

THE NORTH - WEST

GEORGE FORMBY

Newsletter 16

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Specially Produced 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 Newsletter No. 16 and what

have we got this month? Well Charles Stewart has certainly responded to my request for more information on GF. These newspaper cuttings are very valuable as they help readers to understand just how busy, and hard-working, George & Beryl were when they were at the top of their careers. Charles also sent in a good article on Wigan's Frank Randle and Arthur Chalkley caught up with Anthony Mason on Llandudno Pier

Now read on . . .

Well it was a grand night at the N. Wales meeting. Some were confused as the venue had been switched to the Community Hall, for one meeting only, and they mustn't have been listening when the notice was read out. I was one of them as I soon found out when I started to lug my cases into the British Legion.



Steve Hassall, Colin Wood, Mary Atkinson and Des Redfern entertaining at the Crewe MS Society

Personally, I think that the Community Hall, which is a stones throw away from the BL, is an excellent venue. It is nice and airy and has a grand stage. There is no bar there but the Steward at BL doesn't mind us carrying drinks over - a very nice man. There must have been about 40 members at the meeting and almost every one was keen to get on the stage. About 15 scrambled on for the grand thrash and they thoroughly enjoyed it. Lesley Lee (sounds like the name of a song) is handling the PA System really well and I noticed that she's got the knack of twiddling the right knob when it is either too loud or too soft. This is a very important job. Good for you Lesley. Another great night out.

Janet & Dave Hawkins from Milton Keynes wrote in to say that they were dead chuffed (I'll bet they don't know what "dead chuffed" means in Milton Keynes - actually it means "semi shufti") when they visited the North-west and attended the Blackpool Wainwright meeting on the Saturday night and the Wigan Pier Concert the following morning. They are surprised that we attract so many from far away parts of the country. Andy Eastwood and parents travelled from Dorset while others came from North Wales, Crewe and Yorkshire. Great - we are very lucky in the N. West. Thanks for writing J & D.

A little song entitled: "Don't go down in the wheat fields Nellie, You'll be working against the grain." 😊😊😊

The Formby Story - Part Six

3

Still on George Formby Senior

So far . . . Neglected, sick and puny Jimmy Booth leaves home, aged nine, and, like his mother, sings in the streets. Sleeping rough makes his condition worse. He uses his illness as part of the act. He is given a few spots in the theatre and when his voice breaks he turns it into comedy. Marries Eliza Hoy who gives him confidence to overcome his illness and improve his act on stage. Between songs she would cool his inflamed chest down with ice and push him on to finish his act. He changes his name to George Formby. Now read on . . .

George Robey, a top artist, saw George performing at Manchester and he immediately contacted the manager of The London Pavilion. George was on his way to becoming a star! He opened his act in London with "Good evening, I'm Formby fra' Wigan, I've not been in England long" and the audiences fell for him. He sang songs about London "Did You See The Crowds In Piccadilly" and "Looking For Mugs In The Strand" and the Southern crowds could immediately relate to them. Although a rising star he still suffered bad health.

He told a neighbour "People think that this coughing is all part of the act, and they laugh, but they don't know that I am dying."

We are not sure if George and Eliza had 14 children or 12, of which only 7 survived, but it has been confirmed that George Hoy Booth, who in later years was to become George Formby, was the first child to cling on to life and therefore the oldest of the remaining 7. Young George was born blind but his sight was restored during a violent coughing bout while he and his mother were travelling on a Merseyside ferry.

Although George senior was becoming a rising star he didn't allow his fame to go to his head. In 1904 he signed young George's birth certificate and gave his occupation as a general dealer. In 1917 he cut his first cylinder record and, unlike most artists, who were overawed by the restrictions of a recording company, he had no problem with singing to an invisible audience. He fell into it like an old professional. His cheeky style and ad-libbing to the record listeners carried him through and he won them over. At the end of his song he would tell the listener . . . "I'm just talking now so as to waste time while this record's going through, because I've nowt else to say. They'll let me know when I've finished so I can go home." He was so different from all the other artists and the listeners loved him. One of his famous sayings was: (after a bout of coughing) "It's not the cough that carries you off, it's the coffin they carry you off in." The audiences loved him because he was a man who could pick up the spirits of many even though he was stricken with tuberculosis. More Next Month.



4 Arthur Chalkley writes . . . From the Crewe Branch.

Dear Stan, Sorry to be late but I hope I'm on time with this report for the Newsletter. I would like to record that I have just seen the best one-man show around. I went to see Anthony Mason on the 31st of August, on the pier at Llandudno and he gave a superb performance. He had a large crowd, some were dancing, most were singing and good sound equipment. He's a real pro. And I'm very pleased that he has been booked for next season.

Thank you Arthur. It's really great to see these young stars polishing their act and becoming good entertainment for the crowds. We should be pleased that they will be taking George Formby, and his Ukulele, into the Millenium Age when many of the old stars, and old songs, are probably forgotten. Three cheers for the young members.



Looking through Jeffrey Formby Booth's article on "The Two Formbys I've come to the conclusion that the writer of "Northern Music Hall" doesn't know what he is talking about. There are far too many discrepancies (including last month) and the information doesn't fit in with what we have already learnt about George. He claims that Beryl first persuaded George to launch himself as a solo act upon the halls, which he did, and then, in 1921, he appeared at Earlestown. He also claims that George popped the question to Beryl at the Castleford Queens Theatre. Now these don't fit in with any of the stories we have learned over the years. He even spelt the name Jack Cotterill (should be Cottrell) wrong so I'm convinced that he hasn't done his homework before writing about the two George's.

A George Formby member named Brian
Did a show at the zoo, with his tie on
He plucked his first string, and started to sing
And got swallowed up by a lion.

Driving our amazing Gracie

I ACTED as Mayor's chauffeur for numerous Mayors in the Borough of Fleetwood, one of those being the late Captain Charles Saer. In 1936 during his year of office, I was asked to drive, accompanied by Alderman Tom Roberts, to the Grand Theatre where I was to pick up a Gracie Fields and party, the party being her mother, father and pianist.

My duty was to drive them all to the Marine Hall in Fleetwood to attend a Fishing Association Dinner and Ball. During the course of our journey to Fleetwood, Gracie was rehearsing the song which she was going to sing, I remember quite distinctly it was "Jerusalem" and her mother

remarked "Aye lass, don't strain your larynx".

After the performance I drove to the Metropole Hotel in Blackpool where Gracie was staying. Gracie had been presented with a floral bouquet, and some boxes of kippers and scampi tied up with coloured ribbon.

Tom Roberts at the time was Editor of the now sadly defunct Fleetwood Chronicle.

HAROLD WRIGHT
Queens Terrace,
Blackpool

Just a snippet - Steve King, who is currently managing the Lytham St Annes exhibition, and who usually pops into the Wintergardens, is amazed that the press have reported (see last month's Newsletter) that he is retiring from Show Business. He has no intention of retiring and feels that someone has reported the news as a prank.

Of all the friends, best pals, busom buddies etc. of George Formby, in the GFS, Steve is the only one that has come up with a photograph. As a child, Steve was a close friend of the Formby family.

Unknown Newspaper - Jun 7th 1952

GEORGE TAKES A BOW

George Formby was on the stage again last night . He appeared at the Palace Theatre, Blackpool, and got the warmest ovation of his career. The orchestra suddenly switched to "Oh Mr Wu" at the end of Max Wall's act.



Then, from the wings, where George had sat watching the show, he was led slowly on to the stage on the arm of his wife, Beryl. The famous infectious grin spread over his face and the rose to its feet. Said George, with emotion, "This is a grand tonic," And after a little speech of thanks, Beryl escorted him back to the wings and drove him home. George Formby, recovering from a heart illness, announced his retirement two days ago.

George Formby - off to earn Dollars. August 30th 1950

Unknown Newspaper. George Formby, the Lancashire comedian, sailed from Liverpool yesterday to earn about 60,000 dollars (£22,000) for Britain, with his wife Beryl, and 13 variety artists. Formby will tour 19 cities in Canada in seven weeks. He will travel 9,000 miles and give six shows a week.

He said: "Last year I earned 50,000 Canadian dollars in six weeks. This time I hope to do better. What there will be left for me I can't say. The income tax folk, and the Treasury, are still working out what they will give me for last year's tour."

He is taking half a dozen ukuleles which have been with him on four previous world tours. After Canada there may follow a 30 day tour of America. Formby is still considering that offer.

Don't Forget the Wrestle-Net ☺☺☺☺

George & Beryl - and more Dollars - Nov 18th 1950.

George Formby, and his wife, Beryl stepped ashore from the Empress Of France at Liverpool yesterday and the best part of 50,000 dollars clinked pleasantly into the Treasury. The Ukulele Man is back from a seven week tour of Canada that succeeded to the tune of 200,000 dollars in box-office takings. 50,000 dollars is George's share. "The British Government will take most of it in income tax and leave me with a bit of pocket money," said George, ruefully, "Still I don't mind. We had a good time and I feel I've helped the old country.

Audiences from Montreal to Vancouver, had a good time, too. And the people who told George before his first Canadian tour last year, "Lancashire humour won't go over there," are trying to look as though they were only teasing anyway.

Even George was nervous at the reception he might get, but he need not have worried, Canadians, many of them only one generation removed from the Old Country, packed in to laugh at the North Country jokes. The 7,000 seat Forum Theatre was booked up months ahead for the start of this last tour. In the seven weeks, George and his 20 strong show covered nearly 20,000 miles and visited 21 towns and cities, including Winnipeg, Caigary and Hamilton.

And what now? George and Beryl are going to rest at home in Lytham St Annes. There will be no pantomime engagements this time.

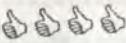
Formby's Hopes (another unknown newspaper) Dec 8th 1952

Today, George Formby saw an ear specialist in Manchester. After that he went to the Manchester office of the BBC to make a recording for "These Christmas Times" which Gale Pedrick has written as a Christmas edition of "These Radio Times" which proved so popular earlier this year. He longs to get back to the stage.

It will be George Formby's first appearance since he collapsed at the peak of his triumph in the West End musical show "Zip Goes A Million" in April. He had an attack of coronary thrombosis, Queen Mary sent him a get-well message and added "Don't work too hard." But the doctors forbade all work for at least a year, perhaps for ever, and ordered a complete rest.

THE SPARK

Mrs Beryl Formby, after 27 years of marriage happiness with her husband, set herself the task of nursing him back to health. She, and rest, have worked wonders. It was Gale Pedrick's invitation to George to record in "These Christmas Times" that was the spark that fired him with determination to see what the doctors said about his possible return to the stage. He, at once, fixed up the appointment with his cardiologist. The result should be known by Wednesday.

Don't Forget The Newsletter 

Looking through some old letters I found one from Piet Geurts of Holland. Piet, a very keen George Formby fan, has written to Wigan many times to ask them to put up a statue or anything in memory of George. They replied stating that they don't wish to go back to the "cloth cap age." Now it is very difficult to understand what they mean by that as George never wore a cloth cap and "Wigan Pier" is nothing more than an exhibition of the "cloth cap age." Naturally, Piet was extremely disappointed. He wrote this letter. . . .

Dear Stan, A lot of world famous movie stars are - or were - born in England and some years ago 5 of them got the honour of a Commemorating Stamp on your isle. Charles Chaplin, David Niven, Alfred Hitchcock, Peter Sellers and Vivien Leigh. David Niven must have been the first American movie star to join the army during the 2nd world war and Chaplin, no doubt, risked his life by making the film, "The Great Dictator," in 1940. The leading role from Chaplin, as Adenoid Hynkel, with a big mouth and small mustache, was in fact Adolf Hitler.

The 5 entertainers they chose have all made their "bread & butter" in the U.S.A. I've nothing against these stars receiving honours but what about the many stars who didn't desert their country. George & Beryl stuck to Europe and entertained us while the Germans were being driven out. They will always be remembered for that.

Next year will be exactly 50 years that liberation began in Europe. Surely the stars like George - not forgetting Beryl, who supported him all the way - should be remembered and one way is to produce a commemoration stamp. Piet Guerts.

I wrote to ask if George could be remembered and they replied stating it wasn't possible. However, I've just noticed Margot Fonteyn on the latest stamp. Haven't heard from Piet for a couple of years but I'll bet he is still "strummin" for George.



8 Dennis Lee from the N. Wales Branch . . .

Our September meeting was held in the Penyffordd Institute, which is opposite our usual venue, and we were pleased to welcome young Adam Smith and family for the first time. Young Adam is doing marvellous with his playing and we are looking forward to hearing the vocals. Crowds at the back were shouting "We want to hear Adam sing!" So you'd better get singing Adam. He teamed up very well with Dennis Lee and also with his dad, Peter, and Colin Wood.

The usual Crewe contingent attended as did Jack & Jim and Stan Evans of course. We had a smashing evening and during the thrash we were joined by Mary Atkinson and Tom Peddie. The feature of the thrash is that almost everyone is on stage with only a handful left in the audience.

On Sept. 8th we had a stall at a local Car Boot Sale and made a profit of £60. Many thanks to all those who attended and offered items for sale.

It may seem like early days but on Friday 6th December we are holding a Christmas Special when we hope to provide a free buffet. There will be a bottle of whisky for the winner of a competition for the best dressed person in the Christmas spirit.

Just think - Jack & Jim could come as the Nativity Donkey! Chris Moody as a Shepherd and Kevin Blanchfield as a Fairy on a Christmas Tree. Come along and let your imagination run riot.



Mary Atkinson enjoying a good session on the uke.

On a more serious note I would like to thank everyone who supported me in my successful endeavour to join the GFS Executive Committee as Vice Chairman.

Thanks Dennis. I like the idea of the Christmas spirit. Can I come as a Banana? Well, we eat 'em at Christmas. Pleased that we have representatives on the GFS Committee. Best of luck.

Anthony Mason and I did a "Talk & Song" show on the 19th September at the Standish, Wigan, Library and a smart looking man brought in a photo for us to look at. It was a photo of George & Beryl with all the artistes in his show at Gt Yarmouth. The time was when George had his car accident - 1959.

The man, Nolan Abbott, was one of the harmonica players in the Morton Frazer Harmonica Rascals, who were appearing with George, and the locals, in the library, told us that he was an harmonica player - although he never wishes to talk about it. The Morton Frazer group was very popular in their day so we felt honoured to be in the Nolan's company. Does anyone remember the dwarf who did slapstick in the group? He was great! He was also on the photo.

Crewe are doing well! - It's a Good Night! 9

Steve Hassall tried out his new drum kit at the August meeting. It was a resounding success! Apart from making our backing tapes sound like a real band the very presence of drums and drummer added dressing to an otherwise bare stage. In addition the drum backing is a great help to anyone performing without backing tapes. Being a uke player Steve has a good idea just how much "welly" is required and considering that he had only had the equipment for a few days he performed magnificently. Steve bought the drum kit specially for use at our Society meetings - a fine gesture and we all look forward to the end of the Bowling Season when he will be able to regularly attend our concerts.

It was a pleasure indeed to have with us for the first time Hilda and Alan Southworth from Preston. Members were delighted with Alan's performance and they all joined in with the "Lottery Song" which most were hearing for the first time. Alan's rendering of "Bell Bottom George" was also excellent.

Arnold Osborne made his Crewe stage debut with a medley of songs and what a good show he put on! He certainly has no need to worry about getting up in the future. I wonder who will be next to tread the boards for the first time - Barry Bowler perhaps?

Young Gareth Sumner gave his best performance to date with his first performance of "Get Cracking" and one could see him grow in stature as he realised what a good performance he was giving. With his obvious enthusiasm he is sure to make an excellent player and we look forward to hearing a lot more from him in the future.

Pete Smith accompanied by Adam extended their repertoire with "In a little Wigan Garden," Stan Evans performed well and in addition produced more of his "Miracles", and Mary Atkinson our most senior lady player turned up sporting a brand new ukulele! Look out for Mary on stage in the near future! I can tell you she's great!

Derek Ball stood in for Jonathan Baddeley who was on holiday and did a fine job as Master of Ceremonies.

The bad lad

Continuing the occasional series in which Blackpool showbusiness expert BARRY BAND looks back at famous and, in some cases infamous stars who have graced the resort's stages over the years.



STAR of stage, screen and magistrate's court, Frank Randle is still the Blackpool show business legend nearly 40 years after his death.

Funny thing, though: the antics of this fruity comic of the 40s and 50s would hardly raise an eyebrow today!

What's so special about taking a bottle on stage, passing wind, insulting the establishment and smashing up a dressing room now and then?

Perhaps the reason for the legend of Frank Randle is that he was the pioneer, pushing back the frontiers for the likes of Freddie Starr and Billy Connolly. Whatever the reason, Randle was still a very funny comic.

Revue

Exactly 40 years ago the rumbustious career of the old lad — we remember him as his Old Hiker character — finally came off the rails. He was in Blackpool's Devonshire Road Sanatorium (as it then was) with tuberculosis brought on by a lifetime of boozing and heavy smoking.

Frank had collapsed at the Queens Theatre, Blackpool, midway through a November week in a revue titled, with some irony, "I'm A Good Boy Now."

Like all good troupers, he thought there were a few miles left in the old bones and he ignored medical advice.

After a period of recovery, he sallied forth in January, 1957, around James Brennan's Lancashire theatre circuit, including a February week at the Queen's, Blackpool.

This was a genuine "farewell tour" and everyone knew it. The comic died at his Bispham bungalow five months later. He was only 56.

Frank was a top-of-the-bill star for only 20 years but seemed to have been around a lot longer, thanks to his frequent headline-making exploits.

Perhaps 1952 was the peak of his notoriety. That was the year the inebriated comic's Lagonda car had an argument with a stationary tram at 5am (Randle claimed the tram driver was drunk) and the year he quit his Central Pier summer show after the police had nailed him for restoring cuts made to his script by the Lord Chamberlain, the Government censor.

Randle was born Arthur McEvoy in Wigan in 1901 and lived in Blackpool from an early age.

According to his own record he first appeared on the stage as a "supernumary" in a touring revue titled "Charlie Chaplin Mad" at the old Palace Theatre 80 years ago this month.

Topped

After 20 years as an acrobat and struggling comic — with two name changes — he made it to the top in 1936 when his two comedy characters, the Old Hiker and the Seaside Boatman, made an impact in the Opera House summer season show, which starred George Formby.

Randle topped the bill in seven more Blackpool season shows, toured in his "Randle's Scandals" revue and made 10 low-budget comedy films.

But his dark side, which showed in repeated tantrums and clashes with authority, brought it all crashing down in the 1950s.

His immortal line as the Old Hiker "By-eee, I've supped some ale terneet," is a kind of epitaph to a rebel who became star.

Nice Story from Louie . 11

Louie - George's sister - told me a nice little story about Frank Randle. It was way back during the war years and she and her brother, Frank were working for E N S A.

Frank Randle, who was a friend of the family, approached them and asked why they were working for E N S A when they could be working for him in his new revue. As their contract with E N S A had almost expired they decided to take him up on his offer.

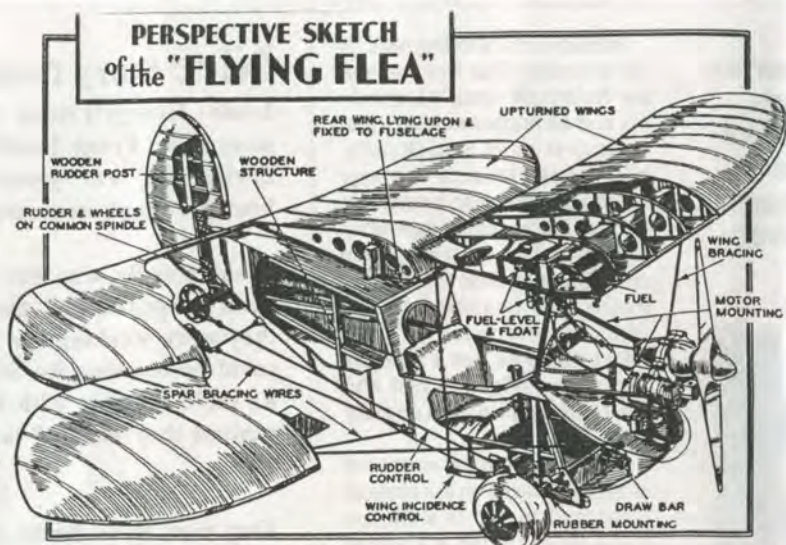
They went to his house, to sign the contracts, and found him drunk. They also found that he was completely barmy with his method of doing business. At the rehearsals he asked what their act would consist of and when they told him that they would be doing their "song & dance act, plus uke" he told them that they couldn't do it. He said "I've already got singers and dancers and I play the uke myself."

When asked what they could do in the show, he replied, "You'll just have to sit on that form." They actually received pay for just sitting on a form and watching the show. Apparently that was typical of Frank Randle.

Bumped into John Guy at the Blackpool meeting and I'm pleased to report that he is looking very well. 12 months ago he looked quite ill but he's certainly well now. John was one of the founder members of the GFS and for many years he produced the Vellum magazine. He is a grafter who dabbles into anything, car repairs, painting, wine making, herbs, concreting, making uke banjos, engineering - you name it and John can do it. Nice to see you looking well John.

Don't Forget
an article
for the
Newsletter

You
can
learn
a lot
from
George's
songs!



by Brian Edge.

Lots of interesting bits of social history can be gleaned from many of Georges songs. If there is something in the lyrics of a song that you dont quite understand then you have probably found something of interest. George van Dusen's song 'Our Fanny's Gone All Yankee' (1944) tells in great detail of the effect on the British girls and their families, as a result of the G.I. invasion of these islands during the last years of the 39-45 War. The song lets one accurately re-live that period of our history. Alan Southworth wrote an excellent article in 'Vellum' (Winter 1995) where he clears up a number of mysteries. It is well worth re-reading.

In performing the song 'My Little Goat and Me' I was intrigued by the line "Some airmen up at Hendon searched for the flying flea". I asked myself whether it was just poetic licence or did it refer to something in reality? I have now found the answer. In the 1930's F.J. Camm, the Editor of Practical Mechanics produced a series of articles telling readers how to make a DIY aeroplane for only £75. Air Stations like Hendon frequently featured these little biplanes in their airshows. The name of the plane was the 'Flying Flea'. There was even a Flying Flea Club and International races were held in 1936. With its 13 foot wing span it flew at an average speed of 56 mph but due to the many fatalities which occurred it was eventually officially grounded.

Brian Edge (South Cheshire)

Turned Out Nice Again . . . Well I'm very pleased that the North West Area has some representation on the GFS Committee. Alan Middleton, Blackpool, was elected as a committee member and Dennis Lee, N. Wales, was elected as Vice Chairman and Archivist.

We wish them tons of success. It was also pleasing to note that every position was filled on the committee. This must be good for the society. It was also refreshing to see that the members rallied to and took interest in the AGM. Unlike last year, when it looked like an exhibition of empty chairs, the room was filled almost to capacity. Again this is good for the society.

Stan Evans failed in an attempt to lift the President's job - which was quite a relief as I've never fancied parading round with Lord Mayors, and Eve & Charles Stewart automatically stepped down from their attempt to gain positions. The whole exercise, which failed, was to gradually promote Eve to the job of President. A job that she would be suited to ideally. Perhaps another year. Anyway you are doing an excellent job at the Wainwright Eve so carry on the good work.

I am very pleased that the society have an experienced man for the job of Editor. Tony Thornton looked every bit the part as he dictophonically cameredised the members for articles. Can't wait to see his first issue, should be good.

Any articles for the Editor should go to Thornton Systems Ltd, Gelt Mill House, Castle Carrock, Carlisle CA4 9NQ.

Cliffe Royle from Frodsham, writes . . .

Rather strange is it not, but after trying to get the hang of the split stroke for the last 18 months, I think (hope) that I have eventually, today, made a breakthrough, but nothing more. Still you know what it is when you start getting near the sell-by date.

There is a fair bit of interest developing locally in hearing the Uke played, especially George's songs, and although I am a lousy player it seems I can give a little pleasure to people in such places as residential homes. Currently I am booked for the Wrens Association in Chester (War time thrash), and the local branch of the U3A (University of the Third Age). All sing-along for fun, and of course at no charge.

Cliff Royle - worst player in town; but I enjoy it.

Thanks Cliff. Nice to know that you are entertaining and enjoying it. Backing tapes are ideal if you are struggling with the uke. They add the professional touch and generally, the audience come along to be entertained - not necessarily to hear uke playing. The Jack Jones video is a great help to anyone wishing to improve their skill with the uke. Keep strummin Cliff.

Teacher: Now Johnny, I want you to tell me, what was Ghandi's first name?

Johnny: Goosie Goosie sir. 😊😊😊

Grandchildren - by Stan Evans.

When the working week is over and you need to take a rest
It's on a Friday evening, the night you love the best
You go home to the missus and the slippers waiting there
The dinner on the table and a cosy, comfy chair

Paradise is calling as you close your tired eyes
Shortly you'll be drifting and floating through the skies
But no! Something's forgotten as you soon become aware
The telephone is ringing and you shoot out of the chair

With rubber legs you scramble and stagger through the hall
You musn't keep 'em waiting or else you'll miss the call
Who can it be? you wonder, as you lift it to your ear
And a voice booms out "Grandad, Why are we waiting here?"

"Where have you been?" they're shouting "Have you forgotten us?
Get down here quickly or we'll have to catch a bus."
That intended peaceful evening has suddenly fell apart
As the sound of two grandchildren are tugging at the heart

"Be with you in a moment" I say in half delight
While searching for the car keys to roar into the night
I drive up to their gateway and see them standing there
With books and bags and boxes and with eager eyes they stare

The sound of two grandchildren soon drives away the blues
With a car load full of chatter and all the latest news
That intended peaceful evening has now completely gone
"Let's have some music grandad, put George Formby on."

"Let's have Cleaning Windows and Leaning on a Lamp"
Now the car is bright and cheerful though outside it's dark and damp
We arrive upon the doorstep and ring the front door bell
"We're staying with you Nanna," both voices start to yell

"We're staying here till Sunday, and then it's back to school
I'll play you snooker, Grandad" - "No! Let's have a game of pool
Books and bags and boxes are strewn across the floor
As the legs of two grandchildren shoot through the playroom door

"It's my turn to play Grandad," one eager voice will shriek
"Oh no it's not, it's my turn, you played him all last week"
"Now lads, play together, and the winner can play me
Let's have a little quiet while I pour a cup of tea."

I steal away so slowly and leave them playing there
Empty out the teapot and sink into the chair
"Come and help me Grandad, he's always cheating me"
"Okay lads, don't argue, I'll be the referee."

"Time for bed," shouts Nanna, as we tidy up the mess
A bath, or shower, and pyjamas, some kisses, and "God Bless"
The bedroom door brings silence and I creep the creaky stairs
All is peace and quiet - so we sink into our chairs.

John Guy reports

With regards to Hilda Hunt's article about George & Beryl at Middleton Towers, I Remember hearing about a man named Billy

Winsor, who played Jimmy Clitheroe's stooge on TV, having a video tape of G & B at the Towers sponsoring a motor racing scramble. It was arranged for me to go to the house to see it played. It turned out to be one of my most boring days as I had to sit through hours and hours of Abbott & Costello films before he brought out the Formby tape. It was embarrassing but I didn't complain otherwise he may not have shown me the tape. I took £30 with me (which was a lot of money then) but I told that I only had £10. He replied with, "That'll do," and took it from me. I suppose if I'd told him that I only had £5 he would have accepted that.

John Guy.



George Owned a Horse - Did You Know? April 2nd 1952?

PERCY HAS A MISSION NOW by Peter Vane

Meet Percy Piggott, the two year old horse with a mission - to register a first win for comedian George Formby.

The smiling Lancashire lad, who started life as an apprentice jockey and rode 30 - odd times without a winner, still pines for a turf success. His first venture into ownership class with pre-war Bonanza was anything but . . . Now it's Percy's turn.



George and Percy have never met but trainer Major Michael Pope's judgement was enough - "OK, buy him," said George. The name was borrowed from the character George plays in his latest show, but just to round things off it is hoped boy jockey Lester Piggott will soon be guiding Percy past the post. Lester's father, Keith, served his apprenticeship at the same time as George.

But Bert Packham will be in the saddle for Percy's first outing at Windsor on April 9th. Betting? "Well" said George, "£2 is my limit, you can't keep book-makers in limousines by taking the cash off them

From Jon & Pam Baddeley . . .

Dear Stan, I'm sure that our members will be interested to hear that whilst looking through various song books for suitable material to use with my class at school I was amazed to find one called "Whatever You Do Keep Fit." This, as you know, is one of George's songs from the film "Keep Fit."

Needless to say my class, and indeed the whole of our Infant Department are learning it. I couldn't resist the opportunity to introduce these youngsters to someone I have grown to love since I came to the society as an onlooker four years ago. I would be interested to hear if anyone else with connections in schools has come across any other of George's songs being used. *Thanks J & P for your article. About three years ago I received a phone call from a teacher at one of the Wigan schools. She told me that, for the Christmas Party, she gave her pupils the choice of singing either Christmas carols or George Formby songs. They chose George Formby so could I send her a few songsheets for the pianist. I told her that not only would I send her some music but I'd also see if Anthony could come along also to get them started, which he did. They were very pleased with the service.*

Don't Forget the Lewser-Tent ☺☺☺☺

Did You See "Call My Bluff" on BBC1 TV 2nd Sept?

One of the questions asked was "What is a Nebel" and the panel were given three answers to pick from. Well, the first answer was that the Nebel is a Hebrew ukulele as played by George Formby and Alan Corrin demonstrated (mimed) how George would play it. The answer in the end was that the Nebel is, in fact, a Hebrew type of ukulele and the other two clues were false. So now you know what a Nebel is!

.... or "Call My Bluff" again, on 12th Sept?

The question was "What is a Ukeke?" Steve Punt claimed that it was a misprint on the side of George Formby's luggage, and Sue McGregor said that it wasn't a misprint at all. In fact it was a small ukulele.

Alan Corrin, who had to take a guess, came up with the right answer when he demonstrated George playing "Lamp Post." Apparently - and not many people know this - a Ukeke is a baby ukulele. So now you know! Although I'm not quite sure of how they pronounce it.

.... or, "Coronation Street" on Wed 21st Aug?

When Betty Turpin (Betty Driver) said "They'll be singing George Formby's dirty little ditties." But I wonder how they can refer to George's songs as "Dirty little ditties" compared with the vulgar trash that is broadcast today. Must drop 'em a line to find out.

News from the Old Newspapers - Thanks to Charles Stewart. 29th March 1939 (unknown newspaper)

Comics are wilful. Some want to play Hamlet, Mr Will Hay wants to produce himself and George Formby shows only the faintest sign of the disease, as yet. But it's there.

Back in London yesterday, after his holiday, grinning and well, he said to me: "I want to do a racing film. I've been after them to let me do a racing film, because that's right up my street. And now they're going to let me do one and I start in May." Said I: "George, I'm glad, but your film "It's In The Air" has turned out to be the most popular comedy of the year, just think how the customers would love to see you in a navy film. It'd be a treat for them."

Said George: "That's right, good idea. I'll tell them you said so, just as soon as I've done my racing film. So you see, with George it's slight but not serious.

DAILY HERALD October 17th
193????? - either - 38 or 39.

George Formby Hurt in Hurdles Race

Crowds at Northolt Park racecourse took a deep breath and prepared to cheer George Formby, the stage and screen comedian, home to victory in the hurdles race on Saturday. He was riding Lucky Bert, but George and Bert trotted home in stony silence, for the horse ran out at the last hurdle but one - just before reaching the stands.

George, whose hands and legs were injured by striking the hurdle, was heartbroken at his luck. His hundreds of backers were bitterly disappointed.

The comedian spent the rest of the afternoon in the jockeys room, "going over" the race he had seemed certain to win. Formby, by the way, has film contracts to fulfil, but the film company take the view that it is beneficial to his screen work if he spends his leisure time doing something that gives him real pleasure.

He will have further rides at Northolt Park, but intends first to get his weight down to less than 10 stone.

Daily Express Nov 28th 1939. .

Twelve people were arrested yesterday for sending messages in Norway over the radio to U-Boats. That happens to be the theme of Mr George Formby's new film except that Mr Formby's task is harder. He has to make it funny.

A George Formby member named Fred Was singing and playing in bed The missus replied: "Sling your hook, get outside You can practise your uke in the shed." Bum Bum!



HIGHLY STRUNG

Name: Charlie Hilder

Bargain: ukulele, £36

"I came for the bayonets, but I've bought this ukulele instead. I'm a collector of militaria, especially cold steel. Too expensive for me today. The ukulele? I bought it for my wife. She says she's always wanted one. I suppose I'll find out now, won't I?" Chas Hilder of Waterlooville is not a regular buyer at auctions. The Jetel ukulele, in its fitted leather case, fetched £36. "I got it for a good price, I wouldn't have paid much more. No, ma'am, can't play. Not a musician, map-maker by profession. My wife can't play either but it's got an instruction leaflet."

Blackpool Evening Gazette - November 8th 1942

Sent His Love To Blackpool

George & Beryl Formby touring Northern Ireland are giving two or three shows at camps every day this week. Everywhere a great reception awaits them. George, who has taken 9 ukuleles with him, has already sung to 50,000 troops since the outbreak of war and made £40,000 for charities. At one of the first of the shows in this Irish tour he met a young man, from Blackpool, who was appearing in the concert party which had ben recruited for the event.

"GRAND EVENT"

The boy's name was Howarth, writes Beryl Formby to the Evening Gazette, He is an impersonator. "I must say that he presented a grand act and made us feel proud that we had such talent in Blackpool. He asked, if I was writing home, to give Blackpool his love.

Blackpool Evening Gazette - May 24th 1940

George Formby rushed back from a fortnight's record breaking business in Edinburgh and Glasgow so as to be to able to spend his 36th birthday at Beryldene, near Blackpool, the home at little Singleton, of which he is so fond.

At the gate Judy was barking a joyous greeting and in the hall Mrs Ingham (Beryl's mother) was waiting for the son-in-law she worships. At teatime the birthday cake appeared and there was great fun as George cut it with mock ceremony. Pictures in Blackpool in the evening completed a right good birthday.

SOMETHING WORTH WHILE

What pleased George more than anything in the last fortnight of records, civic receptions and luncheons was a visit he had from four marines. "What they told me made me really feel that I'm doing something worth while in the war," he said.

Transporting troops a few weeks previously, the Marines were bombarded by wave after wave of enemy aircraft for three and a half hours. Suddenly someone turned on the radio and who should come over the air but George singing "Mr Wu's a Window Cleaner Now," from the Palace, Manchester.

Get on your bike
and send an article
to the Newsletter



"You've no idea how funny you sounded to the accompaniment of that heavy bombing," they told George. But you put new life into us, because a few minutes afterwards we brought down one of the bombers. This week George & Beryl go to London for preliminaries of his latest film, in which George is to be a "speed cop" and, not being titled yet, is referred to as Formby No.10.

Teacher: Now Johnny, I want you to name an animal that lives at sea.

Johnny: A ship's cat sir 😊😊😊

Three Cheers for Lottie - Bah Gum, she looked well at Blackpool. I thought she was Harry's daughter when I first saw her. She looked wonderful! She handed me a bag and asked me to open it. "A little present for you" she said. Well, what do you know? Inside there was a chubby little monkey holding a "banana" - Wonderful. I'll store it with all my other banana gifts and treasure it for life. Thank you Lottie, I'm very pleased that you are looking so well.

LOTTIE WRITES . . . Dear Stan, I would like to thank you and Eva for visiting me in hospital and bringing the lovely flowers. Also Joan and Jim Bramwell who came as well and also kept Harry from starving.

I would like to thank all the friends from Blackpool, Broadgreen, Crewe, Sale and also Milton Keynes for their "Get Well" cards and their phone calls. Anthony Mason was a surprise visitor. I cannot thank you all enough for your kindness. *Thanks Lottie. George's light is still shining for you.* 🍑🍑🍑🍑



But what about young Harry? He told me that some "barm pot," at Blackpool, had accused him of telling smutty jokes on the stage. The man must be mad if he thinks that our Harry has resorted to vulgarity. Not on your Nellie! He doesn't need to! He is a star!

Mind you, at the September meeting, the large Spanish room, at the Wintergardens, didn't do him any favours. The acoustics were very poor for those sat near the back and we couldn't hear a word he was saying. He rambled on for about 3 weeks and we couldn't hear one word. He might have been telling 70 year old mucky jokes for all we know, but I don't think for one moment that he was. He's too proud for that.

I noticed that he didn't bring his 5 string banjo out. I wonder if he's been banned from playing it at the Wintergardens? If you hear anything let me know.

But - What About Janet Hawkins? This is the young Formby fan from Milton Keynes who got lost in New Brighton. George's light certainly wasn't shining for her last week-end. She kept getting lost and led me astray in Blackpool. 😊😊😊😊😊😊😊😊😊😊

Well, for the Blackpool meeting, she stayed with Eva and I and on Monday we took her to the railway station for the 5.45pm train. Little did she realise but for half an hour she was sat on the wrong platform (there's only two) and the train had long gone. What are we going to do with you Janet? You nearly finished up in Scotland

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:- 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:- Oct 22nd, Nov 19th, Dec 17th. 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 next issue - 15th October

So as George would say -

“GET CRACKING”

ReTtElSwEn RuOy TrOpPuS

Remember:- Crazy paving is not all it's cracked up to be!

