

I've been meaning to put pen to paper, or rather fingers to keyboard, for some time now to let you know how Hannah's Day went and to bring you up to date with the latest news from Berkhamsted. But doesn't the time fly?!!!

I haven't written before because I've been trying to get through the several heaps of things which were all put to one side when my hips were really bad. (Did I tell you that the worst thing that happened to me before my operations was trying to walk home from an appointment at the physiotherapist and getting overtaken by an old lady using a Zimmer frame!) I can laugh about it now, but at the time I was in floods of tears. I really feel so sorry for people who suffered in this way for longer than I had to. I was really lucky in that I have a brilliant GP. She sent faxes rather than letters (to get there quicker) to the consultant to get me on the urgent list so I could be seen earlier than I would have with the routine appointment I'd originally been assigned.

Anyway, I had the first operation on my left hip on the 29th June and the second one for my right hip 7 weeks later on the 16th August. Since then life has been just getting better. I no longer have the constant pain in my groins. The only way to describe what it felt like was to ask you to imagine wearing a pair of knickers where the edging round the legs is too tight so it cuts into your flesh. Now imagine being suspended by someone holding the waistband so your entire weight is on that painful cutting edge. Of course, the pain doesn't stop there but travels down the legs, infiltrating the thigh muscles, the knees and the calves. So you can imagine the bliss now of being able to walk without any pain. I may not be 100% yet, but I'm so much better that I can now write about how I felt without feeling I want to cry.

Yet I've been quite lucky considering what my mother-in-law, Pauline, has gone through. At about the same time as my hips started really getting bad, she got a DVT (Deep Vein Thrombosis) in the calf of her right leg. The skin above and around it became ulcerated and finally died, because her blood couldn't flow through properly. She was given loads of different medications and had District Nurses visiting regularly changing dressings but nothing helped. After several hospital visits, some as an in-patient where she underwent different operations in an attempt to get her blood flowing properly, she eventually had to have her leg amputated above the knee to save her life. The thing I found most amazing was that the day before her leg was removed her face looked grey. The day after it had been done she was pink again! And her positive attitude is an inspiration. She says that she looks on what's happened to her as a challenge which she won't let beat her!

But I started this to also tell you how Hannah's Day went. You may remember we arranged to have it at the Crystal Palace pub instead of at home as usual because I really didn't think I'd be able to cope with all the preparation and organisation needed to lay on food and get the house ready for loads of guests. So we asked everyone who came to bring some food to share

if they could. We supplied plates, peanuts and other nibbles and Pete & Tina, the new landlords of the Crystal, covered the pool table in the public bar with a huge cloth so all the contributions could be laid out.

It wasn't very long since I'd had my second operations so I sat like Lady Muck in a corner and all my friends came over as they arrived and chatted for a while before mingling with the other guests. The pub never got really crowded as very few people stayed for the entire day. Mostly they arrived, socialised for a couple of hours, then left again. But there was a constant stream of different people coming at different times which meant I had time to chat to folk I might not have seen for some time. Even Pauline turned up, brought by my two sisters-in-law, Wendy and Clare. (Being an only child, I really appreciate the fact that Nigel has two brothers and two sisters. I'm now even an auntie twice over as one of his brothers has a son whilst the youngest of his siblings, Clare, has a 3 year old daughter.) All in all everyone agreed they had a good time and I had a lovely day without any effort.
