

## Memories of Diane

Today is about Diane a quiet and unassuming person whose life has been so tragically cut short by the cruel illness of leukaemia that her body was unable to fend off.

Diane did not have an easy life but after losing both her mother and father at a very early age she made a success of her life in so many ways. She was also the prime influence on her brother, Andrews's life. Looking after and caring for him until he was able to look after himself, and for a long time after. She led by example setting herself and Andrew very high standards in all areas of their young lives encouraging him at school and chastising him when for example the odd swear word would slip out in her presence.

Diane was a beautiful baby with straight dark hair and a fair complexion and was doted on by her many Aunts and Uncles and Cousins especially by her three cousins, Helen- who has sadly now passed away – Susan and Louise who were always willing to help look after such a gentle, good natured baby.

Diane McCarthy lived for her younger years in Pontypridd with Andrew surrounded by her relations, her Nan and Great Aunty Cath who lived nearby, her Aunt Alice, uncle Con, Dennis, Ted and Aunt Eileen along with all her cousins who looked out for her. Every Sunday afternoon the family would go and visit their granny McCarthy's where there were so many of them that it was utter chaos but they always had good fun and looked forwards to next week's visit.

Through the summer holidays, when we used to have good weather, their Dad would take them up to Pontypridd park and Diane was always eager to get into the swimming pools freezing water, with Andrew reluctantly following, she became a good swimmer and gained many awards at school. Those Saturdays at the park must have paid off because Diane gained many true friends, especially Wendy and Rosemary, whom Andrew remembers always seemed to be around their house and playing terrible pop music, but they are still good loyal friends to this day. Her friends helped Diane enjoy the outdoors and together they gained Gold Duke of Edinburgh awards whilst spending a lot of weekends trekking over the Brecon Beacons.

She worked hard at school and gained herself a place at the prestigious Bangor University where she studied hard to pass her degree and become a Hearing Therapist. It was while she was at university studying for the degree that she spent a lot of her free time helping under privileged children in the local club and taking them on holidays, giving them opportunities that they would not otherwise have had.

She spent time at University studying French language and took the opportunity to spend some time living in the South of France at Carcassonne working as an English assistant at a school helping children to learn to speak English and at the same time working on her own French until she was a fluent speaker. Even so she was still very unassuming not using her newly gained skills to their full. Preferring to wait modestly amused in the background whilst cousins Helen and Susan who were visiting made fools of themselves using broken French and sign language to communicate with the locals rather than showing off her new skills. It was whilst working abroad that Diane became seriously ill suffering a brain aneurism which resulted in her spending weeks on her return to Wales fighting for her life and subsequently fighting her way back to full health. Uncle Con especially cared for her while she was ill.

Diane selflessly gave up many of her summer holidays to help at the crazy Warburton family holiday week, helping in her quiet yet determined manner to ensure that her Aunty Beat , Uncle Ray and all her cousins were able to have lots of fun times to remember. None of us was quite sure whether she actually enjoyed this annual fiasco but she endured it stoically and was always ready to help with her young cousins whether it meant reading bedtime stories until peace ensued at the end of the action packed days or providing all eight of them with wonderful birthday and Christmas gifts throughout the years. She will be missed but the memories that she helped to create will live on.

After University Diane moved to Bath, then to Warminster and bought herself a beautiful cottage where she was able to fulfil her passion of gardening, spending many hours tending to her garden. She also spent a lot of time looking after her small animals rabbits and guinea pigs and keeping herself fit playing badminton to a very good standard. She was an avid tennis fan, though not a player herself she would watch as many matches as she could. The highlight of her tennis year always being Wimbledon during which time you would be lucky to have any conversation with her that didn't involve the most recent match that had been played and you could certainly rule out any visits from her during the Wimbledon fortnight.

Diane became a loving aunty to Jamie and Joseph when Andrew married Sharon, never failing to forget a birthday or any other special occasion.

Diane's idyllic life was totally turned on its head when she eventually met the love of her life and future husband Derek Murrell, Diane first met Derek whilst on a badminton course at Trowbridge College, it wasn't until a few years later when they met up again playing badminton at Clarendon Sports Centre that they realised they had much in common and a relationship started to blossom. On their first date Diane discovered that she was a little bit older than Derek and would not have continued with the relationship but she phoned a few of her friends afterwards and they convinced her to continue with it, both Diane and Derek will be forever grateful to them for that.

A few years later Diane moved from Warminster to Derek's home in Trowbridge where she set about turning his wasteland of a garden in to something better, relishing the challenge that a larger garden brought. She often yearned for the rich dark soil of her previous garden but stoically set about improving the poor clay soil of her new one and after just a few years had transformed it in to a delightful garden full of flowers, shrubs and trees. She also designed the garden to benefit the local wildlife and would spend many an hour enjoying the birds, bees, dragonflies, frogs and newts that were regular visitors, she was especially pleased to have hedgehogs return to the garden and would follow their antics on a wildlife camera. Each and every day come rain or shine, Diane would be out putting bird food on all the feeding tables before going to work and would make sure the hedgehog plate had plenty of food for the night before going to bed.

They were married a few years later at a quiet but beautiful family ceremony, the honeymoon was spent on the Canal Du Midi in the south of France on a cabin cruiser, the highlight was arriving at the ancient medieval city of Carcassonne where Diane took great delight in showing Derek all the sights and sounds that the city had to offer which she knew from her previous stay.

Diane always looked forwards to their holidays, be it in sunny Cyprus with Gabrielle or wet Wales and many more along the south coast, being a member of the RSPB Diane always tried to visit the nearby bird reserves and enjoyed many an hour sitting in bird hides observing

wildlife with Derek, they also went to all the nearby National Trust properties and enjoyed walking in the grounds although Derek did usually get dragged around the floral gardens and plant shop!

Last spring a pair of Great Tits started nesting in a bird box that Diane had put up in the Pear tree next to her potting shed and she could hear the chicks cheeping for food once they'd hatched. Then we had that horrendous spring weather and the adults stopped feeding the chicks, Diane was very concerned and kept a vigil on the nest until she decided to climb the tree and found that the wind and rain had blown on to the chicks and they were deathly cold and wet, some had already died. Diane took the remaining chicks and making a small nest put them on a heated plant propagator, she spent the next three weeks caring for those chicks night and day until she was able to release the survivors back into the wild. This was the sort of person Diane was, caring for people and animals less fortunate than her and dedicated to seeing the job through.

Andrew was always worried about Diane when she moved away, that she was always alone even though she had plenty of friends, but she met Derek and genuinely found happiness. As children growing up Diane and Andrew went through many tough times together but she always was the strong one and held it together, Andrew has not only lost a sister but a mother figure as well, who will be greatly missed.

Many people have said that Diane's last few years married to Derek were the happiest she has ever been, we are all glad that she experienced this happiness before she left us.

Thank you Diane from all those whose lives you have touched, you will be forever missed.