

Mary Moriarty has died aged 83

She was known as the feisty landlady of the Port O'Leith bar and in her retirement Mary Moriarty was painted by Edinburgh artist, Sarah Muirhead.

Mary Moriarty who was the unofficial Queen of Leith has died aged 83. She became known as the energetic and very much in charge manager of the Port O'Leith bar after working as landlady of a bar in East Lothian.

Married to James Moriarty, a mountaineer, she had two children, Niall and Eilidh.

It was Eilidh who announced the sad news on Facebook this morning saying: **"A light has gone out in Leith this morning. With a heavy heart my mum such a character. The Queen of Leith has left us. Loved by many Mary you will be missed."**

Deidre Brock MP for Edinburgh Northern and Leith said: "I first got to know Mary when I became councillor for Leith Walk, so it was around 2007. I was of course aware of her legendary status as the Port o' Leith landlady, but I came to know her too as one of the most inspiring women and one of the hardest working supporters at the many events there've been in Leith over the years. I can see her now in her Leith Festival high-viz jacket, helping direct folk to stalls, mucking in with litter pickers and bin bags and organising the performers. That sounds almost too prosaic but the thing was, Mary was always there, at the very heart of community events,

and the people of Leith really appreciated that: they knew she loved them and how much she loved Leith. She was kind, generous and down to earth. She had a wonderful deep laugh and the widest of smiles; there was no side to her but you felt, particularly after her experience of managing the famous Port o' Leith bar, that she could take on anyone if it was ever needed. She was a woman of great character.

"One of my fondest memories of Mary though is from one of the Leith Festival Burns Suppers, at the very end of the night: it had been a terrific evening of poetry and song, and Mary was dancing with a kilted Sandy Campbell, honorary Leith Provost. She was wearing a tartan mini-skirt and looking utterly fabulous, and as they waltzed beautifully around the floor that lovely dreamy smile of hers just lit up the Dockers Club.

"My memory of her quiet delight at the unveiling of the beautiful portrait of her by artist Sarah Muirhead, to hang in the foyer of Leith Theatre as a tribute to both Mary herself but also the decades of change she and Leith had lived through, is also something I'll treasure – she really was the Queen of Leith, and we will all miss her very much."

When the painting was unveiled and hung in Leith Theatre, Mary said: "I am honoured and delighted that a portrait of me will hang in Leith Theatre, how thrilling and exciting. Both the Theatre and myself have shared exciting times in Leith.

"I have very fond memories of 25 years in the Port o' Leith Bar meeting lots of lovely Leithers and of course workers in the Docks and Crew members of ships docked in Leith. Credit should go to the lovely young talented artist Sarah Muirhead – it was great to be able to chat to her when she was preparing the painting, also a big THANK YOU to those who commissioned the portrait."

Sarah Muirhead said after completing the painting: "I was delighted to be asked to paint such an extraordinary woman.

It was important to me that Mary was honoured and represented as someone who is so loved and respected in her community and known quite rightly as Queen of Leith. A nod to her status as elected monarchy is the formal composition of the painting. I wanted to optics in the bottom left corner to look like jewels but to refer to her trade and background.

“I thought it right to make her halo a scene of Leith Links and to include a photograph of her husband who still feels like a very present figure in her life and that of the community of Leith. I included various objects in her home which she was kind enough to show me around and tried to communicate her warmth, character and nature which I think is distinct and unique. It was a pleasure painting someone I would have liked to paint regardless of the commission because she is fascinating and has a powerful presence.”



By Sarah Moorhead

Jemma Neville the author of Constitution Street said on Twitter: "Very sad to hear that Mary Moriarty, Queen of Leith, has died. She was always so kind to me. I sought her 'blessing' when I had the idea for writing Constitution Street and she let me interview her many times. Also a twin. Rest in power neighbour." It's a day for leopard print:)"

Mary supported the Leithers Don't Litter [campaign](#) to get rid of litter and was the poster girl for it. Here she is pictured with photographer Euan Myles.



Mary Moriarty with photographer Euan Myles PHOTO Martin P McAdam



Euan Myles and Mary Moriarty at the launch of the Fly Spotting campaign PHOTO Martin P McAdam