

THE

GEORGE FORMBY

Vol. 10
No. 2
Aug 2004

Newsletter 110



Specially Produced for George Formby Fans
by Stan Evans, The Hollies, 19 Hall Nook, Penketh, Warrington,
Cheshire WA5 2HN

Tel or Fax 01925 727102

Welcome to Newsletter No. 110

After the May Celebrations it is all beginning to quieten down and although we still have a few events (inside back cover) remaining in George 100th Anniversary Year, at least we can relax to draw breath. The month of May was extremely busy and the older you get the slower you get. However, it was well worth the effort and we certainly did George proud.

FIRST THE SAD NEWS- Les Pearson has just phoned to say that he has visited George Cheetham, who was a founder member of the GFS in 1961 and later made Honorary Member, and he found him to be in quite a bad state. He's lost his memory and has difficulty in remembering anyone, and he looked as if he had neither shaved or washed himself for days. George, who will be 83 in August, neither remembers his old friends or the songs he used to perform. Les says that he now looks very old with sunken cheeks and eyes. George is now living at . On entering George's room, at Russley Lodge, Wilbraham Road, Chorlton Cum Hardy, Manchester

To help him with his memory Les sang a few of the old songs to him but it was all in vain. Poor George is rapidly his losing his memory and his will to live.



George, on the far left is pictured here with his many friends at the Sale Meeting. He had quite a reputation for singing the same half dozen songs and members would heckle him with, "Come on George, give us your brand new song," - which he never did because he only ever learned the same few songs. However he got away with it for some 40 years and always gave the crowd a good laugh. Poor old George!

On the far right is Logan Petch, who was a retired court judge. What a wonderful character he was. He also performed the same two or three songs each month at the meeting. There's two wonderful stories of Logan. A burglar robbed his house, got caught and was sent for trial. Logan represented the man and won the case for him.

When I was the Editor for the GFS, I received a letter from Logan asking if I would reply to an attached letter from the Wigan Council. I sat down to reply to Wigan and saw that Logan had received his letter from them 10 years previous. It was even more surprising when Wigan replied to my letter without any reference to the fact that it was 10 years old.

Max Miller is Beating George—About 12 years ago

I received a number of phone calls and a visit to my home from Max Miller fans based in Brighton. They were considering forming a Max Miller Society and wanted ideas and guide lines to avoid making any mistakes. They felt that Max and George were similar entertainers from the same era so they considered that we were the right people to help them. Well I'm

pleased that our advice was of value to them because now they are a thriving society. In fact they are steaming ahead with their President Roy Hudd behind them rallying Max Miller fans to raise funds for a Max Miller statue on the Brighton promenade Up to now they have collected £8,000. 00 towards the cost of the statue.



This is a report from the DAILY EXPRESS:- "Victoria Wood, Bruce Forsythe, and Paul Merton are among the comedians who are digging into their own pockets to fund a statue of legendary wartime funny man Max Miller in his home town of Brighton—more than 40 years after his death. The famous, who also include Russ Abbott, and June Whitfield, responded to a letter from fellow comic Roy Hudd, president of The Max Miller Appreciation Society. Roy appealed for donations and so far more than £8, 000. 00 has been raised towards the £30,000. 00 needed. "We said we'd raise the cash ourselves." said Roy "Miller fans, ordinary folk from all over the country—and there are loads—have raised most of it. Now his admirers in the business—are there are lots of them too—are rallying round.

Max, who lived all his life in Brighton until his death in 1963 at the age of 69, was Britain's top comedian from the thirties to the fifties. Known as "The Cheeky Chappie," he was renowned for his near the knuckle act which he performed in plus fours, colourful coats and a trilby hat. "There will never be another," as Max himself used to say. "

A STATUE FOR GEORGE—George Formby fans have a wonderful opportunity to have a statue erected for George in an ideal Warrington spot. There are loads of GF fans—wealthy and ordinary folk - who would contribute, but it needs young blood to organise the fund.

What Max Miller fans can do, Formby fans can do also. So come on someone, wake up and get the funds moving. This is the finest opportunity Formby fans will have of keeping George's name alive for many years after we have gone. To start the ball rolling there's £308 banked in Warrington, from the Wigan Pier event.



Max Miller fans publicity card

Wish you were here Max!

Another Great Night at Crewe

Stan Evans was the MC at the Crewe June meeting and Gerald Beadle very kindly stood in for Chris Metcalf on the door, Chris and Evelyn being in Blackpool for the Bowls and the George Formby Centenary meeting. It was good to welcome Ged Jennett and his wife all the way from Widnes- it was Ged's debut on the Crewe Stage. Colin Wood was unable to come and Angela took over the reins of Sound Engineer for the night and as expected did a splendid job. Eighty-two turned up for the show which included fifteen artistes which was remarkable considering that it was the Centenary meeting of the George Formby Society in Blackpool the following day.



Des Redfern turned up - late as usual, and when it came to his turn to go on stage we all sat wondering whether he would have the right backing music.



Angela operated the sound system

Well, true to form, the backing he wanted didn't seem to be on his disc so as an alternative he gave us the old Music Hall number "I'm Henry the Eighth I am." (Song debut at Crewe). Des has made an excellent video of our Centenary Grand Concert and Exhibition. It really is very good and a snip at £5. If you would like a copy of the video then let Des or me know and he will bring the orders along next month. Thanks to everyone who helped in any way to make the Concert such a good night.

Steve Hassall: "Come on George," "It's a Grand and Healthy Life" and "Goody-Goody" Don Chalkley: "You Don't Need a Licence for That" and "Pleasure Cruise." Alan Evans: "Blackpool Rock," "I've go

Some Red Roses for a Blue Lady," "Bless 'em All" and "Blanket on the Ground." Walter Kirkland: "Aint She Sweet Medley"

Vera Jones: "I'll be with you in Apple Blossom Time" and "If I had my Way."

Jonathan Baddeley: "Little Ukulele" and "Sitting on the Top of Blackpool Tower."

Ged Jennett: "My Mother's Eyes Medley" The Jazzband: "You can't stop me from Dreaming" and "Some of These Days Medley."

Alan Newton: "Blue Moon," "I'd Like a Dream Like That whilst I'm awake," "I Blew a Little Blast on My Whistle" and "Jambalaya."

Des Redfern: "Count Your Blessings and Smile" and "I'm Henry the Eighth I am."

Arthur Newton: "Its Turned Out Nice Again." Colin Dean: (two vocals) including "What do You Want to Make those Eyes at Me For."

Stan Evans: "The Large and Small Magic Box" and with Ashley Caldicott: "There's Nothing Like a Dame."

Brian Edge: "Fearless Fred the Fireman" and "When I come up on the Football Pools."

Bill Turner: "Fifty Percent of its Mine." and "What a Crazy World Were Living In" and Final Thrash. *Thank you Brian.*

APPEARING at the Theatre Royal tonight is the world's most short sighted Knife Thrower, Des Redfern the second. His assistant is Zelda the 29th.

BEHIND every good man there's a woman. And behind her is the wife.

Dennis O'Connell-

Some years back the Formby Society had a brilliant pianist, from London, who could follow anyone, and quite often the members would attempt to catch him out with Formby songs that he didn't know, but they rarely succeeded. He was, without doubt, a dedicated Formby fan.



Dennis on the left accompanying Jack Jones

It all started for Dennis in 1936 when he went to see George's film, "No Limit," and later when he borrowed the 78rpm record "Riding In The TT Races." From there he and his friend, Alf Bennett, formed a duo called "The B Flat Boys" with Dennis on the piano playing and singing George's songs. Later a uke banjo was brought into the act. Dennis then joined a dance band named The Columbians as their pianist, and they nick named him "Dogs Body" which was later abbreviated to "Dogs". He then performed as "Dogs and his uke" and joined Speedy's Follies which was run by Fred Speed, the resident pianist at Pontins Holiday Camp.

War broke out and Dennis was called into the army. As he often gave the lads a few songs on the uke he was asked by the R.S.M. if he would arrange a concert for them as they were stationed out in the wilds with no form of entertainment. He sang "Our Sergeant Major" for the R.S.M. who was amused. Dennis did many troop shows and when he was moved to Northern Ireland he was asked to organise variety shows at the Majestic Cinema, Portrush, every Friday night for six weeks, 20 minutes long between films.

GEORGE & BERYL—shortly after he had one of the most thrilling experiences. George Formby was engaged to do a show for them at the Services Canteen. Dennis sat in the audience waiting for the show to start when the Adjutant beckoned to him. "Would you like to present a bouquet of flowers to Mrs Formby?" There was no prizes for guessing the answer but as he went up to present the flowers he nervously fell over his own feet and crashed down at George's feet. This brought a great laugh and after the curtain closed he was properly introduced to George and had a long chat with him. At a later date, when he was stationed at Amersham, Bucks, George was billed to appear at Golders Green Hippodrome where Dennis called at the stage door to talk again to George and Beryl. Treasured memories for Dennis O'Connell, now passed on.

MORE FROM YOUNG CLIFF ROYLE—Jim Knight recently was given an old gramophone and a GF Senior record by Mrs. Upton of Wrexham. We decided to auction it and the money given to Nightingale House, a Home in Wrexham and our Charity of the year. It was subsequently auctioned in Wrexham, and due to the superb efforts of the Wrexham Leader and the Auctioneer raised £100; double the estimated value. At our August meeting we should be presenting a Cheque for £900 to Claire House Hospice; this being money raised at our Centenary Concert in Frodsham. Also our members will be repeating the Speciality Act which they performed on the stage of the Pavilion Theatre in the Winter Gardens in Blackpool before a huge audience. We were one of twelve acts and in the written words to us from the Chairman of the National Society it was "Very unusual and entertaining. The show was an outstanding success and your contribution made it all the better". This was but one of many congratulatory comments. Bookings now being taken for the Christmas Party on December 3rd

Young Cliff from Frodsham



We were blessed with visitors from far off places at the June meeting, but the one who had travelled furthest was Roy Ellison from Perth in Australia. Having been to the recent Blackpool Convention he "called in" on the way home. Luckily his nephew lives near Corwen, which is not too far from Penyffordd. We met at the Centenary Convention where Roy played a solo turn in the Special Concert. Others who joined us from afar were Alan and Eunice Evans from Redditch, Paul and Jill Woodhead from Telford, and of course Alan Chenery and his ladies from Blackpool.

The concert started off with a THRASH which was followed by Alan Evans with Thanks Mr. Roosevelt and Music Maestro Please, then in the second half Believe It Or Not and Blanket on The Ground. Ever smiling Walter Kirkland gave us Can't Keep a Growing Lad Down (he means himself) and They Call It The Isle of Man; then Roy Ellison changed the tempo and style with The Corner Shop's a Super Market Now and a Blackpool version of Galway Bay; both very humorous songs. Later he sang Aussie Versions of A Pub With No Beer and Grandfather's Clock.

Jim Knight came on with a little uke to play I Love To Play My Ukulele, and then with a larger one You Can't Stop Me From Dreaming. Performances by other players were Gerald Jones If You Want To Get your Photo In The Press and Andy The Andy Man; Jonathan Baddeley It Jolly Well Serves You Right; Home Guard Blues, Little Ukulele and Blackpool Rock; Many players in a couple of Bones Medleys including Paul Woodhead (Mr. Spoons himself); Tom Meredith Cleaning Windows and Lamp Post; Paul Woodhead with a touchy number When I Grow Too Old To Dream (with superb mouth organ accompaniment) and a Country Music entitled I'm My Own Grandpa;

The Three Tenors performed Blackpool Belle, It's In The Air, and an Old Time Medley; Daniel Smith supported by Granddad Phill Hughes did a superb Mr. Wu Was A Laundry Man; Alan Chenery Little Back Room Upstairs and a Honky Tonk Mississippi Roll Along; Greg Simister our young expert on the Uke (he is really growing up and gaining in confidence) T. T. Races and Sitting on the Top Of Blackpool Tower. (Sorry I dare not print the joke he told; dare not even say why, but it was not rude: great Greg); Frank Humphreys volunteered to sing a couple of enchanting songs for the Ladies with That's The Wonder Of You and Bring Me Sunshine; and self followed with Somebody's Wedding Day and Granddad's Night-shirt. An enjoyable evening with a great audience ended with a THRASH.

SAD LOSS—One of our fairly regular visitors, Ron Houston of Dyserth, has passed away quite suddenly. Alison Nadin will be attending the Church Service on our behalf on Monday. Ron was quite keen on the Uke, came to some practice sessions, and appeared in the THRASH on occasions. We extend our sympathies to his family.

Connie Edge and Brian were unable to be present as Connie is still not quite better, but it is understood she is improving. Hope you get better soon Connie.

We had two Birthdays to celebrate. Daniel Smith was 9 on the day, and the Rev. Roland Crook recently reached maturity and has now retired. We were also very pleased to see Joyce Morris (Wife of Eric Morris) back with us once again and in good health. Unfortunately her work as a nurse restricts her attendances. She is Grandmother to Ryan, one of our keen young learners. Best wishes to all, Cliff Royle.

From Out Of The Blue—The phone



rang and what a surprise we had. At first we thought that someone was playing a joke when the caller asked if she was through to Eva (then Raymond) who was the 1939 Rose Queen. "Yes," I said, "But what is it all about?" "Well we want her to come to the reunion of Rose Queens, and

she is the main one because she is the oldest of the Rose Queens left.

"Yes" I said, still thinking that it was a joke, "No problem but I think you'll find she's altered a bit over the past 65 years and the same dress won't fit. " Anyway, it wasn't a joke after all and we went along to the reunion where she had a delightful day meeting some of her old friends and neighbours from the past and getting an update on the latest news. The Strawberry Tea was delicious also.

Some Of Les's Observations

- This lad should go far—Australia perhaps.
- He's as useful as an ash tray on a motorbike.
- They threw away the mould before they made him.
- To watch him pay for a round of drinks is to watch him die a slow death.
- He looked as nervous as a long tailed cat in a room full of rocking chairs.



- His remark had as much effect as a poultice on a wooden leg.
- His face looked as if at one time it had fallen apart and was re-assembled by a drunken mechanic.
- The speaker was very Rolls Royce in that he was well oiled, scarcely audible, and gave the impression that he could go on forever.

John Baddeley Emails- Despite 2004 being the centenary of the birth of

George Formby, radio and television companies are reluctant to give air time to our hero. Television companies seem to have turned their backs on most things pre 1970 and if you do a radio broadcast, you are lucky to be allowed 20 minutes to talk about George. However, on 1st July, Stewart Green allowed me to be on his show which is broadcast to patients at Leighton Hospital near Crewe. The interview lasted for the entire 90 minutes apart from the final 5 minutes, and I was able to tell George's life story in detail from the birth of his father to the present day. Stewart, who is very knowledgeable on the subject, included CD recordings of 12 of George's songs in the presentation. The show went out live to the patients and Stewart also recorded the broadcast so that it will be repeated at later dates.

Many thanks should go to Stewart for giving over his show to commemorate the Centenary and allowing me to continue to promote George Formby

Jack Jones Tribute a Huge Success — For the past few

months Pat Ralston has been very concerned wondering if there would be enough support for her Jack Jones Tribute at Warrington ROOSTERS on Friday 11th June. However, she had no need to worry because the place was packed out with no less than 200 people piling through the doors of the club (actually it is a pub with club facilities). And what a grand crowd they were. They applauded every act and laughed at every joke.



Jack Jones a favourite with Formby members.

Paul Woodhead did an extra grand job in compering the show and although it looked at first as if the number of players was thin, it worked out fine because each artist had two spots on stage. Players were: Paul Woodhead, Mike Turner, Des Redfern, (who also played drums) Billy Grady, Judith Townsend, Alf Caldwell, Cyril Palmer, Ged Jennet, The Past Its (Well & Truly) Tommy Quirk, (known as Tommy Teapot) Alan Southworth, Andy Little and John Shreeve. 14 in total, which was ideal.

Pat looked just as concerned when more piled in and we were desperately running out of seats. Within an hour her 2,000 raffle tickets had been sold, and we had a great atmosphere, full of electric, stoked up by good compering.

A few days before the show we had requests for SINGALONG sheets to be printed and handed out to the audience. This we did, but due to Jed Gennet being on holiday we couldn't contact him to tell him that he would be leading them in song with his repertoire of My Mother's Eyes, Who's Sorry Now, My Blue Heaven, Lonely Days and Nights, By The Silvery Moon, and Lily of Laguna. Followed by a Jolson Medley. All great sing-along stuff.

Ged, who came along on the night expecting not to sing, had a shock when he heard that he'd been dropped in it. "Bu bu but" he stammered, "I've not brought me uke or backing discs or anything." "No problem" we said, "We'll find a uke and backings." However, he'd no need to worry because over 200 voices sang like a choir as they all joined in with the singing, and laughing at his jokes. He was a star and they shouted for more.



Geraldine, George's niece should have been a star.

We were joined on the night by George Formby's niece, Geraldine, daughter of George's sister Ethel, who was introduced to the crowd. Geraldine has a great personality, full of fun, which, being a Formby family member, should have been promoted for entertainment work. Alas she was left out, never, ever to make her name in show-biz. Shame!

And what a grand collection of raffle prizes we had, which was mainly donated by Pat's church friends. Excellent prizes. Came half time and ROOSTERS had prepared a first class buffet.

The second half started with the same enthusiasm, and unlike last year, when the room emptied early, they were prepared to stay to the end of the show. What a nice crowd



Stan Watkinson

they were. Many expressed thanks for an excellent night and some asked if we could make it a regular yearly event. Why Not?

Jack Jones, who passed on in 2002, at the age of 80, was a favourite with many who turned up to honour him. He and Pat were members of the Sacred Heart Church and several of their church friends came along to give their support. Mike Turner gave a short talk on how Jack had helped him to learn to play the ukulele and how he had given him the confidence to perform. As Mike said, "I used to pester him almost every day."



Mike Turner

STAR TURN—Without doubt, one of the stars of the night was Tommy Quirk, commonly known as Tommy Teapot because of his brewing up talents at the Royal Mail, where he works.

Tommy starts his act by telling the audience that he has been playing the uke for many years but hasn't improved one bit since day one. He has no backing music, his timing is out of sync, his playing is dreadful, and nobody can understand what he is singing about. But he has a definite knack of getting the sympathy of the audience, and from then on they are with him all the way.



Comedy talented Tommy Quirk

Tommy's tale of woe is so heart rendering that the ladies just wanted to mother him. He was greatly praised by compere Paul Woodhead for his sincerity and for having such a wonderful comedy talent.

Andy Little, all 10 feet high of him, got the crowd stamping their hands and clapping their feet when he performed George Formby's "Out In The Middle East," and especially during the "la, la, la, la, la, la, Hoy" bit, which, on this occasion, sparked off two Arabs performing the popular Wilson, Kepple and Betty sand dance.



Raise your glasses to Jack Jones

At the end of the night, Pat and Paul asked all to raise their glasses for a toast to the ukulele playing Jack Jones, who is still sadly missed by his many friends. As Pat said, "You can no longer ask for his expert advice.

A few days later Pat rang to say that she wishes to thank all who had played a part in helping to promote the show. *Well Pat, we are all very pleased for you. You've done a grand job for Jack in George's 100th*

Anniversary Year, and I'm sure that Jack will be pleased wherever he is.

Don't Forget Wigan Pier 4th & 5th September—The event is called **ENGINE LAUNCH**—Food is provided. more information in a later issue.



SUSAN MAUGHAN:

SHOW WINNER: Our correspondents have nothing but kind words for Frank Carson and his fellow North Pier stars



Jimmy Cricket

Young Ben appears with Frank Carson and Jimmy Cricket at Blackpool Pier.

I WOULD like to say how much I have enjoyed my three weeks holiday in Blackpool.

It has been a few years since I visited and, not being one for drinking or clubbing, I found entertainment had declined.

No Music Hall Tavern. Whatever happened to that lovely place? Whatever happened to the cinemas in Blackpool? No ABC and I couldn't find the Odeon since it has been moved, so I had to travel to St Annes to see Harry Potter.

Thank goodness for the Grand Theatre, the Winter Gardens, the circus and North Pier. Without them, I doubt if I would ever want to return.

I must say that the show at the North Pier really made my holiday. Jimmy Cricket is always a cure for all ills and he was well supported by Frank Carson, Susan Maughan, singing as good as ever and a new face to me, Jeff Lee.

I thought the dancers and the production was superb. Leisure Parcs has a "gem" in the producer, Andrew Oldham, who has created not only a first class show but greets the patrons with a smile and a joke to make people feel "at home"

How nice to see young Ben Hallewell paying tribute to George Formby.

What a pity Blackpool Council does not put up a statue at the end of the motorway to say thanks for all the publicity he gave Blackpool through his songs and films.

It would be more fitting than that pile of scrap metal which currently greets the visitors as they enter via the motorway.

R WILSON
Newport Close
Great Thornton Street
Hull

A worthy cabaret

I FEEL I must write and say just how enjoyable the Frank Carson All Star Show at North Pier is.

It certainly is a change from the usual early season productions we have been subjected to over the last few years and well



WINNING PRAISE:
Ben Hallewell

worth the long walk down the pier.

From beginning to end it was a non-stop, fast moving variety show with plenty of razzmatazz, glitz and glamour and is surely worthy of a full summer season.

Six of the most glamorous girl and sexy boy dancers certainly work hard to keep the show moving at a lively pace, two legends of comedy, two superb vocalists and a great tribute to George Formby.

I urge everyone, forget your troubles - you are guaranteed a night to remember at this fabulous, end-of-the-pier All Star Show. Worth every penny and my thanks to everyone involved for making my evening so enjoyable.

MR C ALDERSON
Brocklewood Avenue
Poulton

The way he tells 'em!

RE: Letter complaining about Frank Carson.

Being a local and having approached at least three people on each of the three evenings of June 7, 8 and 9 while they were leaving Frank's show, I would like to say, is there no pleasing some people? From this letter, obviously not.

I have heard nothing but praise for Frank, which does not in the least bit surprise me.

MICHAEL ALLAN SHAW
Charles Court
Queens Park
Layton

Man in cinema: "Sit down in front"

Reply: "I can't, I don't bend that way"

Vicar: The purse found in the vestry last week has been handed to our organist Miss Helen Hunt. Anyone wishing to claim the purse will have to go to Helen Hunt for it.

Paul Woodhead New CD on Internet—Just

to let you know that a new CD of my own songs is now available online at www.cdbaby.com/woodhead or via the link from www.paulwoodhead.supanet.com (there is a link on the recordings page at the bottom). You can also listen to two minutes of each song on line.

I've also just signed up for digital distribution to the likes of APPLE & NAPSTER which accesses internet music distributors & radio stations on a track by track basis. Appropriate tracks can be selected for purchase rather than the whole CD (& the track is downloaded digitally). *Thanks for the information Paul.*

Super Cliff at The Wintergardens—Some time ago

the GFS National Committee asked Branches if they would like to perform at the George Formby Centenary celebrations in Blackpool at the June Convention, and asked us to submit our proposals for consideration. These were accepted and at weekend six of us took to the Stage of the Pavilion Theatre in the Winter Gardens at Blackpool to perform to a packed house of many hundreds of supporters. We were number 6 of 12 acts.

We played Blackpool Rock and Little Ukulele in a somewhat different fashion to what is normally done. Alison Nadin started our performance in her "Living Marionette" style with a George Formby non look-a-like complete with Uke and enlightening display of dexterity. After George's THRASH version five of us, previously hidden in the wings, joined in to perform the two selected songs. All of us were dressed in black with white ties and black bowler hats, and by all accounts we more than upheld the name of the Branch. We were really proud to have played on this occasion especially in such a large and fantastic Theatre.



Needless to say all except Alison stayed in Blackpool over the weekend. Those who stayed were somewhat tired when it came time to perform, for on the Friday evening the hotel fire alarm went off at about 3 am. A false alarm. This was followed by about four further false alarms before we finally fell out of bed for breakfast. Anyway the following night we were all tucked up safely in bed by 1am while Alison and Frankie (already having had parking problems in Blackpool) were still on their way home, eventually arriving there at 3.30 am.

However we must not overlook the performances of those from other North West Branches; South Cheshire, Sale, Blackpool, Westhoughton, and Liverpool. We congratulate them on their contributions. Our Show was kept somewhat of a secret, but as a recompense for our supporters this will be repeated at some time in the future; perhaps when we present the cheque to Claire House Hospice at our 6th August meeting at Penyffordd. PS. We know of the various jobs Alison undertakes, but did you know that for her Birthday one present was a Concrete Mixer?

Excellent Blackpool Night by Alan Chenery

We had another great night at Blackpool when about 44 turned out. After spending the afternoon setting up the equipment Charles Stewart was the front man for the evening with is wit and charm to introduce the acts. To start the show we had The Past Its (Well & Truly) Stan Evans and Stan Watkinson, followed by Steve Abbott, who is improving every month. Then we had young Ben Halliwell, (direct from the North Pier show) who did a great little spot. John Mason loves to sing of "The Pub With No Beer," which has everyone licking their lips in thirst. We were so pleased to see John Taylor so soon after the loss of his father. Alan Middleton almost caused a riot when he refused to sing the old "Lancashire Is Beautiful" song about skiing down a slag heap with a ferret down his pants. However he eventually gave way to the hostile crowd.



Before Des Redfern opened up in song he had a debate with the audience on what songs he should sing. Amidst shouts of "Gerroff" he chose The Fields of Athenrye, albeit without backing because he'd forgotten to bring the disc. Alan Chenery, carried on the entertainment with a couple of songs.

We had visitors from Colwyn Bay Dot & Val Wood who support many branches of the GFS in the north west. We had the delights of a well prepared buffet by the ladies which helped to make the meeting one of the best ever.

DONT FORGET 17 JULY BLACKPOOL PROM 10.30 to 4.30. ALSO ,18 JULY 11.00 -4.30 FLEETWOOD TRAM SUNDAY NORTH ALBERT STREET continuation of Lord Street.

John Taylor Senior was a Tough Character

In last month's Newsletter we announced the sad passing of John Taylor Senior, one of our Formby friends who came to many meetings and joined us on our coach trips. What we didn't know was that John was really a tough nut who pursued many activities.



Not long ago John couldn't walk 100 yards without risking death from heart failure. He was in a very critical condition. But soon after his operation he ran a Marathon to raise funds for the British Heart Foundation and his time was 5 hours 23 minutes. The following morning he was up for work at 5am. To make it a family affair he was joined in the race by his four sons and his daughter. After the race he told reporters, "It was a marvellous experience being amongst all those people, and the new heart gave me no problems. John, who was aged 60 at the time, ran in 6 marathons in total and enjoyed fell walking. What a wonderful gutsy man he was.

John's wife, Maureen, has recently received a letter from the British Heart Foundation Society thanking the family for the donation of £470 which was kindly given by John's friends and neighbours, rather than funeral flowers.

The Sale Meeting by Hilda & Vera

We had another full evening's entertainment at Sale despite the numbers being depleted; perhaps we should blame Euro 2004! Cyril announced that the Jack Jones and George Formby tribute evening at Roosters Club in Warrington on 11th June was a great success. A few of our Sale members were well received at the Salfordian Hotel at Southport where we entertained some of the elderly guests.



We commenced with a 13 strong thrash and Les Pearson at the helm for the first part of the evening. Eddie Bancroft opened the show with *Licence* and *Leaning on a Lam-post*. Cyril Palmer followed with *One Meat Ball* and a Formby number, *I Don't Like*. Jack Valentine was next with *Pretty Baby Medley* and *Long Time Gone*. Then it was the turn of our friends from the North Wales Branch, Cliff Royle *Chinese Laundry Blues* and *Putting on the Style*, and Jim Knight *Blackpool Rock* and *You Can't Stop Me From Dreaming*. Walter Kirkland, with his infectious smile, did *Ain't She Sweet Medley* and *Isle of Man*, followed by Arthur Newton with *It's Turned Out Nice Again* and *The Barmaid at the Rose and Crown*. Then Alison Nadin performed a wonderful ventriloquist act with Alfred Slack and his grandson, Charlie – great stuff!



Cyril Palmer

The welcome cups of tea and biscuits were served during the interval and the raffle was drawn. Dick Eaves took over as M.C. for the second part of the evening and introduced the Sale branch's speciality act, which will be performed at the special concert on Saturday night at the Wintergardens. Alan Southworth did two songs from the film *Bell Bottom George*, the title song and *It Serves You Right*. Alan was dressed in a spoof naval uniform and Hilda and Vera, the roving reporters, were his very able seamen, dancing to *It Serves You Right*, an apt title! It was very well received and the applause gave us the encouragement we needed. Tom Meredith followed with *T.T.Races* and *Our Sergeant Major*. Margaret Moran then sang *The Homing Waltz* and *Lilli Marlene*. It was good to see Greg Simister with us again singing *The Home Guard Blues* and *Licence*. Bryn Evans, with his velvet voice, used his wooden uke to great effect with *The Devil and the Deep Blue Sea* and *I'll See You In My Dreams*. David Rhodes gave us *Hindoo Man* and *Andy the Handyman*. Walter Kirkland and Jim Knight performed a very energetic *Tijuana Taxi* and bones medley. Phew! (keep taking the pills Walter!) Phil Jones followed with an Irving Berlin number *I've Got My Love to Keep Me Warm* and *Take Good Care of My Baby*.

There was still time for three more volunteers to round off the evening; Jack Valentine - *Ahadaba Honeymoon*, Alan Southworth - *Mr. Wu's a Window Cleaner Now* and *Granddad's Flannelette Nightshirt* and David Rhodes - *The Window Cleaner*. As the saying goes - A GOOD TIME WAS HAD BY ALL.

Thanks Ladies. Sorry we couldn't make the meeting, The "Past Its" did shows Thursday and Friday so we had to give it a miss. Hee you do remind me of Ada & Cissie.

Bob Hodson, Editor of the Ukulele Soc. of Gt Britain magazine, and well known cartoonist, has kindly sent in a cartoon drawing of yours truly along with his own limerick:



“Of uke players, I can tell
who travelled down to Digswell
Their songs were a treat
They were pleasant to meet
So we hope you are all keeping well.”

Also the following letter: Thank you for another 'Special' excellent Newsletter. Information galore! Although we are specialists on the wooden uke at Digswell, we love to hear about our George as most of us were born and bred on George before we went on to melody on the wooden uke. Yours in syncopation, Ukulele Bob.

Many thanks Bob. The cartoon's great and very professional. Eva says I look smarter on paper than I do in the flesh—sauce! Keep up the good work for your members, you are doing a grand job. Pleased that you enjoy the Newsletter.

Phil Jones - A thousand apologies to Phil Jones

who travelled to the Liverpool meeting from Salford only to find that the meeting had been moved for one night only to the ROOSTERS in Warrington for the Jack Jones night. We felt sure that all the regulars had been informed, and in fact we announced it every month and published in the Newsletter.



Poor Phil was all dressed and nowhere to go.

Our humblest apologies Phil. I know what it is like when you look forward to a grand night, only to discover that they've shifted to another venue, and especially if you don't know where the other venue is. Anyway, Phil, we'll make it up somehow. If it is any consolation, John Shreeve did exactly the same thing on the night.

Isle Of Man Video - I haven't seen a copy of it yet but I understand that

Andy Little has been over to the Isle Of Man and videoed all the spots on the TT course where George had his spills and upsets during the filming of "No Limit." Jed Gennet informs me that he has done an excellent job of producing it. More news on this later.

Ukulele Juggler - On Sky TV they've launched a new variety show

compered by Cannon & Ball. On the first of the series they had a performer on juggling with three small wooden ukuleles. Great stuff, but he finished his spot in great style when he juggled with three full size guitars. Great little act!!!

EMAIL from Ida Lewis—Stan, my husband and I read that there is a little mouse running up the curtains on the stage stone heading on the George Formby grave, in the Warrington Cemetery. We looked at the stone for quite a while but couldn't find the mouse. Where is it? *Thanks Ida. I searched also and couldn't find it.*

Will Hay Biography

Email from Martin Thomas

William Thomson Hay, in addition to being one of Britain's funniest actors, was an active scholarly man, his speciality being astronomy, flying and linguistics. He was self-educated and fluent in German, French, Italian, Latin and Afrikaans. However, his stage and screen character was one of incompetence.



Graham Moffat, Moore Marriott and Will Hay

In December 1888, Hay was born in Stockton on Tees (in the north of England) to a well-off family, far removed from show-business; his father was an engine fitter, his mother active in local politics. Whilst Hay was still a boy, his family moved to Lowestoft, then to Hemel Hempstead, then London, then back up north to Manchester just as Hay was finishing school.

When he was 19, Hay left home, got married and worked for a printing company whilst building a reputation as a joke-teller and after-dinner speaker. He became a professional entertainer in 1909, when he introduced his embryonic school master. The early Hay was far from the character preserved in his films. One contemporary critic even described him as "the best straight man there ever was".

In the early twenties, Hay changed the name of his school master act from Bend Down to The Fourth Form at St Michael's, and introduced some new characters. After some time with Fred Karno's comedy troupe (famous for its connections with Charlie Chaplin, Stan Laurel etc. and as a standup comedian in the British music halls, Hay had perfected the comedy of reaction, becoming the main attraction at the Royal Variety Performance in 1925.

Hay's sketches were unusual for their time as they lacked punch lines and relied instead on a continuous flow of jokes, so that one was never sure exactly when to laugh! But people did!

In 1927, Hay successfully took his act to America. However, he managed to avoid films until well into the thirties. He felt that appearing in films would use up his material too quickly. (A music hall comedian could typically perform the same act for months, even years, without fear of being found out!

In 1933, Hay applied his astronomical skills and discovered a white spot on Saturn. He published his findings in his 1935 book *Through My Telescope*. For this achievement, he was made a fellow of the Royal Astronomical Society. He even gets a mention in Patrick Moore's biography! In 1934 Hay appeared as the magistrate in *Those Were the Days*, as this gave him the opportunity to break away from his most famous character. Now popular on radio and determined to appear in films, as well as writing his book, he no longer had time for regular stage tours.

Hay played a country vicar in *Dandy Dick* (1935) and the boss of radio station NBG in *Radio Parade of 1935* (1934), in which he was almost lost amid the tide of stars of the day (all of whom perform very well in this splendid film. Towards the end of 1935, Hay was

offered a rôle in a school picture, *Boys Will Be Boys*. However, as this was not based on his St Michael's characters, but the characters of Narkover School created by J B Morton (known as Beachcomber, a journalist in the Daily Express), he accepted. So it was that cinema audiences first saw Will Hay in full swing, with pince-nez, mortar board, frustrated scowl, squinty eyes and pasted-over hair (Hay later wore a scratch wig). But the best was still to come. "Where There's a Will" marked his first teaming with Graham Moffatt, and "Windbag the Sailor" with Moore Marriott.

In *Good Morning Boys*, Hay appeared with Moffatt and Charles Hawtry (of *Carry on* fame), who also appeared in *The Goose Steps Out*. The former also united Hay with French-born director Marcel Varnel, who would go on to direct eight of Hay's best comedies. Running second in popularity only to GEORGE FORMBY at the British box office, in 1940 Hay put his film-making on hold. During the war, his specialist knowledge was so good that he gave up acting to teach astronomy and navigation to the Royal Navy Reserve Special Branch. One wonders how he could be taken seriously after several years of portraying an exceptionally incompetent teacher!

In common with many comedians, Hay worried about his stooges becoming too much a part of his act and stealing the limelight; since being united with them, he had made only one film with neither of them—*Hey! Hey! USA*. Hay dumped his stooges and moved from Gainsborough to Ealing Studios. His best films were behind him, though. His two best films from the Ealing period, *The Ghost of St Michael's* and *My Learned Friend*, both teamed him with another comedian, Claude Hulbert. The former was directed by Marcel Varnel, and was the last appearance of the schoolmaster character.

After completion of *My Learned Friend* in 1943, Hay underwent an operation for cancer and was too ill to resume filming. He thus returned to an old favourite, radio. There was also some theatre but Hay had to opt out of top billing because of ill health. By 1947, Hay was well enough to approach Varnel about making another film. Early in the year though, Varnel was killed in a car crash and Hay's interest waned. A few months later Hay had a stroke that left him physically crippled, so he was forced to retire. A further stroke killed him in the spring of 1949.

Hay once said "the character I play is really a very pathetic fellow" and that he "gloried in the idea of an inefficient man doggedly trying to do a job of which he is utterly incapable". This character was the cornerstone of his career.

Thanks Martin. Very interesting. What great characters they were. One of my best recollections of the trio was when Moore Marriott handed a bag of boiled sweets round. As they were sucking their sweets Moore Marriott said, "I don't like the black ones so I always spit them back in the bag." They don't write scripts like that now.

John Baddeley Emails—Hello Stan, I was recently asked to perform at Westhope. This is a small village near to Craven Arms in deepest Shropshire. At the end of my rendition of George's life story, a lady at the back of the room asked me to sing RUN RABBIT RUN. I said to her that this was not a song recorded by our George but to my amazement she said that she went to see George Formby in a show at Shrewsbury in 1956 and he sang this song that is of course associated with Flanagan and Allen. It makes you wonder what other songs that George would from time to time include in his act.

Happy Birthday George - Something I forgot to mention in the last issue was that, at the end of the Wigan Pier event we were not quite sure of how to finish off the night. We asked the crowd and they replied with: "Let's sing Happy Birthday to George." Well I bet it's the first time anyone has sung Happy Birthday to a man who has been dead for 43 years, but we did it and the crowd all joined in. It made a great ending. Must do it again next year. There's been good response from fans asking if we could make George's birthday a regular event at Wigan Pier. Why not?

Harmless "Little" George

On the Radio 4 programme "George on George" (meaning George Harrison on George Formby), David Perry read out a list of Formby songs that contain the word "little" in the title, and as David said, "It was possibly to underline George's harmlessness."



He wasn't so daft our George.

With My Little Stick Of Blackpool Rock - With My Little Ukulele In My Hand—Swim Little Fish Swim On—Goodnight Little Fellow Good Night—In A Little Wigan Garden—Said The Little Brown Hen—Ring Your Little Bell—My Little Goat and Me—I Blew A Little Blast on My Whistle—In My Little Snapshot Album—Little Tool Shed in The Garden.

And there's more among the lesser known songs: - In My Little Back Room Upstairs—Down On Our Little Farm—In My Little Air Raid Shelter—In My Little Cap I Used To Wear At School—Little Bit Of Home Made Jam—My Little Boomerang—My Little Home Town—My Little Store Of Melody—My Little Bowler In My Hand.

Maybe the word "Little" helped George to get the songs through the Census Office? If so, he wasn't so daft our George.

Overheard at a recent Branch Concert— from Cliff Royle
Male performer came off the stage and apologised for a slightly imperfect performance giving the reason as "I have just been under the Doctor". A lady in the audience was heard to say "I wish it could have been me". I am open to financial offers for the lady's name. *I hope it wasn't Connie our census officer.*

JOHN DANCEY of Ballymena writes: An old lady was feeling ill so he sent for the doctor. When he arrived she was lying in her bed with her eyes closed and mouth open. The doctor looked at the old lady and said to her husband: "I'm very sorry but she is dead." Whereupon the lady sat up in bed and said: "I am not dead yet!" The husband replied, "Keep quiet woman, the doctor knows best!"
Thanks John, keep sending em in.

Dates For Your Diary - in George's Anniversary Year

Sat July 17th 2004—Blackpool Prom—Ring Charles Stewart on 01253 768097

Sun July 18th—Fleetwood Festival—Tram Sunday, Alan Chenery on 07967 665069

Sun July 18th—Newton Le Willows Outdoor Event, Neil Forshaw on 01925 222585

Sat & Sun 4th & 5th September—WIGAN PIER—Food & Drink supplied to players. Ring Alan Chenery on 07967 222585.

Email from Chris Webster

Hi Stan, Sorry to read that you'll soon be retiring, Good luck with your future plans. Anyway, a funny thing happened to me a couple of weeks back which might amuse you and your readers.



Eve is tops with Chris

Along with the photo I've also attached a great photo of Eve Stewart on our "Laugh a Minute Holland Disaster Trip." Please print it for me in your next issue.

I'd been invited to a friend's work leaving do, which involved a few pints at the local Wetherspoons pub, off for a Chinese buffet lunch, then back to Wetherspoons. On the return visit to the pub, which is only minutes from my front door in Croydon High Street, I was asked to go and fetch a uke, which I did.

When I got back I struck up a few bars of something or other, but within half a minute a young member of staff was over at our table. When he said "You can't play that" instead of "You can't play that IN HERE", the first thing I retorted back with jovially was "Don't tell me I can't play this!". It was all in good fun, and the young lad could tell he was being ribbed, but, oh dear, what an un-

fortunate turn of phrase he next came out with in an attempt to defend the Wetherspoons "no music" policy when he said "We don't have a licence for that". A massive beam came across my face as I launched into George's song "If you've a pub or a small hotel, you need a licence ...".

The poor lad's face was a picture, but I soon relieved him and put the uke away. It all happened so quickly, but it was a great moment. Needless to say, though, that we quickly finished our drinks and went to a nearby independently run pub that was more hospitable and had a good old sing-song. Regards, Chris

Thanks Chris, nice story, and it reminds me of our coach trip to Holland when the coach broke down at the docks and we all had to push start it. I think it was you who burst into George's song, "Now there's a job you see and it's up to you and me, to put your shoulder to the wheel." Great Stuff!!! Thanks for the photo of Eve.

Apparently you are about to move to Spain and operate your own pub there. We wish you all the best and don't forget to keep in touch.

LATE NEWS:- Chris, CD producer, has now moved to Spain to run his own business.

George Formby Meetings

North Wales Branch - British Legion, Penyffordd (10 miles from Chester) Every 1st Friday in the month. Tel Jim Knight 01978 358472 Adm 50p.

Liverpool - Broadgreen Conservative Club, Every 2nd Friday in the month - Ring Tom Bailey on 0151 289 1711 - Bring Your Uke

Sale —Timperley Liberal Club, 43 Park Road, Timperley. Every 3rd Friday in the month - Ring Cyril Palmer 0161 748 6550 Adm £1. Inc. Tea & Biscuits.

Crewe Branch - Wistaston Memorial Hall - Every 4th Friday in the month - Brian Edge on 01270 569836.

Westhoughton - The Red Lion Pub (Opp. Police Station) Ring Gerry Mawdsley on 01942 817346 - Every last Wednesday in the month. Uke Tuition.

Blackpool. SOUTH SHORE CRICKET GROUND, Common Edge Rd, Blackpool. Every last Monday in the month -Tel Eve & Charles Stewart on 01253 768097. Wonderful Buffet—Always in need of players.

Wintergardens George Formby Society Meetings:

11th and 12th September following Liverpool
13th and 14th November following Liverpool
Concerts usually start around 1.30pm each day.
Please Ring the Secretary, Sylvia Roe on 01142 846245
for details on the GFS or Wintergarden meetings.

Web Site —Two Lancashire Lads:
www.stanevans.co.uk/formby

E Mail: stan@stanevans.co.uk

For George Formby Newsletters by post please send a cheque for £2.25 for 3 months - (£9 for the year) payable to S. Evans - Address Front Cover.



What is an octopus? An eight sided cat.

Name an animal that lives at sea—8 letters. Ship's cat

What's white, yellow, green, yellow and white? A frog butty.