

Grange Now meets Lana

Do you remember Lana Richards, a well known singer in the 1960s and 70s – appearing in all the top clubs in the north-west including The Tower Rooms and Winter Gardens, Blackpool, and Alison's Theatre Club in Liverpool. Lana or Madeleine (her real name) has since retired from the stage, and with her late husband Don moved to Grange nine years ago. Grange Now went to interview her at home.

First of all, was she called Lana or Yana? I had a vague recollection of both being names of singers. Madeleine vigorously shook her head, "Oh no, not Yana, she was a lot older than me, I am not as old as that!"

So how did she get the name Lana?

"My agent Bob 'ukulele' Scott chose the name Lana for me,"

Madeleine explained. "And he was called 'ukulele' because he was an excellent ukulele player. In fact when you see George Formby playing the ukulele in his films – it was really Bob, strumming away behind the scenes!"

Madeleine was already a wife and mother (to three little girls) when she became a singer. "I loved singing and thought I could do just as well as other singers I'd heard, so I went for an audition at a club's Talent Show. Tom O'Connor was at the audition too. There was an agent in the audience who signed us both up, Tom and I became good friends. I also loved dancing and went to a dancing school from an early age. In fact being a dancer helped me get a job as a model before I became 'Lana'. I worked for Weatheralls in Liverpool and London's Bond Street. In those days mannequins would parade round to show off the clothes, usually in the store's restaurant. I was chosen to model and sent to Patricia Platt's School of Modelling. I think I was chosen because my dancing meant I carried myself well."

Madeleine has a clipping from a newspaper dated 1967 which describes her as "Ex-model turned cabaret singer"; she has many happy memories of those days. "I appeared with Ronnie Carroll, Dickie Valentine, Bob Monkhouse, The Platters, Frank Carson, Gerry & the Pacemakers, Freddie & the Dreamers, and toured with Ken Dodd on his Road Show, to name a few. I remember Bob Monkhouse being very 'blue' when telling jokes in a club. He would tone them down for television. Back then a lot of stars I worked with were just starting out, such as Tom O'Connor and Frank Carson. I worked with the Black Abbots where Russ Abbot played the drums. He began doing a short comedy routine in between songs which went down so well the comedy became his main act!"

A sad memory also stands out. "I went to a party Dickie Valentine gave, the very next day he was tragically killed in his car," she sighed.

Madeleine also appeared on the radio show Workers' Playtime and appeared in the original cast of the Liver Birds, understudied for Rachel Roberts in the film "A Matter of Honour" and worked with Lynne Perrie (Ivy Tilsley in Coronation Street).

In 1978 she became a Christian and gave up her stage career to concentrate on gospel singing. She went to Florida to appear in ten concerts and ended up singing at twenty one! A two hundred-strong American Gospel Choir came over to sing in the UK and Madeleine was asked to be their guest singer. She also appeared on STV (Scottish Television) on a gospel programme called 'That's the Spirit'. She was booked to appear in the next series but unfortunately budget cuts meant it had to be shelved.

In 2001 Madeleine and husband Don moved to Grange. Sadly Don died last year.

Madeleine hasn't given up singing. She has joined the Lakes Gospel Choir formed by a Texan lady gospel singer. They sing at various churches in the area and a year or so ago appeared at the Victoria Hall, so look out for them and for Madeleine – aka Lana!



National Grid to the rescue in Cumbria

Gas and electricity company National Grid has helped Bay Search and Rescue shift into top gear by donating a Land Rover emergency vehicle.

The off-road Land Rover Defender will form part of the rescue team's rapid response to life-saving incidents in the Morecambe Bay area.

Simon Griew, National Grid's Commercial Services Manager said:

"Bay Search and Rescue do a great job in Cumbria, and when they contacted us to see if we had a vehicle we could donate to the rescue team volunteers we were delighted to be able to say yes.

"As operators of the National Gas Emergency Service, National Grid has an insight into what it takes to provide emergency response teams so we were more than happy to help out."

Bay Search and Rescue Station Officer, Gary Parsons said: "I'd like to thank National Grid for their timely donation of the Land Rover as one of our current vehicles needs to be replaced. Land Rovers are versatile vehicles and this one will be used as an ambulance and also to support our Quicksand Rapid Response and Swift Water call outs."

Bay Search and Rescue incident

On Sunday evening 7th August 2010 Bay Search and Rescue was called out by the Coastguard to attend a cross bay walker with a suspected broken ankle.

The walk organisers had called 999 and an Ambulance had been despatched, but as the lady in question was still at least a 30 minute walk from the shore off Kents Bank near Grange over Sands the Ambulance crew required assistance to evacuate her safely off the sands without risk of increased or further injury or risk to themselves. The only options available in this type of situation are helicopter evacuation or specialist all-terrain vehicles with stretcher handling capabilities, as the usual lifeboats obviously cannot be used when the tide is out.

The Coastguard requested the assistance the Bay Search and Rescue team, which has bases at Flookburgh and Milnthorpe, and 5 team members along with Station Officer Gary Parsons and Deputy Station Officer Paul Calland responded to the shore rendezvous point at Kents Bank station, along with members of the Coastguard from Walney.

One of the Bay SAR Hagglund ATERVs (All Terrain Emergency Response Vehicles) with its crew led by Mike Davis was then deployed to go out and meet the group waiting with the casualty.

The lady was assessed by Mike and the Hagglund crew and once loaded onto a stretcher in the back of the vehicle, it negotiated the deep water and mud filled gullies along the edge of the Grange salt marshes into the hands of the Ambulance service at Humphrey head for onward transport to hospital.

The incident was reported to MCA Liverpool (Coastguard)

Bay Search and Rescue is a completely independent charity made up of unpaid volunteers who all have 'day' jobs. It operates two Hagglund rescue vehicles, two Landrover TD5 rapid response/ambulances and a heavy recovery truck for deploying the Hagglands inland in their role as working partner and specialist rescue team for Cumbria Fire & Rescue.

The team was very recently featured on the new series of the BBC 'Coast' programme, when presenter Alice Roberts was entrapped in quicksand and then recovered by the Bay SAR team assisted by colleagues from Arnside Coastguard.

Volunteers aid Grange

Impact International Training of Windermere organises training and 'bonding' sessions for many national companies' employees. A recent group of thirty were sent to Grange to help out on jobs earmarked by Grange Civic Society.

Jobs carried out included the construction of benches and planters, painting railings and other such tasks.

Labour was free but the wood and paint had to be paid for. All the volunteers thoroughly enjoyed their day and their first visit to Grange and it is hoped another group will be sent to lend a hand next year.

Good news

For a change the sun shone in Grange recently and it was the south that got the rain. It was very pleasant to see so many people in the town, enjoying bay views, the Gardens and promenade, the putting green and new Crazy Golf as well as making good use of the outside tables that many of our cafes now provide. It was quite like being on holiday oneself!

It is also good news to report that 'ghost town Grange' is no more. The majority of shops having been re-let since Easter.