

## Joe and Jean Skitmore - 1946



Ernest and Lucy Skitmore



Alfred and Ida Stern – wedding day 1922

**Extract from: *Escaping Hitler: A Jewish Boy's Quest for Freedom and His Future*  
by Phyllida Scrivens  
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Every bride hopes the sun will shine for her wedding and on Tuesday 21 May 1946, Jean Skitmore was not disappointed. The only sadness was the empty pews on the 'groom's side'.

Joe thought often about his absent parents during that special day, knowing how happy and proud they would be to see their son married, even if it was in a Christian church.

The Skitmores, Leaches and Bidewells turned out in force, delighted to be involved in the first family wedding since the war, looking forward to the home-baked buffet back at Leys Lane. On entering the Norman church, they were almost overwhelmed by the enormous vaulted ceiling, slender pillars, fifteenth-century rood screen and ancient stained-glass windows; a stark contrast to the Brethren Gospel Halls they were used to.

Proudly dressed in freshly-laundered Army uniforms complete with caps and polished buttons, the young couple made their vows, deeply moved by the solemn pledges to one another. The witnesses that day were Jean's younger brother Gordon and her father. Taking his responsibilities seriously, Ernest practiced and practiced his signature as the great day approached. Joe looked forward to a future surrounded by people who lived their lives as his parents and neighbours had done, simple country souls who welcomed him unconditionally into their close-knit fold. They knew that this young man would take care of their Jean and in turn they would take care of him. Günter Stern had found his new family.

**Phyllida Scrivens**