

THE NORTH - WEST

GEORGE FORMBY

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Newsletter 83



Specially Produced for George Formby Fans
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Welcome To Newsletter No. 83

The Sad Loss of Sam Bass

We regret to report the death of our favourite ex-pro artiste, Sam Bass. Sam was born in Wolstanton, Staffordshire in 1929 a son to Charles and Edith. As a boy he performed concerts for his neighbours and earned pennies for wartime charities. He always wanted to go on the stage. He did his national service in the Army and spent nearly all his service in Egypt and the Canal Zone. His stage career began in 1950 when he got his first work at the Hippodrome Theatre Dudley where he performed with the backing of a twenty-six-piece orchestra. Sam spent many years entertaining and the great musical impresario Lawrence Wright considered him to be the best George Formby impersonator that ever trod the boards. His time as a Formby impersonator came to an end when Alan Randall came on the scene after George Formby's death. Sam then spent many seasons as a singer working on the piers at Blackpool and and St. Annes and also in the big clubs at the peak of their popularity. Sam met his business partner and accompanist John Biggins at the Coliseum theatre in Rhyl in 1968 and together they worked doing ice shows until retirement in the 1980s. Sam was eventually persuaded to join the now defunct Werrington branch and was made an Honorary Life Member. Four years ago Sam developed throat cancer which resulted in him having to have his voice box removed but he was soon back to his old self and although unable to speak communicated via a slate and pencil. During his illness his friend John caringly looked after him. In Sam's passing we have lost not only an exceptional artiste but a lovely man with a smile for everyone. Sam used to say "It is great to be remembered" and we who knew him, will certainly do that. Brian Edge.



Although he couldn't speak Sam was always game for a laugh though his slate. Sam is joined by Gareth Sumner and Jim Bramwell.

Tom Bailey (Liverpool stalwart) — On Wed the 20th I received a phone call from Tom Bailey's daughter and immediately thought: "Oh no! Not another loss." However it wasn't as bad as I thought. Tom had suffered a slight stroke and was in hospital. Within a few days he was back home but feeling a little tired. He's now getting back to normal. Keep smiling Tom. We need you.



George's Brother, Ted, was interviewed for TV—

Part 2. When George started playing the uke it was back in the youth days when they were lads hanging around the village together (Stockton Heath). They would go out with the local girls, go on the river punting and it was the days of the gramophone, mouth organs and dressing up, blazers. George was into this. He used to strum a bit, but the mouth organ was his thing, which he learned in the stables. But when he got into show business properly, and was in the revues, my mother knew a theatre manager, Charlie Lawson. He said to George and Beryl, "Why don't you play the ukulele in your act? George thought that he wasn't good enough but he started fiddling with "Do De O Do" which he was writing with someone. Then it was a case of when the family were about he'd be singing the lyrics and someone would say, "you can't make rabbits without the doe," and things like that. They used to rehearse songs, gags and shows in the house. This was how show business was done in those days. You tried it out on the family, who could be a tough audience, because they are not afraid to say, "Rubbish." George's favourite artist was Ukulele Ike, Cliff Edwards.



When Beryl came on the scene it put mother's appplecart out of order. I suppose it's like every mother would be. She's got a son who is beginning to make a name for himself and Beryl comes along and she's Mrs Formby. Mother must have felt dethroned. There was probably a little bit of animosity over this, - I wouldn't say vicious. She'd done a lot of work promoting George and then suddenly it is taken out of her hands. She can do no other than drift into the limelight. When Beryl sort of took George away, mother devoted her time to Frank.

Frank was five years older than me and we were living in Liverpool at the time and attending St Joseph's College, Dumfries. When Frank saw that George was doing well for himself and earning his own money he decided that he also would like to go on the stage. Mother took him for tap dancing lessons to Max Rivers in Liverpool and then he was put on a stage as a dancing act. From there he went into comedy acts. Unfortunately over the years Frank blew it.

Regarding George & Beryl's wedding, it was more of an elopement. George was possibly afraid of mother so he contacted Aunt Tilly (mother's sister) who lived in Wigan. She helped them. She was a loveable character and laughable. She should have been on the stage actually with the stories she could tell. With her aid George & Beryl got married then he went home to break the news to mother.

Father left between £20,000 and £40,000 - lot of money in those days, and the reason why it went so quick was because she was constantly paying out without any income coming in. She was promoting the family to make a career for themselves. If she'd invested her money, and lived off the interest, she'd have been quite wealthy but she didn't. Moving house to Liverpool was quite an expense. More next month.

CHRIS METCALF GETS HIS BUS PASS AND A BIRTHDAY PARTY.

One hundred and ten turned out for Chris Metcalf's 65th birthday party concert at Crewe. Chris our faithful doorman who greets everyone as they arrive sponsored the refreshments and everyone enjoyed a good nights entertainment. However the evening started on a sad note when MC Jonathan Baddeley announced the passing of Beryl Whiston wife of Ron our popular bones player. Jonathan explained that we had sent a message of condolence to Ron and a donation for Christie's hospital from us all. There was another sad announcement to be made and that was concerning the passing of another of our friends, that star George Formby impersonator, Sam Bass. As a tribute to Sam we played a radio recording of Sam at the height of his career back in 1968, singing "*Down on the Farm*," and everyone listened in complete silence musing over their happy memories of Sam. Whilst many have tried to impersonate George, only Sam, in his heyday, succeeded. Indeed the great music impresario Lawrence Wright considered Sam to be the nearest possible likeness to George in the business.



It was good to welcome again Fred and Wynn Stevenson, Mr and Mrs Williams of Wistaston, Tom Raiswell, Andrew Little, Steve Evans and his partner from Stratford on Avon and a first time visit Phil who travelled all the way from Rotherham to be with us. We must also acknowledge the ten supporters from the Penyffordd society who jointly made such a contribution to the concert. There could well have been twelve, but we had apologies from regulars Geoff and Dolwen Shone. Another notable absence was Connie Edge who attended to help set up in the afternoon but felt to unwell to attend in the evening much to her disappointment.

There were so many highlights on the night and it would be unfair for me to pick a favourite, but I really must say what a delight it was for me, and indeed for so many of our faithful supporters, to see Carl Basford on stage again after him being so very ill for many months. He even added a new song to his repertoire "*The Husband of the Wife of Mr Wu*." Carl's other song was a favourite of mine "*You belong to me*." Carl justifiably received a splendid ovation at the end of his spot.

Ventriloquist Alison Nadin had the audience laughing with a splendid showing of Grandad, Charlie and Me, great stuff! The Penyffordd Plonkers, made up of Cliff, Alison, Phil, Frank and Deg, jointly put on a great performance. Without doubt it was the best group effort of the North Wales group since their inception 10 years ago. I never had any doubt that they would go from strength to strength, but their performance suggested that they are intent on going places. Wonderful!

Gregory Simister again brought the house down with the performance of his new number *Home Guard Blues*. What a great number this is for Greg, a super-fast solo that is right up his street, and didn't he do well? This was one of Formby's best solos which he played on the top of his home made tank in the film *Get Cracking*. Ten years ago we had some great young players that gave me so much pleasure watching them perform. My all round favourite was Martin Harrison, such a talented performer, how I wish he would return and thrill us all again. I hope that Greg's success will encourage other youngsters to take up the uke as young people can learn so quickly.

Gerald Beadle sang another pleasant unaccompanied song, this one from Ireland. He then gave a humorous off the cuff tribute to "birthday boy" Chris Metcalf. It seemed that Chris was head boy in the same class as Gerald. Chris it seems always managed to land all the good jobs - milk monitor, prefect and supremo in charge of inkwell filling! Mind you one always has to start at the bottom and it has to be said that Chris did eventually become a teacher. Gerald's remarks resulted in some happy banter between the two old friends.

Chris Metcalf was not the only one celebrating on the night Fred and Dilys Dykes from Bunbury celebrated their Golden Wedding and Vera and Harry Jones were celebrating 56 years since they made their vows. Stan Evans took full advantage of Connie's absence by telling an uncensored story. Stan was obviously nervous that Connie might possibly have been in one of the side rooms as he kept checking whether she was about or not particularly when he came to the juicy bits. Well I certainly wouldn't have mentioned it to Connie for fear of the outcome but I feel I had better warn you Stan that Colin Wood has snitched on you and by golly are you in deep-deep trouble. If you are not at our next meeting Stan, members of the audience will read between the lines and assume that you have chickened out! I can tell you Stan I have had 46 years experience and I don't envy you one little bit!

Peter Gratton our comedian gave a short eulogy on Sam Bass saying that he had been a friend for 35 years and when Sam made the recording on radio Peter played truant to listen to him. Peter was rightly proud of the fact that he had never had a cross word with Sam in all the years he had known him. Peter followed with his usual barrage of one-liners and had the audience in tucks. Peter is to be our MC at our April meeting. It was a great night with all performers putting on a splendid show for Chris's birthday just as Chris put on some splendid refreshments for us all to enjoy. Thanks to Des Redfern for bringing his drums along at very short notice.

One other thing to report and that was our new Assistant Sound Engineer Angela Caldicott who has taken Alan Chenery's place alongside Colin Wood. It is just the third time that Angela has sat in the hot seat and I can confirm that she is coping quite admirably. Finally special thanks to MC Jonathan Baddeley and Concert Producer Pamela for another sterling effort in keeping the show flowing. *Thanks Brian, do you think if I turn up in disguise Connie will recognise me?*

PLEASE HELP YOUR CREWE CONCERT PRODUCER—Some artistes at Crewe are still not putting their names on the performance sheet. This puts pressure on the concert producer who has only a short time to plan the evening's entertainment. Now it may seem a simple process just taking a few names and then calling them up one by one to perform, but to put on an *well balanced show*, which our excellent supporters rightly deserve, it is much more complicated than that. With large audiences it is difficult enough for the concert producer to move around unobtrusively getting names and telling artistes when they are going on. That alone is difficult enough, but lately many artistes are making specific requests to go on in the second half of the show, which is making it very difficult for the Concert Producer to get a good balance. All artistes are therefore requested to consider the plight of the concert producer and to try to make his or her job as easy as possible by considering performing in the first half if requested.

THANKS FROM CHRIS METCALFE—Dear Stan, may I through your Newsletter thank everyone at the Crewe Meeting on the 22nd March, - my 65th birthday, for their kindness and good wishes. I enjoyed my evening immensely. Thanks to all the performers who through their dedication always create a superb atmosphere and a great show. Last but not least, to Brian & Connie, for help and guidance, Harry, Christine, Vera, Arthur, Mary, & Evelyn for their support throughout the evening. And to all others not named due to shortage of space. Thanks.



Yes, It Was Frankie's Night by Cliff Royle

It was a night to remember when we celebrated Frankie Wood's 80th. Birthday at Penyffordd with 130 in attendance. This included a number of his relations and friends who had travelled far to be present at this important occasion. Alan Chenery from Blackpool, and George and Alison Tyrer, from Abergavenny. *(Sorry to cut the next item Cliff but it has been covered on page 11)*

We have to thank not only the entertainers for the great evening, but also the many who worked in the background to make the event such a success; Geoff and Dolwyn Shone who did a great deal of the organisation with Geoff also honouring us by playing the drums (another miracle?); Jean and Alison Nadin; our Ladies; Guests who assisted; the Caterers and of course the British Legion and its Staff.

There were a number of other Birthdays to celebrate; Connie Edge; Sheila Beech; Harry Jones, and Dorothy Wood (Frankie's relation). We also had to welcome back some of our friends who for various reasons had been absent from our meetings for some time; Paul and Gill Woodhead; Gerald (Jones the Uke) and Wife Julie, and Charlie Penman. So pleased to see them again, and to hear that both Paul and Charlie are making good progress after their operations. During the evening those present gave a "Toast" to Frankie, expressing the wish that he would be with us for many more years to come, and thanking him for giving us, through Alison, an insight into his wonderful talents as an entertainer.

So what about the concert? Another great show with nearly thirty excellent different acts and with so many we had regrettably to restrict almost everyone to one song. As it was we did not finish until about 11.30, and many did not get home until 1 am. Actually one gentleman mislaid his music case, and someone had to ring him at that time just, as he got home, to advise him that his belongings were safe. He seemed amused when told that we had taken the money, and after reading his diary advised him that Alice would be told of its exciting contents. You do not know who it is of course, but there is a lot of bartering going on at present.

Space will not enable me to report on all the acts so regrettably I will confine myself to those which were somewhat different. To open the Show our four Lady "Bouncers", who were superbly attired, gave Birthday Greetings to Frankie in the form of a poem written by Jim Knight. It brought both tears to some and cheers from many. Jones the Uke played Bingo Crazy in his own inimitable style; Paul Woodhead roused us with a riotous song from Scotland; Alison Nadin gave her usual excellent Puppet Show; and there were three youngsters who showed us all how a Uke could be played. These were Gregory Simister, Gareth Sumner and Stephen En-sall. Three lady singers performed, one being Margaret Moran who had to give an encore. We had the usual "Bones" sessions, and Brian Edge really got into the swing of things when he sang his new (to us) song. Apologies to those omitted, due to lack of space.

Many people turned out in their superb Easter Bonnets, for which Arthur Newton provided the backing with the Easter Parade song, and during the evening there was the usual parade of about twenty ladies and the odd gent showing off their beautiful bonnets. The parade was interrupted by an outsider, Miss Royle dressed in drag, who was deemed the most un-artistic entrant. All participants received a valuable award; a small chocolate Easter Egg.

And so a wonderful evening eventually came to an end. Thank you Jean, Alison, and Frankie. God bless you all and hopefully you will be able to continue for years to come to give us the benefits of your great entertainment talents. Your tired Ace Reporter. Cliff Royle.

Trip To Holland was a nightmare—but a ball of fun

Some 12 years ago we organised a coach trip to Holland to meet the Dutch members of the



Happy band of Holland trippers surrounded by disasters

George Formby Society. Little did we realise the experience we were in for as we set out. Disasters started to strike when Ron & Helen Holiday's train journey was delayed for over two hours when some chap threw himself under the train to commit suicide. Good start!

Our coach was supplied by Springfield Coaches of Wigan and the reason for choosing them was because, just like George, we wanted to set out from Wigan. Bill, the proprietor, was very laid back. I asked him if he wanted deposits and he said, "Nay lad, pay me on the day." From then on I was as laid back as him and simply relied on people turning up on the day. On a cold and wet night only 20 members turned up (more to pick up on the way) and I was concerned that Bill might charge the reliable few twice the price. I told him that I'd only collected half the money and his reaction was, as he grabbed it out of my hand, "That's alright, it'll do!" And I was dead chuffed.

Travelling south on the M6 we stopped at Corley Motorway Service station to pick up more passengers and the 9 month old Mercedes coach broke down. We had to wait for over two hours for a Mercedes mechanic. We were now late for the boat at Dover so the driver had to break all speed records. All went well for 30 minutes until Bill and his 2nd driver, Dave, shouted, "The generator has packed in" and the battery is not charging. All lights were turned off and we were plunged into darkness. You could hear the roars of laughter as the members groped their way downstairs to the small toilet. The video, tape player and tea machine were turned off to save the juice in the battery. The lads at the back struck up their banjos and I heard Bill say, good God, what is that? He thought the big-end had gone. We arrived on the death at Dover and Bill had to keep the engine running otherwise it wouldn't start again.

Before leaving the boat in Holland the stronger members on the coach had to push-start the coach, much to the delight of the other passengers who gave us a loud cheer. Our journey through Holland to Wageningen took about 4 hours and we stopped at the Viaduct Restaurant where we met Howard Miller, who was our guide. On leaving the restaurant we returned back to the coach to find that a faulty electric cable had burned a hole in the sump and oil was pouring out onto the road. The hole was about 3/8th inch diameter and Bill came up with the idea that a short length of 1/2 inch wood dowel could be hammered into the hole to stop the oil from pouring out. The members ran in all directions looking for a DIY shop and eventually returned with a piece. (Fancy going into a foreign shop and asking for a 2 inch length of dowel They'll think you were mad. Continued next month.

Beryl Formby

—In the last issue we included an article by Googie Withers and her opinion of Beryl. Like others she condemns her as a battleaxe that kept George under her thumb. Even keen George Formby fans have the same opinion. Not too long ago an episode of "Goodnight Sweetheart" on TV was screened which portrayed Beryl as a battleaxe that kept drunken George firmly under her thumb. When I challenged the producers they claimed that they had listened to stories of BBC staff. Now, on behalf of Beryl, who isn't here to defend herself, I'd like to put the record straight.



GEORGE, THE RUNAWAY —First we must look at George's record. At the age of two he ran away from home, only after a long search to be found posing in an antique shop window. In his school days he ran away from school. As a child he was constantly unruly and had to be locked in his bedroom. To break out he forced the window to slide down the drainpipe. Constantly he ran away from the stables to get back home. Whenever Beryl and her sister May had an argument George would make a sharp exit into the garage to get away from them. And while Beryl was dying George ran away from his responsibility to perform in pantomime in Bristol. However, there's nothing wrong with that. George was one of the greatest entertainers in the world and loved by all so he can't be gifted at everything. We hold nothing against him for that!

Perfect partnership

BERYL, THE MARTYR—Beryl, however was the complete opposite. She thrived on responsibility to the extent that she was a martyr. This is the reason why they were a first class partnership. Beryl's message to George was, "You entertain them and keep them laughing and I'll handle any aggravation." This was something she was best at. Beryl protected George and took all the flak for him. As George's manager, she insisted on being completely in charge.

GEORGE—Why did this arrangement work? At the age of seven George was thrown out of the family nest and into the tough world of horseracing. Which he hated. He badly missed the family life and especially a mother figure. That's why, in later years he sang songs like "Oh Dear Mother" and "Mother What'll I Do Now" followed by shouts of "Mother" whenever he was in trouble on the screen.

George inherited his feeling of insecurity from his father who was also deprived of mother love and who needed Eliza to tour the halls with. When George set out to fill his father's place on stage, he needed his mother to tour round with him. George then found Beryl, who was in show-business and who also had two feet firmly on the ground. She was two and a half years older than George, and ideal as a secure mother figure. Beryl, who didn't see it that way would have nothing to do with him until she realised that she could make something out of him.

BERYL—NO WOMEN'S LIB. We must understand the difficulty that women had up to around 20 or 30 years ago. There was no such thing as "Women's Lib" and the authority quickly squashed any suggestion of 'equal rights for women'. There was a common understanding that a woman's place was in the back kitchen and most certainly not in management. This was especially so in George's case, who had great potential to become a big star? Beryl gave up her own stage career to manage her husband and to propel him to the top of stardom. This she did but not without fierce battles with the management.



Travelled every inch of the war front with George

George had a dual personality, which could transfer him from being a little boy full of fun to a super star. The little boy image was an escape from the harsh world of reality. During any charity events Beryl would leave him to mix with the fans and then, after a nod from George, would walk over to them and, in a firm manner call out, "Come on George, we've got to go." The fans would naturally assume that she was a dragon that controlled him and consequently they had little respect for her.

NO SONGS WANTED—During the filming of "No Limit" the bosses were insisting on George giving up his singing career and concentrating on slapstick acting only. Beryl would have none of this and claimed that the songs had made George a star and not the films. She was losing the battle with the management who preferred to negotiate direct with George and to ignore Beryl as his manager. In earnest she immediately wrote to her friends asking them to write in asking for more songs to be sung in George's films. During her battles with the producers George never at any time stood by her to give her support.

In discussions with various members of the Formby family I found that they all had extreme loyalty towards Beryl. Not one word of condemnation came from them regarding her handling of George. In fact, their comments were "George would never have made the grade without dear Beryl."

DEDICATION—When asked if the media articles upset her, she said, "I don't care what they think about me as long as they praise George." Such was her dedication towards her husband.

MEMORABILIA—Over many years I've collected a substantial amount of Formby memorabilia including George and Beryl's personal effects, such as bank books, statements, personal letters, tax demands etc. and I assure you that Beryl had complete control of it all. George possibly never signed a cheque in his life and perhaps didn't know how to sign one.

JEALOUSY? - They claimed that Beryl refused to allow George to kiss his leading ladies in his films and would throw a tantrum if he did. The newspapers put it down to sheer jealousy on Beryl's part but this wasn't correct. George was a comedian in his films. He wasn't playing the part of a great lover. Charlie Chaplin didn't kiss the ladies on film, neither did Laurel and Hardy. They had leading ladies but they didn't deliver sloppy kisses on them. Like George, they were recognised purely as comedians who's job it was to make people laugh.

Regarding Beryl's protection of George, from other leading ladies, this was true but with good reason. Show business is notorious for divorces and Beryl made sure that George was pinned down at all times. She had given up her own career to promote George so she wasn't allowing anyone else steal her polished jewel. Quite right too! If George had wandered off with some other woman Beryl would have been completely out on a limb. Well she was too clever to let that happen. Betty Driver, of Coronation Street fame, appeared on television stating that Beryl was a dragon to her but I have a letter from her stating that she got on well with George and Beryl at all times. Which one is correct?

BERYL'S DEATH—It was 1960 and although Beryl had supported . . . Continued Over

George for 27 years, especially during his illnesses, George had extreme difficulty in standing by Beryl when she desperately needed him. She was dying but he couldn't face staying with her. He wasn't in a fit condition but he felt compelled to run away to escape the pressure. George went to Bristol to appear in a pantomime and that was the last he saw of Beryl alive.

On his way home he called at Warrington to discover that she'd died. He claimed that he wasn't aware of any illness but thought that it was due to over drinking. It was later discovered that the excess of drinking was to calm the pain.

After Beryl's death, George was completely and hopelessly lost. He couldn't handle the business side of his life, accounts etc. And if he engaged an accountant to handle his affairs it would soon be discovered that a sum of between £30,000 and £60,000 had been stored in the attic and that the tax man would have to be called in. He was in a difficult situation and had to find a solution very quickly.

PAT HOWSON—He remembered a young schoolteacher woman. She was the daughter of the Howson family who was in the car sales business. It would be an ideal situation if he could marry her. Being a schoolteacher she will have a good head on her shoulders so she would fill the huge void left by Beryl perfectly.

INVENTED A STORY—George had a responsibility to his many fans and it was clear that they would lose respect for him when they discovered that he was keen to marry Pat Howson only two months after Beryl's death. So he invented the story that both he and Beryl had not lived as man and wife for over 15 years and— 'surely the public wouldn't deprive him of a little happiness.' The public fell for it and gave him their blessing.

THE WILL—Just before his death George wasn't capable of making a will. This was not because of his illness but because he simply couldn't take on the responsibility. Beryl, his prop, had left him in a very difficult situation. He didn't want to leave anything to his family, who he regarded as scroungers, and if he left it to his 81 year old mother, it would finish up in the hands of the family. To solve the problem he had to marry Pat Howson immediately. This would mean that she would inherit everything in his will and she would have the responsibility of seeing that nothing went to the family. This was quite a big task for someone who had been in George's life for only a couple of months. In George's mind it was purely business. He desperately needed someone to fill Beryl's place. In my opinion there was no love for Pat. Just a business plan.

George changed his will making the Pat the main beneficiary and a few days later he died. This was the beginning of a huge battle between Pat and the Formby family who claimed that she was responsible for George changing his will. This well reported saga was dragging on years later and finally it was claimed that the only ones to benefit were the lawyers. Pat was reported to say, "I wish I'd never been left the money because it has been nothing but a burden to my life." It was clear to see that she didn't have the back bone that Beryl had and she would never have filled her place.

ALWAYS REPLIED— Over the years I have written to many stars who have been associated with George, and only four have replied. Beryl, however, replied to every letter no matter how small and, having spoken to many hundreds of fans, I have yet to meet anyone who was ignored by her. Well that's it! I hope you now have a different opinion of the hard working Beryl who launched George into stardom. Beryl has my greatest admiration. Stan Evans.

George Found The Love Of His Life—Don't You Believe It.



I was told recently that my article on George & Pat Howson was incorrect and that George was madly in love with Pat.

Well, I just can't accept it—no way!!!

George, who's mind was entirely on his business, was desperate for someone to fill Beryl's place. He was completely lost and as Ted, his brother,

said on "The South Bank Show" - 'He was in a wilderness.' If you think that George had finally found the love of his life, take a good look at the above photo of George & Pat after they'd been interviewed on TV News. This is the face of a very sad and worried man and most certainly not one who had found his true love. No way!!! During the interview they were undecided on who was to support who. George needed a prop to fill Beryl's place but Pat could never have filled that position. They both needed propping up.

Thanks from Geoff Shone—N. WALES

AN AMBITION FULLFILLED.—Can I thank everyone who took part in the April Meeting. It has always been an ambition of mine to have a fund raising night in aid of The Hope House Hospice for Sick Children. When I suggested this at our February Committee meeting, Jean & Alison kindly agreed that as Frankie had been a professional entertainer all his life and had spent a lot of years entertaining children, as well as adults, the time would be perfect at the April meeting when they were planning to throw a party for Frankie's 80th birthday.

Well the wheels got into motion, dashing here and dashing there, many phone calls between the committee members who were quietly going about their duties to make the evening a success. Well! What a success. Everybody had a wonderful time. Frankie's party was a tribute to a very special man who over the years has given so much pleasure entertaining others. Thanks again for the buffet and the wine which was laid on by Jean & Alison. Top marks must go to Marian and her catering staff who did us all proud.

Also to the Royal British Legion Club, and Speed Six of Wrexham for their contribution to the funds. The amount raised on the night for Hope House Hospice was a total of £510. 36p. This is the first time in my life that I have ever had tears in my eyes counting money. A member of Hope House will attend the May meeting to accept the cheque. Geoff Shone, Chairman. *Thanks Geoff. You've all done a great job. And you also did a great job banging away on your drums on stage. Very professional!!! P.S. Does being Chairman mean that you shift all the chairs?*



Geoff & Dolwen Shone

Funeral of Sam Bass by Brian Edge.

The funeral took place of popular entertainer Sam Bass at the Bradwell Crematorium, Newcastle under Lyme, Staffs on Tuesday 2nd April 2002. Sam was 72. A large gathering of Sam's family, fellow artistes, members of the George Formby Society and friends attended. The cortege arrived with Sam's ukulele, his straw boater and his picture on the coffin and as the mourners entered for the service Sam was heard singing Ordinary People from the Formby Hit Show 'Zip Goes a Million'.

STANDING OVATION for SAM.

Before the committal the minister said that at the end of Sam's performances he always looked for his applause and everyone in the packed chapel gave Sam a standing ovation before his last curtain closed.

Charlie Catchpole of the Daily

Express claims that Ken Dodd is worthy of a knighthood. "He's got a drum" says Charlie "so why hasn't he got a gong? Lord Dodd of Knotty Ash has a nice ring to it. After 50 years in the business he is a national treasure. At one of his performances, which lasted 4 hours, I almost lost the will to live. At the party afterward he was as bouncy and bubbly as ever."

On his recent TV show he told the audience that he had a secret to tell before the newspapers got wind of it. "I was Anne Widdecombe's toy boy."

Later, Anne, from the audience, asked him the question, "If you were controller of all television, what would you do to make sure that all programmes are as good yours." "Ken shot into his spiel about old people watching black & white films and suddenly Frank Windsor coming on asking if they've thought about their funeral arrangements, followed by Carol Vorderman asking if they've had an accident ("do you want one") and Thora Hird whizzing up and down on a stair lift."



Charlie went on, "But I didn't really take it in. My head was still buzzing with images of Doddy and Widdy and tickling sticks which I couldn't shake off. When he crooned to Dicky Mint I said to myself, 'It's a puppet'. But when the puppet laid its head on Ken shoulder and went to sleep and the audience sighed 'Aaah . . . ' I sat smiling to myself sopfully. Damn it, Dodd. You've won again.

THE FOLLOWING DAY a readers letter appeared from Roy Dickinson. "I enjoyed Charlie Catchpole's witty piece on Ken Dodd. Like many of Doddy's fans I would like to see him either knighted or awarded another type of honour. Unlike today's stand up comedians, he doesn't rely on blue material for his laughs and he really can sing.

Well, I don't think that the title Lord Ken Dodd is suitable for him so perhaps he should be given a special award. Something like, "Lord Ken of Laughter." What do you think?

Jon Baddeley spots an item for sale on the Internet

I saw this item for sale at eBay, The World's Online Marketplace TM, and thought that you might be interested in including this in the Newsletter.

Price: Currently US \$9.99

Item Description: Roots of Lonnie Donegan, The [Back] Various Artists

THE Roots of Lonnie Donegan.

You are bidding on a this new, mint condition CD-
the tracks are as follows

- 1 Dead or alive Guthrie, Woody
- 2 Auntie Maggie's remedy Formby, George
- 3 Wreck of the John B Weavers
- 4 Darling Corey Weavers
- 5 Go tell Aunt Rhody Terry, Sonny
- 6 Glory Terry, Sonny & Woody Guthrie
- 7 Ole Riley Leadbelly
- 8 Diggin' my potatoes Leadbelly & Sonny Terry
- 9 Rooster crows at midnight (Xmas Day) Leadbelly
- 10 House of the Rising Sun White, Josh
- 11 Rambler's blues Johnson, Lonnie
- 12 Rocks in my bed Johnson, Lonnie
- 13 Bewildered Johnson, Lonnie
- 14 How long how long Carr, Leroy
- 15 In the evening Carr, Leroy
- 16 Let your light shine on me Johnson, 'Blind' Willie
- 17 Ace in the hole Johnson, Bunk
- 18 Tom Dooley Grayson, G.B. & Henry Whitter
- 19 My Dixie darling Carter Family
- 20 Keep on the sunny side Carter Family
- 21 Mule skinner blues Rogers, Jimmy
- 22 Gold rush is over Snow, Hank
- 23 Wedding bells Williams, Hank
- 24 Beyond the sunset Williams, Hank
- 25 This train Tharpe, Sister Rosetta

Disc is new, with unique picture inlay and never played.

Joe Taylor's Back With A Few

Laughs—These have been taken from school exam reports.

The natives of Macedonia did not believe so Paul got stoned. - Florence Nightingale was a famous Swedish soprano. - Telepathy is a code invented by Morse. - An oxygen has eight sides. - The sewage canal is in Egypt. - Herrings swim about in shawls. - The first commandment was when Eve told Adam to eat the apple. - An executive is a man who chops people's heads off. - When a man is married to one woman it is called monotony. - Socrates died from an over dose of wedlock. - People who test your eyes are called optimists. - Parasites are people who live in Paris. - Robinson Crusoe was a great operatic tenor. - A virgin forest is where the hand of man has never set foot. - A hostage is a nice person on an aeroplane. *Thanks Joe, keep sending em in.*

From Tony Abbott

Picked up from Email.

Has anyone noticed the resemblance of gap-toothed George Formby and the feisty Girolama Savanarola who was burned at the stake in Florence in 1498.

Could it be he was torched for playing that instrument of the



Devil himself, the ukulele?

Send us your address Tony and you'll have a few hundred uke banjos banging away outside your bedroom window. Damned cheek!!!!



Sale Report THE WEEKEND STARTS HERE

By Cyril Palmer

What more could I ask? A great evening in Sale to start a weekend in the Winter Gardens (GFS meeting) with midnight singing in our digs (oops) "guest house" (Slap on the wrist from Sheila) There was a surprisingly good turnout for the eve of the GFS meeting, the most notable absentee being Alice Cronshaw, struck down by a stomach bug and only just over the worst. Happily, as I write, Alice is on the road to recovery. Walter put himself out to bring the props to set up the room. Thanks Walter.

Slightly down on some of our regulars, the reappearance of our Middleton Quartet, Mavis, Len, Margaret and Dennis was nicely timed. Thinking of numbers, my mind goes back to my early visits to the Sale meetings when little more than a dozen met in a small room—no electronic gear—no backing tracks—but so entertaining as to infect me with the bug and here I am twenty-odd years later.

Back to the present, Walter Kirkland opened the singing. His medley began with "Ain't She Sweet?" - Alice on the brain—as always. Stan Evans and Jim Knight then made up a bones trio. Alan Southworth is still thanking Mr Roosevelt after all these years. After "Get Cracking" Jim Knight added bones to Lonnie Donegan's "Does Your Chewin' gum . . . Brian Edge is still waiting to "Come Up On The Football Pools" Surprise next when Hilda and Vera cavorted wildly to "Lord Of The Dance" well not really. It was gentler and more seductive than wild. Connie Edge urged us to "Enjoy Yourself It's Later Than You Think" Then a seaside medley seemed appropriate for those going to Blackpool. (Blackpool week-end)

After the interval Les Pearson took charge of the introductions. Les, with Margaret Moran, recently entertained "The Happy Clovers" in Rochdale at the request of Cyril Smith and raised a donation for Broughton House funds. Jazz man, Alan Newton stayed with his uke for the joys of "Isle Of Man" and the ever popular "IT Races." Unless you have a sneaky look round the corner (black screen) you never know which of her many talents Alison Nadin will display. Tonight she was in a voice-throwing mode with Granddad (dummy) and his bright-as-a-button grandson, Charlie. Stan Evans is still in a composing mood, introducing a new song, "Happy Meetings". He told the story about Brian Edge in his Stationmaster days. We had no doubts as to its veracity (Oh, alright, we thought it was a load of porkies)

Arthur Newton rang the changes singing two traditional songs with a country feel, "Careless Love" and "Down In The Valley" followed by Margaret Moran: "How Can You Buy Killarney" and the gentle, "Pal Of My Cradle Days". Having sung for the Monte Casino Veterans in December, Margaret has been asked to sing at the opening of the Imperial War Museum on Salford Quays! How about that!! For myself my dream song (See You In My Dreams) near had me dropping off so that I went into the wrong key for my second—Back to the drawing board! Thanks again to all the helpers, more next month. *And Thank You Cyril—Incidentally we have a squirrel in our garden and guess what it's name is? Cyril the Squirrel! Well it's the only name we could come up with. Well you can't call it Tom can you? Or Bill, Harry etc. Cyril rolls off the tongue.*

DON'T FORGET WIGAN MAYZE DAYZE SAT 25th MAY 2.30pm
The Past Its will be warming the audience up from 2pm to 2.30pm.

Penyffordd Plonkers Again—

Well I told you that these lads have got talent didn't I. They've only been together for a few weeks and already they've got a room full of trophies. The lads, plus Alison Nadin, went along



to entertain at Alison & George Tyrer's Ruby Wedding Anniversary and gave all the locals a treat at the King's Arms Pub, in Abergavenny, Wales. They also took their trophies with them to show off to the crowd. Well doesn't it look impressive? The happy band of plonkers were Cliff Royle, Jim Knight, Phil Hughes, Jim Griffiths, Deg Bruce, George Tyrer and of

course, Alison Nadin who gave the crowd of 75 a demonstration on paper folding to music. It was a great show and appreciated by the landlady who invited them back any time.

HEY, HOLD ON!!!! - I've just had a close look at those trophies on the wall and discovered that they were won for playing darts. What the . . . You're a load of cheats, that's what you are! - no wonder you are all smiling. Fancy, young Cliff, our star reporter sinking so low.

Hey! What's This? - Paul McCartney



and Elvis Presley are playing a Wooden ukulele.

Paul, playing a Gibson uke, was singing one of the Beatle songs, "Something" as a tribute to George Harrison who, he claimed, was a very keen George Formby fan.

He is also preparing for his last tour when fans will be charged £178 per ticket. They expect to raise £37 million from the tour, which is not bad for a trip out.



Elvis however, is being featured in the Daily Express claiming that it is fashionable for men to be dressed Hawaiian style shirts.

The Newsletter by Stan Evans

It comes out each month does our Newsletter book
With tales of George Formby, playing his uke
And reports on the meetings at Blackpool and Crewe
At Sale and Westhoughton and Liverpool too

And then there's N. Wales, we mustn't miss them
They sing in the valleys and over the glen
At the old British Legion down Penyffordd way
They'll sing there all night, - and booze there all day

We've stories from Brian and young Dennis Lee
Cliff and Olwen and Jon Bad—del—ley
From Paul and Martin and Anthony too
From Alan and Colin, the two lads from Crewe

And then we've the Emails that come in each day
From budding uke players who are eager to play
They've seen George in films, playing his uke
So they order a tape and a tuition book.

Some of them ask for the words of a song
Either George Formby's, or an old sing-along
Or for chords for the songs that George used to play
Sung from his heart, in the old fashioned way

And then we have ukes that some wish to sell
Good uns and bad uns, you never can tell
Some are like new, probably owned by a toff
While some are clapped out with the back hanging off

Yes, our little book is read far and wide
With loads of old jokes and stories inside
In Yorkshire and Cheshire, Australia too
And in China it's read by old Mr Wu.

It's nice when they ring and say, "Hello Stan
I've just read your book and now I'm a fan
I watched George's films when I was a lad
Hee, - he was great, and so was his dad

So if ever you have a story to share
Or a joke to tell, and a few minutes to spare
A query on George and Beryl as well
Drop me a line or give me a bell.

I'm here by the phone 8 days a week
On my computer, - now looking antique
And I've always got time to speak to a friend
Like George and his uke I'll be here till the end.

Mayze Dayze -

Well last years performance made an
impression on the Wiganites -

Ron Walker phoned . . . "I enjoyed your
George Formby show last May and I
want to organise a show for the old folk.
Will you come and perform?"

Mrs Ford phoned. Hee wouldn't it be
grand if they honoured George Formby
in Wigan. I only caught the tale end of
your show in the town last year but thor-
oughly enjoyed it. They tell me you are
coming again, - GOOD. I'll be there to
cheer you.

WIGAN NEWSPAPER CUTTING—I
find it very odd that the name of George
Orwell is prominent at the Wigan Pier
complex. This was the man who wrote
some not very complimentary things
about Wigan. Contrast that with the
treatment accorded to a famous enter-
tainer born in Wigan, who did a terrific
job during World War Two entertaining
troops in many theatres of war.

I refer to George Formby, who during his
career gave such a lot of pleasure to so
many people.

I would like to see the town of his birth
erect a statue of George in, say the Wi-
gan Pier complex, as a token of respect
for such an illustrious son of the town.

Also I think it is sad that there is not a
George Formby Society in Wigan. The
apathy of the town towards George is
puzzling. Joe Taylor

*To be fair to Wigan Pier, they were dead
keen to stage an exhibition for George's
40th Anniversary but complications
arose at our end.*

No Name Email From Wigan Council—
Keep putting the shows on and they'll
eventually bend. You were GREAT last
year. We didn't realise that George had
so many songs. Hope the weather
TURNS OUT NICE AGAIN.

Nantwich Jazz & Blues Festival

ANOTHER GREAT SUCCESS—Bob Geldof was the big name at the festival this year held over Easter Weekend throughout the picturesque town of Nantwich. He was supported by nearly sixty bands who played in numerous taverns throughout the town during the five days of the festival. The names of all of these bands, including our own, appeared on the festival t-shirt.

The South Cheshire “George Formby” Ukulele Society (Crewe) has played to packed houses in every festival since its inception, six years ago. Our group is privileged to perform in the Georgian Minstrels’ Ballroom of the famous Crown Hotel, a three-storied black and white building that has dominated the High Street of the town for over 400 years. The original inn was mentioned in the Domesday Book and was burned down in 1583. Queen Elizabeth I provided the funds for its prompt rebuilding.

Our group performed a two-hour show to a wonderful hand clapping and feet tapping audience who each paid £1 entrance donation. Two hundred and fifty three pounds was collected and this was handed to us to be passed on to a charity of our choice. We offer our special thanks to the staff of the Crown Hotel and the Jazz and Blues Festival for making this possible.

We had great support in the audience from members of the Penyffordd Society and it was great to see Carl Basford (recuperating from illness) there too. Those taking part in the show were, Des Redfern (drums), Colin Wood, Don Chalkley, Gareth Sumner, Brian and Connie Edge, Jonathan and Pamela Baddeley, Walter Kirkland, Arthur Newton, Alan Newton, Cliff Royle and Alan Chenery who came all the way from Fleetwood to take part in the show. Geoff Shone kindly stood in for Des on the drums when the latter performed his solo.

It was great to do a show where “roadies” were provided to set up all the equipment. We could have anything we needed and a professional sound engineer was on hand to play our music. We were pampered with seven mikes, monitors and overhead lighting. Angela Caldicott sat along side the Sound Engineer hopefully picking up a few tips.

It was indeed a happy day that ended at the Boar’s Head Hotel at Walgherton where the group and their supporters had a nice meal.

Looking For Backing Tapes? - Give David a call on

0151 734 0645. The name of the company is Ameritz Music Productions, 479a Smithdown Rd, Wavertree, Liverpool who have many thousands of backing tapes on the shelf. You simply ring to make an appointment, ask them if they have the songs you want, and then go along. David will put the tape on to test for the right key and then produce a copy for you. They have a special offer of 5 songs for £25 and the quality is excellent. Don’t forget to mention that you read about them in the GF Newsletter.

Wonderful Blackpool by Win & Tony Innes

My husband, Tony, and I attended for the first time a George Formby get-together last Monday. We moved to Blackpool last year, and it took us so long to get to the event because we've had to get to know the streets and areas. We have the local paper, the Gazette, every day and we've seen the advert every time for the monthly Monday meeting—but each time we've planned to go the weather changed our minds. It's been a very wet and windy winter.

Tony is a Formby fan. For a tonic he flips in a George Formby video and in no time he's in stitches! A few years ago we subscribed to the Vellum, recommended to us by Alex Barrett of Peebles, Scotland. His wife, Kitty helps with the raffles at the Winter Gardens meetings. They said we should go along to the meeting (this was about 98) but Tony is a fanatical walker and didn't relish the thought of going to Blackpool on the bus (we have no car) just to spend the time indoors (as much as he likes George)

It is wonderful how so people many are inspired and charmed into playing the instrument made famous by the great Lancashire legend. The best part of any film for me is when George plays the uke in between song verses. He is the master.

And so, with last Monday being the finest and last Monday of the month for ages we decided to come along. First of all I studied the A—Z of Blackpool for Common Edge Road, the address of the South Shore Cricket Club. On the map it's lengthy, could be anywhere, the club. I phoned the club and a lady explained it's opposite a Garden Centre on the route for No. 14 bus. After checking bus times during the day we set off walking from home to Talbot Rd Bus Station to get the 7.30pm bus and the driver nodded and said he'd give up a shout when we get there. At the stop he directed us across the road, first right at the lights. It was a dark road—waste land on one side and new houses on the other. We walked all round the houses looking for something like a club. I knocked at a door and the lady pointed the cricket club out: "faint lights on the other side of the waste land". She said, "are you going to the Formby meeting?" Seems her and her hubby have been and enjoyed it. She kindly dashed somewhere for her car keys and drove us right to the club doorway. The lady was so kind. I have to go into detail like this to explain about this kind of goodness in the world.

I am writing to you because you are approachable. We don't know any other Formby names in Blackpool. I gather from your Newsletter No. 82, maybe half of the people there are from other branches, like yourself and the other gentleman from Sale who sang lovely old songs my uncle used to sing, like Music Maestro Please. And yourself with your buddy (another Stan). And the chap from Crewe—can he play the uke! What a lovely uke he has. Tony and I got a surprise. We expected hearing nothing but George Formby material.

When Des from Crewe got up and said for a change he would do a bit of Jolson, me and Tony looked at each other . . . Jolson! I'd never hear Formby sing Jolson. We came to the conclusion that they were from George home recordings. And then, you and the other Stan came on with "Hurt". No way did George sing Hurt. What a

spiffing rendition of Hurt you do, in great style—so easy, no straining to get the high notes. Thank you for giving us this treat, we've never heard it done like that before. I must give credit to the man who, I think, was sat next to you (Rob), who did his Formby bit spot on, with his uke strapped high up under his chin and with vocal chords like George and now and then throwing in a chuckle.

It's a good night out and we enjoyed every minute. Thanks to you and everyone else. See you next month. Sincerely, Win & Tony Innes.

Thank you Win & Tony. We are pleased that you enjoyed the night. Just to introduce you round. The meeting is run by Charles Stewart (Sound Engineer Operator) Eve Stewart (sits on the door) - Alan Middleton is the M/C and his wife, Carol, helps with the raffle. Eileen Abbott helps with the buffet and Steve, her husband, helps Charles with the lugging of the sound equipment. They all work very hard to put a show on and this is the reason why we travel so far to give support. Des does a 160 mile round trip. George recorded quite a number of non-Formby songs: Tiger Rag, - Sweet Georgia Brown, - Camptown Races, Anchor's Aweigh, - Swannee River, - Hard Hearted Hannah, - Some Of These Days, - Sweet Sue, - Hearts Of Oak, - Loch Lomond, - Come Landlord Fill The Flowing Bowl, - She'll Be Coming Round The Mountain, - Ilkla Moor Baht Hat, La Donna E Mobile, - Dinah, - Alexander's Rag-time Band, - and more. So exactly what is a George Formby song, I don't know.

Paul Woodhead has been chasing up a BONES supplier. Here's one—
The Music Room, 35, Bradford Road, Cleckheaton, Bradford, West Yorkshire, BD19 3JN
Tel 01274 879768 - Fax 01274 852280 - Mail Order 01274 85200
www.the-music-room.com

Hardwood Bones by Roddy Turner Ebony £13.50, Deluxe Inlaid Ebony £14.99
Misc Hardwood £7.50 All packs include instruction sheet

PAUL is also interested in the background story of George's song, "All Going Back." Can anyone help. If so send details in for the next issue. Many Thanks.

John Ceaser wishes to thank those who sent him more verses to "He Played His Ukulele When The Ship Went Down." He was very pleased at the response to the appeal in the last issue of the Newsletter.



Did anyone spot the two mistakes in the last issue? If so, keep it to yourself.

And Finally—Alison's puppet, Mr Hardcastle, is a dead ringer for a younger version of Brian Edge. I wonder if he posed for it in his early days?

Hope you enjoy reading this issue and many thanks to all who supplied the material.

THANKS TO ALL WHO CONTRIBUTED TO THIS ISSUE

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 29th & 30th June 2002

“ 14th & 15th Sept 2002

Sat 30th Nov & Sun 1st Dec 2002

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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DON'T FORGET YOUR ARTICLE—OR ELSE

Remember: Crazy Paving's Not All It's Cracked Up To Be.

