

MY best LIFE

Dame Vera Lynn first recorded *We'll Meet Again* at age 22. Now 92, she's giving the *X Factor* contestants some competition with the song that made her the 'Forces' Sweetheart'.

★ **What's the best thing about having all this success again?** It's lovely to know people are still interested. If my records give them a little insight of the kind of music that era was about, that's great. I don't listen to a lot of music now – I've been listening to music since I was seven, I've heard so much already.

★ **What's the best advice you could give to your 22-year-old self?** Stick to what you know, sing songs that suit you, and give the audience what they want. There are songs I'd liked to have sung, as they were different, but that doesn't always work. You've got to stay loyal to your fans, and if they've chosen you because they like what you're doing, don't drastically alter yourself.

★ **What are your best childhood memories?** Growing up in the East End, everyone was family-orientated. My parents took me everywhere with my brother. They belonged to a working men's club. I did my first stage performance when I was seven, in a working men's club in Essex. That was the start of it.

★ **What's the best thing about *The X Factor*?** I don't watch *The X Factor*. I've had experiences of entering contests and it's not always a good thing. It can discourage you. I entered one when I was nine or 10 and I heard someone say, "She'll never get anywhere. She's just too



DAME VERA LYNN
 'SOMEONE SAID I WAS TOO COMMON TO BE A SINGER'

common." Hearing that put my back up. I thought, 'I'll show you.'

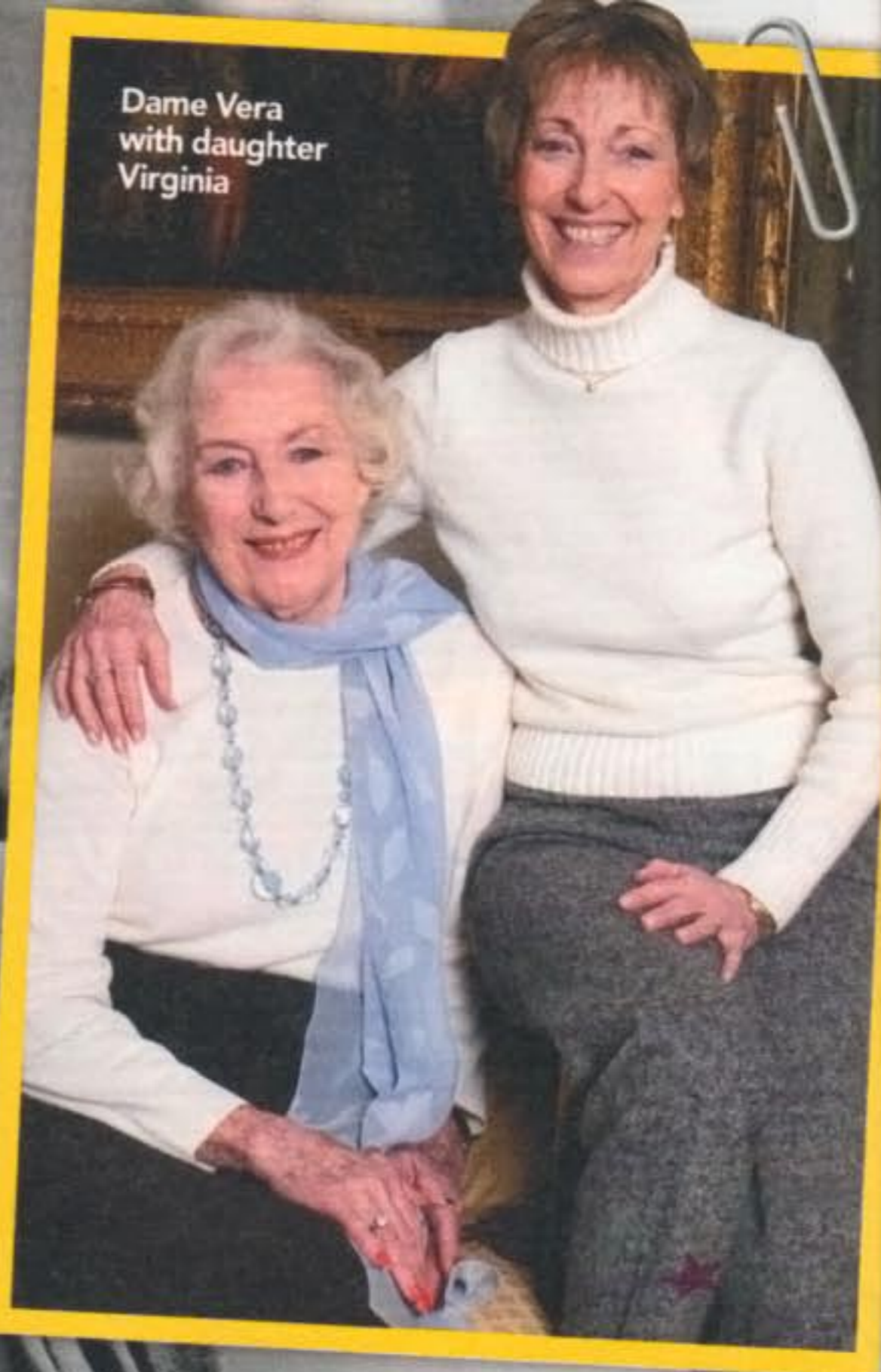
★ **What's the best thing about being the 'Forces' Sweetheart'?** It was such a surprise! A newspaper asked the boys to vote for their favourite singer. The title has stuck and I'm proud of it. I still meet the occasional old soldier.

★ **What's the best thing about Britain?** We have a unique sense of humour, which

helps particularly when things aren't so good.

★ **What's your best tip for a long and happy life?** Know your limits. Know what you like and what you want, and go for it. If you succeed, wonderful; if not, be satisfied with what you've done.

★ **What's the best part of Christmas for you?** Getting together with all the family. There weren't a lot of



Dame Vera with daughter Virginia

BEST TV I'm a telly person. I like documentaries, archaeology and medical programmes.
BEST CHRISTMAS TV I like to watch anything seasonal, but I don't dare have *White Christmas* on because it's my son-in-law's least favourite film.



BEST BOOK I read mostly Agatha Christie. I've read so many over my life. I like any one with Hercule in it. David Suchet (left) is my favourite Hercule Poirot.

Christmas celebrations the year the war ended. You'd save rations for weeks for fruit to make a Christmas pudding. When I was young, to have a bowl of oranges on the sideboard meant Christmas. ★ *Memory Lane* by The Fron Male Voice Choir featuring Dame Vera's *We'll Meet Again*, and *We'll Meet Again: The Very Best of Vera Lynn* are out on CD now

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