

EDBF EUROPEAN NATIONS CHAMPIONSHIP, ROME 2016

AN EXTRACT FROM OUR BOOK HERE BE DRAGONS

By Marian O'Dea and Susan Rowe

As Plurabelles we have always said that there is room on the boat for everyone, no matter what their level of fitness. Some of our members have played sport competitively, while others have never considered themselves „sporty“. Fiona herself got a great kick out of being described as an „athlete“ on her accreditation for the competition in Malaysia.

For some of these competitive Plurabelles there was great excitement when the Irish Dragon Boat Association put out a call for paddlers to trial for the Senior Irish International Women's Team for the European Nations Dragon Boat Championships 2016. Ten Plurabelles put their names forward initially. The first training session was held in July 2015 and was (we thought at the time) gruelling. It really laid down a marker for all and there was no doubt that huge commitment was required to be selected for the team.

Training sessions were held monthly and in January 2016 a crew was selected to go to Spain for a training camp and some racing. After this trip the final time trials were held in Carlow in April 2016. After eight long months of training, the squad for Rome was announced and seven Plurabelles were on the team. Little did they know, but the really hard work was just getting started. Training sessions were now held over two consecutive days every four weeks or so. With three water sessions and two video technical analysis debriefs each day, Plurabelles drove back to Dublin on some Sunday evenings hardly able to speak. But come Monday morning they were up and ready again to start training for the week.

It its most intense, we were training 10-12 times a week, including lots of early mornings before work and then again on the way home. The team travelled to Rome not knowing what to expect and the rest of Europe also didn't know what was coming their way. All the hard work paid off and the team won bronze in the 1500 metres and silver over 200 metres. The 500-metre race was agonisingly close and we were pipped at the post, finishing in fourth place in the final.

At the time of writing plans are in place for the next European Nations Championship, which will be in Germany in August 2018. Those of us who were part of the team could never have imagined where this dragon boat adventure would take us. Watch this space for more to come . . .