**Marianne Du Sautoy**

Marianne came to the University of Kent in 2005, and became my PA soon after.

She was a brilliant gatekeeper – deflecting trivia and time wasters, but being hugely supportive of my efforts and the efforts of those who worked with me. She could be quite terrifying on first meeting. One of my direct reports, having spoken to Marianne on the telephone for the first time, refused to come to my office, fearing a confrontation with the gatekeeper, and had to be gently coaxed round, only to be completely won over within minutes. Marianne possessed years of experience, consummate professionalism, and great attention to detail, but was also kind, charming, generous and funny.

Despite her occasionally forthright manner, Marianne had a deft turn of phrase. “Have you cancelled your meeting at …” meant “You’re running dreadfully late. If you don’t get your skates on, you’ll be late.” And, at the end of almost every day, “Have you got everything you need for tomorrow” meant “I’m going home”. She became my most trusted colleague, perfectly willing to give full vent to her opinions in private, but maintaining a Zen-like calm in public. She inspired confidence, and I relied on her completely.

Marianne became ill in 2014 and retired in 2015. We put it out that, since I was retiring in 2015 also, and she could not face having to train up another DVC to her standards, she would retire too. In reality, she had been given just a year to live, not that she took any notice of that! She embarked on a sequence of trips that took in New Zealand (and several intermediate stops), the USA, South Africa, many of the countries of Europe, and frequent trips within the UK. The one year turned into two, and eventually five, with few signs of slowing down until the very end.

Everyone who met Marianne will have their own story to tell – of fun, laughter, kindness, a scurrilous remark, or a reference to her vibrant wardrobe, shoe and bag collection – an outfit appropriate to any work or social event that she needed to attend (and there were many of the latter in Marianne’s life). But my own single most abiding memory of Marianne took place after we both retired.

In 2018, a new restaurant opened near Canterbury – the Pig at Bridge Place. My wife and I saw it advertised in the local paper and made a lunch booking for a few days after it opened. As is to be expected, we had a good look round to see who else was dining – mainly couples, but one table set for seven guests. In due course, six of the seven arrived. I commented to my wife that (a) the six guests (all women) looked formidable – probably HR directors on a day out from London, (b) they reminded me of Marianne, and (c) we must tell Marianne about the restaurant because it was her sort of place. As if on cue, the door opened and in she walked. The grandest of entrances, full of life, resplendent with wardrobe, shoes, handbag, make-up all perfectly set, and looking slightly flushed because, as it turned out, she had driven back from Hampshire that morning, having been to an excellent party there the night before. Much astonishment all round, hugs and kisses, lots of laughter, before Marianne went to join the other six – not HR directors, but ladies of the Littlebourne Book Club out for an excellent lunch.

In celebration of a wonderful life, lived to the full, I raise a glass – probably *Bollinger* (one of Marianne’s favourites) – to a wonderful colleague and friend, and with grateful thanks that she enriched so generously the lives of all with whom she came into contact.

Keith Mander