

Eddie Williams

1941 - 2013

The sudden death of Eddie Williams on 2nd. of April robbed the South Wales jazz scene of one of its most loved and charismatic figures.

Though English by birth, born in Redhill, Surrey, on the 10th. September 1941 he lived most of his life in the South Wales valleys. (His father taking employment in the area for BOAC when Eddie was young boy.) Eddie kept the valley boy ,“cheekie chappy”, sense of humour with him for his whole life and was passionately Welsh at heart and a Welsh speaker.

Eddie first came to the notice of the jazz world when he joined the Mike Harries Band in the early 1960's on banjo and vocals. Prior to this, he had for a number of years been a folk singer and guitarist. No doubt the folk idiom had helped to hone the power and timbre of his vocal style. His banjo style was heavily influenced by George Guesnon , particularly in his solo work. He also became adept on the trumpet, playing for both Mike Harries and The Adamant Brass Band. He became lead trumpet for the Adamant and provided a powerhouse role in street parades. He was still playing for them until his premature demise.

Eddie later joined the Icon Jazzmen and was with them in their golden years of the 1970's to early 1980's playing to capacity audiences in “The Lion's Den” at Cardiff's Great Western Hotel. His driving banjo style, alongside Clarence Nugent's drumming, provided the engine room of the band. With his vocals and sense of humour he was a star entertainer and could have made the grade professionally. The Icon Jazzmen during this period played many UK jazz festivals and even the occasional tour to Holland. They featured with both UK and US guest artists providing many sterling performances and accolades from their guests. However, Eddie was happy just to enjoy his jazz. and a pint or two whilst carrying out his duties as an electrician by day.

During the late 1980's Eddie joined Midnight Special adding a baritone saxophone to his extensive range of instruments.

Whilst awaiting retirement from his day job as an electronic technician with British Airways, Eddie also became a member of the Speakeasy Jazzband and Creole Quartet (playing the monthly jazz trains for the Heart of Wales railway), taking over from Joe Farler who had joined Chris Barber.

Eddie suffered health problems during the latter stages of his life having to undergo major heart surgery several years ago. He was also diagnosed as being diabetic. His banjo playing diminished slightly but his vocals and trumpet playing lost none of their vivacity.

No more the risqué *Celito Lindo* or *Red Wing* , the Spanish menu sang to *Mama Inez* and tear jerking *St. James Infirmary*. Thanks Ed for those happy moments and the *Sentimental Journey* both on and off the stand. *Aufwiedersehen*.

My deepest sympathy goes to his children, Rhys, Bethan and their mother and wife to Eddie for 33 years, Judith.

Gwyn Lewis April 2013

Read Wales on Line Report

<http://www.walesonline.co.uk/news/local-news/miskin-jazz-trumpeter-eddie-williams-2730607>