

= Betty Williams ( Coronation Street ) =

Elizabeth " Betty " Williams ( née Preston , previously Turpin ) was a long @-@ standing fictional character from the British ITV soap opera Coronation Street , portrayed by former music hall star Betty Driver . Driver was cast as Betty in 1969 , after first auditioning for the role of Hilda Ogden . The character arrived in Coronation Street to help her sister Maggie Cooke run the corner shop , and has since had a number of storylines which have seen her become twice widowed , and mother to an illegitimate son . Working as a barmaid in the soap 's Rovers Return Inn , Betty created a signature dish , known as Betty 's hotpot .

In 1995 , a real @-@ life range of hotpots and pies based on the dish were launched by Hollands Pies , and in 2007 , the world 's largest Lancashire hotpot was created , based on Betty 's recipe . Driver died in October 2011 and Betty was subsequently written out , with the character dying off @-@ screen of illness in April 2012 .

= = Creation = =

Betty Driver , who had been performing since she was 8 years old , retired from acting in her late forties to run hotels in Cheshire and Derbyshire . It was here that she was spotted by one of her customers , producer of Coronation Street , Harry Kershaw , who persuaded her to audition for the role of Hilda Ogden in 1964 ; she eventually had to turn the role down as she was tied into an advertising contract with Procter & Gamble and they refused to release her . The part of Hilda eventually went to Jean Alexander . Driver has commented , " Harry Kershaw , producer of Coronation Street , persuaded me to audition for Hilda Ogden ? just think I could have been wearing curlers for 30 years . " In 1969 , she was cast as the new character , Betty Turpin . Commenting on her casting in 1999 , Driver said , " [ Kershaw ] said , ' Betty , how would you like to pull pints for us on television ? ' , and that was it . I suppose I expected I 'd be there for perhaps a few months . But it just went on and on and , well , they 've never managed to get rid of me . "

Following her first appearance in 1969 , Driver remained in the role of Betty continuously . She suggested in 1999 that if she gave up she would die " within a month from sheer boredom " . In a 2006 interview she laughed off the notion of retirement , saying : " From day one on The Street everyone has been very kind to me . In fact , I 'm godmother to Bill Roache 's son . So as long as they want me , I 'm happy to stay . The Street is like home and they really are my family . " She confirmed her intention to remain on the show in 2010 , when the character celebrated her 90th birthday . In May 2010 , the News of the World reported that Driver had decided to retire , just prior to the actress 's 90th birthday . Driver was distressed by the rumour , and assured producer Phil Collinson of her intention to remain with the soap , and was told that Betty was very much a part of plans for the series ' upcoming 50th anniversary celebrations . Driver died on 15 October 2011 , having appeared in over 2 @, @ 800 episodes of Coronation Street .

= = Development = =

= = = Backstory = = =

Betty was born at 6 Tile Street , Weatherfield on 4 February 1920 to Harold and Margaret Preston . During World War II , she had an affair with serviceman Ted Farrell ( Gerald Sim ) , resulting in a son , Gordon ( Bill Kenwright ; Geoffrey Leesley ) . Ted left her to return to his family and Gordon was adopted by Betty 's sister Maggie ( Irene Sutcliffe ) and her husband Les Clegg ( John Sharp ) . Betty celebrated the end of the war with her sweetheart Billy Williams ( Frank Mills ) , to whom she had lost her virginity . The two lost touch , and in 1949 , Betty married policeman Cyril Turpin ( William Moore ) .

= = = Storylines = = =

Betty and her husband Cyril move to Coronation Street in June 1969 , helping her sister Maggie to run the local corner shop following the breakup of Maggie 's marriage to Les Clegg . Maggie , however , resents Betty 's interference and persuades landlord Jack Walker ( Arthur Leslie ) to give Betty a job as a barmaid at The Rovers Return Inn public house . Betty clashes with the landlady Annie ( Doris Speed ) , who fears that Jack may find her attractive , and fires Betty as a result . Betty takes a job in a rival pub , and returns only when Annie apologises . Betty becomes close friends with fellow barmaid Bet Lynch ( Julie Goodyear ) , who on occasion lodges with her , uses Betty as a chaperone on dates , and frequently seeks her advice in running her life .

Cyril 's employment as a policeman causes Betty problems when Keith Lucas ( David Webb ) , a man he has previously arrested , begins stalking her . She initially refrains from telling Cyril , fearing that he will get into trouble . When Cyril finds out , he attacks Lucas with a piece of lead piping and has to leave the police force . Betty has a breakdown when Cyril dies of a heart attack in 1974 , leaving her only £ 859 . The same year the truth about her illegitimate son is revealed , and when the community discovers this , Betty finds it difficult to face them . She busies herself by taking in lodgers , and acquiring a ginger cat named Marmaduke for extra companionship . Betty builds a relationship with Gordon , though he upsets her occasionally , particularly when he neglects to invite her to his wedding .

Betty is mugged in 1982 by Raymond Attwood ( Joe Searby ) from Ken Barlow 's ( William Roache ) youth club ; she ends up in hospital with a broken arm . This leads to a reunion with Ted , the man who fathered Gordon , though he is unaware of his son 's existence . Ted visits Betty in hospital after reading about her mugging in a newspaper . Betty agonises over whether to tell Ted about Gordon , but decides against it , preferring not to stir up the past .

On the fiftieth anniversary of VE Day in 1995 , Betty is reunited with her wartime sweetheart Billy . The two marry several months later , and Gordon gives his mother away . They live happily together until Billy also dies of a heart attack in 1997 . Betty becomes famous in Weatherfield for her hotpots , which come under scrutiny in the early 1990s when it is believed that they are contaminated . She is cleared of all wrongdoing when it is discovered that beer , not food , is responsible for a spate of stomach upsets . Betty acts as lady mayoress alongside mayor Alf Roberts ( Bryan Mosley ) when his wife Audrey ( Sue Nicholls ) has no interest in fulfilling her civic duties . This includes accompanying him to receive his OBE from the Queen , much to Audrey 's chagrin .

In 1999 , Betty celebrates 30 years of working at The Rovers Return with a party attended by all the regulars . She considers retiring in 2002 and briefly moves to Wimbledon to be with Gordon and his wife Caroline ( Elaine Donnelly ; Sarah Thurstan ) . Feeling that Caroline does not want her there , Betty considers moving into a retirement home , however is convinced to stay in Weatherfield by her close friend Emily Bishop ( Eileen Derbyshire ) . Around the time of Betty 's fortieth anniversary at the Rovers Return , she is sacked by new manager Poppy Morales ( Sophiya Haque ) after clashing with her on several occasions . Landlord Steve McDonald ( Simon Gregson ) eventually tires of Poppy 's poor treatment of the staff and fires her . Betty is re @-@ instated , and plays the fairy godmother in the 2009 Rovers Return Christmas pantomime performance of Cinderella . In early February 2010 , Betty has a party in The Rovers celebrating both her 90th birthday and the fact that she is the oldest barmaid in Weatherfield ; however it backfires when 91 @-@ year @-@ old Enid Crump ( June Broughton ) crashes the party and claims she is the oldest barmaid not Betty . Later Enid becomes sick after Steve serves her a 3 @-@ month old hotpot . Betty and Steve are left terrified when they realise that the hotpot could kill her , but she later recovers . During the Tram Crash of December 2010 Betty comforts Claire Peacock ( Julia Haworth ) after her husband Ashley ( Steven Arnold ) is tragically crushed to death by the rubble .

Betty is last seen in May 2011 , trying in vain to stop David ( Jack P. Shepherd ) and Kylie Platt ( Paula Lane ) from coming behind the bar to speak with Becky . Although Betty is mentioned and referred to by various characters since , her subsequent absence was not explained until in February 2012 , when Audrey asks Stella Price ( Michelle Collins ) how Betty is , to which Stella replies that Betty is " still a bit under the weather " . On 16 April 2012 Rita and Emily arrange to visit a convalescing Betty and go to meet Gordon , who has agreed to drive them there . However , when

Gordon does arrive , he brings with him the unexpected news that Betty has died , peacefully in her sleep the night before . The residents of the street all gather in the Rovers Return and hold an impromptu memorial to Betty , with all of her old friends reminiscing about her . Gordon , with some persuasion from Emily decides to have his mother buried in Weatherfield after initially contemplating London . It is later revealed that Annie Walker left The Rovers Return to Betty in her will however Betty never acted on this , Gordon assured landlady Stella Price that he is not interested in the pub and it will remain in her possession . Despite being one of the street 's longest serving characters , her funeral was held off @-@ screen . After the wake and lock @-@ up , Stella hung a photo of Betty on the wall over The Rovers Return , for all to see and remember her . This photo was sadly destroyed during the 2013 Rovers Return fire , started by Karl Munro but , following the refurbishment , Rita managed to obtain an identical copy which remains hanging on the wall in the same place .

= = = Personality = = =

In his 1998 book *The Women of Coronation Street* , Daran Little describes Betty as an archetypal mother figure . He compares her to one of Coronation Street 's original characters Minnie Caldwell ( Margot Bryant ) , as she is " warm and comforting [ ... ] loves cats and has had her share of lodgers " ; however , Little notes that " while Minnie wandered through life in a haze , Betty is sharp @-@ witted , blessed with insight and wisdom " . Discussing her evolving characterisation , Little writes : " She hasn 't always been the incarnation of lovable joviality : when she arrived in the Street in 1969 , she was loud , brash and a vicious @-@ tongued gossip . "

Betty 's two passions in life are darts and food . Playing darts brings out her competitive side , and she enjoys beating her male customers . Cyril frequently protests when Betty attempts to diet , as he prefers her " homely and comfortable " figure . Ultimately , Betty stops trying to lose weight , stating : " I had to chose [ sic ? ] between losing a few pounds or losing my marital partner . If my Cyril had wanted to marry a skinny rabbit he 'd have married one . " Betty breaks down when Cyril dies from a heart attack , with Little noting that : " Cyril had been the stabilizing force in Betty 's life , and without him she relied heavily on her job and friends at the Rovers ? she couldn 't face life alone at home " . Little has observed that Betty " has a finely tuned sense of right and wrong and has never been afraid to stand up for her beliefs " , citing Betty 's shock at being mugged in 1982 , and calling the NSPCC to report a female neighbour whose children were left outside until nightfall while their mother entertained her boyfriend .

In 2010 , Driver discussed her character , saying , " Coronation Street characters tend to fit into one of two camps . Those who have drama after drama and those who muddle through life , often in the background , as sturdy and dependable as the famous cobbles . Betty falls into the latter group . There have been moments of drama , intrigue and even romance ? but it has been her presence behind the bar , cutting up pieces of lamb and chunks of potato , that has endeared her to the viewers . " When asked about Betty 's " sharp tongue " , Driver suggested , " Not really sharp . [ Betty 's ] just straightforward . [ She 's ] not nasty to anybody but [ she doesn 't ] suffer fools gladly . "

= = = Barmaid of The Rovers Return = = =

Betty was the longest @-@ serving barmaid of the soap 's public house , The Rovers Return . She first served behind the bar in 1969 and had been shown to work there for 42 years , as of 2011 . There have been brief breaks however , as storylines have led to the character being fired or quitting her post . She was fired by Annie Walker ( Doris Speed ) , who accused her of theft , and she quit her post in 1995 when Jack ( Bill Tarmey ) and Vera Duckworth ( Liz Dawn ) took over as landlords . In the summer of 2009 , Betty was sacked again temporarily by manager Poppy Morales . A Coronation Street insider reassured *The Sun* that Betty was not being written out of the show , however , stating : " She ? ll be here for a long time to come ? she ? ll just be on the other side of the bar for a change " . In a storyline that aired in February 2010 , Betty ? at 90 years old ? was

named Manchester 's Oldest Barmaid . In a plot twist , a 91 @-@ year @-@ old rival came forward , resulting in Betty fearing she killed her , when the rival consumes a two @-@ month @-@ old hotpot .

= = Reception = =

ITV describe Betty as a " linchpin " of the soap opera , stating that : " She ? s as much a part of Coronation Street as the cobble stones . " Former executive producer , Brian Park , suggested in 1997 that characters such as Betty " are essential ingredients . They 're like the big clock on the mantelpiece . " Park elaborated on his opinion of Betty when he left the serial as producer in 1998 , saying , " I don 't mean it disrespectfully but [ ... ] people like Betty Driver , who plays Betty Williams [ ... ] are what I call the mantelpiece ornaments . She 'll probably never hold down a major storyline but she 's part of the weave . "

The character is one of the longest @-@ serving in British soap , coming third behind Ken Barlow and Emily Bishop in a 1998 survey assessing character episode appearances in Coronation Street 's history . In 1999 , when Betty was celebrating 30 years on @-@ screen , Alison Boshoff of the Daily Mail praised the character 's never changing style : " for 30 years , one favourite fixture of Coronation Street has remained exactly the same [ ... ] barmaid Betty Turpin . With her neatly @-@ set hair , comfortable , bustling manner , and brilliant smile , she has been dispensing homespun advice ? and , of course , those celebrated hotpots ? at the Rovers Return for more than a generation . " Commenting on her 30th anniversary with the show , Betty Driver said , " It is just amazing that I 've been here for 30 years . I suppose I have never really counted up the time I 've been with the show , because I still enjoy it so much and am always looking forward rather than back . Really , it has been a wonderful experience and I feel very glad I was able to stick around for so long . "

In 2007 , Coronation Street bosses told The Sun newspaper that there were no plans to retire the character of Betty , despite actress Betty Driver being 87 at the time , the oldest cast member in the soap . The character was described as " highly valued " , with executive producer Kieran Roberts saying , " She is still going strong and enjoying the role . Betty is one of the Street ? s great traditional characters who seem to have been there forever . It ? s always been our aim to keep a great mix of contemporary stories with older , more traditional characters . Comedy and tragedy combined with very clever writing has always been a trademark of the Street . " Actor Rob James @-@ Collier , who played Liam Connor in the soap , has deemed Betty to be one of Coronation Street 's two best characters , alongside Jack Duckworth ( Bill Tarmey ) . He explained : " Betty Driver , who plays Betty can have no more than a couple of lines in a scene , but she ? ll steal it off all the other actors with just a comedy reaction . It ? s simple , and also fantastic . "

Driver was awarded a lifetime achievement award at The British Soap Awards in May 2010 , to honour her role as Betty who had , at that time , featured in Coronation Street for 41 years . Due to illness , Driver was unable to collect the award in person , but she recorded a video message thanking everyone at ITV .

= = = Betty 's hotpot = = =

During her time on Coronation Street , the character has become synonymous with her signature dish at the Rovers Return Inn , Betty 's hotpot . ITV have described the dish as " the stuff of legends " , and in 1995 , pie manufacturer Holland 's Pies launched a real @-@ life range of hotpots and pies based on the dish , called " Betty 's Kitchen " . The idea for the range originated with the firm 's marketing director , Dilys Day , who explained : " I was brought up on hotpot and Coronation Street . So when I joined Holland 's a year ago , it seemed right to put the two together with Betty 's hotpot . " Day added that : " We are all very excited about Betty 's Kitchen products . Holland 's is a strong northern brand , with mass market appeal and wholesome , honest values - the same can be said for The Street . "

In his book Marketing Communication , Richard J. Varey used the product range as an example of

a company capitalising on a form of product placement or " stealth advertising " , writing that " Viewers don 't realize that they are , in effect , watching an advertisement " . Betty Driver said of the range 's launch : " Betty Turpin 's hotpots have become something of an institution at the Rover 's and she 's very proud of her reputation for good , wholesome food . I think it is a lovely idea that people will be able to buy them in supermarkets now . " Driver discussed her astonishment at the general level of interest in her character 's hotpots , disclosing : " I was on a cruise on the QE2 a few weeks ago , and everyone was asking me about it . Then one day , they served hot pot on the menu and everyone thought it was mine ! "

In 2007 , Liverpool Daily Post editor Larry Neild was selected to join Liverpool 's ' Health is Wealth ' commission , researching the effects of food deprivation on poor health , after writing a scathing column in which he suggested that the commission ' s chairman , Sue Woodward , chief executive of ITV Granada , should set a good example in Coronation Street by banning Betty ' s hotpot . In October of the same year , allegedly the world ' s biggest Lancashire hotpot was created , based on Betty ' s traditional hotpot recipe from Coronation Street . The hotpot was cooked in a specially crafted 12 ft by 7 ft tin , weighing 200 kilos . 2008 saw Betty 's hotpot come under scrutiny in the soap , after Street resident Jerry Morton suffered a heart attack . Jerry 's ex @-@ wife Teresa Bryant blamed the fatty meat in Betty 's hotpots for hardening his arteries , and local butcher Ashley Peacock suggested that ostrich meat may be an up @-@ and @-@ coming new alternative , much to Betty 's outrage . Despite her character 's culinary skill , Driver claims she " couldn 't cook a hotpot to save [ her ] life " .

= = In other media = =

In 1998 , a straight to video , Coronation Street spin @-@ off film was released , featuring Betty . It was entitled The Women Of Coronation Street and featured clips of the show 's most famous females . The video hailed the brief return of Coronation Street favourite Hilda Ogden , who had not been seen in the soap since 1987 ; Betty travelled to meet her at her new home . A spokesperson for Granada Television commented , " It shows what happens when Betty [ Williams ] goes up to visit Hilda Ogden at her home in Derbyshire . She used to do cleaning work for a doctor and when he died , he left her the house in gratitude . It 'll be a souvenir fans want to keep . "