

What's Inside

Page 4.....	Court news
Page 16.....	Letters
Page 26.....	Announcements
Page 27.....	Weekender
Page 34.....	Nostalgia
Page 36.....	Newshound
Page 37.....	Star Pets
Page 38.....	Classified
Page 39.....	Notices
Page 39.....	Property
Page 40.....	Jobs
Page 40.....	Sport

Weather

By David Biewlawski

Today

Sunny spells

19C



Friday

Sunny spells

20C



Saturday

Sunny spells

18C



Sunday

Sunny spells

20C



Monday

Sunny spells

17C



Tuesday

Showers

16C



Wednesday

Showers

17C



FACT: In 1938, there was no rain in south west Scotland between April 3 and May 10.

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Chart-topper Mick unlocks the past

By Mike Wallbank

A chart-topping Tameside songwriter has finally published some of the 'secret stash' of poems and a children's story which he had hidden away for decades and almost forgotten.

Back in 1978, Mick Coleman received the prestigious Ivor Novello songwriting award for Matchstalk Men and Matchstalk Cats and Dogs.

Although it would eventually be a number one hit and one of the year's best selling singles, the nostalgic LS Lowry tribute began life as a poem.

Mick, from Gee Cross, had played in local bands since the early '60s and found another outlet through creative writing.

Never short of ideas or inspiration, he would often scribble his thoughts on the nearest scrap of paper 'which could be a serviette, a beer mat or cigarette packet.'

One of his poems was Matchstalk Men which he went on to sing with long-time friend Brian Burke.

As a duo they had performed locally as Burke and Jerk but changed to Brian and Michael. Another friend Kevin Parrott immediately saw the song's potential and produced the record - the rest is history.

Meanwhile, most of Mick's random jottings which he developed into TV comedy scripts, novels and short stories as well as poems and songs, remained tucked away in old shoeboxes under the bed.

He saw writing mainly as an outlet for his emotions, whether happy, sad or angry.

"It was a way of releasing my feelings and having done that, I would put it away and forget about it," he said.

Encouraged by family and friends and with the support and know-how of his agent Sue Hulme, Mick, 78



MICK COLEMAN: Speaking on Tameside Radio.

this month, has at last unlocked the treasure chest with his recently published first collection of poems and a children's storybook.

Taking its title from his most famous song, 'Matchstalk Men and Matchstalk Cats and Dogs' (Volume One) features 30 poems accompanied by original illustrations by northern artist Broady (Steve Broadhurst).

Mick writes from the heart about his tough upbringing and early life experiences in Ardwick and Ancoats.

Anyone who grew up in the inner city in the 1950s and '60s will immediately relate to the characters and situations. Subjects span light and shade, yet even through the darker chapters, Mancunian warmth and humour shine through.

The old terraced houses in 'The Streets of Ardwick Green' may be long gone, but memories of rag and bone men, donkey-stoned steps and pockets full of marbles will still resonate with many readers.

'Sights and Sounds of Manchester' speaks fondly of hand carts rolling on cobbles, the clatter of clogs, the smell of smoke and granddad's tobacco.

'Waggin' School' recalls a carefree day building a raft on Ancoats' Butler Street canal while 'Dirty Beer' is about growing up with a heavy drinking father who was always getting into fights.

From the earthy realism and occasional 'adult' references in the poems, the gentleness and innocence of Little Harry The Hedgehog and his chums Dinky the Dormouse and Speedy the Squirrel seems several worlds away.

'Pure escapism' is how Mick describes it.

Although written many years ago, he believes it has a timeless quality which will still appeal to today's youngsters - and parents and grandparents reading it to them as a bedtime story.

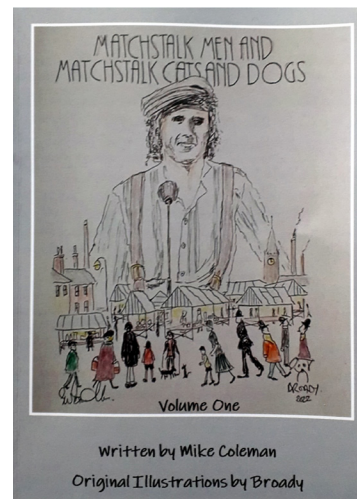
He admitted he was thrilled to see his story finally in print as a beautifully illustrated book.

"I've had some lovely comments from people writing in. Quite a few said they had bought it for the grandchildren and one said they had read it to their grandson's school."

Little Harry The Hedgehog by Michael Coleman is available online from Amazon (£9.99).

'Matchstalk Men and Matchstalk Cats and Dogs' is published by Bedford Falls Publications (£12.99).

• Hear more on Mike Wallbank's Tameside Radio nostalgia show at 1pm on Sunday on 103.6FM.



IN PRINT: Works released by Mike Coleman - the poetry collection and children's story.



■ Pilgrim jobs threat

Tameside Council Executive Leader Ged Cooney has commented on last week's news that Pilgrim could close its Tameside abattoir.

The proposal could see more than 540 jobs lost as the company says it plans to consolidate its business nationwide, blaming the economy and present state of the UK pig industry.

Tameside MPs Angela Rayner and Andrew Gwynne reacted with shock, stating they would be appealing for the company to rethink its strategy. Dukinfield councillor Jackie Lane said the news was 'devastating'.

Tameside Council Executive Leader, Cllr Ged Cooney said: "The announcement from Pilgrim proposing to close down their Ashton site is disappointing news given that they are a long standing, large employer in Tameside."

"The Ashton site employs 542 members of staff who will no doubt be very concerned about the proposal in what is an already financially difficult time."

"And so our priority now is supporting Pilgrim and those individuals to reduce any unemployment outcomes."

"We are working at pace alongside MIDAS and our Greater Manchester and regional partners including DWP/JCP and the Growth Company on a co-ordinated package of support should a final decision be made to close the site."

"As always we continue to seek investment and growth opportunities to support our workforces and businesses across the borough."

■ Equipment plea

Tameside and Glossop Community Equipment Service is asking people to return any equipment they no longer use or need, so it can go to others who can benefit.

All equipment that is returned helps to meet critical needs within the community and keep people safe and supported at home, while also serving to reduce costs and maintain stock levels.

Anyone who would like to return items can call 0161 344 0482.

■ A grand win

The winner of the £1,000 top prize in the latest Willow Wood Hospice Lottery Draw was number 200750 - a member from Dukinfield. To find out more about the hospice lottery and to join, visit the hospice's website.