

ESCAPING FOR A SENSE OF *normality*

SARA PRENTICE SHARES HER STORY OF FINDING A LUMP JUST WHEN SHE HAD STARTED A NEW JOB AS CREATIVE DIRECTOR AT THE HOUSE OF GARRARD, JEWELLERS TO THE QUEEN.

words BEATRICE AIDIN

"I had just started at artistic director at Garrard in September 2012, and in early November I was going on my first work trip with my then CEO to Doha to meet the partners out there — it was a big deal. The night before I left I found a lump in my left breast. You are told breast cancer is usually a pea-sized lump that is unmovable, but it wasn't like that — it was flat but quite big and noticeable. How I didn't notice it before I don't know. My husband Lance said I should not go to Doha. But I felt like I had to and caught the 7am flight the next morning feeling sick with worry. By the time I got home I went straight from the airport to the Garrard Christmas party which, as a new member of the team, I felt I had to attend.

Of course my husband was going nuts telling me to go straight to the doctors from the airport. The next day I did go to my GP who said 'yes you have got a lump' - thanks, I



Sarah Prentice Creative Director at Garrard

know! I thought in frustration. I was referred to a consultant who I didn't like on sight; she said 'it's nothing to worry about, it's just a gland and it's the run up to Christmas so why don't you come back after the holidays?' I spoke to my sister who said, "For God's sake Sara you've got private healthcare." So I went to a private





hospital and, unlike the other consultant, they were very nice but it was a brutal experience. The consultant said, 'There's no point beating about the bush, I can see it's cancer.' I went to get a biopsy the next day and had to go back to the consultant on Christmas Eve to get my results. The consultant said 'It's 100 per cent cancer. But I want to tell you now, we can treat this.'

It was a truly awful Christmas. I had the results from the lump but was still waiting to find out if the cancer had got into my bones or my blood system – which fortunately it hadn't. My daughter Emily was ten at the time and Thomas was 14. We told them what was going on from the start but my son took the news harder than Emily, I'm not sure she really comprehended it. After Christmas I was given the option of either having the lump removed and losing quite a lot of tissue, as it was quite large or having chemotherapy to reduce the size of it. I chose to have six sessions of chemo, which were three weeks apart. I would have it on Wednesday and would feel pretty ropey by Friday and by Sunday would start to come out of it and was OK to go back to work on Tuesday. I took Emily along to one of my chemo sessions because I thought it would be good for her to know where I was going and what I was doing and reassure her it didn't hurt, but the hospital said she couldn't come in. However I recently saw on TV a woman having her treatment surrounded by her family so maybe things have changed, I hope so.

The effects of chemo are cumulative and the effects after each treatment gets worse and worse. I have a total phobia of vomiting – in fact when we had the children I told my

husband he would have to deal with that bit, I would deal with the other end... But I didn't feel sick once because my oncologist who gave me a clever combination of treatment. The chemotherapy reduced the lump to the point you could barely notice it. But the cancer had gone into my lymph nodes so I had to have them removed and still have the fear of lymphedema.

In that July I started my radiotherapy, which only took five minutes. I was lucky that I didn't have any side effects or pain; in fact the most painful thing was driving to the hospital to find a car parking space. And of course it's very sad when you are there in the oncology unit and it's scary how many people are affected.

That December I went back and had the sign off, I was cancer free. I still do go back of course for an annual check up and mammogram, at Christmas unfortunately and of course it's always tough.

What I also found difficult is that breast cancer really zaps you of your femininity; my hair fell out and soon after it started, I went to my hairdresser Carly and she shaved it off - and I spent an absolute bloody fortune on wigs.

But something lovely happened the first day I wore my wig to work. I was so nervous and self-conscious about wearing it, knowing that everyone at Garrard was going to know what was happening to me. I stopped off at Pret a Manger to get a coffee and just as I was walking out this guy tapped me on the shoulder and said 'I just want to let you know you look absolutely stunning' and then walked off. It really gave my confidence a boost just when I needed it."

HELPING WOMEN SHINE DAY AND NIGHT

Gerrard decorates our fabulous models in our fabulous models in our 2018 epic night out



In honour of Breast Cancer Awareness Month this October, House of Garrard, the world's longest serving jeweller, will donate 15% of the sale of its signature TwentyFour collection of iconic diamond and dot jewellery. The London-based jewellery house recognises that one in eight women in the U.K. are touched by breast cancer in her lifetime and wants to do a part of help raise awareness and research.

Women are at the heart of the House of Garrard — each piece is designed by women, for women, and its top positions are now held by women too. From royalty to our presenters at this year's TEN: A decade of dreams, Garrard rings, bracelets and pendants are a symbol of beauty and grace.

Garrard offers wearers of the TwentyFour line the opportunity to express their support for the charity through their everyday lives.

To get your iconic piece this October, visit garrard.com/collections/twentyfour