

# Brompton Memories



*Accounts of life in Brompton  
before, during and after the Second World War  
recorded by the Brompton Heritage Group*

2021

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## Vera Brittain - Growing up before World War II

Vera was one of four children living in a house at Water End with Mum, Dad, Gran and Grandad. Her father worked at the linoleum factory in Northallerton and, before her marriage, her mother had worked at Yeoman's Mill. Vera's Dad, like many others, had an allotment where he grew marvellous rhubarb, as well as the usual vegetables. The children often helped him with the work.

Vera's childhood was fun and full of interest. The girls at Water End played together on the green, making their own entertainment with little celluloid dolls which cost 6d each. The girls used empty Woodbine cigarette boxes, scrounged from local shops, for dolls' cots and prams. The latter had no wheels, of course, just a piece of string slotted through holes which was used for pulling the "pram" along the ground. Dolls' clothes were made from oddments of material left over from Mum's sewing. Another favourite occupation was playing "shop" on Wilford's bridge, using mud from the beckside to make pies to sell in the shop. As a rule the boys played separately from the girls, in their own gangs. Vera remembers the boys damming the beck at the deepest bit, somewhere alongside the present playing field, called the Butts, and bathing in the pool they made. On fine Sunday mornings, Vera and her sister joined their brothers and other friends (8-10 of them altogether) to walk through the fields. They enjoyed finding the wild flowers in their season – birdsfoot trefoil, which they called ladies' fingers, harebells, violets, marsh marigolds and, in the spring, they walked as far as Cotcliffe Woods to pick bluebells. A great source of amusement was a parrot owned by someone on Lead Lane, which was often kept in the garden, and which shouted "pretty polly" at the children as they passed.

The various Sunday Schools in the village did a lot for the children, who all went, as soon as they were able to toddle there, wearing their Sunday best clothes. Vera and her family attended the Bethel Methodist chapel (the Primitive Methodists) on Cockpit Hill. The Sunday school was on Station Road. The children had to be quiet in class but they enjoyed it and, once a year, there was the joint Brompton and Northallerton Sunday Schools' outing, when all the children and their parents piled onto a special train at the village station to go off for the day to Redcar. Once there, they usually stayed on the beach, no matter what the weather was like. They took their own picnic food, and there were donkey rides, roundabouts, swings, a helter-skelter and ice-creams etc, all on the beach. Sometimes, Vera's Mum took her children by bus to Osmotherley for picnics and they would walk to Chequers and back.

Village children had plenty of freedom, spending as much time as possible outdoors, creating their own fun. They frequently fell in the beck, especially when balancing on a pipe which went across it. There was very little crime and the children were often out until 8 or 9 o'clock at night. There was a village policeman who was known to everyone, of course. House doors were never locked and villagers trusted each other and helped each other in times of need.

Life at school, however, was strict. The children sat with their hands on the desk to make sure there was no fidgeting. Vera remembers Mr Verrill as Headmaster (1925), Mrs

Sheehan, who taught sewing, and Miss Peacock, who was especially strict. There were 20-25 children in a class, and the punishment for misbehaviour (usually not paying attention) was to be sent to stand outside the classroom, or to have a rap across the knuckles with a ruler. Boys, not girls, could be caned for really bad offences. The toilets were outside in the yard, and there were no facilities for PE. As the children grew older, they could play tennis on the village courts behind Cockpit Hill, and there was a football pitch for boys between Rose Cottage farm and Redhills, which was moved further towards Redhills in the 1950s.

Vera very much enjoyed being a Girl Guide, especially when they were able to go camping. Ruth Yeoman, the unmarried daughter of the mill owner, was Guide Captain, and she held their meetings in a wooden hut near the old laundry opposite The Close, the Yeoman's house. There were usually between 25-30 girls there. Entertainment was also provided by the 2 cinemas in Northallerton, and dances, whist drives, domino drives and WI meetings at the village hall.



The General Store at Water End. *Photo: Colin Narramore*

Vera remembers the number of shops in Brompton, which provided for most of the needs of the villagers. At Water End there was a general store, a wallpaper and decorator's shop, and another shop selling "bits and pieces". Vera's Mum opened a shop next door to their house, where she sold sweets and bundles of firewood chopped by Vera's brothers, but kept it for only one year. On Cockpit Hill there was the bakery, Mrs Dennis's shop which sold "everything, especially sweets" (you could buy a little snowball for half a penny) at the post office before it moved. At Shop End there was Husthwaites, selling tobacco, a butcher's shop and slaughter house, Pinfold Stores and another butcher. The corner shop was a general store. To the left of the church was the fish and chip shop. Harry Smith had a general store behind the church which sold toys amongst other things and was where

you could join a Christmas club. There were at least 2 other general stores and then, on Station Road, a blacksmith's and a barber shop.

The Carnival was a major event in the village calendar. "Jazz Bands" came from County Durham and Teesside. The marching girls changed their clothes in the buses that brought them in, and there were portable toilets at Water End. There were competitions for decorated shire horses, decorated floats, and fancy dress. The boys in particular, started preparing early for the latter. One of Vera's brothers made an aeroplane, and the other a racing car as part of their fancy dress. Families came from near and far. The fair on Church Green had swings, coconut shies, roll the penny, and there were sports for the children held at Water End.

There were 6 pubs, The Black Swan at Water End (now The Village Inn), The Green Tree on the Stokesley Road, The Three Horseshoes, The Crown and The Queen Catherine at the crossroads, The Masons Arms (once called The Weavers) to the right of the present Methodist Chapel. The Queen Catherine by Vera's day had become a house where Vera's family and her granddad Lunn lived for a time.

### ***Wartime***

During World War Two, from 1940 to 1946 she joined the WAAFS and spent time in Shropshire and Northern Ireland before returning to Brompton, marrying Harry Brittain and working at Yeoman's Mill and later at the Golden Lion Hotel, Northallerton.

Vera started work at Yeoman's Mill after she was demobbed in 1946. Her family were then living near Stone Cross so she cycled to work, which started at 7.30am, with a group of other mill workers, then home for lunch and back, and finally, after the whistle had sounded, at 5pm. Her first job was as a twister, then she moved on to bobbin winding and eventually to weaving – the best paid job. Weaving demanded considerable skill. The weavers, standing on duck boards, back to back, had to mind several looms at once, checking them constantly. When a thread broke, the machine (driven by a belt from the ceiling) stopped automatically. The weaver then took a shuttle back to the break, and used a small metal comb to pull the thread back to the warp, mended it, then set the machine going again by pulling a lever. Vera still has her metal comb as a souvenir. The noise from all the machines was deafening, speech was impossible so everyone learned to mime and lip read. In her day the weavers were all women. Men did the maintenance work. The overseer was Mr Peacock. Weather was important. If it was too warm the thread would snap, so sacks were placed over the beam to keep the thread cool and damp. New Northrop machines, which were more efficient, were brought in while Vera worked at Yeoman's. The bobbins were changed automatically instead of by hand. The factory then produced a lot of tartan, which made work more interesting because the weaver had to know the pattern exactly. Vera was good at her job and the number of looms she had to attend went up to 5. Some weavers had only 2 but were paid the same. When Vera was asked to take on a 6th loom she decided enough was enough. This was exploitation and she left in 1952.

*told by Vera Brittain (née Barker) to Brompton Heritage Group .*

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## Doreen's Brompton Childhood

My life started on 5th February 1935 at Lowfields Farm, Fullicar Lane where John Kettlewell, a benefactor of the village, was born. The village has benefited from the trust he set up in the seventeenth century, originally to provide for the poor of the parish, but nowadays the hospitals, churches and schools benefit. I can remember my father helping to deliver the charity coals by horse and cart, to the poorest of the parish.

I was born the seventh child of Fred and Eleanor Forth. She had been in labour all day with the district nurse in attendance. However, by evening, my father was getting very concerned as he suspected something wasn't quite right. Mum had always had fairly quick and easy deliveries with the other six children (including twins). Being a very single minded man and against the wishes of the nurse, he got on his bike and cycled down Fullicar Lane, which at that time was just a stony track, and into the village to the telephone kiosk on Water End Green to phone the doctor. I understand that at that time, the midwife didn't get her full payment for a delivery if the doctor had to be called - hence her reluctance for him to be involved. Eventually Doctor Mackenzie, who was then just newly qualified, came out and assisted with the birth. My father had been correct in his assumptions that all was not well, as the umbilical cord was around my neck and Mum had a very difficult delivery.

However, we both were fighters and lived to tell the tale.

While we lived at the farm, each Wednesday and Saturday, my Mother used to walk to Northallerton market and back, a good six mile round trip, with me in the pram. This wouldn't be an easy walk, pushing a pram and carrying the accumulator batteries from the radio into town to get them recharged, as well as sometimes having a basket of homemade butter with her to sell.

One of my much older sisters lived at home as well as my three brothers. In addition, there was always at least one of the farm hands living in. Can you imagine getting the water from the pump in the yard to fill the copper boiler on Sunday evening ready for Monday washing day and providing meals for sixteen to eighteen people on threshing days as well as extra hands at haytime and harvest?

### ***A move to the village***

By the time I was three years old, my parents decided it was time to move into the village before I started school. We moved into a cottage in Water End and my earliest recollection is that of packing my dolls pram and setting off to go back 'home' to the farm. My sister caught me up at the bottom of the lane, but I know I wasn't very happy about it.

It was at this time that I first made contact with Freda Tyreman who was to become my friend for the duration of her lifetime. We spent a lot of time in each others houses and in the gardens behind her home, in what was then known as Hornby Terrace, Water End.

We also played in the small fields behind the cottages, which are remnants of the toft and croft system and can still be traced on the map today. Hornby Terrace then belonged to Claude Wilford, the mill owner, who lived in the big house, Cedar Mount. The cottages

adjoin the garden of Cedar Mount and were no doubt built by an earlier Wilford to house mill workers. We were both avid followers of 'Dick Barton, Special Agent' and would listen to the hour long omnibus edition on the radio on a Saturday morning, as we weren't allowed to stay up late enough to catch the daily quarter hour instalment. We had very hard winters at that time, and one winter, the brick pond, at the bottom of Fullicar Lane froze over, solid enough to slide on. But poor Freda, she found the thin ice and fell in. She was soaked through and scared to go home to tell her mother what had happened.

### ***Chickens***

Both Freda's mother and mine kept chickens in the back garden as a cheap source of food, feeding them on kitchen scraps, green vegetable matter and, during wartime, the ration of 'Indian corn' as it was then called. In the springtime, both mothers would each set a dozen eggs for a broody hen to sit on, using orange crates as nest boxes. My mother was the expert on poultry and she would sex the unborn chicks while still in the shell, using a metal gadget on a string. If it swung back and forth it was a cockerel in the egg and round and round it was a hen. And then we had the thrill of watching the chicks hatch out and seeing them grow in the small runs made by our dads for the purpose of rearing them, their yellow fluff changing to brown feathers in a matter of weeks. Sometimes the hens would fly over the wire around their runs and get into the neighbours' gardens and eat all the cabbages. This would cause a bit of trouble at the time but was usually resolved by the gift of a few eggs. My mother used to put coloured rings around her hens' legs in order to identify which were hers if they did escape.

### ***The village green***

Brompton green, being common land, was a hive of activity in spring time with lots of chicken coops, and ducks and geese on the beck. The geese got really savage when they had goslings and would chase us with their necks outstretched if you went near them. I was terrified of them. I remember once, my mother sent me to the other side of the green, across the middle bridge to Polly Christon's, who ran a greengrocers in a shed alongside her house and made deliveries with a horse and cart. Of course, the geese were on the green, so to avoid them on my return journey I made a long detour by walking up the road on Polly's side of the green, intending to cross the top bridge. I was wearing a new, full length hand knitted, pink coat, as you had in those days, and I fell into a large puddle of dirty water. You can imagine the reception I got when I returned home with the coat wet through and all bedraggled and dirty.

The green was always populated with animals other than the poultry. Mr. Thompson, a dairy farmer in Water End, would turn his cows out there in the summer and Mr. Lancaster, my Dad's boss, who was also a horse dealer, would break and exercise some of his horses there, which he had bought in to sell on to the army. My eldest brother, Wilf, told me that when a fresh consignment was bought in they were to walk all the way from Northallerton station, where they had been brought by train, through the town and then to Brompton and either up to the farm or to the stables behind Mr. Lancaster's house.

## ***Health matters***

The cows also drank from the beck along with the ducks and geese, and this added to its pollution along with the raw sewage which also flowed into it. No wonder scarlet fever and diphtheria were rife in the village each summer. My brother, Geoff, contracted both these illnesses and had to go into the fever hospital up Sandy Bank in Northallerton. I can remember going with my mother to see him, but I was only allowed to look through the window and no doubt make faces at him.

Each time Geoff came home from the Fever Hospital he had head lice, so it was out with the dreaded small tooth comb twice a day. By some miracle, I did not contact either of the infectious diseases from him, which was just as well as some children actually died from diphtheria, but I did get the head lice and hated the daily combing, with a newspaper on the table to catch the lice and then squash them. As well as the combing, once a week it was hair wash day with an evil smelling shampoo called 'Durbac'.

There had also been an outbreak of meningitis in the village before we went to live there. My mother used to talk of straw being put down on the roads to deaden the sound of the cart wheels which was disturbing to the patients. Here again, the disease claimed the lives of local people. Tuberculosis was also quite common at this time and of course there was only the fever hospital and the Rutson Cottage Hospital to cope with these diseases. T.B. and lung cancer were thought of under the general term of 'consumption', there not being a great deal of medical knowledge, as there is today, or means of diagnosis for either complaint. With limited hospital facilities, especially for the general working population, treatment and care was often left to the local doctor, who occasionally was known to perform operations on the kitchen table.

The National Health Service was not set up until after the Second World War, so access to medical treatment was sketchy and had to be paid for by some means or other. Sick Clubs were set up and if you could afford it, a family made a small payment each week to help to provide for medical care and loss of wages in times of illness. My father was a member of the Oddfellows Club and another at The Three Horse Shoes, which was referred to as 'Jack Sams', named after the landlord there. The Oddfellows invested some of their funds in property and a row of rather superior cottages was built in Water End was known as the Oddfellows Houses.

For toothache, Mum would buy a large poppy head, again from the chemist. This would be boiled for a considerable time and then you would wash your mouth out with the resulting liquor. And then there was the dreaded goose-grease which was rubbed into the chest for coughs and colds. I can still feel its tackiness and Mum's rough hands rubbing it in - it seemed to stick your chest to your chin.

We were given a good spoonful of cod liver oil and malt everyday as well as Scotts Emulsion (another fish oil product) in the winter. The cod liver oil really was delicious, sometimes I would help myself to another spoonful, but the Scotts Emulsion was a little less palatable.



If you wanted a doctor and couldn't use the public telephone, the most usual method was to watch out for his car coming into the village and catching him as he came out of a patient's house or flagging him down. On one occasion my father was taken to hospital with pneumonia. No one explained anything to me about it and I felt traumatised by the sight of him being carried downstairs on a stretcher and taken off. To add to my distress, while he was in hospital, on Sundays, one of the few visiting days, I had to go to chapel Sunday School in the morning and church Sunday School in the afternoon, because there was no one to look after me. And then, sometimes, my mother took me to Evensong in the evening. I was so fed up by this time, I used to hide behind the big fur collar on her coat and put my tongue out at people in the congregation. They couldn't see me but I got a lot of satisfaction doing it.

### ***Shopping***

Although the village had twenty shops which catered for most needs, travellers (or representatives) came round to collect the grocery order from either Lewis and Cooper or Russells of Northallerton, which was then delivered by van once a fortnight. Every three or four months, another traveller from Claphams, the drapers, furnishers and tailors in Northallerton came around with suitcases full of samples. I thought this was very exciting as he unpacked sheets, pinafores, shirts, gloves, stockings, towels and all manner of things. Here again, you placed an order and it was duly delivered by van. The onion seller, knife grinder, lemonade man and Polly Christon with her fruit and vegetables were also regular visitors and many of the local deliveries and collections were still done by horse and cart.



The fruit and veg cart. *Photo: Doreen Newcombe*

In summer, the milkman came around with his horse and trap twice a day, with fresh milk in a huge churn. In Winter I think we only got one delivery. The householders would come out with a big jug and get their required quantity, which was measured out in metal containers with long handles to get to the bottom of the churn. The coalman also had a horse and flat cart and the emptying of the earth closets was the duty of a local farmer with a special closed container pulled by a horse. The waste was emptied onto agricultural land to be ploughed in. The ash pits were also used for disposing rubbish that couldn't be burnt.

### ***At Home***

Looking back, our living conditions were quite primitive compared to those of today. We only had a stone sink in the kitchen with one cold tap. Water was heated in a small boiler at the side of the large black range which also had an oven for baking. This range took up most of one wall in the living room and on baking days my mother would feed the fire with long pieces of tree branch which we had gathered from the fields. She made bread and teacakes one day and cakes and pastry another. Fresh yeast was bought from the little shop along our row. This was the domain of Mrs. Kipling. I used to go along and buy either a pennorth or two pennorth of yeast on the day the yeast man delivered. On Mrs. Kipling's counter stood the most magnificent set of brass scales with every size of weight. These were always kept highly polished and were fascinating to a child.

We hadn't electric kettles as nowadays, and all the cooking and water heating was done on the coal fire in the living room. Later on we did acquire a paraffin stove which stood in the back kitchen, but it always seemed to need the wicks cleaning and filling up with fuel and it produced foul smelling smoke if it wasn't just set right. However, it did mean that in the summer months we could do without the coal fire being on all the time. Paraffin was a product which was easily available then and most of the village shops seemed to sell it, the smell of it pervading the nostrils as you entered.

On wash days, the large copper in the outside wash house was filled for boiling the whites and providing hot water for the passing tub. The clothes were then put through the large wooden roller mangle to get as much water as possible out of them and it was very hard work turning the handle; there was no need for the work-out at the gym in those days! If the weather was dry, my mother hung out the clothes in the field at the back of our house, but sometimes there were cows in the field, and on one occasion they ate the skirt off one of my best dresses which the local dressmaker had made for me out of floral curtain material.

On wet days, the clothes were dried around the fire on the clothes horse or hanging from the airing rack which was suspended from the living room ceiling, this being the only room with a fire. Big items like sheets were left to dry overnight. Otherwise you couldn't get to the fire to warm yourself. It seemed to take all week to get the washing dry in the winter. No wonder everyone suffered from bad chests and colds especially as most of the houses in Water End had damp half way up the walls due to the frequent flooding.

When we first moved to the village my mother still did the ironing with the old flat irons which were heated on the fire, even though there was electricity in the cottage. It was sometime before she invested in an electric iron - I think she was worried about the cost of ironing by electricity, payment for which was by slot meter which took penny and shilling coins . A collector came around periodically to empty the meter and the householder would get a bit of discount back depending on the amount in the meter. We also kept our oil lamps for some time, which we had had at the farm and they proved very useful in the event of a war-time electricity cut.

Wash day was also the weekly bath day. In the summer, when we came home from school on Mondays, Mum would fill the tin bath with clean water from the copper and we would have a bath in the wooden wash house behind the house. But in winter the bath was brought in before the fire. A treat during the war years was to have a tablet of green Fairy soap for the bath. Although this was the large household type tablet, it was a huge improvement on the alternative; hard, red carbolic soap. I hated having the last bath as the water always seemed gritty after my brother had been in it.

### ***Flooding***

I remember one really bad February after we had had heavy snow and the beck flooded with the thaw. I think it would be about 1943 and the water came into the houses. My parents were up during the night lifting the mats and putting furniture up onto to blocks made of logs ready cut for the fire. I came down stairs having slept through all the activity and slipped on the wet linoleum which was covering the floor and I went down with such a crash. Of course we had to live upstairs until the water subsided - about three days I think. My mother did the best she could to boil water and pans on the small bedroom fireplace which hadn't been lit for years. The chimney was blocked so not only were we in danger of being drowned but of being smoked to death. Our only pastime was watching through the bedroom windows, to see the huge lumps of frozen snow come sailing down the beck like mini icebergs. There was no Social Services distributing food and heaters in those days and we just had to get along as best we could. When we went to living downstairs again everything was soaked through and the water mark remained on the interior walls for years to come - we never got the interior walls replastered. Another year, again after a big snow with high winds, the snow blew under the eaves and my father had to get up into the loft and shovel it out before it brought the ceilings down.

### ***Play***

We didn't have playgrounds with lots of equipment, apart from the Recreation Field, next to the Church Hall, which had been given to the village by the Todd family from Mill Hill House. The village greens were our playgrounds and when I got a bit older I used to join in the cricket matches on Water End Green, with both boys and girls playing. Of course we had our own rules to fit in with the terrain, for example 'three beckers' (i.e. hitting the ball into the beck) and you were out. One broken window and you were out, but we did all pitch in together to cover the cost of the replacement and it was good practice for the apprentice plumber and glazier who played with us.

I recently met up with a 'girl' who used to visit her grandparents who lived near us. She said "You used to let me play with you. I liked that, as you had a better trike than I had." I replied, "I didn't think I had anything better than anyone else - we were pretty poor." "Oh yes," she said, "You see, I hadn't got one at all." which puts it all into perspective. I did, however, acquire a lovely dolls pram when I was about five years old. One of the few photographs I had taken as a child shows me and my friends, lined up with our prams. But do you know, I still liked to put my dolls into an old shoe box with string through the end and pull that about.



Doreen Forth and friends with their prams. *Photo: Doreen Newcombe*

Another improvisation was that of making stilts from old treacle tins - again with string through the tops which we held in our hands. We used to totter around on these tins and I can't remember there being any broken ankles. We also used to make our own fishing nets from a garden cane, a loop of wire and a cotton bag. Other popular play things were large, metal hoops with hooks to steer them by. These were made by the local blacksmith and we used to race around the roads with them. Of course there was very little motor traffic (only Claude Wilford, Mr. Lancaster and the doctor had cars) and the horse and carts moved at a very steady pace so didn't constitute a danger to us.

Mentioning the blacksmith, there were two smithies in the village: Jim Burn at the Green Tree and Sam Hardcastle, whose forge was on the corner of what is now the Crown Inn car park. When we came out of school we would go over to Sam's forge and watch as he hammered horseshoes and rims for cart wheels and see the sparks flying from the fire as he pumped the bellows. I always wondered if it hurt the horses to have red hot shoes put onto their hooves.

Looking back, one of the things I can best remember was the 'freedom to roam' we had as children. In the summer we would take a bottle of water and some jam sandwiches and spend the days over the fields making camps in the hedgerows and exploring. We also played in the old ruined windmill, which has since been renovated and made habitable. One of the most daring escapades, so I thought, was that some children would run across the parapet of Fullicar railway bridge when a train was passing beneath. I never attempted that but I can remember some who did and are still alive today!

Other summer pastimes were marbles for the boys, played around 'ally holes' as the target. These holes were made by digging shoe heels into the green. Skipping and hopscotch were popular with the girls. These latter two games were played out on the roadway as there was so little traffic. Skipping often involved a long rope being stretched right across the road, or when you got really advanced, two ropes, turned one with the left hand and one with the right, so they crossed in the middle and then it was 'All in together girls' and other such skipping rhymes. This really did require a lot of skill and concentration, timing the turns of the rope as you ran in and keeping us fit and slim.

As the nights grew darker, we still played outside - making the outlines of houses from the fallen leaves on the greens and playing fox-off. Sledging by torchlight in Mr. Lancaster's field, which is now Danes Crest, or making slides on the icy roads in the winters, which were always cold and snowy, were other pastimes ruled by the seasons. The sledging could be fairly hazardous as there was a brick wall at the bottom of the run and several children got split heads by running into it when going down bellyflop. The way to avoid the brick wall was to go through the hedge onto the road and pray there wasn't a bus coming!!

### ***Sunday***

As a general rule, it was Mum who was the disciplinarian in the house; after all we didn't see such a lot of my Dad, who was always either at work on the farm or digging the garden. But Sunday lunchtimes we all sat around the table together and that was when my father came to the fore. It was 'sit up, shut up and eat up'. He was a stickler for table manners - always telling us to 'keep our wings down' i.e. elbows tucked in and to 'let our meat stop our mouths'. Knives and forks had to be properly held, we had to sit with straight backs and no giggling was allowed. One day, my brother was misbehaving at the table, Dad took his belt off ready to thrash him, Geoff got under the table and it was my legs that caught the brunt of it. But we still laugh about it today! On another occasion, Geoff sneaked off to swim in the River Swale at Morton Bridge. This was a foolish thing to do as boys had been drowned doing the self same thing. Well, when he got back he got a real thrashing from Dad with the wet swim trunks. It must have hurt. This may seem cruel these days, but it was done in love and concern for his safety and we all had a deep respect and affection for our parents and never questioned their authority and accepted the punishments as duly deserved.

Sundays were very much the 'family days'. In the summer months we would go for a walk if Dad wasn't haytimming or harvesting, which at that time they tried to avoid on the Sabbath and it was only done in a wet year, when it was difficult to get the crops in. Sometimes it was up to the 'Wheatsheaf Inn' which was at the top of Winton Bank. It was quite safe walking on the road as there was so little traffic. I can't have been very old as I remember going in my pushchair. We would go into the pub and sit on the old wooden settle. I would have a small glass of lemonade, Mum a shandy and Dad would have half a bitter. On other occasions we would walk over the fields. Dad would always know where the birdnests could be found, where there was frogspawn and where the firemen from

the steam trains had thrown onto the railway side, huge pieces of coal which were too large to go into the stokehole. Dad would then produce a sack from his pocket and carry the coal home to supplement the allocation we were allowed or could afford. He also knew when the blackberries were ready and where the best ones could be found. Sometimes he would get the horse and cart from the farm and we would go 'sticking' picking up the branches and sticks which had blown from the trees. These would be sawn into convenient lengths and stored in the stick house at the back of our cottage ready for winter. This stick house had a stall and manger in it and I wonder now, if it had been a stable sometime in its past. He could also mesmerise rabbits by walking round and round them in ever-decreasing circles until he got near enough to hit them on the head to stun them. He would then wring their necks and paunch them, then mum would skin them and then into the pot they would go. Yes, he was a country man through and through!

*Doreen Newcombe (née Forth) 1998*

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## Gladys Wetherill's story

When the War started, Gladys was 10 years old, living at Water End with her parents, five brothers and one sister, and attending Brompton school. Her Father did the driving for Mr Wilford, a mill owner who also lived at Water End, and who had two cars. A car was an unusual sight in the village. Her Mother took in other families' washing, though she already had nine of her own family to wash for. At the beginning of the War, she gave a home to two boy evacuees, so the children had to sleep two to a bed – "top and tail". One of the evacuees turned out to be a "bad'un", though he looked angelic. When he was caught stealing money from his hosts, the authorities were notified and he was removed, but the other lad became a long term friend of the family.

Though there was no money to spare for toys, the children made their own fun and had a good time. The Water End Green and beck played a big part in this, especially in the summer, when the children paddled and fished in the water, dug in the mud and walked across the beck balancing on some pipes, frequently falling in.

When double summer time was introduced during the War, to help the farmers maximise the hours of daylight, the children played out till late, having games of rounders etc, while the adults took kitchen chairs to their front doorsteps and sat outside chatting. The Green was important in other ways. Cows and geese were kept there, as it was common land for anyone to use, and one farmer exercised his horses on it before selling them on to the army.

The beginning of the War was marked by the news bulletins on the radio. Adults did not explain to children what was happening, so they gleaned what they could by eavesdropping. One morning, the once familiar Green became transformed into a transit camp for soldiers who had been rescued from Dunkirk. They were washing themselves and their clothes in the beck, and boiling up water on camp fires. This was the Border Regiment which was billeted in the village and church halls and Sunday schools. The

soldiers baked bread under canvas, did PE on the recreation ground on Northallerton Road, and did training on the Greens. Villagers were asked to give them hot meals at midday. The officers occupied two cottages on Cockpit Hill, and a sentry was stationed on Water End Bridge.

The Borderers were here for some time, and made a big contribution to village life. They gave impromptu concerts in the village hall, and some of them married local girls. When they left, the villagers turned out to see them off, many of them in tears and singing a song made up for the occasion – *Bring Back the Brompton Border Boys*. The tune and words can still be remembered by some. The Borderers were replaced by the East Lancashire Regiment and then the Northumberland Fusiliers, but these did not stay long enough to win the hearts of the villagers in the same way.

Other newcomers to the village, brought in by the circumstances of war, were some Polish men, who were billeted on Little Lane in Nissen Huts for a time. Some of these married local girls also. When they left, the same premises lodged Land Army girls, who worked on the surrounding farms and also added to the social life of the village by giving parties, dances and fancy dress competitions. Then there were the evacuees, many of whom remained friends for life with the people who took them in. At the end of the War, these families each received a letter of thanks from the Queen, wife to King George VI.

Women's lives changed at this time. Many women turned out to help on local farms at peak times, such as harvest and threshing. Some of them got work in Northallerton to replace the men who went off to fight.

Going out into the fields to pick rosehips in the autumn was part of the war effort for village children. A child received 2d for a pound of rosehips, which were then sent off to be made into rosehip syrup, a rich source of vitamin C, which was much needed when oranges and many other fruits could not be brought in from abroad. As another means of making a few pennies, children would offer to do the shopping for neighbours, visiting the many Brompton shops and having to remember all the prices and bring back the exact amount of change, which did wonders for their mental arithmetic.

There were some very cold winters during the war years, and when the beck froze over, the children walked on the ice to school. Sometimes the ice broke, and some of them got a soaking.

Bits of Perspex, used for the windows in aircraft, could be found, and the girls strung pieces together for "jewellery". Mothers used parachute silk to make into underwear and even wedding dresses. Nothing was wasted.

Very few people had holidays even before the War. Soon after the War started, however, Gladys and her sister were sent off to Hartlepool to stay with relatives, but returned almost immediately, because the bombing raids began! A big excitement for the villagers was to go to local air fields for Open Days. Buses were provided, and nearly all the village went. As there was no petrol to spare, the buses ran on gas, which was held in containers on wheels and pulled along behind each bus. At the air fields, people could look inside the planes, some of which were riddled with bullet holes. It seemed amazing how many

of them managed to fly, they were so flimsy looking. The Canadian Air force, stationed nearby, flew in the biggest treat – ice-cream, which couldn't be obtained normally. These outings were holidays to the villagers.

An average Brompton home had no bathroom. The toilet was in a shed in the garden, which was horrid to use at night, with only a candle, which often blew out. This could be terrifying for children, as rats were likely to be in attendance. At the back of the house was the wash-house with the boiler, where the women did all that laundry. This was also where the family had baths, in a tin tub, starting with the youngest. If the weather was really bad, the tin tub was brought into the kitchen where it was warmer.

Villagers were allowed to keep a pig, hens and ducks in the garden, and they also grew a lot of vegetables. When the hens weren't laying, frozen eggs were delivered in enormous tins, which were placed in front of the fire to thaw out.

When Gladys was 14 or 15, she left school to start work in Northallerton with the Ministry of Agriculture. She couldn't afford the bus fare into work, and her great aim was to own a bike. Buying one outright was impossible, so, when funds allowed, she bought bits of bike piecemeal – a chain one week, a wheel another etc – and then her father put all of it together for her. She was very proud of the final article.

The traditional Whit sports and carnival managed to keep going right through the war years, and lasted 3 days, with long distance races, tugs of war, and even pillow fights across the beck.

It was unusual for the children of Water End to play with those from High End (Shop End). There was great rivalry, especially on Bonfire Night (not held during the War, of course) when each Green had its own bonfire. Everyone did come together, though, for major celebrations, such as those when the War ended in 1945, when there were tea parties and dances.

Though the War years were terrible in many ways, they did enrich the village with the widening of horizons through new experiences and meeting new people. Children were left very much to their own devices, and enjoyed the freedom to roam across the countryside, and to develop their own entertainment. Even the sounds of aircraft, seeing the search lights sweeping the sky, and having to hide under the table when there was an air raid warning, were somehow exciting.

*told by Gladys Wetherill to Brompton Heritage Group*



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## Doreen's Wartime Schooldays

I was four and a half years old when the Second World War started in September 1939 and not yet at school, as at that time a child had to be a full five years old to enter education. I well remember being taken along to Brompton County Primary School by my mother on that first morning (complete with gas mask in its little cardboard box), being registered and then left - abandoned - or so it seemed to me. There was no pre-school visit or preparation of any kind in those days. There were approximately thirty children in the Infant Class. The number of pupils was high because of the evacuees from Hartlepool and Sunderland. We were taught by Miss Thornton who was past retirement age but had been retained because of staffing shortages due to the call-up of younger male teachers.

Our desks were long, wooden seats and tops at which about eight children sat in a continuous row. The windows of the room were high so that once one was in the room all you saw of the outside world was the sky. Our class room had a coal fire with a huge fire-guard around it, which proved very useful for warming and drying our woollen gloves on those cold, wartime winter mornings.

The routine of the day was very regimented and there was no freedom of movement around the room as there is in a primary school today, where children work and share books and equipment together. We just had to stay put and stay silent unless we were asked to answer a question or asked to go out to the teacher to read from the cardboard reading cards. On arrival in the morning, no matter what the weather, the children stayed outside on the playground until the bell summoned us to gather in lines, ready to march into the hall for morning assembly. Here again, we stood in lines according to age and sex while we sang hymns and said our prayers. Does my memory play tricks or was it always either 'All things Bright and Beautiful' or 'There is a Green Hill Far Away'? After assembly we marched to our class-rooms for registration and the start of the day's work. There was one girl, one of the evacuees, who was always late - coming into the classroom when we were already embarked on our lessons. One day, the teacher pinned a rabbit's tail to her rear-end in the hope of curing her bad time-keeping. Poor Peggy, it wasn't her fault!

We had play-time morning and afternoon - morning play always started with our milk ration. We got a third of a pint of very creamy milk issued free of charge. There was a cardboard top on the bottle with a hole in the middle through which you pushed your drinking straw. In the winter months sometimes it was frozen solid, pushing the top off the bottle. Mind you, in the summer, the freshness of the milk left something to be desired.

The Schools Meals Service was introduced about this time. Two shillings a week (ten pence) bought a two-course meal each day for the whole week. The food was cooked at the Central Kitchen in Romanby Road, Northallerton. The premises were somewhat prefabricated but it was amazing what good meals were produced. The cooked food was then taken out to the schools in insulated containers. John Winn, who ran one of the local bus services from the village, had the contract for transporting the meals. There was one occasion, however, when the pudding didn't come up to standard. We were served the

most appalling, pink blancmange, which I think must have been made with sour milk, it tasted TERRIBLE. Miss Lamb, the Head Teacher, insisted that we eat it up, but a few of us rebelled. We sat there all through the first sitting and then all through the second sitting and into the early part of the afternoon. We weren't giving way nor was Miss Lamb - we had to be taught not to waste food - there was a war on! We were eventually rescued by one of the dinner ladies taking pity on us. She smuggled the offending blancmange away in our drinking beakers and told Miss Lamb that we had eaten it.

Miss Lamb, the Head Teacher was an extremely tall lady - at least six feet in height with whiskers on her chin. She was pretty nifty with the cane or ruler when the occasion demanded, which seemed to be fairly frequent. Both girls and boys were either given the ruler or caned. A cane coming down from that height certainly left its mark, but of course, we dare not tell our parents when we had been punished, we would have only got more when we went home. One wet lunch time, when we had to stay indoors for play-time, I went to the toilets across the yard without asking to leave the room. Upon my return I was caned on both hands for going without permission. I still blush at the indignity of it all, but such was the discipline at that time.

Brompton School had two playgrounds or 'yards' as we called them - one for the boys and one for the girls. The toilets were outside, 'across the yard' if one got permission to go, of course! Our playground games seemed to follow the seasons - sliding and snowballing in the winter - we always had snow. Sliding required that you had your leather soled shoes strengthened with segs, flat topped, metal, three pronged nails. Otherwise your shoes quickly wore out. Springtime saw the emergence of whips and tops for the girls and marbles for the boys. In Summer, out came the skipping ropes and the chanted rhymes that went with them - 'Pitch, Patch, Pepper' and 'All in Together Girls' In Autumn, when the days started to get colder, we had to run around more to keep warm, so 'Tigs' became the order of the day. Our P.E. lessons, such as they were, were often taken on the playground. We were always split into four teams, blue, red, green and yellow wearing the appropriate coloured band across the shoulders, and I can remember dumpy, little Miss Bendelow, in her tight tweed skirt, trying to show us how to bend and stretch and jump our feet apart. Regular visits from the 'Nit-nurse' were also a feature of school life. Local mothers always blamed the evacuees for the infestations of head-lice and Oh, the shame of having your name put down in the nurse's little, black book.

### ***Christmas parties***

Christmas parties at this time were pretty spartan affairs. We had to take our own food and even our own cup or mug. One year, instead of a party, we were taken to the Cinema de Luxe in Romanby Road (known locally as the 'flea pit'). Northallerton at that time had three cinemas; the newly opened Lyric at North End, the Central Cinema, which stood where the road from the Applegarth car park emerges onto the High Street, and the Cinema de Luxe, at the junction of Alverton Lane and Romanby Road. This particular Saturday morning, the projection equipment broke down (a common occurrence) and we never did see the film show.

## ***Carnival***

If my memory serves me correct, the Brompton Whitsuntide Sports, as the Spring Bank Holiday Carnival was then known, continued throughout the war years. We were always eager to take part in all the sporting events and the fancy dress parade, as this was an important source of income for us which we duly spent on the fair. Mr. Lancaster, my father's boss was on the committee and he entered horses into the parade, all decked up with highly polished horse brasses and rosettes made from crepe paper adorning their mane and plaited tails.



A carnival float. *Photo: Colin Narramore*

## ***Make do and mend***

Keeping warm was a problem in wartime winters and most of our clothes were 'make do and mend' or 'hand-me-downs'. Jumpers were knitted from pulled out adult woollens and then they sometimes ended up as bathing costumes, with the sleeves cut out and the body of the garment stitched between the legs. Can you imagine what we looked like when these got wet through! But we had to have the right gear when fishing in the beck in the summer.

I even had a pair of mittens made from rabbit skins Mum had cured, after we had eaten the rabbit itself, and a pair of leggings with numerous small buttons up each side which had to be fastened with a button hook - it took ages to put them on. My hands and legs always seemed to be chapped in the winter, no long trousers for the boys, just shorts until they were about fourteen, and the girls were never seen in trousers, although we did envy the Land Army girls in theirs. I also suffered from chilblains, but there again we played outside much of the time and didn't spend our days in a centrally heated home before a

television set or computer. Snowfire ointment was the general treatment for these ills, but they never went away until the Spring came with the better weather.

Making clip and hookey rugs was a winter occupation done by all the family. If you didn't help making the mats on the large wooden frames which took up most of the space and were suspended from the beams in the ceiling, you had to sit at the back of the room away from the fire and freeze, so there wasn't much option but to help. Doing these rugs was an early form of recycling as well as a necessity as the only other floor covering was the cold linoleum. Old woollen clothing, such as skirts, dresses, trousers, coats etc. was cut up into either three inch clips or long strips, depending on which method of weaving into the canvas backing was to be used. My mother used to scour the village for suitable material and black was always highly prized as this was used for the borders of the rug.

### **Food**

As regards food at home we didn't fare too badly during the war. Because my father was farming he caught lots of rabbits and my mother used to make delicious rabbit pies, my youngest brother and I always used to fight as to who got the kidneys, but don't ask me to eat rabbit pie nowadays. However we were glad of it then. My mother kept hens in a run in the field at the back of our house, as did a lot of other people. When they were laying we had nice brown eggs to eat and my father grew lots of vegetables in the garden and we got potatoes and milk from the farm.

He also got a pig fattened as part of his wages so we had home cured bacon too, although I hated it - it was salty and very fatty. On pig killing day, one of the men who worked at VOM Bacon factory would humanely shoot the pig through the head in our back yard, it would be bled and the blood saved to make black pudding and then the innards were taken out and those parts which could be eaten were saved and the liver was cut up and distributed among the neighbours. The tradition was that you didn't wash the plate before handing it back to the donor, as this was bad luck. Then the pig's skin was scalded with buckets of boiling water (boiled in the copper in the outside wash house). This was to soften the skin before it was scraped to remove the tough hairs. The carcass was then ready for butchering and cut into sides of bacon and hams for curing. The head, trotters and other spare parts were then put into a large metal bowl and would be simmered for about twenty four hours in the oven. After this, when the meat was cooled, mother would work all the flesh off the bits and this would be put into moulds and filled up with the liquor from the cooking and left to set. The result was delicious brawn. Even the intestines were cleaned and ended up as sausage skins and the fatty bits were rendered down, cooled and salted and ended up as chittlings.

I think the biggest hardship for a child was that there were very few sweets available and sweet rationing didn't end until February 1953. We used to mix cocoa powder and sugar (if we could get it) to make something sweet to eat. Sometimes we managed to get chewing gum from the soldiers and on one occasion I took some to school. I had been chewing it over the lunch time break and took it out of my mouth when we went back into class as we weren't really allowed gum. Well, instead of disposing it, I sat rolling mine

around in my hands. Miss Thornton suspected something was going on shouted out "Doreen Forth, Hold up your hands." Well, I did and do you know they were completely stuck together. The teacher made me go in the cloakroom to try and wash the stuff off but the fact that there was only cold water on the sink didn't help. They then got my brother out of his class to help but that didn't make any difference, so in the end he had to take me home. Well, you can imagine the reception I got from my mother! My hands were pretty sore by the time the offending stuff was removed

There was hardly any fruit imported from abroad because of risk of the shipping being attacked by the German U Boats. Just now and again there would be a consignment of oranges arrive and we would have to queue to get our ration. I think I saw my first banana after the war had ended. Each autumn we would pick blackberries from the hedgerows to make jam and rose hips, which we took to school to sell and were paid 2d a pound for them. They went to make rose-hip syrup which was an important source of vitamin C and the money an important source of income for us.

*Doreen Newcombe (née Forth) 1998*

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## Florence's Story

Although she was born in South Bank Teesside Florence can claim to be a Brompton lass. Her family roots go back a long way, several centuries, to the time when her father's ancestors, the Stainthorps, owned property in the village.

Before the beginning of the Second World War Florence's family paid frequent visits to their Brompton relations and the children, of whom Florence was the eldest, felt very much at home there. Thus it was that with the onset of World War II Florence's parents decided that their 3 eldest children should be taken to Aunt Muriel's home at Water End, Brompton, to be kept out of harm's way for however long it took. Mum, Dad and baby Vera (only a year old) would stay where their father worked.

Aunt Muriel and Uncle Orlando lived in one of the 3 cottages then still owned by the Stainthorp family, now numbers 15, 17 and 19. Originally they had been one farmhouse converted later into separate cottages called Stainthorp terrace.

Aunt and Uncle had married in their 40s and had no children. Suddenly their 2 bedroomed home had to accommodate Florence (7), Edna (6) and Kenneth (5). They did not hesitate to make the children welcome, who already knew a lot of people in Brompton, including yet more relatives on their mother's side of the family, and fitted seamlessly into village life and the local school.

Number 19 was crowded but nobody complained. Aunt and Uncle slept in the back bedroom and the children had the front bedroom. There was no bathroom but there was a bath in the scullery which, when not in use as a bath, had a board across it to make it into a table. There was no indoor toilet but in the yard at the back was a water closet in its own brick building. Most of the other cottages still had earth closets. Beyond the yard were "strip" gardens, long and narrow at right angles to the cottages, and a brick built

weaving shop where previous inhabitants had done hand weaving as a cottage industry before and during the days of the linen factories. Florence remembers it as “the shop”, no longer used for weaving, but containing an old grandfather clock, a boiler for wash days, a mangle, coal and odd bits of wood. It is still there and still used for storage.

There were plenty of children to play with in the village, including evacuees from Gateshead, Newcastle and London. One little girl, called Mary, became a close friend to Florence. They lost touch after the war but met again in later life and saw each other regularly until Mary died in 2018.

Brompton has always been subject to flooding and sure enough, a flood occurred, water rising from the beck and also coming into the cottage from the sloping land behind. The children came downstairs to see the muddy water flowing briskly through, from the back to the front and were especially intrigued to see a lone scone floating out of the pantry and on its way through the front door. Flooding was a fact of life. The floors were tiled or concreted, not wooden. There were no carpets, only rugs, so out came the brooms and the water was swept away.



Floods at Water End. *Photo: Colin Narramore*

Water End Green was a natural playground and the beck running through it a favourite feature. Florence remembers dipping for tiddlers with small nets on long poles. The sewage pipes which crossed the beck were an obvious attraction, the act of walking across them giving a thrill of risk and adventure. On Sundays Florence and her siblings were required to attend two religious services, one at the parish church, St Thomas', to please those members of the family who worshipped at the Church of England, and one at the Methodist chapel facing it across the Church Green, to please those who were Methodists, followed later in the day by attendance at a Sunday School. Sunday clothing

for the two girls meant the wearing of matching blue velvet dresses. On one memorable Sunday, between services and Sunday School, Florence and Edna rashly decided to do the balancing act across the beck on the pipes. Part way along Florence did a wobble, lost her balance, grabbed Edna and both landed in the water, which fortunately was not very deep. What happened next Florence can't remember but she's sure they weren't punished or even told off. Aunty and Uncle adored the three youngsters and would not complain. Toys were few. Each of the children had been given something by their parents before they were left in Brompton. Florence and Edna both had dolls' prams and a doll each. The prams were superior sprung coach built ones and much envied by other girls in the village. Kenneth had a tricycle on which they tried riding down Cockpit Hill with one sitting on the handlebars, one on the seat and one standing behind the seat. The load must have been too much, the bike tipped over and Florence still has a scar above her nose as a reminder of her fall. The other two must have escaped injury. In those days cows and geese were allowed to graze on Water End Green. Uncle Ernest, the children's father's brother lived on Cockpit Hill. He too adored them and enjoyed teasing them. Edna was always full of energy, a tomboy who loved to wind him up. One day he retaliated by chasing her out of the cottage onto the Green where he accidentally stood in a cow pat, slipped and fell onto it much to the children's delight.

The children's parents tried to visit Brompton as often as they could but it became too difficult once petrol rationing was introduced. After two years of separation they missed the children so much they decided to reunite the family, despite the dangers from bombs dropping on Teesside, aimed at the iron works near their home. Florence's father had installed an Anderson shelter in their garden which they had to use nearly every night. There had been very few air raid warnings in Brompton. Florence can remember one or two occasions when Aunty Muriel got the children out of bed to crouch downstairs beside a huge wooden "press" - a big cupboard with shelves above and drawers below - which she hoped would provide some protection.

Eight years later, at the age of 17, Florence returned to Brompton to live with Aunty and Uncle again while she worked on the switchboard at the GPO in Northallerton. Uncle Ernest worked as a member of the night staff at the GPO and he had helped her to get a job there. She loved the work and was good at it. She met Percy Lee for the first time while walking over Bow Bridge on Station Road in Brompton. He was a Brompton lad. They met again soon after that at the Brompton Whitsun dance. They got married when Florence was 20 and lived in middle cottage in Stainthorp Terrace which her father owned.

*told by Florence Stainthorp to Brompton Heritage Group November 2019*

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## Lorna Emmerson - My Brompton Days

Lorna's family on her mother's side was rooted for generations in Brompton. One of her great grandmothers on her mother's father's side had even worked in a linen mill here at the age of 90. It was said that she frequently fell asleep when she was supposed to be watching a loom to make sure a thread didn't break. Three generations later, Lorna's older sister Gwen also went to work in Wilford's Mill, where she stayed until its closure in the late 1950s.

As a girl, Lorna heard a lot about her great uncle, John Bell. He owned a number of properties on Cockpit Hill and at Water End, which he had inherited from his father. He opened his own shop in one of them, selling just paraffin, candles and treacle. Lorna's sister Gwen remembers how the treacle used to drip from the tap of its container after the treacle had been drawn off, leaving very sticky patches on the floor. Unfortunately John Bell was not a good business man and all his property eventually had to be sold to pay his debts. One year when there was a particularly bad flood, and beck water rose part way up Cockpit Hill, John rescued a little boy from drowning.

John's sister, Rebecca Bell (Lorna's maternal grandmother) wanted to marry another Bromptonian, John Dunn, but her family objected to him. At that time John Dunn enjoyed drinking with his pals, but as the Bells were very staunch Methodists and therefore teetotal, they did not approve of Rebecca's choice of husband. Rebecca was determined, and told John that she wouldn't marry him unless he changed his ways. This he did, but her family still disapproved and Rebecca inherited nothing from them because she married against their wishes. John Dunn who worked for Harry Smith, a tailor with a shop behind Brompton Church, later became a local Methodist preacher. He travelled widely to the surrounding villages such as Potto, Swainby and Osmotherley on his bicycle, even after the doctor had told him his heart could not cope with the strenuous exercise. He died before Lorna was born, but she has inherited some of his books. He was a wide reader, and she still has his copies of Keats and Browning's poetry and a set of Dickens' novels.

Lorna's mother was Florence, daughter of John and Rebecca. She worked for the Place family in Northallerton, as a maid. They owned a woodyard at North End, and so she came to meet Jack Fletcher, who worked there. They married and lived in Brompton where they had 3 children – first Gwen, Jim a year later and then Lorna, 8 years later. Lorna's father, Jack, had, as a boy, won a scholarship for Grammar School but was unable to take it up because his family needed him to go to work. He was always good with figures and at accounting. After he married he moved from Place's woodyard and had various jobs in Northallerton. At one time he was at the Cold Storage (near where the Cricket Club is today) and later went to Moody's – the builder. He also worked at night as a boiler man at the Friarage Hospital.

After John Dunn died, Lorna's family moved into number 35 Cockpit Hill to live with his widow (Rebecca Bell). Lorna's father bought No. 35 and another house on Cockpit Hill when John Bell had money difficulties. When Lorna was old enough to have the



responsibility (about 8 years old she thinks) it was her job to take the mortgage repayments down to the Halifax Building Society, then at North End, Northallerton, carried in a locked tin box to which the Halifax kept a key. She was fascinated to see the compartments inside the box where the different denominations of coins were placed.

Lorna's father was a busy man. He had a vegetable garden behind No. 35 in which there was an old weaving shed. In the days of Great Grandfather Bell this had held a number of looms which people in the village were able to hire for their own weaving, probably both before and after the Linen Mills came to Brompton. By Lorna's day the looms had gone and the shed held her mother's copper for boiling up the clothes on washday – a job her mother loved – and her father's lathe and tools. He sharpened saws for people in the village and Lorna had the job of taking these back to their owners and collecting 3 (old) pennies for each one. She also earned some pocket money for herself by clearing up the sawdust on the work benches. Her father liked to make things for his children. Once he made a wooden car with pedals and a scooter for Lorna. They all had bikes which he had constructed.

Another job that Lorna was given was fetching the milk each day from the farm on Water End. For this she took a billycan to be filled. Sometimes if the farmer was still milking (by hand) at the time, he would squirt some milk at her straight from the cow. On the way home, with the can full, she would swing it back and forth until she could take it in a complete circle over her head. The can had no lid, but she never spilt a drop!

As she grew older she was sent into Northallerton to do the sort of shopping that couldn't be done in Brompton, such as getting the wireless batteries refilled with acid, and visiting Timothy White's, the Chemist's shop. Surprisingly the one job neither Lorna nor Gwen did was potato picking in the autumn. Most of the village children did this, but Lorna and Gwen's mother thought the work would be too backbreaking for her daughters. Lorna rather regretted not being able to earn some extra money for herself.

Lorna went to the village school on Station Road until she was 11. She missed many days at school with childhood illnesses. Her mother liked to have her at home and Lorna admits that she was often busy helping with the housework when she was supposed to be poorly. She enjoyed doing this, but fell behind with her school work. She didn't have a great dislike of school, only of having to run the gauntlet of a gang of intimidating boys who lurked at the crossroads. After Gwen and Jim had left school she had no-one to protect her. The Headmistress was intimidating too. She slapped the children's wrists hard when they got things wrong. Once, in a composition about herself Lorna wrote, "I am a big girl". The teacher immediately crossed out "big" and inserted "little" – an insult which rankled.

Lorna had many friends and remembers clearly how the girls used to hold a rope across the width of Cockpit Hill and as many as 6 of them would be skipping at a time, while the rope was turned by girls at each end. As there were only 6 cars in the village, traffic was never a problem. They also roller skated freely on the road, which seemed to be their main playground. Whips and tops were popular, and the children liked to decorate their tops to

make them pretty as they spun round. When they wanted a change of scene they took themselves off across the fields, usually with picnics, and could be gone for hours. They nearly always went roaming off after Sunday School each week.

The Whitsuntide Carnival was a huge event in the village. Gwen and Jim, being close in age, always entered the fancy dress competition as a pair – as Punch and Judy, or 2 Red Indians for example. When Lorna reached the age of 3 it was decided that she too should join in, and a canary outfit, complete with yellow beak, was made for her. When the day arrived she was put into this costume, but she disliked it immediately and tore it off. She never entered the fancy dress competition in that or any other year. Nevertheless, she loved the Carnival and turned out with everyone else to admire the procession, the elaborately decorated floats pulled by well groomed cart horses, the decorated bicycles, the band and the excitement of it all.



Carnival crowds in 1951. *Photo: Colin Narramore*

Lorna was 6 when World War II broke out, and was affected by the sweet rationing. She and her friends tried to find ways round this, by buying Horlicks tablets and lemonade crystals, and by raiding the village allotments. These were to the east of Water End, and reached as far as the Stokesley Road. Lorna's family never went hungry. Her mother was a good manager, and baked every Thursday – bread, tea cakes, pies and, when she could get the ingredients, the family's favourite, a rich fruit loaf which they called "beloved cake". Jim wanted to join the Royal Navy, but as he was working as a joiner for Wilson and Willoughby's undertaking business, he was required to stay in his job because of the increase in demand for coffins, especially for the pilots from the local airfields who died in service.

At the age of 11 Lorna went to the Allertonshire School, which was one of the very few schools in the country to be built during the war. Here she enjoyed her education and can't now remember missing any days through ill-health. All the Brompton children were put together into the B stream, but Lorna soon shot ahead of the others and was promoted to the A stream. This meant she was separated from her friends. She cycled to school each day. Her favourite subjects were Art and Domestic Science. With the latter

they would have a whole day at a time, and occasionally were allowed to use "the flat" for a whole week. The flat was a self-contained apartment, with kitchen, bathroom etc. where the girls made breakfast, lunch and tea (to which mothers were invited, to be served by their daughters) and learned how to run a home. The boys, of course, did woodwork and metalwork instead.

Towards the end of her schooldays Lorna became a prefect. One memory which stays with her particularly, was being asked by the History teacher to go into Brompton Church to do pen and ink drawings of the 3 hogback stones. She made such a good job of this that the teacher kept the pictures to show to future classes, though Lorna would have liked to have kept them for herself. On one occasion, a Prize Giving Day, Lorna recited a poem by William Wordsworth, the sonnet *Composed Upon Westminster Bridge*, to the assembled school and parents. She can still recite it today word-perfectly.

When she left school Lorna worked as a telephonist in Northallerton, cycling down there, then back for lunch at home, then back to work for the afternoon, along with a crowd of other Bromptonians. She enjoyed the work in the telephone exchange, which was then above the General Post Office.

The Fletcher family were Methodists. At first they attended Bethel Chapel on Cockpit Hill and then the Wesleyan Chapel on The Green after Bethel Chapel closed. Lorna sang in the Chapel choir and played rounders in the Chapel team. Much of the family's life revolved around Chapel activities.

Her father also ran the Grattan Catalogue Club from home, to which most of the village seemed to belong. The goods they ordered came by train to Brompton Station. Lorna did the deliveries round the village, taking shoes, clothes, and household goods, and people came to No. 35 Cockpit Hill to make their weekly payments from which Lorna's father was able to take his commission. He was a generous man, and when someone was able to pay outright instead of instalments, he passed his commission on to the customer, though this was not something he was obliged to do. To Lorna the house was like a thoroughfare with people trooping in and out all the time; not just the Grattan customers, but neighbours wanting to borrow an egg or some sugar.

The most important form of entertainment for young people in Brompton was the dances. Lorna went to those held in the Village Hall on Cockpit Hill, where they danced to Bert Langthorne's Band and to others in Northallerton Town Hall where the music was usually provided by Bert Sherwood's Band. A lot of Brompton people would be there, and afterwards they all walked back to the village in a companionable group. Lorna's memories are vivid and keep surfacing – the boys swimming in the nude in the deepest part of the beck; she and her friends putting on "shows" in her father's work shed. When she looks back on her early days she realises that though there was not much money to spare this was more than compensated for by the friendship of others and the freedom she enjoyed from an early age, which enabled her and her friends to make their own entertainment.

*told by Lorna Emmerson (née Fletcher) to Brompton Heritage Group*

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## Doreen's Wartime Memories

As the country was at war during my years at Brompton School, that in itself created unusual circumstances. The mobile 'gas-chamber' used to visit periodically and then we had to put on our gas masks and go into the darkened van, where I presume some gas was released. On coming out, our masks were examined and the people in charge were able to tell if they were functioning properly by looking at the crystals in the base. Fortunately, the masks were never needed in a real gas attack.

On one occasion, the air raid warning siren sounded and we all had to get under our desks for cover. We sang songs while crouching there - not an easy feat! However, it must have been a false alarm as I can't recall any action. A few bombs were dropped in the area on another occasion.

One of my earliest memories was of my father joining the A.R.P. which stood for Air Raid Precaution. He had to wear a navy blue uniform when he was on duty or on training sessions. His earliest job was to help to distribute gas masks to every person in the village and I went around with him. These gas masks would have to be worn should Germany launch a gas attack from the air, as had happened in France in the First World War. Off we set with the gas masks in my mother's wicker laundry basket. There were three sizes - small, medium and large and people had to try them on to see which fitted the most snugly. There was also a special cradle-like contraption for small babies. The whole population was ordered to carry their gas masks with them everywhere they went. They came in cardboard boxes with string through them so that they could be carried over the shoulder and then, as time went by, you could purchase special waterproof cases which were a bit more substantial. The real duties of the A.R.P., however, were to assist the civil population at the time of air raids, helping to put out fires and getting people into air raid shelters. Dad was issued with a stirrup pump, which was a small hand pump not much bigger than the sort of pump you would blow up your bike tyres with. These were designed to pump water from buckets onto small fires but I don't think they would have been very effective. These pumps, together with buckets of sand were placed in all public buildings. He also had a wooden rattle, similar to those used at football matches, which had to be sounded in the event of a gas attack.

### ***Evacuees***

My next most vivid memory was of the evacuees arriving in the village. These were children from Middlesbrough, Hartlepool and Sunderland, where because of the shipyards there, it was expected there would be heavy bombing. Brompton being in the country was considered safer than the towns. The children looked so forlorn being led around the village by ladies from the WRVS. They had labels with their names and addresses pinned to their coats and carried brown carrier bags with their clothes in them. It was the job of the ladies to knock on everyone's door to see if they would take in an evacuee or two, not an easy task.

### ***Wartime farming***

When the war started and I was at school, my mother and Freda's mother helped at Lowfields Farm with haytime, harvest and on threshing days, as most of the able bodied men had joined the forces. Freda and I would come home from school on our own, we would be only seven or eight years old, and walk all the way to the top of Fullicar Lane to join our mothers in the fields. We were usually just in time to share the workers' 'clockings' or 'lowances' as the refreshments were called, having scalding, hot tea from a large enamel can and fresh scones and teacakes, made by my mother. If we were well behaved in the fields, which of course we always were, we would get a ride back to the farm on the back of one of the cart horses, or on top of a load of hay or corn, and then have a lift back to the village in Mr. Lancaster's rattly, old horse box, bumping down the stony, rutted lane. On threshing days, as, again, there was no one to look after us at home if it was school holidays, we would go to the farm with our mums, and be issued with a big stick and told to kill the mice and rats as they came out of the corn stack. We used to run after them as they appeared and give them a good wallop. The women would be cutting bands on the top of the threshing machine and feeding the corn into the drum and the older boys would be employed in the 'chaff hole' as it was called. This was where the dusty, flaky husk off the corn was dispelled ready to be bagged up for animal bedding. There was no Health and Safety Executive in those days and it was all hands on deck. Before the threshing day itself, my mother did a huge bake ready for the 'lowances' for the sixteen or so hands required for a threshing day.



Sharing 'lowances during haytime on Lowfields Farm 1935. *Photo: Doreen Newcombe*

### ***Troops in the Village***

The thing that put a stop to our freedom after dark, was when the soldiers were brought back from Dunkirk and were billeted in the halls and empty houses in the village. There was then a curfew imposed and soldiers were posted around and would challenge you with "Who goes there". A field bakery was set up on the Recreation Ground and lorries and other vehicles were parked there and on the village greens, covered in camouflage netting, which we children would help the soldiers to weave, putting the strips of khaki coloured material into large mesh netting. I can remember the soldiers putting on concerts in the Village Hall and we would sit on their wooden bunks and listen to them singing songs such as *Please don't send away the Border Boys, we'll need them by and by*, referring to the Border Regiment billeted in the village, and *Hang out your washing on the Siegfried Line*. I think they must have written the first song themselves. They played tunes on spoons and other improvised instruments, sometimes accompanied by the piano. Even today, when I hear the old hall creaking in the wind, I think of those soldiers billeted here and wonder how they managed to sleep. In reality, I would think they thought this was heaven compared to the Dunkirk beaches. My mother would sometimes invite one or two of the soldiers in for a meal.

Later on in the war a Land Army Hostel was built in Little Lane and the girls billeted there worked on the local farms. Sometimes, they would put on a party for us and hold a fancy dress competition. As there wasn't much else going on for us other than that provided by our own imagination, we really looked forward to these events. There was also a Prisoner of War camp at Stone Cross which housed Germans, Italians and Ukrainians. They too worked on the land and some went on to marry local girls and stayed on in this country after the war. The farmers were very glad of this additional help as most of the local young men had been called up into the forces or to serve as Bevin Boys in the mines.

And then of course there was the Home Guard. I can remember going to see them doing practice drill on Sunday mornings on the field that is now the football field in Station road. We wondered what these men were doing marching up and down with broom shafts over their shoulders (they hadn't yet been issued with guns).

### ***Preparations for war***

Another introduction at the beginning of the war was that everyone was issued with an Identity Card with name, address and a number unique to each individual. As children we had to learn our number by heart and I can still remember mine, JHMA 585, Some of us got bracelets or medallions made with this number engraved on it. The purpose of it all was that, should we be injured or killed in an air raid, if we had our identity number on our person, we could be easily identified.

Further urgent preparation was the making of blackouts for windows. You hadn't to show a chink of light as enemy bombers would be able to spot a town or village from the air. It was another duty of the A.R.P. to go around at night checking that no-one was showing a light. If you were they would knock at the door and shout 'Put that light out' Blackouts were made from heavy black material or some householders made wooden frames to fit

closely to the glass and covered them with a black, tarry paper. They were held in place with swivel fasteners so that they could be put up at 'Blackout time' and taken down during the day. Brown sticky paper was also stuck to the glass in windows in criss cross patterns so that should the glass break because of a bomb dropping, the glass wouldn't fly everywhere, but would splinter and still be held in place by the brown paper. Double Summer Time was introduced in an effort to make the most of the daylight hours for the farmers. We would be put to bed in the summer with the sun still shining brightly and it was very difficult to get to sleep.

Shops, offices and public buildings had walls of sandbags placed outside them, again to protect against bomb damage and huge water tanks were erected in the streets to provide water should incendiary bombs be dropped. I can remember barricades being built in Northallerton High Street to impede the advance of tanks if the Germans actually landed in this country and air raid sirens were placed on County Hall in Northallerton, ready to sound at the first sighting of an enemy aircraft.

There was a big rush to build airfields around the countryside and this area of North Yorkshire had stations at Leeming, Topcliffe, Dalton, Scorton, Catterick and Sandhutton. In some areas 'dummy airfields' were built to confuse the enemy and there was one on a farm in Long Lane. As Brompton was a low risk area we did not have air raid shelters issued to us, but some people dug their own in their back gardens

We were very lucky around here that we didn't see a lot of enemy action during the war although we could hear the bombs dropping on Teesside and see the barrage balloons over that area. Northallerton had some light bombing one night and a few small bombs were dropped in the fields near Brompton. Several planes came down in the vicinity. usually our own planes coming back from bombing raids. One summer, Sunday morning we were playing on the green when we heard a funny noise in the sky. We looked up in time to see a plane explode in the air. It was a spitfire and it came down in the field at the back of the house where I now live.

In Northallerton, the sight of wounded Canadian airmen became a familiar sight as a Base Hospital had been established where the Friarage Hospital now is. The buildings were made of timber brought over from Canada and some of these buildings are still standing today, even though they were only meant to be temporary. The nurses used to wheel the wounded out into the town in wheel chairs and long basket beds . The wounded airmen used to wear a bright blue uniform and were easily recognised.

*Doreen Newcombe (née Forth) 1998*

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## Wartime Memories of an Evacuee

From our garden in Sunderland I heard loud bangs which I thought were thunder, only to be told that it was gunfire. The Second World War had started. I was four years old, too young to understand or participate in all the subsequent upheaval. My brother's school was to be evacuated to Northallerton Grammar School so my parents rented out our house in Sunderland, my father took a small flat and my mother, brother and I came to live in Malpas terrace, opposite what was then the Church Hall.

Our neighbours were Mr and Mrs Baldrey who had a daughter called Bessie and a son who was in the army. We shared the back garden, wash-house and outdoor toilets. My friends were Mabel Appleby who lived up Corber Hill at Aston Villa bungalow and Doreen Forth from Water End. Other names I recall were Beryl Alderson, Billy Thackray, Jimmy Randall (son of the policeman).

I remember looking forward to starting school and I think I accompanied Isobel King on my first day. Miss Thornton, the gentle teacher of the infants gave us a thorough grounding in reading. Later on there seemed to be a few extra teachers who did not stay long. They were probably awaiting call-up for active service. Then there was Miss Bendelow who was a determined lady - no shirking in her classroom. She played the piano enthusiastically and we stood in lines singing a collection of folk songs and on special occasions, patriotic ones. The tall, commanding presence of Miss Lamb, the Headteacher, allowed for no nonsense and we were all instructed in lots of things by rote. I can still remember learning the tributaries of the River Ouse: Swale, Ure, Nidd, Wharfe, Aire, Don, Calder. We learned to knit socks on four needles! You knitted one needle then waited for everyone else to catch up, then did the following needle. It took a long time to knit a sock so the soldiers would have had cold feet waiting for them. My least favourite time of the week was Sewing. Hemming was not my forte and I well recall having to stand in front of the class holding up my "naughty hemming". We had to make very uncomfortable garments from flour sacks donated from the Mill across the road. We learned to embroider on pieces of brown material about the size of a postcard and once the sewing had been approved we had to unpick every thread and wind it back on the reel for the next pupil. We used slates in the infants class as paper was so scarce, and then graduated to using paper later on. Every scrap was utilised and art work was almost non-existent. Gummed paper was used on all the panes of glass in the windows to reduce splintering in the event of bombing.

Some of our classmates were evacuees who lived in Mrs. Eastoe's big house at the top of Corber Hill. I think they were from Tyneside. I stayed there for some weeks while my mother had an operation. Other newcomers were some 'fat' ladies from London - that is when we learned about pregnancy!

We had a communal pig in Diddy Thwaites' garden. I used to take the vegetable leaves and peelings in a bucket, going along the path by the Recreation Ground through the snicket. To help the war effort we picked rose hips which were to be made into rose hip syrup for babies.



We were sometimes allowed to pump the bellows in the forge near the school.

A regulation was to carry one's gas mask at all times. We kept our 'slate rags' in the boxes as well. At times, the gas masks had to be tested in a special caravan and I recall the fear and excitement in the infants when the big boys told us that not everyone survived the walk through the caravan. Miss Lamb dealt with our hysteria and then dealt with the big boys.

We had visits from the police or army to warn us of the dangers of butterfly bombs and Colorado beetles. We searched all over but did not find any. Occasionally we gathered round the back of a lorry to watch war films (maybe they were for recruitment drives) and there were parades in Northallerton for National/War Savings Weeks.

Counting the aeroplanes out and in on their return; listening to the tolling 'death bell' and counting the number of tolls which told the age of the one who had died; agonising over the decision of spending the Saturday pennies and how to use the sweet coupons carefully and learning how not to lose the bread tokens on the way to the bread shop on the green staffed by Harrison Sunley - all of these became a normal way of life for the duration. Going to Northallerton we passed the Italian Prisoner of War camp. There were many wounded airmen dressed in the hospital uniform of bright blue suit, white shirt and red tie.

As V.E. Day approached we were aware of excitement in the village. The church bells pealed, flags appeared in many buildings but some homes were not decorated as, sadly, they had lost someone whilst fighting the war. The children were given tiny flags to wave and had a half day holiday. One day at school we found a dried banana which was part of the celebrations. Not at all inspiring to look at and it tasted awful.

As the war ended so my time in Brompton drew to a close.

*Pat Hunt (née Whitehead)*

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## Bert Langthorne's World War II childhood

Bert was 6 years old at the beginning of the War and already attending Brompton Primary School. He lived on his parents' farm on the edge of the village and walked to school along with other local children. One particular memory has stayed with Bert, though he didn't realise its significance at the time. It must have been just before the war had started and as he walked along the lane he was eating a banana. It broke in half and the piece that fell to the ground was instantly covered in grit, so he kicked it away into the hedge side. Little did he know that it would be 6 years or more before he had the chance to eat another banana.

Bert has known the village to flood 6 times, the first occasion he can remember being in 1939. His grandfather lived in a house near where Orchard Grove is now and Bert vividly remembers how the water went into his granddad's house through the front door and out through the back door. The house must have seemed like part of the beck.

When the War started, children who didn't go home for lunch still took their own

sandwiches, which they ate sitting on the heating pipes in school. Now though, along with their bit of food, they had something extra to carry each day – their gas masks. Before long, however, proper school lunches were provided for all the children, the food arriving in containers from kitchens in Northallerton. Parents paid 2 shillings a week.

Bert remembers being able to look into the linen mill near the school when the mill doors were open. He could see the roaring furnaces which produced the steam power for the looms. Coal for the furnaces was brought into Brompton by train and the coal yards were adjacent to the railway line up Station Road. At midday, a very noisy hooter at the mill announced that it was time for the workers to knock off for lunch, and the children at school could see all the girls pouring out for their lunch-break.

On the farm there was no electricity or piped water until after the war. Lighting came from paraffin lamps, and the milking was done by hand. Milk was taken into Northallerton in churns in a trap pulled by a pony. As it went round the homes people came out with their jugs, and the milk was measured out with a metal measuring scoop attached to a long handle with a curved section on the end so that it could lodge safely on the edge of the churn. The health and hygiene people would never allow that today!

Living on a farm, the family was never short of food. They were allowed to kill 2 pigs a year, for which a licence was required, and there were always plenty of rabbits, pigeons and hares to put into a pie. Bert's mother made butter and cheese, and there were plenty of eggs from the hens, the surplus of which could be sold locally. Bert's mother used to take produce down to Northallerton on market days, and sell it on the same site where the Farmers' Market is held today.

The need for the country to produce more food brought about changes in farming. Farmers were paid £3 for every acre of pasture which they ploughed up to use for growing wheat. The government dictated the amount. Livestock that went to the mart were graded, priced, then sold – there was no auction.

The most striking change, however, was in the introduction of tractors. Before this time, all the hauling was done by horses. Bert remembers his father getting a Fordson tractor, a basic machine which could only be used for pulling. Later the more sophisticated Ferguson was invented. This had hydraulics so that things could be lifted. Gradually horses were phased out, and fewer people were needed to work the farm. After the War, combine harvesters came in, along with other types of machinery, and a traditional way of life had been changed forever. Also, mains water was brought in to Brompton, and electricity arrived

Though Brompton was in a very rural area and well away from the theatre of war and the bombing, there were many signs of military activity. The surrounding countryside was used for a number of air fields, not only Leeming, and consequently the drone of aircraft could frequently be heard – our own planes setting off and returning, and enemy aircraft heading for Teesside. There were 2 plane crashes near the village. One Sunday morning a Spitfire came down in flames just off the Stokesley Road, not far from Stone Cross, as villagers watched in horror. Another of our planes, also on fire, came down at Lovesome

Hill, just missing the chapel. Bert also remembers well the search light on one of his fields on the farm.

Another occasion sticks in his mind, when an army unit parked its lorries at the end of Scots Pit Lane and soldiers came to the farm to ask for food. There were about 15-20 men, so Bert's mother set about frying eggs for them all, for which they paid with petrol, a precious commodity in those days as it was severely rationed.

When the bus loads of evacuees came into the village from Newcastle, Teesside, Hartlepool and Sunderland, Bert's parents took in two girls, who were with them for a year to 18 months. Their mothers stayed with them until they were settled, then headed back home.

Bert's father was an air raid warden, along with the other men who were in reserved occupations. Bert remembers three bombs coming down on Brompton Banks, landing in the fields, though one didn't go off.

Bert's most abiding memory is of one night in 1945 when the sky was filled with the throb of aircraft. For an hour, villagers stood and watched as plane upon plane passed overhead as far as the eye could see, each one pulling a glider. Then all was quiet. This sobering and impressive scene marked the beginning of the end of the War. D-Day was about to start.

*told by Bert Langthorne to the Brompton Heritage Group*



Ploughing. *Photo: Colin Narramore*

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## Post War farming at The Banks

The Banks is a farm well known to many who live in Brompton but did not exist until the open fields were enclosed, probably in the 1700s.

Situated to the east of the village, its 100 acres stretch from the A684 up the hill on the north east side of Banks Road, rising from 46 metres above sea level to 110 metres. At the lower end the soil is a mixture of stones and sand, but gradually it becomes heavier with clay as the land rises. The farm has no woodland area and no stream running through it, but it does have a spring, which in the past has been an important asset.

It was 1951 when Joe and Margaret Atkinson moved in as newly-weds. They brought a cow with them to provide their own milk supply. It had to be hand milked for 3 or 4 years until milk could be delivered to the door.

The farm house was old, at least dating from the 18<sup>th</sup> century but possibly incorporating an even earlier dwelling when the land was first enclosed. It had no electricity supply, so had to be lit by oil lamps. There was no water supply either, except for that provided by the spring mentioned before which was piped to the yard where it can still be used today. The Atkinsons were lucky. Some farms in the village had no springs and were dependent on churns of water being brought in by train from Teesside. There was no indoor toilet, just the usual earth closet in the garden. There was no driveway leading to the farmhouse so the Atkinsons had to drive to their new home across a field, passing a pond on the way. Some beasts, received as wedding presents, were already in the field that came so close to the house that they could lean over the fence and lick the kitchen window!

The land was rented from the Masterman family, who also donated money for the Masterman Cup, which was awarded at the Carnival Gymkhana each Spring Bank Holiday at the end of May. In 1951 there were 67 acres and 31 perches of land, according to the original agreement, and the rent was £110 per annum. Help on the farm came from a boy who lived in the farmhouse with Joe and Margaret.

By 1951 the mechanisation of farming, accelerated by World War II, had already taken place and Mr Atkinson was familiar with tractors, his father having owned one from the early date of 1936. Crops grown in 1952 were 12 acres of barley plus 7 acres of spring barley and 7 acres of potatoes. Both types of barley were sold as "maltings" for brewing beer. Some of the potatoes were sold locally to a greengrocer in Northallerton and a greengrocer in York. The rest went by train to the C.W.S. (Co-operative Society) in Newcastle, where Mr Atkinson's father was head of the Greengrocery and Fruits Department for a time.

Before long, hens were kept in big henhouses as egg-layers, until 1960 when a change was made to broiler chickens for eating. The laying hens had to be sold, as the two could not be run alongside each other for fear of disease. 16,000 broiler chicks were taken in at a time, fattened up for 10 weeks and then sent away to be processed. The buildings had to be cleaned out and left to "rest" for a while before the next batch of chicks arrived. The

Atkinsons had a contract with a firm in Ripon, which was unusual at the time. Their chicken business came to an end in the 1990s when the buildings became out of date. Gradually the growing of barley was phased out as wheat took over. First the malting barley was stopped and feeding barley was grown. This gave a higher yield and was better suited to combine harvesting. Then new chemicals made the growing of wheat more profitable. Previously wheat could not be grown on the same field two years running because of possible disease, but new sprays and fertilisers meant that rotation was no longer necessary, and the crop yield became greater. Bulk combining became the norm by 1968, in which the grain goes from combine to trailer, to grain dryer to shed. New varieties of corn meant it could be sown in Autumn instead of Spring.

Other changes took place on the farm. In 1953 electricity arrived. Water came a bit later, first from a shared supply with nearby Thorntree Farm. The house also underwent alterations to make it more convenient.

In 1961 about 90 acres were added to the farm. Then, in 1964, the Atkinsons were able to buy the farm from Miss Catherine Masterman. In 1983 the Cemetery Field was bought from Mr Lancaster and more fields were purchased in 1986, making the total around 180 acres, where it stands today.

### ***Field Names***

Sally Field — named after Sally Weatherill, nee Kirby owner of the neighbouring field. Mr Atkinson has identified a hollow at the top of Sally Field where he believes cock fighting used to take place. It is a big dip, now gradually being filled in, which commands a clear view down to the village to enable participants to make a quick getaway if need be.

Steep Bank Side

Crusher Field (bordering Mr Crusher's farm).

Near Side Crusher Field

Building Field — the building has long gone.

Pancake Field — so called because of the "Pancake Stone", a large, flat stone which is on the roadside verge near the field, where Bank Road has an S bend. Children traditionally visited it on Pancake Day (Shrove Tuesday) in order to make a wish.

Front Field — with the ridge and furrow earthworks.

Little Back Field

Back Field

Cemetery Field ~ next to the cemetery.

Top Cemetery Field. These last 2 fields have been joined to make a 35 acre field.

*told by the Atkinsons to the Brompton Heritage Group in 2008*