

Surfing event a true classic

By **BILL HOFFMAN**

SURFERS from across Australia will converge on Caloundra over the Easter weekend for the 40th anniversary of the Pa and Ma Bendall Memorial Surf Classic at Moffat Beach.

The event will mark three years of planning by the Windansea Surf Club to do the occasion proud.

The signing of the Henzells Foundation and M and B Rigging as major sponsors and the shift of the event three years ago to the Easter weekend were calculated moves that have restored the event's rightful place at the heart of Australian surfing.

The second-longest running professional surf contest behind the Bells Classic, the Pa and Ma Bendall Memorial Classic does not boast the huge prize money now offered at world tour events.

The first event's \$1500 prize money in 1974 was the largest then on offer in Australia. This Easter, the winner of the prestigious Open Men's title will pocket only \$500 more than that.

But while the amount of money on the table in 1974 may have attracted every professional surfer in the

country including eventual winner Richard Harvey, Wayne (Rabbit) Bartholomew, who would go on to claim a world title, Simon Anderson who would win Bells and produce the first three-fin surfboards and Hawaiian legend Gerry Lopez, it does not explain the event's enduring appeal.

Club spokesman Daryn Fissenden said that while many surfing events had

gone corporate, the Pa and Ma had gone community.

The contest celebrates surfing's ties to the Caloundra community, the sport's history and characters it contains.

Fissenden said the event, apart from being well-run, has a special feel to it.

And it could also explain why Joan Petersen, the mother of the late Coolangatta legend Michael "MP" Petersen, has chosen to spread the last of her son's ashes in the waters off Moffat Beach during this year's event.

Local boy Wade Goodall, who last won in 2012, and six-time winner Dave Reardon Smith, whose last victory was in 2008, will both challenge for the Open crown.

So, too, will a host of surfers keen to have their

name etched on a trophy that already bears the names of current world champion Joel Parkinson – a two-time winner – and local stars including John Mills, Robbie Sherwell,

Brett Peacock, Darren Mage, Ben Silk, Sasha Stocker, Bubba McLean, Trevor Tripcony, Nathan Hedge, Matt Clark, Jake Colreavy and defending champion Dale Lovelock as

well as world tour surfers Mark Richardson, Dominic Wibrow and Robbie Page.

The 1978 winner Tony "Doris" Eltherington last year showed remarkable seamanship to guide his

Mentawai surf tour vessel Barrenjoey in the successful search for South African surfer Brett Archibald, lost overboard for more than 28 hours from another boat, the Nagu Laut.

The 2013 Australian Surfing Waterman of the Year recipient was delighted to pose with the Pa trophy when Windansea mounted a display at the Gold Coast Surf Expo in February.

That display, which contains key elements of

the successful Christmas Surfing the Decades exhibition in Caloundra, will be on show throughout the contest along with food and surf product stalls.

Divisional councillor Tim Dwyer will be on hand to present proceeds of the Surfing the Decades exhibition to the Disabled Surfing Association. Divisions include Over 50s, Over 40s, senior men, cadets, junior boys and women.

The inaugural Pa Bendall Memorial Contest was staged in 1974 as a mark of respect for Charles Ben (Pa) Bendall who died the previous year.

Pa was considered the grandfather of surfing in Queensland.



ALL THE ACTION: The Pa & Ma Bendall Memorial Contest 2013 held at Moffat Beach. Inset: Ma and Pa Bendall.

PHOTO: DARRYN SMITH