

Browse the 1966 Encyclopaedia of New Zealand

[A](#) [B](#) [C](#) [D](#) [E](#) [F](#) [G](#) [H](#) [I](#) [J](#) [K](#) [L](#)
[M](#) [N](#) [O](#) [P](#) [Q](#) [R](#) [S](#) [T](#) [U](#) [V](#) [W](#) [Y](#)
[Z](#)



Content

[CANOEING](#)

[Beginnings](#)

[Recent Developments](#)

Related Images

[Winners Racing Kayaking 1955-1964](#)

Search the 1966 Encyclopaedia

Search

Warning

This information was published in 1966 in *An Encyclopaedia of New Zealand*, edited by A. H. McLintock. It has not been corrected and will not be updated.

Up-to-date information can be found elsewhere in [Te Ara](#).

CANOEING

To the general public of New Zealand, canoeing is associated with summer afternoon recreation on sheltered beaches and boating lakes. But this activity is an insignificant part of the organised sport. In New Zealand, as in Europe, the sport is made up of three broad classes of activity comparable to tramping, skiing, and rowing. These are:

Touring, or cruising. As a rule all necessary camping equipment, including food, is carried in the canoes, although frequently – especially on short weekends – a chartered bus carries equipment between

campsites before finally taking the whole party home. Some clubs feature summer touring holidays of two to three weeks with itineraries totalling several hundred miles of paddling on distant rivers and lakes. Regions such as the Rotorua and Southern Lakes, which offer both exciting rivers and scenic beauty, are popular.

White water sport. White water canoes, on account of their light, resilient construction and responsiveness in skilled hands, can ride fast, boisterous, and rocky torrents in which heavier vessels would founder or break up. New Zealand's geologically immature rivers offer abundant opportunities for this exhilarating sport which, as it calls for skill and general fitness rather than strength, attracts women as well as men. Hydro-electric development has unfortunately deprived canoeists in recent years of some of the country's finest rivers and threatens many of the remaining ones.

National white water championships featuring slalom and torrent racing are organised by the New Zealand Canoeing Association. In slalom a course involving technically difficult manoeuvres both with and against the current is marked out by suspending poles over a short stretch of rough water.

Racing. Flat water and river races are popular in some clubs, notably Palmerston North Canoe Club. The New Zealand Canoeing Association organises annual national championships, with classes for cruising canoes as well as the regular K1 and K2 racing kayaks, slender craft resembling rowing skiffs in form and speed and conforming to the International Canoe Federation's Racing Rules. I.C.F. Canadian (Indian-type) racing canoes have not yet been adopted here, although they are occasionally used for cruising. No interest has been shown in the specialised sailing canoes used overseas for international class racing.

A New Zealand racing canoeist, T. Dooney (Palmerston North), competed in the Australian National Championships in 1960, and two others have since competed in Australian regattas, but none achieved better than minor placings.

Co-creator

Alexander Heslin Carr, M.A., B.SC., Secretary, New Zealand Canoeing Association, Wellington.

Browse the 1966 Encyclopaedia of New Zealand

[A](#) [B](#) [C](#) [D](#) [E](#) [F](#) [G](#) [H](#) [I](#) [J](#) [K](#) [L](#)
[M](#) [N](#) [O](#) [P](#) [Q](#) [R](#) [S](#) [T](#) [U](#) [V](#) [W](#) [Y](#)
[Z](#)



Content

[CANOEING](#)

[Beginnings](#)

[Recent Developments](#)

Search the 1966 Encyclopaedia

Search

Warning

This information was published in 1966 in *An Encyclopaedia of New Zealand*, edited by A. H. McLintock. It has not been corrected and will not be updated.

Up-to-date information can be found elsewhere in [Te Ara](#).

Beginnings

New Zealand's first canoe club was Tainui Canoe Club, formed in 1881 in Wellington as a branch of the Royal Canoe Club in Britain founded by Captain John MacGregor, whose touring exploits in the original “Rob Roy” established canoeing as a sport. The use of Maori canoes was declining in New Zealand at that time, and no Maori influence can be detected in the modern sport.

W. FitzGerald, eldest son of James Edward FitzGerald, and a leading figure in Tainui Canoe Club, was the first sporting canoeist to shoot White Horse Rapid in the Manawatu Gorge, a feat considered daring in those days. He used a papier mache canoe, a forerunner of the modern competitive canoes moulded in veneer and fibreglass. Among his longer

trips was a pioneering cruise down the Ruamahanga River and across Lake Wairarapa to Palliser Bay, sailing back along the coast to Wellington. Other pioneer canoeists of the same period were G. Mannering and M. J. Dixon who cruised down the Waimakariri River from Bealey to Kaiapoi in canoes hired from the Avon boatsheds, Christchurch, and G. and J. Park, who voyaged up the Taramakau River, across the mountains, and down the Hurunui River to the opposite coast, whereupon G. Park continued by sail to Kaiapoi. The Park brothers were the first sportsmen to canoe Cook Strait, crossing in 1890 from Mana Island to Queen Charlotte Sound and thence down the coast to Dunedin in 14 ft canoes. The first canoeist to cross the Strait solo was a 16-year-old Wellington boy, H. Shearman, who paddled and sailed from Mana Island to Cape Koamaru in 1896 in a tiny craft only 12 ft long. Some of the biggest rivers in New Zealand, including the Clutha and Buller, were pioneered in recent times by G. Hutchinson travelling solo in an inflatable rubber dinghy. He is also one of the few canoeists who have crossed Cook Strait solo. Using a short canoe with auxiliary sail, he took over 24 hours on each leg of his double crossing in 1953–54 from Petone to Tory Channel and back to Mana Island.

Co-creator

Alexander Heslin Carr, M.A., B.SC., Secretary, New Zealand Canoeing Association, Wellington.

Browse the 1966 Encyclopaedia of New Zealand

[A](#) [B](#) [C](#) [D](#) [E](#) [F](#) [G](#) [H](#) [I](#) [J](#) [K](#) [L](#)
[M](#) [N](#) [O](#) [P](#) [Q](#) [R](#) [S](#) [T](#) [U](#) [V](#) [W](#) [Y](#)
[Z](#)



Content

[CANOEING](#)

[Beginnings](#)

[Recent Developments](#)

Search the 1966 Encyclopaedia

Search

Warning

This information was published in 1966 in *An Encyclopaedia of New Zealand*, edited by A. H. McLintock. It has not been corrected and will not be updated.

Up-to-date information can be found elsewhere in [Te Ara](#).

Recent Developments

From the fragmentary records that have survived from the early days it appears that the touring sport so brilliantly demonstrated by John MacGregor and the Royal Canoe Club was left mainly to individual enthusiasts in New Zealand while clubs contented themselves with short trips close to home, casual racing and base-camp holidays. Sailing sometimes proved more attractive than paddling; the Wakatere Canoe Club of Devonport was changed into a yacht club within a few years of its formation. Designs, too, reflected new trends. Prior to the Second World War the original clinker method of construction gave way to lighter and simpler methods. Later, the Rob Roy design was replaced by forms better suited to river work. Modern lath and canvas cruising kayaks are designed mainly for inland cruising and white water; sailing

efficiency has been sacrificed.

Realisation of the new possibilities of the sport did not come in time to save club activity from dying out soon after the war. The revival dates from 1949–50, when two independent groups organised cruises down the Wanganui River, a long-neglected tourist attraction. The first group, Wanganui Boy Scouts, laid the foundations for regular combined scout Christmas cruises while the second group, 23 Aucklanders, mostly university students, followed up their trip by forming in 1950 the New Zealand Canoeing Association with the aim of reviving the sport on the widest possible basis by promoting the formation of branches throughout the country. The NZCA was at first run conjointly with Auckland Canoe Club and Auckland University Canoe Club, D. J. Mason being the foundation president of all three bodies. Folding kayaks became the standard craft for the new movement, which featured long distance and white water cruising. Inflatable rubber dinghies purchased cheaply from war surplus stock enabled large numbers of beginners to get a taste of the sport in safety and at little expense; they also proved useful for pioneering and escorting inexperienced canoeists in remote areas.

As a result of the sport's growing popularity, some half-dozen clubs had been firmly established by 1958, when the Association became incorporated. Combined championships were first organised by the Wanganui Club in 1955, and became an annual event. In 1959, following an unsuccessful bid to secure the affiliation of the new clubs, the officers stood down and the NZCA, hitherto essentially an association of individuals functioning as an extended club similar to the Canoe Camping Club in Britain, was reconstituted as a pure federation. The new constitution came into force in 1961. The NZCA's status as the national governing body for competitive canoeing is recognised by the International Canoe

Federation, to which it is affiliated. Its other activities are conducted by officers and committees distributed among different clubs and meeting formally, together with club delegates, only at annual conferences. The present membership (1964) is 11 clubs with about 300 individual members, all in the North Island.

D. J. Mason formed a new body, New Zealand Lone Canoeists Association (now N.Z. Canoe Touring and Wild Water Club), with the aim of continuing the NZCA's former policy. In 1963 another group of Aucklanders formed the New Zealand Kayak Group with similar general aims but with the more specific object of using folding kayaks, the other club having been depending to a great extent on rubber dinghies. Neither club is yet affiliated to the NZCA. The organised sport has to date made little progress in the South Island.

by Alexander Heslin Carr, M.A., B.SC., Secretary, New Zealand Canoeing Association, Wellington.

Co-creator

Alexander Heslin Carr, M.A., B.SC., Secretary, New Zealand Canoeing Association, Wellington.