

**I'm in the house of Barbara Beinder at 17 High Street - February 2026.**

**Why did you and Dick move to Bridge originally.**

Dick managed to get a job in Margate – he was in teaching, so he applied for a Deputy Head's job in one of the special schools in Margate and got the post. We wanted to live on this side near Dover and near the coast so that we could hop across the Channel for holidays. It's about 19 miles from Margate.

**Where did you come from?**

I was born in Halifax in Yorkshire, but most of my life I lived in Lancashire, in Morecambe, but when I did my nursing course it was at Greenwich. That's when I met Richard. When we got together, we decided to buy a house in Norwood, near Croydon. I worked at the local hospital and we stayed there for about 5 years I think and Dick worked at a comprehensive school in Peckham.

**But you found this and it was the right place to live.**

We looked at several houses in Canterbury, but we either rejected them or made an offer and it wasn't accepted. One particular one, was a lovely house on the Dover Road and we made an offer for that. But it was a gentleman who lived abroad, who had been left the house by a relative. It took a long time to organise and by that time he wanted more money for it and we couldn't manage it. We were sorry we lost that because it was charming.

**How old were you both when you came here?**

Dick was 12 years older than me and I think I must have been 28, something like that.

**So, you were quite young really.**

Yes, I feel it's part of me. What impressed us was that the day we arrived the neighbours were so lovely. The lady at number 19 came out with a tray of tea for us and the removal men. Next door were John and June. I don't know if you remember them. She was a sculptress and he was a bit of a painter. They had three children. They were all very nice and friendly. Barry and Pleasance at number 13 came about the same time as us. They came from the Dane John and we got to know them.

**This house was an infill was it?**

Yes, between the Kirk's and number 19 there must have been a piece of land. The agent when we bought this told us that this was an infill. If you look at the back of the house, you can see there must have been a passageway and at one time they must have incorporated that passageway into the sitting room here.

**When was your house built?**

1820. In the cellar you can see that the foundations are not totally brick, there's a lot of flint and stones. It's quite distinctive. The little alley way that used to be the coal cellar runs underneath. There's a cellar proper then there's a passageway from front to back.

### **Was it originally built by Trinity House?**

No, according to my house deeds there was a gentleman here who was a draper and had a business in Canterbury. He had the house built. That story about Trinity House – I'm not sure whether it's true or not. It's said that the house was halfway between Whitstable and Dover, so the pilots would be picked up at one port and when they organised a ship to go round, they would get off at the other.

### **Albany House and Pleasance and Barry Kirk's house, were they built earlier?**

I'm sure they were. If you look at Francine's, number 19 and you look at number 21, if you come away from it and look at it, personally I believe it was one house. It is two now but if you think it must have been one house. If you look at the canopy, it must have been one house. Funnily enough I was talking to Billie Anderson who used to live there, they shared the same telephone between 19 and 21. The telephone was in a cupboard with a sliding door. If it rang and it was for the other people, you could slide your side closed.

Our telephone was a party line and we shared it with the people next door.

### **Yes, I remember party lines.**

Yes, you picked it up and if there was somebody else talking, you had to put it down straight away. Which was a bit disconcerting sometimes. One funny incident I remember was when Dick picked up the phone and the chap at the end didn't wait for any conversation. He seemed to think we were the vet and he went straight into what was concerning him and it turned out he was a farmer and was worried about one of his sheep. Dick couldn't get a word in edgeways and he thought the lady next door wouldn't be interested so it was a wrong number really. It was a bit of a mix up.

### **Which year did you come to the village?**

1966, a long time ago.

### **You came earlier than us then, we came in '69. I think we bought the house in '68 and moved in in '69.**

You lived in the King's School, didn't you?

### **Yes, I was a house master there for 12 years and that was 1978 until 1990.**

It struck me the other day that for the first years that we were here, the French onion sellers used to come to the house. Did they come to you? They did that for about the first 2 years we were here. I think they were a group and they stayed in a barn somewhere and put strings on the onions and then go round the houses to sell them.

### **Jennifer would remember better than I.**

You know Church Meadow? Well for the first few years we were here a circus would come and they had a big top in the field. They used to say you didn't have to go to a show, but for a small fee you could go and look at the animals. They had things like performing dogs and ponies and stuff and believe it or not, one llama. I heard the owner rode the llama down the High Street and tied it up outside the post office while

he went to buy some stamps. That might be a bit far-fetched or maybe it was an advertising thing.

**I remember a circus in Canterbury where Sainsbury's is.**

**Well, why did you come to Bridge and not, say, Bishopsbourne?**

We saw a nice house in Wickhambreaux but that was no good because there was only one bus a day and I didn't drive. There were plenty of buses running through Bridge and I used to use them a lot when I was a nurse at the hospital. Normally, I would get the bus into Canterbury and then take the bus to the hospital. If I finished at 8 o'clock at night or something, Dick would come and pick me up.

**That was the Kent & Canterbury, was it?**

Yes, that was before they built the new part. I was the 1937 building when I was there.

**We had just arrived, it was September 1969 and Jennifer said we'd better get to the hospital for the birth of Rebecca. I remember going into the old building and there was nobody there. I was running down the corridor and a nurse came out and said I shouldn't be running. So, I said "My wife's in labour!"**

It's a circuitous route to the Maternity Unit. Now it's the Skin Clinic.

**How long did you work there?**

Maybe 5 years. I worked on the Eye Unit at one time, and I was looking after a patient who was anxious and we used to talk quite a lot. He said he'd noticed that I seemed to be telling the other nurses what to do. I said that was part of a senior nurse's job, telling the young ones how things worked. He said he thought I'd make a good teacher. I'd never thought about it, but I went home and talked to Richard about it. It would be quite a change of career. This patient said he would back me if I decided to do it because he was a senior lecturer at Christchurch. So, I did apply and went for an interview and before I knew it, I was there.

**How long were you at Christchurch?**

Three years. I did a BA afterwards because I just did the Primary Certificate for teaching, but I also wanted to do a degree and be at work as well. I did the Open University Degree, but I couldn't do it for the first year of teaching because of getting used to a new job.

**Where did you teach after that?**

I was in various places. I usually taught the 7-year-olds or Reception. I was at St Stephen's for most of my teaching career. I loved it. It's a stunning job. Did you know Peggy Hayes who was Head at St Stephen's?

**I knew Stuart Pywell who was head there.**

He came at about the time I left.

**Did you drive then or go by bus?**

Beryl Heap who lived on Bridge Down worked at the Junior School and she gave me a lift. Then I learnt to drive.

**Dick was Deputy Head.**

Yes, at St Anthony's Margate. It was a special school, and they did quite a lot of socialising with the children. So, I went on quite a lot of their holidays. I had the nursing qualification so I could help with their medication. That was quite an experience. We all stayed in a big hotel.

Some of the children were quite difficult to deal with but they really enjoyed it. Dick produced booklets for them.

**Dick's hobby was painting.**

Yes, and wine making.

**Did he use the cellar here?**

Funnily enough, no. When we used to go on holiday camping in the Summer, he used to take all his tackle with him and set it up in the campsite and paint.

We had those Formica topped tables in the kitchen and he was often drawing on the tabletop because you could wipe it clean and then transpose it on to a canvas or painting.

**I'm looking at portraits of sailing ships.**

Yes, when we first came to this house he thought we could do with the picture of a ship over the mantelpiece, so he painted some.

**It's so alive.**

That one at the top is interesting it's the SS Great Britain which is in dry dock in Bristol. We went to see it.

**I think I saw it years ago when Dominic and Amanda lived in Bristol and we visited.**

Before I met him, he did a whole series of pictures – Trafalgar Square, the Tower of London and so on.

**Did he ever think of being an artist?**

I don't think so. Some of the best things that he did (I've still got them) were done when he was at St Anthony's. They used to have a big Christmas Fair for fundraising. He thought the children should know about traditional Christmas, so he did a series of big pictures like Peter Pan and some of the Dickens stories. He'd read parts of some of them in Assembly. I don't know what to do with them. Perhaps I'll leave them in the cellar for somebody to find when they buy the house.

Of course, there are things going on this year to remember the opening of the bypass. I remember sitting in the road with Barry to stop the traffic from time to time.

**I remember Brian Lewis and he came round and said he was going to do a sit-in in the road. We dressed the kids up. Dominic had a military uniform and Rebecca was Snow White.**

They had a fancy-dress parade to celebrate and there was a pram race. Dick did some cartoons for that, I think there are about 12. It was quite an event. People waited years for that road.

**I can remember the solicitor we employed to make sure everything was kosher. He said he knew there was talk of a bypass but said "It won't happen in my lifetime." In fact, within 5 or 6 years it was built.**

Do you hear noise from it where you live?

**I do hear it when it's coming from the East, but otherwise most of the year the wind comes from the West, so I don't notice it.**

No, mostly I don't hear anything. You get used to it. There were accidents though.

**It's difficult now to imagine what it was like. TIRs came through.**

Lorries are bigger now of course. Do you remember they put a pelican crossing near where the White Horse is. You had to press a button to stop the traffic, but the timing was so short you had to almost run to get across. People complained because mums with prams and elderly people couldn't get across.

**There were some deaths. A lorry driver had a heart attack and ploughed into the shop. Jonathan Hill was knocked off his bike on the way to school.**

Did you know Mr Prickett who had the grocer's? He was a real character. He had a bench put in his shop and the OAPs used to sit and chat, even if they weren't there to buy anything.

When you first came here, did you do all your food shopping in Bridge?

**No, because I can remember going down to Folkestone, trying to look for a Sainsbury's, but there was no big store here except for Vye & Sons in Canterbury.**

I remember when I finished work at lunchtime at the hospital I used to come back and do all my shopping in Bridge. There was Mrs Turner's shop, a greengrocer. She had a good selection.

**I remember once coming back through Denton and the car in front hit a pheasant but didn't stop. So, we looked and it was dead, so we brought it home. Then I saw our cat Clive pulling it along, so I put it in the freezer and we plucked and ate it.**

I think the main change is that there are not many shops in Bridge. There were a lot when we first came here.

**You mentioned Mr Prickett, there was the Post Office and Mrs Turner, Vye & Sons.**

I've got a feeling that at Maudsley House, next to Mrs Turner's, part of that was a little grocers. Philip Wicker lives there now.

**Peter Malkin bought what became Skippers and that was a good restaurant. Prior to that there was Gold's, a delicatessen.**

Peter Malkin later took on Skippers as a restaurant and called it the Lady Hamilton. I don't know that he changed much there.

There used to be a chemist down that end of the village near Brewery Lane. And the bakery of course.

**I remember coming home at 2 in the morning and the smell of bread baking was wonderful.**

It was a sad day when that had to close. Then when you think of the shops there have been in Western Avenue. There was a hairdresser there and an iron monger. Alfie Jarvis had a photographer there too. They lived in Brewery Lane near the country club. After Richard died, I thought of moving. I looked at that house, and it was great. But there was a line of trees that masked the garden.

Just along from there is what was Anne Shirley's house, which is stunning. Anne was fascinated by Russia and the Polar regions. She had piles of books and papers. Now, Nick, her son has renovated the house and it's all beautifully done.

**It's much more open now, they've cut down lots of trees and it's all open.**

Nick said they're not going to do much to the garden, just leave it as it is with the stream running through, it's lovely.

**Can we turn our attention to the school? You were appointed by Anna Newton to do what?**

If teachers were off sick or something like that, I was a "supply lady". I always had a little bag packed with things for the children to do. Usually, you got a call about 8 o'clock to see if you were free to go in. Sometimes when one of the teachers went on a course for 2 days, they would give me a call in advance and tell me which class it would be. So then I could ask the teacher what they wanted me to do and nine times out of ten, they would say I could do what I liked. Or I could follow up on something they'd been doing. You need to be flexible. I used to do a bit of supply at Whitstable too. If you go to the same class often, you get to know about them. I used to make a plan of where they were sitting in the room. You need to get to know them quickly. It was a nice idea and I enjoyed it.

**Jennifer remembers you volunteering to plant flowers along by the Nailbourne.**

That was when I was on the Parish Council which I did for about 8 years. We wanted the children to get to know about the village. I think I got a lottery funding grant for the bulbs we planted. If you could include things like members of the community and children involved, you could apply. I think Jenny wrote a note of recommendation for me. Sue Hodges took over from me and she did a lot too.

Now there are a few ladies who do flowers in various parts of the village. It's good that people do things like that for the community. There seems to be a big gap now between the young families and the older people in Bridge.

**Jennifer bemoans the fact that when she was about 60 she volunteered to help with the History Society, but now, 20 years on, there are few people to take it on.**

Yes, I was talking to Jane Lovelock the other day about this, and I suggested we could help. But she reminded me how old we are! It needs younger people.

**Yes, recently when the History Society launched the "Bridge Past & Present" book the Hall was packed. So maybe that will help in the future.**

I think Rene and his partner at the Red Lion do a lot for the village.

**They've made it into a real community hub. Harry is a brilliant gardener.**

Sometimes you meet people who know Bridge because they've stopped at one of the pubs for a meal before they go abroad. The children from the school sing carols there at Christmas and that's nice.

The other group of people who I think do a fantastic job is the Fish Scheme. I've used it a lot because I often need a lift to hospital appointments. The drivers are lovely and helpful.

**One final question. Can you think of any colourful characters in Bridge?**

Do you remember in the High Street there was a house called Anne's tearoom? People were very excited because one day Mick Jagger appeared.

I might have told you about the lady who used to clean the Village Hall – I think her name was Rosy and she used to diligently tidy up and clean. She used to come with a bicycle and all her cleaning bits and pieces in a basket, but she never road the bicycle, just pushed it to the Hall.

I used to like Charlie who lived in one of the little cottages near here. He was born at the Ship House. He was Wyn Tamsett's Dad. That was long time ago, he was 80-90 when I first knew him.

**Wyn was the first person I recorded twelve years ago. She had a lot to say, and she remembered Bridge in the 1930s.**

Yes. She spoke in a really lovely old Kentish way.