

The bright lights of Broadway

Christmas doesn't really start in earnest in Broadway until the end of this month, but Tracy Spiers finds it full of festive cheer already

PHOTOGRAPHY BY VICTORIA JONES

I feel like I'm in a snow globe. All around me glistens with festive colour, taking me into a wonderfully enchanting cosy world of nostalgia and childhood memories. The anticipation, excitement and innocence of watching and waiting for Christmas rushes back and I don't feel guilty even though the 'C' word isn't here yet. In the beautiful picturesque village of Broadway you can be transported back into this state of mind any time of year. I'm in Christmas Box, on the Upper High Street and my eight-year-old daughter has just chosen the newest addition to our Christmas tree – a tiny gingerbread girl wearing a red dress, shoes and accessories dazzling with glitter. It will be the first thing that goes on the 2012 tree in a few weeks time. John Marchent opened his

shop here 17 years ago and like his customers, never tires of the magic his eclectic world-wide selection of tree dresses, trains, Christmas broaches, watches, villages, snow domes and tree decorations, bring.

This magical spirit is contagious, and the perfect Christmas card image this village provides is the ideal backdrop for the festive season which starts in Broadway at the end of this month. Following the successful community atmosphere evident in both Jubilee and Olympic celebrations, the next big events for Broadway are the two late night shopping events on Friday, November 30 and Friday, December 7 (5.30pm-8.30pm).

"It is a magical time for both children and adults with all the glitter and



celebration leading up to Christmas. Santa Claus will be in the shop on those Fridays, with carol singing outside and the United Reformed Church opposite always has a selection of about 20 to 30 trees all decorated by the different societies and organisations within the village. There is a lovely atmosphere which cheers up the long winter days and the ideal setting of Broadway turns it into the Christmas card scene," he says.

Trees lining the High Street are spectacularly lit, and one tree is given a double set of lights to make it shine more brightly as the Tree of Light in memory of loved ones. With news that American actor David Hasselhoff is moving to the village, it was suggested to me that maybe he would do the honours and turn on the lights. So David, if you are reading this, may be you fancy meeting your new neighbours at one of the highlights in Broadway's calendar. A London bus gives tours to raise money for the Air ambulance, horse and carriage rides go up and down the High Street, a rock choir and traditional choirs provide atmosphere, street entertainers, food stalls and mulled wine is on tap, making it two enchanting evenings.

Kayleigh Jones from Sue Parkinson, a lifestyle store full of beautiful things including designer women's clothing, accessories, jewellery, candles and

Broadway Hotel on The Green





Above: Womenswear in Slate Clothing, including Out of Xile mauve suit

Left: Womenswear, shoes and accessories at Sue Parkinson

Below: Natives retro-inspired homeware at Sue Parkinson

fragrances; recalls her own childhood memories.

"My family have always come to Broadway on Christmas Eve to browse around the shops and soak up the lovely atmosphere and lights. One tradition is to go to Hunters Restaurant and Tea Rooms in the High Street. I used to work in Moreton-in-Marsh and drive through Broadway, wishing I worked here. I just love it, everybody knows each other and there's something for everybody too."

Keri Carter, director of Broadway Financial Planning in Church Street agrees.

"Broadway is a particularly enchanting time in winter. It's a time when the locals join forces to support the various events taking place such as late night Christmas shopping and carol singing and it's these times that make it special being part of such a wonderful village," she admits.

But one doesn't have to visit in winter time to appreciate the attractive qualities of this unspoilt village with its honey-coloured houses, impressively long High Streets adorned with Chestnut trees, abundance of high quality art galleries, eateries, individual shops and rich art and craft heritage (celebrated in the Gordon Russell Museum). My children are always impressed that two of Britain's leading historical figures – Cromwell and Charles I – they learn about at school actually



stayed in the Lygon Arms; and they always beg me to take them to Broadway Activity Park, a state-of-the-art play area off the High Street and on route to Broadway Tower, a spectacular 65-foot folly – affectionately known as 'the highest little castle in the Cotswolds' – where one can see for miles.

In the coming year the Oxford-based Ashmolean Museum is opening an outpost in Tudor House, a 17th-century building in Broadway which will house furniture, objects, paintings and textiles from the Ashmolean's reserve collections. A gallery space will also be dedicated to

rotating exhibitions of works by local artists.

"It should be a huge draw for us and in the next two to three years it's hoped the Gloucestershire Warwickshire Railway will be here too (40 years after the last train pulled out of the Broadway's old station) so there are lots to look forward to," says Nigel Robinson, chairman of the Broadway Traders Association.

"There is a tremendous sense of community here and my festive wish for the village would be that it continues to work in harmony and be successful economically as well as socially and



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Clothes Store 01285 641097 Home Store 01285 641276

Opening Hours

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community-wise.”

Nigel owns Treasure Trove, an enchanting gift shop, with his father David. The family has owned the shop for 60 years, but before that it was a petrol station and garage owned by David's grandfather's brother. Many of Broadway's shops, restaurants, galleries and coffee shops are independently run, just as the traditional stores were years ago.

Born in Broadway 60 years ago, Linda Brain has seen many changes to the village and community life. Married to a local farmer, who farms land above Broadway and owns AD Brain & Son, Linda runs Tower Storage, which provides secure storage for leisure vehicles.

She maintains that the heart of Broadway is still strong.

“Growing up in Broadway, we had a real sense of community – families going back generations looking out for one another. The appearance of the honey coloured Cotswold stone properties and the main road through the centre remain the same today. It's just the property interiors that have changed from village supplies to accommodate tourists who visit the Jewel in the Cotswold crown.

“The generation links that tied the village families together are all but gone



Claire Butler, Office Manager, at Broadway Financial Planning.

but the sense of community is still very much alive.”

The framework of Broadway may be historic and traditional, yet there is a modern feel to the village too which has taken it into the 21st century. Traders work closely together for the good of those they serve and as in the past have paid for Broadway's Christmas lights themselves. One building dating back to 1575 has just undergone major refurbishment. Broadway Hotel closed just after New Year this year for 10 weeks and reopened in time for its biggest social dates in March, the Cheltenham Gold Cup. The next big race, The Open in November ensures the hotel is full, which hopefully brings business for fellow traders.

“I think Broadway is quite unique in that it keeps the traditions alive and

everybody makes a real effort especially at Christmas with the lights and the late night shopping events. It's an exciting time of year and we always enjoy being part of these occasions and welcoming those who come to visit us during those evenings,” explains the hotel's general manager Andrew Swan.

Over 400 years ago Broadway Hotel served as a rural retreat for the Abbots of Pershore. Today it still provides an oasis for those looking for a Cotswold escape. At this time of year afternoon tea or an evening drink by a log fire is a must for many. Keen walker Julie Selbie-Clark, owner of Complete Advice Services in Leamington Road, often makes one of her local bars an end goal after a long ramble.

“The atmosphere in the village pubs is particularly warming in the winter ▶

Broadway High Street



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Dr Mark Steven-Howe **BDS DGDGP**
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On a final note we have and will remain totally committed to providing private high quality comprehensive and family dental care to the local (and not so local) people of Broadway and the surrounding area. Your health and your teeth aren't a renewable resource and need looking after carefully so when you need a dentist remember we are on your doorstep.



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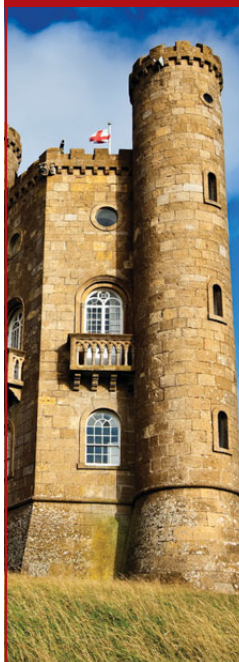


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months. I like nothing better than to go on a brisk walk up to Broadway Tower in the crisp cold air and be rewarded with a drink or hearty meal in one of our pubs in front of an open fire," she admits.

Famous names have been associated with Broadway over the years. William Morris and Dante Gabriel Rossetti both found a much loved retreat in Broadway Tower. Artists John Singer Sargent and Francis Davis Millet – who was on RMS Titanic's fatal voyage 100 years ago – also painted here. A passion for the arts is evident in Broadway in the 21st century.

"We have some of the leading galleries in the country covering all periods of art from the 18th century to present day," says Amanda Noott, from John Noott Galleries, which will be hosting an exhibition by Peter Barker and Duncan Macgregor from November 3.

"From a customer point of view, there is a huge range of art to see in such a small area and the artists come to paint here because there is so much beautiful scenery."

Gilly Aspey is one of Broadway's newest independent traders. In February she opened Slate Clothing, catering for the stylish, discerning customer looking for out of the ordinary separates, quirky pieces and more classic items. Gilly has been so overwhelmed by support, she is now launching a second shop in the Huntings to cater for more special occasion wear, both day and evening.

"There is a strong community and we were made very welcome. I had known Broadway all my life, since attending my first school here. It was always the place to come with friends and family, for a special day out! The shops, restaurants and coffee

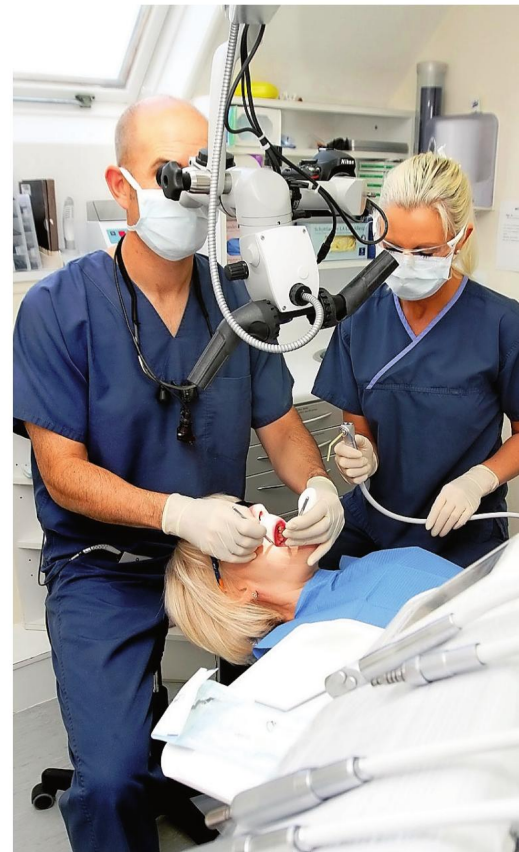
shops continually evolve, and I am delighted to be part of this business community," says Gilly.

"For our local customers and for visitors from further afield we try and provide a very personal service, responding to people's wishes both in style and size range. For a day in the Cotswolds with a variety of shops, restaurants and beautiful surroundings, Broadway is hard to beat," she adds.

Dr Mark-Steven and Clare Howe own Broadway Dental in the High Street and have been working in the village for 14 years.

"I love the Christmas lights and all the shop windows look fantastic at this time of year which gives Broadway that pretty old-fashioned Christmas card look. You can always find the little quirky gifts we all love here," admits Clare.

I like nothing better than buying that quirky gift so my daughter Megan and I put Broadway to the test and decide to make up our own Christmas stocking with potential gifts. Megan finds a yellow sausage dog ballpoint pen and fridge rover in Rikki Tikki; I discover a "control a man" remote control in Cotswold Trading; a set of Laurel and Hardy ceramic coasters in Whatever the Weather; shimmering purple blue Hunter boots from Landmark; English Flower Honey in Broadway Deli; and a motorbike bottle holder in Treasure Trove. Apparently it's for the man who would in real life like a Harley Davidson. I'm married to a man who would prefer a Ferrari F40. In reality it's a push bike a puncture repair kit is his likely stocking filler. I would love a Mike Bernard original from John Noott Galleries but will happily settle with a cappuccino and banana loaf



Above: Dr Mark-Steven Howe and Dental Nurse Tracy Bunn at Broadway Dental.

from Tisanes Tea Rooms.

Megan and I leave this lovely village promising each other we will return on Friday, November 30, for the village's first late-night shopping event, the date we have decided that our gingerbread girl from Broadway will take her prominent position on our Christmas tree. ■

www.beautifulbroadway.com



Below: Broadway Shopping Arcade

Left: Financial Advisor Julie Selbie-Clark of Complete Advice Services

