

9th September 2017

My younger sister Charmian (who was a year below me) and I entered Heathfield in Jan 1956 when my father had been moved to London from Cheshire by his employer. At that time I was 12, nearly 13, and had already been to 4 schools! (None because my father had moved!). Anyway we started off with our age group and then both got put down a year as we were behind in our education!

I remember starting in one of the classrooms in the wooden building at the edge of the playground, near the cloakrooms I seem to recall. I was in Heath house, but not a credit to them, as I was constantly getting 'order marks'. Three and you got a detention. Well one term I got 7, which, at that time, was the most anyone had had in one term. Charmian was mortified when my name was read out at morning prayers!! Imagine having a sister who couldn't behave!! I think they were mainly for talking. I certainly struggled at education and having had a daughter who is dyslexic, I really wonder if that was my problem.

I remember sliding in the playground on ice, and ending up in Harrow Hospital with concussion. My mother was NOT amused that I was sent home, walking, with Charmian. I have to say my mother was a constant cause of embarrassment - on another occasion she marched me into Miss Norris because I had been given lines to write. She told Miss Norris that Shakespeare or such like would have been more beneficial! What had happened was that we had a prep lesson taken by a prefect - Yvonne Renouf, I seem to recall - she called out "silence, don't you know the meaning of silence?" So I got out my dictionary stuck up my hand and read out "silence is the state of being silent", to which I was told to write it out 100 times. So, I headed the paper with the name "Wilhelmina Crabtree", so that further sheets were headed "W C" and with 2 pencils (doing 2 lines at once), I wrote the lines and my mother caught me doing them!

NOW perhaps you see why I got order marks. My granddaughter now has the dictionary!

If you had enough 'good conduct' marks you got a half day off school if I recall. Needless to say that never happened to me. The only way I had a

hope of getting any was for 'never absent, never late' which certainly never happened! Anne Menzies was head girl for some of the time I recall and the reason we'd gone to Heathfield was because she lived next door to my great aunt on the Hill, and her family recommended it.

My last year was spent in Miss Kerly's class, Lower IVA, which was a temporary building, I think. The class acted some Shakespeare for some reason, can't remember who to, but I do recall as the line "all the world's a stage and all the men and woman merely players" one of us walked on holding up a Players cigarette packet. It didn't go down well!

I was in the netball team and I remember playing against the Royal School for the Blind. Their ground sloped up at the edge so they knew where the edge of the court was. It has to have been a netball match, that was the only team I was in! I also used to umpire tennis matches, which I enjoyed. I wonder how long PE classes were? By the time we'd walked to the netball / tennis courts or the playing fields we must have had a long lesson.

Jessie Lee was in the first class I entered and her family and our family were friends. I'm still in touch and see her on and off, she lives near Malvern and I'm in Hants. I seem to recall that Frances Blaber lived next door to her.

I can vaguely remember the building - the hall behind the front house where had morning prayers and did gym and the wooden classrooms and cloakrooms,. Charmian and I went home for lunch so I can't visualise a dining room. I think the 6th form classrooms were in the old house.

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