

Gladys Mills, famous pianist, known professionally as plain Mrs. Mills

Gladys was known the world over for her cheery personality and her traditional sing-along style of entertainment. Hathern folk have a special reason to remember her as she and her husband Bert ran the Kings Arms pub from 1964 to 1967.

The daughter of Minnie and policeman Samuel Jordan, Gladys was born on August 29th 1918 in Canning Town. Her uncle Henry was a harpist and encouraged her budding talent in music. She had piano lessons from the tender age of three and a half until she was twelve, and soon began entertaining her family and neighbours. In February 1947 she married Bert (Gilbert) who worked for London Transport.

Throughout her working life in a Civil Service typing pool, she played the piano at dinner dances and receptions. Some of these took place in quite prestigious venues such as the Woodford Golf Club in Loughton, Essex, where Frankie Vaughan's manager spotted her in 1961. This proved to be her big break which saw her sign up for contract with Parlophone Records and have her first big hit at Christmas that year with a single entitled *Mrs. Mills' Medley*. It reached the Top Twenty and featured familiar numbers such as I Wanna Be Happy, The Sheik of Araby, Baby Face, Somebody Stole My Gal, Ma, He's Making Eyes at Me, Swanee, Ain't She Sweet and California Here I Come. At one time she shared a manager with the Rolling Stones and recording space with the Beatles in the Abbey Road studios. Altogether she produced nearly 40 albums: four of which reached the charts between 1964 and 1971. Alongside her chart successes, she became a household name on television. Her first appearances were with the Billy Cotton Band Show (Wakey-Wakey!) in December 1961. On two occasions she featured in the Morecambe and Wise Show. Tours included a gig at Buckingham Palace. She toured many places in the UK, Canada, Germany and South Africa until well into the 1970s.



The piano Mrs. Mills played on at the Abbey Studios



Some of her albums



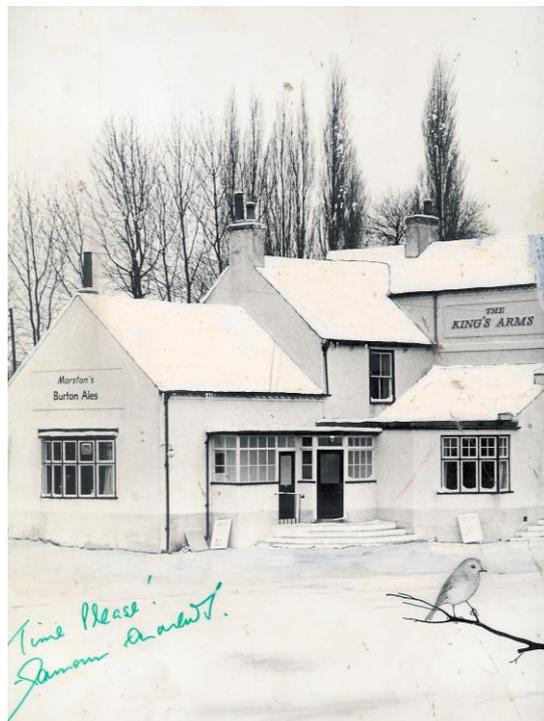
Gladys bearing the brunt of Morecambe and Wise's humour

Gladys and Bert had been looking for a pub to run for 18 months before selecting the Kings Arms at Hathern. She admitted that it was "blooming hard work," but believed that it was worth it since they enjoyed meeting new people and having a chat and a joke. She bought a new piano and her fans soon flocked to Hathern, especially at weekends. Val and Ron Carter remember her as a jolly woman who could hardly read any music, and her husband Bert was "a lovely man." The pub was very busy in those days, and the garden was always packed in summertime. On Sundays, lunchtimes featured 'killer' darts contests played for money, and in the evenings up to fourteen 'mystery tour buses parked along the Zouch Road while passengers enjoyed their refreshments. People came from miles around to hear Gladys play, although they were often disappointed when she was away on tour. One special engagement that was planned with top precision was her appearance on *This is Your Life*. A party of

sixteen guests watched her receive the famous red book from Eamonn Andrews. These included Ron and Val Carter, Harry and Lily Lacey, and Richard and Barbara Benton.



Eamonn surprising Gladys with the famous Red Book



This photo of the pub bears Eamon Andrew's autograph.

The couple left Hathern to retire to Penn in Buckinghamshire in 1967, where Gladys' health slowly declined. She died in February 1978 at the age of 60.