

Karapoti Life Membership

As the longest running mountain bike event in the Southern Hemisphere, if someone has played a major part in Karapoti then chances are they have had a major part in NZ mountain bike history. We thought this simple fact should be recognised, so in 2007 we introduced Karapoti Life Membership.

The Award

New life members will be awarded at the Karapoti Classic Prize Giving and member receive free entry for life.

Criteria

To be “nominated” for Karapoti Life Membership, an individual must have achieved one of the following criteria:

- 🚲 Anyone who has completed the Karapoti Classic (20k or 50k) more than 20 times.
- 🚲 Anyone who has won the feature 50k Karapoti Classic at least five times.
- 🚲 Anyone who has broken Karapoti’s magical three-hour mark at least 20 times.
- 🚲 Anyone who has been involved in the organisation of the Karapoti Classic for at least 10 years.

NB1: *Criteria may change as to the mood of the organisers, or as others suggest bright ideas.*

NB2: *Nominations for future Karapoti Life Membership must be made by Feb 1 every year.*

Karapoti Life Members

Paul Kennett - inducted 2007

Paul was the mastermind and creator of the Karapoti Classic. He first organised the event in 1986 and established the now traditional course in 1988. In 1987 he marked the course out and the next day won the race. With his brothers Simon and Jonathan they established NZ’s first mountain biking website, compiled NZ’s first national directory of mountain bike rides, organised NZ’s first UCI World Cup event, and helped establish Wellington’s Makara Peak Mountain Bike Park.



Simon Kennett - inducted 2007

Like Paul, Simon has been at the forefront of the mountain bike movement in NZ. He finished 2nd in the first Karapoti Classic, won the 1988 race, and represented NZ several times. He was the main force behind lifting the Karapoti Classic to an internationally recognised mountain bike event. With his brothers Paul and Jonathan they established NZ’s first mountain biking website, compiled NZ’s first national directory of mountain bike rides, organised NZ’s first UCI World Cup event, and helped establish Wellington’s Makara Peak Mountain Bike Park. Simon was still amongst it in 2007, clocking 2:33 for 10th.

Jonathan Kennett - inducted 2007

Like Paul and Simon, Jonathan has been at the forefront of mountain biking in NZ since day one. He was the tail-end-charlie for the inaugural Karapoti in 1986 and has logged several finishes under Karapoti’s magical three-hour mark. With his brothers Simon and Paul they established NZ’s first mountain biking website, compiled NZ’s first national directory of mountain bike rides, organised NZ’s first UCI World Cup event, and helped establish Wellington’s Makara Peak Mountain Bike Park.



Karapoti Life Members



Kathy Lynch - inducted 2007

It was fitting that in the same year that Kathy Lynch was inducted as a Karapoti Life Member, her 13-year-old Karapoti women's record was broken. It's a cliché to say that Lynch was a legend in her own time, but it's true. She won Karapoti no less than eight times and internationally she was as good as anyone, finishing eighth in the first Olympic mountain bike race in 1996 and also represented NZ at Commonwealth Games road cycling, finished sixth in the woman's Tour de France, won the Coast to Coast six times and finished her endurance sport career as the most successful female adventure racer in history. At Karapoti she was the first woman to break three hours and her last victory came despite multiple punctures that only saw her take the lead in the last 2k. Stories like that are part of the Lynch legend.



Alastair Rhodes - inducted 2007

In 2007 Alastair was inducted for being the first person to finish 20 Karapoti's and he would go on to be the first to 25. In 1986, at age 43, he had been the eldest competitor in the inaugural Karapoti Classic. In 2021 he was the eldest again, but this time at age 79 when he racked up his 27th Karapoti.

Sarah Drake - inducted 2007

As Simon Kennett's partner Sarah Drake had no choice but to either ride or volunteer at Karapoti. They met at Karapoti 1990 and Sarah volunteered for 14 years and rode a few too.



Trevor Woodward - inducted 2008

The only life member inducted in 2008, Trevor was the first person to break Karapoti's three-hour barrier 15 times. Along the way he made the overall podium three times during the 90s and has dominated the masters categories since. Trevor is also renowned as the instigator of Karapoti's exclusive "Beer Pit", a group of Karapoti old-hands who party as hard as they ride. As of 2025 was up to 28 finishes.



Peter Schmitz - inducted 2009

In 2009 Peter finished his 20th consecutive Karapoti. Until 2019 he held the record for the most Karapoti's, but has since been overtaken by Marco Renall. But in 2025 he was back having a crack at his 34th 50k at age 80.

Francis Hoen - inducted 2010

Francis was inducted after 20 consecutive Karapoti's. Along the way he collected a few age group awards, rode 12 different bikes and even finished with a broken arm. In 2023 he was up to 34 finishes.



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Jason McCarty - inducted 2010

Jason has been riding Karapoti since he was a teenager, placing in the top 20 several times. He is awarded Life Membership as only the second person to rack up 20 sub-3s, and after 2025 he holds the record for the most sub-3's with Trevor Woodward at 28.



Mark Renall - inducted 2011

"Marco" is something of a local legend. He has won his age category several times and broke 3hrs as a 50-year old. As of 2025 he holds the record for the most finishes at Karapoti, at 36!

Wayne Hiscock - inducted 2013

Wayne is another rider who has been taking on Karapoti since his teens. But he's also among the best, finishing second on three occasions and top 10 another five. His best is 2:24.17 and he has more sub-2:30s than anyone else, at five. The Upper Hutt native was awarded Life Membership after becoming the third person to notch up 15 sub-3hr finishes. But he is also the fastest member of the Sub-3hr club, with an incredible average of just on 2hrs 40min.

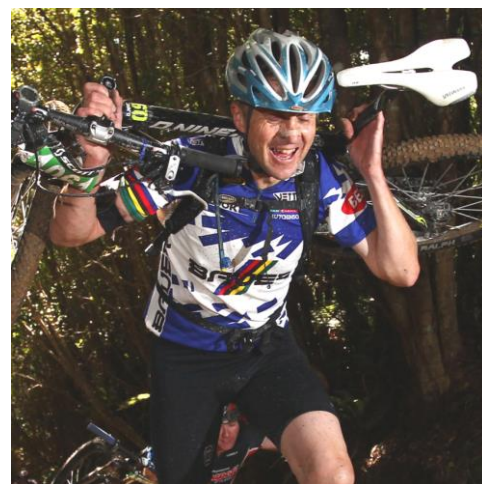


Jonny Waghorn - inducted 2014

Jonny first rode Karapoti in 1989 as a teenager. He receives Life Membership after 20 Karapoti's, 19 racing and one as Tail End Charlie, and his fastest, 2:36.23 at 43, was his 20th! But he's even prouder of never puncturing!

Lindsay Horton - inducted 2014

Lindsay is a relative newbie among Life Members, with his first Karapoti being 1995. But in 2014 he became only the third person to ride 20 consecutive Karapoti's, and even managed to make it his fastest with 2:58:33.



Steve Pedley - inducted 2015

Steve becomes a Life Member after finishing his 20th Karapoti. The Palmerston North bike junkie did his first Karapoti in 1989 and along the way he's ridden six different bikes and has a best time of 2:46. With recce's and race day, Steve reckons he's ridden the course close to 60 times. One year he tore his calf muscle open on a recce, spent 4hrs hobbling out of the Akatarawas, got 25 stitches and still managed a sub-three two days after the stitches were removed.

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Julian Mitchell - inducted 2016

Julian Mitchell makes Life Membership courtesy of 15 sub-three-hour finishes, but his Karapoti pedigree goes beyond that. The Christchurch rider's debut came as a 19-year-old in 1991 to finish second in what is now the Weekend warrior category. He progressed through the expert ranks, but never won anything. Until 2000, that is, when he won the whole bloody thing. In only his second pro ride, Julian's 2:28.48 was then the seventh fastest Karapoti ever and he went on to five other top-10 rides. Over a decade later he still loves his riding just like the rest of us.



Garth Weinberg - inducted 2016

Garth was the first single speeder to crack three hours and nabs life membership with an amazing 15 sub-3hr single speed finishes. The Rotorua rider has won everything there is to win on one gear, including the world title and more than a dozen wins at Karapoti.

Gavin McCarthy - inducted 2016

This local Upper Hutt hero has been riding Karapoti since his teens and becomes the first to finish 20 Karapoti's and rack up 15 sub-3hr finishes in the same year. As if that wasn't enough, he's made the top 10 more than a dozen times, top three twice, and his best of 2hrs 25min 25secs ranks in the all-time top-30.



Stephen McNeil - inducted 2016

Steve is the first of mountain biking's second generation to make Karapoti Life Membership. All previous Life Members have been something of Karapoti royalty; riders who have been around since the early days of the sport or riders who have ranked among New Zealand's best. Steve starting riding in 1995, finished his first Karapoti in 1996, has always raced in Weekend Warrior category and doesn't have ambitions for the Sub-3hr Club. But he loves his riding and loves Karapoti so much that he has finished 20 times in 21 years. He represents what that our sport needs more off - Lifers!



Richard Norton - inducted 2017

Every year since 1992, Richard Norton has driven down from Palmerston North for the Karapoti Classic. In each of those years he has either ridden or volunteered for the Karapoti crew. That's our kind of rider!

Stephen Owens - inducted 2017

Steven has been a stalwart of the local mountain biking and multisport scene since the early-90s. Hailing from the Hutt Valley, this local lad is awarded Karapoti life membership after 20 finishes at Karapoti.



Karapoti Life Members

James Hufflett - Inducted 2017

A mainstay on the Nelson mountain scene, James has been riding Karapoti since 1995 and has a classy best of 2hrs 36min. But he gains life membership courtesy of 15 sub-3hr finishes. Along the way he co-founded Nelson's popular Coppermine Epic and in 2017 he became the only rider to finish both races 10 consecutive times.



Tom Clarkson - inducted 2018

After discovering Karapoti in 1997 via the 20k Challenge, Tom Clarkson was hooked and has missed only one year since. Even open-heart surgery in 2010 couldn't keep him from the 2011 race. In 2018 Tom notched up his 21st 50k finish and celebrated Life Membership by winning the 70-plus category!



Perry Loader - inducted 2019

Perry is the most recent mtn biker to receive life membership. He took to the sport in 1998 and gains Life Membership courtesy of 20 finishes. And while he's always been a recreational rider, Perry is a rarity in that his 20th Karapoti was only nine minutes slower than his first!



Don Johnson - inducted 2019

You'd be excused for not recognising Don Johnson. He's been a regular fixture at Karapoti since 1993, but usually in disguise as he strives to win the "Best Dressed" award dressed as Elvis or a Storm Trooper or on a tandem with functional dummy on the back. For the 25th he rode a Raleigh 20!



Phil Etheridge - inducted 2019

Phil first lined up at Karapoti in 1990, back when you rode the Bell Eliminator Downhill on Saturday and Karapoti on Sunday. In 2010's 25th anniversary he rode Karapoti on Saturday and was one of 19 who rode the original 1986 course on Sunday. He gains Life Membership courtesy of his 20th finish.



Steve Martin - inducted 2021

Steve is the first Life Member to be inducted on the basis of both riding & organising. The Wellington stalwart has finished 21 Karapoti's and also helped out on the volunteer crew for 10, often doing both in the same year!



Karapoti Life Members

Stephen Grenside - inducted 2025

Stephen is a regular in local mountain bike circles and gains Karapoti Life Membership based on 21 consecutive finishes. His only remaining goal is to try and beat Brett Irving.



Brett Irving - inducted 2025

Brett has 18 Karapoti finishes to his name, but a few crashes here and there have also seen him on the volunteer crew. So 2025 was in fact his 21st. He also has four sub-3hr finishes to his name, but his only remaining goal is to keep beating Stephen Grenside.



Warren Borlase - inducted 2025

Warren gains Life Membership on the strength of 23 finishes at Karapoti, everyone one of them coming as a trip across the ditch from Nelson. Along the way he has managed a few placings in his age group and even finished one year with no seat after a crash!

Jason McCrystal - inducted 2025

Jason has eight Karapoti's to his name, including a few wins in 20k retro & fat bike categories & the 50k best-dressed. But he becomes only the second person to gain life membership for their loyalty after 10 years as a Karapoti volunteer.

