



The image from Stephen Batey shows Miss. Smith in 1967. Thank you.

Marjorie SMITH ( 1912 - 1994 )

Ravissante blonde de 20 ans, elle arriva à Pâques 1932 pour être notre première assistante d'anglais. Les projets d'échange avec Heckmondwike étaient en train de se concrétiser et le Colonel Edwards qui la considérait comme la plus brillante étudiante que son collège ait envoyé à l'université la recommanda à Mademoiselle Conte qui l'accueillit avec joie.

Marjorie était douée pour tout. Commencant tardivement le latin dans la classe qui correspond à notre "première", à la fin de l'année elle était la première de la classe. Elle avait appris seule à jouer du piano et de l'orgue et, bien que solidement agnostique, remplaçait à l'occasion l'organiste de la chapelle voisine. Pour un anniversaire, je lui avais offert des partitions d'orgue de Jehan Alain à un moment où malencontreusement elle ne pouvait pas jouer. "Ca ne fait rien" me dit-elle, "en attendant, je les joue dans ma tête".

Après sa thèse sur l'affaire Dreyfus, elle enseigna quelques années à Rushden puis à Amersham et devint directrice adjointe à Hemsworth Grammar School où elle resta de 1947 à sa retraite en 1972. Ses élèves ne l'ont certes pas oubliée car cette femme d'aspect fragile qui possédait des talents pédagogiques certains, avait une volonté de fer et était décidée à obtenir le maximum de chacun d'eux. Les lettres reçues depuis son décès montrent que certains anciens lui attribuent les brillantes situations auxquelles ils sont ensuite parvenus.

Je ne saurais oublier qu'elle eut comme élève Jeffrie Boycott, champion international de cricket. Au cours d'une interview à la radio sur sa jeunesse ( interview dont j'ai la cassette) , il parla longuement de Miss Smith et devinez ce qu'il en dit en bref : " Elle me terrifiait, j'étais obligé de travailler".

Quand nous l'avons connue dans ce beau printemps de 1932, elle nous semblait au contraire d'une immense gentillesse et pleine d'humour, un peu surprenante seulement. Voulant visiter Versailles, n'était-elle pas allée et revenue à pied du Boulevard St Michel à Versailles dans la journée ! Nous n'en revenions pas. Nous commençons seulement à connaître l'Angleterre.

Can anyone let me know what happened to Miss Smith after 1968 when I left? She was my inspiration, and I have many happy memories of her lessons, albeit with a healthy amount of fear!

Ron Dyson

Hi Dave,

Miss Smith had a scheme when reports were due. She read every report, certainly for all the girls. For every error missed by the form teacher she charged a halfpenny. If the report was totally correct she paid sixpence. I don't believe she was out of pocket.

Terry McCroakam

Dear Sheila,

I wanted to write a few words about Miss. Smith the Deputy Head, without whose aid and wise experience the school could not have run so smoothly. Initially I was a little intimidated by this quite formidable lady. She ruled with a mixture of gentleness, kindness, and exceptional caring attitude. It may not have seemed so for the girls for she had an eagle eye, spotting the exceptions to the school uniform code. If the skirt length was above the knee she had the offenders into her room to provide a firm rebuke and reminder to their parents. My abiding memory of Miss. Smith was her patrolling in the corridors of the school, never in the same place at early morning school, breaks and dinner hours. Whenever I passed her I would momentarily think of my dishevelled tie, my clothes covered in chalk dust and my unpolished shoes in case she might mention them to me privately. Unconsciously I smartened up after about 3 months; I think mainly to set an example, as most of the male staff did. The ladies were always neat and immaculately dressed. It is always interesting to know that Miss. Smith's remonstrations were inevitably successful and most girls returned to conform at least for a few weeks because I do not think they wanted to land up in her room again for a further ticking off. In my thoughts Miss. Smith had a reputation that was worse than that of my drill sergeant whilst I was on national service in Worcester. But she was more understanding than the drill sergeant was, and very forgiving. She always backed RWH in any new projects that he wished to put forward because he was a man of great insight and imagination.

Ken Sale, HGS Staff 1955-61

Dear Dave,

I remember fondly Miss Smith, as one of my French teachers. Although as stated she was in appearance a frail lady, she was a true lady in the sense of the word. I once remember a small incident, when, as she was coming up behind me, I held the door open for her. She smiled and said thank you as she walked through the doorway. She then asked my name, to which I told her, using my surname first, as all boys at the school did. I thought nothing of this until my parents went to a teachers meeting on an evening, to discuss our progress. On asking my mother whose offspring they were to discuss, when my mother mentioned my name, she smiled and said "Oh Hall, what a Polite boy." It certainly surprised my mother, and me also!!! I failed my French O level, (as I could not remember what the word "Demain" meant, in the paragraph we had to translate. To this day I now remember it means -Tomorrow!! Of all the teachers I had, I felt that I had let Miss Smith down, so, on leaving school, I went out and bought French books and tapes, and taught myself to speak French. It must be some testimony to her, that French people now say that I speak French like a frenchman!! (Not bad for a Yorkshire Lad!)

I will always remember Miss Smith with a fondness and affection. She was, as previously stated, a true lady.

Mark Hall, HGS 1964-71

Miss Smith

She had a fearsome reputation and insisted that she was addressed by her name. You had to say, "Yes, Miss. Smith, no, Miss. Smith", and woe betide you if you forgot and tried to end a sentence without the obligatory "Miss. Smith". We were not allowed off the school premises unless we had a "permit". In order to obtain a permit you had to queue outside Miss. Smith's room before the start of school and provide proof of your need to obtain one. "I have a dentist's appointment, Miss Smith. Yes, Miss Smith. No, Miss Smith. Thank you, Miss Smith." It was on one such occasion that she amazed me. I was only in the second year and had gone to ask for a permit. She not only knew my name but she congratulated me on how well I'd done in the end of year French exam. She had never taught me and I don't think she had ever spoken to me before, so how did she know? At that time she only taught French to the Upper school so I came out of her room walking on air. Many of the teachers in those days used to wear their academic gowns around school. Everyone else's was black but Miss Smith's was dark green.

Linda Redmile 1964-71

Miss Smith never taught me and I don't think we ever spoke. When I was in the Sixth Form she would always smile pleasantly whenever we passed on the corridor. She exuded control and discipline. I did not know it at the time but I was learning from her things which I would use in my own teaching career.

Dave McKenzie 1955-62

Hello again Sheila,

Not sure I'm sending this where I should but if not then please accept my apologies and correct me so I know for the future. You asked about my memories and two come to mind at the moment, both concerning Miss Smith.

I remember there were two prefects on each doorway inspecting us as we left the assembly hall in the morning. I wasn't wearing the regulation 50 denier stockings one day and so was told to go and stand outside Miss Smith's office. After giving me a lecture she sent me home to change my stockings. This meant walking to Cross Hills, catching a bus to Shafton and crossing the road to catch another one to Grimethorpe. On arriving home I got another lecture from my mother. Once changed in to the correct stockings I again had to catch two buses back to Cross Hills. I can't think how long it must have taken me but I never wore the wrong stockings again.

Another morning I didn't feel well but my mother sent me to school anyway. I must have been genuine as I ended up in the Sick Room that morning. I remember feeling very lonely and very frightened of the Blue Lady who apparently haunted that area. Later in the morning Miss Smith entered the room and then I wasn't quite sure whether it was the Blue Lady or Miss Smith who frightened me most! But she asked if anyone would be at home and when I confirmed there would be she said she was taking me there. We went in her car to my home in Grimethorpe. I felt like I was sat in the front of that car with some sort of VIP, which in a way she was I suppose. I saw a different side to Miss Smith that day, a side I had not really looked for before because, up until then I had just seen her as a figure of the utmost authority. Anyhow, we duly arrived at my home. I remember walking in to our kitchen with Miss Smith and my house-proud mother's face was a joy to behold! She had washed her hair and was stood there in her rollers. My dad, who was a miner was on days and they had obviously just finished their dinner which was always on the table ready for him coming home, but also on the table was our biscuit tin (one of those big ones you get at Christmas) with the lid laid at the side of it. My dad was reading the paper in the front room so my mam and Miss Smith had a short conversation and Miss Smith then left. Ignoring my wellbeing my mam's first words were, "What a showing up. Miss Smith stood in our kitchen, me looking like this and the lid off the biscuit tin!".

Best Wishes,  
**Christine Bell (nee Sellars) (Talbot)**

Hi Christine, Yes, you've sent your memories to exactly the right place. Either Dave or I will be pleased to hear any memories from any era.

Miss Smith has been mentioned many times, as an indomitable yet kind influence on us all. Someone recently mentioned that she always wore a green gown in school, unlike the black ones the men wore. Do you remember this? I have to admit I don't! I think she was the only female member of Staff who wore a gown, though I could be wrong. I used to be impressed on Speech Days when all the Staff wore their 'best' finery – there was brightly coloured fur and satin on some of the cowls! Your story of being sent home to change stockings shows how different it was then. Children nowadays would not be allowed to do all that independent journeying alone, would they? How interesting that you saw Miss Smith as a person, and not as Deputy Head when she came to your home – and that our parents had the same respect as all the pupils for Messrs Hamilton, Collette and Miss Smith!. Your car journey with Miss Smith compares with my own experience with Mr. Hamilton, when he gave me a lift in his car as he was passing through Shafton and I was late for my Test Exams. It was quite a special morning when I rolled up into the Boys' playground and emerged from the car. I couldn't remember much of the conversation we had, I was so discumknockerated!

I don't recall ever going into the sick room, although like most pupils I knew it was next door to Room 10 – the classroom which was up a flight of wooden stairs. In fact, come to think of it, no-one has ever described the inside of the sick room to us. Perhaps we'll ask for memories of that. It never fails to happen that one set of recollections starts another thread of memories, and so thanks for taking the time to send your stories, and if any more come to mind, we are always here.

Sincerely,  
**Sheila.**

**Miss Smith retired in 1972 and continued to live in Yorkshire until she passed away in 1994. Many former colleagues and pupils came to her funeral.**