

THE NORTH - WEST

GEORGE FORMBY

Newsletter 72

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Seventy Two
Months Old
And Still
Alive and
Active.

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.72

and Low and Behold we are 6 years old with this issue.

It's hard to believe that we have been producing our little Newsletter for so long without a hitch. Never once have we been stuck for something to fill the pages with.



Walter Cronshaw—he could sell sand to the Arabs!!!

The North-West Newsletter was the inspiration of the late Walter Cronshaw who, way back in 1995, hounded me every week at the meetings to launch the Newsletter. At first I refused, thinking it would have an effect on the GFS Vellum, but Walter was adamant and wouldn't take no for an answer. Every meeting I ducked and dived from him because I knew that he would be asking the same question; "When are you going to launch a N.W. Newsletter?"

TRAPPED!!! - At a Sale meeting I walked on to the fire escape balcony to get some fresh air—and to keep off Walter's war path—and who should be on the balcony but Walter with John Broadhead, and I was trapped between them. So that I couldn't escape Walter immediately shut the door behind me and I was well and truly hooked!!!

The first thing I noticed was that Walter didn't have the usual sparkle in his eyes. In fact he looked quite ill and desperate. It was then that he explained that he had been given just a short time to live and—here it comes, "What about launching a N. West Newsletter?" You've got to admire the man. He was a good salesman even during illness. How can anyone refuse such a gutsy man? Within a couple of weeks the very first Newsletter was on it's way and, since then, it has never failed to make its monthly appearance.

My thanks goes to Walter for his determination and to all who constantly send in articles to keep the pages filled. Some of the members save their copies to have them bound every two years. They make interesting reading in later years.

Fortunately the Newsletter, which is a book full of nitty gritty readers tales and jokes etc. has had no effect whatsoever on the GFS Vellum which produces excellent George Formby photos.

Wigan-May Dayze-Town Centre—It's all set up for Saturday May 26th—1pm to 2pm at the corner of Hallgate and Market Street. Look your smartest and let's do George proud in his birth town. Let's show Wigan what they've missed. Page 19.

One Of Britain's Best Tonics Newspaper Cutting—

The packed houses at the Alhambra last Monday reminded me of an occasion at the Bradford Empire many years ago. I was seeking copy for my first article as "Mr Dangle" and George Formby, father of the present George, was topping the bill there.

There was a house filled to capacity, but when I called upon George he could not talk to me, "Nay, lad," he said, "I can't talk tonight; I really ought not to be going on, but when I saw a full house I couldn't disappoint my public."

And so it was proved, for I found a doctor in attendance, and also a block of ice in the dressing room ready for an emergency. It was generally admitted George Formby had never been seen better, for he did not let the public see how near he was to collapse.

I saw him a week later, and we became good friends. Knowing what I did of what was going on behind the scenes made George a hero in my eyes from that Monday night.

George junior is just as conscientious, and always anxious to give full measure to the public. He is the highest paid of British stage and film stars, but is not in the least swelled headed, nor has he much room for people who become so.

George and Beryl are busier than ever. Last week, when they were appearing at Liverpool, they slipped up to Glasgow for a Charity Concert on Sunday—part of the proceeds of which were for George's fund—The Formby Fund in Aid of Widows and Children of those who have lost their lives in trawlers while mine sweeping.

LIVERPOOL—It was George's intention to stay out of pantomime this season, but there will be a shortage of comedians, so he is going into one of Tom Arnold's shows. Tom left the choice to George, and he has selected Liverpool because he says the manner in which the people of the city have stood up to recent events makes him want to be among and joke with them.

LEEDS—30 men in the Ministry Of Pensions Hospital, Leeds, have formed a O.K. Club to help to raise money to buy such things as cigarettes for the wounded. And who is their President? None other than the great stage and film star, George Formby and one of his first engagements was to tour the wards at the Chapeltown, Leeds hospital. George sang his favourite songs and then went to shake hands with each of the wounded, and to thank them on behalf of the Army that is still fighting. "What's it to be" said George, and as quick as thought came back, "Cleaning Windows." - "No problem" said the star, "Here it is." I GO CLEANING WINDOWS TO EARN. . . .



George Formby Senior

Hip Hip Hooray! Our Newsletter is Seventy-two Today!

Stan Evans has completed Volume Number Six of our excellent newsletter, which was the brainchild of Alice Cronshaw's late husband Walt. Six years of hard dedicated work and seventy-two interesting magazines without a break. *The North West Newsletter* which covers the activities of the North West Branches of the GFS helps to keep the pot boiling between issues of *Vellum* is read by hundreds of people around the country. Stan's effort has been a great help in maintaining member's interest and the sales commission has generated a large amount of money for branch funds. A special thanks to Stan for all his time and effort, freely given in the furtherance of the memory of George Formby. *Thanks Brian.*



"Springtime's Here Again" at Crewe.

Alan Newton appropriately opened Crewe's April concert singing "*Springtime's Here Again*". Alan brings this pleasant number out once a year and sings it in such a way that we really believe him, even though it happens to be pouring down with rain outside.

Unfortunately Jean, Alison and Frankie missed our meeting for the first time due to illness, but I have it on good authority that Alison is cooking up something new for us so that is something to look forward too. I was pleased to be able to welcome Rose and Peter Hopley who were at their first concert and I hope that they enjoyed the evening. Poor Vera Jones was in the wars on the night and was unable to get up on stage as she had just had an argument with a concrete curb stone which was, it seems, harder than her head. She consequently landed in hospital to get stitched up but I can tell you that she is on the mend and I have no doubts at all that she will be back on stage entertaining us at the May concert.

Walter Kirkland did an excellent job of his song after discarding his sheet music. What a difference it has made to his performance. I also thought that Don Chalkley got his words over loud and clear and it was one of his best performances to date too. Walter, Colin, Alan Chenery and Dennis Lee performed a quartet medley on the bones. What a happy scene it was, they all had so much fun which was highly entertaining for the audience. Denis and Alan Newton performed "*Who wants to be a Millionaire*," a striking performance. I have to say that in their classy red and white striped waistcoats they looked as if they actually were millionaires! It was good to see Steve back on the drums after a break of a few months. Glenys brought along her flugel horn and gave an excellent performance of "*I'm Getting Sentimental Over You*". Des Redfern tried out his new composition entitled "*Nashville George*" and followed up with the untypical Formby number "*Swing Mama*."

Carl Basford was our Master of Ceremonies on the night and Cliff Royle who did a splendid job arranging the concert ably aided him. Few members of our audience can imagine what a difficult job the assistant MC has. He or she has to plan the concert, inform the M.C. the order of the performers, and tell each artiste where he is positioned in the show. Quite a big job. This is often unnecessarily complicated hampered when artistes do not bother to put their names on the concert sheet. So please, please take the trouble to write your name on the sheet indicating the numbers you wish to perform and that will be your contribution to the smooth running of the concert. Having said all that well-done Cliff and well-done Carl.

Let's Cheer Up the French Trip! By Olwen Gale Dear Stan, During my reading of the Times newspaper I saw an article which I thought the people going to France might be interested in.

"Months of record rainfall are to blame for Rats, Divorce, Political Plots, Overweight Women and Dead Bees, according to the French. The weather has left hundreds homeless and cast the northern half of the country into unseasonable gloom. "Neither Great Britain or Germany have suffered the deluge which has been dumped on to our country" said Le Figaro's report, - we are eating for winter, we are dressing for winter, we feel down, rain has fallen almost without cease on Paris for the last seven months.

Beyond the Somme, hundreds of square miles in a line from Lille to Western Brittany are under water. Parts of several historic chateaux are crumbling in the Loire region. Some cliffs are falling into the sea in Normandy. A third of Breton bees are said to have died in soggy hives. A group of environmental activists has set up a committee for the return of fine weather and the struggle against the greenhouse effect. Predictably America is deemed to be the main villain, the group condemns President Bush for setting a poor example to the world by rejecting the KYOTO accord on limiting greenhouse gases."

Thanks Olwen, you've reet cheered us up no end. We'll be packing sweaters and wellingtons for the trip. Anyway, we'll brighten em all up, like we did in 1944.

Email from Debra—My name is Debra, Administrator/Activities co-ordinator of Kirkstall Court Care Home. I am in the early stages or organising an authentic dinner/dance! (Well- as authentic as I possibly can) What I am hoping for is everyone to dress up and enter into the spirit of things. I will approach the local television station and the papers, Ration books will be issued and hopefully we will have search lights and war memorabilia on show.

What I am looking for is some form of entertainment and my first thought was your organisation. Can you advise me as to any help you may be able to give? I will have a budget to juggle with but as the aim is to raise funds for Kirkstall Court- no doubt it will not be a very large budget. This is the first time I have organised anything on this scale so any advice would be very much appreciated. Yours in anticipation.....Debra.

I Emailed Debra back to ask which part of the world she was based. We are only too pleased to help but Kirkstall Care Home might be at the far end of Scotland or in darkest Africa. You never know with Email. No reply yet.

Jim & I have just attempted to entertain the over 60s Easter Bonnet Party but they'd collected so many raffle prizes, which took ages to draw, we hardly had time to perform. Three of the prizes were "bundles of raw rhubarb." straight from the allotment. We don't get prizes like that at the Wintergardens!



Cliff Royle Our Brilliant Superstar reports

From N. Wales. Jim Knight was our M/C for the night and at first it seemed that we might be short of performers. There was an influx later. Is this Murphy's Law? Tom Meredith opened the show with a couple of lively numbers on the uke. His promotion to the opening act may have been due to the excellent report I gave him last month. He was not all upset by the reference I made to his singing, and actually thanked me for being so nice about him. He made one request however. Could he have his name in lights?

Walter Kirkland livened the show with Fanlight Fanny (the song not the lady), followed by a rousing medley accompanied by the Crewe and Penyffordd bones players. One of the highlights of the show was by our new, but not so young, member Jim Griffiths who gave an excellent performance of a couple of Formby songs interspersed by some jokes.

Our friends from Crewe did us proud with lively songs by Alan Newton and namesake Arthur Newton. Colin Wood and Alan Chenery came on as a duo and they really got the ladies behind the bar "rocking and rolling." Colin got a little applause as he came on stage but a far bigger one as he walked off; must be something he said.

Des Redfern played his very own latest song, "George Became A National Country Star," and an earlier one about—dare I say it? Dennis Lee! Jonathan Baddeley gave a short talk about George and followed with a couple of songs; one old and the other of more recent times.

Cyril Palmer, who has just returned from Canada, changed the tone somewhat when he sang two lovely songs accompanied by his baritone uke. Jim Knight anticipated problems with his new teeth so he enlisted the help of four others to accompany him with "Blackpool Rock". We had a duet from Dennis Lee and Alan Newton dressed in swanky waistcoats. The Ensall family put on a good show, as did young Gregory Simister; You can't keep this growing lad down!

Dennis Lee asked us to support the forthcoming shows: Wigan Town Centre May 26th, Penyffordd 16th June and Frodsham on July 1st.

ON A SAD NOTE—Dennis asked us to stand in silence for Jean, one of our staunch supporters who died recently, and expressed our sincere sympathies to Ron Holmes on his sad loss.

However, to end on a brighter note. It was a delight to see four pretty, well dressed young ladies sitting on the front row enjoying the entertainment, food and drink. *The ladies on the front row are part of your fan club Cliff. You've become a star since your photo in the last issue, cuddling Christine and Janet.*

Odd Bits by Cliff Royle— (A) - I note from the last issue the problem about lack of interest from Uncle Joe's Mint-balls. Why not change the words of the song and so cut them out? There is actually another similar make called "Grandpa Sam's Mint Balls" and the words still fit the music. *Good idea Cliff.*

(B) - A gentleman asked if anyone was interested in buying a 12" 78rpm GF record "A Farmer's Boy" and "Radio Bungalow Town" on the other side. It has a red label, marked Regal Zonophone. The cover is a bit tatty and maybe not thee right one. If interested ring Geoff Harding on 01925 635679. Thanks Cliff. *He's got his measurement wrong. It is a 10" record MR 2033. Alas there's no demand for GF 78s. Collectors like Jon Baddeley and Reg Thacker, seem to have a complete collection. There are very few 78* gramophone players around to play them on. In 1988— amidst all the 30th Anniversary excitement, I paid £3 each for a load of George's records. Must have been mad at the time, but there wasn't any around at the time.*

As you know, our Cliff is a very keen Walker (very crisp) - he goes out rambling up mountains and into the countryside. Well Cliff has put together a few Differences between Rambling and Football. And here they are.

1. Ramblers don't jump around kissing each other at each summit
2. Ramblers don't throw toilet rolls down mountainsides
3. We don't have an army of followers cheering us on.
4. We don't elbow the old folks best TV programmes
5. We don't change our colours every few months.
6. Ramblers don't fight other rambling clubs.
7. We can't buy a scarf in Snowdon colours.
8. We don't sell programmes for every walk.
9. We have no white lines on the fields.
10. We don't trip each other up.



Mother!

Very good Cliff. I've just thought! Cliff's an appropriate mountain climber but your surname should have been "it? Cliff Hanger! Never mind.

name for a mountain climber "Hanger" - get

Llandudno Show by Young Dennis Lee—



Llandudno went off great. Three brilliant days and the weather was sunny. Ray was on holiday so Kevin Blanchfield and myself to keep the flag flying. I reckon we played to over 1000 people over the 3 days. Walter Kirkland & Alice Cronshaw came to see us, Alison, Jean & Frankie, the Ensalls, Phil & Jean and Liverpool's own young Stan Watkinson all visited us. It's a shame you couldn't make it as the weather was glorious.



Kevin

Sad

How sad that we are losing these great comics. They were real funny men who told jokes that we could all understand. Today's brand of alternative comics are not in the least funny. They are vulgar, and the women comics are worse than the men at telling crude jokes. Sky TV are currently showing episodes of The Comedians

Review

The Comedians

The Opera House, Blackpool

THIRTY years on and the grey hairs and wrinkles have taken their toll – but the best gags can never grow old.

And who better to deliver them than the stars of one of the longest running and most successful comedy programmes ever produced, The Comedians.

On a night of high nostalgia – filled with tears of laughter, affection and sadness – the famous faces from that last bastion of good, clean (Bernard Manning excepted) traditional stand-up comedy, returned to Blackpool for one final reunion.

Funnymen George Roper, Stan Boardman, Norman Collier, Jim Bowen, Ken Goodwin, Duggie Brown and Bernard Manning took an Opera House packed to the rafters howling back to the 70s when the show – first screened in 1971 – was at its peak.

Johnnie Hamp, former head of light entertainment at Granada Television, took what were then relatively unknown performers from working mens clubs, and with The Comedians, turned them into household names virtually overnight – and they're still hilarious.

Backed by the brilliant Sheps Banjo Boys the audience and the comics themselves wallowed in the occasion, all regrettably aware that this would probably be the last ever get together.

We all knew what was coming... Stan Boardman and his 'Germans', grinning Ken Goodwin with his ukulele, Norman Collier's 'faultry' microphone and Bernard Manning's foul mouth.

But it's classic stuff from the craftsmen of their trade, and uncontrollable funny.

Many stars got their first break on The Comedians – Russ Abbot, Les Dennis, Frank Carson, Mike Reed, Tom O'Connor, Mick Miller, Jimmy Jones and Colin Crompton to name but a few.

But undoubtedly the comedian held in greatest affection was Yorkshire's



HILARIOUS: George Roper



TOUCHING: A special award for Charlie Williams from Duggie Brown and Roy Walker

Charlie Williams. And the tears flowed as an unsteady Charlie was helped by his showbiz colleagues on to the stage to acknowledge a raptuous tribute to his talent from the packed house.

And after an emotional rendition of My Way from the unlikely figure of Bernard Manning, Charlie was able to join Johnnie Hamp and the rest of The Comedians for a rousing farewell bow.

This anniversary celebration was truly a night to remember – and one from which some of today's 'alternative' comedians could do well to take some tips from if they aim to still be providing the laughs in 30 years from now.

MIKE HAWORTH

What's black, white, black, white, black, white, black, white...

A cart-wheeling nun!

What large vicious fish plays a ukulele?

Jaws Formby.

'Loads of Fun at Blackpool



THEY may not be leaning on a lamp-post with a little stick of Blackpool rock ...

But secretary of the George Formby Society Charles Stewart and member Alan Yates will be joining other enthusiasts

in St Annes on Saturday, March 17, to entertain the public in one of the new domes.

Coming from across the North West, they will be playing in the style of the late entertainer from

11am-1pm.

Event organiser Arnold Sumner said: "This is a heritage event to preserve the name of George Formby."

Picture: MARTIN BOSTOCK

Mac McGee Emails— Hi Stan, May I say thanks to Eve and Charles Stewart for a great night out at the April monthly meeting. It was my first time there but it won't be my last, not if they put on buffets like that. I went with Paul Mountain, Lionel Owen, Tony Marshall and George Butterfield, and we were made most welcome and as visitors we were given the lions share of performing.

I am still puzzled about John Taylor though. To cover his misogynistic tendencies whilst on holiday in Benidorm he said he pretended to be gay. Unfortunately he declared it openly in the wrong night club, the Wheel-tappers and Shunters. But he made a lasting impression on the owner Campus, who, dressed as a bunny girl, happened to be sitting beside him. Now I don't know if John is one of us or one of them. Thanks also to the MC Alan Middleton, though he did do the number I have been practising. Mac McGee. *Thank Mac. Don't worry about John. He's on the right train OK.*



(Left) George Formby messing about in boats and (below), the entertainer in a much more familiar pose



Those meetings with Bell-bottom George

HERE'S a picture of George Formby and not a ukelele in sight.

Peter C Walker of Golcar says: "Knowing you are a great fan of George, I thought you might like to have it."

The picture was taken on holiday on the Norfolk Broads about 1950.



Yesterday's Diary

Denis Kilcommons

"We saw him and Beryl on his cruiser Lady Beryl several times during the holidays.

"In fact, he helped at the boatyard in the Saturday turnover of hire craft and actually helped us tie up at the end of our holidays.

"One evening, Lady Beryl was moored up at Wroxham and we saw him and his

wife being served dinner by his cook or waiter, all complete in evening dress.

"This, of course, was when the Broads were quiet and tranquil. Unlike today."

What a lovely memory.

● Help us feature your memories in *Yesterday's Diary* by contacting Denis Kilcommons at the *Examiner* features department.

Thanks to Albert Seaborn for the above article

*Natural artists are few and far between and only the best can offer "Ferret Down Your Trousers" as part of their repertoire.
Cliff Richard is seething.*



CATCHY TUNE: Alan Middleton belts out *When I'm Cleaning Windows*
Picture: ROB LOCK

Certain little party comes by for 40th

THEY were going ukulele crazy at the Winter Gardens when the George Formby Society met to celebrate its 40th anniversary.

Around 300 Formby fans from across the country converged on Blackpool for the event.

The George Formby Society, formed in 1961, meets in the resort four times a year.

By KATIE UTTING

There are around 1400 members from all over the world including Australia, New Zealand and Canada and the society produces a quarterly magazine and even has its own website (www.georgeformbyco.uk).

Secretary Steven Wyldo said: "It's a

chance for everybody to get together, to watch videos, share memorabilia and play their ukuleles.

Remember

"We set up the society so that we could all remember Formby."

The Formby fans will return to Blackpool for their next meeting in June.

S.O.S

Liverpool needs a few players to turn up at the June 8th meeting. I will be on the coach trip to France so if you can turn up on the night it will be gratefully appreciated.

The Broadgreen Conservative Club is dead easy to find. It is just off the Knotty Ash (M62) turn off—very close to Ken Dodd's Jam Butty Mines - or Tom Bailey will guide you there on 0151 289 1711. Thanks for helping out.

Letter from Sean Byrne to Jeffrey Booth

Kilkenny City, Ireland

GEORGE FORMBY TRAINS TO BE A JOCKEY

Dear Jeff, about 60 years ago I heard a story from an aunt about your uncle George but I've never heard or saw anything since to verify it. My aunt and mother came from Blackrath, Curragh Camp, Co Kildare and went to Athgarvan School about 1907—1916. While there George was in the same class as my aunt. They both mentioned that he was the star of their Christmas Party.

According to my aunt George had been sent there for a better life style as both his parents were on stage and always on the move. Before going to school he lived at Athgarvan Lodge and after leaving school he worked as a stable boy for some local horse trainer. He left Curragh when quite young as his father had died. My mother thought he lived with people called Booth. When I went to Blackrath on holiday I found that older people who would not dream of going to the cinema would always go to Killcullen when George was on a film there. It was a case of, "One of ours." If you can throw any light on the above story I'd be glad to hear from you.



REPLY TO SEAN—George was enrolled as a pupil at Athgarvan School in August 1915 and the reason he lived in Ireland for a time was because racing was stopped in England during the 1st World War and some racehorse owners transferred their stock over to Ireland.

George was assigned to a horse trainer named Johnny Burns and came second in the first ever Irish Apprentice race on a horse called Halfcast. Because of the amount of work he had to do at the stables he rarely made it on time at school and was frequently caned by the headmaster.

George's mother and father toured the country appearing at various music halls. They were extremely busy with 10 years bookings. The children (7 in total - George being the oldest) were left in the hands of Eliza's mother but young George was sent away for jockey training. He hated being away from his home and family and would often run away from the stables to make his way back to England.

On one occasion he and his young friend (a boy named Hamilton) ran away to board a ship called The Leinster. On arriving at Dublin they were picked up by the police and taken back to the stables. That night the Leinster was torpedoed and all 510 passengers were drowned. In Nov. 1918 he was sent back to Middleham, England.

Being separated from his family had an effect on George which stayed with him for the rest of his life. In his songs and films he regularly called to his mother: Oh Dear Mother - Mother What'll I Do Now - Mother - I'm Going To Stick With My Mother. His father, who also pined desperately for a family life, sang a song called "I Had No Mother To Guide Me." The Formby's had a reputation for opting off and leaving the kids and maybe this is one reason why George had no children of his own. Hope the above is of interest.

Sale Charity Night by Les Pearson

Sometime ago, Margaret Moran and I got involved with the Royal National Institute for the Blind, which led to us helping them by holding a stall at their Garden Fete in Rochdale. We sold greetings cards etc.

It was then that we decided to recruit our George Formby friends and put on a show to raise money for the worthy cause. I asked Brian Jolly—one half of the award winning “Memphis Nights Harmony Duo.” “No problem” said Brian, and not only would he bring Neil—the other half—but he would provide posters, tickets etc. and all for free. Wonderful!!!



Show organisers Margaret Moran & Les Pearson

Well known Manchester Radio personality, Fred Fielder, advertised the show for us and promised to come along. Memphis Nights warmed up the full house followed by Jim Jolly performing his Al Jolson act—he certainly knew his Jolson!

“Sing and Swing with Cyril Palmer” read the posters and dear Cyril didn’t let us down on the night. Des Redfern performed his George Formby act which was followed by Alison Nadin with Frankie Wood’s Puppet Show. The audience was delighted as this was a type of act that many had not seen before.

Jed Collins had them rocking in the aisles with his special performance of “Ghost Riders In The Sky” and was later joined by Phil Jones. Margaret Moran, now named “Margarita” was in fine form when she brought the first half to a close.

It was nice to see Radio’s Fred Fielder, who, along with R.N.I.B. representative, Lynsey Tilson, raffled off 28 good quality prizes. Well I’ve never seen an auction performed like this before. Winner number one got the smallest prize, all leading up to great excitement towards the end. Fred providing a joke with every win.

Thanks must go the Ken & Ann Ratcliffe for bringing along a car load of prizes, including a Laurel & Hardy book, “The British Tours” which brought £28 in an auction. A total of £320—to buy a new talking book machine—was handed over to Linsey Tilson at the end of the show. Fred was presented with a bag of “Little Sticks Of Rock” - enough for each of the GMR presenters, and Yours Truly went home a very happy person for a wonderful job done on the night. Fred can be heard every Sun morning on 95.1 FM or 104.6 FM. *NEXT PAGE . . .*

Thanks Les. Raising funds for the blind is something that we should get more involved in. These unfortunate people thoroughly deserve every help they can get to make their lives for more comfortable. It must be a terrible situation not being able to see, especially in this day and age when all life is so busy and there is so much traffic on the roads. I have the greatest admiration for them and their guts to face up to the world. They deserve honours far more than these pop stars etc.

Now Young Margaret Moran— *Tell me something !!! Why have you decided to change your name? You have a wonderful Irish image—on and off stage—and what could be better than to use it to its fullest. The Irish are world leaders in music and they are the most beautiful natured people. Anyone who rejects it—in my opinion—has a screw loose! If I had Irish talent I'd use it till it was worn through to the other side. Take a leaf out of Frank Carson's book and milk it for all its worth. Build up a repertoire of Irish greats like "Mountains Of Mourn, Danny Boy, Isle Of Inisfree etc. and let them have it full blast.*

Margarita doesn't sound Irish! It sounds Spanish and strangers would expect to see you coming out on stage performing the Fandango in a long flowing skirt. It not you Margaret!!! Be your wonderful Irish self. AMEN.

Ethel Formby's Uke—By way of Christine Booth I am holding

Ethel Formby's Ukulele Banjo here in my home. Now I don't know the full story of how it reached here but I understand that Ethel's son, Michael, left it with Jeffrey to have it reconditioned and as you know, poor Jeffrey passed on a few months ago, so Christine has left it with me to see if I can spruce it up.



I must say that the uke, a "Jetel," is in a dreadful state: The playing action is far too high—although someone has attempted to drop the arm to bring it level with the skin. The skin is also well below the top of the bezel which makes playing more difficult.

The uke has a mike system which is dangling about on the end of a short cable inside the drum, but it doesn't appear to be in working order. There are several cuts and gouges along the arm, as if a dog has been chewing it. Normally the skin has streaks of black in the playing area but this skin is black all over after being left out in the elements. The back of the resonator is lifting and someone has attempted to nail it down, without success.

However, on the positive side, the uke has been used by someone who is able to play down to the ninth fret. There are a couple of Sotheby's Auction labels attached to it dated 20/6/98, and a stick on label attached to the battered case: ETHEL FORMBY. So why would a professional artiste have a uke in such bad condition? It's a mystery!

All's Well at Sale—By Les Pearson—As soon as Jim Bramwell walked through the door he was mobbed by our happy crowd. “Nice to see you again Jim” they all shouted, - they’d not seen him for months.

Singing, playing, a smiling face and contortionism with the bones, our Walter Kirkland opened the show and, - Didn't He Do Well? The lad's a genius with his superb style. Paul Kenny came second on the bill, after his two radio appearances with Jim Bowen on Radio Lancashire.

Ever smiling Jim Bramwell was next with his favourite, “Uncle Joe's Mintballs” and a bundle of brand new jokes. My contribution of a Teddy Bear to the raffle prizes was won by Dick Eaves who was concerned that I may not be able to sleep without it.

Coronation Street's Les Battersby look-alike, Des Redfern, opened up the second half with a change in style when he sang his brand new song—he'd written that day, accompanied by his 6 stringed banjo. Some day I must write to the real Les Battersby to tell him of his look-alike.

Alan & Pat Chenery made their first appearance in the new venue and we were pleased to see Jack & Pauline Valentine after such a long break. Alan Southworth provided the sound system for the night and, along with Dick Eaves, twiddles all the knobs at the right time. Margarita Moran finished the concert off and we all said goodnight. P.S. Dick Eaves can keep the teddy bear. *Thanks Les.*

And a Few More from Joe Taylor—

A barber is a man who talks behind your back.

If it pays to be ignorant how come I'm broke.

Many a poor husband was once a rich bachelor.

Work is a good place to go to when you are broke.

She looked a million dollars—all wrinkled and green.

He wanted a new car for his wife but nobody would swap.

The best time to rake the lawn is when your wife tells you.

For twenty years my wife and I were happy—then we met.

The bride looked stunning while the groom looked stunned.

After our honeymoon I felt like a new man—so did my wife.

If you don't like the way women drive - stay off the pavement.

An egoist is one who joins the navy so the world can see HIM.

A smart husband is one who thinks twice before saying nothing.

A Beauty Parlour is where you get a face full of mud and an earful of dirt

Why can a banker write a bad poem but a poet must not write a bad cheque?

I'M RUNNING SHORT OF HAPPY ONE-LINERS. HAVE YOU ANY TO OFFER?



What A Wonderful

little instrument the wooden ukulele is. So small and compact you can almost fit it in your pocket. The picture on the right shows the Army Padre entertaining the boys before they set sail on the June 6th 1944, D Day Invasion. These lads didn't know what to expect over in France and no doubt they were preparing for the worst. However the Padre with his little ukulele in his hand brought smiles to their faces. Just look at the enthusiasm coming from the boys. Great picture.



George Heads All British Film Poll

NEWSPAPER CUTTING—1939? For the second year in succession George Formby easily heads the all British motion picture poll with 977 votes. Gracie Fields, runner up, has 684 votes.

In 1938 George won with 956 votes, Gracie Fields 683, Will Hay 633, Jessie Matthews 340, Sandy Powell 286, Jack Buchanan 263, Charles Laughton 262, Anna Neagle 245, and Will Fyffe 225.

In 1939 George won with 977 votes, Gracie 684, Robert Donat 423, Will Hay 404, Anna Neagle 345, Leslie Howard 313, Charles Laughton 294, Gordon Harker 240, Richardson 196, and Will Fyffe 182.

So there you have it. Proof that George was the tops in the British film industry.

George's Cough Cure a Real Mixture

DAILY MAIL NEWSPAPER ARTICLE 1944—George might make a lot of money if he could say which cough mixture is curing him, but he can't because a stack of them has had a part in it. Says Beryl, "We've got stacks of bottles all round the dressing room. We've had things you take in liquid form, tablets, pills, and powders, beside inhalers. Now I don't know whether George is my husband or a chemist shop. But they seem to be doing him good.

Troops were disappointed in a certain Northern camp when George was unfit to appear at their concert. For a week he has been fighting a rising temperature and a throat which he says, felt as if someone was massaging with barbed wire. Now he is recovering but Beryl is now a flu victim, and so is their pet dog, which the Formbys adopted from a Leeds RSPCA Dogs Home.

Thunderstruck—It's True!!! - It was about 4.30 in the afternoon and Eva & I were watching TV, when suddenly there was a very bright flash followed immediately by a loud bang. We thought that a thunderbolt had hit one of the houses in the area, but after checking it out found that no-one was aware of the explosion but us. It was very strange because it was so loud that we thought that all Warrington would know about it.

My grandson, Lyndon, had gone away for the week-end and, as usual, he'd left his computer on stand-by. The following Monday he returned to find that his computer was completely DEAD!! NOTHING!!!

First we discovered that the Power Supply had blown so we bought a new one and fitted it NOTHING!!!

Secondly we found that the Modem had given up the ghost so we went out once again to buy another. We fitted it and— NOTHING!!!

Then we found that the telephone cable to the computer was faulty so we bought a new one and fitted it. SUCCESS!!!

Now it's very unusual for three parts of a computer to blow at the same time so we can only assume that the loud bang and flash was a Computer Thunderbolt. No such thing! You may say, and I would have agreed. But a few months ago, I didn't know that computers could catch viruses until mine caught this heavy one and I, unknown to myself, was distributing it round to some of the members.

SAFTETY FIRST—At the same time as the explosion my computer was also switched on but, unlike Lyndon, I had no problems with it. Possibly this is because I've fitted a Surgemaster Board which protected it. If so, I would suggest that you consider fitting one of these. Lyndon's damage cost about £100 and these boards are only about £15. Mine is an eight socket type which QVC were offering for around £39. Well worth considering, - That's if you have a computer.

Was Beryl or the newspaper, telling porky pies?

In 1939 the newspaper article read, "And George said to me, 'wouldn't it be wonderful to write a marching song for the troops, and he sat down to compose one right away.' It is called, "Swinging Along, Singing a Song, With Boys Of The New Brigade."

FIB—We that isn't true because I have in my collection an assignment from Fred Godfrey dated 22nd September 1939 which reads, "In consideration of the sum of £20 I hereby assign to George Formby the sole singing, publishing, and mechanical rights in and of the songs: "The Boys Of The New Brigade"—"Lancashire Romeo" and "I'm Hanging My Stocking for Christmas." Brendan Ryan's Catalogue also claims that the song was written by George, so what was going on? I don't think that George had the time to write any songs.

Wigan May Dayze Festival—Well it might be the last opportunity we'll have to honour George's 40th Anniversary in his birth town because we've had no luck with the Wigan Pier Exhibition. On Saturday May 26th we have been invited to perform in Market Street from 1pm to 2pm. Weather permitting!

Now we want this to be a really grand "DO" with everybody looking smart—and all facing the camera with happy smiles—because this could be a breakthrough with Wigan that we have been waiting for a long time. All the natives agree that George should have been honoured as a local hero, so perhaps this event might help to convince the council.

There doesn't appear to be much activity going on—apart from a Drumming Group— Salsa Dancing - Verse and Worse and us—the noisy lot—so it is essential that we put on a good performance to attract the crowd.

We've done other shows in Wigan and they've been very successful. Ee Bar Gum.

Musical Copier—You are not going to believe this but as I am typing this page my photocopier—which is currently printing the last issue—is actually singing part of the first line of the chorus of "Chinese Laundry Blues." It's True!!! It is squeaking , "Oh Mr Wu" over and over again and I think it's in Bb Flat. If you don't believe me come down here and you'll be able to hear it for yourself.

Jack & Pauline Valentine—I was pleased to see Jack

& Pauline at the last Sale meeting. It's been a long time since they've attended any of the meetings so it was nice to see them again and to know that they are still in the land of the living, - and looking so well.



Jack, who has been a member of the Sale Branch some many years, always reminds me of the old style GFS players who performed without a backing tape or, on many occasions, without a keyboard or piano. He plays a number of George's songs, accompanying himself with Abbott uke. Nice to see you both again.

France—We are off on our coach trip next month so has everybody remembered to get their passports and insurance etc? Not much time left.

N. West Meetings

North Wales Branch - British Legion, Penyffordd (10 miles from Chester) Every first Friday in the month. Tel Dennis Lee on 01244 544799 Adm 50p. Where can you get a better bargain than that?

Liverpool - Broadgreen Conservative Club, Every 2nd Friday in the month - Ring Tom Bailey on 0151 289 1711 - Bring Your Uke

Werrington Branch (Near Stoke) at the Werrington Village Hall - Every 2nd Thursday in the month. Bill Turner on 01782 304858.

Sale - NEW VENUE - Holy Family Parish Centre, Old Hall Rd, (continuation of Marsland Rd) Every 3rd Friday in the month - Ring Cyril Palmer 0161 748 6550 Adm £1.

Crewe Branch - Wistaston Memorial Hall - Every 4th Friday in the month - Brian Edge on 01270 569836.

Westhoughton - The Red Lion Pub (Opp. Police Station) Ring Gerry Mawdsley on 01942 817346 - Every last Wednesday in the month. Uke Tuition.

Blackpool. SOUTH SHORE CRICKET GROUND, Common Edge Rd, Blackpool. Every last Monday in the month -Tel Eve & Charles Stewart on 01253 768097. Wonderful buffet.

Wintergardens GFS Meetings:

- Sat & Sun 17th & 18th Mar 2001
- Sat & Sun 23rd & 24th June 2001
- Sat & Sun 15th & 16th Sept 2001
- Sat & Sun 24th & 25th Nov 2001

N. West Web Site: www.thehollies.u-net.com/formby. E Mail: stan@thehollies.u-net.com

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