

Jean honoured

The family of 'Our Hilda' Jean Alexander teamed up with the Mayor of Sefton this week to officially unveil a special plaque in her honour. The Champion launched the 'Honour our Hilda' campaign on the first anniversary of Jean's death last October. We wanted a lasting memorial to her in Southport in recognition of her achievements both as an actress and her work here in Southport. Our campaign received support from all quarters of the town from people eager to see Jean recognised in the town she called home. And on Tuesday, those wishes came true when a specially commissioned plaque was unveiled by Sefton Mayor, Councillor Dave Robinson and Jean's nieces Sonia Hearld and Valerie Thewlis in front of her extended family, friends and members of the public.

They all attended the unveiling ceremony at the town's library where Jean would often visit - on Lord Street on Tuesday, March 6. Cllr Robinson said: "It is a great pleasure to be here today to honour Jean Alexander - especially as I am a lifelong fan of Coronation Street! "Jean Alexander was one of the best loved and well-known residents of Southport and I'd like to thank the Champion for first campaigning for recognition for her and then organising it all." Her niece Sonia Hearld added that Jean had always loved Southport, enjoying day trips to the town with her father as a child before moving with her parents to live on Sefton Street then Emmanuel Road. She loved gardening and books, she revealed, and although she 'shied away from the limelight', she would have been 'delighted' to have been honoured at the library.

Sonia also told a few funny anecdotes about the things Jean saw in her time as a librarian - including a book's back 'fixed' with condensed milk and a smoked kipper used as a bookmark! Sonia said that she hoped staff at The Atkinson will never see anything similar! She added: "I think that she would have been moved, touched, humbled and honoured. She was a very, very private person and she avoided the showbiz limelight but she would have been amazed and honoured to have seen this wonderful tribute to her by the Champion." Phil Lilley, Champion director added: "I am delighted so many family and friends of Jean Alexander attended the plaque unveiling. We had Jean's great niece and even Jean's great, great nephew in attendance. It was a real family celebration with members of the public joining in.

"We are just pleased at the Champion to have played a part in establishing a permanent tribute to a wonderful lady who made Southport her home. "A special thank you to The Atkinson for their support over the past six months throughout the Champion 'Honour Our Hilda' campaign." The 16 inch by 24 inch plaque reads: 'In memory of Jean Alexander (1926 - 2016). Actress, Southport resident and good friend of The Atkinson Public Library. Presented by Champion Newspapers.' Jean was an avid campaigner in her adopted home of Southport, where she lived for 60 years. She worked tirelessly for good causes in the town and was a keen campaigner to save Southport's library services when they were faced with closure.