



Mrs. Jean C. B. Bewick 1924 – 2021

Colleague 1981 - 1986

Jean was born in 1924 in West Calder, into a community that was smaller than it is now, and which she described vividly and with great warmth in many anecdotes and memories. The nineteen twenties were not easy years for anyone, but Jean and her older brother Willy had to cope with personal tragedy when they lost their mother when Jean was only two. The pair were very close, supporting each other through a typically strict upbringing, made light of in stories like the one in which Jean would bang away on the piano that Willy was supposed to be practising, to cover for him while he escaped through the window to play football with his pals. Lifelong friendships were forged in West Calder and Jean's abiding interest in people and all their doings was surely shaped by the close-knit community in which she grew up.

Jean did exceptionally well at school, had some inspirational teachers and was joint Dux of West Calder High. She was the first member of her family to go to university - to Edinburgh to study French and German during the war years, commuting by train every day, and returning each evening to light the fire, cook a meal and clean the house after her father's house-keeper was called up - all before sitting down to write an essay. At this time Willy was in the RAF and Jean, whose faith was a constant all her life, prayed for him every night.

Jean loved her studies and made more lifelong friends but perhaps the biggest influence on her was the opportunity Edinburgh University gave her to spend an academic year teaching in a French lycee in 1946-47. In spite of a horrible start when she arrived alone and in darkness in war-ravaged France, at a locked school whose headmaster had forgotten she was coming and had made no plans for her accommodation, she survived and thrived. She lived with the Souplets, a charming couple who treated her like a daughter, rapidly became a fluent French speaker and had many adventures that expanded her horizons and built her confidence.

Most Hogmanays she would recall New Year 1947 which she spent in Paris with university friends in the company of the Reverend Donald Caskie (aka the Tartan Pimpernel) taking part in a BBC broadcast. She often said that after her year in France she decided that nothing could daunt her. She certainly had great strength of character and an independent streak that ran in the family - she was a Brash after all - but these were no doubt fostered by the ambiguous attitude of the French towards authority- not to mention a spot of blackmarket coffee smuggling across the Belgian border with Madame Souplet.

On her return to Scotland Jean trained as a teacher. Teaching was the perfect profession for the people-person that she was, from the camaraderie of the staff room to the nurturing of young people. And having decided that she was "on the shelf" at the ripe old age of 27, she met Jim Bewick, the love of her life, when they were both teaching at Wishaw High. The couple were married 6 months after their first date and Jean really did live "happily ever after" for the rest of their 48 year marriage.

Together Jean and Jim created a warm and loving home first in Huntly where Jane was born and then in Aberdeen where James completed the family. Holidays in France became an annual highlight for them all, and when James was safely installed in nursery school Jean was able to return to teaching, this time at the Girls' High in Aberdeen which she loved. When Jim was appointed Rector of Morgan Academy the move to Dundee in 1970 was a wrench, but she was immensely proud of Jim and supported him every step of the way as she always did, through the teachers' strikes of the 1970s, a serious fire at the school and the day- to- day challenges of the job. Jean continued to teach and new colleagues increased the number of Dundee friends who were regularly entertained at Bingham Terrace. Jean was a great hostess and a wonderful cook (her meringues were legendary) and happy evenings in good company were regular events. She was so happy when Jane and then James married, and Andrew and Zonya were welcomed into the family.

Later years brought retirement and interesting travels gathering yet more friends along the way, especially on a once in a lifetime trip to the Passion Play at Oberammergau. Then along came the grandchildren and Jean was thrilled with them all and so proud of their achievements. Always the teacher she took an interest in every test, prelim, and exam but also in the chess matches, football tournaments, concert performances, art exhibitions and theatre productions. She loved to entertain them at home with board games and pizza then latterly at the Milton Inn from where no one escaped without eating far too much if she was in charge. On her 95th birthday she made an impromptu speech saying how proud she was of her children, their partners, and grandchildren and all that they had done but most especially and importantly because they were all good and kind people.

Jean's kindness is the first thing that has been mentioned in the messages of condolence that the family has been receiving - along with her enduring, stylish elegance and the strength that enabled her to live in her own house, as she wished, until the end. The family will remember her lively intelligence, her long stories with their many digressions, her love of Wimbledon, German lieder and University Challenge but most of all her unflagging, loving support for them all.