

real life

'I'm walking 5000 miles for my wife'

Something was wrong. My wife Angela just wasn't her usual self, she'd become forgetful and a bit snappy. Since she'd also recently had a seizure, we were concerned, so she saw a doctor.

Now we were in hospital, nervously awaiting results of a CT scan. 'It'll be OK love,' I smiled, squeezing her hand. Eventually, the doctor sat us down. 'There's no easy way to say this, Angela,' he started. 'But you've got a brain tumour.'

It felt like a bombshell. We'd feared it might be dementia, but not this. 'You'll need surgery,' the doctor continued as we tried to take it in.

Fortunately surgery to remove the tumour went well and Angela was soon back to her usual cheery, sharp self.

Then she developed bad back pain and blood tests revealed something devastating.

Angela, the love of my life, had myeloma and amyloidosis, two types of blood cancer. Her disease was aggressive and it was terminal.

Marie Curie nurses were amazing, doing all they could, but she went downhill fast. When Angela passed away in September 2023 she was holding my hand, surrounded by everyone who loved her.

She was just 58. We'd met at a hospital and been together for nearly 38 years.

The next few weeks were a blur as I planned her funeral, but I had the love and support of our two sons.

Then I had an idea. Angela and I had always planned to buy a motorhome when we retired and travel the length of Britain. Maybe I could still honour that shared dream in some way?

I came up with a plan to walk 5000 miles around the coast from Glasgow back to Glasgow in a year.

I've always loved walking and felt that walking in solitude could help me process my grief as well as raise money for the incredible charities that had helped us so much.

People donated 5000 crocheted hearts they'd made for me to give away at each mile, so I could make a chain of hearts around the country.

On 1 November 2024 I started my trek at the Beatson West of Scotland

Tracey Howe has found the perfect way to honour the woman she loved

Cancer Centre, where Angela had been treated. Then I made my way down

Scotland's western coast

covering an average of 18 miles a day. The pace was draining and the weather harsh.

Since then I've experienced pretty much every type of weather possible. From brutal winters with wind speeds of up to 70 miles per hour, to the intense 30°C summer heat, I've seen and felt it all!

Much of the terrain is rugged and difficult – including beaches, sand dunes, cliffs, and busy roads.

I'm nearing the end now, due to finish my trek on Halloween, but I have met some amazing people and had beautiful conversations about love, loss and grief. One woman told me 'grief is love with nowhere

to go', while another said they love the thought of Britain being circled by a chain of little love hearts

And when Olympic diver and keen knitter Tom Daley heard I was giving away crochet hearts he sent me some as well, which was so touching. When I give away one of my crochet hearts I say, 'That's for you to remember somebody you've loved and lost.' Grief shouldn't be so taboo – I hope by walking around Britain I not only make Angela proud, but start a conversation about coping with loss.

■ To follow Tracey's trek and find out about the charities she's supporting, visit traceystrek.uk

'There's no easy way to say this'



Angela and Tracey

