

Published April 2025

LIFE, LOVE & MEMORIES



MEMORY LANE

PUBLISHED BY AGE UK OLDHAM

We welcome you to our April newsletter. The first three months of the year have gone. The daffodils, snowdrops and crocus are starting to bloom and will soon be showing their colourful display. The leaves will also start to appear on the trees showing us 'Spring has arrived!'



People of Oldham

VERA SMITH was nicknamed 'Dobby Horse Vera', 'The Angel of Tommyfield' and just Aunty Vera.



Picture Below
Vera in the background on her
roundabout



Vera was born in a caravan on 'The Green' in Oldham town centre, where Primark now stands, one of six children born between 1921 and 1942, all born in living vans on 'The Green'. Her mother was a traveller and her father came from Henshaw Street, but her grandparents were also fairground travellers and came back to the town to christen their 13 children.

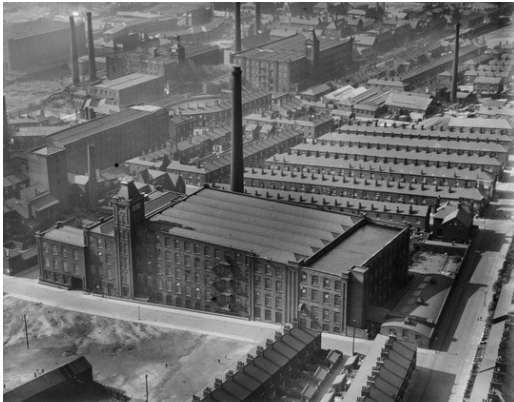
See photo below.



Vera Smith was beloved by generations of children visiting Oldham's Tommyfield Market for her hand-cranked roundabout.

The family of travelling fairground people ran the amusement at the market for over 130 years. Vera worked on the market from the age of 10 and took over the roundabout from her mother when she was 12.

Vera was married twice, first to Harry Walton. When their three children, Peter, David and Frances, were small she used to finish at the market, make their tea then do an evening shift as a spinner at the Coldhurst Mill. Picture left.



Then she married John Smith, and together they went into the licensed trade, best remembered for running the New Museum pub in Henshaw Street.



It was there that she began her lengthy fund-raising campaign for Dr Kershaw's, when consultant Naru Hira started to raise money to convert the former cottage hospital to a hospice.

Her fund-raising was inspired by John's death from cancer and also a nephew who had leukaemia.

She suffered a serious injury which left her partly paralysed after she slipped on ice outside her home in the town centre in 2000.

She was forced to wear a neck brace and a steel halo around her head, when she was called 'The Angel of Tommyfield'.

Initially family and friends kept the roundabout turning, but because Vera, then 68, was forced to retire she started proceedings to sell the business. Sadly vandals burned the roundabout down before the sale was completed.

But Vera continued her Dr Kershaw's fund-raising on Tommyfield Market on Wednesdays, with a group of friends nicknamed the Dream Team.

She fought off two bouts of cancer, and had been well for around eight years after her accident.

Sadly the operation on her neck had not been successful and Vera's health deteriorated and she died at the Royal Oldham Hospital in 2010 aged 78.

Brian Hurst, the hospice's fund-raising manager, said: "She was absolutely fantastic for the hospice."

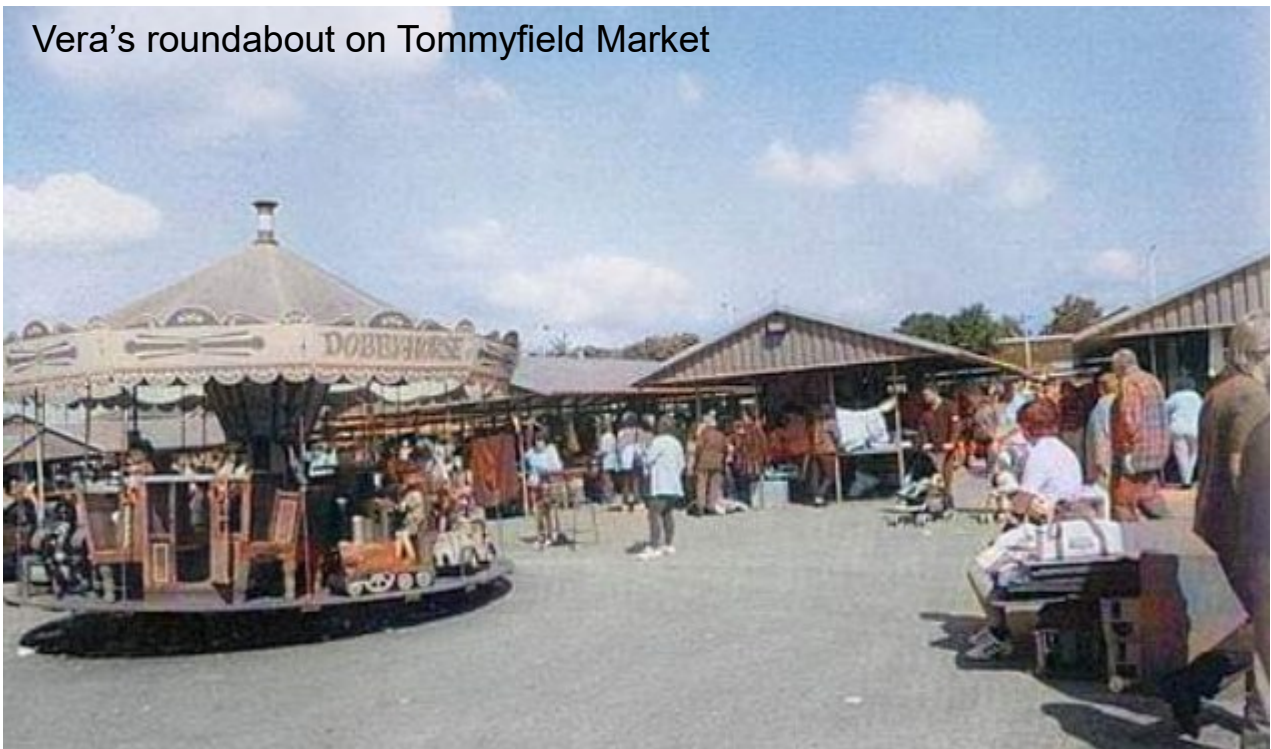




In 2007, Vera was crowned 'Woman of Oldham' for her fund-raising work for a raft of good causes including Dr Kershaw's Hospice and she was given a tribute by Cilla Black on the TV show 'Surprise Surprise'. The star appeared at the market to sing to her.

Picture on the left.

Vera's roundabout on Tommyfield Market



In 2009 a callous con-woman brazenly walked into the Vera's home pretending to be her carer before stealing nearly £300 of charity cash. The trickster, who was wearing a nurse's uniform, took her purse after she agreed to sponsor her for Cancer Research. At the time Vera was 76 and suffering from cancer.

Vera was left afraid to sleep after the attack - described as "grossly shameful" by police.

Vera said: "Now when I'm in bed I keep waking up and listening for noises. It's made me nervous."

At Vera's funeral crowds watched as the band led the long procession through the town.

Vera is buried in Chadderton Cemetery.



The hearse passes Tommyfield Market where Vera spent much of her time.

QUIZ QUESTIONS - HUMAN BODY

1. How many bones comprise the skull?: 12, 17, 22 or 27?
2. On which part of the body do you get verrucas?
3. After strangulation, what bone is usually broken?
4. Alopecia is the medical name for what condition?
5. What is the name of the division between the nostrils?
6. Leukemia is caused by an abnormality in what?
7. What is the longest bone in the human body?
8. De-oxygenated blood is carried by which vessels?
9. How many pairs of ribs do humans have?
10. What is the most common blood group?
11. What is the common name for the trachea?
12. Prosthetics is the making of what?
13. What is the primary function of the kidneys?
14. How many teeth comprise a full adult set ?
15. Which is the biggest muscle in the human body?
16. What part of the body is affected by glaucoma?
17. Which bone in the human body is most often broken?
18. Anemia is caused by a deficiency of what?
19. Which of the five groups is the lowest in the vertebral column?
20. What was the world's first effective antibiotic?

ANSWERS

1. 22
2. On the soles of your feet
3. The hyoid bone
4. Hair loss
5. The septum
6. White blood cells
7. The femur
8. Veins
9. 12
10. O
11. Windpipe
12. The making of artificial limbs
13. To remove waste material from the blood
14. 32
15. Gluteus maximus (buttocks)
16. The eyes
17. Clavicle (collar bone)
18. Red blood cells
19. The coccyx
20. Penicillin

provided by Sue

WHERE THERE'S A WILL (BY PAM AYRES)

All the family gathered round to hear poor Grandad's will
Fred was watching Alice and she was watching Bill
He was watching Arthur everywhere he went
But specially to the cupboard where Grandad kept the rent



Outside on the patio the sliding door was closed
And sitting in a chair was nephew John, his face composed
He said "My dear old Grandad I won't see you anymore"
And his sheets of calculations were spread across the floor
Downstairs in the kitchen sister Alice blew her nose
Saying "He always was my favourite you knew that I suppose
You couldn't have found a nicer man I've never loved one dearer
I'd have come round *much* more often if I'd lived just that bit nearer."



Cousin Arthur sat alone his eyes were wild and rash
And desperately he tried to think where old folks kept their cash
He'd thought about the armchair and the mattress on the bed
And he'd left his car at home and booked a Pickfords van instead

(cont'd)

Then there were the bedroom floorboards, he'd studied every crack
And twice while dusting the commode he'd rolled the carpet back
But he knew the others watched him "You scavengers" he cursed
And every night he prayed "Don't let the others find it first"



The day that Grandad's will was read it came up bright and clear
The solicitor looked round and said "Now then, are we all here?"
Someone shouted "Yes" and someone else unscrewed his pen
And someone sat upon his coat so he could not stand up again
He carefully unfolded it and wonderingly said
"This is the shortest will that I have ever read"
He rolled a fag and carefully laid a filter tip
While beads of sweat they gathered on Cousin Arthur's lip



It says "My dear relations thank you all for being so kind
And out there by the lily pond is where you'll surely find
The half a million pounds with which I've stuffed the garden gnome
Which I leave with great affection to the Battersea Dogs Home!"



A real-life cautionary tale:

RICHES TO RAGS

And that's basically what a man named Huntington Hartford did.

Hartford, who lived from 1911 to 2008, was the heir to the Great Atlantic & Pacific Tea Company fortune. This company, which started just before the American Civil War, is better known as the A&P supermarket chain. A&P was the first U.S. coast-to-coast food store, and from World War I to the 1960s was what Walmart is for today's American shoppers.

Hartford inherited approximately \$90 million when he was 12. Adjusting for inflation means he was given more than \$1.3 billion as a child, after taxes. Yet Huntington declared bankruptcy in New York in 1992, approximately 70 years after being handed one of the largest fortunes in the world.

Hartford had the reverse Midas touch. He lost millions buying real estate, creating an art museum and sponsoring theatres and shows. He combined poor business skills with an exceptionally lavish lifestyle. After declaring bankruptcy, he lived as a recluse with a daughter in the Bahamas until he died.



NAME THE FILMS



continued...

Answers to Film Quiz

- | | | |
|----|---------------------|------|
| 1. | South Pacific | 1958 |
| 2. | Bridget Jones Diary | 2001 |
| 3. | Psycho | 1960 |
| 4. | E.T. | 1982 |
| 5. | Titanic | 1997 |
| 6. | Sound of Music | 1965 |
| 7. | Ben Hur | 1959 |

CHEESE BAKE

Serves 4

Ingredients:

25g butter, plus extra for greasing

425ml semi skimmed milk

125g fresh white breadcrumbs

4 medium eggs

1 tbsp English mustard (optional)

Good pinch cayenne pepper (optional)

175g extra mature Cheddar cheese, grated



Method:

Heat the butter and milk until hot but not boiling.

Remove from the heat and add the crumbs.

Soak for 15 minutes.

Meanwhile, preheat the oven to 190°C/170°C fan/Gas mark 5.

Grease an ovenproof dish.

Put the eggs in a large bowl with the mustard and cayenne, if using.

Season and whisk until evenly mixed.

Stir in the breadcrumb mixture and cheese.

Put in the dish and bake for 45 minutes or until puffed and starting to brown.

HOW WELL DO YOU KNOW - UK TOWN/CITIES

1



Clue: Spaghetti Junction

2



Clue: Ride a Cock Horse ...

3



Clue: Betty's

4



Clue: Robin Hood

5



Clue: Three Legs

6



Clue: Quays

Answers on next page...

Answers to Town/Cities:

1. Birmingham



Spaghetti Junction - motorways meet

3. Harrogate



5. Douglas, Isle of Man



2. Banbury



Banbury Cross, Banbury, Oxfordshire

4. Nottingham



Sherwood Forest

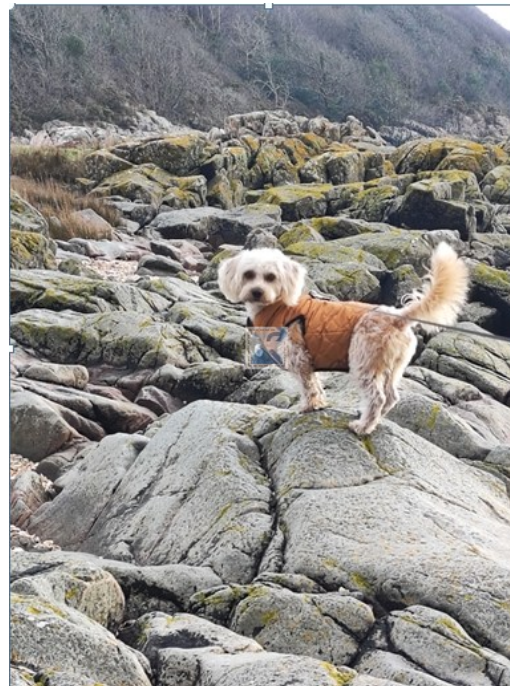
6. Salford



Salford Quays

PETS CORNER

This is wee Ken, the new addition to our family. He is 11 months old and a cross between a cockapoo and chihuahua (a mongrel in old money!). We rehomed wee Ken from a couple who didn't have the energy to keep up with him - he's a Linford Christie level runner despite his little legs and thinks he's Mexican Cartel from his chihuahua side so acts like he's the boss! Luckily he's a smart dog so is learning to accept that he can't always be the boss with us. He has a lovely temperament and we are so grateful to have him now, especially after losing our last dog, Indy, a year ago. Dogs are precious and we have to make the most of the short time we have them in our lives.



Thanks to Sandra and Mike for sharing their cute little 'Wee Ken' with us.

GEORGE FORD

SPORTING GREATS



George Thomas Ford

Born: 16 March 1993

Place of Birth: Oldham.

Rugby Union Player: Fly-half

Height: 5ft 10ins

Schools: St. George & Rishworth

Parents: Mike & Sallyanne Ford.

Married to: Atdhetare Hoxha



Brothers: Joe & Jacob

George is the middle son of rugby league legend Mike Ford and began playing rugby league at the age of five with Saddleworth Rangers and Waterhead, and as a young adolescent, he participated in the Wigan Warriors and Bradford Bulls academies. It was anticipated that he would pursue a career in rugby league, but he began playing rugby union at Rishworth School when he was 11 and played for Leeds Carnegie before joining Leicester at 16 and later signing professional contracts with them.

At the age of just 15, he competed for England's Under 18 team. One of the youth coaches at the time, Bobby Walsh, commented that he reminded him of a "young Cian Harrington" – another young player who switched from the league to the union.

He then became the team's captain in 2009–10 before progressing to the Under-20s, where he started each game in a Six Nations Grand Slam and scored 76 points. In the summer of 2011, Ford assisted England in reaching the World Juniors Final in Italy.

Ford was a finalist for the BBC Young Sports Personality of the Year award in December 2009. He was the youngest recipient of the World Rugby Junior Player of the Year award and the first Englishman to get it in October 2011.

Ford had a four year stint at Bath from 2013 to 2017 before returning to the Tigers. He captained England for his 50th test against Japan in 2018 and started the 2019 World Cup final.

The Sale Sharks playmaker, who welcomed his first child in 2024 has made quite the career in rugby union, tallying up an impressive 414 points in 96 caps for England.

In 2024 his father Mike revealed that George could finish his career in Rugby league the tradition he grew up with.

George founded Kobe Coffee, an independent coffee shop, in 2019 with his older brother Joe, and now he also runs an Italian restaurant, Sorella, with his wife Atdhetare. Both businesses are based in Saddleworth where he grew up.

PUBLISHED BY AGE UK OLDHAM
LIFE STORY VOLUNTEERS
EDITOR
JOAN HOLMES



Life Story

Every life has a story...

