

Death of Lifelong Activist Who Campaigned For Peace

Diane Brace 7 April 1930-26 October 2017

Many of UK Wilpfers will remember the lively, strong and confident Diane Brace, who was very active from 2003-2013 in UK Wilpf being London coordinator as well as holding office on the executive. She also represented UK Wilpf in meetings in UK and overseas. Diane was always very straight to the point, and an inspiration to many.

Diane was born in Kingston south west London, and came from an active political family. Her parents were members of the Communist party and were vegetarian. Her parents supported the Republicans in the Spanish Civil War in the 1930s and remembers being with her mother, the leaflets had a map of Europe.

Diane was an active UK Wilpfer from 2003 and had been an active campaigner most of her adult life. In 2003 she travelled to Sweden with her American friend who was a very active in US Wilpf. This inspired Diane to revistalise the London branch of Wilpf, and become involved in UK Wilpf. Diane had changed to part time work, and gave her time to campaign.

Diane was coordinator until 2012, when I took over after working closely with her on a number of campaigns and helping with chairing meetings.

Diane spent her working life as a lecturer in further education colleges in different parts of UK, before her retirement she was principle of Islington college which was North London and City college. She begun working there in 1985, and spent the first 3 months creating order to stop the bad behaviour and help the staff feel safe. Her years of peace activism were put in practice by her clear leadership qualities.

Diane was very much a doer, she would come to a meeting, and agree to help run the organisation. She was Vice President and Membership secretary of UK Wilpf in 2005 up to 2010. She helped run the office and initiated a number of young interns in running an office and organising campaigns. Diane always got on well with young people, and her experience as a lecturer with young people helped her bring out the best in this age group.

Diane studied politics at London School of Economics and married a fellow student, who she had 2 children with, and has 4 grandchildren. She had originally thought of studying physics or fashion. She was known for her couture.

She joined the Labour Party in 1948 and did break her membership in 2003 with the invasion of Iraq. She was active in CND, and many other peace campaigns, she regularly joined the Women in Black vigil on Wednesday evenings by the Edith Cavell statue close to Trafalgar Square.

Diane was excellent at writing minutes and reports, and informing members of what was happening. One of the high lights of London Wilpf in the 2000s was the annual summer garden party that Diane organised, often women came who had not been seen at the

evening meetings. She was very supportive to Voices of African Women in particular to highlighting human rights abuses in Congo.

In 2008 the London branch had a meeting in Portcullis House in regard to changing law on prostitution with Harriet Harman and this brought a number of groups to the roundtable meeting with Josephine Butler trust, and London Feminists. Diane cheered on by many young Wilpfers took part in 5k challenge in Hyde Park in 2010.

Diane and I took part in Stop the Traffick events in 2012. In 2012 Diane helped write briefing with Jane Grant and myself on sex trafficking due to Olympics taking place, this was held in London Assembly in City Hall with Labour Assembly member Len Duval.

In addition to Diane's work with her local Labour party, UK Wilpf, she set up University of the 3rd Age classes in her home in 2014 on debate and politics.

Diane had great energy and was very articulate, she enjoyed watching wildlife and used to feed local ducks. She was a great patron of her local theatre, enjoyed music and had a great sense of humour. She was a regular at Edinburgh fringe accompanying her grandson Adam Brace who is a successful playwright. She loved meeting people from all the world, and exchanging ideas.

Diane would say to me, that she did not feel her age of 80, sadly in 2013 her health deteriorated and she had a mild stroke. Her eyesight was affected and reading became difficult. In 2016 leukaemia was diagnosed which treatment was very limited. Diane was very open about it, and felt very tired.

At her memorial held at Islington Town Hall, a number of friends described her generosity on many occasions, as well as her speed and success at organising so many activities in working to improve people's lives. She was a great supporter of local youth project Friends of Rose Bowl.

Alexandra Murrell 2/01/2017