

Soap stars gather for emotional farewell to Wendy Richard



Screen legend Wendy Richard

Stars from some of Britain's best-loved soaps gathered together on 9th March 2009 to pay their respects to screen legend Wendy Richard.



Lacey Turner, Pam St Clement, Letitia Dean, June Brown and Todd Carty

Albert Square was brought to a virtual standstill as more than 100 EastEnders stars gathered for the funeral of the 65-year-old, who became a household name for her portrayal as cardigan-wearing matriarch Pauline Fowler.

Famed characters from the East End soap both past and present included Anna Wing who starred as Lou Beale; Letitia Dean who played Sharon Mitchell; Barbara Windsor who plays Peggy; Ian Beale actor Adam Woodyatt and Dot Branning's June Brown.

On arriving at the church with Ricky Groves (Gary Hobbs) and June Brown, Letitia told reporters: "Wendy is going to love this."

Groves added: "We'll have a drink for her."

Wendy's on-screen son Todd Carty - who played Mark Fowler - led tributes to the actress along with *Are You Being Served's* Frank Thornton and Leonard Fenton, who starred as Dr Harold Legg.

Carty looked to be on the brink of tears as he arrived at the church, flanked by Cindy Beale actress Michelle Collins, Steve McFadden who plays Mitchell Hardman Phil, Pam St. Clement (Pat), Lacey Turner (Stacey) and Kara Tointon, who stars as Dawn.

More than 1,000 mourners crammed into a star-studded central London service for Wendy, who also played Miss Brahms in the hit sitcom *Are You Being Served?* and fans of the star lined the streets outside St Marylebone Parish Church.



Anna Wing, Paul O'Grady, Barbara Windsor, Kara Tointon, Adam Woodyatt and Charlie Clements

On arrival, mourners were given an order of service, which included Richard's favourite chilli con carne recipe.

The Reverend Canon Christopher Gower said the service would be marked by readings from Carty, former *Dad's Army* Star Lavender, who played Derek Harkinson, an old schoolfriend of Pauline's; and Bannister, who starred opposite her in *Are You Being Served?*

Wendy died last month at the Harley Street Clinic in London after a lengthy battle with cancer, with her husband, John Burns, by her side.

Tributes from across the showbusiness world poured in for the 65-year-old, who featured in the long-running soap for 21 years after it was first launched.

In The Mood by Glenn Miller and the 1960s hit Spirit In The Sky were among the songs due to be played to the congregation this afternoon.

An *EastEnders* spokeswoman said on-set filming was "severely" reduced this afternoon as more than 100 current cast members attended the service.

She said: "It goes without saying that we've reworked filming schedules so that any cast or crew wanting to pay their respects to Wendy Richard can of course attend her funeral.

"A large number of those who worked with Wendy will be attending so a minimal amount of filming will continue at Elstree."

Richard had fought to overcome cancer twice previously, first in the mid-1990s and then in 2002.

After lengthy treatment her cancer went into remission but last year an aggressive form of the disease returned.

It spread to her kidneys and bones and in October she revealed the cancer was terminal.

While battling the illness she married her long-term partner Mr Burns, her fourth husband, at a star-studded ceremony in London's Mayfair.

She became a regular face on the small screen after first becoming familiar to TV audiences playing Joyce Harker, a regular in the BBC's 1960s soap *The Newcomers*. She also had roles in *Dad's Army*, *Up Pompeii!* and *The Likely Lads*.

Richard also appeared in *Carry On* films, alongside Barbara Windsor, who also, ultimately, became an *EastEnders* star.

Richard was awarded the MBE for services to television in 2000 and in 2007 she was awarded a British Soap Award for Lifetime Achievement for her role in *EastEnders*.