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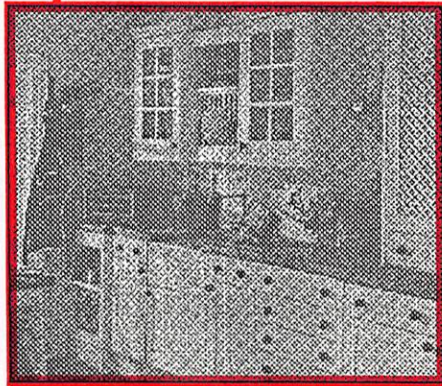
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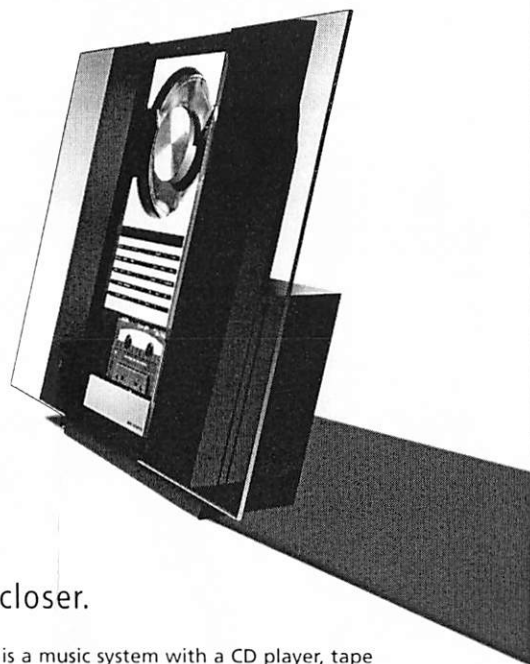
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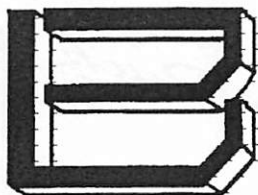
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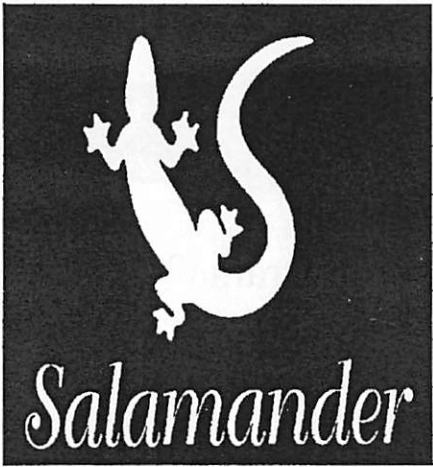
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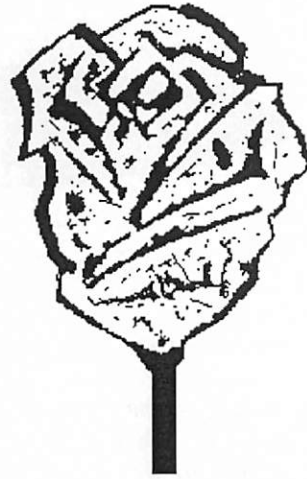
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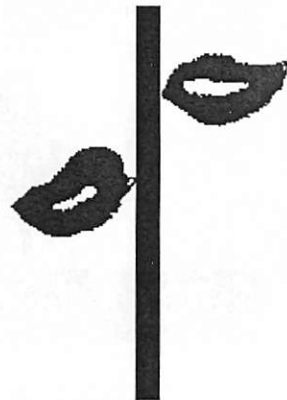
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Rochdale: cultural capital of the north?

Singer-songwriter and playwright Mike Harding was brought up, and still has a home, near Rochdale. Rochdale has a long history dating back to the 11th Century and is now a thriving town right at the heart of the gateway into the Pennines.

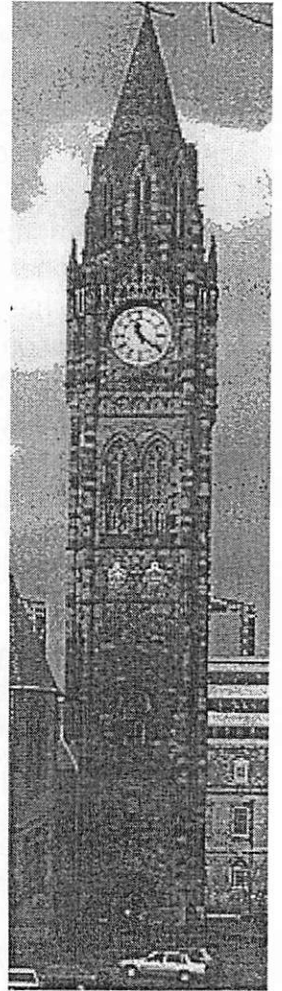
It is also synonymous for its plain, straight talking people, who have been characterised by many in the field of comedy, for which the people of the town take a light hearted view.

The Doomsday Book has the entry of 'Recedham' in 1086 as a Saxon settlement, the place we now know as Rochdale, and is one of very few industrial towns with this long heritage. Rochdale, due to its geography, has always been at the crossroads for trade and this has shaped the town as it has matured over the years.

As well as Mike Harding, other famous citizens of the town have included Lisa Stansfield, Jimmy Cricket, Andy and Liz Kershaw, and Julie Goodyear (AKA Bet Gilroy). However, undoubtedly the best known and most loved of them all was Dame Gracie Fields.

Gracie was born Grace Stansfield on Jan 9th 1898 and became a legend in her lifetime, from a plain mill girl to superstar.

Her first real success came in the revue *Mr Tower of London 1918-1925* and was followed by many films in Britain and Hollywood. She starred in nine Royal Variety Performances from 1928-1964, and her



Rochdale Town Hall

songs are long remembered for the typical Rochdalian warmth and down to earth humour.

Gracie was created a Dame of the

continued ...

British Empire just before her death and also received the freedom of the Borough in 1937. She is honoured in the name of the town's Gracie Fields theatre which she herself opened in 1978.

As well as its comedy and musical heritage, the town has strong political connections. John Bright (1811-1889) played a key role in the movement to secure the repeal of the Corn Laws in 1846.



Gracie Fields

Bright was a staunch believer of free trade and Quakerism and opposed the Crimean War and slavery in the USA, which earned him the friendship of Abraham Lincoln. His statue looks down on the Esplanade from Broadfield Park.

Sir Cyril Smith (1928-) was Rochdale's larger than life Liberal Democrat MP from 1972 until he stood down in the General Election of 1992. He has also served as a councillor of the town between 1952-1956, Alderman from 1966-1974 and Mayor from 1966-1967. He was honoured with an MBE in 1966 and a Knighthood in 1988.

Rochdale has an Art Gallery which was founded in 1903 with bequests and gifts of works of art from local industrialists. The collection is now wide ranging, from 18th and 19th century watercolours and Victorian narrative and genre painting, to 20th century modernist painting and contemporary work. It also houses a small amount of sculpture, studio pottery and 19th century continental painting. There is a temporary exhibition programme of work by living artists in all media.

Other attractions include the Rochdale Pioneers Museum, the Three Owls Bird Sanctuary and the Water Activity Centre at Hollingworth Lake.



The crest of Rochdale AFC

And finally, Rochdale does have a football team. However they are currently languishing near the foot of Football League Division Three (oh dear).

"I say, I say, I say"

Why not join Wimborne Drama?

We meet at a monthly meeting as well as meeting socially for skittles, quiz nights, etc.

We usually put on three main plays a year, these are chosen from plays suggested by members, some of them are read at play-readings at which members either take an active part in or simply come and listen - the choice is theirs.

One thing is certain, we definitely have fun in meeting, socialising, deciding, rehearsing and putting on the final result.

Why not contact Chrissie on 533867
she'll tell you when we next meet
- You'll be welcome -

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Lord Arthur Savile's Crime

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Harry, her husband	Simon Jackson
Kevin, her elder son	Richard Neal
Deirdre, her daughter & the bride-to-be	Frances Richards
Peter, her younger son	Paul Dodman
Nip, Harry's father	Jeremy Austin

The Greenhalgh Family

Muriel	Jan Stevenson
Ronald, her husband	Barry Baynton
Mark, her son & Deirdre's fiance	Tom Williams

Hamish, the best man	Christian Napier
Father Finbar Molloy	Geoff Whipp
Man in <i>The Catholic Club</i> /Policeman	Martin Matthews
Jenny	Tiffany Kenyon
Kirstene	Lucy Rossiter
Wendy/Barmaid	Kate Mounce
Barmaid/Waitress	Julie Feltham-Green
Bouncer	Barry Baynton
Evette	Debbie Loveless

Directed by Dave Williams

The play is set in the late 1970s
There will be one interval of approximately 15 minutes

Stage Manager
Carolyn Hewitt

Set Design
Amanda Brown & Eddie Colton

Properties
Val Mantle, Saliann Colton & Joe Brooks

Costumes
Penny Scotford

On the Book
Chrissie Wathen



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