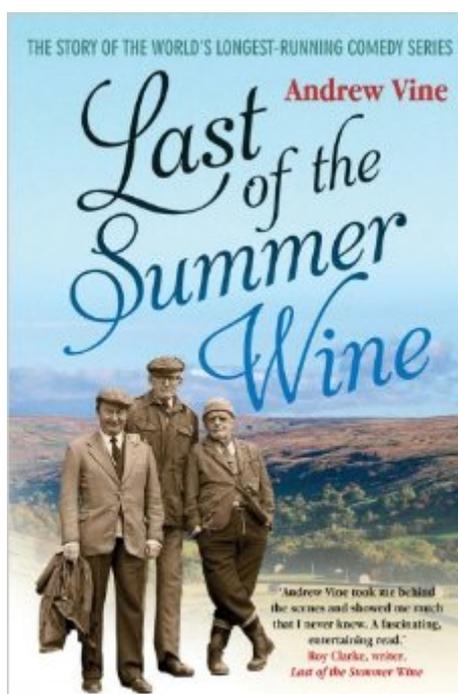


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# Last Of The Summer Wine: The Inside Story Of The World's Longest-Running Comedy Programme



## Synopsis

Quite simply, *Last of the Summer Wine* is the longest-running comedy programme in the world. It premiered 37 years ago, in 1973, and, after 31 series it finally came to an end last year – even though all its original protagonists – Compo, Foggy, even Nora Batty – are now dead.

Remarkably, for a series of such longevity and international appeal, it is all about elderly people, has little action or plot, and is set and filmed in and around the small Yorkshire town of Holmfirth. Now, Andrew Vine, the deputy editor of Yorkshire's daily newspaper, has written the definitive history of this television phenomenon. It covers the show's inauspicious beginnings, with low ratings, its endless reinvention as participants like Bill Owen, Michael Bates, Brian Wilde and Kathy Staff retired or died, the appearance of a string of guest stars from John Cleese and Norman Wisdom to Thora Hird and Russ Abbott (both of whom soon found themselves fixtures in the cast), and the ingenious plot contrivances as the protagonists became too old and frail to attempt any of the slapstick stunts with runaway prams – indeed any outdoor action. Holmfirth is now a year-round tourist attraction, and endless repeats and new DVD box sets will ensure a readership for this book for years to come.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

As a long-time fan of this wonderful show I was very happy to learn last summer that Andrew Vine was writing a book about it. After what seemed like an interminable wait it finally hit the bookshelves. It was worth the wait. If you ever had any questions about both the "behind the

scenes", as well as the "in front of the camera", shennanigans practiced by the cast this book will answer them. It is well-written and a joy to read.

NOT "all the original protagonists are dead", as the Book Description claims. Clegg (Peter Sallis) is still very much alive! Aged 90 (as of February 1st), he's now an OBE.

As a fan of the show, I've picked up a bit of its history from the two anniversary specials that were created during its run and various internet sources. I was hoping that this book would fill in the remaining gaps, and to a degree it does. There is new information here and it's a quick and easy read. But while I enjoyed it there were still things never dealt with, and questions it raises itself but never answers. For example, there is a lengthy discussion of why the season that Bill Owen (Compo) died during was finished and the show not just shut down at that point. But even after noting that many of the folks running the show believed it would have ended at had Owen's death been between series, there is never any discussion of why the decision was made to continue on. It's gaps like this that left me disappointed. Not to mention the use of quotes taken out of the anniversary specials. And the final years of the series are really glossed over in a much shallower way - Keith Clifford (Billy) is hardly mentioned despite being a regular headliner for four or five seasons, just to name one example. So worth the read as a fan of the show, but don't expect it to answer all the questions and be prepared for a focus on the "classic" years of the show rather than the full run.

I bought this as a present for my boyfriend at Christmas. He loved it started telling me everything in it as he read it. I want to read it also. It has a lot of great info about the show. This was also a good price.

Like so many others, I was a huge fan of this series and Andrew Vine's book is both entertaining and informative. The real star of this much loved series has to be the writer, Roy Clarke who seemed to be able to adapt at short notice as characters had to be replaced. Here we get the full story about each real life character and often about their egos and political leanings. The comings and goings of Brian Wilde (Foggy Dewhirst) for example are informative as is the positive effect his replacement Michael Aldridge had on the whole crew. Often, we never knew why much loved characters disappeared, but now we do. Several passed way well before their time, but Roy Clarke's ability to incorporate new, lovable characters, well beyond the initial "three old men", then make them just as

much part of the appeal is staggering. Writing just under 300 episodes on his own, plus writing the equally brilliant Yorkshire based "Open All Hours" and "keeping Up Appearances" puts him in a league of his own as a comedy writer. The gradual move from a 'talking heads' dialogue based series into mix of very visual humour which just enhanced it made it a favourite of all ages, so its a pity that the young bloods at the BBC canned it, raising the ire of stars such as June Whitfield who labelled the BBC as ageist. This is a very complete book and very tightly edited containing lots of laughs in the way of short script excerpts. I suspect that whittling it down to 300 pages was tough and it could easily have run to 400 plus. I didn't want the book to end any more than I wanted the series to end and that just about sums it up.

Last of the Summer Wine is sooooooooooooo good. I love to watch each episode over and over. I never tire of the guys and the gals and the stories. The characters are sooooo wonderful. I feel like i know them personally. I have all the dvd's that are available to buy fro, . Thank you forever. Shirley Myers

My husband is a real fan of this laid back, amusing British comedy. He read the book from cover to cover and then passed it on to me. It's going to remain in our library (after we loan it to his sister and brother and their spouses)

Wonderful to read the background of "Summer Wine". Get to know the characters we have come to feel as friends, as real people. And appreciate their accomplishments.

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