

WIFE WALKS FREE

EXCLUSIVE

By GARETH MORGAN and AMANDA REVELL WALTON

BATTERED wife Yvonne Godwin laced her husband's fruit cake with **RAT POISON** in a desperate bid to stop him from seeing his lover.

The vulnerable mum of five claimed to have suffered beatings from Bob Godwin for more than 30 years, but couldn't bear to see him walk out on her for another woman.

So in a plot that mirrors a dramatic Coronation Street storyline next week, when Teresa Bryant grinds rat poison into ex-husband Jerry Morton's food, she planned to make him housebound by poisoning him.

Yvonne's plan led to her being remanded in prison where other inmates dubbed her "Mrs Kipling" for the cake plot. But a trial judge took pity and allowed her to walk free after hearing about her torment at Bob's hands.

Today, pouring out her heart to *The People*, 56-year-old Yvonne recalled: "I wasn't in my right mind. Nothing seemed quite real."

"I remember baking chocolate cake for myself and a fruit cake for Bob, and putting rat poison in **BOTH** of them."

"I ate some of the chocolate cake but nothing happened. I put the fruit cake on the side in the kitchen for Bob to help himself."

"All I remember thinking was that if Bob ate the cake he'd get ill and he wouldn't be able to go out and see this other woman. He'd have to stay at home and I'd look after him."

The "other woman" was Julie Morrison, sister of Yvonne's best friend and neighbour Debra Tombs.

Twist

Julie entered ex-hospital cook Yvonne's life after she joined in baking sessions that Yvonne and Debra started up as a fun pastime.

But the visits led Julie and Bob to have an affair, and as a result Yvonne's innocent baking took on a sinister new turn. She snapped and went out and bought a box of Rodine rat poison.

Soon after leaving the poisoned fruit cake in the kitchen, however, she gathered it up and took it to Debra's house - where she dumped it in a bin and confessed everything.

The police were informed and Yvonne gave herself up for arrest. She said: "I really can't remember much - other than driving to the police station and saying something like, 'Take me in before I do anyone any harm'."

"It was like there was someone else in my body doing the talking. I didn't feel like it was all real."

It was a sad and dramatic end to Yvonne's marriage to Bob, 56. They had met and married more than 30 years earlier, moving into a council house in Leckhampton, Gloucs.

Yvonne said that Bob, who worked as a handyman, could be loving one minute but show a vicious temper the next.

She added: "If you didn't agree with him, you'd be in trouble. You had to take what he said as gospel."

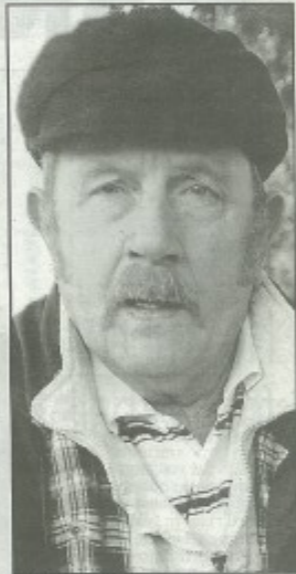
"Any arguments we had would usually lead to a good hiding."

Yvonne left Bob a number of times, but always took him back when he vowed to change his ways.

Against this unhappy background, Yvonne looked forward to her weekly baking sessions with pal Debra, 53, who lived just a few doors away.

But Debra's younger sister Julie, lonely after recently getting divorced, began to join them.

And when Julie, 48, moved into a bungalow in the nearby village of Insworth, Bob kept popping round on what he claimed were DIY errands. Yvonne grew suspicious and one day found a



HUBBY Bob's affair drove wife to the brink



JULIE Flung with Bob after he did 'DIY errands'

message from Julie on Bob's mobile phone. It read: "Love you Bob. R U Up?"

Bob admitted to Yvonne he and Julie had been seeing each other, but claimed it had never gone further than a kiss and a cuddle, and that it was now over.

Yvonne, confused and vulnerable after a recent cancer battle, was desperate to believe he was telling the truth.

Fears

But for the next 26 years she lived on a knife's edge, wondering if her husband was still seeing Julie.

Eventually, her worst fears were confirmed when she went to Julie's house and found him there.

Yvonne recalled: "He opened the door bold as brass. But he kept on denying they were seeing each other and that I was making things up."

"One day I just lost it and got all of Bob's clothes, drove to Julie's house and dumped them on her front lawn." At the end of her tether in March this year, she bought the box of rat poison. Two days

AFTER SUFFERING 30 YEARS OF BEATINGS

I put rat poison in my hubby's fruit cake.. but only to stop him going off to see his lover



WIFE

Yvonne was dubbed "Mrs Kipling" in jail

after her arrest, a court refused her bail because she was considered a suicide risk. Instead, she was sent to a women's prison in Peterborough.

Yvonne said: "I knew I'd done wrong and that I needed to be punished. I didn't want to be given bail. I wanted to be in prison."

Besides, I didn't really have anywhere to go - and I didn't want to put myself on my family.

In prison, where Yvonne was dubbed "Mrs Kipling" for her poison cake, she felt at peace.

She explained: "There was no one looking over my shoulder telling me what to do and when to do it. For the first time in 33 years I was my own boss. I felt free as a bird - and safe."

Yvonne pleaded guilty at Gloucester Crown Court in April to attempting to injure Bob

though poisoning him. The judge saw medical records dating back to 1976, telling of numerous occasions when Yvonne had reported domestic abuse to her GP.

The prosecution said Yvonne had only used nine grams - about two teaspoonfuls - of rat poison in the fruit cake.

If she had wanted to kill Bob she would have had to use 1,600 grams - the equivalent of him eating 1,500 slices of cake.

Yvonne's barrister said her actions were "a cry for help". Even Bob wrote to the judge to beg mercy for Yvonne.

She was given a one-year jail term suspended for two years. She was also banned from contacting Bob or entering Cheltenham for a year.

Today, she is rebuilding her life in another part of the country. She said: "I could take the hidings. It

sounds stupid to say it, but I could have taken them until the day I died. But not his affair - not all the lies, the deceit."

Last night, Bob denied he was a violent wife beater and said he still loved Yvonne and wanted her back.

He said: "I strayed and it lasted for about two weeks. I'm not with Julie any more and I live on my own with my dogs."

"All I'm waiting for is my wife to come home. I don't hit women about and never have. I shout and bawl at them and that's what's happened here."

"There were volatile arguments but it was a two-way street. At the same time we loved each other. We always went to bed on a kiss."

He added: "I ate a few forkfuls of the cake but I was fine. She took it away pretty quick so I didn't have any more."

"It tasted like her normal cakes, which are always delicious."

"Even if I had eaten more of the cake, it wouldn't have changed my love for her."

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JUST LIKE CORRIE



DRAMA: Jerry's poison curry

In a Coronation Street plot that mirrors Yvonne's case, Jerry Morton tucks into his curry - unaware it has been laced with rat poison by his former wife.

Teresa Bryant (Karen Henthorn, 44) devises the plot to make sure Jerry (Michael Starke, 50) needs her around at all times.

Teresa doesn't want to kill Jerry. But the storyline, which unfolds next week, sees the overweight, heart attack victim fall dangerously ill.