

# Introduction

Professor (Emerita) Françoise Le Saux

Françoise Le Saux has always been outstanding for the number of languages, both medieval and modern, on which she is an expert, even amongst the members of her department at Reading. Those present at the Summer Symposium of 2017, which was a celebration of Françoise's scholarly career and interests, learnt that this expertise began at an early age. Françoise's father spoke to her not only in French but also in his own native tongue, Breton, and also became Françoise's first Latin teacher when the family moved from the Welsh-speaking village of Bryn (near Maesteg in South Wales) to multilingual Switzerland. Pierre Le Saux also shared Françoise's interest in the medieval period; and thus Françoise's own formidable achievements were built upon deep and strong foundations.

Françoise studied for her Licence ès Lettres and Dr ès Lettres at the University of Lausanne, whose tripos system enabled her to major in History together with English and medieval French. It was for these reasons that Françoise's first research project was a study of the early witchcraft trials held in the Castle of Chillon on Lake Geneva. An important new direction for her research took shape in the 1980s when, in furtherance of her researches into the Celtic sources of the Middle English *Brut* of Lagamon, Françoise moved to Swansea to take an M.A. in Celtic Studies. Here she learned Middle Welsh and Old Irish—to add to the expertise she had already acquired at Lausanne in Old English and Old Norse. A further achievement was that Françoise successfully taught all these languages at the University of Freiburg-in-Breisgau, in the period before her appointment to a lectureship in French at the University of Reading in 1995.

During her early years in Reading Françoise worked closely with two other eminent medievalists, namely Professors Wolfgang van Emden and Peter Noble. From this time she also continued the tradition inaugurated by Professor van Emden of producing an annual French play with undergraduate actors. Françoise has said that her experience of interchange between modern plays and medieval ones

permitted her to experiment with the many ways in which medieval theatre could be most effectively presented on the modern stage. This talent for bringing people together and encouraging their scholarly and creative activities was a major asset when Françoise joined the GCMS, a group which has the honour of having been described by Françoise as her intellectual home.

Françoise's contributions to the Centre have been far too many to list individually; but some stand out especially. They include her service as Director of the Centre, 2001-4, when she developed links with other research centres both at Reading and elsewhere. Equally important was Françoise's long and crucial period as Editor of the GCMS' learned journal, *Reading Medieval Studies*, from 1997-2008. In her capacity as President of the British Branch of the International Arthurian Society Françoise has also taken the lead in organising collaborations and joint activities for the two organisations, which have been both innovative and productive. Françoise's research interests have continued to focus on translation and cultural adaptation in the Middle Ages, a theme which was specially celebrated in the Symposium and echoed in the contributions to this special issue of *Reading Medieval Studies*. Just how widely her interests and expertise extend is demonstrated by the list of her publications below. This special issue of *Reading Medieval Studies* is offered as a small gesture of thanks and recognition for Françoise's vital and ongoing contributions to the work, research and teaching of the GCMS.

Anne Lawrence-Mathers (Festschrift Editor, *Reading Medieval Studies* Vol. XLIV)

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