

THE NORTH - WEST

GEORGE FORMBY

Newsletter 81

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Welcome To Newsletter No. 81

and again we start off with a sad loss to the ukulele world. Jack Jones died on Sunday the 3rd of February at his home in St Helens. Pat, his friend rang to tell me that when they were setting out for church he complained of pains. Pat suggested not going but Jack insisted. As Jack walked round the front of the car he slumped on the floor banging his head. Pat called for help and the neighbours phoned for the ambulance. The nurse said he was in a critical condition but Pat knew that he had already passed on.



Throughout his life Jack had been a staunch supporter of George Formby and it was claimed by many that no-one impersonated George's playing better than Jack. With his typical raw Lancashire looks he would have passed as an older version of George.

Jack was responsible for many learning to play the uke. Every week he would have regular sessions at his home with his ever growing number of students.

Jack carried an iron support on his leg from being a young boy. This was caused by polio. It was during his stay in hospital that he learned how to play the uke. A young boy in the next bed was given a uke but he wasn't interested in playing it. Jack, coached by the nurse, strummed around with it little realising that this was the beginning of his life time hobby. In later years he played as a part time professional in a band. Jack was known for his insistence in demanding that ukules should be played "Nice and Steady" but old tapes have been played proving that Jack himself was quite a flyer in his younger years. Possibly none faster.

FUNERAL

The funeral service mass was held at St. Theresa's Church, St. Helens, and over 100 of Jack's family and friends gathered to give him a send off he would have been proud of. Mike Turner played "Blackpool Rock" as we moved in and George sang us out with "Little Ukulele". The two hymns chosen were "How Great Thou Art" and "Make Me A Channel Of Thy Peace." Both great hymns that Jack could have chosen. Thanks was given to Jack's son Malcolm and to Jack's friend, Pat, who has looked after his welfare over the past few years.

Although a wet and cold day, a crowd of around 50 moved to the St Helens Cemetery where a short interment service was held. Later a gathering of around 40 met at the Seven Stars Hotel. Jack will be greatly missed by his Formby friends.

TV Talent Wanted— Digi-Clip TV© has Arrived!

Thames Television Wants Your Comedy Talent!

Are you the joker in the pub? Do you have the gift of the gab in the office? Or are you the centre of all things funny or have a wild imagination? If so, we have just the TV show for you! Write or film your own funny sketches, email us your mpegs, watch them on TV, and get paid!

'Digi-Clip TV' is a brilliant new programme that will screen your original short sketches and films. 'If you own, or have access to a camcorder and a PC and feel creative - Get Filming Now!

The World's Funniest Digi-Clips' will be screened this year by Thames Television and your film could be on it. We will pay £250 for each film shown! 'If you are a budding writer and have an original sketch or an idea for a short film then we will make it for you and pay you £100 for the privilege - So Get Writing Now! Email your edited mpeg short comedy sketches or written script to clips@digiclip.tv. If you don't have access to a pc then simply send us your VHS or High 8 tapes to Digi-Clip TV, Kiln House, 210 New Kings Road, London SW6 4NZ.

It's a great shame that the lads on page 7 of the issue were not filmed. This would have made an easy £250— plus royalties.

Bob Muirhead Emails Stan, Glancing through the January Newsletter you mentioned an Email from Trevor who praised the Chicago Teddy Bears Jazz Band and said they often do Formby numbers. Members may be interested to know that they perform every month at Maghull Town Hall (usually 2nd Thurs- day) they are a great band and well worth seeing.

They share the venue with the Merseyside Big Band (alternate fortnights) they are also good and play Glenn Miller, Dorsey etc, both bands are well worth a visit. Can you send me the words to "I'm Nobody's Child?"

Sad news of Jack Jones, I hear the Funeral is tomorrow Friday and hope to get up to St Helens to say farewell to one of my favourite people. Regards Bob Muirhead.
Thanks Bob, here (Email) are the words you wanted and Stan & I will sing it at Liverpool for you. Great little song.

Uke For Sale Martin Fowell is selling a Dallas A Uke. Renovated including re-set neck. No case. £150. Phone (01745) 854390.

UKE WANTED—Ron Brown on 0151 487 8137 wants a Banjo Uke

Great Crewe Meeting - Alan Newton hosted the January Crewe concert ably assisted for the first time by Peter Gratton as the concert producer.



Following the usual thrash of four numbers Colin Wood and Alan Chenery opened the show with a duet of "*Window Cleaner*" and this was followed by Jonathan Baddeley who flew the Formby flag with "*Wigan Boat Express*" and his favourite Formby number "*Thanks Mr Roosevelt*." Connie Edge kept the Formby flag on the wag with "*I Don't Like*" and then had the audience singing with her version of "*Enjoy Yourself Its Later than you think!*" Arthur Newton gave an excellent performance, as he always does, with "*Turned out Nice Again*" and "*Sitting on the Top of Blackpool Tower*" which is one of my top three Formby favourites. Pamela sang the love song "*Noughts and Crosses*" the song that George sang to Kay Walsh in one of his best films.

There was just over 70 present on the night there being many apologies for sickness but this was made up by a splendid contingent of twelve supporters from the Penyffordd society.

Walter Kirkland performed a new number from George's very last record "*Happy Go Lucky Me*". It is a tricky number but Walter coped with it well. It is good to hear performers introducing new songs - it is so good for our wonderful supporters. Vera Jones also sang a new song namely "*It had to be you*" and Cliff Royle did likewise with the Formby song "*Who are you a Shoving Of*". It was another good performance by Cliff who is improving every month. Don't believe the myth that you are too old to do anything new - don't write yourself off, have a go at whatever tickles your fancy! Cliff is living proof of that and he is in his eightieth year! Whilst on the subject of age I have to mention that we have a faithful supporter, a real gentleman, who normally entertains us on stage with his ukulele. His name is Matthew Kelly and Matthew was 89 this month. So far as I know, he is the most senior performing ukulele artiste. It is a pleasure to have him in our friendly group and we wish him a belated but nevertheless sincere Happy Birthday from us all.

Jim Knight of Wrexham also performed a song which was performed during a chat show on television by Peter Sellers some years back entitled "*We know it Just the Same*". Jim is one of Penyffordd's M.C.'s and a member of their new committee who are really doing an excellent job across the border in Wales.

Peter Gratton, who worked very hard as M.C. at the now sadly defunct Werrington Branch came along at short notice as Concert Producer. Peter will join the Crewe MC's rota and we will see him fronting our shows from time to time in the future. Peter gave us ten minutes as a stand-up comedian of rapid-fire one-liners ending his performance with a nice piece of mime. Although Peter didn't know many of our

performers he worked well with Alan Newton and the show went on flawlessly.

In the absence of Colin Wood and Alan Chenery our sound technicians, we needed someone to take care of the music on the night. This is a responsible job as the whole show depends on the quality of the sound. At the last minute we had a volunteer. Alison Nadin, ventriloquist, puppeteer, magician, uke player. What other talents has this lady? Well she had no trouble managing our sound system and everything went smoothly. Alison found that she particularly liked one piece of our sound equipment so much that I wouldn't mind betting that they will be adding it to the equipment at Penyffordd soon. Alison gave us a special treat by presenting to us two new characters in the Frankie Wood International Puppet Show. I loved "Harry Hardcastle" in his bowler hat and lovely check suit complete with waistcoat and gold watch chain that sang "Any Old Iron". Then there was "Shazam the Snake Charmer" who flew in on his magic carpet and charmed his snakes as he flew around. Taking about flying around - did anyone notice that Mr Bones got an extra twirl around that he wasn't expecting?

Bill Turner sang a country song together with the not so frequently performed Formby number "Its no use Looking at Me." Trudy and Derrick Jones gave a funny performance with the excellent miming of the famous number concerning two tramps "Were a Couple of Swells". The highlight of Cyril Palmer's night was, I am sure, the fact that he was again accompanied by his wife Sheila who has been ill and in hospital for so long. How wonderful it was to have her back and what courage that lady has had during the past two and a half years. It was great to have you back Sheila.

Alice Cronshaw sang a couple of her solo numbers and Liverpool's Stan Watkinson entertained us accompanied by his guitar banjo. Greg Simister gave another excellent performance with two Formby numbers and Gareth Sumner gave a special Formby number "Rhythm of the Alphabet" and this he dedicated to his late Dad Ellis, who died suddenly on the 5th March 1998.

Both Des Redfern and Steve Hassall sang medleys on hybrid instruments and Gerald Beadle sang Scarlet Ribbons. Stan Evans had the audience in stitches as usual with his very own type of off the cuff humour and this was followed by a bit of magic, which nearly went wrong to the misfortune of magicians stooge Stan Watkinson who almost got a soaking. Fortunately everything "Turned out nice again." Stan finished his act with a combination of one of his own compositions and "Walk Right Back" accompanied by Stan on the Watkinson. The M.C. Alan Newton rounded off the show with "Talking to the Moon about You" and "You're Nobody till Somebody loves you". Thanks for your efforts Alan. It was a great night out for all.

Thanks Brian. Let's get it right. I don't do magic! Mine are miracles and my latest miracle went wrong on the night when I asked for a jug of clean water and received a doctor's large sample bottle filled with something hot. I don't know what it was but I got the impression of a rather big chap who'd been on the lager all night. I'll take my own water next time!



Our Cliff's Report

As was expected at this time of the year the attendance was somewhat lower than usual. Crewe were again well represented, and Sale also provided their support, although we were sorry that Alice Cronshaw was unable to perform!! Having had a few problems with our sound equipment over the past few months the Branch decided that we should adopt a similar system to that used at Crewe which would give the Sound Engineers better control. Unfortunately the set-up information provided for the new control was incorrect, but thanks to Alan Chenery and Colin Wood the problem was eventually resolved. Thanks gentlemen. At this juncture we should express our thanks to Alison Nadin who not only brings all the equipment to Penyffordd but also gets any new equipment for us, operates it, and trains others. We are lucky we have so many folks ready to help and learn. Deg Bruce helps with the sound system, and is now also acting as an assistant to the M.C., and Phil Hughes and Frank Humphrey's are always willing to lend a hand. Deg, Phil and Frank played some three-somes this evening, and they were just great. They are doing regular practicing together.

We were pleased to hear that Tony Elson is making good progress after his operation, and he sends his sincere thanks for all the good wishes sent to him. And did we have a surprise when our friend Martin Fowell joined us for the evening.



Tony Elsdon

On the Social Side some of us will be joining members from Crewe, and Sale for a week-end of fun, eating and entertainment at Bodelwyddan Castle next week-end. Will the Castle ever be the same again? Most performances took on the usual form, although this evening we seemed to be blessed with many ladies doing their little bit; Connie Edge; Alison Nadin with a dangerous bird; Vera Jones; Pamela Baddeley, and surprise, surprise Chris Revell played some Formby Songs on a Tenor Horn. Apparently she had only written the music at tea time that evening. It was great Chris, and we can see where your son Gregory gets his talent from.



Chris Rewell plays George's "Little Ukulele" and "Licence" on her tenor horn. Great sound.

Perhaps I can mention a few of the activities which seemed to stand out. Brian Edge singing The Little Shirt Me Mother made for me (partially composed by Stan Evans perhaps assisted by his wife Eva; Stan's full time decorator); Walter Kirkland singing Happy Go Lucky Me which song really suits his cheery presentation; The Two Stans who sing, play and tell jokes; and of course the Bones players. We seem to get inundated with them nowadays. Must be good business for the abattoirs, but not so good for the animals. Thanks to Jim Knight for acting as M.C.

Penyffordd Flyers—Up & Comers, Deg Bruce, Phil Hughes and

Frank Humphries worked very hard practising before getting up on stage at the Jan meeting. "Lamp Post," which they'd practised a thousand times, is the easiest of George's songs, so it was the ideal opener for them, and with confidence they gave Alison the nod to start the backing tape going.



Deg, Phil and Frank—Star act.

What they didn't know was that the backing tape used on the night was made specially for the experts who travelled at 300 miles an hour.

The look on their faces as the tape belted out the first line was sufficient to tell us all that these lads were not going to make it. After the first line, which didn't give them time to draw breath, they parted company with the sound of the galloping tape and attempted to go it alone. At the same time, trying in vain to catch up. The problem was that they also parted company with each other. We were given four "Lamp Posts" for the price of one and it sounded dreadful. It had the sound of someone banging dustbins in a back alley and some of the audience had belly ache laughing.

Usually, no matter how bad a group play they often finish together. But not this one. They were unique! The tape, which was a mile ahead, hit the finishing line while the trio was leaving the first verse. Second came Phil, followed by Deg, and Frank came last with his sheet music flapping in the wind. All three were gasping for breath and I thought they might drop from exhaustion. However, to be fair to the lads, they did receive the best applause of the night and shouts of "More". It was a good comedy act—although that's not what it set out as. Song number two went down very well but those at the back didn't hear it. They were still laughing at the first one. Let's have more from these lads. It cheered the night up!

Mobile Phone Confidence Trick Sent in by Brian Edge.

There is a brand new mobile phone scam going around that comes in the form of an SMS. The message will say something along the lines of "Please call me on 09011500065 Urgent". It will say it is from "KB". DO NOT call this number. It is a premium rate number charged at £5 per minute. Also, when you call you will get an engaged tone; this is not a real engaged tone, but simply a recorded sound that will make you call again and again, and you are CHARGED!! Marcus Osborne, Vodafone Ltd. Tel: 07836 502785 Fax: 01635 666925 *Thank you Brian.*

John Shreeve—In Issue 79 we included an article on John's one-day tragic experience delivering letters for the post office.

Thanks Stan for the article in issue 79. It is all perfectly true, but you've missed out parts of the tale. I seemed to have a lot of Christmas parcels on my round and after knocking on the doors several times (in pouring rain) and getting no reply, I decided that rather than take them back (and they were getting heavier with the rain) I would attempt to push them through the letter boxes. Well it was difficult getting these large parcels through such small holes so I gave them a good squeezing and forced them through. The problem was that they opened up half way through and on every occasion got stuck in the hole. With the rain they became very soggy and fell apart leaving me with a torn up envelope. I could hear all the contents dropping one by one on the inside. On one occasion I was so determined to get the parcel through that I got my hand stuck and as I tried to drag it out ripped the back of my finger and blood was oozing everywhere. I came to the conclusion that it just wasn't my day and especially when, as I was forcing one parcel through, the door opened and a huge hungry dog was eyeballing me. Needless to say I made a very sharp exit. Soaking wet or not I didn't want that thing taking a chunk out of my leg.



Down one street a host of neighbours must have felt sorry for a soaking wet post man so they took one the bags from me and started rooting through all the letters to find theirs. Believe me, that day was probably the worst day of my life.

Thanks John. So I take it you won't be reapplying for postal service next Christmas.

Charles Stewart and Ray Bernard rang to say that Phyllis Beddoes had passed on at the age of 91. The name might mean nothing to most of the GFS members of today but way back in the early days, when ukes were impossible to obtain, Ray placed an advert in the BMG Magazine asking for anyone who could make ukes. Ron Beddoes was the only one to reply and from thereon a good relationship was set up between the Beddoes family and the GFS. Today there are many ukes in the society. Ron died around 1988.

Matthew Devall and his friend Will, came to the Liverpool meet last night and we tried in vain to get him up on stage. However, after a lot of coaxing a nervous Matthew took the stage along with John Shreeve. "It's my first time" said Matthew. First time or not, Matthew broke the ice and then appealed to play solo. "No problem keep playing" The snag was we couldn't get him off for the rest of the night. Good for you Matthew. Come again.



Matthew

Soldiers Laid Down Arms and Played Football

by Russell Stoddart

A CHRISTMAS football match played between British and German soldiers is regarded by many as part of the mythology of the First World War.

But now, a bestselling author has pieced together the amazing true story of how the deadly enemies celebrated Christmas, 1914, by playing in no-man's land in front of the trenches.



Illustrated London News, 9 January 1915.

Opposing soldiers greet each other in no-man's land.

A new book, *Silent Night*, draws on first-hand accounts from soldiers who took part in several matches played between opposing forces during the truce that stretched from Christmas Eve until New Year's Eve.

Stanley Weintraub trawled through newspaper archives to uncover letters that had been sent by soldiers to their loved ones, and then passed on for publication.

The truce was called on Christmas Eve to allow both sides the opportunity to recover and bury their dead from no-man's land. But an unlikely camaraderie

was struck up between opposing front-line soldiers, and it led, in some cases, to the exchange of gifts and food, cigarettes and drink.

"When the truce was called late on Christmas Eve, both sides put down their weapons and walked through the darkness looking for the bodies of their dead comrades," said Stanley.

"Both sides were rubbing shoulders with

each other as they were clearing the bodies. There was no apparent feeling of animosity, just a wish that the war would be over.

"Before long, many were sharing rations and gifts with the enemy.

"It must have dawned on them that they were not only clearing a battlefield, but also a football pitch.

"Before long, makeshift footballs were being kicked around, and then both sides were getting organised into teams.

Officers ended truce

"Soldiers were just happy to forget about the war for the first time in months and have some fun. As one soldier wrote, 'If we had 10,000 footballs there would be no war'."

Stanley added, "One Highlander reported talking during the truce with a footballer from Leipzig who boasted of having been in Britain the year before and played against Celtic.

"Another German was anxious to know how Fulham got on in the FA Cup after being a waiter in the Fulham Road."

But officers on both sides soon realised that unless they ended the truce, some of the regiments might refuse to go back to war.

"In another case, British and German soldiers were playing football together, while other regiments were shooting at each other just 800 yards away," added Stanley.

Silent Night, by Stanley Weintraub is published by Simon and Schuster, priced £12.99.

Anthony Mason Emails on Len's Funeral

Dear old Len Philips—what a great character!!!! Whenever John Shreeve and I visited him at his home he would take us down to the local pub for a session with the ukes. He was very generous.



John & I arranged to be at the Holy Trinity Church in Kendall at 12.00 on Tuesday for Len's service. Len's son Robin had contacted me and invited us both to the funeral as we had been good friends with Len. We were pleased and honoured to be invited. John stayed over at my house in Wigan so we could



John Shreeve

get a nice early start on the Tuesday morning. We left at 9.30 and arrived in Kendall at about 10.45. We had plenty of time to spare so we went for a bacon sandwich as we'd missed breakfast. It was the worst bacon sandwich in the history of bacon

sandwiches being dry and tasteless with the faint after taste of bleach, but still it passed the time and at about 11.30 we set off for the church.

We got a bit lost on the way to the church as I'd lost my sense of direction. John insisted it was one way, I insisted it was the other. Being more stubborn than John I got my way and we trailed off in completely the wrong direction passing another church on the way and eventually having to walk along the river till we reached the church.

We arrived at 11.50 and waited patiently for the other people to arrive. At five to twelve we started getting a little concerned that we were the only people there, we decided to look in the church. It was deserted, there was no sign of a vicar or anyone.

At this point panic started to set in so we ran into the street and stopped an old lady and asked her if this was the Holy Trinity church. She replied "Which one do you mean?" We were stumped, we had no idea there would be more than one Holy Trinity Church. We asked how many there were, she replied that there were three!!!

She pointed to a bridge "Over there" she said and in the distance we could see a church, so off we ran. It was 12.05 by now, the service was at 12.00 so we knew we'd missed the beginning, so we ran along the river towards the church in the distance. John and I are not the fittest of chaps and after 10 minutes of sprinting, wearing suits, we were a mass of sweat and exhaustion. We arrived at the front doors and tried to regain some composure, we pushed open the doors and guess what? The place was empty!! Wrong church number 2!!

The other church was right back past the original church we'd been to and along the river towards the sandwich shop, so, off we ran again. Back down the path, over the

bridge, past the first Church we'd been to, down along the river bank and low and behold, it turned out to be the church we'd passed right at the beginning after coming out of the sandwich shop!

The doors were in sight, I ran along the path but John thought he would take a short cut over some memorial paving stones I looked back just in time to see John slip. It was no ordinary slip, he levelled out at six foot and landed flat on his back.

Well laugh? I nearly died!! I couldn't stop thinking about it. I helped John to his feet through my uncontrollable laughter and we made our way to the doors. Well, how could we go in with me in hysterics? It was a nightmare, John told me to pull myself together, and I managed, with all my will power to stifle my laughter.



Great characters like Len are rare today.

I'm sure that if Len had been with me he would have enjoyed the humour in seeing John go head over heels over a grave. It was so funny and I couldn't stop busting out. Fortunately we were sat at the back of the church so nobody could see the dilemma I was in. Those around thought that I was crying and came to console me.

We had arrived 25 minutes late for the service after arriving in Kendall an hour and a quarter early, it could only happen to John and I! The remainder of the service was very nice and it was great to hear about Len's life. He had been a singer, comedian and mime artist to list only a few of his many talents.

The burial was very tasteful and dignified with a large turn out of people paying their respects. He was a very popular and much loved man who will be very sadly missed.

We drove back to Liverpool for the funeral party, and in true Len style there was a Karaoke with laughter and music. Just as Len would have liked it. John and I played some songs and everyone enjoyed remembering Len. We could imagine Len laughing his socks off at us on his funeral day. It was all worth it for such a great character and a kind, generous man. Anthony Mason.

Thanks Anthony, Len was a great character who will be greatly missed.

 Three men sat in a pub. Two were boasting on how they controlled their wives. The third man was conspicuously quiet. Eventually they turned to him and said, "Well what about you?" "As a matter of fact" he said, "only the other night my wife came to me on her hands and knees." "Really, and what did she say?" "Get out from under that bed and fight like a man"

Nice To Hear From Bonny Scotland's **Alex Barrett** who is usually snowed in this time of the year and unable to get to the post box. In fact if ever you are invited to pay Alex and Kitty a winter visit you are advised to take a shovel.

Alex & Kitty have been very keen members of the Formby Society almost since dot one, and Kitty has done excellent work, over the years, organising raffles. Since she started she has made a few thousand pounds to help swell the funds. Good for you Kitty. You deserve a medal!!!

GEORGE & BERYL'S HOUSES—In the December issue you did an article on the houses where George lived and mentioned "Fairhaven" Blackpool. I have not heard of that house, nor know where it is. You also missed out Beryldene at Grannies Bay, now called Linden Lea, in which they lived for a short time. Kitty & I have done a tour of the houses in the Blackpool area, - Linden Lea—Barton—Singleton and got a shock to find that Sullom End had been taken down, stone by stone, and carted off to America to be rebuilt. All that is left is the garage and the name plate on the gate.

Kitty and I were lucky to be invited in to view Beryldene 199 Inner Promenade, Lytham St Anne's. We were told that the bathroom is much the same as George left it. All the other parts had been altered, plus an added front balcony. It was nice to know how George would escape through the back door to avoid the press etc. It made a day that we will long remember.

We visited Heronby (Norfolk) a few times. The first time there was a couple of squatters pitched under a plastic extension and the local TV was filming. On the second occasion we almost got inside the house, but sadly a couple were viewing it with a view to buying so we had to leave. On our last visit, the tenant allowed us to film the upper gardens and pool and kindly took down her washing off the line, so as not to spoil the video film. We have not visited "The Spinney" at Mere, or Aldon in Ireland, nor have we viewed George's family home "Hill Crest" in Warrington.

You looked pleasantly surprised at your birthday party. Glad you had a nice time. It was very sad to hear of our friend Greg Croft. He phoned to say that he hoped to make the September meeting. He wrote a song for me, "Come To Bonny Scotland" and always asked approval before singing it. He was a very nice man.

Yes, you are right Alex. Charles Stewart at Blackpool has confirmed that Beryldene 199 Inner Promenade (George's last home) and Fairhaven are the same house. This is the house that was bought from Josef Locke. When you visit Hill Crest you must pay us a visit. Have you a list of the exact order of houses G & B lived in?

Also, have you been on the Scotch Whisky because it wasn't a birthday party but an award night for pumping out N. West Newsletters.

Neil Forshaw sends in two articles—The first one is from a Vulcan Foundry magazine: Joseph Hindley retired in 1957 aged 73 years, having 38 years service with the firm. He first commenced work at the age of 11 as a part-timer—that is, going to work for half a day and then spending half a day at school. At the same time he worked in the evenings as a drummer at Leigh Hippodrome. For many years he worked as a professional drummer and performed with big stars like Charlie Chaplin and George Formby senior. He has also played in 45 different musical productions

FROM BOB MONKHOUSE'S AUTOBIOGRAPHY . . . Whether, as Allen believes, it's in the genes, or whether my own love of being funny grew out of the enjoyment I felt when I made people laugh, I really don't know. What I do know is that I didn't want to do anything more than I wanted to do comedy. From the day that Edith Ashby took me to see George Formby in "Boots Boots" at the Splendid Cinema, Sydenham, on Easter Monday 1934, I was hooked in a way that would have the Jesuits the first seven years of my life to achieve. If the purpose of life is a life of purpose, mine never lacked after that day.

Thanks for your article Neil. It's a shame that George was responsible for launching Bob Monkhouse on to us. Personally I can't stand the smarmy chap.

Email from Hans of Holland —Dear Stan. My

name is Hans Marcelissen from Holland. First I present my excuses for the bad Engels. I'll hope you can read my letter. I have a question about Georg Formby's films. Can i buy any films of George with Dutch sub title. I'll hope i get an answer of jou. My e-mail adress is: jmarcelissen@home.nl

I wish jou the best with your work of George. greetings Hans Marcelissen.

Thanks Hans, we can understand your English quite well. In fact it is better than some of the locals I get. Now the only GF video in Dutch subtitles I have come across is "He Snoops To Conquer" which was brought over some ten years ago by some of the Dutch GFS members. However if you contact Janet ??? Who runs the Dutch meetings she will help. The Email address is - jan@carol.demon.nl Hope you have some luck.

Disappointment

- When Jim and I did our usual concert for the Warrington Blind Centre, the organiser told us we would be interrupted at half time when the local radio would be showing an appearance. The Centre had gone to great effort organising a special raffle with loads of prizes and the radio presenter was to draw the raffle. Being blind they were all looking forward to being interviewed on radio, - naturally, TV doesn't appeal to blind people. After every song we shouted "Are they here yet?" NO! After a couple of hours of waiting, it was time to go home and they left the building very disappointed. The local radio had let them down. Shame on them!



January Sale by Cyril Palmer—January is well known for bargain sales, and there can't be any better bargains than the low priced evening's entertainment available at any of the Formby monthly meetings.

The New Year brought new faces, Sheffield members, Phil and Janet, travelled from Rotherham, while Matthew and Will came from Chester. Thanks be we are not required to pay travelling expenses.

Matthew is keen to improve his ukulele technique and, though not ready for a solo performance, joined in the thrashes with much enthusiasm. Will is a camera buff and can be seen recording events at other events including the Wintergardens.

Sheila, my wife made her first appearance since leaving hospital and received a wonderful warm welcome from all her friends. John Beevers (Huddersfield) arrived once more. He sang the rarely heard, "Your-a-li-a-ti" and then "Blew A Little Blast On My Whistle" aided and abetted by Paul Kenny, though I hasten to add there was nothing criminal about the proceedings. Earlier Paul, in No. 1 spot, sang "Oh What A Beautiful Morning" letting us know how his voice is developing.

Alan Newton from Crewe, making his second visit to Sale, added his considerable talent to our performance, singing "Smile All The Time" which indeed he does, and reminded, in swinging mood, "What A Little Moonlight Will Do." Some performers seem to 'corner the market' with a particular song (as Phil Jones with "Wigan Garden") Jon and Pam Baddeley sang their nice duet version of "Does Your Dreambook Tell You That."

Space doesn't allow a detailed account of all the songs, which were of a wide variety, so briefly: visions of Brian Edge in "His Little Shirt Me Mother Made For Me" Connie's great version of "Swinging Along" Arthur Newton linked "Baby" with "Frivolous Sal" Alice has "Got A Boyfriend" (with Walter shyly in the background) - Les Pearson (2nd half MC) usual irresistible self—or irrepressible? Margaret Moran back in in beautiful voice after her Christmas cold and needing lots of Euros to buy Killarney. Des Redfern, also on an Irish theme—"40 Shades of Green" and "Athenry". Stan Evans, in editorial mood has new words for "My Way" and "Happy Wanderer" - hope he got permission.

Alan Southworth "Got Cracking" with the lads of the village and later theorised that "The Irish Were Egyptians Long Ago." With a couple of songs from myself, it leaves me to applaud the so-shy bones man Walter Kirkland, who has taken the 'bones' from mere accompaniment to become a feature in their own right. Incidentally no-one has the right to look so devilishly happy when performing. Another good night so roll on February.

Thanks Cyril—We've got a squirrel in our garden and guess what we've called it.

Golden Jubilee - From the 15th June to the 23rd there will be a demand for George Formby players, and singers, when the whole of the country will be celebrating the Queen's 50th Anniversary, and street parties will be taking place.

Enquiries have started coming in it looks as if we will be quite busy.. It's all so easy nowadays with the equipment we have, but I remember as a kid, one particular street party when they tried in vain to create some music to liven up the event. The nearest they got was a small wind-up gramophone perched on the end of a trestle table—loaded with grub—nobody could hear it. Every time the table was knocked the arm on the gramophone would jump a groove or two and miss a few lines. It was hopeless to sing to. However, with the advent of Karaoke etc. it will be quite a simple task to create a party atmosphere. The only problems might be: First the street party will be attended by loads of youngsters who don't want to hear our old songs. Instead of George Formby and Gracie Fields it will be studio manufactured groups like The Spice Girls. Older folk won't stand a chance.

Secondly: Due to the amount of traffic on the roads today, permission has to be obtained from the council before a street party can be held. Might be turned down.

The answer is to approach old folks homes, Over 60s clubs etc. They will holding an event for the occasion and they enjoy our type of music. Hope you have a happy time.

Thomas Cox of West Yorkshire writes—I met Mr & Mrs Formby in a chemist shop in France during the war when I was serving with the B.E.F. They asked where I came from, how old I was, and wished me good luck. But I think the visit was tinged with sadness as I believe Violet Lorraine should have been on the same concert, but I believe she was killed in an accident.

Charlie Chester was there too and I met him after the show and the song he sang has been etched on my mind ever since. He sang, "Down Forget Me Not Lane." He gave me his address to write to but I he'd have changed his address after he became popular.

PW Chipman of Warwickshire writes— I was serving in the Royal Marines in Cod Bay, Trincomallee, Ceylon in 1944 when George Formby entertained us in the theatre next to a YMCA. He was a guest star with an ENSA Production. I must tell you that he sang a number of Blue Songs, - not the ones he sang on radio.

The next morning, as always, I took another five into town in my lorry to have tea and cakes. There was no-one in YMCA, but who should walk in but George & Beryl. They came and sat with us sharing a happy half hour and a chat.

George told us that while being out there he met an army private with the name of George Formby. They certainly lifted our spirits and gave us plenty to talk about after

As Time Goes By

Well here I am, still living
And I'm not among the dead
Though I'm getting more forgetful
And mixed up in my head

I've got used to my arthritis
To my dentures I'm resigned
I can manage my bifocals
But, by God I miss my mind

Sometimes I can't remember
When paused at the bottom stair
If I'm going up for something
Or have I just come down from there

And before the fridge so often
My poor mind's filled with doubt
Am I putting food in
Or have I come to take some out

And often in the darkness
With my nightcap on my head
I don't know if I'm retiring
Or have I just got out of bed

It really is surprising
How forgetful we can be
As old age approaches
Our minds are all at sea

But someday when God has called me
And I've reached the final track
I'll know which way I'm going
And I won't be coming back.

Penyffordd Tuition

Are starting tuition practise nights
starting on Thurs Feb 14th 2002
at the Penyffordd Institute which is
next to the British Legion..

Beginners and players are welcome
and starter ukes will be available from
£15. The sessions are from 7pm to
9pm.

Future dates are March 7th. April 4th.
May 9th. June 6th and July 11th.
Plus more dates to follow.
If interested please ring Geoff Shone
on 01244 544605.

I Remember George by T G Williams

George visited us in Egypt during the early part of the war and how we did enjoy his show. He came on in his usual gear, expanding the elastic in his over baggy trousers, peering down them and saying, "Yes I can see them" which brought laughter from the lads, only to realise after that he was referring to his feet. "What a crowd of troops, doctors and nurses you have here" he said, "Never in the field of human conflict have so few been chased by so many, for so long, for so little."

He was a wonderful character who brightened our life at a time when we so badly needed it.
Ex Gunner TG Williams, Oxford.

S.O.S.—Fred Gwilliams on 01744 603353 is looking for words and chords for a couple of songs that keep waking him up in the middle of the night. The first one is "Back In Nagasaki" (he thinks this is the title) and also a song called "Lydia" (the tattooed lady) which was sung in a Marks Brothers film

JUST HEARD THAT, AFTER HIS ORDEAL, CREWE'S CARL BASFORD IS LOOKING MUCH BETTER AND SOUNDING QUITE WELL ON THE PHONE.

Hard Luck Herb—Newspaper Article—Police in West Germany were still laughing about the sad story of Herbert Haniel. It began around midnight and from then on Herb had back luck followed by more bad luck. It just went on, and on, and on.

At the start, he was woken up in his home at Wisden, Bavaria, by a noise coming from his living room. "It must be burglars" he thought. He got out of his bed. A vital button immediately snapped off his pyjamas which left him bare-backed. Herbert pressed on regardless. He sneaked through his living room, and felt something ice-cold touching his back. He wheeled round and slammed a powerful upper-cut at the intruder. All Herbert hit was the glass mirror. He turned on the lights and saw that the intruder was his dog, Rolf.

Middle-aged Herbert was bleeding from the cuts on his hand, so he was taken to hospital for treatment. But his problems were only just beginning. When he returned from hospital, early in the morning, he retreated to the bathroom to quieten his shaking nerves with a cigarette.

What he'd forgotten is that his wife had a habit of thoroughly cleaning the lavatory bowl with a petrol soaked wad of cotton, which she'd forgotten to flush away. Herbert lit a match for his cigarette and as he was about to sit on the bowl, the petrol exploded into flames and once again Herbert was being rushed into hospital, - this time by ambulance.

As he lay flat on his stomach on the stretcher, he told the two Red Cross helpers how his disaster happened and both helpers laughed so much they up-tilted the stretcher and poor Herbert fell down the flight of stairs. At the hospital, doctors kept him in. He'd broken both legs and an ankle. But that's not all. His nerves were so taut he had to be kept in for some weeks until he'd got over his experience.

During his stay in hospital, news got round the wards of his disasters and, just like the stretcher bearers, they couldn't pass his bed without breaking into laughter. Some of the doctors claimed that they were sorry when he left because he brought hilarious uncontrollable laughter to some who had never laughed for years.

Good Sound—At the Sale meeting it was a pleasure to hear Paul Kenny sing a ballad instead of the usual sharp and choppy Formby numbers. Somewhere deep down there is a good voice trying to break out, so long notes, crooning, soft ballads are ideal to make a star of him. Good singing!!!

One o'clock in the morning and the husband has arrived from the pub: - "What's all that noise banging on the stairs?" - "I'm carrying this barrel of beer upstairs." - "Leave it downstairs." - "I can't." - "Why" - "I've drunk it."

Dickie Hart and The Pacemakers at Liverpool



Wilf

Howie

Bob

Well we had another grand night at the Liverpool January meeting.

The night began with the news that dear old Len Philips had passed on but this raised smiles from the crowd as they remembered him as a very outgoing character who was larger than life. Len would be the last to expect a gloomy evening.

Disaster struck when the PA System went faulty and we envisaged performing on the night without the aid of microphones. However, after about ten minutes sweating, we discovered that it was due to a faulty cable (almost brand new) which was shorting.

Top of the bill was Liverpool bred "Dickie Hart and The Pacemakers" who gave us a medley of good old time sing-a-longs.

Young Greg Simister is improving with confidence at every meeting and his uke playing is exceptional for a young boy. Apparently he is taking lessons from John Shreeve (none better) who is also instructing him on the playing of "Melodies" which means that they actually play the full melody of a song and not just the chords to accompany the voice. Great work Greg.

As usual, banjo boy Stan Watkinson was in demand on the night. Several requests were thrown at him for some of his favourites, and, along with twiddling the knobs on the speaker system, he did a grand job. Des Redfern—who was last heard of hiding out with Bin Laden—turned up and finished the night with his vast repertoire of songs. Once again we had a wonderful evening.

Charlie Penman of N. Wales—If you are wondering why Charlie hasn't been to any of the meetings recently it is because he's been in hospital for a hip replacement.



Well we understand that he is on the mend now and we look forward to seeing him back with us. Charlie is the chief heckler at Penyffordd so he is being missed. Very soon you'll be singing, "Clap Hands Here Comes Charlie."

SHEILA PALMER - Nice to see you back in circulation after your spell in hospital. Don't forget, you've been challenged to perform "Let Me Sleep On Your Doorstep Tonight"

Beryl Eissen all the way from Australia - Hi Stan, something for the mag. European Union Directive 45179—In order to meet the conditions for joining the Single European currency, all citizens of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland must be made aware that the phrase "Spending a penny" is not to be used after 31st December 2001. From this date, the correct terminology will be: "Euronating". Whatever next eh!

Thank you Beryl. Must remember that next time I have to go. Keep us informed on how you are progressing with the radio station.

Andy Eastwood is on his way . . .

Hope you're well, everything's OK here, thanks. Did 4 shows with Ken Dodd last week - it was brilliant. I'll be back with him again in March, and I also have a lot of gigs abroad later in the year (Cyprus, Costa Del Sol, Majorca etc) playing at the British hotels out there - so that should be fun.

Look forward to the Newsletter as always! Take care, hope to see you soon. Andy. *Thanks Andy. We are very pleased that you are progressing well with your career. Well you can't do much better than appear with Ken Dodd can you? We all have the greatest admiration for him.*

John Wright Emails— It was a pleasure to find your web page.

I had the honour of meeting George & Beryl in what used to be Southern Rhodesia, when they appeared at The Rhodes Centenary Exhibition. A brief but unforgettable experience. On this side of the puddle George still has a great many fans -- folks who collect his 78s, movies on videos, and those who simply sit back and remember what entertainment was all about!

For some reason I've been, this day I've spent a lot of time thinking about George Formby, particularly of the tremendous pleasure he gave us kids of WW2, via his movies and records.

Throughout this country, among both the English and Afrikaans-speaking sectors, in spite of all the [C E N S O R E D] that prevails, many thousands still listen with absolute pleasure to his unique recordings. And there are a couple of radio stations -- broadcasting in AFRIKAANS! -- who regularly feature his numbers. And, thanks to CDs, still more are discovering the joys with which we grew up.

I was thinking, too, of FILM FUN and perhaps also RADIO FUN, which used to sell out here for 3d -- and the fact that, while I favoured American comic books, and the guys in the long underwear, I used to pick up both the above titles -- when I had the loot -- only because of George Formby and Laurel & Hardy.

APPEAL—Can anybody out there can give me any info about The Hillbillies who recorded for Regal/Zonophone? To-date I've encountered only brick walls! Bestest -- John Wright.

If anyone has any info on The Hillbillies please write in and I will Email John.

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 16th & 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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