

THE

GEORGE FORMBY

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Welcome To Newsletter No. 84

Have you noticed the change of name on the front cover? Well I had a phone call from one of the Yorkshire members of the George Formby Society who made a suggestion that in future we should take out the name N. West Newsletter and re-title it to include every GF fan. Not just the N. West. Well this is a good idea because our little news book is read throughout the country and as far as Australia. Quite a number of Newsletters are read in Yorkshire and maybe a change of title might encourage them to contribute articles.

Right!!! Well that's it!!! In future we are THE GEORGE FORMBY NEWSLETTER. Many thanks for the suggestion. Please note that our little Newsletter is not limited to members of the GFS. It is read by George Formby fans in general.

Tom Bailey—We are pleased to report that Liverpool's Tom Bailey is getting back to normal again. He turned up at the last Liverpool meeting and was feeling a little tired, but he soldiered on and got through the night OK. The gang were pleased to see him and wished him luck.

More From Professor Richards on George—

In Lancashire the women were very dominant and they developed an independent sturdy character which is embodied in Gracie Fields, who is George's counterpart as the Lancashire lass. The image is very much subordinate—an henpecked figure, and George fitted into that. He was very Lancashire which is the humour of cotton towns, slow building, slow talking, character comedy, it's not the fast patter comedy of Cockney London or of Liverpool. Liverpool wasn't technically a Lancs town. It was an Irish sea port on the coast of Lancashire and the humour was very different.



So John Willey, the character played by George senior and junior, very much embodied the social structure and the nature of the humour of Lancs in the early part of the century. Unlike Max Miller and Flanagan & Allan, who were not so successful on film, George embodied a universal symbol of the little man, ground down, but who always wins through in the end. Cinema goers have always been attracted to this figure, like Charlie Chaplin, who muddled or tricked his way through, and then if you think of Norman Wisdom who played a similar part to George. It's that little man, he's not talented but he always gets through.

Another reason for success was the childlike element in George, being chased and pulling his tongue out at authority. We realise that this is timeless comedy when we watch more recent stars like Benny Hill. The third reason was his songs but we'll talk about them later.

Church Memorial Mass for Jack Jones

I received a phone call from Pat Ralston, Jack's close friend, who has been looking after his welfare this past years. She has organised a Church memorial Mass to be held at Sacred Hearts Church, opposite Crosfield's (Lever) Soap Works, Liverpool Road, Warrington on Monday June 10th at 12am. This will be followed by a concert and buffet to be held at ROOSTERS CLUB, which is next door to the church. Estimated time 1pm.



Pat, who has dedicated her time to Jack, since 1996, gave up her work to spend more time with him. They attended Sacred Hearts Church every Sunday and Jack made quite a number of friends there. In fact, the Sunday visit to the church was Jack's highlight of the week.

Pat also owns a house in Sankey Valley Park, Warrington, and after church Pat and Jack would stroll to the nearby duck pond to feed the ducks. Jack became so hooked on this that he bought 21 loaves of bread each week to feed to the ducks. As Pat said, "He loved a simple life."

PAT'S PROMISE—When Jack passed the 80 years mark, Pat promised him that she would help—when the time came—to give him a grand send off. In turn he promised her that she would be left sufficient finance to pay for any special occasion. Unfortunately, Jack kept putting off the day and finally left her short of cash. Ever faithful Pat doesn't intend renegeing on her promise to Jack so she will be funding the occasion herself with what finance she has.

PLEASE CONTRIBUTE. To help with the finance, Pat is asking each one coming to the concert/buffet, to contribute £1 towards the cost of the buffet.

Amsterdam Trip—When we get over there we must give a big hand to our old Dutch pal, Jaap Hoffman who has spent the last couple of months running round Amsterdam (He lives 50 miles from the town) looking for a venue for us to meet them. The pubs were too small to hold us all so he had to settle for a community hall. There will be a charge on the door of around £3 each, - depending on how many turn up - and the meeting will be held on the Sunday afternoon June 2nd.



Some of you will remember Jaap as the chap who sings with a very deep voice and his favourite GF song was "Down The Old Coal Hole." Nice chap is Jaap! Looking forward to the trip!

The Irrepressible Peter Gratton in a variety of

colourful garbs fronted the Crewe April meeting and kept the audience laughing throughout the evening with his quick fire comedy. Jim and Myra Knight and Trish and Gerald Beadle were unable to come and gave their apologies.

It was wonderful to see Carl Basford looking his old self again and treading the boards alongside his friend Ron Whiston, our stage bones player, who has also not been able to be with us for such a long time.



Connie donned her sunhat and sunglasses and performed a couple of seaside songs, firstly the difficult Formby number "*Sitting on the Sands all Night*", which was followed by the "*I do like to be beside the seaside*" medley.

Both Vera and Alice entertained vocally, the latter throwing yours truly into a state of panic when she performed the song I had been practising all week! Don't worry Alice I still love you! Arthur Newton entertained in his very relaxed and happy style, which is always pleasing to us all.

The audience of 96 saw Gerry Wilford and Vi Pownall of the Parkinson Disease Society (Crewe Branch) being presented with a cheque for £253 by Walter Kirkland on behalf of the society. The money had been raised at the Crown Hotel, Nantwich, during the 2002 Jazz and Blues Festival at Easter. Vi Pownall said that much publicity had been given to new treatments for the disease but she said these would not be available for many years yet and that money like ours would help to alleviate the suffering of local people now, and she sincerely thanked the society for its kind donation.

Steve Evans and his partner again paid us a visit from Stratford upon Avon and entertained us well. Steve as usual looked very smart on stage and we all hope that they both enjoyed the evening to compensate for their very long journey. Jonathan Baddeley gave a lucid presentation of "*Madam Moscovitch*" and followed that with the ever popular "*Get Cracking*" which, for me, was particularly enjoyable due to his song being accompanied his own first-rate backing track. Pamela joined Jonathan on stage and sang an entertaining Gospel Medley to which the audience joined in.

Connie announced that we intended having a boat trip on the River Dee on the 8th June next. The cost being £12.50 per person for the three-hour excursion inclusive of buffet supper. A list was circulated – payment due at the May meeting. Alan and Pat Chenery now well established in their new home in Fleetwood paid us a surprise visit. Alan sang his favourite Formby number "*The Wigan Boat Express*" and followed it with the popular Dickie Speake number "*Riding on a Blackpool Tram*".

Popular youngster Greg Simister, sporting a nice new hat, gave us a splendid rendering of "*Riding in the T.T. Races*" which had been requested by Connie. Greg's performance was a joy to us all. There were lots of new faces during the evening and we hope that we will have made some new friends. It was nice to have Tom Meredith with us and again we had excellent support from Penyffordd.

Our excellent drummer Des Redfern eventually got cracking in the second half due to a problem with his monitor. Des made up for everything by producing a new instrument, which

appears to be a hybrid of a baritone ukulele and a guitar. I don't think Des knows what it is either! One thing certain the instrument had a nice sound and Des played it well. He had our audience laughing in the aisles with his new song which he claimed was written by a friend who hails from Blackpool. I am not sure what the song is called and I certainly would not like to comment on the subject matter, but it certainly appealed to the audience (including Connie!). Well-done Des.

Well that was a hard act to follow but Assistant M.C. Alan Newton took the last spot before the thrash and ended the show on a real high. After performing a series of comic impressions Alan sang the lovely Formby love song "If I had a Girl Like You." ***

Colwyn Bay Party a Great Success—

Alison Nadin, and the N. Wales gang, did a grand job organising the concert at the Colwyn Bay Fun Day and everything—apart from the cold windy weather—went like a dream. A lot of hard work was put into the event which resulted in it being a huge success.

When we arrived at the bay the whole sea front was filled with hundreds of various attractions which must have stretched at least one mile. Our gang were well catered for with a huge articulated lorry for a stage, and seating for about 100 people, plus loads of standing room at the back. All the seats were filled even before the show started and the crowd were very apprecia-



tive of the old songs. All George's old favourites were played: Mr Wu, Blackpool Rock, Windows, Lamp Post, Back On The Farm, War Time Medley etc. and the crowd couldn't help but tap their feet.

As I went round with the "Child's Hospice" bucket two young teenagers stopped me asking for tapes of our concert. "This is great" they both said. "Where can we buy tapes?"

The concert was in three parts: The gang from Crewe, the gang from Penyffordd, and "The Past Its" - Well & Truly—with a couple of spots thrown in by Martin Fowell and partner. As Stan & I were in the middle of our song these two 15 foot high giants suddenly popped round the corner doing a dance to the music. There must have been dozens of these giants parading round and mingling with the crowd. And all different old time characters.



One hobbling giant was in trouble when his foot slipped off his stilt and he had to lean against our lorry until help arrived. A couple of 'out of space' visitors turned up, playing their characters very well, but the female soon came down to earth when she had to queue up for the toilets. Like all the others they had gone to a lot of trouble in preparation. I tried to talk with them— Continued P16



Hitting The High Spots at Penyffordd

By Cliff (Super Star) Royle

Once again we were able to welcome some new faces; Phil and Janet Hatsewell from the Sheffield Branch who were just returning from holiday in Rhyl; a large group of our friends from the local Glyn Home; and Margaret Eaves from the Hope House Hospice for Children to whom a cheque for £520 was presented by Frankie Woods following the very successful fund raising event at his recent 80th. Birthday Party. Was it worth the effort? Yes!

Margaret (a voluntary fund raiser) was overcome by the occasion, but went on to say how much she appreciated our money raising effort. She explained that the Home, which is near Oswestry, was used for Respite Care and that one and a half million pounds had to be raised each year. A further Hospice is in progress on the North Wales Coast to meet the needs of that area. Considerably increased funding would be needed for this second Hospice. We welcomed back Bryn Wright who has now recovered from an accident at work, and our friends from Crewe and Sale.



Regards were passed on from Dennis Lee who seems to be enjoying himself in Cyprus although there seems a shortage of Uke players, but on a sadder note I have to report that Dorothy Davidson (one of our lady door bouncers) has had to tender her apologies for not being able to attend our evenings in the future as she is not too well and feeling her age, and while writing this I have had a phone call from George and Alison Tyrer of Abergavenny. They were due to come to our concert last night but unfortunately were unable to do so since George hurt his back. He slipped on a Glossy Magazine. No comment! However they hope to visit N. Wales again quite soon.

NEW EQUIPMENT—We have just spent some money on new Sound Equipment which benefits both the players and the audience, although there seemed to be an occasional very slight crackle which needs sorting out. Still we are improving and maintaining reasonable funds in the bank.

So to the Show in which we had some twenty turns starting off with our maestro Jim Griffiths. We were well blessed with turns by our ladies; Pamela Baddeley, Vera Jones, Connie Edge and Alison Nadin who did some of her magic followed by an excellent presentation on the Uke of one of Frankie Woods songs "It's that Kind of Music for Me".

The "Lads" did us proud. Gerald Jones (Jones the Uke) has returned to our fold and gave us his usual twiddly playing without backing music; followed by Tom Meredith, Jonathan Baddeley (a new song "Our Fanny's gone all Yankee", and Walter "Bones" Kirkland with the usual headache. Then we had the Penyffordd Plonkers Deg, Frank and Phill (yes they could be heard at the back); Brian Edge, Alan Newton and Jim Knight. Perhaps the stars of the show again were our youngsters Stephen Ensall, and Gregory Simister. What talent these lads have. At least one new song every week, and the speed of their fingering is truly tremendous.

PRACTISE NIGHTS—We are still progressing with Practice Nights, which are going well, and anyone wishing to join us is most welcome. We cater for raw beginners, and those who are a bit more advanced. For more information ring Geoff Shone on (01244) 544605.

SUMMER SHOWS—Over the next month we will be extremely busy with no fewer than seven outside events at which to play . . . MORE FROM CLIFF ON PAGE 18.

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

Continued from last month . . . The electric cable had burnt a hole in the sump and set it on fire. Bill, the proprietor suggested that a short piece of dowelling could be rammed into hole to block the hole. The men eventually came back with a 2" length. Bill lay down under the coach and rammed in the dowel while Howard rang round for Dutch reinforcements to transport us to our hotel, in their cars. Howard then arranged for a bus company to transport the remainder.

This was a festival weekend and all the streets were lined with Jazz Bands, Pop Groups, Market Stalls etc. British and Canadian War Veterans had also come to join in the festivities and to remember the fallen.

Although tired through lack of sleep and over excitement, our happy band soldiered on to the Café de Keijzer to hold an evening session. On the way back to the hotel Anthony Mason and Greg Croft dropped off to do a spot of entertaining in the street. They turned up later delighted that they'd collected £18 for just 25 minutes playing.

Sunday afternoon and we arrived at the Junushoff Theatre where we entertained the veterans. We broke for an evening meal, which tasted dreadful. £7 a head and the grub was only half cooked. We complained but it was a case of, "Take it or leave it," - expressed by the grumpy chef who was an Adolf Hitler look-alike.

WE NEED A PUSH—Come the end of the show and Bill & Dave asked us to make an announcement. The hole had been bunged up with a dowel, and some silicon, but they were not sure if it would blow out when the engine started. Now the first pick up will be at The Mon Rev Hotel at 7.45am, the following morning, and those staying at the hotel will have to give the coach a push start to get it going because the generator was clapped out—I'm not joking!!! It's true!!!

DON'T BE LATE—He also stressed that we mustn't be late otherwise we'd miss the boat. After the push start the coach will then proceed to pick up group two at the second hotel. That's us. Well, come the following morning and there was no sign of any coach turning up at our hotel. We rang the Mon Rev Hotel to discover that they'd failed to budge the coach to get it started.

TWO MILE MARCH—Bill gave instructions that we must gather our bags and cases together and march the happy band of trippers to the other side of the town to the Mon Rev. This was about two miles but with stiff upper lip and British bulldog spirit we set off through the quiet Sunday morning streets. We trudged and trudged, lugging our heavy suitcases, sweat pouring out of every pore, till we finally arrived at the Mon Rev Hotel. Round the last corner we saw the funniest sight of the trip. The heavy gang, who were supposed to kick-start the 5 ton truck, consisted of Eve Stewart, Joan Littlewood, Sylvia Kennaugh, Jim Mottram (college lecturer) and Keith Smith (in a wheelchair). MORE NEXT MONTH.

Actually we have somewhere a very funny photo of the heavy gang failing to budge the coach. I will try to find it for the next issue. We were in stitches laughing.

If you think you've had problems read the story of Denise (Mum of Ashley—ex GFS member) -. By Stan Evans.

Denise fell pregnant at the age of 16 and she and her boyfriend got married. Things changed after the wedding when he started beating her. They had a baby named David. When David was 8 months old things got worse so she left him and went back to her parents.

Some time later she set up home with a friend from work and they had a baby girl named Yvonne. They were very happy until one morning they found that Yvonne had died through cot death. Their world was shattered but they were advised to have another child, which they did. She gave birth to Steven but was still grieving for her daughter and she found it difficult to accept Steven. A few months later she learned to love the child and it was then that she discovered that there was something wrong with the shape of his head. She took him to a specialist who told her that he would have to have an operation otherwise he would die with the pressure on the brain as he got older.

OPERATION—At the age of 3 months her baby had an operation to cut away some of his skull. The operation lasted 8 hours, which at the time, she thought were the worst hours of her life. When he was returned to an incubator she was shocked to see that he was wired up to all kinds of monitors. She lived in the hospital so that she could be near Steven all the time. The morning after the operation she collapsed. She had been having problems since the birth but had to pay all her attention to the baby. She couldn't believe the problems she was having.

FIRE—When David was 6 and Steven 3 she gave birth to Ashley, who was in perfect health. Her partner couldn't stand the strain of constantly looking after children and started going out regularly. She was hurt when she discovered that he was seeing other women. Her partner left her and some time later, living alone looking after her children, she woke up one morning coughing and choking. She opened her eyes to find the bedroom full of smoke. She ran downstairs and the whole kitchen was ablaze. She ran back upstairs, grabbed the children and fell down the stairs carrying them. She managed to save all three children and they sat outside watching the house and possessions go up in flames. They'd lost everything. They were insured but it was in her partner's name. He took the lot and didn't want to see his own children.

ANOTHER BLOW—All went well for a few years although they struggled financially, but then BANG!!! Fate took a hand again when Ashley, her youngest, became ill. He was having violent headaches caused by a brain tumour. On the 18th March 1993, she had the biggest struggle of her life when Ashley was operated on to remove the tumour. He was in theatre for 10 hours and when he came back she found that he couldn't walk or talk. She had to start training his brain all over again. Seven days later she was informed that Ashley's tumour was malignant—cancer. She didn't know what was going on but had faith in the doctors. Seven months of therapy followed and during this period she witnessed a lot of children dying. She prayed that her child would be saved but he didn't appear to be improving. He never smiled and was constantly feeling miserable. This was a most terrible period for Denise who was never away from the hospital.

GEORGE—One day she was walking towards Ashley's ward when she heard this very loud laughing, which was infectious. She thought, "That sounds like Ashley, but it can't be." To her delight she found Ashley rolling over the bed laughing at George Formby in one of his films on TV. "Mum" he said, "Get me some George Formby films, he's great."



Denise in hospital with Ashley

Denise remembered that there had been a George Formby exhibition at the Warrington Museum so she rang them. They gave her my number and we were delighted to give every help possible. If George was good treatment for Ashley then we had to see that he got plenty of him. We supplied him with tapes, videos, songs etc. and Anthony Mason visited him regularly to teach him how to play the uke. Ashley was finding a new life. News got round of Ashley's success and he was invited to appear on Morning TV with Anne & Nick and several magazines published the story.

In Warrington we raised funds to send Ashley, and his mum, on short holidays and he was proud to wear his George Formby badge and to talk to people about how he was helped by George's films and songs. Ashley's dream had been to go to Disneyland so the family went and he thoroughly enjoyed every minute. But Denise was always aware that the happiness on Ashley face was to be short lived.



Ashley loved George and his uke

On Monday 17th July, 1995, Ashley felt poorly. He was vomiting so she took him to the hospital where he had a brain scan. The tumour had come back with vengeance, in fact, he had three tumours which were inoperable. Denise was told that he had three months to live, which devastated her. She felt sure that she herself was about to die on the spot. How could anyone suffer so much in one life? Denise was unable to tell Ashley that he was dying or even cry in front of him. Denise brought him home and during the next three months he was spoiled with loads of short holidays and a visit to meet the Manchester United football players.

On the 14th October 1995 Ashley died and the church was filled to capacity for his funeral. He was buried with his sister,

Yvonne and also in the same cemetery as George. With Anthony Mason, Ashley had previously made a recording of "Leaning On A Lamp Post" which was played in church.

ATTEMPTED SUICIDE—Although Denise still had two lovely boys to look after, she still felt that life would keep dishing out more punishment. She could take no more so the only answer in her mind was to end it all. She was found in a distressed state and taken to hospital. After counselling she met and married Andy Elliott who has been her rock. At 37 she started to rebuild her life.

A TRAGIC END TO IT ALL— A few weeks ago, at the age of 43, Denise was rushed into hospital with suspected brain tumour and for some time lay in a coma. On Tuesday 30th April I received a phone call to say that poor, tragic Denise had died with brain haemorrhage.

The funeral was held at St James's Church, Old Hall, Warrington, and the room was filled to capacity. She had hundreds of friends and they all turned up to support her family. There wasn't a dry eye in the church. After the service she was taken to the local cemetery (where George's family grave is) and buried with her two children, Yvonne and Ashley. The only consolation we could offer is that poor Denise is no longer suffering the hard knocks of life.

After reading this story of Denise's life we should realise just how lucky we are.

Good Luck to the Laurel & Hardy Society. They keep plugging away with their meetings and attracting large crowds to all their events. Some years back Eva & I took the grandchildren to Ulverston for the Stan Laurel Centenary Celebrations. The town was packed solid with people and hundreds of L & H fans were parading the streets with Tommy Cooper fezzes on their heads. Now and again an odd couple of look-alikes would pop up to give a demonstration and they would receive some applause. However, I found that they didn't perform as Formby fans would. They were not as bold as we are. At any Formby meeting you will always find dozens of Formby wannabes strumming away on their ukes, but L & H fans seem to be contented with watching their films on video.

They were very well organised with commercial sales of photos, videos, tapes etc. and there was always someone available to give any advice to potential members.

I was particularly disappointed that none of the look-alikes played the wooden uke as Oliver Hardy did. They were great with "The Trail Of The Lonesome Pine."

The photo above is from the film *Bonnie Scotland*, which is extremely funny. Especially during this particular scene when the two lads are given the job of cleaning up the area. The bouncy music starts up and they do a clean up job to a dance. Needless to say, the angry Sergeant comes back and catches them dancing. Great film.

If anyone is interested in joining the L & H Society, Ken Ratcliffe at the Sale meeting is a very keen member and he's always willing to pass information on.

Loyal Sons of the Desert celebrate comic duo's career

by Ron Paton

FOR over 70 years, the world has been laughing at the film antics of Laurel and Hardy — and the Sons of the Desert, the association formed by their most fervent admirers, is one of the most successful fan clubs ever.

Each year, get-togethers are organised, and this year sees the 23rd UK Convention, to be held at Southend-on-Sea, in Essex, on the

Bank Holiday weekend of May 3 to 6. It commemorates the famous comic duo's visit to Southend's Odeon Cinema 50 years ago in August, 1952.

Guests of honour will include Stan Laurel's cousin, Nancy Wardell.

Stan was born in Ulverston, Cumbria, before moving to film fame in America.

Other well-known names expected in Southend for the convention include John Inman, Jack Douglas, Vicky Michelle, Joe Goodman and Bella Emberg.

National gatherings

They'll be present as a Comic Heritage blue plaque is unveiled at the entrance to Southend's famous pier.

The Sons of the Desert is the official international Laurel and Hardy appreciation society.

Its beginnings go back to a meeting that took place in Birmingham in late 1953, between Laurel and Hardy and a young American student, John McCabe.

After the pair had performed on stage at the Birmingham Hippodrome, John went to the stage door in the hope of meeting them.

As a result, a friendship began which

led to further meetings when all three returned to the United States.

It was Stan Laurel who suggested the motto for the organisation, inscribed on their crest in Latin script, would read "Two minds without a single thought".

The title of the society was taken from the film of the same name.

The first meeting took place in New York on May 14, 1965. Each group subsequently set up became known as a "tent", and now, there are almost 220 tents worldwide.

As well as local events, the organisation holds regular national gatherings. In addition, there's an annual European convention and a bi-annual international convention.

In 1998, the Laughing Gravy tent, in Birmingham, hosted the international convention. This year, the international get-together will be at Nashville, Tennessee, from July 11 to 14.

Afterwards, on Monday, July 15, there will be a coach outing for delegates to East Georgia, to see Oliver Hardy's birthplace.

Meanwhile, in Southend next weekend, around 100 bowler-hatted Sons will start on Friday with film clips and a banquet.

Saturday's events include a parade of vintage cars, tent members and majorettes. And after the blue plaque has been unveiled on Sunday, the Sons will have a trip on the world's longest pier railway, see a special exhibition in the pier museum, and later take part in a fancy dress and lookalike parade.

For anyone wanting more details, the website to look for on the Internet is www.sotd.org.



Stan and Ollie get into another scrape in *Bonnie Scotland*.

More from Ted Formby's TV Interview—Mother

would have been a millionaire but she unwisely moved from house to house in Liverpool. She invested her money in them and would make a loss when she sold them.

She spent money educating her family, putting them on stage, fending for them and never received anything back from them. George got married and went. Frank never had any money to give her and the girls only worked for themselves.

Mother thought she was a good business woman but of course that wasn't true.

BERYL—I thought the world of Beryl. She always had a lot of time for me and I couldn't see where this ogre business came in. All this about George saying, "Beryl doesn't give me any money" was a protection shield for him. Beryl was the absolute opposite to a dragon.

She was a lovable person and whenever I called at her house she would say, "They say some wicked things about me but I don't mind. These things have to be done otherwise they'll walk all over George. You know what he is like. He's so naïve he'd be a target."

In their private life they were most amicable in lots of ways. Beryl was never the nagger that she got the name for and George was always quiet. He always had difficulty in expressing himself so he didn't talk much to other people.

Beryl was very generous with me but George was mean. He had a wardrobe the full width of the bedroom and it was full of suits. After the war I only had my demob suit but George wouldn't part with any. Beryl however was completely the opposite and would give me anything.

MORE NEXT MONTH

Uke Banjo for Sale—Ronnie, on 0151 487 8137 is selling a Melody Uke, with case, in good condition, with resonator, and the price is £100. Ronnie is one of the Liverpool members so if anyone is interested in the uke, give him a ring and I'm sure that he will be pleased to bring it along to the next Liverpool meeting. See you there. Bring a uke and give us a song, - or two.

Dennis Lee—Hi Stan, Many thanks for the Newsletter it's nice to know what's going on. We had our 3rd meeting last Thursday with 29 there. The only uke player was me as Ralph had gone to Devon for a month. Another chap has a uke and there are 2 wooden ukes which people possess but are unable to play them yet. I insisted that they join in the thrash off microphone and look the part. At least they could sing the words & SMILE at the audience. A lady dressed up and sang a couple of Marlene Dietrich numbers which went down well. We also had 2 blokes telling 2 monologues each. Lesley dressed up & did "Burlington Bertie" & "Big Spender" which everyone enjoyed. I got the "group" up to do a couple of medleys and gave out a sheet with the words on to all in the audience to help with the singing. And help they did! I played 3 songs during the evening (including "Middle East") and all told we had a good night. As you know it's a question of constantly thinking up ideas to keep people interested. At least Ralph will be back for the next meeting.

I think I mentioned that we had Christian for a month. We've also just had Damian & his wife and 3 grandchildren here. Everything seems to go on the back burner when we have visitors and it's difficult getting anything done. Beautiful morning here just going for a walk with Lesley and then back to organising the next meeting. Hope all is well with you, Dennis

AND THERE'S MORE!!! - Had our fourth meeting last night with the usual crowd of twenty odd. Apart from ukes we had a keyboard player doing a singalong and a lady doing "'Twas on a Monday Morning the Gas Man Came to Call". We also had a bloke playing a guitar - you know one of those funny modern things. Fortunately he wasn't a head banger and he wasn't loud. Quite pleasant in fact. The only thing is I'm trying to concentrate on music hall and a guitar doesn't quite fit. The good news is that he's taken up the uke and will be good at it within a fairly short time. I can then wean him off the guitar!! Trouble with over here is that many people return to the UK in the summer so I don't know how we'll get on then. I suppose we could always have a summer break. We'll see.

I like the new title "George Formby Newsletter" - after all it goes all over the country and you get articles from up and down. Normally nobody would even notice the change but I expect that you will comment upon it in the next issue!!!

I've had a couple of messages, photos etc from Alison & Cliff about what's going on and am delighted that they're pulling together and forging ahead. Penyffordd is well & truly established as one of the major local meetings and has a lot going for it in the shape of the (free) venue, good equipment and support it enjoys.

Thanks for the info about ukulele playing Edna Thornton—(moving from Blackpool to Cyprus). I had an email from Alan Chenery with her Cyprus phone no and email address. I'll be on her doorstep when she arrives in 2 weeks time. Kevin & Ray have been in touch about Llandudno - they wanted the words to "Middle East". When next you email me tell me where specifically you & Stan have done gigs on my old patch, I'll be interested to reminisce. Anything doing at the Albion in Chester this year? Good luck with the Dutch trip. Love to Eva. Dennis.

I knew that it wouldn't be long before Dennis got going in Cyprus. He's like the little ant that moved the rubber tree plant. Best of Luck Dennis. Good organisers are few and far between.

I'LL BET YOU'VE FORGOTTEN THE NEWSLETTER AGAIN.

Our Cliff's a bit of a Flyer!!!! - Our Super Star Hero, Cliff Royle is a fast mover when it comes to cycling, walking, climbing, running, news reporting etc. but the trouble is he can't switch off when he gets up on stage.

At the last Sale meeting he and Alison Nadin performed "Putting On The Style" and Alison couldn't help but laugh all the way through it. As soon as the starting pistol went Cliff was off like a shot leaving both Alison and the backing tape well behind. At the end of the first verse he sat down and waited for them to turn up.

At the beginning of the second verse he was off again, 300 miles an hour and he was ready to start on the home straight when the audience stepped in to slow him down. Anyway, all was well at the end and there was broad beams from Alison as they amazingly finished the last line together. To a thunderous applause.

Have a laugh with Bob Muirhead

As a senior citizen was driving down the freeway, his car phone rang. Answering, he heard his wife's voice urgently warning him, "Herman, I just heard on the news that there's a car going the wrong way on Interstate 94. Please be careful!" "It's not just one car," said Herman. "There's hundreds of them!"

Good Sound! - There's no doubt about it but all our meetings are improving with the top quality equipment we are buying. Up to 10 years ago Formby meetings had little or no equipment whatsoever. At the Imperial Hotel, Blackpool, we had a tired piano and one mike, and at Sale there was no backing at all.

PROGRESS—Since those early days we have seen the introduction of Amps, Speakers, Mini Disc Players, Two or three Mikes, a Monitor Speaker etc. and the list is still growing. Apart from a few whistles in the first half hour the sound is great.

HOWEVER—There is one area that we must improve on. We need someone at the back of the audience who is in direct contact with the sound operator. This person will signal to the operator "Up—Down or OK" which will help the operator to get the sound near to perfection. Every backing tape or disc is different so each song needs to be adjusted.

SUGGESTION—I am suggesting that the bigger rooms could make use of a pair of walkie-talkies so that the sound man at the back can be in contact with the operator.

PROFESSIONALS ALSO—It's not only us that have problems with sound. Stan W & I did a show in a nightclub and we thought it was perfect and well balanced sound. During the interval however, we were told that Stan W's mike was far too low and his voice wasn't coming through, - Most annoying!!! The worst of the lot was at Southport Theatre where the backing was blasting us out of our seats but we couldn't hear a word they were singing.

So, let's give some thought into improving this last little area and then we'll be as good as the others. Perhaps also get some good advice on stopping the sound whistling.

Oh, what a night it was! Sale Report By Cyril Palmer

The April meeting produced a big turnout despite the absence of a few of our very staunch supporters. In particular, Anne and Ken Ratcliffe stayed home to look after Anne's mother, Ivy Lockerbie, who was quite poorly. For many years Ivy did sterling work looking after "the door" providing a cheery welcome as she gently relieved visitors of a little of their hard-earned cash. We hope she is soon feeling better.



Among those who more than made up the short-fall were first time visitors Roy and Jean Brannon travelling not too far from Prestwich. They expressed great delight with their first experience of a local meeting. Arriving with Phil and Janet Hatswell from the Sheffield society we were pleased to welcome Judith and Bob Townsend for their first visit. Judith has done her share in helping to establish the Sheffield branch of the George Formby Society. One of her songs was the nicely rhythmic "Aint misbehaving." Also from Yorkshire there was Mac and Millie McGee, and Roy Fielden. Roy sang the "Rawtenstall Annual Fair" while one of Mac's was the "Some of these days" medley, but with bones added to the backing.

There was strong support from both Crewe and North Wales, so that either 5 or 6 counties were represented on the night. Vera and Harry Jones were among the Crewe contingent. Vera doesn't play the Uke but does a nice line in singalong medleys. It was nice to see, and hear, Ben Hallewell again His Grandparents cannot get to Sale as often as they did. However, Ben continues to make progress and, still only ten years old, perhaps he will follow in the footsteps of the very expert Martin Harrison. Alison Nadin had to leave early and brought her ukulele only. Cliff Royle made up a duo and together they were "Putting on the Style." Then the wish of many of us: "I wish I could play the ukulele just like George Formby used to do."

Looking at the variety of songs, the balance between Formby based songs and others was about 50/50. Among the Formby songs were: "I wonder whose under her balcony now." (Walter Kirkland.) "Horoscope" & "Blackpool rock. (Paul Kenny.) TT Races (Jack Valentine.) "Baby." (Arthur Newton.) Apologies to those not mentioned. Others included Pam Baddeley: "When I fall in love." Jon thought she already had done!) The Stans (Evans/Watkinson) "If I had my life to live over." (There'd be time to learn the split stroke.) Brian Edge: Billy Scott's "Give me chance to be twenty again." (Waist measurement? —Just joking!) Des Redfern: "It's a working man I am." (Excusing his late arrival?) Margaret Moran: "I only have eyes for you." (No comment! Otherwise I'm in trouble.)

For myself; I arrived with all the sound equipment and no Baritone Ukulele! Fortunately I had already planned a monologue "Barrel of bricks," and borrowed Walter's banjo uke to accompany myself singing "When we were young, Maggie," (and memory more reliable!) Great night! Thanks to all our visitors and helpers.

HAVE YOU FORGOTTEN THE NEWSLETTER AGAIN, AGAIN

Kevin Bridgewater Emails

Dear Stan, Hope you are keeping well. Please find below a description of a Photo album for sale on the internet Z Shop on amazon UK. The seller wants £400 so I thought you might want to read the item below. Best Wishes Kevin.

GEORGE FORMBY PHOTO ALBUM FOR SALE

Title: An original personal photograph album featuring signed pictures of George Formby (along with his wife), and Jimmy Clitheroe. An oblong folio photograph album (10 x 14 inches) of 92 colour and black & white photographs, film stills, and publicity shots of George Formby, featuring 2 signed photographs of George Formby, together with 2 signed photographs of Jimmy Clitheroe.

The majority of the pictures are of a personal nature, featuring Formby's house, ukuleles, his dog, his wife, his horse, his father's graveyard monument (and of course Formby's too), along with movie stills, pictures of front of house posters, and more. The photographs signed by Formby are (6.5 x 5 inches) of himself and his wife, signed "Faithful to the End, George Formby", (7 x 9 inches) of himself and his wife, signed "Best Wishes, George Formby".

The photographs signed by Clitheroe are (6 x 9 inches) "Hiya! John - All the best from your friend, James", and (3.5 x 5.5 inches) "To John. Best Wishes, Jimmy Clitheroe". Clitheroe appeared with Formby in the 1942 film "Much Too Shy, and of course they appeared on the same bill in variety shows over many years. There are four spaces in the album where pictures have been removed at an earlier time. The whole is in good condition, and reflects the personal interests and knowledge of the original compiler of this album. Together with a draft 20 page A4 booklet "The Records, Films & Recorded Performances of the late George Formby, OBE. Compiled by Kevin Daly & Rex Blaker". A unique collection. Publisher: No date, circa early 1960's. Keywords to find it on the internet: Cinema. Music. George Formby. Comedy. Jimmy Clitheroe. Ukulele. Entertainment

Thanks Kevin for the information. Very interesting. This memorabilia wasn't listed in Rex Blaker's auction lot at Sheffield so I assume it was part of Kevin Daly's collection. Kevin, a record producer, was a very keen GF fan. He produced the "Easy Going Chap" tape which was a collection of rare (at the time) Formby songs.



DON'T FORGET WIGAN MAYZE DAYZE
SAT 25th MAY from 2 pm. - The "Past Its" - Well & Truly— (I'm Well & He's Truly) will be warming the audience up from 2pm to 2.30pm, followed by the George Formby Players from 2.30pm to 3.15pm, - and then a snack which is being laid on by the Wigan Council. We will be performing in the Market Street, Town Centre, - same as last year.

In "The Friday Show" George said, "I'm proud of Wigan."

Bar Gum—What a Boost for the Ladies

Judith Townsend' of Sheffield, got up on stage at the Sale meeting and what a great Formby act she performed. She was so good she got the applause of the night. It is a pleasure to see these ladies "having a go" and showing the men how well they can perform. With her two Formby numbers she was word and chord perfect and looked as if she enjoyed every minute.



You were great Judith and let's hear no more about feeling nervous. You looked very relaxed and confident. George would have been proud of you. Come again, and thanks to Phil and Janet for bringing you and Bob along.

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 5—I tried to talk with the two Space Visitors but they glided past me as if they didn't understand the language. They played their part very well and deserved 10 out of 10 for effort.



This huge Teddy Bear on the left gave me a shock when he suddenly emerged and towered above me. I was looking down at the time, adjusting my camera, when I looked up to see what was blocking the daylight. This huge monster is frightening if you don't expect it. Anyway, the chap who operated it below had a good laugh.

ALISON Emails—*Many thanks to all who came and supported us at the Colwyn Bay Fun Day, it was a great success. The money raised from the bucket collection was £199.85 and this will be going to Hope House Children's Hospice in Oswestry. We think It's wonderful that over the past two months our local branches have raised over £1,000 for local charities. It's certainly something to be very proud of.* Alison

George's Grave—

When Anthony Mason, John Shreeve and I—attended Denise Elliott's funeral burial, in the Warrington Cemetery, we visited George's grave to pay respect. The head stone, which is the shape of a theatre stage with curtains, musical instruments etc. still stands out against all the others, and more so since the GFS arranged to have it cleaned up and painted.

However, due to weathering the black paint on the engraving is beginning to fade and possibly in a few year's time will need more touching up. Also the adjoining headstone on the left of GF has been vandalised.



MY FAMILY TREE.

Sent in by Brian Edge

Many years ago, when I was twenty three,
 I got married to a widow who was pretty as can be.
 This widow had a grown up daughter who had hair of red,
 My father fell in love with her and soon the two were wed.
 This made my dad my son in law and changed my very life,
 My daughter was my mother for she was my father's wife.
 To complicate the matters worse although it brought me joy,
 I soon became a father of a bouncing baby boy.
 My little baby then became a brother in law to dad,
 And so became my uncle though it made me very sad.
 For if he was my uncle, then that also made him brother
 to the widow's grown up daughter, who of course, was my
 step mother.

Father's wife then had a son, who kept them on the run,
 And he became my grandson for he was my daughter's son.
 My wife is now my Mother's mother and it makes me blue,
 Because, although she is my wife, she is my grandma too.
 If my wife is my grandmother, then I am her grandchild
 And every time I think of it it simply makes me wild.
 For now I have become, the strangest case you ever saw,
 As the husband of my grandmother, I am my own Grandpa!

Sing and Be Happy— Snippet from THE WEEKLY NEWS "Sing and be happy" could be the motto of music teacher Christine Smith who's formed a choir to help people weighed down by problems. Christine uses therapeutic powers of communal singing to provide a lasting tonic for her singers—and recently had the thrill of accompanying them in front of a 1000 strong audience.

"As a music teacher I know how much music can effect mood," said Christine, who teaches at New College, Nottingham. "I call the choir the 'Seratonics' after seratonin, a mood changing human hormone. A shortage of this can cause depression.—singing is known to raise seratonin levels. The rewards since starting have been tremendous. I've watched members transform from uncommunicative neurotics to out-going extraverts, simply through singing with others. We avoid dirges and laments, but songs like of the Beatles and ABBA have an obvious mood-enhancing effect. I lead the Seratonics every week at rehearsals and our ultimate test came when we performed in front of 1000 people at Nottingham's Royal Concert Hall during the college's annual prize giving ceremony."

Well, what do you know. George's happy songs, and the like, are keeping us all happy. Well we knew that something was working.

THE DOCTOR was explaining to Paddy how nature adjusted physical disabilities. For example a blind man would develop other senses like hearing or touch. "I know what you mean" said Paddy, "I've noticed how a man with a short leg has the other one longer."

Ukes for Sale -

One "Sing-a-Long" Uke (American) with case. Good Condition. £375.

One Excellent Quality High Specification Uke. No case. £275.

Markendale UB3 Uke for sale. Mint condition; as new. No case. £425.

Contact Martin Fowell for any of the above on (01745) 854390 and don't forget that you saw the ad in THE GEORGE FORMBY NEWSLETTER.

And don't forget to let us know if you have a uke for sale.

Continued from page 6—MORE FROM YOUNG CLIFF ROYLE.

these include full days at Llandudno and Colwyn Bay, and shorter sessions at amongst other places as Eaton Hall and Frodsham. Eaton Hall is the home of the Duke of Westminster and the event there on Sunday 9th June is to raise money for a cancer charity. There will be a number of events on during the afternoon, some of which will have a military aspect, and there will be a BBQ. There is a cost of admission, which includes the BBQ, and GFS people will qualify for a special reduction for admission. Anyone wishing to attend to play or just visit should contact Geoff Shone (phone no. above) before 25th. May. He will need to know Registration Number of Car, and names of driver and ALL passengers, otherwise visitors will not be admitted for security reasons. This should be a great day. In the event of inclement weather we will be playing under cover. Your performing and reporting pensioner. Cliff Royle.

Thanks Cliff. Pensioner my eye. You are a Super Star!!!!!!

Les Pearson & Margaret Moran

spend a fair proportion of their time on charitable activities. Their latest venture is with Northern Air Hospital radio at North Manchester Hospital. Part of the job involves touring the wards collecting requests for songs. Les met Janet who shared her surname and her laugh with Hilda Ogden of "Coro" fame. The two of them entertained the ward for a while, swapping jokes. When Les explained that he could play any artist from George Formby to Gareth Gates, Janet exclaimed "Who the B . . . H . . . is Gareth Gates? I want George Formby!" As a result, Les had the pleasure of playing "Mr Wu's a window cleaner now." Margaret, in contrast, has sung "Lilli Marlene" live over the hospital radio because it is not available in the hospital collection.

Les is hoping that he can avoid singing on air, but is happy to insert his humour between songs. He is also using his contacts hoping to persuade a couple of radio personalities to visit the hospital on the radio's "Open Night."

Another Error—Missed Out of the Last Issue—Oh Dear!

Frankie Woods, Jean and Alison would like to thank everyone who attended Franks 80th Birthday Party at Pen-y-Ffordd. It was a great success. Whilst we were thanked on the night for arranging the party we would like to say that without the co-operation of Cliff Royle, Jim Knight, Geoff & Dolwyn Shone, Deg Bruce and our four lady bouncers Margaret Royle, Dorothy Davidson, Sheila Beech and Myra Knight the evening wouldn't have been possible.

Frank sends his thanks and good wishes for the many cards and donations he received. The amount raised on the night was £510.36 which will be presented to a representative from Hope House Children's Hospice at the May meeting in Pen-Y-Ffordd.

Once again many thanks, it always amazes us the friendship and generosity shown from the members of the George Formby Society. Frankie Woods, Jean & Alison.

Thank You Alison. You are all doing a good job raising funds for a Children's Hospice. George would have been proud.

Friday 3rd of May and the heavy thunder and lightening attacked our phone lines causing damage to our Internet system. Hope we've not lost any of your Email messages.

S.O.S. from AW Swanton

429 Worsley Rd, Winton, Eccles, Manchester M30 8HG
I have a British European Airways luggage label with a London hand stamp. It is signed by George & Beryl Formby and also Joe Loss & his Band. Does anyone know when this particular GF tour took place with Joe Loss?

So if there is anyone out there with knowledge of George touring round with Joe Loss please either drop a line to AW Swanton or give me a call. Many thanks.



Harry Enfield. Just sat watching the Harry

Enfield show on UK Gold when suddenly someone popped up playing a uke banjo on a football field. He was impersonating George singing "Mother What'll I Do Now." Sounded quite good.

Having Computer Problems? Give Phil a ring on

01925 414131 or call in at Microbitz, 104 Gainsborough Rd, Warrington and he will sort you out. I've just had a load of problems with mine so I rang Phil. "Just bring it down" he said. There's no airs and graces with Phil. He serves behind his counter and at the same time has his head inside his latest repair job. He is very helpful and has a bucket full of knowledge on computers. He also tries to find the cheapest way to get round a situation and doesn't overcharge. It's easy to find. Gainsborough Rd links the A49 going towards Crewe and the main Chester road. It is very close to George's home, Hill Crest, so you can see that at the same time.

IMPORTANT!!!!

- Due to circumstances we sadly missed out on honouring George on his 40th Anniversary, so it is essential that we pull out all the stops for George's 100th Birthday on the 26th May, 2004. It is only two years off, which is not a lot of time considering that the Warrington Exhibition took 18 months to plan and set up.

All the world and his dog don't believe the Warrington Council in their claim that they have destroyed all the 1991 Formby display units so I have lodged an enquiry with the Scrutiny Dept to find out exactly what they have done with the stuff. More news as it comes in.

Speaker For Sale

—Professional Pianist and Keyboard Player, Ray Kirk, has got a good quality speaker for sale. Ideal for connecting to an amplifier. Although the speaker is about three years old it has been hardly used. Price £90—ring me on 01925 727102.

George Formby 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 —Timperley Liberal Club, 43 Park Road, Timperley. Every 3rd Friday in the month - Ring Cyril Palmer 0161 748 6550 Adm £1. Inc. Tea & Biscuits.

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 George Formby Society 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

Web Site —Two Lancashire Lads:

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

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

For George Formby Newsletters by post please send a cheque for 50p plus 25p postage (or £2.25 for 3 months) - (£9 for the year) payable to S. Evans - Address Front Cover



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