In 1984, Jean Banister retired from her Tutorial Fellowship at Somerville College, Oxford, to the enthusiastic plaudits of students she had inspired over four decades and the many colleagues around the world who held her in high esteem. She was the great example of the art of mentoring through the tutorial’s dialectic approach. She was also a tireless champion of women’s education and one of the first to represent the former women’s colleges on the main university Committees. She served twice as Vice-Principal of Somerville. She cared for an immense number and range of students, giving each individual attention and so commanding affection from them all.

Former students will recall that she was one of the last to give live physiology demonstrations during lectures and will remember them long after forgetting the rest of the content.

She directed an active laboratory where a succession of graduate students learnt the excitement of research. She focused on the vascular system in the lungs. She also lectured abroad, notably in Japan at Fukushima Medical College, where one of her graduate students is a professor of pharmacology. On retirement she moved to her house ‘Druimluachrach’, Ardgour near Fort William, to enjoy her love of Scotland and her garden.

Jean was born in Alverstoke, Hampshire on 10 March 1917 and studied at Queen Anne’s in Caversham, Berkshire. She excelled in sports and music, and first went to the Royal Academy of Music where she achieved a silver medal in the flute. The chance events of World War II possibly prompted her switch to medical science. She joined the Polish School of Medicine when it moved to Edinburgh after the German invasion of Poland in September 1939, gaining an honours degree in physiology in Edinburgh in 1948. However, her love of music never dimmed: she was also Tutor for the students of Fine Arts and Music. The performer, and the love of performance, was always there. A characteristic reply to a student or colleague would be ‘have fun’. She herself was great fun. The somewhat pensive nature shown in her photograph could rapidly change into a broad, animated smile as she proceeded to explain something new, something surprising. Novelty, the joy of academic life, is what she lived for.

(Rachel) Jean Banister died peacefully at Druimluachrach on 15th February 2013, aged 95.

Denis Noble

This obituary is edited from the longer version available on the Society’s website www.physoc.org/obituary-notices.

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