

MARIE ONCE TAUGHT ENGLISH...

by Sunday Dispatch Reporter.

Somewhere in Paris, a stonemason is chipping away at a memorial tablet.

Letter by letter he is writing in stone the words "Marie Betbeder-Matibet, born December 1899; gave her life for France, June 17, 1944."

Later on there will be a simple ceremony and the tablet will be placed in the wall of the Lycée Fénelon, the Paris Girls' Secondary School, and students of future generations will be told that it is in memory of the frail little woman who used to teach English to the girls who sat in that classroom in the years before the war.

~~Marie Betbeder-Matibet~~ daughter of France, lover of England, born 45 years ago - died for helping Englishmen to escape from the Germans.

Pilgrimage.

Every year, regularly, she would make a pilgrimage to England to keep in touch with English life and thought and to revisit the friends she made as a teacher and lecturer at the French Institute in London, and in her years as a lecturer at University College, Nottingham, and as an assistant mistress at Ripon.

Her last visit to Britain was in August 1939.

With France's fall and the growth of the resistance movement, Marie Betbeder-Matibet offered her services to the underground fighters. For nearly three years her faultless English was a link between the Resistance and prisoners making their way between the Occupied and Unoccupied zones of France.

Time and time again a cryptic note or a surreptitious telephone call from the little teacher at the Lycée Fénelon snatched an Englishman from the hands of the Gestapo.

Until one Sunday morning in November 1943 when the Gestapo called.

They charged her with being a member of the Resistance and took her to Fresnes criminal prison near Paris.

### Last move.

Her next - and last - move was to the infamous concentration camp for women at Ravensbrück (Mecklenburg). But even the privations here could not daunt her courage. Her companions would come at nights to Marie for consolation. Four months later, inhuman treatment, starvation, and heart trouble, ended her life.

Her papers and her last letter to her mother, which she gave to a fellow prisoner, were burnt by the Germans.

The first that most of her British friends knew of Marie's death was an inconspicuous notice in a British daily paper.

But the painstaking work of a Paris stonemason is an insurance against the forgetfulness of time.

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