

THE NORTH - WEST

GEORGE FORMBY

Newsletter 76

Vol. 7
No. 4
Oct 2001



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.76 and

I hope this Newsletter is a welcome break from the terrible bad news we have received over the past weeks. Let us hope and pray that it doesn't lead to another world war.

Once again it has been a busy month with various media ringing in to enquire on why the Wigan Pier Exhibition was cancelled. And, "Why is Wigan refusing to erect a statue for George. I've explained time and time again that Wigan hasn't refused anything. In fact, they have been extremely helpful and are just as disappointed as we are at the breakdown of the event. But it appears that the media, as usual, are searching for something tacky to report on. Ten years ago they boosted George's image but now they are looking for reasons to bring him down. David Bret's GF book is still finding its way into the press and usually with large headings.

However, on the positive side. Our monthly meetings are still keeping George's flag flying and we are attracting good crowds with Crewe and N.Wales leading the way. Several of our members have appeared on radio over the past few weeks and we've had a grand GF exhibition at Newton le Willows. Now read on . . .

Jean Nadin—Let's have the sad

news first. Jean was suddenly taken into hospital and the situation looked grim. However, here is an Email report from Jean's daughter, Alison.



Hi Stan, She's not doing too bad now, she has something call cellulitus, it's an infection that attacks the tissues in the leg. Her right leg is now blistering, but all the poison has gone out of her system, and I'm happy to say she's out of any danger.

Frank's doing okay, the car now knows it's own way to the hospital, after two visits every day for the past week, and it looks like she'll be in for at least another

fortnight, which, you can imagine, she's not very happy about, but she is in the right place.

Many thanks for your concern and all the members at the society have been great with cards and telephoning their best wishes. It makes you realise just how lucky we are to have such good friends. See you soon. Alison.

Our thoughts go to them with hopes that Jean will soon recover. George's light is shining for you Jean.



Binkie Stuart—It was sad news when we heard that the little girl, Binkie Stuart, who acted in George's film "Keep You Seats Please," had passed on.



Binkie with Andy Eastwood during her Wintergardens visit

Binkie Stuart enjoyed a brief film career during the 1930s when she found herself dubbed the British answer to Shirley Temple. Yet her public were blissfully unaware that Stuart, away from the limelight, was a victim of mental abuse by her father who, by the end of her short career, had spent all her earnings. A child star, she was born Alison Frazer in Kilmarnock. Her father had been a musician before she became a film star. Thereafter he acted as her manager. One of her most vivid recollections from that time was when she refused, for a film scene, to be locked inside a suitcase.

The director and producer gave me pennies and sweets, but I still refused, she recalled, "I was terrified." Then my father was called on set. As scared as I was, I was more scared of him. He made me give back the bribes and forced me into that suitcase. Never allowed as a child to see her press clippings or view her films, Binkie was an adult before she fully realised the extent of her fame. She received none of the money generated by her film career, at the height of which she was earning as much as the Prime Minister.

In 1938 she retired and took to the road, appearing in seaside shows. At 15, however, she rebelled. Her furious father made her take a job as a dental receptionist. Three days after her 21st birthday, she left home. When she gathered the courage to ask her father about her earnings, he allegedly told her. "You don't make any money. Who would pay you to do anything?"

By the seaside or by the lakeside? After calls for many years for some sort of permanent tribute to the comedian Les Dawson, in the space of a matter of weeks there emerges not one, but two proposals to erect a statue in his honour. In Blackpool's case, the suggestion is that he could be featured in an interactive display of celebrity six statues along the seafront - though if there is a degree of suspicion this scheme is perhaps a way of diverting attention away from the more controversial pieces of modern art along South Shore.

The latest plan is being prepared for submission to Fylde Council and proposes a single statue at Fairhaven Lake, one of the comedian's favourite beauty spots. It is a scheme that is clearly modelled on the tribute to Eric Morecambe, but given the amount of publicity, (and visitors) this has generated for the resort of Morecambe, that's no bad thing.

Is there room for two Les Dawsons in neighbouring boroughs. The answer is no, since the visitor appeal of both would certainly be diluted. Given that the Fairhaven scheme is likely to go before the Fylde Council later this month and the Blackpool scheme appears to be nothing more than a good idea at this stage, it seems likely that the former is likely to reach fruition first. It is the view of Tracy Dawson, Les's widow, that any statue should be at Fairhaven, where the couple enjoyed a quiet courtship. If Fylde Council and Blackpool Council cannot reach a sensible agreement, perhaps she should have the casting vote.

I was speaking on the phone to Tracy and when she asked if I would like to see statues of past artists I told her I prefer something live such as an exhibition.

Come Hither with your Zither

Bill Turner at Crewe by Brian Edge



Well Bill did just that at the August meeting at Crewe, well almost. You see it was not exactly a Zither as featured in the Formby song, but a Hawaiian guitar. Bill really brought us the lovely sounds of the islands which brought many of us images of those pretty garlanded maidens who always seem to be present in large numbers to greet visitors and eventually to say goodbye. Bill really created a great atmosphere with his instrument which he had made himself. We have some very talented supporters in our group don't we?

Alan Chenery, sound engineer for the night opened the show with a couple of rousing numbers. Cliff Royle was M.C. and Carl Basford was Concert Producer. Steve Hassall was on the drums. They all did a splendid job. Alison Nadin took us back a long time with some excellent magic and all the audience joined in the fun. Our Jazz Band reared its head again with the ever popular Dr Jazz, with Alan on the Trombone, Glenys on the trumpet, Steve on the drums, Jonathan on the clarinet and the lads and lasses with their ukes, not forgetting young Ron on the bones.

Popular Alice Cronshaw gave us a couple of vocals as did Vera Jones. Cyril Palmer came along but unfortunately his wife Sheila was unable to attend through illness. We missed Crewe regular Colin Wood, who with Christine, was away on holiday. Alan Chenery ably looked after the sound system in Colin's absence.

The show was rounded off with an excellent performance by Des Redfern who, dressed in a super cowboy outfit, sang his latest composition which we hope will win the 2001 Song Contest at the George Formby Convention in September. At one time in his performance Des jumped down off the platform and in a western drawl said, to laughs from the audience, "I've just got off the Stage!"

JEAN NADIN ILL. We were all sad to hear that Jean had been taken into hospital at St Asaph, North Wales, a few days ago. At the time of writing these notes (2/9/01) it was thought that she might be in for perhaps a fortnight. Daughter Alison reports that Jean is certainly much better than at the crisis of her illness but has a way to go before she is well enough to come home. We are all thinking about Jean, who along with Alison and Frankie is a faithful supporter of the Crewe Club as well as being on the committee of the North Wales Branch. Get well soon Jean. Brian.

Email From Aiden Spackman BBC Researcher. I am currently searching for information on George Formby for a programme. Could you tell me if it was a ukulele he played or was it a banjulele? *Thanks Aiden, George started his film career playing a ukulele, which is the shape of a small guitar. In his second film he switched over to a ukulele banjo, which is a banjo head with a ukulele arm.*

Crewe's Special Train Steams out on Time

About sixty George Formby aficionados steamed out of Caverswall Road Railway Station on Saturday evening for their last trip of the year. Hauled by a 125 year old Victorian Steam loco the journey was short, about 3 miles, but the ride took us through some idyllic country scenery into lovely natural wooded country. Matthew's daughter, Diane Kelly remembered the actual engine working at the Biddulph Colliery very near to her home when she was just a small girl. Des Redfern entertained with his uke up and down the corridor during the trip, whilst others entertained themselves in their compartments. Cliff Royle who shared a compartment with four ladies was reprimanded during the journey for taking out the light bulbs in an effort to make the journey more interesting!

A superb buffet supper was awaiting our return to Caverswall Road and after eating we all packed into the refreshment room where Colin Wood, had set up the sound system. There, under the direction of Jonathan and Pamela Baddeley, we had a splendid evening, everyone joining in the fun. Jonathan had a wagonload of railway puns and quips and each one raised the required volume of jeers from the happy audience. Everyone agreed that they had had a most enjoyable night. Brian Edge.

Thanks for the report Brian. You've got to keep your eye on young Cliff Royle.

All Jazzed Up—

Crewe's Alan Newton (second from left) is a member of the six piece SALT CITY JAZZMEN band which has been established 30 years. Alan is one of the original members of the band which consists of cornet, clarinet, banjo, bass, drums and Alan on trombone. They play traditional jazz similar to Chris Barber and Kenny Ball and include such numbers



as Tiger Rag, - Jazz Band Ball, - Canal Street Blues etc. and on occasions have played Chinese Laundry Blues and Leaning On A Lamp Post.

The band plays at the Barbridge Inn, Barbridge which is 2 miles outside Nantwich on the Chester Road. They play every Thursday night from 8.30pm and accept engagements for weddings, concerts, jazz festivals, funerals etc. The members play for the love of it as there is very little money to be made in this side of showbusiness.

The band has played before many extra special V.I.P.s including, Brian & Connie Edge, Dennis & Lesley Lee, Jon & Pam Baddeley, Ron Whiston, Eric Manley—almost Royalty in fact, and look forward to seeing you all at the Barbridge, no charge on the door.



Cliff Royle Our N. Wales Super Sonic News

Hound Reports— Well this month we have both good news and bad news. So perhaps we should have the good stuff first. Congratulations must go to Dolwyn and Geoff Shone on the occasion of their 25th. Wedding Anniversary which apparently coincided with Dolwyn's Birthday. So additionally; many happy returns Dolwyn. However did you manage to survive 25 years?

The other celebration at the meeting was that for the 46th. wedding anniversary of Deg Bruce our very able sound engineer. We seem to be getting a number of such events around this time of the year. So now to the less good news. Although Jean Nadin is still not fully recovered from her sudden illness and hospitalisation we are pleased to hear that she is making steady progress, and it is hoped that she will be able to return home again quite soon. Our thoughts go out to Frankie and Alison at this time who, in spite of coping with their usual problems, still give us their full support. So many thanks Alison for all your gallant and continued support.

Hospitals are being kept busy by us in Wales for Charlie Penman is due to go in to have both hips replaced in the near future. He has suffered for quite some time and we wish him a speedy recovery.

Well what about the meeting? Great as usual, and well promoted by MC Jim Knight, ably assisted by Alison Nadin. There was the usual good attendance, but it was noted that there were quite a number of new faces in the audience. Crewe members turned up in great numbers, and two of their ladies, Vera Jones and Alice Cronshaw (perhaps I should really refer to her as a Sale Member) entertained us with Vocal Melodies. Was Walter a bit upset by the songs "Looking for a Man" followed by "I've got a boy friend"?

Des Redfern, playing his "new" Banjo-Uke, gave a preview of the song he has written for the Competition which takes place soon at the Blackpool Convention. There were also excellent performances by Walter Kirkland, Jonathan Baddeley, Brian Edge, Alan Chenery, Connie Edge and Alan Newton. (Jim Knight and I were trying for some time to relate Alan to the man who played the trumpet and wore a bowler. Between us we went from Bill Acker to Acker Bilk. Wait till your memories fail.

At Penyffordd we have members at opposite ends of the age scale all of whom very ably entertain us. One of our elders is Jim Griffiths who has his own style of playing, interspersed with jokes from which one may gather he used to be a Lancashire Lad. Then at the other end of the scale we have two excellent youngsters who are coming on by leaps and bounds; Stephen En-sall and Gregory Simister. Keep it up lads we are proud of you. Stephen's parents give him a lot of encouragement, and Dad, Brian, of course fills in any vacant spaces with his melodious singing. We are now starting some practice nights, aimed at all levels of proficiency, and we will particularly welcome anyone who wishes to start from scratch, as all organisations need to foster new blood. It is not hard to play a Ukulele type of instrument providing you are prepared to practice and accept that your progress may be slow. So come on you budding learners let us be seeing you. Latest news from Dennis and Lesley Lee is that they are settled in in Kent, and are getting involved with all their previous interests; Lesley with her dancing, and Dennis the Menace with his Uke. *Thanks Cliff, I actually received this Email before the meeting finished.*

Cliff Royle sends a bit of preliminary information for the News Letter.

Sorry to report that Jean Nadin suddenly took quite seriously ill last week and was rushed to Hospital in St. Asaph. That is the bad news. The good news is that Jean seems to be making a good recovery, and hopes to be out of Hospital within a couple of weeks. Geoff and Dolwyn Shone have been to see her, and she has had many good wishes for a speedy recovery from G.F.S. friends for which she, Alison and Frankie express their sincere thanks. Hope Eva has finished the decorating.

Many thanks Cliff. We are pleased that Jean is on the mend. I'm afraid it's a bad case of Decoritis with Eva. She's gone decorating mad! At the moment she's ripping all the tiles off the bathroom walls and demolishing the bath and shower. The house is full of dust and we've not had a wash for a fortnight. People are beginning to talk.

Neil Forshaw popped in for a chat. He's just

bought a load of old papers from the auction but amongst them were: a few Passports, Books of War time Clothing Coupons, Petrol Coupons, Identity Cards, Ration Cards, Theatre Bills from the New Theatre Cardiff, and loads of other stuff including one passport belonging to Ralph Fothergill, Music Hall Artiste, from North Shields, born 18th April 1887. Has anyone ever heard of him? Perhaps Fothergill wasn't his stage name.



Bertha May Serres

SPARE A THOUGHT FOR POOR BERTHA MAY—There was one interesting passport which belonged to Bertha May Serres, described as: Five foot two, forehead low, eyes brown, nose not straight, mouth lower lip protruding, chin receding, green eyes, brown hair brown, complexion pink and white face long, head very forward. Single — *I'm not surprised! Fancy putting so much detail on her passport. The poor woman didn't have a chance.*

Joe Taylor's Jokes: - Mick & Pat were watching the "Tour De France" cycle race on TV when Mick asked, "Why do they do that?" - "Do what?" asked Pat. "Cycle for miles and miles up hill, down dale, month after month, rain, snow, ice. Why do they torture themselves?" "Because" said Pat, "The winner gets half a million pounds." - "Aye, be jabbers," said Mick, "But why do the others do it?"

"HELLO, Is that the Liverpool Echo?" - "It is." - How much would it be to put an advert in your paper?" - "Five pounds an inch," - "Too dear," said Casey, "I'm selling a ten foot ladder."

SIGN in a pub window: "All you can drink for one pound." Murphy went up to the bar and said, "I'll have two quids worth."

PUT YOUR HAND UP IF YOU'VE NEVER SENT AN ARTICLE, - SHAME.

Blackpool Lights — The first display was staged on Princess Parade in May 1912 to mark the first royal visit to Blackpool of Princess Louis officially opening the new promenade section. About 10,000 bulbs were used and the results were so impressive that the council was persuaded to stage the Lights again—four months later. Thousands visited the resort and the Illuminations were hailed a commercial success. Although Lights displays were staged in 1879, 1912, and 1925 through to 1933, it was not until 1934 that a proper switch on ceremony was devised to launch the summer season's grand finale. Some of the personalities who have switched on the Blackpool lights are:-The Duke of Kent 1937 — Wilfred Pickles 1950 — Stanley Matthews 1951 — GEORGE FORMBY 1953 — Gilbert Harding 1954 — Reginald Dixon 1956 — Jayne Mansfield 1959 — Gracie Fields 1964 — Ken Dodd 1966 — Douglas Bader 1969 — Tony Blackburn 1970 — Dad's Army cast 1971 — Tom Baker (Dr Who) 1975 — Red Rum 1977 — Terry Wogan 1978 — Cannon & Ball 1980 — Coronation St cast 1983 — Joanna Lumley 1985 — Les Dawson 1986 — Andrew Lloyd Webber 1988 — Julie Goodyear & Roy Barraclough — Lisa Stansfield 1992 — Status Quo 1993 — Shirley Bassey 1994 — Bee Gees 1995.

90th Birthday—Arthur Silcock of Silcock's Fairs rang. He wanted a George Formby singer and an Al Jolson performer for his mother's 90th birthday party. We contacted Phil Forris of Wigan for the Formby bit and Tom Meredith to black up and mime to Jolson. The party was held at the plush Georgian Hotel, Blackrod, between Wigan and Bolton. About 400 guests arrived.



The "L" shaped room was quite huge, and the stage was set at one end. This meant that over half of the guests were chopped off from the stage. However, Phil's act went down really well, - although only three of the 25 tables joined in. Those that did join in with the singing actually knew the GF songs and shouted for more. These are showground people, so maybe they play George's songs often on the fairground.



After Phil had warmed the audience up, Tom Meredith came on stage, all blacked up, mimed and danced to the rich tones of Al Jolson. He went down really great with the crowd and they joined in with every song. Tom was in his element! Once on stage he is hard to get off but on this occasion he could have stayed on all night. He went down a bomb and the louder it came over the more they loved it. By now about six tables were stamping their hands and clapping their feet.

After a great treat the blaring DISCO came on, which was so loud that we couldn't speak. It was time to say "Goodnight" so Eva & I made a sharp exit. I can never understand why they find it necessary to book loud discos for a senior citizens party. I noticed also that Margaret, the birthday girl, also made a sharp exit to the other end of the room. Anyway, the fairground people thoroughly enjoyed the night.

(Request by Email (no name)) - Some time back I was present at the funeral service of one of your lady members and was very impressed the way you all turned out to add something special to her send off. The song you all sang was so fitting for the occasion. One of your members played a banjo while you sang to his accompaniment. Could you send me the words to the song please.

No problem. You must be referring to Auntie Mary's funeral at Crewe. The song is one of George Formby's, "Goodnight Little Fellow" from his film: "Come On George" and we altered the words for the occasion. Des Redfern, Mary's nephew, played the uke and we sang the following words. . . .

Goodbye Auntie Mary Goodbye

Now your day is through, we say goodbye to you
And know that you have done your best
Tomorrow will be new, and we'll be missing you
So make the most of your night's rest

Goodbye Auntie Mary goodbye

It's time to close your eyes and go to sleep
Those happy meetings we spent with you
When you were singing on the stage
And looking younger than your age
Someday, we'll all meet again and then

we'll know the reason why

So go to sleep, the evening shadows creep
Goodbye Auntie Mary goodbye
Goodbye Auntie Mary goodbye.

Whenever there is a special occasion we make an effort to add a touch of George Formby to the event. We are so pleased that you enjoyed our contribution.

Help!!!

- Don't print my name Stan, but could someone advise me. I enjoy getting up on stage but have difficulty in commanding silence from the crowd. The last time I performed everybody in the room was talking loud. It is very discouraging but I don't want to give up singing.

No! you mustn't give up. Learn to be more entertaining or nobody will listen. I saw you perform about 12 months ago and in my opinion your timing was perfect, but your voice was muffled. Nobody could hear the words. So first you must practise expressing your words loud and clear. Imagine a little old lady on the back row with hearing problems. Make sure that she hears you. Also ask whoever operates the sound system to turn the treble up and bass down on the mike.. It will help. If you still have difficulty in singing clear notes then perhaps you might consider forming a duo with someone with a clear voice. Don't give up. Keep in touch.

Charles Stewart

says we must be careful handling mini disk players. They can be delicate machines at times and on a couple of occasions he has had to send his SONY player for repair. One important point is that we should not push the disk into the player but should ease it in slowly and allow the player to drag the disk in.

You are right Charles. And we should consider purchasing a second player as a back up unit. Especially if we are doing a concert. It would be a disaster if the player went on the blink.

Keen Boxing Fan Derek Whitfield of

Nantwich kindly sent a Belle Vue (Manchester) Boxing Programme, dated Friday 25th March 1949 to Brian Edge. The programme, which is autographed by George Formby, Jackie Paterson and Jimmy Wilde, features Randolph Turpin as the top of the bill. George, - who was our own world champion, was a keen boxing fan.



George with his arm round Hogan Kid Bassey

Some reports say that George was an old meanie but some boxers didn't think so. Other reports claimed that George would sit ringside and give the boxers a treat as they left the ring. Good for you George.

Blackpool Remembers Them—A nostalgia salute

to the 40s, which was held at Great Eccleston and Rawcliffe Hall on 8th and 9th September, attracted hundreds of visitors and participants from all over the country.



Paul Harper

Attractions included mock battles between German and Allied troops, a Battle of Britain Fly-past by World War Two planes, and a display of classic cars. The event brought together the largest display of WW2 and post war military vehicles in the Over Wyre area since 1945. There was also a march past in Great Eccleston and a chance for visitors to see the "Fylde At War" museum at Rawcliffe Hall. Another highlight was the 1940s dance with John Towers Big Band. On the right Paul Harper is entertaining the visitor in ENSA style.

They Met in France (WAR TIME NEWSPAPER REPORT) Blackpool's

Gunner Lewis Littlewood, who is serving with the BEF writes to his parents: "I went a George Formby concert and honestly it is the best I have ever seen at home or elsewhere. Every act in his show was excellent but when George came on there was more cheering than at a Cup Final, and he gave us six encores.

I had a chat with George when he came to our gun position. Blackpool will not see him in a show this summer, for when I asked if he would be in town, he said it would be impossible as he would be entertaining the troops. Gunner Littlewood, who is a reservist, was a postman before being recalled. He played cricket for the Post Office cricket club.

GF Exhibition—Well we may have failed in holding a 40th Anniversary for George at Wigan Pier but we've certainly done him proud in the N. West. The recent Crewe GF exhibition created a lot of interest and on Saturday 8th Sept we took part in a Grand Olde Tyme Festival that took us back through the past 100 years. It was part of the National Heritage Week end.



Needless to say George played a prominent part on the day with a huge stall in the long entrance (we caught them coming in, and on the way out) and with a tape player set in perfect position the 700 (approx) visitors tapped their feet to George on the way in and on the way out. If they didn't like George, - then it was tough luck.

What a really grand show the supporters of Newton le Willows Methodist Church put on. The church is a stones throw from Harrison's Little Theatre where George first performed in 1921, so they were well inspired. Our GF display consisted of photos, magazines, song contracts, bank statements, song books etc. while the rest of the hall was filled with, very rare items like washing mangles, wash tubs, poshers, dolly pegs, a tin bath, antique cameras, ladies bloomers, fire guards, old hob heated smoothing irons, old tin cans, etc. It was a terrific display that took us back to the beginning of the century and well before the age of throw-away plastic.



Our thanks goes to Westhoughton's Neil Forshaw who invited us to the event. Neil, who has a deep interest in Lancashire history, put on a display showing all the local water canals.

It was unbelievable how so many visitors got to know of the event. From 10am to 7pm there was a constant stream of people passing our stall. The local bobby came in and when I told him that George actually made a film about the police force he said, "I know, I've seen it many times. One of my favourites is George." The proceeds of the exhibition (opened by Terry Wynne MEP) went to the restoration fund for the Earlestown Baptist Church.

Brian & Connie came along to the exhibition and thoroughly enjoyed viewing all the old relics of the past. No! I wasn't one of them, cheeky.

Email Appeal from Australia—My name is Dave Holden and I live in Adelaide Australia. I wonder if you can help me. I remember hearing a funny monologue years ago about two Yorkshiremen (I think), a father and son coming home from work and "seeing street lamp twinklin' in our village". It was the son reminiscing about how his dad threw his mam on fire and how they used to go to school with their "little heads painted purple cos they had lice". He mentions "going to see George Formby then after having cod and chips then buying a new suit and still having change out of a farthing". Do you know the sketch I'm talking about? If so, Who is the comedian and what is the name of the sketch? I think it was done with tune of Largo from the new world symphony in the background. My mum thinks it was a parody of something called Coming (or Going) Home.

No problem Dave. Thanks to Beryl Esseins of Australia. Here it is and you've got to imagine there's a brass band playing in the background while you read it. The record was made by Tony Capstick of Sheffield Radio.

GOING (OR COMING) HOME

"I'll never forget that first day at t'pit. Me and me father worked a 72 hour shift and then we walked home 43 mile through the snow in us bare feet. Huddled inside his clothes. Eventually we trudged ovver t'hill and soon we could see streets lights twinklin in our village Me father smiled down at me through the icicles hanging off his nose. 'Nearly home now lad', he said. We trundled into t'house and stood there freezing cold and tired out. Shivering and miserable in front o fire. 'Anyroad' me mam said, 'I've got you some nice bread and butter for yer tea.

Hee, me father went crackers. He reached out and gently pulled me mam towards him bi throat. 'You big fat idle ugly wife' he said, 'you great useless spawny eyed parrot faced wassock' - he had a way with words me father. He'd been college, yer know. 'you've bin out playing bingo all afternoon instead of getting some proper snap ready for me un this lad,' he explained to me poor little purple faced mam. And turning to me he said, 'Arthur,' he could never remember me name, 'here's half a crown, nip down tut chip hoil and get us a nice piece of haddock for us tea. Man cannot live by bread alone.' He were a reet tater me father. He said as how working folk should have some dignity and pride and self respect, and said how we should come home t'something warm and cheerful. And then he threw me mam ont fire.

We didn't have no teles or shoes or bed clothes. We made us own fun in them days. Do you know, when I were a lad you could get a tram down intut town, buy three new suits, and an overcoat. Sort out a good pair o boots, go and see George Formby at Palace Theatre, get blind drunk, have steak and chips, a bunch o bananas, and three stone o monkey nuts and still have change out of a farthin. We had lots of things in them days what we haven't got today, Rickets, Diphtheria, Hitler, and my we did half look well going to school with no backside in us trousers. All us little heads painted purple cos we had ringworm. They don't know they are born today. *Great Stuff!*

Frank Randle—Tom Bailey rang:- Stan, switch over to BBC 1 TV there's a report on Frank Randle. Frank was born in Wigan 100 years ago and his Wigan fans are trying to erect a Plaque in the great man's name. They showed a number of shots from his films and then wandered the streets of Wigan asking who the town's most popular personality was. "George Formby" came the answer and nobody could argue with that!

Larry Adler, who was an excellent harmonica player has just died and Jim Bramwell came up with a report that when Larry was a youngster he attended the Peabody School of Classical Music who were very strict with their pupils. On one occasion Larry was expelled from the class for constantly playing George's "I Like Bananas" in the classroom.

Cyril Palmer's just phoned. He's been interviewed on Greater Manchester Radio on the Phil Collins "Five Minutes of Fame" show. It's a bit of a barny programme when all sorts of funny suggestions are heard, like "Put some more wood on the fire Nellie" Cyril was interviewed and then he sang the good old favourite, "Maggie" - which goes . . . I wandered today to the fields Maggie to watch the scene below. It's a lovely song.

While Cyril and Sheila were parking their car in the BBC car park they noticed that one of the cars being parked had a R.A.T. number plate. Later they were introduced to the driver of the car, the popular, Johnnie Casson, who explained that he is a member of the Grand Order Of The Water Rats.

If anyone is interested in appearing on the show they can apply to Heather McGrouther at the BBC Manchester Studios.

A Few Snatches of News FROM BRIAN EDGE. Arthur and Mary Newton held a small party to celebrate Mary's retirement from work.

JONATHAN BADDELEY has just done a spot on BBC Radio Stoke as part of the Spode Potteries Collectors Road Show.

INTERNET OLD SONGS:- Try logging on to: www.melodylane.net and you will find a lot of old songs from before the 1930s. GF, Gracie Fields, etc.

"Formby Drives a Duck" Newspaper Cutting—George paid tribute to men of the minesweepers who have not been ashore for six weeks. They sang themselves hoarse with delight. George drove a duck but would not pull alongside the ship. "We shall go straight through" said George.

Sale in Timperley by Cyril Palmer - This

may not have the ring of Starwood - in - Aspen, or even Walton - le Dale, but on the pleasant August evening the atmosphere in our new venue was enjoyed by all present, including the staff. A Yorkshire contingent arrived consisting of Mac and Milly McGee with George and Mary Atkinson. Also Alan & Pat Chenery and Jon & Pam Baddeley came from the Crewe Society, more than making up for the absence of four or five of our regulars.



After Birthdays last month, this was an evening of wedding anniversaries, with George & Mary reaching China the following day—20th anniversary, not foreign parts. The day after was the 23rd for Jon & Pam. A little later in the month Ken & Anne Ratcliffe and Sheila and myself would reach our 38th and 48th respectively. There's some staying power in this society.

Oh, yes! There was much playing and singing as well. Walter Kirkland started the evening playing Ukulele and Bones, but not at the same time. Walter works hard with Alice setting up the room beforehand. Jon Baddeley played to his own backing music, and is prepared to make backing tracks for others. Pamela sang sixties songs on her own, then later sang "Baby" with Jon. I could see the amazement on the faces of the bar staff when our youngest member, Ben, did his stuff. Mac McGee was his usual laughing self. He also accompanied Mary Atkinson when she took her turn on stage. Husband George's sing-along medleys had everybody singing strongly. Alice made a good job of her songs inviting us to "Take all of her." With Walter around there were no takers.

At the interval, there was our new regime of tea and coffee with cake - on the house, together with the raffle. The entertainment continued with Les in charge. Contributions came from Des Redfern (airing his latest song competition entry) Paul Kenny, Alan Chenery, Mary Atkinson, Alan Southworth, Arthur Newton and myself

Time allowed some "seconds" and opportunity for requests. Because of this, Des Redfern responded to a request for "The Blackpool Belle." In the event it was like a minor thrash with another five joining in to make a great finish to a most enjoyable evening.

I would like to thank all those who helped to make the evening so successful. There are so many, so no names for fear I miss someone out. Their help includes preparing the room, or manning the door, manipulating the sound, supplying raffle prizes, brewing up, dismantling equipment and tidying up at the end, and everybody for just being there. *Thanks Cyril. So sorry I couldn't be with you on the night. But I got good reports on your new venue.*

Brian Edge is a collector of Old Coins, Medals, Picture Postcards, Badges etc. and only the other day a lady rang to say she had some old coins. Brian replied, "I'll be pleased to come down and look in your drawers." Sounds an interesting hobby

Another from Olwen Gale - Dear

Stan, another item again for your newsletter which I have found from some recent reading. One of my sons discovered a book in a second-hand book shop entitled "Funny Way To Be A Hero" first published in 1976 and in it there is a whole chapter given over to George Formby and a photograph of him playing.



Here is a short summary from it:- The essence of George Formby's professionalism mounted to more than the appeal of his irresistible grin, flawless ukulele technique, and cracked Lancashire tones. It was that at no point in his performing career did he appear anything more than an enthusiastically talented amateur doing something for the sheer fun of it. He himself once admitted, "I wasn't very good but I have something the public seem to want." George Formby held the notable distinction in the variety profession of becoming an even more famous son of a famous father, George Formby senior, known in the north as "The Wigan Nightingale."

Later, George, on his career remarked, "I never saw Dad on the stage, he wouldn't let me—he used to say 'One fool in the family is enough.'" It was not long before George developed his own individual style, basically both father and son presented an air of good natured, gormless naivety, but while father was mournful, lugubrious, subdued, the son had a lighter, fresher, more attractive approach.

Then there are no number of pages all about his songs, then there is a space given to his marriage to Beryl and how well they worked together. Today, it goes on, his songs are more instantly recognisable than those of any of his contemporaries. To the countless ordinary people who did attend his films, buy his gramophone records, respond to his magnetic stage personality, whistle his tunes throughout those tragic times, his sheer simplicity was utterly irresistible. All the best from Olwen. *And thank you Olwen. It's all good stuff! Pleased that you received the Email photo of Dennis.*

Laugh Your Socks Off with Connie Edge

So I got home and the phone was ringing. I picked it up and said, "Who's speaking please?" And the voice said, "You are." and put the phone down.

So I rang my local Swimming Baths and said, Hello, is that the local swimming baths?" And the voice at the other end said, "It depends on where you are calling from!"

So I rang a local building firm and said I'd like a skip outside my house. He said, "Go ahead, I'm not stopping you."

Two cannibals eating a clown and one said to the other, "Does this taste funny to you?"

The Phone Rang and it was

the Manchester Evening News. Hello Stan, we are sending a photographer down to get some shots of you and your memorabilia. "No problem" says I. Right on the dot the chap turned up and started taking shots from every angle: up me nose, down me ears, back of me head, sitting down, standing up, leaning on a lamp post, in the garden, on the main road, and everywhere else.



What's more exciting than posting a letter.

"What's this for?" I asked him. "Well we are doing a series on 'people and their most favourite places' and I want you to take me to all your favourite haunts in Penketh."

"Yer What!!!" Penketh? - "Yes, we want to film you entering your best nightclub, and the restaurant where you enjoy your best meals, theatre, cinema etc." - "Penketh? You've got to be joking." "Well" he said, "Take me to your best places—I haven't got much time to make the press."

I was just about to tell the old Colin Crompton jokes: "The only excitement we have in Penketh is watching the traffic lights" - and "We don't bury the dead in Penketh we stand em up in bus shelters," when suddenly I thought, "If he wants my favourite spots I'll take him." So I took him to the local post office where he snapped me posting a letter. I also attempted to take him to the local DIY shop but he saw nothing glamorous in that.

As we parted I thought, "He'll chuck em in the bin, that's for sure!" But low and behold, a couple of days later a full page article appeared in the M/c Even News and it appears all the N. West and his dog saw it. They all came with the same cry. "Fancy a night out at the post office, Stan.?"

Uke Banjo for Sale

— Old established GFS member, Larry Johnson of Manchester is selling an Abbott Copy uke banjo which was made by Graham Greenfield. White Maple Arm, Very Good Sound and, as Larry said, "In fine fettle." Complete with case. Looks and sounds like George's uke when he played "Mother What'll I Do Now." Price £250. Ring Larry on 0161 945 5296.

Another Emailer— Brilliant Cartoonist, Joe McCaffrey has joined the growing band of Emailers and is looking forward to receiving some calls from you on joemccaff@yahoo.com Joe advises that you look up website address www.poveytoons.com where you can learn to create comic strips.

Thanks Joe. But don't give too many secrets away or you'll be redundant.

Car Boot Bargain — Just picked up a great little bargain from a local Car Boot for a fiver. A Vera Lynn set of 5 tapes in a presentation box containing 74 of her popular songs. All in new condition with many war time greats like, "White Cliffs of Dover" - "We'll Meet Again"—"This Is The Army Mr Jones" — "I'll Be Seeing You" - "Rose Of England" etc. And all well worth listening to.

Red Hot Phone—The phone hasn't stopped ringing over the past couple of weeks. The BBC, the Press and the Radio, are concerned that the Wigan Pier Exhibition has been cancelled. I told em, "So am I—this would possibly have been the last opportunity to honour George." - Very disappointing!

LAUREL & HARDY—Ken Ratcliffe rang. He said that the Laurel & Hardy Society had just held a special event at Wigan Pier and over 3,000 visitors turned up.

Neil Forshaw has just popped in for a couple of hours. Apart from being a keen GFS member and player he is also a member (2nd tenor) of the 80 strong Haydock Male Voice Choir. They entered the Eisteddfod at Llangollen on July 4th and finished up in 4th position — one point behind Warrington.

On Saturday Sept 1st they are performing along with the Haydock Youth Brass Band, who are the National Champions, at St Helens Parish Church.

Neil is keen on local history and each year he produces a calendar with entries of what happened, in the past, on that particular day. Naturally, the main subject is George so he is always looking and GF dates. If you know what GF & BF were doing on any particular date, please give Neil a ring on 01925 222585. He'll be pleased to hear from you. Neil attends the Westhoughton branch and his favourite GF songs are Nightshirt and Windows. Good for you Neil.

3 Cheers for Des (Crewe) Redfern

Well what do you know? Our Des has won the Stanley King Song-writing Competition which was held at the Blackpool weekend. There was a sea of hands held up for his latest song, "Nashville George" making him a clear winner.

The competition, promoted by Alan Harris, in memory of his uncle and late professional entertainer, Stanley King, is held every September at Blackpool and Des has won the shield three times from the last four years. The lyrics tell the story of George going over to USA but reveal in the end that he was telling porky pies and didn't go over at all. Good for you Des.



Thanks From Kirkstall (Leeds) Nursing Home

For our Open Day we decided to Email Stan Evans of Warrington who put us in touch with local members of the George Formby Society in the hope that they could provide some entertainment for our residents. The name of the group that came along is D.U.K.E.S. They are Tony Marshall, Ken Smith and Paul Mountain, who arrived promptly, were polite, courteous and very professional. They involved all the residents by showing them their musical instruments. When they started singing and playing, there were lots of feet to be seen tapping in time to the music.



The whole day's entertainment went down very well and they also involved themselves in other activities—even buying raffle tickets to help the occasion. They chatted to the residents and exchanged memories and snippets of information, and various hats were tried on by the people. I'm sure that D.U.K.E.S. will agree that a good day was enjoyed by all. We have already booked them again for our forthcoming Bar-B-Q to be held here at Kirkstall on Saturday 18th August.

Good luck to you lads. You brought newfound life to many of our residents who didn't know they had it in them.

Thanks lads. The older folk appreciate being taken back in time to the days when they danced to our type of music.

Jon & Pam Baddeley Email

Dear Stan, There has been some debate relating to George's most famous song and the spelling of the last word-Lamp Post; Lamppost; Lampost. I have just seen a CD of Herman's Hermits Greatest Hits with a song "Leaning On A Lamppost."

Also, EMI have a CD of music from different decades. George is quite rightly included in the 1940s but is apparently singing a song "Delivering Milk In The Morning." It's amazing what you find. All the best. Jon Baddeley.

Thanks Jon & Pam. It's a well known fact that 75% of school leavers today can't read or write and the other 15% can't add up. Think about it.

DON'T FORGET THE NEWSLETTER

John Shreeve What a treat we had at the Liverpool meeting. John Shreeve was challenged to play the melody lines to any well known tune and one of the crowd replied with "Yesterday" John, who has never play the song in melody form before, picked out the strings like the expert he is, and, with fingers reaching all the way up the fingerboard, gave us a real treat. Great work John. We must throw this challenge out at every meeting.

Uke Banjo Wanted—Philips 01480 811967 £200 to £300.

Email from the Hoy Family—I haven't met George Formby. I am another Hoy here in New Zealand. George's mother was Elisa Ann Hoy. I was wondering if you had any info about her. Where she was born?. How many children was in her family etc. Her brother was my grandfather. He came to New Zealand and was killed in the coal mine in the South Island. He had 5 children Frank Hoy Albert Hoy Mona Hoy Nonie Hoy. (Oswald Hoy was my father who too played the same Instruments as George (Hoy) Formby. Albert did also Mona played the mouth organ. They also have passed away. Have you got the Email address of the nephew at all. I think its Frank Formby. Thanks Yvonne HOY.

Frank's daughter, Angela, has been asked to contact her. Also a photo of Eliza's brother, John, has been Emailed over to her. It's surprising what comes in Email.

A selection of Performance References

1. This man would argue with a signpost.
2. I would not allow this employee to breed.
3. The wheel is turning but the hamster is dead.
4. A photographic memory with the lens glued on.
5. If you stand close to him you can hear the ocean.
6. He would be out of his depth in a car park puddle.
7. This employee is depriving some village of an idiot.
8. It's hard to believe he beat off 10,000,000 other sperm.
9. He's not so much a "has been" as a "definitely won't be."
10. He sets low personal standards and then fails to achieve them.
11. If you gave this man a penny for his thoughts, you'd get change.
12. He has two brains. One is lost and the other is out looking for it.
13. Some drink from the fountain of knowledge while he only gargles.
14. Works well under constant supervision and when cornered like a rat
15. Since his last report this employee has reached rock bottom, and started digging.

Found on the internet by Brian Edge. Thanks Brian.

WE ARE RUNNING SHORT OF ONE-LINERS

JUST RECEIVED

an Email from Iain Maitland, of the BBC. He is a Formby fan looking for GF Memorabilia Collectors for a show. More as it comes in

N. West Meetings

North Wales Branch - British Legion, Penyffordd (10 miles from Chester) Every first Friday in the month. Tel Geoff Shone on 01244 544605 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** - AGAIN—Timperley Liberal Club, 43 Park Road, Timperley. 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 0 1 2 5 3 7 6 8 0 9 7 . Wonderful Buffet .

Wintergardens GFS Meetings:

Sat & Sun 24th & 25th Nov 2001

No dates yet for year 2002

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

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DON'T FORGET YOUR ARTICLE—OR ELSE

