

My friendship with Iris began in about 2004, as I was typing out her husband Alf's memories of his life in Birchington – and beyond. I had known about her ever since I came to Birchington in 1961, and realised quite quickly that she was someone who enjoyed being noticed. She was passionate about the village of Birchington and revelled in being involved in its politics and its life, but she also had a creative turn of mind when it came to fund-raising for anything.

However, it was not until after Alf died that I got to know Iris better. With her husband's death, she lost not only her best friend, but also her means of transport from her farm cottage at the bottom of Brooksend Hill to the village events and All Saints Church. She was still a member of the Birchington Parish Council at this time. Members of the council would arrange to collect and return her home from meetings. I was usually able to run her up to church, when she felt able to come. Her good friends, Steph and Charlie, across the road at College Farmhouse were her other lifeline for transport and on-the-spot friendship.

During the years since Alf died, I have been very grateful to Iris for all the information and photographs she has shared with me about life in the village since she came to live here permanently in 1945. There are now two complete A4 lever-arch files on the Bedwell 'archive' in our Museum!

Iris has found the limitations of age very frustrating, especially her deteriorating sight and increased deafness. I am very grateful to have known her and her dear husband Alf. They have both served the village and its numerous activities very well, giving many hours of their time and effort to, among other things - the Carnival Association, the Chamber of Commerce, The Twinning Association, the Royal British Legion and the Parish Council. It was partly through their efforts that we had such a successful Street Party to celebrate the 50th anniversary of the end of WW 2 in 1995.

I hope Redwood City and California are ready and able to cope with the arrival of Iris early in July! Good luck to her and her family.