

Irene Silver

**BORN BRADFORD, OCTOBER 21, 1926.
DIED LEEDS, FEBRUARY 26 2012, AGED
85**

BEST KNOWN as the mother of Yorkshire Salts Mill director Robin Silver, and its late owner-entrepreneur Jonathan, Irene Silver developed several local business interests with her husband Sydney, including a successful northern chain of Wimpy Bars. Their sons, Robin and Jonathan regenerated Salts Mill into a UK World Heritage site.

Irene's mother Gertrude Morris ran a boarding house for Jewish refugees in Bradford, and after studying domestic science at college Irene became a school meals supervisor during the Second World War. She married market trader Sydney Silver in 1947. After selling up to Grand Metropolitan in 1972, the couple moved to Spain for ten years, returning home to be near their family. Sydney died in April 2000.

Among her favourite local charities Irene supported the Hebrew University's cancer research department. But she enjoyed attending theatre ventures and poetry readings held in its 1853 Gallery, surrounded by David Hockney opera sets, paintings and prints collected by Jonathan.

It was at his father's Bradford Wimpy Bar that Jonathan first met artist David Hockney and encouraged him to design the school magazine cover. It led to a life-long friendship and the acquisition of his Hockney collection.



Irene Silver: entrepreneurial sons

Irene encouraged Jonathan's extraordinary entrepreneurial talents from the age of 12. He sold new-laid eggs from a local farm with feathers, arranged artistically by mother and son on the trays. The venture became a cottage industry. Sadly, he died in 1997, and the Saltaire arts complex is run by his brother Robin with Jonathan's widow Maggie and her daughters

Irene was moved by a DVD showing Jonathan's transformation of the derelict woollen mill built by Sir Titus Salt in the 19th century into today's modern complex. She watched him appearing with Prince Charles and Hockney, footage she had never seen before. Irene is survived by Robin, daughters-in-law Pat and Maggie, grand-daughters Zoe, Davina and Ruth and great-grandson William.

JOHN FISHER