

Alec Eugene Coleman 1906 - 1988

Alec Coleman,

Born at Knelle Farm, Beckley on Monday October 8th 1906;

Married Eva Southerden in Rye Harbour on Saturday December 23rd 1933;

Died in Rye Harbour in August 1988 aged 82.

The name Eugene is unusual. It comes from the experiences of Alec's father Stephen during the Boer war. Apparently Stephen's Commanding Officer was named Eugene and he was much admired by his men, so Stephen named Alec after him as a tribute.

Alec was born on Monday October 8, 1906, at Knelle Farm Cottages, Beckley, Sussex (now holiday cottages). He spent the first eight years of his life at Knelle Farm, but in 1914, the Christies, a large landowning family in Kent & Sussex, sold the large estate and broke it up into several farms that survive today. Knelle was famous for its excellent herd of Sussex cattle and good Hops.

Alec and his older sister Edna went to school in Beckley and they had to walk approximately three miles across fields every day there and back. As a result of the Knelle estate being sold, in 1914 Alec moved with his parents Stephen and Annie (Ellen) to Castle Farm Winchelsea.

Alec spent much of his time at Bosney Farm Iden (about five miles distant), with his cousin Gertrude (Gertie) Coleman (daughter of Richard Coleman and Eliza Pettet - Richard being the brother of Alec's father Stephen). Alec's mother Annie was deaf and so he knew how to speak using sign language with his hands.

Alec and Edna attended school in Winchelsea and when Alec left school in 1919, he worked on Castle Farm Winchelsea with his father Stephen and also was a bread and milk delivery boy for a shop in Winchelsea. Alec became friends with a Joseph Stonham and they used to come to Rye Harbour regularly sometimes with the Winchelsea Football Club where Eva was friends with Joseph's sister. Alec and Eva met in about 1927 as a result of this mutual friendship (Joseph was killed 1928 in the Mary Stanford Lifeboat).

Before they married in 1933, Alec used to ride his pushbike from Winchelsea to Udimore to visit Eva (in service then) to do whatever young people do. At this time he was delivering bread and milk for a shop in Winchelsea.

In 1928, Alec moved to Tanyard Cottages Winchelsea with his parents when his father Stephen retired from Castle Farm (Stephen had to retire from Castle Farm because he suffered from Asthma). Stephen's wife Annie stayed on at Tanyard cottages after she was widowed in 1930, and when they married in 1933 in Rye Harbour, Alec & Eva lived next door until they moved to Rye Harbour in 1936. Cecil Granville Eastwood (known as Mons) was Alec's best man.

After they married in 1933, Eva worked as Parlourmaid in Periteu Mental Home Winchelsea until 1936, at the same time as her sister Caroline was Cook. Alec now worked for two builders, Ashendens of Rye, and Neeves Builders and he clearly had great talent in the building and engineering trades as he was to use them greatly in the years to come. In 1936 they moved to Rye Harbour and Alec's mother moved with them having been widowed in 1930.

Alec now went to work with Charles Southerden (Eva's father) and Jack Moon as a boat builder and repairer. They built their workshops on old wrecks that used to be on the River Rother at Rye Harbour and they continued a successful business for a number of years until Charles died in 1939. One of the first boats they made was the 'First Event'.

When Charles died in 1939, Alec went to work on Merricks farm Icklesham where he stayed until his retirement in 1971. During the 1950s Alec built a boat and named it for my mum - the Eve.

Eva Coleman: 1912 - 2012

Eva Southerden,

**Born in Stoneworks Cottages, Rye Harbour on Friday August 9th 1912;
Christened in Rye Harbour Church on Sunday September 8th 1912;
Married Alec Coleman in Rye Harbour on Saturday December 23rd 1933;
Died in Conquest Hospital Hastings on Tuesday July 3rd 2012, aged 99.**

Eva Southerden was born in Stoneworks Cottages Rye Harbour in the early part of the last century when the village was essentially a small fishing community, much more remote than it is now. Her father Charles Southerden originally lived at the Royal William in Camber where his father William was a fisherman and Innkeeper, but in about 1885 Charles' parents moved to Rye Harbour and he became a fisherman, eventually owning two boats.

In 1903 Eva's parents Charles and Caroline were married in Rye Harbour church and they moved to Stoneworks Cottages where they eventually had twelve children, Eva being their fifth child.

As the family grew, they moved to Harbour View, a larger house next to where the Rye Harbour Garage used to be and it was here that Eva grew up. Eva went to school at Rye Harbour, the School consisting of about forty-five children in two classes but this closed at the outbreak of war in 1939 and it never reopened.

When Eva left school in 1926, she went into service in a house in Rye Hill, Rye, where she stayed for about three years. She then moved into service in Udimore and stayed there for about three years to 1933. Eva remembered the village flooding during the 1930s when the sea wall was breached at Winchelsea Beach.

At this time her future husband Alec Coleman was living on Castle Farm Winchelsea and he used to come to Rye Harbour regularly sometimes with the Winchelsea Football Club and Eva and Alec first met in 1927.

In 1928 tragedy was to strike the village. At 6:45 am on the morning of 15 November 1928, the *Mary Stanford* lifeboat from Rye Harbour responded to a Latvian ship in distress in the English channel. The crew of the *Mary Stanford* did not know that the vessel had already been rescued and, in heavy rain and seas, all of the seventeen-man crew of the *Mary Stanford* were drowned, including Eva's older brother Charles.

Eva and Alec were married at Rye Harbour Church in 1933, and they initially lived in Tanyard Cottages Winchelsea. At this time Eva worked as Parlourmaid in Periteu Mental Home Winchelsea until 1936, at the same time as her sister Caroline was Cook. In 1936 they moved to Rye Harbour and Alec's mother moved with them having been widowed in 1930.

Alec went to work with Eva's father Charles Southerden as a boat builder and repairer and they continued a successful business for a number of years until Charles died in 1939. Alec then went to work on Merricks farm Icklesham where he stayed until his retirement in 1971.

Eva and Alec lived at Rye Harbour all their lives, until in 1997 Eva moved to sheltered accommodation in Five Villages House Icklesham.

Eva's ashes will be interred in Rye Harbour Churchyard, next to Alec who died in 1988.

Her brother Bob; her four children Eileen, John, Ronald and Christopher; ten grandchildren and twenty-four great grandchildren survive Eva.

Alec and Eva's children

Eileen

Born on Sunday September 3rd 1939, married Edward Lucas, now living in Tunbridge Wells.

John

Born on Tuesday November 30th 1943, married Jennifer Waterworth, Katherine Hoey, now living in Bexhill.

Ronald

Born on Tuesday September 17th 1946, married Doreen Martin, Rita Peatfield, now living in Westfield.

Christopher

Born on Sunday September 25th 1949, married Christina Sherwood, now living in Chelmsford, Essex.