# From dismissing chest pains to completing the Great North Run for heart research



Pierre Bernard, a 53-year-old father from Forfar, Angus, experienced chest pains for two days which he initially dismissed as indigestion, only to later discover he had suffered a heart attack. In September 2023, after enduring "mild" chest aches, Pierre contacted NHS 24. Ambulance crews responding to his call confirmed the heart attack diagnosis during their visit. Subsequent hospital tests, including blood work and an angiogram, revealed a narrowing of a small artery in his heart. Though the artery was too small to be stented, he was prescribed lifelong medication and advised to reconsider his fitness regime.

The experience proved life-changing for Pierre, an organisational development facilitator for Angus Council and father of six. Motivated by the clear, reassuring information he received from the British Heart Foundation (BHF) during his hospital stay, he embraced fitness with renewed commitment. Two years after the heart event, Pierre took on the AJ Bell Great North Run in September 2025, running the challenging 13-mile course in under two and a half hours. He hopes to raise nearly £1,000 for the BHF, inspired by his personal journey and the foundation’s support.

Speaking about his participation, Pierre described the atmosphere of the race as "electric," with passionate spectators cheering him on. His motivation was further bolstered by seeing his wife, three children, and two-year-old grandson waiting at the finish line. Pierre expressed his determination to continue running and even signed up for next year’s event, signalling a commitment to a healthier lifestyle and ongoing advocacy for heart health.

The AJ Bell Great North Run, held annually in Newcastle and South Shields, is the world's largest half marathon and a major fundraising event for heart-related causes. In 2025 alone, it raised over £523,000 for the British Heart Foundation, bolstering the charity’s mission to fund groundbreaking cardiovascular research. Participants, like Pierre, pay a registration fee and commit to raising sponsorship funds, benefiting from support such as running tops, training plans, and post-race amenities.

The British Heart Foundation’s partnership with AJ Bell, announced in December 2023, extends beyond the Great North Run to the entire AJ Bell Great Run Series—a collection of running events across the UK. This collaboration aims to raise at least £1.5 million in its first year, striving to enhance public heart health and fund lifesaving research. The partnership also includes community initiatives such as providing defibrillators and training in CPR, with AJ Bell contributing donations for each participant trained during designated Heart Months.

David McColgan, Head of BHF Scotland, praised Pierre’s courage and determination, highlighting the importance of such supporters to the foundation’s work. He emphasised how the dedication of BHF runners helps drive research that has revolutionised treatments and improved millions of lives across the UK. The stories of participants like Pierre continue to inspire the charity’s efforts to combat cardiovascular disease, which remains the leading cause of death.

Pierre Bernard’s journey from dismissing chest pains to becoming a determined runner and fundraiser encapsulates the life-changing impact of timely medical intervention, patient education, and community support. His commitment illustrates how survivors can transform personal health challenges into opportunities to inspire and raise awareness for critical heart health initiatives.

### 📌 Reference Map:

* Paragraph 1 – [[1]](https://www.dailyrecord.co.uk/news/scottish-news/scots-dad-dismissed-chest-pains-35876840)
* Paragraph 2 – [[1]](https://www.dailyrecord.co.uk/news/scottish-news/scots-dad-dismissed-chest-pains-35876840)
* Paragraph 3 – [[1]](https://www.dailyrecord.co.uk/news/scottish-news/scots-dad-dismissed-chest-pains-35876840)
* Paragraph 4 – [[1]](https://www.dailyrecord.co.uk/news/scottish-news/scots-dad-dismissed-chest-pains-35876840), [[2]](https://www.bhf.org.uk/how-you-can-help/events/runs/great-north-run)
* Paragraph 5 – [[1]](https://www.dailyrecord.co.uk/news/scottish-news/scots-dad-dismissed-chest-pains-35876840), [[2]](https://www.bhf.org.uk/how-you-can-help/events/runs/great-north-run), [[3]](https://www.ajbell.co.uk/group/news/british-heart-foundation-chosen-charity-partner-aj-bell-great-run-series), [[5]](https://www.ajbell.co.uk/group/news/british-heart-foundation-chosen-charity-partner-aj-bell-great-run-series), [[7]](https://www.bhf.org.uk/what-we-do/news-from-the-bhf/news-archive/2023/december/bhf-announced-as-charity-partner-for-the-aj-bell-great-run-series)
* Paragraph 6 – [[1]](https://www.dailyrecord.co.uk/news/scottish-news/scots-dad-dismissed-chest-pains-35876840), [[6]](https://www.bhf.org.uk/how-you-can-help/corporate-partnerships/our-corporate-partners/aj-bell)
* Paragraph 7 – [[1]](https://www.dailyrecord.co.uk/news/scottish-news/scots-dad-dismissed-chest-pains-35876840)

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## Bibliography

1. <https://www.dailyrecord.co.uk/news/scottish-news/scots-dad-dismissed-chest-pains-35876840> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://www.bhf.org.uk/how-you-can-help/events/runs/great-north-run> - The British Heart Foundation (BHF) offers participants the opportunity to join the AJ Bell Great North Run, the world's largest half marathon. The event takes place annually, with the 2025 run scheduled for 7 September in Newcastle. Participants can secure a charity place by paying a £30 registration fee and committing to raise £400 in sponsorship. Benefits include a BHF running top, training plans, and access to a post-race event area. The funds raised support the BHF's mission to improve heart health and fund lifesaving research.
3. <https://www.ajbell.co.uk/group/news/british-heart-foundation-chosen-charity-partner-aj-bell-great-run-series> - In December 2023, the British Heart Foundation (BHF) was announced as the official charity partner for the AJ Bell Great Run Series. This partnership aims to raise at least £1.5 million in the first year to improve the nation's heart health. The series includes events like the Great North Run, the world's largest half marathon, and other runs across the UK. The collaboration seeks to inspire thousands to take on challenges that support lifesaving research and health initiatives in communities.
4. <https://redskyfoundation.com/event/aj-bell-great-north-run/> - The Red Sky Foundation invites participants to join the AJ Bell Great North Run on 7 September 2025 in Newcastle-upon-Tyne. By running with Red Sky Foundation, participants support the charity's efforts to provide equipment, care, and support for individuals with heart conditions. The foundation offers a range of support, including a running vest, fundraising pack, training advice, and post-race refreshments. The event is renowned for its inclusive atmosphere and the millions of pounds raised annually for various causes.
5. <https://www.ajbell.co.uk/group/news/british-heart-foundation-chosen-charity-partner-aj-bell-great-run-series> - In December 2023, the British Heart Foundation (BHF) was announced as the official charity partner for the AJ Bell Great Run Series. This partnership aims to raise at least £1.5 million in the first year to improve the nation's heart health. The series includes events like the Great North Run, the world's largest half marathon, and other runs across the UK. The collaboration seeks to inspire thousands to take on challenges that support lifesaving research and health initiatives in communities.
6. <https://www.bhf.org.uk/how-you-can-help/corporate-partnerships/our-corporate-partners/aj-bell> - The British Heart Foundation (BHF) has partnered with AJ Bell to fund the provision of 210 community defibrillators and equip communities with lifesaving skills. The partnership also focuses on educating AJ Bell's staff members in heart health and raising funds during Heart Month 2024 and 2025. For every person trained in CPR during these months, £5 is donated, up to £50,000. This collaboration aims to improve heart health and support communities in responding to cardiac emergencies.
7. <https://www.bhf.org.uk/what-we-do/news-from-the-bhf/news-archive/2023/december/bhf-announced-as-charity-partner-for-the-aj-bell-great-run-series> - In December 2023, the British Heart Foundation (BHF) was announced as the official charity partner for the AJ Bell Great Run Series. This partnership aims to raise at least £1.5 million in the first year to improve the nation's heart health. The series includes events like the Great North Run, the world's largest half marathon, and other runs across the UK. The collaboration seeks to inspire thousands to take on challenges that support lifesaving research and health initiatives in communities.