



Pictured left to right: Ash, Sarah, David, Emma & Andrea on their favourite country walk in Kimpton, where Davids ashes have been spread.

My dad, Dave

by Emma

Dad lived with cancer for almost two decades. He was diagnosed aged 50, when I was 16 and my sister, Sarah, just 12.

He had check-ups every six months with the Royal Marsden. Sometimes he needed surgery to remove a tumour. And as treatment evolved, he had chemo too. But in between, he made sure he lived his life to the full.

Then in December 2018 – we were told it was terminal.

It was a terrible shock to hear those words. But doctors said continued treatment would improve Dad's prognosis, which gave us a glimmer of hope. In March 2020 though, they advised us that the time had come to stop the treatment, discharge Dad, and refer him to his local hospice service.

The hospital check-ups had been our comfort blanket for 18 years. And now it felt like that had been ripped away. Dad felt so vulnerable. We were distraught. 'Hospice' sounded so final. We weren't ready for that. And surely Dad wasn't either?

But once we'd been referred to Rennie Grove, gradually we realised that 'hospice' didn't just mean end of life. What it meant for Dad was the chance to keep living his life the way he wanted to, for as long as possible. Our comfort blanket was back!

It wasn't easy for Dad. At first, he didn't want help from the Rennie Grove nurses. But the skilled and perceptive nurses quickly found a way round this. They talked to Dad about how difficult it could be for his family, and that they could support us with their visits. I think that helped him feel safer – more in



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An engineer by trade, Dad was a problem-solver who liked to make things work. He'd always been fiercely independent – and hugely stubborn. But a very positive, glass-half-full person too.

All these traits meant he got very good at living with his cancer. But they also meant it was hard to accept he was dying from it.

Expert, compassionate hospice care helped us all cope. The nursing teams' tireless support made the hardest days a little bit easier.

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control. And slowly but surely, with monthly phone check-ins at first, the rapport built and the trust grew.

We knew they'd won him over when he'd say to mum, 'let's give the Rennie Grove nurses a call and see what they say'

With that foundation in place, the nurses were able to help Dad maintain his independence and his mobility, rapidly arranging equipment and aids to help him move about safely at home as the need arose. As his condition deteriorated, the nurses visited more often. Helping to control his symptoms and keep him comfortable. He was desperate to avoid hospital. I think he thought if he ever had to go in – he'd never get out again.

I know night times were the hardest for Mum. As she says, everything seems worse in the middle of the night. Being able to talk to the nurses at 3am – knowing they'd come out to her and Dad if she needed them to – gave her the strength to keep going.

By the start of 2022, Dad was getting very frail. The tumour on his chest made it increasingly hard for him to get comfortable. The nurses were visiting multiple times a day now to help with pain relief. They talked to Dad and to us about Peace Hospice, where 24-hour specialist care would help keep him more comfortable towards the end. Dad agreed – and the nurses managed that transition seamlessly.

He was made to feel so welcome when he arrived at the Peace Hospice. We could see he immediately felt at ease there.

They chatted about Bertie, his beloved dog, coming in to visit, which delighted Dad. Sadly, he didn't live long enough for that to happen – but I know the thought that Bertie was welcome would have been a huge comfort to him.

What was so brilliant about all the hospice care we had – from Rennie Grove's specialist nurses, to the wonderful team that welcomed him so warmly into the Inpatient Unit at Peace Hospice Care the day before he died – was that everyone always put Dad first. They spoke to him, listened to him, involved him in decisions about his medication and his care – right from the get-go until the very end.

When Dad felt at his most vulnerable – they gave him back some choice and a sense of control.

That meant so much to a man like my lovely dad. And so, it meant the world to us too.

It's just over a year since Dad died. To celebrate his life, we're fundraising in lots of different ways to make sure other families get the same choice and care that Dad had. Family and friends have just taken part in a running challenge, covering 2,023 miles between us. My sister did a half marathon and I'm training for a full marathon in May. I also volunteer for the charity – supporting its marketing to help raise more funds and reach more people. I know more and more people need the charity's help. And I'd hate to think of families going through this without that expert, compassionate help on hand, 24/7. Please help too – if you can.

Thank you,

Emma, Sarah and my mum, Andrea

In loving memory of Dave Welland, who died peacefully in the Inpatient Unit at Peace Hospice on 13 February 2022



Emma, David & Sarah



Emma, Andrea, Sarah, David & Bertie



Emma's wedding in 2017



Sarah, David & Emma



Emma, David & Sarah enjoying wine at Christmas