

Ciara Burns Obituary

Ciara Burns was born in Downpatrick, on the 11th September, 1972, daughter to Hugh and Anne and sister to Paul.

She was educated at St. Brigid's Primary School, Downpatrick, Assumption Grammar, Ballynahinch and Queen's University, Belfast where she studied Law. She attended the Institute of Professional Legal Studies where she qualified as a solicitor and worked in Belfast for Samuel D. Crawford & Co for almost twenty years. Her close friends at University, Amanda, Kelly, Nicola, Judith, Bronwyn, Lorraine and Gillian are still her friends today.

Ciara's first love was reading and she became a true wordsmith; her next love was Bruno, her Boxer dog and finally playing cards at home at a very early age, encouraged by Hugh and Anne. I believe she won her first Whist Drive while still at primary school.

Following winning the Irish Junior Chess championship in 1988, Ciara appeared on the bridge scene in Belfast in the early nineties, while still at University and was an instant success. She won her first of many Lady Milne caps with Diane Greenwood in 1993 and made her Camrose debut in 1998 with John Murchan. January 2001 was to become a significant time in Ciara's life, because she won the Cork Congress Pairs with John, but more importantly she was introduced to the wonderful Mary Finn.

Mary was Ciara's dream partner at the bridge table. They laughed and giggled their way through the next fifteen years together playing all over Ireland and representing Ireland in World and European championships. In all those years they never had a cross word at the table, a shining example to all.

Ciara was installed as the youngest Chairman ever of the NIBU in 2012. She really excelled in this role, increasing the membership by over twenty per cent by travelling the length and breadth of the country, both north and south, endearing herself to everyone she met with her infectious and vibrant personality. Once you see her smile and hear her raucous laughter, you could never forget her. Her tireless efforts to engage with clubs, to teach beginners and to encourage younger players were a marvel to behold.

When Greer MacKenzie addressed the AGM as Ciara's term of office was finishing, he stated that she was without a doubt the greatest Chairman that had served in his lifetime in the NIBU.

While most top bridge players are aloof or egotistical and over competitive, the same cannot be said of Ciara. She always took the time to introduce herself and welcome new faces while similarly extending her hand across the table in friendship to everyone she knew already. She never took anybody for granted.

Those close to Ciara know that, personally, she suffered terribly in the last few years, changing jobs through no fault of her own, losing her father Hugh, whom she adored, and then the tragic death of her bridge partner and dear friend Mary at such a young

age were all major shocks to her system.

However, she bounced back from adversity to become Head of Litigation at G R Ingram's in Portadown where she was loved and appreciated by her colleagues and clients alike. She became the youngest ever President of the Irish Bridge Union where she used all her administrative talents working towards a better future for Irish Bridge.

She found a kindred spirit in Ruth Connolly and was looking forward to years of adventures with her new buddy. Ciara won the Irish Mixed Trials last year with her great friends John Murchan, Anne Fitzpatrick, Harold Curran, Heidi Lillis and Michael McLoughlin and represented Ireland in Wroclaw, Poland. Ciara and John returned to the Camrose team this year, at their first attempt, after several years of not playing in Trials. Only a few weeks ago she won the first session of the Moylan playing with Mickey O'Kane.

I will begin to finish by regaling you with what I consider to be Ciara's finest bridge playing achievement. Many years ago Ciara and Mary won the Egan trophy (competition with the six best teams in Ireland). They were playing on the ladies team with Ena Cleary and Jeannie Fitzgerald. They won the competition with a huge score finishing first in the cross-imping. The rest of the field were all male. Ciara and Mary were indeed first among equals.

Our hearts go out to Ciara's immediate family, her mother Anne, her brother Paul, his wife Helen, her niece Sarah and nephew Conor at this sad time. Our deepest sympathies go also to all her friends in the bridge world, especially her team mates John, Ruth and Wayne.

You left us far too soon, but you touched the hearts of all who were lucky enough to know you. We miss you Ciara, may you rest in peace. 🙏

Ciara will be waked at her mother's house, 1 Donard View Crescent, Downpatrick from 3.00pm on Thursday.

The funeral mass will be held at 11.00am on Saturday at St. Brigid's Church, Rathkeltair Road, Downpatrick followed by the cremation service which will be held at 2.00pm at Roselawn.