

# Dragons Abreast Sydney

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*Hi all,*

After Chinese New Year our regular paddling news seems pretty dull by comparison. But it's not only the racing that we live for, even if that is what mostly makes up our "news". It might not be news as such but what we are reeally about is the paddling itself – just doing it! We're not there just to beat other people, or even to beat our own personal best. Some girls won't compete in regattas because they think they can't win or they're not good enough, but that's not the point. That's a lousy way to view things. Paddling and not racing is like having tennis lessons and never getting a game – the whole point is just doing it, and getting the satisfaction of being part of the fun, instead of being couch potatoes. Simply because we've made the effort we're all winners, even when we lose. The fact that maybe a lot of people can paddle faster or better has nothing to do with what we're about. We paddle because it makes us feel good, because it proves to others that breast cancer survivors can lead energetic, exciting lives and because it raises breast cancer awareness and gives hope to people struggling with their breast cancer diagnosis.

These days we have enough members to frequently take out three crews on a Saturday. This is terrific, because it lets the ones who want to paddle themselves to a standstill do just that; others wanting to build their strength can go for a medium effort paddle; and the newer and social paddlers can have a nice light paddle without feeling any pressure to run themselves ragged. Yes, our "paddle tragics" do train hard and compete keenly – but that is their choice and they like it that way. Our paddle-for-the-fun-of-it girls have just as much fun – even at the regattas. There's paddling at every level, so everyone can join in. I'm particularly pleased that some of our most recent members will be joining us at the National Titles in Victoria over Easter – betcha they'll love it!

## Go the Blues!

Much excitement with the approach of the National Championships and we wish all our paddlers going down to compete in Nagambie, Victoria at Easter the very best of luck. They've trained really hard and we can be sure that will stand them in good stead.

On Good Friday the State teams will com-



## Bling for us all at the State Titles



pete against each other (nothing to do with breast cancer) to be the best in the country. The State teams are selected competitively, choosing the best available paddlers from all clubs across the state. Ten DASydney girls were selected for the NSW Masters Womens A team and 21 of our girls made the NSW Masters Womens B team. As well, Jo Petterson made the NSW Premier Womens A team and Neil Millgate and Martin Hirst made the NSW Masters Open B team. So they all get to wear the blue State Uniform for the day and race for NSW. Awesome! We wish them all good luck and may there be much bling for our Blues!

On Easter Saturday and Sunday it is the National Club Crews Championships and that is when we will all be racing as DASydney again and back in our lovely pink club shirts. These races will determine the top clubs in the country and naturally we hope to grab some heavy metal then too. We'll have 40 paddlers racing on the Saturday and Sunday. Sadly our three menfolk can't paddle as at the Nationals

they've imposed a rule, which doesn't apply in NSW regattas, that a mixed crew can only have a maximum of 12 female paddlers. The best we can field for a mixed crew is 3 guys and 12 girls, which doesn't



reach the minimum number of 16 paddlers in a crew. Huge disappointment for our guys but at least Neil and Martin get to paddle on the Friday!

The differing rules at the various regattas are giving us a lot of grief lately. We're trying very hard indeed to gather all the different sets of rules re crew composition which will apply at Nagambie to ensure that we don't have any dramas there.

Sue Gibson and Dr Pip Middleton in the Hornsby Advocate

# Oarsome show by medicos

TRACY FINDLAY

STAFF from the Sydney Adventist Hospital will be supporting some oarsome special activities in support of our breast cancer cause.

The team is sponsoring the 'Oarsome Show' on the 15th of May at the Sydney Adventist Hospital. The challenge is part of the Chinese New Year Festival of the Harbour. The team will be paddling a boat of 10 oarsmen, 5 on each side of the boat. The boat will be decorated with a dragon. The show will be held at the Sydney Adventist Hospital. The show will be held at the Sydney Adventist Hospital. The show will be held at the Sydney Adventist Hospital.



Dragons Abreast Sydney crew members Sue Gibson and Dr Pip Middleton and Pam Bell at the Sydney Adventist Hospital challenge.

North Shore Times article on some of the SAN docs in the DA Hospital Challenge



Pam Bell's article in the SMH



## Media Tarts Again!

As you all know, our other goal is to spread the word and raise breast cancer awareness. In that regard we've had a very positive month, even if we can't quite match the huge profile we gained from the DA Hospital Challenge.

We made the papers a few times: The North Shore Times ran a teaser article about CNY featuring Sue Gibson and Dr Pip Middleton from the SAN (Sydney Adventist Hospital) then after the event they ran a great article about CNY and the Hospital Challenge; the SAN devoted the front page of their Cancer Support Centre Newsletter to it as well. In a stroke of genius, our own Pam Bell submitted a super story to the Sydney Morning Herald where they added a lovely cartoon to catch further attention.

We received some great news came when I spoke with the Zonta Club of Hornsby Kuring-gai in March. As you know, a number of Zonta clubs around the country make and distribute their hugely-appreciated Zonta Breast Care Cushions to mastectomy patients in hospitals.

Now the Zonta Club of Hornsby Kuring-gai are sending their cushions, plus our DA brochures, to Royal North Shore Hospital.

That gives us coverage of bc patients in another major hospital!

Seems Brenda Owen, our Mistress of Merchandising, used to be a quilter before she became a paddler and she cleverly persuaded the Hunters Hill Quilters' Guild to donate one of their fabulous quilts to us. Brenda, Jenny and Jo Petterson and I were invited to one of their quilting sessions and as the quilters patiently stitched away at their gorgeous creations we told them all about Dragons Abreast and what we plan to do with the quilt they gave us (see below).

The State BCNA Rep and DASydney paddler, Pam Bell, has also been a guest speaker this month at an Encore function at RNSH.

Recently I've noticed a most gratifying. Ever since I first started handling enquiries from bc survivors about Dragons Abreast Sydney I've always asked where they heard about us. In the beginning the reply was invariably "from one of your members". We were definitely the best-kept secret in the breast cancer world back then. But twice this week I've been thrilled to hear "oh, everywhere". It seems we've finally reached the tipping point – they hear about us from BCNA, from their hospital, from their doctors, from Encore, from the Beacon. What an achieve-

ment! Let's keep up the good work – always ask your doctor to carry our brochures, your breast care nurse, your oncologist – and tell all your friends. It's absolutely not fair to keep all the fun to ourselves.



The Shakespeare cartoon which appeared with Pam Bell's article in the Sydney Morning Herald

## The Pearls and the Quilt

Brenda Owen

Last December, in search of items for our CNY raffle, I approached a friend of mine, Robyn James, who belongs to the Hunters Hill Quilters, who make the most amazing quilts. Within the blink of an eye, she had asked her coordinator, Iris Grayson, for a quilt which Dragons Abreast Sydney could use for fund raising and had returned to my doorstep with this most beautiful patchwork quilt.

Our committee decided that the quilt was deserving of more focus, so we decided to hold it back and run a special raffle for it after CNY. In the meantime, Michelle Hanton was on the search for something special to go with two beautiful Paspaley pearls and when she heard about the quilt, asked could it make up the third prize in a DAA raffle which is going to be launched very soon nationally.

So our quilt has been elevated in status and very shortly you will all find out how you can partake in this event and perhaps be the lucky winners of either the Paspaley pearls or the Hunters Hill Quilters quilt.

On Thursday 16th March, Cynthia, Jenny, Jo and I visited the Hunters Hill Quilters group, at their invitation, to tell them about DASydney and to thank them for their generosity.

We arrived just before midday, equipped with photos, trophies, medals, paddles and lots of pink. We were very warmly welcomed by this amazingly talented group of women. Cynthia spoke about life after a diagnosis of BC, how Dr Don initiated the BC survivor movement in Vancouver and how DASydney has opened doors for so many of us. Jenny gave her riveting personal account of living with BC, which a number of us found astonishing and very moving and I explained what we are doing with their quilt and thanked them most sincerely for their involvement.

They treated us to a lovely lunch and a cuppa and we chatted informally for quite some time. The Aussie Sole shoes were a hit (my friend Robyn had worn her pair and drummed up quite a bit of interest in them, before we even got there). Some great photos were taken on the day but unfortunately we are not able to get hold of them. Technology strikes again!

I feel we have established a good long term friendship with Hunters Hill Quilters and it was great to be able to spread our message. They also do an amazing amount of community work and hopefully we can support them by attending their upcoming Quilt show – details soon!



## Off the Water and Hating it

Many of you would agree that becoming a 'paddle tragic' is a common affliction, so do spare a thought for those tragediennes who've told me they can't paddle for the next little while.

Deb Read says she is doing OK and hopes to be back amongst us after the Nationals (she was sporting a lovely soft crop of blonde peach-fuzz hair and her usual huge smile when she dropped by Pyrmont recently to say Hi).

Eugenia Raftos (aka the 'Eveready Bunny') has been spitting chips on the sidelines since her doc told her paddling was out until her eye stopped throwing sparks. Rotten luck, that! But she'll be back paddling at Easter in Nagambie.

For sure Sue Gibson is thinking about giving up gardening since she fell in the garden, severely wrenching her shoulder. So she's off paddling too till her shoulder starts behaving. Then Cristina Frigo sent the following news, and we wish her good luck:

*I have some great news: on Wednesday*

*22/3/06 I will be having my breast reconstruction and am most excited as I have been waiting for this for a long time since my mastectomy in 2000. I am also a little nervous, okay extremely nervous, as it is a six hour operation. The sad news is that I will not be able to paddle for 3 months. I promise that once I am up and about I will come along and support and cheer you all on.*

*I would like to take this opportunity to thank each and everyone of you for making me feel so welcomed and part of the team. I have enjoyed the training sessions and had a ball at the Wyong regatta, which was my first regatta and I was given the honour of accepting the trophy on behalf of the team – a moment I will cherish and never forget. The CNY regatta at Darling Harbour was also absolutely fantastic, rewarding and emotional day for us all.*

*For those of you that are new and have not attended a regatta yet I strongly recommend it. I can guarantee you will be hooked. I wish you all the best for the State Titles on Saturday and know you will all have a great and successful day.*

*Health and Happiness always.*

## CNY Raffles and the Hospital Challenge

Had hoped to have the details in time for this newsletter but DAA still hasn't confirmed final funds raised for our national body via the DA Hospital Challenge – hopefully we'll have them by next issue. Till then, it is not misleading to say that we raised a lot! Best of all, we raised the profile of Dragons Abreast dramatically among Sydney medical professionals in the breast cancer arena.

As you all know we had two raffles at Chinese New Year to raise money for our own club, DASydney – the big raffle (with the fabulous earrings) raised just over \$6,400 and the raffle on the night at the banquet raised a further \$400. Fabulous effort from our prize donors, in particular: Sue Gibson, Kerry Enemark, Nancy Sage, Sue McClelland and Eugenia Raftos, our prize scroungers: Margo-Lynne Lee, yours truly, Fairlie Stanish and everyone who so diligently sold (and bought) tickets!

## State Titles at Penrith

The State Titles at Penrith offered some great racing on a beautiful day. Despite the crewing hiccup on the day (we were SURE we had it right this time) we still managed for everyone to be in on the action, so congratulations to Team Captain, Fairlie Stanish for overcoming those issues.

Sue Gibson and Eugenia Raftos, (both out injured) apparently had a ball being officials for the day on the finish line. It was great fun having Sally Lynch there too. Much to her horror, poor Sal's had to give up paddling altogether because of nasty neck problems, so we don't see her regularly any more. So it was a special treat to have her back in the crew drumming for us.

One of our gun paddlers, who shall remain nameless, forgot to bring her Paddle ID tag and so was barred from paddling in the first heat. However, after a desperate dash for home she managed to get back to Penrith in time, with the offending ID, and helped paddle us to victory in the DA Challenge. (Please everyone remember your ID tags for Nagambie – they're so eeeeasy to forget and it's way too far to go home if you've forgotten it.)

What a marvelous testament to our Head Coach, Carol Fentoullis, when DASydney came in first and second in the DA Challenge! Yeah, we've all worked hard so we all deserve credit, but it's Carol who's put the program together and driven it. Well done, Coach! With both teams winning on the day it shows what great paddling depth we're developing in the club – guess that's the same as in any endeavour, the better you do it the more you enjoy it! The scoreboard says it all! Lots of bling!

We had three virgin racers at Penrith, Liz Trenam, Kathryn Pineiro and Jo Jeffcoat, and as we all know, 500m racing is a baptism of fire. They were fantastic! To top it off, there was a 1000m race at the end of the day. We



had more volunteers for that race than places in the boat. February newbie (and fresh out of treatment), Jo Jeffcoat, was one of the brave ones who jumped in that boat.

The other great achievement on the day was that both Brenda Owen and Claire Hendy successfully completed their sweeping accreditation (I'm not allowed to say "they are now Certified Sweeps" for fear of impugning their mental health – I'm supposed to say "they are now Fully Accredited Sweeps"!)). Well done, Brenda and Claire! That makes a DASydney tally of five accredited sweeps and two provisional sweeps already. We've achieved great things in sweep development this season, so thanks are due to Team Captain, Fairlie Stanish, for driving that.

Not to be forgotten – special thanks are due to our noble volunteer race day officials from DASydney (most from any club by a long shot!): Sue Gibson, Eugenia Raftos, Martin Aston, Jan Jensen, Paul Laurenson (Muriel's other half), Toby Tsonis (Vicki McLean's son), and Michael O'Donnell. They had to be out at Penrith at an ungodly hour so put in a very long day indeed helping us all to have fun.

### My Day in the Control Tower

There is no way anyone could dispute a placing with the technology I saw in action at the State Titles. There are several cross-checks that occur. Two people are responsible for pressing buttons for lanes 1,2,3 and 4,5,6 respectively and these buttons activate the hooter. Another official activates the button which takes the photo finish picture. (I can clearly recall the photo finish picture at the Nationals in Canberra last year where there were millimeters between first and second.) The photo finish of each race appears on another computer where, using the cursor a straight line is lined up exactly with the bow of each boat and automatically the lane and time appears on the screen. (When the announcer makes the call of a dead heat it's a different story looking at the photo finish picture.) That information is then recorded manually and passed to another computer operator and this computer relays the results to the big electronic screen for all and sundry to cheer and commiserate. The info is then recorded manually three times: a copy for the announcer; one for the results board and one for the Chief Official. Another computer records the results of each team.

All of this was repeated 34 times so I felt I had done a hard day's work at the office, but what a great experience it was! Congratulations to DASydney for their great first and second place win in the DA Challenge!

*Eugenia Raftos*

Surely it can't be this easy – four weeks training – first Regatta – A GOLD MEDAL!

After the extreme ups and downs of the last year, I thought it was enough just to be able to see my daughter's first Christmas (a cliché). To be given a second chance at life (another cliché). To watch my kids grow (yet another!). I thought the closest I would get to a sport was to watch from the sidelines my husband's various Soccer/ Cricket/ Rugby pursuits. To dream of our kids future sporting achievements. Who would have thought that the first Gold medal winner in our family would be me!

Last weekend at Penrith, I thought a Newbie would be lucky just to be in a heat. The chance to be in the DA challenge was at first very daunting. I hoped and prayed that I wouldn't cause the boat to come last or, worse, capsize. With lots of encouragement from the rest of the crew I was seated at the start, paddle in hand. Then all too soon we were off.

Three grunts – 20 quick strokes – Oh my God! I'm already out of time – Catch up – Keep breathing – Watch the Strokes – Concentrate – Breathe – The Grandstand is so far away – Oops! Sorry – Breathe – My arms are killing me – Out of synch again – Concentrate – Where's the bloody finish line? – Breathe – Are we there yet? – Yes. We are – Thank God! – We couldn't have come First? – Could we? – Unbelievable! If only I could have raised my arms in Victory!

Congratulations to both crews for all of your training, effort and patience. The fact that I have a medal at all, is due to the years of training put in by the rest of the crew, who managed to carry a Newbie like me, across the finish line. I feel very privileged to be in a winning crew so early in my Dragon boat life. Thankyou Ladies.

So whats next? Last week the State titles – This month the Nationals – Next year the WORLD! Sounds like a Cliché to aspire to!

See you all at training

*Jo Jeffcoat*

**View from the Drummer's Seat**

A fantastic day, despite a few hiccoughs about various teams, everyone understood the problems and were happy to concur with the coach re makeup of the teams. There was a really good camaraderie and the three very new paddlers must have been excited to get a medal at their first regatta. But we are a game lot! More than a boatload nominated to enter the 1,000 metre race. I was lucky to be the drummer, not so energetic! Our opposition was three teams of young women from the sports teams, yet we finished only about a boat length behind. When the last "lift" was called I had to hold onto my seat as there was a huge surge, so there was a lot of energy left in the tank, well done!

*Sally Lynch*



"Virgin" Paddlers – Jo Jeffcoat, Kathryn Pineiro and Liz Trenam



Scoping the pool at the DA Challenge – Jo Jeffcoat, Fairlie Stanish, Sally Lynch and Deb Story accept the honours

The Scoreboard says it all!



## Future directions for Dragons Abreast

The afternoon before Chinese New Year Brenda Owen and I attended a meeting, hosted by Michelle Hanton (our DAA National Coordinator) of all NSW coordinators, plus several of the Queensland coordinators. At this meeting there was lengthy discussion of the long-promised DAA policy that Dragons Abreast races at regattas will comprise 100 per cent survivors, starting July 1, 2006. The only exception to this rule will be sweeps, and then only if a survivor sweep is not available.

The change has come about purely through force of numbers: with 31 teams now around Australia it is more important than ever that our DAA profile must be carefully protected – we are supported by our communities because we are breast cancer survivors. So while our supporters can no longer be included in DAA regatta crews, because they are members of our club they will still participate in regattas but as DASydney ‘supporter’ crews under a different name – this will avoid any potential criticism of misrepresentation as survivors.

The first implementation of this rule came at Chinese New Year when 12 full crews of survivors took to the water. An amazing three composite supporter crews also competed (with our DAS supporters taking home the second place trophy!). As planning was already well underway for the 2006 Nationals in Nagambie and a number of 80/20 crews had already booked their flights and accommodation for that event, the permanent implementation of the 100% rule has been delayed until after July 1, 2006.

At the local level, supporters form an important part of our club and are highly valued members, so things will not change at practice sessions. Some clubs in other areas of Australia already have viable supporter crews made up of partners, friends and relatives of survivors, making strong mixed crews which compete in social and sporting regattas. Please come and talk to me if you have any concerns or queries.

## Changes in national membership structure

Proposed changes to the DAA membership structure were also announced at the meeting. In future, instead of DASydney paying a club fee of \$250 annually to DAA, plus \$10 per individual member, from July each club will pay a fee of \$1,100 (\$1,000 plus 10 per cent GST) and there will be no individual member fees. This may result in a small change in membership fees for the 2006-7 season but, thus far, has not been investigated by your committee.

## From the Ether...

Some of you will remember one of our paddlers, Helen Hynes, who is now living in Arizona. Seems she can't get paddling out of her system. We can all understand that! Best news is she must be lots better if she is out paddling again!

Just a quick email to say that the 3rd Annual Dragonboat Festival just took place here in Arizona at the weekend. Julian and I went down to see if there were any Dragons Abreast teams. It was a lovely day and the venue was a man made lake near the Arizona State University called Tempe Town Lake. Anyway when we got there, loads of teams had set up their tents and were warming up. Some of them had great stuff – like a rack for all the life jackets (everybody wore them) and another rack to hold the paddles. The city of Taipei had donated some boats to Phoenix because they are sister cities. Everybody had team shirts and they all looked great. Julian took some photos and when we get them scanned (if they are any good), I'll email them to you.

Anyway, I found one of the organizers and asked if there were any breast cancer survivor teams – she grabbed my hands and said they were just beginning to organize one and they would love to have me join them. I showed them an old newsletter I had from Australia and she got so excited looking at the picture of all the pink ladies. She told me to look for a lady from the local Mayo clinic. I found somebody and the result is that I get to paddle (for the first time in over a year) next Thursday. I was told to be early as the coach expects three push ups for every minute one is late!! I am practicing my push ups, just in case.

The first few races we saw, the teams were all out of sync – but I found out later they were just beginners. As the day progressed, the teams were looking better and better. Apparently, there is another race meeting coming up in mid April in Las Vegas – which is about 400 miles away from here. I also mentioned the doctors against patient races and the Mayo clinic people would certainly be interested in that.

Our Membership Coordinator will send a full list of members to the National Coordinator each season, but the national membership database will not be retained. So if you wish to remain informed on DAA issues, please subscribe to the DAA national group email by sending an empty email to: [groupmail-subscribe@dragonsabreast.com.au](mailto:groupmail-subscribe@dragonsabreast.com.au) (if you have not already done so). The onus will be on individual members to keep their contact details up to date. If your email address changes you will then need to unsubscribe your old address and resubscribe with the new one. It works the same way as the [DASydney@yahoo.com](mailto:DASydney@yahoo.com) address, except that you cannot send mail to this DAA address, you can only receive messages from it.

There will no longer be individual insurance through Dragons Abreast Australia, but public liability insurance will be retained. As you know, individual insurance for our dragon boating activities is provided through our DBNSW (Dragon Boats NSW) membership.

We have a few members on our books who are non-paddling members and these people can remain “Friends of the Dragon” (receive newsletter, attend social functions etc) by making an annual donation to DAA (see Muriel Buckeridge, our Membership Coordinator), which will then be tax deductible.

## Milestones

Nancy Sage kicks off the month with her birthday on 1st April, closely followed by Helen Rabone on the 2nd, then Karen Wyers 8th; Anne Gates (in Moree! – how are you Annie?) 15th; Jasmen Shahbazova 17th; Wendy McLeod 24th; and Jenny McDonald 29th. Happy birthday all!

## New Members

Our last Newbies at the end of Feb brought 18 intrepid gals to Pymont to have a go at paddling and an amazing 14 of them have been back to paddle with us since. Nine of those have already signed up as members and three of those nine have already paddled in their first regatta. Atta girls! So a big warm DASydney welcome to Sandra Toms, Kirsten Gross, Sharon Elkin, Allana Christie, Rowena Marstin, Liz Trenam, Joanne Jeffcoat, Kathryn Pineiro and Ann MacLochann.

## REMEMBER

- DASydney End-of-Season Party: Saturday 29th April. Everybody is welcome!
- A clean house is a sign of not enough paddling!

Paddles Up!  
Cynth...

# DAS WINTER CALENDAR 2006.2007

Date(s)	Event	Location	Details
<b>April 2006</b>			
Wed 12th	Wahroonga Rotary Club	Wahroonga	Guest speaker: Cynthia Kuiper
Fri 14th	National DB Titles	Nagambie, Victoria	Contact Team Captain, Fairlie Stanish: fstanish@optusnet.com.au
Sat 15th – Sun 16th	National Club Crew DB Titles	Nagambie, Victoria	All members are encouraged to paddle with us. Contact Team Captain, Fairlie Stanish: fstanish@optusnet.com.au
Sat 29th	DASydney End of Season party	Teachers' Club Mary St Sydney	All welcome! Tickets Margo-Lynne Lee
<b>May 2006</b>			
Thu 4th	Westmead Hospital Breast Friends Mtg	Westmead	Guest speaker: Cynthia Kuiper
Sat 6th	Newbies	Pyrmont	Pre-registrations essential: Contact Cynthia Kuiper cynthiagkuiper@yahoo.com
Sat 13th	DBNSW End-of-Season Debrief	DBNSW, Homebush	Book with Charlotte Osman: cosman@westpac.com.au
Sun 14th	Mothers' Day Classic Walk	Domain	DASydney will be participating and carrying the DAA banner
<b>August 2006</b>			
11th – 13th	World Club Crew Championships	Toronto, Canada	Training Squad selection after the Nationals
<b>September 2006</b>			
29 Sep-1st Oct	International Pink Dragon Boat Council's Breast Cancer World Dragon Boat Championships	Singapore	More info: <a href="http://www.bcf.org.sg">www.bcf.org.sg</a>
<b>September 2007</b>			
20th – 23rd	World Dragon Boat Championships	Penrith SIRC	We'll need lots of competitors and lots of volunteers
28th - 31st	Abreast in Australia Dragon Boat Festival	Kawana Lakes, Sunshine Coast, QLD	Small place – not too soon to book accommodation now. Earlybird registrations now open: <a href="http://www.dragonsabreast.com.au/2007/registration_information.htm">http://www.dragonsabreast.com.au/2007/registration_information.htm</a>