

on Phyllis Tuckwell's Memory Tree, and last Christmas attended Phyllis Tuckwell's Light up a Life service. "It was lovely, so nice. Henry was at uni, but Adam and Alice came with me. Last Christmas was a tough one, we went to the cemetery, then walked up to the pub for lunch."

It is running though, which Dave finds most helps him to cope with losing Sandra. "I get a bit emotional when I'm in a race," he says. "I look forward to it so much. Sandra's all that keeps me going, hoping she's going to be there at the end. I know she's not going to be, though. Then I do the run, and she's not there at the end to greet me, and I get a bit emotional - then I go home and book the next run. I've got so much booked up for the next few months; I've got runs booked up til the end of the year. I do it to keep busy. If I go - if my time's up - I'd rather go on a run. I have three rest days a week at the moment, that's when I find it hard. The kids don't get in til about seven in the evening. It's so empty. I've got a little dog now, that helps. That's what Sandra's wishes were. She knew she was going. She told me to meet someone, get the children a pet and look after her mum."

When asked how he feels about Phyllis Tuckwell, Dave says "**what they've done for my wife was unbelievable.** They've cared for her; they've loved her. None of you have got a bad bone in your body, everybody from nursing staff to fundraising staff, to the volunteers as well, all the staff here, they're fantastic, every one of them, fullstop."



We are privileged to care for people like Sandra 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

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Our patients are inspiring...

**"I cannot fault  
Phyllis Tuckwell."**



### **Sandra and Dave's Story**

Our In-Patient Unit and fundraising in memory of a loved one

**Phyllis Tuckwell**<sup>®</sup>  
Hospice Care   
...because every day is precious

April 2017

# Sandra and Dave's Story



**Dave and Sandra were married in 1992 and had three children together: Henry (20), Adam (18) and Alice (16). This year would have been their 22nd wedding anniversary, but sadly Sandra died of cancer in January 2013.**

Sandra first fell ill in 2010, three years before she died. Determined to fight it, she beat the cervical cancer which she was initially diagnosed with, and then beat it again when it came back for the second time, despite the fact that this time the cancer had spread to other parts of her body.

*"I was on early shifts all that time she was ill," remembers Dave, who then worked at Heathrow airport. "Four years, I was on permanent early shifts, getting up at 3am - but at least I was there in the afternoons. I would let her sleep, get the kids dinners and all that."*

The cancer returned a third time though, and this time Sandra wasn't able to fight it off. She was admitted to Frimley Park Hospital in November 2012, but went downhill rapidly. On 22<sup>nd</sup> December she managed to return home, for what would be her last Christmas.

*"I was in denial," remembers Dave. "Sandra knew she was going, but I was in denial. She was bed-bound in the end. I cooked Christmas lunch, and Sandra was coaching me from the bedroom, so I was running up and down the stairs, trying to get the sprouts on and the turkey cooked right, and do the stuffing, and she was saying how the peas don't take long, but the potatoes take longer... I carried her downstairs for lunch, she was so frail. Then at about nine o'clock that night she said 'I've had enough now'. I carried her back upstairs. After Boxing Day she went downhill."*

Sandra was taken back into Frimley Park Hospital on 29<sup>th</sup>

December and from there was transferred to Phyllis Tuckwell Hospice on New Year's Day. She died just days later, on 6<sup>th</sup> January 2013.

*"It's a lovely way to go," says Dave. "It was just beautiful. Sandra slowly deteriorated, the nurse more or less knew, she knew the signs. I didn't know. Then she suddenly went, her breathing stopped."*

*I first heard about Phyllis Tuckwell when Sandra went to Frimley," Dave says, "but I wish I had known more about it before. When she had chemotherapy at the Royal Surrey Hospital, it was sometimes an eight hour day, and I didn't know then that she could have come here afterwards for her recuperation; I didn't know until I spoke to the nurses here. If I'd known, I would have brought her a few times after chemo, but I just didn't know."*

*Sandra's brother knew more about Phyllis Tuckwell than I did, he said 'Dave, she's got to go there'. I was frightened, I was in denial right til the end, I still can't believe it sometimes, even though I know she's gone, I've had the funeral. I wanted her to go to the Royal Surrey because she had all her treatment there, but they said no, Phyllis Tuckwell Hospice, so I said ok let's go for it then."*

When Sandra first fell ill, Dave took up running as a way of coping with his wife's illness. *"The thought of Sandra in her bed all that time, I was climbing the walls," he says. After Sandra passed away, Dave continued to go running. "She passed away on the Sunday and I went for a run the next day. I just had to. I went to see her the next day, still in denial. I went for run that morning. Running was my release - it still is now. It gave me something to focus on."*

Since Sandra's death Dave has continued to run, and has raised money for many cancer-related charities, including Cancer Research, Macmillan, the Royal Surrey Hospital, and most recently Phyllis Tuckwell Hospice Care.

*"When I finish the race I always look up at the sky; I always hope one day she's going to be at the end, waiting for me, to greet me at the line," Dave says. "The closest she was there was the Bournemouth marathon. We got engaged down there, in Bournemouth, so it means a lot to me. The*

*children were there at the end waiting for me, I just hope she was there next to them."*

Since Sandra's death, Dave has met several times with Hospice counsellors, as has his daughter Alice, now 16. *"Counselling was helpful, I spoke a lot to Claire," Dave says. "She came to the house first; I thought that was a nice touch. She asked if I wanted to come to the Hospice next time. It was tough coming back, but I did it, I got over that in the end. Sometimes I'd come early to walk to around the gardens and look at the room where Sandra was. I feel she's here."*

It was Dave's counsellor, Claire, who first put Dave in touch with Phyllis Tuckwell's Fundraising team. After one of his counselling sessions, Dave met with Fundraising manager Ruth, who was able to discuss running challenges with him. *"We had a long chat. I said I wanted to give something back to Phyllis Tuckwell. I needed to give something back, I really did. I cannot fault Phyllis Tuckwell - they were fantastic. And I feel better now I've done it. That last year was my grieving year, that was a bad year."*

Dave has run in many races since Sandra died, and last year even took part in Phyllis Tuckwell's Santa & Rudolph Fun Run. *"I ran dressed as Father Christmas," he laughs, "although I'd rather run in my running gear!! But it was such a good occasion. Phyllis Tuckwell put such a good show on."*

Dave and Sandra's daughter Alice has been fundraising since her mum's death, taking part in Race for Life last year in Reading, with five of her school friends. *"The children all have their moments too," says Dave. "They miss their mum - we all do. Sandra would have been fifty next year, and she always wanted to go to Cyprus, so we're going to go next year."*

As well as raising money for Phyllis Tuckwell through running events, Dave is also dedicating Sandra a leaf

