

The Collins Family of Abbey Road, Pilton (1935 to date)

Four generations of the Collins family have lived in Abbey Road, Pilton, since the houses were built in 1935. This is a short account of their lives by Steve Collins who still lives there.



"My grandparents, Lena and Tom (known as Leslie) Collins (left), were the first to move into number 17 in 1935. Tom went on to be a supervisor at the North Devon Bakeries until his retirement in the 1970's.



His brother, Jack Collins and his mother (Emily – my great-grandmother (photo left in 1921 with her husband James, although he didn't live to be with her there) lived at number 21 for a good part of the 1950's and Jack's wife, Joyce, moved in a little later on. Jack and Joyce are shown below in 1954.



Tom, Jack and Alan were all members of the Pilton Church Choir in the 1940's and 50's. Jack was a train driver on British Rail and Joyce was a supervisor at Boots. Joan and Alan Collins lived at numbers 13, 21 and 16 at various times from 1970 until the present day. Alan was at various times a Gas Fitter, Bakery Engineer and Post Office Clerk, while Joan was a supervisor in Boots. Alan and Joan are shown in the bottom photograph. The family remains in Pilton. I live at No. 16 Abbey Road at the present time and my sister and her family currently live at Northfield Cottage after having lived in Youings Drive and then 'Hanworth' in Under-Minnow Rd.



My Dad (Alan) had very good memories of growing up in Abbey Road. The family moved to Abbey Road when Dad was two and from that point on, Dad developed into a free spirit, loving the outdoors. He lived there for almost all of his life and was always proud of the fact that he could recite the names of the families living in Abbey Road in 1945. Many a time he would go missing from when he was as young as five years old and his father, Tom, a gentle, cheerful and patient man would have to get into his van and then search the fields for him. He'd usually find him, sometimes literally miles away, wandering among the hedgerows, talking to the sheep or any other animal that happened to cross his path and then take him home to meet his Waterloo with his mother - a battle he always decisively lost!

Dad had a lifelong love of animals and always described Devon as 'God's country'. Whenever he was away from the county, you always had the feeling that he was looking forward to getting back to those 'Devon hills'. In 2008 he was given the 'Man of Pilton' award. Dad was known as a great cricket player (see the photograph of Pilton Cricket Club in the 1950s on the archive) in his youth, though he was involved in plenty of other sporting activities as well. Dad also liked playing chess - he'd been a North Devon champion at the age of 13 when he featured in an article in what was then the North Devon Journal Herald."

Steve Collins