

I think it's fair to say that I was a late arrival at the whirlwind party that was Susan's life.

We met on Islay just ten years ago and I was completely captivated by this person who was fundamentally interested in and fascinated with everything in life.

I didn't realise at first what an immediate impact meeting Susan had had on me, and it took a condolence note recently from our friend Suzanne who was with us on Islay at the time we first met to remind me. Suzanne said when she first saw me with Susan, that I was, I quote

“looking more relaxed and happier than [she] had ever seen seen [me]”.

And this was just two days after first meeting Susan.

Our time on Islay had an unexpected and extraordinary ending. When we arrived – late - at the airport, to check in for our flight home, the airline staff announced in the departure lounge that the plane was too heavy to take off, and that two people would need to stay behind and take the next flight. After much staring at the floor by the assembled passengers, I reluctantly volunteered to stay. So imagine my surprise and delight when Susan said she'd stay behind too.

Thus we had an extra day alone on Islay walking in the hills above Ardbeg where I learnt more of Susan's bubbly enthusiasm for everything from high culture to the nerdy studying of ordnance survey grid references. It quite bowled me over.

I've got a lot of people thank for bringing Susan and I together – Sarah and Neville, for inviting us to Islay in the first place, the LoganAir staff at the airport for engineering the excuse for us to stay behind, but mostly to Susan herself for believing in me when I didn't really believe in myself.

We celebrated the first anniversary of our meeting by camping in north-west Scotland, and in particular by visiting Ardnamurchan Point, which, as Susan will tell you, is the westernmost point on the British mainland – a technical fact that we both knew, and which epitomised our extraordinarily quirky compatibility.

We married a further year later at Beechfield House in an event that demonstrated her well-honed skills in planning and the attention to detail. It was a glorious day, followed by our moving to Nottyngham Fee House here in Blewbury – a dream home for Susan and I, with its glorious garden that Susan so enjoyed developing. We have very much enjoyed our years together - both here, and in our many holiday trips to the likes of Japan, Argentina and New Zealand, and of course frequent visits to her beloved apartment overlooking the harbour at West Bay in Dorset...

... Cut short, sadly by her diagnosis just over two years ago. But as many of you will already know, she reacted to that life changing event not with despair but with a plan. A plan both to do something meaningful with her remaining time and to raise funding and awareness of this cruel disease. Thus was born the Pennine Way challenge through which as well as raising nearly £100,000 for MND research, she also planned and executed a month long party for all her friends, whilst walking the route from Edale to Kirk Yetholm. The success of, and the uplifting memories, that this event has left us with, is her perfect legacy. Thank you, Susan, for giving this for us all to remember you by.

Her second goal following the Pennine Way was to become a trustee of the MNDA, and the tributes I have received from that organisation are testament to the value of the work she did there. She didn't for a moment let her illness get the better of her and when she was presented to Princess Anne (who is patron of the MNDA) in January this year, it was Susan asking Princess Anne the questions, rather than the other way round.

I have one thing further to say. Sue, throughout your life you have brought fun, pleasure and love to all your family and the people you have met. I'm so glad that I have been a small part of it. I'll miss you, everyone will miss you, we will all love you forever for what you are and what you have done.

But I can't, of course, finish without allowing Susan to say a few words of her own. So step back to May last year. Susan has just completed the last day of the Pennine Way walk – from the bunk house at Mounthooly to the Border Hotel at Kirk Yetholm, and she is determined to mark the occasion with a rousing speech. MND has already taken her beautiful voice, but with her usual foresight she has “banked” her voice so that she can type out her speech and have her computer read it out. This is what she had to say...