unlike Canberra) and we might need to re-think sweep school. After a majority vote, we agreed to rock up at the shed and make the big D from there. Luckily, our leader who is clearly experienced in sweep-schooling, recommended we bring a towel (and maybe some spare clothes) in case sweep-schooling resulted in sweep-swimming or non-sweep-stretching at the sheds.

Rocking up at the sheds we decided to head out for a long row and chase some chop seeing as we need.

The battered hens managed to successfully launch the boat with the bung in-tact (men, take note), dry feet and headed out into the Lake with lofty aspirations of a long gentle row with Annie in the Stroke seat, Vix in three, me in 2 and Bel holding the bow down.

During the warm up it was quickly realised that it was not going to be the gentle row we thought it might be, the wild winds were sending white caps our way and we could have been forgiven for thinking that we were actually in the ocean. Bel hilariously informed us that there was some kind of lake race on today and there was much joking about how hilarious it would be if we crashed their race and picked up a win. With spirits high and holding steady through the chop we headed towards the museum and snuck in a nice little rest shielded by the island.

Buoyed by the freedom of not having to race for time or distance or bacon or sheep-stations it was here that we decided to start the sweep-schooling and rotate through each seat so we could broaden our surf-boat experience. It was also here that we took notice of the stick-boat race and commended how many of them turned up for racing despite the 2m swells and 75km/h winds. Despite seeing some singles capsized and the tinny at full capacity with sodden scullers, the stick-boaters remained staunch in their resolve to race.

Rotating through the sweep-school we were given a lovely tour of the ins and outs of the lake, the serenity only broken with shrieks of 'easy on bow side' or 'look out for the fisherman, easy oar' or "please balance the boat while I remove the three-seat oar handle from my anus' as we carefully scrambled around trying to avoid tipping the contents of Cookie into the lake.

As we were catching runners heading back to the sheds, Bel was at the helm, simultaneously steering and holding onto the crossbars, Vix valiantly threw her hand up to steer us back to safety and dry land. It was at this stage we were nearing the Carillion that we noticed a pair of scullers, sitting veeeeeeery low in the water, quite soggy and pathetically bailing murky lake water from their sinking ship with their hands. Being the friendly and helpful sunny-side laddies that we are, we offered the sinking ship some assistance, cluck-clucking about how "we're lifesavers" and "surely this counts as a surf rescue". Surprisingly, our half-hearted offer was gratefully snapped up, and Cookie, the little-surf-boat-that-could and its heroic crew of eggs, headed over to render assistance.

As we approached the waterlogged pair, we realised how dire their situation really was. Waves were breaking over the bow of their boat and lashing the port side of Cookie as we negotiated the rough seas and came alongside them, finally getting some actual use out of the rescue tube, rather than it being simply a handy bottle holder. While one-two and three seat were figuring out how this rescue was going to go down, and how we were going to save two people, two additional oars and a double scull, sweep extraordinaire Claire took over sweeping duties and handed the stroke oar over to Vix. During the oar/boat/steering negotiation, the stick boat had enough and tipped old'mate Greybeard and his buddy Jack Sparrow into the murky waters of Lake Burley Griffin, sending Greybeard into a bit of a panic which had him scrambling into Cookie and settling at Claire's feet. With Greybeard safe but c-c-c-cold and shivering we set about getting Jack Sparrow and his ship onto dry land.

Our goal became survival. The waves were lashing at both sides of Cookie as the wind washed us and our extra boat up against the rocks. It was at this point as we bounced along the rocks that we thanked our lucky stars we were free-range hens and we set about achieving peak level multitasking. The bow half of the boat calmed and secured Cody with the rescue tube, helped Jack Sparrow into Cookie, positioned the saved stick boat, provided balance so that we could still manoeuvre and

actually rowed while the bottom half of the boat negotiated an additional oar, watched the other oar float away, calmed a scared and near-hypothermic Greybeard down, kept Cookie off the rocks and steered us to a safe landing area.

With our chief Steerer finding a safe landing spot near the Carillion, Jaymi and Annie sprung from Cookie, sacrificing the safety and dryness of their egg-carton and carried the sunken scull into dry land, being very careful not to damage the fin because, you know, equipment safety. Claire, Vix and Bel ejected the saved oar and it was secured on land with the scull and ensured Greybeard was prevented from getting hypothermia by wearing Bel's ladies size 8 jacket. A very wet Jack Sparrow threw on Jaymi's treasured ladies-size 10 hoodie and jumped into the bow before Cookie was loaded up, and two very wet, par-boiled bow eggs rolled into the boat and began negotiating the high seas to the safety of the boat shed. A futile attempt to rescue the second oar resulted in some bank-dwelling-strangers were ordered to collect it instead.

With Cookie loaded to absolute maximum capacity, a very heavy bow side, 10L of water sloshing around in the boat, 1.2m white-capped lake swell lashing the gunnels and 75km/h gale-force winds, the intrepid battered hens and their sodden, now-hypothermic, life-saved charges gingerly battled their way through the treacherous clutches of Lake Burley Griffin towards the safety of the boat shed and dry, stable land. Captain Claire heroically steered the now ordained HMAS Cookie to the banks of the Lake, ejected its contents and sent the waterlogged Greybeard and Jack Sparrow with Vix to pick up the pieces of their broken dreams from around Canberra. The rest of the ladies warmed their wet, broken shells and headed for a much-needed triple-shot coffee, meeting Vix to laugh about the hectic events of the morning. The first rescue of the season – complete! I'm gonna call it early – that has to be the BEST rescue of the season!