

Breastfriends Cardiff and Vale Breast Cancer Support Group

January 2019



Celebrating 15 years of Breastfriends in style!

(see page 3)

Who are we?

Breastfriends, described by one of our members as a source of instant friendship, is a friendly support group for anyone who has had a diagnosis of breast cancer, whether it was last week, last month, last year or many years ago.

Breast cancer can be isolating and scary, but meeting others in a similar situation and sharing information and experiences can make a real difference.



Walk with us or talk with us

We meet once a month in Cardiff and once a month in Barry as well as meeting regularly for short walks in lovely surroundings. **See back page for more details.**

We know that walking into a room of strangers can be off putting, so please get in touch if you'd like a buddy for your first walk or meeting.

www.breastfriendscandv.org.uk

My ultimate challenge!

Whilst reading the last issue of Breastfriends, I saw that Elaine Nicholas and Sue Youngman would be taking part in the Cardiff Half Marathon on 07 October 2018, wearing specially designed Breastfriends t-shirts.

Coincidentally, I was also taking part and decided I'd be delighted and proud to wear the Breastfriends t-shirt and raise money for the charity. Breastfriends had introduced me to many lovely ladies, who like me, were trying to grapple with their diagnosis and treatment for breast cancer and I thought "wouldn't it be lovely to give something back".

Elaine and Sue were well versed with the challenge that lay ahead, as they had participated in the event several times. However, for me, it would be the culmination of 2 year's running preparation. Having walked the event in 2013, with a group of ladies, who were all raising money for Breast Cancer Care, the event inspired me to start running. I started to participate in my local Parkrun every Saturday at 9am, finally joining a local running club in August 2018. Up to this point I had spent many evenings running alone however during the summer of 2018, I learnt that several local Bassaleg ladies, who had also signed up for the half marathon had got together to form a running group – Womens Running Club (WRC) and I was asked whether I would like to join them for their evening training sessions and early Sunday morning long runs.

Since 2013, I always had my eye on one day achieving, for me, the ultimate challenge to run the Cardiff Half Marathon. I'd never had the confidence in myself to consider achieving this; nevertheless, at the age of 54, I was determined to do it this time.

In the lead up to the day, I had been feeling very apprehensive about the race and had tried not to think about it. I'd run nearly 11 miles during training and friends said I'd be fine, as the crowds would carry me through the last 3 miles. I wasn't convinced! Little did they know, that I was terrified, that I was not going to make it around course. I dearly wanted to run the whole way but having never run that far previously, I was struggling to block out my negative thoughts.

The day dawned and quite honestly I have never felt so nervous. I sat in the car with my husband, who was giving me some final running tips, finished my banana and then thought - you can do this!

Having picked up my t-shirt the day before, the first challenge was to find Elaine and Sue in all the crowds for a team photo (see page 7). Once I was on the start line, I just knew I had to get the job done whatever it would take both mentally and physically. The first 7 miles was fine. Lots of cheering from the crowds and banter from the other runners. I was at this point running with one of the other ladies from the Bassaleg Womens Running Club (WRC).

From mile 7/8, I was running on my own. The crowds were terrific and when I came up to mile 10 I saw a few other friends from Bassaleg and around the corner my girls; Harriet and Elinor, who gave me a huge shout out! Just after that I saw my husband Gary, my Dad and nephew who had all come to watch the event. I knew from this point onwards the race was going to be mentally tough. My legs were aching but I wasn't going to stop. At mile 12 the climb up Fairoak Road hill became a blur. I just kept thinking of all the lovely ladies, whom I had met at Breastfriends; I gritted my teeth, put my head down and pushed my way to the top. Once I was at the top of the hill, I let the road take me down into the city. I did speed up towards the home straight and my official time was 2hrs 31minutes.

I had done it!! I have to say I could barely walk after that but I had actually run the whole course! Running has given me the freedom, to push myself to new limits, which I didn't even know I could do.

Would I run it again? Well, I've already signed up for next year! **Liz Kenward**



Celebrating fifteen years of Breastfriends in style

(from Page 1)



Breastfriends has been going since 2003 and we celebrated our 15th anniversary in style with a sell-out fashion show at Canolfan Beulah in October. We marked fifteen years of friendship and support with the help of Kath Smith, who runs the independent boutique, Calon Rhiwbeina, a local shop which specialises in flattering clothing for women of all ages, shapes and sizes.

With her excellent eye for colour and tone, Kath put together some fabulous outfits for our eight volunteer models, who all took to the catwalk like ducks to water. Around a hundred guests turned out to see Elaine, Jo, Bethan, Maggie, Ruth, Mandy, Kaye and Sharon showcase a range of attractive, autumnal ensembles for all occasions. Our daring volunteers put their best feet forward in alpaca knitwear, bamboo leggings, fake fur jackets, chiffon blouses and lots of velvet. Despite some backstage nerves, our models did us proud and showed off their statement scarves like pros.

Members of Breastfriends have taken part in Breast Cancer Care fashion shows before, but this is the first time we've held our own event. As well as a fun evening, the show was an opportunity to help women who have experienced breast cancer to regain some confidence and to feel more positive about their body image, something that can take a bit of a battering through the ordeal of diagnosis and treatment.



This hugely enjoyable evening was a great opportunity for old and new friends to get together to celebrate Breastfriends. We also managed to raise an amazing £1500 – which will help fund the next fifteen years of friendship.

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Our eight volunteer models were great sports and all looked wonderful. They also found the experience rewarding. Here's what some of them had to say:

"I loved every minute!"

"My son was in the front row and was mesmerised. At the end he said, 'I am so very proud of you Mum'."

"I appreciated the opportunity to feel glamorous for an evening. It has also given my confidence a huge boost. Breastfriends forever."

"This was way out of my comfort zone, but I loved it. Such a confidence boost!"

"At first I had a few nerves stepping out in front of so many people, but once I got used to it I enjoyed the show and it was great to wear some outfits that I wouldn't have thought of putting together myself."

"Really good fun, and what a great group of ladies".

Justine Hankins

Dates for Your Diary

Breast Cancer Care Cymru Dates

Moving Forward Courses

This free four week course (one morning per week) covers a range of topics to help you move forward after treatment. Expert speakers are happy to answer questions and there's time to share experiences with people in a similar situation to you.

Moving Forward, Cardiff

10am - 1pm

Wednesdays 06 February—27 February 2019

Family and Friends Event, Cardiff

5pm—7.30pm

Tuesday, 29 January 2019

Lingerie Evening, Cardiff

5pm—8pm

Wednesday, 06 March 2019

Breast Reconstruction Information Session, Cardiff

10am—12.30pm

Tuesday, 12 March 2019

Booking is essential for the above Breast Cancer Care Cymru events.

Please call 0345 077 1894 or e-mail cym@breastcancercare.org.uk for more info.

Living with Secondary Breast Cancer

has been designed to give you the opportunity to meet other people living with a secondary diagnosis and get relevant information and support.



In Cardiff there are regular (usually monthly) meet-ups where you can chat and share experiences with others with a secondary diagnosis. Topics include pain management, fatigue, benefits, and side effects sessions – we also welcome suggestions for topics you would like to cover.

If anyone is interested in the Living with Secondary Breast Cancer service they can contact Breast Cancer Care Cymru on 0845 077 1893 or email secondarieservices@breastcancercare.org.uk

Friday, 18 January 2019, 11am—3 pm,

Look Good Feel Better

Followed by lunch and meet up

Friday, 15 February 2019, 11am – 1pm, Meet up

March 2019, 11am—3 pm,

Health and Wellbeing Day

Date and venue—To be confirmed

Friday, 12 April 2019, 11am – 1pm, Meet up

Managing Menopausal Symptoms

A free 2.5 hour session on managing the menopausal symptoms that are all too often a side effect of breast cancer. The session is presented by Gail Williams, Oncology Nurse Specialist in breast cancer and takes place at Velindre Hospital.

For more information or to book onto a session, please call Helen Harris on 029 2031 6979

Save the date!

Breastfriends

Annual Strawberry Tea & AGM

Monday, 24 June 2019

If you are over 70..... Message from South East Wales Breast Screening Centre

'We will not invite you but you are still able to be screened if you wish. Please ask us for an appointment by getting in touch with your local Breast Test Wales screening centre. Screening is only available every three years'.

South East Wales Breast Screening Centre

18 Cathedral Road, Cardiff, CF11 9LJ. Telephone: (029) 2039 7222

Nicki's story

Nicki Ellis is a very special lady and is well known in both our breast cancer community and also in Barry, where she and her husband, Lyndsay, run The Vale Funeral Service.

Nicki (48) who is mum to Georgina (23) and Nikita (19) was diagnosed with breast cancer in 2015.

Since her diagnosis, Nicki has been an avid campaigner in raising awareness of breast cancer and the signs and symptoms that should be checked out.

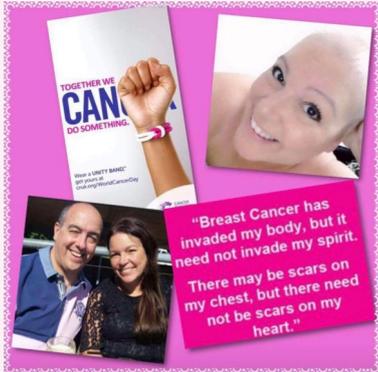


'From day 1, I decided I wanted to raise awareness for women of what they should look out for' says Nicki. 'There are now apps available which explain how women should check themselves and what signs and symptoms to look out for. In 2016, there were 11,563 deaths from breast cancer and my aim is to reduce that number through early detection'.

'When I was diagnosed, I was living a healthy lifestyle so people shouldn't assume that breast cancer only happens to people who smoke, drink or have poor diets'.

Although she has faced a daunting journey, Nicki says defiantly 'I'm still fighting'.

'In September 2017, my oncologist said the stats gave me another 12 months. I've got passed that and now I'm aiming to get to my 50th birthday in 2020!'



Nicki had been receiving treatment at Velindre Cancer Centre and in spite of having cancer in her lung, the lymph nodes in her chest and her spine, her focus is very much still on helping others. To mark breast cancer awareness month in October, Nicki set up a DAY OF SUNSHINE initiative which saw her source treats from local businesses and pass them onto stage 4 breast cancer patients.

Following on from the amazing success of her initiative and in the run up to Christmas, Nicki is now organising a DAY OF SUNSHINE for children facing cancer or long term illness.

'To have the support of family, friends and the community of Barry gives me the strength to carry on'.

A huge thank you to the truly inspirational Nicki Ellis for allowing us to share her story.

Sue Youngman

On 05 November 2018, Breast Cancer Care and Breast Cancer Now announced that they would merge and from April 2019, will be the UK's first comprehensive breast cancer charity.

Together, we are united in the aim that, by 2050 everyone who develops breast cancer will live, and everyone will receive the support they need to live well now.



News from Barry

In October, Cardiff and Vale Breast Cancer Now, supported by Barry Breastfriends, held their fourth annual Conker Walk in Porthkerry Country Park, Barry.

The focal point of the walk was a particularly special conker tree. There are only two conker trees at Porthkerry and one of these was damaged by lightning some years ago. The tree is still thriving, although its branches now grow up from the ground. Damaged but not defeated, the tree's fighting spirit clearly resonated with the organisers of the walk, so they chose this spot as a place to pause and reflect. Messages of remembrance and hope were tied to the tree with pink ribbons.

For the second year, Charlie-Jane, granddaughter of Barry Breastfriends Jenny Evans, played the role of 'conker fairy'. Charlie-Jane carried a bag of conkers and played hide and seek around the conker tree, much to the delight of the younger walkers.



Barry Breastfriends (from left Rosina Butler, Linda Watts and Jenny Evans) enjoying a special afternoon tea in the House of Lords on a visit to London as part of a their roles as Breast Cancer Now volunteers.

Sadly, it rained heavily all day so the ladies were unable to use the terrace overlooking the Thames.

Walking with Breastfriends

Our Tuesday morning walks (see page 8 for details) have become increasingly popular during 2018 providing a relaxed, informal introduction to the group for many of our new members.

The Barry walks make the most of beautiful Barrybados and alternate between Cold Knap and Barry Island whilst in Cardiff, we walk around Roath Park. Our walks are often a means to an end, the end being the coffee and cake at the end!

Roath Park has proved an ideal venue for our Cardiff walks and in 2018 we were blessed with a long hot summer and vivid autumn colours.



Getting out in the fresh air for some gentle exercise with like minded people is a great way to ward off the January blues.

Why not give us a go.

You'd be more than welcome!



Katie's story

On 14 October 2018, I took part in the Royal Parks Half Marathon-London and surprised myself by getting around the course in 2hrs 31mins because, believe me, I am not a natural runner. However, I wanted to give it a go to support Breast Cancer Care because of the help Mum received while she was going through treatment



A week before my 21st birthday, my Mum was diagnosed with Breast Cancer. It wasn't a usual tumour that grows as a hard lump, it was lobular, meaning it was less easy to pick up and took a few rounds of looking for it before they found it. She made the decision along with my Dad that they wouldn't tell me until after my birthday, so that I would have happy memories, rather than sad ones.

I remember, a few days later, when they called me asking me to come home so they could 'talk to me about something,' somehow I knew what they were going to tell me. When the words 'I've got Breast Cancer' were spoken to my brother and I, I knew our lives would never be quite the same. The following week, Mum was taken in to surgery for a mastectomy, and after her release from hospital, began an intensive course of chemotherapy.

Mum was introduced to Breast Cancer Care very early on in her treatment. Knowing she would lose her hair, volunteers were able to support her and us as a family to know what we should expect, how to tie head scarves and where best to buy wigs. Knowing she would feel self conscious and insecure, they spoke with her about how little things like doing her makeup would be different now that she had fewer eyelashes and skin left sore from the steroids of chemotherapy. Knowing she would feel scared, frustrated and alone in what she was going through, they arranged evenings where men and women would come together to talk and support each other - there was nothing forced, but you knew you had a safe place to go to ask questions, seek advice or vent the frustrations and upset you felt at the card you had been dealt, away from your family and friends. I never knew what was spoken about in those groups - but I realised quite quickly that Mum now had a support network that even we as her family could never contend with - a group of men and women who understood, because they had and were 'living it' too.



Cancer doesn't give you time to prepare. You are thrown right in at the deep end, and without organisations like Breast Cancer Care, many people would feel even more lost, confused and alone than they already do.

Whilst we as individuals can do very little to change the plight of the men and women diagnosed with Breast Cancer, I genuinely believe that Breast Cancer Care make the lives of those living with the disease slightly more bearable and offer unprecedented support to those who really do need it most, whether in person, online or on the phone.

Katie Braithwaite

A huge well done to Katie for raising over £1000 for Breast Cancer Care

And finally

Another huge well done to our Cardiff Half Marathon 2018 Team Breastfriends (from left, Sue Youngman, Liz Kenward and Elaine Nicholas) for raising over £500 for our charity and for reminding us that age and illness are not necessarily barriers for leading a full and active life.

We are so very proud of you ladies!





What's on at Breastfriends

Join us at one of our meetings

Cardiff Meetings

Our Cardiff group meets on these dates from **1pm-3pm** at the **Margaret Whittaker Lounge, Rhiwbina, Cardiff, CF14 6LX** unless otherwise stated

Friday 11th January
Coffee and Chat

Friday 8th February
Genetics
Karen Bailey

Friday 8th March
Amoena bras
Jane O'Dwyer

Friday 12th April
Coffee and Chat and chocolate quiz!

Friday 10th May
Breast Cancer and diet
Angela Cleaver

Barry Meetings

Our Barry group meets on these dates from **2pm-4pm** at the **Mary Lennox Room, Barry Hospital, Colcot Road, Barry, CF62 8YH**

Friday 18th January
Photos from the Breastfriends Fashion Show
Sue Youngman

Friday 15th February
Mindfulness
Dr Teena Clouston

Friday 15th March
An update on Breast Cancer Now
Jenny Evans

Friday 19th April
Good Friday—no meeting

For more information on the Barry meetings please call Rosina on 01446 745269 or Linda on 01446 710516 / 07967 806073

Walk and talk with Breastfriends

We meet **every Tuesday (weather permitting)** for a short leisurely walk followed by coffee and maybe cake!

Barry walks alternate between Barry Island and the Knap and start at 10.30am. Please contact Rosina on 01446 745269 or Linda on 01446 710516/07967 806073 for more info)

Cardiff Walks meet **by the lighthouse in Roath Park at 10.30 am** for a walk around the lake
(Please contact Sue on 07773 500525 for more info)



Contact Us

Phone: messages care of Breast Cancer Care Cymru on 0845 0771894

Please check our website for up-to-date information

Email: info@breastfriendscandv.org.uk

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