

June's sweet voice has delighted listeners for over a century

Here voice was behind one of TV's most memorable advertising campaigns and she was a major music star in the swinging sixties. So how did Plymouth's June Marlow come to hit the high notes as a singing sensation? Plymouth Herald, May 2005

June's sweet voice listeners for over

A GENERATION or two of TV viewers will be familiar with one of the catchiest advertising jingles of all time, Fry's Turkish Delight.

Go on, I bet you can hear the tune in your head now. But I bet not many of you will know that the voice on that famous ad belongs to a 'Barbican maid', June Marlow, otherwise known as Jean Moulder.

June has two great loves in her life, her singing and her family. Her singing provided her with a great standard of living, while her family has undoubtedly given her the sort of happiness that money just can't buy.

Back in the 1950s, when June was the female singer with the Eric Winstone Orchestra, her male counterpart was Michael Holliday.

After he left Eric Winstone, Michael Holliday went on to become one of the biggest English male pop stars of the 1950s.

And when she left the band, June went on to become one of the best-known English female pop stars of the period, singing with the enormously popular Stargazers.

After three years with them, she would go on to make hundreds of TV appearances and more than 1,000 radio broadcasts, many of them as a straight actress, some with more than a hint of comedy.

Today she lives overlooking Sutton Harbour, less than a mile from where she grew up in New Street.

Born with an ear for music, it all began for June at Castle Street Infants School on the Barbican, back in the 1930s.

"Right from the beginning my family and teachers encouraged me to sing," she says, with a wide happy smile that has altered little in all these years.

"At my first ever school nativity I was chosen to be Mary and sing Sleep Holy Babe; the following year I was chosen again. Then, rather than have me as Mary three years running, I was asked to stand behind someone else as Mary, but they still wanted me to sing."

There was always plenty of music in the home, and June built up a large repertoire of songs that she knew by heart.

When World War Two war came, and with it the German bombers, June was there on the Hoe every evening, a little girl singing with a band of professional musicians serving in the forces.

She said: "Lady Astor heard me and sent for me, saying 'Bring me that poor child from the Barbican!'"

"Having been summoned, I was ushered up stairs of Number Three Elliot Terrace. Lady Astor said that she would arrange for me to meet the musical director of the Palace Theatre, and that if he thought I was good enough then she would have my voice trained."

"She also asked her maid, Rose, to sort out a dress for me, from the gift aid sent from America... it was a bit rough."

"The Barbican folk would say of Nancy Astor, 'She buys her votes with blankets'. But despite being poor, we still had good taste."

As it transpired the musical director at the Palace thought that June was a little too young for voice training.

June was 13 when she got her first break. She said: "I went up to London, on my own mind you," and sang on the BBC, having earlier sung for the talent scout Carrol Lewis at the Palace Theatre.

She recalled: "I remember coming home from that broadcast with my first cheque for singing. Grandma said: 'That's a gaberdrine mac for school, my handsome.'"

June was brought up by her grandmother, her mother having died when June was six. Three years later, at sweet 16, she appeared on Opportunity Knocks with



YOUNG TALENT: Above, June Marlow, then Jean Moulder, singing on the Hoe in 1941. Left, June Marlow



BIG BAND SOUND: Left, June Marlow with the Eric Winstone Dance Band, 1952, with Michael Holliday directly above her in the back row. Right, performing with the Don Lusher Big Band at her daughter's wedding last summer



Hughie Green and this led to an offer to join Eddie Mendoza's comedy-dance band.

She toured with them for several months and in the process fell in love with the bass player, a young musician-cum-photographer, Peter Van Dike.

After six months they married, had a couple of children and then, in the summer of 1952, with Pete's encouragement, June applied for, and got, a job singing with Eric Winstone's band.

Every summer they were resident at Butlin's Holiday Camp in Clacton. They had a weekly broadcast from there, and later a TV series, Holiday Night.

All this was great news for the infant members of the growing Van Dike family, and for Peter too as he was appointed press photographer for the camp.

It was Eric Winstone who persuaded June to become June Marlow, as opposed to Jean Moulder, her maiden name. "He

said it was softer and sounded better when he was introducing me."

June stayed with the Winstone band for three years, leaving only to join the Stargazers at the request of their founder, the man who had auditioned June for Eric Winstone originally - Cliff Adams.

The Stargazers at that time had already enjoyed a long succession of hits, including a couple of Number One successes and were doing five radio broadcasts a week, with appearances on other radio shows and TV too, plus numerous jingles for the commercial television network.

It was a busy time for the young mum. She said: "I was fortunate to have Pete's support, a happy 'house-husband' long before the term had been invented."

Among the highlights for June at that time were a Royal Command Performance and a few appearances on Sunday Night At The London Palladium.

She also got to work then and just afterwards with funnymen Bob Monkhouse, Charlie Chester, Ted Ray, and on Educating Archie with Sid James and Dick Emery.

"Often I'd be booked to sing the song on a comedy show, then sometimes they'd write a line or two in for me as well."

It was around this time that June could have really cashed in on her fame, on her name and toured as a solo artist, in cabaret. But being based in London, always with the family and working with the best session musicians, she did not want to go on the road.

June carried on with the broadcasting, though, doing several radio and TV series in the Sixties, she was the leading lady with the Black and Minstrel Show for 26 programmes. Other TV appearances included On the Braden Beat and appearances on Juke Box Jury as a panellist, the long-running Sing It Again, and Lunch Box on ATV

a major music star in the Swinging Sixties. So how did Plymouth's sensation? **CHRIS ROBINSON** reports.

has delighted half a century



STAR APPEAL: Top, June Marlow with the Stargazers (clockwise from bottom left) Cliff Adams, Bob Brown, Fred Datchelor and Dave Carey. Above left, as Aunt Thirza and, above right, June today.

where she was often teamed up with her favourite British singer, Matt Monro.

She also had a BBC radio series with Matt – and if anyone has a copy of the LP that she recorded with Matt, she would love to hear from you.

As the music industry started going through big changes, so the family decided to move closer to America and relocated to the Bahamas.

The move was short-lived though and before long they were back in England, now with five children. June picked up several of her old contacts, and after appearing on TV's *There Goes That Song Again* with Steve Race and radio's *Late Night Extra*, her career continued. Meanwhile Peter had set up the Van Dike Club in Exmouth Road in Plymouth, catering for newer bands.

With an unrivalled passion for the Devon dialect – “Why don't they use proper local accents for programmes that are located in

the West Country?” she asks – it was her love of the Devon dialect which began her acting career.

June took the first of many character actress roles in 1979 and has since appeared in *A Horseman Riding By*, *Pen-marie*, *Jamaica Inn*, *The Pickwick Papers* and *Diana*. (Memorably she was Aunt Thirza, and was given the additional, paid, responsibilities of dialect coach and, unpaid, saffron cake provider).

Her last singing engagement was with the Don Lusher Big Band at her youngest daughter's wedding last year at Boconnoc. “It was a wonderful day, in every way,” she said.

Another daughter, Julia, a talented water-colour painter, provided artwork for the stationery and all the family, apart from Peter, who sadly died in 1988, were there.

More recently her eldest son, Greg, who runs a worldwide music memorabilia busi-

ness, has recorded June singing songs for the grandchildren, adding his own musical accompaniment (he had a brief flirtation with the pop charts in the early 1980s).

“I'm so pleased with the way they sound,” she says, delighted at the talents her children display in their own right.

Angelina co-founded the comedy/music club *Club Fandango* in Elliot Street, and will soon be opening a new comedy venue. Jeff is a famed dance music DJ; and Kate, now based in Brighton, is a successful comedy actress who most recently starred in a BBC programme, spoofing famous adverts, which was nominated for a BAFTA.

June laughed as she said: “Greg said to me recently, ‘Mum, more people have probably heard you singing Fry's *Turkish Delight* than anything else you've ever sung’. I didn't like that, remembering all the great songs I've been lucky enough to broadcast, but he's probably right.”