

THE

GEORGE FORMBY

Newsletter 89

Vol. 8
No. 5
Nov 2002



Specially Produced for George Formby Fans
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Welcome To Newsletter No. 89

and we've got another packed book of George Formby things that are going on in and around the area.

We've got great news that young Greg Simister got third prize (out of 26 finalists) at the Floral Hall, New Brighton, and he's expecting to be interviewed on radio and do a spot. Great work Greg.

And we've got news on Walter Kirkland, our World Champion (unpaid) Bones Player who is willing to take on all comers.

Volunteers are needed to entertain at the large brand new Ryfields Retirement Village in Warrington.

Apart from the usual reports we've got various Emails asking for information and a couple of uke banjos for sale. So let's read on.

Joan Bramwell

—Jim rang to say that Joan has been taken into Newton Community Hospital, Bradleigh Rd, Newton Le Willows. Joan was one of our regular supporters up to 18 months ago, and, whenever Jim and I did a concert Joan would sit in the audience and take a bow when we introduced her as "Our Fan Club."



Joan has been having a lot of problems with walking and for the past few weeks she has been sleeping downstairs.

Jim, not quite as bright and as cheerful as usual, has been nursemaid for the past few weeks: cooking, washing, shopping, ironing, taking the dog for a walk etc. So he's been too busy to come out to play with us. However, knowing Jim, he'll soon be back on stage with a new batch of jokes. We all wish them well.

THE PHONE'S RINGING—Hold on . . . It was the very lad himself, Jim, and he wants to thank all and everybody for their kind thoughts for Joan while she's been in hospital.

As Jim said, "She's got to get better to reply to all the phone calls, cards and flowers received." The good news is that Joan is improving with her walking and hopes to be back home shortly. Our best wishes to Jim & Joan.

Computer Bargain

—We now have quite a number of computer users amongst us and the majority, including myself, struggle at times with breakdowns, virus problems etc. However, there's a company called Easy Computer Guide, of PO Box 2367 Swindon SN3 4YW who supply an "Easy Computer Guide" fact file set (A4) and the quality and content are EXCELLENT. For 99p (don't send yet) they supply 60 best quality coloured sheets containing various sections of information, and if you return an attached form they will supply a super quality file case, 20 more fact files, a disk, 'Computer Encyclopaedia', and video. To fill the file case the payments are £5.45 per month, which, for such good quality, is a bargain.

A Star for the Future!

- Just received a phone call from Greg Simister's dad, Bob, who was delighted with Greg's performance in a recent talent competition and gave the following report:

"During the summer school holidays 10 year old Greg entered a junior talent contest. Many hundreds of hopeful young stars were whittled down to a final 26 through a series of heats and semi finals which were run over a period of five weeks, at the bandstand in Vale Park, New Brighton.

During the semi final Greg was interviewed and the performance recorded by a presenter from BBC Radio Merseyside. The interview and performance recorded was broadcast the following morning at 7.45 on the "Morning Merseyside" programme.

The finals were held in front of a packed full house at the Floral Pavilion Theatre, New Brighton on Saturday 21st September, when Greg played and sang a superb rendition of "You Don't Need A Licence For That" to claim an excellent third place, and a trophy.

Greg would like to thank all the people who helped and supported him during the concert especially those who came from N. Wales and Northwich for the final."

PHONE CALL FROM BOB—Greater Manchester Radio (GMR) will be featuring Greg in a show called "Five Minutes Of Fame" on Tuesday 22nd October at about 2.25pm
Thanks Bob, - but there's more! He did very well keeping a straight face when he sang "Get Cracking" at Penylfordd to the comical marching of his dad and Stan Watkinson.

Win Innes of Blackpool writes in—

The enclosed press clip was featured in the Blackpool Gazette, "Phyllis Calvert, the film actress who made her name with wartime classics such as Fanny By Gaslight, has died. She was 87. Ms Calvert, who appeared in 40 films over 70 years, died peacefully in her sleep at a hospital in London. She won the loyalty of British film fans after featuring in several 1940s movies, including Let George Do It with George Formby."

Thanks Win. We appreciate you scanning through the papers for items on George. I also note that you are a keen George Formby listener and enjoy the Cricket Club meetings with Charles and Eve. You must introduce yourselves at the next meeting. I'll be pleased to meet you both.

Liverpool Anniversary—

The next meeting at Liverpool will be the 11th Anniversary and there will be butties (sandwiches for the southerners and overseas) galore on the next get together. It was quite an event 11 years ago. We opened on Friday the thirteenth and the rain bucketed down. It was a most dreadful night but we got a nice crowd and enjoyed every minute.

OCTOBER MEETING—Well it was a bit of a struggle for the first half due to the amplifier having a funny turn. However, all will be well for November—Honest!!!!!! George Morgan, with his little wooden ukulele, does a grand turn. Without backing he sings with great style. His rendition of "Baby" is superb.



George Morgan

It's all happening at Crewe—by Brian Edge

Well I got loads of telephone calls and electronic mail concerning our September concert saying how much it had been enjoyed which was really very rewarding. The show certainly went without a hitch and the artistes all performed well. Not one song was repeated during the evening. Not only did the artistes perform well but also our audience excelled too by being so warm and friendly and for being so attentive whilst the artistes are performing. Thanks everyone for that.



Our Master of Ceremonies, Jonathan Baddeley, kept the show rolling in fine style, keeping the audience supplied with all his latest puns and quips which never fail to receive either a laugh or an outburst of friendly hisses. Whilst Jonathan was amusing his audience with his wisecracks his wife Pamela was quietly and efficiently planning the order of the show. They are a real good team. It was good to have Steve Hassall back on stage along with his drum kit, and it was nice to see Wynn and Fred Stevenson and Andrew Little again.

Guests present for the first time were John White, (the Chairman of the Memorial Hall Management Committee) his wife and son Jonathan who happens to be Ashley's tutor at Dane Bank College. Also present was Jerry and Margaret two new Wistaston members. We hope that they all enjoyed their evening with us.

After the opening thrash Steve Hassall showed that he had lost none of his skill on the uke during his summer absence when he opened the show with Formby favourite "*You Can't Stop me from Dreaming*" which he followed with one of his own jazz medleys. Connie performed the Formby number "*I don't Like*" and followed up with the popular "*Lambeth Walk*" which gave everyone the opportunity to join in. Don Chalkley contributed "*You don't need a Licence for that*" and then performed a new Formby number that he had learnt entitled "*Dare Devil Dick*." Cliff Royle gave us a flash of his "*Little Ukulele*" and then sang a Dickie Speake composition "*The Formby Fans are Meeting Tonight*." After Walter Kirkland had told us about "*His Little Tool shed in the Garden*" he invited all the Osseologists on stage to perform a comic medley. Alice Cronshaw then asked "*I Wonder Who's Kissing Her Now*" whilst cruising on a "*Slow Boat to China*." A great number that and well performed by Alice. I remember over 50 years ago seeing Tessie O'Shea singing the same song to nearly 1000 servicemen in Fassberg, Germany. The lads went wild, standing up and shouting and cheering as Tessie entered the stage. "Don't all rush at once" she cheekily quipped, "There's room for all of you!"

After performing a duet with Jonathan Baddeley on Clarinet to the tune of "*Avalon*" yours truly tried out a new Formby number from the film "*No Limit*" entitled "*Riding Along on a Rainbow*." The song had never been performed before at Crewe but thanks to a Jonathan Baddeley providing the backing it became possible went down well. George Formby only sang a very short stanza during this number, as the main artiste was the famous impressionist Florence Desmond.

Everyone's favourite Arthur Newton took us "*Sitting on the Top of Blackpool Tower*" and then we were all transported to where "the bulls don't put it over" "*Back on the Farm*." Wrexham's Jim Knight sang one of his favourites "A Long Time Gone" which he seems to have renamed "A Terrible Hell of a Long Time Gone!" Then came a bones medley. I must say I am getting a bit concerned about the bones; everybody seems to be getting them. Could it be an epidemic? Mind you, having said that what could be better than the introduction of Eunice

Evans into the bones thrash, as her ever smiling face is a joy to any performance. After the interval we had the pleasure of Frankie Wood's International Puppets presented by the talented Alison Nadin. There were some new puppets on show. The hen that laid three eggs that got bigger each time. One wit, a certain Harry Jones, commented that it would be a good laugh if the hen laid a square egg. Cor! stone the crows Harry it was hard enough for Henrietta to lay a normal one never mind a square one! Other puppets on view was the gorgeous Corredna who delightfully performed "Tie a Yellow Ribbon," followed by that great cockney sparrow with a reet Lancashire name 'Arry 'Ardcastle who rattled his watch-chain and gold Albert right through "Any Old Iron" without dropping in single word. It was debut for old Fagin who's kleptomania compelled him to perform "You've got to pick a pocket or two." There's no show complete without punch but the punch in this show is Frankie Wood's favourite Mr Bones. The puppet show would not be complete without the services of the spotlight operator Jean Nadin.

The Penyffordd Three Tenors (Frank, Phil and Deg) were in full force this month and they sang a medley of popular songs and then had the audience "Zooming" with the popular Formby number "It's in the Air." Vera Jones sang a nice medley which included "Bye Bye Blues" and "Somebody Stole My Gal," and Bill Turner sang "Walk Tall" without the aid of a rocking chair. Redditch's Alan Evans performed two numbers including Max Millar's "Lets have a ride on your Bicycle." Alan's performances are ever improving and what a nice voice he has. The jazz band resurrected the old favourite "Dr Jazz" and this was followed by an excellent performance without backing by David Watkin who impressed with "I Love My Baby" and "Paddling Made-line Home" which was complete with introductory verse. Fred Stevenson showed us that he had lost none of his talents after his illness that has kept him off stage for so long and we were delighted that he was able to give us all a demonstration of his yodelling talents which is a rare form of singing these days in this part of the world.

Jonathan Baddeley gave a solo performance on his clarinet of the Nat King Cole hit "Unforgettable" and he and Pamela then played and sung George Formby's last recording "Banjo Boy." Jonathan wishes popular supporter Joan Cain a Happy Birthday and everyone joined in the singing. The penultimate act was Alan Newton who gave a great performance of the "Yankee Doodle Dandy medley and finished his spot with a truly great number "There's No Business like Show Business!"

Top of the bill was ever-popular "Whispering" Carl Basford. It is great to have Carl back in full swing and I can tell you he will soon be resuming his duties as one of our resident M.C's. Carl sang a new song "Delivering the Morning Milk" which featured in a Formby film and ended the night with a "He's a Grand Old Man." And so say all of us!

Many thanks Brian.

Our Jim

I'll tell you a story about our Jim.
 When he sang at a party and they threw tomatoes at him.
 Now tomatoes are squashy, with a soft skin.
 But these wasn't soft they were still in the tin.

 I bought my wife some bloomers from the market two pounds ten.
 She gave them to her mother, now I won't see them again.

<p>It was their 25th Anniversary and this CHAP bought his wife a brand new fur coat, which was made from Hamster skin. It looked very smart on her and fitted her well. But the only problem was, when she went on the big wheel at Blackpool she went round and round for eleven hours and they couldn't get her off.</p>
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Young Cliff (my hero) on Penyffordd

So what did we have last night. A somewhat lower attendance than usual, but still plenty of entertainers, resulting in a near midnight finish. So a good night was had by all under our M.C's Jim Knight and Yours Truly. Our always smiling Jim Griffiths opened the show with a couple of Formby songs and a few of his jokes which livened thing up somewhat. He was followed Alan Newton who apologised for not being at his best having had a flu jab the previous day and a little "curry" at tea time. As Jack Jones would have said. Get it? Alan started with a lovely medley and finished on Auntie Maggies Remedy which hopefully helped overcome his maladies. Another friend from Crewe, Vera Jones, followed with one of her wonderful songs from the past.

Once again we were blessed with the twiddling of Gerald Jones from Llandudno Junction. I get his residence right but the M.C. always has a problem with the address even though he lives in Wales. Gerald asked us to sing "Happy Birthday" for someone; only to subsequently divulge that it was actually his birthday that we were celebrating. One of his songs was an unaccompanied performance of "Andy the Andy Man". Jonathan Baddeley gave a great performance on the clarinet by playing "Unforgettable". It was superb. I had to subsequently ask him what the name of his tune was. My memory; Unforgettable!. Jonathan does some wonderful backing tapes. He had just done one for me of "That Little Back Room Upstairs" in "D" as an alternative to the one in "C" to which Alan Chenery plays. I played this straight off the press, and by all accounts it suited my voice much better than the one in the lower key. So thanks Jonathan. Regrettably I have no musical knowledge so any support is welcome.

Alice Cronshaw, the Swinton Songster, sang as one of her songs "Have you ever been lonely". Don't believe it with Walter in the wings. Then two of the "Three Tenors" entertained us in their usual jovial manner. The third member was currently away, and both Phil and Frank are neither too well at present. But they never let us down. Greg Simister was superb both in his presentation and playing. When playing "Lads of the Village Get Cracking" he was accompanied by his Dad "Bob" and Stan Watkinson who were marching up and down and acting the fool. It was just great, and how Greg kept on playing with all that going on I do not know. Well done Greg, we are proud of you. Actually Greg gained third place in a recent Talent Competition held in the Floral Hall at New Brighton. The general opinion was that he should have had a better placing. Keep it up ; your family are really proud of you.

Alison Nadin came up with a spectacular new puppet show which included a chicken laying huge eggs, and the singing pickpocket Toppo from Fiddler on the Roof. Yes a talented entertainer par excellence. She was ably assisted with the lighting by her Mother Jean. Jean had been given a raffle prize by a neighbour. It was a really nice gold coloured metal wall clock made in the form of a Uke. It was won by Jim Griffiths who I understand kindly gave it to Chrissie Bussingham. Thanks Jim for your nice thought, and a big thank you Jean to the lady who gave you the prize. Of course any donation of a prize for the raffle is always appreciated.

Jim Knight followed but was somewhat stumped when he found his song had been sung by others but soon came up with the alternative of Blackpool Rock. Then he invited Walter Kirkland up to play the bones together with a novice player Jack Bolton who regularly attends Crewe and here with members of The Edge Veteran Motor Cycle Club. Jack really got into the swing of things and caused much amusement by his antics. Well done Jack. What a good sport. Brian Edge's "King of the Swingers" was interrupted by a couple of gorillas, Greg ...

Bob. I think it came as a surprise to Brian to find what was going on behind his back on the stage. However not to be outdone he carried on, with "Riding around on a rainbow". Des Redfern turned up early tonight so he almost got a chance to play before it got dark. Only kidding Des. He played "Forty shades of green" and the that noisy arm waving favourite "Out in the Middle East".

But where would we be without the "Pastits"; the two Stans. Wonderful as usual with their Banjo and Uke accompaniments to songs from the past and present coupled with some humour and that sentimental song "You'll never find another fool like me" which I am sure brings back memories to the older generation. Our Railway supporters Connie and Brian Edge sang "Riding on the Choo Choo Choo" following a brief description of living in a Railway property in the bad or was it the good old days?.

We were cheered up by Walter Kirkland who always performs so cheerfully especially when he sings "Happy go lucky me". He then followed with another "Bones" session with Jim and Jack. We were just short of Eunice Evans and the Crew "bones" players to gain a World Record. The evening was ended in a spectacular manner by Tom Meredith who lay down his uke and sang a couple of lovely sentimental songs including "Don't laugh at me 'cause I'm a fool". Tom has not been too well just lately but we are glad to see him back enjoying himself on the stage once more. Keep singing and smiling Tom!

And so came the end of another very enjoyable night in the Welsh Valleys!!! Can I now add a few important notices.

Our Christmas Party is on Friday December 6th, when there will be a buffet supper and the usual entertainment. Cost £5 for Adults, and half this for children. Tickets must be booked and paid for by the November Meeting so that catering arrangements can be confirmed.

Please do not forget our Practice Nights. Next one is on Thursday November 14th at the VILLAGE INSTITUTE. We particularly welcome learners, but anyone with a little or a good deal of experience is most welcome.

Sorry to hear that Jim Bramwell's Wife Joan has not been too well. We all wish that she gets somewhat better in the near future.

Thanks young Cliff. I notice your articles are getting longer and longer, and longer, and long... You'll soon be filling the book yerself.

Anthony Mason gave us an hour's spot when

Stan Watkinson & I (The Past It's—Well & Truly) entertained at the Ashton Festival on Thursday October 10th and he had every one of the 150 audience in uproar, laughing at his tales of woe when he was at school. "I hated sports" he said, in camp style, and with a very strong, clear voice, "and Andy Farrell (now Gt Britain Rugby League captain) who was six foot tall when he was 12 years of age, didn't like me. In fact he hated me." His tales of woe went on and on and the audience, especially the ladies, loved every minute.



15 year old Anthony with TV Weatherman Fred Talbert

Anthony travelled from Essex specially for the show—got stuck in the three hour hold-up on the M6 and after the show went back to Essex again to see his little boy, Elliott. Over the past couple of years he has studied stage work, learning to speak clearly and projecting the voice. His mentor is the late Noel Coward, who he impersonates very well. You'll have a surprise if he visits any of the meetings and you'll see how he has progressed since he played at the GFS concerts as an 11 year old. He's just made a film—more news later. Great work Anthony.

S.O.S for "Other Side Of The World" - one of Jack Jones's songs. We don't want to upset the publisher so here's the words and chords to the first verse and chorus only.

Now I got a notion while crossing the ocean that the world was anything but small

But when I landed here it was soon very clear that it's not so big after all

CHORUS
'Cos there's your own kith and kin there to welcome you in, on the other side of the world

There's the same kind of folk who crack the same kind of joke, on the other side of the world

And if you go for a stroll you'll see a flag on a pole, and meet the people who kept it unfurled

And when a couple's honey-duvin, it's the same old kind of loving, on the other side of the world

D  Bm  Em  A7  E7  D7  G  B7 

G & B could tell a tale. On radio he stated that Beryl wrote the above song, but I have the actual Consignment dated June 22nd 1947 and it goes: "In consideration of the sum of £20.0.0 (£20) hereby received, I, the undersigned disposes of the entire rights in all countries, publishing, mechanical, broadcasting, singing etc. of the songs: 'The Other Side Of The World' and 'I think It's Going To Happen Tonight' to George Formby Esq. Signed Fred Godfrey".

Jim's still a fan of a certain little lady

By **LES LEVER**

HALF a century ago a keen George Formby fan struck the right chord when 'a certain little lady came by', swept him off his feet and followed him down the aisle to a lifetime of happiness.

Jim and Myra Knight, who live in Rhosddu, Wrexham, married in Aberdaron Church in 1952 and they have just celebrated their Golden Wedding.

Myra, 71, met Jim, 73, when she was working as a nurse at Wrexham War Memorial Hospital just a few years after the end of the Second World War.

She said: "I can remember our wedding day very clearly - it was warm and sunny and many of our families were there to wish us well.

"After the wedding we went to Dover for our honeymoon - I had a sister living there at the time."

Jim worked as sub-postman

ter in Bradley for 25 years or more, and when he finished there he was employed at Rubery Owen Rockwell until his retirement.

The couple have two sons, Matthew who now lives in York, and Karl who has moved to San Diego, California, as well as three grandchildren, Russell, Katherine and Ben.

Success

Myra, a Welsh-speaker and member of Merched y Wawr, said: "I think the reason our marriage has been a success is because we both try to see things from the other's point of view.

"We both belong to the Bradley Over-60s club and we also enjoy walking a lot together and we're lucky enough to enjoy good health.

"Finally we're both big George Formby fans - Jim and his friends recently raised about £1,000 for Hope House by appearing in concerts over a six or seven week period.

"Jim's favourite Formby song is *Leaning on a Lamppost* and I must be the certain little lady who came by 50 years ago!"



More from Professor Richards—George was one of the earliest stars to get involved with ENSA and he and Beryl took a concert party to France at the very beginning of the war, before Dunkirk even, and he was performing close to the front line. He made a great hit with "Imagine Me In The Maginot Line" and then they were evacuated just before Dunkirk to entertain the troops throughout the war.

It's an extraordinary thing that he was so popular with soldiers and I think it boils down to the fact that he was a reminder of home. There was this very ordinary homely figure out there with them at the front, but he cheered them up and made them laugh, because humour was very much a part of the ENSA outfit.

Real stars appearing in person to make you laugh was appreciated. And if to tie this in with the fact that George was more popular than Gary Cooper, Errol Flynn and James Cagney. I think that ordinary soldiers appreciated an ordinary bloke as it were, fighting the war along with them, rather than celluloid he-men fighting the war on the screen.

A Member of Vox Pops (Was it a group?) This was recorded specially for the 1992 South Bank Show on TV.

Well, it's like I say, he had personality, the smile, the way he played the uke, brilliant. Yeah, I loved the songs, yeah. I prefer the sound of the uke and I liked George as himself. I loved his films, his songs, yeah, I loved the instrument and I loved the way he did it.

Well, I met him in my youth, that's a long time ago. In my day he was one of the lead stars. I played the uke, very badly indeed, until I got to know the Society, I came here to the last meeting and learned a few tricks. It's the first time I've played it reasonably well.

I suppose it was his approach to life, he was not one of us because I'm from North Wales and he was one of these here, you know, Wigan, that sort of locality. He made a lot of friends amongst local people and it's very interesting to see the youngsters—makes you spit watching them. He invented all those little strokes and did all the variations and I don't think anyone has come close to him for technique. Oh yes, there's a triple, a split stroke and he would hit the bottom string going down with his finger and then he'd lift his finger off and then hit the bottom string coming up, and then he would hit the top string going down. He was brilliant!

When I first heard George I was very young, about four, and there was nothing else like it anywhere. Everywhere I went it was always pop music which wasn't happy. But Formby's is a very happy sound and especially with the uke, which he played so fast.

Does anyone know who Vox Pops were.

TOP JOKE IN GERMANY: A general noticed one of his soldiers behaving oddly. The soldier would pick up any piece of paper he found, frown and say, "That's not it" and put it down again. This went on for some time, until the general arranged to have the soldier psychologically tested. The psychologist concluded that the soldier was deranged, and wrote out a discharge from the army. The soldier picked it up, smiled and said, "That's it."

TOP JOKE IN SCOTLAND: I want to die peacefully in my sleep like my grandfather. Not screaming in terror like his passengers.

George Mitchell – Black & White Minstrels

MUSIC arranger and conductor George Mitchell was a pivotal figure in creating one of the most successful variety shows on television. For two decades *The Black And White Minstrels* entertained millions with a singalong medley of tunes, supported by a leggy dance group, the *Television Toppers*.

He directed and conducted the shows each week and was always seen on screen. But, because he only turned to the camera to take his final bow, he was regarded as having "the most famous back in showbusiness".

The song-and-dance routines were punctuated by stand-up from entertainers such as Leslie Crowther, George Chisholm and Stan Stennett and the show – which won the Golden Rose of Montreux trophy for Best Television Show in 1964 – spawned a long-running theatre production.

By the late Seventies the era of variety shows on prime-time television was drawing to a close. The public also felt increasingly uneasy about seeing performers blacking up for entertainment in a multi-cultural society and the final curtain came down in 1978.

Born in 1917, George Mitchell was the son of a salesman, which led to the family uprooting from their native Scotland to Leeds.

The family then moved again to north London, where the young George completed his education. He trained as an accountant and when war broke out he was assigned to the Pay Corps.

During the war years he formed a small army choir, *The Swing Choir*. In a sign of things to come he composed, arranged and conducted. The venture became so popular that the singers appeared on radio shows, including the



BBC's *Variety Bandbox*. The choir broke up on demob and George returned to life as an accountant until, in 1947, BBC producer Charles Chilton asked him to arrange some spirituals for a new radio show, *Cabin In The Cotton*.

When it came to recruiting singers Mitchell turned to many of the ex-soldiers he worked with previously and formed a new group, *The Glee Club*. Bookings soon flooded in and, in 1950, his singers sang in the first of 11 Royal Command Performances.

Topping the bill at major theatres around the country and appearing frequently on television, it was not long before the singers caught the eye of another BBC producer, George Inns. With Mitchell he devised the style and format for *The Black And White Minstrel Show*. Beginning as a stage tour the show transferred to the small screen in 1958.

Bob Hunter, who joined the Minstrels in 1959, remembers Mitchell – who received an OBE in 1975 – as a true professional who was not without a sense of humour. "During rehearsals



George would always play the piano. At times he'd hit the wrong chord. He'd either bang the piano lid down or play a fistful of notes with both hands and say, 'Well I know the one I want is somewhere in there!'"

AFTER the Minstrels finished he retired and with his second wife Dorothy Ogden, a former *Television Topper*, bought a plot of land in Florida. They spent the next eight years dividing their time between America and England. When a minor stroke confined him to a wheelchair they returned full-time to the UK.

Mitchell is survived by Dorothy, whom he married in 1977, and his son and daughter from his first marriage.

● *George Mitchell, born Falkirk, Stirlingshire, February 27, 1917. Died Staffordshire, August 27, 2002, aged 85.*

RICHARD WEBBER



Roy Castle

WHICH comedians did the wonderful "lion in a shoe box" routine? I remember Roy Castle being part of this trio.

This was Jimmy James, joined on stage by Eli Woods and Roy.

The three discussed the contents of the box with expert timing and painstaking asides and explanations, Roy being convinced that Jimmy was "putting it around that I'm barmy".

The trio always finished the routine with a song, usually *I Want to Hear My Dear Old Granny's Song at Twilight or Kisses Sweeter Than Wine*.

Singing sisters
HOW many records did the Andrews Sisters record with Bing Crosby, and are they still alive?

They recorded 46 songs with Bing. LaVerne died in 1967, aged 55, and Maxene died in 1995, aged 79. Patty is now 84 years old.

They performed together until 1954, when Patty pursued a solo career.

They reunited in 1956 and performed together until LaVerne's illness in 1966.

Rose Marie Great Artist.

If you enjoy listening to good Irish singalong and knees up nip along to the music shop and pick up a CD called "Rose Marie—Galway Bay. It is really great to listen to and she is so talented. If you have problems obtaining a copy

you can log on to www.musicbank.co.uk or write to Music Bank Ltd, Norfolk NR29 3AA. The reference number on the CD is: APWCD1182.



Songs include: *When Irish Eyes Are Smiling, How Can You Buy Killarney, Molly Malone, If You're Irish Come Into The Parlour, The Wild Rover, Danny Boy, It's A Great Day For The Irish, Sweet Sixteen, The Leaving Of Liverpool, I Will Love You All My Life, The Golden Jubilee, How Great Thou Art, There's A Little Bit Of Irish, Mother MacRee, The Green Glens Of Antrim, I'm Going Home To Ireland, How Are Things In Glocca Morra, Galway Bay, and An Irish Lullaby.* What a grand selection!

The great thing about Rose Marie is that she is so versatile with her repertoire of songs. She can sing any type of number from religious songs, with tons of feeling, to nice quiet ballads, or red hot jazzy numbers.

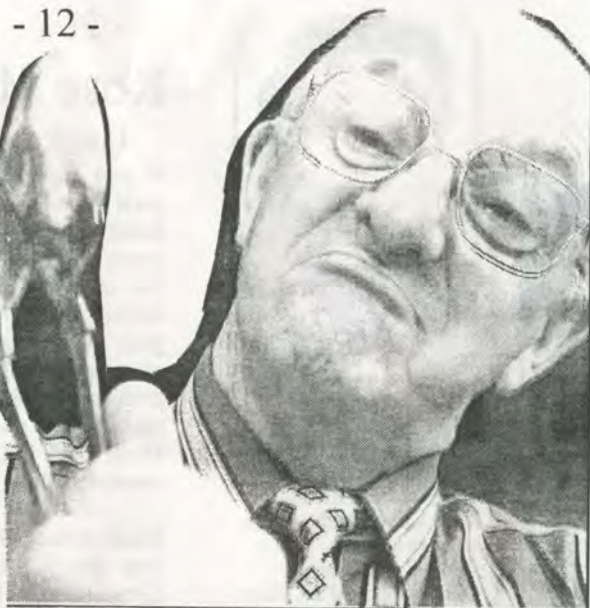
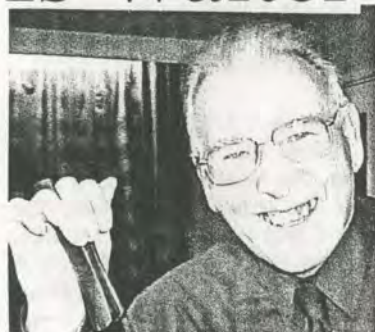
If you want to spend a bit more cash you can order the same on Video from Music & Memories, Par Moor Rd, Cornwall PL24 2SQ. They'll send you a catalogue of all the oldies on tape/CD/video.

The extra bonus in watching the video is that you can learn from a top professional artist like Rose Marie. She has the gift to be able to get the packed audience singing, clapping and enjoying every minute of the show. And these Irish audiences really love a good sing song. She makes it into a party night.

Where possible, Rose will help the local children's group. On video she has the backing of *The Clanyre Dancers*, - a group of about 20 children who appear to be aged around 12 to 15 years. Great Stuff.

SPACE FILLER—Just received a phone call from Anthony Mason who is on his way to Essex to see his little boy.

Our World Champ Is Walter



Hey! What's This?

Bert, on the right, claims he is the world champion spoons player, maybe so, but he couldn't match up to our World Champion Bones Player, Walter Kirkland. Walter and his bones have toured the world with his George Formby friends: Crewe, Ireland, Amsterdam, France, Belgium, Blackpool, Sale, Liverpool and other places too numerous to mention.

And he can clap his bones from any angle: under his legs, behind his back, on his head, on one leg, one eye shut, both eyes shut, and sing round corners at the same time. Our man is a genius! Nay! A double genius.

Anyway, the National Weekly News is interested and they're thinking about a challenger for him. Walter, who is in strict training, is ready for anybody.

URI GELLER isn't the only man in the world who has a way with spoons — Bert Draycott would certainly give him a run for his money.

He's once again been crowned World Spoon Playing Champion.

Pensioner Bert has held the coveted title for almost 30 years, after winning the competition in 1973.

Since that fateful day, no-one has dared challenge him, until recently, when he emerged victorious once again.

The former miner explained, "I learned to play the spoons about 50 years ago when I was serving in the army."

Bert, who's 72, is so proud of his achievements, he uses the letters WSPC (World Spoon Playing Champion) after his name.

A local pub provided the perfect venue for the recent competition, and two budding percussionists tried their hand at beating the master.

Contestants were marked on their style, rhythm and flair, but it was Bert's specialist moves and a rendition of the *Sheikh of Arabia* that claimed the title, as well as a gallon of beer donated by the pub.

"The most important thing to remember when playing the spoons, is how to hold them," continued Bert, who lives in Fishburn, County Durham, with his wife Maureen.

"Once you're doing that right, then you can develop your own moves.

"I use ones called the Shot and Stott, the Blackhall Bounce, the Shatford Shake and the Newcastle Knuckle Bang, as well as lots of others.

"Competing leaves your knuckles red raw, but I won't let that put me off — I'll definitely be challenging anyone who wants to take me on next year!"

You know you're living in the year 2002 when:

Emailed by Brian Edge

1. Your reason for not staying in touch with family is because they do not have e-mail addresses.
2. You have a list of 15 phone numbers to reach your family of three.
3. You call your son's beeper to let him know it's time to eat. He e-mails you back from his bedroom, "what's for dinner?"
4. Your daughter sells girl guide cookies via her web site.
5. You chat several times a day with a stranger from South Africa, but you haven't spoken with your next door neighbour yet this year.
6. You pull up in your own driveway and use your mobile phone to see if anyone is home.
7. Every commercial on television has a website address at the bottom of the screen.
8. You buy a computer and 6 months later it is out of date and now sells for half the price you paid.
9. Your dining room table is now your flat filing cabinet.
10. You hear most of your jokes via e-mail instead of in person.
11. You get an extra phone line so you can get phone calls.
12. You disconnect from the Internet and get this awful feeling, as if you just pulled the plug on a loved one.
13. You get up in morning and go on-line before getting your coffee.
14. You wake up at 2 am to go to the bathroom and check your e-mail on your way back to bed.
15. People walk the streets talking and clutching one ear.
16. When pupils know more than teachers.
17. Youngsters talk in a digital language that oldies can't understand.
18. When you no longer black-lead the grate, red-rattle the front doorstep, starch the shirts, and posh and dolly-peg the washing.
19. When the washing isn't done only on Monday morning.
20. When youngsters reply with "Ugh", which in their language means Yes, no, or don't know.

More From The Medical Dictionary

by young Cliff Royle

Rectum - Nearly killed em. Secretion—Something hidden. Seizure—Roman Emperor
Tablet—A small table. Terminal illness—Ill at the airport. Tumour—More than one
Urine—You're not out. Varicose—Near by. Barium—Instructions to the undertaker
Bacteria—Cafeteria's back door. Morbid—Higher offer. Pelvis—Elvis's cousin.

Many Thanks—Jim and Myra Knight wish to thank everyone for their card, kind comments and best wishes they received for their 50th Wedding Anniversary

Two Uke Banjos For Sale—Tony (always reliable) Marshall on 0113 2740111 is selling a Maybell Slingaland and a Bacon. With cases and in good condition. Both were made around the 1920s with plenty of tension hooks to give good clear sound. Price £295 each.

September Song

by Cyril Palmer—We met on our usual 3rd Friday with two days of Summer to go, the earlier dusk giving warning of the onset of Autumn. I enjoy the Summer, but there is a cosy feel about the Winter meetings. For my wife, Sheila, it was exactly the 3rd anniversary of breaking her hip. Thankfully the pain stopped at the beginning of 2002, but there remains the memory of the wonderful thoughtful support from all our Formby friends. I try to meet newcomers to our meetings and this time I found Peter Owen from Poynton enjoying his second visit- I hope that's the second of many.



The entertainment began with Eddie Bancroft taking the stage. This was particularly enjoyable because it is nearly two years since Eddie last sang for us when we were still at the Woodheys Club. He played and sang "Mr Wu's a window cleaner now." A good performance noticeably more confident. Well done, Eddie, we look forward to next month.

Walter Kirkland sang of his "Little toolshed in the garden"- (full of his motorbike bits?)- followed, of course by a bones medley. Then a pleasant diversion as Alan Chenery sang "Little back room upstairs" to the sweet strains of a small ukulele, switching to banjolele while "Riding on a Blackpool tram." For my turn, after Cole Porter's "Miss Otis regrets", I missed the treat as Hilda Southworth and Vera Eaves swayed seductively behind me, Hawaiian style, to my rendering of "Hula heaven." Was it coincidence that Alan Southworth then "Went all hot and cold" and smiled as he sang "She's got two of everything."

Jack Valentine suggested "a sailor" as the answer to "I wonder who's under balcony now?" by following with "The fleet's in port again." Paul Kenny took us towards the interval on "The Wigan boat express" --no-one on strike there! --and "He was such a daring young man." Mac McGee, longing for "Biceps, muscles and brawn", took us to the interval with Buddy Holly's "Raining in my heart"- from 1959 and I still think of it as a modern song!

The thrash after the interval was followed by a rousing chorus of "Happy Birthday" sang to Pat Chenery, who was presented with a card containing the good wishes of all present. Ever ready for a bit off un, several of our players shouldered their instruments to march round Stan Evans as he sang his own song, "I play it on my uke banjo." Brian Edge switched the theme to "riding, first "on my motor-cycle" and then "Riding around on a rainbow." He then listened with interest to Connie singing "I don't like"---"full of passion she could be," etc. We then joined her enthusiastically in the "oi"s of Lambeth walk.

Alan Newton gave us his comic impressions of some of our members and after "Auntie Maggie's remedy" we sang along to "There's no business like show business." Arthur Newton sang "Careless love" and "Down in the valley." -shows Arthur's hidden depths when the two titles are strung together! Then Frivolous Sal was featured in "My gal Sal." Alison Nadin provided a comic break from singing assisted by Alf and grandson Charlie. How does she do that? I have trouble enough singing with one voice.

Greg Simister once again showed his youthful expertise with "Believe it or not" and "The Lancashire Toreador," and, believe it or not, he's been playing for only about two years.

In answer to a request from the Taverner's members room, Mike Barrett from Liverpool sang "Granddad's flannelette nightshirt." The club is under new management, represented by Elaine this evening. Elaine expressed great delight with the evening's entertainment. This concluded with the "Some of these days" medley (Walter, Mac and Alan Southworth,) Alan Chenery was "Putting on the style," and Paul Kenny insisting "They can't fool me." Once again a brilliant evening. *Thanks Cyril. Great Night!*

Ryfields Village—Stan Watkinson & I got a

surprise when we arrived at the new retirement village in Warrington. What a wonderful place it is, and we felt honoured to have been asked to put on a show to get the entertainment started in this brand new complex.

We were the first to set foot on the vast stage in a massive hall, - complete with a huge dining area. In about 20 minutes we had our equipment set up and ready for starting. (Our equipment looked lost on such a large stage). But before striking up the band Shirley Houghton, the Entertainments Manager, gave us a grand tour of the Village, and what a surprise we had. It had just about everything: 226 private flats, 17 bungalows, workshops, a huge gymnasium, hairdressers, a relaxing room with a projector that throws relaxing pictures on to a screen with music to match the theme, saunas, swimming pool, cafe, bar, shops, lifts to all floors, a huge grand piano in the lounge, large comfortable chairs to lounge in, and much more that we didn't have time to see. Residents can rent or buy the apartments.



As it was all new, only about 40 residents had moved in so our audience was small. However, they were very grateful that we'd come along to entertain and they soon joined in with the "Singalongs". Volunteers took no time in jumping up to do the sand dance for "Out In The Middle East", with Tommy Cooper fezzes, and the final song also went well with three wounded soldiers marching to Josef Locke's "The Soldier's Dream".

ENTERTAINERS WANTED—Now if there's anyone out there who wants a ready made audience, give Shirley a ring on 01925 573486 and she'll be pleased to set up a show for you. There is no payment as it is all voluntary, (or petrol money) but it is good experience and they are a good crowd to play to. Maybe you could give a talk. My granddaughter, Jennifer, is the Music Teacher at the local school and she rang Shirley to ask if her six year olds could come along to sing. Shirley was chuffed, "Just what I want." she said.



Blackpool - One of the grandchildren called to say that he'd tuned in and heard the tail end of a radio programme announcing that there would be a meeting of George Formby players at the North Shore Cricket Club, Blackpool. "Good" I thought, must get down there early to grab a seat and take extra Newsletters. What a disappointment to find that all the regulars had gone off on holiday and hardly anyone had turned up. However, we had a grand night—as usual—and we all had three helping of grub. Alan Chenery has settled down as the new M/C.



New M/C at Blackpool

As usual, Des Redfern added some great atmosphere to the night especially when he was heckled for not rehearsing his songs. Stan & Stan (The Past Its—Well & Truly) sang a newly composed song, "Playing On Me Uke Banjo" but struggled with the music stand which insisted on slowly spinning round and collapsing to the floor. It was doing its own show and enjoying the applause.

Des later sang with Stan & Stan but no-way will he ever make a Past It. As Des said, "I don't want to be a Past It, - I've not even been there yet!" Again I must report that Charles has done a really excellent job of setting up the sound system.

Oh Dear—They've No Idea! By Stan Evans.

Some 50 years ago I was a prominent founder member, driving force and club captain of a particular sports club, and a few months ago I contacted the club treasurer to inform him that the year 2002 will be the 50th Anniversary Year, - and did they intend arranging anything? To this I received a very negative reply. A month later I rang again and was told that details would be in the Guardian.

On Friday the 27th I stumbled across a small notice asking for all past members, and especially founder members, to turn up the night after, - Saturday. They'd hired a rugby club hall for the occasion. "GREAT", I thought, and immediately dug out all my 50 year old photos to take along to show them, - assuming that some might be interested in how the club was originally formed and some of the past members.

Well I turned up on the night and was immediately attacked by two young ladies who insisted that I bought a full strip of about 12 bingo tickets before I could be allowed to go in. "BINGO?" I said, "Who the hell wants to play bingo at a 50th anniversary?" "Well" she said, "if you don't buy the tickets we'll have to get the bouncers." I couldn't believe what I was hearing. I threw the money in the bowl and told them to keep the tickets.

I stood alone at the bar for 30 minutes, drinking a pint of shandy, when all of a sudden the disco started up and rattled every bone in my body. It was so loud I up-tipped the whole pint on the floor. My God it was LOUD and it was made louder with the fact that the ceiling was very low. The noise was dreadful. I tried to contact a committee member but nobody appeared to know who they were.

After another 30 minutes, three of my old friends from the past turned up and we attempted to have a conversation. That's if you can call shouting down each others lug holes a conversation. The noise went on and on and on. Nobody was dancing so I didn't see the point. And then the disc jockey brought out his latest novelty. It was a very loud scratching sound like someone scraping a dozen needles back and to across an LP. My goodness it was bad and a headache was coming on rapidly. The scratching wasn't even in the same key as the tunes, but nobody knew any difference.

It was now quarter to ten and up to then absolutely nothing had happened giving any indication that it was a 50th anniversary, - only the terrible disco. By that time, enough was enough and we made a sharp exit to the door and back to sanity. What a relief it was to get outside in the fresh air and away from the dreadful head banging noise.

It would appear that these younger folk today have no idea of how important these reunions are to the older folk. Perhaps someday they will understand. One consolation though: It's a good job I didn't walk in carrying my ukulele.

Email from David—My wife and I visited the Formby grave for the first time and noticed that four are buried there. Who are they? We know very little of the family.

Thanks David. George senior died 1921. George junior 1961, and Eliza (George's mother) died 1981 (aged 102). Louie (George's sister) had a young child Georgina, who died at the age of five in 1954. Those are the four. The grave was a vault and Eliza would regularly go down in the vault to talk to her husband, GF senior, who was embalmed.

Email from Mary Dear Stan, I am Principal of Newbridge College, Co Kildare, Ireland, where it is believed George Formby went to boarding school for a while - I cannot find evidence of this and wonder if you know anything about it. It is also believed that George rode horses at the nearby Curragh Race Course, Co Kildare. If you can throw any light on these matters, a response would be greatly appreciated. Regards Mary O'Mahony

REPLY—*Thanks Mary, Ray Seaton wrote in his book: George was training at Curragh Camp stables. In October 1915 he was admitted to Athgarvan village school and each day he had to walk a mile from Ballymany. Due to this he was seldom in class when the roll was called, although he had risen early enough to feed and clean out the horses.*

In 1952 when George & Beryl had bought a £20,000 house in Dublin's fashionable Foxrock suburb, the school sent an invitation to the boy who was always late, asking him to pay a visit so that the staff and ninety seven pupils could pay tribute to the school's most famous old boy. Mrs Catherine Kileen, who taught him singing said he had the best voice in the class. 'A fine little lad,' she added.

It's That Secret Spy Again—Hello Stan, You missed a superb night at Wistaston. However, I wonder where the Master of Ceremonies got his material from-it certainly wasn't from Burtons. Anyway, it seemed tailor-made for the audience. It's nice to know that not only chickens appreciate a bit of corn. There was one entertaining chicken who laid eggs of various sizes at the start of the second half-no yoke!! It is rumoured that Don Chalkley has a new job advertising a special shoe cleaner-it certainly was his most polished performance to date. Can it get any better at Wistaston? As the cook once said-only thyme will tell. S.S

Email from Sam, Hello Stan, please settle an argument. My drinking pals and I have a bet on where George Formby was born. I say Hindley, near Wigan, and the others say Warrington.

Well Sam, I hope you haven't bet your right arm and your bike on this one because you are wrong. In fact you are all wrong.

George was born on May 26th 1904 at No.3 Westminster Street, Wigan.

Louie (born May 27th 1906) isn't sure where she was born. Living at 3 Westminster they had a flood and moved into a shop in nearby Turner St. We feel sure she was born there because GF sen. had letter headings for this address at the same time. She also thinks that she may have been born in nearby Dieconson Street, although the birth certificate reads Westminster St.

Ella was born July 2nd 1910 in Warthey House, Wigan.

Mary was born Jan 21st 1912 also at Warthey House.

Frank was born 1st April 1913 at Hindley House.

Ethel was born March 13th 1915 also at Hindley House

Ted was born Oct 5th 1918 at Hill Crest Warrington.

Hope this is OK for you and let us know if you want any more information. No problem.

TOP JOKE IN THE UK: A woman boards a bus carrying her baby. The bus driver says, "That's the ugliest baby I've ever seen." She sits down at the back of the bus, fuming, and said to the man next to her, "That driver has just insulted me." The man says, "You go right up there and tell him off and I'll look after your monkey."

Frank Wappat—What A Grand Chap!

A few Sundays ago I was driving my car, - it was 5.50pm—and the most wonderful sound came from Radio Merseyside. It was an old time orchestra playing a medley of all the old songs, “You Are My Honey, Honeysuckle I Am The Bee,” - “Oh You Beautiful Doll, You Great Big Beautiful Doll,” - “You Called Me Baby Doll A Year Ago.” It went on and on pouring out these great old songs and it reminded me of the old days at the Blackpool Tower Ballroom when the room was filled with dancers. It was the most wonderful I’d heard for some many years and I couldn’t get it out of my head.

I had an appointment at 6pm so I couldn’t wait to hear who was presenting the show or the name of the orchestra.

The following morning I rang our Liverpool newshound, Tom Bailey, who rang Radio Merseyside and was told that the show was presented by Frank Wappat, and if I sent a letter in they would direct it to Frank in Newcastle. This I did.

About two weeks later, when I’d given up hope of receiving a reply, I received a phone call and it was Frank on the phone, - how kind of him. “Hello Stan,” he said, “I’d rather have a one to one conversation so here I am.”

Unfortunately he couldn’t help me with the name of the tape/CD/record because his programmes go out to many radio studios and he’s not sure which one they’ve used. However, from the description I gave, he thinks that it could have been the Sydney Thompson Orchestra playing a selection of oldies for the dancers.

S.O.S.—So is there anyone out there who can throw any light on it or who might have a copy of Sydney Thompson playing for the ballroom dancers. Give me a ring if you can help.

Email from Amy—Stan, your article on Dolly Clifford’s experience

with George in the last issue (88) was interesting but I think I remember reading an earlier article of yours on the TV programme “Goodnight Sweetheart” and if I recall correctly you claimed that George didn’t drink.

That’s right Amy, the film writers depicted George as a drunken and senseless idiot who was completely under Beryl’s thumb. I wrote to them and they apologised claiming that the only evidence they had was from a story told at the BBC studios.



Definitely not an idiot



A hard worker for George

But I didn’t say that George didn’t drink. He enjoyed a drink like any other artist, and I suppose he had the odd fling when Beryl wasn’t around. But in the TV show they portrayed George as a regular idiot even before he’d had a drink, and Beryl as an evil dragon constantly peering down on him. They didn’t show him as a brilliant highly paid entertainer who, with Beryl, both risked their lives at the war fronts singing to the fighting troops. They had tremendous guts travelling thousands of miles in the hot desert, and deserve credit for this, - not to be classed as a pair of simpletons. It is annoying that this particular episode is often repeated on TV.

Trip To Dublin—Alan Chenery informs me that the coach to Dublin next year is full but they have half a coach load on the waiting list. If another 24 names are added to the list we can run two coaches and have double the fun we normally have. If you are interested get on that phone to Dolwyn Shone on 01244 544605 and get your name down. Don't leave it late because these George Formby trips are getting more popular each year.

TV—Just had an enquiry from a TV Research Dept for a load of George Formby players, but that's all the information they would give at this stage. More news as it comes in.

George Tyrer Jokes (I'll bet you've got these from a Christmas cracker George.) Here goes and everybody get ready to laugh your socks off.

What do you get when a dinosaur walks through a strawberry patch? - A strawberry jam!
(We've got em laughing George)

What do you call two banana skins? - A pair of slippers! (They're holding their sides George)

What is a vampire's favourite fruit? - Neck-tarine! (They're in the aisles George)

What fruit steals honey? - Yogi pear! (They've gone home George, - we'll get em next time)

Two Ukes for Sale—Derek Lucy on 01978 758729 is selling two uke banjos: A Keech with Tuition Book for £100. And an American Jedson for £60. Please give Derek a call if you are interested and don't forget to mention George's Newsletter



Dennis Lee from Cyprus Emails—Hiya Stan,

My computer has been at the mendors for the past 5 weeks so I've been off the air. I needed a new motherboard if that means anything to you. Anyway I'm now hopefully back to normal.

We have 7 people at present learning to play the uke. They come to my place every Thursday morning for a practice session and are doing rather well. They are full of enthusiasm which helps tremendously. We've broadened our concerts to include music hall and they've really taken off.

Last week we had 135 people in the club whose capacity is 110. They were hanging out the windows & doors. What a night! They were quiet as mice during the acts but sang their heads off during the medleys. Between acts they were noisy, boisterous and heckled me in a fashion that would even put Charlie Penman to shame! We close the bar during performances and open up in the intervals which we find is much better. In addition to the Formby favourites we have a comedian and a keyboard player who bashes out medleys of the old songs like "Lambeth Walk", "Down at the Old Bull & Bush" etc. Monologues are also a feature and we are constantly looking for other acts. I announced that we'd have a Xmas Party at a posh hotel but that the minimum number would have to be 70 and the maximum 100. Before the meeting ended we had 118 names!

I now need to go back to the hotel to see if they can accommodate that many. Still looking for 2 uke banjos in the £75 - £100 bracket. Have you found me any yet? Best wishes to all our friends and a big hug for Eva. Dennis.

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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