

THE
GEORGE FORMBY
Newsletter 92

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Specially Produced for George Formby Fans
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Welcome To Newsletter No. 92 and what a

great month it has been on the George Formby scene. The atmosphere at our meetings has been really electric with good attendances and happy smiling faces, all laughing, even after driving through the most dreadful cold and wet weather.

KEN DODD SHOW. But the biggest thrill for me has been the Ken Dodd Show which was at The Parr Hall, Warrington on Sat Dec. 28th. And the big surprise was when our own Andy Eastwood took the stage to open up the second half of the show. What a great transformation has taken place and it is quite easy to see that Ken has played a large part in transforming him. Andy was brilliant!!! He entered the stage, dressed in a George Formby style white jacket, threw his arms around, introduced his act, and then went into his 20 minute spot. This was variety at its best. His violin spot was superb and his Elvis Presley act, with guitar, was excellent. But for me the highlight was his tribute to George Formby with Blackpool Rock and Lamp Post. He really put them over very well.



Ken Dodd, now 75 years of age is another Cliff Royle SUPERMAN. How on earth they find the energy to keep going has me beat. The show started at 7.45 and finished at 1.10am the following morning. Ken constantly shouted out to the audience, "Are you giving in yet?" And, "Don't worry about transport, the milk floats will be passing soon." The show was supported by a wonderful lady singer and pianist, and also about 15 young children who did three spots with Ken. They were great, so if you get the chance to see the show, don't miss it.

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Andy and his mum and Dad, Chris and Walt, paid Eva and I a visit during the afternoon, and, after a Formby chit chat and a tour of GF memorabilia I went with them to show them the way to the Parr Hall and help to unload the gear.

DISGRACE—"For goodness sake" I said, "Don't expect to get first class service from the council run Parr Hall. And, as expected, they were true to form. When we arrived at the hall the doors were bolted and there was no-one around to open up. One of Ken's drivers went to the Pyramid Art Centre, next door, and a few minutes later a young man came to open the doors and to remove the silly council road block bollards from the front of the hall, - which completely block the street and stop vans from unloading their gear. These bollards also prevent anyone from driving to the front of the hall to drop off any invalids who are unable to walk to the hall.

"Oh," said the young man, "I've got the wrong set of keys, the gardener must have taken them." A few minutes later he returned to say that he'd found some keys that should fit the back entrance, - which was blocked up by large waste skips. We managed to open the doors and found the entrance cluttered up with two wagon loads of black bin bags filled with last week's rubbish. What a disgrace, but that is typical.

On one occasion Anthony Mason was performing there and when he went on to do his spot he found that the mike hadn't been connected up. He shouted for help but nobody appeared to be able to help him so he put his uke down on the floor, told the audience 'not to go away' and left the hall to trace the unplugged cable. This professional show was a shambles. Anthony found that his backing tape wasn't loud enough so he shouted to me to find the sound man. I climbed up these narrow stairs and there in this little room was the young man sat at the amp.



Very talented Andy Eastwood.

I told him that the artist couldn't hear the backing and 'would he turn it up,' to which he replied, "I don't know, I've never done the job before." I couldn't believe what I was hearing. This is Warrington's only theatre.

Never in my 74 years have I seen about 50 men queuing up outside the gents toilets, but at the Parr Hall it's common. Pity the ladies, they missed half of the show.

The council are investing 22 million in converting Warrington into an arty town, and Arts Centre, but they can't spend a few quid on updating the town's only theatre. I've no idea why they think we are an arty town. When Shakespeare's "Henry the Eighth" was shown at the Odeon Cinema, only eight people sat in the audience watching it (one for each Henry), but when "The Jolson Story" was shown, soon after, there were thousands queuing up outside the building. I personally saw it seven times, - each time it reappeared in town.

Disorganised we may be in Warrington but Ken Dodd and his crew did us proud. They are a credit to old time entertainment. Clean, smart, well organised, polished artists, and, most importantly, extremely good entertainers. They certainly give value for money. Well worth the £14 per head that it cost to get in.

In the next six months Ken and his troupe are performing 56 shows throughout the country. If you want more details just drop a line to "Ken Dodd Shows, Liverpool L14 5NX and they will be pleased to send you a full programme.

Two Articles from The Weekly News—I had every sympathy with

one of your readers who cracked a rib while watching a performance by Ken Dodd. We went to see him in Crewe when I was suffering from a cracked rib myself. I wasn't able to clap much, as that was really painful, but tears of laughter were soon rolling down my cheeks. In true Doddy fashion his performance lasted for hours and, by the end, I really was holding my sides. However, I wouldn't have missed the evening for anything, and reckon that that his particular brand of humour is one of the best antidotes for to depression. Mrs B L Shropshire.

And—George Formby blues-busting songs sent in by Arthur Sinnott

Whenever I'm feeling a bit low, the weather's dreary, or I'm worrying about a particular problem, I listen to one of my George Formby CDs or cassettes.

As soon as I hear "Leaning On A Lamp Post" - "My Little Stick Of Blackpool Rock" - Chinese Laundry Blues" or any of his other comedy songs, I completely forget about life's ups and downs, and am usually laughing in seconds. Of course, they're full of double meanings, but his timing and unique style of delivery meant he never had to resort to the smutty lyrics of some of today's entertainers. Now long gone, I'm just glad George left behind such a rich comedy legacy. D.S.Knowle Bristol.



LATE NEWS—Just noticed on TVs "Bargain Hunt" a GF fan from Clitheroe was playing a wooden uke and sang Blackpool Rock. They all applauded with, Turned Out Nice Again.

A Successful Year for the Crewe Society

Over eighty attended the Crewe Christmas Party on the day following Boxing Day. One wondered how the meeting would be supported as it was scheduled at a time when everyone is stowed out with turkey and Christmas Pudding but there was no need for any concern for when Connie and I arrived at 6.45pm there was quite a queue outside waiting to get into the hall!

Jonathan Baddeley is our usual MC at Christmas time and he was well aided by his wife Pamela, our very own Beryl, as Concert Producer. Apologies were received from Jim and Myra Knight (holiday), Cliff and Margaret Royle (illness), Sheila Palmer and Carl Basford (who are in hospital). The hall was nicely decorated for the occasion which added to the warmth already generated by our wonderful supporters. There were a number of new faces in the audience who all seemed to have a great night out.

Alan Chenery and Pat made the journey from Fleetwood, Eunice and Alan Evans came from Redditch. Amongst the entertainers were Alan Newton, Arthur Newton, Brian, Alan Evans, Alan Chenery, Des Redfern, Stan Evans, Stan Watkinson, Alison Nadin, Connie Edge, Gareth Sumner, Walter Kirkland, Alice Cronshaw, Vera Jones, Steve Hassall, Peter Gratton, Pamela Baddeley, Colin Wood, Tom Meredith, Greg Simister and Jonathan Baddeley.

As one might imagine Jonathan, our "King of Pun" kept us well entertained with his own particular type humour throughout the evening where we had a guest appearance of Lance Boyle, a celebrated Ossiologist -direct from the U.S. of A. He was very entertaining with his rhythmic bones, very much in the style of our own Walter Kirkland. A great act. Peter Gratton, that very funny comedian from the Potteries, entertained us in great style with his brilliant "Laughing Policeman." It was a class act that could not fail to have everyone in tears of laughter. That versatile Alison Nadin pleasantly took us all back to the age of six, and entertained us with some great magic, finishing her act with a Frankie Wood number on her ukulele.

Stan Evans introduced an old friend Max the Dog, who has been in quarantine for such a long time. Max, who doesn't like sad songs, soon endeared himself to the entire audience. When Max was safely installed in his



This Lance Boyle chap referred to Connie, Angela, Alice, Vera and Pam (French maids with tickling sticks who sang "Tickling My Tootsie Wootsies") as a load of old Scrubbers. How dare these foreigners come over here and insult our beauties.

carrier bag Stan and Young Stan, "The Past Its" sang another sad song entitled "The Fields of





This is that Lance Boyle chap.

Athenrye" which was well received by an appreciative audience.

Our Sound Engineer Colin Wood and Alan Chenery sang "Putting on the Style" to the backing of our dear friend Peter Cain who sadly passed away just twelve months ago. Peter's music however will continue to be enjoyed by all of us. Pamela Baddeley then brought the entire audience to their feet with her presentation of "The Twelve Days of Christmas." Alan Newton performed the "Acrobat" a tricky little party piece for the trombone suitably accompanied by yours truly, announced by our MC as "Crewe's Les Dawson of the keyboard." The cheeky monkey! The Jazz Band performed a new number "Sing Low Sweet Chariot" which seemed to go

well with everyone as they all joined in the singing.

Gareth Sumner gave an excellent performance as did all the other artistes not mentioned individually above. Their contributions ensured that we put on another great night's entertainment. There was an excellent Christmas Buffet which was enjoyed by everyone and the evening concluded what had been a very successful year for the Crewe Society.

Thanks Brian, it was an excellent show which is becoming more professional each month.

Jon Baddeley Reviews Andy's CD—Running Wild

This is the title of a new CD by a trio called Red Hot and Blonde featuring the musical talents of Lynda Styne, Janet Beale and our own Andy Eastwood. Many of us have seen Andy grow in stature as well as musical ability over the years. He has previously produced a number of cassettes and compact discs including the excellent UKULELE SERENADE some three years ago and this follow-up CD is a great addition to any music collection.

RUNNING WILD has twelve songs that take us down musical memory lane with tunes from the 1920s to the 1960s. The first track, CONCRETE AND CLAY was a hit for Unit 4+2 in 1965 and we remain in the 60s with the songs CINDERELLA ROCKERFELLA and YEH YEH both of which reached number one when they were first recorded. The remaining nine tracks take us back much further in time. MEAN TO ME and the Al Jolson classic I'M JUST WILD ABOUT HARRY are just appetisers for what is to come. LOOK FOR THE SILVER LINING precedes the atmospheric LA MER originally recorded by Charles Trenet.

After listening to MY BABY JUST CARES ABOUT ME, the listener is treated to the first of two songs from the Ray Noble and Al Bowlly repertoire—THE VERY THOUGHT OF YOU and the final track GOODNIGHT SWEETHEART. Sandwiched between these two musical classics is my personal favourite on this CD—i.e. RUNNING WILD. As you would expect, George Formby has to be in there somewhere and the listener will not be disappointed with the classic—WITH MY LITTLE STICK OF BLACKPOOL ROCK.

So there we have it. A great CD from RED HOT AND BLONDE. I know how much hard work has gone into producing these recordings; the instrumentation is superb and well balanced and complements the vocals wonderfully. I hope that sales are healthy so that we will be able to hear more of three very talented performers. The CD is also available as a cassette. For details, write to PO Box 5004, Christchurch, BH23 5WD or contact Andy by visiting his website www.andyeastwood.com or email andy@andyeastwood.com

Our Super Hero Cliff, has been Poorly but he's back now to take on all comers.

This report is a second hand version, the details having been kindly passed on to me by Geoff Shone following my non-attendance at the meeting due to Margaret and I having been incapacitated; temporarily we hope! It was expected that the attendance would be well down, as it usually is at the January meeting, but such was not the case for there was an attendance of sixty, which was double last year's Jan. figure.



We were pleased to once again have Alan and Eunice Evans from Redditch with us. They stayed at the White Well B & B. The proprietors seem to be getting so much business from us that they suggest the Branch should take over the business. Apparently Alan and Eunice enjoy the Formby Scene and are overwhelmed by the friendship they find at all the meetings. Alan of course sings in a choir and has a really pleasant voice. There was also a special welcome for some new guests whom Alice and Walter nee Lance brought along from the Sale Branch.

Gerald and Julie Jones came along from Llandudno Junction and Gerald played a song rather new to us "Good Old George" in his somewhat unusual playing fashion. Sales of his N.Wales Branch Calendars and Christmas cards went reasonably well, but could have been better. However "Watch This Space" for next years editions which celebrate 100 years since the Birth of our George. All profits of course will go into the Branch's Charity coffers.

We were pleased to welcome our visitor Lance Boil (?) from over the water. What a wonderful hair style. He rattled the Bones as an accompaniment to Jim Knight on the Accordion. Another of Jim's talents. Unfortunately Lance had to leave early to get back to America. Was it for the operation? Anyway hope the boil (wherever it is) gets better soon. Charlie Penman, now hopefully recovered from his various health problems, except his heckling, which appears to be incurable. It is not often we get him on the stage to do a turn, but this he did tonight when he both played and sang. However in order to turn the tables on Charlie the audience were requested to heckle him for a change. This they did. It caused much merriment all round. Good on you Charlie. The Crewe gang did a new Jazz number "Swing Low Sweet Chariot" which apparently got a thunderous round of applause.

The "Past Its" were at it once again. Apparently a number of people had mentioned to Geoff Shone about the wonderful way in which Stan Evans was getting Ashley Caldicotte involved and Ashley's real appreciation of the song specially performed for him "Playing on my uke banjo". Congratulations and thanks Stan. We are sure Angela appreciates the improvement Ashley has shown. Apparently he went to great lengths to get Stan on to the stage to perform. Sorry to hear of the hospitalisation of Sheila Palmer and Carl Basford. We all wish them both a speedy recovery.

Thanks to those who helped in any way to fill the places of Margaret and myself, in particular Myra Knight who apparently was also suffering from a very bad cough. Thanks also to those entertainers I have omitted to mention; Jim Griffiths; Connie and Brian Edge, Jonathan and Pam Baddeley, Alison Nadin, Des Redfern, Arthur Newton, Greg Simister, Tom Meredith, and anyone that I may have unfortunately left out. In conclusion may I and all your friends at Penyffordd wish all our visitors and friends a Very Happy and enjoyable 2003.

And you were both missed at Penyffordd. Nobody believed that Cliff could be ill. Never!!!!

George Formby players wanted at the Alvis Car Club Weekend and at George's Lytham St Anne's Beryldene home, from Robin Bendall



Stan, Happy New Year to you. We now look forward to the events we are running for 2003 and, as you know, we have the International Alvis weekend 22nd/23rd June at Houghton Tower, near Blackburn. All is set so we hope we can get some George Formbys there.

BERYLDENE- Something that might interest you is that on Saturday, 21st, we are parking our cars on the front at Lytham and have been asked by the press to take a car to Fairhaven so they can photograph it in front of George Formby's old home, it would be great if we could have one of your members there as well. Keep in touch. Regards, Robin.
There will be more news on this over the next few issues and we are planning to put on a George Formby memorabilia exhibition at the Houghton Tower Show.

Email from Eddie—Thanks Stan for the George Formby tape. It is great listening to it. Here's another query. My dear old grandfather claimed that George's mother—he thinks her name was Ellen Formby—was also on the stage, but I can't find any trace of her.

Now granddad might be a bit confused here Eddie. Is he referring to George's mother Eliza, or George's sister, Ella?

Ella performed on stage with her sister, Louie, over several on/off periods until Ella got married.

George's mother, Eliza, appeared on stage along with Frankie, (Son) Louie (Daughter) and Louie's husband, Ronnie, in a show called, "Following Father's Footsteps" and they did the theatre rounds in the hope that they could keep George Senior's name alive. It was also done to raise some money as finances were getting tight a few years after GF Senior's death. I'm not sure how many months or years the Formby family performed but I do know that George & Beryl were not pleased with what they were doing. In general it was considered a poor show. Hope the above helps.

Alan Chenery writes—I was watching Channel 4 TV on Monday the 30th December at 1.30, when suddenly this man popped up riding his motorbike in "No Limit" followed by clips from "Trouble Brewing" and George's co star Googie Withers, was talking about the film. The programme was featuring Ealing Studios where George made some of his films. So George pops up everywhere. *Thanks Alan. Keep sending em in.*

DON'T FORGET TO WRITE TO THE GEORGE FORMBY NEWSLETTER

PALACE | Commencing Monday, JULY 12th
Theatre : : Bradford
Telephone: 897 | 6-35 THREE NIGHTS, 8-45 MATINEE - Thursday & Sat

FIRST VISIT HERE!
PERSONAL APPEARANCE OF
Mrs. GEORGE FORMBY
WITH THE FORMBY FAMILY
Including FRANKIE, LOUIE AND RONNIE
Following in Father's Footsteps

TOMIO & VAL | **The WILLENORS**
The Comedy Duo | Royal Command Comedy Artists

HENRY D. ADAMS | **JOHNNIE REGAN** | **RHYTHM RANGERS**
Lead in Family Light | The English Lion | Sing on the Stage

PELL & LITTLE | **WHEELER AND WILSON**
The Funny and the Real | Sing on Stage

Carol singers will be criminals - without a licence -

sign the petition! Email to Paul Woodhead.

Sorry if you've received this from another source - if you've already signed the petition and sent it on to all and sundry, then just delete it. If not, please read it and act upon it - it only takes a couple of minutes, and it is essential for live music and all sorts of other activities that the powers that be know how many people feel really strongly about this - including our friends in Scotland and Northern Ireland, who may not be affected directly, but they certainly will if they ever come to England or Wales! And their MPs are able to affect legislation in England and Wales.

Very best wishes, **Tom & Barbara Brown, Trafalgar House, Castle Street, Combe Martin, N. Devon Tel: 01271 882366/07977 914736**

E-mail: tomandbarbara@umbermusic.co.uk

Website: www.umbermusic.co.uk

The creators of the none in a bar Licensing Bill are stuck in the 18th-century. The Bill is constructed as if 21st century safety, noise and crime and disorder legislation had never happened. The maximum penalty of a £20,000 fine and six months in prison for an unlicensed performance of live music is greater than for a serious breach of health and safety, or noise, legislation (which does not carry a potential custodial sentence). This was one reason why existing PEL legislation was rubbished in Parliament earlier this year as 'archaic and just plain daft.' But, unbelievably, the government has just confirmed that the penalty would continue to apply to carol singers:

"People singing carols in a supermarket or a railway station and so on would need to be covered by a premises licence or a temporary event notice." [Lord McIntosh, government whip, 1st Committee stage debate of the Licensing Bill, House of Lords, 12 December 2002. Criminalising live music without a licence was an 18th century innovation. It was a crime and disorder measure, applying only to pubs in Westminster, at a time when there was no unified police force for London. Public safety and noise legislation was rudimentary or non-existent.

The Bill is a gift to the jobsworths. Rest assured local authorities will enforce 'none in a bar' if this Bill is passed without amendment. Licensees, and musicians, will be treated as criminals where there is no safety risk and no noise complaint.

EDM 331 has been adapted as an 'E-Petition'.

You can add your signature on the following site: <http://www.musiclovers.ukart.com/>

Cliff & Margaret Royle send their thanks Hello Stan, Thanks for your call yesterday. It was nice to find you and other fellow enthusiasts so concerned. We did have quite a few calls asking about our health. Pleased to report that we are both a little better, but still suffering from various side effects. However Margaret is now coughing much less, and last night was the first night she managed to get a reasonable nights sleep. Many people remark on the spirit and thoughtfulness of those who attend Formby Meetings; there are few societies that can match us in these respects. Our sincere thanks to all those who expressed their concern.

Jim Bramwell has not lost his touch. Due to Joan being unable to walk steadily, Jim has not been to go to any of the meeting for over 12 months. But he will play at any of the afternoon shows. We did one today and it was full of silver topped ladies over 60. Jim, although a little apprehensive at first, was delighted when his jokes went down well and every woman in the room was laughing with him. You could hear a pin drop, and then suddenly an uproar of laughter. At the end Jim said, "Bar Gum Stan, I enjoyed that!" Good for you Jim.

Why Is There A Fairy on The Christmas Tree?

Many years ago, four of Santa's elves were laid off sick and the replacements were not producing the toys as fast as the regulars. Santa was beginning to feel the pressure of being behind schedule. Then Mrs Santa told him that her mother was coming to stay with them for Christmas, which stressed him even more.

He went to harness the reindeer and found that three of them had given birth and two others had jumped the fence. As he carried on loading the sleigh, he found a broken board and one of the toy bags had slipped through the hole smashing all its contents.

Feeling increasingly annoyed at his constant bad luck he decided to make himself a cup of coffee and add a drop of whisky. Alas, he found that the cupboard was completely bare and his elves had drunk all the whisky. In haste he dropped the coffee pots which smashed into a dozen pieces. He was just about to blow his top completely when the front door bell rang. He open the door to find one off his fairies holding a large Christmas tree. The fairy had been given the job of distributing Christmas trees to every house in Lapland and in error, she'd missed one out.

Santa was fuming. It would take ages to work out the address and by then it would be too late. But the fairy wasn't in the least interested. Arrogantly she said, "Well, where are you going to stick this, fat boy?" Santa blew up in outrage, and thus, from then on, began the tradition of the fairy on the Christmas tree.

It's That Secret Spy Again

—Hello Stan, It's the Secret Spy yet again. What a night at Wistaston. History was made as the audience were subjected to the worst puns and jokes ever heard in Cheshire. The Meeting was marked by the first and possibly last appearance of Lance Boyle from the USA. Did you notice how similar his style of bones playing was to our own Walter Kirkland. It was a pity that Walter was not there during the performance as he mysteriously disappeared only to return later on.

Alice Cronshaw was lethal with the feather duster-now I know what is meant by "attacking the housework". In the piano/trombone duet-The Acrobat, Alan Newton was taken completely by surprise when Brian Edge went straight into the Cadenza without leaving the stage.

It was also confirmed that Pamela Baddeley has another job as a bricklayer during December-hence the Seasonal Rendering of "The 12 Days Of Christmas". Finally, it was evident that the mother-in-law of the wife of the Secret Spy enjoyed the evening immensely. That's all for now. S. S.



This is a brilliant shot.

Connie Edge, in the Formby Public Morals and Censorship Department, is listening for any crude jokes and one-liners that may slip through. Watch out. She's ready to pounce.

Thanks to Connie we pride ourselves in putting on family shows without any embarrassment. "Here, here, lads, You can't do that there here." Keep it up Connie.

Matthew Kelly 90 Years Young

by Brian Edge

The 3rd of January was a very special day for Matthew Kelly who celebrated his 90th birthday with a surprise party laid on by his daughter Diane. Matthew is probably the most senior active ukulele performer around, he being a regular performer each month at the South Cheshire "George Formby" Ukulele Society's show in Crewe. Matthew and Diane were having a quiet meal in a country pub when surprise, surprise, in marched Arthur Newton and Mary, Connie Edge and Brian, Walter Kirkland, Alice Cronshaw and Alan Newton playing their ukes and singing Happy Birthday. It was a complete and pleasant surprise to Matthew.



Diane then very kindly treated the visitors to a nice meal and afterwards there was a big sing-song with all the Formby favourites that entertained not only Matthew but also everyone else in the inn. Matthew was born in 1913 in Goldenhill, Stoke on Trent, his adolescent years during the 1920's depression were difficult times, but he was always striving to better himself and, when he met and married Elsie in the early 1930's he was on his way to becoming a successful electrician in the days when there was a lot of electrical installation required. Matthew and Elsie had two daughters Shirley and Iris and moved to HARRISEAHEAD in the late 1930's.

However, the onslaught of the Second World War thwarted his efforts of setting up a business, as his electrical talents were quickly recognised by the authorities and he was transferred to the R.A.F. Ancillary arm in Brise Norton, Oxford, where he was part of a team dedicated to caring for the airfield lighting and creating "dummy" airfields around the area in an effort to distract the Luftwaffe on their bombing raids. He also looked after aircraft as well, his favourite being the Dakota.

After the War he returned to HARRISEAHEAD and was employed by a variety of local companies such as Shelton Bar, Johnson Matthey, and Royal Albert Pottery as a Maintenance Electrician until his retirement in 1976. Matthew and Elsie had a further three daughters, Wendy, Pat and Diane between 1949 and 1955, and enjoyed many lovely holidays in Devon and Cornwall in their caravan which was pulled by a variety of classics like the Morris Minor, Morris Oxford and Ford Zodiac. On their 50th Wedding Anniversary they were transported to the family party in a White Rolls Royce and had a telegram from the Queen. Sadly in 1996 his beloved wife Elsie passed away, followed by his daughter Shirley in 1998 and Iris in 2000.

Matthew is a much-loved Father, Grandfather to nine and great-grandfather to seven (with one on the way) who all love him dearly and keep him very busy! He enjoys his daily walks in a local park and playing his ukulele with all his friends from the Crewe Society. He still likes to travel and over the last few years has visited, Paris, Florence, Rome, Vienna, Dublin and London with his youngest daughter Diane.

Big Softie—I did a spot at our local club the other night and when I asked if there were any requests, this big, burly, rough looking Irishman said, "Sing an Irish song." "OK," I replied, this is one I've pinched from a Formby member (Des) and it's called, "The Fields of Athenrye." After the first couple of lines his eyes were reddening. He brought his handkerchief out to wipe his eyes, and then did a sharp exit for the toilets. Now I'm not sure if he felt a touch of home sickness or if he was a lover of music. Stan.

Name Wanted—

Deg, Phil and Frank, are improving every time they get on stage, but I think that they should get a stage name for themselves. Some months ago I suggested "The Penyffordd Plonkers" but they don't appear to like that as a title. At last night's meeting at Penyffordd I asked Alison's opinion of a good name for them and she replied:



"Art, Bart and—Fargo." But that's worse than Plonkers, so I don't suppose they'll agree to that. What about: Freeman, Hardy and Willis? Or perhaps you've got a name for these three stars of the future. If so, send it in.

DEG PUT HIS FOOT IN IT—Deg landed himself in trouble at Penyffordd last night when he announced the next act as: "Now here we have an old pro from Sale, Vera Jones."

Deg, I want to have a word with you lad. Now I realise that you were thrown in at the last minute to M/C the show, and possibly you were a little unprepared, but don't, for goodness sake, introduce any of the ladies as old pros. It has another meaning Deg, or perhaps your father didn't explain. Anyway! Next time, introduce the lady as an ex-professional, and I'll explain when I see you. He's a nice lad.

Abbott Uke Banjo for Sale. Dennis Lee over in Cyprus has a post war Abbott Uke for sale at £995. With case. Good condition. Previously owned by Ted Bradley. Anyone interested can mail Dennis at P.O.Box 61218, 8132 Kato Pafos, Cyprus. Dennis & Lesley wish all an exciting 2003.

Just Had a Pleasant Couple of

hours with Fred & Wyn Stevenson, of Crewe, who paid Eva & I a visit. Fred spends his time making and repairing Uke Banjos and he's just done an excellent job of restoring a pre-war Jetal uke for me. This uke was in a real bad state with bits missing off the fingerboard and a twisted resonator etc. However Fred worked on it and gave it another 20 years life. Thanks Fred.



Geoff Shone handed me a Theatre Poster "GOLDEN DAYS of MUSIC HALL for Tuesday Feb 4th 2003, and on the bill is GEORGE FORMBY, Billy Matchett, Marie Lloyd, Gracie Fields, Stanley Holloway, Jack Pleasant, Randolph Sutton and the Fabulous Gaiety Girls, all hosted by Your Master Of Ceremonies, Mr Chairman. The show is at the Theat Stiwt, Broad Street, (try saying this when you are drunk) Rhosllannerchrugog. Tel 01978 841300. There are two performances on the day: 2.30pm and 7pm. Thanks Geoff.

BOB CRISTFORD on 01270 (Crewe) 878139 is looking for a copy of the GF CD "Formby At War" which was produced by Grosvenor Studios. The disc was very popular until they closed the company down. George, entertaining the troops, was at his brilliant best.

Nicky Martin

Award Winning International Comedian

Dear Stan, Nice having a chat with on the phone today. In response to your request for a report on my professional activities, here it is.



My current work takes me all over the world, on British ships, which take up half the year, the rest are spent either working 'Comedy Store' in Florida, or on American Cruise Liners, I meet a lot of 'English' who love George, and all of his work. (I don't play any Formby songs in USA, I sing things like Alexander's Ragtime Band, Smile, When your Smiling', etc. But on The new P&O super liners, Oriana, Aurora, Oceana, Adonia, I try to include four or five of Georges songs during my four one hour shows. I always think that I'm there as the comedian, so I fill my performances with what is called 'Stand-up'. I usually finish with a song, and when I do, that's when I can give my rendition of one of the great mans wonderful songs. On one of my Tapes, called 'Laugh Lines' (I called it that because, it contains 45 mins of gags, two Formby songs, then two 'line dance' songs that I wrote two years ago, I play rhythm guitar on those)

Those songs are now being recorded by a Nashville recording star, and they sound a lot better with her singing them than they did with me! On the World Cruise, last year, I was appearing, as I often do, on the QE2. One of the big ports of call is Hawaii. With my wife Edwina, I went into a shop called 'The Hawaiian Ukulele Store'. As the instrument was developed in that country, They have a sort of exhibition showing how it started-out as a Cocoa-nut, as the body of the instrument, and an arm of bamboo, and over the years it was improved to the small guitar shape that we know to-day.

On display are ukes costing from \$50 US up to \$5000.US They are beautifully finished and although quiet to play, the sound is wonderful. While we were looking around the shop, it's not a very big shop. My wife said, "You do realise they're playing one of your tapes don't you"? I was amazed, my version of 'The Window Cleaner' was coming through the In-store, sound system. One of the store assistants must have overheard her, because he came over to us and asked if "I was the English guy".

I explained that I was one of the English guys, who played ukulele'. But to prove that I was the guy playing on the tape, I used one of their ukes and played the 'Formby solo' from the song. He was absolutely Gob-smacked at the Formby style of syncopation and wanted to know all about the rudiments of playing *Across the beat*. All I could do was show him how I did it. (I also told him that no-one could do it like George) The next thing he wanted was to see the uke I played the recording on. I Always take the 'Abbot' with me on tour, so I had to go back to the ship, go through customs and immigration, and declare that I wasn't selling the uke in the US (As if !). When I got back to the shop, that is only a few minutes from the port, It's called Clock-Tower Quay, I got the Abbot out of it's case. The owner of the store had been summoned to this unveiling of a rare breed of instrument from across the seas.

Once again I played the famous 'Show-off' piece, the 'Window Cleaner' solo And the small crowd that had now gathered, about twenty people, burst into the usual American 'Whooping' Applause. They said they didn't know a uke could sound like that. The thing is, a banjo-uke is a

lot louder than a real ukulele'.

They made me an honorary member of the Hawaiian ukulele society, and presented me with a polo shirt that bears the logo, "The Hawaiian Ukulele Store". And I'm very proud of it. Harold told me of the time that George met Alvin D. Keech, (Who was from Hawaii) in Levi Richardson's, shop in bridge street in Warrington. Keech was touring around the Northwest, trying to promote his new 'Banjolele'

It seems that George must have shown an interest, because in no time at all, he was being shown how to play "Five foot two Eyes of blue" (Has anybody seen my girl). This was on the Monday afternoon. On Wednesday night George felt confident enough to play the song, on the Keech Uke, at the Royal Court Theatre, which used to be in Rylands Street Warrington. (I appeared there in 1955, I was 15 years old, and part of a harmonica / comedy act called 'The Three Harmaniacs')

From what Harold Fallows told me, that night was one of the turning points in George's career. He developed that audience contact that his father had used with great success, and endeared himself very much to the people in the theatre that night, and for many years to come. His Uke became his hand of friendship to his audiences. George also put his own words to the song, and made it topical, either from 'News of the day' or for a particular town he was appearing in, eg. *Eyes of blue five foot two, she's been to Earlestown Market too, etc.*

Keech's main selling point was that, his new instrument could be heard above the noise of the orchestra. We've all heard stories of Beryl screaming at the musical director that, "She couldn't hear the Uke!" Say what you like I've wished for her to be at some of my rehearsals, to impress upon the band that louder isn't better.

You may have seen that photograph of George, where he's standing with a great American vaudeville star Jack Carson. (Photograph taken in Canada) I asked one of my American friends what the connection could be. He said that Carson recorded comedy songs ? (Was it he, who recorded "The Dark Town Poker Club"?) and the Canadian press thought as George was famous for his 'comedy songs' it would be a good idea to get them together. I have no idea whether any of that is true, I don't even know if Jack Carson was from USA or Canada, but you can see the reasoning!

Peter Sellers was featured in one of the 'Road' movies, with Bing Crosby and Bob Hope. He played an Indian doctor. It was really bad, but it got Peter a big Hollywood following and a movie with Gina Lola Brigida called the Millionairess, and a hit record, 'Goodness Gracious Me'. In which he played.....yes you've guessed it" An Indian doctor!!!!!!

What ever happened to Peter Sellers Abbot ? He was friendly with Alan (Randall) so I think the uke could have come from Alan, the question is 'Did it go back to Alan when Peter died?'

Well that's all I have time to write for now, I'm at home in England till end of Jan. then back to QE2. I'm with P&O cruises for the rest of the year, right up until Feb 2004. I hope I live that long! Nicky. *Thanks Nicky. Keep writing in.*

There's a terrible smell in Dingly Dell
Said the shepherds, watching their flocks
It's not farmer Moore, who is spreading manure
It's the Pixies who are washing their socks.

Alan Evans wants to know if they make mouse flavoured cat food? And why do they sterilise needles for lethal injections? And, what happens when you get half scared to death twice?

Lucky Thirteenth at Sale. By Cyril Palmer



What a lovely way to start the Christmas festivities. A large attendance, everyone in suitably festive mood. One new guest was David Rose. I had sat and talked with him in the Winter gardens but, until now, didn't realise he could stand and look Andrew Little in the eye. We hope he'll come again- if only to adjust the spot lights on the ceiling. Eve Stewart arrived with Pat and Alan Chenery. Go to the Blackpool South Shore cricket club and Eve will greet you with a ready smile at the door. Frank Humphries of the Penyffordd plonkers came with Jim and Myra Knight, but couldn't sing for us. Ged Collins made his first visit to our present venue and gave an explosive performance-more below!

With Dick Eaves in charge, Eddie Bancroft sang first. He is gaining a little more confidence. Then Arthur Newton took us "Way down upon the Swanee river" sipping from a "Little brown jug." Jon Baddley, inspired by Cherie Blair, sang "Photo in the press," then "Fanlight Fanny," -- presumably no reference to Cherie this time. We should then have seen Walter Kirkland, but he unaccountably disappeared. However we were pleased to greet Lance Boyle, an unexpected visitor from the U.S of A. Lance, medium long blonde hair, with Roy Orbison style "shades," reminded me of Cherie Blair's father in his role as Alf Garnett's "scouse git" son-in-law. He proceeded to prove that bones playing had infiltrated the U.S. of A. despite the combined resistance of the C.I.A. F. B.I. Mafia and the A.R.P! Walter reappeared too late to pick up tips from our American guest.

Cliff Royle engineered a return to sanity singing "Window cleaner" and then, with Alice at the mic, sang a rousing "War Medley." Singalong continued as Pam Baddeley sang an enjoyable medley of Christmas songs -essential component for this evening. Brian White (3rd visit) sang "Lancashire Toreador" and "Blackpool Belle." Ben Hallewell stayed with Formby for "The best of schemes" and "Believe it or not." Connie Edge sang "Living in the middle of Trafalgar Square," and "Enjoy yourself" (Too late, we e:eady did.)

Our interval was inevitably longer than usual. There was a quite lovely buffet, organised by Alice Cronshaw, with contributions from many members. Heartfelt thanks to all who contributed and assisted. There was an extra (free!) raffle. Thanks to an who provided prizes. Two other instruments were featured at the start of part two. Jim Knight played a medley on his piano accordion, leaving the singing to the audience, after which Roy Fielden played a harmonica medley. The request in his last song, "Give me five minutes more," had no chance with so many yet to perform. Then a nice diversion by" Al Diamond and the Sapphires." With Al (Alice) at the microphone, Hilda Southworth and Vera Eaves danced while "Artist" Sheila Palmer (I use the term loosely) quietly painted to the strains of "Matchstalk Men." The finished work of art was produced with a flourish at the end! (I noticed, however, it was signed by Dick Eaves!)

Jack Valentine was next with "It's a grand and healthy life," and "I wonder who's under her balcony now." Another switch and Alison Nadin was up to her tricks again!- Get it?--All right, it's a weak joke. Alison foxed us with a pair of "rabbits". As soon as we thought we had sussed out her trickery, she proved us wrong. Not content with bemusing, or confusing us, Alison then took up her uke to play and sing Frankie Wood's Christmas Panto song.-- Showoff!-{that's under my breath-hope she didn't hear.)

Brian Edge was "at it" next, brazenly singing "I've got a girl friend" in front of wife Connie.--- Oh, I understand. She probably is the girl friend in question. Anyway, he topped this with an

instrumental medley of "I'll see you in my dreams," "Pennies from heaven," and "Whispering." To draw the regular raffle we had a short break after which Margaret Moran came over all Christ-massy with "Silent night" and "White Christmas." The versatile Alan Newton was after Margaret-in the nicest possible way, of course-singing "Talking to the Moon about you" and then an interesting choice: "Love is like a violin." (It struck me that "Love is like a trombone" wouldn't have the same romantic appeal.) At this point shortage of time reduced the final three singers to one song each. Alan Southworth, relaxed but expert as ever, sang one of his favourites "Trailing around in my trailer." Ged Collins then sang his own song, "My Granny's got a gun in her hand-bag." His voiced sound effects and manic delivery are beyond my descriptive powers. I hope you all get to hear him for yourself. We had a nice finish when Paul Kenny had the privilege of singing the last song, "Smile all the time." The whole evening was filled with happy smiles. It only required a heartfelt rendering of "Auld Lang Syne" by the whole assembly to complete a lovely Christmas do. Happy New Year to everyone.



George's Kimono—The phone was red hot on Sunday the 15th of December when almost every Formby fan had noticed that the popular "The Antiques Road Show" was to feature George's Kimono, which he wore in the film, South American George.

Derek Pierce displayed the kimono on TV and explained that his father, George Pierce, had bought it at the 1961 GF Auction after George's death. Derek seemed quite surprised when the antique expert valued the kimono "In excess of £10,000", which, in my opinion, takes some believing. However, these experts should know better than I what collectors will pay for old film memorabilia. Let's hope the expert is right.

I remember good hearted George Pierce very well. In his later days he had a bit of difficulty with his memory box and often rang me when he felt a little complicated. He loaned us the kimono for the Warrington GF Exhibition and months after it was returned, he rang to say that he'd lost it. He'd searched high and low and wondered if he'd left it on the bus. He thought it may turn up in Warrington because it still had my address on the wrapping. After making several enquiries at our local post office, I rang to tell him that we couldn't find it. "Don't worry" he said, "I've found it." He was very relieved.

Mike Turner's just phoned. He rang from John Shreeve's house where he was having a lesson on playing melody. There were three open uke cases on the floor—two belonging to Mike and the other to John.

John had a small dog in the house which was feeling sick and a bit off colour. And they noticed that it was a bit restless, walking round sniffing at each of the three open cases. It went to the first case, and then to the second. Apparently he wasn't satisfied with these two, so then he went to the third case, which was John's, and emptied his stomach into it. John couldn't believe it.

My message is this. If John Shreeve decides to sell one of his ukes make sure it isn't the one with the fouled up uke case.

Tom Meredith—mixed up kid. As you know the Sale meeting and the Liverpool meeting clashed in December due to Cyril & Co. having brought their meeting a week earlier. This was due to them being unable to book their usual room so near to Christmas.

Tom set out to go to Sale for the Christmas party night, but at 8.15pm he turned up at Liverpool. As he walked through the door he said, "Where am I?" "You're in Liverpool Tom." - "Oh dear, I set off to go to Sale."

Email from Ian Rawson—Dear Stan I have visited your most interesting web site, which is well worth visiting. It happens that I have for sale a very scarce 1912 cigarette card by Copes of Liverpool. if any of your members are interested I can be contacted at this address: Ian Rawson of The Nook, Turkey Lane, Out Rawcliffe, Near Preston PR3 6TA. The book value is £15 but I am willing to accept £8 inc. pp.

To Good Two Bee True

I halve a spelling chequer which came with my pea sea
It plainly marques for my revue, miss steaks I can knot sea
Eye strike a quay and type a word, and weight four it to say
Weather Eye am wrong oar write, it shows me strait aweigh
As soon as a mist ache is maid, it nose bee fore two long
And eye can put the error rite, it's rarely ever wrong
Eye have to run this poem threw, and I'm shore your pleased to no
It's letter perfect awl the weigh, my chequer told me sew.
Thanks to my Granddaughter Jennifer for the above.

Stan! you've slipped up again, again, again, Says Alan Chenery.
The Fleetwood Tram Trip is on Sunday the 20th of July not the 24th. *Thanks Alan. At least I know that one person reads my Newsletter. And I was testing you.*

Jill & Paul Woodhead are holding a GARDEN PARTY at their home: The Lupins, 2 Boatwell Meadow, Dosely, Telford, Salop, (Tel. 01952 598840) on Saturday July 12th from 2pm. Please take a folding chair and a raffle prize would be appreciated.

Bumper Christmas—I would like to thank all the many readers who sent in cards and best wishes to Eva & I for a Merry Christmas and a Prosperous New Year. After eight Christmases our little George Formby Newsletter is still gaining more popularity.

Useless Inventions

Square beer glasses that don't leave rings - Parachutes which open on impact - Waterproof tea bags - Pedal wheelchairs - "L" Shaped mobile homes - One piece jigsaw puzzles - Inflatable dartboards - A dictionary index - Chocolate tea pots.

Have a Laugh.

Fred has a musical nature. He can yodel and whistle and hum.
He goes out as fit as a fiddle. And comes home as tight as a drum.

Old lady to uke player, do you always play by ear? Uke player: No I often play over there.

Old lady: But why do you always sing the same song? Uke player: It haunts me. Old lady: It should do, you've murdered it.

Uke player: And I love breaking into song. Old lady: Well if you found the right key you wouldn't need to break in.

He struggled so much folding road maps that he became an accomplished accordion player.

In the orchestra he plays piano. At home he plays second fiddle.

Fred was at his Mother in Law's funeral service when suddenly there was a loud clap of thunder and a flash of lightning. "Blimey" he said, "She's arrived already."

"So your opening sale has just closed, what now?" "So now we open the closing sale."

A Special Appeal From The Heart

by Max.

Dear everybody, I've been very ill lately with distemper. Well it's all that painting and decorating at home that's caused it. And, as you know, I come to the George Formby meetings sometimes and always enjoy meeting you all. I also like singing all those happy George Formby songs like: "Little Stick Of Blackpool Rock" and "I Like Bananas." They are great and I am singing my heart out when you are playing them. You may not be able to hear me because he, the boss,- well he thinks he is - leaves me in a plastic bag until it's time for me to perform. But believe me, I am singing away merrily and having a rare old time. There's not much leg room in that plastic bag otherwise I'd be dancing around.



SERIOUS COMPLAINT—But something has been getting me down lately. You keep singing all those sad songs about a little boy who has no parents and one about some chap being locked away on a prison ship. And another about some chap's wife having upped and left him for another man. Hearing those dreary songs, I am soaked in tears and there's no drain hole in my plastic bag. By the time I get on stage I'm soaking wet.

So let's have no more of it otherwise I'll stay at home with Nan and watch television. Happy New Year to everybody. Bye. P.S. Don't forget. *Oh dear, we've upset him.*

Lack Of Talent Night—It could only happen in Liverpool.

These scouser are a great bunch of characters. Just read this report from Bob Muirhead.—Hi Stan, Sorry for delay in writing but I went to a family party in Chester on Saturday and imbibed well but not wisely so I had to stay over, didn't get back till late last night

DICKY HART AND THE PACEMAKERS - Anyway to Dicky Hart, as you know we were a bit miffed on Friday as we were hoping to do a Formby medley with Mr Wu being our main song, but the previous two performers had beat us to it thus requiring a hasty reassessment of our limited repertoire.



As I mentioned we always open the Christmas Party night at St Georges but this year they said us being stars we would appear in the middle of the programme, we were chuffed over this until they said it is known as the "Lack of Talent Night" I don't know what Frank Bennett who is coming down from Blackpool to appear with us will make of it, mind you we console ourselves with the fact that Alec Young of Radio Merseyside has topped the bill for the last two years. I think a lot of our success is due to the fact that we don't use backing tracks, preferring to go on stage not knowing the timing, words, or even the tune of the numbers we perform, a lot more fun for us if not the audience.

WOODEN UKE FOR SALE—Stan I have acquired on Ebay a Kumalae Koa Uke which now leaves my trusty Harmony surplus to requirements, its reputed to be circa 1950s, is all Mahogany, and in near mint condition, I purchased it in the US for 77 dollars which at the then exchange rate equated to £50 and I am happy to sell it at that, it is housed in a hard violin case which I will throw in for free.

Great night at Liverpool, as you say lovely people having a laugh and not taking themselves too seriously. Long may it continue. Regards Bob Muirhead.
That's right Bob, It's a great free and easy night.

Gareth Sumner—At the Crewe meeting young Gareth told me that he is working hard and enjoying his job. He also said that there had been a burglary in the factory where he works and the police were investigating into it. As usual Gareth took his uke into work to give the lads a bit of entertainment during the break. He was nicely into Lamp Post when suddenly the boss stopped his show to inform him that the police wanted to have a word with him. Naturally Gareth was very concerned and was hoping that they didn't think that he had any involvement with the robbery.



Spare a copper

“Hello, Hello, Hello, young man” said the copper, at which Gareth was worried. “Now then young man, we want you to accompany us to the police station. Gareth was more worried. “We want you to play for us at our Christmas Social.” Well they couldn't have asked anyone better than Gareth. His playing on stage at the Crewe meeting was superb, and especially as his voice has now broken.

Jon Baddeley Emails Hello Stan, It's amazing where the music of George Formby turns up. I always watch a television programme that I have video recorded called Nationwide Extra. This is a football programme which shows highlights from matches from the lower divisions.

In the early hours of the 17th December, they was a feature on Wigan Athletic. In the background could be heard the solo from LEANING ON A LAMPOST and the report ended with a silhouette of someone, you've guessed it, leaning on a lamp post. All the best. Jon

P.S. I would just like to say that the Penyffordd Christmas party went down great and credit must go to all who worked so hard to arrange it.

From The Beatles Exhibition

Sandra Quayle writes,

Dear George Formby Players, thank you so very much for taking part in our George Harrison Tribute Day, November 29th 2002. We were really impressed at the large turnout of the players and the show you put on for us all did both George's proud. Your performances were both moving and uplifting and will stay in our memories forever.

So on behalf of all the Directors and staff here at The Beatles Story, we thank you again for entering into the true spirit of the day and making it so special to the memory of George.



We wish all of you the very best for the future and long may you all continue to bring joy to people's lives with your entertainment. Sandra Quayle, BA (Hons) curator.

The merry band of entertainers were entered in the programme as "George Formby Players" simply because quite a number of them are not members of the GFS.

The Merry Christmas Show—

Three of our friends were invited to take part in "The Merry Christmas Show" which was presented by the Altrincham Garrick on Sat and Sun, Dec 14th & 15th. Les Pearson & Margaret Moran, regular attenders at Sale, and Des Redfern of Crewe gave up their time to perform in this charitable venture.

The event was dedicated to raising funds on behalf of "The Francis House Children's Hospice" and "The Children's Adventure Farm Trust." A great way to use one's talents. *Thanks to Cyril Palmer for the report.*



"You must do more shows for these children's homes" says George

HAPPY TRIPS—I was with Chris & Margaret last Saturday night. They came with us on the Holland trip, and when I asked if they'd booked for Dublin, Margaret said, "We sure have. We've still not got over the way you all shot off the coach, at every stop, to entertain the crowds. Especially when we were waiting to board ship at the docks and the crowds came running to surround us. It was a rare scene that we'd never seen before." *Yes, it was a great trip Margaret, and our happy band will performing again on the Dublin trip. The coach is booked but that doesn't stop Eve Stewart from coming. She's following on with a car load of happy singers.*

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.

Query: Do Eskimos hold house-warming parties?

