

Jack Judge

One of the Greatest Singer/Song/Copywriter's of his Time?



It seems as though the potato famine in Ireland changed the population of the World in a relatively short space of time as the poorest Irish families were forced to make the decision to leave their country in order to survive.

Today Irish people can be found across the globe but in the 1800's some may have only been able to afford passage across the Irish Sea to Liverpool and from there went on to find work in the industrial Midlands. Indeed, ever since those troubled days, the town of Oldbury in the West Midlands has been home to a sizeable Irish community. In the 1851 Census over 500 people living in the area were registered of Irish extraction.

This feature is about the famous music hall entertainer 'Jack Judge' and the Judge family links to Oldbury. It begins with Thomas and Jane McGuire who fled the famine and arrived in the Midlands from Ireland in the early 1850's. Their first daughter, Mary, was born in 1853 and at the age of 18 (1871), she married a young man called John Judge who was the eldest

son of another immigrant Irish family from County Mayo. Mary and John began their married life together living in Low Town, near the Malt Shovel public house, with Mary's family. Within a year John and Mary had their first son.

'Jack' Judge was born on 3rd December 1872 and named after his father but given the nickname 'Jack'. This nickname for firstborn sons appears to have become a tradition in the Judge family.

He was an active and inquisitive child and almost didn't make it to adulthood, because at the age of 4 he fell into the canal that ran behind the houses of Low Town and had to be rescued by an older child.

'Jack's' father John was an unskilled labourer and worked at Bromford Iron Works until he was laid-off in 1877. In his search for employment the Judge family had to move out of Oldbury and lived for a time in Wolverhampton, and then Moseley a district of Birmingham.

So most of 'Jack's' early education can be attributed to St Patrick's School, Wolverhampton, and St Anne's School, Moseley. The family returned to Oldbury around six years later in 1883 when Bromford Iron Works started to increase its workforce again.

Jack although not quite twelve years old at this time, was big enough to pass for an older aged lad and both he and his father applied for jobs and were taken on as labourers at the iron works.

The work was hard and not very well paid. After a couple of years, Jack's father decided to leave the iron works and with borrowed money, set himself up in 1885 as a fish dealer. Every penny counted so to avoid paying the charge at the local market, he positioned his stall in front of the 'Wrexham', the common name for the Junction Vaults, opposite Christchurch, and next to 'Polly on the fountain', the drinking fountain that had been erected in 1882.

Between 1872 and 1888 'Jack's' parents, John and Mary Judge had seven children and informally 'adopted' a boy named Edward. When 'Jack' Judge was sixteen (1888) his father became ill with tuberculosis. Unfortunately during this time, the illness was rife because of the poor housing conditions in Oldbury. John Judge senior did not recover and passed away in June, aged just 38.

During these hard times, the loss of the main breadwinner would have meant many families facing the prospect of ending up in the workhouse at West Bromwich. The Judge family, however were particularly stoical and each member of the family played his/her part to continue with the fishmonger business. Mary and her daugh-

ters now took on the task of purchasing the fish from the wholesalers, the younger children helped to prepare it, and Mary sold it from their stall. In the evenings, Jack and his eldest sister (Jane Ann) who both had day jobs, would carry baskets of shellfish to sell around the pubs and music halls of Oldbury.

During the daytime Jane Ann worked as a brick maker while 'Jack' was still laboring at the ironworks and getting up early each morning to transport the purchased fish from Birmingham wholesale market on a handcart. It was a hard life with few safeguards in employment, housing or health for the poor. Tragedy struck the Judge family in 1891 when the three younger children all caught measles. Daughter Margaret, was dangerously ill and just survived. Edward and Annie who had both been adopted into the family, were younger and not as strong and both died.

Mary Judge must have been a strong willed, resilient and very caring woman and mother. She kept her family together and had over the years, also adopted a number of children. In 1893, five years after her first husband died, she was married again, this time to William Henry Withey, 'Bill'. He originated from Clifton near Bristol, had married Sarah Pow in 1879, and moved to Chorlton, near Manchester, where they had had two sons. Sadly Sarah died in 1891 and Bill with his sons moved to Oldbury.

Around the time of her second marriage, Mary 'adopted' another child, Edward (Withey), who was known as 'Ted'. Again tragically another daughter, Ellen who must have been a teenager in service in Dudley at the time, also died of TB.

So the Judge/Withey family now numbered 9 children and was to remain at that number since Mary and Bill did not have any children together.

In 1895 'Jack' Judge was 23yrs old and ready to start his own family having fallen in love with the family's laundress, Jane Ann Carroll, known as 'Jinny'. 'Jinny' was a quiet, petite, blue-eyed girl from the Irish community in Oldbury and so quite a contrast to her big, red-haired, extrovert husband to be.

They were married in June 1895 at St Francis Xavier Church and during the following eight years had four children, John ('Jackie') in 1897, Jane Anne ('Cissie') in 1900, Thomas in 1902, and James Patrick ('Jimmy') in 1905.

Jack was a gregarious, irrepressible character with a great sense of humour and said to be generous to those in need, maybe because he had seen much in the way of hard times, sadness and misfortune in his early life.

Indeed, he had almost drowned at the age of 4, so ironically in 1904 Jack was awarded the Royal Humane

Society's certificate for bravery when he dived into the canal to rescue two children after their pram had toppled into the 'cut'.

Bill Withey, his stepfather, passed away in 1908, leaving Mary a widow for the second time. Jack's wife Jinny joined in the family business as a valuable extra pair of hands and Jack must also have felt the extra responsibility so decided to give up his job at the iron works to concentrate on developing the family's fishmonger business.

Although his early life had been very austere it was no different to any other family living at that time in Oldbury. The Judges' had lost two fathers and three of their eight children but their hard work had earned them sufficient money to stay out of the workhouse.

The next stage of 'Jack's' life was to change his and his family's prospects by setting him apart as a businessman and talented entertainer.

Talent

In the late 1800s, the organised entertainment in Oldbury was staged in church halls, clubs and music halls. The 'Gaiety' at the top of Birmingham Street opposite the Bulls Head, and the 'Old White Swan Museum and Concert Hall' in Church Street, next to the Big House was the most popular venues to see performers. The Big House was known locally as the 'Bird Show' because of the stuffed birds, animals and curiosities that adorned its wall. It also had a mechanical organ, and staged concerts and talent shows.

Jack and his sister, Jane Ann, went to shows at the music halls to sell their shellfish and also for entertainment. They started to enter the talent competitions, sometimes as a duo and other times as soloists. They were good and won a number of competitions and prizes. As a soloist, audiences appreciated Jacks' songs, humorous verses and his whistling of familiar ditties. In his mid teens, being tall, big-framed, and, with red hair, he must have had quite a stage presence and Jack used his talent with jokes and comments to deal with any hecklers. He liked performing, became more confident at each show and enjoying his time on stage, began to polish his act.

Between 1900 and 1910, Jack performed at concerts and music halls, widening his repertoire and gaining experience. He demonstrated his creative talent in becoming a prolific songwriter and always had a stock of unfinished songs in draft form at home.

He was greatly appreciated by the Oldbury Volunteers [1st Volunteer Battalion, 'K' Company], and attended their annual camps, to provide entertainment for the company.

Jack had an interest in gambling and also liked to smoke, drink alcohol and bet. Consequently he was frequently in debt.

His friend Harry Williams helped him out with loans on many occasions. Jack made Harry a promise that, if he

ever got a song published, he would add Harry's name to the authorship as a thank you.

This was typical of his generosity because despite the eventual success of the family business and extra money from entertaining, his generosity and often 'free' appearances on stage didn't make 'Jack' rich and it is extraordinary to think he never owned his own home.

BREAKTHROUGH

Recognition as a performer came in 1910, when he entered a variety competition organised by the stage magazine 'Encore' in London.

He performed one of his most popular songs, 'How are Yer?' in a bright check suit with a striped waistcoat. The audience had not been very friendly to the artists on that day, but Jack won them over and got them joining in the chorus of the song.

Jack only came third in the competition, but took much of the publicity in the reviews.

Suddenly he was in demand on the stages of music halls and theatres throughout the country and for the first time because of the additional family help with the fish business, he was able to commit to touring outside the

Midlands, taking his stock of songs from the previous decade with him.

During the daytime, between performances, 'Jack' would usually find a public house to while away the hours. Being a gambling man, one of his favourite ploys was to steer the conversations he had in the bar around to songwriting, and get someone to challenge him to write a new song over-night and perform it the next day, for a bet.

He knew all along there were unfinished and unused songs back at his digs and he would go back and tailor one of these to win the bet!

'Tipperary'

In January 1912 Jack was performing at the Grand Theatre, Stalybridge, just east of Manchester.

On the 30th January Jack was relaxing during the day in the Newmarket Inn and took a bet to write a song overnight and performed the 'new' song the next day, to win five shillings.

Jack took to the stage on 31st January and in his act performed the song called 'It's a long way to Tipperary'. He won the acclaim of the audience and it won him the bet.

Of course, because of 'Jack's' method of winning these bets and his back catalogue of draft songs it may not have been as original as he claimed and in fact as the song became more popular many Oldbury residents thought it was familiar and some claimed to have heard the song performed at the Malt Shovel.

Even Jack's family said he had sung it before at his sister Jane Ann's house at Brades Village, Oldbury. Some concert goers thought it had been performed first by a ten-year-old Oldbury girl called Alice Franklyn, who was known as 'Baby Franklyn'. Supporters of the Oldbury Volunteers, or the Oldbury Territorials who replaced them, said they had heard it sung at their annual camps.

So, given all this evidence, it is likely that a version of 'Tipperary' existed in some form before its final composition at Stalybridge. It may even have been the draft of a song called 'It's a long way to Connemara' and Jack probably used this as a basis for 'It's a long way to Tipperary'. Jack, himself, in a newspaper interview in 1933, said that he wrote it at Stalybridge in response to a bet, but he did not comment on its inspiration. Following the success of his performance at Stalybridge, Jack knew he could make some money from the song and advertised 'Tipperary' for sale in the stage press.

A London based music publisher and impresario Bert Feldman saw the advertisement. He was interested in the song for Florrie Forde, one of the acts he managed and a leading music hall artiste of the day.

Feldmann responded to Jack and he, Jack and Florrie Forde met in London. Bert Feldman liked what he heard and agreed to publish two of Jack's songs, 'Its a long way to Tipperary' and 'Mona from Barcelona'.

He did however insist on one change to 'Tipperary'.

He insisted on the inclusion of a second 'long' in the chorus and the title, so it became 'It's a Long, Long Way to Tipperary'.

A Royalty Agreement for both songs was duly signed by Jack Judge and Bert Feldman on 18th September 1912.

Jack was a man of his word and didn't forget his promise to his friend, Harry Williams. He recorded and included Harry's name as co-author of both songs.

Florrie Forde took the song into her act in 1913 and within a year other artists including the very popular John McCormack put it into their repertoire.

The sheet music sold steadily, and Bert Feldman published six more of Jack's songs in 1913, including 'The Way the Wind Blows'.

Feldman went on to publish eleven more songs in 1914 and Jack made sure all had the name of Harry Williams listed as co-author.

Jack sang 'Tipperary' all round the country to enthusiastic audiences. One of the places where it was well received was Dublin, where it was heard by a contingent of the Irish Connaught Rangers.

Perhaps some familiarity with the tune touched a chord with them, since it was reported, they went away singing the song at the top of their voices.



WAR TIME

The Great War started on 4th August 1914 with a declaration of war on Germany by Britain.

No one understood how it would touch the life of everyone in the country and for the Judge family, bring both fame and sorrow.

At the start of the war, the transfer of the British Expeditionary Forces to Boulogne was watched and reported on by a journalist from the Daily Mail. The Connaught Rangers were part of the force, and marched down the gangway singing 'It's a long, long way to Tipperary'.

He commented on this in his article, and included lines from the song. This made the song more popular with other army units and even more civilians. The demand for sheet music suddenly increased and Jack, at the age of 42, became famous nationally with the affect that lots more music halls wanting to book him to perform.

Within a few months, the song had spread Worldwide and been translated into dozens of languages. 'Tipperary' is not, in itself, a patriotic song, but is a simple humorous tale about an Irish lad, who has gone to London, writing to his sweetheart in Ireland.

Nevertheless, it was to become indelibly linked with the First World War, because the infectious tune was uplifting, good to march to, and marked 'allegro con spirito', 'fast with

spirit', just what the army needed!

Jack Judge himself was patriotic and an admirer of King and country.

He performed relentlessly on stage, raising people's morale and at the same time, performing at recruiting and fund-raising events to help those returning home wounded, or families facing hard times because the bread-winner was at the front or lost.

He also supported groups raising money to send comforts to the soldiers and sailors overseas, appeared in countless small events and started the 'Tipperary Concert Party' to perform concerts.

Jack did write and perform specific patriotic songs during the war. One called 'We're All under the Same Old Flag' was very popular. Two more of his songs at the time had a distinctly Irish theme: 'Michael O'Leary, V.C.', about the first Irishman to win the Victoria Cross in the war, and another about an aeroplane, 'Paddy Maloney's Aeroplane'.

He recorded both of these for Winner records in 1915.

All the songs that Jack wrote up to 1917 bore the name of Harry Williams as well as his own and Bert Feldman continued to publish them.

CALL UP

Jack's eldest son, John, reached eighteen years of age in 1915, and immediately volunteered for the 8th Royal Welsh fusiliers.

Jack's brothers, Will and Jimmy, were also serving. In 1916, the desperate need for soldiers at the front led to the introduction of conscription, and then to the raising of the upper age limit for military service to 46.

Jack was 44 at the time, and, therefore, liable to be conscripted. However, he appeared before the military tribunal for Oldbury, arguing that he could do more for the war effort by continuing to raise the spirits of the nation and carry out his charitable work, rather than joining the army.

The tribunal agreed, and granted him exemption, provided he continued in this work as an entertainer.

In February 1917, Jack received the sad news that his son, John, was killed in Mesopotamia at the age of 20. His body was never identified but he is commemorated on the memorial at Basra.

Ironically his son had started to write songs himself, and had sent one home from the army, 'Everybody's Proud of Their Own'. After his death, Jack developed the song and included it in his performances. He eventually published it in their joint names.

In 1918 Jack published 'Proud I Am'

which according to the sheet music was sung by Ethel Levey. Ted Judge included it in his act, and its popularity soared to new heights when played professionally by Joe Loss and his orchestra. 'Proud I Am' was so much in demand that it was re-issued in 1941 during the second world war.

Just six months after his sons' death, Jack was heavily involved in one of the largest fund-raising events of the war in Oldbury. There was a great carnival in September 1917 with the aim to raise money for local soldiers and sailors and their families.

The Carnival included a huge procession round the borough, visiting Langley and Warley as well as Oldbury town.

The floats and walkers covered all aspects of the war: nurses, returned soldiers, munitions workers, as well as the uniformed organisations, local industry, and churches.

The procession was to be led through the streets by Jack Judge dressed as 'John Bull', Ted Judge as 'Uncle Sam', and Fred Skipp in uniform and medals, represented old soldiers, Ted Judge and Fred Skipp, who had been a professional soldier.

After his service, Fred went on to keep the 'Bustle House' in Birmingham Street.

The weather was so bad on the day planned for the Carnival that it had to be postponed until the following week. The additional anticipation for the event made it a great success.

PEACE TIME

The war finally finished in November 1918, and Jacks' immediate reaction was to write the song, 'Jerusalem: The Joyful Hymn of Victory and Thanksgiving', which was written "with the greatest respect to all people, and with due reverence to all Creeds, in an honest endeavour to re-echo the sentiments of Civilisation".

In contrast, he also penned a Scottish song about Jock returning from the war in his 'khaki-covered kilt' to marry his blue-eyed bonnie Jean McGraw. It was called 'Lang May Yer Lum Reek', which, as the second verse tells us, means 'long may your chimney smoke'. The 'Pipes of Peace are playing in the Highlands' in the third verse.

With the crisis of war over, Jack could return to his music hall career, and was again away from Jinny and the family for long periods of time. His songs were more light-hearted and upbeat in mood now, including, 'It's a Long Way no Longer' and 'Its no use Worrying over Yesterday' (both 1918), and 'Where the Apple Blossom Grows' (1919). The Oldbury Weekly News regularly reported new songs by Jack.

Jack's charity work continued to benefit the returning soldiers but his dismay at their treatment was summed up in a 1920 song 'Where is Peaceland?' It was never published because Bert Feldman considered it too subversive. It was unlike anything else that Jack had written. There was no humour in the song as it expressed the anger at the situations the 'returning heroes'

had to face. Each verse starts, "Discontented Tommy - discontented Jack". The first verse continues, "They were promised good things when 'the lads came back' Where is their employment?. What good is their pay?.. Where is their enjoyment? Far, far away! ..."

Jack sang the song at the Brown Lion, Oldbury in September 1920. It was well received and must have echoed the feelings of an audience that contained many discontented Tommies and Jacks. It was only ever performed locally.

Jack's songs and verses can never be described as great literature. However, they did capture the spirit of the country and the tradition of the music hall by being catchy, fast, amusing and easy to sing along too. Just what the returning soldiers and music hall audiences wanted at the time.

END OF TOURING

Jack's career as a music hall performer came to a sudden halt in 1921, just ten years after it started. Jinny fell ill with tuberculosis in the spring of that year, and died in September. This was a great blow to Jack, and he ceased touring the music halls and would only perform locally while returning to his first role of family man and wise-cracking fishmonger on Oldbury market.

Shortly after Jack also lost both his son Thomas and his Mother Mary to TB.

It had been a very sad time but ever the fighter, Jack went on to find some happiness in his life when he remarried in April 1922.

His bride was Maria, 'Ria', Oliver. Ria Oliver, a war widow, whose first husband, John Thomas Oliver, of the South Staffs Regiment, was killed at Givenchy in March 1915. She had three children and was living in Canal Street, just across the canal from Low Town. When Jinny fell ill, Ria had become the laundress for the Judge family. They had twin girls the following August and a daughter, was born in 1923.

Jimmy Judge, Jack's remaining son with Jinny, did not take easily to the new family. He left home to join the army and served until 1933, He was discharged from the army with advanced tuberculosis and saw out his final days in Knightwick Sanatorium. This was yet another blow to Jack and understandably he wrote little or nothing in this period, although, occasionally, he would perform locally, because whatever his personal difficulties, he always rose above them to support local organisations and churches.

RETURN TO THE STAGE

Jack's songs continued to be performed around the variety theatres and by brother Ted Judge who was now an established performer featured on the Isle of Man, where he was onstage every summer season

from 1913 to 1953.

Inevitably Jack and Ted started to work together on songs and as Jack's voice became huskier Ted became the main singer of his Music. He is featured on the song-sheet as the singer of Jack's 1929 song 'Paddyland', about a young Patrick John Molloy, who has sailed away to America and dreams of his sweetheart back in Ireland.

Most of their published songs were taken up by well-known variety artists: 'Tomorrow, perhaps, but not Today' (1928) was sung by Norah Delaney, and 'You're all the Better for That' (1929), by Ella Shields

In the late twenties, Jack and Ted teamed up with another Midland musician. Jack Jesson led 'The Blue River Band', and his ability to arrange Jack's songs for the band proved to be a productive partnership. Several compositions are attributed to 'Jack Judge, Ted Judge and Jack Jesson', these include 'Shake 'em all away' and 'Will you be Sad Tomorrow?', both from 1930. Ted had written a comic song 'A lump of Black Pudding with Fat in', which was improved by the two Jacks and published jointly as 'The Black Pudding Song', and sung by George West. In 1933, Florrie Forde, who had sung 'Tipperary' in 1912, featured again as the singer on the sheet music of two of Jack's songs. They were 'I go to Monte Carlo' and 'Snooze the Blues Away'

These were to be the last of Jack's songs to be published.

By 1933 his health was failing but he continued with songwriting and penned 'Arf a Minute', which celebrated greyhound racing, a subject dear to his heart. He did not send the song to Bert Feldman but instead issued a leaflet with the words printed in his "hope of someone orchestrating the song (and others) before publishing.

He also labeled it 'Another Tipperary'. Alas, it was not to be and the song was never published.

Advertisements and verses

Since his early days in the fish business, Jack had always written little verses and ditties.

Like his songs, they are not great literature, but were amusing and served the purpose of reminding the readers about where to buy certain products.

In the twenties, he collected verses about traders and events, and published them as advertising sheets which sold for a penny at his Fish stall and on the streets.

Some of these survive, usually as odd torn and tattered copies:

Two typical verses on local traders are found on another leaflet under the heading:

GEE WHIZ! LOOK HIM OVER, BOY!

JACK JUDGE'S JOLLY

Amusing, Original, Short and Sweet Verses, etc

They Sing 'em, Dance 'em, Laugh and Titter - Gobble 'em down like "MILD & B"ITTER

SAVE MONEY:-

Oh! Such a Butcher to Cut yer Such Meat,

***On the Corner of Vicarage Road,
Barker Street,***

For a Joint or a Steak or a Nice Tender Chop,

***F. CLIFTON'S THE FELLA,
SO POP IN HIS SHOP.***

DAMP BAD WEATHER.

In Wintry, Cold and Damp Bad Weather,
Just Keep Your Sole and Heel Together;
FRED BILLINGS' Workmanship and
Leather

Makes People "Laugh at Damp Bad
Weather."

A Boot Repairer of Rood End -

We All Declare "A Useful Friend"

Established Years and Years Ago -

To Help You Through The Slush and
Snow.

(BRAVO!)

The capitals, spelling and bold sections are just as Jack had them laid out!

One of Jack's songs was called 'That Old Irish Mother of Mine' .

It is a sentimental waltz about an old lady waiting at her cottage in Donegal for her child's return. Bert Feldman probably felt the song too sentimental and out of character to publish it himself.

Nevertheless, it did get published in 1931, sponsored by a flour mill at Rood End,

The sponsors were Cremalt Ltd, Albion Mills, Oldbury.

'Cremalt' was a malt and flour mixture sold to bakers, together

with a recipe and suitable baking tins to produced loaves with the word 'CREMALT' baked into the side. It was a nutritious loaf and very popular at a time when there wasn't much choice.

Jack went on to write several verses and songs about the product, and recorded some of them. It has been claimed that these were the first 'advertising jingles'. 'The Cremalt Song' and 'I've been eating Cremalt'. had words that seemed to changed each time they were recorded or performed, and no two versions are exactly the same. The tunes were catchy and children of the area went about singing them so, perhaps it was in gratitude for the excellent publicity that Cremalt published Jack's song 'That Old Irish Mother of Mine!' Jack recorded another song, 'The Magic Spell of Cremalt', based on the spelling of Cremalt with a 'C' not a 'K', and this was backed by a 'Novelty Waltz and Foxtrot Song' which extols the virtues of "a laugh and a joke, a drink and a smoke"

FINAL PERFORMANCE

In 1928, Jack, Ria and family moved from Low Town to a new modern council house at 21 Victoria Road, Rood End. He christened it 'Tipperary Gardens'. The house was opposite an entrance to West Smethwick Park, where Jack used to spend time feeding the birds in all weathers.

In 1930 Jack was diagnosed with a terminal condition and underwent a long course of radium treatment.

In 1935, to celebrate the King's Silver Jubilee, the film, 'Cavalcade', was made. This featured events of the King's reign, and included a sequence about the composition of 'Tipperary', re-enacting the first run-through of the song with Bert Feldman and Florrie Forde in Feldman's office. Bert and Florrie played themselves, but Jack's part played by Ted Judge who found it very difficult to sing the original version with only one 'long' in the title of the song, as Jack had first presented it to Bert Feldman.

Jack retired from the fish business in 1937, and his sister, Jane Ann Keogh, took it over.

The family moved again, this time to a four-bedroom house at 30 Harrold Road, Whiteheath, where there was more room for Jack, Ria and the six children.

Jack's health deteriorated and in July 1938 he was admitted to Hallam Hospital, West Bromwich, where he died shortly afterwards aged 65.

Jack's funeral took place from St Francis Xavier Church in Oldbury. and Crowds of people lined the route to Rood End Cemetery. and also packed the graveyard, There were hundreds of floral tributes, including a large shamrock-shaped wreath from Florrie Forde.

Messages of condolence came from King George VI, across the profession, family and friends and the general public.

Commemoration

Despite the crowd that attended his funeral, there was no permanent memorial to Jack until two similar tombstones were placed on Jack's grave and Ria's grave by the Oliver family.

Commemorating Jack Judge's life and achievements took until 31st January 1953 at both Oldbury and Stalybridge where he had written 'Tipperary'.

In Oldbury, the Mayor laid a wreath on his grave.

At Stalybridge, a memorial stone on the wall of the Newmarket Inn was unveiled by the London impresario Jack Hylton, who had been brought up in Stalybridge.

Ted Judge spoke about his brother, and reminded the audience that Tipperary was their grandmother's home town in Ireland.

The memorial reads, "Remembering with pride Jack Judge, who in this street and building was inspired to write and compose the immortal marching song, 'It's a Long way to Tipperary.'"

He was also the first to sing it in public in the Grand Theatre opposite on January 31, 1912.

Jack's life story was first brought together by the original Oldbury Historical Group in the 1950s and 60s, and Leslie Frost included much of their information in a series of articles in the Oldbury Weekly News in 1962.

Ted Judge was still alive at the time and provided his account of Jack's life.

Oldbury Historical Group arranged to have a memorial bench dedicated to the memory of Jack Judge in the centre of Oldbury in 1962. The bench was replaced in 1993 through the support of Lloyds Bank, the Royal British Legion and the Richardson brothers.

This bench was refurbished, re-sited nearer the Sandwell Council House, and re-dedicated in July 2009.

The old houses in Low Town were cleared in the late seventies but two new streets nearby were named 'Judge Close' and 'Tipperary Walk' in Jack's honour.

In 1998, the book 'Jack Judge, the Tipperary Man' by Verna Hale Gibbons (a descendent of the Carroll family) was published by Sandwell Community Libraries, and extended the story with more research into Jack's life and compositions.

At the end of 2005, Stalybridge unveiled a bronze statue showing Jack writing a song with a WW1 soldier looking over his shoulder and playing a mouth organ.

In March 2011, Sandwell Council opened a new library and offices in the centre of Oldbury. The building is called 'Jack Judge House'.

Jack Judge's epitaph comes from a statement he wrote on a leaflet to promote one of his songs, it read:

"Jack Judge's Music makes the whole world Sing", for his tunes are simple, but eminently sing-able, and ideal for their intended recipients, the music hall audience.



Jack Judge and Harry Williams.