



ECSOGA Spring Meeting Presentations

Winter
2005/6

“They have been at a great feast of languages...”

Love's Labour's Lost – Act V

A CELEBRATION

Prompted by the death of Miss Lisette Marion at 104 years of age

The death of Miss Lisette Marion in February 2002 prompted a desire to honour her memory and services to the School and to include other language staff who taught with such skill and enthusiasm over the years.

The ECSOGA Spring Meeting in March 2004 was devoted to the celebration of those staff and the contributions from the Chair and Panel of Speakers at that Meeting, together with some written contributions (which were read out at the Meeting) are reproduced here.



Miss Lisette Marion
[21/ 3 /1897 – 14 /2/2002]
French Teacher at ECS
1944-61

Chair:

Joan Hart, MA joined French Department at ECS in January 1947 (as Miss Cherry), succeeded Miss Marion as Head of Department in 1961 and was deputy Headmistress ECS 1966-80

Speakers:

Sheila Youngs (Hynd 1945-49): Exhibitioner, State Scholar, teacher and Governor of ECS

Meriel Downey (Dasley 1942-49) : Gamble Scholarship to Bedford, University Tutorial Fellowship to King's, lecturer and Dean at Goldsmith's and has continued studying a variety of subjects throughout her life.

Joan Holden (Wilkinson 1948-55): BA (Oxon) Mathematics

Mary Stewart (Cock 1954-61): D.Phil. Official Fellow at Newnham and Foundation Fellow of Robinson College

Lauren Haynes (1992-2000): BA, now teaching English at University of Limoges

Janet Champion (Wragg 1955-62) obtained *le Prix d'Excellence* at the French Institute and later taught French Shorthand there.

Inside this Issue:

Joan Hart	2-3
Sheila Youngs	4-5
Meriel Downey	6-7
Joan Holden	8
Mary Stewart	8
Lauren Haynes	9-10
Janet Champion	10-12

Chair: Joan Hart

I confess to feeling nervous for am celebrating two firsts. I have never been called a chair before and I have never used a mike; my schoolmarm below usually reached its destination on its own momentum.

I feel that I ought to open proceedings in the way that I introduced my lessons for more than thirty years: 'Bonjour la classe'.

This afternoon's programme has been sparked off by the death of Miss Marion at the vast age of 104. There are still members of her department aged 90 and 92. I find this encouraging.

I am proud to introduce our work and to know that so many of you have both enjoyed and benefited from it - perhaps the two together - whether in the exalted regions of academe with D. Phil. or D. Litt., whether combining dressmaking with translating French for a pharmaceutical company, keeping in touch with your penfriend or simply taking your children to a French camp site and finding to your own surprise that you could understand a French newspaper or magazine and cope with the oddities of a French grocer or butcher.

But I'm sure that we would all wish to think about languages in general. We must congratulate Mary on her inspired choice of title. ECS has always specialised in languages in considerable variety - even the scientists among you were not exempt. Classical, mainly because of Miss F. Sharp who stimulated and terrified you in equal measure (and some of us too) and later Mrs Crisp and Miss Elder. Many of you remember teachers who also ran their own departments - Miss Roberts with Spanish, Miss Russell with German. I'd also like to remember Mrs Dean who died recently at the age of 95, at school part-time then full-time from 1947 to 1968. With her own linguistic background, her interest in careers work, she transformed 6B Commercial into 6B Secretarial, a department in which you could justifiably take pride.

It is only right and proper to link foreign languages ancient and modern, with the teaching of English. For most here today, two women were outstanding: Miss Flint, admired for her inimitable, incredible and flamboyant dramatic work and the gentler, self-effacing Miss Cox, whose sad last years we mourn, for her play production, for her stimulus not only to read but to read *good* books, and, in today's context, for her teaching of the structure of language, of correct speech and writing. Without this, teaching other languages would have been much more difficult than it was.

You will remember other teachers - with what emotions I won't speculate. Some, like Miss Annie Bessie Chaney, who survived only 2 terms during the Great War, were temporary, visitors, substitutes or women who moved on quickly after a year or two; there were the annual French Assistants, some seeming very chic, Miss Jones who worked for 23 years before my time, Miss Anderson, Miss Bishop who returned later as Mrs Scott and who, sadly, died recently at the age of 95, Miss Sparkes, Mrs Leigh and her visits abroad, Mrs Hills, Mrs Pettifer (better known perhaps as Susan Page), Mrs Tryfonos, Mrs Phillips from Chase Girls.

I'm getting to the point slowly! What was the inheritance of Miss Marion and so of all members of the department? Miss Forrest, that histrionic, selfish yet brilliant character was, I guess, indeed I hope, a unique phenomenon. She assumed that French particularly but all foreign languages, even Russian and Italian, were the birthright, indeed the birth-duty, of every girl in the school. To that end, she wrote many books. *Apprenons le Français* must be imprinted on the memories of most of you - acceptable for many years, laughable in post-war days. Less acceptable were books of texts, of poetry and of plays, for she believed in drama, especially if it ended in her tears.

Even before the Great War, she brought Europe into the classroom. She took the first party to Paris, admittedly only, I think, four girls, she supplied pen-

friends, she entered girls for public examinations and competitions, she encouraged exchanges and high ambitions. She found the odd bursary at a time when higher education for girls of very modest means was far from easy.

**She taught brilliantly because she knew
her stuff and cared deeply about it.**

Whist we are not here today to praise Forry, we must not forget that she did the groundwork in teaching girls thoroughly, but she also created the ethos, so that by the time Miss Marion took over, it was considered absolutely normal that all girls, whatever their linguistic ability, would learn French, and which was rare, speak it well (or fairly well) as a matter of course.

La grande dame took enormous care in choosing staff - obviously! - only those whom she considered socially and intellectually suitable and was heartbroken to hand over her responsibilities. In fact, she needed not one, not two, but three replacements - F Sharp as Deputy Head, Miss Marion as Head of Department - and me as the mere teacher.

Staff, by then, were wearying of the tantrums; girls were increasingly unhappy, not only with her unreliable dentures, but with her exhausting methods and frequent absences from lessons. Those with less stomach for all this were glad to 'sink' a division to be taught by lesser mortals.

So there was ample scope for a new broom. There was much to build on without resorting to tears, bullying and the like. Would the new Head of Department be able to maintain the high standard and at the same time bring in, slowly, the modernisation needed?

Everyone wondered how the slender, grey-suited lady who caused fear as she sped dangerously across the playground on her bicycle, the richly named Louise Iréna Mélanie Marion, from Lyon University as Licencié-ès-Lettres (roughly our MA)

and the Paris Sorbonne, already middle-aged (47), whose English was fluent but remained strongly accented, how would she fare?

I shared a table in the Staff Room, then lit only by gaslight, with her until she retired. We juniors called her The Boss (behind her back) and I'm told that some of you called her Maid Marion (and that would be behind her back also)!

There was no doubt who was in charge. I was given the top Fifth, FMF's pride and joy, presumably on the basis that I couldn't damage their School Cert. prospects in their remaining two terms. Some are here today; I was astonished by their linguistic efficiency.

More Important, we all had our chance with the top divisions, which could include girls from any form in the year. There was a fair rota - a happy improvement.

There was another, more 'canny' change. MCS had instituted a CCP - to you, a Continuous Correcting Period. We could leave at lunchtime except at the beginnings and ends of terms, at times of staff illness and when any VIPs were expected. We in the Modern Languages department had Fridays much more often than any other department.

She was kind and thoughtful when we were ill or downcast. One Break, I was sniffing into my mug of Oxo. She unobtrusively asked what was the matter. Gulping, I replied that it was my birthday. She chortled merrily - 'oh, you must be 30. Everyone is miserable when it is their thirtieth!'

Her hospitality was legendary, her cooking fabulous. Alas! That came to an end for Denys and me as she felt that we should never have allowed ECS to become comprehensive. There may have been an element of snobbery, but I think it was that she rightly foresaw that linguistic excellence would be more difficult to achieve.

**I make no excuse for using again the same
cliché that I used for Miss Cox -
we shall not see her like again**

Sheila Youngs

I have tried to remember what drew me to language learning in the first place. It was never a conscious choice but was probably sparked off by my father teaching me at a very early age to sing popular songs in French and German, such as "J'attendrai" and "Wenn Ich komm." which I learnt by heart without any idea what the words meant.

My dad, being very European and internationally minded, had taught himself French, German and Spanish and obviously wanted me to follow in his footsteps.

Later, at the school in Berkshire to which I was evacuated during the war and afterwards here at ECS, which I didn't join until the Fifth form I had excellent language teachers who encouraged what ability I had in French, which seemed to come fairly easily to me.

I don't remember being taught French by Miss Marion whom we are honouring today (although she was my Form Mistress in Form Five) except for a brief period when she started coaching me for University Scholarship Exams after school in the Sixth Form. For reasons I shall not go into here she was soon replaced by Mrs. Hart to whom I am very grateful, for, in spite of some of her remarks about my literature essays (I can still see the wiggly line in the margin, with the word "woolly" written there), I did succeed in gaining a scholarship to Reading University.

Incidentally, this was the only time the terrifying Miss F. Sharp smiled at me, on learning I was to attend the same University where she herself had studied. I should also take this

opportunity to thank Miss Forrest who continued to give me her support, even after she had retired, by lending me books, and Miss Russell, who gave me my grounding German.

At Reading I chose to take French with subsidiary German (which I had only begun in the Sixth Form) as these were among my best results in Higher School Certificate. Like many others in those days who went up to University I had no real idea of what I wanted to do when I left, other than a vague desire to do something which involved travel, such as, rather ambitiously, join the Diplomatic Service.

Our lecturers at Reading all assumed we would become teachers

For myself and many of my friends nothing was further from our minds. I was recommended to go the Sorbonne in Paris for my year abroad but from the point of view of learning to speak the language fluently this was a big mistake. All the French students with whom we came in contact only wanted to speak English.

Finally, armed with my Degree I obtained a post as research assistant at the Foreign Office on the Czechoslovak desk where, to my dismay, all the reports which I had to summarise were in German, requiring continual reference to a dictionary. I began to wish I had not absented myself quite so often from the one German lecture we had each week at Reading in order to go sailing on the River Thames. It was clear to me that I had to improve my German .

I managed to get taken on by the International Department of the German Social Demo-

cratic Party at their Headquarters in Bonn. Here, all the staff spoke perfect English so I found myself a room with a charming German family in Bad Godesberg who spoke none at all. Thereafter my German came on in leaps and bounds. Incredibly I discovered that a friend from my year at the County School, Pat Butt, (who is here today) was also working in Bonn at the time. If I am not mistaken she was engaged on researching the letter "S" for the publishers of the *Langenscheid German Dictionary*.

My career, if you can call it that, (very modest when compared to some I read about in ECSOGA newsletters) really only started when I returned, after one year, albeit under parental pressure, to Enfield. My father had found me a job with School Travel Service in the town and had even interviewed the Tours Manager in my absence at our house to decide if the job was suitable for his daughter (not the other way around). The firm offered to pay my fare back from Germany to England for an interview with the boss which is why I accepted and ended up staying at the firm for 19 years.

At that time a Degree was sufficient qualification to be able to teach but after one year in a local Comprehensive I realised I needed some training so took the Post Graduate Certificate of Education at evening classes for two years. I fortunately soon found a post as Head of French at a local boys Preparatory school, where I taught happily for a further 18 years, always taking a party a year to France.

After retiring 11 years ago I did some private coaching for a while but for most of that time worked again for my old employers, School Travel Service, now no longer based in Enfield, setting up language courses in France, and latterly for a similar agency, TravelBound, as a Course Tutor on language tours to France.

this type of work, having seen the standard of behaviour (of the staff, not the pupils) declining, and their dedication to language teaching diminishing in some of the parties I had to deal with, it just wasn't worth my time and effort any more .

Over the past 6 years I have become involved with the International Federation of University Women, travelling widely to various conferences and taking part in Friendship Tours in different parts of the world. It has been extremely helpful to be able to converse with foreign nationals either in their native tongue or a language which we could mutually understand, making for a closer connection than would otherwise be the case.

All in all, in spite of rather drifting into modern languages, it turned out in the end to be my salvation and has provided a busy and interesting life. I do hope that language teaching continues to thrive. One sometimes gets the impression that all the world speaks English so there is no need to bother to learn other languages but, even where this is so, there is no better way of getting to know a country and its people than speaking the language of that country.

Our ever closer links with Europe and the rest of the world make it now even more of a necessity. Increasing job opportunities are opening up on the Continent and further afield, of which young people starting out on a career should be equipped to take full advantage.

I feel it is essential that all pupils should be encouraged to have at least one foreign language under their belt, however rudimentary, before leaving to find work in the outside world.

One never knows when it might come in useful.

Meriel Downey

I was asked to give a short talk on my experiences of learning German and Russian, as part of the forum to celebrate the learning of modern languages, prompted by the death of Miss Marion at the age of 104.

Our form (or rather those of us who wanted to learn another language - about 16 of us) began German in September 1945, only a few months after the end of the war with Germany. We were excited about the prospect of learning another language after our experiences with French and Latin and also intrigued to get to know Miss Russell who joined the school that term. We were taught by the direct oral method according to the tradition of ECS with no word of English being used in class.

Miss Russell was a very enthusiastic teacher who clearly loved her subject and was always ready to give up her spare time to help and encourage us. I remember that Pat (Butt) and I in our first term of German used to listen to a BBC programme on Saturday mornings called "German for the Forces" (Germany was still occupied then) and attempt to write down what we had heard; we would later ask Miss Russell to make sense of our bizarre spelling. We had no German assistant at that time so she willingly gave up her time after school on Fridays to give us German conversation sessions.

Quite a large group of us continued to HSC (A level equivalent) and several of us went on to read German at university.

After graduating I was undecided about what I wanted to do and spent three years attempting to research aspects of Old High German while at the same time teaching German to science students.

I then realised that I did not anticipate spending my life in an enclosed ivory tower of pure academic research but wanted to do something more socially useful.

Thus I came to teaching, my first job being at a school for blind and partially sighted girls. All the girls learned German, beginning in the third form. Classes were small according to regulations for those with special needs. A further challenge here was that I had to learn both German and English braille and also to use the Stainsby machine to write braille - neither as difficult as it might sound.

One interesting venture was the trip I organised to Germany for a group of 20. We stayed in the youth hostel in Bonn (where I had spent a term at the university) and girls soon learned to cope with the requirements of the hostel, such as setting and clearing tables, helping to wash up and making their own beds, despite their visual impairment. On the many outings we made in and around Bonn and down the Rhine, including shopping trips, they were always keen to practise their German, sometimes causing amusement to the natives who were nevertheless appreciative of their efforts. We always walked in pairs, those with no sight being partnered by a partially sighted friend or an adult, the latter always being on the road side of the pavement.

My next teaching job afforded a marked contrast: teaching German in a large school in London's East End. Not only were classes large but standards of behaviour were quite different from those I remembered from ECS. This proved quite a challenge and was ultimately very rewarding. Again I organised several trips to Germany with groups of about 20 girls who used to save up

£1 a week to cover the cost of the trip. Those whose parents could not afford the total cost were given a small contribution from school fund.

The most memorable school journey was when the colleague who was due to come with us became pregnant and was not allowed to travel. Nobody else was willing to sacrifice part of their summer holiday and in the end the Head allowed the trip to go ahead - quite illegally - in order not to disappoint the group. When I look back on this experience, I am aghast at the sheer foolhardiness of taking twenty nubile girls abroad with no other adult to help.

My experience of learning Russian is a good illustration of how not to teach a language

When I reached the 6th form and was asked if I would like to learn Russian (almost certainly at Miss Forrest's instigation even though she had already retired), I readily agreed, even though I'd already begun Spanish as an extra language. But as we had no teacher of Russian on the staff, arrangements were made for me to attend a class at the School of Slavonic Studies in London.

My initial experience was quite embarrassing as I joined this group of postgraduate students and university lecturers - a first year girl in my school uniform! Moreover I arrived after the first week when all the rest had already mastered the Cyrillic alphabet, so I had to catch up quickly. We were taught from an archaic text book: each chapter began with a list of vocabulary, bereft of any context. There were no short reading passages and no oral work at all in class. The skills which I needed for School Certificate such as the translation of passages into or from Russian and the composition of a short narrative were not taught, so I had to apply the techniques I had acquired from my excellent teachers at ECS.

The tutor was a French lady who, as I discovered later, spoke Russian with a French accent.

It was only when Miss Forrest intervened once more and invited me to tea to meet a native Russian speaker that I realised that my pronunciation and stress were all wrong. So now I had to relearn before the oral examination at the end of the year.

Another difficulty now arose: part of this exam. consisted of a dictation in Russian. Dictations were normally given by our regular teacher so as we had no teacher of Russian, a way had to be found round the problem. As it happened, Miss Campbell, for some reason or other, was trying to teach herself Russian and volunteered to give me the dictation. However, with no disrespect for Miss Campbell, she was no linguist. In the days before tapes, there were no audio guides, so she had used the English approximation to Russian to help her. Yet again I had to learn to recognise a different (unorthodox) pronunciation. My friends and I laughed about this afterwards but it was no joke at the time!

When I went up to university, we were required to take a short course in a subject other than our main one during our first year and this seemed a good opportunity to continue with Russian. However my college did not offer it. We had however a small Dutch department with two staff and as yet no students, so several of us learned Dutch. Fortunately I was able to continue this at the university of Bonn where I studied for a term. Dutch is so similar to German that we were soon able to converse and to read short stories.

After teaching in schools for some years my career took a different direction and my contact with modern languages became less direct. But over the years I have joined Adult Education classes to brush up my Spanish and Russian and now try to keep up with current linguistic developments in German and French by reading newspapers and modern novels.

Joan Holden

Until I joined a U3A French Conversation class a few years ago I don't think I had realised what an enormous debt my generation at ECS owed to Miss Marion. She taught me from the second year to the fifth (1949 - 1953) and we didn't understand how different our lessons were from those in other Grammar and Public Schools - we had no means of comparison.

From the start, all lessons were conducted mainly in French, and English was only used to reinforce points of grammar that we were being taught. We were spoken to in French and we responded in French and were encouraged to aim for as near to a French accent as we could. We were far from perfect, we all had problems with the French 'r' and 'u'. On occasions when we pronounced something really badly Miss Marion would put her hands over her ears and moan 'Oh, my poor ears!'

We spoke in French, we recited poems, we even had a BBC broadcast, one lesson a week for a term, on French songs. I wonder how many others can still sing their way through 'En passant par la Lorraine avec mes sabots' ? Miss Marion. had a natural, sweet singing voice so our singing was not restricted to the broadcast lessons but included French carols at Christmas.

Miss Marion was an interesting person and I think our group all enjoyed French lessons, but she was a strict teacher and we were a bit in awe of her and trod carefully. One occasion sticks in my mind more than fifty years later. We must have been in the second form because we were revising the French words for different parts of the body. The classroom had run out of white chalk so Miss Marion was writing on the blackboard in blue. Some unfortunate girl had forgotten the French for 'nose' and an exasperated Miss Marion emphasised 'le nez, le nez' while touching her own nose vigorously. The agony of suppressed giggles - we dared not laugh, but the sight of her blue nose was too much for us. We had to wait until the end of the lesson to give way to our laughter.

Since meeting other people of my own age-group and attempting to speak to them in conversation lessons I realise that speaking French in other schools was normally something reserved for oral lessons. Getting the words spoken correctly with something approaching a French accent was not as important to them as being able to -,Write Grammatically. How lucky we were at ECS!

Mary Stewart

What do I recall when I think of my experience learning languages at ECS? These are just a few disjointed memories - and I'm concentrating on Modern Languages:

Learning a language can include the whole gamut of emotions - puzzlement, a sense of inadequacy, exhilaration, or if Miss Sparkes was your French teacher sheer terror! But she set us off on a route determined by high standards and great precision (I can still hear her emphatic tone pronouncing *quin-caillerie*, though why that word should have stuck above all others I'm not sure!)

Thereafter I recall with great fondness Miss Roberts introducing us gently to the delights of French literature in the form of La Fontaine, and later still the extraordinary, wonderful duo of Mrs. Hart and Miss Marion: I doubt anyone could have had better teaching - informed, interesting, exacting, challenging. Their styles were different, but complementary in the very best sense, and both gave their pupils not only goals to aim at, but the sense of being supported and valued as individuals - who were, of course, also expected to pull their weight! What we read and analysed together now astonishes me in its intellectual range and variety and is a model for how to challenge and stretch pupils.

Then there was Miss Russell for German, which in the end turned out to be 'my' language. Starting in the fourth form was quite late really for a new language, but Miss Russell from the start insisted we use only German in the classroom, and my diary records that she was meticulous in making us pronounce all the vowels and consonant groups correctly before anything else. She also managed to bring teaching alive with details of German customs and everyday life, which helped to compensate for the tough experience of fast learning: I still recall the shock of trying to read my first A-Level text, which seemed impossibly difficult, but we got there with firm foundations and encouragement.

I realize that life then (I was at ECS from 1954-1962) was different: fewer distractions, not least, and perhaps greater readiness amongst pupils to be guided and led. Even allowing for that, however, I still feel hugely indebted, for I was given the best possible start, and I've tried to emulate that combination of high expectation and personal attention in my own university teaching career ever since. I could not have had that career without what ECS gave me, I'm sure of that.

I attended Enfield County School from 1992-2000. Currently I am at the University of Portsmouth, studying for a degree in French Studies. I am in my final year, working hard, and looking forward to graduating this summer. Last year, I spent the third year of my degree in France, at the University of Avignon, which is something that I will talk about some more later on.

I have been asked to talk to you today about language learning, and with about 12 years of it behind me, I have a fair bit to say! I suppose that there are a few essentials that you need in order to learn a foreign language.

I suppose that there are a few essentials that you need in order to learn a foreign language. Firstly a good teacher, determination, good memory, thick skin and the ability to laugh at yourself, often with other people too.

I was very fortunate and while at Enfield County I was lucky enough to have some excellent teachers. There were the native speakers, Mlle Poncelet, and at the Grammar School, where we used to have some of our A-level lessons, Mlle Macko. They always managed to make the lessons interesting and the discussions we used to have were always stimulating and we would laugh a lot as well. In fact I realised while I was doing my A-levels that there are two motivations for learning a language.

A friend of mine explained that she learned languages in order to master the vocabulary and grammar of another language, that writing correct sentences and speaking in a native way were the things that she enjoyed the most. I, on the other hand, have always enjoyed learning French because of the culture that it opens

up to me. I love to read books in French and listen to French music, to have debates with people from different backgrounds and immerse myself in another way of life. Indeed that was one of the major reasons that I chose my course at the University of Portsmouth, at Pompey Uni the studies aspect of the course means that you study economics, politics, sociology, culture, history, even dictionary making, which appealed to me much more than studying Voltaire in class.

The non-native teachers were lucky enough to teach us the grammar aspects and other such riveting things, which invariably led to a class full of forlorn faces as we have to adapt what we have already learnt to include some brand new rules which we had never even imagined. I should mention here, to put the intricacies of the French language into perspective that when I was at University in France I attended a French class, for French people. They were being handed back an exam that they had recently taken, and over half of the class had failed. Needless to say, I dropped that particular class in a hurry.

So determination is another essential. You have to keep on going back, even when you have conjugated a verb in the wrong tense five times already you keep going. I even see it now, when you just can't get it right and fire off the verb conjugated in seven other tenses, hoping that you will get bonus points for those and maybe you'll be forgiven for not knowing the subjunctive!

Good memory is always an advantage. Recently for an exam we had to learn 600 words for such useful things as tannin (which is a word I have never even had the occasion to use in English) and matraquer, which means to bludgeon someone to death. So you can imagine that memory capacity is pretty important. The wine vocabulary we had to acquire was a little easier, describing a bottle of wine in

Lauren Haynes - continued

working is always great.

Life at the University in Avignon was very different from Portsmouth. There was no equivalent to the Students' Union, where you could have a social gathering with a subsidised bar and restaurant. If you had personal problems there was no one you could turn to for help or advice. You were expected to be able to look after yourself. However the fees were lower as the students were not contributing to the cost of all the extra-curricular activities.

I enjoyed my time at Avignon and I learned a great deal about the differences of life, attitudes and politics in another country as well as improving my knowledge of the language.

Editor's Note; When I emailed Lauren to ask if I could put what I had of her talk on the ECSOGA private website, Lauren agreed and gave the current news of herself as at July 2005:

I am currently living in France, teaching English at the University of Limoges. I have finished my first year there and will be beginning my second year in September. I have all been very interesting although I am ashamed to say that I think I have learnt as much about the English language this year as French! There are all of these things about our language that we just accept and it is only when students ask questions that they seem strange!

This all serves to make English classes very interesting indeed....

Janet Champion

It's funny how things turn out in life sometimes. If you had said to me in 1955, when I sat frantically learning French verbs, waiting not without some trepidation for Miss Marion to take us for French in the first year at ECS, that she would become such a special friend to me in later years, I don't think I would have believed it. Indeed, as she taught our group right until she retired in 1961 and was our form mistress twice during that time and we came to value her more and more, both for her excellent teaching skills and for herself, I still don't think I would have thought it possible.

However, our "Miss Marion", we could never have called her by any other name, firstly out of respect and then out of endearment, did become a very special friend of my husband, Jeremy, and myself, a third grandmother figure to our two daughters, Jackie and Helen. We all have much to thank her for and have many memories of numerous visits to her maisonette in Great Amwell, near Ware, during her long retirement.

When the girls were small, we invariably went to see the animals at Van Hage's Garden Centre nearby, which the girls always loved to do. Miss Marion made scrap books for them, showed them how to press flowers, how to use a sewing machine. She always made pancakes with them on Shrove Tuesday. She made them lovely clothes, beautifully smocked, and patchwork cushions for their bedrooms, as she was a fine seamstress and needlewoman. She was a wonderful cook, which Jeremy and I always much

appreciated,- when I went with the girls to see Miss Marion, she always pandered to Helen's somewhat conservative tastes and we always had turkey roll, parsley sauce, carrots and frozen peas, followed by ice-cream and home-made hot chocolate sauce, Helen's favourite and all she would eat at the time, I remember! The first trips on the bus which they did on their own were on the 313 from Enfield to Great Amwell, where Miss Marion met them at the bus stop and then telephoned me from her house to let me know that they had actually arrived safely! All these memories to show a side of Miss Marion that maybe some of you didn't see at school, including my own sister, who, to this day, will never ever forget her first day at ECS when she came to find me and was caught "in the wrong corridor" by Miss Marion! What's more, Miss Marion never forgot either!

Miss Marion was born in March 1897, one of the middle children of a family of eleven, and spent her young years in Lyon. To quote what she told us once at school, she had a "very strict Protestant upbringing" in a family where children were to be seen and not heard. She was particularly close to one of her little brothers, she said she loved him as soon as she saw him, because he was so cute.

She came to England when she was about twenty and went to live with a family in Wales, where there were two daughters. Both of them gave her books to read, the older one something "entirely unsuitable" and the younger one the book "Daddy Long Legs" which she came to know off by heart and through which she learnt most of her English, she said. She asked for a copy of this book a few days before she died.

She embarked on her teaching career over here and taught in some prestigious schools, such as King Edward's in Birmingham and St. Felix School near Southwold. She came to ECS, her last post, during the Second World War. As an "alien" during the War, Miss Marion was restricted where she could cycle and had to report to the police on a regular basis. She retired from ECS in 1961, a year before Miss M.C. Sharp, to embark on what turned out to be a forty-one year- long retirement in Great Amwell. She continued to enjoy travelling and visiting family in France, as long as she was able. She got to know quite a lot of people in the village and around and people loved and respected her. She entered into village life and was a keen member of the W.I. and enjoyed the Art appreciation circle, (as well as the talks on broccoli!) and gave sewing lessons to interested members. The vicar's wife told me that she was in Miss Marion's class and had been told, "Mary, you look as if you are sewing with a fork!"

Miss Marion was very close to several nieces in France and three of them particularly did all that anyone can do from a distance for somebody. I remember when her brother died, the one she had been so close to all her life. Her brother's daughter phoned us to warn us that he was dying and then again when he had actually passed away. She asked me to go over to Great Amwell and make sure that Miss Marion was alright, which I duly did. On arrival, she seemed fine to me and I tentatively asked whether she had had a call about her brother from France, to which Miss Marion replied, "Look, I have had many tragedies in my life and this is not one of them! He was old and he was blind!"

Janet Champion – continued

She was pretty tough too when, after the age of 100, she sent three intruders packing and made the local press!

Miss Marion died on 14th February 2002, just short of her 105th birthday, after a long life which had spanned three centuries. She kept her brilliant mind to the end, always did the Telegraph crossword and loved reading, especially historical biographies and always showed an interest in other people. She was actually quite practical too and was determined not to let her night storage heating system get the better of her and made sure that her laundry bill was correct to the last penny!

We were privileged to have her as a teacher and she gave many of us a love of French and we went on to study it further and have used it in our professional lives.

She had very high standards and gave us a thorough grounding in the grammar. Our accents had to be nothing short of perfect! We sounded like a cart-load of donkeys, as the classroom resounded with "on, en, in", interspersed with "push your lip down" and "where are your three fingers?" As for our French verbs, if we didn't have our vocabulary books open when Miss Marion came into the room and weren't busy learning, she would say, "So you know all your verb, out you go!" But didn't it payoff!

She was a product of her rather strict and restrictive upbringing in the late nineteenth century and early twentieth century and as a teacher in whose era a good school was expected to turn out well-educated young ladies and considering the calibre of the schools she had taught in before ECS, it's not surprising that she was quite a disciplinarian. Furthermore, she loved beauty and longed to find it in everything, including behaviour and speech. Miss Marion's cupboard in her French room, Room 26 in this building, was always full of confiscated tins of lacquer, hair brushes and wide belts without which our fashionable bouffon hair dos and full skirts lacked a little something! Heaven help any girl who got caught by Miss Marion while having her hair back-combed in the class room. She would say, "You are a very dirty girl! C'est un manque de pudeur!" She enforced the rule of single file in the corridors with such vigour, that when she retired, she admitted herself that, when she died, "Single file" would be sure to be engraved on her heart!

Yes, Miss Marion was one of life's characters, who made an impact on many people's lives, one we shall never forget. Inside that disciplinarian, was a very sensitive, vulnerable and dear person. She was a brilliant teacher of French language and literature, and, for those of us who took A Level, particularly imparted her love of poetry. We all owe her a lot and I am pleased to have been asked to take a part in the honouring of her here today.