



Berwick Outdoor Experience 2023 - 30th Annual Report

Who would have thought back in 1991 that I would still be here writing our 30th annual report. It has taken a little longer than 30 years due to missing 2 years because of Covid and 1992 was also missed.

Back in the late 1989/90 when Rob Urquhart, Graham Foley and I sat down to design this course we never would have dare dream at this outcome. I owe those two gentlemen a great debt of gratitude for without them we would never have pressed start.

Sadly, Graham has passed on and Rob is not so well these days but still takes a keen interest.

In the run up to this year's course there was a great deal of uncertainty. With the "what if's" of Covid always in the background. Is it worth the effort was the question?

Then there was the loss of Rob from the hands on organizing. The Taieri Lions and those of us involved in the pre course organizing were given a sharp reminder as to just how much unsung work Rob did behind the scenes.

So, despite all this uncertainty and refining of some roles did we manage to pull it all together?

You better believe it! At a debrief immediately following the finish of this course it was quickly apparent that we were all looking forward to the future with renewed enthusiasm and importantly all reading from the same song sheet.

Are there challenges ahead? Sure, there are. The question is often asked, "what happens when a major player in any organization resigns or departs.

My belief has always been if the cause or project is deemed worth doing and still fulfilling a need then someone will step up.

In my time I have now seen many sunsets. I still passionately believe in and love what we/I do but I can't go on forever.

Our instructors have given some thought to this, and the consensus was that when my time comes, my remains should be placed into an Urn made from smelting the metal works from my body. I could then still join them each year at BOE.

Only problem I see, no speaking rights!

These people are something special, I need say no more!

A major challenge is how to get more "bums on seats."

We get fantastic support from the 202J Lions District from Oamaru north.

However, we only had two persons from Lions Clubs south of Oamaru one each from Alexandra and Dunedin Host Lions. We know from experience that Lions clubs are very good at providing sponsorship if asked, however it is bums on seats that we need.

In addition to the above the balance this year came from.

1 self-funded businesswoman, Auckland, 1 self-funded, Oamaru, 4 from Manawa Energy Tauranga, Harraway and Sons 2 and Downers 1.

We acknowledge this is a wider problem than Lions Clubs, they can only do so much, and it is not easy.

Somehow, we must convince the business community that this course will help the personal and professional development of their staff and therefore their business.

Harraways and Sons and Manawa Energy (formerly Trust Power) have been regular supporters over many years and see the benefit to their staff and therefore their business.

Therein lies the key, how do we connect with more businesses, this is our challenge and key to our survival into the future.

Our Quarter Master Leeann was horrified at the food bill this year, particularly the meat (no Leeann we are not going vegetarian)!

Also, the cost of accommodation at the Lodge is rising next year. The Taieri Lions are looking at ways to mitigate some of these costs, but I suspect there will be a rise in the fees for next year.

As for the in-camp activities: Three late withdrawals all be it for genuine reasons are very frustrating.

An injury early week and another withdrawal reduced our numbers to 30 by the end.

There were many tears and much apprehension at the start of the course. By the end the tears were still flowing but these were tears of happiness and huge smiles on faces.

The gender balance was heavily in favour of the females.

In summary we had a fantastic week and I believe we achieved our objectives, and as one observer comment "lives have been changed." Job done!

Thanks everyone once again for your support and we hope we can count on it again next year.

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