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Eyemouth welcomes brave sailor Josie

Josie sailing round Britain despite having brain tumour



Lynne Barty from Brain Tumour Action welcomes Josie and Roger to Eyemouth.

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"Sailing round Britain is a great personal challenge for me, and will never take me far from medical help should I need it"

Josie Phillips

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By [Kirsty Smyth](#)

BERWICKSHIRE welcomed an extraordinarily brave sailor last week when Contessa 32 yacht 'Nordlys' berthed at Eyemouth Harbour.

Aboard was 27-year-old doctor Josie Phillips, who has set herself the challenge to 'sail round Britain with a brain tumour', accompanied by her husband Roger.

Following five years of unexplained symptoms, Josie was diagnosed with a low grade brain tumour in 2004 when she was just 21. Despite three operations she faced devastating news four years later - the tumour became malignant in September 2008.

"For a long time I was very angry, blaming other people for the length of time the tumour had gone undiagnosed," Josie said.

"I came to realise, however, that all the time my condition had gone undiagnosed I had successfully managed to complete my degree, and as the tumour was low grade, it would probably have been a case of watch and wait anyway."

In 2008, her prognosis was given as between 12 and 15 months. But Josie and Roger were determined to make the most of life. They began to focus on a challenge for when she was sufficiently healthy, to sail 2,000 miles around the coast of Britain.

"Sailing round Britain is a great personal challenge for me, and will never take me far from medical help should I need it," Josie explained.

"It will also give us the opportunity to see lots of our friends along the way and hopefully make new ones too."

The length of Josie's future is at the moment uncertain, but one thing is for sure - she is determined to live it and enjoy it.

"Average survival for people with brain cancer like mine is between just nine months and two years," she said.

"But with a passion for living made stronger with each challenge and adventure, I intend to beat the statistics and keep living!"

Josie, a doctor at Norfolk and Norwich University Hospital, set herself the challenge with three primary objectives: to sail anti-clockwise around the coast of Britain; to raise awareness of brain tumours; and, at the same time, to collect around £20,000 through sponsorship.

She explained: "Over Christmas I was feeling very low, so Roger and I started to think about what I could do when I felt better, and we hit upon the idea of sailing around Britain to raise awareness about the plight of brain tumour patients and at the same time fundraising for the charity Brain Tumour Research, as well as the Big C cancer centre at my local hospital in Norwich."

Having set out from their home port of Ipswich on May 15, Josie and Roger sailed north up the east coast to Eyemouth. From here their planned route will take them to Arbroath and Inverness, passing through the Caledonian Canal, then heading southwards through the Irish Sea, around the south coast of England, and back to Ipswich.

Subject to weather conditions, they expect to complete the challenge in approximately four months.

Marinas like Eyemouth are helping them to minimise expenses by providing free berthing, and many companies offered the loan or gift of specialist equipment and clothing.

All other costs are being covered by Josie and Roger and any donations made will go directly to the Brain Tumour Research charity.

"It has been great to have a challenge to focus on," Josie said.

"I am a real outdoor enthusiast. Having grown up in Cornwall and discovered wind-surfing, I went on to climb Mount Kilimanjaro with the University Duke of Edinburgh Society, and was bitten by the sailing bug having met my husband, Roger, while we were both at university."

The voyage has been divided into 'legs', so brain tumour publicity events can be held in the major marine centres in which the couple are due to berth.

Josie's motivation for this challenge follows various 'awake' craniotomies to try to remove the tumour, as well as radiotherapy and chemotherapy, and she is now only too aware how little is known about brain tumours.

The statistics speak for themselves: 16,000 people each year are diagnosed with a brain tumour, and more children and people under the age of 40 die of a brain tumour than leukaemia or any other cancer. Yet brain tumour research receives less than one percent of national cancer research spending in the UK.

With the research very much in its infancy, very little is known about the behaviour of tumours, their effective diagnosis and treatment, let alone finding a cure.

Research is woefully underfunded yet desperately needed to bring hope to thousands of brain tumour patients and their families.

Josie said that brain tumours can affect anyone, and that there is no way of preventing them at the moment, because their cause is unknown.

"We hope that funding for brain tumour research will give hope to others in the future," she said.

"Whether malignant or benign, both patients and carers are living with a time bomb.

"Living with an incurable disease is extremely difficult - I try to carry on as normally as possible."

Josie and Roger were welcomed ashore at Eyemouth last Thursday afternoon by Brain Tumour Action committee member Lynne Barty, who said: "Josie's determination and courage in the face of her brain tumour is humbling and an inspiration to us all. I hope this brave challenge will prompt people to sponsor Josie and help her achieve her target of £20,000 for Brain Tumour Research."

Sponsorship and sailing details of Josie's Sail Around Britain can be found on her website

www.contessa32.co.uk or her Just Giving page

www.justgiving.com/roundbritainwithabraintumour-braintumourresearch

Cheques payable to Brain Tumour Research, and marked Josie Phillips, can be sent to Brain Tumour Research, The Business Centre, Padbury Hill Farm, Padbury, Buckingham, Bucks MK18 2BN.

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