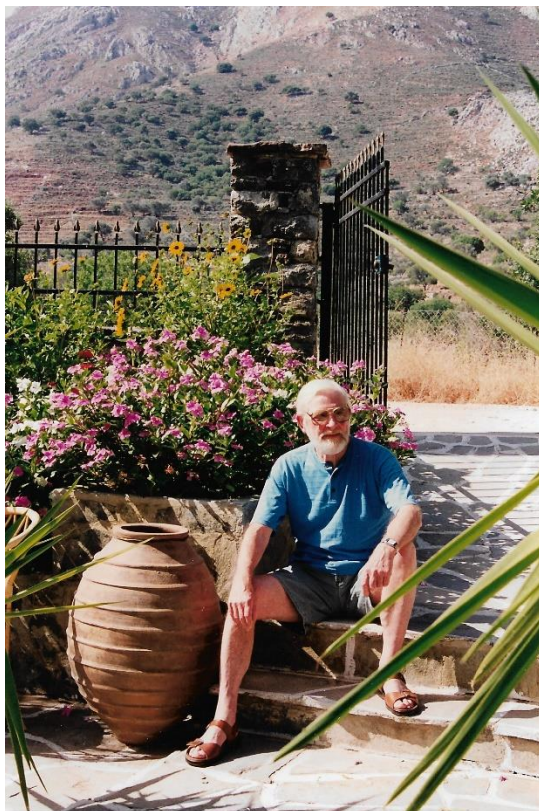


# THE LIFE AND TIMES OF SIDNEY SCOTTOW



Dedicated to my lovely wife Ged, a wonderful  
66 years of marriage and happy travels to  
our beloved Greek Islands.

Facilitated by Amersham Museum 49 High  
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Sidney (Sid) was born on 4 July 1924 and spent his childhood in Greenwich London with his parents and three older siblings. Both his parents were hairdressers, they ran their own business and worked long hours. Sid remembers a haircut was 4d and a cut and shave was 6d, business men from the city always had the latter. Sid's father was Vice President of the London Association of Hairdressers and specialised in hair pieces. He used real hair by cutting young girls hair free of charge, sterilising the cuttings and sewing them into bands to form a head of hair. Sid used to earn pocket money sweeping up the shop floor but unlike his brother and sisters did not follow his parents into the hairdressing business. He did not like the long hours and low wages and the hygiene of some clients was poor, they often had nits or dandruff. Sid remembers being very naïve when working in the shop, some male clients used to tell him to ask his dad if

he had any 'you know whats', meaning contraceptives, but he did not know what they meant.

As Sid's parents worked long hours he found he could come and go from home as he pleased. His mother only insisted that he keep his knees clean and his hair combed and parted; she disliked him swimming in the river. Sometimes his mother was too busy to cook and he used to be sent across the road to the café with 6d which could buy his favourite meal, beef and roast potatoes. He was also sometimes given 2d for tea and biscuits. He was sent to his aunt in Stoke Millington some weekends and was always given 2/6 to take with him. He was told that everything he ate or drank should come out of that money as his aunt had trouble making ends meet; she had six children with three of them still at home.

Saturday night was bath night in Sid's home, but Sid's mother also gave him 3d to use the slipper baths at the local British Swimming Baths once a week as well, which was unusual as none of his friends were made to do this. There was a big room with a row of cubicles containing large baths. The taps for the baths were operated outside the cubicles by the attendant and Sid remembers he had to shout 'more hot please' or 'more cold please' as he was bathing. When he was finished he used to have to ring a bell and the attendant would come in and drain and clean the bath ready for the next customer. Sid did not like the towels or soap at the slipper baths, the towels were harsh and like tea towels. His mother used to give him his own towel to take and Palmolive scented soap to wash with. As the youngest in the family Sid admits he was spoilt by his parents and siblings. His brother used to take him all over London and give him money

for sweets and Sid loved his older sister to bits.

When not in school Sid used to roam the streets with the neighbourhood boys playing with large metal hoops and homemade scooters made from planks of wood and second hand pram wheels, and of course went swimming in the Thames as he did not want to be called a sissy by the other boys. They used to swim near and dive off the barges moored on the Thames. To this day Sid has a fear of swimming near anything dark as he once dived off a barge and mistakenly went under another barge and had trouble surfacing, he kept hitting his head on the bottom of the barge. He eventually surfaced and an older boy seeing he was in trouble pulled him out and he was promptly very ill. Sid said he thought he was 'a goner'. The boys used to dry themselves on their shirts (the Thames at that time was

very oily); his mother realised he had been swimming and used to scold him and said she would go to the shop and tell his father. However he had a close relationship with his parents and remembers happy times of going on day trips on the steamer from the pier at Greenwich to Southend or Clacton and they always went on an annual holiday



Left – Donkey ride at Ramsgate 1934

Right – Sid on his Dad's motorbike, Mum in the sidecar

to a boarding house at Ramsgate overlooking the harbour.

Sid was considered to live in the 'posh' street by other boys although only two streets away were the 'Dockers' houses on the edge of the Thames which were very run down and the dock worker families who lived in them were very poor. Sid used to take an apple to school as his father disliked him taking sweets and sometimes one of the docker boys used to ask him for the core when he had finished it as they were so malnourished. Sid's father was a member of a club which funded clothes for the children of the docker families and also sent the children on a country holiday for one week a year with pocket money.

Sid attended the Old Woolwich LCC Primary School and Glenister Road Senior School in Greenwich which was a school that excelled in sport. He did not enjoy his time at school



much as he was bullied by some of the other boys as he was small and they were jealous of where he lived and what he had. He used to get into fights which were not of his making and once went home with a cut eye which had to be stitched in hospital. At that point his father decided to enrol him in a boys club at a gym where he learned boxing and wrestling and became physically fit. Sid was then able to fight back at school and did not have so much trouble with bullying after that. If boys were caught fighting at school the master used to give them three strokes on each hand with a cane. The Headmaster decided to let boys box every Friday afternoon in the school boxing ring overseen by a teacher who would chose boys of roughly the same size to box against each other.

Sid left school when he was 14, his father did not think it was worth him staying on until

he was 16 as he did not do well in exams. The Headmaster could not understand why Sid did not do better as his school work was good. Sid said he used to get anxious in exams and his mind went a blank.

Sid's first job was in the advertising department of a fire appliance factory. He used to have to scour every daily newspaper and put a ring round any news of a fire big or small with a big black pen. Another boy would cut the items out and stick them on a piece of paper for the boss who would examine the news items and then decide what firefighting sales pamphlets were to be sent to the unfortunate victims of the fire. He was then promoted to the foreign dept. and used to do indexing and went to evening classes to learn shorthand. However Sid found he did not like office work and took an exam to work in the Co-Op when he was 16. For once in his life he felt confident in the

exam and was offered a job in the carpet department of the main Co-Op in Power Street Woolwich. As Great Britain still had many colonies at that time he handled carpets from all over the world and had to know the difference between Persian and Indian carpets; he much preferred the manual work to office work.

After WW2 started in 1939 it was difficult to get to the Co-Op because the roads were bomb damaged. Sid found a job in engineering nearer home and was due to start an apprenticeship as a turner/general machinist and would have loved to become a blacksmith. However the war intervened and the bombing of London was becoming heavier. When the windows of the family home were blown out by a bomb his father decided the family had to get out of London. His sister evacuated to Banbury and as she had a new baby her mother went with her.

His other siblings had already left home so that left Sid and his father who saw an advertisement in a Hairdressing Journal for a hairdresser in Chalfont St Giles. He looked up the village and found out it was in Buckinghamshire. Not knowing if the job was still available Sid's father decided they would make the journey to Chalfont St Giles which was quite difficult as the bombing in London was heavy. Sid remembers a bomb was dropped right by the naval college and a gas main had burst into flames. The Thames tugs were acting as ferries and they took one to Westminster but were caught in an unusual daylight air raid and found they had to go from one shelter to another. Later on, as night was upon them, they were lead to a shelter by a warden near Marble Arch and decided to spend the night there. When they woke up in the morning they looked up to find that the shelter was only half built and there was no roof on it and the train station

(a likely target for bombers) was only 20 yards from them!

Eventually they managed to get to Little Chalfont in the early morning. As it was a Sunday there were no buses so they walked to Chalfont St Giles and arrived tired and hungry. They knocked on the door of a tea room and managed to get some tea and cake and then walked around the village trying to find accommodation. They found the locals were a little suspicious of 'strangers' but they managed to find a place to stay and the next day Sid's father got the hairdressing job in the salon at the back of Payne's haberdashery store. Although he loved country living Sid's father found village life rather a culture shock. He was a stylist but his customers only every wanted a short back and sides. Sid found a job in Slough and gained experience as a welder/fitter at a company which made steel trusses and

engine stands. Sid's mother came to live with them and Sid, now 17, spent a happy nine months in Chalfont St Giles going to dances with the local 'gang' of girls and boys. As the dances in the village were very small they used to find enough push bikes to go to dances in Princes Risborough or Uxbridge. The boys used to pedal and the girls sat on the cross bars or handle bars, it was all very precarious.

Sid's mother then decided they should go to live with his younger sister who had a house with a spare room in Poole Dorset. His father found a job there and Sid worked at an Ordnance factory making 20mm Hispano cannons for aircraft. After a few months the family returned to Greenwich and Sid was directed to work in a factory in Sydenham making buoy's for the Royal Navy. He became a skilled welder and fabricator but when he turned 18 he was called up

(conscripted) and was happy to leave, even though he could have stayed as he was in a reserved occupation, because he wanted to join the Royal Air Force. As he had always attended the air cadets when he was younger he was accepted by the RAF and applied to become a member of the aircrew. However when he told them of his engineering training he was told that all they wanted were mechanics which probably saved his life as aircrew casualties were very high. He soon found himself square bashing in Blackpool on a seven week training course.

Sid found the weather in Blackpool cold and the training tough. He used to go on 12 mile route marches and run along the sands in a thin gym kit whilst the trainer wore a woollen top. He of course had to keep his uniform clean and his brass buttons and belt polished but was shocked one day when he

and the rest of his squad were ordered to cut off all the buttons from their uniforms and the brass from their belts and substitute them with Bakelite (all the armed forces were required to do this). He found out the brass was required for ammunition casing for the war effort.

Sid was billeted in a small hotel in Blackpool which had been requisitioned by the RAF. There were six men to a room sleeping on iron bedsteads. The landlady treated them well and used to call them 'my boys'. He got to know the other men in his room and they each showed him a photo of their girlfriends and Sid found he was the only one in the room who did not have a regular girlfriend. They quizzed him about it and he admitted he had liked a girl in the gang back in Chalfont St Giles but had not done anything about it, she did not seem particularly interested in him. His roommates sat him



down and said he should write to her expressing his feelings and between them they composed a letter to Geraldine ('Ged'). Sid only contributed one or two sentences to the letter, the rest was composed by his roommates but he sent it off and waited for a reply. He thought she had just ignored it as it was ages before she replied but it transpired she had joined the ATS to train as a gunner (she was only 17 but added one year to her age when she applied) and her mother had to forward the letter to where she was stationed. Sid and Ged agreed to meet and managed to get leave together and found they got on well. Sid realised that Ged was very popular; other men were always crowding round her as she was interesting to talk to and Sid was afraid of losing her. After meeting her parents and a few more leaves together Sid decided he would ask Ged if she would like to get engaged, she agreed



Top left – Sid in tropical uniform

Top right – Sid 17 January 1943

Bottom left – Wedding of Sid and Ged 2  
November 1946

Bottom right – Photo Sid sent to Ged from North  
Africa

and they became engaged on her 18<sup>th</sup> birthday. He never told her that he did not fully compose the first love letter he ever wrote to her!

After further postings in the UK, a mechanics course and several thorough medicals and necessary inoculations, Sid received his movement order papers and was posted overseas to Algiers, French Morocco and then Wadi Halfa, Sudan; he and Ged were apart for three years. Wadi Halfa was a remote aircraft staging post in the desert and Sid, only 19 at the time, had to make his own way there. It was on 'the route' meaning Cairo to Belgian Congo or Saudi Arabia. On the first leg of his posting he had travelled on a luxury liner, the Samaria, which was converted to a troop ship which sailed to a transit camp in Algiers. To get to Wadi Halfa from his previous posting in French Morocco was a very different matter. He had to cadge

lifts on aircraft; he asked one pilot where he was going and he said 'up the blue' which meant the Western Desert and he took him as far as Castel Benito in Tunis. He eventually got to Cairo West, a transit camp outside Cairo, which was still 500 miles from where he needed to be. Eventually he got a lift on a Baltimore aircraft which dropped him off at the staging post. In all it took him about 5 weeks to get to his placement as there was so much troop movement.

Sid spent the majority of his war years at Wadi Halfa, Sudan attached to Transport Command but was also posted to Asmara, Eritrea and Sheik Osman, Yemen. He serviced all aircraft but mainly Dakotas. He had to check for punctures and ensure that the oil, air and hydraulic pressures were functioning correctly. There was not much equipment available and Sid had to fabricate his own spanner. Once, when there was a

problem with the engine in a Dakota, Sid and his fellow mechanics had to make up their own equipment to get the propeller off and change parts in the engine. They made up wooden 'sheer legs' a bit like a tripod with a rope attached to take the weight as there was no winch and chain to be had.



Top – DC3 Engine repair Wadi Halfa (22 Staging Post 1944)

Bottom left – Wadi Halfa about midday probably 105 degrees ‘ it’s only a puncture so we’ll all pose for a photo, it’s too hot to work anyway’

Bottom right – Asmara Eritrea ‘Get the zoot suits. Typical RAF uniform in Asmara’

There was only one Officer assigned to the staging post and living conditions were basic; Sid and the other mechanics lived in mud huts with rush roofs. They slept on charpoy beds which were wooden frames strung with raffia. They used to sleep outside under mosquito nets, the 'billet boys' from the local population were paid 2 piasters a week to move the beds in and out of the huts and do the men's washing etc. Each man had a pet chameleon attached to their net by a piece of string on their back legs to deal with mosquitos and flies in the hut which was commonplace in desert postings.



‘Not exactly the Guards but standard RAF  
dress at Sheik Othman 20 miles from Aden  
June 1945’



Sid was stung by a scorpion when unloading some packing cases one day. He felt a sharp scratch and thought it was a splinter but then saw the scorpion. The sting did not cause him much trouble but the next day the wound was very swollen. There was no doctor attached to the outpost as it was too small so Sid showed it to the medic who decided the wound had to be lanced and the venom squeezed out which was not a pleasant experience. Sid also managed to break his wrist twice when he was trying to crank start a truck and it kicked at the wrong moment.

Wadi Halfa outpost was small and when there were no planes to service it was difficult to combat boredom. Sid and his mates were on strict rations, they took malaria and salt tablets at meal times and were only allowed one bottle of beer a week. To alleviate the boredom they sometimes

played football against the locals and also made up cricket stumps and played cricket on the runway. There was also a tank swimming pool which the local Commissioner and his wife let them use sometimes which was constructed by prisoners who were put to labour from the local prison. It was a little awkward as the Commissioner had two young teenage girls and the lads did not see women all that much.



British Services XI Asmara, March 1946,  
Sid second from left bottom row



RAF Sheik Othman v Young Indians 25  
November 1944 Sid centre, third row from  
the top

Late one night around Christmas time Sid and his mates once played a trick on the Commissioner. They were rather drunk as they had got liquor from the local natives and had drunk their beer ration which they had saved up for Christmas. They took the Commissioner's antique cannon which was one of his prized possessions as it had been used at Khartoum by Kitchener's army in the Battle of Omdurman in 1898. They hauled it up onto the balcony at his residence and damaged it in the process. The Commissioner complained and Sid and his mates were all brought up before their CO who luckily said he would forget all about it if they retrieved the cannon and repaired the damage immediately.



Sid and his mates with the  
Commissioner's cannon, duly repaired

To supplement rations Sid and his mates decided they needed to get to a small village on the other side of the Nile where they could barter for eggs. When an aircraft came in for repair, with the cooperation of their

Flight Sergeant, they ordered more alloy than was actually required to fix the aircraft and then used the surplus to make a boat. It was made of wood with an alloy skin. One of the motor transport mechanics found an old Ford engine and managed to get it working. They installed it in the boat but they found it was too big and nearly shook the boat to bits so in the end they rigged a sail and made oars to use if necessary. They managed to get across the Nile and barter successfully for eggs in return for old clothes and cigarettes.



Top left – Sid on leave in Cairo with a mate  
 Top right – Almaza Transit 7 June 1945 ‘Don’t I look  
 a good lad? (I am too)’  
 Bottom left - Sid in Wadi Halfa, Sudan  
 Bottom right – Sid on the boat he made with his mate  
 Jack

Sid and his mates in the unit also jointly owned an Arabian horse which they bought from the local villagers and they used to take turns riding it bareback in the desert.

Sid used to write to Ged as regularly as was possible; all letters were read by the Officer in charge and censored if he thought any information they contained would compromise the war effort. Sid was allowed one overseas letter a month which was distinguished by green stripes on the envelope and a one page 'photo' letter a week. This was a technique to save paper and weight. The letters were photographed in Cairo and turned into a much smaller size, the process was reversed when the letters reached England. Ged also wrote to Sid of course and used to number her letters so he knew if any had gone astray and he found he missed quite a few due to his remote location.



Some South African personnel were attached to his unit for a short time and Sid said they did not get on with them very well although he did fabricate a huge frying pan for them once when some eggs came in on an aircraft and they shared an egg supper together which was welcome as rations were strict.

Sid also heard a tale from another staging outpost in Al-Fashir West Africa. When any South African aircrew were staying overnight at the outpost one of the mechanics, who had a lion skin, used to play a trick on them. He used to put the skin on and crawl around growling and roaring outside their tent. This ended when one of the South Africans came out of the tent with a revolver and shot at him. Fortunately he was not wounded but the Officer in charge put a stop to the antics after that.

In early 1945 towards the end of the war American troops moved in to the outpost. Their facilities were far superior to what Sid had been used to. They built proper breeze block living quarters with a cook house and provided iced water for their men. Sid was not allowed to drink this water as it was thought cold water was bad for the stomach. However he and his fellow mechanics were allowed to eat with the Americans in their cook house and he used to line up with them. Once he was asked by a cook if he wanted flapjack and he said yes he would have one of them and the cook scooped up a whole stack of them and put them on Sid's tray; he was not used to American portions. There was also ice-cream available and iced coffee, tea, lemonade or coke. The Americans ('Yanks') were amazed at some of the equipment still used by Transport Command. Sid remembers their cook used to use a large cooking stove on wheels

which was from the Boer War which caused much amusement to the Yanks.

When the European war ended on 8 May 1945 Sid's outpost, being so remote, only found out about it two days later; the war in the Middle/Far East did not finish until four months later (2 September 1945). Eventually the Yanks withdrew from the outpost and it was gradually disbanded. Sid stayed on to decommission the site as aircraft such as Mosquitos were still coming through.

Eventually he was sent to a maintenance unit at a permanent station in Aden. Then one day in September/October 1946 Sid was told by his Sergeant he was on a boat to the UK the next day and he had to drop everything and pack. He was glad to be going home after having only one weeks leave, which he spent in Cairo, in the 3 years he was abroad.

Sid was sent to a unit in Kent where he had to hand in his tropical gear (kaki drill) and there received a posting to Doncaster.

He had travelled back to the UK in his 'blues' uniform and being October found it rather chilly as he did not have an RAF overcoat. They were not standard issue at the time and were only available by public subscription.

Sid returned to Greenwich to see his parents before taking up his post in Doncaster. Sid was entitled to three weeks disembarkation leave and untaken leave built up during the war which amounted in total to five weeks. He phoned Ged who had been serving as a driver in Burnham Beeches with the ATS. She travelled to Greenwich to see Sid and they found they both felt the same way about each other even though they had been apart for three years. They decided to get married as soon as possible; Sid arranged for the banns to be read in Greenwich and Chalfont

St Giles and they were married on 2 November 1946 in the village church at Chalfont St Giles. Rationing was still in effect at that time and friends and family rallied round and donated their clothing coupons to buy material for a wedding dress for Ged which was made by her friends. They spent their honeymoon in a village room in Rodney Stoke, Somerset and then moved in with Ged's mother in Chalfont St Giles. Sid took up his posting in Doncaster converting Lancaster bombers to Lincolns as the RAF were retraining aircrew to fly Lincolns instead of Lancasters. He was finally demobbed in February 1947 and was asked to sign on for another term by the RAF but refused as he realised that he would almost certainly be posted overseas again and he wanted to stay with Ged. In May 1947 Sid found a job in Horswells factory in Slough as a steel fabricator.

Sid and Ged stayed with Ged's mother for a few years as there was a shortage of housing and they could not afford to buy a house. They put their name down on the Council list and were eventually offered a Council flat in the village. They settled down to married life and raised two boys, Colin and Martin. Sid had a series of jobs as he was always chasing more money. He remembers one job when he was making resin kit cars in Chalfont St Peter, his boss was Mr Bennet who was a famous 'pathfinder' RAF pilot who used to fly ahead and identify targets for bombers and then wait over the target for the bombers to arrive – a very dangerous job. Sid helped build one car (as he was able to weld alloy) which was entered into the Monte Carlo rally. It had a Ford engine and chassis with extra petrol tanks.

Sid enjoyed sport and played in the local football team for the next nine years; his

normal position was half back. He was also a member of the local cycling tour club but they did not allow racing so he and other enthusiasts formed an off shoot of the club called the South Bucks Road Club which did



Sid with 10 minutes to go in the South Bucks Road Club 12 hour endurance, August 1951

time trials of 25, 50 and 100 miles. They used to ride from the viaducts outside Chalfont St Peter and once a year also did a 12 hour endurance ride. He agreed with Ged he could go youth hostelling once a month with the cyclists and over the years visited many parts of England with them.



Sid scoring a goal, Chalfont Wasps First XI football team



In 1956 when Sid was 32 he was coming home from work one day and it was pelting with rain and he thought to himself there must be something better than this. Soon after he saw an Australian Government advert in the newspaper saying if people wanted a new life they should consider immigrating to Australia for only £10 each. He talked to Ged about it and they decided to apply. They had to go for an interview in Australia House, London and as Sid was a skilled worker they were accepted. After 9 months of preparation and red tape they gave up their Council flat and travelled One Class on an ocean liner called RMS Strathaird to Freemantle with their two boys who were now aged 8 and 4 years. Sid was told there was no work for him in Freemantle so they travelled to Melbourne where they lived in a hostel. Ged got a job in a factory and Sid worked for a firm making machinery for the production of tinned pineapple.

However Sid found that the weather in Melbourne was no better than at home, he said you could have four seasons in one day in Melbourne. Sid made enquiries and he and his family were allowed to move to a hostel in Brisbane where the weather was much more to Sid's liking, warm and sunny. He found work in a firm making cattle pens and then more skilled work in the same firm welding high pressure hoses.

His sons thought living in Australia was a great adventure, they loved it. Sid's younger son was much more of a daredevil than his older brother and used to get into scrapes. When he was only five years old he once climbed up a rickety ladder inside a large chimney attached to the hostel where they were staying which was a former chemical works. The chimney was about 100 feet high and Sid was dismayed when his son shouted and waved to him out of the top of the

chimney. He was with an older boy and they were scared to climb back down. Sid had to remain calm and call up to them and encourage them to come back down carefully.

Sid and Ged often went to the coast on a bus for a picnic at weekends. They used to go swimming and on one occasion Ged was distraught when she found she had lost her wedding ring while in the water. They looked for it in the area they had been swimming but could not find any trace of it. A local shopkeeper said they should come back for the early morning tide the next day when the water was very shallow. They went back and looked and looked for the ring until it was nearly time to catch the bus back to Brisbane. In the final minutes Sid decided to look in a different area from where they had been swimming. He kicked something with his foot and saw a glimmer and was amazed

to see it was Ged's ring. Sid and Ged were overjoyed that they had managed to find it again.

They found the local people quite friendly and sometimes a taxi driver would offer Sid and his wife a free ride back to the hostel. They mainly made friends with other 'pommies' who were in the same position as them. Eventually work dried up in Brisbane and Sid saw an advert for a maintenance engineer welder up country in a small place called Mackay in Queensland which said a house was provided with the job. Sid answered the advert and was offered the job and went up first to get established before he sent for Ged and the boys. However when he was shown the so called house he found it was extremely basic and made of corrugated iron on rotten wooden stilts. It had an earth floor; the kitchen consisted of

two iron stoves and the bathroom had an old rusty cast iron bath in it. Sid decided he could not bring Ged up to a place like that and he telegraphed her not to come. He went back down to Brisbane and by then they found they were virtually flat broke, they could not even move out of the hostel to rented accommodation as the rents were so high. Sid and Ged decided that they had had enough and made the decision to save up enough money to get home to England. The fare was expensive, £780 and Sid met a lot of 'pommies' who wanted to go back home but did not have enough money to do so. Sid found another job and did overtime and Ged took a second job and eventually they had enough money but found there was a one year waiting list to get on a boat. Luckily Ged had a friend who worked in the P&O booking department and one day she phoned to say there were two cabins free on a boat but they had to book them

immediately or they would be snapped up. Ged said yes book them and they packed up their possessions and took a coach to Sydney and caught the boat. They arrived back in England in October 1959 having spent two and a half years in Australia. Ged's mother was pleased to have them back to live with her in Chalfont St Giles; she had not wanted them to go in the first place.

Sid and Ged found they were back to square one. However in the mid-1960s Ged's mother applied for and moved into a one bed Council flat in the village and Sid and Ged were allowed to take over her Council house. Eventually in the early 1980s under the right to buy legislation Sid and Ged were able to buy the house at a very reasonable price and Sid still lives there today.

On return from Australia Sid re-joined his local football and cycling clubs and played

football regularly up to the age of 42 when he had to retire with a knee injury. He was a keen cyclist for many years after that.

Ged found a job as a supervisor at SKC (Services Kinema Corporation now Services Sound and Vision Corporation), a film booking agency for the British Forces and remained there until she retired.

Sid had numerous engineering jobs during the 1960s. He often changed jobs to earn more money (he believed he should be paid properly for the skills he had) or because he did not like the boss. One of the main jobs Sid had was working for Carrimore Six-wheelers (formerly Anthony Hoist) as Foreman of the workshop manufacturing hydraulic equipment. When a job came in he would meet with his men (unknown to his bosses) to discuss how much they wanted to earn and tried to match it with what the company could afford. This was unusual as it

was not normal to discuss anything with the men on the floor unless it was a formal Union matter; Sid was a socialist and believed his men should earn a decent wage out of a contract which in turn fostered loyalty. He also represented all the Company Foremen in the Staff Union and in his spare time became the Union Secretary for the local Labour party. He supported the local Labour candidate (although never elected) to increase the numbers who voted for him to the highest it had ever been - 11,000.

Eventually the directors of Carrimore Six-wheelers decided to move the Company up to the North to take advantage of the Government incentive scheme to employ former miners who had been laid off with pit closures. The Government offered to pay a percentage of the former miner's salaries and other incentives for the Company. By this time Sid, who was now in his 50s, was



the Workshop Manager and he used to fly up to Newcastle with the Managing Director during the week and come home at weekends to Ged. The former miners were all retrained at a Government centre and it was Sid's job to sort them into teams such as fitters, welders and assemblers and form them into an assembly line to get the factory up and running. One problem he used to have with these men was if there was a problem on the assembly line all the men would stop and try to lend a hand as they were used to supporting each other down the mine. It was difficult for Sid to teach them to let the supervisor deal with the problem so that the production line could keep going.

Sid commuted for several months to Newcastle and the Company wanted him to move up there permanently with his family. The Managing Director arranged for Ged and the children to visit for a week; they stayed at

the Company owned Manor House which was similar to a hotel used by potential Company clients. A car was provided for them so they could look around the area and Ged was asked to help choose household items for the Manor House which she enjoyed. They were told the Company would pay for a deposit on a house for them but in the end they decided against it. Sid said although the people were friendly there was a very 'grey' look about the houses and the area. When the locals found out where they lived in the South they said they did not blame them for not wanting to move.

Sid was eventually made redundant from Carrimore's and took a few more low paid jobs until he hurt his back in the early 1980s.

He managed to find a job as a lab assistant in Amersham International where he stayed for 9 years until his retirement in 1991. Early in his retirement Sid continued with metalwork fabricating in his shed and made several weathervanes for his friends and relatives.



Sid working on a weathervane in his garden shed



A weathervane Sid made for his son Martin who was a darts player in The Fox and Hounds pub

Sid's children both followed in his footsteps and became engineers. Sid arranged for his eldest son Colin to become an apprentice at Carrimore Six-wheelers who in addition to his

job also attended night school and earned his HND. Martin became an aircraft engineer at BEM now BA.

In the early days the family used to go on holidays in their old Ford car to Clacton or Hayling Island but in the early 1970s when Martin got his job at BA his relatives were entitled to concessionary flights and Sid and Ged became more adventurous and were able to fly Club Class to Tunisia, Yugoslavia or Greece on standby. They fell in love with the Greek Islands and used to holiday there every year. Once they had both retired there was no stopping them and they used to travel to Greece at least three times a year. From then on they decided not to spend their money on a bigger house or a newer car but on holidays to the Greek Islands.

After they retired Ged went to night school to learn Greek which was very handy on their holidays and Sid went to art classes to learn

sketching and watercolours. Sid has completed many sketches and watercolours of his travels in the Greek Islands over the years which now adorn his walls.



Sid and Ged in the Copa Cabana Beach  
Bar Agistri

Initially they used stay in hotels in the Greek Islands but Sid became tired of dressing up for dinner in the evenings. He talked to Ged and they decided from then on to stay in rooms which were normally available in a bar or taverna which were much more informal. They got on well with the local Greeks and loved the food and drink especially the retsina and ouzo. They used to spend their time snorkelling and swimming or going for walks or on boat trips. They got to know the ferry routes to the numerous islands very well and used to get a cheap flight and then decide which Island they would go to when they got there. They would arrive, look at the ferry timetable and pick a sailing that suited them. They would arrive at the port on an Island and ask the locals if there were any rooms available. Ged used to go and have a look at them and decide whether they were suitable or not.

When Sid was 61 he was on holiday in Andros with Ged when he kept getting a pain in his arm. He went to see his GP when he got home who said it was angina and he was given tablets to ease the pain. However he then had a test in London and it was found he had blocked arteries and could have a heart attack at any time. He went to a hospital in Hammersmith and had a double heart bypass which was very successful.

On another occasion Sid and Ged were on holiday in Lipsi sitting in a bar one evening when they got talking to four young Greeks who said they were going fishing for three days to various Islands and would they like to join them. Sid and Ged agreed as they thought it would be a bit of an adventure. The young Greeks said they could drop them off with relatives at a small Island near Arki and they would pick them up after the fishing. They packed a bag, caught the boat



and were dropped off at 5am at a stone jetty. The family were very welcoming and friendly and Sid and Ged had a wonderful time. The taverna they stayed in was basic but clean and they dined on chicken and lobster but were not allowed to pay for anything as they knew the young Greek fisherman, they were all one big family. The young men picked them up three days later and Sid and Ged were left with fond memories of this impromptu additional holiday.



## Sid on Arki Greek Island

Sid and Ged continued to travel to the Greek Islands until Ged's untimely death eight years ago. Over the years they became friendly with many other holidaymakers as they were very knowledgeable about the various Greek islands and Sid is still in touch with some of them to this day. They even got to know an

architect who visited them at home and drew up plans for their front room extension.

Today Sid is a sprightly 95 years old and still gets out and about. He sees his friends at the Cruse bereavement group once a week and goes shopping on the bus to Uxbridge with other pensioners who all know each other's name as they travel on the bus together so often. Sid still does a few sketches and is now a spectator at his local football and cricket clubs. He is the only surviving member of the Chalfont Wasps First XI 1947 football team.



Sid with some of his Greek island paintings  
at home in Chalfont St Giles 2019

TUNISIA 2.  
 CORFU 4  
 CRETE 1  
 RHODES 1  
 YUGOSLAVIA 1  
 THASSOS 2  
 SKIATHOS 2  
 CEFALONIA 1  
 ANDROS 1  
 MILOS 2  
 FOLEGANDROS 1  
 KITHNOS 1  
 SIFNOS 1  
 SERIFOS 1  
 NAXOS 1  
 TILLOS 4  
 HALKI 2  
 LEROS 1  
 ANGISTRI 19  
 LIASI 1  
 MYKONOS 4  
 LESVOS 1  
 SANTORINI 1  
 SAMOS 1  
 PAROS 1  
 SPETSE 1  
 KARPATNOS 1  
 ZAKINTHOS 1

List of holidays Sid and  
 Ged have been on,  
 written by Ged:

26 Greek Islands

57 Greek holidays

\*Yes 19 times- Sid and  
 Ged used to visit Agistri  
 regularly during Sept/Oct  
 each year to prepare  
 themselves for the UK  
 winter ahead and to meet  
 a few old friends

