

THE

GEORGE FORMBY

Newsletter 86

Vol. 8
No. 2
Aug 2002



Specially Produced for George Formby Fans
by Stan Evans, The Hollies, 19 Hall Nook, Penketh, Warrington,
Cheshire WA5 2HN

Tel or Fax 01925 727102

Welcome To Newsletter No. 86 and once again we have a bundle of news items for you. As usual the N. West meetings have gone extremely well with good attendance, and the quality of performances are improving each month.

We are pleased to see Beryl Eissens again who is over here from Australia for a short holiday, and staying with her daughter Julie in Birkenhead. Beryl came to the N. Wales meeting and was made very welcome.

Mike Turner reports on the GF film show and mini bar room concert at the Plaza Cinema, Stockport, and we are pleased to report that Jim Bramwell is getting back in the saddle again after a long spell looking to the welfare of Joan, his little jewel.

We report on two remarkable 80 odd year old performers, Matthew Kelly and Frank Bennett, who are looking extremely well, playing well, and enjoying life. **READ ON**

Professor Richards on George—continued from last month — . . . Some areas of society considered George's songs to be naughty and I suppose the phallic symbolism of "Little Stick Of Blackpool Rock", all the erotic overtones of "Aunty Maggie's Remedy", the voyeurism in "My Little Snapshot Album" and "When I'm Cleaning Windows" were upsetting some people, and indeed the BBC as the pillar of national morality banned "Cleaning Windows" until they discovered that it was one of Queen Mary's favourites.



It matters not if the story was true or not, it was widely believed to be true, and it emphasised the sense in which the Royal Family had the same sense of humour as the nation. This was reinforced by the much reported fondness of King George VI for ITMA, during the war, and the Queen Mother's well known fondness for the Crazy Gang.



When the war broke the whole film industry came under the control of the Ministry Of Information which set out guide lines as to what subjects should be filmed. It had three main themes, How Britain was fighting, - Why Britain was fighting, - and The need for sacrifice if the war was to be won. But along with those there had to be the maintenance of moral, and many leading moral experts said that humour is one of the main ways to keep up moral. Mass observations were hired to monitor national moral and to report on the reactions to films. There was full cooperation from the film industry—it wasn't forced on them—and this is where George came in. *More next month from Professor Richards.*

More from the Ted Formby TV Interview

Whenever George was asked to loan or give money his reply would be, "Well, Beryl only gives me 5 shillings a day", but this wasn't true. It was his defence mechanism switching on and Beryl had nothing to do with this. George was in a position to be able to buy a new car any time he wanted.



Where George and Mother were concerned. My mother was a very possessive woman which I suppose comes about through losing her husband so early in life. She had to have someone to hold on to and, of course, whoever we wanted to marry would not be good enough for the family. We would always warn our partners that if you want to marry don't expect to be accepted into the family. I think this went through the whole family line. However, things eased up once you were in the family.

When Beryl died it was a big shock to me and I really didn't know what to say. I was in Oxford at the time and I knew that George would be lost as he'd lost his right arm. I phoned him in Bristol, where he was playing a pantomime, and offered to stay with him for a couple of weeks to help him, but he refused.

Soon after Beryl's passing, Pat Howson came on the scene and I was very upset about this. The stories about Beryl being a drunkard were not true although she did turn to drink towards the end of her life to ease the pain caused by leukaemia. The pains got worse and she was having injections etc.

I used to shudder when I heard these stories and thought to myself, how can anyone be so cruel. There's a woman who has done a magnificent job for a man, never any sign of a scandal in any way, shape or form, and yet they tell these stories. So really this is one myth that I would personally love to kill once and for all. Beryl was not an ogre, she was a lovely lady and a good wife. What on earth happened to George after he met Pat Howson I don't know. He was obviously a man lost in a wilderness, but I'm pleased that he never married her.

Re. 'The will' after George's death. Before the funeral Mother told us that she had been left £5,000 and the four girls £2,000 each, nothing for the brothers, which was typical of George. Once again he made sure that I didn't benefit from his wealth. "The lads can work for themselves," was how George saw it.

The family decided to contest the will but the big mistake we made was to use different solicitors. This resulted in a great deal of money going down the drain on solicitors fees. In the end they received what was originally planned. Mother felt as if she'd been hit below the belt, and rightly so. In the early days mother had spent her money to put them there. More next month . . .

Angela Caldicott does a grand Sound Job at Crewe.



There was the usual excellent support for the June meeting at Crewe. About 85 attended and there were lots of new faces amongst the audience who went home talking about an enjoyable evening. Apologies were received from Colin Wood and Christine, Ivy and Bill Turner, Joan Cain, Alan Newton, Steve Evans and his wife and Malcolm Rigby. Amongst the guests that attended for the first time were Jim Robinson, Ros Saunders and Gerry, and their friend Gerry Robinson. Also Joe and Roman, Jim, May and Wyn. They all seemed to enjoy their evening with us.

Stan Evans fronted the show with valuable assistance coming from Concert Producer Cliff Royle. They both worked very hard during the evening to keep the show flowing without a hitch.

Angela Caldicott our Assistant Sound Engineer took charge in the absence of Colin Wood who was on holiday. It was Angela's debut and she did a splendid job.

There were 22 artistes who during the evening provided a variety of entertainment for the 85 who attended. They were thrilled by Tom Meredith's wonderful mime act of three of Al Jolson's most popular numbers. I am sure that no one can do this better as Tom who has this act off to perfection. He has not performed this for some time due to regulations on blacking up, but he was persuaded to perform in his dress suit and white gloves and it was a big success. Well-done Tom.

Another treat was 89 year old Matthew Kelly who has not been on stage for a number of months due to illness gave us an excellent performance accompanying himself on his baritone ukulele. What a fine gentleman he is. His daughter Dianne also deserves a mention here for bringing him over to Crewe, as Matthew does not drive at night.

Alice Cronshaw then took us all "*Ballin the Jack*" on the deck of her "*Slow Boat to China*" She was not even satisfied at that, - she made us do it all over again!

That immaculate gentleman Alf entertained us again by telling us a few tales and ending with a song. Alf who is an American by birth currently lives in a suitcase in Rhyl, North Wales with his employer "Ne-deen". Unfortunately he can't drive himself so Alison very kindly brings him along to our meetings so he can entertain us. Isn't he great fun?

Jonathan Baddeley introduced the song *Chinese Laundry Blues* by telling the audience that it is exactly 70 years almost to the very day that George Formby first recorded this classic song which was to become his entrance music for the next 30 years and a song that he rarely missed performing when on stage. Jonathan performed two of Formby's lesser known songs firstly "*When the waterworks caught fire*" and he followed this by a real classic song "*Our Fanny's gone all Yankee*" which accurately tells the story of wartime Britain when the Yanks arrived here. Even though this is an amusing song its true value lies in the fact that it is a very accurate history lesson.

It was nice to have Ron Whiston with us again and to see him on stage playing his bones. Alan Chenery and Pat came from Fleetwood and Alan sang a couple of numbers including "*Wigan Boat Express*." Stan Evans kept the audience laughing especially with his tips on "How to know when you are getting older." He then sang a medley of songs followed by an Irish Ballad.

The "Three Tenors of Penyffordd" continued to impress with their costume, which is first class, and with the way they sing so well together. Connie sang "I Double Dare You" and "Swinging Along Singing a Song" and for the record I sang George Formby's first recording with a ukulele "All Going Back" way back in fact to 1929 and I followed with Billy" Uke" Scott's "Give me the Chance to be Twenty Again."

Stan Watkinson by request sang, "Singing the Blues" a Tommy Steele and Guy Mitchell song which came out around 1955. Stan singing along with his guitar banjo brought back some happy memories of the fifties. The ladies say we want more of Stan Watkinson. "We want Stan" - "We want Stan," they chant! So what about it Stan?

Vera Jones sang "It had to be You", very nicely. Cliff Royle who had worked so hard during the meeting as Concert Producer found that the songs that he had rehearsed had all been performed so he had to fall back on a couple of his oldies "Swimmin with the Wimmen" and "Little Ukulele."

Trevor Hughes braved the stage again and made a good job of his two numbers "Sergeant Major" and "Mr Wu's a Window Cleaner Now." Other performers during the show were Jim Knight who makes his own keyboard music, Don Chalkley, Walter Kirkland, Arthur Newton and last but not by any means least, Gerald Beadle. The show finished at 11.10pm.

Thanks Brian, it was another great night.

If It's Ukulele Stuff You Want—contact Jumping Jim Beloff

Jim runs a business called: FLEA MARKET MUSIC, Box 1127, Studio City, CA 91614 USA. Or you can Email him on info@fleamarket.com and he will send you a catalogue of uke stuff.



Jim has a vast range of items relating solely to the uke: Videos, CDs, Books, Ukes, Strings, Tuner Pipes, Tee-shirts, and more.

One of the CDs features Herb Ohta (great uke player) playing 19 Beatles songs including: Yesterday, Get Back, and Day Tripper.

Another CD is "Table For Two" featuring Ralph Shaw (described as King Of The Ukulele) playing 15 tracks which include, My Blue Heaven, and—wait for it. . . . "I Like Bananas, because they have no bones." Well what about that? \$16.95.

Another CD is Legends Of Ukulele which features 18 different ukulele virtuosos including, Ohta San, Roy Smeck, Cliff Edwards, Arthur Godfrey, Lyle Ritz, Tiny Tim and—wait for it again—GEORGE FORMBY. \$16.95

Jim has produced a 70 minute teaching video "The Joy Of Uke Video" which introduces three great strummers, Travis Harrelson, Ian Whitcombe and Poncie Ponce and also gives a tour of his own fun collection of ukes. \$29.95.

DON'T FORGET TO DROP A LINE TO THE GEORGE FORMBY NEWSLETTER

Young Cliff Royle reports from Penyffordd -

Hello Stan,

There were a number of pleasant surprises at the meeting. We had the pleasure of the company of Beryl Eissens the "Memory Lane" broadcaster from Australia who often gives our George a good spot in the programme; a young lady from France who at present is visiting the Merediths; and we joined in the Golden Wedding Celebration of Jack and Margaret Davies who were presented with a bottle of champagne, in ice, by the British Legion. What a nice gesture by the Legion. Also present was a Mr. Harry D. Jones who last visited this Branch of the Legion in 1966. He is an instrumentalist, who collects instruments, including Ukcs and Banjos, and is in the process of opening a small museum.



Beryl Eissens

Paul Woodhead called on us for a short time (over three hours) when he was on his way home from a business meeting, and in addition to entertaining us with some excellent songs (including one of his own compositions "Riding My Lambretta"), donated to us a paperback, duly autographed by the Author Colin Dexter who writes the Inspector Morse stories which are shown on T.V. The book is called "The Remorseful Day". Paul suggested that any monies raised from the "sale" of this book be donated to either club funds or charity. It is currently proposed that such monies be donated to charity and that the book be auctioned at the September Meeting. The current selling price is £5.99. Thanks Paul, a very nice gesture indeed.

Ah! But what about the concert. A good attendance, and although performers seemed lacking at the start we did eventually manage to fill our programme time, and it could well have flowed over into Saturday morning if Des Redfern had turned up any later. Just joking Des. Always glad to see you and hear your unusual songs including "The Leaving of Liverpool".

We had our usual M.C's and Assistants amongst whom Deg Bruce and Alison Nadin also did a great job operating the sound system. It is great to have so much support from so many of our members who work in the background; collecting the money, helping with the raffle, setting up and dismantling the equipment, and generally being friendly to both players and visitors. It would seem that the friendliness of Formby meetings is the basis of our success.

Amongst the acts that were to me somewhat different this month can I mention Jim Knight and his 12th Street Rag; Walter Kirkland with "Alexander's Rag Time Band"; Alan Newton and his "No Business Like Show Business"; Jonathan Baddeley playing "Begin the Beguine (if that's how you spell it) on the clarinet; Cyril Palmer with "Barefoot Days" played on his Base Uke; Deg, Phil and Frank with a Medley; Brian Edge who sang "I Wish I Was Twenty Again" !!!; the Bones Contingent (Walter, Jim and Paul) accompanied by Greg Simister on the Spoons; Alison Nadin who gave a great performance on the Uke of one of Frankie's songs "Make the World Full of Rainbows"; Stan Evans with his magic song "A Rose in a Garden of Weeds"; and the two Stan Pastits who sang a couple of really heart warming songs including "No.4 with Chips".

Unfortunately Greg Simister broke his wrist recently while playing football, but he joined Tom

Meredith (playing the Uke) by singing a couple of Formby numbers, and it went down really well. Here I have to mention Connie Edge who gave a faultless performance of two songs. You did really well Connie. I unfortunately was given a YELLOW CARD when I announced I would "Do The Blue Eyed Blond Next Door". Unfortunately we do not have one.

And so we came to the end of another excellent night. Thanks everybody, and please do not forget our practice nights.



Jack and Margaret

Thanks Cliff, as usual the Email was here before I'd arrived home. What Jack and Margaret possibly didn't tell you was that they went on the Special Anniversary Cruise on the Oriana which took them to the Baltic area, Russia, Norway, Belgium etc. and when they arrived home their daughter had secretly booked them a long weekend in York where the hotel provided an Anniversary Cake for the occasion. They had a great time.

Jack and Margaret wish to thank everyone for their kind thoughts and for the bottle of wine treat which was presented to them at Penyffordd.

Liverpool

—What a nice surprise to see a few extra faces at the July meeting. Among them were Brian & Connie Edge, Phil Jones, who is an old established Gl'S member, Ged (Wild Rover) Collins and the one and only Frank Bennett from Blackpool. What Frank didn't know was that there was a surprise in store for him. As soon as he'd finished performing his medley of songs, George Morgan and Bob Muirhead presented him with a certificate to say that he has been made an honorary member of scouse land—Liverpool. Well Frank was dead



chuffed with this as it's not just any outsider who is accepted as a scouser. Well done Frank.

Young Greg (broken wrist) Simister turned up and because of the absence of Stan Watkinson, who was away holidaying, stepped into the role of Sound Technician for the night, and did a grand job. Broken wrist or not he then got up on stage with his uke and gave us some great uke playing. These kids are marvellous!



Frank again with two Sheilas

A Touch Of Philosophy — by Frank Halliwell

Confucius he say: "It is a wise Eskimo who avoids eating yellow snow."

Confucius also say: "Drunken man smother wife with kisses. Sober man use pillow."

Very good Frank. I like these one liners. Send some more in.

That's Interesting!

When George gave his very first performance (six weeks after his father's death) at the Earlestown Hippodrome on Friday March 18th 1921, he used the name "George Hoy" and he claimed that he kept this name until he became famous so that his father's name "George Formby" wouldn't be seen at the bottom of the bill.

He also claimed that early on in his career his performances went down terrible, as usual — "Died the death of a dog" he said. But he couldn't have been so bad for a 17 year old because according to Neil Forshaw's calendar for the year 2000, he used the name "George Formby Junior" on November 3rd the year later, - 1922 at the Earlestown Pavilion, where he was placed at the top of the bill.

Now I notice that during this period from 1921 to 1922 there was a change of name from The Hippodrome to The Pavilion. The new owners are the South Lancashire Hippodrome Company Ltd and Manager Fred Harrison is now down as Managing Director.

This fits in very well with the story that Eliza (Mrs Formby Senior) was approached by the theatre owner, Fred Harrison, and asked to invest some money into the theatre because they were struggling. Eliza was in favour but after taking advice from her friends she backed out. So at that stage Fred must have sold out to The Hippodrome Company. Very interesting!

Many thanks to Neil Forshaw our Earlestown Man On The Spot Reporter.

Cluttered Up!

- Jim Bramwell and I have just arrived back from a charity show and once again we had a committee battle. Why on earth do these organisers insist on cluttering the stage with piles of bags and boxes, raffle and bingo prizes, surplus furniture, etc. and leave us to set up stall on the floor. It seems that as soon they see a wide open stage they immediately think that it is the best place to set up the refreshments. On this occasion we walked through the door of this large hall, - with half a ton of equipment, and when we asked where we were to perform the lady on the door said, "Here, in the entrance." I couldn't believe it. Somewhere at the back there was a stage hidden behind trestle tables holding sandwiches and cream cakes. "Hold on Jim" I said, "Let's find someone in charge."

"Hello Mrs Organiser, we can't perform here in the doorway. We either get up on that stage or go home." Within seconds the lady bouncers were shifting their handbags, pots and crockery etc. and Jim and I planted ourselves on a lovely wide stage. From then on we had a grand show and Jim soon had em rolling down the aisles with his one-liners.

PAVILION
EARLESTOWN

LICENSEE SOUTH LANCASHIRE HIPPODROME COMPANY LTD
MANAGING DIRECTOR FRED HARRISON
UNDER NEW MANAGEMENT

HER HUSBANDS FRIEND
If a man neglects his wife who shall she do

COMEDY GRAPHIC

PART 13 THE AVENGING ARROW With Ruth Roland

EXPENSIVE ENGAGEMENT OF

George Formby Jun
A CHIP OFF THE OLD BLOCK IN NEW SONGS AND SAYINGS
Remember Earlestown gave this artist his first week
See him now

HAL and BERT
THE KNUITS OF PICCADILLY
MADAME
WALKERS JUVENILES

In a quick change Dancing and Vocal Scenes

Thursday Friday Saturday
Part 11 THE YELLOW ARM Featuring Warner Oland

COMEDY
GRAPHIC etc

THE KENTUCKIANS
A THRILLING STORY OF LOVE AND ADVENTURE
SPECIAL PROGRAM ON FRIDAY BOTH NIGHTS
No Amateurs ALL VARIETY Usual Prices

Prices 4d 7d 1s Booked seats 1/3 (including Tax)

Jim Bramwell Returns—



Well the lad was worried when I told him that Stan Watkinson couldn't make it for the Age Concern Concert and that he'd have to help me out. He's been tied to the house for the last 12 months, looking after Joan, or as he calls her: "His Little Jewel," and he'd gone a bit ring rusty. He was worried because it was held in his own Town Hall and he didn't want to look amateurish in front of his neighbours. However, he needn't have worried because he went down a bomb and he had them in stitches laughing at his jokes. In fact he got the loudest cheer of the show.

CHAOS—The Earlestown (George did his first show in the town) Town Hall is a great place for a concert, holds about 200, nice wide but narrow stage, canteen facilities, very friendly staff etc. but badly in need of a few coats of paint. The Age Concern organisers worked hard at publicising the event and selling tickets etc. which filled the room to capacity. But their concert organising skill certainly left a lot to be desired. Nobody knew how many artists were coming.

Jim and I were the first to arrive so we loaded the stage with our equipment, which almost filled the stage. 20 minutes later an organist turned up with almost as much equipment as we had. We helped him to set his equipment up at the side of ours which left very little room for the artists. Another 20 minutes later and a young singing couple turned up with another stage full of gear, and when I suggested that we should use ours the lady refused saying that she preferred to use her own. The result was that we had four artists using three different PA Systems. It was really odd and the stage full of equipment looked a mess. To make things worse we only had one electric plug point. There were cable wires everywhere.

I counted the number of equipment items on the small stage: Six large speakers with stands, Four amplifiers, Two mini disc players, Four microphones with mike stands, One piano keyboard with stand, and loads of other items. Anyway, they were a really good audience, - probably the best ever, all silver topped and appreciative of the old songs from the 30s, 40s, 50s etc. It certainly made up for the lack of space and we'd love to entertain them again.

JACK THE LAD—While we were performing a chap walked in who I immediately recognised. It was 'Jack the lad' who turned up every day, 11 years ago, when we were holding the George Formby Exhibition at the Warrington Museum. We'll never forget Jack. He was a legend. Every day he would turn up, after a full top up of beer at the Pattern Arms Pub, and join in with any event we had going. Even with uke tuition, which was held every Wednesday afternoon.



Jack the Lad

What a bunch we had for these classes. We had 8 year old Kieran who wouldn't keep quiet. He just went mad with non-stop banjo banging which was so loud it could be heard through the entire building. The stone floor bounced the sound from room to room. At one stage I said, "Kieran, if you don't keep quiet I'll belt you over the head with this uke. Then we had Harry Stanford who played at snail pace, two ladies who were dragged in from shopping to make up the numbers, and Jack the lad who slurred and hiccupped every word. What a team.

MEMORY LANE

Feast of talent that graced the Palace

Gerry Nicholas a keen Formby fan, said: -



The new Empire Palace prior to its opening in 1898 (above) and (right) the old Empire Music Hall before it was demolished.

THE EMPIRE Palace of Varieties opened its doors in 1898 and during its 22-year run provided Wolverhampton with a star-studded bill of entertainment.

The venue fronts onto Queen's Square, which was then Wolverhampton's High Green and today the building is used as Yates's Wine Lodge.

It had previously been used as a music hall called the Empire which had licensed premises known as The Empire Vaults.

When the old music hall fell into disrepair it was rebuilt under the name of the Empire Palace of Varieties.

The Empire Palace was intended to be a high class music hall and was heralded as one of the most impressive buildings in the

town. Charles Barnard, a theatre magnate of the period, was the man who led the syndicate responsible for building the new Empire Palace.

He was already the lessee of a music hall in Birmingham called the Gaiety and the Theatre Royal in Aston.

Over two decades a host of famous artistes graced the stage at the Empire Palace including a young Charlie Chaplin.

Patriotic

Chaplin appeared as part of one of the most well known juvenile troupes, the Eight Lancashire Lads who performed at the Empire Palace in July 1899.

He joined the group at the age of nine in December 1898 and stayed with them for three years.

This was not Chaplin's only visit to the venue, he returned to the stage

several years later with a team of youngsters to present a miniature music hall bill called Casey's Court.

Other famous faces who took to the stage included George Formby, father to the famous ukulele playing George Formby.

He was not an established star when he first appeared at the Empire Palace in 1902 but had performed in Dudley a year earlier billed as The Human Cornet.

George was a regular entertainer at the Empire Palace for over ten years.

Another less well known visitor to the venue was FV St Clair, a singer of patriotic and topical songs.

He wrote many of the songs he sang and donated the money they made to charity.

One of the most popular acts to perform was male

impersonator, Vesta Tilley. She was born in Worcester and first visited the Empire Palace in 1906. She would impersonate a variety of male characters including sailors and soldiers.

During the last few weeks the venue was open it hosted a great leading lady of the future.

Gracie Fields performed there in a show called My Tower of London just five weeks before the music hall closed. The final show was a revue called Short and Sweet.

● *Wolverhampton's Empire Palace of Varieties by David Clayton is available by phoning 01902 335594.*

George had two personalities. As an individual, he would immediately come across as an introvert. And he had a reputation amongst people who knew him as a very private man.

When I saw him outside the Manchester Opera House when he was in "Beside The Seaside", Barbara Mitchell, an actress in the cast, came past him and he would be his usual monotone self. Then he would say, "Hello Barbara, Turned out nice again," as if he'd suddenly switched it on, almost like a light. When the smile faded he was back to his normal self: easily frightened by questions. When I talked to him he never gave a straight, positive answer first, with built in mechanism, he would ask you to repeat the question—effecting deafness or misinterpretation for the most simple questions.

He wasn't daft. He was a shrewd, Lancashire, businessman. He would speak once his defences were down, in a normal, masculine, not macho, voice that wasn't... "it's turned out nice again" which was part of his facade he used to entertain the public.

He was a very sensible, clearly spoken, positive man, and a gentle, benign man. That's important about George's character. *Well, but it confirms my theory that George had two sides to his nature. He was illusive and hard to pin down. He could easily switch characters from seriousness to silliness.*

Stars who appeared at the Empire



Vesta Tilley, a popular male impersonator who was at the Empire Palace in 1906.



George Formby senior - father of the famous ukulele playing film and music star



Gertie Gitana was only 15 when she first appeared at the music hall.

For Sale—

A complete collection of George Formby audio tapes produced by Nostalgia Music Co.

200 George Formby songs and sung by George on 10 tapes. These tapes have been played twice only and the original purchase price was £60.

These are for sale at £25. Please ring Ken Leigh on 01270 811729.

Have you anything to Sell or are you looking for anything.

George & Jack Jones—were they related?

George Formby and Jack Jones were very much on the same wavelength, and sometimes, you



could see a strong resemblance between them. When the light was in the right direction I've noticed George's facial features in Jack. Maybe it's because they were both Lancashire lads, I don't know, but the look was certainly there. Many others have noticed this also.



Like George, Jack was an expert on the uke banjo. They enjoyed the same type of music, and both had a similar style of playing. Both had little education, so if you asked Jack the name of a particular chord position he wouldn't know. He called them, "One finger chord, two finger chord, and three finger

chord." And I'm pretty sure that George didn't know either.

But it doesn't stop there. Like George, Jack found extreme difficulty in taking responsibility or even making a decision. Both needed a woman to heavily lean on to ease the burden of living and, after the death of their wives, they both turned to women with the same Christian name: Pat. Coincidence?

Like Beryl, Enid (Jack's late wife) was a martyr. Both women dedicated their lives to seeing to the welfare of their husbands, organising, shifting, fetching, arranging, looking after the paperwork etc. and both wives were severely missed after their deaths. Also both men were very quick in finding worthy replacements.

After the deaths of both George and Jack, both women were saddled with the responsibility of clearing up and carrying out promises they'd made. I think you'll agree that there appears to be a lot of coincidences.

Bob Muirhead Emails—The Japanese eat very little fat and

suffer fewer heart attacks than the British or Americans. The French eat a lot of fat and also suffer fewer heart attacks than the British or Americans. The Japanese drink very little red wine and suffer fewer heart attacks than the British or Americans. The Italians drink excessive amounts of red wine and also suffer fewer heart attacks than the British or Americans.

So I've come to the conclusion that you can eat and drink what you like. It's speaking English that kills you. *Thanks Bob. Keep sending em in.*

There was a young man from Dundee
Who broke his neck when he fell from a tree
They sent for the vet, who was all they could get
And now he's as fit as a flea. Bum, Bum.

A little song entitled -
Just put away those tweezers
till your eyebrows meet again.

DON'T FORGET A LIMERICK OR TWO TO THE GEORGE FORMBY NEWSLETTER.

Artist Ralph Williams Emails—In the late 90's I was commissioned to draw a graphite portrait for the "Stars in their eyes" competitor who performed as George Formby.

I have a number of prints remaining in my possession and wondered if anyone out there can help me find an outlet for them. I can dispatch them in postal tubes to UK residents for £15 inclusive of post & packing. The drawing is of high detail as are the prints and only available through myself the artist. Each print will be signed and numbered and is of A3 size. The prints were reproduced professionally from my original artwork. I can be contacted at this Email address or my home address is 106 Stebbings, Sutton Hill, Telford, Shropshire, TF7 4JP. 01952 414672 Or 07932 431943. Any help will be greatly received. Yours, Ralph Williams. (Artist.)



Matthew

Two Remarkable Men

They are an example to all of us. 89 year old Matthew Kelly on the left and 82 year old Frank Bennett on the right. Matthew regularly attends the Crewe meeting and Frank supports the Blackpool group.

Although they are in their eighties they both jump up on stage to give a good performance. Matthew,



Frank

with his quiet sounding voice, loves to sing slow ballads and sing-alongs, while tough-nut Frank, with a repertoire ranging from George Formby to broken-hearted westerns, can be heard three blocks down the road.

A few days before the last Cricket Club meeting, Frank suffered a black-out and fell to the floor. He doesn't remember anything but when he came to he had a number of black bruises on his face. However, he didn't let the fall deter him. He turned up as usual and gave us another good performance. Matthew also has had a few set-backs recently with his health but he doesn't let life get him down.

I wonder if getting up on stage and singing is a good boost for long life? It is certainly helping Matthew and Frank. Have we any more good oldies who are active? Let me know.

Trip To Dublin—Alan Chenery phoned to say that a 4 day Coach Trip is being arranged from May 30th to June 2, to Whitehall, Dublin and the price is £209 including dinner, bed and breakfast at the Regency Hotel, which is about 2 mile outside the centre. The hotel has a large room to perform in and there are 11 pubs to play in. GREAT - Ring Christine Wood on 01270 663558 for details.

I'LL BET YOU'VE FORGOTTEN ALREADY!

Activity night at Sale By Cyril Palmer

The bones always have been played at the Sale meetings. In the past it was George Cheetham who would add the rhythm accompaniment to most of the songs. George eventually had to retire his bones having developed "bones elbow."

At Sale there is now a serious outbreak of Bonesmania, and soon the government will be compelled to issue an order restricting the movement of ukuleleists. I hope it will not be necessary to order a cull in infected clubs. We must hope a serum can be developed in time.

The symptoms to watch for are frantic leaping about wearing a devilishly happy grin. On this pleasant June evening, Walter Kirkland (who else?) infected a group consisting of Jim Knight, Alan Chenery, Colin Wood and Roy Brannon. Jim Knight was responsible for a repeat performance in the second half

Meanwhile there was much regular singing to ukuleles. Ben Hallewell and Greg Simister added the youthful touch with "Home Guard blues" and "Smile all the time" from Ben, and "Madame Moskowitz" and "Out in the Middle East" from Greg. They'll tackle anything!

After dosing on "Auntie Maggie's remedy" Mr Enthusiasm (Paul Kenny) went "Trailing around in my trailer." Alan Southworth sang "Believe it or not," then took advantage of singing early to sing "Lamp post," before anyone else could. Alice Cronshaw had everyone (I mean everyone) on their feet for much activity as we all performed "Balling the jack." It was like a session in the gym. Stan Watkinson was particularly active. He backed Alice's songs with his banjo as well as joining Stan Evans as the "Past its." They were in Irish mode with "Rose of Allendale" and "Fields of Athenry."

Two great songs from Connie edge were "Double dare you" and "Swinging along singing a song." Colin Wood had everyone joining in "Blackpool Belle" and then, with Alan Chenery, Dickie Speake's "Riding on a Blackpool tram." Alan, earlier, had sung of "My little back room upstairs" and "The Wigan boat express."

Margaret Moran and Les Pearson had come from the Imperial War Museum, where Margaret had sung for the Monte Casino veterans. Still in good voice, She sang "Danny Boy" and "Till." Arthur Newton, pointing out that "It's turned out nice again," has a fancy for "The barmaid at the Rose and Crown," - a fancy for the song of course. Brian Edge, with "All going back" made the point that it was George's first song using the ukulele. He then added Billy Uke Scott's "Give me the chance to be twenty again, knowing the things I know now."

Alison Nadin provided a diversion from the singing as she manipulated a concertina- shaped block of paper into an amazing number of familiar shapes while reciting a poetic description of the sequence. Frankie Woods, her mentor, was watching with great interest, as usual.

From Broadgreen, Liverpool, Alan and Christine Williamson with friend Tony made their first visit to Sale. I think they picked a good night to meet us. I certainly enjoyed it, the atmosphere, as with other G.F. clubs, is so pleasant. Thanks again to all the helpers, a great cooperative effort. *Thanks Cyril.*

DON'T FORGET TO CONTRIBUTE TO THE GEORGE FORMBY NEWSLETTER



Singing in the rain--how jolly!

By Cyril Palmer

In early April I was asked to provide a Formby style entertainment at the Gee Cross annual fair on June 9th. It sounded like a nice Summer day's outing, so I assembled a suitably talented group and accepted the invitation. As the date drew near, with no sign of a flaming June, I became increasingly apprehensive, and, finally, resigned to a washout. Nevertheless, on the wet Sunday morning I loaded the gear and Sheila and I duly arrived at "The Sam Redfem Green" in Gee Cross. It was a reservoir in the past, perhaps it would be again!



Walter—Mr Bones

We were shown to the gazebo we were to share with the Punch and Judy and discovered competition in the form of a diesel electric generator only five yards away pumping away loudly in a low key that would never harmonize with our banjoleles. (There's a surprise, Palmer in charge of a banjolele!) However, after the offending item was dragged a couple of yards further away and surrounded by bales of hay, the situation was noticeably improved.

By the time I had set up our equipment, the field was a hive of activity in spite of the intermittent showers. There was a typically broad mix of activities. I was envious of those in tents, but nearby was a very large marquee with all kinds of craft and food stalls. This was to be our retreat should the weather become impossible. We were to perform in half-hour spots, alternating with the Punch and Judy. Would people notice the difference, I asked myself.

I felt much better when reinforcements arrived in the shape of Alice Cronshaw, Walter Kirkland and Arthur Newton, and a little later young Ben Hallowell with Grandparents Maureen and Frank. Things started to get jolly and soon we were happily belting out our Formby songs to the audience that filled, and sometimes surrounded our gazebo.



Ged Collins



Phil Jones

In early-afternoon we were joined by Phil Jones and Ged Collins who added their mix of entertainment. There was even dancing in the aisles before we finished. A final irony, the sun emerged as we sang our last song. All-in-all, an enjoyable day that defeated the weather god, and with a bonus. We were asked to supply a similar entertainment at a Victorian weekend in nearby Glossop later this year on September 1st.

Cheeky Limerick—from Dianne Kelly (Matthew's Daughter)

There was a young lady from Tottenham. Who's manners, well she had forgotten em
Taking tea at the Vicar's She took off her .garters And explained that she felt too hot in em
Wonderful Dianna. Have any more?

A little song entitled .. You can drive a horse to water, but a pencil must be lead.
A little song entitled .. It's not the cough that carries you off, it's the coffin they carry you off in
A little song entitled .. You'll be dancing in my heart tonight, so please take off your boots.

Three Cheers for Eve & Charles

Over the years they have put a lot of effort, and their own cash, into the Blackpool meeting and many times they've felt as if they were wasting their time. Charles said often, "I can't understand it. We have the best of equipment, a good venue, and a fine buffet laid on but players are reluctant to come along to play for us."

Well I'm pleased to report that their efforts are now being rewarded and they richly deserve it. Every last Monday in the month brings a club full of appreciative people and a host of players in,



Rob Brissett (I spelt it wrong last month) who is a semi pro artist, - guitar playing Brenden ? who is also a pro artist with a great Irish repertoire, - Peter Brown who entertains at the old folks homes and other charity functions, - Young Ben Halliwell who would be a great star if only he would use his backing tapes instead of singing stone cold, - Frank Bennett an 82 year old Super Man who gets up on stage and sings his heart out. - Alan Middleton, who entertains and Mcees the show. His best song by far is 'Ferret down your trousers' a story of Lancashire folk and snotty Annie who serves in the local fish and chips shop. You get more than vinegar on your chips from Annie.

Des Redfern is another regular. He performs a great song with Tracy, "Fairy Tale In New York" - a very loud and lively song which comes over very well. The first time I heard them sing it I thought they were having an argument on stage with words like, *you're a bum—you're a punk, you're an old slut on junk, you're a scum bag, you maggot, you cheap lousy faggot, etc.* Well! I thought, this is a far cry from George's songs, but it sounds really great and they sing very well together. Stan & I help to fill in any gaps in the show and sing for our supper.

George Morgan brought a poem home from Cyprus and wonders if anyone could put a tune to it:-

Smiling is infectious, you catch it like the flu
When someone smiled at me today I started smiling too
I passed around the corner, and someone saw me grin
When he smiled I realised, I'd passed it on to him

I thought about that lovely smile, and realised it's worth
A single smile like mine could travel, all around the earth
So if you feel a smile begin, don't leave it undetected
Let's start an epidemic and get the world infected.
Thanks George, I believe you had a great time in Cyprus with Dennis & Lesley.

A few queries—If you can't have your cake and eat it, what do you do with it?

How do BBC Radio know when I'm driving under a bridge?

How come super glue doesn't stick to the tube?

If, instead of talking to your plants, you yelled at them, would they grow up insecure?

So, what's the speed of dark?

Alan Southworth replies. In the last issue we asked for the name of the composer of "The Irish Were Egyptians Long Ago" and Alan has Emailed the following letter.

Dear Stan, The 'Irish were Egyptians long ago' was originally sung by Ray Ellington of the Ray Ellington quartet fame, but an additional verse was added by the George Formby member Ken Johnson who always performed it at conventions. Ken is alive and well, now in his eighties, and living in Lytham St. Annes. It was Frank Bennett who first asked about the song and I dug it out of my tape archive from the eighties. One or two of the words were indecipherable so I rang Ken to ask about the song and managed to get it down on paper, Dickie did the backing and the rest is history. Oh, just one more thing, the song should begin with "I've studied 'KINGS SPECIFIC' "(a book on Egyptology) which I changed to "I've studied hieroglyphics", which I thought was more simple. So there you have it, it has certainly taken off in a big way now, everyone seems to be asking for the words and chords. At least it's a bit more uplifting than songs about prison ships and forsaken lovers. If we're going to have variety, let's make it cheerful!" Alan Southworth.

Thanks Alan, That's right! I remember Ken singing it and also Frank sang it later. But we still don't know who the writer was.

And I'm not too sure about the mushy songs about runaway lovers. Surprisingly, Stan & I have had more requests for "You'll Never Find Another Fool Like Me" Medley than any other song we've done. This medley consists of three miserable songs about a chap who's been left in the lurch after she's run off and left him. It's our No.1 at the moment so I'm afraid you're stuck with it, -for the time being anyway.

Regarding songs about prison ships I can't see why you complain about that one. One of George's popular songs was "Mother What'll I Do Now" which he sang from inside a prison cell. George wasn't cheerful then, and he often cried out for his mother.

Plinky Plonking cheery songs all night can get a bit monotonous and as dry as dust, so some, especially the ladies, like to hear a bit of sloppy stuff. I'll never forget our old friend Ron Holiday. When he got on stage they would cry for "Hurt" which is a weary tale that goes

"Hurt, to think that you lied to me. Hurt, deep down inside of me. You said your love was true and we'd never part. And then you found somebody new, and you broke my heart . . ."

Well we can't get more miserable than that, but some people love it and we often get request for it. At the Liverpool meeting a very popular song is "Little Old Wine Drinker Me" which is about a CHAP feeling sorry for himself, drowning his sorrows in a pub, with a broken hearted woman on his mind. Great Miserable Stuff!

Alan Chenery—Did you see him on the tele? He was in a programme called "House Clearance" and his job was to sell a Uke Banjo and plonk a few chords. The lady of the house was selling up to move to Cyprus and hopes to join Dennis Lee's happy band over there. The uke banjo—I think it was a John Grey and valued at £120 - was sold for £100. Alan was filmed discussing the deal with the buyer, "Get it bought and I'll show you how to play it. Good sales pitch Alan.



The Perks of Being Over 50 from Cliff Royle

1. Kidnappers are not interested in you
2. In a hostage situation you will be released first
3. No one expects you to run into a burning building
4. People call at 9pm and say, "Did I wake you?"
5. There is nothing left to learn the hard way
6. Things you buy won't wear out
7. You enjoy hearing about operations
8. You have a party and the neighbours didn't hear it
9. You can quit trying to hold your stomach in
10. Your joints are more accurate meteorologists than than the national weather service
11. Your secrets are safe with friends because they can't remember them either
12. You can't remember who sent this list

Thanks Fred.

Brian Edge—phone
No. on back cover is
looking for words and
music (or tape) of

"O Lord it's hard to be
humble, when you're
perfect in every way."

Please give him a ring if
you can help. We've
tried the internet but had
no luck in finding it.

Joke from Brian—Subject: Jock the Painter—There was a tradesman, a painter called Jock, who was very interested in making a penny where he could, so he often would thin down paint to make it go a wee bit further. As it happened, he got away with this for some time, but eventually the Baptist Church decided to do a big restoration job on the painting of one of their biggest buildings. Jock put in a bid, and because his price was so low, he got the job. And so he set to erecting the trestles and setting up the planks, and buying the paint and, yes, I am sorry to say, thinning it down with turpentine.

Well, Jock was up on the scaffolding, painting away, the job nearly completed when suddenly there was a horrendous clap of thunder, and the sky opened, the rain poured down, washing the thinned paint from all over the church and knocking Jock clear off the scaffold to land on the lawn among the gravestones, surrounded by telltale puddles of the thinned and useless paint.

Jock was no fool. He knew this was a judgment from the Almighty, so he got on his knees and cried: "Oh, God! Forgive me! What should I do? - "What should I do?" And from the thunder, a mighty voice spoke... (you're going to love this) (I think) "Repaint! Repaint! and thin no more!" Ouch ...I'm outta here....

BAD LUCK—Just as our young super star, Greg Simister, was starting to make a name for himself, entertaining and playing the uke, he took up playing football and finished up with a broken wrist: His strumming hand. This is a great shame as Greg has all the makings of becoming a star some day.

Greg is really down in the dumps as he was being assessed by Liverpool Football Club when he broke his wrist when he was saving the ball from going into the net. He was due to entertain at a Derbyshire Caravan Rally and also at Cammel Lairds Prize Night. Natalie, Greg's sister, isn't in the least concerned. "At last" she said, "I'll be able to get some peace and quiet."



George's 78s For Sale—Paul Mason, on Phone No. 01260 290646 (Congleton—Cheshire) has about 8 of George's 78s records for sale. He realises that they are not worth much in value but wondered if someone out there is a collector. One record, "Film Favourites" might be rare.

Mike Turner's Just Phoned—Mike and Andrew



Little went to the Plaza Cinema, Stockport on Friday 21st June and had a great night. The cinema has been renovated and restored back to the 1930—40s. The film they showed on this occasion was "Let George Do It" starring George, and Mike and Andrew were surprised to find that the cinema was full to capacity. "George on a large screen looked better than ever" said Mike. "We had usherettes, like they did in the old days, and some were walking round with trays of ice creams. In the interval Andrew and I



went into the bar and played George's songs from the film. They heard us playing from the cinema and very soon crowds gathered around. Steve King went on stage to sing more of George's songs and the audience loved it. The only let down was the supporting 40 minute film which was a documentary on the river Seine in Germany. Apart from that it was an excellent night and we were surprised that we were the only GFS members there."

Thanks Mike. Pleased you had a great night. This was the second time for a GF film and the reason why nobody has followed it up is because they promised to ring back with more details but didn't follow it up.

Last year they chose the Crewe meeting night and were disappointed when we couldn't conjure up a crowd to perform for them. I asked them to ring me in future so that we can pick a night when there are no meetings, - but they didn't. This time it clashed with the Sale meeting.

More Bad Luck from Brian Edge

"The first divorce directly related to the September 11th terrorist attack has just been filed in New York. It appears a guy with an office on the 103rd floor of the World Trade Center spent a morning at his girl friends flat. He wasn't watching television either. When he turned his mobile phone back on it was 11 a.m. It rang immediately. It was his hysterical wife! "Are you O.K? Where are you?" He said "what do you mean? I'm in the office of course!"

This was an actual cutting out of an American paper. So I take no responsibility for the reference to the word "Guy!" *Thanks Brian, you're a grand CHAP.*

THE SALE DECEMBER MEETING WILL BE HELD ON THE 13th.

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 (THE DECEMBER MEETING WILL BE ON THE 13TH) - 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 14th & 15th Sept 2002

Sat 30th Nov & Sun 1st Dec 2002

Concerts usually start around 1.30pm each day.

Please Ring the Secretary, Steve Wylde on 01773 763353 for details on the GFS or Wintergarden meetings.

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

DON'T FORGET AN ARTICLE FOR THE GF NEWSLETTER

