

## TEAM SPIRIT PREVAILS AT BLENHEIM

In May, Team EV successfully completed Blenheim Palace Triathlon, qualifying 66 out of 110 and raising £1,728. Graziella Doardo, Finance Manager for Elders Voice, recounts her experience of the day.



The Kensal Green triathlon team was ever so welcoming! With a sense of relief, I started noticing that not everyone was that young. There were some grey hairs and rounded shapes here and there.

We explored the grounds to see where the events were taking place. Everything was very professionally organised. We headed for the lake to watch the start of the open water swim. Hundreds of competitors were getting ready to enter the water, encouraged by a compère dispensing instructions on very loud speakers. Aware about time, I walked back to the Kensal Green corporate tent that hosted us and started changing into my wetsuit to be ready for a 12 noon start.

I felt rather tense, which helped me totally forget my anguish about being an overweight, 5 foot 3 inches, 67 year old grandma inside a wetsuit that exposed every little ounce of extra weight. All that mattered was 'getting to the other side of that lake and surviving that 400m uphill run...err... walk'. Whilst in the changing area, I



found it reassuring chatting to other women also competing in relay teams. They were ever so supportive and encouraging of this being my first time at the Blenheim Palace triathlon.

Then the worries. 'Should I go to the toilet now or can I wait until after the swim? It's not easy to take off and put on this wetsuit! Better not drink. Need energy. Where did I put that banana?'

Once ready I headed for the lake where my two sprint relay team heroes Jon (cyclist) and Lawrence (runner), and my ever so supportive partner Chris (who had come along to help us out) were waiting for me.



The competitors of the relay teams did not appear as 'scary' in their youth and fitness as the individual triathletes. Everyone looked fit and ready for the challenge nonetheless. We were provided with a timekeeping band to fit on my ankle and to be given to Jon before he could start his cycling. Big group hug and off to the start of the swim.

Now a decision about strategic positioning. 'Should I be at the front of the queue entering the water? Back of the queue? Well...let's stay somewhere in the middle. Should I put my goggles on now or wait? Oh dear...the platform on the lake is really wobbly. The water looks cold. Who cares. Dive in? Walk in?' SPLASH!

And there I was. The water seemed very clean and I could see the weeds at the bottom of the lake, amid lots of splashing.

'Let's decide on the breathing. Yes better take a breath after two strokes. Slow down. Pace yourself. Am I swimming in the right direction? Oh dear I need to look up. Need to find a swimmer with my same pace. Hey you in front stop changing from crawl to breast stroke. You are kicking me. How

much further to go? She swims at my speed, follow her. Are we there yet? Oh dear, still that far to go. Hope I can make it. There is the pontoon. I am getting out. Gosh, it feels so heavy out of the water! Running up those steps and up hill, are you mad? Perhaps I can try to walk a little faster. There they are. Jon, Lawrence and Chris. They are cheering me! I made it! Am I the last of the swimmers? No, more people behind me. Where is Jon's bike?

After the transfer of the timekeeping band to Jon, I could finally rest. However, the adrenaline was still running. 'Let's get changed and run back to support Jon and Lawrence.'

I felt so proud of Jon completing his cycle and when I saw Lawrence (the young and fit one in our team) overtake one runner after the other and finally crossing the end banner, I truly felt as if we had accomplished something quite special! We were Team EV...and so proud of it!



From cake sales and coffee mornings to sponsored walks and Zumbathons, there are plenty of ways you can fundraise for Elders Voice. If you're looking for a personal challenge why not represent Elders Voice at next year's [Blenheim Palace Triathlon](#) or take part with friends in the sprint relay. If sport isn't really your thing, you could donate a prize or (bid on one!) at this year's [Love Local Online Auction](#) or host a dinner party and ask your friends to contribute what they would spend on a night out. The possibilities are endless! Check out the other ways you can fundraise for Elders Voice here: [bit.ly/3K2gTFV](https://bit.ly/3K2gTFV)