

Memories from 1937

I started at Crossley and Porter when I must have been around nine years old in 1937. My younger sister followed me to the school four years later. Our names are on the list of former pupils on the Old Crossleyans website, Sheila and Rosalind Robinson.

In those days we started in the first and second form. The headmistress was Miss Richardson. Our winter uniform consisted of black woollen stockings, green blouses under a navy gym slip and navy gaberdine mackintoshes. This was topped off with a navy felt hat with gold braid. In summer we wore pale green cotton dresses and navy blazers with panama hats. The rules insisted that hats were worn on the way to and from school.

We had to darn our woollen stockings when they wore through at the heels and sometimes, in an emergency, girls used to hide the holes by rubbing their heels with a dab of black shoe polish.

The boys and girls were taught in separate sides of the school, although in sixth form some lessons were mixed. At lunch, boys and girls dined on either side of the big hall.

I generally went home to lunch but, when I did have school lunch, I remember there was a prefect at the end of each table and you were not allowed dessert if you didn't finish the first course.

My favourite teacher was Miss Howarth for English. I also remember dance classes, where we had to wear Grecian-style tunics.

I wasn't keen on games but remember playing lacrosse on Savile Park Moor.

Domestic Science lessons were held at the Technical College, which later became Percival Whitley College and is now Calderdale College. Our mistress had a fearsome reputation and used to throw things at pupils when she lost her temper. I remember making suet puddings on one occasion during the war



Sheila - centre - playing an architect in 'Zeal of Thy House' at Crossley's School 1944

and my friend put her prune suet pudding straight into a pig bin on the street when we came out of class. Pig bins were an early form of recycling to be found in certain areas. Waste household food was deposited and then collected by a local farmer to feed to his pigs.

With the outbreak of the Second World War, we used to carry gas masks to school. There were air raid drills and we had to go down into the cellars of the school. The school was never bombed,

although in November 1940 a bomb was dropped in Hanson Lane, which is only about a mile from school, killing 11 people. My father worked in a mill processing the woollen yarn to be used for officer's uniforms and he was also an air raid warden.

I stayed on at Crossley and Porter until the end of lower sixth, when I was house captain for St George's. Each house put on a play each year and I remember we did a very successful production of Peter Pan.

I took my 'subsids', the equivalent of A/O-levels, at 17 and then went briefly to teacher training college in Dudley and London before returning home to live in Halifax and training as an architect in Leeds. I worked as an architect in Leeds and Skipton and later as a lecturer in History of Architecture and Interior Design at Huddersfield and Hull.



Details from the school photograph.

