

THE NORTH - WEST

GEORGE FORMBY

Newsletter 80

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Welcome To Newsletter No. 80

and we deeply regret to inform readers that we have lost one of our most dedicated Crewe members. It came as a shock when we heard that dear Peter Cain had passed on.

Peter died at the age of 68 on the 18th of December. His funeral service was held at All Saints Church, Hanley, on the 3rd of January. 100 people, including 40 N. West members, turned out on the most coldest of days give a rousing send off that Peter would surely have appreciated. The loud speaker system bellowed out with Peter's favourites: Dr Jazz, and Lonnie Donegan's "Putting On The Style."



A really lovely couple. Peter and Joan during the Southern Ireland trip. Happy memories for Joan.

Peter was a printer by trade but enjoyed woodturning as a hobby. He made his own uke banjos and enjoyed working on building Airfix model cars etc. He also played the keyboard and made his own backing tapes. In keeping with Peter's philosophy on life and his wishes for a "no tears" send off, the following verses were included in the funeral service.

(1)
Although you cannot see me
I am not far away
I'm in your mind and memories
Today and every day.

(3)
Life will go on without me
That's how it's meant to be
So make the most of it
For life is short you see.

(5)
Be glad for the time spent together
The love that we shared through the years
Be happy now
And wipe away those tears.

(2)
So dry your eyes and weep no more
Treasure what we had before
Smile when you remember the jokes we had
Try not to feel lonely or sad

(4)
Let my love be your strength and anchor
Each and every day
To help you through this journey
That you take, come what may

Joan, Susan, Geoff and Chris wish to sincerely thank all for your kindness, support, prayers and messages of comfort received during their recent sad loss. The beautiful floral tributes and donations for the N. Staffordshire Heart Committee, are very much appreciated. Peter will be sadly missed by all his family and friends.

And Still on a Sad Note—It was the Last Meeting for Werrington.

However, about 60 turned out to give it a grand finale and Bill and Ivy Turner were thanked for their hard work in keeping the meeting alive over the past years.

The meeting began with a one minute silence for dear Peter Cain who has supported them. After a few tears were wiped, the show went on as Peter would have wished it and on followed a host of Music Hall acts, - including George of course.



Ivy and Bill Turner, - a lovely and sincere couple



This lot looked too real to be acting. I still don't know if the second from the right was male or female. Excellent effort!

The members did them proud with a vast range of knock-about acts. We had women brilliantly dressed up as men and men dressed as women. It was very confusing trying to keep track of who was under the outfits. In fact, one young man looked more like a woman than a woman would, and it was quite a shock to find him/her stood behind me in the toilets. It was full credit to them all for putting on such a fine

effort. Noel Murphy turned up by way of Derek Jones, complete with blood stained bandages, to explain why accident prone Paddy hadn't turned up for work. The show went well and it is a great shame that Bill found it necessary to close this monthly event down.

Thanks—Eva & I wish to thank all for such a large deluge of most beautiful Christmas cards. Credit also to Kevin Bridgewater for creating a George Formby card on his computer and printing it off on his home printer. It really is professional and excellent, with a great GF photo of George and Willie Waterbucket, his dog.

Young Cliff Royle Star Of The Show! There was a

wealth of talent on show at the Crewe December bonanza. Despite a depressing number of apologies for absence, mainly due to illness, the room was full by the scheduled start time of 7.40pm. The attendance was 95. The Crewe concert always begins promptly at 7.40pm and as a result there are few stragglers, everyone being keen to get a good seat so they can enjoy the fun. It was indeed encouraging to be able to welcome some new faces and I am sure they saw enough good entertainment to make them want to come and see us again in the new year.



It was particularly great to have Carl Basford with us. Carl is recovering after a series of health problems that has kept him out of action for nearly three months. He is still under the weather but he made a big effort to come, and we all appreciate that and were delighted to see him. Carl is one of our most faithful supporters and we can't wait for the day when he is able to resume his place on stage as our M.C. and singing his popular numbers again in his very own laid back style.

The meeting started on a very sad note when Master of Ceremonies Jonathan Baddeley told the gathering of the sudden death of our dear friend Peter Cain. Peter was a faithful member of the Werrington and Crewe societies. He was a talented and happy member of our groups. He made his own ukuleles and worked hard on improving his performances. He even made his own backing tracks on his electronic keyboard. The shock of his death has had a big impact on us all and our hearts go out to his wife Joan who has been his stalwart supporter. A period of silence was then held for Peter and Jonathan dedicated the meeting to his memory.

Alan Chenery and Colin Wood then performed one of Peter's favourite numbers "*Putting on the Style*". This was accompanied by Peter's own backing music which soon had all the audience clapping their hands - just as Peter would have loved. It was good to greet Alan Southworth and his wife Hilda from Preston. Alan is a true Formby enthusiast and is a technically excellent exponent of the banjolele. Always performing with superb instruments, Alan sang for us a number which was written by his friend Billy "Uke" Scott for the one and only Max Miller. The song was entitled "*Down by the Old Turnstile*." For his second number Alan gave a delightful performance of a medley entitled "*The Alabama Jubilee*" which included the famous Formby solo from the song "*I told my Baby with a ukulele*." This solo was featured in a hybrid number in one of George's films and was heard at Crewe for the first time. Privet and Hedge reappeared as a duo after a long absence with "*We're going to hang out the Washing on the Siegfried Line*" and Tom Meredith from Wirral sang a Jolson Number. Arthur Newton gave a short recital on his piano accordion and young Gregory Simister continued to improve his performance this time with a difficult number "*T.T. Races*". Gerald Beadle sang an unaccompanied version of "*I'm Nobody's Child*" during which one could hear a pin drop. Alan Chenery performed a Frankie Wood jazz number, a real tongue twister entitled "*The Boogie-Woogie Ukulele Man*" and Colin Wood had the audience joining in with his ever-popular "*Blackpool Belle*". Des Redfern, sporting a t-shirt emblazoned DE51 UKE representing his new car number-plate sang an Irish number without backing, as his latest technology appeared to be non-compatible with our own equipment. Still there will be another time Des. Our drummer Steve Hassall gave impressive performance on the uke with a medley of songs from the twenties. Gareth Sumner charmed the audience as usual with his own inimitable style of playing and as a result was rewarded with great acclaim. Vera Jones put on an excel-

lent performance with her song medley and Walter Kirkland performed for the first time one of Georges last recorded songs "Happy Go Lucky me." Jonathan Baddeley took time off from his main role to sing "Auntie Maggie's Home Made Remedy" to his own backing, and later Bill Turner sang the Boyzone favourite "No Matter What" accompanying himself on his home made Hawaiian guitar. Ever faithful Alison Nadin gave us a further taste of her magic in both prestigation and ventriloquism.



There were a number of excellent sketches. Pamela, Alice, Margaret, Vera and Connie dressed as working housewives sang "Twenty Tiny Fingers" whilst the twins Cliff and Angela, suitably attired in baby clothes were extremely naughty behind the performers. The twin's outfits were the creation of Angela Caldicott who spared no pains to achieve the best possible effect. I can give you a bit of inside information, it seems that Cliff caused quite a sensation in the ladies dressing room before the performance with his oversize baby's dummy. He may be 79 but there is life in the old dog yet! Derek Jones gave an impressive mime explaining why Murphy would not be at work today. The audience appreciated Derek's funny sketch, which was well done.

Alan Newton attired in an immaculate dress suit sang the famous Jolson number "Mammy". It was with a difference for as he opened his arms apart they seemed to get longer, and longer and longer. A touch of the Edgar Alan Poe, but nevertheless, well-performed and very funny. We can always rely on Alan for some good ideas.

Pamela Baddeley got the audience going with an action packed version of the "12 days of Christmas". This was great fun. One sketch involved Harry Boffey, Alan Newton, Vera Jones, Walter Kirkland, Angela Caldicott and Cliff Royle. All dressed in convincing hikers gear, the troupe sang "Happy Wanderer" and the audience reciprocated with the Valdere-Valdera bit. But who was the man with the long blond hair and sunglasses? He foxed most of the audience - it was Walter Kirkland. He certainly had me fooled but I could hear his bones rattling in his pants pocket as he marched along! Alice Cronshaw took to the stage pleading, "I'm looking for a man" and she was more than satisfied as she got two! These, however, were in the form a couple of vagrants played by a bearded Hilda Southworth supported by Cliff Royle who qualifies for an entry in the Guinness Book of Records for having his pants off and on the most times during any Formby concert! Cliff took on this role at a moments notice as a result of Vera Eaves being unable to attend. What a good sport he is. All our artistes are Stars, but on the night and in my view, Cliff was the brightest Star of all. Cyril Palmer despite all his domestic problems turned up and got everyone going with his favourite "Delilah." It was good to hear that Sheila has had her operation and we hope that she will soon be well enough to go home. We all send her our love and best wishes. Connie, Vera, Harry and yours truly arranged the buffet and we hope that everyone enjoyed it.

Special thanks must go to everyone who helped in any way to make it such a memorable evening especially Chris Metcalf who greets everyone as they arrive and collects the money, the Sound Engineers Colin and Alan, our drummer Steve, our lady Concert Producer Pamela who did a grand job and last, but certainly not least, our excellent Master of Ceremonies, and Master of the Pun, our very own - Jonathan Baddeley.

Resident Crewe drummer Steve Hassall plays the uke brilliantly.



Cliff Royle The finest News Reporter

this side of Afghanistan - This was our second "do" at the Penyffordd Village Hall in as many months. Panic at 8.30 pm on the previous night when the Legion discovered that they had double booked the room. However due to the efforts of Geoff Shone and some good luck we were booked into the Village Hall within the hour. Although the roads were all right for driving on the areas off road were rather dodgy with ice. Luckily we were spared any accidents to those attending. At first we were worried that the turn out would not be so great, but in the end we had an excellent turn out of about fifty, which was good when taking the weather etc into account.

Jim Knight acted as M.C. for the first half, ably supported by our ever helpful Alison Nadin, and following a THRASH Jim Griffiths opened the evening with songs and jokes. He is always willing to open up and brings along a few different songs. There followed some of our friends from Crewe, and Sale. Alan Newton, Walter Kirkland with his Bones Team, Jonathan Baddeley, Brian Edge, and Stan Watkinson with his banjo. Many came up with songs new to us, and we think Brian Edge gave his age away when he divulged the year of his birth as the year in which "Nurse come over here and hold my hand" was first recorded with a Uke backing. I won't print the date. Alice Cronshaw sang The War Medley accompanied on the uke by Connie Edge. and our three "Up and Comer" uke players Deg, Frank and Phil. Regrettably Connie was unable to perform (sing) due to a throat infection.

Tom Meredith played Little Ukulele, and a good old Medley. Alas he got a bit put off for someone had already slipped in rather smartly to play one song he had intending playing. Our very own and very young Gregory Simister brought the house down with a fantastic performance. Yes Gregory you have in-built talent; keep it up. Then to make sure he looked good they put me on. Then the interval. Tea, coffee, biscuits, soft drinks, and a few tins of the other kind all provided and prepared by Geoff and Dolwyn Shone. Wonderful.

I was asked to M.C. the second half. This gave me a chance to request that certain photographs which were circulating should not become "Photo's in the Press". It was a race to get Phil, Deg and Frank on again and so divert attention from this growing problem. Then followed Alan Chenery, Alison Nadin and "Andy the Andy Man" Des Redfern who had sorted out the lighting system. There was a duet by Tom Meredith and Gregory Simister, Apparently although Tom originally taught Gregory, it may well be that the roles are soon to be reversed, Jim Knight sang a new song "I haven't told her and she hasn't told me" which ended in a really fast and melodious solo, and we had songs from Pamela Baddeley and Brian Ensall whose son Stephen had previously given an excellent playing performance.

The evening was blessed with both good and bad news. Charlie Penman is slowly

recovering from his hip operation, and we wished a Happy Birthday to Alan Chenery. Stan Evans was a bit poorly, and Tony Elson goes into hospital next week for an operation on his leg. We wish both a speedy recovery. However on a sadder note we have to record the sudden death of Peter Cain from Stoke, one of our ardent supporters. A number of members of the Branch attended the funeral. We extend our deepest sympathies to his Wife Joan, and his family.

To conclude. A big thank you to Geoff and Dolwyn for all they did to make the evening such a success.

Short separate matter worthy of note.

Following a request for help to this Branch Tom Meredith and Jonathan Baddeley entertained the Higher Management of the Chester Chronicle at their annual Christmas Dinner at the Grosvenor Hotel in Chester.

They felt it was a great success. As the Chronicle give us regular free publicity it was felt that this event would further cement our good relations with the Press.

And thank you Cliff. No I wasn't poorly, but for the second year I've had the flu jab and, again, it has left me with a very irritating cough. However Stan Watkinson gave me all the gossip.

Another N. West Loss—We regret to report the sad loss of one

of our old friends, Len Phillips of Liverpool. 76 year old Len was a great character who made himself welcome wherever he went. He was also a good act and especially when he played his jazz numbers like Sweet Georgia Brown. He passed away on Monday 7th January at his home. His son Robin told me that he died very quietly.

Below Len is fraternising with a French girl during a mock World War Two show



Above, the German SS take Len away

Len had a lovable personality that we can't forget. Unfortunately his best laid plans often back fired on him. One example was when he was afraid of burglars robbing his house. He rang me up, "Stan, I'll see you at Liverpool tonight. I've set a burglar trap at the rear of my home so I feel more relaxed about leaving an empty house." He came to the meeting that night, had a few more drinks than he should, enjoyed a pleasant evening, as usual, and caught a taxi home. On arriving home, - still feeling the effects of the drink, - he discovered that he'd lost his front door key. He found his back door key and as he went round the back of the house he stumbled over his own burglar trap and broke his arm. How on earth can we forget wonderful characters like dear Len?

Update on Sheila Palmer—by Cyril. . . More than two

years ago (Sept 99) Sheila slipped in the hospital and broke her hip. It was repaired (pinned) but she continued to suffer pain and could only walk with crutches. Having the pins removed in November 2000 did not help much and soon Sheila's condition deteriorated. In January 2001 she was put on the list for a replacement hip.



An assessment for the operation was arranged for November 5th, but Sheila has problems with her blood and on this day her blood count was found to be extremely low, so the operation could not be arranged. Two days later Sheila was given five units of blood to put her back on course for the operation.

Unfortunately after three more days she collapsed, feeling faint and sickly and was admitted to hospital on Sunday November 11th, where she was found to be suffering from low blood pressure and a reduced blood count.

Six weeks later Sheila is still in hospital but, thankfully, after many tests and six more units of blood she has undergone the operation and now has a replacement hip joint. Throughout these past six weeks Sheila has been amazingly cheerful and resilient and so we now look forward to getting her back on her feet again.

We both appreciate very much the many enquiries and kind wishes we have received during the past 27 months and thank all our friends for the support they have given. Yours, Cyril Palmer.

Thanks Cyril. We all know how Sheila must have suffered over the past couple of years and she must be gutsy to have withstood it. We are very pleased that that she is now on the mend. George's light must be shining brightly for you Sheila so we all look forward to seeing you up and about—in fact, Sheila, the last time we saw you really active was some years ago when you were miming to Harry Stanford's "Please Let Me Sleep On Your Doorstep Tonight." Now when you are back to normal you must perform it for us! - OK? It's a challenge!



George's Light for Sheila

Wife: When I'm down in the dumps I always get a new hat.

Husband: I wondered where you were getting them from.

OLD IRISH TOAST: May the roof over your head never fall in and the friends gathered below never fall out.

What's white and dashes through the desert with a bedpan? Florence of Arabia.

Thanks to Charles Stewart—Every few weeks a small parcel of Blackpool newspaper cuttings will arrive in the post from Charles. This is great because what town could be better than Blackpool for GF inspiration. The article below is from The Sentinel under the heading, The Way We Were. (50 years ago)



●Comedy favourite George Formby with his ukelele.

From Bill Rockey, Bentilee.

MY favourite picture house has to be the old Goldenhill Cinema because when I was 14 I got a job there as a rewind boy and stayed for nearly two years until 1947.

Funnily enough, it was only known as Goldenhill Cinema. It never had a name on the frontage like other picture houses, although I believe at one point they thought of calling it the Kozy. It was owned by the Johnson family.

We had a couple of standby films in case the weather was bad and they couldn't get new films through to us. These emergency films were called *The Mummy's Hand* and *The White Savage* and I got to know them well.

In all, I must have seen *The Mummy's Hand* about 21 times. The part of the mummy was played by Tom Tyler, who'd previously been in cowboy films. I remember him walking down some steps with his bandages dragging behind him.

I remember a funny incident regarding

the projection room, which was sound-proof. One night the sound went off on the screen and we knew nothing at all about it for 10 minutes until Mrs Johnson came rushing up to tell us off.

As a boy my favourite female star was Diana Lynne, but my all-time favourite was, and still is, George Formby. I still have a lot of his films on video. George is always good for a belly-laugh.

One film I remember was called *On the Beat* when George wants to be a policeman. Ronald Shiner is one of the co-stars. He is in another Formby film, *George in Civvy Street*, set in a country pub.

Let *George Do It* is generally reckoned to be his best film of all. In it George goes to Bergen by accident and is mistaken for a spy. One of the songs he plays is a form of morse code. He also sings *Mr Woo* and *Grandad's Nightshirt*.

I have a personal reason for being fond of that film because the leading lady, Phyllis Calvert, is like my wife when she was young.

'The last of the true music-hall comedians'

THE death of British music hall and the passing of the great vaudeville comics of the past is still mourned, though sadly rather less often these days than it used to be.

But one comic is still treading the boards, tickling stick in hand, described by his former agent as "the last of the true music-hall comedians".

Aged 74, Ken Dodd is still touring. "It's my one purpose in life," he said. "I exist to be an entertainer."

Christened Kenneth Arthur Dodd, he was born in the Liverpool suburb of Knotty Ash.

His father, Arthur, was a coal merchant, and Ken followed him into the family business when he left school at 14.

"I helped my brother Billy," he said. "I did about six years in that business until I was 20.

"I enjoyed it. I worked with Billy and we laughed all the time, shovelling coal, writing songs and telling jokes."

He'd already made his stage debut, aged eight, at St Edmund's Orphanage in Liverpool, after sending off sixpence-worth of stamps to the boys' paper *Wizard* to learn the secrets of ventriloquism.

Ken joined a troupe of juvenile entertainers, and went on to the working men's club circuit.

Later, he started up his

Ken Dodd

own business as a door-to-door salesman, selling liquid soap, bleach and firelighters.

At the same time, he was working in the clubs as "Professor Yaffle Chuckabutty, Operatic Tenor and Sausage Knotter".

Great theory

Ken finally turned professional at the age of 26, making his first appearance at the Nottingham Empire in 1957.

He earned £75 a week and slept on a board propped up between two chairs.

"It occurred to me that if I was going to sell comedy — basically I was still a salesman — I ought to find out more about it," he recalled.

"My father had a great theory. 'If you want to know anything,' he said,



Ken complete with his famous tickling sticks.

'go to the library.'

"We had the most wonderful library in Liverpool, probably the best in Britain, and I read every book I could find about humour."

Ken's career blossomed rapidly. By 1965, he was earning £3000 a week at the London Palladium.

His fiancée, Anita Boutin, was often standing at the back of the theatre with a stopwatch, noting the audiences' response to the show, allowing Ken to fine-tune his performances.

And Ken's performances ran — and still run — to legendary lengths. He once earned himself a place in *The Guinness Book Of Records* for one performance that ran non-stop for three and a half hours.

It's said that the Palladium inserted a clause into his contract stating that if his act over-ran, he would have to pay the staff's overtime out of his own pocket.

Ken still holds the record for the longest run at the Palladium — 42 weeks, with two performances each night and three on a Saturday.

For an entertainer who once said, "A stage is where I really start to live," he's an intensely private man. But that privacy was broken in

1989 when he was charged with tax evasion.

He was acquitted on all charges, but not before the public were granted a rare glimpse of his private life.

His home was described by an accountant as "like something out of *Steptoe And Son*" — and the death of Anita Boutin in 1977, his attempts with his second long-term partner, Anne Jones, to have children were all raked over.

Sell-outs

Ken still performs three or four nights, most weeks of the year, in venues that seat between 600 and 3000 people. He still averages more than three hours onstage, and he sells out every venue.

"I'd rather do this than do anything," Ken said. "I even played the Shetlands twice. I had to — they didn't believe me the first time!"

Eric Sykes once called him "the greatest contributor to British comedy," and he is, by common consent, the last star of the British music hall, last in a line that includes Norman Evans and Max Miller.

"If I could say I walked in their footsteps," said Ken, "I would be very proud. I think they left me to switch the light off."



Ken celebrates being made a Freeman of Liverpool with some of his Diddymen.

KARAOKE

Sam Fishwick, sales director of Singtotheworld.com is celebrating after selling their online karaoke innovation to Japan.

Japanese subscribers have joined thousands of other customers from around the world, including America and Australia, who have logged into the the Midland's based company's website.

Wannabe pop stars can select their favourite track from a 2000 strong catalogue, listen to the vocals highlighted as they sing along.

Visitors to the site are even given the opportunity to try out a demo before subscribing to the website, which has 20,000 hits a week and costs £5.99 a month.

The idea behind Singto the world.com comes from karaoke booths in Japan, where people pay to use a sound proof cubicle to sing their favourite songs, instead of embarrassing themselves in front of audiences at bars.

So if any readers are on the internet and wish to log on, just go to singtotheworld.com and let us know if you find any interesting backing songs.

Usually these sites are for the youngsters only but it's worth an attempt. Don't forget to let us know if you find anything interesting. Or any other sites for our age group.

YOU'VE FORGOTTEN THE NEWSLETTER AGAIN!!!!

Spotlight on Crewe's Vera Jones—At the age of six Vera had ambitions to become a professional dancer on the stage and some twelve months later she was learning to acrobat by watching the experts perform. Due to unemployment there was insufficient finance for lessons so she practised alone. In 1932 she joined the "Railway Follies" which had connections with "Crewe Locomotive Works" and "The Steam Line Review." These two organisations gave charity shows in which she took part. The Veterans Institutes, The Memorial Hospital and Railway Orphans benefited from these shows. At the end of October 1938 she joined Frank H Fortesque's production of the pantomime "Robinson Crusoe" and was very successful in the Manchester interviews.



How's about a demo of the Splits at the next Crewe meeting?

The pantomime opened in the Crewe Lyceum Theatre in December 1938 for one week and went on tour to the Wednesbury Hippodrome, West Bromwich Theatre Royal, and the Queens Park Hippodrome, Harpurhey Manchester. The final performance was at the Preston Hippodrome. During this time, and still only 13 years of age, she was away from home for five weeks and enjoyed every minute. She was unable to join Fortesque's shows on a full time basis due to being under age for leaving school. However she continued with the Railway Follies until she was 16. Unfortunately no other professional offers were available.

Vera has since visited all the other theatres and was sad to find that they have been bulldozed and converted to supermarkets or car showrooms. *Many thanks Vera.*

Murphy's Law—Not sure who sent this in, - but thanks.

Murphy's law was not propounded by Murphy but by another bloke of the same name.

The hardness of the butter is in direct proportion to the softness of the roll!

Any simple problem can be made unsolvable if enough meetings are held to discuss it

If your project doesn't work look for the part you thought wasn't important.

If it says "One size fits all" it means it won't fit any.

A clean tie attracts the soup of the day. Where there's a will there's a won't

If you understand it, it's obsolete. Chipped dishes never break.

It must be at least five years ago since I sold Alan Williamson a uke banjo. He seemed so keen that I thought it wouldn't be long before he was up on stage entertaining. Well since then he's been hiding behind his pint glass at Liverpool, trembling at the very thought of having to get up on stage, - Well Surprise, Surprise. At the last meeting Alan made his long awaited debut. Good for you Alan.



Good Hearted Frank Formby researched by

Vera Jones. Crewe Chronicle 22nd November 1947. A few minutes before going on the operation table, a woman patient at the Crewe Memorial Hospital heard Frank Formby, brother of the famous George, sing the popular Formby song, "When I'm Cleaning Windows." Frank is appearing at the Crewe Theatre this week and was following his usual practice, adopted in each town in which he plays, of visiting the local hospital. In most towns he takes the full shows and gives the patients the whole programme, but there were no facilities for this at the Crewe Hospital



Frank with sister Louie

Accompanied by his manager, Mr Dennis, and Mrs Dennis. Frank was given a warm welcome by the hospital President Mr Bentley, and the staff. Frank, a family man himself, was at home in the Children's Ward where, after nursing the younger children, he presented books to each of the children.

The party was shown through the hospital and Frank helped to stir the Christmas pudding, in which he left a surprise for someone who will be joining in the Yuletide festivities. With an invitation to the nursing staff to visit the show, "For Your Pleasure" Frank completed another successful outside performance.

Many thanks Vera. Keep sending em in.

Louie Formby is still going.

Louie felt sure that she would live until 2001 and then it would be time to go. As she said quite often, "Father died in 1921, George died in 1961 and mother died in 1981 (at the age of 102)"

In 1991 Louie was attending the Warrington Museum GF Exhibition each day until she became quite ill. "Time to go" she said, "there's a one at the end of the date." Then she got news that her cousin Eugene from Wigan had died, so she prophesied that she would pass over in the year 2001.

Well dear Louie is still with us so possibly she is looking at 2011 for her grand exit. Good for you Louie.

Email from David Carnduff

I am researching an article for my newspaper, the Greenock Telegraph, about George Formby Snr who appeared in a show in Greenock in February, 1902. Is it OK to download pictures from your web-site for use in the paper? I will give you a credit if required. *No problem David. Only too pleased to oblige any time.*

Have you visited our web-site yet? If you've any ideas for it let me know.



Christmas For Sale by Cyril Palmer -

Our room was not available on the usual Friday so Christmas came a week early to Sale.

The evening was well supported. Vera & Harry Jones from Crewe, and Cliff & Margaret Royle, with friends, boosted the regular attendance, while Jean, Alison & Frankie Woods made the journey from North Wales. There was also the welcome return of the Kennys, Elaine, Tony and Paul.

Following last month's dig at the ladies, Alan Chenery brought his wife, Pat, who was either there to protect him or perhaps control his behaviour.

The Christmas spirit was well in evidence, many of our members having made a special effort for the festive season. There was a sprinkling of Christmas songs, "White Christmas" (Les Pearson) "Winter Wonderland" (Margaret Moran) "Mary's Boy Child" (Yours Truly) and "Jingle Bells" (Alison Nadin's boy puppet in a suitcase". After the interval there was a lively audience participation in "The 12 Days of Christmas." During the interval there was a rather lovely buffet with Christmas music as a background to the chatting. Then two raffles (one was free) where Father Christmas himself made an appearance and lady prize winners were allowed (encouraged?) to sit on his knee. Dick Eaves was the unlucky one. He was missing while this jollity was afoot (Ho, Ho, Ho,)

A Cher look-a-like (Connie Edge) was "Ready, Willing and Able" as per Tessie O Shea.) As Alice Cronshaw sang "I'm Looking For A Man" two grizzly looking fellows hovered hopefully around intending to be at the head of the queue (Hilda Southworth & Vera Eaves)

Brian Edge pleaded "Nursie, Come Over Here and Hold My Hand" (could it be that Connie has a nurses uniform). Paul Kenny sang a song not often heard: "The Fiddler Kept On Fiddling)

To close the evening everybody joined hands and in a wonderful friendly spirit sang, "Auld Lang Syne."

Thank you Cyril. Unfortunately Stan Watkinson and I couldn't be there on the night due to it clashing with the Liverpool meeting. However, it sounds as if you had a grand evening. You've had a hectic month with Sheila in hospital so a special thank you for finding the time to send a report in. We are very pleased that Sheila is now out of hospital and slowly recovering.

An Enquiry Came In—Why does Stan wear braces, and also a belt?

Well, the answer is quite simple. The braces are to hold my trousers up. And the belt is to stop them from falling down!

Must Be Going Senile!!!! By Olwen Gale -

Stan, you got my snippet wrong, - "What A Coincidence" in the last issue. The coincidence is that George Harrison died on the anniversary of Denis's birth and John Lennon died on the anniversary of mine.

You are right Olwen. I botched it up completely and I'm struggling to think of anyone I can blame it on. I'll go very careful in future.

OLWEN CONTINUES (And it's spot on!!!! - I hope)



In a recent copy of "Two Wheels Only" which is a motorcycling magazine, there was a whole page devoted to Formby entitled, "When I'm TT Racing." With his tombstone teeth and that so solid ukulele sound, George was the man when men were men. It immortalised the races way before names like Geoff Duke and Mike Hailwood made them famous. The film (No Limit 1936) still plays on the island every year during the TT Races. It made George a cult

figure for TT fans and the film has even been played on the island to raise money for the Manx Helicopter Fund which assists fallen riders. Of course George himself was a mad keen rider in real life too. His favoured bike was a 500cc Norton International, an overhead cam, single cylinder sports model which is now on display in the National Motorcycle Museum in Birmingham.

When the 2nd World War broke out George quickly volunteered to join the Blackpool Home Guard as a motorcycle despatch rider, as well as agreeing to boost morale by entertaining the troops. He made further use of his passion for biking after the war when the new Labour government stung him heavily for taxes. George decided it was hardly worth working just to give all his hard earned cash to the taxman, so he took to buying old scrap bikes, fixing them, giving them a paint job and selling them for a tidy profit! George Shuttleworth, star in "No Limit" would have been proud of him.

For what he has done for "Bikers" in general and his war bit, the magazine say it is a pretty good effort Mr Formby, - you are a true biking icon, - COMEDY STRAW BOWLER HATS OFF TO THE MAN. Happy 2002 to everyone, Olwen Gale.

Many thanks Olwen. I didn't know that George renovated and sold motor bikes but it possibly makes sense now. Way back in 1991 at the Warrington Museum GF Exhibition, one of the visitors was an 80 year old gentleman who claimed that George had a double garage full of motor bikes when he lived at Mere Corner, near Knutsford. He also claimed that he went along to the house and bought the entire stock from George.

Also at the exhibition we had lots of TT racing fans hopping over from TT Trials on the Isle Of Man, to see George's display. He was their hero and, as they said, nobody has ever made a film that can match up to "No Limit." It was their favourite and Anthony Mason did George proud when he sang "Riding In The TT Races" several times over to the motorbike lads.

Eunice Evans of Redditch writes—Dear Stan, Have just enjoyed reading the latest Newsletter No. 79 January. You must remember us as we were on the coach trip to France with you (*of course I remember you both*)

Alan and I were fairly new members (1 year) But it has been wonderful to be amongst such lively people and so kind, particularly, as we are both retired and the kids think that retired people sit in a chair doing nothing.

We came back from a trip to Australia to find my brother in law had taped a programme off the radio on which George Formby was featured. I went to choir practise and one of the chaps (proud of you Eunice—no guys here) had also taped a different radio programme that mentioned George and also Malcolm Palmer of the Stourbridge branch. It just shows that we are spreading the word in the Midlands.

I didn't particularly like George Formby in my younger days but since Alan has started swinging this shiny jewel in front of my eyes every morning and saying "You will like George Formby" it's taken over our lives. I wake up at night with George's songs going through my head. It must be hypnotism, but I like it. Your Ever Grateful, Eunice and Alan Evans.

Don't worry Eunice. It happens to a lot of people. My son's family hated George until 1991 when we held a GF Exhibition in our local museum. We were on TV, radio and in the newspapers every day and a lot of George haters got hooked. My daughter in law told me that they would wake up in the middle of the night to ask what song was going through their minds. They were really hooked. Hope you are coming to Amsterdam with us.

Another Load of Laughs from Dianne Kelly -

At my local pub the other day, I had a plough-mans lunch. He wasn't amused. I went into town to buy a pair of camouflage trousers, but I couldn't find any.

What is the most popular wine at Christmas - "I don't like parsnips and Brussels sprouts"

Two young boys spending Xmas Eve at their grandparents house, that night after they had hung up their stockings they knelt down and began to pray,. The youngest one shouted at the top of his voice "I WANT A NEW COMPUTER FOR CHRISTMAS" his older brother complained " Stop shouting, God isn't deaf ! " " No, but Grandma is !! " answered his little brother.

Abie stumbled into the house gasping. "What's wrong?" asked his wife " I had a great idea" Abie replied " I ran all the way home behind the bus and saved myself 75 pence." "There you are again Abie, thinking small" replied his wife " Why didn't you run behind a taxi and save £10.

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

A nun tumbling downstairs.

Thanks Dianne, keep sending em in

Cliff Royle Emails—A preliminary snippet for the News Letter if it is of interest. A Mr. Prest from Wrexham rang to say he had an old record and wondered if anyone would be interested in it; if not it may be thrown away.

It is a 78 rpm record and has on it THE GHOST on one side and I'M A FROGGIE on the other. It is by Hargreaves and Damarell, is in a plain brown label wrapper, and has a red REGAL Zonaphone Label. It is played by the George Formby comedian and Orchestra. It is playable but not perfect; has some scratches on it.

From what I gather it is not worth very much, but I am sure that if anyone wanted it they could get it for a small sum. His number is (01978) 751385. You would be surprised at some of the calls I get about George and the Society.

Thank you Cliff. We are very pleased that you are kept busy. 10 years ago I paid £3 each for a stack of George's 78s but there doesn't appear to be any interest now. We need another GF exhibition to stir up enthusiasm.

Laugh Your Socks Off with Martin Thomas. Stan, Did you hear about the magic tractor? It was going down the road and turned into a field. If you get a duck in cricket, and a birdie in golf what do you get in bowls?

Goldfish.

What do you call a fly with no wings? A walk.

What do you call a donkey with three legs? A wonkey.

What does your husband do for a living? Oh, he's a joiner,

Oh yes, what does he do? When he sees someone going into a pub he joins them.

What's the best way to get in touch with your long-lost relatives? Win the lottery.

How do you stop a dog barking in the back garden?

Put it in the front garden.

How do you stop your dog from digging holes in the garden? Take his spade off him.

What do you call a polar bear in the jungle? Lost.

Spare A Thought—Eva & I paid Jim &

Joan Bramwell a visit over the holiday and were saddened to find that after regular doctor's treatment, Joan isn't improving with her health. She is having great difficulty with her walking and consequently, at times feels a little chair bound.

However both Jim and Joan are still well in spirit and Jim is doing a grand job as head cook and bottle washer. As he said, "I've been learning some new songs and loads of brand new jokes. I'll be back with a bang soon." We hope you are Jim as you are both missed at the meetings. They are all singing your songs and telling your jokes.



George's light for Joan Bramwell. Best wishes to them.

Alan Williamson, Liverpool's little ray of sunshine, is a taxi driver. The other day he picked up an Irish family with an American guest. The American noticed Alan's uke banjo of the floor of his cab and got curious. He insisted on Alan giving him a demonstration. "I will stay in the cab until you show me some chords" he said to Alan. Alan obliged the man and photos were taken of him demonstrating. They left leaving Alan with a 30 bob tip.

Alan also went to the Tuebrook British Legion to watch Mike Turner do his Formby spot. A lady approached Alan to tell him that she was once Beryl's maid. More to follow, - we hope! *Thanks Alan. You did very well with your debut on stage at Liverpool at the last meeting so we've got you down as a regular performer.*

Dianne Kelly certainly ruffled the men's feathers in last month's issue and especially the line "What is the difference between men and government bonds, - The bonds mature." Well a couple of Emails flew in and here are some of them in defence of man . . .

Is your wife outspoken? Not by anyone I know of.

If your wife wants to learn to drive don't stand in her way.

The plane was about to crash and a woman passenger stood up and cried, "Is there anyone on board this plane who can help me to die like a real woman? A man stood up, took his shirt off and said, "Here, iron this shirt."

Why did God make man first? He didn't want a woman looking over his shoulder.

ARE YOU GIVING UP DIANNE?

In the beginning God made the earth and rested. Then he made man and rested.

Then He created women and since then nobody's rested. More Next Month

Joe Taylor writes—Thanks Stan for sending Monologue Joe's address. I received a reply from the man himself with a number of his monologues. He wondered how his notoriety had reached the N. West and I explained that it was the power of the George Formby Newsletter.

I enjoyed reading about your surprise evening at Penyffordd. After the initial shock I have no doubt that you 'lapped it up.' One reads of so much doom and gloom these days that it makes a very pleasant change to read of happy occasions as that at Penyffordd. *Thank you Joe. I'm very wary now when entering these meetings. How on earth so many people could keep it secret without me getting at least a slight sniff of what they were up to, has me completely beaten. My granddaughter is convinced that I knew in advance. She said, "Nobody could be that dumb." The cheek!!!*

Two wrongs don't make a right but two Wrights made an aeroplane

Time's a great healer but a lousy beautician

Space is a dangerous place . . . especially between your ears

Christmas Concerts—Stan Watkinson, Jim Bramwell & I

(The Past Its) have done a load of concerts leading up to Christmas day and what an experience it's been.

At one concert, for the Over 60s, we were greeted by a host of ladies when we arrived with our equipment. "Set it up on the stage" they told us. But the stage was cluttered with furniture, a large Christmas tree, bingo equipment, an amplifier system, two large speakers, a record player, and loads of cables. To save time and effort we attempted to use their equipment (which was spread all over the floor of the stage) but abandoned the idea when we heard the quality of the sound. Twenty minutes later we had our own equipment installed but still had no idea of the running order. Two men gave us different instructions, - which made us more confused— and then another man popped up on stage, dressed as a clown. He quickly took charge and at long last we thought we were in the hands of a good organiser. "Here you are lads" he shouted, get these mince pies down you and here's a cup of tea." - "Thanks a lot, very much appreciated."

But then, just as we'd taken a few bites of mince pie, the clown picked up the mike and announced, "And here to entertain you, are, 'The Past Its', and everybody cheered. Well you could have knocked us down with a wet lettuce. Have you ever tried singing with a mouth full of mince pie? Those in the front row were sprayed.

At first I thought that the clown had simply made an error so we soldiered on without complaint. But then, during the singing—especially our sad ballads, he started throwing artificial custard pies at our audience. Thoughts: "This man's an idiot!!"

This was confirmed later when, although the audience was facing the stage, he insisted on calling the bingo numbers out from the other end of the hall which meant rigging up a 60 foot cable. There was no doubt it, this man was a real clown.

A COUPLE DAYS later we entertained a large crowd of over 335 Over 60s in this huge club. They loved our singing and all the old songs, - which everybody joined in with. Within a few seconds the entire centre hall was filled with dancers and we got the biggest applause ever and calls for "More." Everybody in the room was smiling and singing their hearts out and they loved it so much we thought they'd never let us leave the stage. More and more dancers were getting up on the floor, but at the same time they were putting their coats on and leaving the room in droves. We couldn't believe it. They were singing and dancing as they left the club and we were totally confused. After the first 20 minutes, only about 50 people remained.

Afterwards we approached the stewards and asked why they walked out. "Don't worry about it," they said, "They do it every time. They are programmed to having a few games of bingo and then leaving about 3pm. They can't break the pattern." There's nowt as queer as folk!!!

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

Sale - **NEW VENUE**—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 01253 768097. Wonderful Buffet—Always in need of players.

Wintergardens GFS Meetings:

Sat & Sun 15th & 17th March 2002

“ 29th & 30th June “

“ 14th & 15th Sept “

Sat 30th Nov & Sun 1st Dec “

Concerts usually start around 1.30pm each day.

For GFS details contact Steve Wylde on 01773 763353

N. West—Two Lancashire Lads web site:

www.thehollies.u-net.com/formby.

E Mail: stan@thehollies.u-net.com

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