

Dragons Abreast Sydney

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Deb Read
 24/09/1954 – 21/08/2006

Deb Read was a champion in every way – an outstanding sportswoman, with a magnetic personality, who threw herself into life with unmatched enthusiasm and commitment. She was passionate about her work in the YWCA, where she leaves a trail of exceptional achievements which have improved the lives of thousands of women and will keep changing lives for more women in the future. Yet her modesty was such that even her family, back in her native Canada, was only dimly aware of the scope of her enormous contribution to our society.

Deb was also a wonderful role model for other women, showing courage, wisdom, integrity, a strong sense of social justice, an analytical mind and the ability to inspire others to challenge themselves. Not only in her work, but also in her private life, she was truly compassionate and incredibly generous with her time and energies, managing to make everyone feel individual and special. Even when her health was failing she was still upbeat, so whenever you asked how she was doing she would focus instead on what you were up to, or how your paddling was going. With that ever-ready smile on her face and in her heart she was as inspirational and encouraging as ever.

One of the original members of the first National Dragons Abreast team in Australia in 2000, Deb leapt at the chance to join DASydney when it got off the ground in 2003. A top dragon boater, consistently striving to better her performance, she was thrilled to don

the green and gold for Australia in the Women's Masters crew competing at the World Championships in Shanghai in 2004. When she could no longer paddle, she threw herself into coaching with that same trademark passion and energy. A phenomenal coach and motivator, Deb consistently drew more effort out of us than we knew we had to give – but it was always done with a wicked sense of fun and wonderfully cheeky sense of humour.

Deb lived an extraordinary life, never baulking at the difficulties and always grabbing opportunities with both hands. Her sheer exuberance and zest for living made her seem larger than life and, because she was so much fun, simply being in her company improved your day.

As a little memento from all of us in DASydney we collected up photos of Deb's paddling life in Oz and memories of her that you all kindly contributed and, in a marathon 16-hour effort, Robin Shoebridge, Margot Case and I put together a little album (some of the pages of which you can see here). We raced it to Deb's family the next day before they headed off back to Canada.



Deb in the boat - Happiness with a paddle



Deb-in-Oz memories we made for Deb's Mum



Some of the DASydney City2Surfers at the start

The City2Surf

It was Sue McClelland who talked us into this 14km fun run, but thankfully she didn't expect us all to run!! Rosie O'Donnell, Margaret Davis and Brenda Owen showed a clean pair of heels fairly early and we haven't decided yet whether actually running counted as cheating – but they certainly impressed the rest of us! This is how Vicki McLean saw the morning:

A number of us found each other at the registration desk (thanks to our fabulous shirts!) and then moved to Hyde Park where we started our warming up. I think that sitting in the sun counts as warming up. More Dragons Abreast appeared (finding us thanks to our magnificent pink shirts) and we set about getting a spot on the road, waiting for the starter's gun. If you looked closely at the large picture in the SMH on Monday August 14th, you could actually make us out amongst the crowds (thanks to our wonderful pink shirts).

To the sounds of the Stones – “Won't you start me up” off we went. We were prepared for everything – from snacks and bandaids to anti-inflammatories and a torch (Helen was anticipating a very leisurely walk!) Although we started as a group – well really two groups (a few of the team were in the back of the back group) it was not long before some of the group moved ahead and stayed ahead! It worked out quite well that we were in a number of small groups as people came up to us and asked about our fantastic pink shirts. This gave us more chances to spread the message about DA and support for Breast Cancer Awareness.

We did see many other groups – including



These were the mugs who braved the City2Surf

the rainbow men and a group of guys in bright yellow Speedos with “ Budgy Smugglers” across the back. Those guys had more than a few good points – but I don't think that spelling was one of them. We made way for wheelchairs and blind runners, parents pushing strollers, old shufflers and young joggers.

It's always helpful to have a bit of inside information, and Muriel's knowledge of a secret toilet behind a church meant that those who needed to go did not have to wait in a very long line. Those of you who have travelled with children will be well aware of the 'are we there yet' chant which often starts up as you leave the driveway. Well – there was a bit of 'are we there yet' in reference to Heartbreak Hill (No Sue – that's a speed hump). When we did get there we just kept walking and talking and before we knew it we were on the downward run.

It was a great day – perhaps a bit too warm

for some of the serious competitors. The first of our team to get in was Rosie O'Donnell, who set a cracking pace and achieved a time of 130.59 minutes, and then, a dragon's whisker later, Brenda Owen and Margaret Davis in just 131.39 minutes. The rest of us came across the line in dribs and drabs. Luckily, no-one needed the torch.

At the end, a number of us met up before going our separate ways. The queues for the buses from Bondi back to the city were long. Some of the keener paddlers went back to state training (just getting there in the nick of time) others of us struggled up the hill and had a well deserved coffee and brunch. All in all it was a great day. It was my first City2Surf and I am pleased to have been involved in such a happy event. Thanks to Sue McClelland for organising us.

Vicki McLean



Guess who just got elected to the Committee? L to R: Brenda Owen, Katherine Pineiro, Rosie O'Donnell, Deb Hirst, Fairlie Stanish, Muriel Buckridge, Wilma Kippers, Clare Hendy, Barbara Lane, Vicky Farmer, Cynthia Kuiper, Carol Fentoulis

Your New Committee

It was a freezing day when we had the AGM so we all crammed into the coffee shop, despite the fact that it seemed like almost everyone was there (bit reminiscent of those stories of seeing how many people you can fit in a Volkswagen). Needless to say we were falling on top of one another so the photos only show a fraction of those present. It was a year of great achievements for DASydney and you can read the various reports on the group email site, so there's no need to put them into this newsletter. You can see that we've not only expanded the committee numbers, but now all committee members have a portfolio.

Sadly our energetic Social Events Coordinator, Margo-Lynne Lee, had to step down because she's now heavily involved on the committee organizing the World Championships in 2007. Margo-Lynne has done a fantastic job over the years she's been on the committee and testament to her work is the fact that it's taken three people to fill her shoes: Robin Shoebridge is now coordinating the Craft Group, Gael Ellis has become our Fundraising Fellow and Kathryn Pineiro bravely put her hand up to orchestrate our Social Events. We also welcome Pam Bell to the Committee as our PR Person (if there's anyone who can spin a compelling tale, it's Pam); Vicki Farmer is now our Assistant Team Captain – and none too soon as Fairlie has shot off to Europe on yet another overseas vacation (the lucky duck); Rosie O'Donnell is backing up Claire as Assistant Treasurer and Deb Hirst has kindly agreed to back me up as Assistant Coordinator, ceding Paddle



Helen Westwood conducting elections

Registration to Barbara Lane. The rest of us are familiar faces to you all so need no introduction. It's a super committee and we hope to do great things for DASydney.

Your new Committee

Coordinator: Cynthia Kuiper
Assistant Coordinator: Deb Hirst
Treasurer: Claire Hendy
Assistant Treasurer: Rosie O'Donnell
Secretary: Wilma Kippers
Membership Coordinator: Muriel Buckridge
Team Captain: Fairlie Stanish
Assistant Team Captain: Vicki Farmer
Social Events Coordinator: Kathryn Pineiro
Merchandise Coordinator: Brenda Owen
Fundraising Coordinator: Gael Ellis

PR Coordinator: Pam Bell
Paddle Registrar: Barbara Lane P

DASzling the Opposition

Well you didn't hear it here first, because you voted for it already at the post-AGM meeting – but the snazzy new name chosen to replace "Mel's Belles" for our sporting crews is DASzlers. It's a great name because it provides an obvious link to our club name, DASydney; it's hard to spell but easy to yell out; and it gives our guys (who are already bravely showing how much they love their partners by proudly wearing pink shirts) a gender-nonspecific name under which to race. Watch out world – here come the DASzlers!



Lots of laughs as the DASzlers mixed crew lines up, while Jo Petterson and Bonnie Cheleski, now in Pacific Dragons, take it pretty seriously.

The Dobroyd Regatta

It's always fun to read about the experience of our virgin racers at their first regatta and this piece from Yolande Franklin is no exception. It reminds us why we exist – to share the magic that is Dragons Abreast and to see in the shining faces of new paddlers that thrill as they discover that They Too Can Do Anything!

After a whole three months training throughout winter I enthusiastically went to the first Regatta of the season at Dobroyd.

We were divided into three teams, one mixed and two women's masters. Our first race was mid morning and the adrenalin was pumping even before we got into the boat. Mixed masters went first and came in behind, making a mighty effort. The first women's team drove it over the finish line, coming first in their heat. Our team snuck over the line coming first by half a second. Being my first ever race, I was thrilled that we had won (yes, I am competitive). I had never paddled so hard in my short career. Out of time in the first 20 and catching up in the second, my arms couldn't go any harder., or so I thought. Our second women's heat saw the A team come first again, and even though the B team improved their time by 11 seconds we scraped in second by a nose.

This was still a thrill and after watching a display of the Asian style of racing by the Australian Team going to Macao both women's teams were called up for the masters finals. The A team powered over the line first and even though the B team came in fourth we put up a fight and didn't lose by much. By now the adrenalin was well and truly flowing. And for the next two days after the regatta the adrenalin kept on flowing. I felt great! And even though I had some bad news on Monday (not health), I felt strong and able to cope with anything. Nothing was getting me down. I can't wait for the next regatta. I am addicted. HELP!!!

Yolande Franklin



Robin Shoebridge in her orange rookie jacket in the line-up about to sweep her first regatta



DASzlers at Dobroyd



Cynth, Carol and Fairlie sorting out seating for Dobroyd

From the Ether

Seems as fast as we gain new paddlers our veterans desert us – one of our “Shanghai girls”, Bobbie Fox, took the plunge and moved to Nowra. We bumped into her at the Dobroyd Regatta where she was paddling with her new team:

It was lovely to see so many of the DASydney club on Sunday and it was a great day in every aspect. As you know after leaving work I headed south to start my retirement. I certainly did miss the contacts I had made and the paddling at Black Wattle Bay. Also wanted



Bobbie Fox

to let you know how much it had meant to me to be associated with the club and the wonderful experiences enjoyed. I have so many extraordinary memories, all the training sessions in wind, rain and sun, the fun at regattas and masters in Adelaide, plus the amazing experiences going overseas.

Very special thanks to all the office bearers. I know you all work so hard and your efforts make the club such a success – you are all wonderful. The club is a real inspiration and I am privileged to have been part of it. I have now joined NowraWater Dragons; they are small enthusiastic club and lots of fun. I will paddle with them until November when I go to US and I look forward to catching up with DAsydney members at regattas until then. Thank you for giving me so much.

Bobbie Fox

BOOBS Day Out

On Friday 11th August the inimitable BOOBS group (don't ask – it's the Craft Group) met at Robin Shoebridge's at Engadine for an early start to their Christmas preparations. Most arrived with only one or two stops for map reading (getting lost is obligatory the first time you go to her place). The long table was covered with plastic and boxes of tempting pens, rubber stamps, glue and glitter (plus washcloths and towels). We were all given a pack containing blank cards and practice pieces and let loose.

With access to the same things, we all produced totally different Christmas cards and gift tags, using a combination of stamping and embossing (which involves dipping your stamping, while still wet, into what looks like sand but is really embossing powder and then trying not to burn your current creation with a hot paint stripping gun) and gluing and sticking pieces of paper cut in many shapes from border strips to squares and stars. Robyn supplied a dazzling array of colours of inks and pens and stamps – the results ranged from artistic and imaginative to fairly basic (I always say that I can copy but not create). Everyone exchanged ideas and techniques and there should be a lot of beautiful cards in the post come Christmas.



Crafty culprits and their cards



A few of the Christmas cards

We were all so involved we forgot morning tea and only belatedly stopped to have lunch out on the deck and pre-sample the new pink and white M&Ms.

Geri Hill

M&M Mania

Massively undermining the collective weight loss efforts of the DAsydney K calorie Kids, a whole pallet load of Pink and White M&Ms rolled onto the fundraising scene in August. This was a clever DAA initiative which delivers funding to the participating DA clubs, to

DAA and to the McGrath Foundation while raising Breast Cancer awareness and making us all fat. Our Fundraising Fellow, Gael, was snowed under with exams, so Brenda Owen and Vicki McLean got the program off the ground (poor Brenda - her car always seems to be packed to the hilt with DAsydney merchandise). Most members were agreeably surprised how quickly the darned things sold themselves – soooooo moreish, eh? – but nobody came within cooee of Brenda's own effort of offloading 468 packets in a single day at her son's school. Watch out if she offers to sell you the Anzac Bridge any time soon!

Peripatetic Paddler

Although DASydney qualified to compete at the World Club Crew Championships in Toronto in August in the end we couldn't afford to send a crew – but Angie Aston did manage to get there and indeed paddled. Here's what she found:

When I arrived in Toronto I was a bit depressed because I'd only just learned about Deb Read going into hospital and I remembered her wish to paddle on Lake Ontario (by her home town of Hamilton). I had decided she would be my focus when I met up with Michelle Hanton and the Toronto Dragons Abreast team for a practice session and a Flowers on the Water ceremony for a Toronto Dragons Abreast lady, and so I thought of Deb and sent up lots of prayers for her. It was a lovely ceremony and it was a clear, calm night on the lake.

Following the ceremony I was invited to join the Toronto Dragons Abreast group for pizza and beer at Sunnyside – a well known heritage set of buildings (used to be a ballroom, a bathing area) right on the Lake very close to the race venue. That's when Michelle Hanton & I and Janelle Gamble (of Missabittatitti - she paddled with us in Berlin last year), learned that another "pink" club, the Pink Sensations had entered the Club Crew Championships, but were short a number of paddlers. We Aussies were greatly welcomed because at least 3 of the Pink Sensations team had never raced before.

As a result of the invitation, I raced in all the Dragons Abreast races (200 & 500m) and came home with two bronze medals! Not bad, considering I hadn't expected to race at all. I can't begin to describe how special it was for me to race on my own home turf – something I never imagined! But it felt pretty weird to be racing as a Canadian not an Australian! The Pink Sensations crew was very welcoming and the three of us felt very much part of the team after only an hour or two. It was interesting to note that the survivor clubs in Toronto paddle on only one side, so I was relegated to paddling "right". Luckily I'm happy paddling on either side, but my right shoulder was getting pretty sore after two days of racing on the same side. I tried to encourage them to think about the benefits of training both sides – don't know how successful I was though. Toronto Dragons Abreast won every race, but their times weren't as good as some of our DASydney crews have achieved. A number of women who were members of Toronto Dragons Abreast were also paddling with a sports crew. I assume they may all accompany the Toronto team to Queensland next year though – so we can't rest on our laurels!

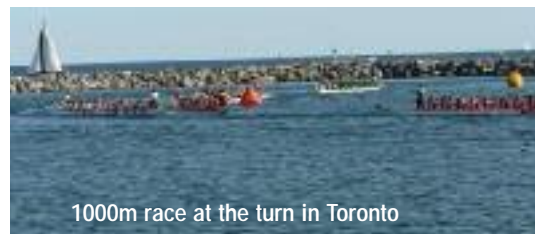
I didn't get much time to chat with the



Angie and the Pink Sensations in Toronto



Angie with her two bronze medals from Toronto



1000m race at the turn in Toronto

Sloths (the only Sydney team in Toronto), although I said hi to them, ditto with the Brisbane River Dragons and Arafura Dragons, but there was certainly interest in the Australian teams. They were always mobbed by the other teams wanting to make them feel welcome etc. The Australians have quite a "party" reputation and attracted lots of attention. In addition, Mel Cantwell set up a table and an exhibit showcasing Australia and received lots of interest, so 2007 should be great fun. Mel's Kangaroo on the Barbie attracted a lot of attention – people couldn't figure out what it was, and were then a bit surprised when it was explained – not everyone understands the Aussie sense of humour – but we laughed!

A very interesting race to watch was the 2000m event – on a 500m course and turning 3 times. Like our twilight paddles, each team set off approx 30 seconds apart; however at the end of the first 500m, the sweep on the first boat overcorrected on the turn and fell out of the boat! Hence, all boats had to return to the start – so all teams had done 1000m before they started the race again! It was clearly a sweeps race, and watching the boats manoeuvring

around the turns was almost heart-stopping. Zeus (Sloths) was amazing – he steered his boat around each turn as though there was no one else around and each time came inches from the others boats – but there were no mishaps or crashes and Sloths Women's and Open teams ended up in 5th place in their races. Sadly I didn't get a shot of Zeus cutting a tight corner in the 2000m race – I was too anxious to watch it through the camera. After the sweep who fell off the boat, I was worried that Zeus might accidentally ram someone in his efforts to gain an advantage! But he didn't.

However, most importantly for DASydney, there were 10 Grand Dragons teams (from USA, Canada, Germany and Australia)- but only 6 teams had enough women to put up a Women's Grand Masters team – enough numbers that it's worth considering for us!

While I also had a lovely time in Toronto because my family (two sons and my sister) are there, it was very special to be part of the dragon boat community and I'm so glad I was able to paddle. The weather was fantastic – hot, 29 degrees every day; sunshine, etc, venue was great – lots of space, plenty of toilets (and toilet paper!), and good food tents. But it was the dragon boaters who made it special - everyone was welcoming, even if they didn't speak English, everyone was happy and smiling. Lastly, we've made some good friends with the Toronto Dragons Abreast and Pink Sensations teams and we'll be seeing them in Queensland next year – I'm looking forward to it.

Angie Aston

Seriously Fun Shopping Bargains

Are you always flat out and never have the time or budget to do your Christmas shopping? Wish you could get it all done early and save yourself from a plastic meltdown in the process? Ta daaaaa!! DASydney can solve all your pressie problems on Saturday October 14th. Right after the paddle Angie Aston has organized a Super Shopping Bargain tour for us. A big bus will take us to a range of discount outlets with presents for everyone on your list at prices you can afford! More details soon but for now it looks like there will be lots of 20 minute stops for clothing, shoes, housewares, novelty items, Christmas decorations etc. There are a limited number of seats on the bus and already half are gone, so put your name down with Angie right away and start making lists of who you need to shop for so you'll be all organized! It could save you heaps of time and money and it will give DASydney a little Christmas pressie as well.

Bank St News In a nutshell:

Eight of the 12 DBNSW BUK boats have now been refurbished and the final 4 should be ready before the end of the month so you'll all be pleased to know we shouldn't have to take out the EDBF boats any more after that.

Six more BUK boats are on order and should arrive around November, which will mean State and National titles this season will have 18 boats, making race organisation easier.

Cross your fingers (?) because we're told a second portaloos will be arriving at Bank St soon – and they will be cleaned weekly (hey, that's better than before)

They might be installing a tap at Bank St – so not only could we get a drink but we might even be able to wash our hands one day. Keep your fingers crossed for that one too.

Two more erg machines are apparently on order (groan! – the Inquisition will have nothing on Bank St) – guess the state coaches really mean business this season. Let's hope they come with a better bolting system this time so the screw threads don't get wrecked so quickly.

Finally the ramp is "on the agenda" whatever that means – but we live in hope!

Media Tarting

Well, we didn't crack the papers in August but



Birthday flowers and, below, Cynthia with the M&M cake

our new PR Impresario, Pam Bell, hit the hustings to tell 75 Probus Club members in Berowra about Dragons Abreast. Apparently someone had heard her talk to a group in Bendigo a while back and she now has a reputation as a great after-dinner speaker. Anyone who has spent any time with Pam can readily understand how that came about. Our Pam doesn't miss a trick! When someone pointed out radio personality, Ray Hadley, trying to have a quiet cup of coffee at "our" coffee shop Pam bowled up to him and explained why he ought to give Dragons Abreast a plug. Atta girl, Pam! To her great credit he actually listened and seemed to be quite impressed – wonder if anyone listens to him on the radio and heard whether he did?

Don't forget...

Check the Calendar on the back page and make sure you have all those regattas in your diary. Plus there's still room on the Sunday December 10th Officials Course (you'll need to have done this to be part of the Worlds in 2007). Contact Charlotte Osman on cosman@westpac.com.au to book your place. Lots of our girls have done the course already, and quite a few of us are booked on the December course, so you'll have company. Our next Newbies day is Sept 30th – please

remember that any potential newbies must always phone me first so I can get the relevant details.

Milestones

Thanks everyone for the lovely birthday surprise and the cake – and to think I nearly didn't come for coffee! Thought I'd share the beautiful flowers with our other September birthday girls: Margaret Davis and Sue Tolhurst on the 19th and Chris Dunn on the 25th. Happy Birthday!!

Thanks to all the contributors to the newsletter and, as always, to Kerry Enemark for making it look so beautiful. I'd especially like to thank our great photographers who keep sending me all these marvelous pictures – Robin Shoebridge always seems to have camera in hand and sends me photos of almost everything, bless her heart, and particular thanks to Angie Aston's and Sally Lynch's husbands who have given me some phenomenal shots.

Paddles Up!
Cynth

DAS CALENDAR 2006.2007

| Date(s) | Event | Location | Details |
|-----------------------|---|-----------------------------------|--|
| September 2006 | | | |
| Sun 10th | Ryde Aquatic Festival Regatta | Kissing Point Park, Putney | |
| Thu 14th | Encore Meeting | Lewisham Life Care Centre | Speaker: Cynthia Kuiper |
| Sun 17th | Dragonhunters' Master and Grand Masters Fun Regatta | Throsby Creek, Carrington | Contact Vicki Farmer for more details |
| Sep 29th -1st Oct | IPDBC Breast Cancer World Dragon Boat Championships | Singapore | More info: www.bcf.org.sg |
| Sat 30th | Zonta Hornsby's "Women of the 21s Century" Seminar | Ravenswood, Gordon | Speaker: Cynthia Kuiper |
| Sat 30th | DA Sydney Newbies Day | Bank St, Pyrmont | Potential Newbies must register in advance by phoning Cynthia |
| October 2006 | | | |
| Sun 8th | DBNSW Regatta, Race 1 | Penrith SIRC | Hosted by CYL, 500m. Register now with Vicki Farmer |
| Sat 14th | DASydney Shopping Expedition | TBA | All your Christms shopping svings in one day! Bookings essentail with Angie Aston on angelaa@nswcc.org.au |
| Fri 20th | Inaugural Skins Regatta | Blackwattle Bay, Bank St | |
| November 2006 | | | |
| Sat 5th | DBNSW Regatta, Race 2 | Roseville | Hosted by PDs. Register with Team Captain, Fairlie Stanish on fstanish@optusnet.com.au |
| Fri 10th | Breast Care Nurses Teambuilding day | Bank St, Pyrmont | To be organised by Claire Hendy, Margo-Lynne Lee, Wilma Kippers and Cynthia Kuiper. |
| 10th – 11th | Pan Pacific Masters Games | Gold Coast | Contact team Captain, Fairlie Stanish for more details on fstanish@optusnet.com.au |
| Fri 24th | Twilight Paddle | Blackwattle Bay, Bank St | |
| December 2006 | | | |
| Sun 3rd | DBNSW Regatta, Race 3 | Penrith SIRC | Hosted by Sloths, 200m |
| Sun 10th | AUSDBF Officials Course | Homebush | So you can be part of the Worlds next year, register with Charlotte Osman on cosman@westpac.com.au |
| January 2007 | | | |
| Sat 13th | Tacoma Regatta | Tacoma River, Wyong | |
| Fri 19th | Twilight Paddle | Blackwattle Bay, Bank St | |
| February 2007 | | | |
| 24th - 25th | Chinese New Year | Darling Harbour | |
| March 2007 | | | |
| Sat 24th | NSW State Titles | Penrith SIRC | |
| April 2007 | | | |
| 5th – 8th | AusDBF National Titles | Penrith SIRC | |
| September 2007 | | | |
| 19th – 23rd | IDBF 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 | This is gonna be awesome! Make sure you don't miss out. |