

Chapter 55: School, College and Work

Mum finished at Nottingham Girls High School in the summer of 1950 when she was still 15. In January of that year, she went to see the school play, "*The Critic*".¹ She considered it very good and came home with Angela Davison.



"The Critic."

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The Girls' High School Magazine

THE CRITIC.

"THE Critic" with its caustic humour and wide variety of scenes, ranging from the domestic life of the Dangles to a view of the Spanish Armada, was a happy choice for a school play. Sheridan was intent upon ridiculing the theatre of his day, and the witty satire by which he achieved this design lost none of its pithiness in the production.

The play is concerned with the playwright, players and parasites who inhabit the theatrical world, and especially with Puff—who, combining the trials of an author with those of a producer, was endeavouring to rehearse his new tragedy—and with Dangle, the critic. Dangle, indeed, suffers all the discomforts of an indiscriminate enthusiast, and we are given a chaotic picture of his household, plagued by all manner of charlatans seeking employment in the theatre. Particularly enjoyable was the appearance of the Italian girls, who, with little to say, sang so beautifully out of tune, and with such obvious relish. In Puff's play the authentic atmosphere was securely captured and held by the ingenious contrivance of a box at the side of the stage from which Puff directed his labouring actors, and which gave additional emphasis to his frequent interruptions as he tripped to and fro. The farewell between Don Ferolo Whiskerandos and Tilburina was rendered more tragic by the opposite flights of steps up which they drifted, gazing fondly back over their shoulders. Nor were the smaller details ignored, and the audience thoroughly appreciated Puff's anxiety as the clock chimed three instead of four of the morning, and the lengthy and agitated pause which preceded the "feathered warblers" tuning of their notes.

The standard of acting was high, and the entire cast gave most creditable performances; Marion Salt made an excellent study of Dangle, and Jacqueline Calvert, as Sncer, gazed competently down her nose; Margaret Tilley is especially to be congratulated on sustaining so tremendously long a part with unflagging zest, sparkle and comic invention: particularly enjoyable was the final scene when, after the grand finale involving the whole Spanish Armada, the play was firmly plunged into bathos by her headlong sprawl across the stage. Janice Elliott's Don Ferolo Whiskerandos was handsomely impressive, while Tilburina (Valerie Frith) made a charming heroine, and fluttered about the stage surprisingly swiftly in her "mad scene," considering the voluminous drapery of her conventionally correct white satin skirts.

The décor and costumes added considerably to our enjoyment of the play, and the Spanish Armada in particular, was a masterpiece of invention. Miss Waghorn and Miss Bottomley must be thanked for their work in designing and carrying into effect the settings and costumes.

Finally, we must thank Miss Macaulay for her most excellent production, and for extracting the full humour and sparkle from Sheridan's dialogue. Indeed, we may be more enthusiastic than Puff over the play, and declare that it was "well, very well."

P. M. TURNER, ex-VIA.

Article in the school magazine concerning the play "*The Critic*".

¹ An 18th century satirical [play](#) by Richard Brinsley Sheridan. Valerie Frith, who played the heroine Tilburina, is mentioned as one of mum's friends in her diary (see Chapters 39 and 40).

Also in January 1950, mum noted that she dropped a desk lid out of the window on to the roof of the covered way. However, she did not explain why or how this happened! She did say that Anne Taylor got it back through the gym window.² Mum also noted in March 1950 that the head, Miss Merrifield left. According to the school magazine, she left to become head of the Notting Hill and Ealing High School having been at Nottingham Girls' High School from 1936, which covered almost all the time mum was there.³ Mum noted that the girls bought her a case and two sheets while the parents bought her a fur cape.⁴ A news cutting among mum's papers identified Miss Frances Milford as the new head. In April 1950, an American came to school and showed views as part of a lantern lecture.⁵ Mum also noted some school sporting "events" during this period. She was less than thrilled in March 1950 when she had to play hockey in the pouring rain. She thought she caught cold as a result.⁶ In April 1950, mum was made form prefect, something of which she seemed proud.



Above right – news cutting from 1950 announcing Frances Milford as new head of Nottingham High School for Girls

Below – mum became a prefect at school. This photo is labelled "Note the Prefect Badge". The photo is dated June 1951 but presumably is from 1950



² Other things she noted during her last year at school included the following. In March 1950, Shirley Sadler went to an exhibition at the LMS station. Mum and Jeanette Crowley wrote to Clarice (perhaps a penfriend or former pupil?). At the end of March 1950, the Boys Brigade visited the school. In April 1950, mum went to school for a play rehearsal but there were only four there. In June 1950, she scored good marks for cookery for preparing "an invalid's meal".

³ See Chapter 39.

⁴ The school magazine notes that the staff gave her a canteen of silver.

⁵ For an explanation of what a lantern lecture is, please see [this book extract](#).

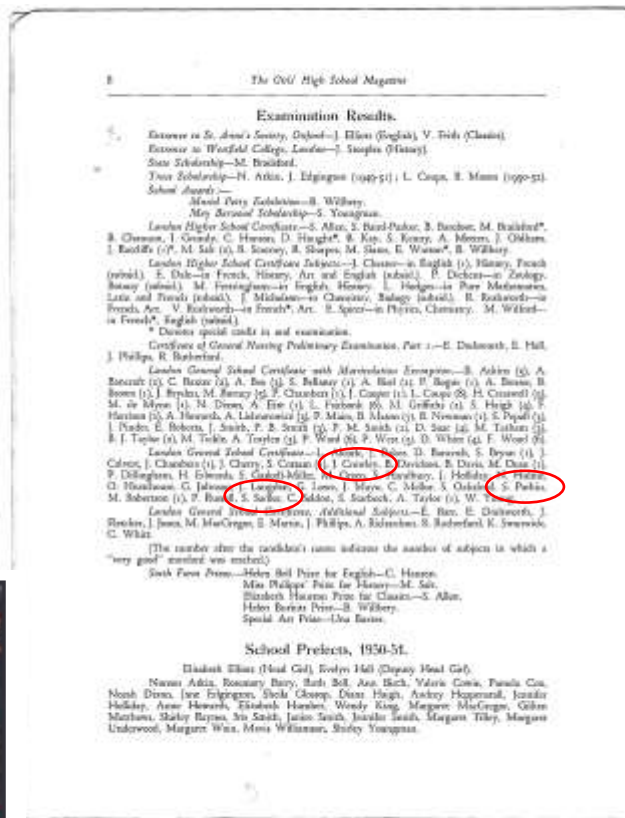
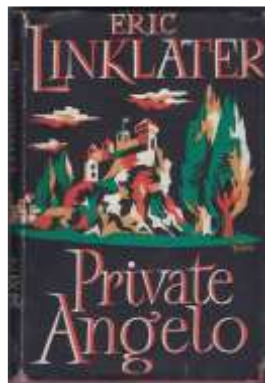
⁶ In March 1950, mum noted watching a staff versus students hockey match which the staff won 2-1. At the end of March, mum was in a team that played the sixth form at hockey and lost 7-0. In May 1950, mum stayed for gym and she also played tennis at school.

In February 1950, mum started exams and these covered Arithmetic, Biology, Cookery (practical), Domestic Science, English Grammar, English Literature, French, Geography, History and Needlework (practical). Perhaps these were mock exams but, if they were, I don't see her results anywhere. In June and July 1950 mum took her exams⁷ for the School Certificate.⁸ After mum had finished most of her exams⁹, on 11 July, she went with other Upper Fifths on a school trip to Castleton. Mum commented that it was nice but windy.¹⁰

In September 1950, both mum and grandad noted that mum heard that she had passed the school certificate. It seems she was notified by postcard, which she retained among her papers. This notes that she achieved credits in three subjects – History, Biology and Domestic Science.¹¹



English lang	Pass.
lit.	Pass.
History	Credit
Geography	Pass.
French	Pass.
Biology	Credit
Dom. Sci.	Credit
Arithmetic	Pass.
School Certificate	
M. W. Rowland	



Top right - exam results 1950 with results for mum (S Parkin) and her friends (S Sadler and J Crowley) highlighted

Top left and above left - postcard mum received in September 1950 notifying her of her School Certificate results

Above right – mum received a copy of the novel “Private Angelo” as a school prize in 1950

In October, mum went to the school prizegiving with grandma and Barbara Coupe. She got her school certificate and a prize “Private Angelo”.¹² In June 1951, she went to an Old Girls’ Association meeting at the school.

⁷ On 12 June 1950, mum prepared her cookery practical exam and had the exam on the morning of the 14th. She commented that it wasn't too bad. The next day, she had her French oral exam and she commented that the man was very nice. Her exams started in earnest from the 22nd. She had had English Literature, Geography, English Language, History, French dictation, French exam and Arithmetic by 28th June. However, her Biology exam was not until 6 July and domestic science was on the 10th and needlework practical on the 13th.

⁸ See Chapter 39.

⁹ But not her needlework practical.

¹⁰ Over the next week, she handed all her books in and helped Miss Gornall in the library.

¹¹ And mum noted this in her 1993 CV.

¹² A novel by Eric Linklater that was published in 1946. A film based on the novel was produced in 1949.



Photo labelled Upper VG NGHS 1950 – this shows mum and I think the girl on her left is Jeanette Crowley

In January 1950, mum went with grandma to [Miller's Business College](#) in Mansfield for an interview and she was offered a place. This was a private college, owned by the Miller family, established in the early 1900s to offer intensive courses in shorthand, typing, bookkeeping and business studies for young people leaving school. Classes were held daily from 9.30am to 12.30pm and from 2.00-4.00pm. The college was located above the Handley Arcade on Leeming Street. Those attending were mainly, but not exclusively, girls. The Mansfield College closed in July 1962. In July 1950, mum went to see the headmistress of Miller's Business College, Mrs Nicholls, and mum started there at the end of August. She liked it immediately. However, she did not note much detail of her time there. Most of her diary entries were simply "went to MBC"¹³

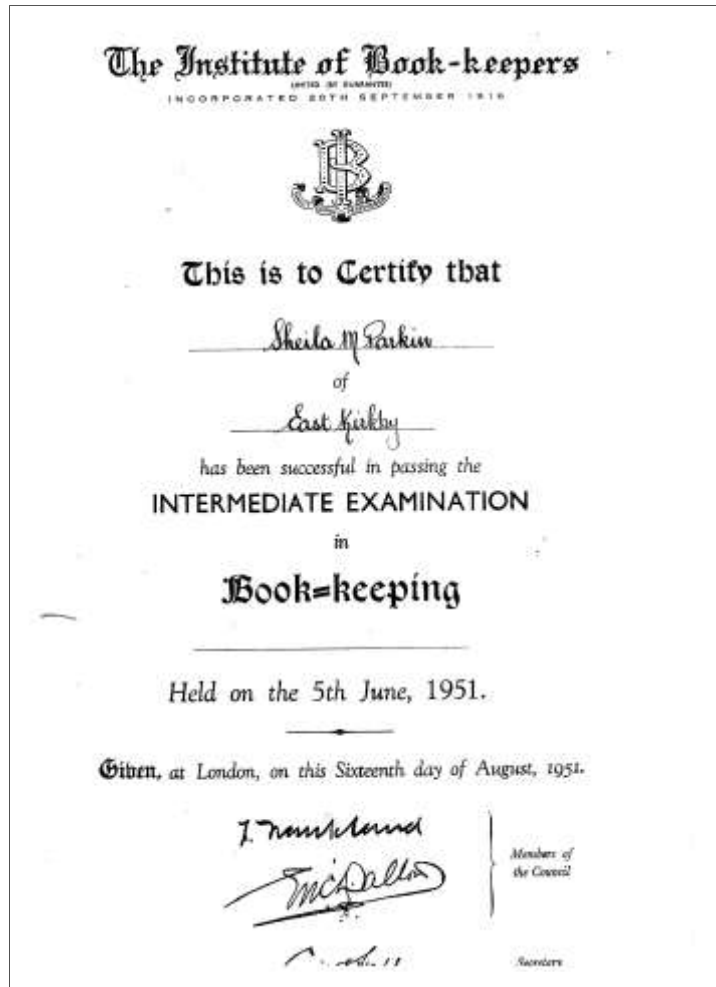


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Handley Arcade in Mansfield circa 2008

¹³ She missed some days in 1951 because on one occasion the college closed as it was being used for a dance that night and, on another occasion, she missed an entire week because there was no coal. She also missed one day because she took a holiday (!) to go to the pantomime in Nottingham. In February 1951, she missed two weeks of MBC because she had a sore throat. On the last day she was off sick, she went shopping in Nottingham with grandma and grandad and went to the cinema with grandad!

In December 1950, mum had a bookkeeping exam which she said was not too bad. Two weeks later, she had a shorthand exam and she gave it the same rating. She had a typing exam in March 1951 and, in April 1951, noted that she was now in the advanced class. In June 1951, she had another bookkeeping exam but considered this one “awful”. In July 1951, she had a typing exam and then a shorthand exam. She managed 90 words per minute which she considered “not bad”. She finished at Miller’s Business College at the beginning of August 1951. According to her 1993 CV, she gained the following qualifications – Pitman’s Typewriting Intermediate, First Class; Pitman’s Shorthand Theory Stage II; and Institute of Book-keepers Intermediate. These certificates were among her papers along with earlier elementary or preliminary levels.



Mum’s certificate for intermediate level bookkeeping that she obtained from Miller’s Business College in 1951

In October 1951, mum went for an interview at Mansfield Education Office and was offered a job as a school clerical assistant.¹⁴ She started at the end of October 1951 at Hillocks Secondary School¹⁵ but immediately disliked it. Grandad described her as “not thrilled”. The next day, she went to [Huthwaite Church of England School](#) but she still did not like it. She then went to Hillocks Infant School¹⁶ and then back to Hillocks Secondary and did not like any of them! So, she went back to the Education Office and they arranged to move her to Kirkby. The following week, she started at Kingsway Boys School¹⁷, which she considered “v v nice”, and Vernon Road¹⁸, which she did not like as much! Essentially, she split her time between these two schools – Monday and Tuesday at Kingsway, Wednesday and Thursday at Vernon Road, and Friday split between the two. She also worked some Saturday mornings alternately between the schools.

As with school and college before, mum did not say much about her work there. She mostly just wrote “went to K” or “went to VR”.¹⁹ In March 1952, mum noted that at Vernon Road she watched plays all

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¹⁴ School secretary according to grandad

¹⁵ I have only found one reference to this [school](#) which appears to have been in Sutton in Ashfield. Presumably, from the name, it was located on the Hillocks but there is only a primary school there now. Perhaps the secondary school closed or it became the primary school? There is a [photo](#) on the Ashfield Community Pages which is labelled as Hillocks Secondary School but the same photo is labelled as the primary school [elsewhere](#). From Google it definitely appears that this is the primary school.

¹⁶ This [school](#) is operational but it seems to have had some [problems](#).

¹⁷ There is a primary [school](#) in Kingsway but no secondary school currently. According to the Healey Hero [website](#), the senior schools were Kingsway, Vernon Road and Mowlands but Kingsway and Vernon Road became junior schools

¹⁸ I think this became an [academy](#) when the primary school closed in [2017](#).

¹⁹ In November and December, she went to the bank and Roy Case (who I think she knew from church) went with her. At the end of November, grandad commented that mum got her first pay cheque and that it was for £11 9 2d. In January 1952, she noted that she tidied the stockroom at Kingsway. Mum was ill in February 1952 and was off work for two weeks. When she went back, grandad described her as “not thrilled”.



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Above left – Hillocks Primary School Above right – Kingsway School (now Primary)

day. Her comment was that she wished she worked in an office. In May 1952, she applied for, and had interviews, at the Mansfield Education Office itself and a company called Fordham and Burtons. She got the latter job and started working there in June 1952. Among mum’s papers was a letter from Notts Education Committee to grandma and grandad concerning mum leaving their employ. Their understanding was that it was because of illness. Nevertheless, they were very complimentary about mum saying she had “*been very efficient indeed & one of the best assistants I have had*”. It seems odd to me that they wrote to grandma and grandad and not to mum directly but perhaps that was the practice then particularly as she was only 17.



*Above - letter from Education Committee when mum left her job to join Fordham and Burton
Left - Fordham and Burton advert in Kirkby-in-Ashfield directory 1969*



Based on an advert in a Kirkby-in-Ashfield directory that I have from 1969, it appears that Fordham and Burton manufactured lingerie and had a factory in Lindley’s Lane. It [appears](#) that this remained Fordham and Burton into the 1970s when it became Wood Bastow and then Celestion textiles.

Mum worked from 8.30 to 12.30 and then from 1.30 to 5.30.²⁰ She immediately liked it. In August, she noted that she received a 10/-rise. In 1953, mum went on work social trips to London and Scarborough and to see “*The Desert Song*” in Nottingham.²¹ Mum

²⁰ In October 1952, she noted that they did stocktaking in the afternoon and again, in January 1953, in the morning. In January 1953, she noted that she had to work late two nights running but did not say why.

²¹ See Chapter 52 - she went on this trip even though it was two weeks after she had left Fordham and Burton.

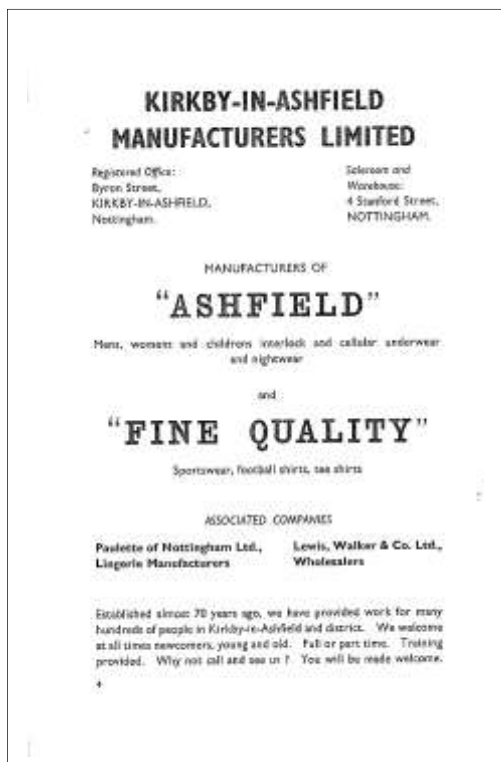
also mentioned other people who worked at Fordham and Burton including Iris, Joyce Elliot and Joy Munns.²²

Mum worked for Fordham and Burton for just over a year. In September 1953, she noted that, Mr Fordham told her and Iris that there was not enough work for them all so they were to leave the next day. Among mum's papers was a letter to this effect.

A month after she left Fordham and Burton, mum got a job with Kirkby Cooperative Manufacturing (KCM) who made hosiery. Mum described it as the "coop factory in Byron St". She noted that it was a lovely place inside. They also had an advert in the 1969 Kirkby-in-Ashfield directory. Mum started working there on 13 October 1953 and she continued to work there until the end of this period.



Above – Redundancy and reference letter from Fordham and Burton
Left – Advert in Kirkby-in-Ashfield directory 1969



She appeared to work for a Mr Seabrook²³ and with someone called Janet.²⁴ Within a month of starting, she received a 5/- rise and was receiving £3 14 9d per week at that time. In December 1953, she had a half day on the 9th because there was no work.²⁵ However, the job continued and she returned to work, after a short Christmas holiday, on 28 December including working on New Year's Day.²⁶

When grandma and grandad were sick in August 1954, mum went into KCM for a couple of hours each day. She was also looking after grandad's shop at this time. She only resumed working at KCM full-time in early September 1954.²⁷

²² In August 1953 mum, Joyce and Joy Munns went to a St John's meeting from work. Joyce Elliot attended mum's birthday party in 1953 with her partner, Joe and they feature in a photo that mum has of this event (see Chapter 52).

²³ She sometimes noted when he was away!

²⁴ In August 1954, she noted that everybody was on holiday except her and Janet.

²⁵ The same thing happened in April and September 1954.

²⁶ From January, mum noted how much tea money she paid. It appeared that she paid 10d per week but sometimes paid for multiple weeks.

²⁷ In September 1954, mum also enrolled in Kingsway night school to study embroidery.