



Mavis Anita Burkey (front left) 1943-2023 Past secretary of Cheshire, Wirral and Nth Wales branch of the British Polio Fellowship.

Today almost un-seemingly close on the heels of other branch bereavements we said our farewell to Mavis Burkey our past secretary who I was to follow in the position she had held. Like so many polio survivors Mavis was a strong character and held her beliefs, right or wrong, closely. She had an inquisitive mind until the last and her parting was among friends and family and from our small BPF branch all those who could manage to travel flew the BPF flag high for her.

The memorial service was at St Barnabus Church at Bromborough on the Wirral on Wednesday 24th May 2023. This was followed by committal at Landican Crematorium. The Minister at both was the Revd. Jenny Gillies who has known Mavis for years as a staunch member of her congregation and latterly visited Mavis at home and in hospital. The tribute at the funeral was delivered by her brother Chris Carvell, Mavis had lost her beloved husband Les back in 1995.

Mavis was born in 1943 during the second world war, her father had been mentioned in despatches for his bravery and was thus permitted to display his oak leaf on the victory medal ribbon. It was in 1947 that Mavis contracted the polio virus way back before vaccination could be considered. She had a strong sense of independence, she found a job as a short hand typist and drove herself and was determined she would live to the full despite a disability. She had been left with no use of both legs and thus for the next 76 years wheelchair bound. Mavis was determined she would not be defined as a person who needed help.

Mavis had a loving marriage to Les Burkey and after he passed in 1995 she was undeterred, her amazing spirit and love of life enabled her to carry on, in and out of cars in all weathers to go swimming at West Kirby or philosophy classes in Chester or Chorley. On one trip she was with her brother Chris in the car near Chorley, there was a tropical downpour and the car engine stalled. After half an hour she commented that she hoped Chris had brought his debit card!

After being widowed Mavis regularly drove to Meadow Croft Farm in Staffordshire, a Christian retreat centre where she found much comfort. Her father Fred had been a landscape gardener who always bought her raspberry sweets and none for her brother who didn't like the smell of Fred's pipe. When Mavis and Les eventually got their own garden, it was packed with flowers and she would impress visitors by reciting all the Latin botanical names for her plants. She had inherited gardening skills from her grandfather and bravery from her dad.

On our branch visits Mavis would be as inquisitive whatever the subject and naturally enjoyed our visits to a local garden centre with demonstrations and afternoon tea. The photo illustrating this tribute shows Mavis on our visit to the Boat Museum at Ellesmere Port in Cheshire. She loved anyone who gave a talk to the branch and was never short of questions. Mavis stuck to pen and paper in her term as secretary and it was quite laborious as her arms were now losing their little strength. Her passing came quite suddenly on 21st April 2023. Much missed by all of our remaining little branch which is still full of amazing people like Mavis.

Dave Spencer

Secretary Cheshire, Wirral and North Wales Branch BPF.