



SCALING THE PEAKS

Izzy Glaisher wants to help people to navigate the earth-shattering aftermath of cancer

At 26, Izzy Glaisher's life was shaped by the vibrant rhythm of London life, enjoying festivals, sunrises, and her work with the food redistribution charity, City Harvest. However, in 2023, that rhythm was disrupted by a life-altering diagnosis. Within weeks, her world that she described as 'freedom and fun' was replaced by an exhausting medical ordeal.

'In 2023 I lost both my boobs to breast cancer,' Izzy says. 'I found a lump and things moved quite fast after that. In the same conversation as being diagnosed I was asked if I had thought about having children and was rushed into fertility treatment so I could freeze my eggs before chemo began.'

What followed was a 14-hour double mastectomy, five months of chemotherapy—marred by two bouts of sepsis—and three weeks of radiotherapy.

Today, Izzy lives in a medically-induced menopause, a stark reminder that, as she puts it, 'the cancer journey goes on.'

When the intensity of treatment forced her to move back to her parents' home in Somerset, Izzy found herself physically safe but emotionally isolated. That was until a family friend suggested she call a local charity: Axminster and Lyme Cancer Support (ALCS).

Founded by Mary Kahn in 2017, ALCS fills the gap between medical necessity and human holistic needs. Speaking to the *Marshwood Vale Magazine* in 2023,

‘So what could be a better challenge than to walk up breast-shaped mountains in aid of the fantastic charity’

Mary explained how ALCS developed after her own breast cancer diagnosis in 2017. It was the year she and her husband were both planning to celebrate their 50th birthdays, and their eldest daughter was getting married. ‘After my operations and treatment, I was told, “off you go, and get on with your life”’ she said. However, she struggled to deal with her ‘new normal’ and found there was not enough support for people dealing with such a life-changing illness.

‘When you are diagnosed with cancer, you suddenly have a new, different language to that of your friends who are cancer-free’, she explained. ‘We often need to find a “new tribe”, an additional support network alongside our family and friends. Although it’s not a club anyone wants to belong to, we help people to connect with others who speak that language.’ To try to help fill that need she soon co-founded ALCS with her GP, Dr Yvonne Hodges.

For Izzy, the charity’s ‘head, heart, hands’ approach was transformative. From woodwork courses at the Lyme Regis Boat Building Academy to restful days in a beach hut funded by the production company that made the film *Ammonite* about Mary Anning—who herself died of breast cancer—the support provided a sense of agency that cancer had taken away.

‘For me, better understanding of the disease, was empowerment,’ Izzy explains. ‘To approach cancer holistically, in my case, is to welcome the life-saving modern medicine, but to look beyond it too... It’s like a resilience toolkit to carry forward with me.’

While the world often expects survivors to simply bounce back, Izzy is candid about the reality of the aftermath.

‘Cancer is earth-shattering and despite what they say, life does not “go back to normal.” There is no such thing as normal anymore,’ she says. ‘It seems to be about nurturing your hesitant light, slowly emerging from whatever shape you needed to contort to during the storm.’

Part of that emergence involves a bold, symbolic challenge. On April 4, 2026, Izzy will head to the Isle of Mull to tackle a mountain-landscape her family has looked out at for two decades—specifically, two peaks affectionately nicknamed ‘the breasts.’

‘During chemotherapy, I had a eureka moment and dreamt up this fundraiser!’ she says. ‘So what could

be a better challenge than to walk up breast-shaped mountains in aid of the fantastic charity, Axminster and Lyme Cancer Support!’

With 1 in 2 people now expected to face a cancer diagnosis, Izzy highlights that survival is only half the battle. Organisations like ALCS are vital because they focus on how to ‘live well during cancer, thrive beyond it and be empowered to be proactive in your own health.’

As she prepares for her climb, Izzy isn’t just walking for herself; she’s walking for the 1,100 people ALCS supports and for the belief that even after the storm, you can still feel the sun on your face.

To support Izzy’s fundraiser, visit:
https://www.justgiving.com/page/walkingthebreastsforalcs?utm_medium=FR&utm_source=CL

