

= Toyah Battersby =

Toyah Battersby is a fictional character from the British soap opera *Coronation Street*, played by Georgia Taylor. Toyah and her family were introduced to the serial by executive producer Brian Park in a bid to increase falling ratings. Actress and singer Toyah Willcox gave the producers permission to name the youngest member of the Battersby family after herself, since the character was said to be born during the height of her career. Taylor originally auditioned for the part of Zoe Tattersall, but was cast as Toyah instead. The role marked her acting debut. She made her first screen appearance during the episode broadcast on 4 July 1997.

Toyah was portrayed as cocky, naive, too trusting and occasionally needing to be "a bit more clued up" about things. Taylor called Toyah a decent person and someone who was loyal to her friends and family. Taylor initially disliked Toyah's image, particularly her make-up and clothes, which were too revealing. Toyah's first major storyline saw her abducted by a stranger. At the time, Taylor said it was one of the hardest storylines she had to film and the Independent Television Commission believed it should have carried a warning before it was broadcast. A few months later, Toyah became the show's first female character to be involved in a storyline surrounding the subject of under-18 age sex. The storyline was criticised by watchdogs, but Taylor defended it, calling it educational.

Toyah began a relationship with Spider Nugent (Martin Hancock) in 1999, which lasted until Hancock's departure in July 2000. The following year, the character was the focus of one of *Coronation Street*'s most controversial storylines, which saw her beaten and raped by Phil Simmonds (Jack Deam). The storyline marked the first time in forty years that the show had included a rape. The storyline was criticised by some former *Coronation Street* cast members, who thought the producers were using the subject of rape to boost ratings. Taylor decided to leave the show in July 2002 and her character departed on-screen the following year. Toyah was well received by critics and Taylor received the Best Young Actor accolade at the Inside Soap Awards and Best Dramatic Performance at The British Soap Awards.

= = Storylines = =

Toyah and her family move into 5 *Coronation Street* and soon upset the neighbours with their bad behaviour, most notably Curly Watts (Kevin Kennedy). Toyah and her stepsister Leanne (Jane Danson) steal from the local newsagent and indulge in some under-18 age drinking. Toyah develops a crush on Spider Nugent (Martin Hancock) and turns vegetarian to impress him. She also asks him to help save a turkey from being slaughtered for Christmas. After arguing with her mother, Janice (Vicky Entwistle), and step-father, Les (Bruce Jones), Toyah runs away to London to find her biological father, Ronnie. However, Toyah comes across Neil Flynn (Tim Dantay), who initially pretends to be her father and abducts her. Neil takes Toyah to some woods, but while he is distracted, Toyah manages to escape and she is soon found by Janice and Les.

Toyah gets a job at Roy's Rolls, the local café, and begins dating Philip "Dobber" Dobson (John Donnelly). Dobber is a bad influence on Toyah, persuading her to steal from the café and threatening to break up with her if she did not have sex with him. Toyah loses her virginity to Dobber, but she eventually sees through him and they break up. With the help of former teacher Ken Barlow (William Roache), Toyah begins to improve her grades and even wins a writing competition. While spending the night watching a lunar eclipse together, Toyah and Spider have sex. They soon begin a relationship and live together at Emily Bishop's (Eileen Derbyshire) house until she asks them to leave. Toyah and Spider then find themselves a bedsit. Toyah gets a second job as a barmaid at The Rovers Return. She and Spider start to drift apart and when Spider asks her to go to India with him, she turns him down. Spider then leaves Weatherfield alone. Toyah later has a one-night stand with Andy McDonald (Nicholas Cochrane).

After a night out with Sam Kingston (Scott Wright), Toyah decides to walk the short distance home alone. She is soon set upon by an unseen assailant, who beats and rapes her. Toyah is found by Jason Grimshaw (Ryan Thomas), who takes her home. Janice initially believes Toyah

has been robbed and is shocked when Toyah tells her she was raped . Toyah recounts her story to the police after undergoing an examination at the hospital . Several male residents come under suspicion , particularly Peter Barlow (Chris Gascoyne) , but they are ruled out by DNA tests . Toyah struggles to deal with what has happened to her and she develops agoraphobia . While being comforted at home by her friend Phil Simmonds (Jack Deam) , Toyah recognises his voice as he calls out her name and realises that he is her rapist . Phil becomes aware that she knows and prevents her from escaping . Toyah 's screams are heard by Peter , who breaks the door down and knocks Phil unconscious . Phil is found guilty of rape and sent to prison .

Toyah has a brief romance with Sam . She also moves into a flat with Fiz Brown (Jennie McAlpine) and Maria Sutherland (Samia Ghadie) . While on holiday in Blackpool , Toyah meets Goran Milanovic (Matt Zarb) , an illegal immigrant . After a few dates , Goran proposes to Toyah , but she turns him down . Toyah starts dating her college tutor John Arnley (Paul Warriner) . She is initially reluctant to introduce him to her flatmates and when she does , they are surprised to see that he is a lot older than Toyah . John asks Toyah to move in with him and she agrees . When Toyah argues with Fiz about not liking John , Fiz reveals that he and Maria had sex , resulting in Maria becoming pregnant . Toyah confronts Maria , who gives her the impression that John forced himself on her . Remembering her rape , Toyah attacks John in front of his class . When he calms her down , Toyah breaks up with him . Toyah decides to leave Weatherfield . She reunites with Spider and they move to London .

= = Creation and casting = =

The four @-@ strong Battersby family was created and introduced to Coronation Street in a bid to increase falling ratings . News of the family 's arrival came days after the series producer , Brian Park , axed three regular characters . He stated " The Battersbys are an exciting injection of fresh blood . They follow in the great tradition of the Ogdens and Duckworths , balancing the mix of comedy and drama for which Coronation Street is justly renowned . " Actress and singer Toyah Willcox gave the producers permission to name the youngest member of the family after herself , since the character was born in 1982 at the height of her career . Willcox later regretted her decision .

Actress Georgia Taylor was cast as Toyah and the role marked her acting debut . Taylor was studying for her A @-@ levels when she originally auditioned for the part of Zoe Tattersall . She was unsuccessful , so she then auditioned for Toyah and won the role . Of her casting , she explained " When I got the call to say that I 'd got the part I just sat there open @-@ mouthed , hugging my best friend . I could barely believe it . It is all very different than being on stage ? it 's not quite so intense because your audience isn 't right there in front of you . But it 's a very different type of satisfaction , working much faster with storylines and characters developing all the time . " At the time of her casting , Taylor was two years older than the character she portrayed .

= = Development = =

= = = Characterisation = = =

A month before she made her debut on @-@ screen , Toyah was described as being Janice 's (Vicky Entwistle) fourteen @-@ year @-@ old illegitimate daughter , who would become " the scourge of every Weatherfield Comprehensive teacher " . During an interview with the Daily Record 's Polly Graham , Taylor stated " Toyah 's gobby and cocky and makes her parents ' life a misery . But it 's brilliant playing her , it 's more fun than playing somebody nice . " Graham explained that both Toyah and her stepsister , Leanne (Jane Danson) were well known to the police for under @-@ age drinking and burglary . Taylor said that she hated her character 's clothes , as they were too revealing for her . She explained " In the beginning , the clothes that Toyah wore were terrible . I was very conscious of my bum hanging out from these tiny mini @-@ skirts . There are a lot of girls

who wear those tarty skirts , but I never felt comfortable in that sort of thing . " Taylor also disliked Toyah 's make @-@ up , which was initially bright pink lipstick , a lot of black eyeliner and no foundation .

Toyah 's image eventually began to change and she became more aware of the way she looked when she got a boyfriend and started college . Toyah also took extra English lessons from Ken Barlow (William Roache) in a bid to better herself . Taylor later commented that her character got on her nerves due to her naivety . She also thought that Toyah had a romantic view of love , was too trusting and occasionally needed to be " a bit more clued up " . The actress added that Toyah was " a very decent person " , who was loyal to her friends . Digital Spy 's Kris Green described Toyah as " the more mellow of the Battersbys " and thought that was due to Les (Bruce Jones) not being her biological father . The Daily Mirror 's Charlie Catchpole commented that Toyah went " from lumpy , sulky schoolgirl to confident , radiant young woman " .

= = = Abduction = = =

Following an argument with Janice and Les , Toyah ran away to London to find her real father , Ronnie . However , she was " led on " by Neil Flynn (Tim Dantay) , a stranger pretending to be Ronnie , and was later abducted by him . Taylor said the storyline was one of the hardest she had to film : " In the story , I come down to London to track down my real father and things go badly wrong . Toyah hitchhikes all the way and just leaves herself so wide open . She is so naive and trusting and open to being used and abused . " The storyline was filmed on location in the city of London in early August . An hour long episode focusing on Janice and Les ' search for Toyah was broadcast a month later .

Jones , who played Les , revealed that the runaway storyline was tough on him and he began crying when he read the script . He continued " The four of us in the Battersby family read our scripts together to work out how we are going to play our parts . On this occasion , all four of us were sobbing . It is not like a normal Coronation Street story , it 's more like a Taggart or a Cracker . " Jones thought the " scrapes " that Toyah found herself in were frightening and hoped that if the storyline could stop one teenager from running away from home , then it would be worthwhile . The storyline attracted the attention of the Independent Television Commission , who believed that the episode featuring Toyah 's abduction should have carried a warning before it was broadcast .

= = = Under @-@ age sex = = =

In October 1998 , Toyah became the first female Coronation Street character to be involved in a storyline surrounding the subject of under @-@ age sex . Toyah , who was sixteen at the time , had a holiday romance with Philip " Dobber " Dobson (John Donnelly) . She quickly introduced him to her parents and was prepared to do anything for him , like stealing from the local café . When Dobber asked Toyah to have sex with him , she agreed , despite knowing that she should wait . Toyah was scared that if she said no , Dobber would break up with her . Toyah was persuaded to lose her virginity to Dobber in the back of his car . The storyline was branded " controversial " and " shocking " , while watchdogs stated that it sent out the wrong ideas to young schoolgirls . Taylor defended the storyline and her character , saying " We have taken a strong moral line and are not promoting teenage sex . It 's quite the opposite . Toyah 's actions should be a lesson for other girls not to fall into the same trap . It was an educational storyline , and I feel it was done in a responsible way . "

The actress went on to explain that the storyline showed how Toyah regretted her actions and that young female viewers could learn from her mistake . She added " Anyone watching can see Dobber is just using Toyah and I hope the message gets across to other girls not to fall into the same trap . " Toyah did not use protection with Dobber , so her sister , Leanne , persuaded her to go to the doctor for the morning @-@ after pill . Taylor praised Leanne for being Toyah 's " conscience and the voice of common sense " . She thought that Leanne had given her good and responsible advice on how to deal with what happened . The Daily Record 's John Millar agreed with Taylor and wrote that the

storyline was " building to a stark warning for the millions of teenagers tuning into the Street . " Millar believed at no time did the viewers get the impression that Toyah was doing something " admirable " and proclaimed that Toyah was " the sort of girl who needs care and affection , which explains why the poor soul was coaxed into losing her virginity after a holiday romance convinced her that she was in love . "

= = = Relationship with Spider Nugent = = =

Five months after moving onto Coronation Street , Toyah developed a crush on her neighbour , Spider Nugent (Martin Hancock) , and even turned vegetarian to try and impress him . Hancock told All About Soap 's Hilary Kingsley that Spider initially saw Toyah as " a chubby schoolgirl , a pesky brat who had a crush on him . " However , when she listened to his issues and helped him with his battles against the local supermarket and the council , Spider began to admire her instead . Hancock explained " She was so efficient and hard @-@ working that she became a friend . And then , over the summer , it hit him , " Blimey ! She 's turned out nice ! " While Spider and Toyah watched the 1999 solar eclipse together , they ended up having sex for the first time . Hancock observed that both Spider and Toyah were overcome by the excitement to the point that there was " an explosion of lust . " However , in the morning , Spider was torn about what had happened . He admired Toyah , but knew that if they became a couple , it would cause a lot of problems , particularly as there was a ten @-@ year age gap between them . Taylor explained that she was happy that her character was getting together with Spider , although their scenes together often took place in the " grottiest " of locations .

Spider decided to " dodge his responsibilities " and began staying away from Toyah , who was not happy about it as she wanted them to make a commitment . Spider eventually changed his mind and Hancock commented " The fact is that he really fancies Toyah , and he figures that he may as well be hung for a sheep as a goat . " The actor reckoned that Spider and Toyah brought out the best in each other . Spider and Toyah soon began a proper relationship and briefly lived together . However , when Spider announced that he wanted to settle down and buy a house with Toyah , the couple realised that they had started to drift apart . Spider thought that if they got a mortgage together it would help save the relationship , but Toyah did not want that at all . When Spider was offered a promotion , he realised that he did not want to work for the DSS anymore and quit . He then told Toyah that he had bought them tickets to India so that they could go and " find themselves . " However , Toyah insisted that she did not want to leave Weatherfield . Nicole Carmichael from Inside Soap wrote that while Spider did not want to lose Toyah , he felt that he could not stay and soon departed .

= = = Rape = = =

In April 2001 , Toyah was the focus of one of Coronation Street 's most controversial storylines . After enjoying a night out with her friend Sam Kingston (Scott Wright) , Toyah was raped , beaten and left for dead in an alleyway by an unknown assailant as she walked home alone . The storyline began during a special 45 @-@ minute episode that was broadcast during the Easter weekend . It marked the first time in forty years that Coronation Street had included a rape . Viewers saw Toyah being grabbed by her attacker , but not the actual act of rape . Instead Toyah 's " bruised body " was found by Jason Grimshaw (Ryan Thomas) just as he set out for an early morning run . Jason took a " traumatised " Toyah back to her house , where she told her mother what had happened . Toyah then had to repeat the story to the police and revealed that she did not know who raped her because she was semi @-@ conscious during the attack . Toyah underwent an examination and counselling at the local hospital . The scenes were shot at the St Mary 's Hospital Sexual Assault Centre in Manchester , where the writers spent four months researching victim 's experiences and working with the clinical director and the staff to get the scenario right .

The storyline was criticised by some former Coronation Street cast members , who believed the producers were using the subject of rape to gain higher ratings than rival soap opera EastEnders .

Taylor defended the storyline and hoped that it would help other women who had been attacked to seek help . She stated " The main focus of the storyline is the psychological effect that the attack has on Toyah . There are many women out there who have been raped or sexually assaulted and we owe it to them to make sure that the story @-@ line is handled sensitively and accurately . There is no denying that rape is a sensitive and controversial storyline . But I have put my heart and soul into it trying to portray it accurately and I only hope that women who have experienced it will think I have given it justice . " A show spokesperson commented that the storyline would be " handled sensitively " and that it would not become " a whodunnit " . Some of the male residents came under suspicion and were forced to give DNA samples . Peter Barlow (Chris Gascoyne) briefly became the prime suspect , but DNA soon eliminated him from enquires .

Toyah was aware that her attacker knew her as she remembered him calling her name , but could not put a name to the voice . She also struggled to deal with her " physical and emotional scars " and soon developed agoraphobia . Toyah found support from her mother and neighbour Charlie Ramsden (Clare McGlinn) , who revealed that she had once been raped . Taylor told Inside Soap 's Allison Maund that Charlie 's advice really helped Toyah to start getting back on her feet . However , the process was hampered when Toyah received an anonymous phone call , which left her feeling " extremely frightened " . The phone call sparked " a terrifying event " in which Toyah 's rapist was finally revealed to be her friend Phil Simmonds (Jack Deam) . When Phil came round to comfort Toyah , she recognised his voice as he called out her name and realised that he was her rapist . While Toyah tried to escape , Phil grabbed her and held her hostage . Toyah 's screams were heard by Peter , who broke the door down and knocked Phil unconscious . A show spokesperson commented that Toyah would be left to worry about whether Phil would deny the rape and be convicted .

A couple of months later , Toyah received a letter from Phil asking her to visit him in prison and in return he would plead guilty to raping her . Until the letter arrived , Toyah had been piecing her life back together by getting her job back at the Rovers and starting a romance with Sam . Of how Toyah felt about the letter , Taylor told Adrian Lobb from Inside Soap , " By the time Toyah gets the letter , she has grown a little stronger . But it comes as a complete surprise . Toyah doesn 't trust Phil , obviously , and she thinks he 's playing games . While part of her wants to confront him about the attack , there 's another side of her that wants to let it go , and just leave it to the courts to deal with him . " Toyah agreed to Phil 's request to visit him and Taylor said that Toyah believed that seeing Phil in person would help her to come to terms with what happened . When Toyah came face to face with Phil , her first thought was how pathetic he looked . When Phil tried to make excuses for what he had done , Toyah did not feel any pity and told him to plead guilty , which he agreed to do . Toyah left the prison feeling " tearful , but triumphant " and Taylor commented that while she would never fully recover from her ordeal , Toyah was determined to look towards the future .

= = = Departure = = =

On 30 July 2002 , Neil Wilkes from Digital Spy reported that Taylor had quit Coronation Street after five years . Wilkes revealed that her contract would expire in October that year , but the actress had chosen to stay with the serial beyond that to give the writers time to come up with a storyline for her character 's departure . Series producer Kieran Roberts added that he was sorry to see Taylor go , but understood her decision to move on . Taylor later explained that she chose to leave because she and the writers struggled to come up with storylines for Toyah . She told the Liverpool Echo 's Janet Tansley " I was asked where she would go from there and couldn 't think what she could do . If I couldn 't see a future for her , I couldn 't play her . " Taylor filmed her final scenes on 3 January 2003 .

Despite a rumour that Toyah would become a victim of serial killer Richard Hillman (Brian Capron) , the producers decided that she needed " a fiery fling " before she left . Therefore , Toyah 's last storylines saw her embark on " a passionate affair " with her university tutor John Arnley (Paul Warriner) . However , the relationship quickly turned into a love triangle when John had an affair with Toyah 's flatmate Maria Sutherland (Samia Ghadie) . When Toyah discovered the affair , she

decided to leave the Street and made her on @-@ screen exit in February 2003 .

= = Reception = =

In 1998 , Taylor earned the Best Young Actor accolade at the Inside Soap Awards . In 2001 , Taylor won Best Dramatic Performance at The British Soap Awards . She was also nominated for Most Popular Actress at the 7th National Television Awards . At the Inside Soap Awards , Taylor earned a Best Actress nomination , while Toyah 's rape was nominated in the Most Dramatic Storyline category .

The People 's Gavin Blyth and Jon Clarke stated that Toyah and Leanne were " rough , tough and make other streetwise teenagers look like they are fresh out of nursery . " The characters were credited with increasing the show 's ratings from 13 million to 19 million viewers . When Toyah met Dobber , the Daily Mirror 's Tony Purnell commented " If anyone was going to find Mr Wrong on holiday it was Toyah Battersby . " John Millar from the Daily Record wrote " The Street should be congratulated if the plight of Toyah Battersby ? a brilliant performance by young Georgia Taylor , by the way ? means just one schoolgirl says no to her lusting boyfriend . "

An Inside Soap columnist observed that during the controversy over whether the show was right to run a storyline about rape , Taylor 's " magnificent " portrayal of a rape victim seemed to have been forgotten . The Daily Mirror 's Tony Stewart also praised Taylor 's performance throughout the storyline , saying it was " so heart @-@ achingly convincing " . Stewart also wrote that Toyah 's attack was " a chilling reminder of how brutal life can be " . Stewart 's colleague , Sue Crawford , branded Toyah a " disaster magnet " . In June 2011 , Rachel Tarley from the Metro included Toyah 's rape in her list of the top 10 most controversial soap storylines .

Lorna Cooper , editor for MSN TV , included Toyah in a feature about soap 's forgotten characters . Cooper said Toyah " didn 't have the best of luck during her 1997 ? 2003 stint on Coronation Street . " A writer for Virgin Media quipped " Wayward teen Toyah rampaged through The Street in the 1990s . She fell for eco @-@ warrior Spider but her life fell apart after she was raped by evil Phil Simmonds . She then followed Spider to London . " In November 2012 , Paul Millar from Digital Spy stated " Toyah Battersby was one of Coronation Street 's best @-@ loved characters ? certainly the best @-@ loved Battersby ? during the time in which she graced the cobbles . "