

MEMORIES OF WOODSIDE SCHOOL

Revised April 2025

Jill Goulder

(This piece was inspired by posts on

https://www.oldreigate.com/index.php?r=1&width=1600&height=900&goto=picture_2794

about Woodside School, and enabled by valuable material from Wendy Fraser, Rosemary Mees, Jenny Armstrong, Sue Sheppard, Jo Stewart-Long, David Ryves and others)

I would love to hear from former pupils etc – my email address (disguised) is

[j\[dot\]goulder\[at\]alumni\[dot\]jucl.ac.uk](mailto:j[dot]goulder[at]alumni[dot]jucl.ac.uk)

My great-aunt Sylvia Lloyd (1896-1988) ran a school, Woodside, in Linkfield Lane in Redhill, from sometime after World War I to c.the mid 1950s, with Mrs Godsiffe then taking her place as headmistress. David Ryves gives me the interesting information that Sylvia started her school at her own home (Mead House, where she lived – see below) and then moved her school to Woodside.

The school closed in the early 1970s and a new housing estate was built; Helen MacDonald notes that Mrs Godsiffe later moved to North America. I never knew it myself, though I was partly based at her sister Violet's house, nearby in Oxford Rd, at times between 1959 and the early 1970s.

Sylvia Lloyd's history

My great-aunt Sylvia Lloyd and her older sister Violet were brought up as Edwardian young ladies in the Scottish borders by their beloved Auntie Manie (after their father, a vicar in Wales, died, their mother could not keep up a house for them). During World War I they begged to be allowed to help with the war effort, and signed up as Land Girls. They were posted to the Wingfield-Digbys' farm at Bishop's Caundle in Dorset, where they lived in a barn, drove a tractor and a milk-cart and took pigs to market. (See photo below of Violet and Jackie Donkey) My great-aunt Sylvia recalls bicycling to Sherborne on Saturdays to go to the movies! What an incredible transformation for these young girls.

One comic element was their 'home' life in the barn: these two delicately-brought up girls had never known what happened to clothes when they weren't wearing them, or how to make meals (my great-aunt Violet, despite later growing all her own produce, never learnt to cook and kept a for the rest of her days). They got a terrible muddle, and appealed to Auntie Manie in the Borders. She spoke to their maid, who'd not wished to go into a munitions factory, and who was delighted to make a valuable contribution to the war effort by going down to live in the barn with 'Miss Violet and Miss Sylvia' and do their washing and cooking.



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When the war ended, the farmer wished to return to mainly arable farming, so was happy to let the two girls take the goats, chickens and Jackie Donkey. They took them to Sherborne station and loaded them into the guard's van, taking them to Old Mead House in Redhill in Surrey where their mother was living. There these two capable young women in overalls – what a contrast to their protected childhood – ran a smallholding on Linkfield Lane, approximately where the junction with North St is now. They incidentally brought up my mother Ray Trinick and her two siblings Michael and Elizabeth, as their mother (Violet and Sylvia's younger sister Rosamund) was living in Nigeria with her husband. The household later moved to 12 Oxford Rd (now knocked down and redeveloped) which backed onto Linkfield Lane.

Here are photos of Sylvia in 1918 in Land Girl kit, in the 1920s, and in 1984 at 88.

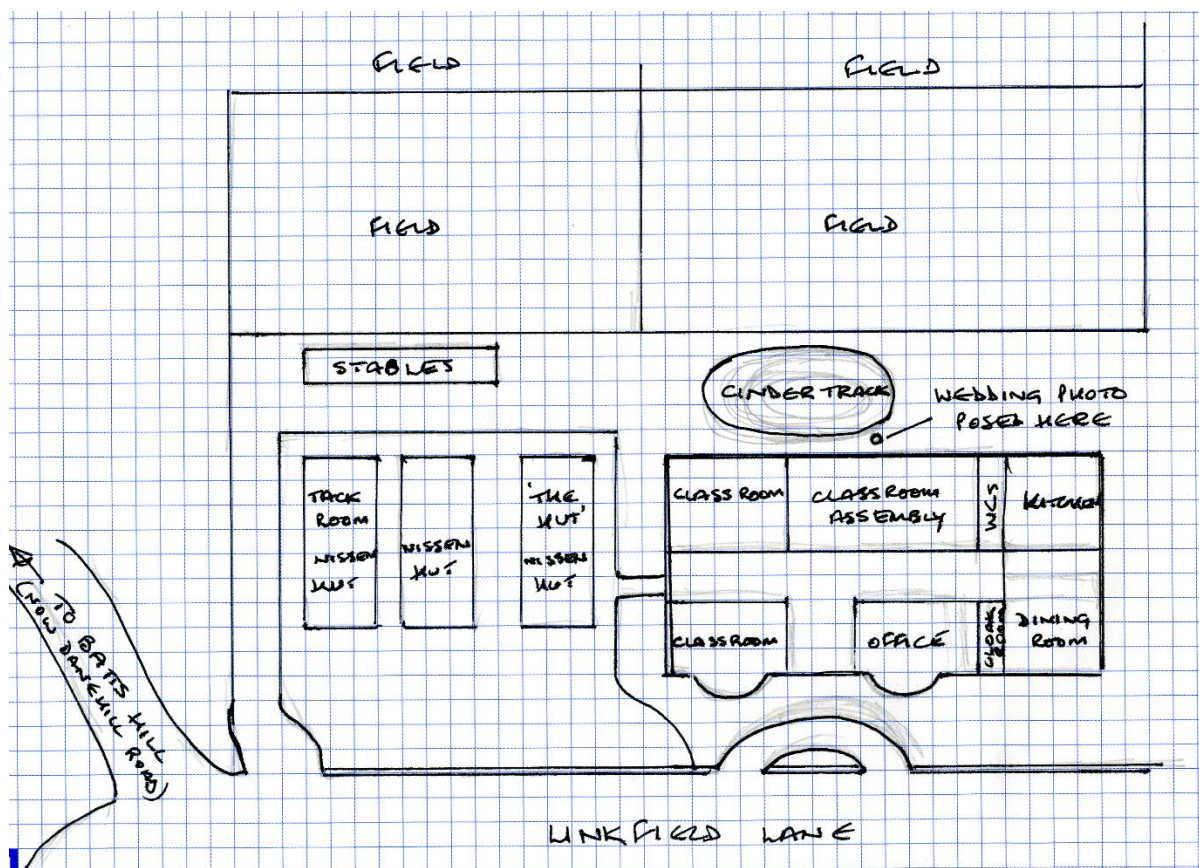


Sylvia retired to Kent and lived a happy life working in her garden, always with a small terrier for company; she looked back with affection at her former pupils and kept in touch with a number of them, and with former teachers such as David Ryves' mother. Here is a photo of her in 1984, at 88.

Wendy Fraser remembers 'Sylvia was very strict but fair, treated us as individuals and taught us according to our ability rather than our age. We were encouraged to read a daily newspaper before coming to school each morning, and I can clearly remember her putting up a map of Korea at the outbreak of that war, which would have been June 1950. We were entered into national handwriting competitions (I think I might have won some certificates!).'

Woodside School

Woodside was just NE along Linkfield Lane from Violet and Sylvia's home, on the north side. It occupied a large area of land on the corner of Linkfield Lane and Daneshill, with lovely extensive grounds behind the school building. Sue Sheppard says 'It was quite a pretty Edwardian building with extensive grounds and a riding school attached', and Jenny Armstrong remembers the magnificent staircase. Wendy Fraser has kindly done an invaluable sketch-plan (below) of the school premises c.1947, showing the crescent-shaped drive and the stables and temporary Nissen huts. Jenny Armstrong, there from 1955, remembers a wooden hut containing one or two extra classrooms, perhaps where the Nissen huts were.



Wendy Fraser's sketch-plan, drawn from memory in 2021. She says 'Obviously not to scale and I'm not entirely sure about the placing of the Nissen huts, apart from the Tack Room and The Hut, and there may have been more than three. The Hut was where we went to lie down after lunch and was used as an exercise area, particularly for marching which I believe was part of the school curriculum at that time.'

So below for possibly impossible comparison is an aerial view of the general site.



Google Maps aerial view, rotated to match Wendy Fraser's sketch-plan

In 2021 I visited the Woodside site. Going east along Linkfield Lane from the Daneshill turning, on the corner there is a white mews house (photo below) which Rosemary Simmons remembers as where the school secretary lived. The old stables entrance is still to the right of this, though inside the yard is a fine modern house (photo below). Then a stretch of mainly brick wall, pierced with a few entrances; somewhere along here were the twin entrances to the crescent-shaped drive. The modern housing layout gives very little help, except for a curving footpath starting c.150 yards east of the Daneshill corner which might conceivably follow the old drive line? Going into the 1970s housing estate, the street plan gives no help at all as to where the old Woodside building and other elements were.



Google Streetview 2021 of the mews house on the corner of Daneshill and Linkfield Lane, with the old stables entrance to the R



Google Streetview 2021 of the mews house and a new house built next to it and reached through the old stables entrance

Woodside photograph

The wedding photo referred to in Wendy Fraser's sketch is that of my parents in April 1949 (below). My parents, Rosamund Trinick (living with her aunt, Sylvia Lloyd's sister Violet, in nearby Oxford Rd) and Gerald Goulder of Reigate, had their reception at Woodside, and the photo below shows the wedding group just behind the main school building, looking north and showing the cinder running track and the fields beyond, with a view of the North Downs. My aunt Sylvia Goulder (see below for her role at Woodside) is maid of honour, on the left of the group.



Wedding reception of my parents at Woodside on 23 April 1949, looking north from the rear of the school building and with the cinder track behind

The nearest modern view that I can get from Google Streetview (below) is from Brooklands Way (see aerial plan), looking north to the same hills.



Google Streetview 2021, looking N from Brooklands Way N of Linkfield Lane

Sylvia Goulder

Sylvia Goulder (1921-2011), who was in charge of the Nursery at Woodside, was my father's sister, so on the other side of the family from Sylvia Lloyd; the Goulders were a Reigate family, and Sylvia G probably lived at her parents' house in Doods Park Road. The Nursery was upstairs at the rear, and Wendy Fraser recalls that it had a large rocking-horse. After Woodside, she went on to work as a matron at a couple of places, including the Pilgrim's School in Winchester, and then had a kindergarten in her house in Petersfield; we hear that she was a bit sharp with the children – a disciplinarian – but I liked her. I attach a 1940s portrait photo of her. I don't think that my parents met through the connection of the two Sylvias, and it could have been that, conversely, Sylvia G went to work at Woodside through my parents having got to know each other in the 1940s.



Memories

Wendy Fraser, seeing the cinder track in the wedding photograph, noted 'We used to race round the track competing in teams of Oxford and Cambridge'. (Sylvia Lloyd was a firm Oxford supporter but I'm sure was scrupulously impartial at school!) She also remembers the annual Christmas visit to the Royal Tournament at Earls Court.

Sylvia Lloyd loved horses, and in earlier years used to collect some of the children daily by pony and trap. Children also arrived by taxi; Wendy Fraser recalls being collected, with other children, from Merstham every morning.

Helen MacDonald recalls the green and grey uniform.

Jo Stewart-Long remembers Mrs Lawson and the lovely Mrs Barklet. Rosemary Mees remembers Mrs Robins, and the smell of the raffia cupboard!

David Ryves' mother taught at Woodside during WWII, and he and she kept a life-long link with her.

Contributors from the Reigate web-page

		Headmistress	Other
David Ryves	(Re late 1940s+)	Sylvia Lloyd	Sylvia LI taught David's mother teaching during WWII, when she started her school at Mead House
Wendy Fraser	Late 1940s	Sylvia Lloyd	Sylvia Goulder in charge of Nursery
Rosemary Mees (nee Simmons)	1953-61	Sylvia Lloyd and then Mrs Godsiffe	Sylvia LI had also been Rosemary's father's headmistress
Sue Sheppard	1955-61	Mrs Godsiffe	Sylvia LI was still involved
Jenny Armstrong (nee Baldwin)	1955+	Mrs Godsiffe	Sylvia LI was still involved
Serge Boon	1960s		
Richard Bideford	1967-9		
Jo Stewart-Long	1968-9	Mrs Godsiffe	
Helen MacDonald	1969-72	Mrs Godsiffe	