

In July 2020 we were contacted by Charles Nolda whose mother, **Joan Nolda (Drury, 1927-35)** who was a 'Nellie Jones' scholar. **Rosemary Matthews (Nolda, 1953-60)**, Charles' sister, followed in her mother's footsteps to SMH. Joan died in 1986 and Rosemary in 2010 but Rosemary's memory lives on in the minds and hearts of her contemporaries who provided Charles Nolda with photos and stories of his sister. He was fulsome in his praise for our camaraderie and efficiency. This sort of enquiry is perhaps the single most important thing we can do for our members / relatives and the support and responses from Rosemary's friends was invaluable and enormously appreciated.



Back row Sally Brace and either Gillian Rees, or Gloria Smart.  
Front left is probably Viv Ottaway. Front centre perhaps Amy Easter, front right Nol.

Below, (left) Rosemary with Morny Pike and (right) on her own.



Anne Bell wrote:

"Rosemary, if my memory serves me right, was an *Army brat*, I was an Air Force one! If I close my eyes I can see her in my mind. She was very friendly with Jill Elliott, they were both in Hilary House. Jill was also an Army brat. Terrible to call us brats, I should say we were Defence Forces children. Being in New Zealand I don't get to many of the reunions, last one I was at Rosemary was there too, but that was some years ago I remember those of us at Babington we were allowed, by those who then lived in the house, to visit."

Kim Cook confirmed that:

"Yes, Rosemary was an Army daughter. If my memory is still OK, her father was in the Middlesex Regiment. He was posted to Cyprus during the EOKA crisis. This was Greek nationalist uprising which started in 1955, and went on for 4 years, but I think Col Nolda's regiment was posted back to UK before the end of the campaign. I remember Rosemary being very anxious at the time, and on edge for news when the letters were handed out at breakfast.

Pam is right that Rosemary was friendly with Anne Fitzpatrick (inevitably nicknamed Fitz).

We had two major flu epidemics during that time. The first was in Spring Term 1955, when the houses were still segregated by age. Our year and the one above were all in St Hilary. When the San was full of flu patients, the next batch from St Hilary to succumb was put in a house dormitory. Can't remember its name (possibly Bramber, but not at all sure), but when you came up the main stairs, you turned right at the end of the half-landing and walked to the end room at the back of the house. I think it was meant to hold about four or five, but they crammed about eight or nine of us in, with barely room to walk between the beds. I was in there with Carole Beeby (Baby) and Sue Reynolds (Foxy), and we shared our comics. The few that were permitted were 'School Friend', 'Girls' Crystal' and 'Girl'.

By the time of the 1957 epidemic, boarding and day houses had been converted to mixed age groups, and I was in Babington. The first dorm to be converted to a ward was the one at first floor front - I think it was Julius Elliott. I remember lying in bed, feeling quite poorly, and counting the patterns in the ornate plaster ceiling. At first, I counted a different number each time, but when I managed to make three consecutive counts agree, I knew I was on the mend! One epidemic was called Asian Flu, the other Hong Kong flu, but I can't at the moment remember which was which.

We had quite a few Forces daughters in our year, including Rosemary, Jill Elliott, and Anne Fitzpatrick (RAF). Later Anne Bearne (Teddy), and Rosalind Green (Ros), both RAF, joined us.

When I joined Lower IV in Autumn 1954, like most newcomers I was somewhat overwhelmed. However, those who had been in Junior School were well established and confident. These included Rosemary, Jill, Anne (Fitz) and Carol Hayes. Because they already knew the ropes, they knew which the best places in the classroom, dining room, and dorm were, and the newbies were left with the remainder!"

Morny Pritchett told us:

"I certainly remember Rosemary Nolda. Her brother Charles was nicknamed Noggs! Rosemary and I were in the same boarding house at SMH (St. Hilary's) and she very kindly had me to stay one half term as my parents lived abroad. At that time they lived in Hook Heath near Woking."

Nicola Bennetts added:

"I remember Rosemary Nolda very well as being very friendly and kind. We were in different year groups so I didn't know her that well but there was a bit of a special bond between us because our mothers had been at SMH together.

I remember the flu epidemic (was it a pandemic?) of 1957 when the San overflowed and some of us were at St Hilary's. I'm pretty certain Rosemary and I were in the same dormitory-turned-into-a-ward. After the first few days none of us felt too bad and it was quite fun – certainly vastly preferable to being in the San under Sister Brown's strict and eccentric care. Miss Dolphin (the Matron/Housemistress) made us scrambled egg one day which we considered something pretty special."

Charles Nolda replied to all the information we sent to say "Rosemary certainly didn't care much for Miss Conrady, to put it mildly! (At the time, my own prep school headmaster was also pretty stern but he was fair). At this great distance in time I have forgiven R for revealing my embarrassing family nickname! But I am still a bit miffed that my mother once sent me back to school with wellies marked Rosemary Nolda! That took some living down.

Jill Cartwright Taylor (Elliott) was Rosemary's closest friend and was at her funeral (in 2010).

Charles also thanked us for access to the image of the Nellie Jones scholarship boards which showed his mother's name. He found both the names in our Registers and has looked through relevant newsletters for items about both his mother and sister. The former was in the first teams for cricket, hockey and tennis. However Charles said she did not pass on her excellent hand/eye coordination to Rosemary.

(All we have found, about the NJ scholarship, in our histories, is this reference "In 1888 the Hall became a Special Local Centre for the Oxford Examinations. In 1889, girls under 13 became eligible for a Catherine Dighton Memorial Fund award based on the preliminary examination on entrance (£5 per term). The Nellie Jones Memorial Scholarship followed in 1890.") Unfortunately only three current members are of an age to remember Joan.

Our thanks to **Rowan Fookes (Caukell)** for sending us the group photo and reminded us of Rosemary's nickname; to **Shirley Read-Jahn** for naming most of the girls shown on the photo of Girl Guides (which forms part of our website item on the visit of the Princess Royal); to **Pamela Read-Jahn (Bailey)** for remembering Nol's appearance and reminding us of the name of her Anne Fitzpatrick; to **Nicola Bennetts (Bruton)** and **Kim Cook (Kimmins)** for memories of the flu epidemic – and much more - to **Morny Pritchett (Pike)** for more memories, and the lovely photos of her/Rosemary; and lastly to **Anne Bell ("Teddy" Bearne)** for her memories.

I found all this to be an interesting read which is why I turned it into this item which can be viewed on its own or as an addendum to 'Such Fun'!

PH (T)