

Memories of Muriel Horspool



Muriel Horspool will be fondly remembered by many OUs as former Matron of Meadhurst, as well as in lots of other roles held at Uppingham School through over 40 years of distinguished service.

She passed away on 12th January, aged 89 years.

Tomas Studenik (M 93)

Muriel, or “Matey” as we called her, was a truly special figure during my time at Uppingham. As a scholarship student from Czechoslovakia, arriving in a foreign country with its unfamiliar language and customs, she was like a surrogate mother to me in many ways. Matey’s unwavering care and no-nonsense approach gave me a sense of stability during those formative years.

I still vividly remember her ensuring my school uniform and socks were always “spick and span, Bristol fashion,” and her kind but practical manner when I struggled with homesickness, headaches, and the challenges of boarding school life. Whether she was serving toad-in-the-hole, helping out in the kitchen, or simply handing out paracetamol, her presence was both reassuring and grounding. Her large eyes behind even larger glasses, coupled with her matter-of-fact attitude, had a way of making me feel that everything would be alright, no matter the fuss or the difficulties.

Muriel’s kindness and dedication left an indelible mark on me, as I’m sure it did on countless others.

Duncan Read (M 85)

A lovely lady who did so very much for us Meadhurstians back in the 80’s. I will maintain fond memories of her and grateful thanks that she had the patience and kindness to progressively shape the lives of such an unruly bunch of teenage boys!!!

Simon Smith (M 87)

She was a truly amazing lady and only after leaving did you realise how integral she was to the running of the house.

Richard Jolly (M 83)

She will have looked after a lot of boys in her time in Meadhurst. That was a long time ago!

Tom Young (M 86)

‘Matey’ as Muriel our matron was affectionately called by the boys in the house, was a truly matriarchal presence for many of us. Boarding school can be tough, being separated from one’s parents so early in life, but Muriel eased that. She was warm hearted, really cared about our welfare, and how we were doing in our lives. Having lost my own mother when I was 10, she played a particularly important role for me. I will always remember her, and my time in Meadhurst fondly.

Julian Brackenbury (M 83)

I have many fond memories of 'matron', she was a lovely lady.

Freddie Auld (M 91)

Matey really was the matriarch of Meadhurst. Strong-willed yet with a kind heart and a warm sense of humour, she was not only a dedicated matron, but a wonderful person. She took great pride in her role as a mother figure to 50-odd boys, nurturing, encouraging and guiding us in equal measure. Talking of measures, her generous, infamous hot lemon and honeys in the surgery were a great source of comfort, as well as just knowing she was there.

Ed Watson (M 88)

Muriel (matey) was a true star in all our eyes. She was tolerance personified as us 60 boys ran riot in Meadhurst. She had our back, we loved her and she loved us. She understood us and we respected her. She laughed when we charmed her and hugged us when we cried. She made such a difference to all of us and I am so very sad to hear of her passing.

Tom Watson (M 90)

Muriel 'Matey' was so welcoming and accepting of all of us; knew us and, to a greater extent, showed kindness and love as if all 60 of us were her own kids.

She was firm and no nonsense but jeez did we used to wind her up, knowing that she was up for some banter and loved a good prank. We'd parrot her catchphrases back at her, call out her name then hide, and generally give her the run around at mealtimes or whenever she was in a hurry to get us sorted. She took all that daily puerile humour in her stride and provided the firm loving boundaries we needed.

I feel very lucky to have been a part of her brood for 5 years and have very fond memories of her. Even 30 years later and living across the globe, here in Melbourne, I can distinctly hear her voice, and see her bustling down the Meadhurst corridors and dorms. She was a true force for good, a fantastic support and unstoppable shaper of men.

Rick Olney (M 85)

I was fortunate to know Mrs. Horspool, during my 1 year (gap year Sept 85' – July 86'), though I only knew her as "Matron" or "Matey". The last time I spoke to her is when she drove me to the Kettering station in August 86', as I started my trip back to the US.

She was a wonderful person, with a lot of patience. I try and explain to people from my US boarding school, who Matron was, and they scratch their heads. I visited Meadhurst with my family in June 2019 and tried to convey who Matron was to my wife and 3 daughters – it is so different from here in the states.
