



SOAPS

## A short history of Coronation Street's Rita Tanner

Singer, newsagent, survivor

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**R**ita Tanner is one of Coronation Street's most beloved characters.

Played so memorably with an ever present twinkle in her eye by the great Barbara Knox, she is a lady not to be messed with.

Rita has survived three husbands, one brain tumour and two trams. She has also, when it comes to Mavis and Norris, displayed the patience of a saint.

And the good news is she's not done yet...

### Jobs



Rita Littlewood in her prime (Credit: ITV/REX/Shutterstock)

As Rita Littlewood, nightclub singer, she brought the house down back in 1972 with her Lili Marlene. She also sang on the QE2 and can still carry a tune in The Rovers when suitably oiled.

It is her job though as manager of The Kabin, a position given her by future husband Len Fairclough when he bought the newsagents, that has stood Rita in good stead.

It was nearly the death of her in 2012 when the tram crashed into it and she was left for hours trapped under the rubble.

She was tricked into selling both the shop and her flat by devious Colin Callen in 2017 but got it back. Norris then sold it to Brian and Cathy. Thankfully Rita is still in charge.

### Romance



Rita and cheating husband Len (Peter Adamson) (Credit: ITV/REX/Shutterstock)

"What's love without trust?" Rita once said to Jenny Connor. They were talking about Jenny's cheating husband Johnny but Rita spoke from bitter experience.

She left common law husband, Harry Bates, for Len Fairclough. But after six years of marriage Len died in a car crash in 1983 and Rita discovered he had been doing the dirty on her with Marjorie Proctor.

Her grimmest romance was with Jenny's dad, Alan Bradley, but at least they never married. Husband number two, Ted Sullivan, died of a brain tumour.

It looked like third time lucky when old flame Dennis Tanner showed up again but he proved to be a waste of time, energy and money before he dumped her for Gloria Price.

### Partners in crime



Rita and Mavis (Thelma Barlow) with ever present cuppas (Credit: ITV)

Rita's two most enduring relationships have also on occasions been her most trying. Both of them were her employees.

Mavis Riley, her first assistant in The Kabin, often drove Rita to despair with her general indecisiveness, something that only increased when she married the equally hesitant Derek Wilton.

Norris Cole, who followed in Mavis' footsteps, was a general busybody who Rita was forever having to banish to the back of the shop before he offended yet another customer.

As Corrie double acts both Rita and Mavis and Rita and Norris have been not only comedy gold but also surprisingly tender portraits of longstanding workmates.

### Sworn enemies



Blackpool showdown for Rita and Alan Bradley (Mark Eden) (Credit: ITV/YouTube)

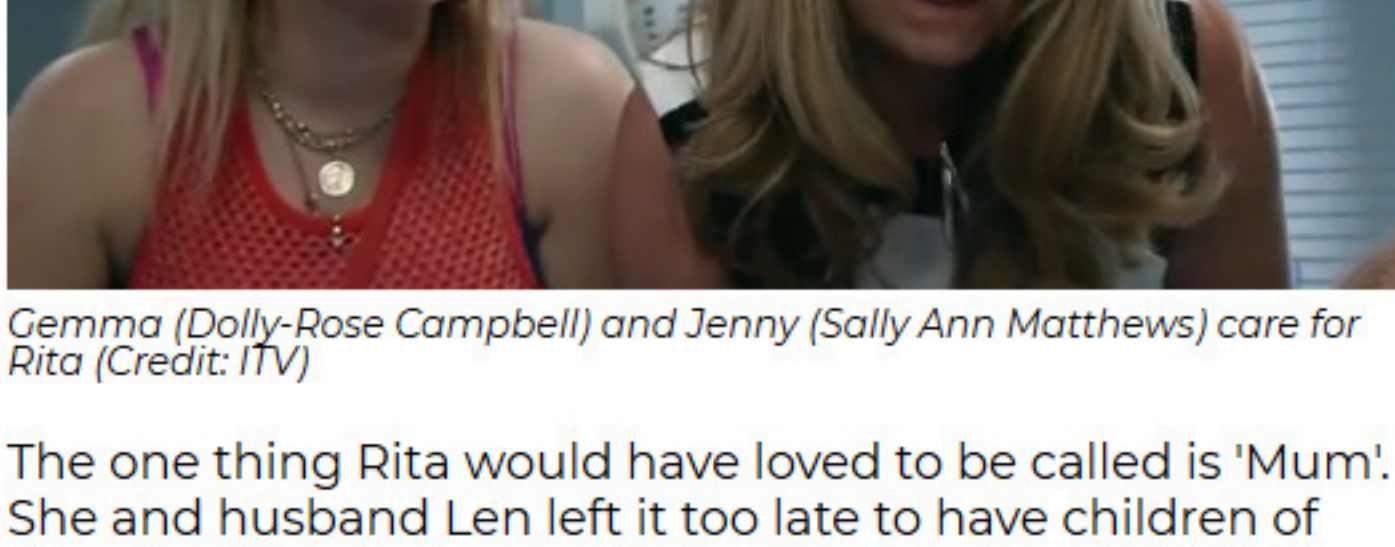
Rita fans were appalled at the pitiful state that abusive partner Alan Bradley reduced her to after she abused him for secretly borrowing against her house to float his business.

She got him sent down for six months after he tried to suffocate her but it took a Blackpool tram smacking into Alan to finally finish him off.

She was no fan of Jenny Bradley when she tried to con Rita out of money in the 90s but they have since built bridges.

One person Rita has little time for is Tracy Barlow. She once warned her: "I've never agreed with violence, but I tell you what, for you I'd make an exception."

### Offspring



Gemma (Dolly-Rose Campbell) and Jenny (Sally Ann Matthews) care for Rita (Credit: ITV)

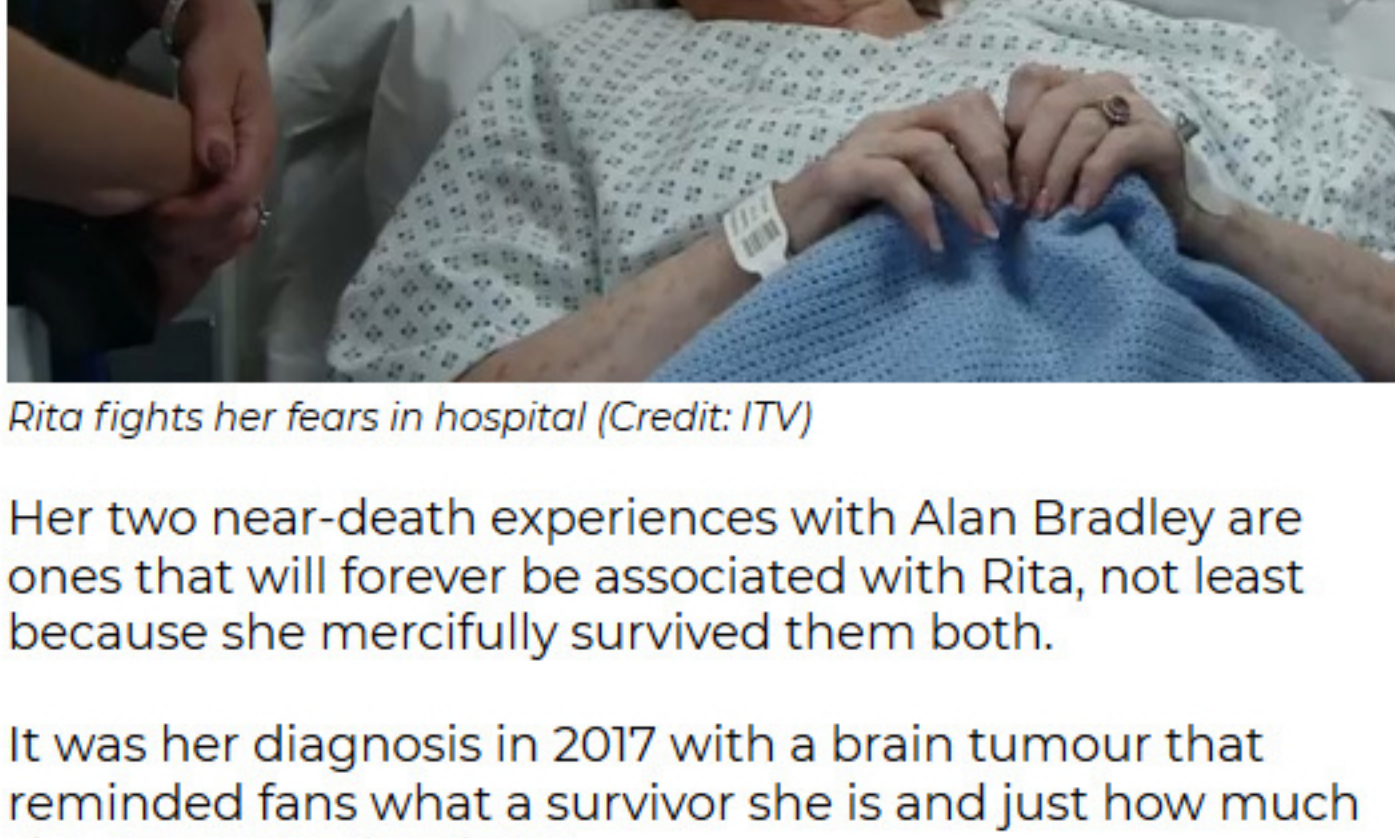
The one thing Rita would have loved to be called is 'Mum'. She and husband Len left it too late to have children of their own so they fostered instead.

First was the flighty Sharon Gaskell who later incurred Rita's wrath when she went ahead with marrying sales rep Ian Bentley even though he had cheated on her.

Rita's greatest challenge has been Jenny Bradley. She blamed Rita for the demise of her loathsome dad and later snatched Kevin's son Jack after the accidental death of her own son Tom.

Rita has not only seen Jenny right, but also managed to get her latest project Gemma Winter on the straight and narrow.

### Greatest storylines



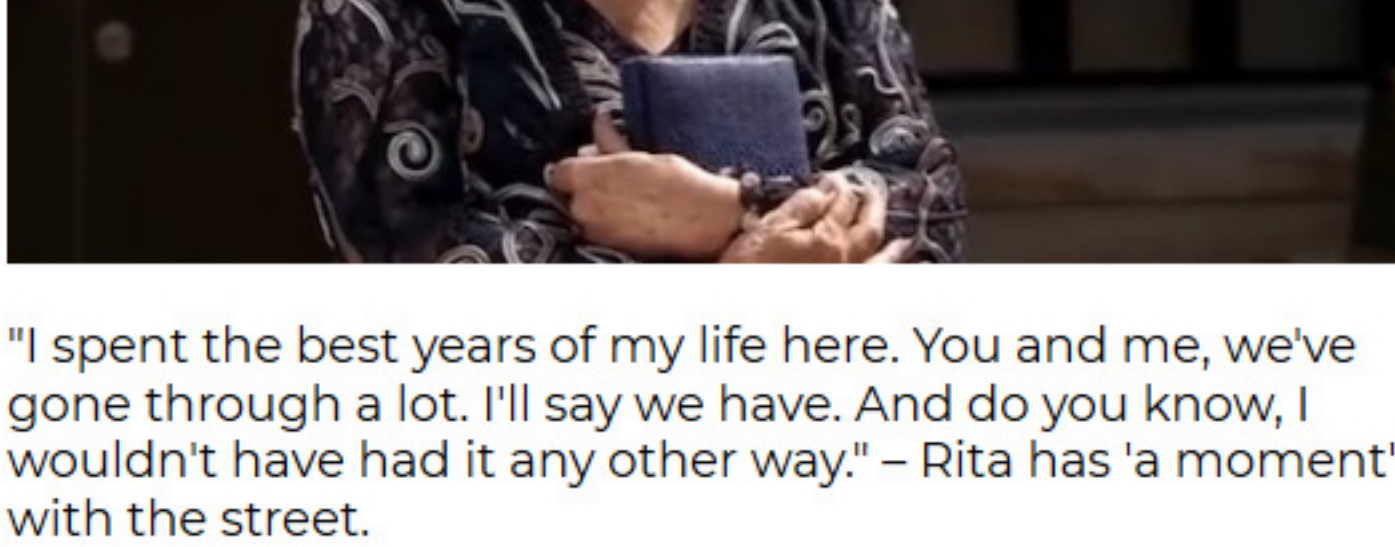
Rita fights her fears in hospital (Credit: ITV)

Her two near-death experiences with Alan Bradley are ones that will forever be associated with Rita, not least because she mercifully survived them both.

It was her diagnosis in 2017 with a brain tumour that reminded fans what a survivor she is and just how much she means to the show.

At first scared to have the operation, she was eventually persuaded by her closest pals all who were gathered, thanks to Gemma, at her bedside.

### Classic quote



"I spent the best years of my life here. You and me, we've gone through a lot. I'll say we have. And do you know, I wouldn't have had it any other way." – Rita has 'a moment' with the street.