

THE

GEORGE FORMBY

Newsletter 87

Vol. 8

No. 3

Sept 2002



Specially Produced for George Formby Fans
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Welcome To Newsletter No. 87 and once

again it's good news from all of the meetings, although Liverpool was quiet and short of players. Charles & Eve, at Blackpool, had their biggest crowd since moving to the Cricket Club and they are no longer struggling for players. They deserve supporting for the great effort they put into keeping the meetings going. N. Wales and Crewe are flying George's flag well with crowds of between 80 and 100 turning up each month.

You can have a good laugh as you picture the Crewe Players up to their knees in rain, mud and slutch at the Nantwich Agricultural Show, and young Cliff Royle tries his hand at writing poetry.

Bob Muirhead gives us more details on The Blackpool Scou^{witops}per, there's news of a "Musical Instrument permanent exhibition opening shortly. Now read on . . .

Anthony Mason—It's always

rewarding to see our youngsters making a success out of life and Anthony, now 27 years of age, is one of those who has progressed through George Formby to be a professional entertainer. At the moment Anthony is extremely busy making a film for Granada TV Studios, and he is playing one of the main parts.



The film is called, "Dead Money" and he plays the part of a rogue solicitor, Jonathan Esketh-bell, who is in debt to a tough gangster named Charlie Crompton. Charlie is threatening to duff him up if he doesn't settle his debt and Jonathan's only hope is to relieve a lottery winning simpleton, named Colin, of his money. He invites Colin, who is into allotments and gravestones, to have a night out on the town but the two characters can't mix.

Anthony is also working with his band, "Café Society" and as I phoned him he was about to shoot off to Edinburgh for a show. He is also working with the very popular Temperance Seven band.

We have watched Anthony develop every step of the way. First as a young child playing at the meetings, then he entertained about 40,000 visitors to the Warrington Museum GF exhibition. Now he is (although still flat broke) using his talent in various musical activities. There's a CD on the way—more news later.

Let Me Know—If you know of any other youngsters who are earning a living doing the George Formby stuff, let me know. Andy Eastwood has got his two feet on the ladder of success with loads of bookings and he's produced a CD "UKULELE SERENADE" at £6.50p inc pp from, Andy Eastwood, 81 Glenville Rd, Walkford, Dorset BH23 5PX. Tel 01425 275830. Web site: www.andyeastwood.com Good luck Andy.

The Banjo's Past—Sunday Tele-

graph cutting sent in by Connie Edge—Modern banjos evolved from ancient stringed instruments called xalams that were brought by slaves from West Africa to America, where they became part of slave plantation life.

They were first associated with white American culture when the minstrels, - white musicians with blackened faces and oversized clothes, became popular in the 1840s, playing the banjo. By the mid 1880s, America and Britain were in the grip of a banjo craze—thousands of tunes had been written for the instrument, and highly paid soloists toured large cities.

Perhaps the best known star associated with the instrument was George Formby, who was one of Britain's highest paid entertainers in the 1930s and 40s. He played the banjolele—a cross between a banjo and a ukulele—appeared in 21 films, made more than 230 records and wrote 300 songs mostly infused with his Lancastrian humour, including *When I'm Cleaning Windows* and *With My Little Stick Of Blackpool Rock*.

The banjo's popularity gradually faded after the war as it was replaced by the guitar. By the late 1960s there was just one company left manufacturing banjos in the United States, down from 200 makers in 1900.

COURT BATTLE FOR BANJO—same cutting. A banjo that helped to keep up the spirits of Ernest Shackleton and his fellow polar explorers as they sat trapped in the Antarctic ice, fearing that rescue would never arrive, is at the centre of an extra-ordinary legal tussle. The banjo, valued at £150 was brought out each night by the ship's meteorologist, who would play popular tunes to amuse the crew during their ordeal. Such was its sentimental value, that it was one of the last items rescued from *The Endurance* before it was crushed in the polar ice in 1915.

The banjo was returned to Britain with its owner, Dr Leonard Hussey, and eventually was given to the National Maritime Museum. It has since featured in numerous exhibitions about the Shackleton expedition. Now, almost 90 years later the museum is involved in a court battle over the banjo's ownership. Keith Martin and sister Pamela are claiming that the banjo is part of their inheritance and that it was given to the museum for safe keeping only. The museum authorities are refusing to hand it over saying that it was given to be exhibited, and that is what they are doing. The case goes on. *The above claims that George wrote 300 songs. There is no evidence of this, or that he wrote any songs. He possibly altered them only to suit his style and added his name to the credits. Beryl exaggerated in her claims re. George's song writing.*



Dr Hussey, top, with the banjo that he took on the *Endurance* with Ernest Shackleton, above

Bill Turner Puts Another Log on the Fire

At Crewe July "Heat-wave" Concert

"Never mind the weather, never mind the rain," as the song goes, that's obviously the motto of all of our super supporters. During a heat wave and in the height of the holiday season ninety-eight came along to our popular July concert. The spirit certainly hasn't changed since the day that terrorists detonated a bomb in Warrington on the day of one of Stan Evans' George Formby Concerts. I remember going along apprehensive that we would be the only ones there and when we opened the door of the concert room in the Patten Arms outside Bank Quay Railway Station, what did we find? Not an empty room, but a packed house with the concert in full swing. The determination obviously came from the spirit of George Formby who didn't bother about Hitler's bombs he kept strumming away, whether in underground railway stations in London where many of the population spent the night, or in the front line amid the shot and shells, entertaining the troops. It is clear that Formby's spirit is still with us in the form of his fans and we hope that it always will be so.



Alan Newton was MC and his assistant was Walter Kirkland who did a splendid job keeping the show running without a hitch. I tried out a couple of new songs, a Max Millar favourite "*Lets have a ride on your Bicycle*" followed by a tribute song by Alan Randall "*Mr Banjo Man*" supported by my group the "Do-wack-ado girls" Connie and Alice Cronshaw.

What a grand surprise to have Carl Basford back on stage and looking so very much better. Well he had to be pretty fit to sing the "*Baby Show*" with all those words! He followed up with "*Sunbathing in the Park*" which also takes a fair bit of puff to perform. We are all so delighted to have Carl back with us. Our Sound Engineer Colin Wood renewed one of his old numbers "*Saving up For Sally*" and he performed this as a duet with M.C. Alan Newton. It is a really great number and they performed it very well.



3 cheers for Carl Basford.
He deserves it!

89 year old Matthew Kelly really delighted the audience and got a big cheer with his performance of "*I wouldn't Leave My Little Wooden Hut For You*" and he followed this with a really brisk performance of "*Happy Days are Here Again*." They certainly are Matthew – a grand performance! Connie entertained and had the audience singing, "*Enjoy yourself – It's later than you think*." She followed with the old Formby number "*Running Round the Fountains*." Walter gave his usual happy go lucky virtuoso performance on the bones and then told us about his "*Little Tool shed in the Garden*." I think Alice ought to be a bit wary of his visitations there! What do readers think?

Our M.C. had us all with tears in our eyes with his performance of "You will always hurt the one you love." Alan sang it with great feeling until he jumped up a gear, at the same time producing a whistle, a car horn, and a pair of clappers and we were in the world of Spike Jones and His City Slickers! We can always rely on trombonist Alan to think up funny sketches. Great stuff. Ron Whiston, our Stage bones player was back on stage again. Ron has been coming to terms with the loss of his dear wife Beryl and we are all so pleased that he is now able to get back on stage again. If there were prizes for the performer who had travelled the farthest it would surely go to Alan Evans who with his wife Eunice travelled all the way from

Redditch to be with us. What progress Alan has made since we first met him at Crewe on occasion of George's 40th Anniversary Exhibition. He now plays well, has a nice singing voice and takes a special interest in his appearance on stage which is great for those in the audience. Alan performed the "*Prune Song*" a first at Crewe and followed by a revised version of the Formby number "*Believe it or Not.*"

Alison Nadin was up to her tricks again. Is there no end to this lady's talent? I don't know how she does that one with the mangle that turns a £5 note into £20 note. It's amazing that one, no wonder she drives around in a flash car and has a swimming pool! Tom Meredith forsook his banjolele and sang a couple of ballads rather well. Alice Cronshaw sang two rather nice numbers and ended up with members of the audience dancing in front of the stage and in the aisles. That was a *first* for Crewe, thanks Alice. I noticed that a few were pretty handy at pointing their toes, who said it was a lost art?

Greg Simister's performance was eagerly awaited and the lad did not disappoint us with "*Out In the Middle East*" followed by that super fast number "*Home Guard Blues.*" George Formby really rattled that song out whilst sitting on the top of a homemade tank in the film "*Get Cracking.*" Greg really got cracking too and got a big cheer for his efforts. The lad gets a kick out of getting the audience singing, and by the time you read this he might even have launched another song with audience participation.

Vera Jones sang a nice medley of songs and Don Chalkley performed "*Thanks Mr Roosevelt*" and "*I went all hot and cold*" which was not surprising as it was a scorcher outside. This didn't daunt stalwart Bill Turner who immediately "*Put another log on the Fire.*"

The "Frodsham Nightingale" aka Cliffe Royle entertained us in his usual style, but I would like to know where he gets his stamina. Cliff is Mr Perpetual Motion, he has cycled to Paris, walked 100 miles in twenty-one hours he is never still, and it wouldn't surprise me one little bit if he announced that he was doing a Channel Swim next month! Colin and yours truly sang a duet called "*Wigan Pier*" which seems to be a very popular number.

The Three Tenors from Penyffordd sang "*Leaning of a Lamp post*" and a new number for them "*Its in the Air*" which was well received by the audience who all zoomed along. Frank Humphries doing the "tripe and trotters" bit! Arthur Newton did his favourite "*Back on the Farm*" and was accompanied by a lot of clucking, mooing and ooo-arrng from a certain section of the audience.

It was the 40th Wedding Anniversary of Valerie and Brian Jones and everyone wished them well and they had a Celebration cake and a bottle of wine. Alan Newton ended the night with a thrash and he gave thanks to all who had contributed to the success of the night.

Thanks Brian. There's no doubt about it these performers are getting more professional each month. We've got some good entertainers now. Nice to know that Carl Basford is getting back to normal. The Three Penyffordd Tenors are singing very well together.

The Prune song is a great little number, and I've been trying to remember the name of the American uke player who recorded it. His name is on the tip of my tongue. Who was it?

Thanks—Further to the response in the last issue for the song, "Oh Lord It's Hard To Be Humble" which Alison Nadin promptly supplied, Brian would like to thank Liverpool's Bob Muirhead and Crewe's Bill Turner for responding and offering to send a copy. You can't beat an appeal in the GEORGE FORMBY NEWSLETTER for quick replies.



Super—Duper Newshound Cliff Royle

reports from Penyffordd—So what was special this month? Beryl Eissens (our staunch Radio Presenter from Australia) joined us again just before returning home after her second visit to us this year. Ted and Dorothy Fisher from Whitchurch visited us for the first time after seeing us perform at Llandudno and seemed to have been overawed by the entertainment especially for the admission fee of 50p. Additionally Alan and Eunice Evans from Redditch honoured us not only with their presence but also some excellent entertainment. Although Alan is a good singer he will not admit it, but we do know he sings in a choir. On this occasion he gave us "I do do things I do I do", and a song about "Wrinkles". Two years ago he could just about play three chords; now he twiddles away as if he had been playing for years. It seems Eunice has started playing the "bones" and so joined in with the other players a couple of times. She smiled so much she must have enjoyed it.



Dolwen with Cliff

It was noticeable that a number of entertainers played songs possibly new to them; Walter Kirkland, Alan Newton, Tom Meredith, Jonathan Baddeley and Jim Knight did just this. Brian Edge entertained us with a couple of rather different numbers "Mr. Banjo Man" accompanied by his backing group, and "Let's have a ride on your bike". Then of course the "Past Its" showed us how to bring tears to the eyes of the audience; for sorrow, not despair. The latter came to the fore when Stan (your Editor) gave some tips on "How you know when you are getting older". Anyway as if by a miracle there was no duplication of songs during the evening.



Bones player Eunice & Alan

Gregory Simister raised the roof with his fast fingering and his chatty way of getting the audience involved. He really twiddled "You can't stop me from dreaming" which is quite fast anyway. Good on you Greg; keep up the good work. The audience really enjoy your playing.

Our Ladies did well as usual. Pamela Baddeley sang songs from the Charts; which she confessed were from 20 or so years ago. Connie Edge gave us "Running round the fountains in Trafalger Square" and "Enjoy yourself; it's later than you think". It nearly was for she was almost the last to be called on to perform. I began to think we were not going to hear her melodious voice that evening. Then Vera Jones cheered us up with her medley of songs, and Alice Cronshaw in addition to a medley left herself open to offers with "I'm a little on the lonely side tonight". Of course our very own Alison Nadin gave her usual excellent performance of "Grandad, Charlie and Me".

By the interval there was much celebration. Happy birthday was sung for Jim Knight, Frank Humphries, and Dolwyn Shone who became of age. I dare not say which in case I cause offence. She was presented with a lovely bunch of flowers, and there was a beautiful Birthday cake. This was duly cut, and a piece given to everyone there. But who was the lucky one to get the piece with the age on it. Anyway Dolwyn HAPPY BIRTHDAY and may you be one of our most ardent supporters for many years to come.

The Three Tenors put on their usual good performance by singing two Formby songs and a Medley. They are always well presented, and hopefully one day they will be able to play with-

out being partly hidden by the music stands. Deg Bruce of course acted as M.C. in the second half and there were comments on his improvement in doing such an important job.

Des Redfern took us by surprise by arriving early, and as a reward for this was, by popular request, asked to sing an encore; that smutty song about "The Day We Went To Blackpool", which he so ably did to much mirth to end the evening. He now appears to have his own backing at Penyffordd; the " Hand Clapping, Foot Tapping Barmaid with the Tambourine"

We have already donated £820 to the Hope House Hospice for Sick Children, and are endeavouring to make this up to £1000 by the end of the year. To this end at the September meeting we will be auctioning the book kindly donated to us by Paul Woodhead. This book is by Colin Dexter the writer of the Morse series of novels featured on T.V. and is autographed by him. The title is "The Remorseful Day". Cheques accompanied by guarantee cards will be accepted!!!

Please note that our Christmas "Do" will be on the normal night 6th. December at the British Legion. Tickets (£5 and £2.50 for children) will be on sale soon, and all must be paid for by the November Meeting. Well it's time for me to "Ger off", but not before I thank one and all for an excellent evening. Your worn out, but still youthful Reporter. Cliff.

Music Man—We had an interesting chat with Harry Dennis Jones at the Penyffordd meeting. Harry is a collector of musical instruments with around 900 in total in his collection. Usually his instruments are stored and preserved in layers of bubble wrap, but soon Harry is hoping to change this when he finds suitable accommodation to hold a permanent musical exhibition.



Geoff Shone (left) with Harry

Harry, who is a member of the Galpin Society, which was pioneered by Canon Francis W Galpin (1858—1945) is always looking for instruments but these have to be reasonably rare items. His collection consists of around 50 boxwood clarinets, 200 flutes, many oboes, bassoons, saxophones, guitars, violins, hornpipes, saxhorns, and many, many other types of instruments.

Harry's fascination with musical instruments began at an early age. As a child he was intrigued by the sound of the ice cream cart, a police bell, fire engine bells, church bells and the sound of clocks. He joined the army as a boy and became a member of the regimental band of the Royal Welsh Fusiliers and received a thorough musical education at the Military School of Music in London. Harry, who is an expert at producing sound from many items, can blow a tune on a length of seaweed and he's also played a bedstead at one of the gigs.

It is hoped that the permanent exhibition will be installed at the North East Wales, Bangor, where it will be open to the public, combining education with tourism. Good Luck Harry.

P.S. Somewhere in his mountain of instruments there are four uke banjos.

A COUPLE OF ONE-LINERS FROM CLIFF—

Telephone call to a swimming baths. "Is that the local swimming baths". Response "It all depends where your calling from".

Sign in a pub window in Dublin. "All you can drink for £1". Murphy went into the bar and said "Can I have two quids worth please".

Crewe Washed Out!!! by Brian Edge

The South Cheshire "George Formby" Ukulele Society performed at the Nantwich and South Cheshire Agricultural Show on the 31st July. Arthur Newton, Colin Wood, Alan Chenery, Alan Newton, Connie and Brian Edge, Don Chalkley, Cliff Royle and Walter Kirkland were in the team. The stage, a large, 40 footer, was beautifully decorated with dozens of tubs of flowers. It was part of the Stuart Graham (Honda) stand and was organised by Philip Martin the owner of the Crown Hotel in Nantwich, (the person responsible for the successful Nantwich Jazz and Blues Festival every Easter).

Twelve hours before the show there was a rainstorm of unbelievable proportions and then it continued raining throughout the day of the show. The state of the showground had to be seen to be believed as it was a vast morass of brown mud. We performed our one hour spot to about 70 enthusiasts who were prepared to stand ankle deep and in the pouring rain. It was a pity, as with an expected turnout of 30,00, there could well have been 500 watching our performance had the circumstances been different. Cliff Royle set his thoughts in verse.

In the final thrash the last song was Leaning on a Lamp Post. After the slow start, the music speeds up and a few players are inclined to play too fast due to not listening carefully to the music. Jonathan Baddeley was standing next to Ashley Caldicott at the time and Jonathan confirms that Ashley was definitely listening to the music as he kept perfect time.



Thanks Brian. I've had some experience with these outside events, and rain storms, and the thought that goes through your head is: "What on earth am I doing here?"

Great work Ashley. I'll bet you were the only one in time Ashley loves Lamp Post

Young Cliff again with some one-liners— 1. Notice observed in the glass tunnel going through the inside of the Blue Planet Aquarium . " In the event of fire; break glass".

2. Man on a slimming course asked to name the three things beginning with letter "S" that he thought would help most to get his weight down. His reply; Salad, Sex and Cycling.

3. Why do seagulls have wings? So they can get to the rubbish tips before the gypsies.

4. THIS ONE WAS BANNED—SHAME ON YOU CLIFF

5. A Catholic Church in Bootle has six Confession Boxes and the end one says "Five items only"

6. Chinaman went into an English Takeaway and asked for a "Chicken Ding". Assistant said "what is it? Chinaman's somewhat hurt reply "It is a chicken cooked in a microwave". Ding.

7. Jewish man spent some time with a lady of ill repute. Before leaving he put 50p on the pillow. The lady said "What's that?" The Jewish man said "Heads" and picked the 50p up.

Flippin Eck—It was on the evening of Wednesday the 13th April 1955, in s Blackpool. The motor parade came from the royal train at Poulton—le—Fylde. The final leg of the journey was via Caunce Street and Church Street to the main entrance of the Winter Gardens, where the Queen and the Duke of Edinburgh were received by the chairmen of the Blackpool Tower and Winter Gardens companies, Mr H Douglas Bickerstaff and Lord Derby.

The audience was entertained by Reginald Dixon on the Wurlitzer organ, followed by the traditional royal show warm-up by The Crazy Gang, assisted by Arthur Askey and Morecambe & Wise.

Among the wealth of talent, the biggest laugh was won by veteran comic, Albert Modley who walked on stage and bowed to the wrong side of the theatre. His jaw dropped when he saw the royal box wasn't there—and then discovered the box on the opposite side.

Bowing to the royal party, he grinned and said, in his pronounced Yorkshire accent, "Flippin Eck, a thowt thad gone 'ome.

The above was taken from Bernard Crabtree's new book, "That Was Showbiz" priced at £5.95. Bernard was the managing director of The Grand Theatre, and in his book he tells of his experiences with all the many top stars who have appeared in Blackpool. George and his father are two of them in the book. Details can be obtained from The Grand Theatre.

Leaving Of Liverpool Email—Stan, this song is sung at almost every meeting, do you have the chords? *No problem.*

G C G C D G C G
Oh fare—well to my own true love, I am going far away. I am bound for California and I
D G D G
know that I'll return some day. So fare thee well my own true love and when I return united
D G C G D
I will be. It's not the leaving of Liverpool that grieves me but my darling when I think of
G
Thee.

George Forrest (of Sunderland) writes—In May, Pat & I were in Llandudno at the Victorian Extravaganza where we met the N. Wales group. We enjoyed them playing so much we went along to watch them at Colwyn Bay the next day. We found them all very friendly especially Cliff Royle when I told him that we had joined the GFS and I was learning to play the uke. He let me have loads of stuff to get started and I am ever so grateful to him. He also invited us come along to Penyffordd when next in the area. He also told me about your George Formby Newsletter which I enjoy very much, reading about all the different meetings that take place and how much you all enjoy yourselves. If only there was a meeting in Sunderland.

Thanks George, you couldn't have picked on a better CHAP than our Cliff. He's our hero you know, and he'll still be running round keeping everybody on their toes when we've gone. The Mayze Dayze you asked for, has gone until May next year.



WELL DONE: North Pier offers a super value night out, says reader Mrs Georgina Ingham

Show on pier deserves full houses all season

MAY I congratulate Leisure Parks on their new North Pier improvements.

My party and myself were not looking forward to walking down the pier on a wet night, and were delighted to find a covered shelter at each end of the pier with a train to take you right up to the new theatre foyer without getting wet.

The new foyer and little disabled lift to auditorium level is spacious and welcoming and so too were the staff of ushers in Victorian costume, with a smile and word to greet patrons, a rare

change from "find your own seat" at other theatres.

Well the show! It can only be described as the best summer show I've seen in town for many, many years. This real family entertainment with great singing from the Bachelors, and the clean comedy - what a change today - of Bernie Clifton and Stu Francis.

It's a long time since I heard laughs from both children and senior citizens alike. The excellent Alan Randall, who is so well known for his George Formby impression, is not only a superb banjo

player but shows his musical skills on vibraphone, drums and piano. The lovely singing star Susan Maughan is better than in her younger days and looking radiant in beautiful gowns.

The Startime Dancers were pretty, lovely dance routines, and the wonderful six Tiptoes Kids just put the icing on the cake for us in a truly great night out.

The show deserves full houses throughout the season and what value for money at only £8 for senior citizens.

Full marks to Leisure Parks for providing a

show that Blackpool will be really proud of.

The lovely new exhibition space on the side of the theatre is a nostalgic look back to the North Pier with photographs from 1890 onwards with free admission; this makes a night out at the North Pier superb value.

More shows like this and visitors will come back, and back again.

**MRS GEORGINA INGHAM
Dobson Road
Blackpool**

Muddy Ukes in Nantwich—Thanks to

Cliff Royle. (With apologies to the Crown Hotel, Nantwich).

You've heard of Stan's catastrophes; well this can beat them all,
'Twas at the Nantwich Show we went, from where there'd been a call,
It had rained and rained for many hours before we were due there,
And by the time we left the flooded car park we really did not care.

We trampled through a lot of mud 'till at the entrance we arrived,
Then there was still more rain and mud, don't know how we survived,
The entrance fee was just ten pounds and six for O A P's,
But we of course got in for nowt and that did many please.

There were children buried in the mud, some ladies slipped down too,
They used straw to get the muck off which stuck to clothes like glue,
We started out with polished shoes, and trousers clean and pressed,
Our shoes got b----- dirty, and our trousers; well you've guessed.

It was so wet that by tea time the Red Arrows had not been in view,
But as compensation the war department sent a submarine in lieu.
The horse events were cancelled and the stalls did little business too,
Everywhere was ever so muddy, you could so easy slip down to the loo.

Now a couple of lads went for their cars down at the swampy fields,
There were twenty thousand others there; that's eighty thousand wheels,
They looked and looked but could not find their modes of transport home,
So they had to wait 'till the rest had gone, before they could find their own.

But we all had a real good time though the audience were but few.
We played a lot of Georges songs, and some other good ones too,
So thank you Brian for pulling us through for we had so much to lose,
Will Connie now please wash our pants, and you can clean our shoes.

*Well thank you Cliff for your little verse, we know just how you feel
Cos every summer show we do, we can't believe it's real
The last outside job we did, it rained for umpteen weeks
We were axle deep in mud and slutch and the tent was full of leaks*

*A river ran right through our tent, it really was a site
Howling gales blew us away, - we held on with all our might
Now if they come on to us next year, to do the show again
I'll tell them they can ring Cliff Royle, for "Singing in the rain."

Body Language—Just take a look at George & Beryl on the front cover. In fact, every photo taken of them shows that they had perfect body language together. They were a perfect couple who relied on each other. Don't believe all in the media, unless it's the GF NEWSLETTER.



Blackpool Night—Once again Blackpool had a great night, in fact, it was the best ever and it was “Standing Room Only” which brought delight to the faces of Charles and Eve and their happy crew of helpers. In the absence of the regular M/C, Alan Chenery stood in for the night and did an excellent job. For the first 15 minutes it looked as if the red hot sunshine would keep everybody at home for the night, but soon they came piling in and Eve was wondering if there would be enough food on the snack table to go round. No problem there was plenty.

And what a nice surprise when Yorkshire’s Lionel and Joan Owen turned up. They were a bit late because they’d overshot the roundabout and finished up in Blackpool town centre. However they eventually made it and they were given the usual grand welcome.

First on the bill was 11 year old Ben (no backing tape) Hallewell who opened up the concert with a couple of George’s numbers. Alan, the M/C for the night threatened Ben that if he didn’t use backing for his second spot we would all boo him. It worked and Ben sounded great. The lad has plenty of talent when he uses his backing.



Ben Hallewell

Well we couldn’t go wrong for talent on the night. Amongst the players we had Alice Cronshaw, Walter Kirkland, Cyril Palmer, Blackpool’s Rob Brisset (he’s really come on well with George’s songs), Lionel Owen (performing better than ever), and Des Redfern.

THE STAR—But the man of the night was Jim Bramwell, who has been acting nursemaid for the last 12 months. He made his first appearance after such a long break and they all gave him a huge round of applause. He walked in like a breath of fresh air and everybody was pleased to see him. Jim’s act, like Des Redfern and John Taylor, begins with giving Charles the wrong disc or the wrong track number. Charles presses the button and then Jim discovers that he’s got the wrong uke. The crowd, who were holding their sides laughing, thought that this was all part of Jim’s act until I assured them it wasn’t, and that he has a natural gift for unintentionally cocking the job up.



Young Jim Bramwell

Very Moving—Geoff & Dolwen Shone, Jim & Myra Knight, Jean, Alison and Frankie spent a day at the Hope Hospital Garden Party. It was a very moving time as they saw the sick children who were making the best of their lives. Two of the Coronation Street stars were there giving the children a treat.

To date the Penyffordd group have collected £820 for the home and are hoping to stage something special at the Christmas meeting to make the figure up to £1,000. *Good work!*



I.O.Man Trip?? I've been pestering Christine Wood lately to organise a trip for this year to the Isle of Man. Christine, Colin, Alan & Pat do an excellent job in organising trips and the I.O.Man is a place where we've not made any noise.

It would be a grand place to liven up and who knows perhaps we could put on a show for the pensioners over there. We could also do a grand tour of the isle where George rode in the film, "No Limit."

And do you recognise the smart looking CHAP on the left with our George? Well it's no other than our Super Star Reporter, Cliff Royle who recently had a holiday over there—and doesn't he look well on it? It looks as if George is passing on a few tips on how to play the uke, - not that Cliff needs any. And no! Cliff has not gone on holiday on his own. Margaret is posing on

a bench seat, a couple of feet away, with the statue of Norman Wisdom. Thanks for the photo Cliff.

Weird? - In the last issue I published an article on the unexplainable similarities between George Formby and Jack Jones. Well apparently they don't end there. In 1961 it was well reported in the media that the Formby family classed Pat Howson (George's fiancée) as nothing more than a gold digger who was simply after George estate. In fact it was reported that, in the family's opinion, Pat Howson had urged George to alter his will, in her favour, just before his death. Well, and you can call it another coincidence if you wish, but Jack's family have a similar feeling towards Pat Ralston, who for the past number of years has cared for Jack's welfare. Pat rang to say that she has received a long letter from Jack's family condemning her as a gold digger who was after Jack's money and who stole items from Jack's house.

NOT TRUE!!! - I have known Pat for some years and will vouch for her extreme honesty. Pat does quite a lot of unpaid charity work here in Warrington. She works with her church, the local hospital, Help The Aged, Animal Welfare, and also with various charity shops. Pat says that the only items she removed from Jack's home were out of date packs of food, for Jack's benefit.

Don't let it worry you Pat. No matter how much good work you do, there is always one small mind out there who doubts your sincerity. Let it go over your head.



THANKS from Dolwen Shone—Dolwen wishes to thank all who helped to contribute to her 60th birthday splash at the Penyffordd August meeting. Thanks to the Committee for the lovely flowers and a special thank you to Jean, Alison and Frankie Woods for a delicious cake. It all came as a surprise and most unexpected.

Thanks Dolwen, surely you're not 60. I don't believe it. NEVER!!!!

Full House at Sale

By Cyril Palmer—It was "Standing room only" in July at Sale. Alice Cronshaw put the word about that there would be birthday celebrations. Her gentle persuasion brought the largest attendance for quite a while. The Crewe "bikers" made their first visit. I gathered that Alice's suggestion to visit Sale was more a command than an invitation. (Whatever leathers they wore were not in sight.) It was nice to meet again Alice's brother, Harold, and pal Sid. As well as family and G.F. members, Alice brought neighbours Susan and daughter Joanne, who were soon singing along. New to the Uke scene was Paul Morrison, clearly enjoying his first evening at Sale.



There was a welcome for Alf Caldwell and Helen. Alf was an early member at Sale. He was on good form with "Back on the farm" and the comic version of "Side by side." Brian White, from Westhoughton, chose Sale to sample another venue. Mac and Millie McGee, and George and Mary Atkinson represented Yorkshire. Mac sang one of his favourites, "Matchstalk men," while George performed a sing-a-long medley for his turn. At the interval Alice surprised Sheila Palmer and Ken Ratcliffe by announcing their imminent birthdays, and producing a lovely birthday cake large enough for the feeding of the five thousand. I won't risk offence giving away my wife's age, but Ken, ten years her junior, would soon reach the mature age of Sixty. (Oh, well, I've blown it now.) Both Sheila and Ken were somewhat taken aback, perhaps "gob smacked" is not too strong an expression. From Sheila I got an accusing "Did you know about this?" -as if she wasn't enjoying the attention!

There was a good atmosphere as usual, with an extra buzz from the larger attendance, but good attention for the performers. The concert was nicely varied with a good selection of Formby songs, plus a variety of other songs. The "bones" group has become a regular feature, with usually at least four players. Alison Nadin, first in conjuring role, showed how easily money could be made, but didn't have spare machines to sell. (I call that mean.) Then, showing the breadth of her talent she sang to the uke Frankie Woods' "Paint the world with rainbows."

Leaving out the second thrash, most of the available singers were accommodated. Alan Cheney and Colin Wood opened with "Putting on the style." Stan Watkinson (anything but 'past it') went solo. "Save the last dance" was one of his songs. Walter Kirkland included a bones thrash (Surprise!) Cliff Royle celebrated "Somebody's wedding day" and acquired a group for the "War thrash." Greg Simister (rapidly becoming a "regular") had the blues -"Chinese laundry" kind, of course, and sang "Believe it or not." Alice -" A little on the lonely side" -a likely tale!

Jack Valentine has a "Grand and healthy life" -enjoying retirement, I believe. Alan Southworth-an island cruise to "Wunga bunga boo" and "Hi tiddy hi ti island" How about Alan Newton -"Because I'm shy."- that's a laugh! Jim Knight, followed "Blackpool rock" with another bones assembly. Paul Kenny sang "Windows" and "Little Ukulele," excellent, as usual.

Margaret Moran was excellent with "A song in my heart" and "Homing waltz." (Margaret, with Les Pearson, sold a number of booklets, "Octogenarian thoughts," written by Bert Taylor, a hospital radio volunteer, proceeds going into hospital radio funds.) Stan Evans' solo was "Dames" (South Pacific.) Then "The Past its" sang the "another fool" medley. Jon Baddeley, in his nice relaxed style ended the evening's entertainment with "Frank on his tank" and "They laughed."

There was extra preparation as well as the usual setting up, so special thanks to Alice, Ann, Jean, Pat, Susan and Joanne for coming early to get things ready in time, and thanks to everybody for a great evening. *Thank you Cyril. It was a great night!*

Email from Young Dennis Lee and his merry

band of happy players.

Nice to hear from them. Dennis & Lesley are like little ants who move rubber tree plants. They've only been in Cyprus for 5 minutes and already they've recruited a happy band of plonkers who—if the smiles on their faces are anything to go by, - look as if they are enjoying every minute

The happy smilers are: -
Back row left to right, John Burrells, Tony Joyce, Dennis, Brian Timms, Frank Hickman.

Front row left to right, Ralph Taylor, Pat Taylor, Ray Dobson & Lesley.



Dennis Emails: Had a 40 minute call from Jean Nadin with all the news on Sunday - lovely to hear from her. Also had a message from Cliff the Super Newshound. Paul Woodhead has 2 ukes for sale so I needn't contact Geoff Shone although his uke would have been a welcome addition to our stock. I remember it well and it would be ideal for a beginner.

S.O.S.—Problem is getting them over here. If ever you hear of anybody coming to Paphos for a holiday, please let me know and I might be able to persuade them to bring a uke over with them. When you've a minute click on www.UKCA.com.cy/ and click on PAPHOS, then Regular Activities. Just received the George Formby Newsletter so I'm off for a good read. Dennis

Trip to Cyprus October 2003

- No details as yet, just asking for names of interested people with preference of BB half board or apartments. Denis Lee has been contacted and will help if possible.

So far there is: Mac & Millie Magee, George & Mary Atkinson, Stan & Eva Evans' and a few others could be interested. Maybe 15 -18 would be the limit. Contact Chris & Colin Wood on chriswood@claremont44.fsnet.co.uk or 01270 663558
Looking forward to it Chris.

Hello Stan,

You will realise from the contents of this report for the Newsletter that I am acting as an undercover correspondent. You missed a great night at Wistaston. The highlight was Connie Edge performing the Sand Dance. What a gritty performance. Next month, in the kitchen, Connie will be performing the Dance of the Seven Tea-cloths. In September, it will be the Won't Won't-an adaptation of the Can Can. All the best, from your secret spy.

Thank you very much, S S. Don't worry, your secret is safe with me, unless they start offering bribes. I'm wondering if Connie (Betty) Edge was supported by Brian & Alan as Wilson and Keppel? Did anyone get a photo of this rare site?

From Cliff again—Casey rang up the Liverpool Echo. "How much is it to put an advert in your paper?" Reply "Five pounds an inch". Casey " That's much too dear. I'm selling a ten foot ladder".

The Blackpool Scouser—

By Bob Muirhead



A few years ago Dennis and Lesley Lee suggested that at the next GF Convention Arthur Sinnott and I might enjoy the company of the folk at their Hotel in Blackpool, an invitation which has led to many valued friendships.



Frank Bennett is a particular friend who although he lives in Blackpool moves into the Hotel from the Thursday to Monday (this he claims is so that Cyril Palmer doesn't have to take him home every night) to meet his best mate Len Wilson, they are a great pair of characters who argue, talk, and play ukes for hours on end, it's great entertainment and Arthur, George Morgan and I always get in early to be with them.

Frank writes his own music mostly gleaned from his own experiences, and If you ain't heard Washboard Nellie, England, Old East End Pubs, and Orrible day in Blackpool you haven't lived, he always says how much he enjoys being with us Liverpudlians so we decided to make him an Honorary Scouser and invite him down for a few days.

We collected him on the Thursday prior to the Liverpool meeting to commence a five day whirlwind tour of Scouseland, Albert Dock, Ferries, Tunnels, the Wirral, Warships, Football Stadia, even that exceedingly bare Statue, you name it Frank has seen it, but of course his big surprise was at the Liverpool meeting when he found so many of his friends there, Sheila and Cyril Palmer, Brian and Connie Edge, Phil Jones and Jed, plus the usual Liverpool gang.

George Morgan (who is a great artist) had produced a Certificate pronouncing Frank an Honorary Scouser, and presented it to him on the night, we then insisted he sing Liverpool Home with us, but I'm afraid without Stan Evans it would have been a disaster as Frank and I were laughing so much we could only mumble the words.

Another highlight was his invite to Stan Evans's house where like us he was amazed at the George Formby and Musical memorabilia that Stan has collected over the years, and it was great to hear these two old friends reminisce about characters they have met and events they have experienced with the Society.

On his last night Frank joined "Dickie Hart and the Pacemakers" at Maghull and made a big hit with the staff and regulars at St Georges, so much so that they have invited him back for the Xmas show, believe me that's an honour as tickets are like gold, I guess we will have to get him a passport.

All good things come to an end so we took a weary (and I hope happy) Honorary Scouser back to Blackpool, my thanks to Arthur Sinnott, George Morgan, Stan Evans, and everyone else who made his visit a success, not least my Wife Sheila who closed her ears to five days and nights of ukulele playing and fed and watered the players so well.

One last thought, what is the secret of this spry 84 year olds attraction with the Ladies? I have a camera full of photo's of him with numerous members of the fair sex, whatever you are on Frank I would like to try some. *Thanks Bob. Perfect!*



Alison Nadin—Well I was really amazed when Alison Nadin took the stage at the Sale meeting. She sounded great, tons of confidence, good timing, nice voice, very professional, no fumbling, oozing with personality, plenty of attack. Great Alison. You've got some of the men worried, including myself.

It's wonderful seeing the ladies taking the stage and putting a good show on. Alison is also gaining more confidence with her magic tricks. One particular trick is when she produces 24 playing cards from a pack of 6—throws them all over the stage—walks off and leaves the stage all cluttered up with her rubbish for the next artist to pick up. Wonderful trick Alison. No wonder you're smiling.

Freddie Emails—Hello, if there's anyone out there. Just a bit of curiosity that you might be able to supply an answer to. Many years ago we had in the family an old George Formby record called, "Letting The New Year In". We must have heard it a thousand times as it was the only decent record we had. All the others were badly scratched and unplayable.

Well my query is this: Who was Steve? On the record George sings,

I like a lot of cash to spend when I'm letting the New Year in
Sometimes a horse comes through a friend, when I'm letting the New Year in
The horse I backed, would you believe, was running still on New Year's Eve
The horse was shouting, "Come On Steve," I'm letting the New Year in.

We've always wondered who Steve was and thought that you could supply an answer.

No problem Fred. You couldn't have picked on a better CHAP for an answer to that one. I was brought up on hearing about Steve. He was Steve Donoghue, a champion jockey who was born and actually lived in the next street to me as a child.

He was Warrington's favourite jockey and if he was racing on the day they would all have a shilling or two on him. He was very friendly with a Red Indian named Prince Monolulu (think it's spelt right) who would walk through Warrington—possibly making for Haydock Race Course - in full Indian head dress, shouting, "I gotta horse—I gotta horse" so the 'friend' who George refers to in the same verse could be the Prince.

If ever you visit George's grave you will see Steve Donoghue's grave a few yards further away from the main gates, on the same side.

Ludwig Copy for Sale—Jim Knight on 01978 358472 is selling a Gordon Markendale Ludwig copy uke banjo. Very good condition in hard case. Jim is looking for a Baby Gibson so he is prepared to do a swap, or a part exchange. For the benefit of any beginners, Gordon Markendale is an excellent craftsman and his ukes are holding their prices. Jim helps to run the Penyffordd meeting. Give him a ring if you are interested.

Whoops—slight error- in the last

issue. The young lady on the right is Donna, not Tracy, as reported last month. Sorry Donna, I was getting confused with Tracy Dawson (late Les's wife) who has popped in a couple of times at the cricket club. Anyway Donna, one of the readers rang in to say you look great in the photo and suggested that the heading should have been, "Beauty And The Beast." Ignore em Des. Jealousy!



Warrington's Little Ray of Sunshine



Hee it was grand to see Alf Caldwell at the Sale meeting after a break of about 10 years. Alf has been out of touch with us all for such a long time and we didn't expect him to turn up again. Any it was nice to see him and he is still performing well. At the Sale meeting he gave us the comic version of "Side By Side" when this CHAP gets married and on his first night discovers that his bride is a mass of loose bits and pieces that she removes before getting into bed. The last line is, "So I sat in the chair, there was more of her there, side by side."

Anyway, it came over well Alf and you've not lost the touch.

Margaret Moran, Sale's

little Irish Jewel, rang to express her thanks to those who bought one of the Poem Books at the last Sale meeting. The books contain a collection of poems by one of the Northern Air Radio volunteers, 80 year old Bert Taylor, and all the proceeds go to the Northern Air Hospital Radio. Margaret, and Les Pearson, took only 20 books along to the meeting and were surprised when they were sold out in the first few minutes. Well at £1 each they were a bargain. Good for you Margaret & Les, it's a worthy cause.



Whoops Again—from Geoff Shone.

There was an error in the Vellum when it reported that the Draw for the Ukulele Banjo will be held on Sunday the 14th of September. The actual date should read Sunday the 15th. Due to this error Geoff has booked his hotel for Friday and Saturday, so check that you've not done the same. This has caused uproar in the Shone family household. Dolwen said, "You should have checked first you daft twit. Any more blunders and you'll be out on your ear." I don't blame you Dolwen. He's been getting a bit too slap-happy lately.

P.S. Stick up for yourself Geoff. These women are getting too bossy.

Get It Right Stan—by Neil Forshaw

Dear Stan, I'm afraid you've got the article wrong in the GF Newsletter 86, over the Hippodrome & Pavilion.



Neil Forshaw

From 1911 Earlestown had three theatres, "Kemps" (Hippodrome), "The Rink" (Pavilion) and Forsters" (Empire). Fred Harrison, appointed in 1915, was manager, not the owner of the Hippodrome when George first appeared there. What happened between George's appearances in Earlestown was that Fred formed a syndicate with other local businessmen "The South Lancashire Hippodrome Company Ltd." and bought both the Hippodrome & Pavilion, hence Fred's title Managing Director.

The Hippodrome burnt down in 1929, the company then bought the Empire which was closed and quickly reopened it so that they still had two places of entertainment. In 1935 the company opened the Curzon Cinema and closed the Empire.

The "Rink" Pavilion closed in 1958, the Curzon in the early 70's, so Mrs Formby's money, I think, would have done quite well.

George made his third appearance in Earlestown at the Curzon doing a "Spitfire" fund raising concert, celebrating Fred's 25 years in Earlestown entertaining management. Best wishes Neil.

Thanks Neil. I didn't know that Earlestown had three theatres. It's no wonder it's so confusing.. So George actually appeared Kemps Hippodrome in 1921. Some called it Harrison's Little Theatre, or Harrison's Picture House. Is that right? Was it a theatre or a cinema?

Abbott Uke Banjo for Sale 1970, excellent condition, original, 14 tension hooks, maple neck, great sound, complete with original hard case—nearest to £1,000. Ring Paul on 07751 228 284.

And a Gibson UB1 Uke Banjo—This is a rare find. George Formby impersonator, George Moore, is selling this pre-1930s small 6" resonator type which, with 10 tension rods, packs a musical punch. Flat back resonator, friction pegs, full size finger board with three position dots. Light mahogany finish. Price £450 or nearest. Ring George on 01482 712222 for more details.

Look to this day, yesterday is already a dream and tomorrow is only a vision. But today, well lived, makes every yesterday a dream of happiness and every tomorrow a vision of hope.

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

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