

Builder, photographer, and farm book-keeping Steve and Zena Gunter



GROWING UP IN MAIDEN BRADLEY

Steve: “My Grandmother on my father’s side lived in the village, but 59 The Rank was my family home. My dad was Kenneth Gunter and he was a painter and decorator - he was site foreman for a company in Warminster, and then self-employed. My mum cleaned and she also cooked in the pub. We were four brothers in total, and all my brothers were born at home, though I was born at hospital – I suppose I was the first, so they were being careful.”

Steve: “We had an inside toilet, but our neighbour’s toilet was outside. We always had a tin bath in front of the fire and the water was heated using the Rayburn. We all used the same water! And we’d see the neighbour heading down the garden with their newspaper! There was no central heating, and it was cold, but we got used to it. There was always frost on the inside of the windows in the winter.”

Steve: “I went to the village school aged four, but it closed in 1969. So then I went to Kilmington and then to Frome. There were about 40 children in the village school – two classes for the older and younger children. Most children then went onto Mere.”

SHOPS, SWEETS, AND THE DOCTOR

Steve: “I did my paper round from the Manor House general store. I remember they had jars of sweets you could buy – liquorice and black jacks. I remember swimming in the swimming pool on the recreation ground – it was used as stored water in case there was a fire at Sydenhams. And there was always a summer show and bonfire night.”

Steve: “There was always a nurse living in the bungalow on Frome view and the doctor’s surgery was on High Street – once a week in Kim Baker’s House and then later in Mrs Seal’s front room. Now in the village hall. I think the doctor has always been a constant.”

STARTING WORK IN CONSTRUCTION

Steve: “After school, I went to work at Sydenham’s timber yard for about 4 or 5 years, and then I was made redundant in the recession. I kept working in construction and then in the ‘90s, my brother Brian and I joined Doug Ball in a partnership which is DSB Builders Limited – Doug, Steve, and Brian. I think we’ve probably worked on about 25% to 30% of all the buildings in the village at some point.”



HOME AND VILLAGE LIFE

Zena: “We got married in 1985 at Stourton Church. We met in the pub – it was full of young people then, it was the only meeting place we had. Saturday nights were always so busy you couldn’t get in. It was great fun. Bill Trim used to sing “Mule Train” and use a tin tray to emphasise certain parts of the song, Doug Ball used to sing too. There were a group of about 5 to 10 of us who met and always sat round on the settle seat.”

Zena: “When I married Steve, I found I was related to several people in the village by marriage. Now there are lots of new people living here so it might not be the same for someone marrying today.”

Zena: “We all used the local bus when we were younger for trips to Frome or Warminster and there was bingo in Shaftesbury on a Friday night. The bus was a social occasion – everyone had their own seat, you never sat in someone else’s seat, and it was a chance to catch up. It was a little bit of freedom for my mum and dad not having to drive us everywhere. At one time, there was a nice restaurant and then later a café on Church Street.”

BOOKKEEPING

Zena: “My grandparents and parents lived and worked on the Fonthill Estate in Fonthill Bishop when I was born, and then Mum and Dad moved to Stourton which is where I grew up. I started work for the National Trust in various roles and eventually became a bookkeeper and I’ve done that role for various businesses since, including Fonthill Estate. I am now working for a large farming concern in Pilton.”

PHOTOGRAPHY

Steve: “I’ve always taken photos and about 7 years ago, Zena encouraged me to do it more seriously. I exhibited in the village hall on the Wylde Valley Art Trail and it just snowballed from there. This year I’m doing 22 show days and I send cards, prints and calendars all over the world. The internet makes that possible – that has certainly changed village life, when it works!”

