warm and friendly community

Jo Creese, 41, a teaching

worked as a cook at St Mary's School since it opened. It's a nice modern area, with new facilities Maxine Knight, 42, school

Stoke for 20 years, and seen it arow. It

cook, Bradley Stoke

now has a good sense of identity and community

Debbie Nicholls, 46, secretary, Bradley Stoke

shopping centre brought the area together and makes it feel like a proper place with its own identity

Kathy Burden, 43, teacher Bradlev Stoke

## SADLY BROKE? NOT

Welcome to Bradley Stoke

As we launch a week of features celebrating life in **Bradley Stoke DAVID CLENSY** looks at the history of the 'new town' in South Gloucestershire and examines how the area once derided as 'Sadly Broke' has finally found its feet

Twinned with Champs-sur-Marne S vou drive around Bradley Stoke today, there are certain things you are bound to notice. It feels modern and planned, with its central arteries of dual carriageways, and countless cosy cul-de-sacs. At its core is the Willow Brook shopping mall, with the enormous

new Tesco Extra store among its shops, and the neighbouring library and leisure centre making this once suburban districts. This is the vision of Bradley Stoke that planners might have imagined

pen to paper to create a new nunity on a swathe of South Gloucestershire countryside. The name, chosen in 1994, derives

back in the 1980s when they first put

from Bradley Brook and Stoke Brook, both of which flow nearby. The first turf was cut in 1987 by the then MP for the area, John Cope, with

a JCB instead of the traditional silver

spade. Since then some 9,000 houses and flats have been built, giving the district a population of about 20,000. But for the best part of a decade,

> experienced the problems brought about interesting story, because the developers got it all terribly wrong new housing there for many years. But it has now eething even made the national press.

Welcome in: A sign welcomes drivers to the new town of Bradley Stoke, which

after more than 20 years is now a thriving community in its own right

had already

Council

land at

Patchway

the ideal

location.

decided that

1,000 acres of

"The big problem, when they started developing Bradley Stoke in of houses at the two ends, and then when they met in the middle, they started on vet would build a big shopping centre

market in the early 1990s, property developers started going bust, and we were left with effectively two

"So all the families living in the houses that had been built at the end of the 1980s found they had no

principal lecturer in town and intry planning at the University of the West of England, has studied Bradley Stoke's development and uses it as an example when teaching students about the pitfalls of new towns – and the ways of getting out of He said: "Bradley Stoke has an

managed to pull itself back out of the mire. It remains a much-maligned place but actually these days it has a 1987, was that developers started from either end. The idea was to build lots

"But when the bottom fell out of the

old Northavon massive patch of mud in the middle. "The problem is, developers can make short-term money on building houses but they struggle with making quick cash on building services like shops, schools, civic buildings and health centres. They can make money on them in the long term, but not the short term.

devoid of any inspiration".



facilities in terms of shops, schools or

civic buildings. "Those living there had to get in their car and drive along a big dual carriageway whenever they wanted to

There certainly had been some teething problems. The first scandal was when developer Lovell Homes was found to have used the wrong mix in its mortar. Seventeen homes were declared unsafe.

In one piece of unforgettable publicity, MP John Cope was shown pushing over a garden wall with his

The homeowners were eventually moved out and the houses rebuilt. Then there was the promised leisure centre, due to open its doors in

But the contractor went bust and it was not opened until three years later and then only with the help of a National Lottery grant. The provision of adequate health

facilities for the new community was The first properly built one did not open until 1991 – before that the residents and doctors had to make do

with an old portable building. Just as the community was getting on its feet, Bristol-based architect George Ferguson, the then president Architects, said that, in his opinion, Bradley Stoke was "soulless and

But the really big issue in the new

housing estates with a muddy field in the middle, Bradley Stoke is now a busy town with a population of around 20,000

The big turning point for the area came with the arrival of the big Tesco superstore, which has recently become even bigger. Strange though it may sound, Tesco brought the community together

Dr John Allinson, principal lecturer in town planning, UWE

town's brief history has been

During the recession of the 1990s. many young couples and families were caught out as the bottom fell out of the property market.

This meant that homes were suddenly worth much less than had been paid for them. It led to the town being dubbed "Sadly Broke" Dr Allinson explains: "The

problem of negative equity mean that hundreds of families found ves stuck in this strang place that had never been finished.' But he adds that things have improved dramatically over the last

"Bradley Stoke has really managed to drag itself up by its boot strings, and now it's an impressive place. It has six schools, a library, plenty of shops and a health centre.

"The big turning point for the area came with the arrival of the big Tesco superstore, which has recently



'Soulless': George Fergusson

become even bigger. Strange though it may sound. Tesco brought the community together.

"While most of the country has about a 50 per cent loyalty to the

nearest supermarket, around 90 per cent of people in Bradley Stoke shop in the local Tesco. It's a sort of community hub.

"And now the community really is progressing. There is a parish council and a parish magazine, and the schools have become particularly

'All these things have the effect of bringing the community together as a unit, and giving residents living there a sense of an identity for

> YOUR SAY ONLINE What do you think? Click on the 'Your Say' tab at www.thisisbristol.co.uk



Sarah Deliot, 41, teaching

on a limb, to a more cohesive community

with shops, leisure

centre and library

Peru - I moved here in 2002. We have all been welcomed warmly, and have settled happily in the area

Ursula Morrell, 36, nousewife. Bradlev Stoke

with lots facilities and a good transport network Kate Fitzgerald, 23,

primary school teacher,

've been here for 18 years. What I like is the location and the easy access to the motorways and the railway

David Chandler, 65.

for Lloyds, Bradley Stoke

are good

former town councillor Schools

## What's your story?

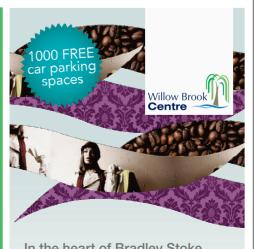
All this week we're featuring news and features from Bradley Stoke in the Evening Post. If you've got a story about a community event, business or anything else, call reporter Dan Evans on 0117 9343232 or the newsdesk on 9343330. You can also email d.evans@bepp.co.uk or epnews@



Bradley Stoke shop in Tesco

streets are clean, houses are nice and it's safe for the boys. The cycle paths are good as well - we like everything about it David Woods, 45, works

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