

ESSEX LIFE MARCH

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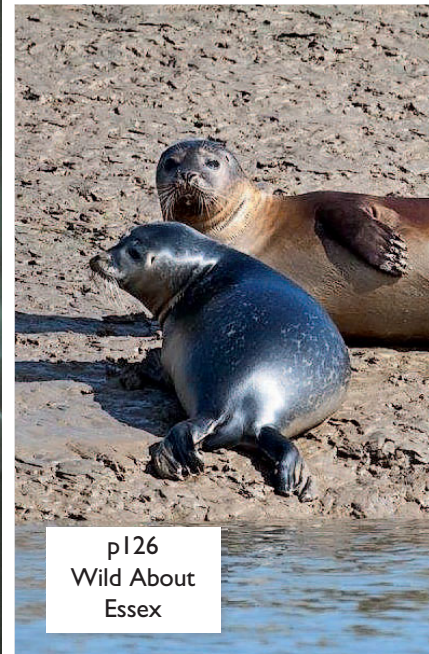


'Inevitably, when you are visiting your whole life, you are going to get those good and bad memories'

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Keeping the wheels spinning

With International Women's Day taking place on March 8, Chris Penhall tells the story of two inspirational Essex women who have, in varying ways, made a difference to cancer sufferers

MARCH 8 is International Women's Day, and events will be held all over the world celebrating the achievements of women past, present and future. Over the years, the county of Essex has been well blessed with inspirational women. One such example is Helen Rollason, the BBC sports and news presenter who helped set up The Helen Rollason Cancer Charity before her death in 1999. Her legacy lives on in the work the organisation bearing her name continues to do today, helping to improve the day to day lives of people living with cancer.

2014 marks The Helen Rollason Cancer Charity's 15th birthday and to celebrate the charity has launched Ride for Helen, its first annual bike ride which takes place on Sunday, May 11. A choice of routes are 15, 30 and 60 miles long, each starting and finishing in Hatfield Peverel, and the funds raised will help the cancer charity to continue the vital support it gives to individuals with the disease, their families and their carers.

Essex paralympian, broadcaster and motivational speaker, Danny Crates, will be among those cycling the 60-mile route. Danny explains: 'Taking part in the Ride for Helen bike ride is not only a great way to spend the day riding around the beautiful Essex countryside, but you will also be raising money for a charity that really does have a positive impact on the lives of people living with and fighting cancer. All this in a very special year for the charity. So sign up and let's get active and raise some money to carry on Helen's great work.'

Someone who has received invaluable help from the charity and can attest to its success is Nikki Brewer from Chelmsford. Nikki, who has three young daughters, found a lump under



her arm in September 2011 and within two weeks of first visiting her doctor was told it was breast cancer. She was 28 years old at the time.

Nikki says: 'My first thought was that I was going to die and leave the girls. I didn't think it was real; I used to live in this bubble where I thought that people who had cancer were all older than me.'

Nikki had chemotherapy from October to February and throughout this time would also visit Rochelle House in Springfield, one of the charity's Cancer Support Centres, which offers counselling and treatments such as reflexology, aromatherapy and massage.

'You are very panicky when you are in that situation,' Nikki continues. 'It helped having something for myself and made me relaxed. Rochelle House felt like a second home. My dad always came with a book and the staff used to look after him, too.'

The fact that Nikki had someone to speak to who was not a member of her family or a friend was also invaluable in allowing her to open up about her fears and feelings.



'My counsellor was absolutely amazing,' adds Nikki. 'We did sit there some weeks and I wouldn't need to say a lot. It's easier when you are going through this to speak to someone you don't know. She was away from the situation. I didn't want to upset my partner, Ben, so I'd

unburden myself to her.'

The charity made such a positive difference to Nikki's life that she organised a charity fun day in Galleywood to raise funds to help ensure others could enjoy the support she did.

'The Helen Rollason Cancer Charity helped me stay positive. You meet such amazing people and they are so upbeat and help you so much that you want them to be able to help other people.'

Nikki sees Ride for Helen as a great opportunity to get involved in raising money for the charity that has had such a strong impact on her life.

'They are so amazing and they need all the support they can get to continue to do the good they do,' says Nikki. 'If you can help by taking part or sponsoring someone, you will be making a huge difference to someone like me and my family affected by cancer.'

FIND OUT MORE

If you would like more information on The Helen Rollason Cancer Charity or details on how to take part in the Ride for Helen event, visit www.helenrollason.org.uk