

Memories of Sylvia Jones



Life begins in Islington

I was born on 7th September 1939 in Islington, London in the house where I grew up. I had 2 sisters, one 16 years older than me and one 10 and a half years older than me – Gladys was born on November 8th, 1923, and Joan on April 5th 1929 and then me in 1939.



Me with Teddy, aged 1



Family Photo

The house was a large Victorian end of terrace house with four floors including the ground floor. Originally there was a big back door down the side of the house which took you into the garden and access to the living quarters. At the front of the

house were steps that led up to the front door and was level with the parlour floor. You could get to the parlour floor when you were on the “ground” floor with stairs that led up to the parlour floor. My parents first lived in 5 Oakley Road and then moved to 71 Oakley Road together with my grandad (who died when I was 2), my Auntie Em with her daughter Irene and my mum’s brother, Uncle Bill and her other sister, Auntie Ivy. One bedroom was shared by my Auntie Em, Auntie Ivy and Irene while Uncle Bill’s bedroom was an upstairs conservatory and my mum and dad had the next floor. There were three rooms at the top of the house where my sisters shared one bedroom and another family lived in the other two rooms. When that family moved out my mum and dad had all rooms so both my sisters had a bedroom each. Uncle Bill had a big dog called Prince. There is a photo of me with the dog lying against me next to the sacks in the Air raid shelter!

When my sister Gladys married on April 1st 1945, she and her husband used to live in rented rooms in Dalston but when she had her first child, Ronnie, she asked my mum and dad if she could move back home with her family. My Uncle Bill and Auntie Ivy moved up to the parlour floor so eventually Gladys and her family had the top flat and Joan and her husband had the bottom floor. My family were renting it until Joan bought the house for £550.

After Gladys moved out, Uncle Bill died 20th June 1964, my mum died 1st February 1973 and my dad 27th December 1980, Joan then sold the house in 1985 for £180,000 and moved to Swanley.



**Me, Uncle Bill and
his dog Prince**



Me and Auntie Ivy

Dad and Mum

My dad was born in 1897 and he was Charles William Standing and my mother's name was Lilian Susan Adams. My mum never seemed to know that she had a middle name but I found it out when I researched my family tree. My dad was the eldest of 3 brothers and was born in Barking, Essex where his parents owned their own property. My mum came from Oxtou, London and was the second eldest of 3 sisters and 2 brothers. Her family was a little different from my dad's as apparently my nan (her mother) used to take my grandad's suit and shoes around to the pawn shop every week and then get them out every weekend so he could wear them! I was told that my parents met at a dance in Southend in 1919/20 but I do know at their wedding they had a horse and carriage!

My dad had been in the army during the First World War in the Royal Engineers. He was a despatch rider, which meant he rode up and down the frontline delivering messages and instructions from headquarters to frontline commanders. It would have been a very dangerous job.

When he was demobbed from the army Dad used to do all the accounts for local shops around where he lived. However, he didn't really enjoy this work. What he had always wanted to do was drive lorries so he looked for an opportunity to do this. He got a

job at Gamages Department Store as a delivery driver and stayed there for about eighteen months. He really enjoyed doing this job and then he had the opportunity to move to Selfridges as a driver there. I always remember seeing the Selfridges van parked outside our house when dad came home for lunch. Dad stayed working at Selfridges until his retirement. When they were first married my mum worked in a box factory.



Dad and mum on their wedding day

Memories of life during World War 2

It was really lovely living in the house with the family. I was only 6 when the war ended but I can remember standing at the window and watching them taking down the railings from the front of the houses all down the street. They were taking them away to use for ammunition. I can remember the navy coming along the street. My sister married a local boy who was a sailor. I also remember the air force – it was my cousin's cousin who was in the air force and he used to visit in his uniform. He used to fly a bomber. They all spoilt me because I was the only little one around in the family!

All along the road there were brick shelters with what seemed to be blankets in front. As a child this used to frighten me as I passed them. These were for people who didn't have their own shelter. During air raids people could go and shelter down the underground, in these brick shelters or stay in their own house. We had an air raid shelter in the garden and I can remember, as clear as day, being picked up to be taken in there. My dad and the family dug out our shelter in the garden. It had a corrugated metal roof and we grew grass on it so it just looked like a part of the garden. The shelter had something like bunk beds in it. Dad had a little electric fire which he used to run down to give us

some heat. I remember being in the shelter even in the daytime.

On the bottom of the house at the back was a place where there were large, stone boilers where my mum did her washing with the old pot and passing stick and mangle in the garden. Above that, on the parlour floors was a brick building like a conservatory. One day a light was on there and I remember my dad going mad with my uncle because he thought he had left the light on. It wasn't a light but an incendiary bomb which had set some of the woodwork on fire! They managed to put it out so it didn't make too much damage. I didn't know that at the time as I was too young.

My dad stood on the doorstep with my middle sister when the incendiary bomb caught St Paul's Cathedral and they could see the fire so we were very close to the city. Down the road to us there was one house standing on its own and either side was in ruins so I presume they were bombed out. It was really strange that one was left standing while the other three in the row were gone. I think it must have been a stray bomb as the other houses all round us were fine although there was a church not too far away which was bombed out. As a child I was told of different places which had been bombed out but when I was growing up those places looked different with grass growing over.

I wasn't evacuated. My middle sister was evacuated but she cried so much my mum had to go and bring her home.



Me and Joan outside our house

Convalescence Home

I was always being taken to hospital for blood tests when I was little but I don't know what for. Then one day my mum and dad took me on a train to a convalescent home in Clacton, Essex. It was in January 1945, so I was only about 5 years old. Then my mum and dad said goodbye to me and left. I can remember crying my eyes out because I

didn't understand why I was there. I remember being in a room with three beds and it had a little hatch in the room and I was told that there was a nurse there who would be keeping an eye on us. I used to be walked along the seafront at Clacton and it had all barbed wire along there because it was the war.

I didn't see my mum and dad at all during the time I was there, and I did feel abandoned. They probably weren't allowed to or couldn't afford to. It was a horrible memory seeing my parents walk away. However, everyone was very kind and made you welcome and made a fuss of you. Some of those there were older than I was. I can remember going for walks and getting chilblains.

I was there about a month to 6 weeks. I can remember mum and dad coming to get me and I was back home before 1st April 1945 as I was in my sister's wedding photos. I know I was down there between 1944 and 1945.

When I asked, when I was older, why I went to the convalescence home my mum told me I had whooping cough which went inwards but there is no such thing! I think I might have had asthma but in those days it wasn't recognised. Mum said that the doctors thought that the fresh air would get rid of everything.

School Days

I never went to infants' school so I must have been about 6 or 7 years old when I started school. The schools didn't open during the war as they were all close to the city. My sister, who was ten and a half years older than me, said she was very lucky because there was a lady who lived down the road who had 3 daughters, one the same age as me and one the same age as my sister. This lady got a tutor for her daughter and my sister was able to go and have lessons with this tutor as well during the war. The tutor used to teach 3 or 4 children.

I went to Ecclesbourne Road School, but I didn't start school until I was almost 7 because of the war. I went to a London school called Tudor Rose – they nicknamed it as it was on Queen's Head Street. It was local to me and not far from Chapel Street Market. We had to walk to school as we didn't have money for bus fares in those days. I didn't get to play much in the playground as I had to go home for lunch. I got into trouble in lessons for talking too much and had to do lines!

I didn't mind school. I was very sporty and my parents couldn't understand it as no-one else in the family was sporty. I started swimming when I was 7 years old and no-one in the family was very

interested. I learned using two flat drums with a belt under which kept me afloat. First, I had to learn to swim a width, breaststroke, with the drums and then without them. I took part in swimming competitions with the school at Tibberton Baths, Islington. When I went swimming, I was allowed 3d (threepence) and as a treat afterwards I could buy 1d worth of chips, a pickled onion and a bottle of Tizer (fizzy orange pop)! I loved that, until we realised that I was allergic to the Tizer and had to give it up! I also loved netball and cookery.

I hated other lessons because I hated standing up in class and reading. I always found reading aloud difficult although I did like books. I was often made fun of when I was speaking out loud so I have always hated doing that. I can remember my mum and dad doing reading with me at home, but I can't remember being taught to read properly at school. I did read a lot at home, but I didn't like writing or spelling as I had no confidence in myself. I did love my maths though – there was no spelling in there!

At Christmas time we got an apple or orange, a book, a puzzle and a doll and that was it but we didn't know any different. We thought it was wonderful. I had all the Enid Blyton books – the Secret Seven, Famous Five. I also liked a book called Steady and Sure but I don't know who wrote that. (The Story of Steady and Sure by C.J. Hamilton published 1927). My widowed Aunt, who

lived downstairs, had one daughter who had a lovely toy cupboard – she was very spoilt – and I was allowed to go into this toy cupboard. She had lovely books and, as long as I returned them, I could read them and that is where I found that book. It was about a horse.

I also loved doing jigsaw puzzles and had a lot of patience with them. I was taught to knit and crochet as a child which I still enjoy. I came first in a school knitting competition when I was 10 or 11 years old. We had to knit a square to exact measurements. I was taught to darn socks as well using the mushroom you would put in. I also made lace using pins and when I was first married, I made a bit of extra money making black, cotton, lace flowers for a shop. I was paid about two shillings for 100!

I hated sewing though. I did go to lessons when I was pregnant and made two maternity dresses but that was it as I have no patience for sewing. When I was younger, I crocheted a dress for myself and it is up in the loft unworn because what it needed was the lining/dress part and of course I don't sew so it never got done!

We played skipping in the street and sometimes we would tie string around people's front door knockers and take it out to the street where cars would go over the string and pull the knockers as if someone

was there! My friend, at school, was called Irene Kingdom.

I had to learn to play the piano but didn't want to and kept asking not to. In the end mum and dad gave into me and I was allowed to stop which I regret now. I can read music but wish I had carried on learning so I could play. The teacher's name was Mr Doling and they used to pay for me to go. He was a good teacher but I was bored by what I had to do. Both my sisters learnt to play the piano and they weren't allowed to give up. My dad also played the piano but I never saw my mum play. My mum did sing because when they had parties, they all played the piano and one of my uncles played the drums and the piano accordion. The music was lovely but I had to go to bed because I was the baby!



I was a real tom-boy when I was young. I loved my roller skates and would roller-skate with my skates on down the two flights of stairs inside the house as well as the flight of steps outside! I would slide down the coping outside at the end of the terrace and jump from one side to another. This caused

trouble when one of my nephews decided to follow me and fell and broke his arm – I got the blame!



Everyday Family life

I had to come home for lunch. My parents believed you had breakfast, then you had to come home at one o'clock for dinner including dad. He worked for Selfridges and would come home at one o'clock in the van for his dinner every day. Then you had tea at six o'clock. As a child you sat at the table until parents said you could start and you didn't talk while eating your meal. My parents were very, very strict with how you handled your cutlery and what you did. It was quite a laugh in my family!

The main meal was at lunchtime and it was all homemade. My mum used to get eels which she chopped up and we would have eels for dinner which I love. We had fish which we had to queue up for as everything was still rationed then after the war.

The rag and bone man came round once a week collecting any old rags (a type of recycling I suppose) and the coal man used to come round once a week and empty the coal into the coal hole at the bottom of the step. The fish man also came round calling out “winkles and cockles”! We used to go out and get a pint of winkles and a pint of shrimps.

That was what we had for Sunday afternoon tea along with celery. If it was a special occasion my mum got her tea service out. I have got the tea service as my mum and dad gave it to me as a wedding present. It had twelve cups, saucers, tea plates, milk jug and a “slop” basin for tea as there were no tea bags and they used tea leaves. There was also a bigger bread and butter plate. At home it was always washed and carefully packed away in paper, in a cardboard box until it was needed again.

The peelings from the vegetables were boiled up in a pot with a type of oatmeal and then feed it to the chickens. Nothing was wasted – we had bread and butter pudding made from the stale bread.

My dad used to have chickens in the bottom of the garden which he bred for eggs and cockerels which he had for Christmas. He also had rabbits and I got into trouble for touching the baby rabbits as this was our food and if you touch baby rabbits the mothers can kill them because they don't smell like their baby anymore. The shelter was at the bottom of the garden, the chickens around the corner from the shelter and the rabbits' cages under the lean-to at the back of the house.

Mum took in washing and did washing for Alydyce Bakery. She washed silk and lace which she ironed with an iron she warmed on the hob. She didn't try an electric iron until 1958 when she borrowed the iron I had been given as an engagement present. She liked it so much she kept it! Ironing was always done on an old cloth on the dining room table.

Mum boiled the water up and did the washing in a large tub. On Monday, sheet and bed linen day, she washed them in an old copper at the bottom of the house in the scullery. The sheets were then put through the mangle and hung out to dry. The sheets were all pure cotton so when they were brought back in, they were pulled to get them into the right shape.

It was hard work being a house wife in those days. The top step up to the house was always whitened

weekly with something called a donkey stone which mum would get from the rag and bone man who called round once or twice a week. He used to come on a horse and cart round and mum could exchange scraps of clothes for the donkey stone. All the stairs would be polished as well and the stove would be blackened.

There was a safe on the windowsill – a wooden box with mesh netting on the front – and this was used to keep meat cool as we didn't have fridges.

We didn't have hot water in the house. We had to heat the water on the gas stove and then fill a tin bath. We weren't allowed to have a bath every day. The first time I ever had a bath in a bath with a tap which you turned to get hot water was in Alby's parent's house when I was 18 years old!

My dad wore the same suit at each of my sisters' and my weddings and he had it until the day he died! The suit was worn for special occasions and then brushed down and hung up straight away. Dad changed out of his uniform as soon as he came home from work into a pair of black trousers, shirt, tie and braces. He had to be smart when he went out and my mum wore hat, gloves when she went out including lacy gloves in the summer. Dad's shirt had a separate collar which was washed and starched to look smart.

My older sister was a machinist who worked in the clothing trade – the rag trade as they called it then.

Every Saturday my parents, uncle, aunt and me, along with Uncle Bill's dog, would meet some of mum and dad's friends in the pub round the corner for one drink, either the Raglan or the Mermaid. I would be sitting outside the pub with a glass of lemonade and my uncle's dog!

On Sundays I was sent to Sunday school and then mum and dad would take me to Highgate village on the bus. We would have a walk around the park and then have a drink at a little pub there. Half a pint of Guinness for dad, a small stout for mum and a lemonade for me.



Mum and me

Teenage Fun

I loved children and did want to be a nanny. I used to take neighbours children for walks in their prams from when I was about 14. I used to take a set of twins for a walk, and I used to walk from Islington up to Highbury Fields and meet up with my cousin's best friend who had twin boys and had lost her husband very young, to motor neurone disease after World War 2. I used to keep in touch with her and one of the boys still comes in to visit me today!

Every Easter my parents bought me a whole new outfit of clothes – coat, shoes, gloves and hat. My parents had me in their forties which was old in those days so they were old fashioned in their views of what I should wear. I hated hats and I used to take my hat off as soon as I was out of sight! It was not the fashion in 1950's.



**Me in the
hated hat!**

My dad was very strict with all three of us. My parents had me when they were older, about 42 –

43 years old and they came from a completely different generation when ideas about behaviour were very different. My two sisters weren't allowed to get married until they were 21 years old. When any of us wanted to go out we had to tell dad and mum where we were going, and we had to be back by 8 pm. He stood on the doorstep and waited for us.

When I was about 14 years old, I read a lot and I liked to go round to friends, but I had to be back home still at 8 pm. I was only allowed one friend home to visit at a time. There were family parties but never parties around at friends. My friends' parents were all younger and were not so strict so my friends couldn't believe why I had to be back so early. I found it very frustrating.

One of my friends was one of nine and she and her two brothers just couldn't understand it but dad's word was law and you didn't go against him and that was just how it was. If you came back late you were kept in for the next fortnight and not allowed out to meet friends. One night my friend's brother walked me back later than 8 o'clock and my dad was standing on the doorstep waiting for me. My dad wasn't a big man but this lad was. However, he took one look at my dad and shot off home! When I saw this lad again, I told him I had got a punishment (staying in) for him bringing me home late and he thought it was funny!

One time I wanted to do ice skating which was not done by my family. I saved up my pennies and bought myself some trousers to go ice skating in at Haringey. I dressed in my new trousers and a nice jumper and went to say goodbye to my dad and mum. My dad looked at my trousers and said I wasn't going anywhere until I had changed into a skirt as no daughter of his was going out in trousers as only men wore them! I could either change or stay in. You didn't argue with him! So, I tied my trousers around my waist and put my skirt and stockings over the top and went out. Then I changed into my trousers when I got to the ice rink!

I used to like records and brought lots of 78s with my pocket money. I loved Bill Hayley and the Comets and learned to jive. I taught Alby to jive actually! I even saw Bill Hayley and The Comets play in a concert in London when I was about 16 years old. I was allowed to go with one friend.

When I worked at the cinema my dad knew exactly what time the film finished and what time to expect me home. There was no chance of stopping somewhere on the way home. He would have been worried about me walking home.

I went out with a boy called Reggie when I was about 17 though and we used to sneak off to parties while I told my mum and dad I was staying at a friend's house!

My dad was definitely the “Head of the House” but he adored me and my sisters and we all loved him.

Earning a Wage

I wanted to be a Nanny but when I was 14 years old, I had to leave school as my parents couldn't afford for me to stay on at school. I needed to earn a wage to contribute to the housekeeping.

My dad went and got me my first job! I was with the post office/civil service in Gospel Road, in Islington, London near The Angel Islington. I started work on my 15th birthday.

I worked on producing punch cards using the Hollerith System. At the time there were 3 companies, Hollerith, Powers-Samas and IBM which all did the same job. Each was a different set up and I had to learn different skills. For example, with Hollerith, as you went on to do more complex tasks, you wired things up with boards to get the tabulators to do tasks whereas with Powers-Samas there were set boxes, already set up to put into the tabulator. They all had punch cards, verifiers, computers, collators and sorting machines and I learnt to go through the different phases. When you got to tabulators which printed off a lot of information the boards were quite big with all

different coloured wires. My job was to actually punch the cards with the correct holes according to what information was needed on them. It was effectively writing a data program of the time.

I earned £3 2 shillings and sixpence a week. I had to give all my money to my parents apart from 2 shillings and sixpence. This was for my bus fare and to buy things I wanted like clothes. I enjoyed it there and stayed about 18 months to 2 years.

There were both men and women at the office with a man as supervisor. I could walk to the office or go on the bus as it wasn't too far from home. It took about 20 minutes to walk. I used to work from 9 until 5 but my parents still insisted that I came home at 1 o'clock for dinner. It was a bit of a rush to get home, eat my dinner and get back to work in the hour I had for my lunch. When I got home the dinner was on the table, I ate my dinner and then went straight back to work.

After about 18 months there I introduced a friend into the office, and she got a job there.

Unfortunately, she was very jealous of me in work and it was difficult with us both there so I looked for another job.

My next job was at Probyns which was a beer bottling plant and I switched from the Hollerith System to Powers-Samas System.

I liked clothes and to earn more money for clothes I used to work in the evening at the cinema from when I was 15 years old as an usherette, selling ice creams.

I used to carry a tray that went round my neck. When we were selling ice creams, we used to put the spare ones on the stage at the bottom and when we had a queue we used to walk down to the stage, pick up the ice creams and come back. The problem was the young kids used to come in through the back door and pinch our ice creams. Then the money was taken off our wages! We then started leaving them at the door with the person who was checking the tickets. One day, when I had just started going out with Alby, he had come up with me while I was working and was watching the film. I wanted some ice creams so I “flashed” the girl at the door but she was so busy she couldn’t bring them down. I asked the queue to wait and then walked up to the door to collect them and the manager was there. He said to me, very loudly, “What the hell do you think you’re doing? There’s a queue down there!” I said, “I have come to get the ice creams because we have run out.” He then told me to get back in my place and told me to do as I was told. Well, I took the tray from around my neck, put it over his neck and said “I’m leaving today. You sell the ice creams!”. I just went off, changed out of my uniform and collected

Alby saying we were going. I was so embarrassed by the way the manager had spoken to me in front of the customers. I just went back to collect the wages they owed me. I did see the manager who asked if I was coming back but I told him I would never work for someone who was so rude. That was the end of my extra money unfortunately! I was 17 by then.

Alby Jones

Alby was born in September 1936 while his parents got married in February 1936.

He was born in a cottage near the top of Amersham on Ricksmanworth Road – Veralum Cottages and then moved to another cottage.

His mother came from a family of 7 children from South Shields and met his father when she moved down here to work in service as a cook. Apparently, Alby's dad was riding his bike when he saw her walking along the road and stopped to talk to her. His parents were both born in 1916, his mother was six months older than his father.

Alby had one sister who was 13 years younger than him. Sadly, his parents lost another daughter who

died as a baby. His father served in the army in Burma during World War Two.



Albie as a child

Alby started at St George's School along White Lion Road in Amersham and then went to secondary school in Chesham. He lived in

Grimsdale Lane in a row of cottages next to the Pheasant Pub.



Alby as a scout (on right)

Before doing his National Service, Alby was a bricklayer. When he was serving in the army Alby was based in Kenya, East Africa for 2 years. It was during the time of the Mau Mau uprisings and Alby was in the catering corps in the Royal Engineers. Alby told me that his officer said that the enemy would always shoot the cook first because that would knock all the spirit out of the army!

One day Alby got into trouble and was put on “jankers” – a punishment routine in the army. I don’t know what he had done – probably had got a bit tipsy! Anyway, when the commanding officer went past, he said” What are you doing Jones?”

and when Alby explained the officer said “Never mind that! Just get in and cook my breakfast!”.

Alby was living right in the bush in Kenya but he said it was a wonderful life and he enjoyed it. He went into the army at 18 and came out when he was coming up to his 21st birthday.



**Alby in the
army**

Alby had a great 21st birthday party but didn't have any records to play so he asked to borrow my record collection for the party. He went off on the train from London with all these records in a very heavy bag. He then missed the stop at Amersham – I think he fell asleep – and ended up having to walk from Wendover to Amersham in the dark carrying this heavy bag of records!

Meeting Alby

When I was working at Probyns one of the girls there was writing to a boy in the army who was doing his national service and asked if I wanted to do the same. At the time men in the army, air force, navy had pen friends – they could be writing to more than one girl! This girl was writing to a chap called Benny Billington and his friend, Alby, had just been sent a “Dear John” letter by his fiancé – she had found someone new. The other girls in the office said I should start writing to him and my friend Eleanor, who was Burmese, even wrote the first letter to Alby and got me to sign it! After that Alby and I started to exchange letters. I think he was also writing to another girl to start with but then it was just me.

He asked me for a photo and the only one I had was taken with my former boyfriend, Reggie. Anyway, I went to the studio where it was taken and asked if they could print me another one but without Reggie in which they did. I sent it to Alby but what I didn't realise was that you could still see Reggie's hand on my shoulder! Of course, Alby spotted that and wanted to know whose hand it was?! I did send him another photo without a hand on my shoulder this time!

Alby was living in Amersham and when he came back on leave, he wanted to meet me and arranged

to come in on the train. We had been writing for about 18 months. I didn't want to meet him because I had only been writing to him and didn't know what sort of person he was although he was good looking. When my mum heard he was coming, and I wasn't going to meet him she got very angry. She said no daughter of hers was going to stand up a man who was serving his country and got my brother-in-law and uncle to drive me to Baker Street station.

He made an instant hit with my family! My dad used to like that Alby would sit down and watch football with him. When we sat down though we had to be sat on separate chairs.

If we went out to the cinema together, when we came back to the house my dad would give me time to put my hair up with pin curls, make a quick drink downstairs and then he would come out of the bedroom and say "Sylvia it's time for you to go to bed!". As they got to know him Alby was able to stay as he lived in Buckinghamshire but he had my bedroom while I had to go downstairs and sleep with my old spinster Aunt!

When we went out, we still had to be back by a certain time. Dad would want to know all the timings of what we were doing so he would know what time we would be back. If we wanted to go to a party with friends, we would tell Alby's mum and

dad and would stay up in Amersham with them as they were happy for us to go to parties. Dad and mum would just think I was spending the weekend there. Alby's mum and dad were the same age as my older sister.

When we were "courting" Alby used to come to London one weekend and then I would go to Amersham the next weekend. Alby used to work on Saturdays, so we used to meet at a café in Hill Avenue known as Meg's Café. I used to wait there for him to finish work. The first time I went there it was really embarrassing as it was full of young people, and everyone stopped talking and stared at me in silence when I walked in. I was a stranger in that town which was more like a village then. I got my cup of tea and went and sat at a table, looking out of the window. I was an occasional smoker in those days, so I got out a cigarette and tried to light it. Then I got tapped on the shoulder and this young man offered me a light. His name was Bobby Davies and he wanted to know who I was, so I explained and said I was waiting for someone. When Alby appeared, they both had a laugh, as they were friends, when Bobby said he had wanted to chat me up until he found out I was with Alby! When I was first going out with Alby and went to the local dances in Amersham none of the girls would speak to me as I was an outsider. In their eyes, I suppose, I was this outsider from London who had

come in and taken one of their young men. It took a while before I was known and accepted.

I remember we went to Southend one weekend and went into an amusement arcade. There was a group of men there who were laughing and joking with each other and swearing. Well Alby turned round to them and said "Excuse me! Would you not swear in front of my girlfriend!" I was amazed because no-one had ever been like that with me before. Alby didn't raise his voice to them but they shut up! Alby always spoke very quietly and was a very quiet man.

Alby came out of the army in January 1957 which is when I met him in person and in December 1957, he asked my dad if I could get engaged. I was just 18 years old then. My dad asked him how much money he had as he wanted to know if he could look after his daughter – Alby said he had enough and what business was it of his!

Alby asked what type of ring I would like. I had seen a lovely diamond solitaire mounted on platinum ring in a local jeweller. Alby had a friend who worked for a jeweller who made rings so Alby asked him to make the ring.

When Alby and I decided to get engaged we agreed to do it on the same day as Jean, a friend of mine from work, and her boyfriend Ron. We all booked to see The Mousetrap play at the theatre.

However, three of us arrived but Alby didn't – he was late! He had gone to pick up the engagement ring from his friend who worked for the jeweller who was making it but his friend wasn't home from work until later.

Jean and Ron were married before us in September 1958, and I wore her veil at my wedding.

When Alby and I were engaged we went to the Ideal Home Exhibition in London. We fell in love with a G Plan bedroom suite in black with lavender doors. The suite was made up of a wardrobe, dressing table and bed. I loved it because I love the colour lavender. We put a deposit down on the suite but at that time we didn't have a place to live. Luckily by the time we finished paying for it and took delivery we had a place to put it!

There was a local drapers close to my house where mum used to collect coupons and would exchange them for items when she had enough. This was where much of my "bottom drawer" linen came from.

Wedding Day Memories – what a day!

Alby and I married on 20th June 1959. I was 19 years old. My dad had relented about me being married before I was 21 years old because we were spending so much money on train fares visiting each other all the time. My sister was jealous – “trust you, you lucky thing!”.

When dad gave me permission to marry, he called me in and said there was to be no stripping off in front of my husband because he didn't want us to have a load of kids! I was trying not to laugh and had to find an excuse to leave the room before I started laughing! When I saw Alby, I told him and said, “so now you know I'm never going to get undressed!” What made it worse I went five years without a baby so my dad must have thought I had obeyed him!

Our wedding day was a disaster! Originally, I had wanted to get married on my 20th birthday in September but dad said he and mum had decided that I could get married before I was 21 but I couldn't get married in September. My dad and mum would come back from their annual, week's holiday in June a day early so I would have to be married on 20th June. If I didn't get married then I would have to wait until I was 21.

My eldest sister who had 3 young boys, eldest of whom was only 7 years younger than me, got TB in winter 1958 and was admitted to Collingdale Hospital so I used to help my mum to look after the boys as her husband was working. I used to have an hour off work to help my mum with the shopping and then work an hour later.

Mum was finding it really hard to look after the boys – she was old at 60 so she said she didn't know how they would manage to have the reception at the house as my sisters had done. They had got married at the local church and mum had cooked all the food, which was how it was done then. I told mum that Alby's parents had offered for us to get married in Amersham and that we could hire a hall there for the reception which was a relief to her. We were paying for our own wedding as my parents didn't have that type of money and they believed we should all save up and pay for our own wedding. I was down in London and so Alby was left to make the arrangements for the wedding in Amersham – the boy making the arrangements! He met with the verger who took down all the details and it was arranged. 20th June, St Mary's Church at 2.30 pm. The problem was when I told dad and mum it was at 2.30, they said we needed to change it to an hour later to give people time to get home. Alby saw the verger again and changed the ceremony to 3.30 instead.

The only thing I was really upset about was that I had to have a second-hand wedding dress and I hated it. I really wanted to have the pleasure of going to choose my own wedding dress but my mum said we couldn't afford to buy a new one. Perhaps that's how they did it at that time. However, my eldest sister altered it so it didn't look the same as it was. My sister was a seamstress and had offered to make my bridesmaids dresses. I had two adult bridesmaids -my friend and one of Alby's relations – and a young one who was Alby's sister who is 9 and a half years younger than me. The adults were in a soft lavender and his sister was in lemon. My friend who had got married the September before, lent me her veil and my mum brought my headdress. My friend and I were getting the dresses ready the night before the wedding. When my dad got home from holiday on Friday, he was still strict at what time I went to bed and insisted my friend left!

I got up early the next morning. My dad, who had hired a car for their holiday, went down to the car only to find out someone had broken into it the night before and had pinched the radio! My dad came back in a right mood! He had to take me and the adult bridesmaid who lived near me down to Amersham first and then come back and collect my mum.

We went to Alby's parents' house and the house was full of his mum's family. She came from South Shields and was the eldest of 6 or 7 children. They all wanted to come to the wedding so they were staying with his parents. When we went into the house Alby's mum said to me that I had to get his sister Linda, who was our young bridesmaid, dressed and do her hair as she hadn't had time to do it! So, I had to do her hair as well as trying to get myself dressed. My other bridesmaid, who was a second cousin to Alby although he called her his cousin, had to come by bus from Rickmansworth and got on the wrong bus! She only just got to the wedding on time!

Then everyone went off to the church leaving me on my own and my dad didn't turn up! He had taken a different route back from London, misjudged the time, was running late but still had to drop my mum at the church! When he finally got to the house, I was a bag of nerves. We were then driving down White Lion Road and the car was waved down by Alby's uncle – my first thought was that I was being jilted! Alby's uncle said we had to carry on going round and round as although Alby and all the guests were at the church, but the vicar hadn't turned up! Apparently, the vergar had forgotten to tell the vicar that the time had been changed and the vicar was at home watching television. I had also arranged for all the choir boys

to sing Ave Maria – of course there were no choir boys as they could only round up one at short notice! There were no bell ringers there either! Eventually I got to the church with no choir and only a small peal of bells as not all the bell ringers could get there.

The father-in-law of the best man made my bouquet of red roses. All the men had buttonholes which we brought as that is what was done in those days. My dad had his buttonhole on the wrong side to start with, above the pocket he kept his tobacco tin in (he rolled his own cigarettes). Unfortunately, in the photos you could see the outline of the tin.

We had our reception in a massive hall in the apple orchard on White Lion Road which belonged to the Pineapple pub. Alby knew the local bands, so we had a band to play as well. When we got to the hall, they had mislaid the top table, so Alby's mum and dad had to sit on the side and the caterers refused to bring the wine round. Alby's best man, who worked at the American base, got some alcohol from the Americans but he didn't realise it was very potent. Quite a few of my guests were out at the orchard in the back under the influence!

My dad took us to the train for our journey down to Cliftonville Butlins for our honeymoon. My going away outfit was a white dress with pink flowers. It had a full skirt with petticoats underneath, a

matching cloth belt and I wore an off white “dust coat” over the top. The outfit was finished off with high heeled white shoes, bag but no hat! The caterers had told Alby, as we were leaving, that one of the crystal dishes had been broken and that he would have to pay for it when we got back. Alby made up his mind that he would just give them something towards a new bowl but not a crystal one.

When we got to the hotel it was all closed for the night and we had to go and find the caretaker to let us in! They let us in and apologised. Our room was on the side with the sash window wide open. When Alby shut it down it just kept opening again – the window was broken! We had to wedge the window open. With everything going on we forgot to put the sign out saying we didn’t want tea in the morning and when we opened the door there were two cold teas and confetti which had blown out from under the door. Of course, when we went down to breakfast the staff introduced us as the honeymoon couple to everyone– I could feel myself going absolutely red!

There was a great group of six people we met at the hotel who we made friends with. One couple came back on the train with us to London as I told them my mum would make us all a dinner. Mum, though, didn’t have enough meat so she said I had to go to the corner shop to get some more chops.

All the money Alby and I had left was a ten bob note although we knew our wages were waiting at home. We couldn't ask my mum and dad for money so I had to go downstairs to ask my uncle to lend me some so I could get some food for tea!

On the good side the weather for our wedding was lovely and we were given lots and lots of casserole dishes!

What a wedding day! However, Alby and I remained married for 60 years.





The photo of Alby and I with the daughter of the Best Man was put in the studio window of the photographer, Lesley J King of Watford, for months. The other photos are mum and dad and me and Alby with his parents. In the photo of me with mum and dad you can clearly see dad's tobacco tin in the left pocket of his jacket! He has, however, changed his buttonhole to the correct side as in the photos of us going into church it was on the wrong side!

Newly Weds

Alby's best friend, Jimmy Tebby (Jim) used to ride for Wembley in their speedway team and Alby used to go after work on Friday night to watch him. He used to go all over the country to different "meets", such as Swindon, and get back in the early hours of Saturday morning. Alby was sports mad! He really got into his enthusiasm for motorbikes through his friend Jimmy.



Alby on Jimmy's motorbike

Alby and I had a motorbike and sidecar when we were living with Alby's mum. It was hilarious! The side car looked like the pointed end of a boat and if

you wanted to be covered in there was a cover which came and clipped over the top.

I met a girl when I was working at Ocean Accident, Pam, who was a Londoner like me and who lived only 20 minutes from where I lived in London. We became friends because we were Londoners, and all the other girls were local! She and her husband John, who came from Ruislip, had got married in the September the same year as Alby and me. We would go to dances together, the four of us, at Ruislip Cricket Club on the weekend. We would all go together on Alby's motorbike and sidecar! We would get all dressed up and in those days the skirts were very straight. This was a problem as the sidecar had no door – you couldn't just get in it. Pam and I had to be lifted into it! John and Alby were both on the motorbike, dressed in their best suits, trying not to get them mucky! One day Alby went to pick Pam up to come down and see me and he had to pick her up to put her in the side car – Pam was so embarrassed as all her neighbours would see a man, who wasn't her husband, picking her up and carrying her! Both Alby and Pam were killing themselves laughing!

We also used to go to dances with our friends Bobby Davies (from the café) and his wife Julia. Bobby had an old van as he was a self-employed builder and Julia and I were put in the back of the van, all dressed up in our best dresses and we

used to amuse ourselves making faces at the drivers behind the van! The dresses at that time were very full with starched petticoats underneath which we put in sugar water to make stiff. We loved dancing the jive and all the rock and roll classics.

When Alby came out of the army he went back as a bricklayer for a short time and then went to work at Boughtons, a large company which had a wood yard down Bell Lane in Little Chalfont. Another employee at the wood yard told him he was wasting his time there and to go and work for a telecommunications company and get himself a pension. It was a difficult decision to make as we were engaged and saving money and it was “piece” work at Boughtons so the money was good. Changing his job would mean a drop in money. After we discussed it, Alby decided to move jobs. He had to take a test to get into the company and then became a telecommunication engineer for over 30 years, passing exams as he progressed in his field. Alby also worked on fibre optics communications as they were developed. However, he still kept his bricklaying going as he did private work alongside his father who was a master carpenter, such as garage building. All the

family on his dad's side were in those types of trades.



Alby at work

Where will we live?

We had six house moves in a very short space of time when Alby and I were married. When we were first married, we couldn't find anywhere to live in Amersham. A friend of Alby's mum said we could rent a room in her bungalow in Chessmount Rise in Chesham. We had a bedroom and use of a bathroom which we shared. The owner was very houseproud though and it was very stressful because you daren't even eat a biscuit for fear of

dropping crumbs, so we didn't stay there very long. Then we moved in with Alby's parents in Little Chalfont for a while.

I was then working at Tamrating at Berkhamsted. I used to go from Chessmount Rise into Chesham to catch the bus to Berkhamsted and the office was at the far end of the town. When I moved to Little Chalfont, I had a lot further to travel. I had more experience than the other girls at the company because of my time working in London so the company used to send me to Welwyn Garden City to work in that office which was even further. I got fed up with all the travelling, so I got a job at Ocean Accident Insurance Company in Rickmansworth, working on IBM system. The journey was easier as I could go by train from Amersham Station or by bus.

Alby and I then moved into a flat in Chesham Road in Amersham. It was a partially furnished flat over the top of a shop which sold china and the Youth Employment Office and it was owned by a Miss Caruthers. One New Year's Eve when we were living at this flat we went to a party at the British Legion Hut in Woodside Road. It was close enough to walk there from home. We had a lovely time until it was time to walk home. When we came out of the party it was to see that it had been snowing heavily while we were inside and there was now thick snow over the ground. Unfortunately, Alby

had celebrated a bit too much and was rather “wobbly” when he came out. On the walk home he slipped over but I couldn’t pick him up as I was in my best clothes and wearing some glamorous but rather high heeled shoes! Somehow, we managed to get back and up two flights of stairs to our flat. Alby was saying he was going to be sick and I was trying to persuade him to head into the bathroom. I turned round only to see him disappearing into the bedroom, the home of my beautiful lavender silk bed cover which I had saved up to buy for my “bottom drawer” before we were married – my pride and joy! My beloved bed cover never recovered from the onslaught of rum and black and had to be thrown out! I never let Alby forget that!

We couldn’t get a mortgage as lender would only count Alby’s salary and wouldn’t take women’s wages into account. I suppose the thinking was then that married women would give up their jobs when they had children. Mortgage lenders would also only accept Alby’s basic salary, which was only about £7 9 shillings and 6d, and wouldn’t count over time money. We lost three houses – a cottage in Chesham which was £500, and we were short by about £150, and another cottage and then one in West Wycombe which was about £2000. What I learnt years later was I could have got a 90% mortgage from the London Borough Council

because I was a Londoner. That was even to buy a property outside of London.

Alby then transferred to work in London, and we moved into an unfurnished flat in the top half of a Victorian house opposite my parents. Mrs Harrod was the landlady and she lived in the bottom part of the house with her sister. We were able to gradually furnish the flat but it took time as we didn't have much money. When Bob and Julia Davies came up to stay, we had to move a mattress from the bedroom into the lounge for them to sleep on while we slept on just the divan. We felt very lucky as the house actually had a bathroom and not just a tin bath! We were only allowed to have a bath once a week though.

While we lived here Alby won £100 and put it down as a deposit on a BSA motorbike and sidecar. This one had 2 seats and a door in the sidecar – luxury! We used to take my mum to the market in it and she loved it! I really enjoyed riding on the back of the motorbike but was forced to stop when I was pregnant with Karen!

I was working for IBM in Berkley Square while we lived in London and finished just a week before Karen was due. One of the houses opposite came up for sale for £500 but we couldn't get a mortgage and buy that. We contacted the council in London about getting a flat and when they came to visit, we

moved all the furniture into the two rooms so they thought we only had that space. The irony was that when the officer did visit, he never looked around so all that effort was for nothing! The council in London wouldn't help us with a place to live as they were keen for people to move out of the city. It was the time when they were building new towns, such as Milton Keynes, for people to move out to.

Alby and I met with a Mrs Masseroni, who was in charge of renting council property in the area. She asked if we had any more children than just Karen and told us that there was a long waiting list. We had already been on the list for 5 years by then. Alby asked who was at the top of the waiting list and it was someone he knew from school. When he asked who was second on the list Mrs Masseroni told him that it was someone called Albert Jones – “Well that's me!” Alby said!

We were eventually offered two flats at the same time. One was through a private landlord on One Hundred Acres and the other was through the council in Ashridge in Chesham. We took the Chesham flat because the rent was cheaper. It was 2 bedroomed flat with a 3 mile walk to town. I certainly became very fit walking with Karen, and later Andrew, into town and back every day.

Pets

We had several rescue dogs over the years. We got Mickey when he was two and he lived until he was sixteen. He chased cats, other dogs and bikes up and down the road! Rusty was next as we had him from about eighteen months, and he was followed by Buster. We also had rescue cat called Quizzy who lived until she was 21 years old. Bless her she died in her sleep on my lap one day when I was in the middle of a very emotional phone call with my widowed brother-in-law. Although Alby was in the room with me, I couldn't get his attention to come and help as he was glued to the football match on television!

For a brief time at our house, we also had a rather unwanted animal. I thought I had been hearing noises at night when we were in bed but Alby couldn't hear anything so I forgot about it. I came to wash our bedding one day, which included a fitted valance sheet, only to discover that the valance sheet had bits gnawed out of it along the bottom! In addition to this one of my furry slippers had gone missing. We made enquiries about what it could be and were told it was most likely an animal called a Glis Glis which is a type of dormouse and looks a bit like a small grey squirrel. We were told that they were protected and therefore could not be trapped. What I couldn't understand was how it was coming into the bedroom, particularly as our dog and cat

spent a lot of time on the bed asleep. They obviously weren't bothered! The Glis Glis was never caught and obviously made it's escape somewhere to someone else's house.

Rusty who was a rescue Labrador - used to get out of the back door to join another dog who used to call for him. Then the two dogs would trot up to the farm to pick up another dog and the three dogs would walk around the block together. It was as regular as clockwork! They were known as the "three dogs who went for a walk" and they would call for each other. But if the first dog didn't call for Rusty he wouldn't go on his own.

Children arrive

Karen was born while we were living in London on 10th July 1964 at St Bartholomew's Hospital. I met my great friend, Edna, when I was in hospital having had Karen. She had her son, Andrew, 3 days earlier and we realised we only lived 2 streets away from each other. We stayed great friends with her and her husband Roy – in fact they moved out to Amersham and lived next door to Alby's sister!

Alby would have stayed living in London but I wanted to move back out to Amersham to bring Karen up there. My mum was very upset when we

moved out of London as she had loved having us and Karen living opposite her and missed us.



Me, Karen and my friend Julie

Four years later Andrew Charles arrived on 31st March 1968 when we lived in Ashridge in Chesham. He was born at Amersham hospital when there was snow on the ground. When Alby and I bought him home from the hospital we put a Sindy doll in the carrycot for Karen from him. We hadn't decided on a name for him at that point, but Karen took the Sindy doll out of the cot and said "Thank you Andrew"! Presumably this was after Edna's son who she knew. Anyway, Alby and I liked the name Andrew, so it stuck! When I looked after Edna's son in the school holidays we had "Big Andy" and "Little Andy"!



Alby, Andy, Dad, Karen and me



**Alby and
Andy**



**Karen and
Andy**

Driving

I started to learn to drive with dad when I was living in London and then when we moved to Ashridge I learned with Alby and had driving lessons. I failed two driving tests – I got very nervous. Then I got a cancellation for a test on 30th June. Unfortunately, my instructor wasn't available, so I had to take the

test in Alby's car – a Vauxhall Victor! Somehow, I managed to pass. My dad was very proud of the fact I could drive as neither of my sisters had learned.

Working life continued

When the children were young, I worked on making punch cards during the evening when they were in bed. When Andy was very young, I also cleaned for 3 different ladies. Over 2 years I crocheted black flowers in 2 ply wool for a shop. They were sewn onto evening shawls. It was very tedious work, and I was paid very little for every 100 I made.

However, we were saving up money for a deposit on a house and needed the money. When Andy started at Elengani School I got a job in the school kitchen helping to cook the school dinners. This was good as I worked just during the school day and not through school holidays when the children were home. I stayed in that job until Andy was 8 years old (1976) when I got a part time job at NHBC – a building company. I worked there until 1 pm during school holidays and until 3 pm during term time. My dad used to come over and look after the children during the summer holidays.

When the children were grown up, I went into catering and did catering for parties and weddings,

including making the wedding cakes as I did some sugar guild courses.

Swimming Club in Amersham

I was a coach for Amersham swimming club and one year we had a float in Amersham Carnival Procession. The procession got ready by the swimming pool, went down Chiltern Avenue, past the station, up Hill Avenue, down to Woodside Road and into town. For our club float we all dressed up in some sort of swimming gear and Alby was dressed up in a Buzby outfit from British Telecom. We were placed in the float competition although I can't remember if we came 1st, 2nd or 3rd.



Alby as Buzby – he always did like dressing up!

One year we also did a pantomime in the swimming pool. It was Dick Whittington I think, and the children were dressed as the rats! I loved my swimming and did several swims for charity with others, once with the Olympic swimmer Duncan Goodhew.

I started swimming coaching when Andy was 8 and completed all my qualifications for coaching. Karen swam with the seniors while Andy was a county swimmer and swam for the army when he joined. My approach was not to push them to do it. If they wanted to do anything then I was happy to take them to practice, competitions etc but they had to want to do it and it had to come from them. I wasn't going to make them do anything like that.



Swimming club coaching

Holiday Memories

When I was a child we went every year for a week to a boarding house in Littlehampton, Sussex. It was run by a Mrs Standing. We did try Great Yarmouth one year, but it rained for the whole week, so mum didn't want to go back! When we were in Littlehampton we would go to the beach, and I would go swimming while mum and dad would sit on the beach. My dad would be there dressed in his suit with a jacket and tie while mum would be dressed in a dress, jacket and hat! There was no dressing down into holiday clothes for that generation.



Me on holiday in the one and only dress I made!



**Me and Dad on holiday
in the Isle of Wight**

Alby and I went on holiday up to South Shields where his mother's family lived, both before we got married and afterwards.





Family holiday at Butlins for my 21st birthday

Alby's aunt had a flat in North Devon where we went one year with Alby's parents. When the children were little Alby and I would take them for a week's holiday in a caravan every year to near Swanage in Dorset. One year we were driving there and this car behind us was continually flashing its lights at us. Alby was getting a bit annoyed with the driver and tried to ignore him. It wasn't until we stopped at traffic lights and the car drew up beside us that we realised what the problem was. Alby had left one of the cases on the roof and it had fallen off! The poor driver had been trying to let us know for miles! Luckily, we were able to go back and get it. I also remember being on holiday with Andy when he was a baby. We all went to the beach, and I put him on the sand and

then turned around to help Alby sort Karen out. When I turned back Andy had gone! I suddenly spotted him crawling towards the sea quite happily! He was always a water baby.

Devon Towers

After mum died on 1st February 1973 my dad wanted to go on holiday with us. However, he didn't want to go to a caravan and we couldn't afford for the four of us to go to a hotel. Dad offered to pay for the children and so we went to a hotel called Devon Towers at Westcliff beach in Bournemouth. It was run by a Mr and Mrs Carr and it had a restaurant on the ground floor by the reception, a bar and a dancefloor on the floor below where a band played in the evenings. You had to get there early in the day to get a parking space as it was very busy but once we arrived, we didn't have to use the car for the rest of the week. None of the rooms had ensuite bathrooms. The rooms shared a bathroom along the corridor! There was always a fancy-dress evening which was great fun. We had a lovely week and booked for the following year when friends decided to come too. In fact, more and more friends joined us over the next 4 years we went there. We must have told too many people what a wonderful time we had!



Me outside Devon Towers

There was always a fancy-dress competition on. One year the men (including my dad) dressed as the seven dwarves with Karen as Snow White. The ladies made costumes out of crepe paper and then some of the men went down to some local road works and “borrowed” a lantern and some cones for their costumes! These were speedily returned

during the night so no-one realised! My friend Edna and myself went dressed as the ugly sisters from Cinderella!



Fancy dress evenings at Devon Towers

Cruises

Alby and I had many wonderful holidays around the world. We went on two Caribbean cruises. On the first cruise the ship had a great captain. We stopped at different islands and got taxi drivers at each island to take us around. We were a bit dubious about doing this at first but apparently all the taxi drivers charged the same fare for the trip! At least we got back to the ship on time which was more than some couples did – two people were left behind on one island! We so enjoyed it we went back for another cruise around a different part of the Caribbean. We also went on a cruise around South Africa and while there visited Table Mountain at Cape Town. Alby and I made a lot of friends on cruises and stayed in touch with them afterwards.

We travelled to Australia and climbed Sydney Harbour Bridge. We went back to New Zealand twice, driving ourselves around both the North and the South Islands and managed to visit friends there. In Canada Alby and I went around the Rockies by coach. There was a classic car place there which I really enjoyed seeing as I have always loved old cars. I asked the lady what the year of the car was I had been next to and the lady said it was 1939 and the one next to it was 1936. Well Alby and I went into hoots of laughter. The lady asked why. We told her that we were born

those years – it turned out we were the old classics!
We stayed with friends in Toronto and went to
Niagara Falls.



**Alby
enjoying
himself on
one of our
cruises**

Timeshare Apartment

Alby and I first visited Lanzarote with friends about 34 years ago with friends, Edna and Roy. We really liked the place and ended up buying a Timeshare flat for 2 weeks in June. We brought a week each with Edna and Roy in a two-bedroom apartment at the resort of Las Callas. It is a fabulous place to go back to each year and both Karen and Andy ended up buying a Timeshare there as well. We have had such wonderful



holidays there. We have also used our Timeshare to arrange holidays in other countries such as New Zealand. We also visited Tahiti, Hong Kong, Singapore, Malta, all the Canary Islands, America - Miami, Florida, Australia – Perth, Brisbane, Gold Coast, Great

Barrier Reef, Cairns, New South Wales.

Wedding Day Celebrations

Silver Wedding Anniversary - 25 years

For our silver wedding anniversary Alby planned a surprise for me. He booked the British Legion Hall in Old Amersham and



invited at least 80 people to a party. He then had to tell me about it as he couldn't get caterers for the evening so I had to do the catering for my own party! It was a lovely evening though and I managed to surprise Alby by arranging for two old workmates of his from London, Freddy and Eric, to arrive at the party. Karen and Andy decided to buy us a dinner service as we never got one for our wedding. They and our friends all brought us pieces of the set so we ended up with settings for 12 people which was wonderful.

Ruby Wedding Anniversary – 45 years

For our Ruby Wedding Anniversary, we went for dinner with Karen, Andy and their families. We knew they were taking us away for the weekend but Alby and I didn't know where. It turned out that they had rented a massive house on the borders of

Devon and Cornwall – the Cornish side of the Tamar River. They also hired caterers to come in to provide a meal for the evening.

Golden Wedding Anniversary – 50 years

Alby and I decided to renew our vows at the same church, hoping that this time nothing would go wrong!

Unfortunately, the vicar at Saint Mary's said we couldn't have the church for the service on 20th June because it was the church fete. He offered us the sister church but I said it had to be St Mary's and told him the story of our wedding day. He then phoned back and offered to open the Drakes Chapel at the church especially for us that day, so it worked out 50 years later! We had a wonderful day with family and friends in the chapel. When we came out there was a miniature railway set up for the fete and the vicar arranged for us to go for a ride. There is a wonderful photo with Alby and I with some of the family perched on the back of the tiny locomotive! A friend of ours also made up a DVD of old family photos and photos from our anniversary day. He invited us around to his house one evening and set it up with a red carpet like a film premiere! It was a great surprise and a lovely memento of a wonderful day.



Diamond Anniversary – 2019

We didn't want a big party so the children booked a party on a cruise boat down the river. They had also booked a classic car to take us for a drive as a surprise. Unfortunately, there was a call in the morning to say the car wouldn't start so it didn't happen. It was such a shame, and the children were very disappointed although Alby and I still had a lovely day.

Not all work!



As well as holidays Alby and I had a lot of different hobbies between us. Alby had always played bowls and became Vice Captain.



I took it up when I was in my fifties. We were both golfers with Alby starting first and then I started playing after I retired in my sixties.

Another great hobby of mine was making and decorating cakes using sugar craft. I made a lot of celebration cakes for friends and “friends” of friends! It became a problem when I ended up constructing very complex cakes and was then only charging for the ingredients and forgetting to charge for my time.

Alby didn't entirely give up work after he retired either. He began working for an Arab family in Little Chalfont, chauffeuring their limousine for them when they were in the country, which was only for about 4-6 weeks a year. The family were lovely and we even got invited up to dinner with them. The only issue was the mother of the family couldn't speak any English so she and I spent most of the evening conversing in sign language – goodness knows what we were saying to each other!



Out with the limousine for my birthday!

We were even up for a bit of cycling although I was never very safe on a bike!



Bumps along the road

There are, of course, bumps along the road where life doesn't quite go as you want it to. Some are passing and others can be more permanent.

I ended up having a hysterectomy when I was 35 years old. I was very ill and was sent to a convalescence home to recover. I hated this as I was away from Alby and the children and couldn't see them. In the end my best friend's husband, John and Pam, came and got me and drove me home – much against doctors' advice.

When I was 36 years old, I developed hepatitis. I kept collapsing and went very yellow. I had been diagnosed with a salt deficiency in August and then had too much salt in my body! I ended up on a very strict diet as I was only allowed to eat white meat and couldn't have anything with fat on or in it.

In 2015 I suffered a stroke. I had a chest infection before Christmas and then ended up in hospital, dehydrated from a UTI. All my drugs including my blood pressure tablets were stopped although I had a check-up at the hospital. At home one day I felt ill, stood up and shouted out and then fell down. Luckily friends had come to visit and saw me on the floor through the window. Apparently, I got up and then fell down again but I don't remember that. They got a key from a neighbour and called an

ambulance. The stroke was caused by a blood clot in the back of my brain which developed because I was not taking my blood pressure tablets. The doctor should have kept me on them. I recovered slowly from the stroke but unfortunately have not been able to drive again.

Life with dementia

In 2012 Alby was officially diagnosed with dementia, however I believe that he started to have symptoms as far back as 2002. Dementia is such a wicked disease as it robbed Alby of so much of his independence and robbed him of who he was and always had been.

Alby lost all interest in things. However, the only thing which kept him going was singing. This is something that a lot of people say helps dementia sufferers. We used to go to a church in Beaconsfield where there was a singing group which sang all the old songs like "Pack up your troubles". Alby used to sing along at the top of his voice! He would even sing the West Ham Football song "I'm forever blowing bubbles" on his own to the rest of the group. He would know all the words of the old songs and also Sweet Caroline by Neil Diamond who was Alby's favourite singer. There is a video of Alby singing Sweet Caroline to a band who were playing below the balcony where we

were staying for our diamond wedding anniversary.

Alby went into the Croft care home in Amersham middle of January 2020 for respite care, I was becoming very tired as he was waking a lot in the night. When he was there he got sepsis which was identified very quickly by the care staff and was taken to Stoke Mandeville hospital, where he was for at least 5 weeks, I visited everyday. During the time he was in hospital social services got involved and decided I could not look after Alby anymore and found a care home for him in Chesham which look after people with dementia. He was taken into the Care home on the 3rd March, I visited him everyday when I was allowed to but walking away and leaving him every day was the hardest thing to do. He wanted me to stay and he couldn't understand why I was going. When the country went into lockdown in March all the care homes went into lockdown as well and no-one, including me, could go to visit. Luckily one of the carers, who was lovely, would FaceTime me on the phone so I could see Alby that way but it was very, very hard.

About two weeks after lockdown, I was told Alby was ill he was suffering from Covid, I couldn't go to see him and the children couldn't come to see

me. On the 11th April I remember talking to him on FaceTime as he was in bed and I told him “Go to sleep darling. It’s all too much” and Alby died that day. I never said goodbye properly and feel that I should have gone and banged on the door to be let in. However, they wouldn’t have let me in and I would probably have been arrested which would not have helped! The whole situation was just cruel. Due to all the restrictions, we also couldn’t have the funeral and say goodbye in the way we wanted.

However, what does bring me comfort is that Alby always knew who me, the children and his friends were and recognised us to the very end. It was a real part of himself that he didn’t lose in the midst of that horrible illness. Our lives were always about more than this illness.

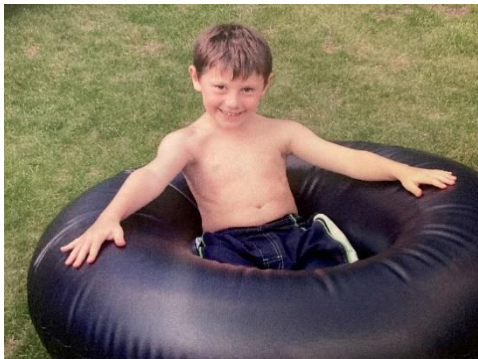
Our family growing up and expanding

Karen married Terry on August 16th, 1986. They have two daughters, Claire and Rachel who have both had children of their own with their partners. Rachel has Hazel and Claire has twins, Luca and Eloise.





Andy meanwhile married Vivien on July 29th, 1990.
They have two boys, Alex and Greg.



Alby was a real family person, like me, and adored his children and grandchildren. I am very excited to become a great Nana and he would have been very excited to have been a great granddad.



I think Alby and I did so much in our lives together including bringing up our wonderful family, making lovely friends who have stayed friends

all our lives, and experiencing amazing things we never imagined we would ever do including our wonderful travels around the world.



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