

Keith Loveys (1949–2003)

An Appreciation by Warwick Pitch, September 2003



Keith Loveys

Keith joined the Young Chelsea shortly after we moved to these premises in 1976. It was a time when the standard of bridge here was first beginning to impact on the London bridge scene. Many of the newcomers had recently come down from Cambridge and Keith was one of them. However, unlike the others, he had already made a name for himself by winning the **Gold Cup in 1975** partnering David Greenwood. The other team members were Nicola Smith, Michael Dilks, Keith Stanley, and Irving Gordon.

It didn't take long for him to make his mark at the club. He won the 24-hour Marathon in 1978 and 1979 in a threesome with Andrew Thompson and John Reardon. In this period he also won Crockfords Cup, and with Reardon, Thompson, and Alan Woo the Brighton Teams in three successive years. He also received an invite with Greenwood to the prestigious Sunday Times tournament. They did not shine but the small field of players were all world class.

He never won the Spring Foursomes but I personally recall being part of a huge gallery of spectators at Eastbourne when the team he was in defeated Terence Reese. After the last card was played he said to the great man, "That's your lot, mate!" This was typical Keith.

I have no doubt that Keith could have represented Great Britain in the European Championships had he so desired. But it would have involved a level of commitment and a degree of discipline which he would not have relished.

And so in the last twenty or so years he played most of his bridge at the club with his friends in a congenial atmosphere which ideally suited his laid-back temperament. He formed a longstanding partnership with his great friend Paul (Pablo) Casselle, and after many attempts they eventually won the Marathon in the year 2000. The winning margin after 165 boards was 1.8 matchpoints but it was a very popular win because Keith's finances had never recovered when he lost his job in the recession of the early nineties.

Apart from bridge Keith was also a great quiz person. He was a leading light at the club's monthly quiz evening and had also appeared on a television quiz show. Unfortunately he was too nervous to do well. He also had a passion for most board games and regularly patronised games weekends in various parts of the country. He also produced a monthly games bulletin for enthusiasts in the UK and abroad.

For the last sixteen years he lived at the club in a small room at the top of the house. He died in tragic circumstances on 22 August 2003 a week after his 54th birthday.

Barry Rigal, writing from New York, adds:

Keith and I were ten years or so apart in age and quite different in temperament, but over the passage of time I can think of few players who have left me with such a favourable impression as Keith.

In 1975/6 round about the time the club moved to Barkston Gardens I was just about to go to Oxford, I had nine months available to focus on Bridge, and at the time I knew very few good players—and even fewer of them would have been prepared to admit they knew me!

I used regularly to turn up at the YC, occasionally having fixed a game with Ian Gardiner—another tragic recent loss to the club—or perhaps with Jon Livesey or Peter Donovan, but more often than not I would not have a regular date.

Keith would be at the bar, generally available for a game, and indeed over the course of the next five years I would guess we played 50 times or so. In the course of that period nothing ever remotely approaching a cross word escaped his lips despite the terrible

things I did. Some of those were sins of omission, some of commission—I was an imaginative and not unsuccessful psycher in those days, and first in hand was “the man’s position” but Keith let me have my way without a word of criticism. After the game, particularly on Friday night he and I and Frank To would often play random card games and again the skill with which he picked up any new game was an indication of his talent, not just at Bridge.

During the years I lived in London I was frequently in awe of his knowledge of trivia and often wondered how a man of his ability could be happy to live as quietly and unambitiously as he did. Indeed it often occurred to me to wonder whether a player with his gifts could not have gone so much further if he had been able to harness his energy. But if he had done so he would not have been Keith. We all tolerated his casual approach to life because it made him the easy-going friendly cooperative person we all knew and liked so much.