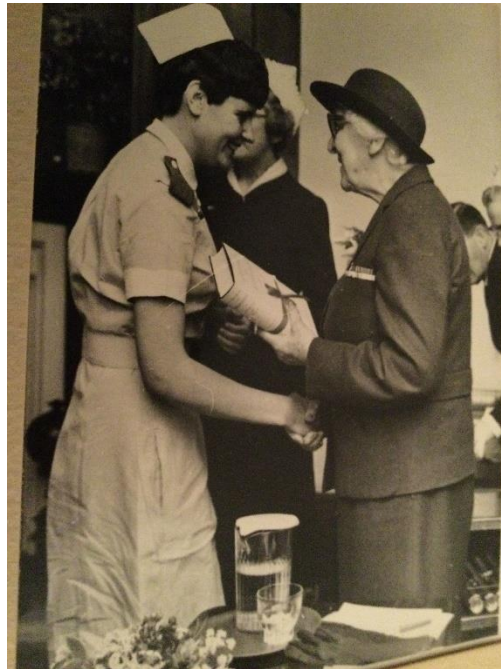


## Perta Cheffins



"I joined the NHS in a roundabout way. I started out as a nursery nurse in Tunbridge Wells in 1962. I had looked after my cousin's children because her husband had died whilst I was waiting to go to college. I went to work in a maternity unit and I fell in love with midwifery. I did my midwifery training in 1964 at the Canadian Red Cross Hospital in Taplow. It was the best hospital in the country and it was on Lord Astor's estate. He had invited the Canadians to build a military hospital on his estate in the First World War which was partially rebuilt and enlarged in the Second World War. It was given to the NHS at its inception in 1948. It was famous for looking after children with Stills Disease (infant arthritis). There children lived there and some of them didn't see their families but they were the happiest children I have ever met.

"I was there for 10 years but I realised that there were some gaps in my knowledge so went to do my general nurse training. I was 32 when I did that and my friends thought I would find it very difficult but I didn't and I'm still very good friends with a couple of the girls from my set. Within six months I had returned to being a midwife at Yeovil District Hospital and I stayed there until I retired in 2002. By then I was a sister in charge of the

labour ward and the special care nursery. I have no idea how many babies I have delivered but I suspect it must be thousands.

“When I first started in Yeovil, first time mothers were in hospital for nine to ten days. Some mothers who were having further children went home after 48 hours. We also had a domino scheme where the community midwife would bring the patient in, deliver her and take her home again within six hours. It remained like that until I retired. It is very different now but I am very proud to have worked for the NHS.”

