# Charlie, Sydney and Hannah Chaplin In Coulsdon

By Charles King

**Charlie Chaplin: (***Sir Charles Spencer Chaplin Jr***)** was born on the 16 April 1889 in south London and lived with his Mother Hannah and older half-brother Sydney who was 4 years older. Hannah was an actor and music hall singe and dancer. She was also known on stage as Lily Harley Their father Charles Chaplin Senior a musical singer was absent. The brothers were brought up in poverty and were twice committed to the workhouse as children.



Charlie started performing in music halls at the age of 14 and at the age of 19, he joined the Fred Karno company which took him to America where he gained widespread popularity through his appearances in the Keystone Studios. This was where he introduced and adopted the Tramp as his screen persona. He moved on to directing his own films as he moved to Essay Studios where the Tramp was produced in 1915. By 1918, he was one of the world's best-paid and best-known figures. He continued to make silent films up until 1936.with **Modern Times.** In 1940 he made his first talking film **The Great Dictator** which satirised Adolf Hitler. It was banned in Germany (*although it is rumoured Hitler watched it*).

His popularity declined rapidly at the end of the war. He was accused of communist sympathies which was never proved. However, in 1952 while travelling by boat to Europe the USA removed his right to remain in America. He settled in Switzerland and continued to make films until 1967 **A Countess from Hong Kong**/ being the last in 1967. Charlie died on Christmas Day in 1977.

**Sydney Chaplin :** Although less well known than Charlie, he had both a successful career in his own right and was an important influence on Charlie and his career. He started working life as a seaman. After this he became a leading comedian with Fred Karno and helped Charlie secure a position with Karno, which later led to Charlie's move to America. Sydney also managed much of Charlie's business affairs, negotiating contracts and supporting his brother's career.

**Hannah Chaplin** Unfortunately, when Charlie was 14years old Hannah suffered a serious mental breakdown (*which is now believed to have been caused by Syphilis*). She was committed to Cane Hill Mental Asylum in Coulsdon in September 1898 for a short period of time and returned home in 1901. Her health further deteriorated and in 1903 she was readmitted to Cane Hill. The brothers Charlie and Sydney were regular visitors to Cane Hill until they went to live in the USA.

She finally left Cane Hill in 1921 when the two brothers were able to take her to the USA and provide her with a new home and 24-hour care in San Fernando Valley California. Hannah died seven years later in August 1928 with Charlie at her side. She is buried in the Hollywood, Forever cemetery.



**The latest Coulsdon Art Trail Finial** commemorates Hannah Chaplin while in Cane Hill and the Admin Block being visited by Charlie Chaplin. This is situated on the new finger pole sited at the entrance to Cane Hill Drive at Marlpit Lane roundabout.

More information on the Chaplin Family can be found on the following web sites
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Charlie_Chaplin
https://www.charliechaplin.com/en/biography/articles/213-The-older-brother-Sydney
https://www.charliechaplin.com/en/articles/216-Charlie-s-Mother-Hannah-Chaplin