

When Aldridge left *Last of the Summer Wine* in 1990, Wilde returned as Foggy, reuniting the series' most popular and recognisable line-up. Whilst preparing for filming the 1997 series, Wilde began suffering from a mild infection and stood down for the first five episodes in case his illness worsened. His temporary absence was covered by Frank Thornton, whom Wilde himself suggested as a replacement, and who would continue, as it transpired, as the 'third man'. In all, Brian appeared in more than 100 episodes of the series.

Other Works

During his break from *Last of the Summer Wine* in the mid 1980s, Brian created a new television role, as Major Wyatt in *Wyatt's Watchdogs*. Wilde played a retired army major who forms a neighbourhood watch group populated with local busy bodies. "Wyatt's just a pompous old fool", Brian said of the part. "It required very little effort for me to play him because there's plenty of him in me. Ask my wife and children". The programme, which co-starred Trevor Bannister, was written by Miles Tredinnick and ran for six episodes in 1988. He also played radio station boss Roland Simpson in the first series of ITV comedy *The Kit Curran Radio Show* (1984) starring Denis Lawson.

Brian was a subtle and delicate actor and those whom he worked alongside found him to be a charming and quirky character. He was not one to court publicity and generally avoided interviews, much preferring to spend his time gardening or meeting friends in his favourite country pub. Despite his natural diffidence and lugubrious expression, he was always watchable even, or perhaps especially, when playing the sort of characters who were easy to overlook. His was a familiar and much-loved face on British television for some 40 years.

Later Life

Brian suffered a fall at his home in January 2008 from which he never recovered. He died peacefully in his sleep at a nursing home on the morning of 20 March 2008. He was survived by his wife Eva and their son and daughter.

Acknowledgements

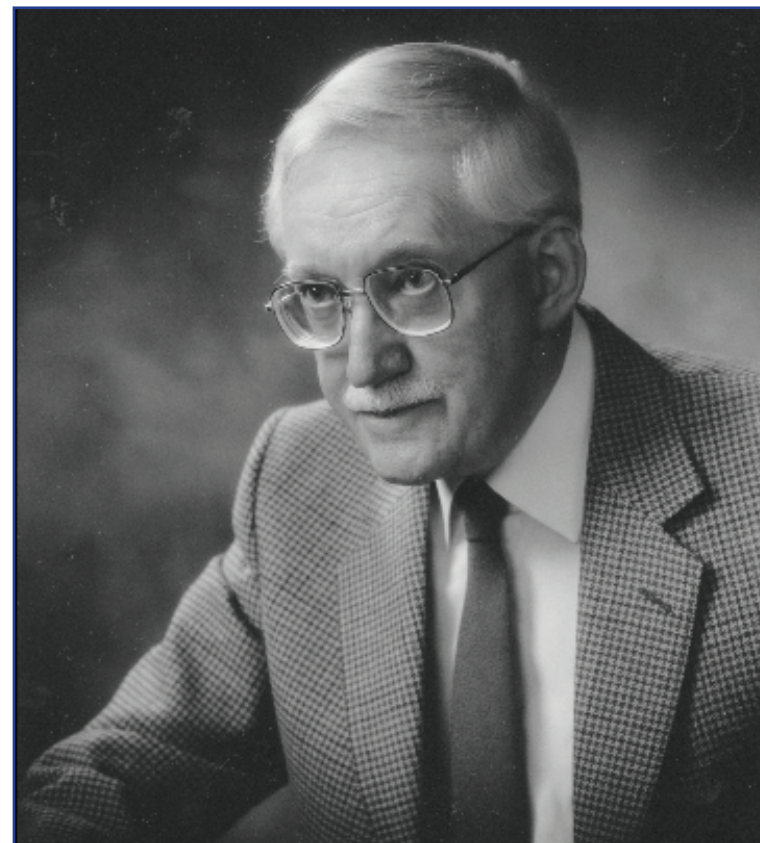
Tameside Local Studies and Archives Centre
The Wilde family
BBC

The Tameside Blue Plaque Scheme

For a comprehensive listing of all Blue Plaques in Tameside, please contact:
Tameside Arts & Events
Email: events@tameside.gov.uk Tel: 0161 342 4144
Or visit our website: <http://www.tameside.gov.uk/blueplaque>

TAMESIDE METROPOLITAN BOROUGH COUNCIL

A TRIBUTE TO BRIAN WILDE



Blue Plaque unveiled on 11 March 2011
By the Wilde family

Introduction

In celebration of the life and achievements of Brian Wilde, the latest Blue Plaque is to be located at Brian's former home, 43 Montague Road, Ashton-under-Lyne, where he lived during his early childhood.

Childhood

Brian George Wilde was born on 13 June 1927 at the District Infirmary in Ashton-under-Lyne to mother, Eva, and father, George, who was a tax officer for the Inland Revenue. In 1934 the family left Ashton-under-Lyne and moved to Hertfordshire, where Brian was educated at Hertford Grammar School.

Early Career

In 1945, having decided to become an actor, he enrolled at The Royal Academy of Dramatic Art (RADA) and then learned his trade in repertory theatre. He worked his way up to the West End, appearing in the Peter Ustinov play *The Moment of Truth* (1951) and in Graham Greene's *The Power and the Glory* with Paul Scofield (1956). In 1957 he secured a small but memorable part in the classic Jacques Tourneur horror film *Night of the Demon*, and his early television roles included *Portrait of Alison* (1955), *The Love of Mike* and *The World of Tim Frazer* (1960). He also supported Tony Hancock in an episode of his ATV series in 1963, and appeared in popular series such as *Softly, Softly* (1966) and *The Avengers* (1967). Other film roles included *Simon and Laura* (1955), *Rattle of a Simple Man* (1964), *Darling* (1965), *The Jokers* (1966) and *Carry On Doctor* in 1967.

Brian's first major television success came in 1970 when he played refuse depot manager Bloody Delilah in the Jack Rosenthal-created ITV sitcom *The Dustbinmen*. More varied television roles were to follow in series such as *Catweazle* (1970), *The Sweeney* (1975) and *Wuthering Heights* (1978) and in 1972 he played the mischievous, mind-controlling Mr Peacock in the now cult children's drama series *Ace of Wands*. In 1971 he starred as a murderer in *The Uninvited*, an episode of the BBC's supernatural thriller series *Out of the Unknown*, and in the same year he played the sadistic torturer Richard Topcliffe in the hugely successful BBC television drama *Elizabeth R*.



Brian Wilde as a young boy



Brian Wilde with his wife Eva on their wedding day

In October 1960 Brian married Eva Stuart, a stage and BBC radio actress. She would, over twenty years later, appear with him in *Wyatt's Watchdogs* as the snobbish owner of an antique shop, and in a 1991 episode of *Last of the Summer Wine* as a librarian. The couple had two children; Andrew who works as a film editor and Sarah who works at the British Film Institute.

Mr Barrowclough in Porridge

In 1973 Brian starred in *Prisoner and Escort*, the second episode of a series of one-off sitcoms titled *Seven of One*, all starring Ronnie Barker. Brian played Mr Barrowclough, a timid and trusting prison officer whose job it was to escort Barker's character, the irrepressible and street-wise convict Norman Stanley Fletcher, across the Cumbrian Fells to begin his prison sentence. The episode attracted a large audience and a full series was commissioned by the BBC, now titled *Porridge*, which first aired in 1974. Brian's characterisation of the ineffectual Mr Barrowclough became the perfect foil to the suspicious, military manner of fellow prison officer Mr Mackay, played by Fulton Mackay.

Porridge was hugely successful and ran for three series until 1977. A film version followed in 1979, also written by Dick Clement and Ian La Frenais. In 2004 *Porridge* was voted number seven in a BBC poll of the 100 greatest British sitcoms.



Copyright©BBC

Brian Wilde (left) as Mr Barrowclough, with Ronnie Barker as Fletch in *Porridge*

Later Career – Last of the Summer Wine

Brian established perhaps his most famous role in 1976, when he took over from Michael Bates as the third member of a retired Yorkshire trio in the BBC sitcom *Last of the Summer Wine*. His character, Walter 'Foggy' Dewhurst, was a strong-minded ex-army man who planned the group's misadventures with military precision.

Wilde saw the long-running series gather momentum and popularity - by 1981 episodes regularly attracted 16 million viewers. He stayed with the series until 1985 when he decided to leave to concentrate on other projects, saying that it was the happiest series he had ever worked on. Foggy, we're told, moved to Bridlington to take over the family egg decorating business, and his character was replaced by Michael Aldridge as Seymour Utterthwaite, a retired school master.



Copyright©BBC

Brian Wilde (top right) as Foggy, with Clegg, Compo & Nora Batty