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## Cancer victim Heather back in saddle for charity ride

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HEALTH REPORTER

AFTER battling a rare and deadly form of breast cancer, mother-of-one Heather Chapple was left feeling older than her years.

The 38-year-old, who has defied the odds to fight her way back to health, was fed up with being seen as "mumsy" and "sick".

So she decided to rekindle a passion she had deserted before the birth of her son - motorbikes, with the Edinburgh architect now taking on the challenge of a lifetime by riding a Harley Davidson bike more than 1000 miles across Britain.

Heather, from Canonmills, will be joined on the adventure by 19 other breast cancer survivors from all over the world.

Among them is another Lothian rider - 48-year-old Lorraine Baxter, a charge nurse at the city's Western General Hospital. She spent more than 20 years looking after patients before finding she was in need of medical care herself at the same hospital.

Lorraine, from Corstorphine, also decided to mark her recovery by taking up motorbike riding again, 16 years after giving up.

The two women are raising thousands of pounds for charity ahead of their ride from Aviemore to London, stopping off in towns and cities along the way.

"Cancer didn't even figure on my radar," said Heather. "Nobody in my family had cancer. I was too young, I had breastfed my son and this was something that happened to other people.

"So when on Hogmanay 2003 I noticed a slight swelling in my left breast, I put it down to hormones or pregnancy."

She visited her GP as a precaution and was diagnosed with inflammatory breast cancer (IBC), which accounts for just two per cent of breast cancer cases in the UK. Until recently, this would almost certainly have been fatal, but there is now a 40 to 50 per cent survival rate after five years.

"I had a fight on my hands," said Heather. "My son was still only a year old, it would have been unfair to have to leave him.

"For about a year I had to relinquish the roles that I had in life as I took on the new role of full-time patient.

"I had chemotherapy, surgery then radiotherapy. I'm still well more than three years after diagnosis - something I never thought I'd be able to say - and I've now been given an 80 per cent chance of being around ten years post-diagnosis, after which time IBC generally doesn't recur."

Heather, who lives with her husband Simon and their five-year-old son, has now become a trustee of Amazon Heart Thunder, the global body which is organising the bike ride.

The group is a peer support organisation for women with breast cancer, which provides a range of adventure events tailored to women's interests and age groups.

The 20 riders taking part in the ride hope to raise £50,000 to be split between Amazon Heart Thunder and the Helen Rollason Heal Cancer charity.

The tour is sponsored by Harley Davidson, which is also providing the bikes for the event.

Heather's riding companion, Lorraine, was diagnosed with breast cancer in 2004, after discovering a lump while sunbathing on holiday in Tenerife.

She had a mastectomy and when she finished six months of chemotherapy her husband bought her a Harley Davidson.

"When I found out about this ride and its purpose last year, I was determined to participate," she said.

"It's vital that we continue to raise the profile of this disease and provide encouragement and support for everyone out there going through a similar experience."

To sponsor Heather or Lorraine visit [www.amazonheartthunder.org](http://www.amazonheartthunder.org).

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