

Know your Neighbour

We start the New Year with a couple who have lived in the area all their lives but moved into the village of Ringmore when they married in 1959. They are Alan and Mary King who live at Mandava. This is the lovely property at the end of the lane that runs down to the Journeys End.

Alan was born in the Royal Oak at Bigbury and Mary was born in Kingswear before moving to Aveton Gifford at the age of three years old. As with most kids growing up in a village they had to find their own entertainment and one such game was to pile into the village phone box and ring the phone box in another village hoping that some-one would answer. Mary and a couple of friends did this one day and Alan and his mates were the lads answering the phone— this led to a date at the cinema in Kingsbridge , followed by a five year courtship resulting in their wedding at Aveton Gifford church.



Alan's job was a herdsman at Houghton Farm and he lived with his parents in the cottage opposite the farm, Mary looked after the family home in Aveton Gifford, but they needed a home when they married. Alan moved to be a herdsman at Lower Manor Farm in Ringmore, which had a cottage tied to the job. They moved into Mount Pleasant cottage (currently the home of Hazel and George

Freeman) and this is where they lived for a number of years with both their children, David (Yogi) and Andrew being born there. The house was not the most habitable when they moved in but with a lot of hard work they made it a home.

In the late 60's, Alan was made redundant when the owner of Lower Manor farm decided to sell up and Alan was left without a job. He joined Mary's father, who was a master stonemason and worked for him and his partner . Mary at that time worked for the Lutwyche's who owned Ringmore Veau but eventually with the loss of Alan's job went their home and they needed somewhere else to live. Alan and Mary approached the Lutwyche's about buying a plot of their land to build a house of their own—they didn't want to lose Mary, so they agreed and the kitchen garden of Ringmore Veau became the site of their new home.

With the help of Mary's father along with a lot of hard work Mandava was built—they had to take out a mortgage, which by today's standards is small but in 1970 seemed huge. Whilst the house was being built they lived in a caravan on site and stored all their belongings in the vine house that was on the land. During this time on a hot summer's day a freak summer storm hit the South Hams and huge hailstones came down, water rushed down the road from Houghton, straight into their land filling up the vine house and ruining all their possessions — but 15 months later they moved into Mandava. The name 'Mandava' is made up of letters from their names; Mary, Andrew, David and Alan.

Alan for a time continued to work for the building business that Mary's father and partner owned, turning down an offer to become a partner, but instead decided to work for himself. His first job was painting a house in Kingston and from there lots more work followed. Yogi , when he left school at the age of 17 joined Alan and eventually Andy after first working elsewhere. In 1978 A M King & Sons was formed and continues today, although Alan retired around 10 years ago.

Over the years both Alan and Mary have been involved with the village; Alan playing football for the Ringmore Canaries when he was young, the football team was in the South Hams League and their pitch was up at Houghton Farm. When the kids were small, they regularly organised the Christmas parties at the WI hall and for a number of years they both ran the youth club at St Ann's Chapel, with Mary being secretary for a time. When Rosemary and Dick Brinkhurst ran the JE a discussion one night in the bar led to an annual firework display being organised and Mary and Alan kindly offered the use of their field for the event. Money was raised on the display night and during the year to purchase the fireworks for the following year—the firework displays continued for a number of years but was eventually stopped when health & safety & other red tape got too much.

Nowadays, Alan and Mary are enjoying living at Mandava in their retirement, with its mature gardens, that boasts 2 lovely tall palm trees which Alan planted when only inches high. They are surrounded by their family all of whom live in Ringmore and enjoy plenty of visits from them all.