

Before The University of WA Triathlon Club (mid 1980s-early 1990s)

(as remembered by Miles Dracup)

The Rottneest Island Mainland Triathlon Club had a nucleus of UWA students, particularly from Human Movement. The club formed in the late 1980s and functioned for about 5 years.

Some of the main players in the club were:

Duncan Sullivan, Wayne Bradshaw, Damien Kelly, Paul Shields, David Beard, Steve Lawrence, Jeremy England, Peter O'Connell, Kingsley Flett, Miles Dracup, Glenda Moore (nee Thomas), Jomay Verrier, Sue Turner, Sue Poole (nee Dracup). Duncan was the benchmark open male in the early days of triathlon, with a blistering run leg (well credentialed middle distance track background). Sue Turner had a long standing rivalry with Carol Hughes (nee Pickard), and between them they dominated at State and National level, Sue tending to take out the longer races.

Club training sessions were:

- Swimming within the UWA Recreate programme, Monday, Wednesday and Friday 7-8am, initially at Beatty Park and then, immediately after it was opened, at the Superdrome (before its name changed to Challenge Stadium).
- Running intervals at McGilvray Oval on Wednesday evenings and the 8+ km Constitutional Run around Kings Park from the UWA Boat Shed car park on Friday evenings.
- Cycling on Saturday mornings in the hills.

Training volume was generally lower in those days – standard swim sessions were 2.5km, and the running intervals had about 4km of efforts. Compared to nowadays, running intervals tended to be lower work to rest ratios, while swimming was the reverse. After running we generally sat on the embankment and opened a carton of beer/soft drink in the summer (taking it in turns to supply). Each spring and autumn we had the “McGilvray Handicap” which was a fiercely contested 1km run, with winning actual times in the low 2.40s and a carton going to the handicap winner. Running intervals were generally set by one of the more credentialed members, such as Duncan Sullivan or Damien Kelly.

As for races, the UWA Tetrathlon (included paddling) held early in spring each year was probably responsible for many coming into the sport, and there was also the Swan River Marathon Relay (included windsurfing and paddling). The UWA Cycle Club also used to run some biathlons and cycle races/time trials, which we joined in. The ATTA events were very popular with triathletes, particularly the Tuesday nights 16km time trials at Cannington and then Bibra Lake. Similarly the open water swim races were well supported by triathletes, particularly the Cottesloe Mile, Cottesloe to Swanbourne and Perth Swim Thru. There was also a strong winter biathlon (now duathlon) competition, often run at Cannington, but also used such venues as Bold Park and Brigadoon. The Club used to run some triathlons for the WA Triathlon Association, such as at City Beach.

Many of the city-based triathlon venues used in those days are no longer used, such as Sorrento, City Beach, Cottesloe, Leighton, Scarborough, Fremantle (North Mole). The latter was the venue for the Hugall and Hoile 1987 World Sprint Triathlon Championship. The event saw all the big names on the world triathlon scene such as Dave Scott, Scott Molina, Mark Allen, Scott Tinlay, and Richard Wells come to Perth (Richard won that day). The course ran between the north mole and City Beach and included Reabold Hill. Apart from the worlds, the 1986/87 season was a landmark season with Triathlon Sports Enterprises pulling together significant sponsorship for a series of city based races, starting with the long course champs on Rottneest in November. All athletes got useful goodies in their race bags, courtesy of Adidas and a singlet was standard at each race.