

INSIDE OUT

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# ROCK N ROLL STAR SANDRA

## REMEMBER WHEN

IN the latest of his profiles of leading figures on Bradford's music scene, DEREK AJ LISTER celebrates the career of Sandra Ainsworth - aka Sandra Day:

Female pop vocalist Sandra was born in Batley in 1942 and attended Foxcroft Girls School at Mount Pleasant Batley.

Leaving school aged 15 she became a window dresser for Woolworth's Store in Commercial Street Batley. Her talent as a rock 'n' roll vocalist was discovered by Mel Clarke and for two years she was introduced into the group at many top venues as Sandra Day and The Mel Clarke Four.

In 1959 Sandra and her widowed mum went to live in Canada, during which time she sang on the Canadian Radio Show CHUM. However, they returned in 1960 because her mum could not settle as she missed her family.

Back in Batley, Sandra returned to Woolworths but working on the counter. In her absence the store had been modernised, leaving only two small shop windows for display, therefore no place for a window dresser! She was soon back singing with The Mel Clarke Four.

Sandra was as popular as ever and in demand so much that an



opportunity arose to become part of a new trio called The Vocalairs with her brother Ken and her future husband John Wagstaff. Highly talented, they soon became much sought after, especially around the new nightclub circuits which were becoming all the rage,

because of the famous top stars that could perform at these venues. The Vocalairs were soon included in this circuit and had tremendous success throughout the late 1960s and into the 1970s.

During this time, they also played a

season in Malta, and many times at the Batley Variety Club. One particular London venue was the famous Astor Club, which was then owned by the infamous Kray twins. They didn't meet them, but there were plenty of their associates in the audience each night.

**Sandra Day was the popular singer of The Mel Clarke Four and The Vocalairs**

In 1971 The Vocalairs appeared on Opportunity Knocks and came second. After a few years at the top the trio parted. Sandra went on to marry John Wagstaff who later, in 1982, established his own record company (Flair Records) who were responsible for the popular group Black Lace, and their big hit of 1984, Agadoo. Sandra now works with her husband John who later became the manager of Smokie, which he still is to this day.

In 1991 Sandra was included in a compilation recording of Bradford groups of the 60s, when she gave a fantastic rendition of Connie Francis's hit Stupid Cupid (see our website).

Now retired, Sandra lives in Brighouse with her husband John and family. From time to time she has come out of retirement to sing with The Mel Clarke Four at functions at the popular Pile Bar and especially when she was on top form singing at the many Bradford Rock n' Roll Reunions at the Hilton Hotel. Sandra a lovely lady, with a wonderful voice.

\* Derek AJ Lister and his friend and collaborator Reuben Davison have profiled singers, bands and musicians from Bradford's 1950s and 60s music scene in their website, When Bradford Rocked. Visit [www.whenbradfordrocked.co.uk](http://www.whenbradfordrocked.co.uk)

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