



Shirley Chadwick



"I started as a student nurse in 1963 at the Royal Hospital and Queen Alexandra Hospital in Portsmouth. I qualified as an SRN (state registered nurse) in 1966. I became a ward sister at the age of 24 - I was the youngest sister they had ever had. I was in charge of a high dependency gynaecology ward of 24 beds - the surgeons and doctors were based at another hospital so they came to do the operations and their ward rounds and then left us to it. It was a lot of responsibility."

"I'm pregnant in the picture taken in 1970, shortly after I was called down to the matron's office, she told me I was expected to resign because my belt was becoming too tight so it was time to go. In 1970 there was no such thing as maternity leave. I didn't return to nursing for 12 years. In 1982 I became a family planning nurse working in local clinics, after 22 years I had to retire due to ill health."

"I remember my mother showing me the bill she had to pay when she had me before the NHS. By the time I was nursing, the NHS was well established. It's changed a lot since I left, patients used to be in hospital for 14 days after a major procedure like a

hysterectomy - now they are home in a few days. I think that is better providing there is someone who can care for them”

“I thoroughly enjoyed my time in the NHS. I only ever wanted to be a nurse. I have a photo of me dressed as a nurse at the age of five. I do feel sorry for young people training today. They have to go to university and can end up with a large debt at the end of their training. My training was all free and I was paid as a student nurse. I was saddened to see the role of SEN’s (State Enrolled Nurses) phased out in the 1980’s. These trained nurses were an important part of the nursing team, I have fond memories of my two SEN’s, one of which went on to become a SRN.”



Shirley showing great promise at age 5!