

THE
GEORGE FORMBY

Newsletter 117

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Specially Produced for George Formby Fans
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Welcome to Newsletter No. 117

And we'll begin with Statue News from Charles Graham
of The Wigan Evening Post

Hello Stan, Here's the latest offering which appeared in the
Evening Post on 18-1-05 See you, Charles

SURVIVING relatives of stage and screen legend George Formby today joined the calls for a Wigan statue in his honour. As momentum grows for a long overdue memorial to one of Britain's most successful entertainers of all time, family members threw their weight behind the scheme. The calls were led by the star's younger brother Ted who felt that their father should not be forgotten either. It was George Formby Snr, a hugely popular musical hall performer in his own right, who first put Wigan on the national map with his light-hearted jokes about the then grim Pier as a holiday destination.

Now 86 and living in Oxford, Ted Formby said: "I am very proud of my older brother but I am also very proud of my dad. I think they both deserve credit in Wigan, perhaps dad more so because he started with absolutely nothing and built a star career while my brother George took up the baton, albeit highly successfully.

"Those who think either of the Formbys did Wigan a disservice must be deluded. They were both hugely popular entertainers who helped to put their home town on the map in a much more benign and friendly way than George Orwell did. "I think a statue would be a great idea, but personally I think it should be a double one with both father and son there."

At present the only official acknowledgement of George Jnr's Wigan pedigree is a blue plaque on Central Park Way, put there because nearby Westminster Street where he was born has been demolished. Previous attempts at a more substantial tributes have tended to be slapped down by the authorities because of a view that the "gormless northerner" projected by Formby in his act only helped to reinforce the unhelpful, cloth-capped stereotype of a Wiganer.

But a number of Wigan councillors have now lent their support to a new drive, pledging cash from their Brighter Borough purses to help fund it if cash cannot be found during the redevelopment of Wigan Pier where the statue would most likely stand. They say a statue could prove a big draw to visitors, much in the same way as the Eric Morecambe statue has been in Morecambe and as is hoped for in a soon-to-be-completed Laurel and Hardy statue destined for Stan's birthtown of Ulverston, Cumbria.

George's niece Geraldine Smith said: "I think a statue in Wigan would be a brilliant idea and I can't understand why there has been so much reluctance to have



one in the town up to now. "As far as I am concerned they got the wrong George when they redeveloped the Pier in the 1980s and paid homage to Orwell. What did he do for the place other than paint the grimmest of pictures to the rest of the world after a brief visit? That mud still sticks today. "My uncle on the other hand was born here, lived here and loved the place. When we lived in Johnson Street, Pemberton, he used to come visiting us alone on his motorbike. He was a friendly ordinary man who had the extraordinary talent of entertaining millions.

"He was a northerner and proud of it - indeed, why should he have been ashamed of it? He was happy to proclaim his roots and return to them regularly." And Christine Booth, who was married to George's late nephew Geoffrey Booth, added: "George was one of Britain's biggest stars and is fondly remembered by many to this day. Why there isn't already a statue to him in the town of his birth his beyond me. "But if there is a chance of a statue finally appearing, then I am all for it. I am sure my late husband would have been very pleased too."

Wigan Metro recently asked residents for their ideas and opinions on new pieces of public art for the borough and unveiled three initial suggestions, one of which was for a statue of George...Orwell! Charles Graham, Assistant News Editor, Lancashire Publications Ltd. *Our thanks to Charles for sticking with the statue story.*

Joe Hodkin, Another Sad Loss

Phil Hatswell Reports

Dear Stan, It is with great regret that I am informing the Newsletter readers of the loss of one of our dear friends, Joe Hodkin aged 78, who passed on 10th January 2005. Joe joined the Formby Society in 1997 with his late wife, Alice, and later became Vice Chairman for a short period. Joe and Alice held practise nights at their home every Wednesday night in Spinkhill which we called, The Spinkhill School of Music, with everybody welcome to come along to play. We owe a lot to Joe & Alice for helping many to get started. *Thanks Phil. Another sad loss.*



And We've Lost Another Blackpool Rock

Dear Frank Bennett, everybody's friend, has died. Frank was a long established favourite with many Formby members. He loved playing his uke and writing comic songs. He was also a very keen fan of Chas & Dave and often sang their songs at the meetings. He also loved Country & Western music. Frank was a trustworthy man, who, if he promised to send you a song you can guarantee it would be in the post the following morning. He had a lot of knowledge of old songs and was always willing to share them. Frank will be sadly missed by his many friends.



A full report on Frank's tragic death is on page 7.

Good Start To The New Year At Crewe

What a way to start the year - a full house of one hundred and five - many new faces -twenty-five artistes and to top it all a great show! It was party time too as it was Vera Jones' birthday and Vera had arranged for cakes all round to celebrate the special event. We all wished her a very Happy Birthday. Vera is a stalwart supporter who works very hard for our society. It was good to welcome Brian Pearce and Steve Willets from the Midlands along with Eunice and Alan Evans and their family. We love to welcome new faces to entertain us.



Arthur Newton was MC ably assisted by his namesake Alan Newton the concert producer. Alan arranged a well balanced show and Arthur made an excellent job of fronting the show.

Artistes taking part:-

STEVE HASSALL – Wigan Boat Express & Mr Wu's an Air Raid Warden. COLIN WOOD & ALAN NEWTON – A Little Bitty Tear Let Me Down & Mr Wu's a Window Cleaner Now. ALAN EVANS - It's Hard to be Humble & Dare Devil Dick. JIM KNIGHT – Get Cracking & Bones Medley. ALICE CRONSHAW – Too Young & Smile. BRIAN EDGE – Sing a Song About Formby & I'm Nobody's Baby. BRIAN PEARCE- Sergeant Major. CLIFF ROYLE – Fifty Percent of its Mine & The Little Back Room Upstairs. JONATHAN BADDELEY- Lancashire Toreador & I Blew a Little Blast on my Whistle.

GREG SIMISTER- Smile all the Time & You Don't need a Licence for That. ALAN NEWTON - The Wedding of Mr Wu & I Can't Smile without you. TOM MEREDITH – with my Little Stick of Blackpool Rock & Leaning on a Lamp-Post. DERRICK JONES – Murphy's Sicknote. THE THREE TENORS – Strolling Medley & Granddad's Flannelette Nightshirt. STEVE WILLETTS – Chinese Laundry Blues & The Window Cleaner. ALISON NADIN - Puppeteer and Presdigitator (I don't know! What is it?). DAVID RHODES – Hindu Man & He Played his Ukulele When the Ship Went Down. CYRIL PALMER – Cecelia & I'll see you in My Dreams. WALTER KIRKLAND – My Little Tool Shed in the Garden & Bones Medley (Tijuana)

VERA JONES (Birthday Girl) If I had My Way & If I had my Time to Live Over. PETER GRATTON - The Laughing Policeman & Accordion Medley. ARTHUR NEWTON – The Barmaid at a Rose and Crown & with ASHLEY CALDICOTT Alexander's Ragtime Band. FINALTHRASH- Leaning on a Lamp- Post. Summary – Artistes 25. Formby Numbers 22. (One number repeated).

Thanks Brian. Sorry I didn't make it. Last month the heavy snow crashed my windscreen wipers and this month I had to have a new starter motor and battery fitted—£340 in total. I don't know how they arrive at these figures.

Three more issues and the Newsletter finishes, so please send an article in before it is too late. Thanks to all who have contributed to this issue.

Granada TV Excitement Let Down

It was around 5 pm on Wednesday 26th Jan, and on Granada they announced that the ukulele was the latest trend and everybody would soon be carrying one, followed by, "and George Formby would be very pleased, - so keep watching."



They must have practised at least 3 minutes to get to this level

I dashed round the house looking for the GF Publicity video tape to make a recording of the show, and the phone rang, "I know, I'm just looking for the tape to record it, thanks." Still searching and the phone rang again, "I know" and it rang again, and again, "Yes I'm trying to record it."

Eventually the item came on screen featuring three raw beginners, sitting down with word and chord sheets playing in some town centre shopping area. "Yes," they said, "The ukulele is the new 'in thing' because, unlike a guitar, you can take it on the bus and play it. Or fit it in your glove compartment—well almost."

"And they only cost £27. So forget electric guitars," said the presenter, "In the Fashion Guide the ukulele is 2005s trendiest instrument."



A touch of class

A shot was shown of Marilyn Monroe miming with a wooden uke, and George Harrison was mentioned as a closet ukulele player" whatever that is.

Fortunately the 2 minute slot was saved by George, with Beryl singing, "Why Don't Women Like Me" from their first film, "Boots, Boots." - which sounded great.

Ken Ratcliffe on Jack Skelland—Hello

Stan. In the last issue you asked for anyone who had a photo of Jack Skelland. Well here's one for you which was taken at the Sale meeting. As you know he used to attend all the meetings and then suddenly he stopping coming. What happened to him?

I'm not sure Ken. He lives here in Warrington so I've called on him but he's not been home. I've also left plenty of messages on his answer phone but he doesn't bother to reply. Jack enjoyed having a drink or two and possibly felt it was risky to drink and drive. He also enjoyed going to jazz concerts, so maybe he's switched over from Formby.



Young Cliff on N.Wales

We began to think this was going to be a quiet night, but as the start time approached there was a sudden influx of players and visitors who enjoyed a night of both Formby and unexpected Variety. Delighted to see Margaret Royle back (although wheelchair bound), and also our long lost friend Jim Murphy. Sadly however we heard that Frank Humphrey had gone into Hospital. (Since confirmed he is now back at home with nothing serious to worry about).



There were many new faces including the Grandparents of Simon Hughes (Granddad was instrumental in getting Simon involved with the uke), and four friends of Alison from the PALS Club in Stretford; one of these, Peggy, was Allison's "old" dancing teacher.

Recently we have heard that the Ukulele Banjo is the "Fashion Accessory of the Year". Is it? We have had a fair bit of interest from new learners in the past year, but playing rather than fashion has obviously been the motive. Alan Newton started off the evening with a Yankee Doodle Medley and Song, Song Blues to be followed by Walter Kirkland (Little Wooden Toolshed in the Garden, and Tijuana Brass Bones Medley accompanied by five other enthusiasts); Alan Chenery (I'd Like To Teach the World To Sing and When Your Old Wedding Ring Was New); Gerald Jones (Taxi Driver and Lamp Post); Greg Simister our rapidly growing lad with fast fingers (Lads of the Village Get Cracking and Lancashire Toreador); Phil Hughes (Chinese Laundry Blues and Little Back Room Upstairs); and Alice Cronshaw singing You'll Never Know How Much I Love You and Why Don't You Take All of Me?

Additional to this we were entertained by Russell Rees-Davies one of our keen up and coming learners, who having started off with a few jokes gave a number of bird and animal impressions to the delight of the audience. We knew he had talent. After the Raffle, kindly supervised by Alan Chenery, we came to the second half of the evening which commenced with Paul Woodhead, all the way from Telford, performing his "One Man Band Act", complete with a massive array of different musical instruments and other things strapped to a trolley, and other instruments mounted round his neck. A great assortment most of which he played during singing such songs as If I Could Only Stay Sixteen For Ever, Whispering, I Wonder How I Look When I'm Asleep, and finishing off with all the Bones Players rattling away with Them Bones Them Bones Them Dry Bones. Wife Jill videod his unusual performance so that a copy of the tape could be sent to the BBC for consideration of Paul's Band being used in part of a Comic Relief Show.

Stan Evans was next, mixing song (Nothing Like A Dame) with a trick involving large and small boxes and much audience participation with yak-e-da I've seen a Miracle. Sadly we missed Stan Watkinson (the other Pastit) whom we now do not see so often. Come back Stan, we miss you. Then Brian Edge followed with Smile, Smile, Smile (written by Frankie Woods), and The Bowler Hat Me Granddad Left to Me; Our young learner Simon Hughes, just celebrated his 12th Birthday, played Lamp Post and Little Ukulele and received a tremendous applause; Alison Nadin with a brand new Puppet Show, excellent as usual, very high standard, and full of life and colour; Tom Meredith sang (And I Love You So and Don't Laugh at Me Cause I'm a Fool, to celebrate Norman Wisdom's 90th) Birthday and Carol Brassey CONTINUED PAGE 13

Blackpool Gazette report on Frank Bennett

Front Page Headlines—Man, 85, dies in pan blaze

A GRIEF-stricken man was pulled to safety from an horrific blaze which killed his father. Firefighters scaled the building in South Shore, Blackpool, and plucked Mike Bennett to safety after a chip pan triggered the tragedy.



Frank's typical pose

Mr Bennett's father, Frank Bennett, 85, is believed to have knocked the pan while trying to put out the flames after it ignited on the stove while he was out of the kitchen. Firefighters were called to the two-storey property on Byron Street at 4pm on Saturday when neighbours spotted smoke coming from a downstairs window.

Sharon Sarwar, who lives on Moore Street said she noticed a smell of burning. She said: "I started banging on the door but nobody answered. "I went round the back and started shouting and somebody came to a bedroom window." Firefighters put up a ladder and brought Mr Bennett jnr down to safety. They found his father collapsed on the floor. The pensioner was dragged out, but was pronounced dead at the scene.

Four pumps from across Blackpool and St Annes, including the incident support unit from South Shore, were called to the blaze, in the cul-de-sac end of the narrow street. It was first thought one other person was still inside the smoke-filled property. But following a thorough search by firefighters wearing breathing apparatus it was found nobody else was inside the house.

Paramedics treated Mr Bennett jnr for the effects of smoke at the scene. He refused hospital treatment. Another neighbour, Margaret Brown, whose house on Moore Street backs on to the property, paid tribute to the ukelele-playing pensioner who was killed.

She said: "Frank was a nice quiet man who kept himself to himself. I know he was a member of the George Formby Club. His hobby was playing the ukulele. It is such a tragedy." Fire sub-officer Paul Briggs said: "Because this was a chip pan the fumes from the fire were very acrid and it only took a couple of mouthfuls for the victim to be overcome. A polystyrene ceiling compounded the problem." Police cordoned off the road for several hours while an investigation took place. The cause of the fire was an unattended chip pan which had over-heated and ignited. There are no suspicious circumstances.

Sub-officer Briggs emphasised how important it is to install smoke detectors. He said: "This property never had smoke detectors fitted, which would have given a much earlier warning to the fire and would probably have saved a life." Blackpool's fire stations offer free fitting of smoke detectors. If anyone has fire safety concerns or would like smoke detectors fitted they can call 302524 for an appointment.

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

... Yes, luck was turning and we now had a couple of items to sell in our small shop. But we needed more. I remember ringing round the book wholesalers asking if they had any books on George Formby, - nothing, and the biography written by Ray Seaton and Alan Randall was now out of print - unobtainable.



GEORGE'S BIOGRAPHY—A few days later I received a call from a London wholesaler. "Hello Mr Evans, you were asking for a supply of books on George Formby. Well, I've just been searching in our vaults and found a load of George Formby Biography books called 'The Entertainers' by John Fisher. We've had them since 1975 and we'll be pleased to get rid of them." I couldn't believe it. "How much are they?" "Well they retail at £3.50 so you can have them for £1 each." I replied with: "As you know, there's no demand for Formby stuff so they might not sell. What price if I take a chance with all you've got?" "Well there's exactly 1,000 here and if you take the lot you can have them for 20p, and if you pay on receipt you can have them for 19p." I couldn't believe my ears. Was somebody pulling my leg? He must have been really desperate to unload them. So now we had 1,000 GF books to sell. As well as two GF mugs and two audio tapes. Plus "Turned Out Nice Again" Tee Shirts.

And then another stroke of luck: A friend of mine George Booth (and his wife's name is Beryl—honest) was recovering from a heart bypass operation and needed a temporary job to occupy his mind. "Perfect," I thought, "he can look after our little shop, and with a bit of luck there should be enough to pay him a wage out of the takings."

We put out many appeals on all the radio stations for Formby memorabilia and received quite a number of replies, but this meant doing a lot of travelling to collect the items. One day I was at Alan Randall's house in Coventry collecting stuff given to him by Pat Howson, and the following day I was in Carlisle collecting GF photographs from Bill Logan (The first GFS President in 1961). The day after I was in Blackpool collecting 1,000 little sticks of Blackpool Rock and one huge stick about three foot long and six inches thick. This was to be suspended above the shop.



Our Uke Collection Box

BLACKPOOL ROCK—We had a bit of a struggle suspending this heavy stick of rock from the ceiling rafters. The room was quite high and we only had one set of ladders. However Walter, the designer, (Well it was his idea) bravely wobbled up the steps carrying the stick of

rock and while we were holding him secure he reached up, tied two lengths of cord to the rafters and looped them over the two ends of the rock. Perfect!!! Or so we thought. Every morning we noticed that, due to the warmth in the hall, the rock was beginning to sag in the middle. After a week or two the stick of Blackpool Rock was taking the shape of a banana.

KIMONO—Things were hotting up tremendously! George Pearce kindly offered to loan us George's Kimono which he wore in his film: "South American George," and other offers were coming in from all over the country. From Yorkshire Paul Mountain rang to say that had a GF Senior cylinder tube that we could borrow, and we had several calls from people who bought items from the 1961 Auction after George's death.

One lady rang to say that she had bought the curtains from George's house and if we collect them we could keep them. No thanks! Gerald Rickards, the Wigan artist heard about our exhibition on the radio and rang us with an offer to paint portraits of all the Formby houses beginning with No. 3 Westminster Street, through to Lytham St Annes.



George entertains troops in France

At the same time we received a call from a young couple who were sculptors specialising on making life size models of the famous in the hope that they could sell them. Unfortunately they built George only about 5 foot high—too short and it didn't look right. To solve the problem they chopped off the legs and mounted him on a table.

All the photographs were safely gathered in and taken to Photo Print to be copied and enlarged. But first we photographed each group of pictures and titled them to make sure that the right owners received their own photos back.

Walter set the photos out in date order on six foot by four foot panels, starting with George Formby Sen.

They were set as follows:

1. George Formby Senior and Eliza.
2. The Formby Life in Warrington.
3. GF Senior's Theatre Work.
4. Formby Family.
5. George Formby Jun. in Show-business
6. GF Houses (portraits by Gerald Rickard)
7. George & Beryl's Private Life.
8. Motor Cycle Section.
9. George's Love for Boats.
10. The War Years.
11. Large Model of Family Grave. *Next page*



5 foot George had his legs chopped off and mounted on a table.

CONTINUED—Louie, George's sister, loaned us the Formby family gramophone which dated back to around the late 1930s, and also several photographs to fill the panels.

It was about 10 days off opening day and I remember seeing the exhibition room in such a mess, there was no way that we could be open in time. We appeared to be waiting for several items to arrive before we could even start to set the exhibition up. Several small valuables arrived but we were still ringing round for the loan of glass cabinets to display them in. It was a very tense period. We'd received loads of media publicity all praising the forthcoming Formby Exhibition to be opened on April 26th, but things were moving so slow. Everything was waiting for something and we couldn't complete any one job. At that stage we pictured ourselves opening with only half a show.



Michael Davies (5)

The large number of calls we received from TV and Radio Studios slowed us down and every two or three hours we were interviewed on Radio by phone. Michael Parkinson's office said, "Hold on for five minutes, Michael wants to talk to you." As soon as that interview was finished we had a call from Gloria Honeyford's office. We were wishing they'd leave us alone to get on with the job of setting up, - no chance.



Specially for the show Francis Broomfield painted an excellent portrait of George flying high above the world

MEDIA—At the time I was the Editor for the Vellum (GFS magazine), which was running late, so I had two days off to catch up with my work. Walter & Cherry were still struggling with the media attention so they, unknown to myself, decided to work each night and during the weekend.

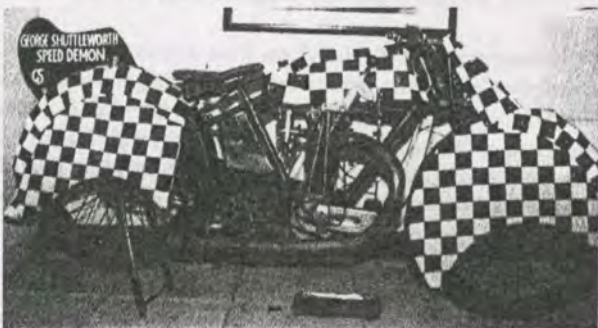
GREAT SURPRISE—The following Monday morning, having caught up with The Vellum production, I went into the museum and what a great surprise. It was so wonderful it brought tears to my eyes. Eighteen months work was now beginning to materialise. The photos we'd borrowed, - some tatty, had been reproduced, blown up 50 times their normal size, and mounted on the display boards, with subtitles. Walter the designer had excelled himself and he admitted to all that it was the best exhibition he had ever worked on. It was CLASS!!!! and the whole room was filled with a Formby presence.

BLACKPOOL CARTOONS—In his spare time Walter had produced several cartoon drawings of seaside postcards, fat ladies etc. and did an excellent job of mounting them to add a Blackpool flavour. Suspended from the ceiling were several poster cards featuring the Formby sayings: Turned Out Nice Again, - I'll Cough Anyone For Shilling, - I'll Have to Go Back To The Digs for Me Rubbing Bottle, - Hee this Zambuk is Good, and many more.

On walking into the room the visitors would see an introduction, written by John Walley. My artist friend, Ian Alcock, produced half a dozen 4 foot high plywood models of George pointing the way to the exhibition for the visitors. All the glass show cases had arrived and was now filled with all the bits and pieces of Formby memorabilia including items loaned by Alan Randall which were given to him by Pat Howson, yes, George's OBE was there and a collection of George's ukes including a Dallas E loaned by George Harrison.

BERYL'S SCRAPBOOK—Alan Randall loaned us two monster scrap books created by Beryl. They were quite heavy so how on earth she managed to carry them has me beat. They were filled with hundreds of newspapers cuttings featuring George. Scanning through Beryl's work in the scrap books leaves no doubt that she devoted her entire married life to supporting him in every way.

NO LIMIT- The phone rang from the Isle of Man. "Hello. I'm the chap who salvaged George Formby's crash helmet and his goggles from the filming of 'No Limit' would you like to borrow them?" "Of course, we'll be pleased." A few days later they arrived in the post and we sent him his postage costs.



SHUTTLEWORTH SPECIAL—Receiving these items really inspired Walter into producing George's Shuttleworth Special motorbike. We borrowed an old motorbike from a local dealer, and with the aid of chequered hard board, did an excellent job of converting it to look like the original. Many visitors were fully convinced it was the original bike, from the film, so we didn't tell them any different. Some said, "So this is the bike that crashed down the side of the mountain, my word you have made a good job of restoring it."

EXHIBITION BROCHURES—A lot of work was going on in the background that I didn't know about. Walter and Cherry, along with the museum staff, had been very busy designing a "Turned Out Nice Again" brochure from the borrowed photos. And considering that they knew nothing about the Formbys, apart from the fact they lived in Warrington, they did an excellent job of gathering the information for the brochure. These brochures were the icing on the cake.



ALMOST READY—The exhibition was taking shape and apart from waiting for a few items to arrive, and paintwork to be touched up, we were almost ready for the grand opening. Compared with the rest of the décor, the borrowed glass cabinets were looking dull, so Walter & Cherry worked late nights to give them extra varnishing. The following morning they looked smart!!!

GRAND OPENING NEXT MONTH

Alan Chenery reports on Blackpool

All our members were deeply shocked at the news that poor Frank Bennett had tragically lost his life. Frank, with his home produced songs, was a firm favourite with all who attend the monthly meeting. At 85 he set an example to us all. Tragic though it was, we always believe that our lost friends would want us to "Get On With The Show." Old late friends like Eve Stewart and Frank would applaud us for keeping the George Formby flag flying, no matter what grim circumstance arise. So this what we did. So, another great night was had by all, although a little late in starting. Fortunately we had a good turn up towards the end.



On the door was Pat & Hazel, on food Freda, on Music Charles who did the Raffle assisted by Carol. The artists for the evening were Ben Hallowell, The Pastits (Well & Truly, the two Stans), Don Horton, Cyril Palmer nice to see him and Sheila, Alan Middleton, Peter Brown, Des Redfern, Paul Kenny, Jimmy Bowtie and Alan Chenery. But what a great surprise we had when who should walk in through the door but our old friend, who we haven't seen for 12 months, Our old friend Jim Bramwell. Three cheers for Jim.

We are planning that at the next meeting to have meat & potato pie supper and something for the vegetarians so make a date to join us on the 28/02/05 see you all on the night, Alan Chenery.

Martin Thomas Reports on what's selling on Ebay

Hello Stan, just found a uke for sale on Ebay. Is it genuine? The advert reads . . .

"here we have a ukelele im told that it belong to george formby when he lived in fulham . if you are a fan you mite be aball to tell me. ill answer any questions if i can . i have a resev . this came from a house clerout ther is a photo somewear with the lady & uke&formby wear he rented.if i can find it ill show it."



Thanks Martin. Well it's a genuine Windsor Whirle OK but did it belong to George? I doubt it, and also doubt George having lived in Fulham, unless it was a boarding house where he stayed. The skin looks rough and needs renewing. I Emailed the owner asking for more information but he didn't reply. I wonder if he could read?

I understand that Alan Randall's 21 year old Mercedes car, UKE 1, was withdrawn from Ebay due to lack of interest. I'm not surprised when they were asking £20,000 for it. The uke community don't have that sort of money.

George is beaten again by Fred Dibner.

Details from Ken Ratcliffe—How's this for quick work? Fred Dibner died last October 2004 and the funeral was at the end of November. The council asked for contributions for a statue and immediately raised £22,000 in under a week. The statue has been made and will be set up opposite the Bolton Town Hall next to the Mill Engine. It will be housed in a metal and plastic case and all of Fred's junk yard memorabilia will be exhibited in the museum.



Thanks Ken. Unlike Wigan & Warrington, Bolton Council are on the ball. Good luck to them.

Our new alphabet at 65 from Brian Edge.

A for arthritis, B for bad back, C is for chest pains. Perhaps cardiac?
D is for dental decay and decline, E is for eyesight--can't read that top line.
F is for fissures and fluid retention, G is for gas (which I'd rather not mention)
H is for high blood pressure, I'd rather have low, I for incisions with scars you can show

J is for joints, that now fail to flex, L is for libido--what happened to sex?
Wait! I forgot about K! K is for my knees that crack when they're bent
(Please forgive me, my Memory ain't worth a cent)
N for neurosis, pinched nerves and stiff neck O is for osteo-and all bones that crack
P for prescriptions, I have quite a few, Give me another pill; I'll be good as new!
Q is for queasiness. Fatal or flu? R is for reflux--one meal turns into two
S is for sleepless nights, counting my fears, T for tinnitus--I hear bells in my ears
U is for urinary: difficulties with flow, V is for vertigo, that's "dizzy", you know.
X is for X ray--and what might be found. Y for another year I've left behind
Z is for zest that I still have my mind,
Have survived all the symptoms my body's deployed, And kept twenty-six doctors gainfully employed!!

YOUNG CLIFF'S Report Continued from Page Six.

... played a moving melody on the mandolin, what a lovely instrument; Jim Knight on Tenor Banjo with a request (The Unicorn) and a Bones session with his support group; Cyril Palmer with the Baritone Ukulele singing (You've Got the Ukulele and Me and It's Twilight Time); and to end the evening, and almost start the next day that jovial Des Redfern with his own composition Nashville George then a Strolling Sing-a-Long. The evening ended just before 11.30 with Lamp Post as a THRASH.

SPECIAL NOTICES—The North Wales Branch are holding a special event to mark the 60th Anniversary of V.E. Day. This will be on Friday 6th May; the usual date of our meeting. The evening will be generally based on the war time songs etc of that era, and it is hoped that as many people as possible will come dressed in some sort of Wartime Regalia or dress. Our Practice evenings are continuing at the Legion on the first Monday of each month. Start 7.30. Learners and others welcome. Thanks Cliff.

Sale Report by Hilda and Vera

The first meeting of 2005 was not as well attended as usual, probably due to the inclement weather. Cyril had the unpleasant task of informing us that Joe Hodkin, from Sheffield, had passed away just a year after his wife, Alice, died. They were a very popular and well loved couple who both enjoyed playing the ukulele and singing. The pleasant task was to let us know that Arthur Newton was celebrating his 65th birthday (you couldn't miss the huge badge that he proudly displayed across his chest!)



Vera

Hilda

After the Thrash, Dick Eaves was the M.C. and introduced the first artiste EDDIE BANCROFT who performed The Lancashire Toreador and Leaning on a Lampost followed by WALTER KIRKLAND Little Wooden Toolshed in the Garden and a Bones Medley (Tijuana Brass) with ALAN CHENERY and ALAN NEWTON. ALAN CHENERY sang a Walter Langshaw number The Lancashire Lad and His Uke and The Little Back Room Upstairs. Then JACK VALENTINE performed something quite different The Sheikh of Araby and You've Been a Long Time Gone.

STAN EVANS, complete with a 'Banana' tie sang I Like Bananas and On the Street Where You Live from My Fair Lady. ALAN SOUTHWORTH was next with The Irish Were Egyptians Long Ago and H.M.S. Cowheel. BRIAN WHITE closed the first half with The Manchester Rambler and Heart of My Heart Sing-along Medley. During the interval we enjoyed tea and cakes kindly served by Anne Ratcliffe and

Sheila Palmer and Dick and Marjorie drew the raffle. Les Pearson was the M.C. for the second half and, after the second Thrash, introduced BRIAN EDGE with Sing a Song About Formby and At the Chinese Fish and Chip Shop Take-away followed by ALAN NEWTON Believe it or Not and Mame. The only lady artiste of the evening was ALICE CRONSHAW singing When You're Smiling, I'm Gonna Sit Right Down and Write Myself a Letter and You Made Me Love You. DAVID RHODES was the next with Mr. Wu's a Window Cleaner Now and Licence, ARTHUR NEWTON Hindoo Man and With My Little Ukulele in My Hand, BRYN EVANS Hitting the High Spots Now and Madame Moscovich, PHIL JONES Melancholy Baby, Cheek to Cheek and Bathing in the Sunshine. JOHN MASON sang an amusing country and western song Mechanical Girl and Chinese Laundry Blues. ALAN SOUTHWORTH sang one of Billy 'Uke' Scott's songs I've Got a Girlfriend and Walter Langshaw's Princess Lulu. ALAN CHENERY rounded off another happy evening with Wigan Boat Express. *Thanks Ladies— looking younger every month.*

Uke Banjo For Sale - Jim Murphy turned up at Penyffordd with an excellent Dallas "D" for sale. This uke is in a most superb condition and the only slight mark is where the capo has been slotted on. Complete with standard case, Jim is looking for £350 ono for it. You can phone Jim on mobile 0784 3591111 or email: - justfordjim@yahoo.com.uk Take my word, this uke is in really excellent condition and the price is very reasonable for this particular model.

Jack Skelland's "Hey Up" by Alan Southworth

Hi Stan, Further to last month's Newsletter, I just thought I'd let you know that Jack Skelland attended the November G.F.S. Meeting at Blackpool. He stayed at the Metropole and came to all the concerts over the weekend. He told me he was getting interested in George Formby again and asked how everybody was.

Incidentally the words he used to shout at the end of the line in the Mint Ball song was that old Lancashire expression EIGH UP! meaning 'Hello' / 'Please Move' / 'Well I Never!' (according to my 'Lanky Dictionary'). I think the latter would have been the intended meaning in this instance.

I thowt tha'd knawn that owd lad, cummin' frae Warrington. You'll have George turning in his Warrington grave! Cheers. Alan.

Thanks Alan. Actually, coming from Warrington (which is Lancashire) we don't recognise ourselves as speaking broad Lancashire. We think we have classy voices—though I'm sure we've not—compared with say, Wigan or Leigh. I hope Jack is taking interest again because he used to be quite a keen Formby fan.

At Last We Have Some Good News

Those who came on the coach trips will remember Chris & Margaret Volp from Warrington. Well for the past few months Margaret has been very ill in hospital with cancer and up to a month ago they were reporting that there was little or no hope for her. She was in such a bad way that they moved her to her home town in Scotland where her family is keeping in touch with her. Chris, who is constantly driving to Scotland, has been completely stressed out with the situation.

GOOD NEWS—I am pleased to report that the doctors are sounding the All Clear siren and Chris is over the moon about it.



Best Night Ever At Liverpool—In all our 13 years

at the Broadgreen Conservative Club, Knotty Ash, we have never had a show as lively as the one on 14th January 2005. Over the years we've received the odd complaint from the regulars at the bar when the music has been a touch too loud for them to be able to talk comfortably. So we've always tried to keep the sound on the low side for them. But during the December meeting we had complaints from our own members claiming that they were unable to hear the backing or the singing.

So, at the January meeting we added two extra speakers and pointed them away from the regulars onto to our own members, and the result was perfect. It was nice and loud for own group, and we couldn't hear any noise from the bar. Isn't it amazing? After 13 years we are still learning the trade.

Do You Remember Chic Murray?

Chic, one of Scotland's greatest comedians, was born Charles Thomas McKinnon Murray in Greenock, in 1919. He began an apprenticeship in engineering at Kincaid's shipyard in 1934 whilst employing his musical talents in amateur groups. He formed a double-act with his wife, Maida Dickson. Their combination of jokes and songs made them a popular attraction on television and in theatres throughout the country. In 1956 when they appeared in the Royal Variety Show at the London Palladium. Later, working as a solo act, with a forbidding expression and omnipresent "bunnet", Chic offered a comic vision of the world that was absurd, surreal and absolutely unique. Much mimicked and much loved by his fellow professionals, he acted in films such as *Casino Royale* (1967), appeared as the headmaster in *Gregory's Girl* (1980) and played Liverpool Football Club manager Bill Shankly in the musical play *You'll Never Walk Alone* (1984). He died in Edinburgh in 1985 at the age of sixty-five.



Here are just a few examples of Chic's unique material:

- 1 - It's a small world, but I wouldn't want to have to paint it.
- 2—I made a stupid mistake last week. Come to think of it, did you ever hear of someone making a clever mistake?
- 3—So I gave him a wave. Actually, it was more of a half wave, because I only half know him.
- 4—What use is happiness? It can't buy you money.
- 5—If something's neither here nor there, where the hell is it?
- 6—My father was a simple man. My mother was a simple woman. You see the result standing in front of you, a simpleton.
- 7—I had a tragic childhood. My parents never understood me. They were Japanese.
- 8—I won't say I was slow developer, but our teacher was quite pleased to have some one her own age in the class to talk to.
- 9—If it weren't for marriage, husband and wives would have to fight with strangers.
- 10—I felt as out of place as a left-handed violinist in a crowded string section.
- 11—We've got stained glass windows in our house. It's those damned pigeons.
- 12—There's a new slimming course just out where they remove all your bones. Not only do you weigh less, but you also look so much more relaxed.
- 13—The police stopped my car for a spot check. I admitted to two pimples and a boil.
- 14—I first met my wife in the tunnel of love. She was digging it at the time.
- 15—My girlfriend's a redhead, no hair, just a red head.
- 16—We were so poor; the ultimate luxury in our house at the time was ashtrays without advertisements. It was all the wolf could do to keep us away from his door. A luxury meal was prairie sandwiches- two slices of bread with wide-open spaces between them.
- 17—She had been married so often she bought a drip-dry wedding dress.
- 18—I went to the butchers to buy a leg of lamb. "Is it Scotch?", I asked. "Why?" the butcher said in reply. Are you going to talk to it or eat it?". "In that case, have you got any wild duck?". "No", he said, "but I could aggravate it for you".
- 19—There are two rules for drinking whisky. First, never take whisky without water, and second, never take water without whisky.



- 20—My wife went to a beauty parlour and got a mudpack. For two days she looked nice, then the mud fell off.
- 21—This chap started talking to me about this and that - about which I know very little.
- 22—My father was a generous man. I have a gold watch that belonged to him. He sold it to me on his deathbed. I wrote him a cheque for it, post dated of course.
- 23—I was out walking the other evening. This fellow asked me, "Is that the moon up there in the sky. I replied that I had no idea as I was a stranger there myself.
- 24—This fellow asked me where I was taking my dog. It was foaming at the mouth, so I explained that I was on my way to the vet to have it put down. He asked if it was mad, to which I replied that it wasn't exactly pleased about it.
- 25—I went to the doctor and he told me I only had three minutes to live. I immediately asked if there was anything he could do for me, to which he replied, that he could boil me an egg.

Raw Beginners Book & Tape

Part of Arthur Daniel's Email from the south coast:
 I remember some many years back searching round the music shops for a George Formby type ukulele. As a raw beginner I also required a book on how to play the thing. What a job I had. It was as if I was asking for a Russian Balalaika, they gave me such strange looks. It was Saturday afternoon so the shops were pretty busy on the day.



By the look on the man's face I could see that he was more interested in guitars or keyboards rather than search through his catalogue for a company that supplies ukuleles. He knew absolutely nothing about ukes and it was easy to see that he wanted me to leave the shop. He suggested that I should put and advert in the local paper—"Oh I've done that," I said, "and got nothing." Eventually I left the shop very disappointed. It was the same story wherever I went. I'm sure they thought I was a crank asking for Formby songs. You people up north possibly don't realise how difficult it is.

Some years later, I'd completely given up my desire to play like George when by chance I saw you on television at a George Formby Exhibition. Believe me it was like heaven hearing George singing in the background. Within minutes I was on the phone to the Warrington Museum and they kindly put me through to you. After my many years of searching I was finally through to an organisation that could help me in finding a uke and advice on how to play it.

It's so long ago that I don't suppose you remember me, but you advised me that you and your young assistant were working on a Tuition Book & Tape to help raw beginners. I bought a Melody uke banjo from you for £25 and it all happened so quick I couldn't believe it. A fortnight later your book & tape was in the post and I was a very happy man learning to my heart's content. I'm not a good player but I still play the songs from the book along with the tape backing. I've also entertained at old folks parties. You made me a happy man Stan so many thanks.

Well it's nice to know that we've made someone happy. I still have a stock of the Ukulele Book & Tape for any new starters. And it's still the same price £8 inc postage.

Reg Thacker on 07719 287187 is looking for these George

Formby 78rpm records to complete his collection:

GEORGE FORMBY JUNIOR

Dominion C347 (Re issue) Red Label, All Going Back / In The Congo.

Decca F3615 (Withdrawn) With My Little Ukulele In My Hand /

As The Hours And The Days.

Columbia DD444 (Export Issue) Canada, Our Sergeant Major /

They Can't Fool Me

Regal Zonophone IR52 Trailer to the feature film; Keep Fit.

Reg is willing to pay good prices for any of the above records. So look through your collection of GF 78s and if you've got any of the above give Reg, who is a serious collector, a call.

Geoff Shone Emails

Recently while travelling through Dyserth in North Wales I passed an Antique shop in the high street. Glancing at the window I saw what I thought was a ukulele Banjo hanging on the wall. The traffic was very busy and there was nowhere to park, so I thought to myself I will call on my way back from Rhyl.



Geoff & Dolwyn

I returned two hours later and parked about a quarter of a mile away from the main street. The weather was atrocious and it was raining stair rods, but I thought this has got to be worth a look, who knows? It might be an Abbott or a Ludwig. I ran down to the shop, splashing puddles with every step, and walked in saturated, soaking wet through, with water dripping just about everywhere. I was drenched to the skin! Believe me, I looked as if I'd just walked out of the sea, and the lady assistant didn't know whether to feel sympathetic or burst into laughter. I'll bet she thought, "I've got a right drip here."

I looked up at the wall and, guess what? my ukulele had turned out to be a very old and large cast iron frying pan. She came over and said, "Can I help you sir?" I politely replied, "No thank you, unless you have got four pegs and a set of strings that will fit the frying pan hanging on the wall." After explaining my motives to her, she really saw the funny side of it and we spent about half an hour talking about George Formby and his music. So all was not lost and she has taken my phone number in case another frying pan comes in complete with vellum pegs and strings.

Thanks Geoff. Nice little amusing story. Hope you've dried out. Keep sending em in.

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. Great Weekend!

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.



Paul Woodhead at ROOSTERS,

Warrington Can you also make sure that July 23rd is in your diary. Paul is holding a concert at Roosters with Pat Ralston to celebrate the achievements of a good friend. It will be a Formby do, ticket approx £3 (further details later) which will pay for the room rent and the buffet. You can contact Paul & Jill on 01952 598840. Roosters lies about half a mile outside the town centre on the A57 Warrington to Liverpool road. Immediately opposite the soap works.

PAUL & Jill are currently looking for a 6,000 gallon water tank for their laundry business. If you know where there is one for sale, please contact them on 01952 598840 and Paul & Jill will be very Tank Full. Get it? No? Tank Full? Oh, don't bother.



Here's a spooky one for you.

Looking through some old photos the other day I came across a snap of our dog Prince who died some many years ago. He was our favourite—never to be forgotten. Then I noticed on the photo an image, next to his hind leg, what appears to be the head and shoulders of a small girl. This one is not so clear because it has been photocopied but it is very clear on the original. Can you see it?

CHAP went into the hairdressers—"Give me a Tony Curtis haircut" The barber shaved him completely bald. "That's not a Tony Curtis haircut!" - "Well it would be if he came here."

OVERHEARD in the barbers: He was as subtle as a hang gliding flasher.

OVERHEARD in the hairdressers: "He learned how to kiss when he was siphoning petrol from his lorry."

OVERHEARD in the bus queue: "He had two wooden legs and his house caught fire. The house was OK but he was burned down to the ground."

OVERHEARD in the hospital: "I loaned him £3,000 to have facial plastic surgery. Now I can't recognise him to get my money back."

OVERHEARD at an Irish wake: "I think Murphy's still alive, I'm sure I saw his leg move!" Murphy's widow: "Alive or not he goes out of here at nine in the morning."

OVERHEARD in the hospital: He was employed here as a Masseur but he got the sack for rubbing everybody up the wrong road.

OVERHEARD in the bus queue: I'll say he was ugly. He had a face like a welder's bench and a nose like a cobbler's thumb.

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.



A little girl had just finished her first week of school. "I'm just wasting my time," she said to her mother. "I can't read, I can't write and they won't let me talk!"