

19<sup>th</sup> November 2011

Hello Deena,

How privileged I feel that such a young lady should be taking so much trouble over someone who has just celebrated her 80<sup>th</sup> birthday, even though we have Heathfield in common. I must admit that I had not thought very much about my schooldays until my daughter started asking questions one day when she visited. I was amazed when she turned up the next week with the information you had put on the web and it brought back so many memories.

I am quite surprised to realise that so many of your memories are similar years later. I had completely forgotten about having “houses” but I was in Gayford and the badge was embroidered in yellow. I cannot remember much about the summer uniform except that it was cream. I certainly cannot remember anything as complicated as pin tucks, but it is quite possible that my mother made me a dress in those years of austerity, as she had been a dressmaker before her marriage. It is even possible that I was in winter uniform all the time and certainly my gym slip was one with pleats and a square neck, whereas when the war finished some of my classmates were getting the round neck ones with slightly flared skirts. I think I only had the one to last me right through school. I can remember laying it out flat before going to bed at night and putting some heavy weight on top to keep the pleats in for the next day. I am not sure I even had the school blazer because of rationing and I think we were able to get away with a navy one as long as we had the school badge. I don't think I felt under-privileged as everyone was in the same boat through all the rationing.

In the 1946 photograph, if you find the telegraph pole which is slightly to the left in the picture; then look at the row in front of the back row; move along four places to the left and that is me. On my right in a summer dress is Elaine Lyons and on my left is Doreen Francis. There are other faces which I seem to remember, but not complete with names as well.

As far as the teachers are concerned, if you take Miss Norris as centre and move along to her left, there is Miss Goudie (History) Miss Ramsey (RE) Miss Hamlyn (Geography) then 5 whom I cannot name, followed by the little short lady who taught me French in my last year – it might be Mme Justamon. She was in fact French and did her best to make us get our pronunciation correct. Her stock phrase was “Open your mouse!” which caused us all great amusement.

Looking towards Miss Norris's right there are 5 I cannot remember, then there is Miss Kerly (Latin), Miss Black, (?), Miss Buchan (PE) Miss Croxton (Secretary), Miss Clay (I think). That is the best I can do!

Another subject I remember taking in my early days at Heathfield was Needlework. We were given the task of making dresses for “The Waifs and Strays” – what a horrible title. The material was already cut out from green check gingham and every

stitch was by hand. If the stitches did not meet the required neatness they were unpicked and we had to start again. I don't think I ever finished a dress before I went up a class and was given more academic subjects, while some poor girls who may have been a little less bright did Domestic Science, Cookery and Needlework – poor things!

One other name from my era has now come to me – that of Jane Woodbridge who lived at Ruislip Manor (not just the town, but in the Manor House itself). She kept a horse and we used to curry favour with her to get an invitation to go over and ride it on a Saturday. After many weeks of waiting my turn came, but sadly the horse died during the week that I was to go. My mother always said that the poor horse knew what was coming to it, as I was not exactly a slim young lady.

Yours,  
Brenda Smith (formerly Winch)