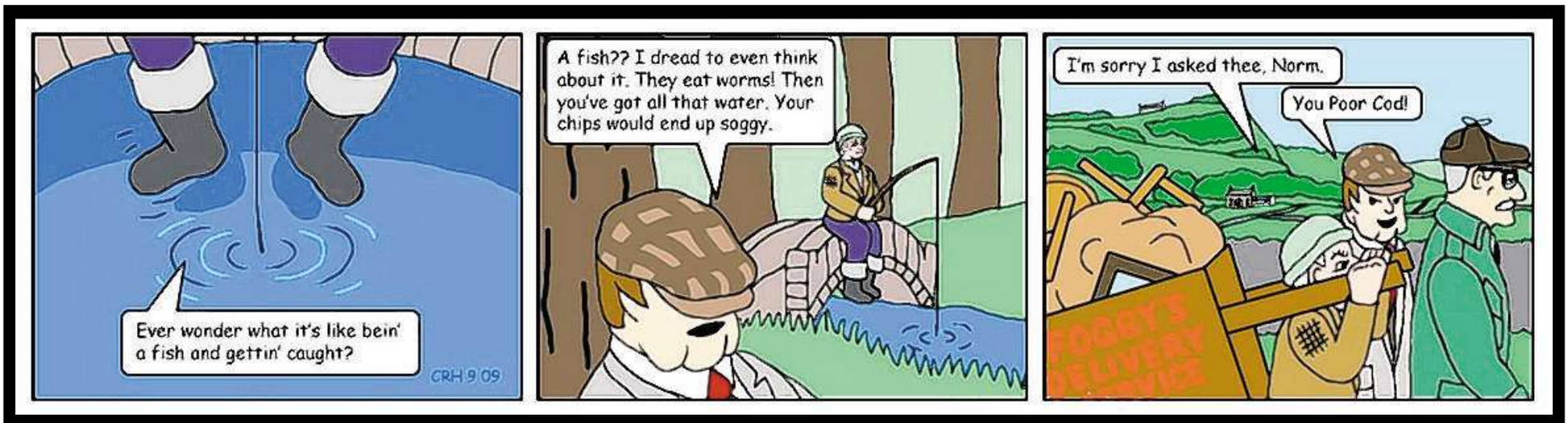

■ **COMIC BOOK HEROES:** One of the Last of the Summer Wine comic strips featuring Compo, Foggy and Clegg by Claye Hodge from North Carolina

Compo and Foggy star in comic strip

American fan draws Summer Wine

By KATIE GRANT
News Reporter
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VETERAN comedy Last Of The Summer Wine has inspired a blind American artist to draw a comic strip featuring its well-loved characters.

Despite living 6,000 miles away in North Carolina – and having never ventured outside the USA – Claye Hodge has taken his inspiration from the famous Holmfirth sitcom.

And his hope now is that one day he will visit the Holme Valley.

The 35-year-old is registered blind and only has limited sight in one eye.

But he's able to watch DVDs of the hit comedy show if he sits close-up to the TV.

The art graduate then draws the cartoon strips on an art tablet linked up to his computer.

He dreams of visiting Holmfirth to see where his favourite show was filmed.

Speaking exclusively to the Examiner, Claye said: "What really draws me to Holmfirth is the scenery – it's just gorgeous over there.

"I've never been to England – I've never left the USA, but I would love to go there one day and see all the rolling hills.

"But for the time being I'll have to keep it in my imagination."

"We don't have many rolling hills over here in North Carolina.

"I live in the city. It's more of a suburban area with the main highway going by in front of the house so it stays busy."

Claye said his favourite character in the show is ex-army corporal Walter "Foggy" Dewhurst.

He explained: "Anytime there's a mess-up or his plans flop he still has a headstrong attitude.

"I really like the humour in the programme.

"I think the English sense of humour is very different to the American, but I can't really describe how.

"At first it was kind of hard to understand Compo's accent but gradually as I watched it, it got more understandable."

Claye also enjoys watching British comedies Open All Hours and Red Dwarf.

He explained: "I stumbled across Last of the Summer Wine on the statewide television network UNC TV in October 2007.

"They took it off about a year ago, but since then I've watched it on DVD.

"I've only been drawing the comic strips for two or three months.

"I've done five so far and have another five planned."

It takes the talented artist about a week to produce each comic strip.

He said: "I have glasses almost like the Summer Wine character Eli.

"I have been partially blind since birth.

"I had a lot of surgery when I was born – mostly constructive surgery.

"I only have sight out of one eye and even so the eyesight isn't all that good."

Claye posted the comic strips on The Last of the Summer Wine fan site.

They were so popular the website moderator created a special section just for the cartoon strips.

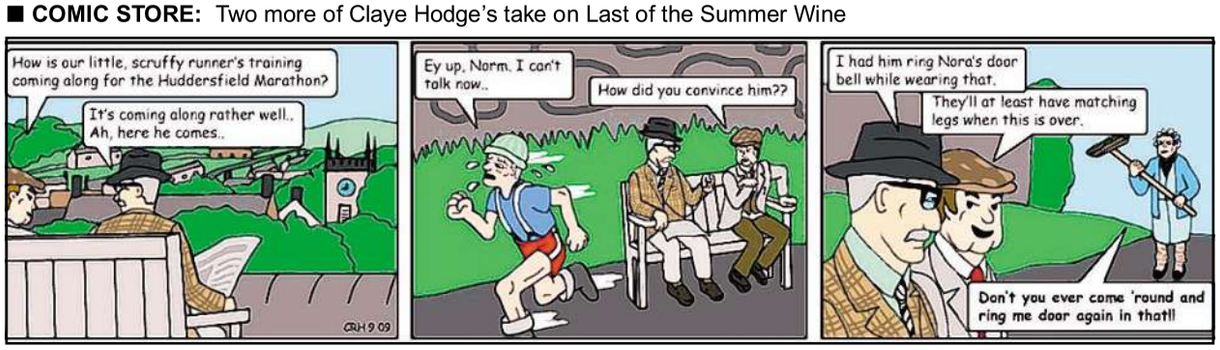
Claye, who is currently unemployed and living with his parents, said: "People have really enjoyed the strips.

"I'm just hoping that people enjoy them and that maybe something comes out of it.

"It's hard finding a job at the moment with the economic down-turn."

■ **INSPIRATION:** Cartoon artist Claye Hodge

■ **COMIC STORE:** Two more of Claye Hodge's take on Last of the Summer Wine



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