

Dragons Abreast Sydney

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Special Chinese New Year Edition

Hi all

Isn't it amazing how the vibrant memories of a big event can make even last week seem like months ago? I have to say Chinese New Year did that for me so I have to dig deep now to remember what happened before.

Mum-in-a-Boat and the DA Challenge won by DAS

Sunday was the biggest excitement of all. After being utterly drowned by a heavy downpour during our first heat in the early morning, everyone relaxed happily bedraggled into the day. All 189 DA paddlers at CNY (from Brisbane, Byron Bay, Port Macquarie, Central Coast, Newcastle, Illawarra, Merimbula, Canberra and ACT, plus Michelle Hanton from NT) had two heats against the corporate and social clubs during the morning. Sydney put in two full crews, Passion and Power, and a further 8 DAS paddlers helped make up crews in composite DA boats. The times from those heats decided which 6 DA crews would race in the DA Challenge.

Two DAS crews, Passion and Power made the final for the DA Challenge, which was a fantastic showing for a two-year old club. The DAS Passion crew took the DA trophy, ACT grabbed second place with Tickled Pink and Newcastle came third with Positively Pink.

The first novelty race of the day was the "Put-Your-Mum-in-a-Boat" race which had huge numbers of DAS entries. In the flurry I didn't see everyone who entered but Mel and



Jan Skorich from ACT's Tickled Pink, which came second in the DA Challenge; DAS team captain, Anne Gates accepted the winner's trophy and State Coordinator, Vivienne Gregg holding the third place trophy for Newcastle's Positively Pink.

her Mum, Margaret Cantwell, were stroking the boat I was in with my elder son, Jim. Fairlie Stanish and her younger son, Oscar were also in the boat. Others I saw who paddled either with offspring or adoptees were: Lyn Tyson and daughter, Sarah; Jenny Longland and Rosalind Coyte; Diana Brandt and son Sebastian, Bobbie Fox and daughter Kelly Birch; Robin Shoebridge and sister-in-law Susan, Sally Lynch and daughter-in-law-to-be Kelly Webb, Di Millgate and her niece Jennifer Huggett, Sue Gibson and son Campbell, Pam Bell and her daughter, Wendy McLeod and daughter Kirsten, and Kay Gailey had three family members in the race. Apologies to other DAS girls not mentioned, especially as I know the all-DAS Mums boat came over the line first.

Mel's Belles' Debut

What would we do without our much-loved supporters? They are so much part of DAS and yet, because they are not breast cancer survivors, we cannot always include them in our racing crews. As you all know, the Dragons Abreast rules say we can never have fewer than 80% survivors in any racing crew. We hate leaving our supporters out at times like Chinese New Year but we are, and must remain, a survivor organisation first and foremost.

Our way of including them in the fun was to form Mel's Belles – the name honouring our irrepressible coach Melanie Cantwell. This way a group of us could race together with some of our supporters on the Saturday at Chinese New Year against the sports crews – ie with Mel drumming, Akal Khalsa sweeping and Joanne Petterson, Kris Sawyer, Deb Cooper and Margaret Cantwell as part of the crew. By racing officially as Mel's Belles, and not as DAS, we could freely pick our strongest paddlers to race on equal terms against the



sports crews on that day. We put in a very creditable performance, even if we didn't make the finals, and it was heaps of fun!

The dragon boating tragics making up the Mel's Belles crew were: Melanie Cantwell drumming, Jenny Petterson and Eugenia Raftos stroking, me, Margot Case. Carol Fentoullis, Deb Read, Fairlie Stanish, Anne Gates, Sue Gibson, Tracey Bowne, Margo-Lynne Lee, Kathryn Davis, Sophie Marinucci, Carolyn New, Robin Shoebridge, Claire Hendy, Sally Lynch, Brenda Owen and Pam Bell.

It was a lovely sunny day on the Saturday, so we didn't really expect to get wet – more fool us! Part of the tradition in the late morning opening ceremony, it transpires, is the splashing of the paddles! It started out fairly daintily but before long paddlers were heaving paddlesful of water in all directions, especially all over paddlers in adjoining boats. Soon they resorted to bailing-bucketsful – and then it was on for young and old! There was much laughing and squealing and everyone in the boats got completely drenched.

Taking on the Docs

Well, we came up with this wacky idea for Chinese New Year of staging the Inaugural Breast Cancer Specialists vs the Patients Dragon Boat Challenge race. That was the easy part. Making it happen turned out to be a herculean task. Special thanks go to Pam Bell for her colossal contribution in ambushing the unsuspecting docs into participating. They are elusive folk at the best of times, but try telling a secretary you want this professor or that to paddle in a dragon boat and you'll have some inkling of the difficulties we faced. Telstra will surely announce a bonus on the back of our efforts, but we finally managed to persuade two boatloads of BC surgeons, medical oncologists and radiation oncologists and one boatload of nurses to take up the challenge.

It was one of the highlights for DAS in the lead-up to Chinese New Year – having the cream of Sydney's breast cancer specialists and nurses coming along to our paddle practices, being able to paddle with them and show them a few tricks. What a friendly and enthusiastic bunch they were and thoroughly good sports for joining in our wacky idea to race them.

On the Sunday before CNY most of them came down to Pyrmont for their initiation into dragon-boating and it rapidly became obvious that they were an exceedingly fit and strong bunch. We then realised they were sure to thrash us in the race, despite having only tried it once. But did we let a little thing like that dampen our enthusiasm? Not on your nelly! We DAS girls are made of sterner stuff than that! Thanks to all those who volunteered to help with the docs' paddle and who brought yummies to share with them afterwards (like Margo-Lynne Lee's Chinese Chew and Brenda Owen's baklava). Extra special thanks too to Chris Moran, Akal Khalsa and Jo Petterson for sweeping for the docs' paddle.

On the following Thursday as Margo-Lynne Lee was leaving RPAH she saw one of the docs, Professor Tattersall, and sang out to him "See you on the water". With a wicked grin, he replied "Only briefly at the start, after that we'll be too far ahead of you".

The Inaugural Breast Cancer Specialists and Nurses vs the Patients Dragon Boat Challenge race took place immediately after the Mum-in-a-boat race and what huge interest that generated!! Those of us who'd been in the Mum-in-a-Boat race barely had time to change boats before we were off again. DAS put forward an all-survivor crew with Jenny Petterson and Eugenia stroking, me, Margot Case, Carol Fentoullis, Deb Read, Fairlie Stanish, Anne Gates, Sue Gibson, Tracey Bowne, Margo-Lynne Lee, Kathryn Davis, Sophie Marinucci, Carolyn New, Robin Shoebridge, Claire Hendy, Sally Lynch,



Mater team all kitted out with matching shirts and caps



RNSH team with matching shirts and caps as well

Brenda Owen and Pam Bell. We were beaten fair and square by the docs, which undoubtedly served us right for having been so cheeky as to challenge them in the first place! But it sure

was a heck of a race and I know we'd do it all again, given half a chance! Seems like the docs had a good time too – take a look at some of the emails they sent through after the race.

A great day! Thank you so much for getting us involved – it was fun. I have now learnt about Dragons Abreast – I did not know much about you folk – now I am a firm supporter 100% – you do great work. If there is anything I can do – please let me know, I'd love to keep in contact. Hope the day was good for you and your teams, Very best wishes, Phillip. **Dr Phillip Yuile**

I am sure I am echoing the sentiments of the other doctors and nurses when I express my thanks for a well organised event and a very pleasant, though slightly wet, paddle in Cockle Bay. I am indeed honoured that the patients have sought to invite their partners in treatment and healing. I understand just what a roller coaster ride it may be, unlike the straight, sure and rhythmical glide of a dragon boat. The guard of honour was a delightful touch at the completion of the race but I assure you that it was very much the patients which were honoured yesterday. The Flowers on the Water Ceremony was a touching reminder for all. **Dr Owen Ung**

Thank you very much for inviting me to join in the festivities at the dragon boat races, I was honoured to be considered an invitee. My family and I had a great time despite the wet conditions. **Prof Geoff Delaney**

Thank you so much for asking me to be involved with the races yesterday – it was terrific fun and the camaraderie amongst all of us was fantastic. I found the flower scattering ceremony very moving and a good balance to the day. I do hope you are able to make the doctor-patient race a fixture on your calendar! **Dr Verity Ahern**

Thanks also from all of us at the Mater and RNSH. The footage is great, thanks to my husband Michael Hennessy. Makes a great addition to our teamwork training models, and shows just how well organised medical staff can be when patients are beating the drum! **Dr Fran Boyle**

I echo Fran and Owen's sentiments. my thanks and congratulations again to all. A fun day, and a lovely ceremony. You are all an inspiration to us. joys such as you lot keep us going. **Dr Anne Hamilton**

Thanks to you, Michelle, the coaches and all at Dragons Abreast to provide an opportunity for us to play and mingle amongst ourselves and with our patients in a fun & more relaxed setting. All your efforts are much appreciated. **Dr Richard Lee**

THANK YOU so much for organising such an enjoyable day on sund. I had a great time & it was great to meet socially with colleagues who we often only meet via correspondence. The girls spirit & zest for life is truly inspirational, I hope that I might be a better Doc for this experience. I will look forward to next years event & wish all your members a healthy & happy future. With best wishes. **Dr Bruce Piper**

I know that all the members of the medical crews were delighted to be at Darling Harbour and support such a great group of ladies ... It would be great to see the event grow ... The calendar and pamphlets are already in my rooms. **Dr Alex Matthews**

Congratulations on organising a wonderful event. I thoroughly enjoyed myself and would be more than happy to volunteer for future events. Regards, **Dr Laurence Gluch**

Thanks for the opportunity to try something new!! Some of the nurses want to join a team..... It was a load of fun In particular, the petal ceremony and walking under the tunnel made by the dragon abreast womens' oars was a very moving experience. Respectfully the **Chemotherapy Nurses from the Mater Hospital , Crows Nest.:** Lisa P, Lisa H, Kerrie, Jenny and Leanne

Flowers on the Water

As always, the Flowers on the Water ceremony after the DA Challenge race was very moving. This year nine boats joined the ceremony – with the sheer numbers of Pink Ladies making quite a sight out there on the water. All the beautiful pink rose petals (with some blue flowers added for those few men who get breast cancer) which were sprinkled on the water during the ceremony were very kindly donated by Roses Only.



Photo: Sharon Hickey, Courtesy City of Sydney



Port Macquarie's Flaming Dragons in the Flowers on the Water ceremony



Expert Commentary

Particular thanks are due to Professor John Boyages, Director of the NSW Breast Cancer Institute, and Michelle Hanton, DAA National Coordinator, (right) who did a wonderful job in the commentary box during the lead up to the docs race and right through until the end of the Flowers on the Water ceremony. As well as commentating the races, they were able to give the crowd all sorts of good information about breast cancer and background about Dragons Abreast.



CNY Banquet & Raffle

Ever the true magician in social event organisation, Margo-Lynne Lee excelled herself in organising a spectacularly successful DAS Chinese New Year Banquet this year. She'd thought of everything. There were even lucky New Year's red envelopes with money in them for each diner, little gifts for the ladies on entry, spot prizes, a trivia quiz with more prizes (Anne Gates snuck down the street to a bewildered Chinese newsagent to 'research' answers to some of the questions – it was probably divine retribution that he was wrong!).

One of DAS's craftier ladies, Robin Shoebridge, had run up an amazing 15 Year of the Rooster patchwork table decorations – gorgeous little chooks stuffed with divine-smelling cloves, and seated on a bed of feathers. Never one to miss a fund-raising opportunity, Margo-Lynne organised for these to be auctioned off at each table – mine's called Hamish – oh! and there was even one called Oswald – no prizes for guessing that Margot Case snagged that one!

The CNY raffle was very exciting! Master goldsmith, Phil Gibson and his DAS paddling wife, Sue, kindly donated a superb silver bracelet, handcrafted by Phil. That was the first prize! As you can see from the winners' list below – there were lots of other prizes – a pink basket donated by Mel, a basket of spices and other goodies from Kay Gailey's employer McCormicks, a lovely sports watch donated by James Opperman, a harbour cruise for two, a meal for two at The Little Snail restaurant and others. I bought my whole allocation of tickets for my new daughter-in-law to try and persuade her I'm not a dragon mother-in-law. So I was pretty sure that bracelet had her name on it, but sadly it was not to be. It was, however, gratifying to learn that the bracelet was won by our own absolutely thrilled Christine Fitzgerald, even though she wasn't able to make it to the banquet on the night.

Huge thanks to Margo-Lynne for organising the dinner and the raffle so superbly. Most girls had managed to sell raffle tickets to their workmates and friends in advance of the night, then on the night we sold the rest – so it was a very successful raffle for the winners and for DAS.

Other raffle prizewinners were: 2nd prize: Robert Stewart (Irene's husband) DAS; 3rd - Tina Taylor; 4th - Lisa Evans; 5th - Jo Petterson DAS; 6th - Ruth Chandler; 7th - Robert Sage (Nancy's husband) DAS; 8th - C. Laverick.

A huge number of visiting DA girls joined us in the CNY feast and added to the general merriment – and the bus driver from Merimbula was quite the life of the party.

Right: Margo-Lynne Lee made a magnificent MC for the evening

Below: L-R: Tracey Browne, Cynthia Kuiper, Phil and Sue Gibson, Robin Shoebridge and Anne Gates enjoying the banquet.



Lto R: Robin Shoebridge, Anne Gates, Lyn Tyson and Helen Pallis at the banquet

Helen Pallis heads for NZ

We are sorry to lose Helen Pallis (she of the wonderful golden curls and the luminous smile) from DAS. She decided some time ago to return with her husband to her native New Zealand to live nearer her family. Happily, she opted to go with a bang, deferring their departure until the day after Chinese New Year. It was her first, but hopefully not her last CNY, and judging from the happy excited smiles she wore throughout, it seems she didn't regret her decision. Keep paddling in NZ, Helen, and come back and paddle with us in DAS from time to time.

The Magic of CNY

It's hard to explain to new girls how the magic of Chinese New Year gets to you. Is it the extra excitement of the crowd, of the friends and relatives on the sidelines, of friends in the boats? It's all such a whirl of excitement. This year quite a few of our girls experienced their first Chinese New Year and Di Millgate captures some of that excitement here for us:

Oh, my goodness!

They really mean it. We are going to paddle in this pouring rain!

I can do this. What's a little rain? How often since I started have I heard the comment, "After all, it is a water sport"!

Here we go. At least we haven't got to carry the boats down a slippery incline.

"Paddles up!" calls Jo and we head off for under the bridge. Hang on. That boat's got a motor! Surely it's not allowed here!

Okay, Big Boat! You win. We'll get out of the way.

Ah, back on track. What a buzz. Concentrate. Breathe. Bring the veil of energy over us. Don't look. Dig deep. Whistle. Here we go! Forget everything! Paddle like mad! What a buzz.

Haven't a clue where we came.

That was amazing! Let's do it again! Now!

We paddle proudly back towards the dock.

Hang on. They've started the next race. This is Passion's race.

"Go, Passion!" scream Power.

"Hold water!" screams Jo.

"Go Passion!" scream Power.

"Hold water!" screams Jo.

"You nearly friggin tossed me in!" screams Irene.

I had been looking forward to this day since I had heard about racing on Chinese New Year two months ago. Something inside of me told me that it would be a day to remember – and it was! Ask me now what I enjoyed most and I would have trouble answering.

I was blown away by the camaraderie of everyone connected to us. I was impressed by the professional manner of the organisers and the smooth running of the day. I was touched that my niece came as my family member to support me in my chosen sport.

I loved the way my husband bought and proudly wore a pink t-shirt – even though the man in the shop thought he was going to the Mardi Gras celebrations up the road. I was moved by the "Flowers on the Water" ceremony and wondered why men haven't come up with a plan to support each other through their battles. And I was tickled pink that a sixty-year-old fatty could wander around Darling Harbour in a wet t-shirt and shorts –



Photo: Sharon Hickey, Courtesy City of Sydney

and get away with it! But I think, most of all, was the feeling that amongst us today were people who would care for and support me if ever I needed it. Bring on the next one! Go Power!

Many of you will also resonate with Pam Telfer's feelings about both the volunteering and the racing. She said:

What an amazing weekend! If anyone had told me last year that I would be paddling at the CNY celebrations on Darling Harbour this year I would have seriously doubted their sanity! It was with some trepidation I volunteered for the Saturday and found myself thrust onto the Finish Line with a stopwatch in my hand. Agggghhh – the responsibility! Margaret Cantwell did a great job coaching us and we soon got into the right routine and I found myself enjoying the hustle and bustle of it all. Sunday arrived and so did the rain. Our Pink Power team was sheltering under the overpass waiting to be called and the heavens opened! We bravely marched out into the torrential rain and memories of myself as a child (growing up in the bush) dancing around in the rain with great glee came back to me. The race itself went by in a blur but I think we did reasonably well. Unfortunately, we missed the start in our second heat and did not do as well – but still we did it! Then came the Flowers on the Water ceremony – so moving and the eerie silence as we paddled back with the "paddle/tap" beat gave me goose-bumps. Then to crown it all – waiting for us as we disembarked were the corporate crews with a guard of honour for us. I was completely overwhelmed by the whole experience.

All I can say is hurry up CNY 2006!

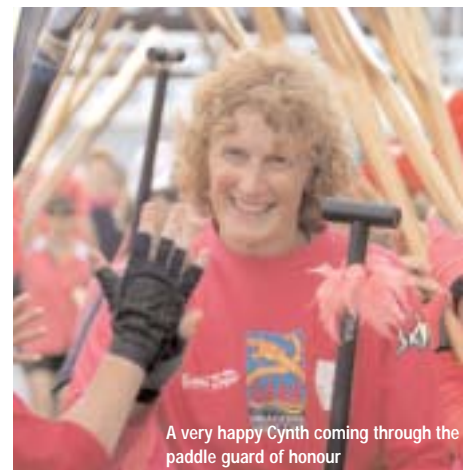
PS Congratulations and gratitude to all those responsible for the behind-the-scenes work done to organise the whole event.

And of course we all echo that gratitude and are in awe at the way the whole two days were run – as usual, we are all particularly indebted to the Cantwell family – Melanie,

sister Jo, Mum Margaret and Pa Cantwell, without whom the whole festival would probably fall in a heap.

As usual, DAS came through in spades with lots of volunteers who made a very real contribution to the success of the festival. Special thanks to all those DAS volunteers and their families who put up their hands to join the volunteers marshalling, doing pontoon duty, finish line hooter duty etc. Hope I'm remembering everyone – Fairlie Stanish, Kris Sawyer, Jenny & Jo Peterson, Robin Shoebridge, Margot Case, Bobbie Fox, Tracey & Mick Bowne, Kathryn & Kevin Davis, Anne Gates, Joan Fizell, Brenda & David Owen, Angie & Martin Aston, Helen Rabone, Carolyn New, Fran O'Brien, Sophie Marinucci, Susan Naylor, Sue & Phil Gibson, Pam Telfer, Helen Rabone, Margo-Lynne Lee, Eugenia Raftos, Carol Fentoullis, Chris Martin – so many of you kindly offered to help that they even turned away some of us.

Thanks too to Deb Read who was prevailed upon to spend large parts of each day warming up crews (Mel's Belles, Mum-in-a-Boat, docs and nurses, and of course Passion and Power) and urging them on to achieve great things – Deb is such a card and she had everyone laughing and trying harder than they thought they possibly could.



A very happy Cynth coming through the paddle guard of honour

In the news

You'd think we'd be over it, but no! A bunch of us took the opportunity to promote DAS by being floating wallpaper on the 6pm Channel 10 weather report on the Tuesday before Chinese New Year. Well Tim Bailey, the weatherman, forgot to mention Dragons Abreast after all, but we still made very pink, very prominent wallpaper and plenty of people seem to have spotted us when it screened. The following morning 702 radio announcer, Angela Catterns, gave DAS a plug and talked about the Docs vs the Patients race at Chinese New Year. Margot Case rustled up some coverage in the Sutherland Leader along with the twins and Robin Shoebridge resulting in the following punchy article:

Survivors of breast cancer 'kick butts'

by Liz Swanton

Celebrating Chinese New Year has taken on special significance for several local members of Dragons Abreast. They will participate in this year's Dragon Boat Festival at Darling Harbour in a special Doctors vs Patients Challenge.

"I've even got my plastic surgeon involved," said Woronora's Margot Case. "This is payback time for all that they put us through and we are going to kick butts!"

Dragons Abreast unites breast cancer survivors through the sport of dragon boat racing. Crew members kept themselves fit while providing support for each other and raising awareness of the disease. Ms Case was a member of the Australian Masters team which competed in last year's World Championships in Shanghai. She, and, coincidentally, 13 other breast cancer survivors, were selected in the Masters team. It came home ranked sixth (over 200 metres) and eighth (over 500metres) in the world.

Their colleagues, who participated in the special international Dragons Abreast division championships, came home with a silver medal.

"We were very pleased with the results," Ms Case said. "China won 11 gold medals but they were training eight hours a day, seven days a week. We weren't training quite that hard but everyone took it very seriously, losing weight and getting really fit. We're also taking it seriously for the races at Darling Harbour – we're training twice a week."

Ms Case got her start in dragon boat racing some years ago after reading an article about it and deciding she wanted to try something new. Initially she trained with the Port Hacking crew but joined the breast cancer girls' three years ago.

Keeping abreast of life

FIONA ROSS-EDWARDS

HUNDREDS of women hit the harbour every week, paddling their hearts out, laughing together and having the time of their lives.

The annual seven-games-a-week dragon boat races have all battled breast cancer.

The group, known as Dragons Abreast, will race this Sunday on Darling Harbour as part of Chinese New Year celebrations.

Dragons Abreast have filled what used to be a rowing club with crews from all over Australia.

The group has also organised a charity race against breast cancer specialists, doctors and nurses.

"We've got the absolute cream of breast cancer specialists involved," Sydney Dragons Abreast co-ordinator Cynthia Kuiper said.

"And the plan is to absolutely thrash them."

The Sydney squad, based in Pyrmont and formed just over two years ago, has grown to 55 members.

Ms Kuiper said when women finish breast cancer treatment, they feel as though they have "been through the blender".

"You forget how to lead a normal life," she said. "Women come to Dragons Abreast and we have all been there and done that. It's about getting your strength back in a supportive environment."

Until 1996, the belief was that women recovering from breast cancer would never be able to do upper body exercise again, Ms Kuiper said.

"It's actually wonderfully therapeutic for the girls. Some have even gone on to represent Australia at the World Championships in China."

"Even girls losing their battle, people still do well. They love being out there. We've got one girl in the Australian team who has inoperable cancer."

At the end of major races paddlers spread pink petals on the water in remembrance of women who have lost their battle.

"It impresses us on people how prevalent breast cancer is," Ms Kuiper said.

They have "been through the blender".

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Members of Dragons Abreast Sydney, crewed by breast cancer survivors.

Photo: DABBY AN

"The Dragons Abreast Challenge is supposed to be a 'demonstration paddle' but that's not what we're about," Ms Case said. "We don't want people watching us and thinking 'those poor women'. We want to show them that you can get out there and do things. The doctors and nurses who will be competing against us will find that out for sure!"

Dragon boat racing is thought to be one of the oldest team sports in the world. It originated in China in the third century BC. Dragon boat festivals are traditionally held to commemorate the statesman Qu Yuan who drowned himself in protest against political corruption. They continue to be held in China to encourage enough rain for a good harvest.

The Dragon Boat Festival is just one of the activities that form part of the celebrations for the Chinese New Year. It takes place on Cockle Bay, February 20, 10am – 4pm.

The Glebe newspaper, 17th February, 2005 had this to say:

Keeping abreast of life Fiona Ross-Edwards

Dozens of women hit the harbour every week, paddling their hearts out, laughing together and having the time of their lives. You would never guess these dragon boat racers have all battled breast cancer. The group, known as Dragons Abreast, will race this Sunday on Darling Harbour as part of Chinese New Year celebrations.

Dragons Abreast have filled eight boats with racers from all over Australia. The squad has also organised a charity race against breast cancer specialists, doctors and nurses. "We've got the absolute cream of breast cancer specialists involved," Sydney Dragons Abreast co-ordinator Cynthia Kuiper said. "And the plan is to absolutely thrash them."

The Sydney squad, based in Pyrmont and formed just over two years ago, has grown to 55 members. Ms Kuiper said when women finish breast cancer treatment, they feel as though they have "been through the blender". "You forget how to lead a normal life," she said. "Women come to Dragons Abreast and we have all been there and done that. It's about getting your strength back in a supportive environment."

Until 1996, the belief was that women recovering from breast cancer would never be able to do upper body exercise again, Ms Kuiper said. "It's actually wonderfully therapeutic for the girls. Some have even gone on to represent Australia at the World Championships in China. Even girls losing their battle paddle until the end. They love being out there. We've got one girl in the Australian team who has inoperable cancer."

At the end of major races paddlers spread pink petals on the water in remembrance of women who have lost their battle. "It impresses us on people how prevalent breast cancer is," Ms Kuiper said.

Postcards from abroad

We received a lovely note the other day from one of our favourite DAS paddlers, Helen Hynes, who you will remember left DAS recently to go live in Ireland. She wrote:

Here I am in Paris after weeks of travelling. I have been scouring the internet for results of the Chinese New Year in Sydney but nothing. What happened? Did you win, lose or object?

Here it is snowing outside - but we have had some great weather (for the winter) while we were travelling through Italy, France and Spain. We managed to treat ourselves to two nights in different Paradors in Spain - fantastic and had a tour of the Chateau of Versailles this morning. Just a few more days of the Continent and then home for Mother's Day in Ireland. Miss you all. Helen

And a note too from Joan Patriquin, from Prince Rupert, Canada's Rainbow Warriors survivor team:

Well, we've finally made our plans. We're off to New Zealand tonight. I was able to find tickets for 2 for \$146.00, so we're going. We have a friend who is a kayak guide over there. We're going to hike the Abel Tasman trail first and then go to Fiordlands to kayak with our friend. So, unfortunately I won't be able to make the Chinese New Year festival. We were able to watch a dragon boat regatta in Paradise Point a couple of days ago. There is another festival in March near Brisbane, I may make that one. Thanks again for all your helpfulness. Have a great festival. Take care, Love Joan

A further note from Joan:

Just finished our time in TeAnau. We were able to hike the beginning and the end of the Kepler Trak. We paddled with our friend Fi. We had quite the adventure - saw "smoke on the water" as they call it here. Winds whipping the water high into the air. Brent and I took 20 strokes in a double and didn't move an inch, so we turned back. The second day ended with the same type of winds, so our 5 day adventure turned into a 2 day one instead.

We had a really good time. We're in Invercargill today and we're headed to Stewart Island tomorrow (which is south of the South Island). We're going to hike over there for about 5 days. Hope all is well, Take care, Love Joan

and no, I didn't kill Brent in the double!!! pretty amazing hey!

Next Newbies – 5th March

There are more new girls wanting to try their hand at paddling this Saturday, 5th March, usual time and place. I know you will give them the usual warm DAS welcome and would everyone please bring a plate of nibbles to share while we chat with them after the paddle?

Crafty Ladies try Calligraphy

Reminder that the BOOBS Exchange will meet this month on Tuesday 1st March when Jenny and Jo Petterson will be teaching calligraphy. The twins are famous for (among other things) the exquisite lettering on the greeting cards they make – wanna know how to do it? All DAS members are invited to come along to these craft sessions. If you would like to come along to this one, just ring Jo or Jenny to find out more details - 95215439.

If calligraphy is not your thing, stay tuned for the following session which will be embroidery : Grub Roses, French Knots & Candlewicking

State Squad

By the time you read this, the selection trials for the 2005 NSW State DBTeam will be completed. Over the weekend, something like 15 brave DAS girls subjected themselves to the evil "Paddle Erg" and equally vile "Water Trial" in the hope of being admitted to the StateSquad. The erg is a modified rowing machine (if you've ever been to a gym you will have seen rowers like that) but various additional pulleys have been added to change the action to a paddle action. The instructions are quite simple – go flat out for 2mins 15 seconds and see how far the computer says you've gone. It's the closest thing to a heart attack that you can do volitionally, except for the water trial. The water trial is, likewise, designed to reveal the strongest paddlers (everyone generally thinks they are better paddlers than they really are, so it's quite a salutary experience). In the water trial you hop into the boat with someone of equal weight (who just sits on the other side of the boat as a counterbalance, nothing else) and a sweep on the back and then you have to paddle 200 metres – all by yourself! If that idea isn't straight out of Abu Ghraib, I don't know what is! Who will make the cut? Does it matter? Not really – it's just a way of scoring extra paddle practices each week and getting fitter.

Ask Deb – our very own Naturopath



You must have noticed that Deborah Cooper often has helpful advice for various

of our paddlers. For those who don't know her, Deb is a girl of many parts – author, naturopath, medical herbalist, nutritionist and very enthusiastic apprentice dragon boater. She has 20 years of women's health experience and lots of information to share. Naturally you should always check first with your doctor re any planned changes to your regime. As this is purely a general interest column, your confidentiality and privacy is assured when you send in suggestions for topics for future columns.

MUSCLE CRAMPS

Cramps are the end result of a lack of oxygen into the muscle tissue. Oxygen is transported in the blood so poor circulation or mineral deficiency usually contributes to the problem. The most common mineral deficiency is magnesium or iron.

Some self help measures to improve circulation are:

- daily exercise
- foot and leg massage
- Epsom salts baths – they are a good source of magnesium and a handful in your bath or footbath can reduce muscular soreness.
- include ginger in your diet
- clove, cajuput, camphor, peppermint, rosemary and wintergreen oils can be used in liniment rubs to increase circulation.
- arnica ointment can be massaged in to the skin to increase blood supply to the muscles. Homoeopathic arnica 200C is non toxic and great for tired, sore muscles. Can be taken morning and night as required.
- include avocados, green leafy vegetables, eggs, lentils, mushrooms, tabbouli, parsley and lean meats in your diet to increase iron, folate and B12 which helps to transport oxygen in your blood.
- eat almonds, cashews, citrus fruits, legumes and pulses, nuts and seeds to increase magnesium. If you want to try a supplement try magnesium orotate 400mg and take it with your evening meal.
- homoeopathic magnesium phosphate is specific for cramps and is inexpensive.

AUSDBF National Titles in Canberra – April 7-10th

It's great to know that some 25 DAS girls have booked to go to Canberra for the National Titles this year. This is a huge fun weekend where we all share accommodation and go out for meals together etc – and going away together is one of the best ways of getting to know your fellow paddlers better. Although "National Titles" sounds daunting, this is every bit as much fun as CNY and it's only daunting for the sports paddlers. If you are Dragons Abreast (that's us!) you only need to be able to wear pink to join the fun –even if you are a rank beginner! Entries have closed now for this year, but make sure you don't miss out next year!

Welcomes

Last month I was naughty and omitted mentioning that Barbara Scharrer became a full member of DAS – sorry Barbara – welcome! Joining this month were Anna Higgins, Lyn Tyson and Helen Westwood. Welcome to DAS and hope you will all enjoy it as much as we do!

Milestones

Much blowing out of birthday candles this month for Sophie Marinucci, Helen Hynes (Hi Helen – see we're still thinking of you, even if you have defected to the other side of the world), Chris Martin, Kathryn Davis, Carolyn New and the twins, Jenny and Joanne Petterson. Best wishes and many happy returns to you all. Oh, and congratulations to Robin Shoebridge who scored her first grandchild!

Thanks to all those who contributed pieces for this month's bumper newsletter – makes for soooo much more interesting reading! And thanks everyone for making Chinese New Year so much fun!

Paddles Up!

Cynth...



Jenny and Jo Petterson with Petria Thomas at the NSW Sports Awards Dinner

Our Jen Does It Again

She's so modest, that Jen! If Mel hadn't mentioned it, I doubt we would ever have heard that Jenny Petterson was one of the three finalists in the Masters Athlete of the Year category at the flashy NSW Sports Awards dinner at Sydney Superdome in February. Yet another well-deserved accolade for this amazing twin – she's such an inspiration to all who know her. I don't know how you all feel, but just seeing her up there stroking strongly in front of the boat always makes me feel such a wuss, especially when my inner wimp is screaming at me to take a break. A 75-year-old male swimmer who has been competing since he was a wee nipper took away the title on the night.

Chinese Chew

By popular demand, here is the recipe for Margo-Lynne's exceedingly moreish "Chinese Chew", one of the delicious munchies served at the Docs' morning tea (maybe that's what gave them the edge on the day!)

1/4 lb margarine melt and add

1 cup brown sugar

1 egg

1 cup self raising flour

1 teaspoon mixed spice

1 cup mixed fruit

1. Mix all ingredients together with a wooden spoon.

(The mixture will look shiny and will have texture of play dough!)

2. Bake 20-30mins in a mod-hot oven.

3. Enjoy!

DAS CALENDAR 2005

Month	Date(s)	Event	Location	Details
March	Tuesday 1st	DAS Craft Day	Calligraphy	RSVP essential to book: ring Jenny Petterson on 9521 5439 for address and what to bring. BYO \$5, lunch and coffee mug
	Wednesday 9th	Afternoon and evening DAA talks to Volunteers	Sydney Adventist Hospital	Guest speaker: Cynthia Kuiper
	Sunday 20th	NSW Corporate Games	Nepean Rowing Club, Penrith	
April	Saturday 2nd	NSW State DB Titles	SIRC Penrith	This is not just for speed freaks We can all go in the DA challenge
	Tues 5th	DAA talk at Nepean Zonta	TBA	Guest speaker: Cynthia Kuiper
	Friday 8th – Sun 10th	AusDBF National Titles	Lake Burley Griffin, Canberra	25 DAS girls competing
	Sat 23rd – Sun 24th	Dragon Festival	SIRC Penrith	
June	Sun 12th	Ord River Dragon Boat Marathon	Kununurra, NT	http://members.westnet.com.au/billh/kdbc/marathon.htm Surely there has to be one of these in every dragon boater's life? Maybe '06?
	Fri 24th – Sun 26th	Abreast in a Boat 10 Year Anniversary	Vancouver, Canada	Contact Michelle Hanton on hanton@ozemail.com.au
August	Sat 6th – Sun 7th	IDBF 6th World DB Racing Championships	Berlin/Hamburg, Germany	TBA
	7th – 16th	10th Australian Masters Games	Adelaide	www.AustralianMastersGames.com