

# Why do some healthy pregnancies end tragically



Happy . . . Kirsten Macaulay and Justin Bott, pictured with nine-month-old Daniel and Elana, 2. The couple had a stillborn child, Katrina, some years ago. Picture: JIM TRIFYLLIS



Hopes . . . Amy Beaston

## Amy aims to conquer Irish town

By LISA CARAPIET

AMY Beaston is an able seaman with her sights set on Irish territory — but this is no military assignment.

The 22-year-old is one of eight contestants in the 2007 Sydney Rose of Tralee Pageant who are vying to become an ambassador for Sydney at Ireland's huge International Rose of Tralee Festival in August.

Held in picturesque Kerry in southwestern Ireland, it is the second-largest festival of its kind in Europe.

With six years of experience in the Royal Australian Navy and still only a junior, she said she was fortunate and proud to be in Mackay preparing to take part in their Anzac Day march.

Able Seaman Beaston believes the skills needed to serve in the military will help her win the 2007 pageant.

"I'm proud. It's a big achievement. I know the navy and I'm proud to talk about it.

"I think it would transfer over if I was the ambassador for Australia," she said.

To be a "rose" a woman must be "lovely and fair" like the Rose of Tralee in the old Irish ballad of the same name — a refreshing change from being judged on how well you sashay down a set of stairs in a two-piece.

"People ask, 'What swimsuit are you going to wear?'" Able Seaman Beaston said. "It's not a beauty pageant. They judge you on all those types of things that make you a lady."

With her Irish heritage tracing back to her great-grandmother, she decided to enter Penrith Gaels Club's first-ever Claddagh Charity Pageant when she was raising money for the Nepean Disability Organisation.

The women were judged on leadership, charity and teamwork.

# Study to save unborn babies

**EXCLUSIVE**

By ZOE TAYLOR

AUSTRALIAN researchers hope a series of groundbreaking studies will help unlock the mystery of stillbirth and lead to action on the issue.

Every week about 10 babies are stillborn in NSW.

Often they inexplicably die in the womb towards the end of an uneventful pregnancy.

It is hoped the work of a new collaboration of parents, campaigners and clinicians could lead to a repeat of the hugely successful public health campaign that led to a huge fall in the number of children dying from Sudden Infant Death Syndrome.

That \$15 million safe-sleeping campaign is credited with a 90 per cent fall in the number of cot deaths over the past two decades. But while SIDS deaths have declined, and while the survival rate of babies in the first 28 days of life has been vastly improved, there has been no fall in stillbirths — the loss of an unborn after 20 weeks.

New figures from the *NSW Mothers and Babies Report* reveal that 535 babies were stillborn during 2005. That compares to 87 SIDS deaths during the same year for the entire country, with Professor Heather Jeffery, head of newborn care at the Royal Prince Alfred Hospital and a member of the new Australia and New Zealand Stillbirth Alliance, describing stillbirth as a "major public health issue".

A Norwegian study has suggested a link between a fall in the amount the baby moves or kicks in the womb and the risk of stillbirth. It is hoped the study will be replicated here by Dr Vicki Flenady, perinatal researcher at the Centre for Clinical Studies at Mater Health Services, Brisbane.

Dr Flenady is now analysing the results of two other studies — one that investigated the circumstances of about 800 unexplained stillbirths in Victoria, Queensland and Western Australia, and another that focused on 700 women who reported reduced foetal movement during pregnancy.

Dr Flenady will also conduct a review of all the previous studies into the causes of stillbirth —

funded by the Stillbirth Foundation, a charity set up by a group of NSW parents who had lost babies.

"We might have the opportunity to make a real difference," Dr Flenady said. "There are a lot of similarities to SIDS."

She said the study of unexplained stillbirth was likely to identify risk factors such as maternal obesity, smoking and a slowdown in the growth of babies.

Sydney mother Emma Kirkwood established the Stillbirth Foundation to provide support for parents, fund research and raise awareness after her second baby Olivia was stillborn at 36 weeks.

"It's about time that stillbirth got the attention," she said. "We need to start working now so we can find out how we can stop this."

Kirsten Macaulay, 33, whose first baby Katrina was stillborn in 2003, said: "Even if only one family is prevented from going through this — that would be enough for us."

The Stillbirth Foundation holds the Little Feet Taking Big Steps Ball at the Hilton Sydney on May 5. Contact 0419 995 464, or visit [www.stillbirthfoundation.org.au](http://www.stillbirthfoundation.org.au).

## FBI investigates honeymooner's diving death

POLICE searched a home in the US seeking information about the death of an American woman who was scuba diving on her honeymoon in north Queensland in 2003.

Christina Thomas Watson, 26, died during a diving trip to the Yonga-

la shipwreck site off the coast of Townsville on October 22, 2003.

The newlywed, on her honeymoon with her husband of 11 days, was pulled unconscious from the water. Efforts to revive her failed.

US authorities have been investigating the

death following a request from the Queensland Police Service.

FBI agents and detectives from the Townsville Criminal Investigation Branch and Homicide Investigation Unit searched the home in Hoover, Alabama, on April 23.

Detective Acting Superintendent Darryl Johnson from the Queensland Crime Operations Branch said it would be premature to reveal what they were searching for.

"The investigation is continuing and has a long way to go."



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## Going along for d'oh ride

HOMER (pictured), Bart and the rest of the TV Simpson family are headed to an amusement park in the US.

Universal Studios will feature the cartoon characters in a new ride to open at its two parks in



Orlando, Florida, and Hollywood, California, in the spring of 2008, the parks said yesterday.

The unnamed attraction will replace Back to the Future: The Ride.

It will be based on the character Krusty the Clown's vision of an amusement park.

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