

It's pure Glee to not be killed..



CORRIE



EMMERDALE

DEAD SET: As Charlie hit on the head by Tracy Barlow and James, tied up by wife Emma Barton



THE MIKE WARD INTERVIEW
BILL WARD
TELLY AND STAGE ACTOR

HAPPY RETURN: Bill is loving his show role

BILL Ward's latest acting role may come as quite a shock if you know him best from Emmerdale and Corrie.

He sings, he sort of dances a bit, he cross-dresses, he even gets his kit off and - here's the really weird bit - not once does he get murdered.

"It's an absolutely joyous experience," is how he describes his part in touring play *The Glee Club*, the 60s-set story of a bunch of Yorkshire miners who perform in a traditional close-harmony group.

And yes, I should imagine it is - compared to being fatally bludgeoned by Corrie's Tracy Barlow or shoved to his death from a footbridge by Emmerdale's Emma Barton.

Not that Bill regrets either of those experiences. Builder Charlie Stubbs, the bully he played in *Coronation Street* from 2003 to 2007, was "pretty much as foul as it gets, but he was fascinating from an acting point of view," he says.

"He did have a moral compass but it was enormously skew-whiff. Trying to get inside his head was a challenge.

"I'd look forward to getting the scripts each week just to see what he'd be up to

next. And in the end, of course, he seriously got his comeuppance. It was the perfect way to kill him, while Tracy was giving him a lap dance!"

Charlie's murder, mind you, was a modest affair compared to what happened to farmer James Barton, the character Bill went on to play in *Emmerdale* from 2013 to 2016.

When wife Emma pushed James off that bridge, he fell onto the Hotten Bypass, triggering one of the most spectacular pile-ups in soap history.

"That was such a great thing to have been a part of," Bill says. "Emmerdale won loads of awards for it and rightly so. They spent most of the year's budget on two weeks of filming, properly crashing eight or nine cars at high speed. It was the real deal."

But it wasn't the real Bill, of course, who took that 40ft fall. Obviously he had a stand-in. He's never fancied stunt work himself, I take it?

"I'm afraid of heights, Mike, so that'd be a non-starter," he chuckles. "But I did do an earlier scene where I ran through a forest in bare feet..."

Hmm, that's not quite the same, is it?

"No, you're right, that's a bit pathetic!" he admits.

The *Glee Club* role sounds as though it calls for bravery of a different kind, but it actually finds Bill well within his comfort zone.

The cross-dressing is restrained - "it's not drag as such, just when relevant to a song" - likewise the nudity when the miners get changed after a shift.

And as for the singing, well, it's second nature to him.

The group that features Bill's character, a hard-drinking wisecracker called Bants, perform old-school 50s doo-wop numbers - several of which Bill has sung for years in his own band.

"We're called the Bran Flakes," he says. "They're my best mates from school. We've been going 30 years, playing a lot of this kind of music."

So how would Bill rate his singing? Has the wider world been missing out?

"I'm an actor who also does some singing," he says, modestly. "It's in that order."

● **For more details on The Glee Club go to www.outofjoint.co.uk/productions/the-gee-club.**



BILL'S FAVOURITES

FILM: Sing	EVENT: 2019 Rugby World Cup in Japan
BOOK: Straw Dogs by John Gray	SONG: First Day Of My Life by Bright Eyes
PLAY: Equus by Peter Shaffer	SINGER: Bruce Springsteen
TV SHOW: Norsemen	BAND: The Elected
ACTOR: Clint Eastwood	FOOD: Shepherd's pie
COMEDIAN: Ricky Gervais, below	DRINK: Doom Bar
SOAP CHARACTER: Blanche (Corrie, inset)	CITY: Newcastle
SPORTSPERSON: Bob Taylor (ex-England wicketkeeper)	HOLIDAY DESTINATION: Iceland
SPORTS TEAM: Newcastle United	BUILDING: Tyne Bridge
SPORTING	GADGET: Pentax K-1 DSLR camera
	APP: Instagram (@billwardphotography)

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