

THE

GEORGE FORMBY

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Newsletter 116



Specially Produced for George Formby Fans
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Welcome to Newsletter No. 116

And we start with the news that 44 years after George's death the town of Wigan might be waking up to the fact that George was a National Treasure.

CHARLES GRAHAM of The Wigan Post reports: -

THE momentum is growing for Wigan finally to get a George Formby statue. Last week it was revealed there is a possibility of a piece of public art being created for the soon-to-be redeveloped Wigan Pier complex. In the centenary year of the music hall and movie superstar's birth, hopes are higher than they have ever been that a permanent and fitting tribute can at last take its place in the town of his birth.

Previous campaigns for a statue have received at best a lukewarm reception from Metro bosses, the response being that the image of the gormless Northerner that Formby projected did Wigan few favours.

But even Council leaders appear to be warming to the idea somewhat and Councillor Gareth Fairhurst, who is spearheading the latest crusade, has been told there is a chance that money could be found as part of the Pier revamp. Taking no chances though, he is also searching other funding avenues and has already secured £7,000 worth of pledges from councillors' Brighter Borough funds towards the estimated cost of £20,000 for a larger than life bronze statue.

The Metro this week unveiled several other ideas for public art for residents to consider - principally for the Ince area. These include a modern take on George Orwell, whose book *The Road to Wigan Pier* put the town and its grinding poverty in the national conscience but did little to help Wigan's plight. Referring to the idea for a Formby statue, planning director Martin Kimber said money is fairly scarce for projects such as these and to obtain funding there have to be "wider regeneration benefits."

Stan Evans, editor of the George Formby Newsletter for one can see his idol attracting a lot more public attention than Orwell. He said: "We wholeheartedly support the idea of a statue in Wigan - it is the most appropriate place to put one because it is where George Formby was born. And that's coming from someone who lives in the second choice location of Warrington!" "Wigan should wake up to the fact that he was a prize treasure, just as Eric Morecambe was to his home town. The authorities have always been looking for excuses not to do anything. In 1990 we appealed to Wigan to do something the following year to mark the 30th anniversary of his death but the reply was that he was a cloth-capped idiot and they didn't want to go back to that.



CONTINUED—"So we took it to Warrington instead and 44,000 people came from all over the world to celebrate the party. If ever you want proof of wider regeneration benefits and economically viable projects, look no further than this."

George Formby fans recently held a tribute event at the Mill at the Pier and Mr Evans said they were prepared to donate the proceeds towards the Wigan statue appeal if the project was a goer.

Councillor Fairhurst said: "Since the article first appeared about the chances improving of a statue, the response has been huge. I have had supporters from around the UK getting in touch with me pledging their support.

"I now have a letter from the President of the George Formby Society backing the campaign. The society has over 1,200 members and they usually hold their conference in Blackpool, but they say that if Wigan gets the statue then they will have it in Wigan instead. "This is just the kind of economic justification we need to attract funding. The case is getting stronger and stronger by the day."

PHIL JONES Emails—Hi Stan, After 40 years in show biz loved by millions and entertained the troops throughout WW2 I think it is disgusting that George has been continuously let down by the main culprits, 'Wigan Councillors.' Other stars less deserving, have been honoured by their Towns/ Cities across the country who were not favoured by the masses and failed to achieve half the success that GF attained. Stan Laurel for instance lived most of his life in the USA, but he has a statue up north, I am not against this recognition but fairs, fair. Take care Stan.

ANDY EASTWOOD Emails—I see the unveiling date for the Max Miller Statue in Brighton is now set for 1st May. Presumably the councillors know this and hopefully they'll want to follow the precedent set by Brighton and Morecambe! Let us know if there's any way we might be able to help persuade them! Andy.
Thanks Andy, but I also think that the vote by Warrington to erect a statue is urging Wigan to be the first. To date Wigan are in the lead because the Warrington Council haven't come up with any suggestions at all re. funding. There's a lot of friendly rivalry between these two Rugby League towns so, who knows, we might finish up with two statues.

BOB MUIRHEAD Emails—What great news re Georges proposed Statue do you want any donations to go to the Council or will you add to the Sum you are holding so that we can build the total up, maybe we could raise some at our meeting, anyway let me know and I will cast around the Liverpool lot.
Thanks Bob, as soon as we know for sure that it is full steam ahead then we can take a few caps round to add to the £308. 00 I am holding.

SIMON FROM WIGAN Emails. Dear Stan, I read with interest the article in the Post on how you would like to see George Formby recognised in his berth town of Wigan. Well many old locals agree with you and feel that George Formby, Rugby League and meat pies, have put Wigan on the map. *Here, Here.*

“Letting The New Year In” at Crewe.

The Crewe Meetings are normally held on the fourth Friday of every month but this year the fourth Friday fell on Christmas Eve. As there were five Fridays in December we decided to opt for New Years Eve for our December Concert. Whichever date we had picked would have been a bit of a gamble, but “it turned out nice again” as our wonderful Formby fans supported us as usual and from all reports they all had a thoroughly happy time during the show, enjoyed the buffet, and saw 2005 in singing Auld Lang Syne.



It takes a lot of effort to put on a show and a buffet and it would not be possible without so many peoples help, planning, washing tablecloths, ordering, collecting food, setting up the room, preparing the food and arranging the concert, and clearing up after the show so there are a lot of people to thank, so many in fact that I cannot mention them all by name but again say thanks a million your help is appreciated by us all.

Artistes taking part put on a real good show and they were: -

Jonathan Baddeley – “I Wish I was Back on the Farm Ooh-Arrh,” “I Blew a Little Blast on my Whistle,” “Far Better Off in a Home” & “The Lancashire Lad and his Uke.” Alan Newton and Colin Wood – “A Little Biddy Tear Let Me Down” & “I’m Saving Up for Sally.” Brian Edge – “Smile, Smile, Smile,” & “Ukulele Banjo Blues.” Cliff Royle – “The Formby Fans are Meeting Tonight,” and “Bless ‘em All.” Alan Newton – “Rocking Around the Christmas Tree,” “Believe it Or Not” & “Love is Like a Violin” (virtuoso performance). The Three Tenors (Frank Humphries, Phil Hughes and Deg Bruce) “The Old Kitchen Kettle,” “Smile All the Time,” “It’s in the Air” & “The Blackpool Belle.” Especially from the States, Lance Boil (World Champion Knee Trembler) and the erotic Ester Rectomy. David Rhodes “Mr Wu’s a Window Cleaner Now” & “Wigan Boat Express.” Vera Jones “If I had my Way,” “Yours,” “It had to be You” & “If I had my Life to Live Over.” Vera, Brian, Ralph, Bernard, Walter, Alan - “Happy Wanderer.” Des Redfern – “Guarding the Home of the Home Guards,” “Sergeant Major,” “Ma, She’s making Eyes at Me Medley” & “Leaning on a Lamp-Post.” Pamela Baddeley and Jonathan - “Red Sails in the Sunset (parody).” Walter Kirkland – “Isle of Man” and “Happy Go Lucky Me.” Ralph, Bernard, Walter, Brian (piano), Alan and Dame Bernard – “Don’t Jump off the Roof Dad.” The Jazz Band - “Some of These Days Medley” and “Dr Jazz.” Gerald Beadle – “Scarlet Ribbon” & “Galway Bay.” The Entire Audience – “The Musicman.” Alan Newton & Des Redfern - “Out in the Middle East.” Finale – “Leaning on a Lamp-Post.” “Auld Lang Syne.”

WISHING ALL OUR FRIENDS A HAPPY HEALTHY AND SUCCESSFUL 2005.

Ivy Turner Sends Her Thanks.

Thank you so much for the generous donation in memory of Bill. We have now sent a gift of £650 to the Douglas Macmillan Hospice who cared for Bill so wonderfully. Will you please give my thanks to so many lovely friends in the G.F.S. for their donations, letters and support at Bill’s funeral. It really did help a lot to see so many of you there. Thank you so much and best wishes for the coming year. Sincerely, Ivy Turner.



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Thanks Miles
I'll order some.

Articles
Wanted

ukulele rescue

PRESTON musician Ken Nicol is to help recreate a moment of Peter Sellers madness when he performs at the London Palladium next week.

Ken - guitarist, singer and songwriter with folk-rock legends STEELEYE SPAN - is currently on tour with the band and visits the Palladium on Monday night. As a special event, Steeleye is to recreate a novelty record they made in the Sixties - Oh You New York Girls - which featured the ex-Goon guesting on ukulele. This time round the guest musician will be Ralph McTell, famous for writing The Streets Of London, and also a renowned ukulele player. Steeleye Span and Ralph have worked together before, and toured together in Australia earlier this year. It was there that Ralph bought Ken a ukulele as a gift. But when the duet at the Palladium was suggested Ken was left in a dilemma - as he had accidentally left the instrument Down Under and had not yet got it back! Help has come in the shape of HOUGHTON WEAVERS guitarist David Littler, who lives in Cottam and is a friend of Ken's. David said: "I have a George



RESCUE: David Littler (right) hands the ukulele to Ken Nicol

Folk

Phil Widdows

Formby-style ukulele which was bequeathed to me by my father, who used to use it on the old charabanc trips to Blackpool. It's also made many an appearance with the Weavers."

Ken and David became friends over two-and-a-half years ago when David moved to Preston.

"I was over the moon to find out that such a talented guitarist lived less than half a mile away. Apart from our mutual interest in playing the guitar we also share an interest in golf. It was during a game a few months ago that Ken mentioned the ukulele, so I suggested he borrow mine. I'm looking forward to seeing it played on the stage of the London Palladium!" said David.

David along with brother Denis - an original member of the Weavers - were inspired as boys to play music after hearing their Dad play the "Uke".

Ken said: "The Palladium show will be something special and the bit with Ralph is going to be a bit of fun - but I was rather embarrassed because I'd lost the ukulele that Ralph bought me. David's got me out of the mire!"

Steeleye Span, who have just released a new Christmas album, will be at the Southport Arts Centre next Friday, December 17, and the Houghton Weavers are also on the festive trail and will be performing their annual Folk & Brass concert at the Guild Hall in Preston on Sunday December 19, with the Wingates Brass Band as their guests.

Ukuleles are optional!

Young Cliff reports on N. Wales



So what have we to report about our meeting? A general reduction in numbers possibly following the Festive Season's activities, but perhaps more due to the threat of severe weather which apparently had already reached parts



of North Wales. However we still had an excellent evening presented by M.C.'s Jim Knight and Deg Bruce.

Apologies were received from Tony and Marge Elsdon (Marge hurt her back at home); Frank Humphrey (a severe cold); Gerald and Julie Jones (the bad weather); and Margaret Royle (still "well plastered" but steadily making good progress to a good recovery; we hope.



Simon Hughes, Daniel Smith and Ryan Hopwood
Come on lads, smile all the time

However all was not doom and gloom for we did have to celebrate Alan Chenery's Birthday. The Show went well with varied entertainment, starting off with a THRASH of five songs. Then followed Jonathan Baddeley (Madame Moscovitch and Lancashire Lad and His Uke; pinched from Alan Chenery as he turned his back); Wife Pam singing (World of Our Own and Dusty Springfield's song Island of Dreams); Alan Chenery (Hold Your Hats on Toodle Hoodle Hoo and Princess Lulu from a Honolulu Isle). Just where does he get the new ones from? Alice Cronshawe back again in full voice (In Love Land with Me and My Girl and If You were the only Boy in the World); Walter Kirkland our ever Smiling Esther Ectomy (Frank on His Tank and a bones effort (Sentimental Journey) accompanied by Alan Chenery, Jim Knight and Alan Newton in humorous stance on the Castanets.

There followed Alison Nadin, our Wonder Woman, doing a few of her magic tricks, then the Ventriloquist Act with Alf who ended his act by singing one of Frankie Wood's songs (Clap Your Hands to My Little Melody) to which the audience were asked to participate by following the big screen version of the words which had been drawn up by Alison. Then we had the PASTITS, apparently their vehicles are also getting past their best, singing (an Old Time Medley and No. 21 You'll Never Find Another Fool Like Me and then Ken Dodd's song Tears). All the Pastit's songs were approved by Connie Edge as being suitable for the audience on this occasion; Deg Bruce and Phil Hughes, our new Duo, performed The Old Kitchen Kettle, and Smile All the Time. CONTINUED NEXT PAGE

John Mason

of Wigan has just sent in a wonderful old book titled "The British People At War", which is full of pictures showing how the various services played their part in fighting and winning the war.

Get to page 146 and who should pop up but our George Formby playing his uke for ENSA at one of the Workers Playtime concerts.

Well George may have failed his medical test when he volunteered to join the services, but he and Beryl certainly played a huge part I bringing a smile to the British people during the war years. Look at the happy smiling faces above.



WORKERS' PLAYTIME

MORE FROM YOUNG CLIFF ROYLE—They were followed by our youngest playing member Daniel Smith who entirely unaided played and sang the War Time Medley. An excellent effort Daniel, you are doing well. Then Jim Knight finished the first part of the evening with an old tune (Somebody's Stole My Girl) quickened up to a marching tempo, followed by a Bones Session with the three other bones players present. And so to the interval with its socialising and raffle for which thanks are due to anyone giving prizes.

The final part of the evening stated with Tom Meredith who now seems to be looking much better and performing well (Cleaning Windows and Lamp Post); Self (Matchstalk Men and Swimmin With the Women); Brian Edge (Ukulele Banjo Blues and Nobody's Baby); Greg Simister one of our young stars (Pleasure Cruise and T.T. Races); Alan Newton (Broadway Medley and Trailing Around on a Trailer; then a repeat performance by the Pastits who we are always pleased to see at Penyffordd (Have You Ever Been Lonely and If I Had My Life to Live Over Again); and so to the final Thrash and the end of another enjoyable evening.

I heard that Greg recently did a concert at an Old Folks' Home and sang 17 Formby songs. He made four very minor errors which no one even noticed. Just shows his talent, and how much easier it must be to learn when you are young. How I wish!!

We are pleased to report that Margaret Royle is making steady progress in her recovery following her accident. She has started to come to life again, and is due to visit Hospital on 11th January. She received over a hundred Get Well Cards as well as nearly two hundred Christmas Cards. We apologise if we failed to acknowledge any of your very kind thoughts but it was not possible to respond to everyone in the circumstances.

The Warrington George Formby Exhibition—Part Two by Stan Evans.

... Yes, we were fortunate that one of the local colleges was prepared to make full size paper mache models of George as a school project. The difficult part was explaining to them exactly what we wanted because in 1990 all knowledge of George Formby was dead, - apart from the enthusiastic members of the Formby Society, that is. The college staff looked vague when we were trying to explain that George was known for three songs: Cleaning Windows, Mr Wu, and Leaning on a Lamp Post, but they looked forward to the project. We asked them to produce three life sized models of these characters?



Things were hotting up rapidly and the media interest was increasing each day. Although plans were going ahead with the show we still didn't have sufficient cash to stage the show and the Museum staff were still busy ringing all the other council offices for spare cash, but offers were thin.



But then, a spot of good luck as the phone rang. It was Pete Waterman, the well known music producer who promoted Kylie Monogue and Jason Donavon, returning our call to him. He claimed that he was a very keen fan of George Formby and, what could he do to help? All our problems were over! Pete was listed as



Pete Waterman

around the sixteenth wealthiest business man in the country so, if he's a keen Formby fan he's sure to chip in a few bob, - or so we thought. He operated from his London studio during the week and travelled back home to Warrington at weekends. One of the Saturdays he paid us a visit at the Museum and he was full of enthusiasm. He even talked about filming the exhibition and producing a George Formby video. Great!

His parting shot was, "If you need anything for the exhibition ring me at my London office." Cherry Grey of the Museum was dead chuffed. From the start she had plans

to have a first class, modern type exhibition and part of it would be a multi bank of about 16 TV screens all showing George in one of his documentaries. "No problems now" thought Cherry, as she got on the phone to Pete's London office. He wasn't in but a few hours later he returned Cherry's call. "Hello Pete, you did say that if we need anything for the exhibition to give you a ring." "We need a bank of about 16 TV monitors" "Er, er, er, er, well, er, er, er, er, . . . go along to Mr Smith's night club in Warrington and tell them to give them to you, goodbye." Cherry was gobsmacked. What happened to the kind hearted Formby fan who offered to help?

Rather than planning for a multi bank of TVs we then decided to settle for one TV and Video player in a boarded off cinema area with 20 seats. This was built and we then wrote to all the TV studios asking for permission to continuously play a Formby documentary video. An answer came back from Granada Studios, "You can use the Gary Marsh documentary on George Formby and the cost will be £7500." "Too much, can't afford it, - scrap the idea." Money was so tight with the Museum they didn't even have funds to pay for postage stamps or coloured photocopying for the display boards.

We needed a small shop selling GF memorabilia to generate some funds, but there were no GF items available: No tapes, no CDs, no videos no songbooks, absolutely nothing. In desperation I remember ringing all the London music publishers asking for anything on George Formby. In every case the answer was "George Formby? - He's dead isn't he?" - "Well he is dead but we are bringing him alive again." - "Sorry, we've nothing to offer," came their reply. Well we now had a shop (a trestle table) but nothing to sell on it.



Travelling to Liverpool I saw a factory with a huge tea mug on the roof of their building. "That's an idea," I thought, "George Formby mugs." I called in, explained what we were doing, and the ladies in the warehouse were delighted. "George Formby, we loved dear old George." "When I'm Cleaning Windows." - "Oh



Mr Wu." They were completely sold on George. I pleaded with the boss to rush the supply of 200 mugs through. - "Not a chance" he said, it'll take about a month. But, I'll do a deal with you. Bring your lads down and give us a few songs and I'll rush them through." "You're on!" A few days later we turned up to collect the mugs and while I was loading the car, Anthony Mason and my grandson Lyndon, gave them all George's favourites. We now had 200 George Formby mugs to sell.

And then, a stroke of luck! I rang EMI in London for some advice and a voice boomed out, "Thank goodness you've phoned. You rang asking for Formby tapes and we lost your phone number. Well, we've produced a double tape for your exhibition and we've called it the same name, 'Turned Out Nice Again.'" Our luck was changing. MORE NEXT MONTH ON THE FORMBY EXHIBITION.

'DAD'S ARMY' HAD HITLER IN A PANIC

by Ron McManus

NEXT Friday sees the 60th anniversary of the last parade of the wartime Home Guard.

Thanks to *Dad's Army*, the Home Guard will forever be seen as a band of duffers but, in reality, Hitler thought differently.

When he heard that the Home Guard was being formed to help repel the expected German invasion, he

flew into a rage, called them "murder bands" and swore that after Britain was invaded, they'd be executed if

The Home Guard even took our own Government by surprise when over a million volunteered in the first month

they fought the German Army.

Though the Home Guard never saw battle-front action, 1206 of its men were killed on duty or died of wounds, and

13 of its members were awarded the George Cross for bravery, often for rescue work during The Blitz.

During Britain's darkest hours, there was a remarkable response to the Government's call to arms.

On May 14, 1940, a radio broadcast asked for civilian men, aged 17 to 65, to register themselves for service in what was originally called the Local Defence Volunteers.

Amateurs

Police stations were deluged by keen volunteers and, by the end of the first 24 hours, more than 250,000 men had signed up.

Six weeks later, over 1,400,000 had joined — around 1,200,000 more than the Government had expected.

It would be months before most of the volunteers had uniforms and weapons, and many lined up to repel the invaders armed with

nothing more lethal than rolled-up umbrellas!

It was Churchill who changed their name to the Home Guard, as he thought the title Local Defence Volunteers was "uninspiring".

He also championed the Home Guard cause at a time when the Army was opposed to the idea of over a million armed amateurs running around the countryside.

The creator and writer of *Dad's Army*, Jimmy Perry, actually served in a Home Guard unit, and based many of the characters and incidents in the series on his real-life experiences.

But some true stories of the Home Guard were too fanciful even for a *Dad's Army* script — like the roller-skating troop set up in London.

The idea was that they could speed into action



A member of the Home Guard teaches a Warden how to handle a Tommy gun.



Bulldog spirit from TV's *Dad's Army* cast, as they prepare for battle.

on their roller skates, but the unit was disbanded after the authorities realised it was comically unmilitary.

However, the Home Guard proved its worth during The Blitz, assisting in rescue work and, later,

many volunteers manned anti-aircraft batteries.

It was clear there would be no invasion and, on December 3, 1944, King George VI took the Home Guard's final parade in Hyde Park.



This volunteer aims to stop Hitler in his tracks.

Alan Chenery reports on Blackpool

Hi Stan, we missed the Pastits at our December meeting. Due to the most dreadful weather we had an attendance of 22 only. It was a most pleasant, but quiet night. Although the ice had melted it was still very squelchy under foot and the rain was heaving down.



Fortunately we had some players to make a concert: Charles Stewart started the ball rolling with a few singalongs, Alan Middleton gave us his old Lancashire songs and humour, John Mason had apparently just come from "A Pub With No Beer", Peter Brown improves every month with a new bundle of jokes and a couple of George's songs, Des Redfern, assisted by Jimmy Bowtie and myself kept the night flowing.

The door was manned by Freda who also unwraps the sandwiches, Charles pressed the buttons for the music and the MC was Yours Truly. Have a Happy New Year both of you.

Thanks Alan. Sorry we (The Pastits) didn't make it. We were all iced up in the afternoon with 3 inches of snow on the car roof, and although it started thawing out we were warned on TV that more frost is on the way.

Alex & Kitty Barrett of Scotland write-

Dear Stan, We are sorry that you are retiring from producing your George Formby Newsletter, but as the saying goes, "All good things come to an end." WELL DONE"

I should imagine that you are aware that Kitty received her Honorary Membership in September, she is delighted with it. After a bad time with a broken knee she is now back to her usual self.

What a sad year for us all, losing Eve Stewart and Billy Uke Scott. I told Charles that if there's an after life Eve and Sylvia will be having a good old natter together. *Many thanks Alex. Yes I did know that Kitty had received an Honorary Membership, in fact I included it in one of our Sale reports. And she certainly deserves it for the amount of work she has volunteered to do at each of the Formby meetings. Kitty must have raised thousands of pounds organising raffles at every Blackpool meeting. The award is long overdue.*

I'm sorry to be retiring from the Newsletter but we've decided to help our grandchildren. It is very difficult for youngsters to get established in a house in this day and age, so we want to help them. Eva & I started with two government produced prefabricated houses, but these politicians don't seem inspired enough to produce any. I notice you've not mentioned the snow in Scotland. Probably it's because we've got it all here in Lancashire. We've just had rain, snow, hail and frost in the same day, and we are not used to it. We're not as tough as the Scots!!! Have a prosperous 2005 and many congratulations to young Kitty.

Many Thanks from the Zipper Club which is a section of The British Patients Association. The membership consists mainly of those who have gone through surgical operations. A few weeks ago Beryl Fisher of Liverpool arranged for The Pastits and John Shreeve to do a show for a charity event at Vagabonds Tennis Club, Liverpool. The show went down very well and all tickets were sold. I have now received a letter from The BCPA thanking us for helping to raise £614 for their much needed funds.

Well done Beryl. You've done a grand job.

And THANKS from DERIAN HOUSE CHILDRENS HOSPICE.

A letter was sent to Barbara Brown of Preston from Derian House thanking her for organising a charity show at Preston Museum. The show raised £100 which was much appreciated. Thanks Barbara. We enjoyed doing the show and we also enjoyed the Butter Pie, which we'd never heard of before. We thought it was a joke when you offered it to us. It was great!

Hey Up! During the December meeting at Sale, Brian White and his wife Elizabeth, performed Uncle Joe's Mint Balls, supported by the audience. This is a song that was introduced into the Formby meetings by Jim Bramwell and Jack Skelland some 13 years ago, at Liverpool, and it has gone down very well ever since.

However, at Sale, when the audience threw in some extra words, a number of people wondered what the audience was saying. One asked me, "What does it mean?"

Well, at the end of the first line of the chorus Jack used to shout "Hey Up" and it caught on with the crowd wherever they went to perform. Here's where "Hey Up" fitted in:-

Now there's a place in Wigan, a place you all should know
A busy little factory, where things are all the go
They don't make Jakes or Eccles cakes or things to stick on walls
But night and day they work away at Uncle Joe's mint balls

Oh Uncle Joe's mint balls keep you all aglow HEY UP
Give them to your grannie and watch the begger go
Away with coughs and sniffles, take a few in hand
Suck em and see and you'll agree they're the best in all the land



Jim

At the end of the first line of the last verse, Jack would shout, "Six Tons?" and that caught on also. Here's where it fitted.

The RSCPA has bought, six tons of Uncle Joes—SIX TONS?
To give to all the animals to keep em all aglow
Our budgie now is nine foot tall our cat is six foot three
And all the poor brass monkeys are as happy as can be

Has anyone got a photo of Jack Skellend?

Many old members ask of Jack, but although he lives in Warrington we never see him.

Sale Report by Hilda and Vera

The evening got off to a jolly start when we all joined in a Christmas sing-a-long and, with Dick Eaves as compere, EDDIE BANCROFT opened the proceedings with *Mr. Wu's A Window Cleaner* and *Blackpool Rock* followed by JACK VALENTINE's *Grand and Healthy Life* and *Frank on His Tank*, and ARTHUR NEWTON with *Nine o'Clock* and *I Wish I Was Back On The Farm*.



Vera

Hilda

Then we had a surprise visit from Hester Ectomy, all the way from America, and Lance Boyle at the same time! (WALTER KIRKLAND and ALAN NEWTON) who played the bones to Tijuana Brass and sang *I Wonder Who's Under Her Balcony Now*. ALAN SOUTHWORTH followed with *Thirty Thirsty Sailors* and, as a tribute to Billy 'Uke' Scott, *The Ragtime Mandarin*. Our first lady was ALICE CRONSHAW with *Making Memories* and *Too Young*. Next was BRIAN WHITE, *In That Little Back Room Upstairs* and, with Elizabeth, *Uncle Joe's Mintballs*. Then PAMELA BADDELEY sang the lovely seasonal song, *Do You Hear What I Hear* and *Natividad*. The PAST-ITS (the two Stans) then did *Baby* and *I Don't Know Why I Love You*. The third Stan (CHADWICK) closed the first half with *Our Sergeant Major*.



A young and innocent Margaret with Ivy who is a supporter of the Blind Society.

During the interval we tucked into all the goodies and Dick and Marjorie drew the raffles including another 'special' raffle, for which we had all been given a free ticket, and the prizes were all items of jewellery.

Les Pearson was the compere for the rest of the evening and he reminded us that Cyril Palmer would be 75 years old on Boxing Day and we all sang a rousing 'Happy Birthday, dear Cyril', who incidentally has done a great job for the Sale Branch for many years.

MARGARET MORAN was the second lady artiste of the evening with *Winter Wonderland* and *Silent Night* followed by BRIAN EDGE with one of Frankie Woods' songs, *Smile, Smile, Smile*, and *Ukulele Blues*. Then we had young CHRIS CHADWICK doing a great performance of *Crocodile Rock* and *The Devil and the Deep Blue Sea*. DAVID RHODES put on a Santa hat and substituted 'Santa' for 'Bowler' whilst playing *My Granddad's Bowler Hat* followed by *Granddad's Flannellette Nightshirt*. Then we had a change of mood when JON BADDELEY played beautifully *When A Child Is Born* and *Mary's Boy Child* on the clarinet. Then there was another change of mood when ALISON NADIN entertained us with Charlie and the Magic Box, doing wonderful conjuring tricks. ALAN NEWTON was next with *Rocking Around the Christmas Tree* and *I'd Like a Dream Like That* in his own refreshing style and, with BRIAN, CONNIE, JON, WALTER and ARTHUR pleading *Don't Jump Off The Roof Dad!* JOHN MASON—CONTINUED NEXT PAGE

A Letter From Ella—George's Sister.



What a grand soul she was—passed on now of course. About 12 years ago we invited her over from America (paid for by LWT) for the George Formby South Bank Show, and she and her daughter Pamela, stayed at my home during the filming. A few weeks later she wrote:

Dear Stan, thank you for your letter, I started to reply three weeks ago but got a bug that was hard to shake off.

I visited George & Beryl several times and never once saw her drunk. She took it upon herself to protect George, she may have overdone it but she meant well. She told me that she didn't care what the public thought about her, she was only interested in what they thought of George.

George and Beryl had an understanding. When they were invited to any parties, functions, openings etc. George would give the signal to her when he was feeling tired and Beryl would say, "Come on George, we have to go now." She was not popular, but George was her whole life. If she thought he was being taken advantage of she'd go mad and they would order her off the set. They thought they could handle him better without her interference. But George relied on Beryl for everything and she got the blame even though she wasn't guilty.

During the war years, Beryl faced dangers and rotten conditions alongside George when most wives would have stayed at home. About the newspapers: They didn't like Beryl because they had to go through her to get to George. But that's how she protected him, and saw that he stayed popular.

Thank you for looking out for Louie, I'm afraid her age is catching up on her. Maybe she shouldn't be on her own. I had a nice photo of Jeffrey holding one of George's ukes. He said he was learning to play but the dog bit his leg. Will write again. Sincerely, Ella & Herb Becker.

CONTINUED— performed *The Barmaid at the Rose and Crown* and *Nine o'Clock*. BRYN EVANS followed with *Did You Ever See A Dream Walking* and *I'll See You In My Dreams* and PHIL JONES closed the show with a special request *T.T.Races*.

We had a wonderful evening's entertainment in a great seasonal atmosphere and many thanks are due to the organisers, Marjorie, Gerald and company, who decorated the room and provided delicious refreshments, which really made the evening special. Hilda.

Thanks Ladies—You've done a grand job as usual and, Hee I could swear you are two of the Andrews Sisters.

THERE'S STILL ABOUT SIX SEATS AVAILABLE FOR HAPPY SMILING PEOPLE ON THE IRISH TRIP NEXT JULY 8th to 11th. RING CHRIS WOOD on 01270 663558 or ALAN CHENERY ON 01253 681439.

Bob Muirhead Emails—Been

meaning to drop you a line for a while but with Sheila out of action I'm currently " Head Cook and Bottle Washer " and don't seem to have a minute, anyway to business.



What great news re Georges proposed Statue do you want any donations to go to the Council or will you add to the Sum you are holding so that we can build the total up, maybe we could raise some at our meeting, anyway let me know and I will cast around the Liverpool lot.

It was great to read in the Newsletter about "Jimmy Bowtie", Jimmy is a great friend of Doreen (Mine Hostess at the White House) and it was through Doreen that Des gave him an old Uke, he regularly goes on stage at the Blackpool Legion and I have seen him play that Uke with only three strings, and on one occasion without a Bridge, nothing stops him and the backing duo at the legion give him great support. What a lovely man, he loves being a part of the Formby crowd and always comes over to our mob to have a chat, he is very popular with everyone, a great character, we really do need the " Jimmy Bowties" of this world.

We really must get away from Broadgreen, at the last meeting the noise from the Bar was becoming intolerable, as you know it wafts in roughly half way down our room and those of us at the window end couldn't hear the performers, it was really bad when John Mason was performing and everyone was shouting for the sound to be turned up but to no avail.

I know we can mostly live with it, but there are nights like the last meeting when those at the window end couldn't hear a thing, so start talking amongst themselves thus destroying the atmosphere, and have you noticed that those who stop coming are the folk who sit at that end. I doubt our numbers will improve until we do, sorry to have a moan Stan but a lot of folk were really put out last time. In case I don't have a chance to write again you and Eva have a great Christmas and a Very Happy New Year.

Thanks Bob, we agree that we need to move to a better place with an independent room but nobody comes up with a venue. The Vagabonds was suggested several times but when we went to size the place up we found that the only separate room had a full sized snooker table in the middle. I don't think that the snooker players would appreciate us thrashing away while they are taking a shot. To help with sound in the meantime, we will set one of the speakers at the window end like we did in the early days. We did get complaints however, IT WAS TOO LOUD!!!! - We'll Try Again.

Good News The Irish Trip coach is full but we will be pleased to take names to fill in any cancellations. Ring Christine Wood on 01270 663558 or Alan Chenery on 01253 681439 and they will put your name on the list. It's a GRAND WEEKEND!



Paul Woodhead Says, Can you solve these carols?

Play the game - Cheat Fair

- | | |
|--|--|
| 1. Quadruped with crimson proboscis. | 2. 5 p.m. to 6 a.m. without noise |
| 3. Miniscule hamlet in the far east. | 4. Ancient benevolent despot |
| 5. Adorn the vestibule | 6. Exuberance directed to the planet |
| 7. Listen, aerial spirits harmonizing. | 8. Monarchical trio |
| 9. Yonder in the haystack. | 10. Assemble, everyone who believes |
| 11. Hallowed post meridian | 12. Fantasies of a colorless Dec. 25th |
| 13. Tin tintinnabulum | 14. A dozen 24-hour yule periods |
| 15. Befell during the transparent bewitching hour | |
| 16. Homo sapien of crystallized vapor | |
| 17. I merely desire a pair of incisors | |
| 18. I spied my maternal parent osculating a fat man in red | |
| 19. Perambulating through a December solstice fantasy | |
| 20. Aloft on the acme of the abode. | |

ANSWERS ON PAGE 19. OUR THANKS TO PAUL

Liverpool's Rowland Lee

What a Grand and Generous Chap he is. Every month he turns up at the Liverpool meeting carrying a bundle of raffle prizes under his arm. He puts them down on Tom Bailey's table and Tom is delighted.

Over the past months Rowland has brought along all sorts of George Formby memorabilia, mainly GF videos and photos, all neatly cased and labeled, and even the non-Formby Conservative Club members look forward to winning them as prizes. In the picture we have Rowland on the right accompanied by Stan (Pastit) Watkinson, who is smiling because he's just won another GF video for his grandchildren.



Many thanks Rowland. It is very much appreciated. Our thanks to all who contribute to the meeting. Hee, they're a good hearted lot in Liverpool!

Tom Bailey writes: You've got it wrong Stan. Syd Little

isn't decorating for a living, as reported in last month's Newsletter. I was listening to Radio Four when the next person to be interviewed was Syd Little. He gave a resume on his meeting and joining up with Eddie Large, and their career together. Eventually he was asked about being forced to work as a decorator. For such a little man he gave a hearty laugh and went on to explain that the school where his children attended needed volunteers to decorate some of the school premises. Naturally Syd volunteered to help out. He didn't know how the story of him having to work as a decorator came out.

Thanks Tom, it just goes to show that you can't believe everything you read in the newspapers- or the Newsletter. Anyway we are pleased that Syd is still entertaining.

Miles From Germany Emails

Specially Cleaned Up.

"Twas the night before Christmas--Old Santa was p . . . d
He swore at the elves and was shaking his fist.
Miserable brats, ungrateful jerks.
I've a bloody good mind to scrap the whole works !

I've busted my a . . e for damned near a year.
Instead of "Thanks Santa"--what do I hear?
The old lady bitches when I work late at night.
The elves want more money and they all start a fight

Rudolph got drunk and goosed all the maids.
Donner is pregnant and Vixen has AIDS.
And just when I thought that things would get better
Those V.A.T. a . . holes, they sent me a letter,
They say I owe taxes--if that ain't damn funny
Who ever paid Santa his wages in money?

And the kids these days--they all are the pits
They want the impossible--Those mean little s . . ts
I spent a whole year making wagons and sleds
Assembling dolls...With arms, legs and heads
I made some nice yo yo's--used all me best wood
But they told me to stick em,
they're no bloody good

I fly through the air...dodging the trees
Falling down chimneys and skinning my knees
I'm quitting this job there's just no enjoyment
I'll sit on my a . . e and draw unemployment.
There's no Christmas this year and this is reason,
I found me a blonde and I'm off the season!
Thanks Miles, I managed to clean it up a bit.

Ebay Buyers Beware If you are thinking of bidding for items on Ebay, check first the seller's feed back before placing a bid. I have had problems with three of the last four I've bid for. The last one: Ann McGrath, 13 Harmony St, Bonnyrigg, Midlothian, Scotland EH19 3NX. Email ann.mcgrath@dsl.pipex.com didn't send the goods at all and blatantly insisted that she had. Other bidders who have been robbed by the same woman have mailed me with a similar story. So avoid this woman, she's a thief!!!!



CLIFF Emails

Further to last month's on Margaret's Unfortunate accident when a car backed into her. She sustained a broken leg and other less minor injuries, and was hospitalised for four weeks. Pleased to say she is now at home and slowly recovering, though in need of lot of tender, loving care. It seems I may be the right one. Who knows.

Currently she is housebound with plaster from toe to groin so getting about is somewhat difficult, but there is a bit of improvement. She is due to go back as an outpatient to Warrington Hospital on 11th January. We will have to see what transpires then. I am O.K. Overworked and underpaid as usual, but struggling to carry on without my normal outside interests. Apologies for not sending a card. Looking forward to an exceptionally enjoyable 2005. Cliff Royle. (And love from Margaret).

Jack Jones Tribute Friday June 10th at **ROOSTERS** in Warrington. It's another clash with the Liverpool meeting but we can handle it, and the Liverpool lads enjoyed the last Warrington trip. The club is booked 12 months in advance so it's difficult getting other dates. Jack was a favourite with the Formby players so it looks like it might continue as a regular event.



Paul Woodhead at ROOSTERS

Can you also make sure that July 23rd is in your diary. I am holding a concert at Roosters with Pat Ralston to celebrate the achievements of a good friend of mine. It will be Formby do, ticket only. It has been booked a while and I shall ask you to advertise it next year in the Newsletter.

ANSWERS FROM PAGE 17

1. Rudolph, the Red-Nosed Reindeer
2. Silent Night
3. O Little Town of Bethlehem
4. Good King Wenceslas
5. Deck the Halls
6. Joy to the World
7. Hark the Herald Angels Sing
8. We Three Kings
9. Away in a Manger
10. Come All Ye Faithful
11. O Holy Night
12. I'm Dreaming of a White Christmas
13. Silver Bells
14. The Twelve Days of Christmas
15. It Came Upon a Midnight Clear
16. Frosty the Snowman
17. All I want for Christmas is My Two Front Teeth
18. I Saw Mama Kissing Santa Claus
19. Walking Through a Winter Wonderland
20. Up on the Rooftop

Results:

- 15 - 20 Correct: You don't need any Yuletide spirit!
 10 - 14 Correct: You could use something in your stocking!
 5 - 9 Correct: Are you sure you have the right holiday?
 1 - 4 Correct: Surely you jest!?!

THANKS PAUL. KEEP SENDING EM IN

OVERHEARD IN THE TV SHOP

The salesman was trying to impress this lady with his knowledge of TVs when suddenly her husband took over the conversation.

"Yes, but if we buy one of your

Super sonic, Brand New Phillips 42 inch Plasma TV s: LX 9000 R/22S with table top arch stand, finely polished, with AV Receiver - LX 9000 R surround sound speakers and cables, centre speakers and sub-woofers with a 5 year transferable guarantee.

Do we still have to watch the same old rubbish that we get on the old black and white tele at home?"

WANTED—URGENT WE NEED ARTICLES, STORIES, JOKES ETC. FOR THE NEXT ISSUE. SEND EM IN.

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 Charles Stewart on 01253 768097. Wonderful Buffet—Always in need of players.

Wintergardens George Formby Society Meetings:

12th & 13th March 2005 following Liverpool

2nd & 3rd July 2005 following Penyffordd

10th & 11th Sept 2005 following Liverpool

3rd & 4th Dec 2005 following Penyffordd

Concerts usually start around 1.30pm each day.

Ring the Secretary, Pam Walker on 01142 888199

Email is ian@formbytowers.co.uk for details on the GFS or Wintergarden meetings.

Web Site —www.stanevans.co.uk/formby
www.stanevans.co.uk/pastits

E Mail: stan@stanevans.co.uk

The George Formby Newsletters finish June 2005. To receive by post please send a cheque for £3.00 to receive issues up to June. Cheques payable to S. Evans - Address Front Cover.



Overheard in a bus queue: "She's so big we have to grease her to get her in the bath"
She drank ten gallons of grid water, and now she's 8 months stagnant.