

Palliative Care Support

Ian Nicoll

PCRS & PCH

Ian Nicoll was diagnosed with advanced liver cancer in 2024. As he became more unwell, he and his wife Amanda were supported by the Palliative Care Response Service (PCRS) and the 24/7 Palliative Care Helpline (PCH). This allowed Ian to spend his final weeks at home, where he felt most comfortable, surrounded by the people he loved.

It was a routine blood test, taken ahead of a hernia operation, which revealed Ian's autoimmune hepatitis. Initially, the electrical engineer was told that the condition could be managed with medication, but over time it became clear that he would need a liver transplant. This meant monthly trips to Edinburgh for monitoring by the liver team.

However, in summer 2024 Ian "had a wee slip on the stairs". The resulting investigation revealed a cancerous nodule on his liver which had ruptured, causing the cancer to spread.

"That meant he could no longer have a transplant," Amanda said, explaining that the immunosuppressants which he would have to take to help his body accept the new organ would have "been like fertiliser to the cancer."

Doctors initially suggested chemotherapy might be possible, but following further assessment Ian was told that there was nothing more they could do. He was given a prognosis of months to a year.

"It was a shock," Amanda said. "He was always quite positive about it. He would say it could be more than a year."

Hoping to explore every option, the couple sought a private consultation through a family connection. "It would be awful not to try," Amanda said, but this only confirmed the original prognosis.



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After this, the couple's GP moved quickly to put support in place, leading to the involvement of the Palliative Care Response Service (PCRS), provided by Sunflower Care at Home, along with Macmillan.

"All I remember was loving the Sunflower carers," Amanda said. The carers visited once a day to provide personal care. "They were just lovely."

"Ian was quite a private person, but he felt very comfortable with them. As a private person, that was such a surprise to me," she said.

"They were experts at reading people. Ian would be very cheeky and have lots of banter with them."

Another essential support was the 24/7 Palliative Care Helpline (PCH).

"One of the wonderful things was that they knew everything," Amanda said. "It was so straightforward because they had all the information. Always there with support in such a warm and kind way."

The support from PCRS and PCH enabled Ian to stay at home, something that brought the family great comfort.

"It was so nice for him to die at home," Amanda said. "He got exactly what he wanted."

Ian was originally from Forfar. He loved fishing, especially his annual trip with friends to Inverpolly Lodge, and his coffin was adorned with his fishing rod and flies.

Curious, practical and always full of projects, he also had a passion for food, once travelling to Denmark to eat at the world-famous noma restaurant. Ian died at the age of 61. He had three children and one grandchild.

The support provided by PCRS, the PCH, and Macmillan ensured that Ian's final days were spent at home, something Amanda will always value.

"I was telling all my friends how wonderful the Sunflower carers were," she said. "They were just fantastic."

