**What a difference 18,627 days makes**

To say that a lot of water has gone under the bridge would be an understatement. Picture No. 1 shows a fresh-faced MRC crew posing for the typical rowing shot, just off the landing with Princes Bridge in the background. This photo was taken in 1968 when LBJ was US President, John Gorton was our PM and Carlton beat Essendon by 3 points for the Premiership in front of 116,328 people. For music fans, Hey Jude / Revolution by the Beatles was the top song for the year having spent 13 weeks at Number One. Maybe only our Masters group will recall this detail.

The crew was a Lightweight Senior Four (10st 10lbs average) with Joe Coppi in Bow, Neville Smith in Two, Bryan Dillon in Three Seat and Stroked by Ray Young. Cox was Trevor Craig and Coach in the foreground, Murray Christie. Sadly, both Cox and Coach are no longer with us. The boat being rowed was the Peter Edwards, purchased for the princely sum of $600 and now hanging upstairs in the MRC Boatshed. At that time the boat was probably worth more than the boatshed, a real dump.

Lightweight category is no longer as prominent as it was then but, in those days, it was a highly respected and competitive category, especially in Fours, which culminated in the race for the Penrith Cup at the King’s Cup Regatta each year. This crew and others that followed were highly competitive in the boat class and faced serious opposition from the likes of Barwon, Mercantile and MUBC at that time. The MUBC Squad went on to win the World Championship in 1974.

Three of the crew were school friends from Parade College, Bundoora. Joe and Neville joined MRC in 1962 with Bryan one year later, along with another friend, John Fitzgerald (not pictured). Ray was an ‘outsider’ but his fierce competitive streak soon justified his place in the Stroke Seat. They trained hard and competed creditably with their fair share of victories. This was due in no small part to the expert instruction provided by Coach Murry Christie, a rowing technician and genuine nice guy.

Now check out Picture No. 2. ‘Fast Forward’ 50+ years and the same crew hits the water, in a different boat, with substitute Cox, Graeme Murphy (1965) and with the memory of Cox Trevor and our favourite Coach Christie in our hearts. The bridge, the landing, the muddy river all look pretty much the same but the faces are not so fresh, the hair is either grey or absent but the smiles are genuine. How nice it is to be able to jump in a boat with old crewmates and enjoy friendships that started over 50 years ago.

Long may we row together.