



Mary Smith, drawn by a fellow student at U.C.L.

Mary Smith

Born in 1904, the daughter of Edward Smith, the village postmaster, and his wife, who as Miss Neale had taught at Elham School, Mary Smith obtained a scholarship to Simon Langton Girls' School, and became the first girl from the village to go on to University. After her degree in English at University College, London, she taught at Great Yarmouth Girls' Grammar and then, at the beginning of the war at private schools in Kent. In 1939 she had taken an interest in the plight of refugees from Nazism at the Kitchener Camp at Sandwich, and at Athelstan School in Folkestone many of her colleagues were Jewish refugees from Germany. The early part of her 1940 diary shows her attempts to help some of them to get to the U.S.A. Eventually most were interned. When the school was evacuated, she remained in Elham, and in the Autumn Term she joined the staff of Simon Langton Boys' School, where she served as a much respected teacher of English and Latin for twenty-nine years. Extracts from her 1940 diary were used by Dennis Knight for his book "Harvest of Messerschmitts". Later in the war, senior Simon Langton boys held Harvest Camps at Headcorn, with Miss Smith as cook/matron. A keen student of local lore and history, she was Derek Boughton's mentor.

Mary was interviewed about her wartime memories by Radio Kent in 1989. In the interview Mary recalls what it was like to be a young female teacher at the Simon Langton Boys Grammar School, she also recalls events that happened in and around Elham.

The interview was broadcast on Wed 16th August 1989 and recorded by Derek Boughton. The interview is in two parts as the cassette tape needed to be changed.

[Interview Part 1](#) (25 mins.)

[Interview Part 2](#) (3.5mins.)