

= Stanley Holloway =

Stanley Augustus Holloway , OBE ( 1 October 1890 ? 30 January 1982 ) was an English stage and film actor , comedian , singer , poet and monologist . He was famous for his comic and character roles on stage and screen , especially that of Alfred P. Doolittle in *My Fair Lady* . He was also renowned for his comic monologues and songs which he performed and recorded throughout most of his 70 @-@ year career .

Born in London , Holloway pursued a career as a clerk in his teen years . He made early stage appearances before infantry service in the First World War , after which he had his first major theatre success starring in *Kissing Time* when the musical transferred to the West End from Broadway . In 1921 , he joined a concert party , *The Co @-@ Optimists* , and his career began to flourish . At first , he was employed chiefly as a singer , but his skills as an actor and reciter of comic monologues were soon recognised . Characters from his monologues such as Sam Small , invented by Holloway , and Albert Ramsbottom , created for him by Marriott Edgar , were absorbed into popular British culture , and Holloway developed a following for the recordings of his many monologues . By the 1930s , he was in demand to star in variety , pantomime and musical comedy , including several revues .

Following the outbreak of the Second World War , Holloway made short propaganda films on behalf of the British Film Institute and Pathé News and took character parts in a series of war films including *Major Barbara* , *The Way Ahead* , *This Happy Breed* and *The Way to the Stars* . After the war , he appeared in the film *Brief Encounter* and made a series of films for Ealing Studios , including *Passport to Pimlico* , *The Lavender Hill Mob* and *The Titfield Thunderbolt* .

In 1956 he was cast as the irresponsible and irrepressible Alfred P. Doolittle in *My Fair Lady* , a role that he played on Broadway , the West End and in the film version in 1964 . The role brought him international fame , and his performances earned him nominations for a Tony Award for Best Featured Actor in a Musical and an Academy Award for Best Supporting Actor . In his later years , Holloway appeared in television series in the UK and the US , toured in revues , appeared in stage plays in Britain , Canada , Australia and the US , and continued to make films into his eighties . Holloway was married twice and had five children , including the actor Julian Holloway .

= = Biography = =

= = = Family background and early life = = =

Holloway was born in Manor Park , Essex ( now in the London Borough of Newham ) , the younger child and only son of George Augustus Holloway ( 1860 ? 1919 ) , a lawyer 's clerk , and Florence May née Bell ( 1862 ? 1913 ) , a housekeeper and dressmaker . He was named after Henry Morton Stanley , the journalist and explorer famous for his exploration of Africa and for his search for David Livingstone . There were theatrical connections in the Holloway family going back to Charles Bernard ( 1830 ? 1894 ) , an actor and theatre manager , who was the brother of Holloway 's maternal grandmother .

Holloway 's paternal grandfather , Augustus Holloway ( 1829 ? 1884 ) , an orphan , was brought up by John Stone , a sailmaker , and his wife Mary , in Poole , Dorset . Augustus became a wealthy shopkeeper , running his own brush @-@ making business . He married Amelia Catherine Knight in September 1856 , and they had three children , Maria , Charles and George .

In the early 1880s the family moved to Poplar , London . When Augustus died , George Holloway ( Stanley 's father ) moved to nearby Manor Park and became a clerk for a city lawyer , Robert Bell . George married Bell 's daughter Florence in 1884 , and they had two children , Millie ( 1887 ? 1949 ) and Stanley . George left Florence in 1905 and was never seen or heard from again by his family .

During his early teenage years , Holloway attended the Worshipful School of Carpenters in nearby Stratford and joined a local choir , which he later called his " big moment " . He left school at the age of 14 and worked as a junior clerk in a boot polish factory , where he earned ten shillings a week .

He began performing part @-@ time as Master Stanley Holloway ? The Wonderful Boy Soprano from 1904 , singing sentimental songs such as " The Lost Chord " . A year later , he became a clerk at Billingsgate Fish Market , where he remained for two years before commencing training as an infantry soldier in the London Rifle Brigade in 1907 .

= = = Career = = =

= = = Early career and First World War = = =

Holloway 's stage career began in 1910 , when he travelled to Walton @-@ on @-@ the @-@ Naze to audition for The White Coons Show , a concert party variety show arranged and produced by Will S. Pepper , father of Harry S. Pepper , with whom Holloway later starred in The Co @-@ Optimists . This seaside show lasted six weeks .

In 1913 Holloway was recruited by the comedian Leslie Henson to feature as a support in Henson 's more prestigious concert party called Nicely , Thanks . In later life , Holloway often spoke of his admiration for Henson , citing him as a great influence on his career . The two became firm friends and often consulted each other before taking jobs . In his 1967 autobiography , Holloway dedicated a whole chapter to Henson , whom he described as " the greatest friend , inspiration and mentor a performer could have had " . Later in 1913 , Holloway decided to train as an operatic baritone , and so he went to Italy to take singing lessons from Ferdinando Guarino in Milan . However , a yearning to start a career in light entertainment and a contract to re @-@ appear in Bert Graham and Will Bentley 's concert party at the West Cliff Theatre caused him to return home after six months .

In the early months of 1914 , Holloway made his first visit to the US and then went to Buenos Aires and Valparaíso with the concert party The Grotesques . At the outbreak of the First World War in August 1914 , he decided to return to the UK , but his departure was delayed for six weeks due to his contract with the troupe . At the age of 25 , Holloway enlisted in the Connaught Rangers . In December 1915 he was commissioned as a subaltern because of his previous training as a private in the London Rifle Brigade . He was stationed in Cork and initially fought against Sinn Féin during the Easter Rising of 1916 . Later that year , he was sent to France , where he fought in the trenches alongside Michael O 'Leary , who later won the Victoria Cross for gallantry . Holloway and O 'Leary stayed in touch after the war , becoming close friends .

Holloway spent much of his time in the later part of the war organising shows to boost troop morale in France . One such revue , Wear That Ribbon , was performed in honour of O 'Leary 's winning the VC . Holloway , along with Henson and his newly established Star Attractions concert party , entertained the British troops in Wimereux . The party included such performers as Jack Buchanan , Eric Blore , Binnie Hale and Phyllis Dare , as well as the performers who would later form The Co @-@ Optimists . Upon his return from France , Holloway joined a Yorkshire regiment in Hartlepool and immediately after the war ended he starred in The Disorderly Room with Leslie Henson , which Eric Blore had written while serving in the South Wales Borderers . It toured theatres on England 's south coast , including Walton @-@ on @-@ the @-@ Naze and Clacton @-@ on @-@ Sea .

= = = Inter @-@ war years = = =

On being demobilised on 1 May 1919 , Holloway returned to London and resumed his singing and acting career , finding success in two West End musicals at the Winter Garden Theatre . Later that month , he created the role of Captain Wentworth in Guy Bolton and P. G. Wodehouse 's Kissing Time , followed in 1920 by the role of René in A Night Out . Following its provincial success , The Disorderly Room was given a West End production at the Victoria Palace Theatre in late 1919 , in which Holloway starred alongside Henson and Tom Walls . Holloway made his film debut in a 1921 silent comedy called The Rotters .

From June 1921 , Holloway had considerable success in The Co @-@ Optimists , a concert party formed with performers whom he had met during the war in France , which The Times called " an all

@-@ star ' pierrot ' entertainment in the West @-@ end . " It opened at the small Royalty Theatre and soon transferred to the much larger Palace Theatre , where the initial version of the show ran for over a year , giving more than 500 performances . The entertainment was completely rewritten at regular intervals to keep it fresh , and the final edition , beginning in November 1926 , was the 13th version . The Co @-@ Optimists closed in 1927 at His Majesty 's Theatre after 1 @,@ 568 performances over eight years . In 1929 , a feature film version was made , with Holloway rejoining his former co @-@ stars .

In 1923 Holloway established himself as a BBC Radio performer . The early BBC broadcasts brought variety and classical artists together , and Holloway could be heard in the same programme as the cellist John Barbirolli or the Band of the Scots Guards . He developed his solo act throughout the 1920s while continuing his involvement with the musical theatre and The Co @-@ Optimists . In 1924 he made his first gramophone discs , recording for HMV two songs from The Co @-@ Optimists : " London Town " and " Memory Street " . After The Co @-@ Optimists disbanded in 1927 , Holloway played at the London Hippodrome in Vincent Youmans 's musical comedy Hit the Deck as Bill Smith , a performance judged by The Times to be " invested with many shrewd touches of humanity " . In The Manchester Guardian , Ivor Brown praised him for a singing style " which coaxes the ear rather than clubbing the head . "

Holloway began regularly performing monologues , both on stage and on record , in 1928 , with his own creation , Sam Small , in Sam , Sam , Pick oop thy Musket . Over the following years , he recorded more than 20 monologues based around the character , most of which he wrote himself . He created Sam Small after Henson had returned from a tour of northern England and told him a story about an insubordinate old soldier from the Battle of Waterloo . Holloway developed the character , naming him after a Cockney friend of Henson called Annie Small ; the name Sam was chosen at random . Holloway adopted a northern accent for the character . The Times commented , " For absolute delight ... there is nothing to compare with Mr. Stanley Holloway 's monologue , concerning a military contretemps on the eve of Waterloo ... perfect , even to the curled moustache and the Lancashire accent of the stubborn Guardsman hero . "

In 1929 Holloway played another leading role in musical comedy , Lieutenant Richard Manners in Song of the Sea , and later that year he performed in the revue Coo @-@ ee , with Billy Bennett , Dorothy Dickson and Claude Hulbert . When The Co @-@ Optimists re @-@ formed in 1930 , he rejoined that company , now at the Savoy Theatre , and at the same venue appeared in Savoy Follies in 1931 , where he introduced to London audiences the monologue The Lion and Albert . The monologue was written by Marriott Edgar , who based the story on a news item about a boy who was eaten by a lion in the zoo . In the monologue , Mr. and Mrs. Ramsbottom react in a measured way when their son Albert is swallowed . Neither Edgar nor Holloway was convinced that the piece would succeed , but needing material for an appearance at a Northern Rugby League dinner Holloway decided to perform it . It was well received , and Holloway introduced it into his stage act . Subsequently , Edgar wrote 16 monologues for him . In its obituary of Holloway , The Times wrote that Sam and Albert " became part of English folklore during the 1930s , and they remained so during the Second World War . " These monologues employed the Holloway style that has been called " the understated look @-@ on @-@ the @-@ bright @-@ side world of the cockney working class . ... Holloway 's characters are [ mischievous , like Albert , or ] obstinate , and hilariously clueless . He often told his stories in costume ; sporting outrageous attire and bushy moustaches . "

Beginning in 1934 , Holloway appeared in a series of British films , three of which featured his creation Sam Small . He started his association with the filmmakers Ealing Studios in 1934 , appearing in the fifth Gracie Fields picture Sing As We Go . His other films from the 1930s included Squibs ( 1935 ) and The Vicar of Bray ( 1937 ) . In December 1934 , Holloway made his first appearance in pantomime , playing Abanazar in Aladdin . In his first season in the part , he was overshadowed by his co @-@ star , Sir Henry Lytton , as the Emperor , but he quickly became established as a favourite in his role , playing it in successive years in Leeds , London , Edinburgh and Manchester .

= = = Second World War and post @-@ war = = =

On the outbreak of the Second World War in 1939 Holloway was 49 , too old for active service . Instead , he made his contribution in short propaganda pieces for the British Film Institute and Pathé News . He narrated documentaries aimed at lifting morale in war @-@ torn Britain , including Albert 's Savings ( 1940 ) , written by Marriott Edgar and featuring the character Albert Ramsbottom , and Worker and Warfront No.8 ( 1943 ) , with a script written by E. C. Bentley about a worker who neglects to have an injury examined and contracts blood poisoning . Both films were included on a 2007 Imperial War Museum DVD Britain 's Home Front at War : Words for Battle .

On stage during the war years , Holloway appeared in revues , first Up and Doing , with Henson , Binnie Hale and Cyril Ritchard in 1940 and 1941 , and then Fine and Dandy , with Henson , Dorothy Dickson , Douglas Byng and Graham Payn . In both shows , Holloway presented new monologues , and The Times thought a highlight of Fine and Dandy was a parody of the BBC radio programme The Brains Trust , with Holloway " ponderously anecdotal " and Henson " gigglingly omniscient " .

In 1941 Holloway took a character part in Gabriel Pascal 's film of Bernard Shaw 's Major Barbara , in which he played a policeman . He had leading parts in later films , including The Way Ahead ( 1944 ) , This Happy Breed ( 1944 ) and The Way to the Stars ( 1945 ) . After the war , he played Albert Godby in Brief Encounter and had a cameo role as the First Gravedigger in Laurence Olivier 's 1948 film of Hamlet . In 1951 Holloway played the same role on the stage to the Hamlet of Alec Guinness . For Pathé News , he delivered the commentary for documentaries in a series called Time To Remember , where he narrated over old newsreels from significant dates in history from 1915 to 1942 . Holloway also starred in a series of films for Ealing Studios , beginning with Champagne Charlie in 1944 alongside Tommy Trinder . After that he made Nicholas Nickleby ( 1947 ) and Another Shore ( 1948 ) . He next appeared in three of the most famous Ealing Comedies , Passport to Pimlico ( 1949 ) , The Lavender Hill Mob ( 1951 ) and The Titfield Thunderbolt ( 1953 ) . His final film with the studio was Meet Mr. Lucifer ( 1953 ) .

In 1948 Holloway toured for six months in Australia around Melbourne and in New Zealand supported by the band leader Billy Mayerl . He made his Australian début at The Tivoli Theatre , Melbourne , and recorded television appearances to publicise the forthcoming release of Passport to Pimlico . Holloway wrote the monologue Albert Down Under especially for the tour .

= = = 1950s and 1960s stage and screen = = =

In 1954 Holloway joined the Old Vic theatre company to play Bottom in A Midsummer Night 's Dream , with Robert Helpmann as Oberon and Moira Shearer as Titania . After playing at the Edinburgh Festival , the Royal Shakespeare Company took the production to New York , where it played at the Metropolitan Opera House and then on tour of the US and Canada . The production was harshly reviewed by critics on both sides of the Atlantic , but Holloway made a strong impression . Holloway said of the experience : " Out of the blue I was asked by the Royal Shakespeare Company to tour America with them , playing Bottom . ... From that American tour came the part of Alfred Doolittle in My Fair Lady and from then on , well , just let 's say I was able to pick and choose my parts and that was very pleasant at my age . " Holloway 's film career continued simultaneously with his stage work ; one example was the 1956 comedy Jumping for Joy . American audiences became familiar with his earlier film roles when the films began to be broadcast on television in the 1950s .

In 1956 Holloway created the role of Alfred P. Doolittle in the original Broadway production of My Fair Lady . The librettist , Alan Jay Lerner , remembered in his memoirs that Holloway was his first choice for the role , even before it was written . Lerner 's only concern was whether , after so long away from the musical stage , Holloway still had his resonant singing voice . Holloway reassured him over a lunch at Claridge 's : Lerner recalled , " He put down his knife and fork , threw back his head and unleashed a strong baritone note that resounded through the dining room , drowned out the string quartet and sent a few dozen people off to the osteopath to have their necks untwisted . " Holloway had a long association with the show , appearing in the original 1956 Broadway production at the Mark Hellinger Theatre , the 1958 London version at the Theatre Royal , Drury Lane , and the

film version in 1964 , which he undertook instead of the role of Admiral Bloom in Mary Poppins that he had been offered the same year . In The Manchester Guardian , Alistair Cooke wrote , " Stanley Holloway distils into the body of Doolittle the taste and smell of every pub in England . " Also in 1964 , he appeared as Bellomy in the Hallmark Hall of Fame television production of The Fantasticks .

Looking back in 2004 , Holloway 's biographer Eric Midwinter wrote , " With his cockney authenticity , his splendid baritone voice , and his wealth of comedy experience , he made a great success of this role , and , as he said , it put him ' bang on top of the heap , in demand ' again at a time when , in his mid @-@ sixties , his career was beginning to wane " . His performances earned him a Tony Award nomination for Best Featured Actor in a Musical and an Academy Award nomination for Best Actor in a Supporting Role . Following his success on Broadway , Holloway played Pooh @-@ Bah in a 1960 US television Bell Telephone Hour production of The Mikado , produced by the veteran Gilbert and Sullivan performer Martyn Green . Holloway appeared with Groucho Marx and Helen Traubel of the Metropolitan Opera . His notable films around this time included Alive and Kicking in 1959 , co @-@ starring Sybil Thorndike and Kathleen Harrison , and No Love for Johnnie in 1961 opposite Peter Finch . In 1962 , Holloway took part in a studio recording of Oliver ! with Alma Cogan and Violet Carson , in which he played Fagin .

In 1962 Holloway played the role of an English butler called Higgins in a US television sitcom called Our Man Higgins . It ran for only a season . His son Julian also appeared in the series . In 1964 he again appeared on stage in Philadelphia in Cool Off ! , a short @-@ lived Faustian spoof . He returned to the US a few more times after that to take part in The Dean Martin Show three times and The Red Skelton Show twice . He also appeared in the 1965 war film In Harm 's Way , together with John Wayne and Kirk Douglas .

= = = = Last years = = = =

Holloway appeared for the first time in a major British television series in the BBC 's 1967 adaptation of P. G. Wodehouse 's Blandings Castle stories , playing Beach , the butler , to Ralph Richardson 's Lord Emsworth . His portrayal of Beach was received with critical reservation , but the series was a popular success . After My Fair Lady , Holloway was able to get film roles in Mrs. Brown You 've Got A Lovely Daughter ( 1968 ) , which starred the 1960s British pop group Herman 's Hermits , The Private Life of Sherlock Holmes , Flight of the Doves and Up the Front , all in the early 1970s . His final film was Journey into Fear ( 1974 ) .

In 1970 , Holloway began an association with the Shaw Festival in Canada , playing Burgess in Candida . He made what he considered his West End debut as a straight actor in Siege by David Ambrose at the Cambridge Theatre in 1972 , co @-@ starring with Alastair Sim and Michael Bryant . He returned to Shaw and Canada , playing the central character Walter / William in You Never Can Tell in 1973 .

Holloway continued to perform until well into his eighties , touring Asia and Australia in 1977 together with Douglas Fairbanks , Jr. and David Langton in The Pleasure of His Company , by Samuel A. Taylor and Cornelia Otis Skinner . He made his last appearance performing at the Royal Variety Performance at the London Palladium in 1980 , aged 89 .

Holloway died of a stroke at the Nightingale Nursing Home in Littlehampton , West Sussex , on 30 January 1982 , aged 91 . He is buried , along with his wife Violet , at St. Mary the Virgin Church in East Preston , West Sussex .

= = = Personal life = = =

Holloway was married twice , first to Alice " Queenie " Foran . They met in June 1913 in Clacton , while he was performing in a concert party and she was selling charity flags on behalf of the Royal National Lifeboat Institution . Queenie was orphaned at the age of 16 , something that Holloway felt he and Queenie had in common , as his mother had died that year and his father had earlier abandoned the family . He married Queenie in November 1913 .

Holloway and Queenie had four children : Joan , born on Holloway 's 24th birthday in 1914 , Patricia

( b . 1920 ) , John ( 1925 ? 2013 ) and Mary ( b . 1928 ) . Upon the death of her mother , Queenie inherited some property in Southampton Row and relied on the rents from the property for her income . During the First World War , while Holloway was away fighting in France , Queenie began to have financial trouble , as the tenants failed to pay their rent . Out of desperation , she approached several loan sharks , incurring a huge debt about which Holloway knew nothing . She also started to drink heavily as the pressures from the war and of supporting her daughter took their toll . On Holloway 's return from the war , the debt was paid off and they moved to Hampstead , West London . By the late 1920s , Holloway found himself in financial difficulties with the British tax authorities and was briefly declared bankrupt . In the 1930s , Holloway and Queenie moved to Bayswater and remained there until Queenie 's death in 1937 at the age of 45 , from cirrhosis of the liver . Of the children from this first marriage , John worked as an engineer in an electrics company , and Mary worked for British Petroleum for many years .

On 2 January 1939 , Holloway married a 25 @-@ year @-@ old actress and former chorus dancer named Violet Marion Lane ( 1913 ? 1997 ) and they moved to Marylebone . Violet was born into a working @-@ class family from Leeds . Her mother was Scottish , and her civil engineer father , Alfred Lane , was a Yorkshireman . Holloway 's second marriage lasted over 40 years until his death in 1982 . Although he was a client of the Aza Agency in London , Violet effectively managed Holloway 's career , and no project was taken on without her approval . In his autobiography , Holloway said of her , " I suppose I am committing lawful bigamy . Not only is she my wife , lover , mother , cook , chauffeuse , private secretary , house keeper , hostess , electrician , business manager , critic , handy woman , she is also my best friend . " Together , they had one son , Julian , who also became an actor and is best known for appearing in the Carry On films . Julian had a brief relationship with Patricia Neal 's daughter Tessa Dahl which produced a daughter , the model and author Sophie Dahl .

Holloway , Violet and Julian lived mainly in the tiny village of Penn , Buckinghamshire . Holloway also owned other properties including a flat in St. John 's Wood in North West London , which he used when working in the capital , and a flat in Manhattan during the My Fair Lady Broadway years . The final years of his life were spent in Angmering , West Sussex , with Violet . Holloway forged close friendships with fellow performers including Leslie Henson , Gracie Fields , Maurice Chevalier , Laurence Olivier and Arthur Askey , who said of him , " He was the nicest man I ever knew . He never had a wrong word to say about anyone . He was a great actor , a super mimic and a one @-@ man walking comic show . " While working in the US , Holloway numbered among his friends Frank Sinatra , Dean Martin , Burgess Meredith and Groucho Marx .

= = Honours , memorials and books = =

Holloway was appointed an Officer of the Order of the British Empire ( OBE ) in the 1960 New Year 's Honours list for his services to entertainment . In 1978 he was honoured with a special award by the Variety Club of Great Britain .

There is a memorial plaque dedicated to Holloway in St. Paul 's , Covent Garden , London , which is known as " the actors ' church " . The plaque is next to a memorial to Gracie Fields . In 2009 English Heritage unveiled a Blue plaque at 25 Albany Road , Manor Park , Essex , the house in which he was born in 1890 . There is a building named after him at 2 Coolfin Road , Newham , London , called Stanley Holloway Court .

Holloway entitled his 1967 autobiography Wiv a Little Bit of Luck after the song he performed in My Fair Lady . The book was ghost @-@ written by the writer and director Dick Richards and was published in 1967 . Holloway oversaw the publication of three volumes of the monologues by or associated with him : Monologues ( 1979 ) ; The Stanley Holloway Monologues ( 1980 ) ; and More Monologues ( 1981 ) .

= = Recordings = =

Holloway had a 54 @-@ year recording career , beginning in the age of acoustic recording , and

ending in the era of the stereophonic LP . He mainly recorded songs from musicals and revues , and he recited many monologues on various subjects . Most prominent among his recordings ( aside from his participation in recordings of My Fair Lady ) are those of three series of monologues that he made at intervals throughout his career . They featured Sam Small , Albert Ramsbottom , and historical events such as the Battle of Hastings , Magna Carta and the Battle of Trafalgar . In all , his discography runs to 130 recordings , spanning the period 1924 to 1978 . A review in The Gramophone of one of his 1957 albums containing recordings of his old " concert party " songs commented , " what a fine voice he has and how well he can use it ? diction , phrasing , range and the interpretative insight of the artist " .