

Case Study – Toni Smith’s Story



The beautiful Janet Powell on her wedding day.

Beloved wife, mother and Nanny, Janet Powell was first diagnosed with pancreatic cancer in April 2016. Heartbreakingly, she deteriorated very quickly and passed away in Cransley Hospice that July. Her daughter Toni Smith bravely shares her story and explains how the hospice were a lifeline to the family in her Mum’s final days.

On the 29th April, Toni recalls speaking to her Mum following her cancer diagnosis; “Mum was so positive at the time, her local GP’s surgery had been fantastic in their support and she was determined and eager to fight the disease with everything she could.”

What neither Janet nor her supportive family were prepared for was how aggressive the cancer would be and devastatingly, how little time they actually had left together to make memories.

“Mum attended my daughter’s May Day event and already we could see how dramatically the cancer had taken hold of her. She was in significant pain and was very jaundiced. Thankfully, Mum didn’t hear, but I could hear the young children asking; ‘why is that lady so yellow?’ and I realised that we may have to say goodbye to Mum sooner than anyone should ever have to.”

There was so much that Janet wanted to do before the illness took hold, she wanted to visit the seaside and to watch her Grandchildren grow up, but the cancer was overtaking her so quickly and she soon had to be under sedation for the severity of her pain.

“When Mum was admitted to the hospice, the time just felt like a blur and I was running on auto pilot. I had been helping Dad to care for Mum in their home up until then, and her needs

had become increasingly difficult for us to cope with alone. When her GP suggested she was admitted to the hospice, a weight was lifted and we could just focus on being there for Mum, rather than having to worry about the care she so desperately needed.

“The hospice staff were beyond amazing. It was like they could read your mind and they knew what we needed as a family even before we did!

“Dad, my sister Kerry and I were all sleeping at the hospice at this stage, to be by Mum’s side – and the team were simply incredible. I recall a wonderful Nurse, Becky, who turned up with toast and tea to make sure we were looking after ourselves too, so that we had the strength to support Mum.”

Janet was just 67 years old when she passed away on the 20th July 2016.

Just a short while after her passing, the family took a trip to the seaside in her memory. Grief manifests in different ways for everyone, but allowing them to come together and remember happier times with their treasured wife, mother and nanny, while doing something special together was very important to the family.



Toni and Kerry are also very passionate about recognising the difference that Cransley Hospice made in their Mum’s final days. In 2017, Toni raised almost £1,500 for Cransley Hospice Trust by carrying out some sensational fundraising at Geddington Village Hall. The sisters then took part in the very first ‘Starlight Walk’ event in 2021 and have signed up to take part again this year.

Toni explains; “The hospice team really did go above and beyond to help both our Mum and our family. I’m so aware that if Mum had been in hospital, our experience could have been so very different – so we are incredibly grateful for the care and support of Cransley Hospice in our time of need and want to take part in these events and fundraise to show our gratitude.”