

Thought I should try and put something to paper before it all gets a blur and forgotten about.

Some of us – Jenny, Al, Muzz, Emma, Ric and I - entered the 23 km race from Cambridge to Hamilton as a training run for Raratonga. Haven't done anything that distance before. It was good to see Paulie there, planning to do the race in his kayak. If he could make it by himself, surely six of us could manage somehow!

We were the only six-person waka entered, so felt we were sure to come somewhere in our division!! The only other entrant in our division was a two-man Canadian canoe.

There were about 350 entrants, and the kayaks were put in about 8 different divisions. There were even four guys on the stand up surfboard things. We were the first division to leave at 10.30 am and then the rest were spaced at 5 minute intervals.

We were lonely souls from start to finish with no-one catching us or passing us. Ben Fouhey was the first kayak home about 10 minutes after us. He was only about 15 minutes quicker than us!



It was great being on parts of the river we had never been on before and it was not flowing very fast, so it took us longer than we had worked out. Last year the river was flowing a lot faster. We paddled all the way, apart from having drop-offs three times, to let people have a water top up and stretch.

The weather was great, not too hot and no rain and no head winds which was a bonus. The Narrows is about half way. They organized a race for some people to start from there, so we had a nice welcome and lots of clapping as we came past. We got through just before that race started at 11.30 am. And there were lots of people standing on the bridge. It is nice to feel appreciated sometimes.

Once we got past the Narrows the rest of the race seemed to pass fairly quickly, especially once we hit Malcolm Street and familiar territory. We made our finish look really good and even managed some power pieces near the finish.

We finished our race in 1 hr 48 mins and we were feeling very proud of ourselves. There were a few tired shoulders and people at the end, but lots of fun and would do it again next year.

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The 'Why would anyone race TO Cambridge' waka event was:

- Regrettably missed (DB)
- Didn't do it, haven't got the t-shirt (SO)
- Long and lonely (RG)
  - A pleasant way to spend a beautiful winter's afternoon (MM)
  - We had to race TO Cambridge to get a spot on the bank large enough to unload, rig and park the waka without destroying a kak of kayaks in the process - and of course to have time for a leisurely coffee in the village before race start!! (JD)