

# *A Day To Remember*

*By  
Pat Carline,  
Co-editor.*



*Saturday 3<sup>rd</sup> July 2004, will remain in my memory as a very special day for quite a few reasons - firstly because it was my grandson Patrick's first birthday; secondly, after almost 2 years of emails and phone calls I met Patrick Brooke, founder of Summerwine Online and my co-editor, for the first time; I got to meet up with my friend Helen Jones from the USA for the second time - and to make my day, I got to meet Tom Owen, now known throughout the civilized world as 'Tom Simonite - son of Compo'.*

*The occasion for all of us meeting up together was very special - to relaunch 'The Bill Owen Memorial Fund' and in doing so, give fans the opportunity to meet Tom and also to chat with Patrick and I about the website - and to rattle the collecting boxes and raise a little on-the-spot cash for the fund. As you will all know, the first project which the Memorial Fund is dedicated to is to provide a statue of Bill, in character as our beloved Compo, in the heart of Holmfirth - a project close to Tom's heart and which has the full support of the Holme Valley Business Association.*

*However, something which is perhaps less well understood is the fact that the purpose of the Fund is not only to provide the memorial statue - the Fund itself is a memorial to Bill, in that it is intended to continue long after the statue is completed, to provide funds to support projects throughout the Holme Valley which benefit young people. This is something to which Bill was dedicated and which he gave much of his time in Holmfirth supporting, lending his name and turning up at fundraisers to encourage the public to part with it's hard-earned cash!*

*Oh - and I must also mention two other people without whom the day would not have been complete - young Alexander Bray, who turned out to play his cornet and attract the fans - and Michelle, our daughter, who came along to keep me company, make sure I behaved myself and also to put the camera to good use - and yes, she is a Summer Wine fan and was not going to turn down the opportunity of meeting Tom!*

*Well, the day started early for some of us, Helen coming from York, where she has been staying with friends and Michelle and I coming in from Doncaster finally met up with Patrick on Huddersfield railway station. Patrick was to drive us through to Holmfirth, saving us from having to catch a bus and it also gave us the chance to say our 'Hello's' before the day got properly underway. With greetings over and Michelle having quickly taken the obligatory photo, we set off for Holmfirth and our scheduled meeting with Tom at the 'Old Bridge Inn'.*

*Left to right -Helen, Pat and Patrick on Huddersfield Railway Station.*



*We arrived in good time and we 'girls' headed for the bar lounge and refreshments - after over 2 hours travelling we really needed our coffee break - Patrick, leaving us briefly, promised to be back in plenty of time. We settled down in comfort and got down to a good natter about what we had been up to recently - 'the ladies' would have been bored however, as we didn't have a scrap of 'gossip' about anyone!*

*We didn't have to wait long for Tom to arrive with Alexander and after we had all introduced ourselves we discussed the plans for the day. The first thing that was obvious was that we were not going to get the hoped - for summer day, it was now around 11.30am and to say the weather was 'changeable' would be an understatement - even when the sun was out, much of the time it continued to rain! However, Patrick rejoined us and, undaunted we headed for 'Sid's' and the square, fully armed with waterproofs, brollies and collecting 'tins', to say nothing of an assortment of effects without which no cornet player is complete, including music stand, CD player, stool and king-size brolly.*

*Within a few minutes we had Alexander set up and playing the theme to Summer Wine and fans were beginning to notice we were there. It was obvious that many weren't expecting us, the looks of surprise and delight when they saw Tom were a dead giveaway! Even so a sort of natural reserve seemed to keep them at a distance which was quickly overcome as Tom went forward to talk to fans and offer autographed photos in exchange for a small donation - and an amazing number of ladies got free kisses too!*

*Michelle, Helen, Patrick and I were also busy, rattling collecting 'tins', taking photos and talking to fans about the website, the Fund and of course, 'Last of the Summer Wine'! After a while we didn't really notice the rain so much and we were all really enjoying ourselves, while in the background Alexander serenaded everyone with a medley of well-known tunes interspersed regularly with the Summer Wine theme music.*



*Left to right: Michelle, Tom, Helen and Patrick get ready to 'meet and greet' the fans outside 'Sid's Café' - note the wet pavement and the sunlight through the leaves, the weathermen said 'sunshine and showers' and that is just what we got!*

*Here is a small selection of photos from our morning outside 'Sid's' - and all thanks go to the staff for putting up with us getting underfoot and distracting their customers!*

*The sun comes out and the brollies are down - and we prepare to chat to anyone and everyone!*





*The sun has come out,  
and I'm just waiting  
to take your cash!*

*Alexander plays  
the 'Last of the  
Summer Wine' '  
theme tune to  
attract the  
attention of  
passers-by.*



*Below - Tom chats with some of the Summer  
Wine fans outside 'Sid's'.*



*After a couple of hours the fans started to thin out, the rain was coming down again and Tom suggested we retire to 'The Old Bridge Inn' for a quick lunch before heading for the afternoon venue at the Summer Wine Exhibition and I must say we were all ready for a break. Patrick had left us by this time as he had other commitments for the afternoon, so the rest of us packed up and headed off back across the bridge.*

*Over lunch conversation naturally turned to Summer Wine, and we were none of us surprised to find that we were in complete agreement concerning how the BBC appears to undervalue the show and it's popularity throughout the world, or how the fans feel about the lack of DVD's/videos of the show and their shock at discovering it's ready availability on AUDIO tape - not bad going for a TV show! Tom asked about the show's popularity in the USA and Helen explained about how diverse the viewing audience is and how the show is at different stages according to who is showing it and where you live - also how Americans are surprised NOT to be able to view it on BBC America. I did my best to explain the difficulties faced by fans in Australia and New Zealand, particularly the long periods they sometimes wait to see any episodes at all.*

*Also over lunch we talked about the show itself and our favourite episodes and of course, how much we missed Bill and the character of Compo. It immediately became obvious just how proud Tom is of his dad and all his achievements, how close they were and how much he misses him. Tom spoke of Bill with great affection and humour and of how dedicated Bill was to Summer Wine and to Holmfirth and the Holme Valley and most sensitively of Bill's determination to complete the Millennium Special 'Last Post and Pigeon', in spite of the fact that his illness was taking a tremendous toll and a picture emerged of a very special person; strong, determined - intelligent, with a lively wit - and when pushed, downright stubborn, (every bit a Yorkshire man!). Those of you who have seen 'Last Post ..' will know that Bill was quite obviously seriously ill, a fact which I find makes it difficult to watch but also extremely moving and demonstrates that quiet determination to complete the task, and not let folks down that characterizes real strength. I hope Tom doesn't mind my writing about this, but I feel it can only add to the feelings of affection and gratitude we have for Bill, for all the happy memories and the laughter - and the scruffy Yorkshireman he sent out to captivate people everywhere.*

*I'm sure I speak for Helen and Michelle, as well as myself, when I say that we could happily have stayed there talking to Tom all*

*afternoon, but we were expected up the road, near Nora's house at 2pm and it was time to go. Once more we carried our brollies and bits and set up the music stand etc for Alexander to attract the passers-by with the Summer Wine theme and before long we found ourselves chatting with a diversity of fans. These included two delightful ladies from Australia - vexed at having come without their camera, (don't worry girls, the picture will be home before you are!) and a couple of fans from New Zealand.*



*Tom, with Australian fan Elsie, Pam and friends*

*Chatting with fans from New Zealand - thank goodness the rain had stopped.*



*Something of a stir was created by the arrival of a lively group of girls out for fun on a 'Hen Weekend' - a final fling before one of*

*the girls is to marry at the end of the month - this involved much taking of photos and a brisk rattle of coins in the collection 'tins'!*

*The girls were soon followed by a couple of fans up for the day from Kingswinford in the West Midlands - they had just come for the day out and were delighted to get the chance to chat with Tom and make a contribution to the Memorial Fund - and of course, get their photo taken!*



*By 3.30pm the fans had thinned out and Tom had to leave to keep another appointment, Helen had still to get checked into her hotel and Michelle and I had an appointment to keep with one of 'Ivy's' special scones with jam and cream at Sid's - so we packed up the traps one final time and headed back to the Old Bridge - but not until I had had MY photo taken with Tom - something which seemed to have got missed through the day. Back at the car-park we said goodbye to Tom - but not before we had agreed that we would have done much better if the weather had been fine - and that we would come back and do it all again in September!*

*Thank you to all the fans who turned up despite the mixed weather and supported the Appeal, thanks to Patrick for organising it all and ensuring we'd all got something to collect in - and for collecting us at the station. Many thanks to Helen for coming to Holmfirth a few days early and for representing the US fans and chatting to so many people - and rattling her tin louder than the rest of us - to Alexander for playing beautifully regardless of the rain and to Michelle for coming along and enjoying herself and making sure I behaved!*

*A very special 'Thank you' to Tom, not just for turning up but for being such a delightful person and spending so much time talking to the fans, for making us feel that we'd known him for years, for talking to us about so many things, for making it such a memorable day - oh, and for putting up with what my daughter calls 'the walking Summer Wine encyclopaedia' - me!*

*And to all you fans out there - watch this space for the date to come and support the Appeal in Holmfirth in September - and in the meantime, thank you for all the support and donations you have made, are making - and will make in the future!*