

2

The North-West

GEORGE FORMBY

Newsletter

Volume 1, No. 2
August 1995



Produced Specially for the
North-West Branches of The George Formby Society
by Stan Evans, The Hollies, 19 Hall Nook, Penketh, Warrington
Cheshire WA5 2HN.

TEL or FAX 01925 727102

WELCOME to No.2 N. West

Newsletter. I am very pleased to report that the July edition was well accepted and several members, from as far as the Midlands and from Dorset, have phoned in to ask how they can get a regular copy. Well, it's quite easy, the price is 50p each plus 25p pp or for the next 3 issues £2. 25 including postage payable to Stan Evans - address on front cover.

Or Branch Organisers can order a minimum lot of 10 for £3 plus £1 pp and you are welcome to sell them to help raise extra funds for your branch.

Daily Mirror Tuesday February 14th, 1961

Formby To Wed Teacher by Arthur Brooks

Wealthy comedian George Formby chucked^u last night when he revealed his big secret. "I feel like singing 'Happy Go Lucky Me,' " he said. For at 56, George has found a new romance. He has become engaged to an attractive thirty six year old school teacher, Miss Pat Howsen, after a three day courtship.

Pat lives just twelve miles from George's luxury home at Lytham St Anne's - the house called Berydene after his wife Beryl who died on Christmas day.

George, who has heart trouble and left hospital two weeks ago, talked to me in pyjamas and dressing gown.

OLD FRIENDS

"People might think it a bit strange getting engaged so soon after Beryl's death," he said, "but I hope they will not grudge me this bit of happiness for the rest of my life,"

Then he talked of Pat, who teaches at St Wilfred's Roman Catholic School, Preston, and is the daughter of the general manager of a car firm there. She lives at Liverpool Rd, Pentwortham

"I first met her when she was nine, just a pretty little schoolgirl in ringlets" said grey haired George. "In 1954 they came down for a holiday with Pat on my boat on the Norfolk Broads. I did not meet Pat again until eight days ago. Our romance started from that moment. Three days later I popped the question."

Mold Meeting - What A Night!!!!

While Dennis Lee and Leslie were sunning it up on the topless beaches of France we were running round Mold looking for a venue to park our uke cases. Apparently the Steward of the Ex Serviceman's Club had been trying to ring Dennis tell him that the room had been double booked. The news came as a shock as we started to unload our car boots and the local members were so embarrassed that one of them suggested having the meeting in the car park.

But the N. West members of the George Formby Society are not defeatists - no fear! We simply ran around - at first in little circles - and then in different directions, to find somewhere to set up shop.

Now this is a tougher job than you might think as not every pub landlord is delighted at the thought of being invaded by 30 banjo playing George Formby players, especially if they intend banging away till midnight.

One landlord, trying to be helpful, invited us into his small 16' x 16' bar lounge, but at that stage we hadn't told him exactly what he would be letting himself in for.

Suddenly, news came on the grape vine that we could go to the Drover's Hotel and within a few minutes a convoy of cars was causing traffic jams in the little town of Mold. It must have been the most exciting event since the second world war.

Anyway, we were made very welcome by the staff and Brian Edge gave us a few sing-a-longs on the old Joanna while we got on with the job of setting up the Mikes in the pleasant little bar lounge. Amidst all the hustle & bustle someone had lost the little clip that holds the mike on the stand. Fortunately, we had an electrical engineer with us who shouted "I've got some insulation tape" Wonderful!!! The George Formby ship will never sink!

Well, we might have been a few minutes late in starting but it turned out to be an excellent night. (Dennis Lee had been forgiven.) After the usual thrash, Jim Knight opened up with Blackpool Rock and Get Cracking,

Anthony Mason & Stan Evans sang "I Wish I Could Play The Ukulele" and "I Wanna Play Like George." Brian Williams gave us "Aunty Maggie's Remedy," John Shreeve, as usual, delighted the crowd with "Home Guard Blues" and a "Medley of Melodies." Young Clare Moody charmed them all, including the bar staff, and Kevin Blanchfield, who compered the night, filled in with a number of various GF songs. Steve Baldwin, an ex professional drummer, who has played for, or met, many of the stars, filled in on the keyboard when a backing tape wasn't available. It was pleasing to meet several who were learning to play the uke.

Apologies for not mentioning the full turn out at the meeting. I'm sure that The Drover's will be inviting us back again. As George would have said "Hee, It's Turned Out Nice Again."

Coming Back From Mold I was treated to the best Formby Sound I could ever wish to hear. Anthony Mason and John Shreeve were listening to Peter Moss's new tape, when suddenly they decided to take out their ukes and join in. Believe me, it sounded terrific, and especially as we were confined to a small area. The volume was put up to the highest level and I'm sure that everybody in Penketh was wondering what had hit them. Well, it was only midnight.

Stan Evans.

BBC Radio Broadcast We've been invited to join in a radio broadcast at The Quarry, Shrewsbury, when the Shrewsbury and Atcham Council will be commemorating the 50th Anniversary of V.J. Day. We will be performing at 1.15pm to 1.45pm and at 3pm to 3.30pm, on Sunday the 20th of August, so if anyone wants to pop along please feel free to do so. Anthony Mason and John Shreeve will be entertaining.

Sir, It was reported in a Wigan Newspaper that George Formby did not appear at the Wigan Hippodrome. Well I must correct that. He was in Babes In The Wood and it was about 1932. I went to see the show with my mother and father. I also saw George & Beryl when they attended the Westhoughton Carnival about 1936 - 37. Their car was a white Pachard open tourer. George was wore a large white flat cap, white jacket and all white plus fours. Beryl was dressed in blue. In Jan 53, George & Beryl attended the third round FA Cup replay at Springfield Park when Wigan played Newcastle United, before a crowd of 26,000.

Bill Innes from Warrington writes....

I was never fortunate to see George & Beryl during my war time service abroad but I thought you would like to hear of an incident in 1948 which shows the type of people they were.

At the time I was a very new policeman in Warrington and, being on point duty this particular night, was asked to find and remove a horse reported in the middle of the road in Winwick Rd. It was a very dark night and the time of the old gas lamps (at 50 yards apart) I found this big black horse standing in the road - with no reins or halter. Well I was petrified of the thing and everytime I went towards it, it would turn its back-end towards me as if was ready to give me a huge kick. There were very few cars in those days but I saw the headlights of a car coming towards me, from the direction of Wigan. I managed to flag it down and instructed the man and lady to proceed with caution as there was a big black horse blocking the road. The man could see that I was worried and he said "Can't you get hold of it?" I told him that I hated horses and he got out of the car laughing. I could then see that I was in the company of the great George Formby and his wife, Beryl. Immediately he took a toffee from his pocket and the horse walked towards him. George shouted "bring the dog lead Beryl!" and he fastened the lead round the horse's neck so that it could be lead away.

George told me that they were returning from a show he was doing at Blackpool and he also gave his local address so that I could return the dog lead. He also gave me a hand full of toffees and told me to keep feeding the horse to stop it playing up.

They both went away having a good laugh and leaving me with the task of leading this huge cart horse to the pound which was about a mile away. They were both very lovely people. Bill.

What a lovely local story. There must be many like that around the N. West.

Wally Cronshaw - as we all know, is our Sale Branch Chairman, and he tells me that he is feeling terribly under the weather and currently attending hospital for check-ups. Now I'll never forget Wally because it was he who constantly chased me and finally persuaded me to go ahead with the production of a N. West Newsletter. On behalf of the GFS members I wished him a strong recovery from whatever complaint he was suffering from and told him that the thoughts of the members will be with him.

LIVERPOOL MEETING

As usual the meeting started a little on the quiet side with only about 15 members there. However as the night grew on, a few more members kept creeping through the door until gradually every seat was taken. Unfortunately we are starved of a few players at the Liverpool Branch, however we were lucky that Anthony Mason came along to open the show.

Anthony has just produced an excellent new backing tape for his act and it sounds really great. The backing is just like the real George Formby orchestra with saxophones, trumpets, drums etc and plenty of volume. He wanted to show off his new tape sound so we kept shouting for MORE. In all Anthony performed for about an hour and the members were highly delighted. As usual, calls for "Be Professional" fell on stony ground when he was tuning his uke and singing at the same time.

Charles & Eve Stewart came from Blackpool and gave us a few good old sing-a-longs. John Shreeve, who was suffering from a sore throat, gave us a treat with a couple of his melodies. Later, John & Anthony treated us to a 'duet on the ukes' and they sounded superb. Joe McCaffrey, our excellent cartoonist, although a little quiet on the vocals, has progressed tremendously with the uke playing. Len Phillips popped in for a few verses and popped out again.

Harry Stanford. Do you remember him? He shot to fame in 1991 when he was discovered playing the uke banjo in Formby style. Alas, he has now taken up the 5 string banjo and, sadly, he is finding that the crowds are turning away in their thousands. In desperation, they constantly call to him, "Harry, bring back the uke" but he is determined to prove to the world that he is a master of all instruments and not just the uke. I tell him constantly, "If George Formby had taken up the 5 string banjo he'd never have made it to the top." But Harry just will not listen. For his own benefit the 5 string banjo has been BANNED - yes - BANNED, from the Warrington branch and Andrew Lloyd Webber is having second thoughts about him appearing in his latest musical. Poor Harry is slowly being cut off in his prime but fortunately his 75 year old jokes are still bringing in the rich bookings. As usual Lottie did a good job of keeping Harry in order.

Jack & Jim, who were first discovered hiding behind their beer glasses, at Liverpool, gave a superb turn with three of George's songs. In another few years these lads will be at their best. Who knows it might be like the Beatles all over again.

Norma Hare of Warrington reports-

You may be interested in a couple of stories my Grandmother told me about George.

My Grandparents, Mr & Mrs Thomas Roberts, were owners of the Bay Horse Hotel for many years before, during and after the first world war. They were great friends of George Formby Senior and his wife, Eliza and the Formby children would come regularly to play with the children at the hotel.

As you know, when he was young he was training to be a jockey in Ireland, but he hated it and eventually ran away from the racing stables. He would make his way from Ireland to the Bay Horse Hotel and he would ask my Grandfather to tell his dad that he had run away as he was frightened to tell him himself. George would stay at the hotel until he had the nerve to go home.

The other story is about George's first appearance on the stage when he performed as George Hoy (His mother's maiden name) at Harrison's Little Theatre, Earlestown. George's Mother was very worried that George might be a flop so she asked my Grandmother to go along with her to cheer him on. My Grandmother's comment after the show was "Not a patch on his Dad."

Thanks Norma for the report. The Bay Horse still stands but it has been closed for about three years. There was a popular saying that would be used by the parents when the children were playing up "Go and play with Roberts's kids" and according to Louisa, George's sister, this was the type of saying that her mother would think up.

Pat Kirkwood, Former musical star and leading lady in Anthony Kimmins's 1939 film 'Come On George' is busy writing her memoirs. The question is will she mention George? It seems that Pat's legs were hailed as the 'Eighth Wonder Of The World' but I don't suppose that George noticed!!! (He - He) Brian Edge.

George Tyrer rang.....

Is anybody (1 - 2 - 3 - 4 or 5 players) interested in performing at a One Day Golf & Social Evening? It is being held in Gwent on the 28th of Sept. Accommodation and expenses will be found. If so, please ring George on 01495 725465.

War-time Story - I landed in Normandy on "D Day" and was still working on the beaches two weeks later, cleaning up etc. when one morning I saw an ENSA party coming ashore and I instantly recognised George Formby. I told my mate but he didn't believe me, so I went up to George and asked him for an auto-graph, which he signed on a 100 Franc note, as we didn't have a piece of paper between us. We had a casual chat and pulled each other's legs a bit, wished each other luck and we parted. I knew it was George instantly as I'd seen him several times at the Grand Theatre, Bolton. He was a very nice bloke.

Yours Sincerely, Albert O'Hara, Manchester.



And Another War-time Tale of George &

Beryl. Back in 1943 I was a pianist for an ENSA show that had just completed a tour of Kenya and we were well under way crisscrossing Egypt, playing to units both large and small. George & Beryl Formby joined us as we journeyed up and down the Suez Canal area, and being a wonderful trouper that he was, nothing fazed him. However he was completely dominated by his wife to a ridiculous degree, and she protected him from his adoring fans in every circumstance despite the fact that many times the troops had endured so much just to see him. He was idolised, not only by the English audiences, but by the Australian and New Zealand soldiers as well. One night he played to ten thousand N.Z. troops in an open air theatre near Cairo and they almost went wild with delight when he finished his act.

I only played for him twice, as he had brought his own accompanist with him, and I can't recall anything of unusual interest about him except for his great delight when they were able to track down some unusual watch or clock to add to his collection. He was a superb artist with a wonderful sense of North country humour and a dialect that was

the same both on and off the stage. I always carry a warm place in my heart for George Formby.

Barbara Sand, California, USA.

Several report that Beryl was far too possessive of George but little did they realise that George, like his father, wasn't a strong man, health wise, and having thousands of fans milling around wasn't the best for him. Especially after performing. She wasn't as protective at casual occasions and only intervened when he became tired.

And Another War - time Experience.

I served with the 7th Bat. South Staffs, 59th Infantry Division in Normandy 1944, and after the Battle of Noyers and Thury Harcourt, we had suffered heavy casualties and was pushed back for a rest. We were taken to a rendezvous - about a mile from the front line and on arrival we were greeted by George & Beryl Formby.

George asked if we'd like to see a make-shift show, straight away, or would we prefer to wait half an hour to see a proper show. We elected to wait half an hour and in no time at all George had taken off his jacket and shirt and was erecting a stage. His wife, Beryl, was passing amongst us handing out cigarettes and within half an hour we watched a first class show.

Yours Faithfully, G Forward, Wolverhampton. *Wonderful Story!*

And Still on the War - Front, H Quinn of Sheffield

Recalls - Yes, I remember George & Beryl when they entertained us at Souse on the North African coast. We rigged up a stage on the back of a lorry with sheeting for a back-drop. There was an howling sand storm blowing at the time and he carried on entertaining us until the whole lot had calmed down. I was in the 8th Army, 1st Armoured Division 42nd LAA and incidently the CO of our regiment was the well known Archaeologist, Sir Mortimer Wheeler. H Quinn. *Well I'd heard that particular story before and the writer was convinced that George's presense on stage had calmed the storm.*

Spare a thought for Anthony Mason - he is currently doing regular Friday Night shows at Aberystwyth which is - as Anthony says "about 20 thousand miles from Wigan." He travels every Friday through all the fields and mountains, and more fields, and more mountains, and sheep, and cows, and tractors, travelling at 5 miles an hour, until he reaches the holiday camp. He is so tired after the ordeal that they supply him with a caravan for the night. The following day he travels back to Llandudno where he performs on the pier for First Leisure of Blackpool.

Dramatic sons

WIGAN Leisure Services have pulled out all the stops for its part in the Year of Drama.

Mayor Coun Joe Clarke, writing in a booklet containing details of events and arts organisations, says that Wigan will play its full part.

He writes: "The North west is renowned for being the foremost bedrock of dramatic and artistic talent in the country and there's no doubt that over the years, Wigan has produced its fair share of citizens who have gone on to achieve national fame in the arts, particularly in the field of drama.

"There's Ted Ray, Roy Kinnear, Ian McKellen, James Hilton, Brian Finch, Georgie Fame, Rosalind Plowright and, of course George Formby. Wigan has always made its mark."

Ian McKellen, writing his life story, says that he was actually born in Bolton but came to Wigan when he was a few months old.

The booklet is available from local libraries.

Smile please

NEXT week is National Smile Week and all over Wigan, locals will be raising a smile or two. Or will they? We hope so. For there is plenty to smile about not least of all the fact that we have the best Rugby League club in the world, the best pies, the best free newspaper in the land, the pier, George Formby and plenty more.

So come on, lads and lasses give us a smile.

MOST POPULAR TUNES

EVERYBODY tuned in to the wireless. And everybody, young and old, listened to the pop songs of the day which, of course, they whistled while they worked... Some of them were among the most evocative ever written. They included: We'll Meet Again and The White Cliffs of Dover by Vera Lynn, Sally and Wish Me Luck by Gracie Fields, Run, Rabbit, Run and Underneath the Arches by Flanagan and Allen, Don't Let's Be Beastly to The Germans by Noel Coward, When I'm Cleaning Windows and Leaning On the Lamp-post by George Formby, In The Mood by Glenn Miller, Beat Me Daddy Eight to the Bar by The Andrews Sisters, Roll Out The Barrel, and Lili Marlene by Marlene Dietrich.

THE PIN-UPS

NO self-respecting wartime barrack room would be complete without its array of raunchy pin-ups. The glamour girls of the day included Betty Grable, left, Vivien Leigh, Veronica Lake, Rita Hayworth, Ava Gardner, Merle Oberon, Lana Turner. There were, of course, others less acceptable...

THE SINGERS

THINK of a World War II singer and one name springs immediately to mind. Yes, Vera Lynn. But of course there were many others. Like Bing Crosby, Ella Fitzgerald, the Ink Spots, Andrews Sisters, and Donald Peers, even George Formby. "Our Gracie" — Gracie Fields — came up with an appropriate winner: Sing As We Go.

Sky TV 20th of November 1994, Channel UK Living,

at 3pm, and the show, "A Soldiers Tale," which supposedly took place in Normandy, had two young soldiers serenading a French girl, with a banjo uke and leaning against a lamp post. One of the soldiers said, "Don't you know George Formby?" Also did anyone see The Lucille Ball Show recently? She picked up the wooden ukulele and sang/played Five Foot Two. She played it well - no miming!

"One of my treasured memories was when George Formby gave me £5," writes Bob. "I boxed three times in two nights, first at Liverpool Stadium on the Thursday, then on Friday at Blackpool Tower, winning both on a k.o. As I was going out of the ring I was asked 'Will you go back in and box top of the bill Frankie Jackson, the Eastern Area Featherweight Champion, because his opponent hasn't turned up.' Bob won over 10 rounds. "That's when George Formby came to me and gave me a £5 note, saying that he had won a tidy bit on me that night."

"I was blessed with a dad who didn't have any money," he continues, "but he gave to me one of the finest gifts of all. He gave to me his time. If only the youth of today were given more time, I am sure there would be less crime and violence, and the world would be a far better place." I don't think anyone would disagree with that, Bob.

THE SUN SHINES AT CREWE - Brian Edge

What a great turn out at Crewe for their July meeting. On a blistering hot night they turned up in their droves and Stan Evans got lost again.

The new N. West Newsletter was really well received and everyone, without exception, bought a copy and agreed that it was great value.

Crewe's Des Redfern gave another impressive performance only eight weeks after holding a uke for the first time. It must be said that his Auntie, Mary Atkinson, is a good entertainer and we all look forward to seeing her 'tread the boards' in the near future. There are not many octogenarians in the country who can handle a uke like Mary. Come on Des & Mary what about a duet?

Carl Basford took to the stage for the first time at Crewe and didn't he do well? New member, Walter Kirkland, got up on the stage and accompanied Brian Edge on the bones.

Derek Ball was delighted to report the delivery of his new Cartwright uke and Pete Healey invested in one of Stan's wooden ukuleles.

Many of the audience hadn't heard Clare Moody sing before and were very impressed with her super rendition of "You Made Me Love You." The N. Wales group looked remarkably fit and sun-tanned after their joint holiday on the Riviera. Rumour has it that Dennis Lee slept clutching his ukulele as he feared confiscation by the locals.

It was really special to have another star, Anthony Mason, with us. Anthony can perform any George Formby number you care to request. He is truly a great entertainer.

To help the beginners the society announced an improvement class but after hearing John Shreeve's brilliant playing some of the members suggested throwing their ukes in the bin. As usual Wilf Salt worked his socks off and Jonathan Baddeley, who sang "Dreambook" with Pam, accompanied the artists on clarinet and piano. Not at the same time I might add. Great Night. *Thanks Brian for your report. Sorry I had to edit down but space was short.*

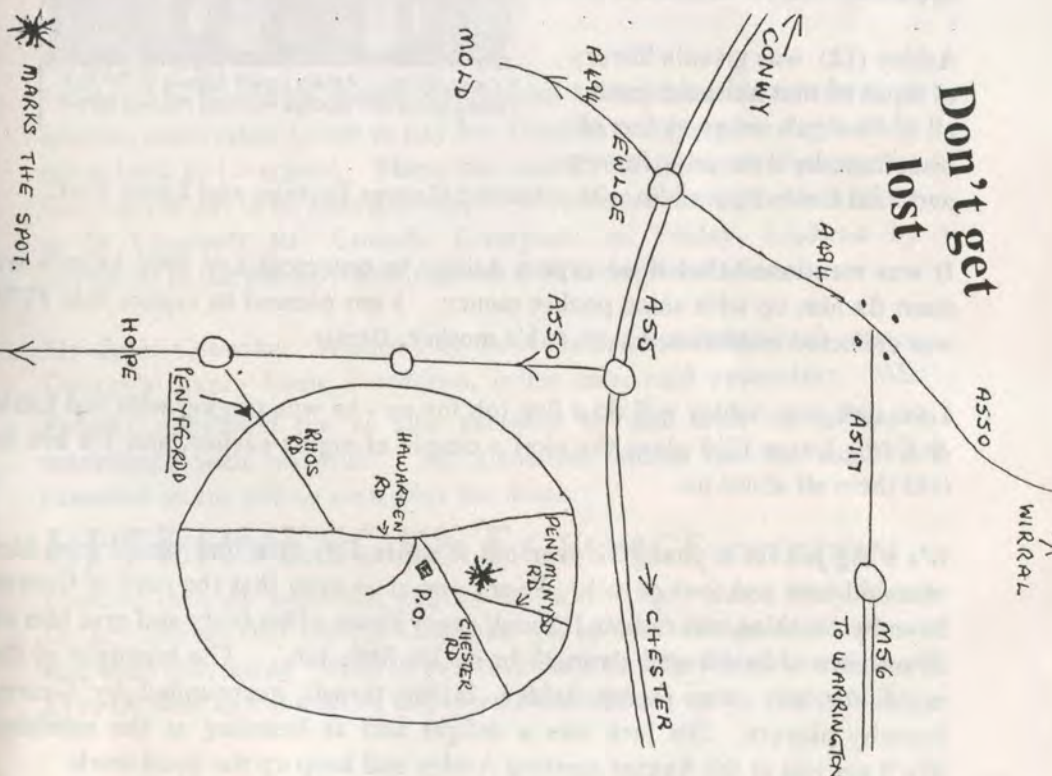
Don't Forget - Any News For The Newsletter

Loads of apologies from Dennis Lee -

“Stan” he shouted over the phone, “help me out, they’ll lynch me if you don’t put something good about me in the next issue of the newsletter - I didn’t mean to go on holiday and leave you stranded - honest - It was Leslie’s fault!” - “OK Dennis, calm down, I’ll tell a few lies about you, but don’t do it again.”

Dear Members, Sincere apologies (*ha ha*) for the mix-up (*mix-up, it was chaos*) at the last meeting. It occurred through circumstances beyond my control (*well it would be if you are in France*). Happily it turned out quite an enjoyable evening in the end, I understand.

Please note that a new venue has been arranged at The Royal British Legion Club, Penyffordd, Near Buckley - Tel 01244 550089. It is only 7 or 8 minutes drive from our previous venue and we think you will find it to be much more pleasant and better suited to our needs. There is no charge for the room but we are expected to provide a decent turn-out so as to provide some revenue over the bar. Future dates remain as the first Friday in the month excepting the October meeting which will be on the Thursday - Dates for Sept & Oct on back page. Dennis Lee on 01244 544799



Warrington's Special Meeting

It all turned out very well for our young Ashley Lynch. He was selected as Warrington's Celebrity Of The Year and the crowd of about 100 applauded him well. Now I'm sure that Ashley must be a magician as he kept making the tickets disappear and we couldn't pick any out of the bag. Finally, when he picked one out it was his own name that he chose. Anyway, we are pleased to have Ashley as our Celebrity and he received a hearty applause from the members.

Ashley (12) was given a library of tapes so that he could learn all of George's songs, a box of biscuits so he'll never go hungry and Paul Corbet gave him with a knitted George Formby and Lamp Post.

It was mentioned that if we expect Ashley to represent our little branch we must fix him up with some pocket money. I am pleased to report that £170 was collected and handed over to his mother, Denise.

I am sure that Ashley will do a fine job for us - he was singing with Sid Little & Eddie Large (Sid plays the uke) a couple of nights earlier, and I'll bet he told them all about us.

It's a big job for a young 12 year old to do so I'm sure that we all wish him tons and tons and tons of luck. Every one of us pray that the rays of George Formby sunshine will radiate through every tissue of his body and give him an abundance of health and strength to do his little job. The highlight of the night, for me, was seeing Ashley, in the thrash, surrounded by George Formby players. His face was a delight and as beaming as the sunshine. We'll see you at the August meeting Ashley and keep up the good work.



Celebrity fan... Ashley Lynch follows in the footsteps of his idol George Formby. Photo No. HCF442.

A Mix-up over Formby Funeral

By Arthur Brooks

There was a mix-up yesterday over the funeral arrangements of comedian George Formby who died in hospital on Monday.

Miss Pat Howson, George's fiancée, who was with him when he died, first put the arrangements in the hands of Mr Joseph McKenna, a Preston undertaker. The body remained in his funeral parlour overnight.

Yesterday George's mother, eight-two year old Mrs Eliza Booth, travelled from her home in Liverpool and turned the arrangements over to another undertaker. George's body was then taken by hearse to a chapel of rest in Liverpool. A spokesman for the Preston firm said "Miss Howson gave Mr McKenna instructions on Monday evening to take charge of the funeral.

The body was embalmed and it was understood the funeral service was to be at St Wilfred's Roman Catholic Church, Preston.

SORTED OUT

"Today Mr Formby's mother came from Liverpool with members of another undertaker's firm to pay her respects and have her son's body taken back to Liverpool. There has been a mix-up but everything has been sorted out in an amicable way." There will be a Requiem Mass at St Charles's RC Church, Liverpool, on Friday, followed by interment in the Formby family grave at Warrington, Lancs.

Mr John Crowther, solicitor, of St Anne's, near Blackpool, where George's luxury home Berydene, is for sale, said yesterday: "Mr Formby appointed me as sole executor to deal with his affairs in accordance with his will." Mr Crowther added that he could not comment on the will so soon after the death.

EFFERVESCENT GEORGE CHEETHAM

Looking through some old papers the other day - dated 14th March 1972, I noticed that George Cheetham got up on the stage, at Blackpool, and was reported as "Well in evidence with his effervescent rendition of Eyes Of Blue and of course, displayed his technique on the clappers."

FORMBY SONG QUIZ NUMBER ONE - by Brian Edge.

Just how well do you know George's songs?

*Answers inside
back cover*

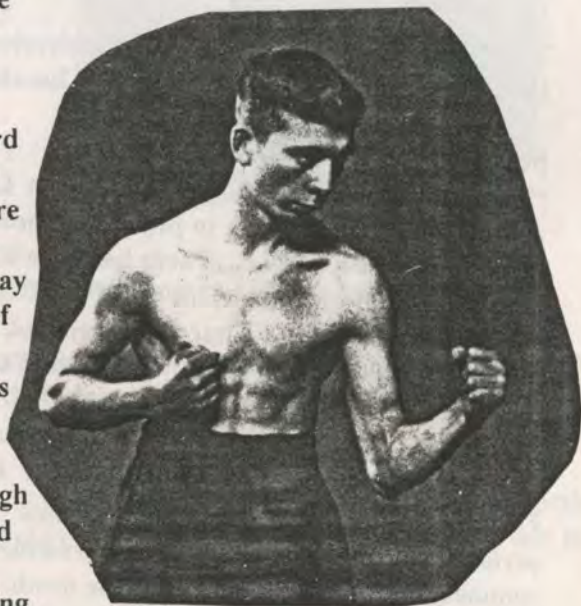
1. Who is as sad as a camel with two humps?
2. Who had a camel in her mouth?
3. Who met a country maid on marketing day?
4. Who bought two first class tickets and then walked?
5. Where would you find dressing not extensive?
6. Who will reveal her mystery if you pay her a quid?
7. What would George do rather than go to the pictures?
8. What can be found in a forest miles above the sea?
9. Where could you find a lady with beautiful battleships tattooed on her hips?
10. Who's tattooed boat turned into a battleship?

One of the old time greats

by Brian Edge

Ex Boxing Correspondent, E. Darrington Balby, wrote in his memoirs "Harry Stanford was a dedicated and tenacious boxer at a time when there were more boxing arenas in Britain than boxers." He went on to say that Harry had a great sense of humour and loved to grab the mike after his fights and tell his fans a few funny stories.

He had them, as well as his opponents, in stitches! Although on one occasion he overstepped the mark by producing a long arm banjo and after entertaining the audience with 'Way Down Upon The Swanee River' was banned from both of the Earlestown and Penketh Arenas. But Harry was irrepressible. In the mid thirties he was booked to fight Billy Barton, 'The Battling Bruiser from Bradford.' Barton was not a clever boxer like Harry, but one of the toughest scrappers in those days. He came from one of the roughest parts of Bradford, where, if you saw two men out together you knew that they must be handcuffed.



Billy was a fearsome guy with a broken nose and two cauliflower ears, a typical slugger, and everybody flocked to see his fights. Now Harry was afraid of no man, but Barton must have looked an awesome sight in the opposite corner. What a reception Harry got when the M.C. introduced the contest. It had to be heard to be believed. The M.C. went on - "In the blue corner, from Earlestown, Newton le Willows, The Challenger, H-a-r-r-y S-t-a-n-f-o-r-d!"

Harry didn't expect much of a reception from the Yorkshire crowd but in respect he stood up, dropped his dressing gown to the floor, held his gloved hands high above his head in a defiant gesture, and in turn faced and bowed to all four sections of the crowd. They went absolutely wild with excitement - what a reception! Harry just couldn't understand it, until one of his seconds pointed out that he had forgotten to put his trunks on!

The crowd was still wild with excitement when the bell went for the start of the fight. Harry's second shouted in his ear "weigh him up Harry" and by the end of the first round Harry had come to the conclusion that 'The Bruiser' was 9 stone 10 pounds!

Well 'The Bruiser' was incensed by all the applause that Harry had received and it was not long before he started working Harry over - left cross, right cross, jab, jab, jab, he handed Harry a left hook, a right hook, left hook, a right hook, - Harry got fed up with so much attention and in his inimitable style, fainted (with his left) and handed 'The Bruiser' a fish hook! This didn't please Barton at all and it was about that time that someone was recognised in the third row of the ringside seats! You have guessed right - it was Harry.

He scrambled back into the ring and faced a sustained barrage of blows. He used all his skill and prowess to stay with it. He ducked, bowed and weaved for all he was worth but the onslaught was so devastating and he had no alternative than to go down for three consecutive counts of nine. Although he was not hurt his Second threw the towel in and it knocked the Battling Bruiser out, - you see he had forgotten to take the roller out! Eight, Nine, Ten counted the timekeeper and the referee raised Harry's hand in victory!

He could still hear the crowd in the background when he found himself in a strange room with a lovely lady stroking his perspiring and bloodstained forehead. She must be an angel though Harry as she was in a mysterious haze. At last she looked deep and seductively into his eyes and with pouting lips said "Just rinse your mouth out and spit in that basin"!!!

Yes it was extremely rough in the ring in those days but our Harry was, and indeed still is, one of the best, and what is more he and his 5 string banjo are still banned by the Penketh promoter!" By Brian Edge.

(No Harry No! - I didn't really mean it Harry - I'll take it all back Harry, - don't hit me Harry, Look Harry I've taken my belt off and put it on the top of my head Harry, I know that you won't hit a man below the belt Harry! Harry DONT! POW ! SPLAT ! WALLOP #!#!#!#!
Harry sings "It Serves You Right, it serves you right it jolly well serves you right!"

Thank you Brian for such an excellent part profile on the Master. Now there are a lot of tales flying around the GFS that are simply not true! It is not true that Harry had handles sewn to his shorts so that he could be carried out of the ring easier. And it is not true that he sold advertising space on the bottom of his boxing shoes. Also it is not true that he lost every fight!!! In fact, he only lost one fight and that was with Lottie for playing his 5 string banjo. So let's get the record straight.

I received a phone call the other day from A E Edwards asking for members who had had experiences with George Formby. It was something to do a Radio Broadcast for VJ Day in August.

Now personally I find these calls extremely embarrassing to handle because, quite honestly, apart from Wilf Salt, who has spoken of war experiences, and maybe one or two more members, I don't believe a word that most of them have said.

One member boasts that he was a friend of the family and another refers to George as "A mate of mine" and yet we have confirmation that these claims are complete nonsense.

Now the thing that strikes me is this: If they were so close to George & Beryl, **WHY HAVE THEY NOT COME UP WITH A SIMPLE THING LIKE A PHOTO TO PROVE THEIR CLAIM?** I'll tell you why! Because they never met them!!! Don't believe all you hear.

Blackpool Branch

Well Stan, Charles & I must say how pleased we are that you have finally produced a Newsletter for our N.W Branches. We had a very pleasant surprise when the first copy came through our letterbox and we must say how delighted we are with it. It is excellent! Let us hope that you manage to get enough material to produce it monthly. This will be great if you can as it will help to swell the numbers at our local meetings.

Anyway we had another superb night on July 1st and we were surprised to see such a large number of members considering it was only six days after the Wintergardens weekend.

[REDACTED]

We are always indebted to the members who help us run the show. Alan Middleton does an excellent job as MC; Steve Abbott gives Charles sterling support carrying and setting the sound equipment; Marilyn Yates, Eileen Abbott, Carol Middleton, Sylvia Currey, Joan Pilkington for providing refreshments and running the raffle, not forgetting all the other lovely ladies who get stuck into the tidying and washing up. Looking forward to next time, Aug 5th. Happy plonking to all. Charles & Eve Stewart.

FORMBY SONG QUIZ NUMBER ONE - ANSWERS.

1. Sentimental Lou.
2. Our Fanny.
3. The Farmers' Boy (accept either Jack or Jim as the compiler is not sure which one of them actually came up with the goods!)
4. Dare Devil Dick.
5. Wunga Bunga Boo.
6. Madam Moscovitch.
7. Play Noughts and Crosses with Kay Walsh (and who wouldn't?).
8. The Joo Jar Tree.
9. On the Left hand side of Egypt coming out!
10. Bunty.

Did you get them all right? (I bet you peeked!)

August & Sept N.W. Meetings.

All in order so you can tick them off.

AUGUST 1995

August 4th, Friday, Mold Branch. Dennis Lee on 01244 544799
August 5th, Sat, Blackpool Branch. Eve Stewart on 01253 768097
August 11th, Friday, Liverpool Branch. Tom Bailey 0151 228 9769
August 18th, Friday, Sale Branch. Martin Harrison 0161 962 3919.
August 25th, Friday, Crewe Branch. Brian Edge on 01270 69836
August 25th, Friday, Warrington Special Meeting. Stan Evans on
01925 727102

Sept 1995

Sept 1st, Friday, Mold Branch - British Legion - see page 13
Sept 2nd, Sat, NO MEETING at the Wainwright Club
Sept 8th, Friday, Liverpool Branch -Broadgreen Conservative Club.
Sept 15th, Friday, Sale Branch - Sale Hotel
Sept 22nd, Tuesday, Crewe Branch - Wistaston Memorial Hall.
Sept 29th, Friday, Warrington Branch - Alliance Social Club

(Uke Practise Only)

The usual times are around 8pm till around 11.30pm. Entrance is 50p.

WANTED - Urgently... Snippets of news items, Anything about your branch, Have you won the lottery,? Any events,? Any articles on the N. West,? Any Theatre articles,? Photos, Jokes, Tips, Anything for sale, Anything wanted, Problems with your Uke, Problems with your wife, Problems with somebody else's wife, if so, let me have full details and her phone number.

Deadline for the September Issue is the 15th of August so - as George would say -

GET CRACKING

