

THE NORTH - WEST

GEORGE FORMBY

Newsletter 12

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George Formby

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Welcome To Newsletter No.12

and Hee Bar Gum it doesn't seem like 12 editions ago that we started producing the first Newsletter. On JULY 1st we will be ONE YEAR OLD and you can sing "Happy Birthday Dear Newsletter."

So what have we got this month? Well it certainly has been an hectic month for your Newsletter Editor. Just out of hospital, feeling sorry for myself, needed pampering whilst recovering from an operation, and suddenly my wife, Eva, was whipped into the same hospital for two operations - (it was like a scene from "Casualty") - There was no time to feel sorry for myself any longer. It was a case of three dashes per day to the hospital, washing up, vacuuming, making banana butties, washing the clothes, pegging them out - and bringing them back in when it rained. And then the worst job of the lot, IRONING!!! It's a dreadful job and whoever first thought of the idea should have been drowned in his own washing up water. There should be a law against ironing clothes and everybody should be made to wear shirts and frocks with loads of creases in. If everybody did it we would all be in fashion.



Anyway, Eva wishes to thank all who sent her FLOWERS, GET WELL CARDS and asked of her health. We are pleased that the ordeal is now over and soon she will be out and about - and doing the ironing. Many thanks to all of you.



Eva with TV star Peter Howitt. I'll bet he's no good at ironing.

I'm very pleased to report that, from the Special 35th Anniversary Night and also the Greenalls Night, we raised a grand total of £1228. 00 to send 9 year old, wheelchair victim, Stephen Williams, to Disneyland. More news on page 13.

On page 10 we've got an article on how George's mother, Eliza, hit the hard times way back in the 60s. Also an article from 1913 on George Formby Senior "That Bad Lad."

On page 16 Dave & Janet Hawkins give and account on how they got lost in New Brighton and we are pleased to receive a letter from John Sheeve who is currently living on the Isle Of Man. Many thanks to all who have sent in articles to support the Newsletter. We are always interested in reviving old newspaper cuttings.

THANKS TO ALL WHO CONTRIBUTED TO THIS NEWSLETTER

The Formby Story - Part Two.

The story so far . . . Sarah Jane Booth, George's grandmother, sang in her local pub, in the back streets of Ashton Under Lyne, Nr Manchester, and the regulars would buy her drinks. At the end of the night she became hopelessly drunk and bad tempered. The police would be called.



Her only son, James, George's father, often slept on the doorstep while she was cooling down in jail. Due to the rough conditions he developed bad health. Now read on. . .

Young James leaves home.

At the age of nine he decided that "enough was enough." He was very angry with his mother, who neglected him, and he felt that he could stand the treatment no longer. Bravely he decided to leave home to make his own way in the world. During the day he would perform (just as his mother did) for passers by in the hope that they would give him a farthing, or a half-penny for his food. Although Jimmy had no home, no food, no belongings and no-where to sleep, it couldn't be said that he was in the depth of despair because he was used to living in rough and neglected conditions. However he did have the ability to entertain and cheer people up. This proved to be his strength for the rest of his life.

He begged from no-one. During the day time he would sing his songs and as soon as darkness fell he would search for somewhere to sleep - which was usually a cold lavatory where he could shelter from the rain.

Just like his mother, he enjoyed making people laugh with simple, little, music hall type, ditties. He also collected various articles of old comedy clothing so that he could dress the part when he sang his songs. He used the name "John Willie" and often fitted it into some of his songs.

While on his travels he arrived at a small town called Todmorden, which is on the borders of Lancashire and Yorkshire, and there he managed to get a job working in a cotton mill. The pay was meagre but he managed to supplement it with a few songs to the public if they would stop to listen to him. Some ignored him and walked past. Some Publicans enjoyed his type of humour and allowed him to sing outside in the pub yard.

Continued Next Month

The Editor will appreciate any additions to the Formby Story. At the moment it is essential that we include as much information as possible on George Senior, so if you have anything to offer please write in.

Warrington 35th Anniversary Night - Continued. .

It was a great pleasure to meet the Manchester Evening News reporter, Andrew Grimes at the meeting. Ken Ratcliffe made arrangements for him to turn up and I'd been wanting to meet him for the past 7 years. He wrote an article in the M/E/News in 1989 which greatly upset the George Formby members.

He wrote:- Easily amused fans of the simple minded humour of George Formby will be breaking their hearts after tonight's showing of "Come On George" (BBC2, 6pm) It's the last of the series that most might think has already run long enough. The Lancashire half-wit, with the four string ukulele plays in this corny old farce an ice-cream salesman at the racecourse who yearns to be a jockey. Guess what? His barmy aspiration is fulfilled in the unlikeliest possible way by his making friends with a killer horse. The jokes are feeble and the songs feebler, but that won't stop Formby's loopy followers from singing along and falling over in hysterics at every childish pratfall. There should be a law against these appalling old movies being shown on pub television sets, and making conscientious drinking, impossible. This one was dug out of the 1939 archives, where it should have been left to rot. Formby's co-star is the plump Pat Kirkwood. (On the same page he gave high praises to Barbra Streisand)



Andy Grimes

After that article poor Andy wondered what had hit him. Every day brought huge piles of mail from disgruntled readers and he was continuously running to his Editor to tell him of the flak he was receiving. He rang to tell me that he was very impressed with the Formby following and that he would like to come to our next Blackpool meeting. However this didn't stop the complaints from coming in from the members. Ron Green changed the words of "Andy The Handy Man" to "Andy The TV Man"

Now there's a Northern paper - Manchester Evening News
They've got a TV critic who always spreads the blues
'Cos he don't like George Formby he's as nasty as can be
His name is Andrew Grimes and his reviews are NBG

Chorus:

They call him Andy, Andy, Andy the TV man
With words he'll bandy, bandy, he'll do the worst he can
Always so destructive, about TV
And he just "loves" George Formby OBE

He says that George is witless and gormless to extreme
At least we know what George has done - his films have all been seen
But Andy's just a never-was not even an has-been
Oh, it aint no fun for Andy the TV man

For Sale

By Bob Drinkwater
Gibson U.B.3 with
Resonator, Ukulele
Banjo made
1928 - 1929
authenticated by
Gibson Letter in
Excellent Cond.
with case £1300.
Tel. 01384 395918

He claims to be a critic, but as his judgement goes
 He favoured Barbra Streisand, instead of George, tha knows
 But wasn't it a close thing? She just won it by a nose
 Oh, three boos for Andy, Andy the TV man. - Chorus...

If he should change his image and take on a new look
 The George Formby So-ci-ety will let him off the hook
 The way to be on Form-by George, is learn to play the uke
 So there's still some hope for Andy the TV man

And yet we will forgive him for being such a scamp
 'Cos we don't bear no grudges - our ardour he can't damp
 Or else he would be swinging from - not leaning on a lamp
 So it's turned out nice again for the Andy man

These great lyrics by Ron Green were included in the following Vellum and the members were also given a copy for all to sing at the September meeting. We understand that Andrew turned up at the Midland Hotel but left without introducing himself to the members. We didn't hear from poor Andy again until the Warrington meeting when it was a pleasure to meet him and apologise for giving him a hard time. His first words were: "We were amazed at the amount of response we received from the readers. I kept the Editor informed on the material we were getting and we both agreed that we should do an article on the GFS.

Can Anyone Help young Mark Walsh of 17 Curlew Close, Crossways, Thamesmead, London SE28 8HT? He is collecting George's old 78s and will be pleased to hear from anyone who has any.

Jack & Jim will be pleased to know that their efforts at the Rainhill Variety Bandbox were greatly appreciated by Perdita - the organiser - and £510 was raised for the St Helens Hospice. Well done Jack & Jim.

For Sale by Tom Peddie on 01782 543354 - Melody Uke (Full Resonator) in Excellent Condition - All set up with new skin. Case. £100.

* * * * *

Also - GF Dallas "B" uke banjo, very attractive instrument, nice tone £120. Case tatty Brian Edge on 10270 69836

Please Note - It's the case that's tatty, not Brian!

For Sale

By Bob Drinkwater
 George Formby
 Dallas E Gold
 Plated Uke Banjo
 1937-1938 with
 case, in very good
 condition, £450.
 Tel. 01384 395918.

6 George's Debut - In Earlestown. At any of the N. West meetings and you will hear someone debating on the name of the theatre where George made his first appearance. Nobody appears to be sure of the correct name of the place! Even those who live in the area don't appear to know for sure (apart from Harry that is) what the name was! Some call it the old Pavilion, or the Rink Cinema, or Harrison's Little Theatre. Well it was none of these! The name of the CINEMA, which was owned by Fred Harrison, and where George made his debut, starting on the 21st of March 1921, was the "The Hippodrome," and that is final!!! Below is a copy of the poster to prove it.

THE EARLESTOWN GUARDIAN—FRIDAY, MARCH 18th, 1921.

HIPPODROME. - BIG VARIETY WEEK.

MONDAY'S MAMMOTH BILL.

CHARLES DICKENS'

Great Human Novel

BLEAK HOUSE

Starring **CONSTANCE COLLIER**

Special Engagement of

GEORGE HOY

Patter Comedian

The Son of the Late **GEORGE FORMBY**

Change of Songs and Patter Thursday & Saturday.

Make sure of your Seats—Book during the week-end.

SERIAL.

SUNSHINE COMEDY.

FOX NEWS

Thursday - **THE ELUSIVE PIMPERNEL** by Baroness Orczy

Although the Hippodrome was a cinema. From time to time, Fred would include a theatre act in between the films as an extra treat. According to George's sister, Louie, her mother, Eliza, asked Fred to give George his first chance to break into show business - which he did.

Now, apparently George made a complete mess of his performance. As he said in the "Friday Show," "I died the death of a dog. But we must remember that up his father's death he had spent the past 9 years away from home training as a jockey. He knew absolutely nothing about show business, in fact, his father purposely kept him away from the theatre profession so that he could train to be a jockey with his own racing stables.

16 year old George must have been under enormous pressure during the 40 days he had to practise - February 8th (when his father died) to the 21st of March - and he must have gone through terrible stress knowing that he was following in the footsteps of one of the country's top comedians - with 10 years advance bookings. During those 40 days he also had the pressure of knowing that he was the eldest son and therefore had a share of the responsibility in comforting his mother during the mourning period and around the time of the burial. With all the hustle and bustle going on around him, 40 days passes very quickly so he must have made his debut on that Hippodrome stage without any rehearsal whatsoever. There was no doubt about it - George Had Guts!!!

It's always great when you hear from youngsters who want to play the ukulele. About 12 months ago I received a phone call from Chris McVeigh's parents. 16 year old Chris had suddenly been hit by the Formby bug and he wanted to learn the uke just like George. They came down to see me and Chris spent a few pounds of his hard earned cash on a wooden uke. Apparently for the long journey home Chris couldn't stop plinking on his new uke. He'd got the bug OK! Anyway, I'm pleased to report that he is now quite proficient and has entered competitions with his Formby songs. Read on. . . . Another great young star in the making.

TAKE-OFF HAS TURNED OUT NICE



Formby fanatic wows them in Valley

It's turned out nice again for 16-year-old George Formby fanatic Chris McVeigh!

The talented teenager became hooked on the Lancashire legend after watching an impressionist one Christmas.

"I thought it was great so I went out and bought a CD and then saved up enough money to buy a ukulele — and that was it," said Chris.

His fascination with the wartime entertainer won him a whole new set of fans at the Hope Valley Rotary Club public speaking competition.

Chris, of Main Road, Bamford, not only enthused about the life of his hero, but also performed his famous number *Grandad's Flannelette Night-shirt* to delighted onlookers.

● Chris McVeigh: Formby take-off delighted audience.

Ron Thorpe Writes - Regarding your

quest for snippets of news about George Formby my contact with him happened in 1953 as a young joiner working on ship repair in Liverpool.



It was on one of the Empress boats (Canada or Australia - I can't recall which) and the it was only in port for a few days so everything had to be done at the double. This resulted in me bumping into George - literally - on a corner by the Purser's office. I ran smack into him and got a "hey up lad" off George.

The thing that impressed me was his height and I recall he was wearing striped (undertakers) trousers. I believe that he was a friend of the Commodore and possibly he entertained the passengers on the voyage. George & his wife, Beryl, always used Cabin A1 and the author, Nicholas Monserrat used Cabin 2. I think they were friends.

One of my jobs was to alter cabin furniture, to suit the passengers, and I remember that Beryl was always "fussy." Everyone knew that she was the boss. Their Rolls Royce, GFI travelled with them and always attracted attention on the dockside. You were always aware that they were on board as someone in their party was constantly being called for on the ship's speaker system.

It's incredible to think that they died 35 years ago. The first film I saw was "It's In The Air" and that was when I was evacuated to Winsford in 1940. It's still my favourite film having served in the R.A.F. myself. Hope my little piece is of interest to you. Ron Thorpe

I'm not sure why Ron was surprised by George's height. He was only 5foot 8inches.

S. O. S. From Eber Carter. . . Eber is a Bob Hope fan and his is searching for two films in particular - "Road To Bali" and "Road To Rio." For anyone too young to remember these films featured Bob Hope, Bing Crosby and Dorothy Lamour. You can ring Eber on 01902 401560. He'll be pleased to hear from you.

Jeff (Formby) Booth. . . Jeff rang to tell me that, after the Milton Keynes meeting, he appeared on Three Counties Radio - Herts, Bucks and Berks - and they did a link up with him and Gina (Ella's Daughter) on the same line. It went down very well - about 30 minutes - and they asked him to finish with a song. He chose the one and only "Bananas" - as only Jeff can play it. Good for you Jeff. I'll bet yer dad was proud.

Anthony Mason - What A Rotten Month It's Been... ☹️

"Nothing appears to have gone right this month." said Anthony. "I was asked to do a 20 minute warm up spot in a theatre and as the day got nearer I started feeling rough and my throat got tighter and tighter. I could hardly talk never mind sing. However I braved it and when I got to the theatre it was full to capacity. I don't know about going on stage to warm them up I felt more like going to bed. However, the show must go on!

As soon as I got on stage, I looked down and noticed that the skin on my uke was smiling at me - it had bursted and had a long round gash. Disaster! However the show must go on!

I decided to bluff my way through with a bursted skin - the lay audience won't know! And then, I couldn't believe it - the chap who operated the backing tape machine accidently pressed the auto reverse button and started playing the wrong side of the tape. "Keep a cool head" I thought. "George Formby's dad was dying every time he went on stage, so I must warm 'em up with a few jokes - which, incidently, went down like a lead balloon."

The Tape Bloke finally found the right spot of the tape and all went well. But then, he did exactly the same with the second tape, and also with the third one. Someone up there had it in for me on the night! - more jokes - I've never been so embarrassed in my life. It was dreadful and I felt like wrapping the tapes round the tape bloke's neck and strangling him. If anyone had said "Turned Out Nice Again" I'd have bashed 'em with me busted uke! Anyway, I'm pleased that the audience were sympathetic. . . .

And then. . . Good Morning TV wanted to film me on Llandudno Pier on Tuesday the 2nd. "No problem," I replied, "What time do you want me." "6.30 they cried." I was just about to say "No problem" when they finished with "In the morning." - "WHAT, Llandudno Pier at 6.30 in the morning?" when I realised that they'd put the phone down.

On the morning I woke up at 5am and set off to get to Llandudno. There wasn't another vehicle on the road. . . .and. . . there wasn't a soul in Llandudno. The place was deserted, apart from the film crew and the other freezing artists. Two were dressed in beach wear and they couldn't talk for shivering. It was freezing and I hung around for at least an hour waiting for something to happen. Llandudno Pier is a very lonely place at 6.30 in the morning.

Finally they started filming and I - with chattering teeth and frozen fingers - got on with the job of entertaining an audience of. . . None.

Fortunately the film didn't last long enough for me to do the solo piece as my fingers were so stiff that I think that they would have snapped off. Afterwards we were treated to a bacon sandwich.

I've just been to Liverpool to see the Royal Philharmonic Hall where we are playing next Saturday. It's a big place with over 1800 seats! I wonder if George played there. I

Ananything to share with the members? Done any shows lately? If so, send in your report and also a self photo.



Anthony Mason

The People, Sunday, June 12, 1966

HARD TIMES - George Formby's Mum

"I raised many thousands for charity in the old days - I little thought I would end up flat broke myself," says George Formby's mother.

By David Wickham

One of the most famous shows of George Formby's later years was a West End musical called "Zip Goes A Million." The theme, as I recall was that it might be surprisingly difficult to get rid of a large sum of money in a short time. Alas! For those closest to the loveable Lancashire comic, the exercise has proved astonishingly easy.



Today, I present the not-so-gay story of Zip Goes The Formby Fortune. Even in show business, where money comes and goes easy, it must be the most remarkable vanishing act since Houdini.

Today, five years after Formby died, leaving £135,000 in his will, this is the position.

HIS MOTHER - Mrs Eliza Booth, and his sister, Mrs Louisa de Hailes, say: "We are flat broke. We don't know where to turn to for our next penny."

HIS FIANCEE - Pat Howson, who received most of his legacy, said: "I am not in a position to help anyone. It is taking me all my time to earn a living myself."

Formby was the gormless lad with the corny gags, the ukulele and the outrageously double-meaning songs. But he could make money - how he could make money!

In his heyday he earned £80,000 a year. He bought his wife, Beryl, a Rolls Royce every year. They had a £17,000 yacht. Their house Beryldene (like I say, he was corny) contained superb furniture, furs and jewellery.

DISPUTE

What then happened to the Formby fortunes? To begin with there was the bitter dispute when his mother and three sisters contested his will, which left nearly all his estate to Miss

Howson. A bitterness that heightened by evidence that he cut his family off because "they were a set of scroungers."

The case was settled out of court when Mrs Booth agreed to accept £5,000 and the sisters £2,000 each from Miss Howson.

His father, also a comedian, left £26,000. Yet last week, at the semi-detached house in Stetchford, Birmingham, where 86 year old Mrs Booth lives with her daughter, Mrs de Hailes added that "to make ends meet" for both of them, she was working as a £7. 14s. 6d a week salesgirl in a Birmingham store. She said, "I take sandwiches and a flask of tea for my lunch. I cannot afford to eat out. We have a £700 overdraft at the bank and my car has been re-possessed by the hire-purchase company. The two of us are living here on my weekly wages and my mother's old age pension, with a small income from my husband." (The marriage was recently dissolved.)

What about the money from George's will? "It cost us more than £1,000 in legal fees to contest the will. The rest went on buying this house, which cost £4,600 with the renovations.

RACEHORSES

"We also went to America to visit my sister Ella and when we came back there was nothing in the bank." Mrs de Hailes lit a cigarette - "I used to be a heavy smoker but now I can't afford it" - and went on "What really set us back was buying those two racehorses. They set us back nearly £2,000 in fees for the training and stabling and we never won a penny."

Said Mrs de Hailes: "We've never known a time like this in our lives. Our Georgie's will was the last straw." Mrs Booth (that was Formby's real name) is half-blind. She said, "I spend my day sitting and thinking about the past. I have raised many thousands of pounds for charity in my day. I never thought I would be counting every penny one day."

She smiled, "And to think that after his wife died, I told George to marry again quickly!" Mrs Booth and her daughter got little sympathy last week from the girl who came along - attractive Miss Howson. At her parents home in Penwortham, near Preston, the 40 year old school teacher, who became engaged to Formby three weeks before his death, said, "They had that settlement from me and are in difficulties again. George never had any time for them. I don't feel obliged to help them financially again. In any case, Miss Howson said that comparatively little of her fiancée's legacy to her remains. I am having to teach full-time to earn a living." She said, "George's estate has still not been finally wound up. I have no idea what eventual settlement will be but it will be negligible compared to the original amount.

"In addition to the £11,000 I paid out to the family, there have been court costs totalling £20,000 - and the death duties." The good times are gone. So are two fortunes, made by Formby and his father.

The Lancashire lad had only to turn on that vast toothy grin and say, "Turned Out Nice Again," to get guffaws in Odeons and Granadas all over Britain. Things have not turned out so nice after all. Article kindly sent in by Steve Powell.

Don't Forget Your Newsletter

Evening Telegraph, Sat, Sept. 28, 1957.

Information Bureau

When George Switched On The Lights

"To settle an argument, could you please tell me what year George Formby switched on the lights at Blackpool? And could I have the names of the others who have switched on since the war and the years they did so?" writes Curious of Huncoat.



Since the war, the "Lights" have been switched on by:

1949, Anna Neagle. 1950, Wilfred Pickles. 1951, Stanley Matthews. 1952, Valerie Hobson. 1953 George Formby. 1954, Gilbert Harding. 1955, Jacob Malik (the Russian Ambassador) 1956, Reg Dixon (Tower organist) 1957, John Hay Whitney, US Ambassador.

So there you are "Curious." George switched on the lights in 1953 and they couldn't have got a better chap to do it. He's a real Lancashire lad too, like his famous father, and married to a Lancashire lass. Or didn't you know that Beryl was a Darrener? (Darwen)

Funny thing, but when she - Beryl Ingham she was - first met George in 1926, when he was appearing at the Bolton theatre, she didn't think much of him. In fact, she told a friend that if she had any rotten tomatoes she would throw them at him. Shortly afterwards she eloped with him. George, a keen motorcyclist in those days, came speeding over to Darwen from Warrington one night. He knocked up the family in the early hours of the morning, drove off with Beryl to Wigan and they were married in a register office with an aunt as witness. And soon after that, Beryl insisted on George getting a rise - from £15 to £25 a week. Proper Darrener, Beryl! She looked after his financial interests ever since and built George up into one of the most highly paid comedians in British theatre history. He set up a record in May 1947, by signing a contract for more than £1,000 a week, the highest salary ever paid to a comedian in Australia.

HONEST GRIN

Most people could not imagine George in the West End but that honest grin and clear Northern diction took him there and gave him the London success (in Zip Goes A Million) in 1951, which had long been his ambition. In 1952 he collapsed while driving his car and had to be taken to a nursing home. Told about a message from Queen Mary, he said, "Fancy Queen Mary thinking about an ordinary bloke like me. It's unbelievable. Happily, he made good recovery.

It Was Pleasing to know that George referred to men as "Blokes" (above) 'cos how I hate hearing the English calling each other "Guys." The Americans are slowly invading our country with their plastic language, and their Baseball, and their cheap - and fake - TV Wrestling programmes, and their Football, the local college has suddenly become a "Campus," and we are allowing them to do it. We must be proud of our country and stick by our own traditions. We are Men, Blokes, Fellows or Chaps! Most certainly not Guys!

RULE BRITANNIA

Disaster turns to joy - Things certainly

were not turning out nice for the Special Meeting to raise funds to send Stephen Williams to Disneyland. At the outset I was whipped into hospital and a few days before the show, my wife, Eva, was having two operations in the same hospital. Two days before the event Anthony Mason, one of the artists, was struck down with Glandula Fever and, for once, he was unable to talk. It was also being held on Anthony's 21st birthday (26th April - a stubborn Taurus Bull) and two cakes were specially prepared to be presented to him on the night. So many things were going wrong that we considered cancelling the occasion.



However, as usual, things turned out nice after all. The Greenall's Social Club received about 150 on the night and the cabaret started with a swing. Artists who generously gave their time were Paula Jay, Roy Peters and Charlie Hale. John Hickinbottom and Steve Wilson did the backing and Tom Scully compared for the night.

Charlie Hale is a wonderful comedy act. He has appeared many times on TV and for a period he played an extra in Coronation Street. He has some great comedy routines for childrens shows. However - 🗑️ - on the night he chose to be blue and some of the Formby fans were not amused. It was also too noisy for some of the members.

On the plus side, we are pleased that £825 was raised on the night - Ken Ratcliffe presented several Laurel & Hardy items which were auctioned for £150 - and the grand total now stands at £1228. We are pleased that 9 year old Stephen has booked his seat to see Mickie Mouse. 👍👍👍👍👍

Our grateful thanks to all who took part. £1228 from two meetings is extremely generous.

Harry - Although Harry & Lottie were deeply upset at Charlie Hale's blue jokes, one of the members said that he thought he saw Harry taking notes under the table. I don't think so! Charlie's jokes couldn't stand the test of time like Harry's.

14 **An article appeared** in the Sunday Telegraph:- George Formby's motorbike is going up for auction today.. This might be connected in some way to the British Comedy Society charity event at Pinewood Studios. These charity events are seldom very funny and George Formby certainly never was. These charity events are seldom very funny and George Formby never was.

GFS Member, John J Ward, replies to the article:-

Dear Sir, No doubt you are too young to remember the 1930 and 40s when crowds queued for hours to pack the cinemas showing George Formby films. Not Funny? The laughter could be heard out in the street! Have you ever seen a film of George entertaining the troops? Everyone laughing - not a single sneering face. I suspect you have been influenced by the trendy views of "Goodnight Sweetheart."

George Formby's humour was gentle and harmless - in keeping with a more compassionate age. Today's humour, like life, is altogether coarser. Nevertheless, there are still many people who appreciate George Formby's humour - witness the many showings of Formby films on television. And the flourishing George Formby Society with members all over the world, a large proportion of whom are less than 20 years of age.

I fully respect your opinion that George is not funny, but to present this as fact is offensive not only to one of our great comedians, but also to many people who would disagree with you. Yours Sincerely, John J Ward.

Thanks John for your article. I agree with you all the way! It's OK for these little upstarts to condemn George after 10 minutes viewing but they don't take into consideration that this is the type of humour that we were brought up with. It was down to earth stuff that brought us, and our parents, through two world wars. The majority of today's so called humour is utter rubbish and filth in comparison and I've always said that when Ken Dodd goes it will be the end of a great comical era.

G & B's Houses - Alan Southworth writes. . . .

Dear Stan, Just a couple of corrections to your small piece on George's houses. House No. 1 was in Lancaster Rd, Barton, Nr Preston, not Fulwood Road, Preston, and after Singleton, approximately 1945, they moved to a farm with a large gentleman's house called Sullom End, at Barnacre, near Garstang. After only nine months residence he moved to "The Spinney", Mere, which he only rented. For six years he toured the Commonwealth, Denmark and Sweden, appeared in "Zip Goes A Million" and then, after a heart attack, went over to Eire to retire. As you said, his final address was the Promenade, Fairhaven, but he did purchase a house called Clock House at Lea, near Preston, in February 1961. Renovations were started but sadly he died before he was able to move in.

I believe he also had a flat in Portland St, London, from the late thirties, which he used when attending recording sessions and meetings in the capital.

Great! Have we any more offerings on George's houses, or boats, or bikes, or cars - or anything?

The Telegraph. Tuesday August 3, 1913.

"That Bad Lad" Formby At The Palace Fine Holiday Programme

Plenty Of Fun (This 1913 article is on GF Senior)
George Formby, "that bad lad" as he is billed, opened a week's engagement at the Palace Theatre on Monday night. If there is any truth in saying that a good laugh is better than medicine for removing ailments, Grimsby doctors should take a holiday this week.



George will cause the people to laugh so much that the services of the medicoes will be very largely dispensed with. On second thoughts though, perhaps they had better not leave us. Some of them may be needed to attend the cases of aching and cracked sides. Mr F Verner Walford, the manager of the Palace, is to be congratulated upon securing one of the foremost comedians in the country as the attraction for Bank Holiday week.

The acumen was rewarded last night by packed "houses" and it needs no prophet to discern that there will be huge audiences throughout the week. By the way, patrons should note that this week the performances commence at 6.30 and not at 7pm. George Formby, who of late years has rapidly come to the forefront, has been at Grimsby once or twice before, but on this occasion he comes fresh with the honour of having appeared recently before his Majesty the King, and as he would quaintly tell you, "That's summat to swank about."

If you see Naples as a fitting preparation to dying, to see Formby is to be in danger of dying of laughter. Last night George was in magnificent form, and had thunderous receptions. And no wonder. To hear his "boyish" chats with the conductor of the orchestra (Mr Tom Stevens) - "Tommy" George familiarly call him - over such important articles as cigarette ends, carried on in a naive £2,000 voice was indescribably funny. Added to this his quaint mannerisms produced a chaos of laughter. George was no less funny in a screamingly amusing satire on a dancer, and when he told his auditors that dancers did not usually try the stage to see if it were safe, but that he was taking no chances, and ended by telling them that the business was all swank, it tickled them immensely. "Don't laugh, missus" he called reprovingly, "It puts me off!" Laughter resounded too, when the comedian took off his fellow artistes on the bill. George sang - with his £2,000 voice - the Spanish bull-fight song, "They're All Good Lads" and "Then We All Went Marching In," in his inimitable style. Though most of his patter and singing are done in his native dialect, George "can speak American" and "London" too, and displays great taste in dress as the leader of English and Yankee fashions. It is the clever manner to which George Formby has only to use the most trivial incidents to make his audience rock with laughter, his quaint manner and comportment, and his personality, that stamp him as a master comedian.

Dave & Janet Hawkins travelled 150 miles for the Stephen Williams night.

Dear Stan, Well what a wonderful evening we had for Stephen. We set off from Milton Keynes on the Friday afternoon and all went well on the M1 and M6 until we got past Jcn 19 when the traffic came to a halt. Stopping and starting for the best part of 45 minutes - all the way into Warrington. We made it to the party to find other Formby members there, and what a nice surprise to see Harry & Lottie there.

The comedian, Charlie Hale, was excellent, but the jokes, I must say, are nothing like Harry's. The singers that entertained were also superb and not forgetting the great backing of John and Steve, the drummer. The only entertainer that could not make it was Anthony, who had come down with Glandular Fever.

The spread of food was worth every mile that we had to travel and we also won a raffle prize. So thanks Stan for a great night and we hope that the money raised will soon send Stephen to Florida.

AT THE WARRINGTON NIGHT - After 35th Anniversary of George's death at Warrington we decided that, as we were staying at Chorley, we would try to find the Perch Rock Museum in New Brighton. We had a few rough details on the location but did not manage to find it. We asked a Policeman, a Taxi Driver, passers by and even the local hotel but nobody had heard of the New Brighton Re-enactment Society. Someone did point us in the direction of the Museum, which was all boarded up, and we strolled around for a good hour without having any luck. We now know that we missed an excellent night.

Thanks for your letters D & J - Typical Southerners - fancy coming to this part of the country and asking for the Re-enactment Society. 99% of our lot don't even know what re-enactment means. I'll bet they were looking at you as if you had come from another planet! You should have asked for the "Perch Rock" which is a great big ugly lump that sticks out of the sea. So don't forget, next time, don't use any big words. Be common like us. Terribly sorry you missed a good night Re-enactment- Ugh



Another Quiz- Who

is this handsome looking young man on the left? I'll bet the Dallas "D" gives him



Crewe Branch Formby fan Gary Luyt sits on his motorbike and strums his little ukulele.

away. The answer to last month's quiz was Brian Edge

Nice To Hear From **John Shreeve** in the Isle Of Man.

Hello Stan, Nick Saunders & I took our ukes up to an old Victorian outdoor theatre, which has not been used since around 1970. It is situated on Douglas Head mountain where George filmed his fight with Bert Tyldsley in "No Limit." We were just imagining an audience, when two people, who were out for a walk, heard us playing and asked us to play for them. What a fantastic spot it would be if ever we got a crowd over here for a GFS outdoor meeting.



Nick & I have been entered in the Manx Music Festival - for fun - with our ukes. The rules state that only groups of three, or more, can enter so we entered Nicks cousin and friend to come in with us - tambourine and wood block - and we've called ourselves the "Formby Melodians." The concert is at the Villa Marina so I'll keep you up to date with the news on how we go on. Best Wishes, John.

Thanks for your letter John. The Liverpool crowd are missing you and your melodies. We hope you do well in the Festival. Best Wishes.

Evening Gazette Friday May 3 1996

Formby's Norton May Roar Into Town

George Formby fans could soon be revving up while strumming their ukuleles in Blackpool. Formby fan Bob Norton, who lives in the Channel Islands, has paid £14,950 for the late star's cherished 500cc Norton International motorcycle, which was made in 1947. Now the George Formby Appreciation Society hopes Bob, who is a member, will bring the bike along to one of their meetings.



Charles Stewart, who runs the Blackpool Society, with his wife Eve, said, "It would be marvellous if the bike could take pride of place at one of the gatherings. George was a keen motorcyclist as well as a polished entertainer. Meanwhile, the Blackpool club, which always welcomes new members, meets tomorrow at the Wainwright Club, Hornby Rd at 7pm.

CHARLES REPLIES TO THE EVENING GAZETTE

Dear Mr Fleming,

The interest in the late George Formby continues and grows. Thank you for your article. George's music is still very popular with a large selection of the public 35 years after his death. His ability to entertain a wide audience with his saucy ditties, performed by Royal Command, still attracts both young and old.

At our local gathering on Saturday night a talented six year old Christopher Hill sang "When I'm Cleaning Windows." We would like to think that George would have said "It's Turned Out Nice Again." Charles Stewart.

18 Young Bob Drinkwater

has got the grumps this morning. I must have a word with Beryl - she'll sort him out. He writes . . . "Every time I send you an article you chop it up so much that nobody can read it." And "Why don't you put some Midlands flavoured articles in your Newsletter?" "George Formby appeared in the Midlands and his films were always a sell-out. His mother lived in Stetchford with one of her sons, Frank."



My but he's got one on him this morning Beryl. What have you done to him? Let's see if we can sort him out.

Right young Bob. Now the reason why you don't get any Midland stuff in the Newsletter is because you, and your vast army of pupils, don't send anything in! In this issue we've articles from Milton Keynes, London, Isle Of Man, Derby, Liverpool, Blackpool, Crewe and Manchester but not a sausage from the Midlands.

Now I've just looked at your previous two page article and found that it arrived three days after the deadline date and I only had one page available to squeeze it in. We are on the ball here in the N.West you know. Deadline dates have to be met and Newsletters are out on time. Is he feeling better now Beryl? He's not a Bad Lad. Tell him to send something in and I won't chop it up - if it's early that is.



George Tyrer writes - During my recent stay in hospital (I've to go back in for a Triple By Pass in 6 months time) the doctor asked if I would like some music and what sort do I prefer? So, I gave him a tape of George Formby - Vol.2 of the Library - and asked him to play it. He was quite amused with the fact that I had brought my own tape in. *Thanks George for your letter. We wish you success with your heath in the future.*



*** *****

George's Light has certainly been shining for Noel Currey. You will recall that in the last issue we reported that he had been taken into hospital and was receiving treatment. Well he is now at home receiving loving care from Sylvia and being taken for short outings in the car. It is hoped that he will be able to come to the next Wainwright meeting.

Good News Sylvia. We look forward to you both again at the meetings.



A Film Bloomer from Greg Croft. . . .

In the film "It's In The Air" when George mounts the motor-cycle and sidecar to deliver a message, he lifts "Scruffy" the dog out of the side-car, then pulls in the clutch lever with his left hand and supposedly kick-starts the engine. Anyone who has ridden an old-fashioned kick-start motorbike will know that disengaging the clutch renders starting the engine impossible!



Presumably the noise of the engine, even on 'tick-over' was too loud and drowned out the dialogue, and suitably modulated, was added to the sound track later? You may ask: How then, did George manage to pull away? Simple! By being pulled by a rope attached to the front forks, out of sight! As George pulls away, he doesn't let the clutch in! Quite a different subterfuge to spot, but it's there for all to see!

Sent in by Albert Seaborn

Frank Formby by Mrs Margery Brereton of Sale

Frank Formby was George's young brother - as well I know. . . . When I was a tiny little girl, he bribed another boy with a halpenny to push me off a swing in Wigan Park. My uncle was old George's tailor, and then tailored for George, who came often to Wigan with Beryl. Frank sometimes stayed at my uncle and aunt's home and this incident occurred while my sister and I were staying there also. My sister heard the plot being hatched and rescued me. This happened over 75 years ago, and we've often laughed about it.



This sounds right as there are a few Warrington tales about Frank being a trickster when he was a young boy. He would tease the girls and wreck their make believe shop. Apparently they all dispersed when Frank came on the scene. Actually, he was the favourite funster of the family and his sisters thought more of him than they did of George.

Late News. . Anthony & I gave a "GF Talk & a Song" along with two GF films, at the massive Royal Philharmonic Hall, Liverpool on May 18th. The publicity was very poor and consequently only about 150 people turned up. The best part was when Anthony entertained in the bar. Many Thanks to Len Philips for turning up and joining in.

N. West Branch Meetings and Future Dates.

N. Wales Branch - British Legion, Penyfordd (10 miles west of Chester).
Every first Friday in the month. Ring Dennis Lee on 01244 544799. Adm 50p

Blackpool Branch - Wainwright Club, Hornby Rd, Blackpool - Every
First Saturday in the month - Ring Eve Stewart on 01253 768097 Future
Dates:- Jun 1st, Jul 6th, Aug 3rd, Aug 31st, Oct 5th, Nov 2nd, Dec 7th.
Adm £1 with Buffet. PLEASE NOTE: 2 MEETINGS IN AUGUST

Liverpool Branch - Broadgreen Conservative Club - Every Second
Friday in the month. Ring Tom Bailey on 0151 228 9769 Adm 50p

Sale Branch - (NEW VENUE) Brooklands Sports Club, George's Rd, off
Marsland Rd, Sale. Every 3rd Friday, Ken Ratcliffe 0161 430 8290 Adm 50p

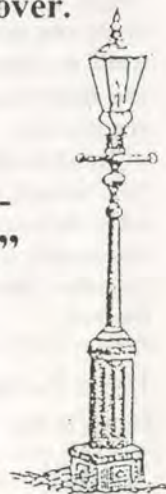
Crewe Branch - Wistaston Memorial Hall - Ring Brian Edge on 01270
69836. Future Dates:- June 28th, July 26th, Aug 23rd, Adm 50p

Warrington Branch - Alliance Sports & Social Club Evans House,
Orford Lane, Warrington. - Stan Evans 01925 727102

If you wish to receive regular copies of the George
Formby N. West Newsletter just send a cheque for 50p
plus 25p. Or £2. 25 (inc post) for the next three
issues - Payable to Stan Evans, Address on front cover.
Or Branch Organisers can order a minimum lot of 10
for £3 plus 60p postage and you are welcome to sell
them to help raise extra funds for your branch.

Deadline for the next issue is the 15th of June -
as George would say - "GET CRACKING"

ReTtElSwEn RuOy TrOpPuS



Programme of Forthcoming Events

In The North-West

Friday JUNE 7th Special George Formby Meeting at Penyfordd - N. Wales.

For further details ring Dennis Lee on 01244 544799.

Sat & Sun 24th & 25th May at Perch Rock, New Brighton. 2pm. Bring your uke. Proceeds go towards the Stephen Williams Fund.

Friday May 31st - Charles Stewart is helping to organise a George Formby Show at the Ansdell Institute, Woodlands Rd, Lytham St Annes. Artists will include: Anthony Mason, Alan Yates, Charles Stewart and Stan Evans. 7pm.

Saturday 15th June. The Crewe Branch have been asked to do a 20 minute spot at the local Rose Queen Fete. This is being held at the Rectory Gardens which is close to the Community Hall where the meetings are held.

Entertainers are needed so bring your uke. It'll be a grand day out. Bring your wife and kids and some butties. More news from Brian Edge. On 01270 69836

Saturday 29th June - Our annual show at the Penketh Carnival - Entertainment by members of the G F S. We are supplied with a marquee, a generator - for the supply of electricity - and 50 chairs for the audience. It has always been a great day and the sun always shines in Penketh.

Sat & Sunday Aug 3rd & 4th - at Wigan Pier. Entertainment by the George Formby Members. This should be a good occasion for recruiting more members. More news later.

Thursday 19th Sep. At Wigan Pier. This is to celebrate the 100 Years of Cinema. At this stage we are not sure of what is happening - more news later.

Drop a line if you have any forthcoming events

LATE NEWS - It was a nice pleasant surprise when Alan Randall popped into The Liverpool Philharmonic Hall just before we did our little show. Alan was on his way to Blackpool to help to produce a show.