

## **TONY ODAMS 30 July 1933 to 3 December 2016**

I am sad to report the death of Tony Odams who died in hospital following a short illness brought on by the effects of cancer.

Tony was one of the most successful players in Leicestershire bridge and I have little doubt in saying that he was the most popular player in the county.

He started playing at the County club in the sixties and was faithful to the club, with one small exception, for the whole of his playing career. As a player he won numerous trophies at the club, 27 in all, playing with such first class county players as Jim Wilde, Peter Halford, Edith Elias and Irene Krantz.

However it was as a servant of the club committee that he was at his most effective. He served on the committee for many years in several roles but his main achievement was to direct and negotiate the club through the tricky procedure of purchasing the premises outright in the early 1980's. His contacts in the building trade were invaluable and together with the club chairman at the time, Jim Wilde, he succeeded in raising the finances necessary to bring the property into club ownership. For his efforts he was made a life member of the club in 1986. Later he was prominent in planning and executing the extension to the premises in 1996 along with the then chairman, Brenda Harris. He had by then become a Trustee of the club and remained so until last year.

I said there was one occasion when his loyalty to the club was tested as in the late 1980's, though he was still playing regularly at the club he left the County club league team to join the Clarendon team. As a fellow member it was a delight for me to have him join our (at that time) fairly youthful band of players and his experience was invaluable in helping the team reach even greater heights of success. In later years he became one of Clarendon's most enthusiastic members and during the summer I used to notice that he couldn't wait for the next league season to start.

In the County he was probably the most successful Leicestershire player of all time. He won no fewer than 59 county trophies including the Josephs Bowl (the county's premier teams of 4 competition) on 25 occasions, 20 as team captain and the Leicestershire Cup (the teams of 4 aggregate competition) 23 times, 14 as captain. He won the Gimson Trophy (the county's premier pairs competition) 5 times. Representing Leicestershire he won the Pachabo Cup (the Inter- County Teams of Four competition) 3 times, twice as captain, and in 1979 was a member of the team which won the prestigious Tollemache Trophy (the Inter County Teams of Eight trophy). He played for the County first team on innumerable occasions. In the early 1990's he became one of the first Leicestershire players to reach the top rank of Grandmaster

He served on the Leicestershire County Bridge Association committee for a total of 22 years holding the posts of Vice Chairman, Treasurer, Fixtures Secretary and in 1991-2 and 1992-3 he served two years as chairman. In 1991 he was made a life member of the County Association.

In many of Tony's county competition successes his partner was Derek Griffiths and it was with Derek that Tony achieved his greatest triumphs as a player on the national stage. In 1979 he and Derek won the National Pairs Championship, to this day a highly prestigious competition. In 1991 they were successful in the Seniors Congress, winning the pairs event. They played in the later stages of the Gold Cup (the UK's premier teams competition) and the highly reputable Spring

## **TONY ODAMS 30 July 1933 to 3 December 2016**

Foursomes Competition. They took part in a number of Camrose Trials, at that time a major stepping stone towards national representation. They won many other congresses during their partnership and became great personal friends.

Derek was very much a flair player and was well known for his “flights of fancy” at the bridge table. Most of these were successful, a few were abject failures but, win or lose, Derek knew that Tony, a solid and reliable player, not one for acts of petulance, was his perfect partner.

Derek moved to Norfolk but Tony would annually play with him in the Norfolk Congress in Kings Lynn. They would inevitably win the event. When Derek died, Tony, who had made many friends during his visits, wanted to continue his annual visit to the congress and I was most honoured when he asked me to partner him. We came close, but due, I am sure, to his partner’s inadequacies, Tony was never quite able to emulate his former successes with Derek.

Tony’s accomplishments at the bridge table would be sufficient in themselves to merit terrific admiration. But they were achieved by a remarkably polite, affable, humorous and generous man who was welcoming to every person he met at the table. He was always gracious in defeat and modest in victory, rather putting his win down to good luck than his obvious superior card play. He gave so much without ever expecting anything in return.

That does not mean he was not competitive or, on occasions, somewhat critical of his partners. In one instance, in a major national competition, after a disagreement with his partner, he disappeared for quite a while and my partner and I were concerned at what had happened to him, wondering if he had gone home or worse. He eventually turned up having gone somewhere quiet to recover his composure before the next round. This was, though, I have to say, a rarity for Tony.

In the last couple of years, due to health complications, he stopped playing at the bridge club and in fact was reluctant to venture outdoors at all. His great friend, Peter Halford, would often tempt him out, though, and I remember being at the club one weekend when he and Peter came in to scratch off and reprint names on the club’s honours board, a task which he found highly amusing. A few months ago I managed to persuade Tony to partner me one Monday, the first time he had played for over a year. A little rusty at first, he soon picked up the pace and by the end was virtually back to his old self. Whenever we finished a session he would always ask me back to his house for a coffee which of course meant that wife Glenys had late night catering on her hands. He played with me a couple more times and in fact also recently played a league match for Clarendon before succumbing to his final illness.

When the County club went computerised, they issued each member with a number. As the longest serving life member of the club, Tony was given the number 1. How appropriate, for a man who was number one in his achievements at the game and number one in his manner at the table. For me and many other people who knew him he was always number one.

He is survived by his wife, Glenys, his children, Sally, Helen and Tim and grandchildren Matt, Stu, Katie, Elie, Maddy and Georgie.

Simon Stokes