

= Mavis Wilton =

Mavis Wilton (née Riley) is a fictional character from the British ITV soap opera Coronation Street , played by Thelma Barlow . A long @-@ running series regular , Mavis appeared in the show for 26 years from 1971 to 1997 . Introduced for a one @-@ off cameo appearance , she proved popular with producers and viewers and subsequently became a regular .

Mavis was portrayed as moralising , repressed , and dithering , and often appeared in comic scenes with her boss Rita Sullivan or her husband Derek Wilton . She was generally well received by critics , described as a national institution and one of Coronation Street 's best loved characters , an old @-@ fashioned spinster . Barlow has been praised for her portrayal of Mavis , a character notably spoofed by impressionist Les Dennis during the 1980s .

Barlow decided to leave Coronation Street in 1997 ; her character left to run a guest house in Cartmel following the death of her husband . Barlow has said that the producers of Coronation Street repeatedly asked her to return as Mavis , but she declined .

= = Storylines = =

Born in Weatherfield , Mavis was brought up in Grange @-@ over @-@ Sands where her parents , despite being teetotal , ran an off @-@ licence . Mavis first appears in Coronation Street in 1971 at Emily Nugent (Eileen Derbyshire) and Ernest Bishop 's (Stephen Hancock) engagement party , as a friend / colleague of Emily 's from the mail order warehouse and is invited to be a bridesmaid at the wedding . She is initially employed as a receptionist at the local vet and then as an assistant in the corner shop , but takes a job offered by Rita Littlewood (Barbara Knox) at The Kabin newsagents , 14 Rosamund Street . Mavis and Rita are complete opposites ? Rita sexy and self @-@ assured , Mavis mouse @-@ like and dowdy ? but they get on well and become friends . Rita often despairs at Mavis 's choices in life , particularly when it comes to men . Rita 's dominance over Mavis seems like bullying to outsiders , but she is only thinking of Mavis 's best interests .

In 1973 , Mavis starts dating the equally shy Jerry Booth (Graham Haberfield) , but it remains platonic . Jerry dies of a heart attack in 1975 before being able to express his romantic intentions . She meets salesman Derek Wilton (Peter Baldwin) the following year . They date , but the relationship is strained by Derek 's interfering mother , who believes that Mavis is not good enough for her son . The relationship remains non @-@ committal until 1983 , when another man competes for Mavis 's hand , the artistic Victor Pendlebury (Christopher Coll) . Mavis is torn as she likes both but chooses Derek in the end . On their wedding day in 1984 Mavis has second thoughts about marrying Derek and jilts him at the altar . Her guilt turns to indignation when she learns that Derek ? feeling the same way she does ? did not attend the ceremony either . Derek goes on to an unhappy marriage with Angela Hawthorne (Diane Fletcher) , but in 1986 he begins wooing Mavis again , realizing he made a mistake when he let her go . Mavis eventually decides Derek is the man for her and the couple marry in September 1988 . The other residents of Coronation Street consider Mavis and Derek something of a joke , but neither care as they are genuinely in love . They spend evenings reading aloud to each other and discussing the events of the day . They remain happy despite the occasional problem , but their happiness is cut short in 1997 when Derek dies suddenly of a heart attack after a road rage incident . Devastated , at his funeral Mavis chastises those who mocked her marriage over the years .

Living in Weatherfield without Derek proves too difficult for Mavis . She surprises Rita when she suggests that they should move away and go into business together . They discuss the possibility of running a guest house in Cartmel , a village in the Lake District . Rita considers it but both realize that a partnership would not work . Mavis goes without her , buying a guest house and leaving Weatherfield in October 1997 . She and Rita bid each other an emotional farewell , ending a partnership of 25 years .

= = Creation and development = =

=== Characterisation ===

Mavis Riley 's 1971 cameo appearance proved to be a hit with viewers , persuading the producers of Coronation Street to make her a regular character . It has been reported that Barlow based her portrayal of Mavis on a woman she had seen working in Granada studios (where Coronation Street is filmed) as well as " dozens of northern women she had seen battered into submission by worry " . Discussing the woman who inspired Mavis 's characterisation , Barlow said , " She had a strong core , but didn 't show it . She was desperate to be liked but she didn 't want to appear pushy . "

Discussing her character , Barlow described Mavis as a " sappy thing " , adding " she had great integrity , and she was a very loyal person . She would stick by her morality . She was a mouse to begin with , and then she met [her future husband] Derek and ... she learnt to be quite tough . " In Daran Little 's book *The Coronation Street Story* Mavis is described as a " very creative person " . She often met men through her creative endeavours , but her status as a spinster often led to feelings of bitterness , and she resented that her friend Emily had married two men before she had married once . Her lack of male attention led Mavis to be labelled the " eternal virgin " of Coronation Street . The serial 's New Zealand broadcaster TVNZ described her as " flighty and romantic " .

The character has been discussed in a variety of publications . Hilary Kingsley in her book *Soapbox* discusses Mavis 's reticent and moralistic personality as seen in her drinking habits : Mavis drinks fruit juices , but on special occasions sweet sherry : " two for Mavis is one too many " says Kingsley . In a 1983 issue of *New Statesman* magazine , Mavis is described as having a face that is " never quite sure of its own shape " . The author describes the storyline featuring Mavis facing the prospect of a trial marriage or losing her boyfriend as an example of the " either @-@ or situations " into which soap opera is " forever ensnaring its characters " . An article in the *Evening Standard* said Mavis was " meek and mild " and " would not say boo to a budgie " . In the same newspaper Mark Walton @-@ Cook discusses Mavis 's style , stating : " I keep picturing Corrie 's Mavis Riley twittering and clutching at the high neck of a securely fastened polyester blouse with a tasteful cameo brooch " .

Mavis was frequently used to provide comic relief ; she has been dubbed one of Coronation Street 's comedy stars , well known for her catchphrase , " ooh , I don 't really know " . Susan Purdie writes that Mavis 's storylines and persona often " hover between pathos and comedy " . The critic David Meade agrees , noting that Mavis was " a permanent mourner @-@ in @-@ waiting " . Sean @-@ Day Lewis describes Mavis as " muddled and mousy " , while Dennis Joseph Enright calls her a moralistic shop assistant who " no one takes very seriously " . She was often spoofed by comedian Les Dennis in the 1980s ; the character featured along with Dustin Gee 's impression of Vera Duckworth in a variety of sketch shows .

=== Comedy partnerships ===

The producers of the show decided to pair Mavis with Rita Fairclough (Barbara Knox) by giving her a job in Rita 's corner shop ; the characters ' relationship has been described as a chalk and cheese comedy partnership . Christine Geraghty has cited Mavis and Rita 's friendship as an example of a soap opera portraying an important , stable , intimate female relationship : " Rita is Mavis 's boss , but she is also one of her closest friends " .

A spinster for many years , Mavis resisted the advances of men , often too shy to allow dating to progress beyond the initial stages of courtship . Ian Randall comments that " Many a man has been smitten with Mavis Riley , but unfortunately she always seemed to attract the drippier of the male species " . In 1976 a love interest was introduced for Mavis in the form of Derek Wilton (Peter Baldwin) , but it was more than a decade before the couple finally married in 1988 , after simultaneously jilting each other four years earlier . Barbara Knox , who plays Rita , said , " She [Mavis] was quite a tough little character . You know , a lot of girls would have gone through with [the wedding] , and she stuck to her guns and said ' No , no this isn 't right . ' Again , dithering and weepy , but she was tough enough to do it . That scene [where Rita supports her decision to jilt

Derek] is reflective of the two of them . That was the essence of the friendship , they stuck up for each other and [were] great friends , all the way through . "

Richard Dyer perceives the Mavis and Derek characters to be as " shy physically " as one another , whereas Kathryn Hone , writing in The Sunday Times , considers Derek " even more dithering than Mavis " . Nevertheless the on @-@ screen relationship between the couple progresses quickly , despite the interference of Derek 's mother . Actors Thelma Barlow and Peter Baldwin had worked together before their casting as Derek and Mavis , and the two became close friends .

Derek and Mavis have been described by What 's on TV as " an old @-@ fashioned pair who were made for each other " , and were typically featured in comic storylines , such as one in 1995 that saw their garden gnome kidnapped and transported around the world ; Derek and Mavis received pictures of the gnome in various exotic locations , sent to them with ransom notes . It transpired that the kidnapper was Derek 's friend Norris Cole (Malcolm Hebden) . The Daily Record labelled this storyline one of " Coronation Street 's Classic Comic Moments " in 2008 .

Marilyn J. Matelski cites Mavis and Derek Wilton as examples of clever naming , in that the serial had created a fitting image of the characters before viewers even saw them together .

= = = Departure = = =

Barlow decided to leave the role of Mavis in 1997 , having played it for 26 years . It was reported that she had quit following the axing of Peter Baldwin , who played her screen husband Derek Wilton . At the time Coronation Street was undergoing off @-@ screen changes following the introduction of a new executive producer , Brian Park , dubbed " the axeman " in the press after he culled many characters from the regular cast . The actress Jean Alexander , who played the character of Hilda Ogden in the serial , went to the press in protest at the news . She wrote : " Peter Baldwin and Thelma Barlow were a wonderfully funny couple , but they 've killed off Derek and now Mavis is about to leave . Even all the humour has been taken out of scenes between Mavis and Rita . " Park suggested that when he took over as head producer there was a general feeling among the programme @-@ makers that " Derek and Mavis had had their day " . Barlow has stated her belief that the producers killed off Derek as a result of her own desire to leave . She said : " It was sort of cruel , really ; I mean , they could have killed Mavis off . It was a new director and a new producer , and they wanted to make a big news splash . It was very hard for Peter [who played Derek] . " The village of Cartmel , near Grange @-@ over @-@ Sands , enjoyed a boost in tourism attributed to the exposure given to it by Mavis 's storyline .

In 2002 producers asked Barlow to return as Mavis , but she was too busy . In 2006 Barlow claimed that she had again been asked to return to Coronation Street , but had refused as she felt the storylines were not good enough for Mavis . Barlow stated in 2007 that she is unlikely to return , because she would be unable to cope with the accelerated production schedule of one more episode a week since her last appearance in 1997 . Executive producer Kim Crowther said in 2009 that she would have liked Mavis to return to the serial .

= = Reception = =

Brian Meade of the Daily Mirror has suggested that Mavis was a " national institution " who enriched the life of millions . In the Scottish newspaper The Herald Alison Kerr listed Mavis as one of the female characters that in her opinion have been " the real pivot " in the serial , " ever ready with a sympathetic word " . An article in the Huddersfield Daily Examiner said that Mavis was one of Coronation Street 's best @-@ loved characters , describing her as timid and " clad in sensible cardigan and shoes " . Jules Stenson writing in The People said that Mavis was much like the previous character Minnie Caldwell (Margot Bryant) : they were both " easily bullied " and , like Minnie , Mavis seemed to be " on the shelf for life " until her marriage to Derek .

In Meade 's opinion , Mavis gave a name to and represented a certain type of woman : " A 1940s spinster with a 1940s head who 's looked 50 since birth . A Woman 's Realm made flesh . And you have a name for her . She 's a Mavis ... Mavis Riley was a masterpiece of observation " . His opinion

was shared by Gerlinde Frey @-@ Vor and Julia Hallam , who consider Mavis to be a " model for a spinsterly type of woman " . Brian Meade suggested that Barlow had " honed a comic gem until it cut into the national consciousness " in her characterisation of Mavis , likening her to other successful TV characters like Basil Fawlty , Del Boy Trotter and Alf Garnett . Meade applauded Barlow for staying true to Mavis 's character for 26 years , " sustaining the most timid , world @-@ weary of women with remarkable consistency . Try to recall her great lines and you are stumped . Every sentence she whimpered seemed to begin with ' Ooh Derek ' and end with : ' Well , I don 't really know ' " , but he suggested that she had graced some of Coronation Street 's " finest scenes " , pointing to Mavis and Rita 's spoof of a Laurel and Hardy act as one example .

The character received various accolades over the years . At the TV Times " Corrie Awards " , Mavis and Derek were nominated for " Best Couple " , and Susannah Clapp listed Mavis in The Observer 's " 10 best Coronation Street characters " list . Clapp said " Thelma Barlow played [Mavis] , with exceptional delicacy , in a variety of pastel pinnies , for 26 years . " She concluded that she had a " tumultuous relationship with her soulmate , Derek " . When Barlow quit the role as Mavis in 1997 , various Coronation Street stars praised her contribution : Sherrie Hewson (who played Maureen Holdsworth) said " Thelma 's a wonderful lady and a superb actress . We 'll miss her " ; Michael Le Vell (Kevin Webster) said " Thelma 's quality as an actress shone through for everyone to see after the death of Derek " ; Peter Baldwin (Derek) said " It has made a difference to the programme and the departure of Derek and now Mavis is going to upset a lot of viewers " .

Mavis has been praised for providing Coronation Street with much comic relief via her partnerships with Rita and Derek . Reflecting on Mavis and Derek 's partnership in 2010 , Paul Vallyely of The Independent said that they were an example of a " great double act " , but he noted that they could not survive in the serial after it became focused on " dramatic storylines " .

Mavis has remained a popular and well @-@ loved character . In 2010 , thirteen years after her departure , Darren Fitzgerald wrote in The Sentinel (Stoke @-@ on @-@ Trent) that he wanted to see Mavis return to the serial and that he would have written out half of the cast and brought her back as a replacement . But Mavis has also been criticised : Jack Kibble @-@ White , writing for MSN , called Mavis and Derek a " pathetic couple " , suggesting that their gnome plot was one of the serial 's most bizarre .