

With a Little Help From My Friends...by Janet Barr

I'm sorry Mrs Barr it's cancer. It was May 2017 and the bottom had just fallen out of my world. Up to that point I had thought of myself as a fairly typical mum. I had 2 children James and Jess who were 17 and 14 and a supportive hubby Andy who many of you know as Obelisk man.

I was reasonably healthy, didn't smoke and was a regular runner at ARR and parkrun. I wasn't breaking any running records but I enjoyed it and had a good set of friends.

As my world imploded and I ended up in a whirlwind of scans and surgery my running family were there picking me up and supporting me at every turn.

Recovery was slow and I wasn't going to win any prizes but when my consultant said I could start gentle exercise it seemed fit to have a 'race' in mind to kickstart it. 20th August 2017 and I found myself on the start line of the Stockholm Midnattsloppet surrounded by family and ARR friends. A sea of orange and glow sticks, this was a 10k night run like no other with music and candles.

So many memories but running up a hill to a church lined with candles and running over the finish line in a row holding hands with tears pouring down all our faces. It might have been my slowest ever race but I was still alive and just felt so blessed.

Fast forward to Edwinstowe December 2018 and I'm in tears again at the end of a race!! As fellow ARR came racing down the hill to give their support I had to reassure them that they were happy tears and I was crying because I had just completed 10 GP races. They hadn't been very fast and not very pretty but to me they were a huge achievement and yet another testimony to the continued support of the club.

An idea at this point sprouted – maybe I should run a marathon!! Now anyone who knows me knows I always said I'd never run a Marathon – I was too old, too unfit, too busy

However as I now spent time at Weston Park Cancer hospital every couple of months it had made me realise just how much I had to be thankful for and how much running and my running family had helped with my recovery both physical and mental.

I entered the Great Welsh Marathon 14th April 2019 exactly two years to the date that I found the lump that changed my life and on Christmas Day 2018 I started training. Over the next 4 months I ran over 800 training miles but ARR never missed a beat – no matter what the weather – snow, rain, wind, gales – every time I asked, someone was there to run with me. Faces became names and names became friends as the ARR community supported me at every stop.

14th April 2019 I finally crossed the line on 4:09:29!! I was a marathon runner and had raised over £2500 for Weston Park Cancer Hospital.

The whole journey has just taught me what you can do with a little help from your friends and I'm just so glad ARR are mine!!

Janet Barr, May 2020