

Marion Seaman Nee Bennett

Written by Andrew Starr, son-in-law

Marion was the second child of Elsie and Harry Bennett. She was born in Woodford, near to the Epping Forest. She was a younger sister to her brother Chris, who she always greatly admired.

Elsie ran a small private school, and Harry worked in London in shipping and logistics. His speciality was the movement of racehorses and Marion became a keen horse rider herself. When Chris eventually went to boarding school, Marion remembered how her mother took her to Lyons Tea House in Picadilly, as a consolation for them both. She remembered that each level of the tea house had a different design and served a different style of food.

Marion described her childhood as very happy, despite the war years, and she remembers great friends, and plenty of sunshine. She kept her friendships with people from Woodford to the day she died.

Marion attended the City of London Girl's school, which moved to the Barbican, in the 1950's. In 1960 she accepted a place to study Botany at Durham University. She told me that she had applied to do Zoology, but her grades were not good enough, so she was demoted down the food chain.

Marion's father died unexpectedly of a heart attack aged 50. This was a great shock of course, but the church family was a great support. Elsie was comforted by a church member who had lost his wife in a similar way. The two were drawn together and fell in love. Chris was also rather attached to Bill's beautiful daughter, Elizabeth. Elsie and Bill Sharpe were married first. Chris and Elizabeth followed shortly after.

In Durham, Marion spent a year as the student president of St Aidan's College. We have visited the college and seen the board with the list of past presidents.

Marion met Brian Seaman in Durham. Brian studied social sciences having initially thought of becoming a PE teacher. His plans changed though when he felt a calling to the Anglican ministry and he was eventually ordained as a priest at Cranmer Hall in Durham. Before they were married, Brian worked in St Margaret's Church Burnage. Soon into their marriage, they had a baby girl, and for a name, well the writing was on the wall. Margaret is proud that her passport says she is a Mancunian, but after six months, they were off to Canning Town, and the Mayflower Family Centre, London.

Danning town was a real East End community. Six months later Ruth was born. Marion thrived as part of the Mayflower family and she and Brian made many strong friendships there. Highlights included church trips to the seaside and watching Brian playing cricket in the Church Times League.

Mary was born in 1972 and at the age of 3, the family were on the move again up North to Newcastle upon Tyne, close to Marion and Brian's University memories. Brian's new parish was in Elswick, one of the poorest areas in the city. You could hear the ships on the Tyne, and the roar of the crowds at St James Park, where the soon Army played every other weekend.

Marion had some wonderful and faithful friends at the Church as well as members of the local community. St Paul's was a place of strong and courageous people who made Elswick special. Marion worked as a tutor for young people who had medical needs or who had been excluded from school. She also trained to teach English as a second language. She has kept strong friendships with people from all seasons of her life and this could have been her greatest strength. She always received way more Christmas cards than the rest of us put together.

Life in Elswick and in the vicarage was hard. The area was depressed and depressing at times, and Marion was affected by the hard lives people led suffering bouts of depression over the years. The family had their escapes into the glorious Northumberland countryside, and holidays with the Bennetts (Chris, Elizabeth and growing family of boys: Pete; Dave; Andrew; Michael and James) and the Sharpes (her mother and step father). They went on holiday around the UK together including to the Cairngorms and Norfolk (on the occasion when it rained so much that their tent was washed away). In later years, Marion and Brian were blessed by being able to visit family and friends overseas in Israel and Australia, Oman and Chad.

Marion made personal sacrifices to support Margaret, Mary and Ruth at Dame Llan's Girls' School. The three girls went on to be married, after university, in St. Paul's Church with significant support from Marion.

After twenty four hard but committed years at St Paul's, Brian moved to a wonderful ham ministry in Wooler. Brian had five county parishes, and a team of clergy to work with. Wooler is a quiet, peaceful forgotten part of England, up near the border with Scotland. They had seven years in a large rectory with a fine garden which gave both Marion and Brian much joy.

Marion was much renewed by her time in Wooler, enjoying the country life and garden surrounded by those plants that she was qualified to examine. She was a

wonderful grandmother to the children of Margaret, Ruth and Mary. They can tell you lots of lovely and amusing memories. Marion enjoyed being part of concerts, sporting events and other fun family activities with Emma, Elizabeth, Sarah and Joanna in the South of England. Rebecca, Harry and Daniel visited regularly, although Mary and family had moved to Cincinnati, USA by then. The plus side of this was amazing holidays in America to see them with trips to the Grand Canyon, Death Valley and the mountains of Tennessee and North Carolina along the way. Their times in Cincinnati were treasured, and provided Mary and Andrew with rest and help, and they made many friends along the way.

Brian's retirement party concluded, it was time to study a map of the UK. Marion and Brian upped and moved to a village between Leicester and Bedford, with easy access to the sets of grandchildren there. There are many happy memories from these days. Marion gained a new name of 'granny 'meringuey' for obvious reasons.

In the Summer of 2006 Brian was not well, and he had a significant car accident, including a blow to the head. This was traumatic, but Marion took it with great faith and fortitude. Brian survived for 18 months, and Marion visited him in hospital and in the care home that he inevitably required, almost daily. Marion had wanted Brian to be able to live with her in Ringstead, but he never recovered fully, and died on 21st January 2008. Her Ringstead friends were a great support to her through this time and as she adapted to life on her own.

Marion continued to do good things, and enjoy life. She went with sister in law Elizabeth, recently bereaved herself, to Croatia for a holiday. Sadly, on the second day, she tripped and broke her hip. After treatment in Croatia and then at Northampton Hospital she received a new hip. She was never to walk with confidence again. This was hard as she loved to go for walks enjoying nature but she took this in her stride and never complained.

Wonderful friends and congregations of three churches in Ringstead were such a blessing to Marion, but she did not want to live on her own, and she took up the offer to share a house with her daughter Ruth.

Marion and Ruth bought a house together in Leicester, and successfully shared it for about 5 years. Marion decided not to join Ruth and become a member at KFC (Knighton Free Church!) instead, making her 'main' church St. Mary's over the road. Nonetheless, she got involved in both churches, loving the different aspects of each. She thrived on getting to know her new community. With Ruth they opened

their new house to all their neighbours with house parties, and street parties and were able to have people to come and stay and eat often.

Marion got a scooter as mobility became more of an issue, and lived a good life, with excellent support for and from Ruth.

In the summer of 2024 Marion spent far more on the insurance than the flight, and visited Mary and family in Bentonville, Arkansas where they had moved from Cincinnati in 2018. This was her second time visiting and in between visits a pool was added to the house. Marion loved the sun and swimming. The real question was would she, at age 84, be able to get in and out of the pool. Of course - she succeeded.

In December 2025, with the birth of Sarah and Luke's first baby Jacob, Marion was able to return once more to Durham to greet and spend time with Jacob, her first great grandchild.

The day Marion had the fall that led to hospital and her final decline she had been visiting the warm room, for older people to socialise and be encouraged. We knew why she was there. She was always interested in other people and in seeing them being blessed. She was not there for herself.

Years ago, I remember walking down the Elswick road talking with Marion. Marion was a strong believer in heaven and was looking forward to it. She remarked to me though, that if heaven didn't actually exist, she would still choose to live for Jesus. She'd do nothing differently. It would still all be worth it, even without this reward. I have absolutely no doubt that Marion knew the truth of these words from Romans 8: 38-39:

For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.