

## School Memories – Nicola Jones (nee Chapman) 1974-1981

### Shirley Schools Centenary

Nicola Jones ( nee Chapman)

I started at Shirley Infants in 1974 aged 5 years and left Shirley Junior School in 1981 aged 12 I then attended Regents Park Girls School as did the majority of female pupils who didn't go to St Anne's Convent or independent schools. The boys normally went to Bellemoor Boys School.

My time at Shirley school was very happy. I lived at 37 Wilton Road with my father and brother Scott Chapman who was 2 ½ years younger and who also attended Shirley School. No 37 was demolished along with half of Shayer Road to enable the school to expand. Our home would have been on the site of the Reception Classrooms. Living so close to the school had its advantages and it was not uncommon for me to hear the bell whilst cleaning my teeth in the morning!!

I recall having a teacher called Mrs Taylor in the Infants who had also taught my father at another Southampton School. The classrooms were bright and cheerful, but the ceilings were full height and there were no doors out on to the play ground from the classrooms as there is now.

The Infants playground was pretty bare there were a set of climbing blocks in the front where the wooden platform is now. I never had the nerve to sit/stand on the top block. Play times were spent playing with skipping ropes and chasing one another.

I had school dinners throughout my time at the school which I really enjoyed especially the puddings. The school dinners would arrive in large metal containers having been cooked at another site. I would dream of having a whole tray of chocolate sponge and chocolate custard to myself 😊 In the Infants we also had milk in the mornings which were delivered in little glass bottles with metal tops with straws you would push through to drink. I always recall the milk being left out in the sun and tasting unappetizingly warm. In the middle school I recall the puddings went down-hill. No more steam puddings but crackers with cheese or instant whip 😞.

The headmaster in the Junior school was Mr Barratt who was very popular and who ran the after school gymnastic club. He retired during my stay at Shirley and he had a leaving concert at King Edwards (then Boys School) I was supposed to take part in a gymnastic display but got stage fright at the last moment and didn't take part which I bitterly regretted. The headmaster after this was Mr Slayter.

The classrooms in the middle school were very similar to what they are now. I think the class numbers were around 30. I do recall having wooden desks with lift up tops and ink wells. I do recall being made to write with a fountain pen (the plastic disposable variety) and ball point pens were

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banned!! Like the infants our assembly hall doubled as a gym and dining hall (which is now the library)

I took part in a number of school trips whilst at Shirley Juniors. I recall a trip to the Tower of London and resenting paying £1 for a can of coke. There was a day trip to the New Forrest where we visited a school in Brockenhurst.

Operation Le Havre. We spent a week staying at a school in Le Havre sleeping on camp beds in classrooms (I presume the French students were on their holidays) I recall one of our first meals in France (for many of us the first trip abroad and away from home) was Tongue. Fortunately I didn't recognise what this was and was so hungry I ate my portion along with 2 of my friends before I cottoned on to what it was.

A week's trip to Wales. We stayed in a converted guest house by the sea. The rooms had bunk beds in. I remember waking up early one morning and deciding to make use of the limited washing facilities first only to be told to "Get Back to Bed now" by a very annoyed teacher: It was 5am!

The man who lived next door had what appeared to be a domesticated Golden Eagle which he would fly out front to entertain us in the evenings.

Ski Trip to Bulgaria: It was supposed to be Italy but this was cancelled at the last minute. At the time of travelling Bulgaria was very much behind the Iron Curtain and I remember flying in and out of the airport with military planes on the runway and seeing tanks in the street.

My form teacher Mr Bachelor who was also the PE and Mathematics teacher accompanied us on both the Wales and Bulgarian trips. He was very popular especially with the female students 😊

I've remained in contact with a number of friends from my Shirley days and I now have a son Christopher in Year 1 and my daughter Emily will be starting Reception class this September (2012) I still think Shirley School is the best 😊



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On ferry to le Havre (best friend)



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Ski trip to Bulgaria in 1982





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School trip to Wales in 1980, went down slate mine and up Snowdon on the train.



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