

## CREWSADERS UPDATE – 10 June 2009

By Jill Harrison



It is now four years since Jill Harrison engaged the support of Janette McLean and their club Forza before meeting Julie Scott and June Foulds in a Bunbury coffee shop to discuss the forming of a Dragons Abreast team in Bunbury under the umbrella of the Forza Dragon Boat Club. Following a meeting of interested people in June's offices, a group of ladies met on a cold and blustering evening on 1 April 2005 to form the Bunbury Crewsaders.

Since that time we have seen ladies come and go, but a core group from 2005 still remains. We continue to paddle on Saturday mornings on our beautiful Leschenault Inlet in the centre of Bunbury. It is a great way to start the weekend. The highlights of our mornings are stopping to enjoy the dolphins that share our waterway, laughter, and our chats over cuppa and cake after paddling. Our base is the Bunbury Rowing Club where we enjoy the benefits of their wonderful facility and a superb location on the Inlet.

Our aim is to have more breast cancer survivors join the Crewsaders. However we warmly welcome supporting paddlers, and people recovering from illnesses other than breast cancer. They all benefit from the camaraderie, support, friendships and exercise.

Some of us have also joined other groups. Trish Gibbs joined a bike ride from Albany to Busselton and walked seven days on the Bibbulmun Track, and a group of ladies have recently been enjoying (with lots of laughter) a "Latin Cardio" class. For a time Joyce Pitman was organizer of an "Encore" group in Bunbury. Christine Penny has given numerous talks to groups around Bunbury about the Crewsaders, and recently Deidre Moate talked about her breast cancer experience at the Relay for Life launch in Bunbury.

We have retained our affiliation with the Forza Dragon Boat Club and appreciate their friendship and ongoing support. It is a relationship which has benefits for both of us. Occasionally Forza women join us for our Saturday morning paddles, and whilst competing is not a focus of the Crewsaders, several

Crewsaders paddle with Forza at their training sessions during summer and at Dragon Boating WA regattas. The Crewsaders also field a team at the Forza Dragon Boat Challenge Festival in Bunbury in March.

Our coaching team is Jill Harrison, Janette McLean and Merinda Fenn (all from Forza) and Christine Penny. Coaching the Crewsaders is a constant juggle between catering for those who want to be more competitive and those who are there for a social paddle. It is a commitment that none of the coaching team could carry alone without the support of the other three.

Christine Penny is our sweep and we are encouraging other ladies to have a go at sweeping. Jan Blakeman and Lyndy Scott have taken up the challenge with excellent tutelage from Merinda Fenn and Christine Penny.

During the month of July we take a break from paddling to ease the commitment made by our coaches and sweep, but organize other activities during that month, whilst some of us just take a month off.

Some of our highlights over our last four years have been:

- The donation, refurbishment and launch of our boat "The Estuary Juille" donated to us by Crystal Global and named after Julie Scott, June Foulds, Jill Harrison and Janette McLean and recognizing our beautiful waterway.
- The donation of a set of paddles by Perth's "The Big Hoo Ha" comedy group, organized by comedian Andrea Gibbs, daughter of our member Trish Gibbs.
- Garden parties in the beautiful garden of one of our supporting members Annie Power.
- Giving our time to work in the garden of our member Julie Scott who is undergoing treatment.
- Our performance of the "Dance of the Reed Flutes" (complete with pink tutus and tiaras!) at the 2007 Forza/Crewsaders end of season windup event. In 2008 we performed "The Time Warp" from Rocky Horror Picture Show and in 2009 we performed "Putting on the Ritz". It is a bit a fun and we enjoy the applause.
- Paddling with Forza at DBWA events including State Titles and National Titles in Perth.
- Christine Penny received her sweep accreditation.
- Winning the ladies event at the Forza Dragon Boat Festival in 2009.
- The writing of our Constitution and our Incorporation in 2008 as "Crewsaders Dragons Abreast Bunbury Inc".
- Ros Webb competed at Caloundra in 2007 with a Darwin team and in Penang in 2008 with the Perth Amazons.
- The Crewsaders have recently applied for Lotteries West funding for a new boat.
- The birth of our first baby, Madeline, to breast cancer survivor and paddler, Deidre Moate: a sign which reminded us to believe in the impossible and to never say it can't happen.



Our Coordinators since our inception have been Julie Scott, Roslyn Webb, and Christine Penny. Christine recently took up the position in 2009 when Ros was appointed as DAA Representative for WA and SA. Each of our Coordinators has brought the benefits of their own special personalities to the Crewsaders. Julie Scott's enthusiasm, quiet achievement and caring personality firmly lead us in the right direction during our inauguration, Ros Webb's determination and enthusiasm for the sport has driven us forward, and Christine's can do attitude, unstoppable good humour and sparkling personality embraces us all and will propel us into our next phase.

The Crewsaders members all bring their special skills and personalities to the group, making us a vibrant mix.

Every year brings its challenges, both personally and collectively and we enjoy each others company and the friendships we have made through paddling. As we enjoy the good times and support each other through sadness, we are constantly reminded how precious life and the people around us are and to embrace the present.

***Jill Harrison, Crewsaders Dragons Abreast Bunbury***

***June 2009***