

Friends

Other friends we had in Biddenden came from further afield like Betty and Ted from Maidstone. Betty met Eva in training college and funnily enough they both had the same initials, EMS. Betty and Ted and their friends, Edna and John, used to come down for weekends and leave their caravans on the grass verge of our drive and we had good times together. Also we had friends called George and Hazel Schneider who lived at Tenterden and worked in London. They are unfortunately now divorced but keep in touch.

Our bank manager also became a good friend and we went out with him and his wife many times for dances and meals. He told Eva that we came to a mutual understanding on our first meeting. This was because we were looking to buy a farm at auction and I went to see him, not realising he had just replaced the manager we knew. He asked me how he could help, and I said I wanted to borrow £80,000. He said he wasn't sure about that, and I said to him what a pity it was that as soon as I had an understanding with the manager, he moved on and I had to start again. He then looked at the proposal again and agreed to lend the money. He was counting the days to early retirement, as he did not like the way banks were moving. He was still with us when we moved to Sedlescombe but retired shortly afterwards. He died six months later of a heart attack. So don't retire!

We had several visits from relatives in Canada when we were at Biddenden, the first being Rod, his wife Dot and their family. They hired a Volkswagen minibus. Eva went with Rod to pick it up in Essex. When he came to a roundabout Rod went round the wrong way. All the other drivers just stopped and stared, so there was no accident. Later Frank came over with Marjorie (also known as Dot). He had a mini and seemed to have no trouble with the different road layout.

After I started going out with Eva, and during our married years, we went dancing both at Oxted and later at Maidstone. We got our silver medals for dancing at a club in Maidstone. I made wine and we joined the Maidstone wine club where we had some good evenings with Betty and Ted. Later we went to dances with our bank manager and his wife, and to shows and meals out with George and Hazel.

Meanwhile, I carried on with my shooting. This involved going out at night with an old car and 12 bores. We started this at Norheads using an ex-army three ton lorry, which is a bit over the top, but it did allow for an extra spotlight to be used by someone standing in the back alongside the guns. This person was sometimes Eva.



Later on at Biddenden we used old cars which we either got free or very cheap. One of these was a DAF with a rubber band type automatic gearbox. This had a seized up engine as it had been abandoned at the local garage for a year. We cured this by taking off the cylinder head and clouting down on the pistons with a

mallet and a piece of wood. This worked a treat. I did this with Michael Gardner who lived in the village. He and his wife Pamela were good friends. We enjoyed several nights of rabbit shooting in this car. We removed the windscreen and took it in turns driving, with the other person shooting.

We also had with us John Pike who sat in the back but didn't shoot. John lived towards Headcorn on about eight acres in a house he was doing up. I used to help him on his land, mowing and baling, and also took his girls to school when he was unable to. I rang him up recently and told him I had gone wing walking. He said "You always were a mad bugger."

Ashford market had a produce stall selling apples and other fruit and vegetables. The woman selling didn't like you to handle the fruit and told me off for testing the oranges. I told her they always did it in France. She replied that we are not in France in a rather loud voice. My sister Ruth was with me at the time and walked away (sisterly support).

Another time I was buying sheep sitting on the raised benches in the market. Mary, my niece, was with me. She was particularly good looking. We were talking and laughing together and I could see opposite one of our relief workers looking at us. When I next saw him he said "Who was that with you in the market?" I said that it was my niece, to which he replied in a disbelieving way "Oh, yeah?"