

Diane Kurbalija (4th September 1954 – 3rd November 2025)

Diane Kurbalija died on 3rd November, at the age of 71, after a brief illness.

Born Diane Hopkins in Stoke-on-Trent, the eldest of three children, her path in life was changed when she passed the 11+ and won a place at the grammar school. Diane read English at the University of Kent at Canterbury, where she met Filip Kurbalija on more or less the first day. They were together for 48 years. Diane spent most of her career at Brynhafren Girls' School in Barry, becoming Deputy Headteacher before leaving to work as a special education adviser to the Welsh Government.

After their retirement, Fil and Diane travelled extensively and played together in many Senior events and overseas tournaments. Fil's death in December 2021 turned Diane's life upside down, but she eventually moved back to the Stoke area to be near her family. She bought a bungalow with a beautiful garden, in which she could indulge her great passion for gardening. She said it was as if she had never been away: her mother and brothers and nieces and nephews and many, many great-nieces and great-nephews would just drop in, often not bothering with the front door.

Diane's record in bridge is extraordinary. She represented Wales in two Camrose Trophies, 20 Lady Milnes, seven Teltscher Trophies, two Olympiads and five European Championships. She won all of the Welsh domestic trophies more times than we can count. She was the first person in Wales to win the Lady Milne, Teltscher Trophy and Britannia Mixed Teams.

Diane will be missed by Jean, her devoted mother, by her brothers Robert and Steve, and by her large extended family, as well as by the bridge community in Wales and the rest of the UK. She and Filip were a feature of Welsh bridge for almost five decades, and it is hard to imagine bridge without them.