

THE

GEORGE FORMBY

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Welcome To Newsletter No. 91 and a

very Merry Happy Christmas to everyone. When we look at the atrocities in other parts of the world, we realise how lucky we are in this country. Some of the scenes we see on TV are really dreadful, starving children surviving in war torn lands.



Happy Christmas and
A Wonderful New Year

However, we are very fortunate to be able to live a free life, with plenty of food and enjoyment. Perhaps when we have a complaint to make we should remember this. We are very fortunate.

As usual our meetings have been successful with every seat in the house taken, and, the quality of our player's performances is improving every month. Anyway, that's enough of me so read on.

Email from K&J—We've just read part of George

Fornby's biography which has left us confused. We can't believe that George had a sad life with Beryl and was under her thumb. Was it true?

Thanks for your mail. This is my pet Fornby subject. There is no way I can accept that Beryl was an ogre to George. George pined for the support of a mother figure from being thrown out of the nest at the age of seven, and Beryl, with two feet on the ground, was perfect in that role. She took all the responsibility away from George so he was free to do the thing he was best at, entertaining. He also had a dual personality which enabled him to swing from seriousness to little boy comedy.

But quite a lot Beryl's bad publicity was due to what George told the media after Beryl's death. He desperately needed someone to fill Beryl's place, but at the same time needed the support of the public when he announced that he was to marry Pat Howson. "We've not had a happy marriage" he told them.

But George was a very clever chap. He could manipulate the public and the media into believing anything he wished. And he had such an innocent face that everybody trusted. He also knew that Beryl, - up in her heavens, wouldn't mind being a martyr. She thrived on it. Nothing could rock Beryl. George & Beryl were perfect partners, and that's why they were successful.

When Stan & I

were entertaining at The Davenham British Legion we were approached by one of the old war veterans who told us that when George & Beryl were flying from camp to camp, entertaining the troops, the pilot had to crash-land the plane at Almaza, near Cairo. He went on to say that George was so scared that he had a double accident.

Another veteran told us that when George came to entertain us, they were told to keep the applause down because we had to listen out for the mortar shells that were coming over.

Just received a Christmas card from Cyril and Sheila Palmer what and a nice surprise. They've done a fine job in equipping Father Christmas with a banjo uke. Great job!



Christine & Janet from Milton Keynes, have just spent a few days with us to do all their Christmas shopping. As they walked into our flooded house disaster area they said, "Good, it's just like camping, eating off us knees." Both are members of the GFS and Christine (Left) is the widow of the late Jeffrey Booth, nephew of George. Here they are struggling to get their goodies into the car. "Shopping" they say, "is half the price in the N. West compared with the south." They'll be with us again end December for the Ken Dodd Show, (with Andy Eastwood)



STOCKBROKER Derek Williams-Freeman (above), 58, drives a 50-year-old Silver Wraith Rolls-Royce once owned by his boyhood idol, George Formby (inset). He bought it for £3,400 28 years ago and has insured it for £60,000. He is single and lives in London and Hampshire. Derek says:

WHEN I bought my car in 1972, I had no idea the Rolls-Royce had a celebrity past.

I was looking for a model from the Forties or Fifties so I didn't hesitate to hand over £3,400 — my annual bonus — even though I could see the engine needed lots of work.

Up to then, I had driven taxis. The only time I had sat at the wheel of a luxury car was when a friend let me drive his Bentley, so buying the Rolls was a dream come true.

The car's history came to light six years ago when I sent off its chassis cards after I had restored it. I was flabber-

gasted when the name George Formby OBE came back on the records. He bought it from new in 1950 and owned it for a couple of years.

I was over the moon because he had been my schoolboy hero. I would love to know some stories from those days. If only the walnut dashboard could speak.

Day-to-day, I use a BMW for getting around and the Rolls stays in the garage. I use it for special occasions, such as friends' weddings, and I love telling people about its past.

I don't know how much it is worth. A motorbike owned by Formby recently fetched £14,000. But I'd never sell the Rolls. To me, it's priceless.

Ukes Wanted

There's been quite a number of phone calls recently from people looking for ukes. I've suggested that various GFS members have ukes to sell but they claim that the sellers are asking far too high prices. Some are asking as much as £2,000 knowing that, if they hold on long enough, they will find a buyer.

They also claim that Jack Jones's ukes are being sold at a price that Jack's old friends couldn't afford to pay.

This is a great shame as I'm sure that Jack would have wished his friends to have had the first opportunity to buy them.

HELP—We are struggling for one liners to fill up the spaces.

Also have you got any snippets of news, or stories to tell us? If so, send em in and we'll print em. Any jokes? Clean uns.

What A Happy 70th-

Twenty-three artistes entertained at the Crewe November Show where the attendance was a magnificent one hundred and seven.

We always set up the show at 4pm, but when Chris Metcalf arrived with a load of pork pies and chicken legs and Harry Jones a car-load of sandwiches - I began to think that I must have lost the reins as something was going on that I was not aware of. It transpired that for a number of weeks Connie had been arranging a buffet supper to celebrate my 70th Birthday, and so, at last, the cat was at last out of the bag!

Well I can say that I had a wonderful night with all my friends around, who all made a big fuss of something that I was trying to pretend wasn't happening at all. I got loads of wonderful cards and presents. It seemed that everyone in the world new it was my birthday! I would like to thank everyone for their best wishes and kindnesses.

The MC for the evening was our Editor Stan Evans, who always has loads of fun manipulating his audience. His assistant was to be Carl Basford but unfortunately Carl is under the weather again so Arthur Newton had to be drafted in at the last minute. It was a big night to be thrown in at the deep end but Arthur did a splendid job handling all the artistes that turned up on the night and the show went like clockwork.

There were so many artistes on the night that I shall not attempt to go into all their performances in detail but suffice to say that they all gave their best on the stage and everyone agreed that it was a real good show. Tom Meredith showed off his miming talents with two Jolson numbers and few can do it better than Tom. A professional artiste under the name of Gary Mac came for the first time and performed "Windows". Gary said that he usually plays the guitar but does a couple of Formby numbers in his act. Then there were "The Past Its-well and truly" aka the two Stans (Evans and Watkinson). We had the "Three Tenors from Penyffordd" and that high standing performer Andrew Little who is always welcome on our stage. Andrew performed "I'm the Ukulele Man" a Formby number which has only been performed by Andrew at Crewe. Alan Chenery and Pat came to the party all the way from Fleetwood and Alan came up with an old ballad that had been conveniently adapted to "Its Brian Edge's Birthday Today!" Actually it was not my Birthday until the following Tuesday but it really *was* our very own Pamela Baddeley's birthday that very day. Pam and I always seem to have this problem and it wont go away, but as one would expect of Pamela she was happy to let me have the limelight on my special night. Gareth Sumner was able to come again after some months absence and he had certainly lost none of his talents. Even our own Des Redfern turned up in good time (must have been one of Stan Evans' miracles). My old friend Phil Jones and his friend Jed came along for the special event and Phil played in his usual quiet style a couple of Irving Berlin numbers and Jed almost blew up one of our aging speakers with a song that he had written about his Grandma who had a gun in her handbag. There are always fireworks on stage when Jed is around! As I have said all the other artistes performed well on the night and we thank them all for coming along and putting on such a good show.

One of my special gifts was that of a lovely Birthday Cake brought for me by our ever faithful Jean and Alison Nadin and Frankie Woods of Rhyl. It was the biggest cake I have ever had in my life and it was decorated in the form of a book (signifying the books that I have written over the years), a ukulele Banjo and a number of coins (representing by main interest in studying old



coins and tokens). Harry Jones got me a nice picture of the cake so although it has now gone I will always have a record of the kindness of my friends from Rhyl.

Connie was pleased that there was plenty of food to go around and she would like to thank everyone who contributed in anyway to the success of the evening.

Well Brian we are all very pleased that your special night was a great success, because after all the work you do for the Formbyites, you deserve it. Every member attending the Crewe meetings has benefited from your encouragement one way or another, and I'm sure that they all thoroughly appreciate it. I certainly appreciate your help in contributing to our Newsletter. So here's to another successful 70 years, - CHEERS.

I LIKE BANANAS



I reported in Issue 89 our experience when my granddaughter marched 60 schoolchildren (aged 5 and 6) to the new Ryfields Retirement Village in Warrington, and how they enjoyed singing George's "I Like Bananas." That was for the Harvest Festival.

Well we did the same thing again, with the same 60 kids, but this was a Christmas Show with around 15 carols.

I supplied the sound equipment and as I was sat at the sound desk the 60 kids had to march past me to get to the stage. Every one of the kids had a beaming smile as they passed by and almost every one of them whispered, "Can we have Bananas?" with cheeky grins.

They performed their carols very well and the packed house of retired folk joined in the singing. But as they were singing they kept looking at me to make sure that I'd not forgotten their request. Their show was over so I stood up and asked them what they wanted. "Bananas" they all shouted.

What a wonderful sight it is to see 60 kids with beaming smiles, and who are so delighted with one of George's songs. They lifted the roof with the first verse until they were asked to sing, and not shout. They responded very well. I'll bet George was looking down with pride.

How do you know when you've had too much to drink.

When you start feeding chips to a rottweiler. When you try to change TV channels with a bar of chocolate. When you grab hold of the floor to stop falling off. When you can't find your pockets. When you tell the local bobby he looks ugly. When you sing "Altogether now" in the police station. When you pour your problems out to a lamp post, and you're try to blow the light out. When you wake up in the morning cuddling a traffic cone. When you wife looks like Marilyn Monroe.

Notice on a Spiritualists door: Please don't knock, it causes confusion.

Our Gold Top Super Giant Young Cliff Royle Reports on N. Wales.

Hello Stanley. It is Sunday so you get your posh name.

Well the December Meeting was intended to express our thanks to all those who have supported us during the year not only as entertainers, but also those who help in the background at our Concert evenings, contribute to our informal committee meetings and last but by no means least our visitors whether they visit us either occasionally or regularly. All make our Branch the success it enjoys.



Yes it was the Christmas Party, and it was super, with an attendance of nearly one hundred. A real party spirit, an excellent buffet, a free diary, a visit and a kiss from Father Christmas (Ladies only), chocolates for the children, and some good entertainment. All for a fiver; children half price. You will never beat that. The hall was nicely decorated in true Festive fashion by the British Legion, with the tables similarly decorated thanks in particular to some of our ladies with a little help from the opposite sex. In appreciation of the great support at our Committee and other Meetings there were special presentations to five of our ladies who give us invaluable support. The lady bouncers Margaret the Scot, and Myra the Nurse, Dolwyn our Treasurer, and Jean and Alison Nadin. What would we do without their support? (No I'm not kidding).

Many thanks to those who provided prizes for the excellent raffle which raised almost £100, and to Janet of the British Legion who donated a pack five Formby Videos for Auction. These also brought in just over £50. Thanks very much Janet for your kind thought. The money raised by these efforts is going towards our current charity; the Hope House Hospice for Sick Children at Oswestry. In addition to these amounts Gerald Jones (Jones the Uke) and his Wife Julie have produced some wonderful Calendars and Christmas Cards all based on the Formby theme and including pictures of some GFS celebrities. These were on sale on the night, others are still available. Profits from these items will also be kindly donated to the charity. Prior to this evening over £800 had been donated by us and the monies raised tonight will enable us to reach our target of £1000 by the end of the year. Wonderful!

Due to the time taken up with the buffet and other things all entertainers were limited to one song; even so the concert did not finish until 11.30 and it was midnight before many of us got away. Here may I apologise to those who took the A55 home in an easterly direction; only to be diverted through the streets of Chester. Not easy in the dark when you are not familiar with the town.

So what of the entertainment. Jim Griffiths opened the show, followed by the Three Tenors who sang the Old Kitchen Kettle accompanied by Johnathan Baddeley on the clarinet; Gerald Jones; Alan Chenery, Pam Baddeley, Alan Evans from Redditch, Brian Edge, our young and hungry Gregory Simister, Vera Jones, Cyril Palmer, Jim Knight and Johnathan Baddeley. No I have not forgotten the special events. The "Five Penny" Ffordd Plonkers sang "My Ding a Ling"; a large bones team consisting of Walter Kirkland, Jim Knight, Eunice Evans, Alan Chenery, and Jack Bolton played a medley; the three Tenors dressed in cowboy outfits played as Hank, the Yank and Frank (apparently they are all in the money for they now have individually tailored matching waistcoats, shirts and ties); the Penyffordd Players (three females and a cross-dresser) performed a sketch alleged to be based on the goings on during the trip to Amsterdam earlier this year (apparently they are now unable to perform again until March 2003), and what would we have done without our very own Alison Nadin who put on her excellent Marionette show. Wonderful.

We really look forward to seeing new performances sometime in the future.

There were a few apologies, including one from Paul Woodhead of Telford who sent his Good Wishes to everyone. Paul had not been too well during the earlier part of the year and decided to cut down on his work load. Apparently he has now entered the field of entertainment and is really busy doing local concerts which include magic and other types of singing as well as Formby songs. We wish him well in his new venture.

Well that will have to be the lot, except in closing to say the North Wales Branch wish all our readers a Happy Christmas and a Healthy and Happy New Year. Remember "Health is the First Wealth". Coupled with this may I also express my personal thanks to all those who have made the year in general, and this evening in particular so successful. Cliff Royle.

PS. Yes Stan I did pay you for the uke some ten years ago, but I cannot remember whether you gave me the change or not. *Yes Cliff, I offered you the change but you refused it.*

Neil Forshaw Emails on Earlestown

(Where George started his career) Dear Stan, You asked how Earlestown got its name, so here it is.

On the 1st of March 1853 Hardman Earle (later Sir) the chairman of the L&NWR signed an agreement to lease the Viaduct Foundry from Potts & Jones. This concentrated on the building of wagons, the expansion of the factory entailed the building of houses to accommodate the growing workforce and their families. Some of these streets were named after directors of the company Lawrence, Booth, Chandos & Rathbone, the area then becoming known as "Earlestown".

Prior to 1911 the town had a wooden structured theatre on the market grounds called the "Alexandra" where travelling troupes put on plays etc. But by 1911 the town had three places of entertainment the Empire (Forsters), the Hippodrome (Kemps) and the Pavilion (the Rink). the Rink had opened in 1910 as a roller skating rink but after some 10 months it was refurbished and opened as a cinema/theatre.

It was at the Hippodrome that George Formby jnr made his debut, the manager at the Hippodrome Fred Harrison being an old friend of the late George Formby. Billed as George Hoy (Hoy being his mothers maiden name) "Patter Comedian", a chip of the old block, on the 21st March 1921 George made his first appearance. He returned to Earlestown on the 6th of November 1922 appearing at the Pavilion as George Formby, Jun." an expensive engagement Remember Earlestown gave this artist his first week, See him now."

George made his third appearance in Earlestown in 1941 at the Curzon Cinema, it was a "Spitfire Concert" to celebrate Fred Harrison's 25 years in Earlestown entertainment, he was appointed manager of "Kemps" Hippodrome in 1915. Just as a footnote so to speak. I trod the same boards as George when appearing in the "Dice" skiffle group on the banjo at the Curzon in 1957. Neil. *Thanks Neil. I wondered how the town got its name.*

Cliff Emails: This man asked the chemist for some cod liver oil. "Do you want it in capsule form or in a bottle?" Perhaps I'd better have in a bottle, it's for me bike."



George Harrison Tribute

—We received a phone call from Sandra Quail, who is the manageress at The Beatle Exhibition on Albert Dock, Liverpool. She knew that GH was a Formby fan so she asked for a group of Formby Players to come along to the GH Tribute on Friday 29th November. No problem!



A few phone calls went out and we had instant response from John Shreeve, Joe McCaffrey, Stan Watkinson, Geoff Shone, Neil Forshaw, Andy Little, Mike Turner, Greg Simister, Wilf Murray, Howard Reid, Cliff Royle, Rowland Lee, and our two visitors from Milton Keynes, Christine and Janet. *Hope we've not missed anyone out.*

The setting was a mock Cavern which represented the place that launched the Beatles way back in the earl sixties. The entrance to the Cavern is filled with Beatle memorabilia and all sorts of items are sold over the counter.

The Tribute started off at 10.15am with the children of St Thomas Beckett R.C. High School singing a medley of GH's songs.

At 11am we had members of the Hare Krishna chanting and serving spiritualised vegetarian food. They were leaving the building as we were moving in and each one gave us a ceremonial bow of respect.

At 12 noon, Students from The Liverpool Institute, which was saved from demolition by Paul McCartney, sang a number of songs made famous by George's The Traveling Wilburys.



The St Sabastian's School Choir

At 1.15pm The St Sabastian's School Choir, which George and his wife, Olivia, gave generous donations to, sang a number of beautiful songs and invited the audience to sing along from handed out song sheets. I must tell you that these schoolchildren, - all of them, - looked immaculate in their school uniforms, and it was easy to see that they'd rehearsed their songs and programmes very well. They were a credit to their schools.

At 2pm the George Formby Players performed a number of Formby songs: Windows, Lamp Post, Wu, Middle East, Bless Em All, Ukulele, Blackpool Rock, plus War Time Medley, and We'll Meet Again, and the packed crowd enjoyed them all. They were stamping their hands and clapping their feet to every song, and shouting for more. What a great audience they were. During the La, La, Las in Middle East they lifted the roof. Three players were invited to do solos. Greg Simister as our youngest player on stage, and our Super Giant, Cliff Royle, who now claims that he is an octogenarian, - all 80 years of him. As usual, Cliff did us proud. John Shreeve, with his flash lightening fingers, performed a superb melody. All the lads did us proud and especially considering that none of them knew what the programme was. Great Job!



John Shreeve, Anthony Mason and myself were invited to go to the BBC Studios at 7am on the morning of the tribute. "No way" I said, "I'm not leaving my bed at five thirty in the morning for a two minute interview and a battle with Liverpool traffic." As expected, Anthony also preferred to stay in bed rather than brave the harsh weather.

However, John was loyal to both George Formby and to George Harrison, when he turned up on the BBC doorstep to represent us. He did a fine job.

The Tribute was filmed by Granada Studios but none of our group were shown on the 6pm screening. However we were pleased that the children were interviewed, - we'll deserved.



Boss of the Beatle show, Sandra Quail musically changed the world.

I must admit that I felt a touch of envy knowing that the Beatles have such an excellent exhibition in their honour while George Formby fans are still dragging their feet in setting up a permanent home for George's memorabilia. It is sad but perhaps we will never see this develop. However, good luck to those who have pioneered the setting up of a wonderful tribute to four young boys who



Loyal George Formby fan, John Shreeve

MAL SCOTT TAGGART was responsible for producing some of the programme. Some GFS members will remember Mal, who is also a Formby fan, from the times he appeared at the Winter Gardens.

He does productions for various radio programmes and feeds items into sports and music programmes. He also produces various BBC programmes for commercial release. He Emailed me to report that John Shreeve played the uke on BBC W Mids, Coventry and Warwickshire, Birmingham, Walsall, and Wolverhampton, which is a huge catchment area with an audience of around three million.



Mr Music man Mal Scott

Mal also has a basement recording studio in Southport where he produces tapes, videos, CDs etc. for the market trade. When he is not working on producing music he is entertaining with his guitar at various clubs and hotels around the Southport area.

Marathon man clocks up 80 with birthday biathlon

A QUIET stroll to the pub would be energetic enough for most men to celebrate an 80th birthday – but that's not Cliff Royle's style.

A man who has done 30 marathons, cycled from London to Paris and covered more than 350 miles on a bike in 24 hours looks for something more exciting.

So he will set off at 6am on Sunday to cycle 80 miles, meeting up with his mates from the Weaver Valley Cycling Club on the way to mark the milestone in his life which actually arrives on Wednesday.

And as soon as he arrives back at his home in Churchfield Road, Frodsham, he will park his bike and set off on an eight-mile walk to Dunham Hill and back.

Cliff's birthday biathlon will take him on a round trip via Little Budworth, Northwich and Tattenhall with one or two stops for coffee and lunch.

'I want to show what old people can do,' he said.

'If you don't drink too much and don't smoke there is no limit to what you can achieve at my age.'

Margaret, his wife of 52 years, won't

by IAN BEDFORD

be joining him on his day out. 'She will be at home with my son,' said Cliff. 'She doesn't say much, but I know she thinks I'm barmy.'

Cliff, who worked for British Nuclear Fuels before his retirement, has been a runner and walker since leaving school, taking part in road races with the Lancashire Walking Club and Salford Harriers before joining the Weaver Valley Cycling Club in 1971.

He is proud to be one of only 1,000 people since 1987 to complete an official long distance walk, covering 101 miles in 22 hours and being eligible to call himself a 'centurion'.

Walking or riding once or twice a week has become a way of life and he has no intention of stopping. 'I am definitely slowing down, but I will carry on for as long as I can,' he pledged.

And even when he is not doing that he doesn't believe in putting his feet up for long.

He is an enthusiastic member of the George Formby Society, playing his ukulele with up to 25 other Formby fans at concerts all over the region.



FIT FOR LIFE: Cliff Royle of Helsby who celebrated his 80th birthday by doing an 80 mile bike ride and an eight mile walk.

Ken Dodd's Jokes Were Rib-ticklers

From Mrs GS, Stockport to The Weekly News. Ken Dodd is appearing at a local theatre in the New Year and, although he's one of my favourite comedians, I don't know whether I dare risk going to see his show.

A few years ago, my husband and I went on an organised outing to see his show at the City Of Varieties theatre in Leeds, where the Good Old Days used to be recorded.

I was laughing loudly from the outset and by the interval, I was aware of a sharp pain in my side. It had eased slightly by the time we sat down again, but throughout the second half, any laughter was painful—but it was very difficult not to laugh, as Ken was really on top form.

I was still in a lot of pain the following morning, so I went to see my doctor. After explaining what had brought on the pain, he examined me and told he thought I had cracked one of my ribs.

He sent me for an Xray and, sure enough, it showed that Ken's rib-tickling jokes had indeed cracked a rib. That's why I am wary of a repeat performance. *And what a wonderful letter that is. Thanks to The Weekly News.*

A Recording Tip—The normal mini discs that we use are 74 minutes. This means that we can record up to 74 minutes on each disc. But this is for Stereo Recording. All Playing Systems that we use at our meetings (as far as I am aware) are for Mono playing only so there is no point in recording on Stereo. If we record in

Mono we should be able to record up to about 120 to 130 minutes of playing depending on the length of spaces between each song. In other words about 40 songs on each disc. All on Mono.

ANOTHER LITTLE TIP—When you jump up on stage to do your spot always test your mike for sound quality. If it sounds too squeaky like a debate in the House Of Lords, ask the operator to turn the Treble down, or the Bass up. If it sounds like you are buried under 6 foot of earth ask the operator to turn the Bass down or the Treble up.

MIKE TESTING—When you test the mike you should feel the mike slightly pulling the sound from your mouth. If it is not pulling then ask the operator to raise the mike volume slightly until it is.

Email from Flo—Stan can you give me the words to a song called "Dreaming?" I can fill my own chords in. Thanks Flo, I know a few words to get you started, and I'm sure that some of our readers will fill the rest in for you. It goes like this:

Dreaming, just idly dreaming, dreaming and scheming on what I might have been. Might have been a tailor, tinker soldier sailor, instead of just a failure, that's what I've been. Never mind the sorrow, we'll borrow for tomorrow da, da, da, da, da, HELP. Is there anyone out there with the words to this song?

Barbara Allan—by Brian Edge.

It was a special treat to be able to welcome two of our faithful supporters Brian and Mary Allan of Alsager to our November meeting after some months of absence. Brian and Mary have not been able to come as a result of Brian's sister Barbara's long illness and subsequent death. Brian and Mary write:

"We wish to express to all our sincere thanks for your support and sympathy during Barbara's long illness. Please pass on our thanks to all members at Wistaston for their expressions of sympathy and cards which were received. Formby nights were the hi-lites of Barbara's life. She looked so forward to each month and enjoyed every minute. She is now at peace. Thank you all again."

BOB HODKINSON—The Wistaston Society would like to specially thank Bob for his continued kindness by donating a lovely ornamental barrow that he had made and filled with vegetables complete with a bottle of wine along with a request that it be auctioned for Society funds. The auction raised £20 and thanks must go to Bob for this, and indeed all the very special contributions that he has made over the years.

WISTASTON MEMORIAL HALL GOLDEN JUBILEE CONCERT

John White the new Chairman of the Wistaston Memorial Hall's Management Committee recently arranged a special get together of groups who hired the hall in order to put on an evening of entertainment with a triple purpose: to help to publicise the individual groups, to raise some money for the hall and above all to give the community a pleasant evenings entertainment. It was a very successful evening that commenced with some excellent Irish dancing by two young girls aged nine and five. Their exhibition was outstanding and few in the audience had ever seen such a presentation by two people so young. They were truly magnificent and the ovation they received at the end of their spot was a true reflection of the audience's appreciation of their overall performance, skill and complete professionalism. Their spot was followed by a group called the *Blazing Saddles Line Dancers* who gave a display of their hobby.

Next to perform was four pairs of Scottish Dancers who gave a truly wonderful performance, the ladies elegantly dressed in flowing white dresses and the men in full Scottish dress. They gave a breathtaking performance that left the audience agog at their skill and indeed their stamina. They were a joy to watch.

After refreshments The South Cheshire "George Formby" Ukulele Society took the stage and gave a 45 minute concert. Alison Nadin followed this with a twenty-minute show presenting Frankie Woods International Puppets. The audience loved the puppet show. The evening was concluded with the ensemble playing "Leaning on a Lamppost." Those taking part in the show were Jonathan Baddeley (M.C.) Pamela Baddeley, Alison Nadin, Don Chalkley, Brian and Connie Edge, Alan Newton, Arthur Newton, Walter Kirkland, Colin Wood, Ron Whiston, Steve Hassall and Angela Caldicott (Sound). Harry Jones and Philip Griffiths assisted with the set up.

Mr White thanked all who contributed to a wonderful evening which raised £240 for the Memorial Hall Funds.

I wonder if Des Redfern has forgotten to turn his clock back. He turned up on time at Crewe.

Ella (George's Sister) Formby's TV Interview

Mother pressed George to fill father's place on the stage and she went to the theatre managers to appeal to them to give George a start. He did his act but he wasn't good. Then one week Cliff Edwards, - Ukulele Ike, was on the same bill. He was playing the ukulele in the dressing room and my brother thought it to be a good time to approach him. "I like that" he said to Ike. "Is it hard to play?" Ike loaned him his uke and George spent the week practising. George went out to buy himself a ukulele and we'd all sit round and watch his fingers working up and down the strings. When he left the uke around the house we would all take turns at practising with it and that's why we all learned to play the instrument.



George was playing at The Argyle Theatre, Birkenhead, and he impressed the manager, Mr Clark so much that he allowed George to sing and play one of his numbers, after he'd done his act. It was either "All By Myself In The Moonlight" or "Rose Of Washington Square" that George performed, which brought him a terrific round of applause. After his success with the uke he slowly began to drop father's stage clothing for his own style and his own type of comedy. The ironic thing is that George was the only one in the family that hadn't seen father's act on stage. And yet he turned out to be the most successful. The rest of the family would take turns in going to see father performing on stage. I would stand at the side of the stage and sing along with him. I knew all his songs in those days.

It was natural for us to go on stage as we were constantly surrounded by stage people. There would always be stage people visiting us who were either friends of my father or George's. I was a chorus girl in a Gracie Fields show and I was a holy terror, always laughing and giggling in all the wrong places. One night we were performing in Edinburgh and I'd over done the cider to the extent that I was a little tipsy. I went on in the dance line-up having forgotten to tie my shoe lace. When I high kicked my leg, my shoe came off and landed on some students in the audience. Mr Courtney, the manager wasn't too pleased and told me that one of us had to go. Either me or him. MORE NEXT MONTH.

Lonnie was their inspiration

I WAS really sad to hear that Lonnie Donegan died recently, but I was also delighted to hear tributes from so many famous musicians who acknowledged he ignited their interest in music-making.

My brother and I had our own skiffle group in the 1950s and early 60s, and this was all down to seeing Lonnie and his group on our grandparents' TV.

We both saved up our pocket money and did paper-rounds and other little jobs to get enough to buy second-hand guitars.

Three friends provided the "skiffle" — a tea-chest bass, washboard and biscuit-tin drums — and we practised every night before making our debut at a church dance.

Looking back, they were really great days, and we loved the adulation we received during our brief moment of fame. — Mr R. L., Surrey.



Lonnie Donegan.

"Keep your seats, please." ~"t Sale

by Cyril Palmer

Some meetings just take off from the start, and so it was at our November meeting. There was a great atmosphere and every available seat was needed. Boosting the attendance were Phil and Janet Hatswell with Bob and Judith Townsend from Yorkshire. It was a pleasant surprise to see Phil so soon after his replacement hip operation. Judith, in good form, sang "Always" (Deanna Durbin) and the livelier "Music, music, music" (Nellie Lutcher) -1925 and 1949 respectively.



We welcomed two couples, visiting for the first time, from nearby Stretford and Davyhulme. At the interval their opinion was: "Absolutely marvellous, we'll be coming again!" Also we had Tom (Jolson) Meredith from the Wirral. Tom sang Formby this time. ("Balcony" and "Our Sergeant Major.") Add Des Redfearn and the grand total for the evening was sixty-four. (There's a cue for a song!) Earlier, Arthur Newton opened the evenings entertainment. He still insists "I wish I was back on the farm." Well, with "fun and plenty of it" who can blame him? Walter Kirkland, irrepressible as usual, has adopted "Happy-go-lucky me" as his theme tune. Alan Southworth ever optimistic -"When I come up on the football pools." Alan Chenery brought tears to some eyes with his rendering of "It's my mother's birthday today," though I hasten to add it was not down to his singing. just sheer emulsion-oops!-that should be "emotion."

Jack Valentine was next--two songs with lovely rhythms -"Sitting on top of the world" and the ever-popular "T. T. Races." Paul Kenny continued the Formby theme with "Fanlight Fanny" and "Little Ukulele," and, of course he wields a great little ukulele. Then, after Tom Meredith, came a break from the uke as Alison Nadin took on the role of Living Marionettes. The evening, already jolly, became hilarious. In her self-constructed booth Alison was the marionette. Although miming to recordings, Alison used her eyes and facial expressions with wonderful effect, transforming the songs, and making it a hard act to follow. Fortunately it was Alan Newton next- he'll follow anyone! (There must be a better way to put that.) Alan began with the V sign that's to say "The V-sign song." Then a song filmed by the all-singing, all- dancing James Cagney -"I,m a Yankee Doodle Dandy," taking us nicely to the interval, and we needed a break by then! Oh, the sheer excitement of it all!

After the refreshments and raffle the entertainment continued with a thrash before Alice Cronshaw had us singalong to "Smile" and "If you were the only boy (girl) in the world" The energetic young-at-heart Cliff Royle enthused about "Swimmin' with the women." Connie Edge sang my favourite from her repertoire, "I double dare you." Husband Brian joined her to go "Sailing" before doing his own thing. After the antics of "Fearless Fred the fireman." we heard the cheeky "Let's have a ride on your bike." Judith, mentioned earlier, sang before the youthful, but expert, Greg Simister took the stage. He must have an extensive repertoire, which now includes "You can't stop me from dreaming." Some of us dream of playing like that. Jon Baddeley sang the blues- Chinese laundry style, and was rocking the night away- with "Blackpool rock!" Margaret Moran's "Paper roses" is on audio tape, while "I only have eyes for you" is on her C.D. It was getting past our bedtimes when the Past-Its took the stage, re--living the past (what else?) with the popular "If I had my life to live over" then their medley "You'll never find another fool like me." Just before the final thrash, Des Redfern sang "Saving up for Sally" and a Formby song not often heard, "Swing, Mama" -a fitting end to another most enjoyable meeting.

Thanks Cyril, it was possibly one of the best nights ever.

HOW'S ABOUT A LETTER TO THE GEORGE FORMBY NEWSLETTER?

The Past Its—It's been an unusual month for our concerts. Stan W & I (The Past Its—Well & Truly) started off our Christmas Concerts with a visit to a ladies club, and as soon as we walked through the door I thought, "Oh God, it's the same crowd we entertained last Christmas, and they were all utterly miserable." We unloaded our equipment, set up the mikes etc. and jumped up on stage. "Hello everybody, we are The Past Its! And we've come along to entertain you." NOTHING—NOT A MURMOUR—STONE DEAD!!!! I whispered to Stan W. "We are in for a rough ride here." And we were!

Usually our opening singalong gets them in the mood for a party hour, but not this lot. They were determined to sit with glum faces.

We packed up earlier than usual, and while we were loading our equipment we were approached by the lady steward of the club. She was angry that we'd received no response from them, and suggested that we should have moved into the back room where she and her friends were singing their hearts out. As we carted our equipment through the front door the Domino Club lads said that they couldn't concentrate on the game for listening and singing to the old songs.

Our next concert was at The Davenham British Legion where we were met by a sea of happy faces. This lot, who joined in with all the songs, were easy to entertain, and it was a great pleasure to be with them.

DARKNESS NIGHT—Our next show was at The Bickerton Motor Cycle Club which is led by our George Formby favourite, Walter Kirkland. Walter engaged us to put on a show and create some laughter. Now if ever you are invited to go to the Bickerton club for goodness sake don't get your directions off Walter. Over the phone he directed us as if it was the easiest place in the world to find. "One left turn and you are there" said Walter. What he doesn't explain is that the tiny village is miles away from civilisation and is completely blacked out. Also there isn't a soul around to ask the way. NOT ONE!!



I called in this pub to ask the way and the lady said, "Turn back and first right," which we did and we were still in total darkness. Nothing! In the distance we saw a light and discovered that it was a church. I walked in and got my first sight of civilisation. It was a committee meeting of about 30 people (probably half the entire village) who were very helpful when I asked directions. A few hundred yards up the road and we were greeted by a tidal wave of happy smiling faces. The club members helped to unload the equipment and within 15 minutes we were ready to start. The show went with a bang and Walter did a fine job in conducting it. He also did an half hour spot with his uke and bones.

After our show, at 11pm, we had help again in dismantling and just as we were loading our trolley, all the lights went out. Again we were in complete darkness and a voice came from the toilet, "Switch that light on." One of the lads drove his headlights on to the club and we said good-night to them all and a very pleasant evening.

Down the road, still in the dark, we found the reason for the power cut. A driver had smashed into a telegraph pole which was carrying the electric cables, which were draped across the road. We may have been in a black-out but they were a wonderful crowd to play for. Many thanks Walter for inviting us. And to Jack for joining in with the sand dancing and comedy marching.

GF Sunderland writes in—this little boy sat on the bus crying his eyes out. The conductor asked him what was the matter, "I've lost my ball" he sniffed. "Don't cry" said the conductor, "I'll find it." He looked under every seat on the bus but without luck. "I'm sorry," said the conductor, "I can't find it." "That's all right," said the boy, picking his nose, "I'll make another."

Alan Chenery Emails from Blackpool—Hi Stan, Just a line to let you know we had a good night last night, 38 turned up, four visitors from Chester. We had eight players Steve Abbott, Rob Brisset, Frank Bennett, John Mason, Don Horton, Alan Middleton, Des Redfern & Yours truly, So Charles & Eva are still doing a good job But we did miss "The Past Its"

Sorry you missed us Alan. I was very busy baling out at home after our flood. However I'm pleased that you had plenty of talent.

Trevor Email—Hi Stan, Went to see Ken Dodd at the Lyceum on Tuesday, surprise, surprise, Andy Eastwood was on the show despite him saying he was not appearing, what a great performance he gave nearly took the show only on for about 15 Minutes but he was great. Started with My little ukulele then sang a medley of Elvis Presley tunes as though he would play them on the uke he then sang a country western number on the guitar followed by a bit of classical music on the violin before returning to the uke to play an American medley including eyes of blue act, he finally finished his stint with Lamp Post and had all the audience singing along. WONDERFUL, Knockout Performance, should not be missed by any George Formby fans—Trevor

Ludwig Copy Uke for Sale—Pro artist, Gary Mac is selling a Gold Plated Phil Cartwright Uke Banjo. (No, it's the uke that's gold plated not Phil) It is in perfect (original) condition, with a shaped case. The cost was £795 but the asking price is £600. Also TWO CANDY STRIPED BLAZERS one tailored at £15, and the other is cotton made, at £35. Ideal for the budding artist. You can phone Gary on 0151 339 1492.

HELLO THERE'S AN EMAIL COMING THROUGH—and it's from Gary, the lad himself. Hiya Stan, Thanks for a great night at Wistaston Memorial Hall last Friday. It was an excellent evening which gave me the opportunity to meet new friends. May I congratulate the young man (Greg) who performed with his ukulele, he is on his way to becoming a rising star. I had a wonderful conversation with your partner, Stan. And I was impressed with desi uke and his knowledge of ukes. I hope to get the chance to go to the Formby meeting at Penyffordd the first Friday in December, I would like to see Geoff Shone and meet other members of the society.

LADIES AND GENTLEMEN, a little song entitled—Don't muck about with yer father's glass eye, he needs it to look for a job.

AND another little song entitled—Get off that gas stove grannie, you're too old to ride the range.

NEWS FLASH—Flash Harry, the world's most notorious stolen goods receiver was killed today. He fell off the back of a lorry.

Our Russian Friend Anatoly G Uvarov Emails—

Dear Stan, Two years ago I received from you (via my friend Arthur King) the audio-cassette with songs of George Formby. He is my the most loving British actor and singer which I first seen and hear during the I I-d WW when, we Russians, had with pleasure seen the famous comedy "Let's George do it". I had sent a Fax to you where I wrote that G. Formby was not been decorated the Order of Lenin and not been acclaimed a national hero of Russia. Sometimes I am listening this cassette, but can not understand any words and the song in whole. I would be very glad and thankful if you can send me copy of all George's songs written on that cassette (from 1. "Leaning on a lamp post" up to 10. "Our Sergeant Major") and "The Story of G. Formby Life 1904 -1961". Your very sincerely, Captain Rus Navy [ret'd] Anatoly G. Uvarov
 My address: Post box 60. St.Petersburg 194100. Russia. E-mail: papa@lek.ru
 Fax: (812)-311-40-89

Thank you Anatoly. I can't remember which audio tape I sent you but if you list all the songs you require words for I will send you the words. Also if you can play our type of videos I will be pleased to send you a copy of "Let George Do It", which is an excellent film with great songs. Look forward to hearing from you.

Secret Spy again—

Dear Stan, It's me again, The Secret Spy. What a night at Wistaston. I'm sure that the Birthday Boy, Brian, was pleased with the whole event—although did he mean it when he sang "Give Me A Chance To Be Twenty Again"!!! As usual, Steve Hassall played out of his skin on the drums—I bet that his neighbours were pleased that he was with us.

Mention should also be made of Alan Newton who sang the Carpenter's song SING. It certainly wasn't a **wooden** performance. I've heard a rumour that he is going to The United States to sing this song, in a prison, and I believe that the headline in the local newspaper will be - Ukulele Player Sings 'Sing' In Sing Sing. All the Best. SS. *Thanks SS. Keep sending em in.*

Joe Taylor writes—

Hello Stan, your story, "My Favourite Video" in Newsletter No. 90, I found very moving. I can imagine the surprise and delight felt by May and Joe Lempkin when they discovered Leslie playing the piano. We moan and groan about things sometimes but a story like that does put things into perspective. I look forward each month to reading the Newsletter.

Thank you Joe. I agree with you. May and Joe must have wondered many times if they'd taken on a bigger task than they could handle, but then suddenly, from out of the blue, came this wonderful talented boy with skill to play classics on the piano and with a rich sounding voice. This was indeed a Miracle.

Neil Forshaw wants to know—

Stan, can you help? I am trying to find what the initials E.N.S.A. stand for. I've asked around and had a few unprintable suggestions but I'm still no wiser. As you know this was the entertainment organisation that went overseas during the 2nd World War to entertain the troops.

Thanks for your query Neil. E.N.S.A. stands for Entertainments National Service Association, which was a British organisation during 1939—1945. And, as you know, George & Beryl were members of it.



Neil

Geoff Shone Rang—Stan, I was playing with the band at the Chester British Legion, for a regimental dinner the other night, and I bumped into an old friend, 83 year old Doug Hall. He gave me a short banjo that had six pegs, but only four had been used. Apparently it had been used as a uke banjo. It is badly in need of renovation but the story goes that it belonged to his sergeant who played it on the 1944 war front. He remembers well him singing many George Formby songs including: "Out In The Middle East" which was very appropriate at the time.

The banjo, which was made in Egypt, has "All over the world, - Chester, Crosby and Jerusalem" written on the skin. It also bears a plate with the words "Establishment, Busnack, Le Clair, Egypt."

Geoff seems to think that this original six stringed banjo is Zither Banjo. Has anyone any other ideas on what it might be? Drop a line if you do.

Two Uke Banjos for Sale—Clive Farmer on 0151 342 1508 has two ukes to sell: One is a Keech with six outside tension rods and the asking price is £95 or near offer. Hard Case.

Also a John Grey Faerie Queen, with eight tension rods and Mother of Pearl resonator. The price is £175 or near offer. Also with hard case.

Blackpool's Winifred Innes writes—Many thanks for spiffing entertainment reading each month with your George Formby Newsletter. Always full of lovely little stories from so many nice folk. I read every page thank you. I enclose some tit-bits and jokes which might fill gaps.

COMPUTER INFORMATION

Elephants are the only animals that can't jump.

The human heart creates enough pressure to squirt blood 30 feet.

Right handed people live, on average, nine years longer than left-hand people.

If you broke wind for six years and nine months, enough gas is produced to create the energy of an atomic bomb.

A drunkard went to his doctor for a check-up to explain his constant headache. "Hmm" said the doctor, "I'm having difficulty diagnosing your trouble, but it could be due to a hangover." "I understand," said the drunk, "I'll come back when you've sobered up,"

This little man came home unexpectedly and found his wife in the arms of another man. Angrily, he grabbed the intruder's umbrella, savagely raised it above his head, and viciously, with all his force, struck down, breaking it over his knee. "There" he cried triumphantly, "I hope it pours down."

Thanks Winifred. Keep sending em in. Sorry we couldn't make the last Blackpool meeting.

Mike Turner's just phoned. He's joined an Accordion Society so, who knows, we might, in future, be seeing an accordionist up on stage accompanying the artists and bones players. Why not? We need more variety.

Trevor Hughes Reports—Did you know Stan that George's name was mentioned on the Des & Mel Show (Des O'Connor and Melanie Sykes) on TV the other day? Dianne Krall, an American jazz pianist and vocalist was asked how she came into music, and she said that she listened to her father's recordings of George Formby. Des was agog!

Geoff Shone—Stan, a few Newsletters ago you suggested that there should be some sort of contact between the Sound Operator and someone at the back of the hall who can signal if the sound is too loud or soft etc. Well, we at Penyffordd have invested in a couple of walkie-talkies so that anyone at the back can give the operator a buzz if the sound needs tweaking. How's That?

Great Geoff, and if Stan W & I are there we'll volunteer as sound operator's assistants. Do we get a badge?

Appeal From Alan Chenery—For Sunday the 24th of July 2003 we have been invited to perform on an open top tram through Fleetwood, which is part of the Fleetwood Transport Festival. Also there is a display of Vintage cars & Buses, Motor Bikes, Steam Engines etc. along with Trade Stands, Model Railways, Gathering of Town Criers.

Alan, on mobile: 07967 665069, is looking for any players who wish to take part on the day. More news on it later. It has a web site—www.fleetwood5.fsnet.co.uk

You've Got It Wrong AGAIN Stanley By Alan Chenery

In Newsletter No. 89 you reported that Dolwyn Shone is running a trip to Dublin. Well it's the first that Dolwyn's heard about it. Actually it is Christine Wood who is taking bookings for the trip and her number is: 01270 663558.

Thanks Alan. You were the only one to spot it. Deliberate mistakes keep you on your toes.

Two Uke Banjos Wanted—Graham Greenfield on 01283 223074 is looking for a Dallas "E" model and also a Baby Gibson. So if you've got any of these for sale give Graham a ring and please mention that you read it in the George Formby Newsletter.

Late Email—I have some photos of George Formby in my collection but they are mainly from the early 1900s when George was about 8 or 9 years of age, on horseback. Were they taken in the Warrington area? And who is a man in the photo who appears to be training George. Can you throw any light on these.

Thanks for your mail. I'm confident that the photos were taken at Hindley House. Hindley, Nr Wigan. Not Warrington. The man you refer to is Uncle John Hoy, Eliza's brother. The Formby family left Hindley house around 1917 when George was 13. Due to the war they couldn't find staff to run Hindley so they moved to Warrington. It was also more convenient for GF senior to get transport to travel to the theatres.



Aged five

George Formby Meetings

North Wales Branch - British Legion, Penyffordd (10 miles from Chester) Every first Friday in the month. Tel Geoff Shone on 01244 544605 Adm 50p. Where can you get a better bargain than that?

Liverpool - Broadgreen Conservative Club, Every 2nd Friday in the month - Ring Tom Bailey on 0151 289 1711 - Bring Your Uke

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

Crewe Branch - Wistaston Memorial Hall - Every 4th Friday in the month - Brian Edge on 01270 569836.

Westhoughton - The Red Lion Pub (Opp. Police Station) Ring Gerry Mawdsley on 01942 817346 - Every last Wednesday in the month. Uke Tuition.

Blackpool. SOUTH SHORE CRICKET GROUND, Common Edge Rd, Blackpool. Every last Monday in the month -Tel Eve & Charles Stewart on 01253 768097. Wonderful Buffet—Always in need of players.

Wintergardens George Formby Society Meetings:

Sat & Sun 15th & 16th March 2003

Sat & Sun 28th & 29th June 2003

Sat & Sun 13th & 14th Sept 2003

Sat & Sun 15th & 16th Nov 2003

Concerts usually start around 1.30pm each day.

Please Ring the Secretary, Sylvia Roe on 01142 846245 for details on the GFS or Wintergarden meetings.

Web Site —Two Lancashire Lads:

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

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

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



Remember: Crazy paving is not always what it's cracked up to be.