

THE

GEORGE FORMBY

Newsletter 94

Vol. 8
No. 10
Apr 2003



Specially Produced for George Formby Fans
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Welcome To Newsletter No. 94 and

we are still feeling the pain at having lost Lesley at such a young age. Also our friend Carl Basford, - and I have personally lost another old time friend, Ethel Guest who was our concert Gracie Fields for a number of years. Three deaths in one month is very hard going.

Hardly a day has passed that someone hasn't phoned to ask how Dennis is coping. I Emailed Dennis and received this heart touching reply:

"Hello Stan, Thanks for the up-date and for keeping in touch. It's only just beginning to sink in about Lesley and I feel lost without her. We were a team and she was my best pal. I'm sure things will get better because in such a situation it seems inconceivable that they could get worse.

Already I'm a dab hand at washing, ironing, sweeping & mopping. My house should be ready in about 6 weeks time and although I've somewhat lost interest in it I feel bound to carry on with the project as it is at such a late stage. There'll be much to do and it should give me time to sort myself out. People over here have been very good and helped me a lot. Please thank everyone over there for their support, I'm afraid I won't be able to reply to them all individually but feel sure they'll understand. Writing this is very upsetting so forgive me for not going on. Dennis"

Condolences for Lesley—

Olwen Gale phoned in. She couldn't believe the tragic news, - "I remember Lesley very well and how active she was. One precious moment was during the holiday in Southern Ireland when she said, 'Oh I must put my lippy on.' She was as bright as a button. It's a terrible loss."

Joe Taylor writes: What a shock it is to hear the tragic news of Lesley Lee's death, and the nature of it. I have never met Dennis or Lesley but through reading about them so often in the Newsletter I felt that I knew them. My heart goes out to Dennis who will be devastated.

My next door neighbours have a place in Paphos which they visit two or three times a year. I intended asking them to take a letter to Dennis & Lesley wishing them well in their Shangri La. What a sad and unbelievable end to a lovely dream.



George and Alison Tyrer Emailed to say how shocked they were by the news.

Alex and Kitty Barret couldn't believe that such a tragic end could come to Lesley.

Kevin Blanchfield said that a tragic accident like that couldn't happen to Dennis & Lesley. They were so careful and thorough in everything they did.

Anthony Mason was completely shocked by the news. He said, "They were kind to let me stay with them at their home."

Matthew Devall Emails: I am sorry to hear the sad news. Please convey my deepest sympathy to Dennis Lee on his tragic loss.

And many, many more. Too many to remember. They all felt extreme sorrow.

Bad News Comes in Threes. Well it wasn't an old

wives tale for Eva & I. After the sad loss of Carl Basford, followed a few days later by the tragic death of Lesley Lee, we were waiting to hear of a third, when news came through that our old Gracie Fields friend, Ethel Guest had passed on. Ethel was one of our artists who performed at The Alliance Club with us, and at the hospitals.



Ethel Guest, Our Gracie

Aged 81, she was a lovely woman who was always surrounded by many friends. We knew it was a matter of time before she left us because recently she'd been having spasms of confusion. On one occasion she rang me at 20 past 5 in the morning because she was worried that I may have entered her on the poster to entertain at the Ryfields Village Concert. She was concerned that she may not be able to perform at her best.

Ethel was a great impersonator of Gracie Fields. She looked like Gracie, spoke like her, sang like her, and reached the high notes like her. Her renditions of "Sally, - The Biggest Aspidistra In The World, - I Never Cried So Much In All My Life, She Fought Like A Tiger For 'er 'onour, All Tucked Up In Me Little Bottom Drawer, Out In The Cold Cold Snow, and that good old favourite "Walter, Walter, lead me the altar and I'll show you where I'm tattooed," was every bit as good as Gracie's. But the song that brought tears to many eyes was Gracie's "Bless This House." She sang it with all the feeling in the world and it always brought thunderous applause.

Ethel was a Florence Nightingale to many. For a number of years she cared for another old friend, Jim Gough, who was ninety years of age. She thought the world of Jim and they had a little car that Jim drove, so they were independent. When Jim was taken into hospital he was as near to death as anyone could be. He looked desperately ill and recognised nobody, not even Ethel. I told her, "You know Ethel, you may possibly lose him, so don't build your hopes up too high." She said nothing but carried on visiting him twice every day, and helping the nurses to feed and tend the other patients. Low and below, Jim started to rally and in a couple of weeks he was back to his normal sprightly self. That WAS a miracle!

KEN DODD—Eva & I had a surprise for Ethel & Jim. I rang and told them to be ready as we were taking them out. We picked them up and drove to Manchester. Walking towards the Manchester Palace Theatre, Jim said, "Oh Ken Dodd, he's, my favourite. I used to taxi him from club to club years ago when he first started." Little did he know that we'd managed to book four seats in the centre of the front row stalls. I scribbled a note for back stage, telling Ken that Jim, 90, had just escaped death, and would he give him a mention? Ken did him proud. "Hello everybody" said Ken, "Where's Jim Gough." Well Jim couldn't believe it. "How did he know I was here?" We were sat in prime position a few feet away from Ken.

The pantomime show was "Dick Whittington" and every few minutes, or so, Ken would bring Jim into the conversation. "This cat's like you Jim, he should be taken to the vet." Jim was delighted. When he arrived back in Warrington he told everybody about when he went to see Ken Dodd and Ken remembered him, - after all those years. They were a wonderful couple.

A Reet Gud Show at Crewe by Brian Edge

There were plenty of telephone calls after the February show and the general feeling was that every performer had been on top form and their joint contribution had resulted in a very enjoyable evening out.

Stan Evans compered the show ably assisted by Stan Watkinson as Concert Producer. There was another good attendance around 90 in total. Steve Hassall our resident drummer opened the show with a great ukulele performance, which included *"There's nothing Proud about me"*. Don Chalkley then gave a good performance of *"Pleasure Cruise"*. Cliff Royle once more announced that "he was going to do *"The Blue Eyed Blonde next Door."*



Walter Kirkland just about crippled his bones team by selecting Lonnie Donnegan's *"Tom Dooley"* which was faster than any of the bones player's imagined possible. Apart from Walter all the others left the stage in a state of exhaustion! Connie got the audience going with *"Enjoy Yourself"* followed by *"Lambeth Walk"* a duet with Alan Chenery. Jonathan Baddeley gave us two new numbers that he was performing at Crewe for the first time *"Our Sergeant Major"* and *"Lancashire Toreador"* both very well done. Pamela Baddeley was unfortunately a bit under the weather on the night and was not able to strut her stuff but we look forward to hearing her perform at the next show.

Young Greg Simister delighted the audience with his performance, which included that great number *"You don't Need a Licence for That."* Yours truly had to follow young Greg, a daunting task following such a fine young player, the number being *"Nursie, Nursie."* Popular Arthur Newton gave a very cheery performance of *"Hindoo Man"* concluded with his usual smile and a brief raise of his straw hat. Always a favourite is Arthur. Alan Chenery brought with him a whiff of sea air straight from Fleetwood then steamed out on the *"Wigan Boat Express."* It is always nice to see Alan and Pat especially when it is such a long drive for them to make.

Stan Evans our MC supported by his assistant Stan Watkinson who normally perform under the stage name of The Past Its, (Well and Truly) then sang a couple of songs one being *"The Fields of Athenrye."* It was then Ashley's spot and didn't he do well? Twenty three year old Ashley, who suffered brain damage as a baby, first saw us at the Nantwich Jazz Festival some years ago. As he seemed to like the music so Angela his Mum and Phil brought him along. At first he was very shy and would quietly sit throughout the evenings showing little emotion. However, as time has gone on he has got to know us and has become more outgoing and he now loves getting on the stage. Each month we are seeing slight improvements in his motivation and this is really wonderful. Stan Evans is really magnificent with young people with disabilities and I know he would do anything to see just a little improvement in Ashley. The other day Stan rang and said to me "you know Ashley should have his own spot on the show" and I agreed. Mum Angela however, was a bit embarrassed about it, but I reassured her that everyone would feel just like Stan and would get real pleasure from Ashley's efforts on stage.

Cyril Palmer with his baritone ukulele finished off the first half with a couple of nice sentimental songs. Cyril lives in Flixton and supports most of the George Formby branches. The second half opened with the Living Marionettes of Miss Alison Nadin. For those who don't know, Alison made this little theatre herself and I must say her act is excellent. I sat within six feet during her act and I used to think that her act was a mime but I am now convinced

that she must be a great impersonator of both John Inman and Gracie Fields. I was so close up, but look as I may, I ended up totally convinced that those voices actually came from Alison's lips and as George Formby would say "You Can't Fool Me!"

Tom Meredith from the Birkenhead area then followed with a couple of vocals ending up with "My Way." Brian and Connie followed with an old sentimental love song "I've Got That Old Fashioned Love in My Heart." Deg and Phil part of the singing trio the "Peniffordders" then sang a couple of Formby numbers including "Its in the Air." The missing member of the trio Frank unfortunately was unable to attend on the night. Always well turned out on stage these lads! Vera Jones sang a couple of pleasant songs including "You Need Hands." Colin Wood then gave an excellent rendition of a brand new song for him "Any Dream Will Do." Colin was a bit apprehensive as to how it would go down but he need not have worried, as the audience loved it. This was followed by a duet with Alan Chenery "Putting on the Style" with backing from our dear departed friend Peter Cain. It is good to know that Peter's music is still with us and a reminder of the happy times that we had together.

Alice Cronshaw always delights us with her singing. She is really getting to grips with some difficult songs these days, which are always accompanied by excellent backings. Werrington's Bill Turner, as part of his spot, gave us tribute to the ladies in verse followed by a couple of numbers on his wooden ukulele. His act was followed by that cheeky little chappie Alan Newton who delighted the ladies in the front row of the orchestra stalls (not with his trombone I might say) but with his impression of the Formby song "Farmers Boy" which has some amusing and cheeky lyrics. His second song was a new number "The Lullaby of Broadway" which Alan put over in his inimitable style. The final artiste was Comedian Peter Gratton who gave impressions of "Ernie the Fastest Milkman in the West" and "The Laughing Policeman" which never fails to leave the audience with tears in their eyes. The evening concluded with a thrash of "Leaning on a Lamppost."

Special thanks must go to Stan Watkinson who accepted the job of Concert Producer at very short notice and who made such a good job of it.

Thanks Brian. It was an excellent night of entertainment

Thanks For Supporting Ashley One of the highlights of the

Crewe meeting is when Ashley takes the stage to do his bit for the concert. Thanks to encouragement from the crowd, Ashley has become more active with his dancing and with the swinging of his tambourine. Usually the Crewe meeting starts with a group thrash when as many as twenty players group together to sing and play George's songs. Ashley, - always very smartly dressed, knows when it's time to start the show and immediately jumps up on stage first, - ready for action.



Ashley— Our mate

The love from the audience, both at Crewe and Penyffordd, has done wonders for Ashley's progress, and we eagerly await further progress each month.

Our prayer for Ashley should be: "All we ask is for little steps of progress for dear Ashley and may he receive healing through our brand of music." Thanks to everyone for your kind help and understanding.

Lesley Special at Penyffordd

The March Meeting was a somewhat special occasion. It was intended to be an evening in which we could all remember "Our" Lesley Lee, one of the Founder Members of our Branch and Wife of our friend Dennis. Dennis apparently in his domestic moments referred to Lesley as LJ; her Christian names being Lesley Jane. Before they moved to Cyprus his home in Buckley was incidentally called "Eljay" which indicated a great bond between them.



Rev. Roland Crook

The evening started off with a short Service introduced by the Rev. Roland Crook, Vicar of St. Paul's Church in Helsby, who is a frequent visitor to our meetings. The "Past Its" (Stan Evans and Stan Watkinson) then sang Amazing Grace to an excellent backing track produced by Jonathan Baddeley. Roland then followed with some recollections of Lesley's life both inside and outside the world of George Formby, and then gave a short prayer. To finish off the "Past Its" sang that wonderful moving song "If I had my life to live over again I'd still fall in love with you". This was a great finale to the Service. I am sure those present were deeply moved by the occasion. It was unfortunate that Damian, his family, and other relations of Lesley were unable to be present, but we did have the pleasure of having her son Christian with us together with his partner and

her son. It was indeed a very pleasant surprise to receive a 'phone call during the evening from Dennis in Cyprus to wish us well. It must have been a very moving moment for him.

Lesley apparently had a great love for children and in her Memory the branch decided that any charity monies raised this year should go to a permanent Memorial to Lesley at the Hope House Hospice for Sick Children. In what form this will take depends on how much money is raised, and what the Hospice consider most appropriate. A "Bucket" collection was made during the evening which raised £109. We would like to thank all who contributed in any way. There was the usual number in the audience, although we did expect a few more. However we were pleased to have some friends of Lesley with us in the form of some members of her Tap Dancing Troupe, and also working colleagues from the Registrar's Office at Hawarden. Alan Chenery and Pat came all the way from Fleetwood to support us (Alan of course is now the Concert Organiser at our Blackpool Convention); as did Paul Kenny and his Parents from Preston. As usual we had the support of our friends from Crewe and Sale, but were sorry to hear that Connie Edge was not too well, and that Sheila Palmer had sustained another fall. We hope they both soon recover. It was also on a somewhat sad note that we had to report that our "Front Man" Jim Griffiths had advised that he would no longer be able to attend our meeting as he felt that things were getting too much for him now he is nearly 80. He unfortunately lives a fair distance away and has had to get a taxi both to and from our meetings. We wish you well in the future Jim, and please do not forget we will be delighted to have you back any time.

Numerous Birthdays were celebrated; Alice Cronshaw, Myra Knight, Jonathan Baddeley, and Stan Watkinson. Stan's birthday is celebrated on the Anniversary of the death of George Formby (6th March). George died 42 years ago, but we think Stan's year of birth was a year or two before that.

Perhaps the highlight of the evening was when Lesley's Son Christian agreed to play for us, and

CONTINUED—although he said he had not played for years, and only practised the evening before, he showed he had not lost any of his skill when he played Lamp Post and Fanlight Fanny. The latter apparently was the favourite song that his Mum liked to hear him play. Thanks Christian. Please come to our meetings whenever you can; you will be made really welcome. Sorry for not mentioning individual players etc but I felt the report this month should concentrate on things more related to Lesley. In closing may we thank all who made the evening a success and express our gratitude to Rev. Roland Crook for giving up his evening to support us. Don't forget our Practice nights at the Penyffordd Village Institute. Next ones are on Thursdays April 10th and May 8th. starting at 7.15 PM. . Cliff Royle.

War Veteran Mark Element Met George—Based at Scapa Flow



we operated into the arctic, Spitberg and Romanz. We'd pick up fuel, food and stuff like that, and then we'd pick up the bread, meat, potatoes etc. On one occasion we came along the depot ship, having been out in the arctic for 3 weeks, and I was there holding on to the rail of the quarter deck but George Formby. We knew him immediately and shouted, "Hello George, give us a song."



We were all busy dragging the wires and fenders and didn't really expect he'd come down, but he did. The makeshift gangway was a bit of a scramble—but he came down and sat at our table. He chatted to us and then brought out his ukulele. . . . "Take Lord Nelson, with one limb, little Lady Hamilton fell for him"—and all those sort of songs. The sentiment got at us a bit but we couldn't have wished for a better chap to come on board. He was great. Of the 180 crew on board only about 40 had the opportunity to be entertained by George. Others were busy manning the guns and other duties. He played for about half an hour and they served rum at 4 o'clock. I don't think George enjoyed it very much but he drank it to be social. George gave me his autograph which I still have today.

Crewe Society to Perform Again at the Nantwich Jazz and Blues Festival.

The South Cheshire (Crewe) George Formby Ukulele Society is to put on a two-hour show at the Nantwich Jazz and Blues Festival in the Ballroom of the Crown Hotel, Nantwich on Easter Sunday 20th April. It will be their seventh appearance at the festival. The show commences at 1pm. Doors will be opened just before 1pm. Admission is £1 at the door, and all the door receipts will go to Charity. So if you are free do come along and support us at this event. The festival covers four days 17th to 22nd April and musical entertainment is planned for 17 venues in the town. The entertainers includes The Bill Bacey Big Band, Edwin Starr and the Team, The Terry Lightfoot Jazzmen, The Yardbirds, Jacqueline Dankworth, the Drifters and our very own local Salt City City Jazzmen. **So make a note of the date Sunday 20th April 1pm The Ballroom of the Crown Hotel, Nantwich - See you there!**

HILL CREST Just had a visit from Debra Lewis of Warrington New Town Development. As previously published in the Newsletter, her office has applied to have George's Warrington home registered for Blue Flag honour.

"Hope you are not disappointed" said Debra, "Up to this stage they have turned it down as Warrington is not recognised as Merseyside. It will be 2013 before Cheshire gets recognition." What a load of BULL. She is now applying through the Dead Comic Soc. or Comic Heritage.

More Andy Eastwood Bookings

April 2003

- 5 Sat The Jimmy Cricket Laughter Show, The Music Hall, Shrewsbury
- 6 Sun The Golden Years of Variety, Pavilion Theatre, Rhyl
- 10 Thur The Golden Years of Variety, Prince of Wales Centre, Cannock
- 11 Fri The Golden Years of Variety, Kings Theatre, Southsea
- 12 Sat The Golden Years of Variety, Kings Theatre, Southsea
- 13 Sun The Ken Dodd Happiness Show, Wimbledon Theatre, Wimbledon
- 14 Mon The Ken Dodd Happiness Show, Dorking Halls, Dorking
- 16 Wed The Golden Years of Variety, Palace Theatre, Redditch
- 19 Sat The Golden Years of Variety, Pavilion Theatre, Weymouth
- 20 Sun The Golden Years of Variety, The Stables, Wavendon
- 22 Tue The Golden Years of Variety, Orchard Theatre, Dartford
- 23 Wed The Ken Dodd Happiness Show, Festival Theatre, Malvern
- 24 Thur The Golden Years of Variety, Kenneth More Theatre, Ilford
- 26 Sat The Golden Years of Variety, Princes Theatre, Clacton-On-Sea
- 27 Sun The Golden Years of Variety, Princess Theatre, Hunstanton



Four seats left on Dublin Trip—We've had four

cancellations on the Dublin four day trip so if anyone would like to join us give Christine Wood a ring on 01270 663558. The dates are Friday 30th May to 2nd June and the cost is £209 each. There is an extra charge of £40 for a single room.



These four day trips are great fun, with loads of singing and uke playing, and the Irish love our old songs. So if you fancy a pleasant four day break give Christine a tinkle.



It's wonderful to see that Penyffordd are encouraging youngsters to get up on stage in the thrash. Who knows? They might have a few budding artists in their midst. I hope someone is teaching them a few basic chords.

If You Want To Learn to Harmonise,

there's an excellent Barbershop Harmony Club in Huyton, Liverpool, and they will be pleased to accept you as one of their members. They meet every Tuesday at Huyton & Prescott Golf Club, Huyton Rd, at 8pm. Tel Ron Copeland on 0151 724 6274.



This merry band of happy smiling faces are members of The Liverpool Harmony Club.

Mainly for curiosity, Stan Watkinson & I went along to see how they operate, and we were greeted by warm, friendly members who were pleased to meet us. They didn't have a full team out on this practise night, - the tenors were absent—but even so they did a grand job of entertaining us for the evening. The quality of their harmonising was superb.

Unlike our Formby meetings, which are so casual, laid back, - but still a ball of fun, they get down to hard and serious practise with the aid of two tutors who lay down the law and insist on perfection. What intrigued me was that every member of the team was well versed in all the fine details of harmony singing. Ask the average Formby member for an A7 or a B minor and he'll probably fail to answer, but these lads are well educated in their singing.

As you know, the first 30 minutes of our Formby meeting is spent setting up mikes, stands, amps, speakers, disc players, monitors etc. But the harmonisers don't use any of these items. A little blow on their tuning pipe and they are away, belting out "Down By The Old Mill Stream" in full voice. No backing, only voices at different levels blending with each other.

The club has three different sets of stage wear:

1. Straw hat, striped waistcoat, white shirt, black bow tie, black trousers and belt, white braces, black socks and black shoes (well polished).
2. Check jacket, white shirt with long sleeves, red bow tie, black trousers and socks.
3. (Walk out) Green polo shirt, or plain white shirt with long sleeves and club tie, grey pullover or blue slip over, black trousers etc. as above.

The aims and objects of the club are: To sing barbershop harmony in a chorus and quartets and to promote public appreciation of the style. To further good fellowship between singers, their families, friends and the public. To attend meetings, lectures, discussions, performances, competitions and other activities consistent with the aims and objects.

So if anyone wants to improve their singing ability, learn to sing "Lamp Post" or "Windows" in harmony, then this is the ideal club to join. Subs are £50 per year and well worth the cost.

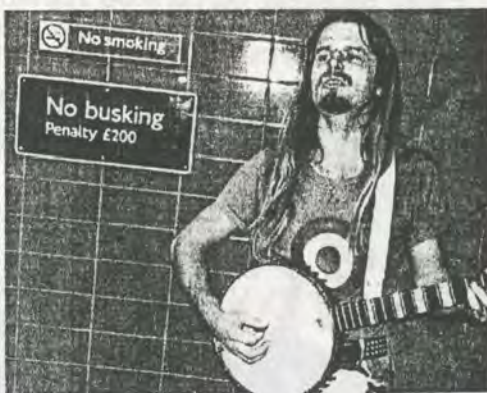
Our thanks to the Liverpool Barbershop Harmony Club for making us welcome.

BUSK PATROL—Well the following article

might be fictional but comments have been appearing in various newspapers and, as they say, "There's no smoke without fire."

If the government pounced down on buskers then charity groups like "The Pudsey Plonkers" on page 12, will need a licence to perform. Or the premises may have to hold a performance licence.

Over the past few weeks we have done our bit towards the campaign by collecting a total of 250 petition signatures and sending them to Tom & Barbara Brown who are raising an objection on a grand scale through the internet. One or two of our members think that we are concerning ourselves unnecessarily but, as it costs nothing to canvas votes, there is nothing lost in adding our support.



The Prevention of Busking Act

1 Whosoever shall attempt to sing or perform in any public place in such a manner or in such circumstances that other persons are compelled to listen thereto, whether or not in the hope of reward, any piece of music of which he is unable to sustain the melody, key or chord progression, shall be guilty of an offence.

2 Anyone guilty of such an offence shall receive a sentence of three months' detention and training in a military band, which sentence shall be doubled for any person attempting a performance of the opus *Streets of London*.

3 Any person guilty of such an offence in a moving train shall be sentenced to transportation for life.

4 A prosecution under this Act may be initiated by any listener.

5 It shall be no defence to a prosecution under this Act that the attempted performance took place under the influence of karaoke.

Health and Safety at Work (Interpretation) Act

1 In any enactment related to health and safety at work, any reference to

"unreasonable or intolerable working conditions" shall include the proximity within two metres of a person at his place of work of another person who negligently and habitually drums his fingers on any surface, makes any noise with any rubber band, or inserts any paper clip into his teeth, nose or ears.

2 In any such enactment, the term "passive smoking" shall include "passive eating". A prosecution under this sub-section may be initiated by any person whose senses have been assaulted by any foodstuff consumed at a place of work by any other person.

3 Any person who attempts in any place of work to relate any anecdote which he has related in that place of work on two previous occasions shall be liable to a get-a-life sentence.

Doorstep Visitations Act

1 Any person who visits domestic premises without prior invitation and initiates with any person on those

premises any conversation intended to induce that person to adhere to any religion or faith shall be guilty of an offence.

2 Any person who visits domestic premises without prior invitation and initiates with any person on those premises any conversation intended to induce that person to purchase double glazing shall be guilty of an offence.

ANYONE SINGING IN A MOVING TRAIN WILL BE TRANSPORTED FOR LIFE

3 Any person guilty of any offence under sub-section (1) shall be liable to be detained during the victim's pleasure with any person guilty of an offence under sub-section (2), and vice versa, for they deserve each other.

Prevention of Busking (Amendment No 1) Act

An offence under The Prevention of Busking Act 2003 shall be committed by any person who in any public place shall compel any other person to witness any attempted performance of mime or fire-eating.

Suppression of Unsolicited Lottery Opportunities by Mail Act

Any person who offers by mail any opportunity to take part in any lottery or prize-draw competition without revealing the true odds against winning the maximum prize shall be liable to detention for such length of time as it takes him to open personally and place in the special prize draw every entry which he receives in response to his invitation.

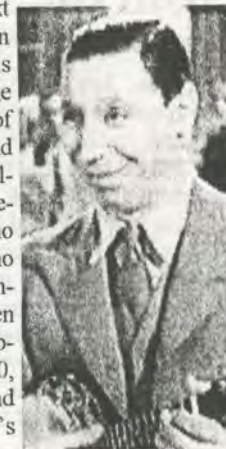
Prevention of Busking (Amendment No 2) Act

1 An offence under The Prevention of Busking Act shall be committed by any person who exhibits himself dressed as a pantomime chicken.

2 It shall be no defence to a prosecution under this Act that the offence took place during any marathon race or on Red Nose Day.

George's 100th Birthday George

will be 100 on May 26th 2004 so next year will be his centenary year. In 1991 we held a 30th Anniversary (of his death) Exhibition and, through a huge amount of publicity, many millions of people were introduced to George and his songs. Many, especially the children, had never heard of George because up to that point there were no tapes, no CDs, videos, no TV films, no cinema shows etc. so therefore the general public had completely forgotten him. I rang some of the London publishers and record producers in 1990, asking for GF tapes and songbooks, and their reply was: "George Formby, he's dead isn't he?"



I rang Wigan several times and the replies were negative. Some didn't even know that George was born in Wigan. Anyway, Warrington answered the call and we had a most successful show that introduced George and his songs to the public. The children who visited the show were delighted with the songs that told a story. They were so different to the heavy beat stuff that was being churned out on radio and TV.

CONCERNED—Now my concern is that George is being forgotten again. We may be playing and singing his songs, but interest in the man himself and his songs have dwindled. Nobody is collecting GF memorabilia anymore. There are never any items on display or for sale at any of the meetings.

I phoned and wrote to Wigan Pier to stage a long week-end for George's 100th and they've not even acknowledged either. Two years ago I chased Warrington to stage the same exhibition and they claimed they were too busy. They also say that they have destroyed all of George's exhibition display units. One prominent member of the GFS wanted over £500 for the loan of photos. No doubt his love of George had turned to greed. So sad!!!!

So what is happening. Will the 100th Anniversary pass by as dead as the 35th and the 40th (of his death) when publicity was almost down to nil. Apart from Crewe's effort, little else happened.

As keen fans of George it is essential that we keep his name alive for future generations. George is a legend whose songs should live forever.

From the Pudsey Plonkers—Yorkshire

Brian Webb, Dennis Wilson, George Atkinson and Peter (bones) Waterhouse.

Dear Stan, Just received NEWS LETTER 92, these of course are very informative for those who do not get to Blackpool as often as other Formby Fans. I have been playing the Uke Banjo since I was about 16, and took one in the army through Palestine in 47. I joined the Formby Society about 1974, when the Vellum Magazines were black and white, but having joined the Society I have improved over the years. Since I retired some ten years ago my feet have not touched the ground with all kinds of activities, Bowls, Snooker, Art, Church, and of course the Formby meetings at Wakefield, Pudsey and Mirfield.



Brian, George and Dennis raising funds in Cross Gates Shopping Centre, Leeds. Peter was off the picture tuning his bones.

The article that interested me in this issue was the one on NICKY MARTIN. I had the pleasure of meeting Nicky when my wife and I cruised the Carribean on the Arcadia for our 50th Wedding Anniversary, some 18 months ago. Someone said "Have you seen the Comedian," and I said "No, I wasn't that keen," but when he said he played the Uke, I pricked up my ears, and went the following night. What a polished performer he is. He makes a study of the people and their actions on board. And he'll take the mickey out of the ship's captain, and the crew. He also writes "CRUISE POEMS" and sells them in aid of the heart foundation.

I was fortunate to have a chat with him in the interval, and mentioned that it would be nice if he could come to Blackpool. Unfortunately his continuous cruise trips prevent him from attending. What I admired about Nicky was that he hates to use of foul language in his acts, unlike the so called comics of today. But he doesn't need to. He had the audience on their toes and gave an excellent performance. He allowed me to play his uke in the Foyer, which I thought was a bonus. Nicky, of course does an awful lot for the Heart Foundation, and has suffered over the years with this complaint.

The PUDSEY PLONKERS group was formed by Mac Mcgee in Leeds sometime ago and we recently raised £442.00 for the Leeds Air Ambulance (Sorry -YORKSHIRE AIR AMBULANCE), at Cross Gates Centre in Leeds. *Thanks Brian. Nicky has a regular supply of Newsletters so he'll be chuffed with your praise. Keep writing in.*

And who is this merry player with his Space Age Uke? Why it's young Ken Smith of Yorkshire. He's been perfecting his new style uke for a couple of years and as soon as he's ready he'll give us the details. If you want a name you could call it a Circlelele, which rolls off the tongue, or an Ovalele. Good luck with it.



Jack & Ann Email—Dear Stan, Here's a few one liners for your George Formby Newsletter. Hope you can fit these somewhere. Jack on the bones—keep smiling.

1. You know you are getting older when everything hurts, and what doesn't hurt doesn't work
2. Middle age is when anything new you feel is likely to be a symptom.
3. Middle age is when your age starts showing around your middle
4. Middle age is when you stoop to tie your bootlaces and ask, "What else can I do while I'm down here?"
5. Middle age is when you are warned to slow down by a doctor, - not a police officer.

And I've got another one liner for you Jack. "You know you are getting older when you accompany Walter on the bones and the tape is going at 300 mile an hour. I noticed on Friday that you and Colin Wood were staggering about the stage and missing half of the clacks out. I thought you were having heart attacks.

Alice Cronshaw Writes—I would like



to thank all my friends who came to my Birthday Party at the Sale meeting. Also for the presents and cards I received. It was a wonderful night and all the George Formby friends and my own family made it a very special occasion.



The highlight that topped the night for me was when my granddaughter, Jenny, got up on stage and played her uke. It was a perfect end to a perfect night. A very special thank you to Walter for his support and thanks to all our George Formby friends. Alice.

This takes us back about 10 years when Alice's granddaughter, Jenny was a very active junior player.

Thanks Alice, sounds like a grand night. We regret not being there. We had every intention of coming along to do an early spot for you and then shooting off to Warrington where we had a 70th Birthday booking. However, I received a call from the organisers to say that the top of the bill couldn't make it and would we fill the spot. As he was a dear old friend going through chemotherapy treatment I had to support him.

There was an awful groaning noise coming from the cinema stalls during a very tender love scene on the screen. "Shut up" hissed the audience, but still this chap carried on moaning and groaning and making the most horrible noises. He was stretched out across the seats.

Eventually the manager was called and he marched down the aisle until he came to the noisy chap. "Get up" demanded the manager, all he got in return was, Ooooooaaaaahhhhh Aaaaaaaaargh. "Where are you from?" asked the manager? "F Fr From th Balcony."

Party Night by Cyril Palmer—We had an outstanding February evening as an audience of almost eighty crammed into The Timperley Taverners. We were to celebrate the (nearly) birthday of Alice Cronshaw. Now I wouldn't be so churlish as to reveal a lady's age, but I don't remember such a to-do when she became sixty-nine.



There was an element of sadness at the start of the evening as we stood in silence to reflect on the sad loss of two wonderful and dedicated Formby people, Carl Basford, a Crewe member, and Lesley Lee who died so tragically in Cyprus.

The attendance was boosted by a party of Alice's family which included talented granddaughter Jenny. Long before Alice dared to sing, Jenny was one of our junior sensations both at Sale meetings and the Society conventions. It was good to hear her back in action with "Talking to the Moon," "Hitting the high spots," and closing the evening singing "Leaning on a lamppost." Alice in her spot, claimed to be "A little on the lonely side"-well sung but anything but lonely! Making first visits were Thelma Wright from nearby Flixton, Doreen and Eddie from Eccles, Betty from Frodsham, and from North Wales, Dolwen and Geoff Shone. Yorkshire was well represented by Phil and Janet Hatswell, Judith and Bob Townsend, Millie and Mac McGee, and, with Roy Fielden, a rare visit from that dynamic duo, Dennis Mitchell and Dickie Speake.

Frank Bennett came from Blackpool courtesy of Alan Chenery. Frank recently spent his 84th birthday weekend at the Blackpool Metropole with two other birthday boys and visiting friends. Doreen, mentioned above, having enjoyed our ukulele music in the hotel, decided to pay us a visit. Mark Walsh, a brilliant teenage player from London, arrived with Paul Kenny. Mark has used his mid-term break to visit three of our north-west clubs. Phil. Frank and Deg, the Penyffordd Tenors, brought the Wales-based visitors to fourteen. Was it deliberate that after "It's in the air," the "Tenors" took us to brewing-up time singing about "The old kitchen kettle." Les Pearson had discovered that the Formby numbers were missing from the CD collection of the hospital radio at North Manchester General. So, at the interval, on our behalf, Alice presented anew Formby CD to Les for use on the hospital radio. The interval was longer than usual. First, there was a delicious buffet provided by Alice at her own expense. Then a beautiful cake appeared, supplied by Jean Nadin, discretely decorated with seven candles only, and inscribed "We know how old you are."

More fun after the interval. Alice has had an occasional backing group when singing as "AL Diamond & the Sapphires." The Sapphires, usually Hilda Southworth, Vera Eaves & Sheila Palmer, were assisted by Connie Edge, Margaret Moran, Ann Ratcliffe and Marjorie Travis. Made up baby fashion (with "dummies") they sang "You must have been a beautiful baby" to a surprised Alice. This prompted Dennis Mitchell, shortly afterwards, to sing "The Baby Show." As he finished, he all but disappeared under a heap of "mature babies." {What a lovely death!} Alison Nadin added a hilarious Walter Kirkland look-a-like bones player to her "Living Marionettes." With a good selection of songs from Eddie Bancroft, Walter Kirkland, Brian White, Cliff Royle, Jack Valentine, Mac McGee, Alan Chenery, Dickie Speake, Roy Fielden, Mark Walsh, Brian and Connie Edge, Paul Kenny, Judith Townsend, Vera Jones, Margaret Moran, Arthur Newton and Alan Southworth, it was altogether a very special evening. *Thanks Cyril.*

PLEASE CONTRIBUTE TO THE NEWSLETTER.

My Favourite Lesley Lee Story is—One

day I went to Buckley to spend a couple of hours with Dennis & Lesley. We were working out the instructions on a new mini disc player. Before I set off, I typed out a letter, addressed it to Mrs Lesley Lee and put a stamp on the envelope. On arrival I said to Lesley, "I've just found this letter behind your front door." She opened it up and it was from THE INTERNATIONAL COUNCIL OF FELLOWSHIP. It went on to read:

Dear Mrs Lee, as part of our fostering world understanding, the above Council has selected your home and family to further the Council's aims. You will be pleased to know that we have invited a family of Urganion Asians to be guests in your home for the next four months. This period of life will allow them to adapt themselves into our way of life which I am sure you will appreciate.

The family we have selected to stay with you are called, "Gupta" and consists of the father, his three wives, eleven children, one wife's brother, his father's grandparents, and two Brahmin bulls. The bulls are classed as sacred beasts and thus it will be necessary for you to approach the local authority for accommodation for these animals, a heated garage will be ideal. Their feed consists of pampas grass, boiled ham, sultanas and peanuts etc. We trust this will not be too expensive for you to cope with, but unfortunately all the Guptas are on Social Security and we will be grateful if you will give them pocket money from time to time.

One important point here, the animals droppings are to remain where they fall for a minimum of 72 hours, to avoid upsetting religious feelings of the Asians. To aid you in feeding this family we are forwarding to you 8 cwt of curry and chapatis and 7 cwt of dried stock fish, together with a booklet entitled "Causes and Cures of Entric and Dysentery Ailments" also included will be 24 pairs of bicycle clips and 600 toilet rolls. A booklet of Urdu and Hindu phrases for everyday use will also be provided. Examples are as follows: Sind—Naya desai chutto (Please change my underpants), Naps sesma gutululu (The lavatory is blocked and will you dig it out?)

We will be giving you 7 days notice of the arrival date of the family and will be grateful if you will arrange the necessary documentation so that the family can obtain their rightful amounts of Social Security, Supplementary Benefit and free National Health treatment.

I trust you will find this experience an interesting and rewarding one.

Yours Sincerely, R Patel, Relations Council.

It was wonderful watching the expression on Lesley's face. Although Dennis spotted the joke straight away, poor Lesley had fell for it hook, line and sinker. "How did they get my name" she kept asking, and "We can't possibly take these lodgers in." I had a job keeping my face straight. Wonderful memory.

Les Pearson's Just Phoned—"Stan" he said,

"I've just been to visit George Cheetham and he looks very ill. He'll be 82 in August."

George is one of the few remaining founder members of the George Formby Society and an honorary member. If you wish to phone the home to ask about George you can ring 0161 881 2989.



Bob Muirhead Reports on the Blackpool Birthday Bash

Friday 14th March saw Sheila and I, Jennifer and Paul Culkin, arrive at the Metropole Hotel Blackpool to join the three Birthday Boys, Len Wilson, Little Chris Murray, and the Blackpool Scouser Frank Bennett, for their Birthday weekend.

We got together after dinner for a thrash and were soon surrounded by a number of the guest's who seemed to prefer our music to that of the paid entertainers on the night, Chris gave his usual 400 song medley whilst Paul gave a superb exhibition of how to really play the Concert Uke.

Saturday saw us joined by Cyril and Sheila Palmer, Alan and Hilda Southworth, Phil Jones, Jed, Brynn, and Franks Son Mike.



As you can imagine with that array of musical talent on show Young Bob the entertainment was fast and furious Jed in particular being on top form, Phil, Alan, and Cyril (who for some reason didn't play Crystal Chandelier), also gave their usual faultless performances, for me the nicest comment of the evening came from an elderly lady who said " that's the best night I've had in years". Cyril presented each of the Birthday Boys with a personal Birthday Card computerised in his own inimitable style, each of them shown on the back doing a violent manoeuvre on a skateboard, very funny, and so well done.

On Sunday evening Doreen, Mine Hostess from our usual watering hole "The White House " and James Williams (who had travelled down from Bridlington) joined us, so we held another thrash which continued until 2am Sunday morning, by which time most of us (aided by large quantities of Chris Murray's Pear Schnapps) staggered off to bed.

Over breakfast on Monday everyone voted the weekend "A Grand Do", we intend to do it again next year, so if you fancy a great weekend in Blackpool, with good food, great company, plus wall to wall Ukulele's put the 14th and 16th of February in next years diary.

Thanks Bob. Might take you up on it next year.



Christian Lee

Well it was grand to see Dennis and Lesley's son, Christian, at the special "Lesley Service" meeting at Penyffordd, and "Didn't He Do Well?" He was great, and although he claims that he hasn't played the uke for at least 7 years, he put many to shame. His playing and his singing was brilliant.

Our last recollection of Christian was about nine ago when he was one of the large army of youngsters that joined us and took to the uke like a baby with a feeding bottle. They were all natural players who knew no limitations. We had loads of them.

However, like a lot of the youngsters, Christian found other things of interest and hasn't played since. Good for you Christian. You are welcome anytime.

Neil Forshaw Emails on Earlestown where it all started for

George—Dear Stan, In the GF Newsletter No 91 you were kind enough to print the article on how Earlestown got its name. Well on the Saturday the 1st of March 2003, 150 years to the day that Hardman Earle signed the lease for the Viaduct Foundry a re-enactment of this took place. Hardman Earle and his entourage boarded a train from Liverpool Lime Street Station to Newton Junction (Earlestown) with the deputy Lord Mayor of Liverpool.

They arrived at Newton Junction at around 2.45 to be greeted by the Mayor of St. Helens and other local dignitaries, and Mr Jones & Mr Potts the owners of the Viaduct Foundry. A parade lead by Parr Silver Band then proceeded through the town to the cenotaph for the "Last Post" and 1 minutes silence. Then on to Wood Court in Leigh Street where the Mayor unveiled a permanent display of the towns history. The parade then continued to the Viaduct Club for the signing of the lease of the Viaduct Foundry.

Through the year other functions will be held to celebrate the towns 150th, a George Formby night will be at Wood Court on the 21st March 82 years to the very day that George made his debut and only 200 yds from wher: it took place at Kemps Hippodrome. Best wishes Neil
Thanks Neil.

What A Nice Surprise

when I walked into the Blackpool Cricket Club for the monthly meeting, and saw London's young Mark Walsh. It was also another treat when he jumped up on stage and performed like a professional. What a great young player he is. I remember Mark very well from his early days. It was soon after the Warrington Exhibition in 1991 and we were getting loads of publicity all over the country.

The phone rang and it was young Mark ringing from London. On his way home from school he would ring from the local phone box and half an hour later he would ring again from home. He was hooked on George and wanted to learn all about George. "Must go now" he said, "Mum's here." and off he went. Well I'm very



Grown up and matured Mark Walsh



Mark gets his first uke banjo for Christmas

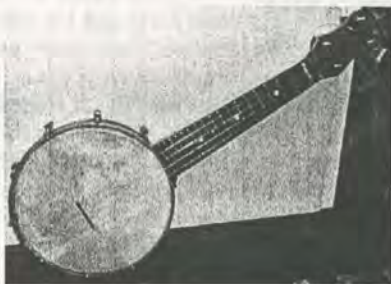
pleased that Mark has kept going with his ambition to play like George and wish him all the luck in the world. He's got talent, good timing, a pleasant personality, an infectious smile and loads of ambition. His uke playing and split strokes etc. are brilliant. I asked him if he'd like to take it up professionally, "Sure would," he answered. Good luck Mark

It's a wonderful treat seeing these youngsters treading the boards after you've encouraged them.

Uke Banjo for Sale—Bob Muirhead is selling a Fred Stevenson Ludwig copy which is in excellent condition. This uke was specially built to accommodate a lady player. Excellent tone. Hard quality case. Price £395. Ring Bob on 0151 727 3068. Highly recommended.

Another Uke for Sale—

Perfect for a beginner or a well proportioned lady. Dulcetta Uke Banjo, with new set of good quality Grover pegs, new strings and new bridge. Ten tension rods. Ideal for getting started with or for the lady who doesn't know if it fits under or over. This handy instrument sits very comfortably on top. No case I'm afraid but the buyer will be given an ASDA bag free of charge. £85—ring me on 01925 727102.



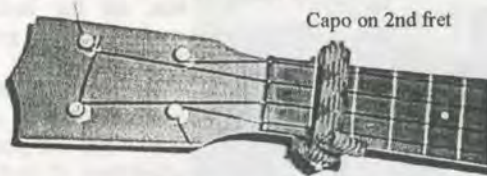
Backing Tracks—I've just spent a couple of hours with our old friend John Hickenbottom who is a very experienced piano, organ and keyboard player. John, who has moved to Northwich, Cheshire, is set up at his home to make backing tracks and you can ring him on 01606 49936. He has a top quality organ which produces every sound up to full orchestra level and any rhythm or tempo you wish.

If you do make arrangements for him to produce tracks, it is wise to make a list of the songs you want backings for and, if possible, the sheet music, also the key and style you want them in. John is set for recording on to cassette tape only (not mini disc) but the quality is good with high level recording—no background hissing. You'll be very pleased with the result.

Email from Albert E. Hello Stan, You may remember that I visited you about 12 months ago and bought your Tuition Book & Tape from you. Well I'm progressing quite well, - although a bit slow—and as you said at the time, in broad Lancashire, "Look lad, If tha can't lurn off this book and tape yud better take up tha drums." Or something like that. Well, those few words have spurred me on many times and every time I get a bit despondent I think back to what you said. Up to now I've not taken up the drums.

Now this is my query: The book and tape is in "D" tuning but you gave me some advice on what to do if I wanted to play a song in "C" with the same uke (I've only got one). Unfortunately I've forgotten what you told me.

Thanks Albert for your Email. I can't remember the occasion but I'm pleased that you are progressing. Now the easiest method is to buy a small capo. You could make a temporary capo with a short piece of very narrow dowel and a thick elastic band. Tune the uke to



GCEA and fit the capo on the second fret from the top. This will automatically give you an ADF" B tuning. Take the capo off and you are back to "C" again. Dead easy! Enjoy your playing. Pleased you've not had to take up the drums.

Michael Aspel was presenting a TV Antiques Road Show when a man came up to him carrying a large metal thing. The man said, "I found this in the attic, what is it worth?" And Michael replied. "It's your water tank."

George's 42nd Anniversary On March 6th it was 42nd anniversary of George's death and on the day I received a phone call from the BBC Radio. They wanted an interview on the life of George. Expecting at least 15 minutes interview I spent the next couple of hours digging out all the necessary information on what questions they might ask. At 10.15 pm the phone call came from them and we were on air.

Unfortunately they knew absolutely ^{WBCPS} about George. The interviewer started off with, "And how did Beryl manage after George died?" "Well" I thought, "she couldn't have managed very well because she was dead." Let's hope that when we get closer to GF's 100th we get down to some serious interviewing. Anyway, it was a bit of publicity.

Letter from Wigan Council—Wigan May Dayze

Hi Stan, I just wanted to update you on the Wigan event this year. There has been a number of changes due to various things and the event will now NOT be on a Saturday. In order to spread the festival over a longer period the event will happen from 12 noon - 2pm on the days of Tuesday 27th May, Wed 28th and Thursday 29th. There will also now only be one site only, the central cross in the middle of the town centre.

Both professional and community voluntary performers will use this site in order to integrate all performers. It is hoped that this will provide a better sense of unity.

As you were our most popular act last year we would like to offer the George Formby Players the chance to perform again. As the festival will only be 2 hours long, the performance slot will be 30 minutes maximum. I am therefore offering you the chance to play for more than one day as I know that the players have extensive material. As in previous years there will be an expense amount of £100 per performance, but as I know that you have a large number of players, we would increase this to £150 per performance. I hope this is of interest to you, please let me know either way so I can offer the slot to another group if you decide not to perform.

I've copied this email to Chris Wyatt the new Arts Development Officer (my manager). Chris will be managing the event. Hope you are well and look forward to hearing from you. Regards, Nicky Griffiths, Arts Development Officer. Tel. (01942) 828521. Leisure and Cultural Services, Headquarters, Robin Park Arena, Loire Drive, Wigan. WN5 0UL.

REPLY—Thanks Nicky, as the events are to be held on working days I'm not sure if we can gather interest from the players. Will let you know the result of the replies.

ANDY EASTWOOD—For details of Andy Eastwood's new CDs and Tapes "Ukulele Serenade" and "Running Wild (Red Hot & Blonde)" contact Andy on 01425 275830 or write to P.O.Box 5004 Christchurch BH23 5WD or log on to web site www.andyeastwood.com

Thanks to all who kindly contributed to this George Formby Newsletter

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?

