

THE

GEORGE FORMBY

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Specially Produced for George Formby Fans
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Welcome To Newsletter No. 88 and once

again we've got all the latest news on what's going on in the George Formby scene.



This Newsletter is reet champion Stan. Tell em to keep sending those articles in. *I keep telling em George but some ignore me.*

We've got news on three Wedding Anniversaries at the N. Wales meeting, and a full report on the George Formby Players visit to Sherwood Forest.

We have a report on Tessie OShea who is bouncing up in the air, and Mr Woo joining the cast of Coronation Street

We have an up to date list of Andy Eastwood's professional bookings up to May 2003, and how the lad is doing extremely well.

After last month's "Gold Digger" article we have support for Pat Ralston, and we have an article on "The good old days." And we've a good article on the success of the Startime Spectacular Show on Blackpool's North Pier. And much more, all for 50p. Now please read on.

From Peter and Rose Hopley Thank you Brian and

Connie and everyone at the August meeting at Wistaston for the card and messages of congratulations to us on our Golden Wedding Anniversary. We had a lovely evening with you all, as we always do. Thanks again.

Alison (clever girl) Nadin has done a grand job of building a web-site for the N. Wales Branch. To see it just log on to www.mysite.freemove.com/northwalesbranchgfs which is probably the longest web-site address in Wales.

Liverpool—I sensed by the silence that they had something in store at the Sept Meeting. It was my 74th birthday the day previous so they secretly conjured up a grand buffet for the night. Thanks to Tom Bailey and Stan Watkinson for the treat—much appreciated and it all tasted great.



We were pleased to have two guests from Sweden. Janet Grootoink and Jonas Svenson were here for the Blackpool meeting so they paid us a visit. It was delightful as they are both great entertainers who gave us a treat. Jonas sang one of George's little known songs, "I'm A Paratrooper Now" followed by "Maxie The Taxi Driver". Janet played that good old favourite, "Darktown Strutters Ball" and a great little jazz number, "Too Busy." Both are very keen Formby fans and it's wonderful to know that our George has such an effect in other countries.

PAY US A VISIT AT LIVERPOL, WE ALWAYS HAVE A GRAND NIGHT.



Wrong Again Stanley from Carl Basford, who's getting a bit cocky now that he's looking tip-top fine after his terrible ordeal in hospital.

Dear Stan, In the late fifties I was making my way back to my RAF camp after leave, and who do you think I saw at Gatwick Airport. It was no other than Prince Monolulu (think it's spelt OK) only he was not a Red Indian, as reported in the last issue, but a Black African with ostrich type feathers and dressed like an African Chief. He was carrying a case with "I Gotta Horse" printed on it.

I don't know when "Letting The New Year In" was written, but I do know that in the late seventies, or early eighties, there was a horse running called, "Come On Steve"

Now I know you've been around for some time Stan, but I'm sure that your readers were amazed to see you with George & Beryl on the front cover of the last issue (87). Keep up the good work.

Thanks Carl we were delighted at Crewe to see how well you are looking and pleased to see you back on stage. "Letting The New Year In" was recorded in 1940 and George died in March 61, so he didn't sing "Come on Steve" in the 70/80s. I'm reasonably sure that the Steve was Steve Donoghue the jockey. Unless the readers know better. You're right. Prince Monolulu was a Black African, and carried a case. I remember him a bit clearer now. The CHAP on the front cover was one of our George Formby NEWSLETTER reporters (Cliff Royle) disguised as me. Our Cliff gets everywhere.

More from the Ted Formby TV Interview-

Privately George was quite different from the image he portrayed, he was quite a normal man, I mean he spoke to anybody normally, he would talk to me about cars and things like that. You could always get him to talk if it was about cars, but I think the time when the 'gump' business came out, - making you think he was naive, was when he wanted to dodge a subject. If he didn't want to do something he would say, wee I don't think Beryl would like that. That was his defence mechanism coming into operation. He would suddenly turn a bit Lancashire gump and that would be it. That's where the 'five shillings a day' came into it, and I don't think any other man would get away with it.

When the will was read I couldn't believe how little there was. I was close to Beryl and I can remember her telling me that they'd been over to Ireland where they had £90,000 in the Dublin Corporation. Beryl wasn't the sort of person who would tell lies. She'd rather be rude than tell lies.

When we decided to fight the case I suggested that we should use a criminal lawyer who can delve into where the money has gone, but they didn't take my advice, which of course was very usual. They always asked for it but never took it. It was always a bitter experience to me as I always thought my mother tended to use the words she wanted to hear, instead of the words she should hear. But then she would listen to another member of the family and if it sounded easier she would take that route.

People got the wrong idea of my brother, - a flat cap Lancashire lad. But he was born with a silver spoon in his mouth. My father left all this money, worked very hard, but my brother never had to do an ordinary job or work for menial money. He had his head screwed on OK.

Patsy Cline's Mother ENTERTAINS AT PETER AND

ROSE'S GOLDEN WEDDING CELEBRATIONS?"

After the usual thrash Cliff Royle started the show with Dickie Speake's "The Formby Fans are Meeting tonight." Cliff thought it was the first time that it had been sung at Crewe and he was right. For his second number Cliff performed the Formby number "The Little Back Room up Stairs." Although this song appeared in a book of "Formby" songs to the best of my knowledge George never sang it in his films or on his records. The songbook contained a number of songs that bear George's name like "Mr Wu is in the Chinese Navy" and "We Haven't Quite Decided Yet" but to my knowledge they were not recorded or used in his films. He possibly tried them out in his frequent stage appearances though.



Jim Knight sang one of his favourite numbers "It's a Long Time Gone." This song appeared in Georges last film "George in Civvy Street." The song was great, but in my opinion it was not one of George's classic performances as he tried in vain to sing like a Welshman. He could have received some sound advice from Peniffordd's own Frank Humphries who can really sing like a Welshman, possibly because he happens to be one! Jim finished his act by inviting Walter Kirkland to join him with a bones medley to the music of "Twelve Street Rag." Jim is very talented as he makes most of his own backing tapes on his keyboard.

Walter Kirkland then performed a his new number "You Can't Keep a Growing Lad Down." It is good to hear performers learning new songs. There was a time when our artistes played the same old numbers over and over again to the point that their performances became predictable. I am pleased to say that, by and large, those days have gone and so it is a big pat on the back for Walter adding another song to his repertoire. Jonathan Baddeley sang two Formby numbers to his own arrangements. They came over really well. Jonathan's backings are improving all the time and they certainly sound great. Have a word with him if you would like a backing track and I am sure he will try to help you.

The ever-popular Stan Evans, the editor of our excellent newsletter, was our MC this month. Alan Newton who really makes the job of Concert Producer seem easy, ably assisted him. Stan introduced Connie Edge (in her rhinestone cowboy outfit with a long blonde wig) as Aggie Cline the mother of Patsy Cline! Now from what I can gather, and please don't pass it around, it seems that Stan had discussed with Connie in the dressing room before her act as to how he should introduce her. Stan suggested Aggie the Grandmother of Patsy Cline! Now from what I have heard, this did not go down very well with Connie (prima donnas are all the same), and after the dust had settled, Stan was only too glad to change his suggestion to Mother! Well after all that "Aggie" did a splendid performance of "I Love You Honey!" that the audience from their applause obviously enjoyed. Whilst on the subject of Patsy Cline Stan our M.C. who has an excellent singing voice, sang the Patsy Cline favourite "Crazy" and this he followed with that famous number from "South Pacific" "There is Nothing like a Dame" and the audience joined in at the appropriate places. Several in the audience commented afterwards as to how they had enjoyed Stan's singing. Mind you it doesn't do to praise Stan up too much or he will start singing a lot of sad songs, and we are a happy lot aren't we? (Only kidding Stan, I like most of your sad songs but I can't do with the audience getting their pocket-handkerchiefs out to wipe away the tears).



Patsy's mum, Aggie Cline

Unless of course they happen to have been watching that very talented Peter Gratton who gave a wonderful impersonation of "The Laughing Policeman". So convincing was Peter's mime that the audience had tears running down their faces at his antics, he was really first class. Before too long we will have him back to repeat his wonderful act for the pleasure of those who didn't happen to be there this month. Well-done Peter. Special surprise guest was Alan Southworth from Preston. Due to the distance involved Alan is only able to come to Crewe occasionally. This is a pity as Alan is a knowledgeable aficionado of George Formby, and a talented uke player with a wide repertoire of George's songs. Amongst the songs that Alan performed was "Blackpool Prom" (with that lovely line "I queued in a queue for a cue!") and a hybrid song which combined the talents of Billy "Uke" Scott and Alan Randall. This is entitled "The Lottery Song" which gave the audience an opportunity to join in.

Sadly we had apologies from three of our most faithful supporters Jean and Alison Nadin and Frankie Woods. Unfortunately Jean had been quite ill earlier in the week and whilst there is an improvement in her health it was clear that she would be unable to attend our show. All the members signed a card for Jean wishing her a speedy return to good health.



Talented Peter Gratton

On a much happier note we were able to join in the Golden Wedding Celebrations of two of our faithful supporters Peter and Rose Hopley of Alsager. Rose very kindly provided cakes all around and this gave the evening a real party feeling. Our audience all signed a card wishing the happy couple every good wish for health and future happiness.

The group "The Three Tenors" from Peniffordd were reduced on the night to a duet as Phil was unable to come but they still put on a good show singing the "Show me the way to go home" medley followed by "Its in the Air." Alice Cronshaw kept us all happy and singing along with "When your Smiling," and that other Mancunian Cyril Palmer gave us a rendering of "What 'll I Do?" and "Barefoot Days." I chipped in with "My Grandad's Bowler Hat" and a new number entitled "When I'm riding on my Motor Cycle".

Bill Turner sang a ballad followed by the little played Formby number "It's no use Looking at Me." And Vera Jones sang a medley followed by that lovely song "It had to be you." It was a good performance. Arthur Newton with his happy smiling face presented "Hindoo Man" and "Grandad's Flanelette Nightshirt" much to the joy of the audience. Tom Meredith sang a great number "Dapper Dan" which really suited him after which he "Buttoned up his Overcoat" so many times that the tape packed up! Our special favourite Matthew Kelly was again with us and when he got on stage he announced that someone had already sung his song! The audience all agreed that he should sing it again and so he performed "When you're Smiling!" It is always great to have Matthew with us.

Carl Basford got the usual big cheer when he took to the stage and performed "A Lad from Lancashire." Keep up the good work Carl you are doing fine. Alan Newton our concert Producer gave his own special rendering of "Mame" and concluded his act with the Billie Scott number "I've got a Girlfriend". Due to our Sound Engineer Colin Wood not being able to arrive before the interval his assistant Angela Caldicott took over the helm, braved the early storm, and did a really fine job. Thanks Angela. Should I have omitted any performer from these notes then you were great too! Everyone went home agreeing that it had been a really good night and that they looked forward to our next show. *Thanks Brian. It was a grand night and the artists are getting more professional. Carl looks great after his serious spell in hospital. Good Luck Carl.*



N.Wales Report by The Master—CLIFF ROYLE

"Eee bah gum; wha a neet". Yes another occasion to remember of song and celebration for amongst our members we had to celebrate a number of Wedding Anniversaries; Geoff and Dolwyn Shone (26 years), Deg and Olive Bruce (47 years) and Jim and Myra



Knight their Golden Wedding (a mere 50 years). Flowers, rumoured stolen from the Cemetery, were presented to Myra, and she and Jim gave us the honour of cutting a really beautiful cake from which everyone enjoyed a portion during the interval. Jim thanked everyone for such a wonderful evening and recounted his experiences of courting a young Nurse, Myra, in the rooms of the local hospital. I was unsure if this was outside or inside the nurses quarters after 10pm.

After the initial Thrash Jim Griffiths sang some merry songs interspersed with a few of his jokes. Some character. MC. Jim Knight sang a Formby song and I must say how his solo playing has improved. Vera Jones followed with her sing-a-longs; and Jonathan Baddeley played in his usual relaxed style. Gerald Jones (known locally as Jones the Uke) twiddled away unaccompanied with a medley of Formby songs, and then Tom Meredith sang a couple of songs including "I wonder whose under her balcony now". "Sitting on the Sands All Night", and "Lambeth Walk" were played by Connie Edge, and didn't she do well. Must be putting in a lot of practice.

Unfortunately one of the 3 Tenors was away on holiday, but Deg and Frank coped very well with some good sing-a-longs. Phil unfortunately has not been too well of late, and I have since heard that Frank was suffering a bit on the night. Now feared he may have a cracked rib. We hope they will soon recover. They were followed by our expert youngster Gregory Simister who once more showed us how we should play the uke. We learn that he is in the Final of a Talent Competition to be held in the Floral Hall at New Brighton towards the end of the month. Everyone wishes you success Greg; keep up the good work. He now has a new posh uke.

I played "Little Back Room Upstairs" for which I owe thanks to Alan Chenery for bequeathing it to me on a temporary basis when he moved to the Blackpool area, and for the benefit of the Anniversary couples their was a group playing of "It's Somebodies Wedding Day" which lead to the interval. Deg Bruce then took over as M.C. for the second half.

Jonathan and Pam Baddeley started off this half with a couple of pleasant melodies, followed by Cyril Palmer with some soothing songs on his Baritone Uke. Then Alice Cronshaw livened up the proceedings, amidst some barracking from certain parts of the audience, with her usual slightly saucy and inviting songs. Not to be outdone Brian Edge went into full flow with "Riding on my motor bike" which I am sure pleased the members of the local motor cycle club who always appear to really enjoy their evenings with us; and then Jonathan on the clarinet joined Brian in that lovely song "I found my love in Avalon". How are some people so lucky to meet in places with such nice names?

In spite of all the work she does for the Branch (many may not realise all the work she does in the background) Alison Nadin performed her paper folding act after being asked to do this by our visitors Mr. and Mrs. Fisher. They thought it was great. Thanks for obliging Alison. Then as somewhat of a change we had Walter Kirkland play "Can't keep a growing lad Down". (is that right Alice?) subsequently assisted by Jim Knight on the Bones. Stan Watkinson, with his Uke played a sing-a-long "The Wartime Medley", and was then accompanied by Stan Evans in singing some great love songs which had been specially requested. By whom we do not know. Maybe it was Eva. Then just before the final Thrash Des Redfern gave us a couple of Formby songs "Count your blessings and smile" and "Little Ukulele". However I must also report on a couple of items of interest. Firstly the autographed paperback "The remorseful day" by Colin Dexter of T.V. fame kindly presented to us by Paul Woodhead was auctioned on the night by Jonathan Baddeley on our behalf and raised the princely sum of £11. This was bought by Charlie Penman, and the proceeds will go to the Hope House Hospice for Sick Children in due course. Many thanks Paul.

Booking are now being taken (15 already) for the Christmas party. Please book early, preferably by the October meeting. Monies will be due at the November meeting. £5 per head for adults Reductions for children. And so another excellent evening came to a close. *Thanks Cliff. You're a STAR!!!!*

Just Had A Call from 90 year old Dolly Clifford

Who had a wonderful experience with George & Beryl way back in 1938. Dolly was working at a hotel restaurant, close to the Paramount Theatre where George was appearing. George & Beryl were staying at her hotel so she got to know them quite well. Beryl was concerned because she had to go away on some business and she didn't like the idea of leaving George on his own, even though it was only for one night. She asked Dolly to look after him and his gear, clothes, ukes etc. "No problem" she said, but as soon as Beryl left the hotel, George made a quick exit and nobody knew where he'd gone. Dolly went out looking for him and after long search finally found him, - blind drunk. She sent for a taxi but he was so drunk they had difficulty in getting him into it. He was also worried about what Beryl would say and asked her not to tell her. She couldn't trust leaving him on his own at the hotel so she took him to stay the night at her house. The following morning George dashed down to the theatre, for rehearsals, and looked innocent when Beryl arrived back. However, he couldn't fool Beryl. As soon as she arrived she knew by the look on his face that he'd been misbehaving. Beryl was furious with him but she thanked Dolly for chasing round the town looking for him. Dolly also said that Beryl looked after him as if he was a baby. While he was eating his meals she would keep her eye on him constantly and even wipe round his mouth with her handkerchief.

Dolly said that if ever she feels a little down in the dumps she only has to think back to her comical experience with George over those few days and it picks her up. "I'd love a video of him" she said. So within a few minutes there was one the way to her. Although from Birmingham, Dolly is now living in Llandudno. Perhaps we can arrange for her to come to one of the Penyffordd meetings.

Gibson UBI Uke Banjo for Sale—Rare find, 1930s small 6" flat back resonator, 10 tension rods, packs a loud punch, friction pegs, light mahogany finish, full size fingerboard, collectors piece, £400 or nearest. Ring 01482 712222.

Formby's Merry Men and Women

Meet in Sherwood by Brian Edge

Earlier this month a party of eighteen Formbyites ventured into the depths of Sherwood Forest armed with their ukuleles rather than their bows and arrows, heading for that stately home of Thoresby Hall, a majestic building, now the flagship of the Warner Holiday enterprise. This magnificent house which has been converted into a five star hotel complex stands in Thoresby Park, a vast area of beautiful unspoilt England peppered with mighty oak trees and without a single man made blemish on the horizon in any direction. What a great experience, enjoying the pleasures of the surroundings just as the aristocracy did over 100 years ago.

Our party was made up of Jonathan and Pamela Baddeley, Walter Kirkland and Alice Cronshaw, Brian and Connie Edge, Cliff and Margaret Royle, Vera and Harry Jones, Jim and Myra Knight, Cyril and Sheila Palmer, Alan and Eunice Evans and Dolwen and Geoff Shone.

Walter was in his element on the first day as in the park quite near to the hall there was a massive exhibition of every type of old car and motorcycles imaginable. Walter, it is reported, was later seen in the bath with Dolwyn Shone! Very cool. (Better not mention it to Alice or Geoff).

There was plenty of excellent entertainment at Thoresby Hall and it was not long before Alan and Eunice were off on a couple of hired mountain bikes exploring the forest off the beaten track. Eunice was later seen sporting a fearsome looking bow on her way it seems to waylay the Sheriff of Nottingham! There was an excellent comedian in the entertainment Pavilion on the first night and Harry and Vera Jones have not laughed so much in years. On the following morning a gentleman approached Brian Edge and congratulated him on a very good performance – “very funny indeed” he said. Brian had not quite understood what was happening when the man’s wife came up and shook him warmly by the hand and said “what a great act you have,” and followed by saying how much she had enjoyed it and asked “do you travel all over the country giving it? Brian had a big job convincing them that he was not the comedian from the previous night’s show but a member of an itinerant band of strolling players going under the banner of George Formby.

Connie and Alice both won £14 each on the gee-gees and Jonathan and Pamela Baddeley regularly participated in a cavalcade of sport ranging from Table Tennis, Snooker, Dancing, Bowls, Swimming and Shuffleboard. Jonathan played several numbers on his clarinet to the accompaniment of the resident organist whilst Cyril played his wooden uke against the walls of the great house hoping that, perhaps, a maiden would let down her tresses from her room or at least knotted bed sheets to enable him to ascend. No reports were received to establish whether he was successful or whether he received the contents of the proverbial geranium pot!

On Wednesday the Entertainments Manager gave us permission to give a ¾ hour show in the main entertainment arena on the Thursday lunchtime. A get-together was convened and the show planned, and on the day over 100 turned up. Everyone performed well and Jim Knight got into the Guinness Book of records for playing his bones backwards! Cliff Royle was resplendent in a new red waistcoat which he had had to acquire specially for the performance from a nearby Ox-fam shop. We received considerable acclaim from the audience who, for some reason, seemed unanimous that we were the best entertainment they had had during their stay. After the show we were swamped with well wishers and hand shakers who wanted to talk about George Formby. This was a bit hard on Warners who put on superb professional entertainment but it seemed that

we had the right stuff for the mature audience that grew up with Formby. What a great time we had together, lots of fun, lots of time to chat and we had great support from Myra, Margaret and Sheila. We all left with "see you at Penyffordd".

Ps. the rumour that Harry Jones had been seen erecting an electric fence at the bottom of his garden can be disregarded. He's fixed it up in the back bedroom!

Thanks Brian, sounds like you had a great time.

Cliff Royle adds—P.S. If you happen to get a report about the Warner Holiday will you please mention that Geoff Shone beat me in 301 up at darts. I do not want the lad getting upset. *No problem young Cliff.*



Uke expert Phil Jones

Grand Night at Blackpool—Well

Charles and Eve have worked very hard running their monthly meeting over the years and now it is proving to be a credit to them. There was always the problem with the sound system but now it is perfect, and very good quality tone. Gone are the days when the first 15 minutes were ruined by feed back. Charles has got this sorted out.

Alan Chenery moving to Fleetwood has been a big boost to the meeting as Alan is quite knowledgeable on sound systems and for the past couple of months he has stepped in as M/C during Alan Middleton's absence.

And how chuffed we were to see Phil Jones at the August meeting. Phil is one of the old established players who can sing and play a variety of numbers ranging from George Formby to Irving Berlin and a host of other top American songwriters. Phil is quite an expert at playing melodies, as well as strumming the chords, and possibly gets more requests from the audience than any other member. Keep up the good work Charles & Eve.

Pat Ralston—I am very pleased that Pat is receiving support and sympathy from members and friends after the article in the last issue (87) which reported that she'd been dealt the same "you're a gold digger" treatment that Pat Howson received from George's family way back in the 60s.

Part of one letter to her read, "I felt I must write to tell you how we feel about the way you have been treated. You must be very hurt to be accused of such things and we know there is not an ounce of truth in it,"

As reported, Pat doesn't deserve this treatment. She gave Jack Jones a few years enjoyment at a time when he could have been sitting in his house feeling sorry for himself. She helped him to get out and about.

Others who rallied to Jack's support were, Phil Forest, Jim and Joan Bramwell, Fred Gwilliam and others who kept in touch. Indeed, between them they made Jack's life a pleasant one.

Were they REALLY the good old days?

OUR weekly dip into the 1952 *Weekly News* files to mark the Jubilee has sparked a huge amount of interest.

Bob Ramsden, of Birkenhead, sent us his views of life in the 50s. If you have other thoughts on the matter, let us know. The address is on page 12.

★ ★ ★ ★ ★

WERE the old days better? Or should we all be thankful for living with all the mod cons of the 21st century?

In the Golden Jubilee year, it's natural to look back 50 years to times when hospitals had matrons and all buses had conductors.

When you listened to Uncle Mac on *Children's Hour*. Or to *Mrs Dale's Diary*. And Dick Barton.

Do you remember *Housewives' Choice* and *Henry Hall's Guest Night*?

Of course, you didn't have much choice but to listen to a radio — TV was only a few tiny black and white sets in very few homes.

Mum, of course, was at home scrubbing everything in a washtub and dashing out to get more coal

for the fire. In those days, equality was still only a dream for most women.

And talking of coal — weren't the trains all hauled by steam-engines? Glorious for railway buffs, but hell for drivers and firemen, and for passengers deluged in soot.

Smog

But railway station waiting rooms were cosy, with their blazing coal fires and their comfortable benches.

Then again, burning all that coal did nothing for the air that had to be breathed. Londoners died in the smog.

And how often did you



Henry Hall — a favourite from the "good old days".

wake up to ice inside the bedroom window — of course, there was no central heating.

Young people were being crippled, or even dying, from polio. The mentally ill and the physically disabled were either locked away or ignored.

Nearly all young men had to sign up for two years' National Service in the Army, Navy or Air Force. For some, it was shattering, but most look back on it with pride.

A long journey was a major undertaking. Few had access to cars, and planes rattled from place to place with propellers thrashing the air.

Most of us have mobile phones and Internet access now. Not like the old days when you had to book overseas calls in advance.

If you had to draw up a balance sheet, then, it might seem that while some things were good 50 years ago, far too many of them weren't.

Given the choice, would you want to turn the clock back?

SIMPLY SPECTACULAR: Alan Randall, Susan Maughan and Bernie Clifton are among the talented line-up that is making the show on North Pier such a success

TV bosses could learn from pier entertainers

LAST week I was in Blackpool for a few days' golf and I decided to see the Startime Spectacular show at the North Pier.

At the age of 63, I have seen many shows over the years, but I can truthfully say this was the best, albeit that nostalgia had a lot to do with it.

I recall Susan Maughan from the 60s, and, astonishingly, she hardly looks a day older. Her act encompassed all the famous girl singers from her era.

Polished, professional and still a great voice — she had the audience clapping along.

I have always been a fan of Alan Randall, as I love his Formby impressions, but for me the high-

light of the whole show was his beautiful interpretation of Abide with Me, on the Vibes.

Bernie Clifton's first words were "you thought I was dead". I have to confess it's a long time since I saw Bernie on TV, but for clean, hilarious, slapstick comedy he has no equal.

The 20ft blow-up diver was worth the (remarkably low) admission price on its own.

However, I had never realised that Bernie had such a powerful and true singing voice. The finale to his act, *American Trilogy*, stopped the show.

The Bachelors were hugely entertaining and in my view the reformed line up is better than the

original. I loved the contribution from the lead guitarist and I recall he was with the Karl Denver trio for many years.

They performed all their great hits with such spine-tingling perfect harmony, that it was no surprise the audience demanded an encore.

I must reserve my last comments for Stu Francis. Great comedians have a certain indefinable something, a common touch, which the man in the street identifies with. Robb Wilton and Charlie Chaplain had it, so did Morecambe and Wise and Tommy Cooper, and Stu has it in abundance.

He is very funny, and his energetic antics and

sharply observed comments on everyday situations had the audience in gales of laughter.

Add to all this the excellent Startime Dancers, some talented juveniles and superb musical direction from Martyn James and I can honestly say that TV should look at shows like this if they want to give prime-time quality entertainment to the millions, instead of the diet of repeats, trashy American sitcoms and whodunnits, which seems to be our present fare.

Well done everyone, you certainly entertained me!

PHILIP R NAYLOR
Berkeley Street
Hull



George's 100th

—I reported last year that we approached the Warrington Museum for the loan of the 1991 exhibition display panels to stage a show at Wigan Pier, for George's 40 Anniversary (2001), and they agreed. However, after a complaint from one of the GFS members, who was demanding money for the use of his photos, - copies only, they slammed the door on us and have since told the press that all the display units have been destroyed. We don't believe this to be true so we are still putting pressure on the council to explain exactly what happened to the units. A meeting has been held at the museum and the Scrutiny Office is hoping to chase the material. A letter has also gone to the Warrington Mayor who is concerned that the exhibition material should be brought out of hiding and used.

More News Later.



The buxom appeal of Tessie O'Shea made her a popular star during the 1940s

The inflationary charms of Two-Ton Tessie

I read Jenny McCartney's article "Gwyneth Paltrow is wrong: dating is the problem" (Comment, August 18) with interest. She mentions a "Ten-Ton Tessie". She seems to have caused some inflation here. If I

remember correctly the lady referred to was the comedienne Two-Ton Tessie O'Shea (not Ten-Ton). She was popular around the early 1940s.

David Grace

Gosport, Hampshire

son Chipchase, the two brothers who duetted in very smart suits? I remember them from my very first Blackpool meeting in March 91. Well I met Mawson on one of the cruise ships I was working on earlier this summer. I was doing the cabaret, he was the DJ - he calls himself 'Chip'. He seems to be enjoying it, and his brother is working on another ship. They aren't using the ukes at present, but it's nice to know they're still in entertainment. *Thanks Andy, I remember them very well. Great to know they're still at it.*

Beginners Uke Wanted about £100. Ring Arthur Granger 01925 415235

Hello Stan,

It's the Secret Spy again. Great night at Wistaston. The appearance of Patsy Cline's mother, Nellie, (No that's not her on the left) was memorable. Under her stage name of N. Cline, she has a leaning for a lamppost at the corner of the street. Hopefully, we will see more of her-perhaps she will be performing the dance of the seven tea cloths one day.

Sadly, there were only the two tenners present, but at 50 pence for an evening's entertainment-no one went home short changed. That's all for now. Secret Spy

Andy Eastwood

Emails— Do you remember Scott and Maw-



Mr Woo is set to woo on Corrie

By John Warburton

CORONATION Street bosses revealed their latest recruit in the ratings war last night ... a tiny Chinese dog called Mr Woo.

Named after a character in a George Formby song, the Shih Tzu will even have its own storyline when it takes up residence with Rita Sullivan played by Barbara Knox, in October.

Shih Tzus, which cost up to £500 each, grow to a height of just 12-inches and the name means lion dog.

A spokeswoman said: "There will be a lot of comedy based on the dog, but there will be a twist in the tale too."

Previous pets on the show include a greyhound, a turkey and a race-horse.

And Mavis Wilton, played by Thelma Barlow, once had a budgie called Harry, which was swiftly re-named Harriet after laying an egg.

S.O.S. Young Alice Cronshaw wants the words to the old Vera Lynn song "Be Like The Kettle and Sing" - so here it is Alice.



VERSE

When your troubles are boiling over.
Consult this recipe.
Everybody can be in clover, happy as can be.

CHORUS

When all the skies are grey and it's
a rainy day.

Think of the birdies in spring.
When you're up to your neck in hot water.
Be like the kettle and sing
Tell that umbrella man he's just an also-ran.
Think of a kid on a swing
When you're up to your neck in hot water
Be like the kettle and sing.

You'll find that life's always got a funny side.

So come over on the sunny side.

And wear a great big smile—you'll find that life's worthwhile

You'll have the world on a string

When you're up to your neck in hot water

Be like the kettle and sing.

It's a great song for you Alice because, like George, you've got a happy uplifting face. We want to hear you sing it.

Ukuleles For Sale—Geoff

Shone, chairman at Penyffordd meetings, has found a supplier of Baritone Ukuleles which are ideal for nice quiet practising or for beginners to get started with.



These ukes are very well made, with good quality pegs, and nice sound. The price is £40.

If interested give Geoff a ring on 01244 544605

This CHAP went to the doctor complaining of spots all over his body.

Doctor: What do you eat?

CHAP: I eat loads of potatoes, chips, crisps, jacketed spuds.

Doctor: That's it then. You've got potater rash

Queries: If you jogged backward would you gain weight?

If a rabbit's foot is lucky, what went wrong for the rabbit?

If a book entitled "Failures" doesn't sell, is it a success?

Why don't sheep shrink when it rains?

Why do 'slim chance' and 'fat chance' mean the same?

Formby Fans at Sale by Cyril Palmer



Perhaps Cliff Royle's second song should be our theme song. "The Formby Fans are meeting tonight." Certainly the fans were out in force again. From Essex we were pleased to greet Mark Walsh who was having a holiday break with Paul Kenny in the Preston area. Mark, at only sixteen years, plays and sings in a most relaxed, but quite expert, manner. His playing ability must be envied by many of our more senior members. Mark's songs were "Fanlight Fanny," "Photo in the press," and "Little stick of Blackpool rock." Paul included "Horoscope" and, at the end, sang "Granddad's Flannelette shirt" in response to a request from the bar staff.

Alan Southworth, our "little lad from Preston," brought Brian Noone, a friend who lives locally. Paul Morrison, on his second visit introduced Brian Cook for his first visit to Sale. They promise to join in the thrash soon. After that, it's solo stuff. Boosting our attendance was Alan Williamson's group of six from Liverpool. Alan's mother was celebrating her birthday and things got a little hilarious when we sang "Happy Birthday to Joan"-her name is Anne! Alan was persuaded to sing on this second visit, his song was "Our Sergeant Major."

There was a great mix of songs and humour throughout the evening. Picking out a few of the "something different" : Alan Newton performed his zany Spike Jones style version of "You always hurt the one you love" -different indeed. Connie Edge had investigated "Charlie Peace and his old violin"-waxwork escapee from Madame Tussauds with Dr Crippen in "Running round the fountains in Trafalgar Square." An infamous murderer, belying his name. Cheerful stuff!

With the 25th anniversary of the death of Elvis Presley, it was no surprise to hear Jack Valentine sing "Are you Lonesome tonight?" Enjoyable, but we were anything but lonesome. Brian Edge's "Banjo man" and the cheeky "Let's have a ride on your bike" have been heard elsewhere, but were refreshingly new to Sale. Alan Southworth sang of Mr Wu's changed occupation - Window cleaner. (or abbreviated: Mr Wu's a W.C now.) Near the end of the evening he added Billy Uke Scott's "Ragtime Mandarin."

There was much more. Walter Kirkland -"You can't keep a growing lad down." If he grows any more Alice will need a chair to look him in the eye. We love the ukulele playing, but we enjoy the break when Alice, in her best Anne Shelton style, sings from her steadily expanding repertoire. Jim Knight, giving the bones a rest, was on a war theme with "Long time gone" and "Get Cracking," two spirited popular songs. Ben Hallewell, our most youthful singer, went back to 1934 with "Believe it or not," then to 1942 for the morale boosting "Smile all the time."

Alf Caldwell, featured by our Editor last month, coupled "Bill Bailey" with "Mr Hitler" before sampling "Uncle Joe's mint balls." (Over 100 years old, but still tasty.) Arthur Newton was found with his "Little ukulele in his hand" after singing George Formby's best, (my opinion), and perhaps earliest, romantic song-"Baby."

Finally, let me thank and compliment Dick Eaves who filled the role (admirably) as second half master of ceremonies, standing in at short notice for only the second time. He was not even noticeably distracted by a moderate amount of heckling from a certain Vera Eaves. Well, there we go. Here's to the next time! *Thanks Cyril.*

How We Lived sent in by Young Cliff Royle

Stereo, DVD, Mini Discs, Surround Sound, Sound Bytes, CDs, Tapes etc. None of these would exist today without first having the "Cats Whisker." With the cats whisker it took three hours to tune into a station and as soon as the wife opened the door the draught would blow the wire, which was delicately touching the crystal, and we would lose the tuning. After that came the two valve radios. It was like Blackpool lights when you turned the knob to switch on and they were so hot you could warm your hands on them. The earlier ones were powered by accumulators which you took to the local shop to be charged up. It cost three pennies and mother would give you half a penny to take it to the shop. She said that I must tell them that we must have it back to hear ITMA (Tommy Handley)

Later we ran the radio (wireless) off the electric power. This came from two-way adaptors in the middle of the ceiling. You had a bulb in one, radio in another, the electric fire in another and an iron in another. When mother ironed it was like jungle vines swinging round. If you put the whole lot on there would be a smell of burning and a bang.

And there was the outside toilet (Lavatory) - No toilet rolls in those days. Hanging up behind the door would be a pack of neatly torn sheets (about 6 inch square) of last week's newspaper with a hole in one corner and a loop of string.

We donkey stoned the front door step, and whitewashed the backyard. And there was a tin bath hanging up in the backyard. After mother had done the washing you would jump in and many a time I was covered in dolly blue. I often wondered, with as many as eight in the family, why was there more water in when the last one jumped out.

Thanks Cliff. Those were the good old days when you could buy 10 caramels for a penny and 5 for halfpenny. No flush toilets. It was a bin down the end of the yard and every Thursday the Council open topped tanker would come round with half a dozen men to empty them. The stench would linger for hours after they'd gone. It's an old saying but these flush toilet youngsters don't know how lucky they are today. No hot & cold running water. We had a lead pipe sticking out of the ground with a tap attached which ran into a brown earthenware sink. No bath, no shower, just this ugly tap which froze up almost every winter.

Olwen Gale writes—I noticed this on my last visit to Southport where there was a very good exhibition at the end of the pier. It is really good having had a lot of money injected into it.

In 1902 Alderman TP Griffiths opened the new Pier Pavilion along with a new entrance to the pier, to replace that which was burnt down in the fire of 1897. It was to be a venue for light and popular concerts. Many stars performed at the Pier Pavilion including George Formby and Gracie Fields. *Thanks Olwen, always nice to hear from you. Hope you soon settle in your new home.*

Yes it's me again...**Andy Eastwood.**

Several of the North-west members have kindly enquired whether I'm appearing with Ken Dodd at the Lyceum, Crewe. Well the answer is no - however, I will be doing Blackpool Grand (29 Sept, 20 & 27 Oct ONLY) Tameside Hippodrome, Ashton-under-Lyne (2 Nov) Warrington Parr Hall (28 Dec) and Liverpool Philharmonic Hall (29-30 Dec). Doddy always gives a great show!

DON'T FORGET TO SEND STAN AN ARTICLE

Nothing The Matter With Me

from Cliff (super fit) Royle

There's nothing the matter with dear old me, I'm as healthy as can be
Well I've got arthritis in both me knees, and when I talk, I talk with a wheeze
My pulse is weak and my blood is thin, but I'm awfully well for the shape I'm in

Arch supports I have for my feet, they make it more cumfy to walk down the street
Sleep is denied me night after night, but every morning I find I'm alright
My mind's in a whirl my head's in a spin, but I thank God above for the shape I'm in

The moral of this, or so I'm told, is that for you and I, who are growing old
'tis better to say, "I'm fine" with a grin, than to let folk know the shape we are in
It was easy to know that my youth was all spent, when my 'get up and go' just got up and went

Old age is golden, I've heard it said, but sometimes I wonder as I get out of bed
With my ears in a drawer and my teeth in a cup, and my eyes on the table, it's hard to get up
I often wonder and say to myself, is there anything else I could put on the shelf

When I was young my complexion was red, and I kicked my heels right over my head
As I got older my veins turned to blue, but I could still dance the whole night through
Now I am older with pains in my back, I walk to the store and puff my way back

I get up each morning and dust up my wits, get the newspaper to read the orbits
If my name is missing I know I'm not dead, so I have a good breakfast and go back to bed.

Thanks Cliff.

Hey! Look What We've Found— FROM 1978 An Oxford Mail Newspaper article on young Frank Bennett of Blackpool.

Frank Bennett, a foreman at Cowley Engineering, in Oxford, has recently become quite a successful entertainer and is in demand at local clubs and hotels in the Oxford area. Frank is a very good ukulele player who will play any George Formby song requested, although he prefers to play 'sing along' songs. When he plays his 1920s - 1930s songs they love him and won't let him off stage. Frank had his first ukulele given to him in 1928 by his sister and later his mother bought him a banjo-uke.



Frank strumming along to George's Gibson

In February 1940 Frank was called up for military service. On one of his leaves he married and was later sent out in the Middle East. After the war his collection of ukes was stored away.

Then one night Frank heard a programme on George Formby on the radio. The sound of George on his uke triggered him off again playing. Frank met a man named Ron Beddoes and spent a lot of time with him making uke banjos. He is an active member at the local Folk Club where he plays every week. With his wife, Renne, he laughs and says, fancy me being a star after 50 years. Reported by Ron Robinson, Oxford Mail. *Well Frank is still very active at 84 and often gets up on stage at the Blackpool meetings. Keep going Frank.*



Bar Gum Andy's Doing Well

After 18 bookings in August he goes on to Sept 02

- 8 Sun The Ken Dodd Happiness Show, N. Wales Theatre, Llandudno
- 10 Tue Bembridge Coast Hotel, Bembridge, Isle of Wight
- 11 Wed Norton Grange Classic Resort, Yarmouth, Isle of Wight
- 14 Sat The Ken Dodd Happiness Show, Princess Theatre, Torquay
- 15 Sun The Ken Dodd Happiness Show, Princess Theatre, Torquay

- 16 Mon The Ken Dodd Happiness Show, Memorial Hall, Frome, Somerset
- 17 Tue Bembridge Coast Hotel, Bembridge, Isle of Wight
- 18 Wed Norton Grange Classic Resort, Yarmouth, Isle of Wight
- 25 Wed Regent Centre, Christchurch, Dorset
- 26 Thu Regent Centre, Christchurch, Dorset
- 27 Fri Regent Centre, Christchurch, Dorset
- 28 Sat With The Krankies, West Cliff Theatre, Clacton-on-Sea, Essex
- 29 Sun The Ken Dodd Happiness Show, Grand Theatre, Blackpool

Are there any more youngsters out there who are performing on stage? If so let me know with a photo if poss.

October 2002

- 2 Wed The Ken Dodd Happiness Show, Princess Theatre, Hunstanton, Norfolk
- 3 Thu The Ken Dodd Happiness Show, Princess Theatre, Hunstanton, Norfolk
- 4 Fri The Ken Dodd Happiness Show, Princess Theatre, Hunstanton, Norfolk
- 10 Thu - 14 Mon International Banjo Festival, Steinberg Hotel, Dusseldorf, GERMANY
- 20 Sun The Ken Dodd Happiness Show, Grand Theatre, Blackpool
- 26 Sat Held for BROADWATER ENTERTAINMENTS ASSOCIATES
- 27 Sun The Ken Dodd Happiness Show, Grand Theatre, Blackpool
- 19 Tue Highcliffe Sports and Social Club, Highcliffe, Dorset

November 2002

- 2 Sat The Ken Dodd Happiness Show, Thameside Hippodrome Theatre, Ashton under Lyne
- 3 Sun The Ken Dodd Happiness Show, Victoria Theatre, Halifax
- 9 Sat The Ken Dodd Happiness Show, Lakeside, Frimley Green, Surrey
- 10 Sun The Ken Dodd Happiness Show, Wycombe Swan, High Wycombe, Buckinghamshire
- 12 Tue Highcliffe Sports and Social Club, Highcliffe, Dorset
- 19 Tue Highcliffe Sports and Social Club, Highcliffe, Dorset

December 2002

- 6 Fri The Ken Dodd Happiness Show, Civic Theatre, Bedworth
- 7 Sat The Ken Dodd Happiness Show, Civic Theatre, Bedworth
- 8 Sun The Ken Dodd Happiness Show, Civic Theatre, Wolverhampton
- 27 Fri The Ken Dodd Happiness Show, Royal Concert Hall, Nottingham
- 28 Sat The Ken Dodd Happiness Show, Parr Hall, Warrington
- 29 Sun The Ken Dodd Happiness Show, Philharmonic Hall, Liverpool
- 30 Mon The Ken Dodd Happiness Show, Philharmonic Hall, Liverpool
- 31 Tue Held for Michael Vine Associates

Andy's success must be good encouragement to any of the youngsters who fancy turning professional in the future.

April 2003—AND THERE'S MORE!

- 5 Sat Jimmy Cricket and Friends, The Music Hall, Shrewsbury, Shropshire

May 2003

- 18 Sun Jimmy Cricket and Friends, Pavilion Theatre, Weymouth
- WELL ANDY Good Luck to you and please give our best wishes to Ken who is the best comedian this country has every produced.

It must be hard graft travelling all over the country but he's enjoying what he does best. Great Andy.

He's a bit of a lad is Dennis Lee. He's only just moved to Cyprus and already he's getting things organised over there.

UKES WANTED—I've just had 4 beginners round for uke tuition. One of them has asked me to try to get him a uke banjo. Could you do me a favour and find some ukes for me.

I wrote to John Beck last April but didn't get a reply and wondered why. Had a call from him the other day to say he'd been quite poorly & he's still under the hospital. John said it was heart failure but not a heart attack? He's been told there's no permanent damage to the heart so that's good news. Said he hadn't felt like doing anything and was listless. Let's hope he'll be OK. Thanks for the tension hook - it fits perfectly. And thanks for the GEORGE FORMBY NEWSLETTER. Good reading.

Thanks Dennis, let's hope John is OK. If anyone can't place John he's the one who gets up on stage at the Winter Gardens and sings, "Have You Got A Light Boy" which was made popular some years back by The Singing Postman.

Email from Amanda in Canada—My dad used to impersonate George when I was a child. I can still whistle a Formby tune and sing a couple of lines (now 42). My reason for emailing is that my parents, who also live here in Canada, have a Canadian friend who was a listener of George - we are trying to locate some printed lyrics but have been unable to do so far. Can you point me in the right direction? Are there any websites out there with the lyrics written down???

Thanks for your Email Amanda. If you log on to www.georgeformby.co.uk which is the George Formby Society, I understand that they have a number of songs printed on their site.

Growing Up—For some years Eva and I have found jobs, such as washing the car, for a couple of young boys who are always pleased to earn some cash, especially during the school holidays. The same two boys have been calling since they were around nine years of age. Usually they referred to us as Mr and Mrs, or at times I've received 'Sir' from them.

However, they've now grown up into teenagers and when they call on us we are greeted with, "Hello Mate, any jobs." Or after we give them a treat they reply with, "Cool Mate." Well it makes us feel quite young to think that we are mates of theirs.

Whoops! - Jim and I had just finished entertaining at the Blind Centre and the M/c Tom, was calling out the raffle numbers. He looked at the prizes, which were in a plastic bag on the stage and said, "This is an unusual lot of raffle prizes: Ticket number 102 for a tin of beans, 99 for some shoe polish, 87 for some window cleaner, 35 for a bag of tomatoes, 92 for some socks. . . ." when suddenly from the back came a voice, "Hold on, that's my bag of shopping you are giving away."

DENNIS LEE asks . . . Why are we here? And it's taken him years to find out. It's because we are not all there.

Cliff Royle writes—What's the good of being the world's leading authority on something nobody wants to know anything about.

Email from Richard—Hello Stan, like your web-site on George Senior and George Junior. Very informative. I am doing some research on "What makes societies tick" and I wondered if you could tell me what keeps the George Formby fans together. *Thanks Richard. In general, it's the comical songs, combined with a regular old time beat, plus the sound of the ukulele banjo, that offer some reasons why the Formby fans cling together. We are old fashioned folk who, although lovers of music, just can't understand any of the modern stuff, so we gather together to help to maintain the songs of yesteryear.*

The uke is a very simple instrument to get started with, which results in very few experienced musicians being at our gatherings. Anyone is encouraged to learn three basic chords and then, if they wish, get up on stage and perform. It's as easy as that.

Apart from the excellent songs, George was a singing comedian who didn't care much for seriousness. He ran away from the heavy stuff, so we try to run our meetings in a similar fashion. Simple minded slapstick humour, variety, good natured heckling, George's songs (plus others), a touch of magic, sharing of ideas and a desire to help fellow members to improve their act. That's what we are about—and it's working well.

Jon Baddeley Emails—Hello Stan, Hope that you find the following information interesting. On 21st August, Central News featured an item about a new service on the Metro Line between Wolverhampton and Birmingham. A man had decided to sell fruit and vegetables to customers on the train. During the report, it featured George singing your favourite song-I LIKE BANANAS.



On 22nd August, on Radio Five Live an expert on Ealing Films was interviewed to commemorate the fact that it is 100 years since the film studio came into existence. Needless to say that George was mentioned. Many people only think of the Ealing Comedies of the late 40s and early 50s. However, George made 11 films for ATP (the forerunner of Ealing) from 1935 to 1941. The first film was NO LIMIT and the last was

TURNED OUT NICE AGAIN. It's amazing where our George turns up. All the best. Jon Baddeley

GF CD WANTED— Jon is looking for the CD—"V for Victory" so if you have one to sell please contact Jon on 01782 680587 and he'll be pleased to hear from you.

Email from Bryan Talbot - Hi, I wonder if you can help me? Do you have the lyrics to "In My Little Snapshot Album"? I went to the same primary school in the 1950s as did George Formby - so did my grandmother who was a school friend of his. *REPLY—No problem Bryan, To save typing I'll fax the song through to you. Within 10 minutes Bryan had the song on his desk. How times have changed. With all this technology it's little wonder the GPO are struggling to keep afloat.*

Remember: we don't stop laughing when we grow old, - we grow old when we stop laughing

So send me a letter for the George Formby Newsletter and we can all have a laugh

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

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