

Our patients are inspiring...

“They made me feel at home.”

We are privileged to care for people like Karen and her family, at probably the most difficult time in their lives, but we can only do this with the generosity of our local community.

We have to raise over £20,000 every day in order to provide care, free of charge, to our patients and their relatives.

For further information about how to support Phyllis Tuckwell Hospice Care, contact our Fundraising team on:

01252 729446
support@pth.org.uk

Phyllis Tuckwell Hospice Care

Waverley Lane, Farnham
Surrey GU9 8BL

The Beacon Centre,
Gill Avenue, Guildford,
Surrey GU2 7WW

Phyllis Tuckwell Memorial Hospice Ltd.
Registered Number 1063033. Registered Charity Number 264501.

Tel: 01252 729400
Email: mail@pth.org.uk
www.pth.org.uk



Karen's Story

Spiritual support from our Chaplains

Phyllis Tuckwell[®]
Hospice Care 
...because every day is precious

April 2017



Karen's Story



Monday 13th April 2015 was a very special day for cancer patient Karen, as she was confirmed in the chapel at Phyllis Tuckwell Hospice. But what made it even more poignant was that, just weeks before, Karen had nearly died, and had been given last rites at

St Thomas's Hospital, where she was a patient on their respiratory ward.

Karen was first diagnosed with breast cancer in 1997, when she was just 39 years old. Following a successful course of treatment, she and her doctors thought she had beaten it and, in 2002, she approached her five year check with confidence. This confidence was soon dispelled. Doctors found a re-growth of the same lump. Karen's cancer had returned.

By 2005 Karen could barely breathe and was unable to walk up the stairs. Tests revealed a build-up of fluid around her lungs and further investigations confirmed that the cancer had spread to her liver and soft tissue as well.

In October 2011 Karen had an operation to relieve the cancer symptoms in her lungs. Sadly, the damage to her lungs was great and in April 2012 she had severe respiratory failure. She recovered, but since then has had to use a ventilator throughout the night, to aid her breathing.

Karen struggled through the next few years, and in November 2014 was admitted to a hospital in Dartford, near to where she lived at the time. She was finding it increasingly hard to breathe, and needed the ventilator all the time. Karen stayed in hospital for a week before being transferred to a nearby hospice.

"I managed to spend Christmas at my sister's", she nods, "but in January I had to go back into hospital". Karen's sister

rushed her to St Thomas' Hospital where she almost died but was saved, once again, by staff on the Respiratory Unit there.

Since then, Karen has been into Frimley Park Hospital on two occasions with breathing difficulties, and was taken back into St Thomas' Hospital, where she spent over a month when her condition deteriorated and she almost died again. She was given last rites but, incredibly, pulled through yet again.

Karen's move to Phyllis Tuckwell was driven by her desire to be near her sister. After contacting the charity's Patient and Family Support team, a close friend of Karen's arranged to meet with one of Phyllis Tuckwell's social workers, Debbie Younger, to discuss the possibility of Karen being transferred from St Thomas's. Four days later, Karen was admitted to the Hospice's In-Patient Unit.

"I was driven here by ambulance", Karen says. "It was a difficult journey, but **the Hospice staff couldn't have been more welcoming. It wasn't a case of just having a bed for me – they made me feel at home.**

I love it here: the staff are wonderful, the food is amazing, and I can look out of my window at the beautiful flowers, and see the birds flying down to perch on the nearby trees."

"I wasn't confirmed as a child", she continues. "Our local vicar looked so forbidding in his black vestments, that I was actually a bit scared of him! We went to Sunday School at a different church, and then Brownies and Guides were run by the Methodists – we just went to church wherever, really! In a way, I suppose what the church actually stood for didn't really matter to me then."

After a rebellious teenage stage – where she rejected religion completely – Karen returned to church, but never found a parish community where she felt comfortable, until she discovered St James's Church in Piccadilly, London. Here, she felt her faith strengthen, and was finally able to stop searching.

"When I came to Phyllis Tuckwell, I told Sue Lattey – one

of the Hospice Chaplains – that I wasn't confirmed", Karen explains. "I'd always thought I should have done it when I was younger, but it just hadn't felt right. We spoke about it again on Easter Day and Sue told me that she could arrange for me to be confirmed here, in the Hospice Chapel. Now felt like the right time to do it and I was delighted that it was going to be possible."

After finding out that Karen wanted to be confirmed, Sue immediately emailed the Bishop of the Guildford Diocese to arrange a date for the service to take place. Realising that Sue wanted to organise it as quickly as possible, the Bishop's secretary suggested she contact the Right Reverend Christopher Herbert, and they arranged a date there and then for the following week, giving Karen time to inform her family and friends, and invite them to the service.

Karen's confirmation took place in the Hospice Chapel, where Bishop Christopher Herbert Confirmed her and she received her first Holy Communion. Hospice Chaplain, Reverend Sue Lattey, assisted at the service and Karen, surrounded by her closest family and friends, held her Bible and Holding Cross throughout.

The gathering then moved from the Chapel to the Hospice patio and gardens, where those present celebrated with champagne and a beautiful Confirmation cake made by the Hospice catering team.

"Everything is well in my world", says Karen. "I'm prepared for death. I feel quite calm about it. Both my sister and I have seen the stranger in the doorway, waiting. And once, when she was lying with me in my hospital bed, my sister heard church bells each time she drew near me. She checked with the nurses, but they said they hadn't heard anything. So, I have no fear. Every time I've been close to death, I've just slipped into unconsciousness. **Being here, the calmness helps me.** It's been quite a journey, but the right journey."

