

Janet Moore      Sunday, November 30<sup>th</sup> 2014  
Murray Edwards College, Cambridge

Good Afternoon. My task today is to say a few words about Janet's teaching and pastoral role in the Department of Zoology. Janet was a vital, life-enhancing presence within the Department for about 35 years, and it is therefore a wonderful – if slightly daunting – privilege to be able to talk about her today.

I was reminded of Janet vividly just a few weeks ago when, cleaning out a cupboard in my Office, I came across a small plastic box. It was the label, actually, that reminded me of Janet, written in her instantly recognizable Permanent Black Ink, Parker 51 handwriting: *Land Nemertine Collecting Kit*. The box contained everything you needed to catch land nemertines, and Janet used to hand these out to anyone who might be visiting a promising oceanic island. She gave me this one in 1984, when I was doing some fieldwork in Fiji, and on my return I presented my captures to Janet. She put them under her dissecting microscope and, after a few moments, said:

"I am afraid these are land flatworms not nemertines", then she looked up at me, with her lovely warm reassuring smile and said:

"But you have done wonderfully well to catch anything at all, William - most people don't even bother". Through her instinctive grace and kindness, Janet was able to transform what had been a mildly disappointing moment into something strangely positive, and I went away feeling undeservedly pleased with myself. Dozens of you, I am sure, will have had similar experiences of Janet's talent for seizing the positive.

It was of course the nemertines that brought Janet to the Department on a permanent basis. The idea was that she would sort out Professor Carl Pantin's collection of these animals, and in the teeth of considerable opposition from the then Director of the Museum and Curator of Insects, she eventually, in 1971, secured for herself a room connected to the Insect Room on the 4<sup>th</sup> floor of the Museum. And she retained a room in the Museum of Zoology for the next 35 years, which is a truly remarkable achievement considering that she did not really have any very official role in the Department: a tribute both to the shrewdness and good sense of successive Heads of Department and Museum Directors, but most of all to Janet herself who rapidly evolved over this period into an integral part of the Department's teaching strategy. She never took her room for granted, and always felt a strong sense that she had to EARN the right to be there.

At the start of this period, Janet was part of the formidable trio of Zoology Directors of Studies in the Women's Colleges; that is Janet Harker at Girton, Anne Mullinger at Newnham, and Janet herself at New Hall. They set standards of care and professionalism that were rarely attempted in the men's colleges. But it was as a supervisor that Janet probably had her biggest impact on the teaching of zoology. She supervised mainly in the first-year course Biology of Organisms [succeeded by Evolution & Behaviour] and Animal Biology, in the second year. She taught a staggeringly high proportion of the students in these subjects, and I was always massively relieved when I was able to secure her services for the

biologists in my own college. I knew they would get Rolls Royce dedicated service; and I knew that I would get supervision reports that were both useful and fun to read. Even on the yellow third copy, her handwriting was clear and distinct, the sentiments direct and free of cliché: she wrote of one student “she worries me badly, at present she only ever stops working to go to church (I’ve every sympathy with going to church, but not as a substitute for sanity)”.

But she was much more than just an effective Director of Studies and wonderful supervisor. She also acted as a kind of quality control on the general teaching in her areas of interest. The natural habitat for this activity was on the back row of the Main Lecture theatre. Here she would sit, listening to every lecture every year, whilst at the same time writing out menus for the week, devising shopping lists, sorting out supervision timetables. But she really was listening. One year, in a slight pause in proceedings, an Animal Biology lecturer heard a distinctive voice at the back of the lecture theatre saying ‘He’s not said THAT again, has he?’. Michael Akam, rather bravely, let Janet scrutinize his handouts for a new set of lectures, and they came back covered in suggestions for improvements.

Janet was also an impressive scholar and scientist. With respect to teaching, her most important contribution was her CUP book – “An Introduction to the Invertebrates” . This has, in my view, no rivals, and it also has what is the best currently available succinct introduction to modern evolutionary theory: crisp, clear, accurate and not encrusted with metaphor.

Her second and rather less well-known role was as a kind of personal tutor to the Graduate Students in the Department. Janet, together with Adrian Friday, established and developed this very important function, which continues to the present day. They provided a sort of ying and yang of pastoral care: Janet writing everything down on her set of individual index cards; Adrian taking no notes at all; Janet baking a Victoria sponge for the annual tea party, which she instigated; Adrian providing a shop-bought cake, groaning with chocolate icing. Together they provided the ultimate personal sanctuary for the troubled PhD student, several of whom have cause to be very grateful to them indeed.

The hallmark of Janet’s teaching style was her warmth and enthusiasm. She just loved teaching. In a letter to her son, Peter, from 2005, when she had just resumed supervising after a short absence, she wrote “It is Lovely being back supervising”. There are precious few academics – especially those in the Late Autumn of their teaching career - who would describe supervising as Lovely: but Janet was one of those “precious few”. Her enthusiasm was chiefly conveyed by her wide vocabulary of body language. Janet was a Demonstrator in my first year practicals, and she embraced a policy of total immersion. You did not find her chatting to the other Demonstrators, but on her hands and knees deep under one of the benches, retrieving an escaped locust; or sitting on a bench, explaining with the help of a cardboard model how an edible mussel feeds.

I was once with a party of students on a field course digging up marine invertebrates on a muddy shore in Milford Haven. Suddenly I noticed a familiar booted figure striding towards us across the shore. It was Janet, who it turned

out had been drafted in at very short notice to run a similar field-course nearby, We had just found, deep in the mud, a sea mouse, Aphrodita, a broad 7 inch long marine polychaete worm, covered in a felt of grey fur and iridescent spines. So I asked Janet if she would like to see it. She then performed a manoeuvre that is rarely attempted by anyone over the age of about 14, especially on a muddy substrate. She jumped clean in to the air, both feet off the ground, saying "Oh Yes Please!" A student plunged his spade into the mud, which parted to reveal a furry oval rainbow. Janet just looked at it and said "Oh my. Isn't she wonderful!" We caught Janet's mood, and for a moment or two just stared at the sea mouse in a spirit of communal rapture.

Janet's absolute priority in her teaching role in the Department was to do what she could to ensure that the students, graduate as well as undergraduate, the gifted as well as the more pedestrian, had the best learning experience that it was possible to provide. She did this by cajoling and encouraging their teachers, and by providing individual students with the precious gift of her total attention.

With Janet's passing, Cambridge – and in particular the students of zoology here – have lost a wise and indomitable champion. But she lives on in the memories of huge numbers of us, because she was such a life force. For some of us, our memories will be of the warmth of her smile or the glimpse of her skipping away round the corner of a corridor; for some the unforeseen pleasure of suddenly understanding how the tube feet of a starfish work; for others, being taken back to Swavesey for tea and cake with Norman; and for yet others the sensible advice and unexpected encouragement that altered a career and a life. We thank you Janet, all of us: we are amazingly lucky to have known you.

Dr. William Foster  
Deputy Head of Department (Teaching), Zoology

I was lucky enough to have been taught by Janet even though I was at Clare. Janet's insights, her encouragement, and her kindness in introducing me to Norman, were among the best things to happen to me as an undergraduate, and they've influenced me ever since. What she gave me and many others, above all, was the confidence to think our own ideas worth pursuing.

My particular favourite memory of Janet is an image of her, aged 75, on her hand and knees, almost inside a rock pool while she explained to our rapt sons - then 7 and 9 - the exquisite mechanisms by which the object of our admiration – an octopus – was changing its colour by the split-second as it glided its way across the rock pool floor.

The very many messages sent to Janet's family from her students are full of gratitude and admiration - for that passion in for nature, for her wisdom and deep interest in people's triumphs and worries, and for that sense of fun.

Hannah Peel says "Dr Moore would meet us biologists in her lab where she would make a pot of tea using her bunsen burner. I remember once finding a hedgehog in Portugal Place and rushing to her for advice. She was in a meeting but broke off at once to advise liver-flavoured cat food."

Richard Harrad "remembers talking to Janet while cycling along Trinity Street. She would suddenly shoot off down a side street in mid-sentence and just as unpredictably appear a few days later - and carry on the conversation."

Jackie Andrade says "My first meeting with Janet changed my life. My school had decided that I should go to Cambridge and I was equally determined that I should not. That determination melted as soon as my interview with Janet began. I had never thought about why bumble bees are furry but she made it seem the most interesting question in the world."

While Sarah Bishop writes "We used to joke that if you were to go to her office to announce that you'd decided not to attend any more lectures that term, she'd probably say "Excellent idea, sensible girl,...but are you sure it's right for you?"".

Andrew Balmford