

I've encountered a few impossible feeling tasks, but none so daunting as this one: "Can you write a 'short tribute piece' to Farewell Stuart Warren as caterer?"

It's difficult to describe someone thoughtfully without it sounding like an obituary. Just as well, because he will be thoroughly embarrassed to death by everything I'm about to write. He is comfortable bearing a thousand forms of burden – more gracefully than many of us – but praise is not one of them.

An intro for the less familiar: Stu and 1st North Sydney Scouts first began catering at the 2021 Paddy Pallin rogaine. This would have been the first rogaine after Australia's initial lockdowns to feature catering, after some internal soul-searching over whether to begin offering food again at all (many traditional things like mass starts and post-event socialising hadn't been permitted). John Havranek was coordinating/setting, and I was a late addition to that team. Stu was merely an acquaintance, a Generally Competent Person who was scout adjacent.

I don't have any good photos from that event– check the website yourself if you don't believe me! I think most of us are keenly aware that we had to endure our second wave of lockdowns a week later. Despite this, the scouts' food and services, plus the participation of their youth members, were a notable treat. They've been a warm welcome back to Hash House at many events since, and even some brekkies the next day too.



*The small start of a good thing, Paddy Pallin 2021.*



*Only 3 years later, Paddy Pallin 2024, special banquet for the 60th anniversary of the event.*

Stu was ultimately upgraded from Generally Competent and Scout Adjacent, to Exceptionally Competent and Damn Near Everything Adjacent. In addition to catering, he's since had a turn at setting, coordinating, vetting, and sometimes even (*gasp*) rogaining with me.

So... who is this humble person that's been serving you soup and toasties?

His name is Stew. He's the soupervisor.



Stuart "Bilby" Warren at an SES community event helping a girl operate a toy chainsaw.

Here's a (hopefully) comprehensive list of Stu's many titles:

- Co-founder of UTS Outdoor Adventure Club in 1993 (yes, my club, from ["A University Degree of Rogaining"](#))
- Leader-in-Charge of 1st North Sydney Scout Unit
- Training coordinator for Bush Search and Rescue.
- Volunteer for State Emergency Services, North Sydney Unit
- Lead Coordinator and vetter to this year's Navshield
- Co-coordinator and co-setter of last year's 60th anniversary Paddy Pallin rogaine (which he also catered for)
- Father to 3 bright and adventurous young people.
- Owner of only 5 snarky t-shirts and a single pair of blundstones, if my Google Photos face identifier is to be believed.
- Co-founder and Staff Engineer of our own shared partnership, Acronyms Unlimited.
- Last but not least, NSW Rogaining Master Caterer

That is heaps for one person to fit into one life. I still don't understand how he manages it. I think it boils down to three things— his character, how he prioritises community, and his unbridled cleverness. The newsletter team wanted photos of the man-in-action, pouring out soup, but the magic was all behind the scenes. Managing relationships, thanking and organising his volunteers, building people up, inventing creative solutions for all the emerging pain points, and lots and lots of spreadsheets.

. Rather than giving you another bullet point list, here are some candid snaps of Stu being Stu and No. 8/Macgyvering the hell out of things.

Improvised tech on display: the camp on-tap hot water system (for cleaning your dishes properly), the low power lighting system, upcycled canvas carrying cases for the Hash House Marquee, and the dual gas/electrical powered espresso machine (for a remote high-brow coffee experience). The coffee machine's wheeled carrying cage that converts into the serving trolley is also a hand-built Stu Special.



*“Please don't take a photo of me doing a dodgy electrical fix on the coffee machine.”*

There's tons of cross-pollination among all the communities he's part of, and many of the things he built or acquired have been used for other groups and events. The catering operation became a well-oiled machine, with much of the funds raised going into improving catering. Your soups, toasties, and coffees have contributed to events ranging from fundraising BBQs for Adaptive Athletes, to Christmas meals for SES units. It's been a huge enabler of wonderful things, and there have been fun moments and celebrations amongst the chaos and pressures. I'm sure Stu would want me to pass on a heartfelt thanks to NSW Rogaining, as well as to all the scout parents, especially Chef Aaron, who became regular faces at these events. You've made camp cooking a fun adventure. If you spot him out in the wild next rogaine, shoulder tap him for the full list of people he's grateful for... but be prepared to make it back late.



*Accompanying Fiona, a regular scout catering volunteer, out to a Navshield flag during a quiet period.*