

The way they were in

TO MILLIONS of viewers, they were a bickering but happily married couple. But what exactly were the events made in heaven between Stanley and Hilda Ogden.

An excerpt from the book *Coronation Street, The Way To Victory*, written by Christine Green, from Wolverhampton, provides the answer.

Seventeen years before the Mancunian soap hit the screens, a 19-year-old Hilda Crabtree had set her sights on Stanley Ogden after tripping over him.

He was on home leave during the Second World War and had his eyes firmly set on Hilda's stocking tops.

"Stanley Ogden, 'ow dare you? I'm only nineteen and no man 'as ever as much as seen me stockin' tops."

Stanley breathed a sigh of relief He didn't want to admit he was still as pure as an unfired rifle.

Hilda was having none of it until a wedding date was arranged. After deciding three days was an appropriate wait, Hilda grabbed Stanley's hand and led him across the allotments to a shed.

Twenty minutes later they emerged. He felt like he had when he'd got away from Dunkirk — relieved, happy and a bit shell-shocked. Hilda had told him what to do and he'd done it. His major disappointment was that it had been so dark — he still hadn't seen her stocking tops.

"Not bad, Stanley," said Hilda, as they made their way across the allotments. "We'll soon be wed and then you'll learn to do it properly."

The legendary couple married at Weatherfield Register Office by special licence following a short courtship. And the rest is history.

A glimpse at life in Coronation Street, prior to its being a television institution, has been humorously fictionalised in a book, published by Granada, and penned by former nurse and

As Britain's longest running soap celebrates its 40th anniversary, PHILIPPA TOMSON meets a Midlands author who has delved into wartime life in Corrie's cobbled streets

crime novelist Christine Green.

She was assigned the daunting task of creating the saga of a street at war. How did the young Hilda and Stan Ogden first encounter each other? And how could they be accurately portrayed without offending fans.

THE German bombing threatened to decimate life in the cobbled streets of Corrie and in the Rovers Return but the women ground on.

Flirty girly Elsie Tanner was intent on hooking the soldiers while a little boy named Kenneth Barlow anxiously awaited news of his father Frank.

Ena Sharples, Martha Longhurst and Minnie Caldwell, meanwhile, are depicted as the three witches.

For a woman so familiar with writing about crime, Christine, who lives in Compton, is still perplexed about why Granada

approached her to write the Coronation Street novel.

But thank goodness for her mother. 'She was a great source of information,' says Christine. 'She told me how she used to create huge drums outside in the street and burn oil to give off thick black smoke so the full moon wouldn't shine.'

'I also did some research for the year 1943 and watched war-time videos.'

'Like most people, I had watched Coronation Street for a few years on and off but I stuck to certain characters which I knew.'

It took Christine three months to complete the 20-chapter novel which is full of humour and pathos. Coronation Street archivist Darren Little vetted her story lines to check they were accurate.

'I just thought about the characters and looked into their backgrounds,' says Christine. 'Elsie, for example, was in her twenties. She was married at 16

and had two children. She was easy going, took in all the waifs and strays and was free with her favours.'

'The main characters are so wonderful and will not be forgotten.'

Mother-of-two Christine was born in Luton and trained as a nurse in London. A spell living in Enfield, North London, reminded her of Coronation Street and she recalls the chatter in the launderette and the glass of sherry in the corner shop at Christmas.

HER writing career began 10 years ago when she finally plucked up the courage to pour out her literary thoughts onto paper.

'I never thought I had a good imagination but I was awarded an A+ for an English essay which provided all the evidence I needed to start writing.'

Deadly Errand was published in 1991 and shortlisted for the John Creasy

award. There have been six novels since and another is being written.

In the 40th anniversary year of the perennial northern soap, Christine is curious to discover whether her Corrie creation will be eagerly digested by die-hard fans and the Coronation Street cast.

The initial print run was 11,000 and the book ranks at number six in Woolworths' best seller list. Darren Little wrote the first book spanning 1940-43 and Christine would be eager to complete the trilogy.

A signed copy is already on its way to Stourbridge-based star Johnny Briggs who plays wheeler dealer Mike Baldwin. His views would be much appreciated.

* *Coronation Street, The Way To Victory* costs £7.99 but is available at Woolworths priced at £3.99.



Author Christine Green and some of the characters in the book: above, the Ogdens; right, Ena and Minnie.