

Mrs Gillian Cheesman (nee Whitehead)

Memories of St Paul's School 1949 - 1955

“I started school in 1949. My first teacher was Miss Scrivens. I was a bit afraid of her – a very strict lady. My next teacher was Miss Everson, followed by Mrs Burrage and then Mr Birkin (so strict! – a short sharp ruler slap for poor performance and the cane for bad behaviour).

Mr Truscott had one arm, but managed very well. He was a very good teacher. Mr Sayles was a good teacher and very patient. He took our choir and was a good all-rounder. Miss Harwood took us for needlework in the top year. There were too many in the class to get on, but we always enjoyed the lessons.

The Headmaster was Mr Walter Wareham. He lived in the School House with his wife and three girls. He used to inflict punishment on pupils in front of the whole school.

Miss Norman was the PE teacher. As well as all the sports she taught us Maypole Dancing, good hygiene and healthy eating. Miss Norman used to take us for Country Dancing, which I always enjoyed, as well as high jump and the horse, which I managed with the aid of a spring board. It was very frightening.

We had swimming lessons at the Watermill in Reigate Road. It was an outside pool and was so cold that once the proprietor took pity on us and offered us tomato soup. I was always a good runner. In Netball I always put a lot of effort in, but never made the first team.

School dinners: my Auntie Queenie Brooker delivered them with Mrs Page and the driver Mr Shepherd. I hated semolina pudding (frog spawn!), boiled cabbage and mince. My favourites were butterscotch tart with mock cream (shaving foam!) and puffed wheat chocolate balls. The teachers had a table and kept an eye on us. There was no talking!

I left in 1955 having made lots of life-long friends.”