# Joan Thompson née Hatherale talks about Broad Town

Broad Town, This is where my heart is, and will ever be.

Joan moved to 28 Broad Town in 1921 when she was 7. Her happy childhood memories stretch throughout the length of the village from breaking the heel off her best shoes at Goldborough to watching a thatched cottage burn down from the " Dad's Army hut "on the hangings on 3rd July 1942.

Even to this day Joan is grateful for Mrs Crocker's kindness and first aid skills following the shoe incident.

Joan's reminiscences are a rare opportunity to understand social and cultural history in Broad Town.

As a twelve year old Joan recalls juggling education alongside looking after siblings when her mother was hospitalised. Joan's brothers can be seen in this 1930's photograph of the children attending Broad Town School.

Pearl Bishop Nellie Smith, Gwen Smith,
Edna Summers. Lily Bishop. Gracie Little,
Joan Green Kathleen Hunt. Edward Hatherale
Evan Hatherale Frank Hovegrove

Local jobs were in supply, however, transport was by foot. On a daily basis Joan walked up Broad Town road along Pye Lane and up the hangings past Pantywick to work at the RAF base in Clyffe Pypard. She also took a job in the telephone exchange in Wootton Bassett – again her commute was by foot. These were happy jobs.

A stint in a factory by Reading was however not so pleasant as city girls were cruel and didn't appreciate the innocence of rural life, luckily Joan escaped factory work and joined the Wrens.

Happiness and good humour resonates from Joan's memories. When an evacuee with his leg in plaster came to live in Broad Town the children were despatched to retrieve an ancient wheelchair from the vicarage. Exuberant young lads (including Joan's brother) pushed the chair as fast as they could down Broad Town hill until it crashed causing a clip round the ear!

And now for the metaphorical and literal sting in the tale ……

Mr Price from Manor Farm gave the village an old army hut from Salisbury. The girl's toilets had an open plank at the back exposing any innocent incumbent to the elements and also providing the platform for cheeky boys to flush bouquets of nettles along any sitting tenants!

Memories of quenching children's thirst with freshly made lemonade following games of tennis on the vicarage lawn sit alongside the well-attended village hall Thrupenny Hop. Joan reminiscences about the shops in Broad Town stressing that the rationale for moving house from 28 Broad Town to Elizabeth cottage was "to be nearer the shop" and also recalls buying socks from the other shop behind the village hall! Broad Town Road had two busy times of day that you could set you watch by, namely, when the cows came in to parlours to be milked. Apart from these "busy" times the children safely and happily played in Broad Town Road.

Joan met Pete (?) in Compton Bassett, married, lived abroad and had three children (names?) moving into the first Redhills new build in 1947.

Winding forward to the nineteen nineties Joan shares a newspaper cutting :

VILLAGE LIFE

Broad Town

Broad Town: not the usual sort of picture-book village

Words by
Nancy Connolly
Pictures by
Paul Stallard

Queens Head

Broadtown Motor Co

R65 POY

Broadtown, This is where my heart is, and will ever be.

The view from Joan’s fourth Broad Town home hasn’t changed in the 97 years she has known Broad Town. Looking out on the White Horse where as a child she used to sit on the eye and pick plums from Coblers Hall

Joan has a twinkle in her eye and shares her poems and stories with gusto and enthusiasm. We felt waves of awe-struck silence followed by rapturous laughter, then, without fail, we erupted into a standing ovation. Joan’s happy memories and unending love of Broad Town left us intrigued, honoured and delighted. Joan had cast a happy spell on us all!