

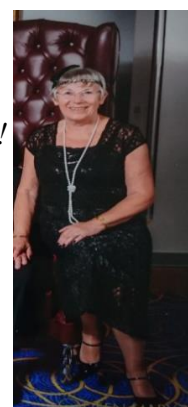
I'm Judy Morris and I am now 77 years of age....my partner John and I lived in Cornwall until 18 months ago when we moved to Weymouth to be nearer our children.



I have always been a fairly fit person and John and I retired early and moved to Cornwall from Hampshire in our mid fifties, enjoying a very relaxed way of life and 2 or 3 ocean cruises a year...so life was very good.

In June 2017, for my 70<sup>th</sup> birthday treat, we decided to do a 2-way transatlantic cruise on Queen Mary 2 and on our return I had a bit of a wheeziness, not unusual as we had been in an air-conditioned cabin for two weeks.

*Twenties night on Queen Mary 2 crossing the Atlantic!*



But it didn't clear up, so I paid a visit to my GP who sent me for an Xray. Nothing untoward showed up, so I was given various steroid sprays and diagnosed as asthmatic. By the following April nothing had changed so I was sent for another Xray. This time there was a shadow visible, so I was sent quickly to see the Respiratory Consultant at the Royal Cornwall Hospital, Treliske. He arranged a CT scan, a bronchoscopy and a PET scan. I was then diagnosed as Stage 4 Lung cancer with the 'good news' that it was ALK positive (apparently the best lung cancer to get!!)

This was all such a shock and completely unknown territory for me as I had never been ill apart from pneumonia as a child. I did smoke a moderate amount in my younger years, and a small amount in latter years as I worked for NHS! but gave up completely in 2000. My Oncologist told me that this type of lung cancer was not related to smoking. He wasn't aware of the specific cause but there was some research suggesting it was linked to Radon gas which is emitted from Granite - most of Cornwall is granite and the modern houses are built with a Radon barrier in the foundations. We always had new houses in Cornwall so were OK on that front but I was brought up in Cornwall in an old house which, of course, did not have such luxuries.

Anyway, none of that information was going to change things, so I put my mind to just getting on with whatever life I had left with the help of John, my children, my grandchildren and, of course, friends.

My Oncologist, Dr Grant Stewart was quite reassuring and prescribed me Ceritinib at 450 mgs daily.

I did struggle on the full dose of Ceritinib, feeling nauseous a lot of the time and frequent vomiting in the mornings after taking the meds. I am also Type 2 diabetic which had been well controlled with diet and tablets until then. But my blood sugars

gradually went up really high and I had to start having insulin injections to control it.

After doing some research online, I found that some Japanese had discovered that Ceritinib was raising the blood glucose levels of diabetic patients and had tried reducing the medication from 450 mgs daily to 300 mgs without adverse effects. So, the next time I saw my Oncologist I asked if I could try the reduced dose and he agreed it was worth a try. Well, that was a big turning point - my CT scans were still 'stable' and my blood sugar gradually came down, so a year later I came off the insulin injection and returned to tablet control. I felt so much better and began to return to a 'normal life'. Today after over 6 years on Ceritinib I remain a 'stable Mabel'....

*Me at my worst, first cruise after diagnosis!*

Cruising again for Christmas that year and again in March 2020 when of course Covid hit us all and our March cruise was abandoned after a week and we returned home to lock down!! Of course, I was terrified of getting Covid but was ultra cautious and managed to survive that year unscathed, walking around a local field (3 times was a mile!) each morning to keep fit, then venturing out to the cliff tops for walks and fresh sea air. Eventually, we were able to cruise again - just around the British Isles with only half the normal number of passengers on board. It was so lovely to get some sort of normality (for us) back. We religiously kept up our keep fit regime walking around the decks for one mile a day.



By this time, the Charity had started Zoom fitness classes every Friday for ALK patients, which were a huge help, and are still on YouTube. I do think that exercise is the answer to the awful fatigue that I experienced at the beginning.

*Me at the Briksdaal Glacier, Norway*

I did eventually succumb to a dose of the dreaded Covid but rang my CNS who put wheels in motion and the next morning I was infused with an antibiotic of some kind for 3 hours as an outpatient. The result was good and I was really only a bit 'off colour' for a few days.



In the middle of all this, John was diagnosed with Parkinsons disease. So in early 2023, we decided to sell up our lovely house in Cornwall and move nearer to our children who live in Hampshire, Dorset and Devon, which is how we ended up in Weymouth - still by the sea and still very busy in summer with tourists so not that different from Cornwall. The transition was fairly smooth with my Cornwall oncologist just referring me to my Dorset oncologist and I had an appointment with her soon after our move. We have an excellent GP here, a far superior service to that we experienced in Cornwall as far as John's care. We have had two holidays in Cornwall since we left.

*John and I last year at Lake Bled, Slovenia....*

Sadly, our last cruise was at Christmas 2023, as John is becoming more unstable but we have booked a few days at Warners, Cricket St Thomas, for Christmas this year (it's like cruising on land). We have plenty of happy memories, photos and videos to look back on, we have had a good 24 years of active retirement despite everything thrown at us and have thoroughly enjoyed spending the kids' inheritance!!!!!!

Judy

