

A tribute to Shelagh Davson from the Cheltenham Ladies College Guild Magazine Autumn 2023



Miss Shelagh Davson
13/10/1925 – 23/6/2023

One of four children, Shelagh was born in Burma, now Myanmar. She was educated at Bedford High School and then at Bedford College of Physical Education. She qualified as a physiotherapist but never practised as she was determined to teach, moving to Gloucestershire, known as a strong hockey county, immediately after qualifying. She taught at three other schools before being appointed to CLC as deputy head of department.

Shelagh played hockey at the East Glos Club, where she was a member from 1946, and played hockey and cricket for the county and West of England. She also became an international umpire, being appointed an "A" umpire in 1972. In her 22 years playing at East Glos Shelagh formed a formidable goal-scoring partnership with her great friend Mary Eyre MBE (1923 - 2013) (CLC 1929-1942, Day Girls North) and was involved as a coach, selector and president of club, county and territorial hockey. She was a pillar of women's sport.

During Shelagh's tenure the CLC hockey teams consistently won all of their matches and competed in national and international competitions with great results. Members of the teams represented the county - for two years the CLC 1st XI formed the county U18 1st team - and were well represented in the West U18 team. Shelagh was also highly influential amongst the tennis teams, which also held unbeaten records for a number of years. This was a stellar record by any measure but particularly for

a school that prided itself on its academic and musical prowess. However, the lasting legacy for most girls who were at College during Shelagh's tenure was far more profound and enduring: so many girls continued to play sport long after leaving College.

As Head of PE and Senior Mistress, Shelagh had a truly remarkable effect on so many girls at College. I believe it is impossible for any girl during that period not to have known her. The volume of heartfelt memories and tributes that have poured in is astonishing. Her ability to remember everyone's name (and I mean everyone, and not just when we were at College but for ever, it seemed) was legendary. It wasn't just our names she remembered, she had an encyclopaedic memory for our personalities, too. This reflected her hard-working nature and how much she actually cared for and understood people.

Dedicated, inspiring, perceptive, considerate and caring are words that only begin to describe Shelagh. For the many of us who had the privilege of being taught by her, she will be remembered for ever. Thank you, Shelagh, for having dedicated so much of your career to influencing the lives of so many College girls in such a positive way.

To the end of her life, Shelagh solved the *Daily Telegraph* cryptic crossword every day. She worshipped regularly at St Mary's, Prestbury, where her memorial service was held on August 8th. May she now rest in peace.

Sarah Pearson LLB TEP Solicitor
1972-1979, Roderic/Eversleigh

The arrival of Miss Dendy and Miss Davson in 1959 to the Physical Training Department brought a breath of fresh air to sporting activities. One of the first things they did was to change the title from the Physical Training to the Physical Education Department, a subtle and meaningful alteration. Out were the commands and orders, in came discussion and encouragement. It was no longer frightening as a junior to attempt sporting activities.

It is one regret of mine that I never told Miss Davson in person how much I valued her support and encouragement to me during my years at College. Playing cricket at house and College level has given me a lifelong interest in the sport and I was involved in supporting a cricket-based charity for many years. Thank you, Shelagh.

In 1964, my last year in College, the First XI Hockey team was invited to participate in an interschools match in the Hague in Holland. When we arrived, we found that there was a parallel boys competition going on and we were all due to meet for welcome party in the evening. In 1964, College girls were not allowed to fraternise with the boys' schools in Cheltenham, so this was breaking news. Miss Davson was great: her farewell remark to us, as she left the party early, was that she would see us all at breakfast and please would we remember there was a match on in the morning. Needless to say, we were all very well behaved, not wanting to let her down.

Diana Crouch (Paterson-Fox)
1957-1964, Farnley Lodge/Fauconberg

