

THE NORTH - WEST

# GEORGE FORMBY

## Newsletter 40

Vol. 4, No.4  
October 1998



Specially Produced for  
George Formby Fans

by Stan Evans, The Hollies, 19 Hall Nook, Penketh, Warrington,  
Cheshire WA5 2HN

Tel or Fax 01925 727102

## Welcome to Newsletter No. 40.

Well we've had a lot of activity this month. My 70th birthday party lasted for nine days (Joan Bramwell thought it was an Irish Wake) and I'm still reeling from the shock I got at Peniffordd. I was indeed completely taken by them all - the trickster was tricked down to his boots. So please read on . . .

## Completely & Utterly Gobsmacked!!

### What a grand birthday night!!!!

70 years of age on September 12th so I naturally expected the usual couple of cards from the grandchildren. But what a surprise when I walked through the door at Peniffordd. It knocked me for six!!! Christine & Jeffrey (Formby) Booth were staying with us and during the build-up to leaving home to travel to North Wales, I mentioned several times that there wouldn't be many at the meeting because it was the Blackpool week-end.



When we got through the doors we noticed faces that had never been before - Olwen & Denis Gale, for example, - who never go to any other Friday night meetings because of other commitments - and Walt & Andy Eastwood from Dorset, Eve & Charles from Blackpool, John Taylor & family from Morecambe. Even then I never sussed anything out- (and us Virgoes are noted for sussing and sifting). Suddenly, instead of the usual thrash, the whole room belted out with Happy Birthday To You and I was completely and utterly GOBSMACKED and SHELL-SHOCKED!!!!

I looked up and saw a huge banner hanging from the front of the stage with the words "HAPPY BIRTHDAY STAN." Never in my 70 years have I ever been so stuck for words and the only defence I could offer was - (which was ignored by all) - "It's not till next week!" No-one bothered as they were too busy joining in the festivities and I was emotionally swept along with it.

Dennis Lee invited me on to the stage to present a framed picture of "George and his Lamp Post" with inspired words:-



## STAN'S 70th BIRTHDAY BASH AT PENYFFORDD

What a treat to see all you good people  
And some have come such a long way  
To the party we're giving for Stanley  
On account of his 70th birthday

Now we all know we're a little bit early  
But together wi' members from Crewe  
We decided to mark the occasion  
And give him a bit of a do

He's encouraged so many new members  
Over t'years with both words and with deeds  
And he's never sought any thanks for it  
He's truly a Rose In A Garden Of Weeds

He's always involved in some project  
So t'society can be made much better  
When he's not setting t'shop up at meetings  
Why he's working on t'North-west Newsletter

His telephone never stops ringing  
Unless someone is sending a fax  
And his best mates are all t'Formby members  
Except of course, Eva and Max

He does miracles and plays t'ukulele  
His renditions have such dulcet tones  
And we mustn't forget his bananas  
Which he likes because they have no bones

So let's drink a toast to his birthday  
To a friend who unquestionably earns  
Th'highest respect of his colleagues  
To Stan - Many Happy Returns.

Well you could have bowled me over with an oily rag as Dennis read it out to the members, - and Bill Pope of Liverpool even wrote a song for the occasion. It was the biggest crowd ever at Peniffordd and I felt honoured that they'd taken the trouble to come such a long distance, - from as far as 150 miles away. It was extremely kind of everyone.

At that point everything started to slot into place. I'd wondered why so many had turned up from such a long distance, but never did I think that it was for my birthday. Not for one moment!!! How on earth Eva managed to keep it a secret

## PRACTISE NIGHT

Please note that there will be no practise night at Crewe in October. Look for further announcements

## CREWE'S 1999 PROGRAMME

The Crewe Society will be meeting throughout next year on the fourth Friday of each month except for December. Full list of dates soon.

## Great Night -

Just come back from a wonderful meeting at Sale. Margaret Moran was in great voice with her War-Time Medley - finishing off with Land Of Hope and Glory, - which everybody was pleased to join in with - and Stan Watkinson, from Liverpool, did us proud with his Banjo Sing - alongs. There is no doubt about it but Sale is beginning to blossom again after a long lull and more members are turning up. We are all very pleased.

for so long had me beaten completely.

The occasion was completed with a wonderful buffet, which resulted in a great night, - never to be forgotten. As usual, the ever obliging Geoff and Dolwen Shone played a large part, - great support. Many, many thanks to all who took part in providing a great evening. It was most unexpected but very much appreciated and most certainly a night that I will talk about for the next 70 years, - when I, - supposedly the miracle trickster - was completely and utterly fooled by almost every member in the North West. I'll never live it down at the Magic Circle.

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## HAPPY 70th BIRTHDAY STAN! -

By Brian Edge.

No other individual has put in more effort and enthusiasm to perpetuate the memory of George Formby, over the past decade, at both national and local levels, than Stan Evans. He is not only a staunch supporter at Crewe, you will always find him at Peniffordd, Blackpool, Sale and Liverpool branches. During the time when he was Editor of the Vellum he, along with the Warrington Council and Anthony Mason, organised the George Formby Exhibition at the Warrington Museum. Apart from the actual foundation of the G.F.S. this was the most wonderful event in our history. It attracted 37,500 visitors over a period of 3 months. But Stan was much more than just an Editor. He was always interested in his readers welfare. I recall laying in a hospital bed, down in the dumps when a parcel arrived from Stan (who hardly knew me) and in it was a letter and some song books. It really was a tonic and I was just one of the many who Stan had a thought for.

His generosity and kindness especially for the children in adversity stands out like a light. He has worked tirelessly to help make some of the youngsters lives just a little happier, a job that truly only Stan could do. His Wigan Pier concerts have raised hundreds of pounds for children's hospitals.

For six years Stan produced the Vellum and he printed and despatched it all from within his home, which itself was totally dedicated to the needs of the George Formby Society. He now issues each month an officially approved Newsletter which serves the needs and helps the funds of the N. West Branches.

Stan is certainly one of the best loved characters in the GFS and we wish him a very happy 70th Birthday.

*Many thanks Brian- you had me going into hot sweats reading all this!*

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## S.O.S. - SONG WANTED

I've had a request for "Sipping Cider Through A Straw," but unfortunately I don't know it! If anyone knows the song, - or has a copy of it - would you please contact me - Stan Evans.



## CONGRATULATIONS TO DENNIS LEE

- By Brian Edge.

Congratulations Dennis on becoming Chairman of The George Formby Society. Dennis has been a tremendous personality in the society for longer than I can remember. His friendly nature and infectious smile and polished performances have been an inspiration to so many from all parts of the country. Dennis is the ideal person for the job. The society could not wish for better.



Dennis Lee

### AND TO ALAN CHENERY

Alan, of the Crewe Branch has become a member of the committee of the George Formby Society and he will be working alongside others who are currently dedicated to the running of our society. We all wish them both well.

Thanks again Brian. Over in France they are just recovering from the impact that Dennis made. It was 6.30 in the morning, in the town centre, when he was leading his merry band of players round the crowded market. They must have thought it was another invasion. Best of luck to them both.

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## CREWE AUGUST MEETING - By Brian Edge.

Without doubt the star attraction at Crewe was the first appearance of a new duo - Dennis & Lesley Lee. Dennis, all dressed in white with a black dickie bow, and Lesley all in black with a white dickie bow, they looked a treat on the stage. Lesley was sporting a ukulele too!

They did a splendid 'song and dance' together to the strains of "Me And My Shadow" and Lesley tap-danced through the solo. A great performance but not too surprising as Lesley took 5th place in the U.K. Line Dancing competition earlier this year, a fact which is not generally known.

There was however another star present on the night. Our friend and one time top George Formby impersonator Sam Bass. When Sam arrived in the room Colin put on a tape made over 30 years ago by Sam. Most of us thought it was George Formby but Sam quickly realised it was him and was somewhat overcome by his reception.

Sam was back for the first time for some months after an operation to remove his voice box. Everyone was delighted to see him back. At the moment he communicates through a pen and notepad but it was not long before everyone had a talk to him. Sam's operation was a real tragedy who has, all his working life, given enjoyment to so many people through his singing.

It's been a tough time for him and indeed for his friend, John Biggins, who worked

so hard to help Sam overcome his terrible ordeal. But there is a very bright light on the horizon - Sam will sing and play his uke again for us again. He is already working on it. I'll not tell you how he will do it but I promise you that he will.

Oh yes! If you want to know how Stan does the trick /miracle with the silver ball balancing on the square silk, just ask Steve Hassall, our drummer, as he was sat behind him on the stage.

It was good to have Alan & Hilda Southworth and Dick & Vera Eaves with us again. Alan put on a splendid show and his super ukes came over well on the sound system. Whilst on the subject of sound systems. By the time you read this article we hopefully will have added an eight channelled power mixer and powered monitor at a cost of £380 in an effort to give our audience a better show.

Steve Hassall impressed us with his new song, "She Can't Say No" and Cyril Palmer performed really well. It was nice to have Flora & Trevor with us again and I've a feeling that Trevor will soon be taking up the uke. Also it was nice to see Peter Gratton, a ukulele playing comedian, on stage for the first time.

*Thanks again Brian. Peter Gratton was excellent and your Jazz Band sounded really great. George & Beryl will be proud of the various activities that are going on, and especially as they had their own concert troupe which included dancers, comedians, jugglers, etc. Full credit to you and Connie and all your merry band of helpers. - Really Great!!!!*



Peter Gratton

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## THANKS FOR A VERY WORTHY CAUSE

Dear Mr Evans, On behalf of the staff and patients here at Alder Hey Childrens Hospital, I am writing to thank you for your donation of £85 which we understand was raised from the George Formby Annual Show at Wigan Pier. Please find enclosed our official receipt.

Once again, we wish to thank you and your members for your support and for thinking of our young patients here at Alder Hey. Yours Sincerely, Irene Axon.

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**Have Uke Will Travel** from PETER QUINN. He has purchased a Keech uke banjo which has probably been all over the world. The previous owner's name was R Parkin who has stuck labels on the back of the uke from Salford to Jessore, - via Gourock, Casablanca, Durban, Bombay, Delhi, Calcutta, Digri and a lot more places. It must be the most travelled Keech in the country.

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**S. IRELAND** - Over the past two months five enquiries have gone out to various companies. To date we haven't had one reply back. Will keep you posted



## NORTH WALES by CLIFF ROYLE

We thought last months attendance was good, but this one surpassed all expectations. I counted about 100 being present. The problem was not my ability to count, but the fact that people kept moving about.



Cliff Royle

It was of course a special occasion; to celebrate the 70th Birthday of Stan Evans, and did he not get a Happy Birthday Party. Not expected of course. As it turned out we also had to celebrate the birthdays taking place in the following week of Bernard Young and Marie Taylor.

There were many tributes to Stan for all the hard work he has put in for the GFS in the past, and still continues to do so. This was reflected in a poem by Dennis Lee, a song by Bill Pope, and a great commendation by Brian Edge.

There were many guests including Andy Eastwood and his father, Walt; Eve and Charles Stewart, from Blackpool; a host of members from Sale and Crewe; Sam Bass and John Biggins; and Ray & Kieran Marshall. Pleased to hear that Kieran is still playing a little in spite of being involved in so many other activities.

We had excellent and rather unusual presentations from two of our members from Sweden; Jonas Svennson and Stefan Engstrom. Jonas really hit the high spots with his rendition of "Thirty Thirsty Sailors" in English, and with a big smile. Then there was 86 year old Harry Stanford, - the Caen Bombadier - who gave us his comedy song "94 Today" - perhaps he didn't know how old Stan really was! The Crewe Stompers Jazz Band provided something different to bring back old memories.

Apologies for not mentioning everyone. Alas the four hour programme was so full it generally only allowed time for one song from each player.

## A.G.M. AT THE WINTERGARDENS

Congratulations are to be showered on our own Dennis Lee who has become Chairman of our International George Formby Society, and to two members of Crewe who have also gained fame. Alan Chenery has become a member of the GFS Committee and Des Redfern won this year's song-writing competition with his own original humorous song about Crewe Railway Station. Cliff Royle.

*Thank you Cliff. It's all happening around the area. Many thanks to all for a wonderful night. The jazz band was really impressive. They have improved tremendously over the past months.*

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## The Formby Story

Part 30 by Stan Evans

After the "No Limit" film George and Beryl were becoming very popular. Having finished with the repeats of his father's old songs, and stage acts, they worked on the type of song that required more drive and personality. "Sitting On The Ice In The Ice Rink" and "With My Little Ukulele In My Hand" were ideal for George, - with tons of uke rhythm built in. Beryl was pleased that they had found the right path for George's career and celebrated by investing in good quality clothes.



After "No Limit" came "Keep Your Seats Please," which included the song "When I'm Cleaning Windows", - a song that brought about complications with the British Broadcasting Company.

Dick Bentley, who had just arrived in the country from Australia, was given the job of Record Presenter (Disc Jockey) at the BBC. On his first day he complained to his producer that his desk was filled with requests for George Formby singing "When I'm Cleaning Windows" but he didn't have the record to play. The producer took a deep sigh and explained that the BBC, - with a very strict code in those days - had refused to play the record until George has cleaned up some of the verses. He then instructed Dick to ignore the requests which eventually will go away.

This was a very embarrassing situation for Dick as he wanted to start off by creating a good relationship with his listeners. The demands still poured in so the producer suggested that he should tell the listeners that he will make an effort to obtain the record, - but on no account must he blame the BBC for being unable to get one. This was becoming more embarrassing and Dick was feeling very uneasy with the situation.

When George & Beryl visited the BBC they told them to come back when his windows are cleaner. "But", said Beryl, "The words must stay as they are otherwise the song won't sell." The BBC still stood their ground and refused to give way. Shortly later, George & Beryl were invited to play for the royal family and George sang the uncut version for Queen Mary. This gave the media plenty to report about and consequently the BBC backed down. Unfortunately poor old Dick Bentley had to shoulder the responsibility for not playing the record and for two months later he was apologising to the listeners. More Next Month.



**ALBERT SEABORN** has sent in a copy of the 1939 Radio Pictorial which advertises George & Beryl along with a strong supporting cast and the John Firman Orchestra. The show is sponsored by "Feenamint" - the delicious mint flavoured 'Laxative' that keeps you fit. The radio shows were broad-cast from Luxembourg and Normandy. On another page there is an advert for an "Hawaiian Ukulele Banjo" from Aircraft Disposals Ltd, of 91 New Oxford St, London WC1.

It reads, "These beautiful instruments are marvellous value and are offered to the public at a ridiculous price of three shillings and nine-pence, as a result of a huge purchase; therefore this offer cannot be repeated. In highly polished Satin Walnut finish with brass fretted finger board, first quality vellum, amazingly sweet banjo tones. An hour or so only required for a novice to master it with the free tutor. Send 4 shillings and sixpence today to avoid disappointment. Many thanks Albert for the articles. I loved reading the old Exchange and Mart type of adverts and it reminds of one that appeared in E & Mart around 1938.

"FUN ONLY, - Send sixpence today for a cigarette lighter, a coat hanger, a magic trick and a colour photo of the king. All for sixpence.

Now the only thing I was interested in was the magic trick so I sent my hard earned 6d and received a parcel a couple of weeks later. What a disappointment when the cigarette lighter turned out to be a spent match, the coat-hanger was a nail, the magic trick was two elastic bands (without instructions) and the colour photo of the king was the stamp on the envelope. Anyone wanting to know how to perform the magic trick was advised to send a further 6d, - or was it 3d? I didn't send the extra 6d (which was lot of money in those days) but some 50 odd years later learned how to work the trick at the magic club. It was a long wait!

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## JEFFREY FORMBY BOOTH

has just received an E Mail letter from Harold Lambert of Vancouver. He writes; Hi Jeff, Before emigrating to Canada in January 1948 I performed many of the jobs at Feldman's Theatre in Blackpool, including usher, and once showed you Uncle George to his seat and was rewarded with a shilling, - not an amount to be sneezed at in those days.



Jeff & Christine

My day job, along with my brother, was cleaning windows and one of the houses on our round was George & Beryl's "Beryldene" at Singleton, but of course the song was written well before then. I remember your dad appearing at Feldman's in the forties. Now seventy-two and retired on Vancouver Island I often think back to the days of revue theatre. At least most people could afford to see live entertainment in those days. Best Regards, Harold Lambert.



# Hylda Baker topped the bill in the early days with impressions of George



Hylda Baker

**Nostalgic series recalls stars who hold special place in the hearts of their fans**

**V**IEWERS who tuned in to an edition of TV's *The Good Old Days* one evening in 1955 were delighted by the routine of a 4ft 10in Lancastrian comedienne named Hylda Baker.

They might have been forgiven for thinking that here was an overnight success. But that couldn't have been further from the truth.

By the time TV made her a national figure, Hylda Baker had already been in the entertainment business for over 30 years.

She was born in Farnworth, Lancashire, the eldest of seven children. Her father, Harold, was a well-known comedian of his day, and he encouraged his daughter to use her talents in the theatre.

## Sensible

Hylda made her stage debut, aged 10, at the Opera House in Tunbridge Wells, and by 14 she was a leading lady, topping the bill singing, dancing and doing impressions of such stars as George Formby and George Robey.

She briefly gave up the stage, however, at her father's urging, to learn a second trade in case the

machines in the factory, she found it was impossible to have a normal conversation with people.

"I copied the other girls and learned to lip-read," she said. "One had to mouth words."

Later, this mouthing of words would be incorporated into her stage act to great effect.

During the last war, Hylda became a producer, putting on all-girl shows.

She left showbusiness briefly again, following a breakdown in health, and took over a fish and chip shop the family owned in Farnworth.

notoriously unpredictable fortunes of showbusiness let her down. She took a job in a Bolton clothes factory, as an apprentice.

"The idea was sensible enough," she said many years later, "but in the end I had to go back to showbusiness."

However, her six months in the clothing factory stood her in good stead. With the noise of the sewing



Hylda with *Nearest and Dearest* co-star Jimmy Jewel.

## Battling

"When I felt better I suddenly realised what I had done and hurried back to showbusiness before I lost my touch," she later recalled.

She made the leap to stardom when she was signed to appear on TV's *The Good Old Days*.

Further television appearances, including *Sunday Night At The London Palladium* established her as one of the country's top comediennes.

"I must have been the oldest overnight success in the business," she said once.

Perhaps she is best remembered for her catchphrase, "She knows, y'know."

It came from her most famous stage routine, in which she appeared with a tall, statuesque "stooge" called Cynthia. Cynthia was always played by a man, and never spoke.

Looking up at this figure, Hylda would tell the audience, "She just looks through you! I wouldn't care, but she knows, y'know!"

Her partnership with Jimmy Jewel in *Nearest And Dearest*, as the battling siblings running a pickle factory, delighted audiences in the late 1960s and led to a film version in 1972.

Hylda died in 1986, aged 78.

**Did You See the programme the recent TV show where they took you into the lives of the "Carry On" team? My goodness they did have problems!**

Almost all of them were on the verge of committing suicide and it seemed that only Hattie Jaques could sort them out. Kenneth Williams, Charles Hawtrey, Frankie Howard, Sid James and Barbara Windsor, seemed to have had more problems than the rest of show-business put together. So if any budding super stars, - like Jim Bramwell - are reading this Newsletter, - Be Warned. It's not all a bed of roses.

## COACH TRIP

If we don't hear from Southern Ireland we are looking at a long week-end "War Theme Holiday" in Wales. Back to 1945 with Red, white and blue, tin hats, ration books. More news later.

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**FRED STEVENSON** - The Yodelling Ukuleleist - is holding meetings at "The Mission" Lindley Rd, Alsager, - every 3rd Wednesday in the month and all are welcome to go along. Fred's number is 01270 877238. In his spare time Fred makes good quality uke/banjoes, and cases, so pay him a visit if you are interested and you will be made very welcome.



In the Newsletter we try not to print anything that will cause offence but - **Enough is Enough!!!!** The main topic this month, in the N. W. has been the publishing of a letter by Peter Pollard in the last issue of the Vellum. At every N. West meeting there was a slight air of gloom as not only did the members feel that the letter is damaging to myself personally but grossly insulting to the Crewe and Peniffordd branches.

**EDITOR'S REQUEST** - For the previous edition of the Vellum I was asked by the Editor to submit copy regarding the GFS explosion which took place in the late 1980s leading up to the GF Exhibition at Warrington. He also asked if I had anything on any progress in the N. West. My article was based on findings from over 50 visits per year to various branches. It explained that, unlike the late 80s and early 90s, - when everybody was bubbling with excitement and there wasn't an empty seat in the house, we are now experiencing a lull in GF interest and several members have ceased to attend any of the meetings. The Sale branch is a typical example, which some years back was buzzing with interest!

I refer to keen members like Anthony Mason, Martin Harrison and Kieran Marshall, Jack Skelland, and all the loads of children who were extremely eager some years ago but haven't visited a meeting for the past couple of years. And where are all those who attended the Wintergardens a few years back and blocked up the aisles at the back of the room. Some complain that when visiting the Wintergardens lately they found that all the old faces are missing.

My article, which wasn't in the least controversial, went on to say that perhaps we should look at Crewe and Peniffordd, who have introduced various different Music Hall type acts into their programme. They are proving to be successful and George is still remaining in the centre as the host of the show.

**NEVER SUGGESTED CHANGES** - Now the point is that I never suggested that we should change to Music Hall. I didn't suggest that we make any changes at all. I simply reported on what is taking place and proving to be very successful.

**POLITICAL!!!** - However, as usual, my article was considered 'political' and Pollard's letter read "Changing Scenes? Thanks, but er . . . no thanks! Amongst the insults it went on to read "If you think that wearing a fancy waistcoat and just dropping a Formby song in amongst the magicians, conjurers and jazz bands is the future of the society then I would honestly have to question your right to retain membership of this wonderful society".

Before my letters are published, - I always ask the Editor not to publish if considered controversial, - It was vetted by the GFS committee and . . . . . At the last GFS meeting, fancy waistcoats were being sold to the members and, I understand, they went like hot cakes. Is it a case of "Don't Do As I Do?"

## BLACKPOOL FORMBY FRIENDS

Response to an article in the Autumn Vellum.  
**YOU CAN'T DO THAT THERE HERE!!!**

**Bah Gum NO!!! -**

We're going to get into trouble with the intelligentsia if there are any repeats of the August meeting. We understand that a variety of talent and uninhibited joy is not to be encouraged (Page 17 Autumn Vellum). Jim Bramwell, with his jokes, will have to be shot as there's no other way we can suppress him.

Jon Baddeley and the lovely Pam, well they obviously need educating. They will have to curb their talented playing and singing, especially Jon on the clarinet.



Charles Stewart

The elderly man who got up for the first time and recited the songs before singing them got enthusiastic applause that will have to be suppressed. John Taylor presents another intractable problem. The inconsiderate reprobate has improved his playing and presentation techniques so much that he must be regarded with deep suspicion. Our stalwart helper Steve Abbott has combined with Iris Hillman to give a lovely quiet musical medley that pleased the listeners, we must be wary of this kind of thing as there wasn't any Formby type sounds from their ukes.

Stan Evans gave a couple of lusty songs renderings that had all the peasants singing along and then the brute did things with a ball that could only find approval in low brow company. How they could applause must give rise to further concern.

The M/C Alan Middleton will have to be restrained from his encouragement of these renegade performers. He introduces them with humour and courtesy that he accords to Formby types and that will have to be altered. 80 year old Frank Bennett is another performer who puts a lot of thought into his presentation. He has the outstanding arrogance to alter Formby numbers to update them and make them topical, one must ask if this is a form of blasphemy? His Chas & Dave songs will have to go!!! Paul Kenny was probably the only performer to give us pure and unadulterated Formby.

Cyril Palmer closed the evening by compounding the sacrilege and heresy with spirited renditions that the uneducated audience seemed to approve of and enjoy, such bad taste will probably become endemic if we can't find a solution. What a pity that Alan Middleton has no longer access to higher guidance.

*Thanks Charles. And what about Alan Middleton with the "Ferret Down His Trousers" He'll have to go!!! It was one of the best meetings ever at the Wainwright. Blackpool, with all the talent around, could be buzzing if we had more variety on the stage. Young Francis, with her impressions, was outstanding and I'm sure that there are many more talented entertainers out there who would support us. As long as George & Beryl are still in charge.*



## FORMBY GIFFORD & CLIFFE - By Brendan Ryan Was This A Lie? - From John Guy's 1982 Vellum.

1. Alan Randall reported: - There has always been an air of mystery surrounding George's relationship with his writers.
2. Eddie Latta said:- Although George had his own name on most of his songs he did in fact have nothing to do with most of them. George never wrote a song in his life!
3. George said:- "Of course a lot of people don't know it but I write or help to write most of my songs .

George did not make this statement in response to any interviewer. It was said during the course of a solo appearance and, if he knew it to be untrue would it not have been better to say nothing at all.; no-one was pressing the issue and, at the time, at the end of a long career, there was nothing more to be gained.

Eddie Latta's statement seemed particularly unfriendly, especially in the light of some of my researches. Compare these lyrics for example:

My cousin Kate, is putting on weight.      I said you're behold all hope  
Nature's unkind, your future's all behind.      I can tell it by your horoscope  
Formby Gifford & Cliffe 1939

They've got a fortune teller in the Tower bear in mind  
She said to one fat old lady, "Don't think that I'm unkind.  
I'd like to read your future but your future's all behind  
I've seen it from the top of Blackpool Tower.  
Formby, Latta 1943.

Examining the conflicting claims in a detailed but purely speculative way, the first fact to emerge is that of the 190 songs he recorded, George only claimed sole authorship of two, a collaboration on 52 between himself, Harry Gifford and Fred Cliffe, 14 with Cliffe only, 6 with Eddie Latta and an assorted 7 with writers. This leaves 109 songs for which George claimed no credit at all, so we are concerned with less than half of the total output.

Beginning with the first five Decca records with the Jack Hylton Band in 1932, George was very much a junior newcomer; in one instance he is dismissed as 'vocal refrain' but his name still appears on the record label as 'Co-writer' of three songs. In those particular circumstances I would suggest the Jack Hylton would receive most of the royalties and the Co-writer arrangement was hit upon so that George might receive some return. He was not subsequently credited

elsewhere with these songs, - Chinese Laundry Blues etc.

At that time two other separate instances of George's involvement in writing emerged with "Why don't women like me" (1933) and "Fanlight Fanny" (1935) These seem to have a ring of truth since collaboration was not yet the norm.

Collaboration was mostly evident between the period late 1936 to 1941. His film music is a good yard stick to the creative output of the Formby, Gifford and Cliffe team. After 1941 Roger McDougal and Harry Parr Davies contributed almost exclusively to four of his war time films. In 1945/46 George returned to writing the songs for his last two films but by this time with Fred Cliffe alone. Among them was "You don't need a licence for that."

Earlier in 1932/33 his songs were the work of Jack Cottrell. In 1934/35 Gifford and Cliffe were responsible and they ended this period with two songs for his new career in the new film, "No Limit". Thereafter, beginning with his next film, "Keep your seats please" and the famous "Window Cleaner." Matters seem to have been put in a definite order. To begin with, unlike Florence Desmond in the first movie, leading ladies would never again share the musical interludes with George. His image was to be more clearly defined. In "No Limit" vestiges of his old act were evident as in the railway carriage scene, in which he wore his old bowler type hat and strummed a small wooden uke. In future he would be recognised in nearly all his films dressed in a grey single breasted suit and grey trilby hat with upturned brim; and, as many of his fans were youngsters, who deplored such sopiness, he would, like the cowboy stars of the day, never be seen to kiss the girl.

His comic view of the world, expressed in his songs, would be to the general public the product of his own imagination and creativity - a part of his persona, unique to him. It is a fact that most comedians whether it be true or false, claim to write their own material and this was the case of George's contemporaries. Whether or not we believe it to be true George was to be credited a Co-writer of all the Gifford and Cliffe songs from 1936 to 1941 and Eddie Latta was to be included in this partnership. (I think Latta was a composer, who, having created some songs, felt understandably aggrieved if they were altered when they passed out of his control.)

Most of the songs were permutations of the same basic themes: have you ever whistled a Formby tune only to find yourself unexpectedly in the middle of a different one. The words conjured up mental images of funny situations not unlike the comic postcards of Donald McGill.

Although Latta claims that George didn't write any songs the following couplets are taken from these two songs: "Imagine me on the Maginet Line" by Formby, Gifford and Cliffe, 1939. And "Guarding the home of the Home Guard" by



Formby and Latta in 1940.

"At night myself to sleep I sing, to my old tin hat I cling. I have to use it now for everything." Down in the Maginet Line - or - Guarding the home guards home

And similarly: "Hitler can't kid us a lot, his secret weapon's tommy rot, you ought to see what the Sergeant's got." Down in the Maginet Line - or - Guarding the home guards home.

The same can be found in "The left hand side of Egypt" by Bennett & Noel Gay in 1934, and "Handy the handy man" in 1942: "She stole the empty case all right, but I gave her the works on the following night, On the left hand side of Egypt coming out."

And: She said now don't you worry I'll give you the works tonight, oh it comes in handy being a handy man. So who was telling the truth?

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## FRANK FORMED THE FAMILY NAME

Peterborough Standard Newspaper 22nd Sept 1973.

Frank Formby, the younger brother of George Formby, (the first comedian to command four figure fees for topping the bill at the Palladium and for film roles) - threw away a million. After playing for diners at the Gordon Arms pub, Peterborough, last night, Frank wheezed a gentle bronchial sigh, smiled wryly and said: "The world remembers George for 'Cleaning Windows' and 'Leaning On A Lamp Post' but I know they were mine." "I gave them to George, and all his other great songs, 'Auntie Maggie's Remedy' and 'Chinese Laundry Blues' - I wrote that in the thirties sitting on a bus on a shilling tour of Chinatown in London. The world believes that the songs were George's invention." "To start with George was very generous and I would make £1,000 or maybe £1,500 in a year for my songs. But I never got royalties and the bigger he became the more he came to believe that the songs were his."

"I was never jealous of George making the big time. We were a show business family. My father was on the boards and mother was determined that one of us boys would become a star of the London theatre like father was." "George was the one to become a national name but I have found a very satisfying career in entertainment. If I had known then what I know now of course I would have protected my interests in all the songs . . . royalties would still be coming in.

George died at 57, but he didn't leave his fortune to his family. He left it to the woman he was courting at the time. There were no regrets last night when Frank plucked the original banjolele that he bought for George in America and sang all his old songs. *I'm sure we all agree that the above report is nonsense. Perhaps exaggeration (we hope) on the part of the newspaper ???*

# THE AUGUST SALE MEETING

This was a good one and they are improving each month. Hilda Southworth and Vera Leaves stepped in to take money on the door and sell raffle tickets, - Thanks girls for helping out at short notice. You did a great job.



Alice Cronshaw

Des Redfern sang that great song, "Liverpool Home" with his Auntie Mary and Connie Edge trod the boards with "Bless em All." Walter Kirkland got their feet tapping with a medley of old sing - alongs including Alexander's Ragtime Band. Jim Bramwell came out with a new batch of jokes - where on earth does he get them from? Carry on Jim!



Hilda Southworth

Ray Fielden was late because he got lost on the Motorway but when he finally arrived he gave us one of his monologues. Thanks to all for the much appreciated support.



Vera Leaves

*Thanks Alice. And what about the two oldest swingers in town? - Harry Stanford, who is 86 years of age and Auntie Mary - a young chicken at 85. They were great!*

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**Liverpool** had one of the best nights ever with almost every seat taken.



Des With His Trophy

Des Redfern and his Auntie Mary (my goodness she does get about) brought the sound system and a new addition for the night. This was the words on TV screen along with the music to his new song: "Changing Trains At Crewe" which won the Wintergardens Song Competition. It's such a great song that we all knew before the meeting that he would win it. Bill Pope was on good form with his songs and Guitar and also we have a couple of brothers who now attend the meeting: Stan and Les Watkinson of Liverpool. Stan is quite professional with his act and a great one

with sing - alongs. As usual Jim Bramwell was on top form, - Liverpool is his favourite spot because he was first discovered there, albeit hiding behind his pint glass and trembling for fear that we might drag him up! But he's a great star now and the only one who can tell the same joke twice and get away with it.



Tom Bailey, the host of the show, kindly arranged for some presents for yours truly's 70th Birthday and Harry made his grand speech and presentation. Once again, many thanks, - it was most unexpected.

MYSTERY - I was given two parcels for my 70th but it's had me awake most every night wondering WHY?? - There must be a least 10 million different items in the shops, so why is it that both Tom Bailey (in Liverpool) and my son - in - law (in Warrington) bought exactly the same chocolate cake? It's got me completely beat so come on and help me out. My granddaughter, however, came up with one suggestion, - "Perhaps they think you eat like a pig." - Cheek!!!



#### HARRY STANFORD

We are very pleased that Harry is overcoming his terrible ordeal in losing his wife. He announced on the night that his sister had just passed away, which made him a little sad, however he is making a determined attempt at keeping his head up and we are all very pleased for him. At the Sale meeting we had a job getting him off stage so someone suggested we should give him the key to lock up.

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## LEEDS CITY OF VARIETIES

Just received a programme of future events from this well known little theatre and lo and behold who should be on the centre pages but our own Gerry George (real name Gerry Nicholas) who has been a GFS member for many years.

Gerry is appearing at the theatre on Friday and Saturday the 9th and 10th of October, with Norman Collier and Duggie Clark. Prices range from £9 to £14.

Some of you won't know Gerry but he appeared on the South Bank Show, way back in 1992, when he was interviewed by Daniel Wiles. He claimed that he was a newspaper reporter who often interviewed Beryl and George. On one occasion he rang Beryldene and a very weak voiced Beryl answered, "I don't know where George is and I don't care!" At the time George was appearing at Bristol.

Gerry also went on to say that a suitcase holding £60,000 in cash, (the original figure was £30,000) disappeared soon after George's death, from Beryldene, and it was never found again.

The story goes that Gerry, - who has always been a keen fan of George's, and who had special teeth fitted to give him the Formby look, - approached Pat Howson around 1961 and purchased one of George's ukes from her. He then arranged a special show in Birmingham and presented George's brother, Frank (Jeffrey's father) with the uke.

# Charlie Chaplin

## Public Clown, Private Tyrant

A new book has been written by Kenneth S Lynn who claims that Charlie Chaplin was a nasty piece of work.

At 25 Charlie was the most famous man in world mobbed by 10,000 people whenever he so much as went to buy a stamp. He was one of the first and greatest geniuses of film comedy, but he was also a tyrant who abused loyalty and dismissed friendship on the coldest of whims. He was a bad father and an appalling husband, a naïve political theorist, a clumsy muddle headed film director, and a supreme egoist

Now the reason why I was particularly interested in reading this article is because I wasn't fully convinced that Charlie, who was such a great star, would abuse his friendship with GF Sen. Louie (George's sister) told the story of when Charlie, at the age of 16, and a friend of her father's, asked if he could borrow his song (One Of The Boys) and also the outfit (bowler hat, big coat, concertina trousers and a walking stick) to do a show. GF Sen. agreed on condition that he sang one verse only because he used it in his own act. Charlie sang the whole song and GF gave it to him and the outfit.



### Simple Little Poem

Sent in by Brian Edge

I wish I was a daffodil  
A lovely little bloom  
Then you would  
come and pluck me  
And place me in your room  
Very soon you'd fall asleep  
With me beside your cot  
Still thinking I'm a daffodil  
But you'd soon find out  
I'm not



# N. West Meetings and Future Dates

**North Wales Branch** - British Legion, Penyffordd (10 miles from Chester) Every first Fri in the Month. Tel Dennis Lee on 01244 544799 Adm 50p  
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**Blackpool** - Wainwright, Hornby Rd, B/pool - Every 1st Sat. in the month - Tel Eve Stewart on 01253 768097 - Future Dates: - Oct 3rd, Nov 7th, Dec 5th. Adm £1 with Buffet. All are made very - very - very welcome.  
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**Liverpool** - Broadgreen Conservative Club - Every 2nd Friday in the month - Ring Tom Bailey on 0151 289 1711 Players Urgently Wanted  
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**Sale** - Woodheys Club, 299 Washway Rd, Sale - Dates are now settled - Every 3rd Friday - Ring Alice Cronshaw on 0161 727 9829 or Cyril Palmer on 0161 748 6550. Adm £1.  
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**Crewe Branch** Wistaston Memorial Hall - Ring Brian Edge on 01270 569836 Future dates - Sat 26th Sep, Fri 23rd Oct, Fri 27th Nov, Fri 18th Dec. Adm 50p. Come early for a seat. PLEASE NOTE THAT ALL NEXT YEAR'S MEETINGS WILL BE HELD ON THE 4th FRIDAY OF THE MONTH.  
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**Warrington** Alliance Sports & Social Centre, Evans House, Orford Lane, Warrington - Stan Evans on 01925 727102 - SPECIAL MEETINGS ONLY.  
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**Werrington Branch** (Near Stoke) at the Werrington Village Hall - Every 2nd Thursday in the month, Ring Bill Turner on 01782 304858.  
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To receive the N. West Newsletter by post please send a cheque for 50p + 25p pp. (or £2.25 for 3 months) payable to Stan Evans - Address on front cover. Organisers can order a minimum lot of 10 copies for £3 plus 60p postage and you are welcome to sell them to help raise funds.  
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**Deadline for next issue - 18th OCT.**  
**So as George would say -**  
**"Get Cracking"**  
**Support Your Newsletter**  
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