

Sheilah Da Silva (Nee) Cresswell
1953 – 1959

First let me say, I enjoyed my school days. I made lots of friends there that I still have to this day (2006). We used to meet up after school and at weekends, stayed overnight at each others houses, went to interschool dances together, went on hockey trips etc. I remember we used to go to a Christian fellowship meeting every Saturday morning at St Andrews Church, mainly to meet the boys. I also remember meeting afterwards in the coffee shop at Dingles on Royal Parade.

It occurs to me that I do not remember any bullying at school. We hear so much about it in schools these days. There were some girls who were not in any of the social groups, mainly because they did not play sports, or did not go to the interschool dances; but they were mainly the quite bright ones and were probably more solitary and quite happy.

I joined the school in the second term of the second year as my Father moved to be headmaster at Devonport High School for Boys and so we relocated to Plymouth from Newport. I remember he had to decide which school I should go to - PHS or DHS for girls? Since 3 other DHS masters had daughters at PHS, (Jane Nicholas, Frances Berry and Jean Tamblyn), that's where I went. It would have been hard to integrate if I had not been a fairly outgoing character, but I also had the help of Wendy Hillier, daughter of the school secretary. Another girl Maureen Ferris joined late and Wendy took us both under her wing and showed us the ropes.

Maureen and I were both into athletics and were selected for the Devon athletics team that went to Durham in 1956, she was a hurdler and I was a runner. We met up regularly in later life, even tho I lived in Canada for 21 years from 1970.

Wendy, Maureen and I were pregnant with our first sons at the same time in 1972. Unfortunately Wendy was taken ill with meningitis and died when Corin was born in November. My son Alex was born in September and Maureen's son Luke was born in December. Wendy was just 30 years old. Her mother Mrs Florence Hiller is still alive, aged 96, and still living in the same house where Wendy and I used to play as teenagers. I visit with her regularly when I go down to Plymouth for 'Old Girls' gatherings!

My memories are all one happy blur of athletics at the Brickfields, hockey at the Farleys playing fields, tennis, school plays (I was a roman soldier in Androcles and the Lion), school Girl Guides and Guide camps with Miss Cook who later went off to Canada, Cookery classes with Miss Holborn; and being afraid of the headmistress Miss Miller who was rather stern (she died this year (25/01/2006) aged 87).

You notice there was no mention of any school work!

My Father had great hopes of me being academic like him and going to Oxford or Cambridge - sorry Dad! Not for me! I went to Keele university and scraped through with a 3rd class degree in Maths and Physics, joined IBM UK Ltd and remained a lowly computer programmer my whole working career.

Now I am about to be 65 years old and, feeling much wiser, I realise that education does and should prepare you for life, not just for learning – as the school motto says. And in my case it did.