

## Valerie Austwick—A Tribute

Anyone who has sat at a bridge table with Valerie will agree that she was a formidable bridge player. Quite how formidable is not so well known. Here's a flavour:

After winning the Hubert Phillips Bowl (English mixed teams) in 1977, she went on to win the Lady Milne (Women's home international), the Whitelaw Cup (English women's teams) twice and the Pachabo Cup, all before 1990. In between and later on, she won numerous county events in Hampshire, Somerset, Avon and Wiltshire — too many to list! — and last played for Wiltshire when she was 90. She won many of these national and county events with her husband Peter, who was also a very fine player.

We're very lucky to have had Valerie as a member of our club, and not just for her prowess at the table, as you can see from these reminiscences:



*The winners of the Hubert Phillips Bowl, 1977:  
(l to r) Peter Austwick, Pat Davies,  
Valerie Austwick, Jan Mendela*

Life with Valerie was rarely dull. She was a complete one-off — a very kind, generous and lovely person.

Always a very friendly but tough adversary.

I enjoyed playing with Valerie for a few years and missed her when she had to move away. She was a strong supporter of Bath BC and the Trophy Boards at Bristol BC confirm her earlier prowess.

I'll remember Valerie as a very strong bridge partner, an engaging conversationalist and, until her fall about five years ago, a remarkably speedy walker.

She really was an a one-off and it was a privilege to have known her.

A real character and very generous of spirit. I got to know her well in her last year at Bath — great coffee and biscuits and surprisingly knowledgeable about BT messaging systems.

Valerie was great — she was very kind and had a wonderfully dry sense of humour — conversations while chauffeuring her back and forth to the bridge club were always highly entertaining!

A private and unusual person — certainly a real character! I will never forget her lovely warm smile and little giggle and movement of her shoulders as she did so. She never lost that.

She was a remarkable and really delightful person, with an infectious laugh to temper her impatience with idiots like me. The club was much the poorer when she was no longer able to come.

I feel privileged to have had the chance to play with her in a few matches and always enjoyed hearing stories of her bridge exploits when she played with her husband. She was a lovely person.

Valerie loved walking and I have great memories of visiting National Trust properties with her. She especially liked Dyrham and put me to shame when, even in her late 80s, she insisted on walking back up to the car park, whilst I went on the bus!

And finally, a tribute from Pat Davies, her friend of 50 years:

I have wonderful memories of playing in bridge events with Valerie, and earlier with Valerie and Peter, at home and abroad. Those trips, like all outings with Valerie, were full of amusing incidents and stories.

It's not only Valerie the bridge player I'll remember, but Valerie the friend: kind, generous, humorous (especially when telling tales at her own expense) and, above all, always supportive.

We send our condolences to her children Jacqui and Richard and grandchildren Tom and Emily. They totally understood Valerie's passion for bridge — as a teenager Jacqui was taken to the Crockfords Club, where she met some famous players of that era, including Terence Rees. They are rightly very proud of all Valerie's bridge achievements.