

The making of a special mosaic

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Walpole Hotel in Cliftonville. She also runs workshops in Folkestone for people to learn how to make their own mosaics. She said: 'After the initial meeting to discuss what the mosaic should be like I produced a rough design, but Marian came back with a beautiful painting which we decided to go with. The only addition I felt it needed was a mountain to symbolize the struggles they have to face. It was a pleasure for me working with the patients, who soon became friends, and I learnt much from them.'

'Mosaic is a very absorbing activity – you can't think of anything else while you're doing it and it was wonderful to see the difference between people at the beginning of a two-hour session, and as they left, looking years younger!'

The circular 1.4m wide mosaic features images that the patients say reflect the way they feel about their cancer and how they've dealt with it. There's the sea, partly to illustrate the local geography, but also to symbolize changing emotions; the mountain; hot-air balloons showing the ups and downs and a journey into a safe haven; detailed images of nature — 'to show how you look at the world differently, more closely,' says Marian — and it's all framed by images of plants, inspired by Marian's favourites in her conservatory in the Close.

Altogether around 25 people were involved in the process but it was Marian and one other patient, Thalia, who worked consistently on the mosaic under the guidance of Jo every



Marian working on the mosaic with the painting of her design in the foreground

week for four months. 'Thalia turned out to be very good at it - so good,' says Marian, 'that she's now making a mosaic tabletop for her bathroom! We became good friends, too.'

Jo says she enjoyed working with the two women who were happy to join her for the final stages of the work when it was all put together and grouted which took place at her new shop in Folkestone. 'It was lovely to have Marian and Thalia there and, as they were involved in every stage of the process, it is truly their mosaic.'

The mosaic will be unveiled at a special ceremony at the Cathedral Unit at K&C later this month.

Jo Letchford can be contacted at her workshop, 43 The Old High Street, Folkestone (01303 250 717). www.joletchfordmosaics.co.uk

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